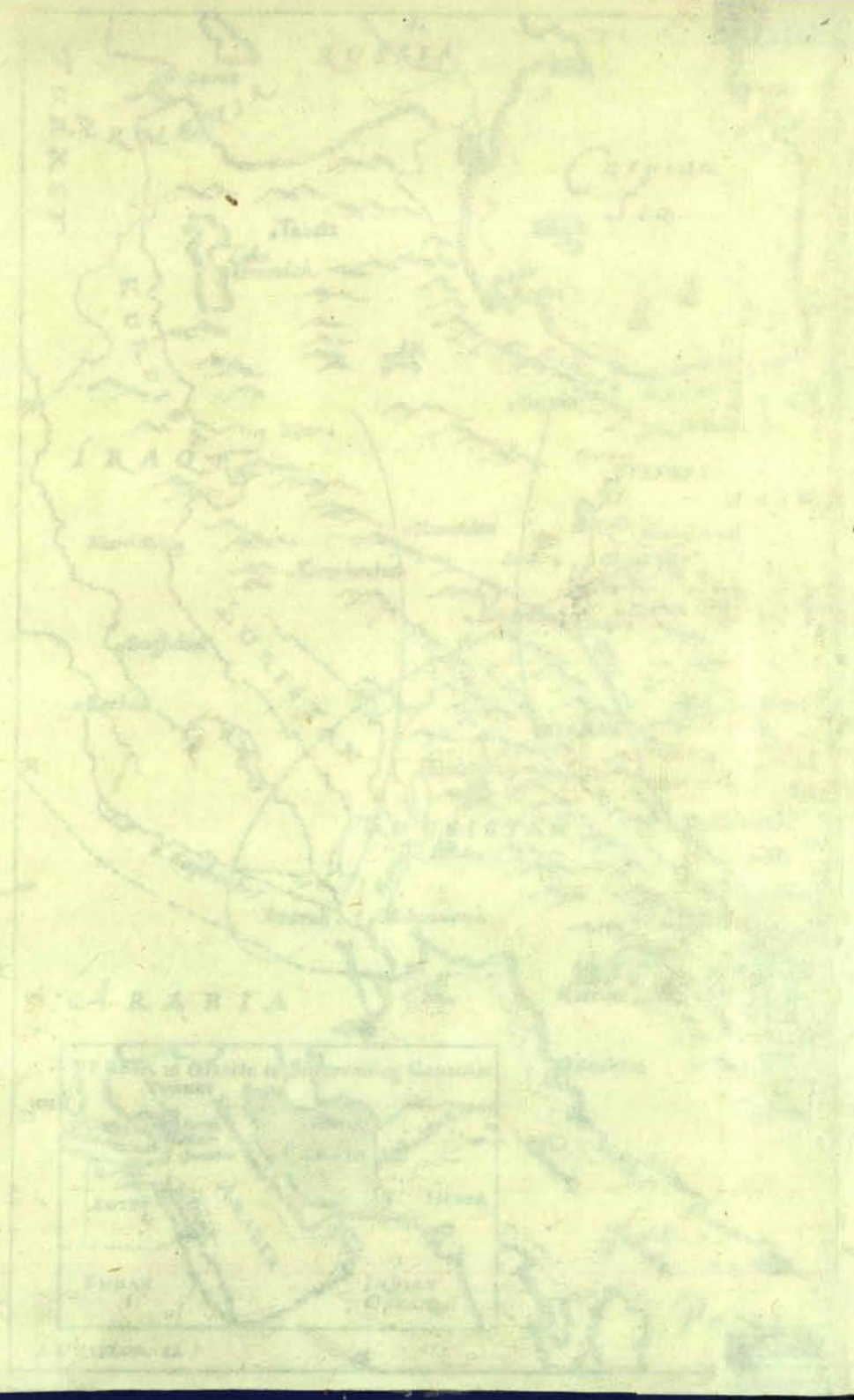
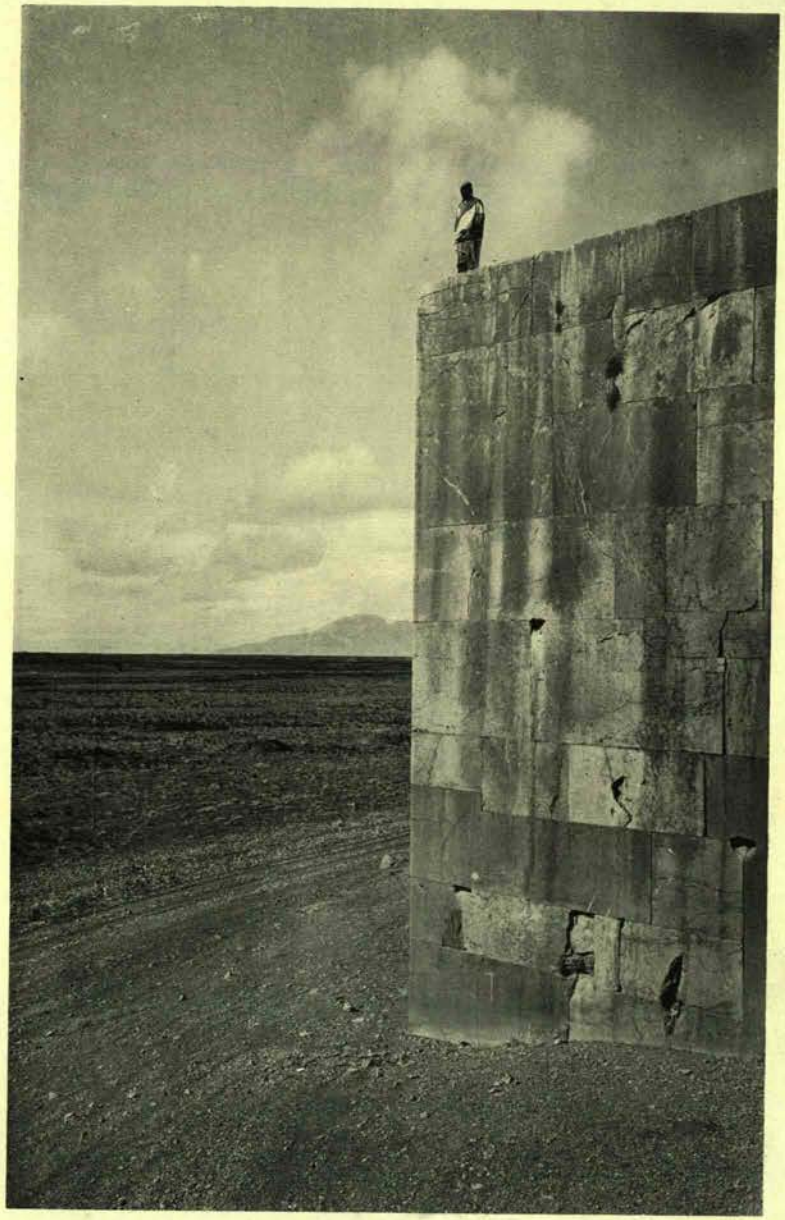

EUROPA
Caspian Sea
IRAN
ARABIA

PERSIAN DAYS



PERSEPOLIS
THE PLATFORM RISES IN PLACES FIFTY FEET ABOVE THE LEVEL OF THE PLAIN

PERSIAN DAYS

BY

COPLEY AMORY, JR.

WITH 51 ILLUSTRATIONS
AND AN ENDPAPER MAP

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
1929

TO

MY MOTHER

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PREFACE

PERHAPS it is unnecessary to warn the reader that the following account of a four weeks' trip made with a friend in central and south Persia makes no pretence at giving a comprehensive picture of the country, its people, or their problems. But if these informal impressions based on notes made during the trip, and put into final shape later, contribute to an interest in a country which is bound, as time goes on, to attract an increasing amount of attention abroad, they will, I believe, serve a useful purpose.

Persia stirs one's imagination in many ways. Few countries have had so long or varied a history. As yet her soil has been hardly scratched to seek for the secrets and missing links of her past which there is good reason to believe lie at hand waiting for the archæologist's pick.

As for the present, internal and international political factors are perhaps the most obvious. Linked with them are pressing economic problems as well as the question of how Nature herself is behaving in this region of the world and the extent to which eventful climatic changes may be taking place.

The spectacle to-day is of a country larger than Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, and Holland combined, with a population variously estimated from seven to ten millions, that subsists almost entirely on a primitive system of agricultural economy and that possesses less than two hundred miles of railroad.

A gradual decrease in the present population appears to be taking place. Certainly the population has decreased markedly since the Middle Ages. Extant evidence points to a population in the thirteenth century in the Province of Fars, for instance, ten times greater, and in the Province of Khuzistan twenty times greater, than the population in those regions at present. One may speculate how far the change in the interplay of world economic forces has been responsible, and the extent to which a modification in climatic conditions has contributed. One speculates, too, on the extent to which this depressing and destructive movement can be counterbalanced by the introduction of modern methods in the national economy.

Before trade routes by sea became practicable in the sixteenth century, commerce between East and West was obliged to follow the overland caravan routes that led in great measure across Persia. But Persia's great natural mountain barriers and the high plateau upon which most of the country sits, with its vast arid wastes, were gladly

given up when sea routes were opened. Persia then paid the penalty for her peculiar topography, and from being on the main highway of the world's commercial traffic, gradually became isolated and avoided. Gradually, too, former timbered areas became bare, and districts where vast irrigation systems had once supported thickly populated communities gave place to untenanted desert.

In recent years Persia's comparative inaccessibility and lack of modern means of transportation are responsible in part for her being a generation or two behind the other historic nations of the East in their contact with the West and their adoption of Western tools and methods. Her nineteenth-century deference to Western civilization has changed, especially since the Great War, to partial cynicism. With the rest of Asia, her disillusionment is being accompanied by an awakening self-consciousness. Westerners who know Persia from many years' residence will tell you, I think, that latterly they have remarked a change. The student, the young officer, or the clerk, is taking more note of what goes on in the outside world, and is giving thought to the future, instead of mechanically accepting the present and complacently pointing down the long vistas of his country's past. He is neater and cleaner in his dress and person. He is more ambitious. He is more likely to be one of those who have turned

so many vacant lots on the outskirts of Teheran into soccer football fields. The process may not have made great headway yet, but it is a seed that once sown may well grow with accumulating speed and vitality.

Persia has one invaluable asset in her extraordinary social cohesion. Perhaps this comes in part from the peculiarities and isolation of her physical position. To both factors is probably due her existence as a political entity for a longer period of time than nearly any other nation in the world to-day. Her territory has had far more than its share of foreign invasion and migration. But as the centuries have gone on Persia has met their impact, watched them break and whirl and eddy, and then, like the streams from her own mountains that so often get imperceptibly swallowed up as soon as they reach plain or desert, has assimilated the new elements and continued her own existence.

The present appeal of Persia is the pioneer appeal. Persia is having to readjust her perspective to the purport of present forces in the outside world and to react toward them in a practically subjective manner. She must adopt much from the West if she is to survive. Indeed, the course of her future history will be determined largely by the amount of vitality and aptitude which she applies to bringing herself in line with Western civilization. She cannot stand still. Contending forces within and

without are too strong. The path she follows will be interesting, for it will not be simple or easy.

In addition to the political factors, with which in so many instances they are intimately connected, are the economic and social sides of the picture. Persia has a difficult and involved opium problem; she is sadly in need of public health and educational work, of agricultural reform, of modern means of transportation, of scientific application of her meagre supplies of water to power and irrigation purposes, of reafforestation. With many of these problems she is beginning to grapple.

The present march of events in Persia has a special interest for Americans because of the country's recent turning to the United States and her employment of private American citizens to help put her house on an up-to-date basis. An American financial mission of nine members was engaged in 1922, has since been increased to sixteen, and under the leadership of its chief, Dr. A. C. Millspaugh, has made long strides in building up the country's financial structure. American directors of agriculture and of roads have been engaged, and most recently an American railway engineer, Mr. W. B. Poland, with eleven American assistants. Mr. Poland is now performing the task, discussed and speculated on for the last half-century, of surveying a trunk line across the country. The Persian Madjles has authorized the early engagement of an American geologist and of an

American veterinarian. Persia is indeed writing a new chapter in her history. One hopes she will show that capacity for pursuing a sustained course of action without which neither nation nor individual can arrive at goals that represent real progress.

C. A., JR.

NAUSHON ISLAND
WOODS HOLE
MASSACHUSETTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I DESIRE to acknowledge my indebtedness and frequent reference to Sir Percy Sykes's *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia* (John Murray, 1902), and to *The History of Persia* (Messrs. Macmillan & Co., 1921) by the same author; as well as to the late Lord Curzon's *Persia* (Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co., 1892), a comprehensive and masterly compilation of facts in regard to the country which, although written over thirty years ago, remains the most useful guide-book a traveller in Persia can have to-day.

I desire also to express my gratitude to the various friends who have so generously placed their photographs at my disposal for reproduction in the following pages. In addition to the use of their excellent photographs I am under special obligation to Professor Ernst Herzfeld, of the University of Berlin, for many months my neighbour in Teheran, and to Ernest Bristow, Esq., British Consul-General in Isfahan. Professor Herzfeld, who stands to-day without a peer in the realm of Persian historical and cultural research, is as generous in placing information at the disposal of those who are interested in Persia's past as he is competent to

interpret it, and I am indebted to him for many useful suggestions. I cannot mention Mr. Bristow without referring to the constant hospitality which he and Mrs. Bristow extend so generously to my countrymen as well as their own when they arrive, travel-stained and weary, in Isfahan, and to the several occasions when I was the fortunate recipient of it.

C. A., Jr.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PERSIAN DAYS

PERSIAN DAYS

CHAPTER I

SOUTHWARD FROM TEHERAN

SHIMRAN
September 13

'FOR to start, must push key like that. Then start it. . . . Then when car start push clutch. PUSH clutch, sir . . . PUSH. Put it first gear, you must take foot slowly, SLOWLY. . . . Put it in top gear, take foot soon off, sir, SOON. . . .'

And so forth: is what Christopher and I have been getting for the last ten days from little Taghi, who has been trying to teach his two mechanically inept masters how to run Nanette. Nanette is small and inexpensive, but she's not a Ford. When we were lucky John took us out. He's an Indian Army Captain, and hasn't taught Punjabi Mohammedans the intricacies of Western firearms without acquiring a faculty for lucid explanation. It was under his quiet eye that we realized how inept we were. But no hen ever fussed over a new chick more than we have over Nanette during the fortnight since she has been our property. For the trip we have been getting, I imagine, enough spare parts to go half-way round the world, but in the

process we are learning the difference between outer covers and inner tubes, clutch-plates and wheel-bearings. . . .

Rahim has been getting the supplies. He's a Persian Jew, small enough to put in your pocket, who went for six years to the American Mission School in Teheran, has been with me for a year, and is the handiest little servant in all Persia. The madder you get at him the harder he works, and the harder he works the fatter he grows. His wife is sixteen, and he's the father of two babies. We should live well if his frequnet trips to the bazaar are a criterion. But you mustn't think we are the kind who have to live on canned Western food. Persian cheese and curds, eggs and native bread, are good enough for us, and you always have Persian poultry. Last night when I went to the storeroom to let Ginger out the air became scrambled with the scared gyrations of four chickens as the little Airedale puppy fled from their midst in terror. All to-day he has shown resentment that his precincts should have been used for such an infernal purpose. For here you buy poultry alive, take it home, and when the cook feels like it he kills it in the kitchen. . . .

ISFAHAN
September 17

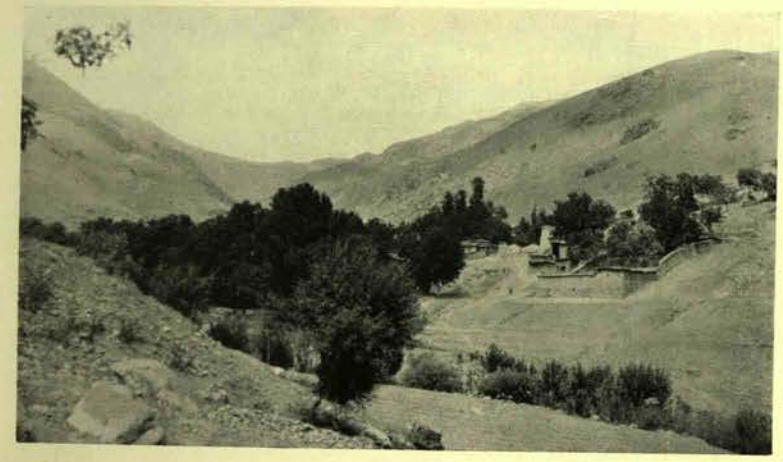
We were delayed two days in getting off. First Taghi got or said he got malaria, then the battery,

which unto Nanette is like the heart unto you or me, suddenly failed—it proved to be an endless and complicated process to cure it. Christopher's temper began to show, I thought, signs of strain, and I began to wonder whether a vacation *in situ* wasn't about as satisfactory as one *in transitu*. As for the battery, we were told, with that timely tact which friends so often show, that chauffeurs are sometimes fond of replacing new batteries with old: new batteries being a compact article and easily transferred for ready cash. Our confidence in Taghi, I fear, decreased sadly, and we began to watch him with a sternness which his little beady eyes and cheerful countenance placidly ignored. Taghi at least has the wisdom never to disagree with his employers in word or look. A commendable policy for others than those who drive automobiles.

Finally, on Wednesday we got off while it still was dark. Ginger was given in charge of the stable-boy, and he didn't like it at all. The stable-boy had beaten his wife the night before, she who usually but not on that day supplied him with enough opium to fill the tiny bowl of his long black pipe. And the lady had disappeared. The lady has a habit of disappearing, however, whether beaten or not. So it was indicated merely that the puppy was not to become a target for narcotic wrath. And I left my garden, with its alleys of poplar and plane and rose trees, in the little

mountain village beside a ravine whose noise alone keeps you cool, and went down to the more populous and fashionable community half-way between the wall of mountains and the plain, whither the *élite* of Teheran escape from the city's summer heat, and picked up Christopher.

We ran down first the broad highway known as the Shimran Road that connects the foothills of 'up country' with Teheran on the plain. The old and new, whether means of transportation or types of humankind, meet here on a basis of unprotesting equality. Hens and geese from their wicker baskets on a mule's back cackle and distend their rubber necks to hiss fiercely at the sleek Packard or Lincoln car of a diplomat; a grandee, in his old victoria, behind a pair of sweating horses, who knows the nineteenth far better than the twentieth century, ignores completely a German aviator tearing into town on his motor-cycle to pilot one of the Junker planes that takes passengers to Resht or even Baku; a 'sea-going hack', full of giggling females shrouded in black *chadors*, from which only the eyes (supposedly) peep out, progresses neck to neck with a holy, turbaned mullah on his donkey; traymen who balance all your cherished glass and china, and sometimes furniture as well, on round wooden platforms upon their heads when you move up-country or back to town; aged, reckless 'jitneys' that carry you and all the world at four krans each



A VILLAGE IN THE ELBURZ FOOTHILLS

THE VILLAGE IN SHIMRAN FROM WHICH WE STARTED ON THE TRIP
ABOUT TEN MILES NORTH OF TEHERAN

back and forth (unless they land you in the ditch or against the line of trees that guards the way)—all these belong to the Shimran Road, a ceaseless moving picture wherein all Persia is of the caste.

When we traversed the ten miles of its broad stretches it was just awaking to another day of noise and stress. The city, too, was just awaking as Nanette threaded her way through four miles of its narrow streets and crawled among incoming caravans of donkeys nearing the end of their night's journey. 'Don't be an ass!' surely had its origin in Persia. Timber (such as there is in this timberless land), stone, soil, fuel, and harvest they carry with a patience that even seems to last when, turned loose by the roadside, you see the carrion birds on their backs and know their time has come. Their loads of straw or alfalfa, or the thorny bush the bakers use for kindling, are slung in huge bundles on each side, and make them look, as Christopher declared, so far does the load reach down, so wide does it bulge, so engulfed is the little beast except for its mincing feet, for all the world like the pannier of a Velasquez lady. . . .

The Elburz range that rises behind Teheran like a wall to the sky gradually receded. But the simple cone of its guardian peak, Mt. Demavand, soaring into blue transparency above all its fellows, seemed to become, as St. Peter's does, higher and more majestic as the distance grew.

Ten miles outside the city we passed the Mosque

of Shah Abdul Azim, with its turquoise dome blinking in the early sunlight, and alfalfa fields, emerald patches on the grey plain, and lines of plane and willow trees shading the little water-courses that in Persia, because of scarcity of water, spell more than elsewhere life and food; and finally, before we left man's handiwork behind and passed entirely into Nature's barren keeping, the factory of a Belgian company, deserted and silent since before the war, erected to turn out the finished product from local sugar-beets, but closed down—so at least you are told—because of pressure from Persia's northern neighbour, who herself exports sugar. And those who comment on the ways of things point to it as the epitome of the expulsion fifteen years ago of W. Morgan Shuster and his American financial mission and of other events which make one speculate upon what Persia's fortunes might have been if such blasts from the north had not been so frequent and so chilling. . . .

The nigh three hundred miles we have covered in the last two days from the present capital of Persia to Isfahan, a former one, leave you thinking of bare plains and barer mountains of muddy and tawny tints. Sometimes the landscape was so black and so naked of any vegetation, and the gougings in the mountain-sides so ruthless and the outline and expanse so grand and simple, that you felt here indeed was an inferno ready for its victims.

Sometimes it was less gloomy. Our own Western prairies and Bad Lands came to mind. Stretches of plain, spotted with tiny bush-like sage-brush, ran neck to neck with grey and reddish table-lands whose muddy sides were deeply corrugated from winter rains.

We ate our first lunch on flagstones under the portals of an ancient caravanserai, where the breeze was strong enough to cover us with dust and dirt, but not sufficient to drive away the hordes of flies that find these places such a paradise. An old peasant in his felt *kola*, that crowns the head like an inverted bowl, leant against the bricks and watched with grave interest our contest with the flies. *He* didn't mind them—no, nor lots of other things. . . .

A word about this that is one of Persia's institutions and one branch of a family whose origin started when civilized communities first started in the East and men began travelling with merchandise or on official errands from place to place. There were road-houses on the roads the Achæmenians built where relays of horses were kept for the amazing post service of those days. When Mongol sway stretched from Pekin to Bagdad the chief routes from one end of Asia to another were supplied with *yams* or hostelries that kept horses for Government mail and gave their riders and others shelter. In Bagdad one of these old yams still stands. It is not unlike its prototype, the

caravanserai, you find to-day in Persia, with haughty, arched entrance and spacious courtyard upon which alcoves or other accommodations open for man and beast. In Persia this type of building has been adapted to uses other than giving shelter to journeying caravans, as for instance in many school-buildings or *madressehs*, where the alcoves about the open courtyard have been transformed from quarters for beasts to quarters for youth, and in many cases a second story has been added.

Over the land the caravanserais are dotted, telling the story of trade and the country's growth. Some are large and boast possibly a labyrinth of courtyards, others are more modest, where camels remain outside and only man and perhaps his donkeys share the shelter of the building. But all that I have seen are of a simple dignity, square and strong and graceful, as befits buildings that from the beginning of time have offered free shelter and rest to wayfarers upon the road. Where distances and solitude prevail, these are welcome and necessary milestones to a journey. Welcome, however, from the point of view of you or me must needs be a question of degree, for whether or not these refuges are crowded with wayfarers from the road, you may count upon their being crowded with permanent small and aggressive residents. And so the stars often become a pleasanter shelter for one's bed than the brick vaulting of the building.

THE SHIMRAN GATE AT TEHERAN,
LIKE THE DOZEN OTHER GATES OF THE CITY, IS GAY WITH VARI-COLOURED TILES

IN THE GREAT SQUARE AT ISFAHAN

WHEN YOU MOVE HOUSE IN PERSIA THIS IS THE WAY YOUR GOODS AND CHATTELS ARE CARRIED

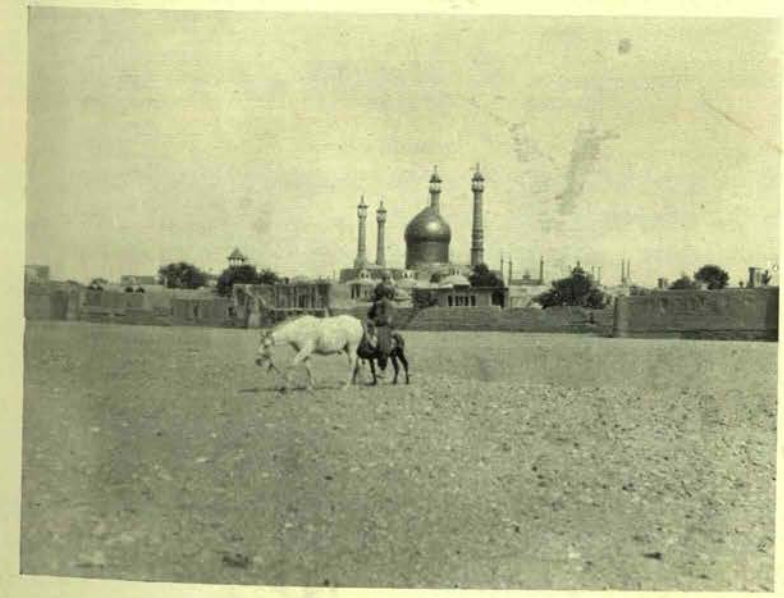
STREET SCENES

After lunch we ran along a sheet of water which was a vast salt lake. Over a tape of road that lay straight as a die across the plain, till it got lost in the mountains on the further side, fifteen miles away. But we did not run near enough its shore to argue with the quicksands that fringe it. The lake tells a local story. Within the memory of those now living a local potentate, the Aminos-Sultan or Trusted-One (mark his name!), built the road we were travelling on, erected caravanserais, and organized a service of conveyances for pilgrims on their way to the holy shrine at Ghom. East and parallel to it had run for ages the old caravan route. The story goes that the size of his revenues disappointed the old gentleman, and as a remedy he cut the dam of a neighbouring river and filled thereby a depressed salt desert traversed by the ancient track. So all traffic came over the new highway, and the old man's coffers were filled with coin and his heart with gladness. Incidentally the lake, bare as a sheet of mercury in a china bowl, pleasantly diversifies the scenery, and the concentration of traffic, seemingly, has made our road one of the least rough in Persia.

Neither Christopher nor I have risked our dignity or the health of Nanette by taking the wheel, but we have emitted at well chosen moments admonitions and suggestions sufficiently non-committal to compromise neither the progress of the car nor the reputation of its owners. . . .

The road for long stretches was absolutely deserted, and most of the time we had it to ourselves. In a country that could take within its borders a large part of Western Europe, but with a population about the same as that of Belgium, one can hardly expect to meet even on a main highway animated scenes of human life. One's fellow-men are few and far between. Although freight is being carried by truck in increasing measure, especially between the larger towns, it is still more often to be seen on camel, mule, or donkey; but passengers, at least on the road between Teheran and Isfahan, are most often to be seen in Ford cars. Well may the Persians bless the name of Ford. He has reached all classes and quickened and cheapened travel, as we have observed during the course of the last two days. And nowhere, I'll wager, is the business more intensive. Along the old caravan roads rattle his cars, bulging beyond recognition or belief with passengers and baggage. Turbaned mullahs, laymen, black-shrouded women, the old, the young, eight or ten or more in a car—if you care to believe me—jostle each other over desert, mountain pass, and gravel stream-bed for one or several days. You'd think they'd lose identity, and by the end of the journey be a joint and not a several load. But they don't; and the overburdened little buses from Detroit reach their destinations to unload and load again. Wrote a friend the other day who

THE COURTYARD OF THE VILLAGE HEADMAN'S HOUSE AT DILIJAN



THE MOSQUE OF FATIMA THE IMMACULATE AT GHOM
THE SECOND MOST SACRED SHRINE IN PERSIA

thus travelled *à la Persane* all the way from Teheran to Shiraz: 'The trip was enlivened by a ninety-year-old Armenian lady, with henna-dyed hair, scarlet dress, pink coat, and silver armature of cartridge-belt style, who took her nip of cognac and her pinch of snuff and curled and uncurled her poor old legs to crawl in and out over the mountains of baggage on the running-board.' Fords, it is obvious, haven't dispelled all colour from the Persian highway.

We passed through neither Saveh nor Kashan, for which we, but probably not Nanette, were sorry; for the road is longer to both places, and its reputation is very bad. The former town, twenty miles to the west, is the Saba of the Psalms, which Marco Polo visited and claimed was the place from which the Magi set out to worship the new-born Christ. Kashan, renowned in a former age for the making of rugs and velvets and silks, lies on a plain to the east, and is to-day dilapidated and depopulated. From its past only its excessive heat and its famous scorpions still seem to flourish.

At midday we passed through Ghom, where the remains of the Immaculate Fatima repose under a golden dome and vari-coloured minarets, that danced and flirted all the more gaily for the sullenness of the surrounding mud-coloured plain and mountains. This third most holy shrine of the Shiah Moslems contains not the remains of

the Prophet's daughter, but the daughter of the venerated Iman Reza. The mosque is the St. Denis of the more recent Persian kings. For these reasons it is a spoiled darling in this poverty-stricken land, and the treasure spent upon it gives it a gaiety and spruceness that one associates rather with the Persia of Harun-er-Rashid than with the present falling-to-pieces aspect of the country. A few venturesome unbelievers from the West are said to have penetrated its interior in disguise, but for you and me its relics must be taken on faith. And so too must an inscription to Ali in one of its sanctuaries: 'Oh, inexpressible man! By thee in truth is nature enriched and adorned! Had not thy perfect self been in the Creator's thought, Eve had remained for ever a virgin and Adam a bachelor!' Ahem!

We spent the first night in one of those villages of narrow lanes and high mud walls that dispense, with the isolated caravanserais out on the waste spaces, hospitality to wayfarers. At Dilijan the house of the village headman contains a clean and spacious room for travellers such as Christopher and me. In the open alcoves about its courtyard women spun until the night. Then after an early supper and when Christopher was sleeping as a man should, I began to curse the near-by philandering of a donkey's bell. Now it tinkled, now it rested, now it tinkled still more loudly, 'Five krans, ten krans', said I finally to Rahim.

pulling him awake on the threshold of our door, 'if that bell becomes quiet, I care not how.' But the offer of the bribe to Rahim, his attempted theft of the bell, arguments with the donkey, and subsequently with the donkey's disgruntled owner, though it occupied the night, did not quiet that restless donkey. And the bell continued tinkling and I continued more and more awake, pondering at the strange contrariness of donkeys. Why, when he could, did he not, too, want to rest? You may say a donkey's bell is a pretty lullaby. Perhaps the bells of some donkeys are, but not, I assure you, are those of Dilijan. At breakfast Christopher remarked on the weary look and silent mood of his companion. But I made no comment.

Last night, the second night, we arrived in Isfahan, and through a labyrinth of thoroughfares made our way to an avenue of plane and cypress trees, at the end of which we found a shelter more welcome than any caravanserai or village headman's house. And I dreamt last night of donkeys' bells, but they were lullabies and not like those of Dilijan.

CHAPTER II

GLORIES OF ISFAHAN

ISFAHAN
September 19

'ISFAHAN is half the world', runs the Persian proverb. She is, of course, the queen of Persian cities, but a queen, alas! who is long advanced in widowhood and whose weeds, once regal, become more shabby as the years go on. Neither industrial evolution nor political revolution has affected the progress of her course. She has been allowed to age gradually, imperceptibly. And to-day, untouched, the embers of her past still smoulder. Go straight to Teheran when you arrive in Persia, stay there fifteen months on end, get to think you know your Persia, then come to Isfahan, and your joy will be unallayed. I did that, and the old city lived again as the books tell of her.

For Teheran at best is new—it only became the capital and began to grow one hundred and thirty years ago, and that in the East is but the blink of an eyelid—and such a second-rate Western veneer has subverted the Persian substance that the city seems to wear a drab, ill-fitting, out-of-

date European coat. It is neither East nor West. It's a hybrid. Isfahan had already reached its prime and its bloom had begun to fade before Teheran ceased to be a small and unimportant town.

But Isfahan is Persia: here are the glories of Persian architecture, unspoiled, gracious, benign, glowing like ships of the sea under full sail; here are the traditional people of the country in their traditional background. It is hard to separate the domes and minarets, the arcaded ways and their slender blue stone pillars, the mighty arches of coloured tiles and doorways of tender groining, intriguing alleys and secretive walls, open spaces and courtyards, and avenues slit down the middle with watercourses and lines of trees. It is all mixed up together like a pleasant dream.

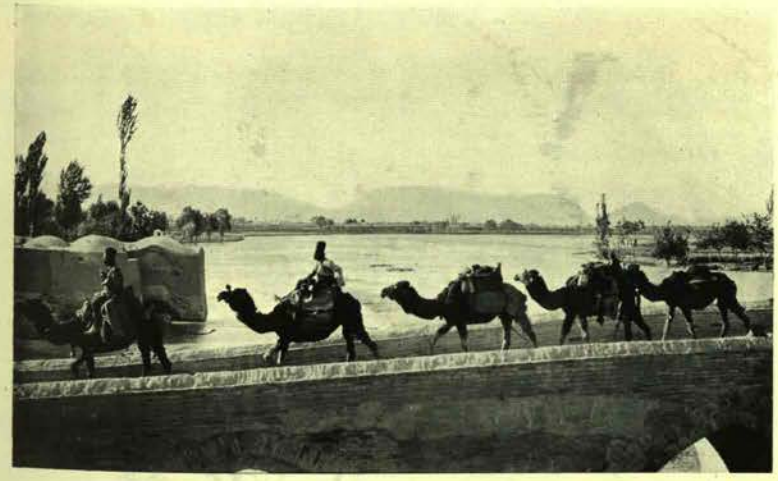
Even the shouting of the carriage-drivers seems to have a special wail. 'Make way, you on the donkey', 'Warning to you, water-carrier'—or whoever else may impede the way—they keep crying. Varicoloured garments, green-turbaned and green-girdled *seyids*, white-turbaned and white-sashed mullahs, flashes of green silk coats, the flowing *abas* of the men, the old-time Persian low-cut, double-breasted gown and flapping trousers, the spectre-like figures of the veiled women, the stalls and the squatting vendors mumbling into their water-pipes beside wicker trays piled high with green and purple grapes, toasted melon

seeds, dried fruits and vegetables—here is a Persia that answers not the call of the West.

The city lies near the southern limit of a great plain. About it on three sides, like the petals of a flower, its fields and vineyards pass into dull, flat space that extends to the mountains, which on the south rise fairly near. Our first view of it was from the north, where the road passes over the low divide in the Murchakhan hills. (Why these hills should have that name, which means 'ant-eater', of which there are none in Persia, I cannot tell you.) Here by the roadside, as if to tell us our journey was nearly over, rose innumerable carefully erected little piles of stone. The first glimpse, in fact, of all the larger towns we came to was heralded in this same manner. 'Stop and look', they seem to say; 'weariness and thirst will soon be over, and—if you are not an infidel—a holy shrine awaits you.'

Then we descended quickly and gently to the plain. And lines of earth-mounds descended, too, from other points, all converging toward the blurred portion of the horizon that was Isfahan. Each mound of earth was beside a hole that descended to a stream of water, running underground from some mountain source to where it finally comes out on the surface to make the grey plain green. To make these water tunnels or *kanats* shafts are sunk within a stone's-throw of each other. They are one of the wonders of the

THE BRIDGE OF ALI VERDI KHAN
CONNECTING ISFAHAN WITH THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY AT JULFA



THE ZENDEH RUD, OR 'LIVING RIVER,'
MORE THAN ANY OTHER ONE THING, KEEPS ISFAHAN ALIVE. THE VIEW ACROSS THE RIVER AND ITS FERTILE FRINGES TO THE BARE, DRY MOUNTAINS THAT FORM SUCH AN EMPHATIC FRAME TO THE GREAT PLAIN OF ISFAHAN EPITOMIZES MUCH OF PERSIA

land, and represent a patient, endless labour, and what a fight for life! The water is sometimes tapped ten or twenty miles away, and must be carried underground, so that neither sun nor sand nor man may filch it. Here and there, where repairs or extensions were going on, we saw a speck drawing up by a crude hand-windlass through one of the shafts buckets of earth, which another, which we did not see, had filled at the bottom of the shaft. This work is an art as old as Persia, and the workers who spend their days in shaft or tunnel toiling with a handpick in ever the old way belong to a brethren apart. They still lay the course and determine its grade and the other necessary things with the simple wooden triangle and plumb-line that has been used since before the Christian era. The kanats tell of a rainfall that is very scant, of a land which is rarely watered by a river, and which, when not broken by mountains, is covered only by arid plain. . . .

There are three chapters to Isfahan: the city itself on the north bank of the Zendeh river, the Zendeh river with its bridges and its pleasant banks, and thirdly the scattered, mud-coloured villages upon the outskirts which flash here a blue-tiled dome or protrude there a pigeon tower. These brick pigeon towers, cylindrical and fat, vying with the tallest poplar-trees in height, are not an uncommon feature near a town in central Persia. They house in cells myriads of pigeons, whose dung

is used as fertilizer for the tasty melons of neighbouring fields. They also offer ready-made pigeon-shooting. Our host tells us of going out with Persian friends, and says it is not so easy to bring the pigeons down when stones are dropped down the central shaft and the birds are frightened out.

Of the suburbs of Isfahan, Julfa is the largest and most famous. It is an Armenian community, whose first settlers were brought from their homeland by Shah Abbas three hundred years ago to assist by their industry and thrift the development of the capital he was adorning so richly. Thirty thousand were thus transported, but now their numbers have decreased to a scant one-tenth of the original, and their town has become a sleepy relic of the past. We visited their cathedral, erected in the early days of the town's prosperity, a stolid building with a stolid dome adorned with bad frescoes of Biblical episodes, which are attributed, I believe, to a travelling Florentine in the late seventeenth century. A friendly priest acted as our cicerone, for the Archbishop was visiting his villages. I don't know whether the redness of his face, the vigour of his grey beard, or the lively twinkle in his eye was the most intriguing. I alleged the twinkle reflected a sly roguishness, but Christopher, whose kindly disposition is ever putting me to shame, maintained it came from a sense of Christian duty. He gave us tea and coffee, and recounted to us the withering-up of his community. The young men go to the Armenian communities in India, where they find rewards for work and enterprise, and only the old and weak remain in Julfa. Then we were taken to the library, a new, neat building erected by the generosity of a son who has prospered in America. We were shown manuscripts dating from the time when Armenia was a kingdom and defied the Byzantine Empire, and with special pride were ushered into a room containing 'the English library'. Where it came from I forget, but I wondered whether these Armenian divines ever dived into the housemaids' delights of Sarah Grand, or *David Harum*, or *The Diplomatic Memories of Lord Augustus Loftus*, or the other literary coxcombs which rubbed elbows in such genial manner with *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Ephesians* and a multi-volumed *Universal History* and many other weighty neighbours.

The Zendeh Rud, which with the kanats gives life to the city, separates Julfa from Isfahan, and belies, at any rate at this season of the year, its name of the Living River. For its water had been diverted for household and irrigation duties long before it reached the city. We could see only a few stagnant pools asleep. On the hot gravel of its bars cotton prints, with peacocks and cypress-trees and other adornment (the *kalamkars* for which Isfahan has long been famous), were spread out so their freshly dyed colours might dry.

The bridges over the Zendeh Rud—there are

five—were made during one of those periods when Persia hitched her wagon to the stars and created things which the world still marvels at. I hardly agree with the modern traveller who describes the largest of these bridges as the stateliest in the world; but such is its grace and so perfect are the proportions of pier and arch that one hardly realizes its length extends for a quarter of a mile. This bridge of Ali Verdi Khan has, as it were, three stories. The middle one supports a spacious roadway, and along each side a covered gallery, from any one of whose ninety arches you may look across the river to the gardens and colonnaded loggias of affluent Isfahani citizens along the banks. Or one may saunter, as Isfahanis do at sunset, along the open promenade upon the top, or if the river be not high, follow the passage through the bowels of the bridge over great stepping-stones that rise from the river's bottom, and through arches that pierce each of its thirty central piers. Oh, Ali Verdi Khan, general of armies that fought in mail with scimitars, you built a bridge that stands the test of time, as if you knew the needs of motor traffic and this modern world!

Another of the bridges, the Bridge of the Zoroastrians—for it leads to what used to be their quarter—resembles the façade of a palace rather than a means to cross a river. The bridge is built upon a dam. Its two lines of arches, the lower

LOOKING SOUTH FROM THE DRUM TOWER TO THE ROYAL MOSQUE. ON THE RIGHT IS THE ALI KAPI

ON THE LEFT IS THE ROYAL MOSQUE, ON THE RIGHT THE ALI KAPI, FROM WHICH THE MONARCHS AND THEIR COURTIERS WATCHED POLO MATCHES IN THE SQUARE BELOW

THE MEIDAN-I-SHAR (ROYAL SQUARE) AT ISFAHAN

broader and more solid, the upper slenderer and narrower, look like rows of vaulted recessed windows. In the middle of the bridge and at its ends the façade protrudes into great bays, and the embrasures here, vaulted and groined, invite ladies of a court to sit and gossip. Below, the dam is cut with narrow sluices, and on the downstream side protrudes, forming a broad platform, which descends by shallow steps gently to the water as terrace steps might meet a garden lawn. Here, too, the Isfahanis come in spring-time and watch the water as it rushes through the narrow sluices and spills over the broad platform of the dam and cascades down its steps. . . .

The Isfahan of to-day is, broadly speaking, the creation of Shah Abbas the Great. 'When this great Prince ceased to live, Persia ceased to prosper', is a dictum that writers are fond of quoting. From his picture he looks anything but great, but his slight figure and unimpressive face, with its smooth chin and absurdly dandified mustachios, hid, apparently, an energy and shrewdness that made him a worthy contemporary of the Great Akbar in India and Queen Elizabeth. Abbas, when still a youth, put his rivals to death and then organized a standing army—with the assistance of an Englishman and the afore-mentioned Ali Verdi Khan—with which he drove invading Turks and Uzbegs out of his kingdom; he sent ambassadors—the chief one was another Englishman who

had sailed the Spanish Main—to European courts; he built bridges and caravanserais to an extent that causes most of those existing to-day to be popularly attributed to him. He played polo. On one occasion he abdicated for three days on the advice of an astrologer, and on the fourth, after his rival had been put to death, reascended the throne. Once he walked eight hundred miles on a pilgrimage to encourage the custom as a means of national consolidation. And, perhaps for better reason than we know, he killed one and blinded two of his four sons. His leadership awakened Persia to a heroic mood remindful of her earlier Achæmenian and Sassanian epochs.

But in no way did the imagination and activity of Abbas take more striking form than in the building and adornment of his capital. Here were welcomed travellers from Europe and from China, whose religions for the first time were tolerated and whose talents, in many cases, were profitably employed; here the factors of Western trading corporations were welcomed; here foreign envoys were received with gorgeous pomp.

The heart of the city is the Meidan-i-Shah. It is of a size which could comfortably include sixteen American football fields, and to the eye looks bigger. Uniform, arched façades of low, two-story buildings form the four sides of this Royal Square —and rightly named it is. The lower stories were occupied by shops, and the arched recesses of the

upper served as balconies from which to watch the life and festivities that centred in the square. 'In the daytime', writes one chronicler, 'the Meidan was all but filled with booths or tents balanced on poles, under which the petty hucksters displayed their wares upon the ground; but on great occasions all these were cleared away, and in the evenings were ordinarily replaced by the shows of mummers, jugglers, and acrobats, by groups of story-tellers, wrestlers, and dervishes, by cock-fights and ram-fights, and by the tents of prostitutes.'[1]

Here and there the even frame of the square is broken by buildings which have become national heirlooms.

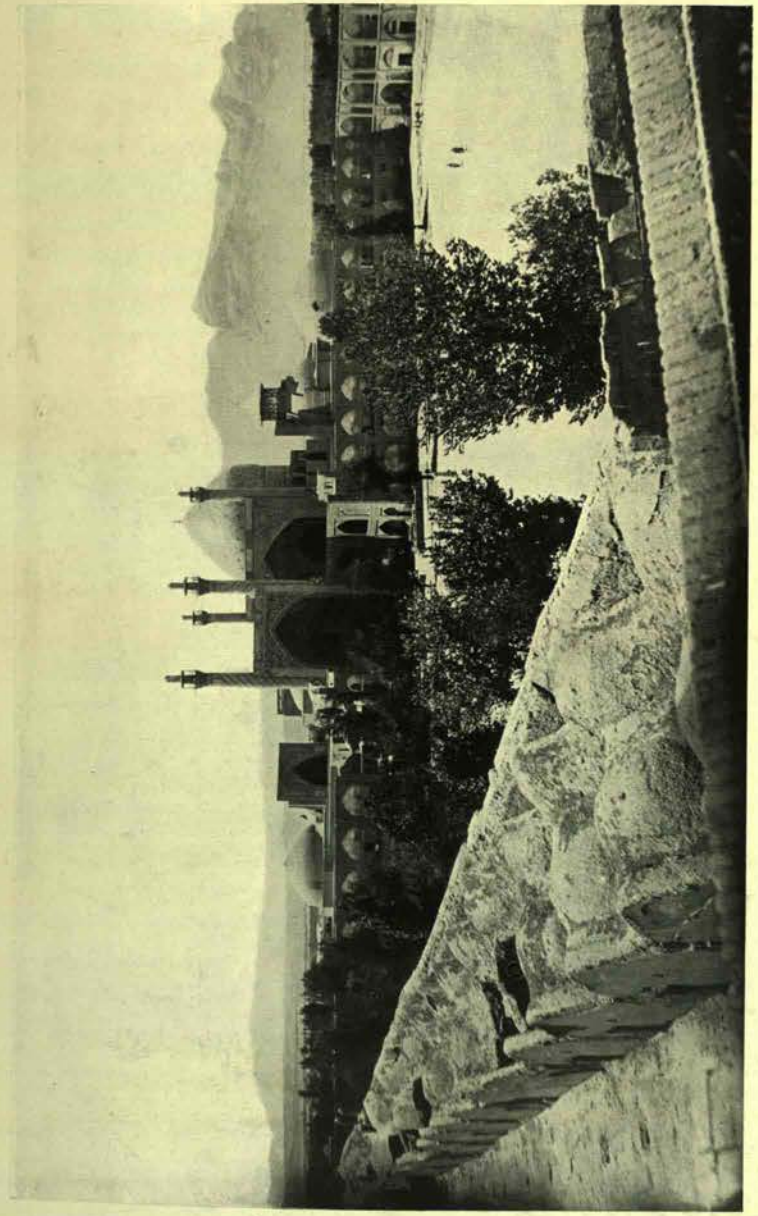
Just behind its eastern side glimmer the arabesques on the dome of the Mosque of Lutfullah—do not ask me who Lutfullah was—black and white and blue upon a saddened amber background. The dome is large and rather squat: 'comfortable-looking' as you might apply that term to a certain type of matron; but the tall arched entrance upon the square, starting with wainscoting of alabaster-coloured marble, continuing with white flowers clambering up a blue ground on both its sides, which join at the top above honeycomb groining, has, shall we say, more the grace and energy of the maid.

In the middle of the square's southern end soar

[1] Curzon's *Persia*, vol. ii, p. 27.

the huge, tile-faced archway and minarets of the Musjid-i-Shah, the Royal Mosque. Again well named, for it is a worthy monument for an earthly king to erect in honour of his Sovereign. Smaller arches flank the large one like handmaidens supporting the dignity of their mistress; and the two minarets, which stand likewise on either side like sentinels, shoot skyward as if they were about to leave their earthly base and fly: all in green and blue and white. Behind this entrance is a marble-paved courtyard with basins of water, walled high with recessed arches, which unbelievers may not enter. I speak only from the pictures I have seen of it. Beyond this is the central mosque itself. But you and I and all the world may see the dome that caps it, not comfortable-looking like its neighbour Lutfullah across the way, but of a stateliness that attracts the eye for many miles around. The patterns on its enamelled tiles, too, run and curl and embrace each other in dark blue and green and white and azure. On top of one of the walls of the inner court is perched a queer and solitary wooden cage. From this crude framework the faithful are called to prayer, for the balconies of the minarets, far higher than the cage, possessed a view of the neighbouring palace grounds too intimate, legend says, to suit the fancy of the king.

At the northern end of the square rises a great portico which forms the entrance to the bazaar and serves as the Drum Tower of the city. Long has



THE MUSJID-I-SHAH, OR ROYAL MOSQUE
FACING THE SOUTHERN END OF THE GREAT SQUARE IN ISFAHAN

it looked over the square and the trees and canal that line its four sides, and in former days on the maypole in the centre and the archers riding at gallop and shooting at apple, melon, or cup of gold that dangled from its top; or perhaps the old tower preferred the polo matches of which memories still linger in the marble goal-posts that remain silent and discredited at either end. No ball is driven between them now, only a camel or a Ford. From the arched balconies of the tower music (*sic*) used to sound at sunset on trumpets (eight feet long, the records say), drums, flutes, cymbals, and their kin, which proclaimed the residence of majesty in the capital.

Nothing in Isfahan proclaims the pathos of its story more loudly than the Meidan. Such life as trickles through it now seems swallowed up in its great expanse, and as if afraid takes refuge largely in its four far corners. No water runs in the stone-faced canal, and walking is smoother in the dusty square than on the remains of the broad walk that accompanies the waterway. So many portions of the façade of recessed arches that forms its frame are now walled up which were once filled by merchants and their wares; so many of the arches are now but hollow masks hiding naught but crumbling mud and brick behind. Sometimes the arch or wall of the mask itself has fallen, and no longer even makes a pretence to hide the ruin.

On the western side of the square lie the palace grounds, entered through the Ali Kapi or Sacred Gate. The Ali Kapi is more than a sacred gate: it is an arched and lofty passage, and in the old days an asylum from which none but the king himself might take a fugitive. Above its front portion rests one of those open verandaed throne-rooms so dear to Persian kings. Upon its back portion rise the six stories of a high square structure whose interior is a maze of intriguing, spiral stairways, of little tiny doll's-house rooms, opening, sometimes one above another, like the loges of a theatre, upon a central one. From here it seems ladies watched banqueting and revel. Enough is left upon the walls to give the feel of bird and flower and tree and tracery chasing each other in soft rainbow colours. Truly a king's playhouse. The open porch in front, with its tapering wooden pillars supporting a coloured panelled roof, was the royal grandstand, from which Abbas, with his courtiers and those foreign travellers whose brains he was so fond of picking, watched polo, races, or other entertainments in the square below.

It was among the spiral stairways and doll's-house rooms in the Ali Kapi that Christopher and I played hide-and-seek with the worthy little Governor of Isfahan. He was inspecting some repairs, and was followed by a retinue of functionaries. Tea had been prepared for him, we had already seen, in a secluded corner of the veranda. When

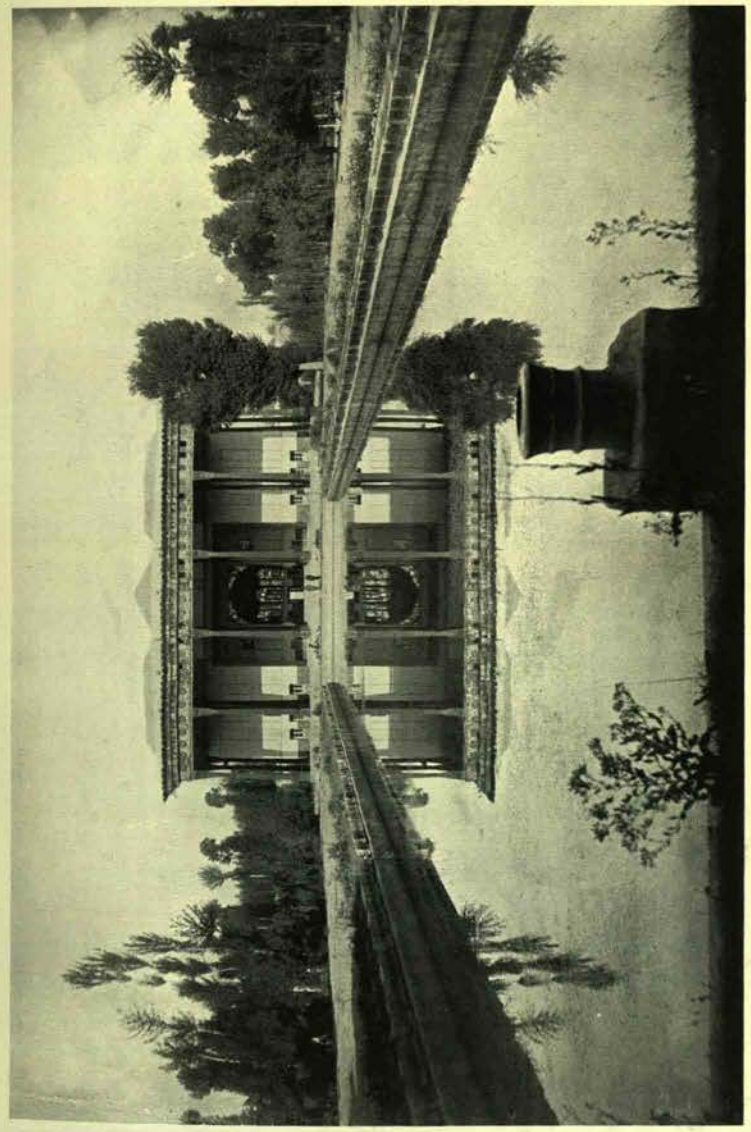
you meet a Persian Governor it means tea and chat interminable. The sun was fast going down, and we were climbing to the top of the Ali Kapi to take some pictures. From its roof you may survey the city and the plain and the jagged, watchful mountains that rise not far to the south. You may look over mud constructions of all shapes and sizes, with here and there the colours of a tiled edifice breaking their sombre hue, over their flat or domed roofs and archways and walls and courts that stretch for miles, and wonder why a city of mud and straw and sun-dried bricks has such an unholy fascination. We watched the lingering light playing on the domes and coloured arches and minarets and the spires of poplar and cypress, which all mingled together with the crimson-tinted sky so you barely knew where man's work met Nature's. Can you blame Christopher and me for hiding from the Governor?

Among the ruins and shabby hodge-podge in the vast palace enclosure that lies back of the Ali Kapi is the thing that to me is more alive than all the rest. It is the Chehel Situn, or Hall of Forty Columns, which was the place for audience and banquet. It still stands and, choked and saddened though its voice has now become, retains the glimmer of a smile and whispers to-day more audibly than any of its neighbours the story of Abbas and his time. The building has three parts. In front a lofty veranda, with panelled coloured

roof supported by twenty tapering columns, retreats from a sheet of water. From the steps of the veranda a long tank shoots down the garden, and the name of the Hall of Forty Columns perhaps comes from the second twenty that are mirrored in the water. There was a time when glass facets shimmered from the veranda columns spirally and diamond-wise. But they have long since gone. And so has the marble bowl from the centre which was filled with water from the mouths of lions crouching at the base of the four central columns. Far above, however, the ceiling still holds its mirrors and its painted panels.

Opening upon this great porch is a large three-sided chamber with wainscoting of yellow marble. From the centre of the back wall shimmers a large recess whose sides and honeycomb vaulting overhead, still completely covered with mirror work, caressed the monarch's throne. It is easy to envisage the elegant Abbas sitting here looking out through the aisle of columns on the porch to the garden and shaft of water beyond, surrounded by his court. Their dress must have vied with the silver and gilt and blues and reds of the ceilings and walls and with that bigger ceiling of azure sky which in Persia cuts all outlines like a crystal background.

Behind this throne-room comes the banquet-hall. The domes in its vaulted ceiling are so rich in interlacing patterns of blues and reds and



THE CHEHEL SITUN, OR 'HALL OF FORTY COLUMNS'

greens and gold, and yet of such a lightness and grace, that it almost seems as if three giant birds-of-Paradise were ready to take flight. Perhaps to encourage the carousing of the monarch and his guests six huge wall-paintings adorn it, two of combat, and needless to say of Persian victories, with Turks and Indians, and the others of royal hospitality. In one Abbas entertains an Indian prince. Bellies so ample that girdles can hardly hold them, musicians, dancing-girls, falconers, attendants, and the two central figures on a dais squatting on knees and heels—for legs were dishonourable members, to be kept out of sight—make the old hall live again. Upon another wall Abbas is host to the Khan of the Uzbegs. Here the flasks of wine are more numerous, the dancers, it would seem, are performing at a later hour of the night, the host is offering his guest a bowl of wine, and one member of the company is on his back with his head in the lap of a neighbour, who is assiduously pressing fruit to his mouth. A pity that spirits of ammonia had not been discovered as a restorative in the sixteenth century, for the *ushak* plant grows in the near-by hills and supplies to-day the gum from which ammonia is made! Here again flash the colours, the turbans, the sashes of silk and velvet and brocade, of which such small and pitiable relics are sometimes offered you by antique dealers in Teheran at prices that make your blood run cold.

It was while I was sharing in this feast that a voice beside me asked: 'Do you know Miss X?' and I found a Persian army captain, whose office was in a near-by side-room, telling me he had guided Miss X among the sights of Isfahan a short time previously, and spotting me for a compatriot of hers, had wished to be polite. 'Unfortunately, no', I politely lied. For I wished to continue my feasting, and, anyway, upon Miss X hung mixed memories. She originated in Oklahoma, I believe, had come all the way to the Persian Gulf—why, I cannot tell—and thence to Teheran. She had left a good many years behind her; had brought with her a waving-machine, insufficient funds to meet her expenses, and an acid temper. Unfortunately for her, the Persian capital is still too primitive to give wavers and their machines all the attention that is probably their due. Miss X's visit included attempts at instructing Persians in the intricacies of her trade. And finally included throwing hot water at persons who pressed her for the payment of their bills; a desire, all too courageous in its application, to speak with the Shah, and, I am told, a somewhat ignominious separation from her waving-machine before her departure in order to liquidate her debts. Altogether it was a jar I did not relish to depart from the flesh-pots of Abbas to the waving adventures of Miss X. I fear the Persian captain classed me as an austere xenophobe.

ISFAHAN
September 20

We spent this morning in the bazaars, which are well worth a visit, though bazaar atmosphere, Persia over, is much the same.

Only in Isfahan the endless vaulted passages seem even more of a labyrinth than usual, and the hustle and colour is greater than in most places; far more than in Shiraz, for example, whose bazaars have a reputation for great size. You don't find much you want to buy. Persia has been combed of her antiques and treasures, and her ancient handicrafts have deteriorated sadly, but you do find the same human game, the same shouting and haggling that has gone on for a thousand years. 'Seven shais a *maun* for my melons, oh my fathers, like pomegranates they are', cries a fruit-vendor. 'Come to me, oh my aunts, mine are but six shais', shouts his neighbour. 'Day before yesterday those you sold me were green and full of water; be quick and weigh me a good one', cuts in a veiled and nimble-witted customer. The scales and wicker trays are balanced, the black spectre pays and glides away.

I had been inspecting with earnestness beeswax, saffron, chili, the method of the bakers, the brass and copper makers, whose din is so especially great they are given quarters apart, those who make the hubble-bubble water-pipes. I had been friendly with a noisy parrot in charge of cakes of suet and

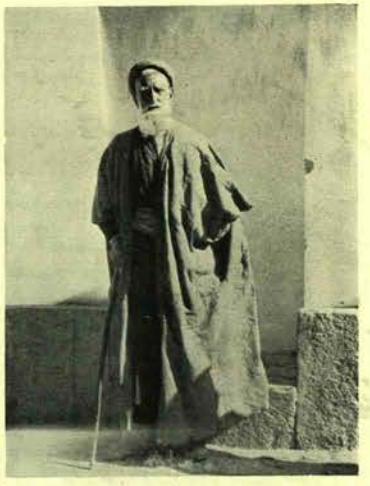
poppy-seed and other features of a grocer's stall, with one of our host's *gholams* at my elbow. I had been assiduously filling many pages in my note-book. I suppose my note-book impressed this worthy Isfahani, who thought it good to boost his town. I had been thinking him extremely well informed and artlessly accepting his information until a curious and compassionate glimmer in Christopher's eye—Christopher was very patient this morning—caused my pencil to run slower and my brain a little quicker, and I realized the big cones of sugar in their blue paper wrappers that you may see everywhere from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf, and that every child knows come from Russia, were being assigned as products of Isfahan. I became soberer and wiser—and so did the *gholam*.

One beauty of the Persian bazaar is the open courts, with perhaps a pine or the bulbous-shaped tongue-of-a-sparrow-tree wooing a tank of water. These you glimpse from the main corridors choked and stinking with humanity, which are lighted only by sunbeams discoloured with thick dust that shoot down through the line of holes in the centre of the little domes overhead. The courts are sometimes preludes to a mosque—the bazaars are largely owned and rented by the clerics—or form the centre of a group of warehouses where wholesale business is transacted amid mules and camels over pipes and coffee.

MULETEERS

A VENDOR OF RUGS

A PROFESSIONAL SCRIBE



A RETIRED MERCHANT

PERSIAN TYPES

It seemed noisy enough to be the centre of the commercial life of far more than eighty thousand people. It supplies their every want. If you do not shave, you may squat upon the ground, and a brother of 'Haji Baba' performs the service; if you do not write, you may hire a scribe; to make lease or contract you may employ the services of a mullah before a tiny desk sixteen inches from the ground, which is merely a continuation of his squatting lap. But what amused me most were the bazaar lunch places. The cooking is done openly on the public corridors for all passers-by to see. The chef squats upon a blue-tiled platform, and fanning tiny charcoal fires in its hollows roasts *khababs* on iron pins, or cuts greens into bowls of broth, or mixes rice and mutton into *pilow*, the varieties of which exceed even the different kinds of *pastas* you get in Italy. You squeeze past the platform through a tiny passage that leads behind to the eating-place itself, not much bigger than the cubicle I had at school. Squatting along the sides and munching bread or meat, melon or radish, are the business men of Isfahan. No business man in a Western restaurant would rise and offer to share with a stranger the contents of his plate as the man did nearest me. Perhaps it was this gesture that made me later extol to Christopher the character in the faces that we saw, but his rejoinder: 'Wonderful how a beard and turban will contribute to dignity and

wisdom', made me suspect he too was feeling it was lunch-time. Perhaps he was thinking also of the old saying that the merchant of Isfahan is of a closeness that makes him put his cheese in a bottle and rub his bread on the outside to give it a flavour.

It's only fair, I think, to give the Isfahani their due, and if they have a reputation for avarice, they also are known for their wit. I like the story of the merchant who complained of harsh treatment to the Governor. The Governor suggested he move to certain other towns, to which the merchant objected that relatives of the Governor were to be found there also. Whereupon the irate officer told him to betake himself to the nether regions. 'Unfortunately', replied the merchant meekly, 'your respected father has recently died.'

Before you leave Isfahan go to the Madresseh-i-Shah Hussein. Go especially, if there's a moon, in the early evening at the time of prayer, as we did last night, when its rays are stealthily silvering the courtyard and the plane-trees and the arched façades, and the faithful are genuflecting, and the moaning murmur of their prayer mingles with the moonbeams: it is an elusive scene that can be only seen and felt. It can't be put in words.

The records say the building was erected as a monastery for dervishes. For many years it has been a Moslem seminary supported by the State, and I hardly blame the students for remaining

on and on and existing without purpose as they seem to do.

They are given a few *tomans* a month for their board, and so far as a stranger can see they supply also their own instruction. And there are only just enough to keep the thread of the tradition going and give a human echo to the deserted spaces. The building is a great square structure about a courtyard. It faces the avenue that sweeps up to the Bridge of Ali Verdi Khan, an avenue that in its day was the Champs Elysées of the town. The entrance of the building is through a lofty arch. It is faced with tiles, and to the corners of its sides cling like a twisted rope flutings of green marble. Overhead is a mass of delicate groining. A confusion of primrose yellow and green and white and blue.

Flanking this on either side along the street run two stories of small recessed arches, miniatures of the parent one. Each is the balcony of a student's room. Here the inmates squat and dream, or smoke or eat, or watch the crowds at sundown saunter by, or squat, too, along the little water-courses on the public street and get served with tea or water-pipes from shops near by.

But the spell of the Madresseh lies especially on its courtyard, down which runs one of those tanks of water which serve to increase the sense of foliage in a land where foliage is so scarce. This one mirrors the giant plane-trees along its edge, whose height

and age make them seem protectors of the edifice. Around the court run also two tiers of groined, arched alcoves, broken in the centre of each side by a more lofty one that shoots above both stories. On the east this arch serves as the entrance to the school mosque, the scaffold on whose dome tells a story of the War. For his sins, the Mullah Nasrollah became a prisoner of the British, and his property was taken by their allies, the Russians. The Russian Consul, being a man of taste, started to apply the funds to the restoration of the dome of the Madresseh's mosque. But shortly afterwards the fortunes of war turned, and British and Russians left the town, left Nasrollah, and left, too, the scaffolding on the dome which proclaims little to-day but the artistic interest of a Russian Consul and local lassitude. . . .

Our stay here is drawing to a close. So is Rahim's easy time. He was perturbed before we left Teheran because he feared the Day of Atonement would find him on the road and perforce at work. That would have brought disaster to himself and his family during the coming year. But on his arrival here he was allowed to disappear among his own folk in a far corner of the city. There is a large community of Isfahani Jews who date from before the Christian era, and who mingle with their neighbours on much more friendly terms now than formerly. Two days ago was the great Jewish anniversary. For twenty-four hours Rahim fasted

—so he says—but that was not enough. Yesterday he must needs travel to the Shrine of Sarah. That meant ten *tomans* from his master. And it wasn't much of a shrine from his account, but far enough away—near a spot where Jacob's granddaughter (she of everlasting life) had been seen by the Great Abbas—to make good business for those who deal in cabs or donkeys. Incidentally, the master of a Jewish servant may learn much Old Testament lore should he have a leaning that way. Did you know, for instance, that the two goats sent by Jacob into the wilderness to atone for the misdeeds of the Israelites were the 'escaped goats' which became in course of time the 'scapegoat' of our present talk?

To-morrow we say farewell to our host and hostess and continue southward. Their hospitality is both generous and wise. If ever you come to Isfahan, try and get invited to that rambling house of roomy spaces and unexpected turns and corners that play such tricks upon each other. It is just behind the town's main thoroughfare that welcomes travellers from the north, and you may tell its entrance by four crabbed wych-elms that hover about it like faithful guards. Its precincts are very quiet and very friendly. In its blue-tiled swimming tank by an old grape arbour you may play with sleepy goldfish, or try and keep your balance on two rubber steeds that answer to the names of Castor and Pollux. Or you may compete on the

tennis court with pleasant neighbours. I recommend it as a perfect hostelry.

Oh, and let me give you a hint in case you should visit Isfahan. Before the cream is passed at table, don't be surprised if your hostess calls the servant and inspects it with some care; for the castor-oil plant is grown in the suburbs of Isfahan, and the cattle aren't fenced in, and the cowherds sometimes sleep under the pistachio-trees that fringe the water ditches when they should be tending the cows, and the cows get into fields of castor-oil plants, and the castor-oil plants get into . . .

CHAPTER III

ON THE ROAD AND TWO VERY ANCIENT CAPITALS OF PERSIA

ABADEH
September 21

ON the road again, albeit a bad one, with 'ripples' formed by water-drainage, where we ran close around mountain spurs which disconcerted Nanette and made progress slow. . . .

The sun was not yet high when we crossed the Zendeh Rud this morning, climbed a low hill, and from the back of the car watched 'half the world' become smaller and smaller and the rest of the world bigger. I left a bit of my heart at Isfahan, partly out of pity for her fall from high estate, partly out of respect for the pride and grace with which she carries her fall. A place to come half-way round the world to see.

Nanette is in good form, and seems out for a no-puncture record, not an easy feat on these caravan-plodden roads. Perhaps the paraphernalia we got with so much care for such mishaps has touched her self-respect. The handbook which describes her system inside and out and a hundred and one

possible ailments and prescriptions for each one with the lucidity of a child's first reader is ever at hand. But so far Nanette has called for no first aid. This pamphlet constitutes with Curzon's fat *Persia* our library. The constancy of our communion with the latter book makes it an integral member of our party. I most heartily recommend it as an interesting and instructive companion to anyone voyaging in Persia.

Again have bare plains and barer mountains alternated, but to-day the former were flat as chessboards, and the latter so abrupt they might have been cliffs rising from the sea and we a power-boat scurrying across still waters. Occasionally, where water had been brought from far away, the landscape was broken by raggedy poplars or plane-trees, or possibly a blue-tiled dome or pigeon tower looking over the crenellated mud wall of a village. For until the recent coming of Reza Shah villages in many parts of Persia needed means of protection against nomad tribesmen and other marauders.

Do you know the villages and landscapes they make for children where the trees are green tissue-paper glued to wire and the gay little houses are of cardboard all stuck on an undulating piece of tin that is painted mud colour? Similarly unpliant are these Persian villages, only here the houses, too, are mud colour, being made of that article.

We lunch where we find a bit of shade. To-day

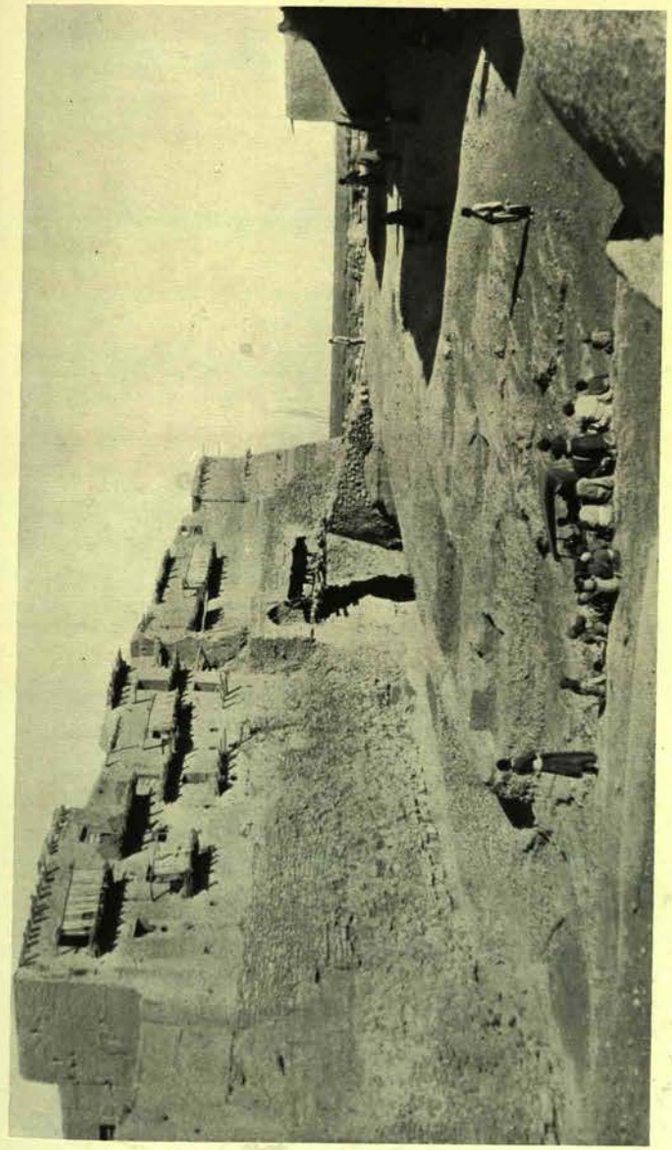
a lone and ancient willow sheltered us beside an irrigation ditch before it ran under the high mud enclosure that encircles the low, one-story mud structures of Aminabad. Comforting is the name of this village, 'Abode of Safety', for we have been hearing of robberies, and already (to myself) I have become the hero of a hold-up. The village apparently was baptized by the stalwart mud wall that fortifies it from the unfriendly activities of Bakhtiari tribesmen in the mountains close at hand.

The place is near the boundary of the Province of Fars. That is the modern name for the ancient Persis, which began here and ended in an empire many times its original size. And Fars Province more than any other is the region that may be reckoned the cradle of Persian history and culture. It gave birth to and was the centre of the vast conquests of the Achæmenian and Sassanian dynasties, and, after intervening centuries and the falling apart of Mohammed's unwieldly conquests, it became again, not long before William of Normandy crossed the English Channel, a small and independent kingdom separated from the rest of Persia.

Have I spoken of the addition to our party at Isfahan? It was a doll. Now, if the doll was the size that a doll should be, and if the car wasn't so loaded that getting into it is like manipulating an upper berth on a rolling steamship, and perhaps

if I were of a more charitable nature, its company would be welcome. But the doll, or perhaps I should say its box, which is of a size to hold many decent dolls, is enormous. The box is shaped like a coffin, which imperceptibly adds to the melancholy of the matter. And just as you wouldn't take a corpse from its coffin, neither Christopher nor I feel like separating the doll from her box. The elephant might become smaller in size, but it would be whiter than ever. Don't, if it is possible, travel around Persia with a doll. It is bad for the temper and for one's vocabulary, and endangers the well-being of all concerned. I say 'if possible', for it is sometimes necessary, friend, in a land of distances and no railroads, to act as *petite* or, if Allah allows it, *grande vitesse* for one's neighbours. One day you carry the doll, but the next will be your neighbour's turn. At Isfahan it was our turn. So our back seat is now shared by three instead of two, and our slightest movement means, of course, a manipulation of the doll.

As the sun was getting low in the west we came to Yezdikhast. Discerning are the Persians in the naming of places. 'As God Wills It' is the sense of this name. And the Almighty willed an awesome and freakish place when He created Yezdikhast. Until actually upon it you think the squat outline of an ordinary village lies before you, when lo! you stop beside a precipice and look across not farther than you can throw a stone to tiers of



THE VILLAGE OF YEZDIKHAST, OR 'AS GOD WILLS IT

houses built upon a solitary, ship-shaped rock. This elongated pedestal rises about one hundred feet to the level of the surrounding plain from the bottom of a chasm that has no patience with other than right angles. 'My flesh had been cut, and it just won't heal', cries the plain.

Two cows were standing on the rickety bridge of poles that connects the village entrance with the outer world. They were apparently of an old-fashioned modesty, for before my kodak could record their pensive silhouette they had disappeared within. I wanted a picture of those bovine outlines upon the skyline, and so ensued, first, inquiries of the village headman, who with many neighbours was surveying Nanette with amiable curiosity, as to his wheat and barley crops. Then followed the presentation of a two-kran piece. Then after some delay reappeared the cows, modesty up to date. We were taken through the dark little alleys of the place—for real estate is at a premium in Yezdikhast, and its houses are piled on one another like quarters in a ship—and upon its roofs, and finally, as a signal compliment, within its decrepit little mosque. You might have been on the deck of a tall, tall ship, or you might have been in a tower, so isolated did the place seem from its near surroundings on the plain. Cheek by jowl with your fellow-villagers if you will, but comfortably placed when marauding tribesmen attempt to pay a visit.

Several hours later the village of Abadeh was

retiring to rest when Nanette entered its narrow streets and sought her way between high, blank walls, which in Persian villages give such a cheerless welcome to the stranger, to the quarters of the Indo-European Telegraph Department. The I.E.T.D. constructed and operates a telegraph system connecting India with Europe. Perhaps in no other instance has English enterprise and capacity contributed more to the benefit of Persia. Back in the early 1860's, when through telegraph service in the Turkish dominions was contested by unfriendly tribes between Bagdad and the Persian Gulf, the English first arranged with the Shah for the construction of a telegraph line. The result was direct intercourse with India for the British, and facilities for communication and control within their own country for the Persians, which represented the longest step forward in this respect since the days of Darius.

To the traveller telegraph facilities are often a convenience, but if you are one of those who receives a rest-house order—and the telegraph authorities are generous—you may put up your bed and prepare your food in the peace of a clean room at the many places where their stations exist. It enables him from the West to retain his temper and his weight, for neither of these things is fostered by caravanserais or native houses. So when you come to Persia make friends with the I.E.T.D.

We found in Abadeh a quiet-spoken, keen-eyed district manager—you'd have said he was a Scotsman—who was making the annual survey of his section of the line, which is a matter of some hundreds of miles. His headquarters were at Isfahan, and he generally travels from steel pole to steel pole on foot, or perhaps on a donkey.

We found also here another British subject. She is a missionary old enough to be more than once a grandmother, who has distributed gospel tracts, held clinics, and shown magic-lantern slides to remote and wondering villagers since before those now grown up were born. This intrepid lady, who, during our call on her, spoke of robbers and pestilence as you would of freakish tradesmen or a cold, travels on a bicycle escorted by a Persian servant and three donkeys with her kit.

This last individual, Lutfullah, appears to be the current subject of discussion. Because two days ago, having borrowed his mistress's bicycle to precede her on an errand, he had fallen down a well, the depth of which was fifty feet. Lutfullah was still alive and had only one arm bandaged. Just how or why he had accomplished the feat neither he nor anyone else seems able to tell. Fortunately he had not taken the bicycle with him. He had lost his money in the descent, but not his voice, and had been finally rescued by the combined exertions of his grey-haired mistress, a passing wayfarer, and

a rope. Lutfullah was shivering still, though whether from fright or the chill of the water was not clear.

Just now, as we were preparing for slumber, Lutfullah handed a note through the window. It was from our missionary acquaintance, and merely announced she was going along the Shiraz road the following morning to the village of Surmak. So are we. Being a simple soul, I observed to Christopher: 'That means she wants a ride.' Upon which, to my concern (for our car is already uncomfortably loaded), he rejoined, 'Well, we must certainly offer it.' I had been cursing all day the absurd doll that was so complacently pursuing the rôle of an uninvited companion, and you may imagine my alarm at this new turn which Christopher's goodness of heart was taking. He admitted with sorrow in his voice that we could hardly offer to take the bicycle too. That, he observed, would have to follow on a donkey. I saw remonstrance was vain when he finally declared, impatient at my feeble attempts at dissuasion, 'I will ride the bicycle myself, if necessary, and give up my own place in the car!' When goodness and firm purpose combine like that, combat is futile. And there was nothing, of course, for me to do but subside into an irritated silence and write up the day's doings.

This day we were about ten hours on the road, and covered one hundred and thirty-six miles.

SIVAND

September 22

The day broke with the arrival of a note from the missionary lady. I knew its contents before the servant crossed the threshold: she accepted our offer with thanks, was ready and waiting for us.

I had best confess at once that after the ride was over and she had left us, mine was a humble and a contrite heart. How the four of us (remember the doll!) sat in comfort on the back seat is more than I can tell you. But we did. And the sporty old lady regaled us with descriptions of welcome in villages which asked whether she was a man or woman, and of adventures in eastern Persia with Kermanis and Afghans, until we came to the fortunate village of Surmak, where she was to stop. Lutfullah was already at the roadside waiting, and the three donkeys not far behind. Here she sailed away to her poor and her sick with a cheery goodbye, her long duster blowing in the breeze, her parasol overhead, and Lutfullah wheeling her bicycle behind. Would that more of us trod the mill with that woman's cheer and courage.

On the outskirts of Surmak a hopeless conglomeration of mud walls and towers that the tears of time and weather have despoiled of any architectural coherency marks the remains of a stronghold of Bahram Gur, one of the most vivid and likeable of Persian monarchs. Bahram of the Wild Ass he was called by devoted subjects,

from his ardour in pursuing this elusive quarry. He pursued also with signal success affairs of state, and by dealing successfully with Romans and invading White Huns and internal reforms, brought Persian power and prosperity to one of the high points in her history. Appropriately enough he lost his life in quicksand while hunting his favourite game forty miles from here. Perhaps you remember Omar Khayyám's pun, which I will give literally and not in the usual poetic but less expressive translation:

> Bahram who all his life caught the wild ass (Gur),
> See now how the grave (Gur) finally caught Bahram.

To-day you will see from the roadside in many parts of Persia huge, incoherent, squarish mounds of earth that look like the remains of what were once forts. I don't vouch for their origin, but Persians call them 'shekargah-i-Bahram', and will tell you they once served Bahram as hunting-lodges.

By midday the mountains and plains became merged together into monotonous, rolling undulations. Soon after a lunch in the shade of Nanette, whom we halted on the top of a hill bare as a turtle's back, we saw in the distance across intervening waves of hills the valley of the Polvar river. It has been likened to an English trout stream. Perhaps that depends on the time of year when you see it. But its valley is a hundredfold wider and flatter and barer than the borders of

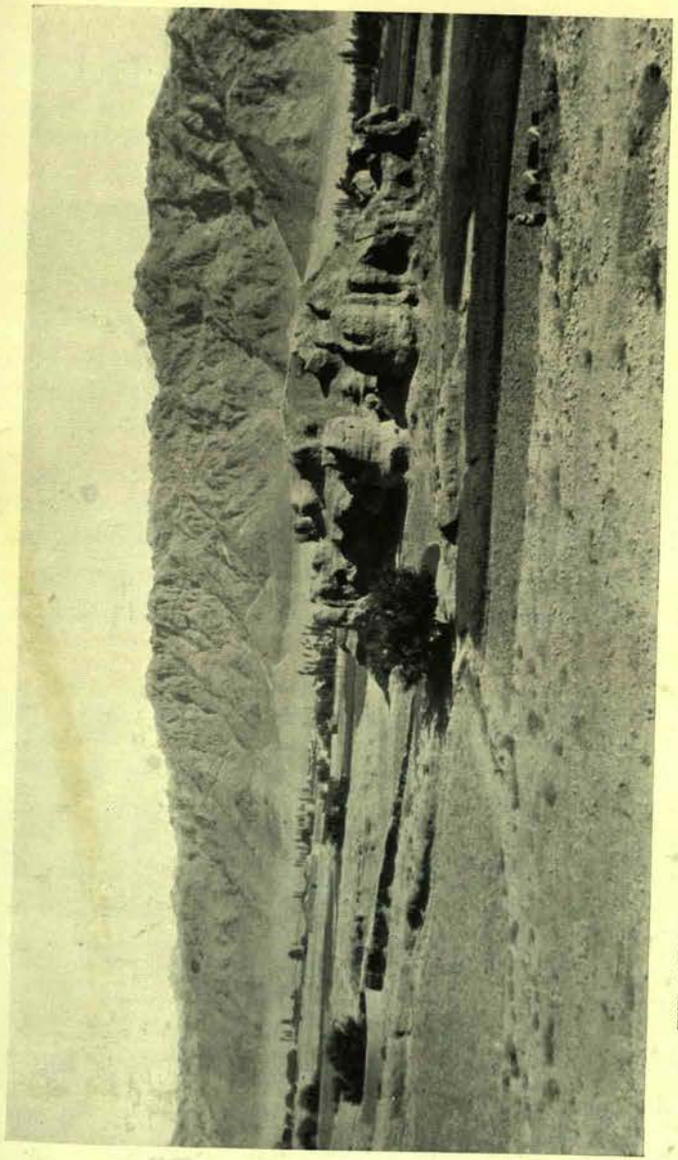
ordinary trout streams. The Polvar valley broadens here and narrows there. On two of the wider plains it waters lie remains of the cities and palaces and tombs of the two dynasties, the Achæmenian and the Sassanian, that give Persia her immortal place in ancient history.

First, on the plain of Murghab—'Where the Wild Fowl Water'—comes Pasargadæ, the site of the city and the burial-place of Cyrus, he whom legend, this time, says was suckled by a dog, who began as a prince of a smallish tribe in Persis, the Achæmenids, who conquered among others the Medes, and who left an empire that stretched from the Indus to the Ægean and to Egypt.

As we left the grey, rolling country behind us and skirted the edge of the bare, flat valley we searched for the site of Pasargadæ. No road now leads to it. No sign points to it, and no guides—thank God!—await the traveller. We looked and looked, and finally left Nanette and climbed hillocks and scanned the plain through glasses. We made out some sheep and goats and two or three tiny mud-walled villages, and some golden, fluffy patches near-by where their inmates were winnowing wheat by tossing it sky-high on sticks, before we espied on the far side of the valley floor one solitary column bathing in a sunbeam and proclaiming more loudly than words departed and historic grandeur.

There was not much else to see when we got there,

after wading the Polvar and scratching our ankles for an hour while we plodded through thorn-bush, except the tomb of the first Achæmenian monarch, he who became first 'King of the Medes and Persians'. It is true there are not far away the ruins of a great palace terrace jutting out from a low hill at the edge of the valley, and a shaft picturing in low relief an upright, winged figure, and a small quantity of scattered débris. But half a mile from this, a white patch against the bare landscape, is the stone structure with a gabled roof perched upon a pyramidal base in which the body of Cyrus was laid to rest. Here came Alexander the Great at the age of thirty-two, already a world conqueror, less than two centuries after Cyrus's death, and found the tomb despoiled. The respectful would liken its outline to a tiny Greek temple, the blasphemous to a dog-kennel. In either case it is not lacking even now in simple dignity, and in its heydey, when surrounded by an open, stately colonnade, must have been a thing of impressive beauty. Neither the structure nor its base is large. The former is about twelve feet long and eight wide, and the latter, on the ground, about forty-five feet square, for each of its seven layers of huge limestone blocks decreases in size as you mount. The tomb itself rests twenty-odd feet above the ground. We clambered up to its narrow entrance with the aid of some vagrant bushes which were aiding time in displacing the great blocks. Inside,



THE VILLAGE OF SURMAK AND THE FIFTH CENTURY RUINS OF BAHRAM GUR'S STRONGHOLD
NOTE THE METALLIC APPEARANCE OF THE MOUNTAINS

bits of rag and tin and brass, from sheep and donkey bells and samovars, were hung on strings, forlorn offerings by superstitious natives. These and the charred remains of fires, which had made the stone walls black—for shepherds must find it a welcome shelter in stormy weather—had taken the place of the Great King's gold coffin and its treasures, and were witness to how posterity had observed the original injunction upon the entrance:

Oh man, I am Cyrus . . . who founded the Empire of Persia and was King of Asia. . . . Grudge me not therefore this monument!'

We went back and rejoined Nanette, and accompanied the Polvar through a canyon in the mountains, and then in the spectral light of a ripe moon along another plain to where the valley again narrowed, and we came to the village of Sivand, and in its outskirts to a rest-house of the I.E.T.D. We spent thirteen and a half hours on the road to-day, including our Pasargadæ stop, and covered one hundred and twenty miles.

SIVAND
September 23

We have seen and wondered. The Polvar may be small in size, but in richness of experience it ranks with the mighty. Like a book of history it began its first chapter yesterday with Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire; to-day we read further chapters that make epics of the past live

and do. To you who may not have read those chapters even in a paper book, let me tell that after Cyrus came Darius, who welded together the biggest empire the world had yet seen, who built a road from his capital near the Persian Gulf fifteen hundred miles to Sardis in Asia Minor, and organized a mail service on it that covered the distance, which is as far as New York to Denver, in fifteen days. And he did many other things. Then came his son Xerxes, whose magnificence and vainglory we learned of at school, and whose hordes were defeated by handfuls of Greek patriots at Salamis and elsewhere, and followed others of the line for a good two hundred years, till Alexander came from Macedonia and hurled them from their high estate. They were the Achæmenians: the first who put Persia on the map, who did it to an extent and with a success that no successor has rivalled. Their days of glory and those of the Greeks were contemporary.

The next chapter of which the Polvar tells is of the Sassanian dynasty, which fought and were contemporary with Rome when she was ripe and over-ripe. Not infrequently they humbled her pride, as when Shapur captured the aged Emperor Valerian at Edessa in the year of grace 260, and used, says tradition, him who had worn the Roman purple as a stool upon which to mount his horse. Like Cyrus, father of the Achæmenian line, the first Sassanian, whose name was Ardeshir, began by

being only of medium account in this same Province of Fars, and like his prototype of eight hundred years before, overthrew successfully a foreign yoke as the first step in building up an empire. This time it was the Parthians, as with Cyrus it had been the Medes, by whose overthrow Ardeshir gave Persia again a civilization she could call her own. . . .

It was a perfect day, like so many in the Persian autumn, when the live air is like wine and the light like crystal. The valley and rocks and sky beamed with a richness and variety of dry colour that so largely makes up in this land for its poverty of vegetation. We had not yet eaten when he whom his neighbours salute as 'Victory-of-the Empire' drove into the I.E.T.D. compound and gave us greetings. He is a great landowner in these parts, and in knickerbockers and Dodge car was inspecting some of his villages. We had met him in Teheran, and remembered his agreeable manner and ready smile. Some people's manner is too agreeable and their smile too ready. If I remember right, many places we had passed through yesterday are his. Rust has hurt the wheat this year and reduced the harvest badly, and Victory-of-the-Empire was sorrowing. So, too, was the whole country-side. We talked of wheat and seed, and how they measure crops here by the increase of yield over seed planted. They are not sorry if they get six or seven fold. They seed their stony patches

in the broadcast manner, and know not the method that we call drilling, that saves the seed but needs machines they have never dreamed of.

We left Sivand and its low mud huts huddled in tiers against the wall of the valley, which here is narrow and precipitous, and hurried south beside the Polvar, in its deep, snug bed for some fifteen miles, until the valley bent sharply towards the west, and, as a small stream may suddenly debouch into a vast lake, expanded into the plain of Mervdasht. The plain of Mervdasht is bare and flat as an empty stage, but in its distances and simplicity and solitude suggestive enough to make easy a reconstruction of the man-made scenery that once adorned it.

While the valley was yet narrow we came upon the scanty ruins of Istakhr. Istakhr was a city of many thousands of people under both the Achæmenians and Sassanians, but the Persian populace then as now lived within mud and clay, which doesn't last to tell posterity its story. Some stone blocks still give the semblance of a gateway that is claimed to have been one of the city entrances, and a single column of some building still supports the double head of a bull. But there is little else above the ground, which here and there takes the form of mounds. If museums would send men and money here to displace the shepherds and their goats and sheep and uncover the contents of these mounds, the result would tell us many

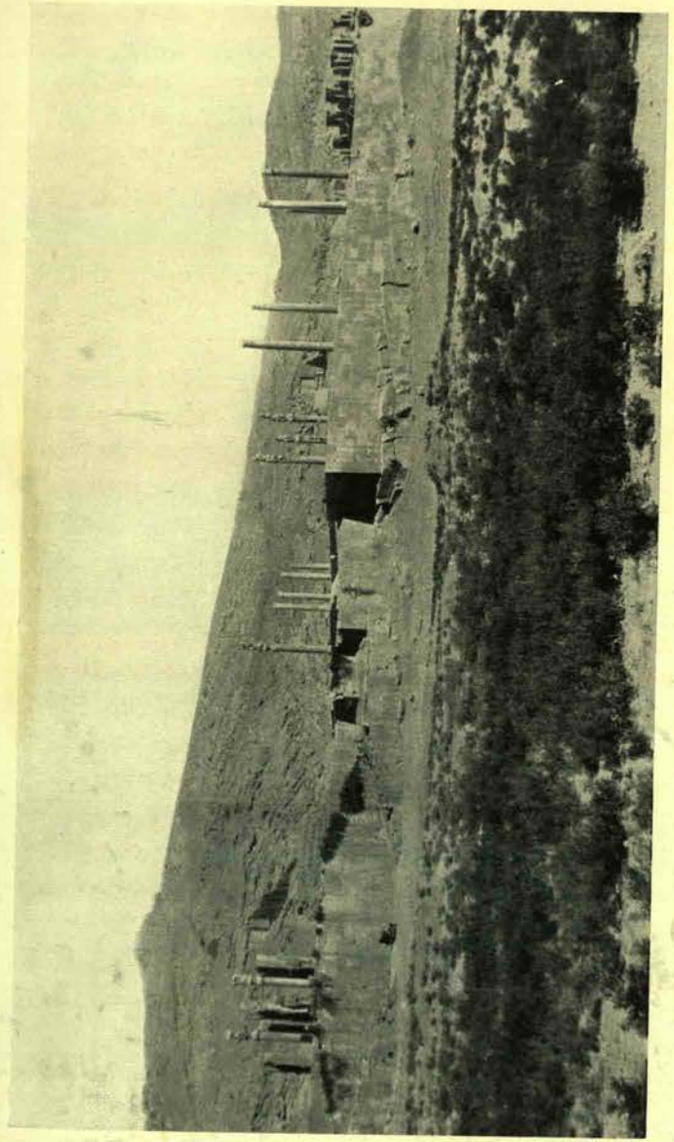
things. But as it is, unless your imagination is of a very lively kind, Istakhr is a sterile, disappointing spot.

A little way beyond, as the road runs close against the rocks which form the valley wall, and where the Polvar begins to get lost in the widening valley, we sought for someone to point out the rock carvings called Naksh-i-Rejeb, for they are partly hidden in a recess of the rocks. I suspect a shepherd is never very far away, for it is an easy way to gain some pennies. We found a guide, or the guide found us, without delay. Upon the three faces of this curious and unexpected nook are three huge pictures, which rise from close above the ground to twice your height, depicting Shapur, son of that Ardeshir who founded the Sassanian line, receiving the symbolic ring of sovereignty from the god Ormuzd. Shapur himself founded cities that still bear his name. Shapur and his horse and his god Ormuzd and the lesser objects in the pictures may be ponderous and heavy, but the sculptors that chiselled them upon the mother-rock had a sense of strength and dignity that make these records of sixteen hundred years ago worthy of their civilization. After we had had our fill examining Shapur's top-heavy globular crown—it doesn't purport, of course, to symbolize world dominion, for, as Christopher reminded me, Copernicus didn't come along till twelve hundred years later—and his loose flapping trousers, which in the stone look for all the world

like a cowboy's sheepskin shaps, and the trappings of the horses that would give new ideas to carnival revellers, we continued our way, jouncing along the stony track that keeps on hugging the valley wall, and let the main road to Shiraz shoot away across the bare, green plain that now spread far out within its frame of distant mountains.

We rounded a spur in the cliff, when suddenly a silhouette appeared half a mile ahead, black against the sunlight, of a giant platform running out from the mountain-side as a huge wharf for ocean steamships might extend into the water. A thousand feet it runs out. It stands forty feet above the plain, and extends for fifteen hundred along the mountain-side. This was the platform of Persepolis.

Columns, pilasters, and shafts of the ancient halls and palaces for which it formed the foundation and the terrace shot skyward, regal relics of a regal past. Have you ever seen a forest, or what was once a forest, denuded by fire and shot and shell of all that is green and growing, and in place of branches and leaves and verdure have charred trunks of trees, limbless and splintered, and nought about but ashes and what is dead tell of destruction and power and contrast? So, here was nakedness and silence and decay on a regal scale. Nature on her part contributed a regal view. When Darius and Xerxes came here on their spring and autumn visits—for their summer capital was in the north and their winter capital to the south-west at Susa—



PERSEPOLIS (FROM THE WEST)
SHOWING A PART OF THE PLATFORM UPON WHICH THE PALACES WERE BUILT. NOTE NANETTE AT THE LEFT

they might have looked out, but didn't, over miles of flat, green expanse to the purple mountains on the other side. For they built walls of mud a hundred feet high all around the edge of the platform, that being a form which protection took in those days, and shut in themselves and their palaces and their people hugger-mugger almost as effectively as if in one huge box.

In those days, when agricultural economy was more advanced hereabouts than now, the plain was dotted with villages, and towards the northern end was covered with the city of Istakhr and its inhabitants. Now it is entirely bare, and, like the palace platform, was forsaken except for some black tents and camels and sheep of nomad Kashgai tribesmen. But Nature's shades and colours remain the same, yet change with hour and season as continuously as the sun pursues its course, the same now as when Alexander came at the age of thirty-two and burned the whole place down as a gesture of retaliation—so they say—for the invasion of Greece by its masters, after he had carried Greek arms and Greek thought over the Persian Empire and from Egypt to the Punjab. Over to the right in the hazy distance rises an isolated rose-red mountain, whose long, gigantic table-top would have made a platform fit for the palaces of gods.

We left Nanette in the care of some inquisitive goats and climbed up to the platform by one of

the two spacious flights of one hundred and six steps each, upon either one of which the car and two twin sisters might have climbed abreast.

No tickets or hours of admission here, or rules or guides or guide-books. We shared the ruins with some leathern-faced women from the tents below, who were collecting madder-bushes from crevices and holes that once had supported gorgeous hangings and sculptured decoration. One mother and two children squatted on a single block and were pounding the roots to powder with pieces of a cornice, as oblivious to us as if they had been floating on a raft.

At the top of the great flight of steps there confronts you a bull-flanked portico called the Porch of Xerxes. Four great piers mark its two main portals, and are high and thick enough to shade one from even the midday sun. Below the colossal bulls, whose flanks are sculptured on the longer sides of the piers, and whose foreparts are planted on the ground in front as if to charge newcomers, we munched hard-boiled eggs and cheese and black native bread, while Christopher likened their long beribboned tails to the bell-pulls of our grandfathers, and drew unpleasing physical analogies to the hair on their flanks, which was frizzled into lines of little buttons that looked like backgammon men. I call them bulls, for that has been the custom, although two have outspread wings and two human faces with crowns and beards

and ringlets. Unlovely and fantastic and sturdy are these sentinels. Sturdy, too, is the inscription above them: 'I am Xerxes, the Great King, the King of Kings, the King of the many-tongued countries, the King of this great universe, the son of Darius, the King, the Achæmenian.'

The lower portion of the piers beneath the bodies of the monsters is the guest-book of Persepolis, where some who have passed this way and speculated and wondered have left their names. Few persons get to Persepolis as travellers to a famous spot are counted nowadays, but the stone blocks proclaim names which fame has linked with Persia. If you have not read, you should, the story of *Haji Baba*, and its foreword written by Sir Walter Scott. Here you may see that its author, James Morier, came in 1809, the year before he went to Teheran as English Minister. Here in bold letters is chiselled: 'Cap. James Malcolm, 1800', the attractive and intrepid Scotsman whose travels and writings on Persia have become classics, and who, too, was sent as English envoy to Teheran, after having served in India with a certain Colonel Arthur Wellesley. Here is recorded the visit in 1765 of Niebuhr, famous traveller and father of a famous son; and standing out larger than all the rest are the words, 'Stanley, *New York Herald*, 1870'. Henry M. Stanley had already been commissioned by James Gordon Bennett to seek for Livingstone in Africa. He came first to

Persia, then went to Africa, and found the explorer there in the following year.

Across some ground that students say was once a garden, but which now grows only bits of rock and a few tiny bits of grass, stands the once great audience-hall of the King of Kings. Long and low is the terrace on which it stood. Few of its seventy columns still stand, and those that do are cracked and scarred with the travail of earthquakes, the desecration of Alexander, and the passing of two thousand years. Their upper portions are precariously balanced and seem ready to fall on the grimy Kashgai mothers pounding madder-roots in their shade. One capital, about the only one that is still aloft, was poised on its column like a diver committed to his plunge. I suppose it had been there for tens of years, and perhaps will stay for another ten. But I was glad to move away from under it. The round bases, at least, of vanished columns are left in place and are big enough to picnic or build a summer-house upon.

You reach the terrace of this hall by one of four gentle flights of steps. But you do not ascend to it alone. Along the front face of the terrace—it is seventy paces long—and where the shallow steps rise, are chiselled lines of others who are on their way also to do homage to the Great King who is allowing himself to be gazed on from the far end of the hall. Here are depicted in low-relief files of subject peoples bringing tribute, and rows of

DOORWAY TO THE HALL OF A HUNDRED COLUMNS

LOOKING NORTH FROM THE PALACE OF DARIUS
PERSEPOLIS

courtiers and companies of guards and warriors who mount the steps with you and crowd the pillared aisles of the great hall and join the splendid ceremonial that took place here and—if you can fool yourself and not mind the lizards that are playing hide-and-seek—is still in progress.

Close by is the palace of Darius, smaller, but also on a graceful elevation of its own, whose sides, too, are alive with warriors and attendants in relief, bearing food and drink to him whose every whim was law. Here, again, are shallow flights of steps easy to ascend for those who carried heavy tribute or wore cumbersome robes and trappings.

This structure is said to have contained the private apartments of the king. It may be so, but the interior of the central hall—it's about fifty feet square—tells us ordinary visitors merely a story of jumbled, prostrate blocks and pillars enlivened by wild hollyhock and scampering lizards and the chatter of more Kashgai women pounding more madder root. Many of its doorways and window-openings remain in place. Upon their inside surfaces are pictured in heroic size the Great King plunging with bored composure a dagger into rampant unicorns and lions and griffins. In no case does the animal attempt to maul him; never does the dagger miss the vital spot. These figures greet you on the jambs of every doorway, and represent perhaps an Achæmenian application of the theory of auto-suggestion. Upon one block is an

ode inscribed to the original master of the place by a grandson of Tamerlane.

Behind, and nearer the mountain-side, is the vast Hall of a Hundred Columns, that presents special thoughts for contemplation, for under its débris has been found the carbonized cedar of the roof which historians attribute to Alexander's conflagration. This largest of all the palaces has no terrace of its own, and so the world of the Great King is depicted on its doorways and its walls. Sometimes he is sitting on his high-backed throne above five rows of subjects and under the hovering god of his faith. Sometimes his throne is on a pillared terrace. Sometimes he is promenading, protected by a royal fly-flap and parasol. You may look with envy on the latter object, for even in September the midday sun can give unwelcome heat in this treeless region.

There are the ruins of the palaces of Xerxes and of Artaxerxes and other buildings without names. When, one wonders, will men come here and uncover the secrets that lie waiting to be told? Never yet has excavation on a scientific basis been carried on at Persepolis. Never, even, has an attempt been made to locate the archives of Darius and Xerxes, which archæologists declare may well be lying between the great blocks of stone that form the foundations of these buildings. For it was the custom for a monarch to inscribe on sheets of gold or silver or copper or bronze

the records of his reign and deposit them in the foundations of his residence.

But finally you tire of the twelve hundred human figures that adorn these ruins and file in such stiff and endless procession to do honour to the monarch. Who was this fellow, anyway, about whom all the world so solemnly paraded? No deeds, no energy, no joy, no life, but what his whim decreed.

Of all the sculptured figures, not one depicts a woman, and not one retains to-day its features unimpaired. As methodically as the original chisel cut out each one, a subsequent chisel has hacked and disfigured the profile of every face. We don't know just when it happened. But we know of one grand vizier who disliked Europeans and who sent down from Isfahan a company of workmen to destroy what he considered an inducement to their coming to his country. Whether his men did all the vandalism, or whether it was shared by Arabs and Mongols and other invaders, the records do not state. The results are the same for us. And it doesn't matter much how or when or who took away the tons and tons of débris that awaited those who built Shiraz and the adorners of Isfahan, as well as nearer and more humble builders.

We didn't have time to find and explore the subterranean passages that are said to burrow through the bowels of the platform and to have brought water to its palaces and gardens, or to visit a few scattered relics on the plain. But we did wait

upon the platform while the sun went down behind the mountains fifteen miles across the plain and left behind a great pink halo.

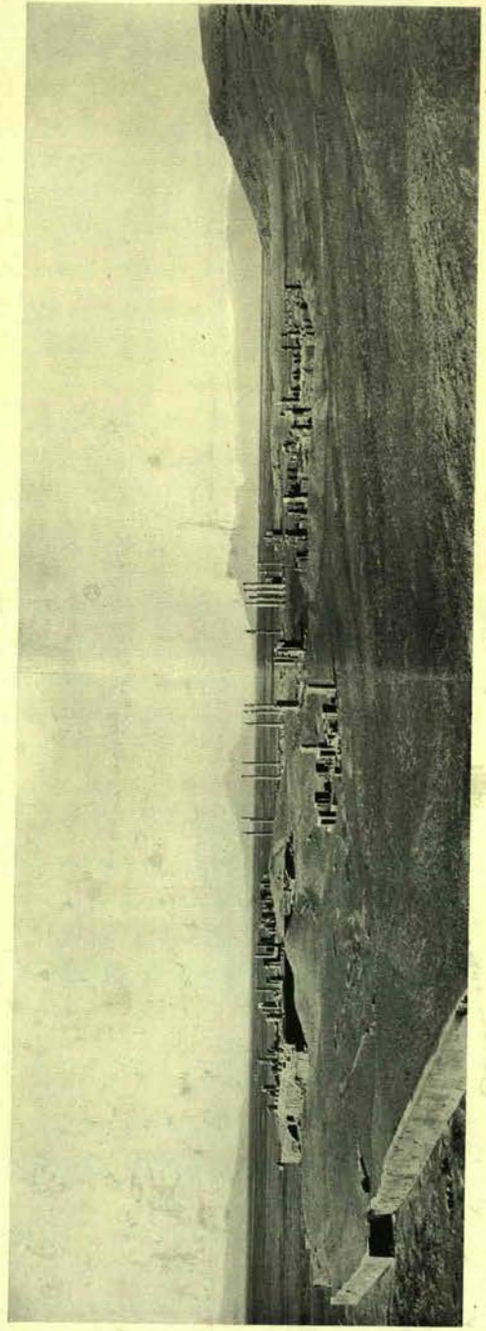
We watched the mountains rise and float in the mist that soon drowned the plain, and the evening fires of the Kashgais glimmer like fireflies in the falling darkness, until a round moon peaked over the mountain behind us. How smug is that never-changing face that has watched with such indifference the rise and blossom and decay of these works of man! It lit up first the far side of the valley with a silver sheet that stealthily unrolled towards us. Its ghostly lustre reached first the divers on their columns and the tops of piers and doorways, and then crawled down them till ruins and moonbeams and shadows were finally all performing together a great dance in pantomime.

It was late when we got back to Sivand for supper.

SHIRAZ

September 24

When the telegraph *gholams* began their work and woke us this morning by bringing milk and eggs, Sivand seemed to smile in the sunlight even more brightly than yesterday. Perhaps the luxury of a big room with a table, some rickety chairs, and two iron bedsteads—albeit one only possessed unrent springs—where our belongings could sprawl about at will, and another room where Rahim and



PERSEPOLIS (FROM THE EAST)

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
And Bahram, that great Hunter—The Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep.

the gholams kept the samovar simmering and prepared our meals, and outside a veranda that looked over the roofs of the village, imparted a sense of well-being that helped all things beam. For usually food, bags, beds, guns, Christopher and I have been confined within the walls of a single chamber.

Rahim rustled fresh supplies in the village. You have to take provisions on a trip such as ours, for you cannot count on procuring locally fresh eggs or a chicken or clean cheese or other things that are pleasurable to eat. At this season of the year you can count on melons, whose flavour sometimes is so sublime that you date your actions from their eating, and on a kind of fermented milk which the Persians call *maast*, which at the end of a hot and tired day slips down and refreshes like an elixir. Maast has the coolness of spring water and a taste that is both smooth and sharp.

You can nearly always get some kind of bread. Persian bread varies in quality and kind, but you may count on its being brown and flat and of unbolted wheat. The most common kind, which you may watch being baked in any Persian town or village on a mountain of pebbles inside a mud oven, looks like a giant pancake. And the people who crowd before the baker's counter at certain hours of the day, for bread is in fact their staff of life, roll it up and tuck it under their arms as if they were carrying home some cloth. This is the *nan sangak*, or 'pebble-baked bread'. Sometimes it is

thicker, sometimes thinner; sometimes it is baked dry and crisp with sugar or grease or a bit of ginger, and you break off hunks as if it were a huge cracker.

This morning we retraced our steps of yesterday, giving the bull-headed column at Istakhr and the nook where Shapur communes with his god upon the rocks the go-by, to the little road-guard station where the way to Persepolis leaves the main road to Shiraz and the Polvar valley begins to lose itself in the plain of Mervdasht. Here we had arranged by telegram to meet Melvin and Josephine, who were coming out the forty miles from Shiraz, and here they soon came in a cloud of dust, and a car whose size and comfort made Nanette feel humble.

I have not told you that on the other side of the valley, which here is about two miles wide, there runs a high cliff wall that further up the valley acts as a wainscoting to the mountains, but here, after the higher mountains have been left behind, continues by itself till it sinks slowly down, and finally disappears under the surface of the plain. Where it still rises a sheer two hundred feet above the valley were hewn, in a row about half-way up its face, the four rock chambers where the greatest of the monarchs whose abodes we visited yesterday were laid to their final rest. At the entrance of each are four colossal cuttings in the cliff in the form of stunted crosses. In the centre of

each of these crosses a black spot marks the actual entrance that leads into the rock-hewn and now empty chamber—entrances long since violated by those who had a lust for treasure. For miles across the plain you may see the crosses as you might giant bill-boards affixed to a mountain face.

Horsemen and spare horses were ready at the road-guard station, and we mounted under the fatherly guidance of Melvin's *kalantar*, a heavy, silent gentleman of dignity and local account. A kalantar is the title given to a subordinate tribal chief, and by an extension of its basic meaning has come to be applied to any personage of local influence.

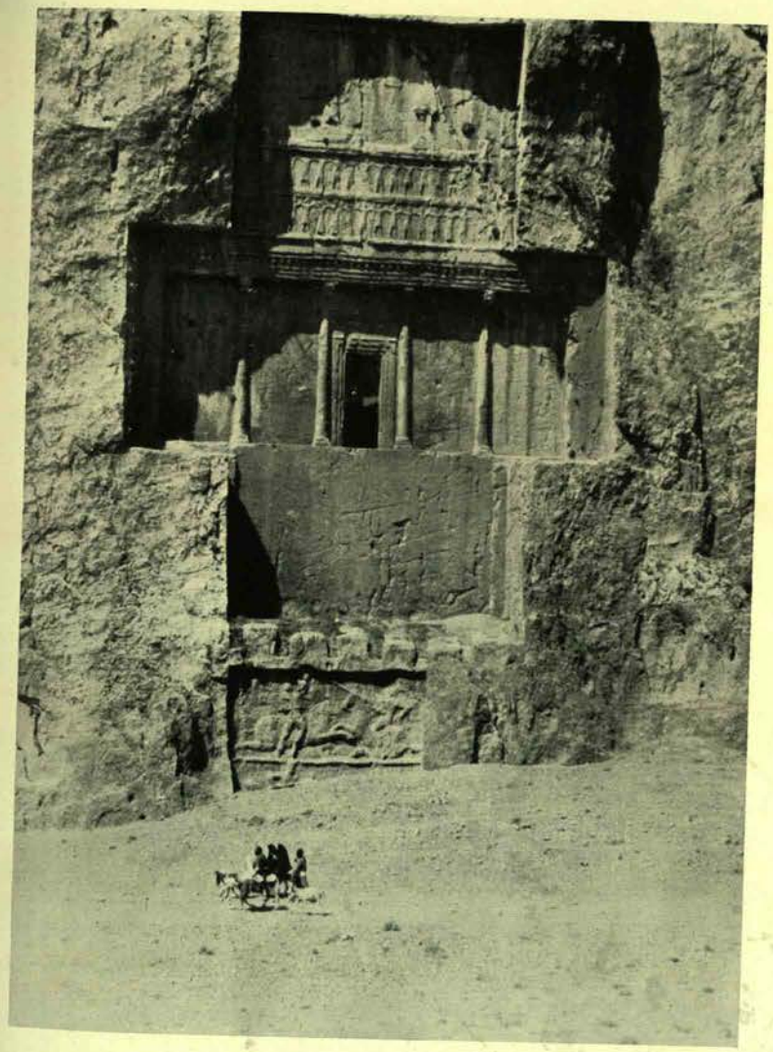
We zigzagged across the valley through forests of ripe sorgum, forded the winding Polvar I forget how many times, whose steep mud banks only ponies of the place would have manœuvred so indifferently, while the four big, cruciform cuttings in the rock, constantly getting bigger, beckoned to us. Finally, we reached the hard and open ground below them. They loomed above us, cut as if by giants half-way up to Heaven.

The horizontal segment of each cross is sculptured to resemble a colonnade. Between the two central columns of this colonnade is a finely moulded door-frame that now is always black and yawning like the mouth of a pit, for the stone block which was the door and which swung upon a pivot has vanished from all four entrances, as have the

sepulchres and treasures that were housed within. In the upper part of the vertical segment of each cross, the part above the colonnade, and, as it were, supported by it, are depicted sovereign and gods and subjects with the same monotony and formalism as we saw yesterday on the palaces at Persepolis, which you can see across the plain eight miles away.

In the second of the tombs was laid Darius, greatest of all Persian kings. By his coffin, according to the legend, a favourite eunuch stayed for seven years, till he joined his master in another world. It is recounted that the father and mother of Darius, curious to see the building of the chamber, were hoisted up by ropes manipulated by forty Magi. It appears the holy men were better priests than engineers, for when some snakes challenged their temerity at the moment when the aged couple were dangling in mid-air, they let go the ropes, and the parents of the king were dashed to pieces on the ground. Whether the forty Magi were dashed to pieces we are not told, but only that they paid for their bungling with their lives.

You can't get up to the entrances, which are sixty-odd feet above the ground, without scaffolding and ropes and a gang of neighbouring villagers and a long stay, so we took the insides on faith and looked at the sculpturing through field-glasses. Their inaccessibility, the mystery of the despoiling of their treasures, their blackness and silence, the



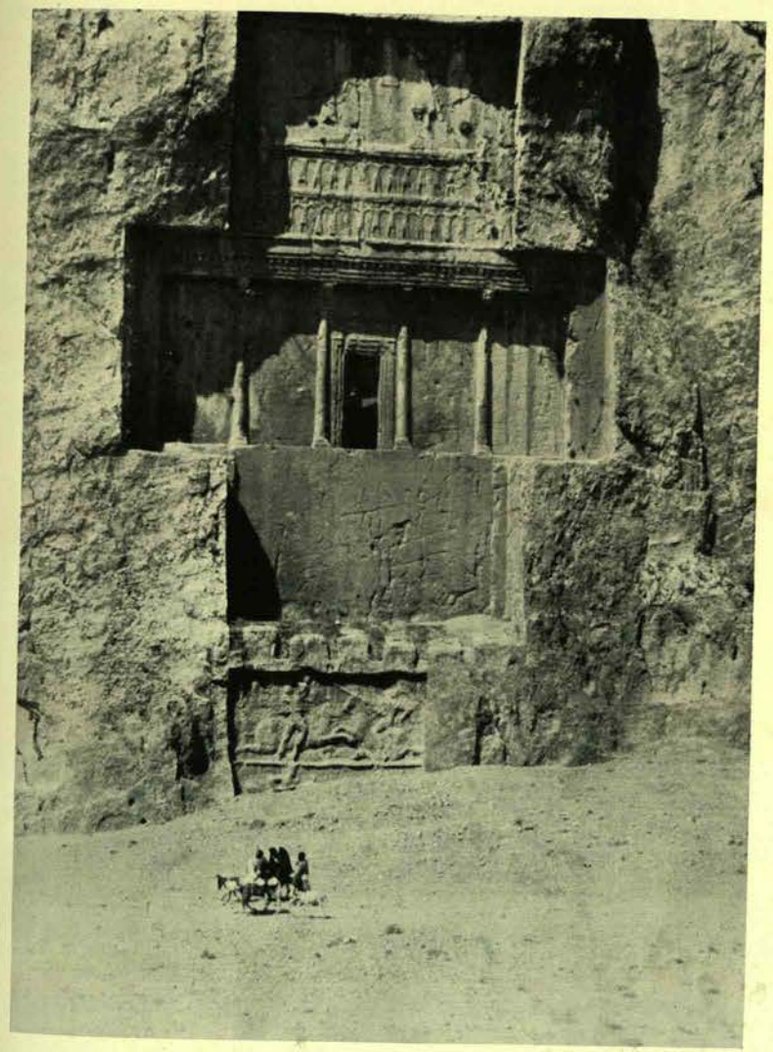
ACROSS THE POLVAR RIVER FROM PERSEPOLIS

IN THE FACE OF THE VALLEY WALL, KNOWN AS NAKSH-I-RUSTAM, IS THE TOMB OF DARIUS, GREATEST OF ALL PERSIAN KINGS

sepulchres and treasures that were housed within. In the upper part of the vertical segment of each cross, the part above the colonnade, and, as it were, supported by it, are depicted sovereign and gods and subjects with the same monotony and formalism as we saw yesterday on the palaces at Persepolis, which you can see across the plain eight miles away.

In the second of the tombs was laid Darius, greatest of all Persian kings. By his coffin, according to the legend, a favourite eunuch stayed for seven years, till he joined his master in another world. It is recounted that the father and mother of Darius, curious to see the building of the chamber, were hoisted up by ropes manipulated by forty Magi. It appears the holy men were better priests than engineers, for when some snakes challenged their temerity at the moment when the aged couple were dangling in mid-air, they let go the ropes, and the parents of the king were dashed to pieces on the ground. Whether the forty Magi were dashed to pieces we are not told, but only that they paid for their bungling with their lives.

You can't get up to the entrances, which are sixty-odd feet above the ground, without scaffolding and ropes and a gang of neighbouring villagers and a long stay, so we took the insides on faith and looked at the sculpturing through field-glasses. Their inaccessibility, the mystery of the despoiling of their treasures, their blackness and silence, the



ACROSS THE POLVAR RIVER FROM PERSEPOLIS

IN THE FACE OF THE VALLEY WALL, KNOWN AS NAKSH-I-RUSTAM, IS THE TOMB OF DARIUS, GREATEST OF ALL PERSIAN KINGS

amount of human blood and labour they proclaim —yet such a tiny effort against Nature's gray background of the cliff—give these four rock-tombs a weird and impelling fascination.

Below the tombs, and so nearly on a level with the ground that you may lean against them and feel like Gulliver amid the Brobdingnagians, are seven colossal panels in the rock with bas-reliefs, cut by Sassanian monarchs, which serve, like those we saw yesterday across the valley at Naksh-i-Rejeb, as historical documents of sixteen centuries ago. The Sassanians chose the place, perhaps, for their own cruder monuments, feeling that the mere proximity to those of their illustrious predecessors would enhance the greatness of their own achievements. Three panels depict equestrian combat in which the monarch—needless to say—vanquishes a foe. They possess an action and freedom that is unusual in Sassanian sculpture. On a fourth panel that event which so appealed to the national imagination, the capture of the Roman Emperor Valerian by Shapur, is again depicted. In all, the central figure about whom the action moves is a Sassanian monarch, although some Persians still like to identify him who is so stalwartly astride his horse, with clustered curls and globular crown, with their national hero, Rustam. In the past he has been identified with many other persons. A Venetian traveller in the fifteenth century described him as 'seemyng to be the ymage of a boysterouse

man, who they saie was Sampson'! Boisterous he may be, but hardly 'Sampson.'

From the crupper of his horse is suspended by a chain what writers have variously described as a flask, a vessel for incense, a lasso, and a cabbage, whereas if only they had been observant—like Christopher and I!—they would have seen that there still persists in this region, after a long succession of centuries, the custom of decorating a horse whose owner is of consequence by hanging from one or both sides a big, fat, fluffy, ordinary woollen tassel.

There is one thing more we explored at Naksh-i-Rustam. On a slight elevation about two hundred yards in front of the cliff wall and its rock-tombs stands a square structure thirty-five feet high and about twenty-five feet square. Its simplicity of outline is as rigid as that of the square blocks of stone of which it is composed. It has no opening save the large entrance that faces the cliff wall, which instead of being on the level of the ground is about fifteen feet above it. This entrance gives access to an otherwise unlighted chamber, whose floor and ceiling are made of a few slabs of rock, the weight of any one of which I would be afraid to guess. Even to-day they could be put in place only with herculean effort.

The purpose of the building till recently was a mystery. Historians and students labelled it in turn a fire-temple, a royal treasury, a mausoleum,

a place for temporary embalmment, all of which makes us ordinary people little the wiser. He who is the greatest authority on such things to-day will tell you, I believe, as a result of living in the chamber for two weeks and studying the problem, that it was in fact a tomb which antedated the four sepulchres hewn in the rock-face just opposite. I understand he came to this conclusion partly from niches and grooves about the entrance, which indicated the former existence of a cleverly manipulated door, which once shut (from the outside), could not again be opened.

We pulled ourselves up to the entrance of the chamber, which was no little feat, for steps have long since vanished and thick blocks jut out to varying extent between it and the ground. Melvin, whose physical agility is to be admired, got up first, and hoisted by him, shoved by the sturdy kalantar, and encouraged by Christopher, who had the wisdom to stay below, I reached the entrance in a condition to be convinced that the purpose of the structure was for embalming. . . .

We wound our way back across water ditches, upon the edge of which my horse showed a frequent agility for kneeling down, across the Polvar, through mud and fields of sorgum, to where the cars were waiting. Then we proceeded a few miles farther to the platform of Persepolis, where we found a tent erected and a lunch ready, prepared by Melvin's contrivance, that would have

been fit to offer the original masters of the place. I can tell you that melons and grapes from a cold container and salad and cold partridge and other delectable surprises in a place where you can strike your match on one of Xerxes' columns, and after a venturesome ride in a hot sun, make an exhibition of a temperate appetite rather difficult. The ruins on the platform improve on acquaintance. I can only attribute the comment of a neighbour in Teheran, that he considered the freak of Nature at Yezdikhast (which I have told you of) more impressive than these palaces of the Achæmenians, to the effect of the sun, which is powerful hereabouts.

The interest of the rock-tombs and our ride across the valley, and perhaps the lunch, contributed to the vagueness of the impressions I have of our forty-mile ride to Shiraz. Dust, which a following wind kept abreast and in front of us, predominates. Through it peeped the brick bridge that high jumps the Kur river after the Polvar has joined it; a bridge with a steeply arched back and narrow as a path, for when it first cast shadows on the river three centuries ago it served only animals and men in single file. And through the dust came the everlasting sense of openness and distance, and naked plain and mountain, and a dearth of fellow-men. We did pass a large caravan of donkeys at a water-hole beside a forlorn and isolated caravanserai, their load set upon the

ground and the muleteers (Persians call them *charvadars*) making ready for the night. I like and respect these Persian charvadars. If you should be told the Persian is not an honest person, speak up for these silent, patient, civil-mannered men in tattered woollen clothes, who can neither read nor write, but who have a twinkle in their eye, and to whom you trust your goods for months, and who take them between north and south and east and west, driving or riding or even sleeping upon their slowly moving beasts. You can tell, if they pass you at night, what kind of beasts they have from the noise of the bell on the leaders: whether it be the boom of the camel's bell, the more business-like intonation of the mule's, or the ready, careless tinkle of the donkey's.

Occasionally a mud-walled village with trees of green tissue-paper and flat-roofed huts of grey cardboard did its meagre best to cheer the landscape. Above, in the sea of blue, canopies of white clouds floated like ethereal mountains that blotched plain and mountain with their shadows, now darker, now lighter, here covering a slope, there a peak or ridge, as if protecting earth's nakedness from a too fierce colour-painting by the sunlight. Then, finally, the dust left us, and the hills became less abrupt, and we finally reached a ridge from which we looked down through a V-shaped defile to the cypresses and walls and houses of Shiraz spread upon the plain below, a

view which the poet Sadi contended, seven hundred years ago, 'turns aside the heart of the traveller from his native land'. So great is your delight expected to be at this view that the point is named the Pass of God-Is-Most-Great, those being considered by the emotional Shirazi the most natural and appropriate words for the enraptured traveller to pronounce. Perhaps when the city was twenty miles in circumference—if an Italian traveller, contemporary with Christopher Columbus, wrote anywhere near the truth—and was one of the great centres in the Orient for trade and culture, its poplars and cypresses and domes and minarets possessed a charm that justified the poet. And perhaps even now, if seen in the freshness of spring, with its famous carpet of wild flowers abloom instead of at the end of a dry summer, you would sympathize with Sadi. But the vignette as we saw it seemed more interesting from the fame it has enjoyed than for itself.

While you are still descending to the level of the plain—and supposedly entranced by the view before you—the road passes under a lofty arch in whose upper chamber is said (for we were not in the mood for more sight-seeing) to repose a Koran weighing one hundred and twelve pounds.

Then soon you reach the outskirts of the town itself. In fact, Shiraz seems made up of outskirts. To-day it has dwindled to less than thirty thousand people, which is a sad reminder of its ancient

glory and the old hyperbolic saying: 'When Shiraz was Shiraz, Cairo was one of its suburbs.' It seems the Shirazi have an imaginative municipal enthusiasm comparable to some of our own communities. It is true the panorama of its cypressed avenues and its domes—the few that are left—and the gardens that peak above the walls have a suggestion of poetic grace. 'There', mused Christopher, pointing to the tower of an ancient building tufted with an airy cupola, 'is where Sister Anne scanned the sky and shouted hope to Bluebeard's wife below.' But Shiraz, to be quite frank, gives you not only the impression of few inhabitants, but of a loosely-jointed place sprawling about the plain. There being plenty of room, real estate is cheap. And the town is more pleasing, let us say, as a vignette from the Pass of God-Is-Most-Great than when one traverses its wide, dusty roadways and looks upon its sunburned, vacant spaces. Its straggling aspect at first sight rather curiously suggests an idea of growth rather than decay, like a half-grown person who cannot co-ordinate his limbs. This impression is increased by the new boulevard they might have copied from a mushroom town in Idaho. If you'll believe it. Between two long, widish roadways is what purports to be a public promenade. Its paths are rough and ill-defined. The shrubbery looks starved and undergrown, and to cap the rawness of the whole, two lines of electric lights run down each side. Their

unprotected bulbs at the end of rakish curves of piping rubberneck at you from the tops of unpainted poles. We went through a portion of the town, then turned west, and two miles beyond came to an entrance in a high wall lit up by the lanterns of our hosts' waiting household.

CHAPTER IV

SHIRAZ AND OTHER THINGS

SHIRAZ
September 26

OUR hosts' garden—in Persia the term 'garden' includes both garden and abode, as the 'villa' does in Italy—is on the plain, as are all the gardens about Shiraz, and looks at the changing colour and rugged outline of the surrounding mountains as you would a virile shoreline from the sea. Under their roof we have been forgetting early hours and hurried meals and dusty roads, and I have put away my note-book, and Christopher says it is pleasanter to have a companion who talks than one who writes.

You must know that a Persian garden is a truly national product. It is unlike a garden in America or England or France, for it knows little of shrubbery and formal beds of flowers and lawns and trim upkeeping. It comes nearer to its Italian prototype, only it's much more ragged. For its main idea is shade from the sun and the refreshing of spirit and body that comes from running water. Its layout is alleys of trees and more or less straight

walks bordered with little purling streams, sometimes in a muddy ditch, sometimes in a neat stone canal. It is a thing of vistas rather than broad views. You look out through aisles of trees into sunlight and space. Most gardens of any self-respect possess a *hauz* or basin, which is the centre of the scheme; it receives water from above, and gives it out below, and if it is a *hauz* of pedigree it mirrors the pillared veranda of the house, or a gingerbread pavilion, or a row of guardian trees about its edge. And if it is of a generous size it serves as swimming-pool for us as well as for the goldfish, which are invariable wardens against mosquitoes. In the blue-ribbon gardens the trees are very tall, and the alleys broad and long, and the stonework of the little canals is neat and solid, and the water courses along at a smart pace. The vista at one end may be a curtain of mountain whose top is a continuation of the tops of the trees that form the backbone of the garden, and at the other end you may look down over a plain that loses itself in a tawny or azure or violet haze according to the time of day. Perhaps a structure of verandas and vines and coloured tiles and the silver carpet of a pool will break the garden in its centre. There is such a Paradise not far from Teheran from which departure makes one sad.

Remember that where sun and arid barrenness take so many tricks, trees and water, even if the

rose-vines climb askew, and the planes and poplars make lines as if they had got drunk, and the scanty grass be rarely cut, mean repose and luxury. It is on this account, and because of the comparative scarcity of these gardens, they and the nightingale and rose have been sung in Persian prose and verse for so long and so loudly. It is all a little disappointing when you first arrive—especially if you have been reading the Persian story-tellers—but, like the solitude and the distances and nakedness of Nature that seem so desolate at first but later make you love their freedom and expanse, their charm grows with time. You do not have to wait to get the charm of the nightingales. When they *do* orchestrate a garden. Even they only go to certain places and only really sing at certain times, but when they do, as I have heard them at mating-time, in a few old gardens in Teheran, where they have come for years and years, it is as if a chorus had swooped down from Heaven.

Persian gardeners are good-natured and lazy and inadvertent like the gardens. I don't know if all are as polite and dull-witted as the Shirazi, but for these characteristics here I can vouch. The air of Shiraz is good to sleep in, whether for foreigner or native. I speak for the former from my own experience, and for the latter from observation. Whether on account of climate, or hasheesh, or merely a more than usual fatalistic philosophy, I

cannot say, but they seem hardly ever to wake up. Thus in the early morning Josephine's usual silvery tones, pitched to the shrillest of shrill keys, penetrate our rooms from various regions in the garden. Later she explained that the only way to get response from her gardeners was to talk as if they were deaf. Results in her garden certainly justified the method. I adopted it with success in some subsequent business transactions in the town.

The four mud block-houses at the corners of the inevitable high mud wall that bounds the garden tell the story of the brigandage that used to come up to the threshold of Shiraz, and that was only recently ended by Reza Shah's strong hand. There is an inner garden about the house, the real garden, and beyond, acres of grape-vines and pomegranate-trees and irrigation ditches play affectionate havoc with each other.

The house is in three sections, which is not unusual. The bedrooms are in the long, one-storied building, whose entire length is protected by a veranda and little airy pillars tufted with honeycomb groining. On the other side of the big round water-basin spotted with ducks and framed with pots of moss-rose is the bigger building for use in daytime, shaded by awnings you could only find in Persia, whose white panels are enlivened with coloured silhouettes of cypresses and chirping nightingales. Beyond and built about the entrance

IN THE GARDEN OF SULTANETABAD BELONGING TO THE SHAH OF PERSIA

is the place where the guards and servants have their quarters.

It all looks down on little rills of water, a labyrinth that dances through the courtyard, laughs up at the verandas and enmeshes the garden. Out farther, with lines of poplar and plane and orange and rose trees, they imprison squares of cabbage-patch, fruit-trees, rose-beds, and jumbled masses of aster, marigold, and petunia. Not for nothing does Josephine address her gardeners as if they were deaf.

She and Melvin have the vitality and humour to make out of living a joyous game. You know the kind. It's a tonic to be in a house where daily routine is made adventure. Things happen. You don't know why, but you find yourself in a current of unexpected interest that revolves like a cinema.

This morning Lassie, the wire-haired terrier, white and sedate and wise, for she was never brought up with other dogs, exhibited her dry humour when one of the polite and dull-witted gardeners came along, while some of us were sitting idle under the plane-trees, balancing on his head a huge tray dripping with grapes. The little rascal eyed him quietly till he got close abreast, and then sprang at his ankles, which in these parts his class wear bare. The surprised old man jumped into a dancing Bacchus, and performed his rôle with as much agility as greenhorns used sometimes to dance to the bullets of six-shooters in Colorado

saloons. . . . Poor old Mark, a shaggy Swedish sheep-dog, who for long had been the other canine member of the family, and whom we had known in Teheran, lost his life a short time back by falling off the roof in pursuit of a cat.

Sometimes the diversion is a servant. Persian servants are often admirable and sufficiently temperamental to be interesting. Of course they are lazy. Your cook to whom you pay twenty-five dollars a month will give one-fifth of his wages to a small boy in order to get up an hour or two later in the morning and get away in mid-afternoon to have a smoke, probably of opium. And according to our standards, the cook will be dirty, very dirty, unless he has already worked for a Western *khanum*. That won't make him clean, but it will make him hide the dirt a little. But he will listen politely to orders, and be skilful before his charcoal fire or his tiled oven, and take pride in learning what you teach him. And if you go on the road or with mules into the mountains and tell him to come along half an hour beforehand, he'll be ready and as handy on the trip as you could want, and your meals will very likely be hotter and more punctual than at home. One thing particularly you should do—keep accounts. Make him report daily. It will mean a tenfold saving, and he'll like you all the better. And another thing: don't ever really lose your temper at him. Laugh at him, be cynical, and if worst comes to worst, with politeness deduct a toman, which is about a dollar, from his monthly wage. That will get him. But nothing will amuse him so much as to see the *sahib* allow his temper to get out of hand. Of course, in Persia you don't find women cooks.

Josephine's household knows it isn't good for their wages to be too lazy, and they are not given much chance to fatten themselves by unmoral means. Being made to think about their work, they don't get the chance to think too much about themselves. Which is a process that applies to others than household servants. Ancient, dignified, and evil-eyed Nasrollah is the head servant, which means he has more of a chance than the others to supplement his wages. Occasionally he goes mad and rushes through the house, waving his arms like one of the flamingoes in the marshes of near-by streams. It seems these spells come on when his mistress refuses to give ear to his many, constant woes. So she at least has the choice of being either bored or inconvenienced; she isn't to be frightened. Then there is little Gholam Hussein, with good intentions and the mentality of the White Rabbit, who hiked a thousand miles to Kerbela to make his peace at the great shrine of his Prophet, and then returned to his master and mistress as if to home, who with solemn simplicity will insist that he really has no idea where the thing is that you are looking for, and which he has in his pocket or is holding in his hand. There is François,

the chauffeur, a young Syrian who married an Armenian girl in Teheran. She had the devil of a time following her husband to Shiraz, owing to the fears of the good Catholic Sisters who had her in charge. Hadiyat is the cook, stalwart, able, and silent, who is the real tyrant on the pay-roll. And there used to be Hussein, a youth from Khorassan, who made centre-pieces with the petals of flowers that made a dinner-table look like a flaming mosaic.

This morning I went with Melvin to his office in town. He goes earlier than we do at home, in the first freshness of the morning, and he doesn't go in a commuters' special or a roaring subway fighting for a place and squeezed cheek by jowl against his neighbour. His office has no elevator, and the air is not charged with pep, and the walls are not of bland, expensive marble. But the big court, with its meditating wych-elms and old plane-trees divided by the long tank of water that runs up to the portico in front of his office, solemn with spirally fluted columns that look like marble, even if they're only limestone, sees quiet achievement that speaks by its results. The shadow of the beloved and patriotic Kerim Khan Zend pervades the place. He was the Vekil or Regent who ruled from Shiraz like a sovereign—he refused the title of Shah—in the days before and during our Revolutionary War, and to whom almost everything of any worth in the place to-day owes its existence.

You must know that Melvin is a senior member of the American Financial Mission that was first engaged by the Persian Government in 1922 to come to Persia under Dr. Arthur C. Millspaugh, for the purpose of reorganizing and building up the financial structure of the country. Their services have been continued since that time, and their numbers increased. You will see Melvin called on the official lists 'Director of Finance for Fars and the Southern Ports', the 'Southern Ports' being the name given to the long, narrow administrative area that comprises Persia's side of the Persian Gulf. The court and its ancient, two-storied building that he took me to this morning is the home of an organization that collects revenues over an area bigger than England and Wales. It is the central office of his administration that in Shiraz alone employs well over a hundred persons. Of its three sections, the first handles correspondence and files and personnel and inspection work. The second has directly to do with the collection of revenue that comes from many sources, but primarily from a land tax, indirect taxes on tobacco and opium and *arragh* (which is the Persian whisky), taxes on the importation of sugar and tea (which are put aside for ultimate railroad construction), and the proceeds that come from public domains and water rights, for in Persia title to vast areas of land lies in the Government. This last is one of the facts which enlarges

to almost indefinite proportions the range of the director's duties, for it places on him partial responsibility in connection with the exploitation of economic resources, transportation needs, the multifarious activities based on Government leases, and throws on him partial control of the great tribal migrations that sweep over his area twice every year. You cannot perform such duties without power, and where foreigners are sought for such service, competent men will not accept responsibility without at the same time being given wide authority. The third section, even more than the other two, is an office of decimals and digits, with cashier and accounts and audits and supplies, from which nearly fifty thousand tomans is transmitted every week to the Treasury-General in Teheran, and from which disbursements are made to most of the other local administrations. This is one of the largest of the twenty-seven provincial agencies sprinkled over Persia, and its contribution to the national income of around twenty-five million tomans it not inconsiderable. Under the main office in Shiraz are twelve sub-agencies, of which a few are over two hundred miles from the centre as the crow flies, and very much longer as you travel.

I assure you, collecting revenues in Persia isn't the same as collecting taxes at home. There's not a mile of rail in Melvin's territory. Owing to the

character of the mountains, there are regions along the Persian Gulf which are only accessible by boat. I cannot tell you how many people it contains, for a census has never been taken, but there are probably short of a million. Think what such scantiness of population means! Of these more than a third are tribal nomads that migrate from southern lowlands near the Gulf with horses and donkeys and camels and sheep and goats and babies and all their household goods in the spring, before the grazing is turned to tinder by a scorching sun, up across great mountain ranges to high, upland valleys, and in the autumn back again to the lower and warmer regions.

Melvin runs his show with the same zest and dexterity that he performed aerial reconnaissance over the German lines during the War. He shares with one other power and authority in the district (a modest term for so big a State!). For here, as elsewhere in Persia, it is the action of two persons, the soldier and the revenue collector, that determines public welfare. Sometimes the two conflict; sometimes the former would like to assume the functions of the latter, sometimes the advent of a progressive, energetic, honest *faranghi* as a colleague in provincial administration is resented. You can see it takes ability of no mean order to meet embarrassments and difficulties under these conditions, and in an area where you may travel, in places, only with armed escort on horseback,

and where ignorance, distrust, and intrigue are often neighbours.

SHIRAZ
September 27

We had, of course, to make some calls on the Persian notables who are Melvin's official colleagues. Calls in Persia are a *sine qua non*. They can't be avoided. Persians are courteous and hospitable, and perhaps it is as well they haven't adopted our own casual social conventions. You don't just go and drop a card on a Persian gentleman—not, that is, if you wish to do the proper thing. You make an appointment a day or two ahead and ask to be received, and dress up, and at the hour indicated present yourself in a starched and solemn frame of mind. Dejected retainers stand by the entrance gate, and if they are of the older generation cross their arms and bow. Others wait on the steps, watch you in an absent-minded way, and mumble the word along that you have come. All of which is to do you honour. Inside, your hat is taken by one and your coat by another and your stick by a third (unless two of the three have an altercation), and you find your host standing at his reception-room door likewise dressed up, and you feel as if an usher were shaking your hand before showing you to a seat. It is usually a large room. Houses of Persian notabilities, whatever else, are spacious, and

according to our ideas of furnishing quite bare. Some chairs—very likely gilt and plush and tassels—placed at regular intervals against the walls regard you with cold propriety. Some decorative coloured cotton prints—the kind we saw sun-drying on the banks of the Zendeh Rud at Isfahan—with perhaps the figure of your host, or H.I.M. the Shah, or peacocks or cypress-trees or other things upon them, or rugs, are on the walls, or stiff Victorian wall-paper. Some rickety tea-tables (*à la* Cote d'Azur) will be trying in a weak way to flirt with the passionless chairs. Some very finely woven and perhaps very ugly-patterned rugs will be on the floor. You will be motioned to the right end of a rather prudish sofa, and your host upon a chair near by will ask, if he be of the older school, if your blessed soul is in a happy state, and your interpreter will reply (if he is on his job) that thanks to the mercy of Allah it is. But if he has been schooled in the West, he may be brief, and, as we do, say it in three or four words. Health being a valued asset of us all, it is altogether a proper and civilized topic with which to open any conversation. Then you are offered cigarettes and tea in small glasses stuck into silver filigree frames with handles. Subsequently comes coffee, but after a certain number of offerings (I always forget how many), it is the thing to rise and take your leave, and your host prays that Allah will be your protector, *et cetera, et cetera.*

Background and procedure may sound bloodless, but let me tell you the average Persian gentleman has a sense of humour and a social readiness that makes a visit a not unenjoyable matter. And conversation as a rule takes a wider range than when, for instance, you get cornered after church by your parson at home or are introduced to one of your mother's friends who hasn't seen you since you were such a lovely child. Some have travelled or served their Government in high positions at home or abroad, or take an active interest in their land, and will discuss French poetry or archæology or Persian literature or international politics with an information and insight and ready wit that will impress and charm you. I have one Persian friend in Teheran to whose house I have the good fortune to be admitted from time to time. I assure you the time I pass conversing with him is pure delight.

It is a pity the knick-knacks of the Persian social stage are such a hybrid of other things (*exempli gratia:* a Newport drawing-room of 1875) than Persia. It is a case where native culture lacked the vigour to hold on, and so there has been brought and planted on it foreign things. To-day it is primarily in the museums and the exhibition rooms of the art-dealers in America and Europe, and to a very minor degree with those few who still try to make a living by covering the community with an ever finer collecting-comb, that you find

products of Persia's former decorative arts: the brocades and silks and velvets that brought fame and wealth to Kashan and Isfahan and other places, the brass-ware and *kalamkars*, the painted panels and miniatures and book illuminations and tiles and pottery and the funny collapsible lanterns which took their size from their owners' social standing, and other practical and artistic handicrafts. . . .

Remember when you call on a Persian not to ask after his wife. You never see or speak of the ladies of the family, whose quarters are apart, and who might be non-existent so far as society is concerned. Times are changing in this regard, and probably will change faster in future. Eunuchs, for instance—Abyssinia was the source of supply—no longer function. Their place is gone, because the women, though still veiled and still outside of social things, now run themselves, their households, and their children. They appear in the streets, in the shops, in the bazaars, albeit still in their black shrouds that reach from head to heel, and in public or semi-public places. The parlours of European dentists and the horse-cars of Teheran, for instance, have separate spaces reserved for women which men may not share. So the black eunuchs, whose job was to guard the women in the *anderun* as treasures that may never see the light of day, to see they never went outside, and who more or less ran the household, are now fast

disappearing. So, too, unless my guess is wrong, will soon disappear the *chador*, the black shroud that covers face and body. At first the chador seems a graceful thing that gives a sweep to the movement and a sharp and harmonious simplicity to the form, hiding what is discordant and unconnected. Hides, too, uncleanliness and poverty and plainness. Plainness is so much commoner than good looks. But listen to the European wife of a Persian, or observe yourself the incongruity of this badge of exclusion and inferiority, especially with the increasing penetration of Western manners, and you forget whether or not you think it's artistic, and know only that wholesomeness and a proper adjustment to modern ways can only come with a recognition of social equality and a throwing of the chador after the eunuchs. Which will not take long to come. Incidentally, the veiling of Moslem women's faces was never ordered by their Prophet. It was a later tactical move of the clergy that, fostered, became with time a deep-rooted and universal custom. With the chador will soon be cast aside, unless my guess is wrong, the prevailing custom that prohibits man and wife from appearing together in an open carriage, or the police regulation that forbids women driving in a carriage or a motor-car unless the top is up, or the legal requirement that the testimony of two women is equivalent to that of one man.

SHIRAZ
September 28

We have been doing the sights. Yesterday we visited the bazaar. The bazaar is the starting-point in most Persian towns for any new-comers, whether they be idlers like us who desire to be diverted, or serious people bent on definite business. The bazaar here dates from the halcyon days of Kerim Khan Zend, and although the books tell you it's the finest in Persia, its arcades and passages are too high and broad and straight and well lighted for my taste, and exhibit too big a proportion of cloth that comes from English and Japanese mills, too much crockery and cutlery from Europe, and too few home products of the East, which is why I visit a bazaar.

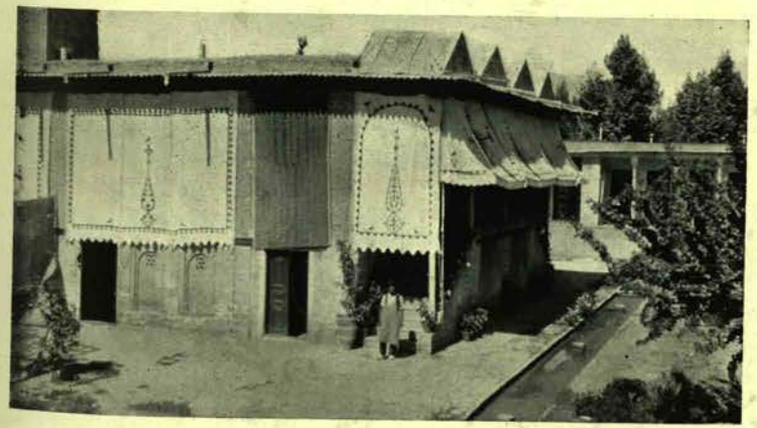
And I went to the huge, square building embracing an orange grove in its big court, which is also an achievement of Kerim Zend, where the Governor lives and does his business. Here on an open balcony under a vaulted canopy of groining he gave me tea, and we talked of the great world of Teheran.

I went, too, under Josephine's guidance, to the place where the great Sadi is buried, called the Sadieh. Sadi, as perhaps you know, is the most popular of Persian poets. He lived to be over a century old. He began writing his odes about the time Philip Augustus was subduing turbulent French nobles and Marco Polo penetrating farthest

Asia. He, too, travelled about Asia and into Africa, went to Mecca fourteen times, was taken prisoner by the Crusaders, and at the age of seventy, when most of us are ready to retire from active work or to another life, wrote poetry by the bushelful, and left behind a name that, with Hafiz, who came along soon after, is venerated to-day in Persia as one of the immortals. His stone coffin, coated with carved Arabic inscriptions within a screen of open brasswork, is in a modest-sized, bare room of a modest-sized, bare building, with open arched recesses instead of windows, and shaded by pleasant pines and cypresses, and used, it seems, on holidays as a resort for picnickers and those who make this two-mile trip from the town the object of a day's outing. Close by is the Garden of Dilgusha (*Anglice:* Heart's Ease), with its twenty thousand orange-trees, the home of a local potentate. Both the Sadieh and Heart's Ease nestle in the mouth of one of the little valleys that break the mountain frame of the Shiraz plain. A peak of mountain just behind is capped with what remains of a Sassanian castle and two wells hewn in the solid rock. It is one of the excursions we did not take. The wells are said to be of unknown depth. It seems to have been a custom until recently to feed them with women convicted of adultery. A pretty story we did not confirm.

Yesterday we went to polo that is played on

THE BUILDING CALLED THE "SADIEH" OUTSIDE SHIRAZ, THAT CONTAINS THE STONE COFFIN OF THE POET SADI



OUR HOST'S HOUSE AT SHIRAZ

the plain within sight of the trees that hover over the resting-place of Sadi and make Dilgusha as an emerald upon a field of sand, and within sight of the Sassanian ruins high above, still breaking, but to-day humbly, the mountain skyline. The polo field is dry and gravelly, and you only learn the extent of its hardness after a spill. In spite of the two-wheeled things that attempted to sprinkle water before the chukkers began, we could hardly follow the game from the tent of Dilgusha's owner (who was one of the players) for the curtain of dust. But the nature of the field doesn't seem to spoil the fun. Melvin plays with the Persian officers. They like you better if you can play as well as work.

We did not get to Hafiz' grave, for which I am sorry. You are expected to have visited Hafiz' grave after you get home from Shiraz. It is said to boast a yellow sarcophagus guarded by an iron fence in a big Moslem cemetery. If you do not read Persian and know of the man only by his name, you may well take, I think, as we did, an inspection of the place on faith. But if you do not see his grave, you should at least be able to tell the story of his interview with Tamerlane. A verse of Hafiz had come under the eyes of the great conqueror and made him angry: 'Art thou he who was so bold as to offer my two great cities of Samarkand and Bokhara for the black mole on thy mistress's cheek?' 'Yes, Sire', replied the poet; 'it is by such

acts of generosity that I have brought myself to such a state of destitution that I now must solicit your bounty.'

Persians are very fond of their poets. Well they may be. And if you doubt their nimble wits, take a look at their proverbs, which are beyond count, and which have a flavour all their own. They are food and drink to the charcoal-burner, the peasant, the muleteer, the water-carrier, as well as to more patrician elements. This I realized on an occasion when I was in camp near a hamlet in the mountains back of Teheran. My tent was pitched by a rapid stream which was bridged only by two uncongenial, erratic poles. After I had made a crossing one morning, with endless trepidation, I found a peasant woman waiting on the farther side, watching to see whether my faltering steps and uncertain balance would land me in the stream or at her side. When finally I had crossed, she said quite simply but admonishingly through the folds of her black shroud, quoting a well-known dictum: 'If you say to yourself "I can do it" and proceed at once to do it, you'll succeed; but if you say "I cannot", there is no use trying, for you will fail.' And gathering her black calico sheet about her, she was across the stream almost before I could turn around.

When you come to Persia you cannot help but make the acquaintance of a famous character, who is an accomplice of Persian humour. His name is

Mullah Nasr-ed-Din, and he is the Persian Mr. Pickwick. Make his acquaintance, for he is a most quaint character. All the children are familiar with his simple humour and the grown-ups with the shrewdness of his simplicity. His adventures and sayings are legend, but they all reflect the same streak of nonsensical sagacity that appeals to all of us. You will hear of the time when the mullah was seeking to locate some treasure he had left on the desert and was asked whether he hadn't marked the spot. 'Yes, certainly', replied the good man, 'by the shadow of a cloud.' On another occasion he was asked whether he would count the stars. To which he replied in the affirmative, on condition they gave him a ladder. But when this was promised, he admitted that he had forgotten it would be dark, and so before he could begin he must be provided also with a light. Or his reply when asked what happened to the old moon: that they made, of course, new moons out of it and the stars with what was left over. The good mullah was a family man, and his wife, it appears, an amorous lady. But of their marital adventures I will let you learn for yourself when you come to Persia. . . .

CHAPTER V

DOWNSTAIRS TO SHAPUR

KAZERUN
September 29

YOU have heard of the 'Iranian Plateau'. It's the vast tableland from four to six thousand feet above the sea on which most of Persia sits and parts of neighbouring countries. The physical aspects of the country we have been travelling through are singularly appropriate to a plateau. It is open and barren and windswept, as if you were on the roof of a house. Or as if you were alone on an unornamented stage.

To-day we have been descending from the roof.

From Shiraz to Bushire, the main Persian port on the Persian Gulf, is a little over one hundred miles as a bird flies. By the road it is a hundred and sixty. The route between the two places has been one of the chief thoroughfares into and out of the country since the Persian Gulf became a lucrative highway of commerce in the eighteenth century. Yet friends in Teheran who knew it before the War talked about a series of ladders, and told me they preferred to negotiate its steepness and

its rocks on foot rather than try to remain astride their mules. No possibility in those days of making the trip in a wheeled vehicle: only beasts of burden had a chance. It must have been pretty bad. A famous English traveller thirty years ago described it as 'the roughest . . . highway of traffic in the world'. It took five or six days to do the one hundred and sixty miles. To-day there is a real road down which you can take an automobile if you have nerve or a good driver.

The greater part of the descent is concentrated in three places: down three stairways, as it were, with stretches of mountain, valley, and plain in between, as you have corridors and landings between stairs in a house.

We didn't have time to go to Bushire, and, besides, there does not seem to be much to see. It is an old seaport, though actual port I believe there is none; ships anchor in a shallow, open roadstead and pray for friendly weather. In the eighteenth century a place to which venturesome English merchants came and where the East India Company had a factory, from which goods passed north up the stairways to the plateau and thence to Isfahan and other inland marts of commerce.

To-day we came down two of the three stairways to Kazerun, which is about half-way between Shiraz and Bushire, for we wanted to get an idea of the road, which is famous in these parts, and see the ruins of Shapur, which is near Kazerun,

and was the chief city that the Sassanian monarch of that name built himself sixteen hundred-odd years ago. Not much is left, they say, but bas-relief tablets hewn in rock and a cave that contains a statue of the Great King. . . .

We got into an appropriately aggressive frame of mind to tackle the crankiness of any road. Yesterday Taghi washed and massaged and purgatived Nanette, and we started off this morning with three spare 'outers' and minute instructions from Melvin, who knows the road backwards, in regard to possible and improbable eventualities.

The first thing that strikes you as you cross the Shiraz plain and climb into the rolling hills of buff and tawny tints at its western end is the silhouette of mountain skyline that frames the northern side. For upon his back, extending several miles from upturned toes to the profile of his head, gazing in mute silence heavenward, lies the Earl of Balfour. Why he should have chosen such an exposed and airy bed is hard to say, but that he lies there, albeit in the rock, no one who has looked at illustrated papers for the last twenty years could pretend to deny.

You soon realize the road is not merely a connection between Shiraz and the Persian Gulf, but a commercial artery along which considerable traffic passes. Not since leaving Teheran have we encountered so many caravans, and never have we or Nanette become so impatient of their

complacent monopoly of the road. A caravan or two is a diversion for which you gladly stop the car to watch the show. You rather envy the comfortable leisure of animal and driver. But when you get penned up on the edge of a dusty highway and see the head of another caravan come over the ridge in front just as the tail of the present one is passing, and have the annoyance keep repeating itself, you take stock of ways and means to assert your right of passage, especially when you have two steep stairways to descend before dark. The plodding charvadars trail behind their line of animals as if there was nothing in all Persia to perplex the leaders, and if you push your way ahead, the charvadars don't get up to the confusion of backing and filling and dancing animals at the head of the column till nothing can be done but trust to fate.

We let the camels pass. Even Nanette seemed impressed with their supercilious indifference and remained meekly still. If you have to ship things that are breakable, see they go by camel; for when your camel kneels on the ground its cargo is brought very nearly to the earth, and so escapes the jolting that it gets when it's lifted off a donkey or mule. Which is an important factor when stuff is taken off an animal every night and loaded on it again every morning for a month or two or more.

Nanette got a little ruthless when the donkey caravans came along. Finally she began to crawl

by and through them. When you push or frighten donkeys over the sides of a road by tooting your horn or stealthily driving your car forward, you have the satisfaction of knowing that no matter how steep the sides or how rough they are with boulders, a benign Providence has given the donkeys feet and balance that prevent disaster. Whereas if a camel misses a step and starts to sprawl too widely he splits apart and dies.

The first sight of human habitation that cheered us was the white, square caravanserai of Khan-i-Zinian, thirty miles out from Shiraz, with a cluster of huts clinging to its solid form. It is beside the little Karaghach or Black Tree river, whose bed was all but dry, but whose white gravel bars were becoming more and more thickly fringed with small scrub. Indeed, the hills began to give hints of greenness we had not seen before, that were as refreshing as drops of rain after a summer's drought.

It was fortunate for us that the stream was in a languid state, for the bridge of half a dozen arches that takes the road across had gone the way of many Persian bridges. The first span had become a heap of bricks, so we started on the river-bed and reached the level of the bridge I hardly know how. Persian bridges are often an adventure. They are picturesque, but usually prettier in a picture than on closer acquaintance. Sometimes the line of road upon them suggests the contour of

a Gothic window, so high do they hold their skirts above the middle of a stream, or else, as here, you trust to the bridge for a part of the crossing and to your own wits for the rest of it. But for your peace of mind know that bridges in Persia are not frequent, because waterways are not frequent. Like the waterways, they are usually small, and during a large part of the year so dry you may cross the stream-bed and make impolite grimaces at the bridge.

Then we left the Black Tree river that books connect with doings in this region for the last two thousand years, and climbed up and shot down the slopes of a ridge called the White Breast. Why, was not evident, unless the spring blossoming of the wild pear and apple and plum that are scattered over it is responsible. It was only evident it was a very old and wrinkled breast, and at this season of the year of a colour anything but white. Barberry and scrub oak and other dwarf trees increased, and the landscape took on a gentler aspect. The convolutions of the road increased too. Places where the incline seemed a little more than usually akin to the steepness of a ladder called forth languid comments from Christopher on such homœopathic subjects as the view.

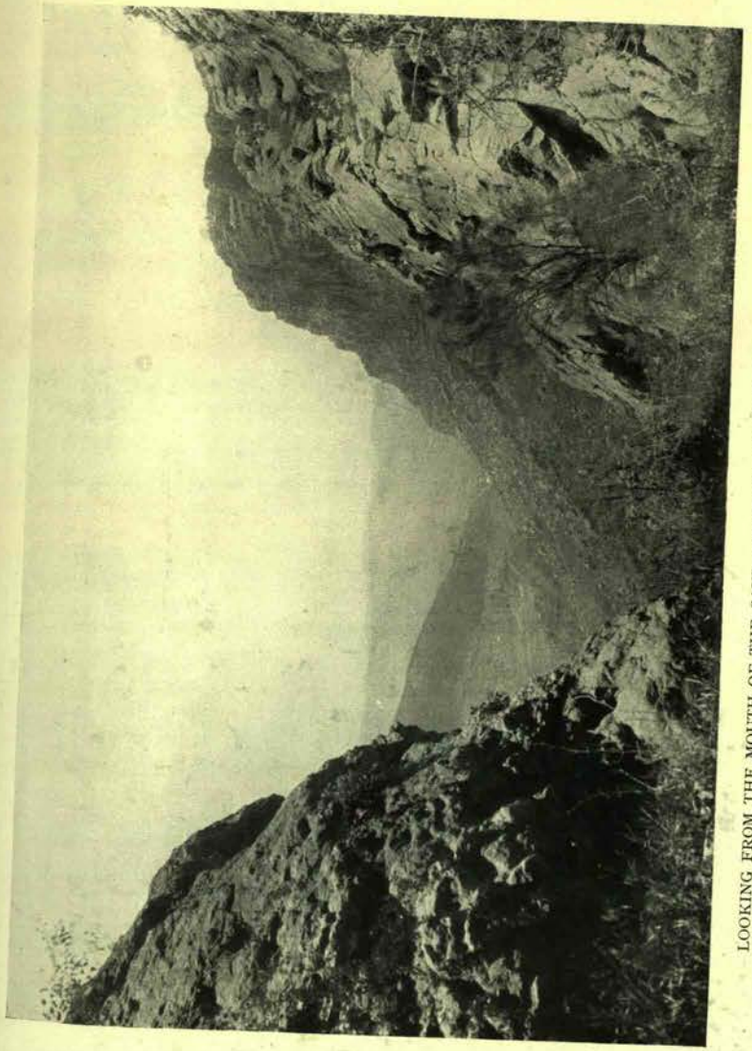
It was a pleasant respite to reach the plain of the Wild Almond. Locked within steep, highish mountains, and only some seven miles across, it was a still and flat and quiet refuge. In the spring-

time, according to one traveller, 'a hundred rills . . . down the rugged sides of the encircling mountains contribute their waters to form the lake in its centre. The beauty of these streams, some of which fall in a succession of cascades from hills covered with vines, the lake itself, in whose clear bosom is reflected the image of the mountains by which it is overhung, the rich fields on its margin, and the roses, hyacinths, and almost every species of flower that grow in wild luxuriance on its borders made us gaze with admiration on this charming scene'.[1]

We stopped beside a pool and a grove of ancient willow-trees for lunch, and read of the former prevalence in the region of the maneless lion and other ungentle beasts, and of their depredations on peaceful travellers. We were glad the description was of the past, for we are only armed to combat the mountain partridge, which frequently entices the traveller in these parts to interrupt his journey.

On reaching the southern end of the little plain, we climbed for a mile or so a stony lane up a mountain-side till we came to the Kotal-i-Pir-i-Zan, or Pass of the Old Woman, seven thousand four hundred feet above the sea. From here descends the first flight of stairs from the Persian plateau, three thousand feet in a handful of miles. Verily the place is well named if one compares the features of certain old women, especially certain old women

[1] *Sketches of Persia*, Sir J. Malcolm, vol. i, p. 95.



LOOKING FROM THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE DOWN ON THE VALLEY OF THE SHAPUR RIVER

in Persia, with the gnarled and stunted and dust-laden trees among the dust-coloured crags and boulders that barnacle the mountain-side. From the pass you survey a new and unexpected Persia. You look out and down over ridge upon ridge of mountain no longer unashamedly naked, but pocked with the modest beginnings of arboreal vegetation. Far down at the foot of our mountain the sun lighted up a trough and a grey thread that ran down its middle. Just before reaching the farther end of the trough the thread dropped over its outside ridge. That, we knew, was our road and the ridge, the Kotal-i-Dokhter, or Pass of the Daughter, and the road down it would be our second flight of stairs, a drop of near another thousand feet. Beyond, where lines and shapes became unreal, the flat stretches of the Kazerun plain blurred the haze.

Nanette made her way slowly but surely around the hairpin turns and down and down, and more ruthlessly than in the morning scattered from her path donkeys and mules, which dropped over the mountain-side, and as if to turn the laugh on us made short cuts to lower points on the road, where they insistently kept on blocking us. Half-way down, on a ledge, a generous-sized caravanserai sat comfortably blinking in the afternoon sun, whose court and interior must be rarely empty of way-worn men and beasts. But it bespoke a dreary loneliness, a oasis far from neighbours, though

safe in the knowledge that lawless nomads or others with fierce intentions would have no interest but to respect its person.

When we got to the foot of our mountain, which is the landing between the first and second stairs, and ran for five miles down a flat valley which was the trough we had seen from above, among oak-trees that were ever becoming less dwarfed, we had a feeling of comfort and safety, as if we had landed on terra firma from a turbulent sea. But it was not to last. We soon got to where the road dropped over the Pass of the Daughter. It resembles the Pass of the Old Woman—she could have been the daughter of no other old woman—except its drop is less and a new roadway permits a less precipitous descent.

Let me assert that Nanette acted with admirable discretion, and the stories we had heard of friends getting out of their cars at every turn or running behind to block the wheels made us feel that both Nanette (who it is only fair to state is not so long in the torso as many of her sisters) and Taghi had acquitted themselves with credit.

Finally we landed on the plain of Kazerun. *Nota bene*, only half-way down to the sea. But it was for us to worry about the third stairway, which from local accounts is the worst, for tomorrow we turn about and climb back to the plateau.

It is a new Persia, as I have said, that greets

you here. It is like the change from living in the upper stories of a house with bare walls to moving down to where the walls have pictures and other things to divert the eye. For in addition to the physical descent you feel a warmer and more humid air, and see about you a Nature warmer and more generous with her furnishings. Thus do the clusters of languid date-palms and groves of pomegranate-trees give you a feeling of getting back to an earth that germinates and procreates.

At the point where we said good-bye to the mountain and reached the plain was a bas-relief hewn in the rock, depicting a prince of the Persian royal house a hundred years ago, with lion and hawk and water-pipe, who when Governor of this district copied the method of his Sassanian predecessors of transmitting his name to posterity. Others of his time and line whose vanity also outshone most other qualities made for themselves similar crude carvings in other places, which compare to their original prototypes as a modern Satsuma jar does, we'll say, to a Japanese vase of the sixteenth century.

Then we traversed a causeway by a marsh called the Bridge of the Mirror, where now only marsh grass and tall reeds take the place of the mirror which spring floods make. After eight miles down the centre of the plain, which does not give the feeling of eternal space as did the plains we left behind, we reached the little town of Kazerun.

We got bewildered in its happy-go-lucky thoroughfares, till we espied the telegraph wires of the I.E.T.D., and played follow-the-leader till they brought us to their little concrete home.

SHIRAZ
October 1

The Armenian in charge of the I.E.T.D. had not received the promised message from the head office in Shiraz about our coming, which was unfortunate, for three other travellers had arrived earlier in the day and were already established in the rest-room. But the Armenian was accommodating, and he and his wife and baby gave us their sitting-room, where Rahim put up our camp-beds and we made ready for the night.

There is a sub-agency of the Shiraz financial administration in the place. Its incumbent called and reported the arrangements he had made for us to see Shapur on the morrow, pursuant to a telegram from Melvin.

The living quarters in the I.E.T.D. station were all on the second floor, and bordered with generous veranda space. We watched the sun sink behind the mountains, listened to the noises of the town subside, and enjoyed the prospect, as you do when it is well earned, of a good night's rest. How blessed is the optimistic nature that has no warning of the slip that is to come 'twixt cup and lip! The prospect of that night was so much more satisfying than its

retrospect. Not on the trip, not all summer, not since I can remember, has a night been so full of irritation and untoward incident. I think the drama opened with the baby. It might have been twins or triplets from the noise it made. It and father and mother and some friends from Bushire (other than the travellers in the rest-room), to whom they were giving shelter, spent the night in part in the next room and in part on the veranda. The baby perhaps felt crowded; but it gave vent to irritation in a soul-piercing manner at constantly more frequent intervals between sundown and dawn. Our connecting door, like the usual door in the East, did not fit its frame. Then the dogs started. All Persian villages have pariah dogs. They eat the offal. And in Kazerun after sundown they start a mutual crying and barking bee that continues till midnight. I suppose they get tired out by then, for at that hour the performance is continued by the poultry. It is a myth that a cock begins to crow at dawn. Persian cocks, certainly Kazerun cocks, begin to crow lustily just as soon as the dogs get fagged and give them a chance to be heard. As a continuous accompaniment to both, in the same way as popcorn used to be passed throughout the continuation of a baseball game, was the presence about our beds of unfriendly sand-flies. A mosquito netting doesn't cramp the style of a sand-fly. His energy is too great and his size too small. Their bite is like contact

with the point of a needle. They don't buzz, and you can hardly see them without a microscope. Altogether they are unpleasant bed-fellows. Then about the time the dogs withdrew in favour of the cocks, and when it seemed for a moment that peace might come, a sudden and violent commotion took place on the other side of the room, and out of the darkness Christopher's voice indicated that a cat had jumped on his bed and was exploring the premises. But there is a stage of vexation when you become quiet with resignation. Your nerves refuse to react further. So about 2 a.m., when the engine of the Ford belonging to the friends from Bushire in the next room began racing and shrieking with blatant shrillness for fifteen long minutes under our window, I merely speculated on the nature of the owners, and wished them a bad journey over the long and unfriendly road they were about to travel.

Later we got up, also before the sun, and made ready for our trip across the plain to Shapur, for we had decided to get back to Shiraz the same day, God (and Nanette) willing.

A young man from the financial sub-agent's office, black-eyed and lean as a knife-blade, who told us his name was Habibullah, was on hand at half-past five to act as our cicerone. Before six we were jolting over the road that runs in a north-westerly direction down the centre of the Kazerun plain and watching the sunlight slowly unroll its

curtain down the sides of the mountain wall on our left. After five miles we struck north, leaving the highroad and, with the contradiction of so many things in Persia, found the track across country easier and quicker going than the main thoroughfare.

As we approached the northern end of the plain its flat surface gave way to undulations. We passed one end of a marsh rank with giant weeds, where the low side of the road was built up with blocks from the near-by ruins of Shapur. Shapur the city was the capital of Shapur the king, and only one of various monuments left by that great building monarch of the Sassanian dynasty. He whose identity as Ardeshir's heir you may remember was accepted only after he, alone of a group of youths, followed a polo ball to the close proximity of the king, who was himself a renowned player of the game, and thereby, according to the legend, proved his parentage.

On a high spur jutting out from the mountain-side, surveying the city it protected, the remains of the citadel towered above us. It is a sad dilapidation of mud and stone that does not belie its sixteen hundred years. We didn't stop to explore the remnants of the city at its feet, which are chiefly interesting to archæologists. Most of them are under the soil or the various mounds that offer the visitor grounds for speculation. None constitutes to-day a standing or the portion of

a standing structure, with the exception of here and there the fragments of a wall.

On the road under the spur whereon sat the ruined fortress were five men and near twice that number of horses. 'They will take us to the cave', grinned Habibullah. For what we wished most to see besides the great rock bas-reliefs was what was farther from the beaten track and more difficult of access, and what most travellers 'leave for another time': a cave high up on the mountain-side in the valley of the little Shapur river. The cave is guarded in the centre of its entrance by the only real statue that survives to-day in Persia from ancient times. It has been the source of many a myth and fable, and was not actually rediscovered until a little over a century ago.

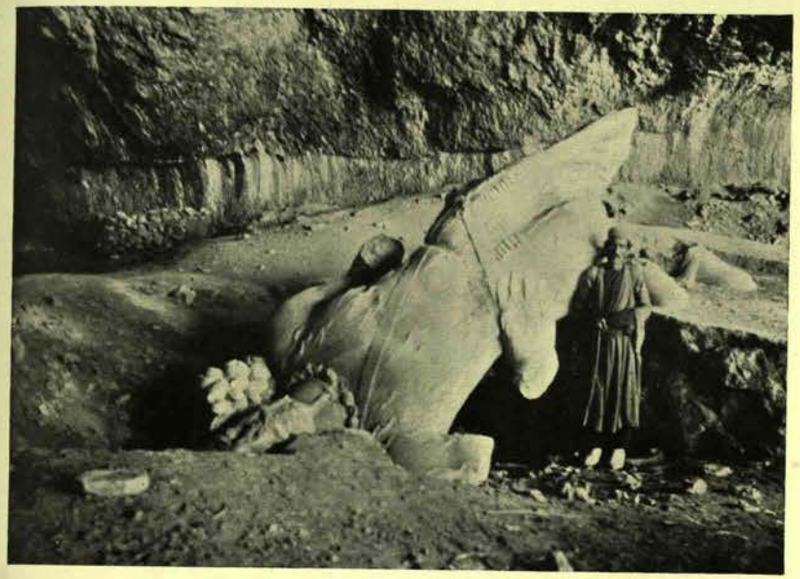
Our guides were peasant-folk employed by Melvin's organization in connection with the care of Government lands hereabouts. Their dress is much the same as that of their class the country over, and reminds one of figures in fifteenth-century woodcuts. Upon the head, having the shape of an inverted bowl, sits the inevitable felt kola, with a fringe curling from under its edge of more or less evenly clipped locks. A long, loose smock covers the body, gathered at the waist by the many folds of a sash; below, loose, flapping trousers. A practical costume for men of the soil, of a fashion that changes only when the manner of livelihood of the region

changes, and on the plain of Kazerun that has not been since the records began.

We left Taghi with Nanette and mounted our ponies beside the little Shapur river where it emerged into the plain from behind the spur on which the fortress seemed to croon so sadly over her fallen fortunes. Behind that spur, whither the trail and our guides led, the high mountain-side suddenly opened, and through a steep and narrow gorge, filled with the laughing ripples of the stream, we espied a green and pleasant ribbon of a valley secure and hidden from the world of the plain. Upon the rock walls of the gorge itself, which here contract to about three hundred yards, are the bas-relief sculptures which have given fame to the locality and are the best of all surviving examples of this form of Sassanian art. Like a picture-gallery, they depict figures and scenes and dress of the Sassanian period, and convey a knowledge of its customs and history in a form that laymen may enjoy. Two of the panels were on our side of the river, four along the other. Our time was limited, and we left their examination till our return from the cave.

I have often been glad my father started me riding at the age of five. Especially are you glad to be at home on a horse in the East, where frequently and unexpectedly getting to places of interest can only be done astride of an animal. As protégés of the American Director of Finance,

who can show Persians points about handling a horse, it was apparently assumed by our guides that we would be as much at home on the backs of their horses as lounging in an automobile. The Shapur valley spread out a bit, after we passed through its narrow gorge of a neck, like the body of a bottle. I have likened its bed to a ribbon. It was a ribbon much tangled and knotted, as we found on nearer approach, but Habibullah and his men, each with a gun slung over a shoulder and the ends of their sashes streaming behind, one with our lantern, another with my rucksack, made time as if on a racecourse. Up and down banks, through reeds thick as a cane-brake, fording the river, over rocks and ditches, some deep and dry, others filled with water, and boggy, spongy patches, across ploughed plots baked hard by the sun—a pell-mell ride it was, the guides showing the *faranghi* the pace of their horses, and the faranghi keeping up their horses as well as their reputations as best they could. Never have I seen surer-footed little animals cover breakneck going with greater ease and speed. After quite a sufficiency of miles, and toward the end of an hour, Habibullah, shouting back, pointed to a black spot high up on the western wall of the valley. It was at the bottom edge of a perpendicular cliff, which had a height of some six hundred feet, and ran along the top of the mountain-side like a protecting palisade. This was our destination.



THE STATUE OF SHAPUR

AS IT LIES TO-DAY, FIFTY FEET IN FROM THE MOUTH OF THE MOUNTAIN CAVE: 'VANITAS VANITATUM, ET OMNIA VANITAS'

We left the horses in the care of a boy when the side of the valley got too steep, and after much talking and shouting—the inevitable preliminary to any action in Persia—we started climbing up the boulder-cluttered mountain-side. The sun was getting hot, and I was glad to be the photographer, which enabled me to halt the more gracefully. Habibullah, proud of his few words of English, applied his spare energy to lengthy and unintelligible explanations of local superstitions that the objective of our expedition has given rise to. After forty minutes' contact with boulders and small rocks and steeply inclined patches of dried grass with surfaces like glass, we reached a perpendicular face of rock twenty feet high, at the top of which yawned the mouth of our cave. One hundred and fifty feet across it extended and near fifty high. The guides here seemed as surefooted as their horses, for barefooted they somehow scaled the scarp, then let down ropes of goat's hair for the two clumsy faranghi.

Do you remember when Crusoe came upon the footprints of Friday: the sudden evidence of unexpected human presence amid the loneliness of Nature? So here. From the ledge to which we climbed you look out on sky and rock and far down on a slender silver-thread of water. You look in through jaws of rock along a passage some hundred and fifty feet long, hewn out and vaulted by Nature, that ends in

still blackness and leads into the bowels of the mountain.

In the centre of this passage, facing him who enters and about fifty feet in from the entrance, as if to guard the mountain's secrets, once stood upon a huge block of a pedestal a heroic statue of Shapur. Only his sandalled feet remain to-day planted on it. The body, clad in a simple shirt gathered with ribbons at the waist, the neck, the head, with its huge clustered curls and mural crown, all a single piece some fifteen feet in length, lies against it: crown and head half buried in the earth and the stumps of the legs waving in mid-air as if majesty had been caught in the middle of a somersault. It is an awesome thing, from its weird placing within the mountain entrance and its tremendous size. When the sculptors had finished, it towered, mind you, twenty-five feet from the floor of the passage to the roof. The breadth at the shoulders is over eight feet, the length of the head and of the feet over three. It is thought to have been originally an integral part of the mountain, for the pedestal, the feet, the entire figure, appear to have been hewn out of a natural column that ran from floor to roof. Above, a lighter grain in the rock shows where the head was once attached. Who pulled it from its proud position no one knows. Some claim an earthquake cast it down, as if Nature became jealous that her mysteries should be guarded by a man-made object;

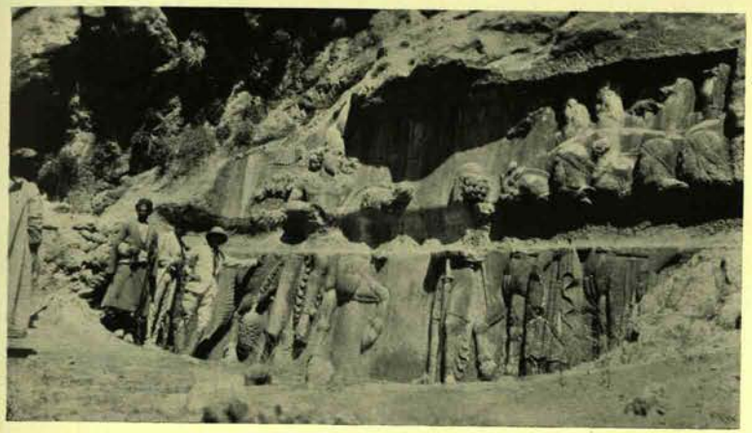
others that the invading Arabs in the seventh century refused to tolerate a thing they found being worshipped as a god.

Proceeding past the statue, the passage for a while contracts, and then, when daylight is nearly left behind and lanterns and candles lighted, you come upon a home for gnomes and goblins. Below and above and around you the mountain opens. Stumbling downwards, we found ourselves in the centre of a huge globular chamber, with pools of water and rocks that leered evilly in our flickering lights. A place for the forges and the ringing of hammers upon anvils of the Nibelungen imps, and the forging of a magic ring! There was some stonework and carving at one side made by man, but whether for the hunter, the priest, the guardian of treasure, or another, will remain unknown till science investigates the place. Like the arms of an octopus, other passages from it penetrated the mountain in various directions. Along one of these uneven tunnels we started, but ups and downs and stalactites rising like posts on every hand and feeble candle-light made progress slow. Finally, Habibullah's admission that he had never reached the end, but supposed that it continued 'for miles', and lack of time, prevented further disturbance of the mountain's secrets, and we made our way back to sunlight and more certain, if not less difficult, going. Down the scarp of rock, down the mountain-side to the horses,

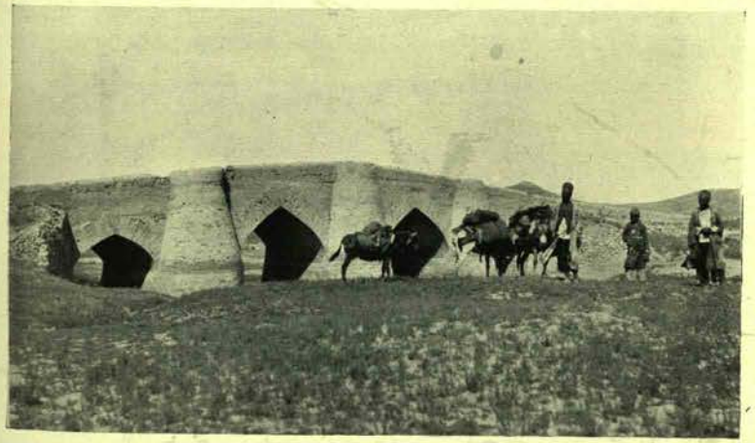
down the valley to the gorge we hurried, and found time to make a hurried visit to each of the six rock tablets.

You rub shoulders with two, as I have said, where the trail hugs the rock wall. Here Shapur, under the auspices of the god Ormuzd, is again receiving the supplications of his prisoner, the Emperor Valerian. Under his horse is a prostrate figure symbolizing the defeated Roman army. In the second panel, which is some forty feet long by twenty high, the Great King is surrounded by horsemen and warriors, and is investing with the Roman purple Cyriadis, a Syrian adventurer of whom history tells us little, in the presence of his captured and aged foe.

Our time was short and the sun hot, but self-esteem did not allow our leaving the four panels in the opposite wall of the gorge unvisited. We forded the stream none too easily, threw our reins into the hands of one of the fifteenth-century woodcuts, and made our way with hands and knees as well as feet along a horizontal cutting in the rock wall, which had once served as a channel for carrying water from the river above, perhaps to turn mill-wheels on the plain below. For the panels are some distance above the ground, which falls steeply into the river, and this ancient water channel which cuts across the face of two of the panels now constitutes the most satisfactory means of approach.



THIS HORIZONTAL CUTTING, THAT RUNS ACROSS THE FACE OF TWO OF THE BAS-RELIEFS AT SHAPUR, WAS MADE TO CARRY WATER



A PERSIAN BRIDGE IS SOMETIMES MORE PLEASANT TO LOOK AT THAN TO CROSS

The panels in size and scheme are worthy of their setting. Picture the quick-moving, laughing river as the floor of the gallery, and not far apart these perpendicular walls of rock rising into the blue canopy above. The first panel is again of the vainglorious Shapur, but this time his conceit must be forgiven because of the beauty of the thing. It is executed on a huge concave surface that forms a bay in the rock, which here is of a steely blue colour. In its centre is the Great King, and about him guards and prisoners of war and tribute-bearers to the number of ninety, and again poor old Valerian and the upstart Cyriadis. It was some feather in your cap, in those days, to defeat a Roman army and capture a *pontifex maximus*! Still another of the panels is of Shapur, but I would especially invite your attention to the remaining two, for their story is not of the ordinary.

To Shapur succeeded his son Ormesdas, and afterwards another son, Bahram I. The son of Bahram I became Bahram II, and after him succeeded his son, who became Bahram III. And as is apt to be the case with kings who are not of a tough fibre, their lives and tenure of power covered short periods. It was Bahram I and Bahram II (for Bahram III reigned too short a time to make any panel) who made the two panels to which I refer. Then after Bahram III came Narses, his great-uncle. Kings are not often succeeded by great-uncles, I admit, but if you exercise your

genealogical sense you will see that great-uncle Narses was none other than a third son of Shapur, who for one reason or another played a waiting game. Now note that upon the corner of the panel which we now know depicts Bahram I is inscribed: 'This is the image of . . . Narses, King of Kings, Aryan and non-Aryan, of the race of the gods, the son of . . . Shapur, King of Kings. . . .'

And so until a few years ago the world took the figure on horseback as Narses, and Narses as maker of the panel. But it perplexed a famous student of such things not only that the makers of the other panels took themselves for granted, but that the figure here did not look too much like the figure on the coins of Narses, and that the spiked crown, symbolizing the rays of the sun, was the manner of crown particularly associated with Bahram I. Being well versed in his profession, he one day took an impression with a soft lead pencil and cigarette-papers of the letters N-A-R-S-E-S. And peering from behind them like a ghost appeared on the cigarette-papers remnants of B-A-H-R-A-M, partially but not wholly eradicated. This is why we know to-day that the panel was made by Bahram. You may draw your own conclusions about the integrity of Narses. For me the moral of the thing is: when you commit a theft, do a clean and not a half-baked job. . . .

Here we said good-bye to our horses and guides and confided ourselves with some relief to Nanette,

Taghi, and our water-bottles. Within an hour we were back at Kazerun, within two we had had lunch at the friendly telegraph station and were scuttling again over the plain, but this time toward its eastern end and the winding thread of a road that climbed up to the Pass of the Daughter.

Taghi served us well to-day. He sits inscrutably at the wheel, except when a self-conscious expression of concern clouds his complacency while he is in doubt as to how we have taken the shaking over a particularly villainous 'Thank you, ma'am!' with which roads in irrigated districts, such as parts of the Kazerun plain, are cursed.

The climb upstairs of thirty-seven hundred feet was long and slow. I soon lost count of the frequent stops that Nanette had to make to keep from getting over-heated or allow demoralized caravans to pass. But she acted well. We reached the top of the first flight of stairs, at the Pass of the Daughter, while the sun was still high, and the top of the second flight at the Pass of the Old Woman as it was sinking behind that part of the horizon which looked now so far away, but where we had been only a few hours before. We halted on the Plain of the Wild Almond as dusk was falling by the pool where we had lunched, and then at the next road-guard post were told no cars were allowed to proceed after dark, and that we could park ourselves for the night in its lee. Persian road-guards and their solitary little shelters, which are

usually perched on a barren eminence from which the neighbourhood can be surveyed, are as integral a part of the landscape as caravanserais or Gothic-windowed bridges. *Amnieh* is their name; we call them 'blue-bottles' from the colour of their uniforms. They do not seem to be a very stalwart or aggressive race, and we suspected that a desire to have affluent-looking travellers remain in their precincts overnight might be influenced a little by self-interest. However, we affably took over responsibility for possible mishap and continued into the dark. The occupants of the next amnieh post were more loath to transfer their responsibility, so we compromised by taking aboard and into Shiraz one of their number.

For your security, when you come to Persia, do not have a rifle, as we now did, the most conspicuous item in your picture. It doesn't frighten trouble-makers. Rather it excites them to expedite the use of their own rifles. When the nomad tribes are on the march, and sometimes at other seasons, the roads do not always offer the best security. If your party is contained in one small car, your best protection is the presence of mind of your driver. The best chance of arriving on time at your destination is for him to step on the gas at the right time, which is before and not after trouble begins. However, notwithstanding our guard and his rifle, we reached Shiraz and the safe precincts of Melvin's garden, albeit when the night was no longer young.

CHAPTER VI

TRIBES AND TENTS

In Camp on the
Zarghun Plain
October 1

WE have been told ever since we have been in Persia to see the tribes on the move. They have been one of the great influences through the ages on Persian history, and constitute about one-fifth of her population. One can't be exact, for Persia only just now is beginning to take a census. She needs it, among other things, for the enforcement of Reza Shah's new conscription law. Her nomad population is not only here in the south. It is scattered about all the fringes of the empire: Baluchis in the east and south-east, Turcomans in the north-east, Shahsevans in the north-west, Kurds in the west, Bakhtiaris and other divisions of the great Lur tribe in the south-west whose origin has never yet been traced, around again to this corner which is the region of Arabs and Kashgais, and all their manifold subdivisions. In the old days, that is, before the advent of Reza Shah, the Kajar monarchs favoured the tribes prospering as

local economic and political entities, for with proper handling they contributed to the country's protection. It was a feudal relationship useful to shahs, whose soldiers were mostly on paper. But since a national leader has come upon the scene, who by training is himself a military man and whose pride in his army is intense, it is natural there should be a change. For the tribes, besides being potential guardians of the country's frontiers, have at the same time constituted the biggest obstacle to an effective centralization of power at Teheran. Now, under Reza Shah's vigorous leadership, their power as semi-independent political units seems to have been definitely broken. Broken to a certain extent too—and it was a necessary corollary—is their *moral*, their economic cohesion, and the control over them formerly exercised by their own chieftains. It is one of those cases where you cannot eat your cake and have it too.

Have you seen the film and the book *Grass*, by Mr. Merian C. Cooper, that gives a vivid picture of the migration of the Bakhtiaris—men, women, children, animals, chattels—barefoot over snow-covered ranges and across icy rivers on goatskin rafts? Mr. Cooper accompanied one of the Bakhtiari tribes on its spring migration in 1924. If you want to be thrilled by a human drama, see the film or read the book, or, better still, do both.

Melvin, by spending a large part of our visit at his office, has managed to get away and bring us

for two nights to the plain of Zarghun, where some of the Kashgai tribes are encamped on the way to their winter grazing-grounds down along the Gulf.

We left Shiraz at four this afternoon. Our first adventure was with Melvin's prosperous landlord while he was jogging along the roadside on his donkey and quite unprepared for a charging Hupmobile. Lassie, of course, came with us, and within the safe protection of the car pretended to be a ferocious canine at all and sundry whom we passed. Our solemn, portly friend, the kalantar, sat in front with Melvin. He is acting as field manager.

The way at first was along the road to Sivand. Up from the Shiraz plain we climbed to the Pass of God-Is-Most-Great, retracing our steps of ten days ago through the big, arched gateway, under its Koran of mighty weight, looking back down through the pass at the vignette of Shiraz and its roofs and walls and cypresses. Then Josephine pointed to a little rivulet beside the road, and told us it was the famous stream of Ruknabad. A commonplace, unnoticeable, tiny stream, little deserving, one would say, of the famous rhapsodies it inspired six hundred years ago in the poetic breast of Hafiz. The stream still courses along unconcernedly, and I blush to admit that till I was informed of its fame I thought it an ordinary irrigation ditch. Perhaps it has hidden qualities and virtues, and like a lot of people who do famous

things, merely seems disappointing on first acquaintance.

Ahead of us, speeding over the bare hills like one of the baby tarantulas that sometimes drop from the ceilings of our summer-houses near Teheran and scuttle across the floors in the blink of an eyelid, was Taghi with Nanette conveying Hedayat, Gholam Hussein, the commissariat, and our riding-kit. Taghi made a get-away before we appeared on the scene, and was now grandly showing off the paces of Nanette, till a puncture somewhat checked his ardour and we passed him in the stony silence of disapproval.

Then, when the post-road descends again to cross the plain of Zarghun, we exchanged its company for a rough track and headed into the emptiness of the plain that in winter becomes a shallow lake. Now, its flat bottom was so evenly covered with grass and weed, deeply yellow after the summer dryness, that we seemed to be progressing into a vast sea of gold that only ended with the encircling mountains that rose abruptly like the cliffs of a mountainous seacoast. The sun was sinking, and angry clouds, salmon coloured in the fading light, frowned and glowered above their metallic crests.

A mud-walled village formed occasionally an island in the sea of the plain, and here and there an ox or cow or donkey wound up with steady tread on windlasses buckets of water from shallow wells.

Then we came to a village where the inmates were gathered at the entrance gate, for Melvin's kalantar was their landlord, and they bowed and salaamed while we rested the cars. Darkness began to swallow up the plain, and we soon lost the track, or perhaps the track lost itself. At times we jolted and bumped like a boat on choppy waves over ditches and across bogs, while Josephine and Christopher revived ancient musical-comedy airs, and the white coats and coloured sashes of the horsemen in front flashed in and out of the lights of the cars as we progressed into the night. They were our pilots whom we had picked up at the kalantar's village.

It seemed much later than it really was when we finally climbed up a little rise at one side of the plain and into the lights of the camp that had been prepared for our arrival. I wish you could see the floor of the fly-tent Christopher and I are sharing. It is covered with tribal rugs made of camel's hair and wool that a match won't burn. On them small camels are ogling large nightingales, and the large nightingales maintain a studied indifference. The colours are as simple and quaint as the designs.

IN CAMP ON THE
ZARGHUN PLAIN
October 2

Do you know the exhilaration of coming out on the deck of a ship at the beginning of a clear and

perfect day, how the feel and the sight cleanse soul and body? Our camp is on a rise that is above and yet of the plain, and we survey its expanse as you do the sea from shipboard, over to where blue and purple bluffs dimly wall its further side. Their stillness and the softness of their lights and shades make them seem like phantoms. Near us is a group of tents that house one of Melvin's financial agencies, whose duty is to collect the poll tax from the tribes. Each year for about eight weeks in the autumn the office establishes itself in these mobile quarters, and as the different Kashgai tribes pass through the plain the annual levy for the Government is made. It is not an easy thing to do: to collect a tax on thousands of persons who are on the move, who are poor, and who may easily become sullen or turbulent. It is collected mostly through the local chiefs. But the local chiefs have no scruples if they think you can be hoodwinked.

The size of the tribes is not reckoned as stationary population is. You refer to their numbers by so many tents. A tent to a family, and a family of four or five or six persons. During the autumn some ten thousand are pitched on the plain before us. Not all at one time, for the problem, as Mr. Cooper tells, is one of grass. Their every movement, life itself, turns upon the procuring of grazing for their flocks. Here they come in the autumn on their way south and east from the higher upland valleys they sought in the late spring, where summer heat

doesn't kill food for their animals and water runs. In summer and winter they spread far apart; only do their routes of migration intersect on this one plain like the neck of an hour-glass, where for many a long year their taxes have been collected. Two to three hundred miles separate their summer from their winter grounds: not a light jaunt for one to make twice a year on foot with all his worldly chattels. They go and come with the precision of large troop movements. The migrations are carefully planned beforehand, and in their own way as systematically executed as the march of an army, so that feeding-grounds for sheep and goats and donkeys and horses and cattle, especially in a land where Nature is so stingy, may be carefully apportioned. The larger divisions number three or four, which get orders from the military officer appointed by the Government who has supplanted the tribal Ilkani. The Ilkani is now an idle gentleman who finds it wise to follow the suggestion of the Government and live in Teheran. His family, until a few years ago, had held the lordship of these people for well on to two hundred years. The larger groups in turn are divided and subdivided, so that every small section knows its route, when it shall move, how long it can stay in one locality, and how many days of the moon it may take to reach another. All the tribes that come here are Kashgais, a people of Turkish stock. Their ancestors are supposed to have been transported from the region

about Kashgar in Chinese Turkestan, fifteen hundred miles away, by one of the ruthless Mongol rulers of Persia, Hulaku Khan, in the thirteenth century.

On the plain, now, are the Namadi, one of the smaller and poorer of the Kashgai tribes. You may gauge their wealth partly by the number of horses. The Namadi, or 'the People of Felt', have mostly donkeys, and only a few horses for their important men to ride. In the old days, before the tribal organizations were much broken by the Central Government, all Persian tribes, but especially the Kashgais, were famous as horse-breeders, and supplied the nation with its horse-flesh.

Talk to Mirza Habibullah Khan in charge of the financial agency here with the big lambskin kola and celluloid spectacles about his job. He will tell you, as if he were discussing a railroad time-table, that the Shishbelukis, with roughly three thousand tents, are about sixteen *farsakhs* to the west; that the Farsimadasi will be on the plain in twenty days with one thousand tents, and that they are just ahead of the Darsahulis, who are due when the new moon is so many (I forget how many) days old—they have two thousand horses, and are the richest and best organized; and that at the end will come the Big and Little Kashkulis, with two thousand and one thousand tents respectively. In parenthesis I should tell you a farsakh is the distance a man or donkey is calculated to walk in an

A PART OF THE " NAMADI " TRIBE AT THE WATER HOLE BEFORE STARTING OVER THE MOUNTAINS

OUR KASHGAI HOSTS ON THE ZARGHUN PLAIN

hour; and as different men and donkeys walk with different speeds, you may count it, in our language, anywhere between three to four miles, if the informant who has named the distance has any sense of accuracy. Which very often he hasn't and distance becomes as elastic as his imagination or his desire to tell you what he thinks will please. They say the Khorassan farsakh is the worst: it has been declared by one as endless as the entrails of Omar, and by another as endless as the chatter of women. I have not been in Khorassan, but even if I had I would hardly feel competent to decide which simile is the juster.

This morning, when the plain was radiant in the sunlight, we started off, a brave cavalcade, to investigate the black specks that dotted its expanse. The black spots are the tents of the Namadi, made of goat's hair and pitched in the shape of rectangular blocks, that is, with three perpendicular sides, the fourth, the front one, open; and the top flat—for at this season they do not have to think of rain.

We galloped from one group to another, greeted by barking dogs, piles of gay-coloured saddle-bags, suckling mothers, old men with water-pipes, girls weaving or spinning or carding, hour-old goats, babies not much older, little smoky fires, and the silence of respect and curiosity. For they don't often have such an imposing visitation.

We watched the weaving of *gelims*, which is the Persian tribal blanket, and as gay in colour and as

useful and as various in size and texture as the American-Indian blanket; we fingered bunches of bright-coloured, woollen thread, just dyed, that were hanging on the tent-lines drying; we watched the weaving of strips fifty feet long pegged out on the ground that would be used for tenting or sacking or saddle-bags; we took photographs; we grinned, then they grinned; Melvin, staffed by Mirza Habib-ullah Khan and his assistants, made terse inquiries; but the real figure of our party was Josephine. Who was this slender, blue-eyed, short-haired, laughing apparition astride one of their own fleet ponies, talking in their own language with their leathern-faced, inarticulate women-folk about illness and babies and medicine, and giving kindly advice? Well might they at first be dumbfounded and take a moment to find their voices, and understandable were one or two somewhat loud discussions in the background that turned out to be arguments as to whether it was man or woman.

We were invited inside the tent of one of the local chiefs. He was a courteous, gaunt old man, who offered us tea and spread bright-coloured blankets on the ground on which we sat, while about us outside nigh a hundred men in their long, loose smocks, gathered at the waist with bulging coloured sashes (bulging because of an amplitude that permits their being used on occasion either as a rope or for sacking), closed around in a semicircle and gazed at us, who were from an unknown

world, with solemn curiosity. Our host stood before us beside the family water-pipe. After his puff, it passed from hand to hand among the elders for momentary whiffs, and then to the women, who were huddled at the farther end among babies and about a half-woven orange and white gelim. We talked of the weather; this year the animals were fat and in good condition; we inspected the orange and white gelim; we were intrigued by the pleating of the women's skirts. The number of the folds made you wonder. It did not seem possible to account for all simply because their owners are often astride a donkey. When they switched about or sank upon the ground all the calico in Persia seemed to hang from their waists. A fancy crossed my mind that a knee-skirt or a sheath-skirt or a slit-skirt or any other kind of skirt would be more friendly than these accordion-like anomalies.

Then we cantered back leisurely to our own more cleanly and spacious tents, and after lunch spent a lazy afternoon wondering, as the light went, whether those phantom bluffs across the plain in front of us were really there or only an hallucination.

SHIRAZ
October 3

This morning we rose before the sun, warmed our insides with provender prepared by Hedayat, and were riding up the defile back of our camp

when the sun first peeped over the mountains and really waked us up. In order that you may not share the disappointment with which our expedition of this day ended, let me say at once that we went out to kill mountain-sheep and ibex, and that at the end of the day our gun-barrels were as clean as in the morning. We did not even get a chance to shoot. Although you may think it is like telling of a stage on which no play was acted, I will tell you of our trip, so that you may know there are at least possibilities of big-game hunting in Persia. At home we think of mountain-sheep as the most elusive of all big game. The trouble is in Persia they are so relatively common that you come to take them more or less for granted. For instance, I have ridden out a few miles from Teheran in the early morning and suddenly seen half a dozen of them cutting the skyline on a hill-top less than two hundred yards above me. It is true the place was not far from the Shah's big game-preserve that runs over the mountains for miles, and which seems more like a zoo than a hunting preserve, so far as mountain-sheep are concerned. But on a holiday you may go a little farther off to anyone's mountain and bring back at the end of the day, or at the end of the morning perhaps, if it is after a fall of snow and the animals have been driven down low, your sheep or ibex. During the autumn and winter you may buy in the open market in Teheran a saddle of mountain-sheep or ibex any time you

want. You pay about a dollar and a half. This meat is not usually killed by professional hunters, but by charvadars when they are coming over the mountains, which they do even in winter with loads of charcoal as regularly as the weather permits, and often stumble on game by chance and earn some extra krans by bringing it to market.

We had a jolly ride along rocky paths up mountain draws, upon whose arid slopes browns and reds and greys alternated and played with each other as colours do when sunlight upon them is always shifting. Some of the tribal folk had strayed into these upland bottoms. Along our way donkeys munched happily the unamiable thistle and thorn-bush that pocked what soil there was.

At the end of two hours, near the head of a narrow valley, we turned, rode half-way up its steep side, and gave the horses in charge of a swarthy tribesman, who led them down into a pocket of the valley out of sight. We echeloned ourselves on the mountain-side two hundred paces apart, Christopher hiding himself on the ridge, and waited. We listened to the chatter of red-legged partridges and the sounds from a village far down a neighbouring valley, which rose with its smoke through the morning stillness, and we watched the caperings of dead thistle-leaves in the light breeze and the flutterings of tiny butterflies. It is, of course, the lazy man's way to hunt: to sit behind a rock with your rifle and, if you care to believe

me, a shotgun too, which you are told to have at hand in case the game should inadvertently rub shoulders with you, and have beaters—who, on this occasion, went out the night before—drive the game to where you sit hidden. It is the usual Persian way of doing it. But think of the comparative abundance of game it signifies! There are places in the mountains not far from Teheran where blinds are made of stones, and where Persian gentlemen lodge themselves perhaps with a servant and a samovar to wait for the appearance of their quarry. Perhaps some of them are no longer young, and so are justified. Stalking is, of course, the proper way, where you steal upon your game and work and sweat and meet it on a more even ground of wits and strength, and really earn your trophy. Upon which matters I had two hours or more to ruminate. Then when my body, like the folded blade of a knife, had almost lost all feeling except for the edges of small rocks that were becoming ever sharper, echoes of the shouting and occasional firing of the beaters became more frequent and grew louder. Finally, when Melvin stood up to survey the scene, we knew the thing was over, and that the flock had outplayed us, and before coming within sight or range had turned and followed some other objective than the muzzle of our rifles. The direction of the wind is a major factor in hunting game, and I suspect the breeze, which had shifted somewhat during the morning, may have warned

the sixteen ibex which the beaters had found of our position. At any rate, we mounted our ponies more sober if none the wiser, and did not have the fun of carrying back to camp around the bellies of our horses, as is the way in these parts, the quarry we had come to shoot.

Although we returned empty-handed, we came upon a sight that rewarded our morning's efforts. The defile by which we had left the plain opens and forks into two gentle valleys after you have followed up its narrow path half a mile. Here a bountiful spring of water bubbles from the earth and forms a little pool between the rocks before running down the defile and losing itself in the vastness of the plain.

When we first had passed the place it was lonely and silent in the fading starlight. On our way back a large number of Namadi who had left the plain and were moving into and over the mountains southward were preparing here for the next long, dry lap of their journey. Men, women, children, old and young, camels, horses, donkeys, sheep and goats were about that water-hole, shouting, shrieking, laughing, crying, walking, running, scolding, coaxing, as simple folk will in moments of importance. There were a few erect, calm-eyed patriarchs who said a word or two, but mostly rested on their sticks and watched the scene. In turn goatskin after goatskin was filled and lashed upon its beast of burden, pans were filled and taken by the

children to the donkeys, in turn the camels came and drank, and then the horses. The sheep and goats brooked no such formality, but appropriated a lower portion of the stream to themselves. It was a picture of the dry East that has been going on since men and their beasts have peopled it, and is likely to continue till Kingdom Come.

Hedayat again had provender prepared when we arrived at camp. Afterwards we packed, said a sorrowful good-bye to the camels and nightingales on the floor of our tent, to Mirza Habibullah Khan and our other friends of the last two days, and jolted back down the length of the plain, which I recommend for travel in the daytime rather than the night. We passed the kalantar's village, and then a few hundred yards beyond he asked to be dropped, and we saw him walk back. It would not have been according to his code of respect to have asked Melvin to leave him at his gate. We reached the post-road and crossed again the mountains that divide the plain of Zarghun from the plain of Shiraz till we reached the Pass of God-Is-Most-Great, and then descended to Shiraz and our hosts' garden.

CHAPTER VII

MISADVENTURE

BISHNEH
October 4

WE didn't know we had the spirit of adventure so strongly. Perhaps no one knows it till a magnet dispels indolence and whets the appetite of curiosity. I think in this instance we began to feel the magnet before we left Teheran, when people who should have known about it told us it was impossible to take a car over the road from Shiraz to Kerman, that landslides blocked the way, that the road had not recently been used, that robbers made it unsafe, and other things that made us wistful. For we wanted to go to Kerman. It is not on a beaten track. Most people don't get there. The town and the sterile mountain and desert province, half as large as Italy, of which it is the capital, are way down in south-eastern Persia by the Afghan frontier and near the Indian Ocean. Even in the days when Europe's luxuries came overland from the East, only a caravan route of lesser importance brought Kerman moderate wealth and pride, for it is near the edge of the

Great Persian Desert, which the old maps named well the 'Sandy Sea', and which cuts it off from farther east far more effectively than a watery sea could ever do. And now more than ever are town and province on a top-shelf and out of sight, like forgotten, dust-covered curiosities.

It was like so many things in this country of so little else, in proportion to its size, than wide waste spaces. We found on getting to Shiraz that our informants in Teheran had no idea of actual conditions, and that the military commander at Shiraz had recently come from Kerman in less than a day. True he had a high-power Italian car, he hardly stopped *en route*, and he had only one hour out of the twenty-four to spare. And his was the only car that had travelled over the road for a long time. But we figured if he could do the four hundred miles in twenty-three hours, we could do it in forty-eight. I don't know if we really thought so, but we pretended to. Christopher and I had become rather perky where Nanette was concerned.

So this morning we left Shiraz in the starlight, passed by the Garden of Heart's Ease and the Sadieh when they were still asleep, and climbed up a rocky track to the pass over the Kuh-i-Bamu into the first rays of the sun and incoming caravans of donkeys. One is apt to attribute only stubbornness to this animal, but I sometimes wonder if

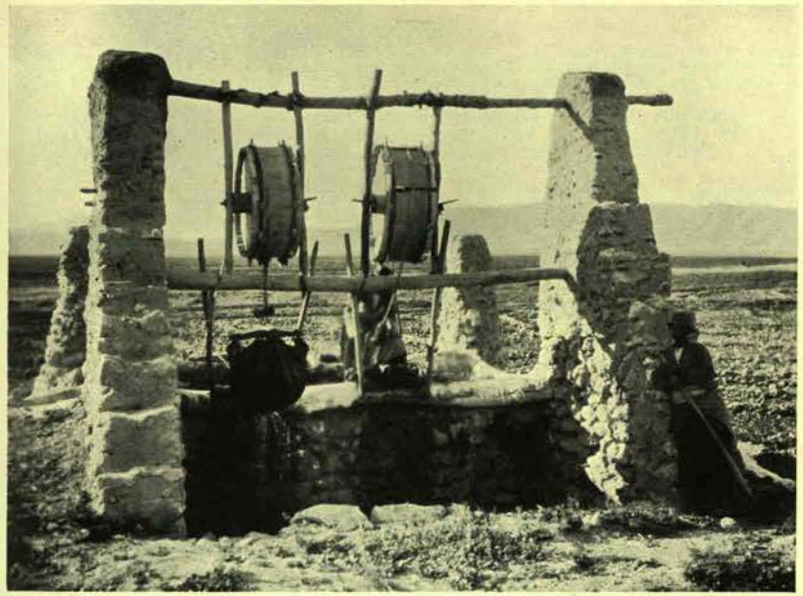
vanity be not really at the root of his ungracious actions. The charvadars, as I have already noted, are a well-meaning, good-natured lot. When you meet a caravan they run about enough; only their *modus operandi* has not adapted itself to the advent of automobiles. This morning, for instance, the size of the caravans seemed immaterial. No matter how energetic the efforts of the charvadar, or how small his caravan, in every case he seemed to overlook one donkey. And it was from the position which this one donkey invariably chose that I incline to the theory that our trouble was with the vainest and not the stupidest of the lot. Without exception, this one animal of all his fellows would plant himself in the centre of the road, squarely in front of Nanette, in one of three attitudes. He would show off his right flank and gaze unconcernedly southward, or his left flank and gaze with equal apathy to the north, or he would almost hitch himself, as it were, tandem with Nanette, and displaying his buttocks would contemplate, as we were contemplating, the east. We like donkeys and admire many of their traits. In fact, at first, we rather admired the perfection of such egoism; then Nanette became impatient and finally impolite. But even so, I hardly think we hurt their thick-skinned feelings.

Instead of uninhabited and lonely regions which the misinformation we had been given about the route had led us to expect, we found villages, and

what according to Persian standards were fertile valleys.

To complete our surprise, the road turned out to be the best we had yet encountered. No sand, no 'waves' or 'ripples', no rocks, no 'thank you, ma'ams': it ran (for a Persian road) straight and true through flat, sun-kissed valleys wide enough to give a pleasant sense of space, but not so wide as to depress you with the monotony of a desert. So for fifty miles we travelled, laughing at passed anxieties, getting one puncture, and when the road ran close to mountain spurs flushing from time to time red-legged partridges that Persians call *kabgh*.

These are the commonest game-birds on the Persian plateau, and on a trip are responsible for more loss of time than punctures or taking photographs or evil stretches of road. For they have a loudish, devil-may-care manner of talk that entices weak-minded men away from their original destination. You stop the car, put up your gun, and although you still hear their chatter, it's a little farther off. They have a way of scuttling over stony ground that is delusive like a snake. You soon find theirs are not single-track minds: they talk while they run, and their sight is as true as a mirror's. They just keep out of range of your gun, which you're not ready to believe till you've chased them a considerable distance from the road. And if there is any cover about, they are careful to



A WATER WHEEL NEAR SHIRAZ

lead you in the opposite direction. They are the embodiment of protective coloration. Your sight must be good like theirs not only to kill but to find them. Their dull red and brown and mottled chestnut feathers are distinctive enough when in your hand, but when you drop kabgh on a mountain-side they completely disappear. If you delay in moving out to pick up your bird, you'll go on after half an hour's search like as not empty-handed. . . . In Teheran on a Sunday we sometimes go to a mountain village, get a dozen or two men and boys, and arrange a succession of kabgh 'beats'. The gunners post themselves some hundred paces apart just behind the ridge of a spur, and the beaters, spread out like a crescent, cover the territory in front with shouts and war-whoops, and you sometimes, but by no means always, get some shots as the birds pass over.

Once we ran into a hawking party. You should have heard the noise and the cries of the hunters as the falcons were let free to soar and pounce on their prey. You would have thought an eagle had come in sight to swoop down on them, for that is the anti-climax to a hawking party. But hawking has now become restricted to killing birds such as kabgh. If you want to know how the falcons are caught and taken from the nest when very young and fed (it must only be out of their trainers' hand), pay a visit to one of the most charming of all Persian gentlemen who still keeps

falcons for this sport at his village a few miles from Teheran. If you are a person of good sense and good manners, I suggest, when you go to Persia, that you make his acquaintance and see how this medieval pastime is still carried on, and ask questions that he, far better than I, could answer.

Persians used, of course, to hunt other quarry besides kabgh with falcons. The larger falcons were trained, for instance, to light on the heads of gazelle, which are a common inhabitant of the plains all over Persia, and to worry the poor beasts till hounds or the hunter came up and finished the job. It does not sound like sport, especially after you have seen these gentle-eyed, fleet little animals flying over their native heath with the grace and speed of deer. If you are going after them at all, the sportiest way is to corner them with the help of other horsemen and shoot, as good Persian hunters do, the fleeing game from a racing horse. You trust yourself to your God and your horse. Those in the A 1 class occasionally bag two gazelle with a right and left. The ground is usually rough and stony, and your horse must be surer on his feet than you with your aim, or else you are apt to enter eternity instead of the gazelle. In these degenerate days Ford cars are taking the place of horses. A neighbour of mine in Teheran prides himself on running down his gazelle alone in his car,

which means no hand on the wheel while he aims and fires.

This morning we surprised a herd of gazelle, but they dashed away before we had a chance even to aim our guns. They were resting in the shade of some oaks which we unexpectedly came upon between the road and the mountain-side after passing the sleepy little village of Halalabad.

The oaks were not big or very numerous, but they rather than the gazelle are an item to record because of the absence of any trees or scrub along our route. Like members of a freakish religious sect that go off and shun their fellows, these gnarled and weather-beaten veterans formed an oasis on the unclothed landscape. Trees are very friendly things anywhere on the Persian plateau because of their scarcity, and their sight gladdens you like notes of music after a great silence, especially trees like this, that are indigenous and a part of the place. Poplars and willows and plane-trees that shade watercourses in and about a village are pleasant in their way, but you know they are man-planted, and they seem like scenery rather painstakingly placed on a stage.

You have plenty of cause to speculate on such a trip as ours on Persia's timber problem. Not so very long ago, as time is reckoned in connection with such things, timber is supposed to have been comparatively plentiful in certain parts of the

country. No two persons give just the same explanation for its disappearance; but you come to the conclusion that a drying up of the climate (for a very small change in rainfall can make a very great change in your timber), a diminishing supply of water, and a wanton use of the existing supply have chiefly been responsible. The pity of it is there has been no attempt at reafforestation, no attempt till very recently to conserve what little wood is left. It makes your heart ache to see a charvadar make his tea on a fire made of almond wood or sticks of tragacanth, that has a potential value perhaps of his whole year's earnings. In some of the mountains in the south-west and up north along the shores of the Caspian Sea are the only two regions where Persia still has forests to be proud of. The Caspian littoral, indeed, offers a startling contrast to the rest of Persia, and, as if Nature were repentant for her meanness elsewhere, provides in that region a climate and soil that yields in semi-tropical abundance. It is in the basement of the house, so to speak, to get to which you not only leave the roof and go downstairs to the ground-floor, but descend farther, for the Caspian and its littoral are substantially below sea-level. There the peasants cut down box-trees and split the trunks to make fences, and waste fortunes in so doing. And this in a country where poverty distresses you at every turn. And where Nature, as a rule, is so niggardly, you wonder whether she

has not disinherited the land. Fortunately there is now an attempt to rectify past errors, but you cannot expect the foreign forestry expert and his few assistants whom the Government employs to change things overnight. It will take time and money and much patience. . . . Forgive, please, these long digressions. They are subjects of interest, but I admit will no more get us to Kerman than will leaving Nanette by the roadside to go after kabgh. . . .

After boulevarding it along and making better time for fifty miles than we had since leaving Teheran, we climbed over a steeper spur of the valley wall than usual, and found mud-walled villages and the dry valley bottom had sunk under a sea of water. It was the lake of Nayriz, the second largest in Persia, whose bed continues for eighty miles between two mountain ranges, to where finally they come together and block its path. Its breadth varies from four to fifteen miles. Our road ran between one of the mountain walls and the southern shore of the lake, and we had time to contemplate its curious and startling beauty. It is far from being an ordinary school-book lake. As you progress from its western end, where its waters are bordered by feathery fringes of reeds—from which it takes its name of 'lake of reeds'—to its shallow parts, where the summer's sun here and there has evaporated the water and left only incrustations of salt that look like patches

of snow, to where finally the whole expanse is covered with this saline residue that extends like a frozen sea to the mountains on the northern side, you begin to wonder if the view is not a fantasy of the imagination. The glassy water that mirrors so sharply the reddish cliffs of the farther shore, the absence of all life upon its surface, the death-like stillness, the vast stretches of seeming snow under a sweltering sun, their Arctic glare, the mirages that turn patches of the horizon upside down or suspend them in mid-air, and change as constantly as you continue on your way, make you wonder if some magic has not cast its spell upon the place. For eighty miles, mind you, you have these alternating aspects of the thing. The colossal scale, the naked sombreness, the severity of outline of the cliff-faces and projections and indentations that keep on breaking the farther shore, make it seem a region that has become tired of mankind and swept from its face all human works.

Nayriz Lake is not mentioned by early writers, and it is a fair guess, therefore, that its confluents (which include our friend the Polvar river) in ancient times were diverted in their earlier stages for irrigation purposes, and gave food to populations in districts that are now dry wastes. The lake does not appear to be deep at any point. One traveller penetrated its slime and risked its quicksands for five hundred yards, and got in no higher than his

ROAD REPAIRING

ON THE PERSIAN HIGHWAY

knees. The depth, of course, varies with the season, and if you see the place after a scorching summer's sun has lured away a lot of water and left only slime or dry salt caking, you aren't tempted to call much of it an authentic lake.

Towards the end of this unreal corridor the ground got higher, and after the lake ended we came to the village of Nayriz. Although we had passed a few lone settlements along the road, it seemed like coming out of a trance to see groups of men again and hear their talk and noise.

We lost our way going through the town, and boxed a portion of the compass when we got outside. Then we lost it a second time on the stretch of plain between the little town and the opening in the mountains that lead up and over the Nayriz Pass. It's not an uncommon occurrence to lose your way on the flat, where each caravan that has preceded you has chosen a different track. In such places you, too, can choose your own track, unless, as here, the ground is covered with stones of inconvenient size and quantity. On such occasions Christopher and I begin to argue, and, besides the way, we sometimes lose a little of our equanimity, which is probably bad for the *moral* of Rahim and Taghi.

Considering ourselves by this time more or less experts in the matter of crossing mountains, the barrier that rose some two thousand feet in front

of us did not present undue misgivings, although it was here that the people in Teheran had so cheerfully envisaged landslides and other obstacles. We found a roadway which, if somewhat steep and narrow, was like a paved street in comparison to our mountain passes on the road to Kazerun. We looked back and down over its sheer sides to the lake behind, whose mirrors and snow-fields were now a white blot disappearing into the haze. The lake and valley and its mountain-sides grew tinier, till, like so many distant views in Persia, it reminded you of those school relief-maps that depict with such complacent simplicity the 'naked countenance of earth'.

It was Rahim's job to block the hind-wheels at points where Nanette was obliged to halt to regain her breath, and for this purpose he ran behind the car from time to time. At one such place where Nanette's wind proved better than we expected, I shouted to him: 'Get aboard!' He was embracing at the moment a rock that looked heavier than his own small body, and after I had spoken I noticed bewilderment mingle with the strain and sweat upon his face. Nanette went on cheerfully, gathering speed, and again and yet again I shouted: 'Get aboard!' Meantime the little Jew hesitatingly looked about him, his black eyes like saucers, blankness and perplexity growing on his features as the distance between us grew. And still he staggered forward with the rock. It

would be inappropriate to record the language of my subsequent commands. Suffice it to say that Rahim left the American School in Teheran before reaching the point where instruction in English idioms is given. For when he finally appeared beside the car he apologetically spluttered: 'There were no boards to get, so I kept the rock.' He was right: there were probably none this side of Shiraz. And I imagine he still thinks it was I who had the brain-storm.

We topped the pass, and found instead of a steep descent that our way glided gently down to vast, bare stretches of upland, too flat to be called hilly, too uneven to be called a plain, but of a solitude and endless distance and a lack of garment that bespoke unchanging continuity. We crossed some sandy beds of what in the spring are streams. After night had fallen, and when the speedometer showed one hundred and eighty-five miles, which is a creditable run in Persia, we reached this little settlement of Bishneh. It is a tiny place, and its fifty or sixty inhabitants are very poor; for Rahim made a reconnaissance for milk from cow or sheep or goat, and leavened bread and fresh water and a samovar, and came back empty-handed. The place, however, has a few road-guards, who showed us quarters in what they call a caravanserai. At best it is a very modest one. We have made some unclean alcoves that open on a large unclean courtyard as clean as a short night's rest in our camp-beds warrants,

and we are, after all, more comfortable than we would be on the open plain.

CARAVANSERAI OF
KHAN-I-SORKH
October 5

Rahim, who has the useful faculty of waking up without the aid of clock or man and regardless of the length of the previous day's work, had a small fire crackling under the stars when I awoke this morning. I thought at first I had only dozed for a moment, and was still looking into our supper fire, whose embers had sent me to sleep last night; but the cold that precedes the dawn said the night was passing and it was for breakfast. Although we had hoped to leave Bishneh behind us yesterday, we still thought we could cover the remaining two hundred miles to Kerman to-day. Why we didn't, and why I am writing this at a caravanserai amid bare mountain uplands, you shall hear.

For thirty miles we serpentined over rolling country, to which scattered juniper and clumps of bushes gave a friendly aspect. Kabgh were out in force at their early feeding.

Somewhere along here we passed out of the Province of Fars and into the Province of Kerman, whose great boundaries to-day are just about the same as they were two thousand years ago. Kerman was the fourteenth satrapy of Darius; it has been discussed by Messrs. Herodotus, Strabo,

and Ptolemy; Marco Polo tells you of its turquoise mines; Shelley sings of the 'Wild Carmanian Waste'; and Thomas Moore of its 'hardy mountaineers'; and—who could ask for more?—the Latin rendering of its name was taken in our generation by the Cunard Steamship Company to christen one of their expensive and fashionable transatlantic liners. Between ourselves, until I came to Persia, the S.S. *Carmania* seemed to my shallow mind a much more tangible ornament of civilization than the land (or was the name just a steamship company's invention?) that it was named after. Can you blame me for feeling a certain thrill at passing into territory that has such claims to modern as well as ancient fame?

Then we left juniper and bushes and kabgh behind, and there stretched below us another of those frozen seas that really belong on the top of the world and not at its belt. The land, the road, and we glided downward to its level. Why, you might have asked, did Nature transplant an arm of the Arctic Ocean to these arid climes? It looked like parts of Nayriz Lake, but here no body of water mirrored the surroundings. It was one of the salt deserts that the Persians call *kavir*, and which are responsible for the great blank spaces you see on maps of the eastern portion of their country. The white sheet of salt residue where we crossed extended only for ten miles, but the drainage bottom in which it lay was far wider, and the

length of it some twenty-five times its breadth, for it runs like a long trench in a north-westerly direction between two mountain ranges up nearly to Isfahan. Nanette first jolted over a rough surface of sun-baked mud, which might well have been frozen earth at the edge of a frozen body of water. The flatness and whiteness of the field, and the lines of break between the planes of salt, made the surface look for all the world like a huge field, properly cracked, of frozen snow. Then the way became smooth as the top of a billiard-table. The speedometer rose to its record point, but the expanse was of such a vast sameness that Nanette hardly seemed to move. She might have been treading slippery ice that merely ate up energy and laughed. One bird, as solitary as the Ancient Mariner's albatross, was all the life we saw on its sinister waste, and helped make its deadness real.

After leaving its eastern edge, we got into stretches of sand (for don't you find sand near the shores of all seas?). Then, almost on a level with the desert and shortly before it ended in some hills, the walls and houses and towers of Saidabad appeared. I say towers, for in the hot places of Persia you find the skyline of all towns pierced with structures whose duty it is to give relief from heat. Logically, are they called *bad-girs* or 'wind-takers'? At Saidabad these towers are numerous and break the flat panorama like the '*torri*' Guelphs and Ghibellines once built in Italian

THE EASTERN END OF LAKE NAYRIZ AT THE END OF SUMMER IS COVERED WITH A SALINE RESIDUE THAT LOOKS LIKE A VAST EXPANSE OF SNOW

'NANETTE WAS MUTE AND APATHETIC; HER SPIRIT, LIKE OURS, SEEMED WELL-NIGH BROKEN'

towns. In the distance they look like these 'torri', for they are square and plain and business-like, only not so high. On nearer approach (not too near) they suggest the tower of an English village church, because well up on each of the four sides are tall windows whose lengths are barred with slats. You may guess the wealth of a place by the height and pretentiousness of its bad-girs, for by its size has a householder a chance to vaunt the size of his income. There are four separate shafts down the tower to the basement quarters, which every Persian house possesses for use in summer, and they produce a circulation of air below, very much on the same plan as do the funnels with their wind socks that you see around the top-decks of an ocean liner.

These hot-weather quarters are sometimes well below the ground's level. In Kashan, for instance—I haven't been there, but my friend, Allah Yar Saleh, who lived there, tells me—they are often twenty-five feet below the surface, and sometimes more. You descend by a straight flight of steps cut into and out of the earth. So effective is the circulation of air that the draft will carry your handkerchief up the shaft of the bad-gir. At night you go above and sleep on a balcony or the roof. But you must beware of scorpions. Saleh says they are so thick that one of the family at bedtime, armed with a lamp and pair of tongs, inspects the corners of all the rooms with the same regularity that at

home we lock the front-door. He and his six brothers, in fact, slept over the tank of water in the garden on that account. They had a big wooden platform of a bed with its four legs in the water, and as scorpions aren't fond of water, they were as safe as a bear in his den. I have heard from others the same sort of thing. Travellers who have stopped at Kashan to spend the night have told me they left in fear before it was half over. You will recall that Christopher and I chose a road that led around it. . . .

Although the outskirts of Saidabad are sandy, and its ten thousand inhabitants live in houses built of mud, which combination hardly makes for comeliness, it has a claim to distinction that no other place in Persia, or elsewhere perhaps, can make. Both Alexander the Great and Marco Polo have been its guests. After Alexander's soldiers had made it known in India they preferred their homes to further spoil, he divided his expedition and sent off a part by sea to the Persian Gulf and started overland himself with the remainder. Sun and desert treated his small force with somewhat the same results that snow and cold treated another bigger army that invaded Russia in 1812. But it was after the worst part of the journey was over that he, who to this day is a living force in Persian tradition, reached this district, and later Persepolis, and was rejoined in due course by the other portion of his forces. Fifteen hundred years later the

intrepid Venetian came through this district on his way to India, and alluded in his writings to the bitter taste of the bread about here. Now bread in some parts of Persia is still made from acorns, which is renowned for its bitter taste, and it has been suggested by those who pretend to know that the present nude mountain slopes were clothed in the thirteenth century with oak timber. You may also find in books that the fact that roots of date-trees have been dug up in the present bare, sandy outskirts of the town is further evidence of climatic change.

As we were ploughing through one of its sandy alleys we came to an open area free of the usual boundary wall of mud. A straight isolated wall of mud, however, along whose edges fancy scroll-work bobbed and curtsied, and which rose even higher than those high board fences that hide our city ball fields or circus tents, ran down one side. Near by a huge ringed dome of mud shaped like a hornets' nest blistered the ground. A holy tomb, thought we, which probably strangers are not welcome to explore. So with respect we asked of an aged passer-by whether we might intrude. An indifferent shrug of the shoulders left us little the wiser, and it wasn't till later that we learned such walls shield series of shallow trenches from the sun, in which ice is made in winter, and our hornets' nest of a tomb was the cap of a great pit where it is stored.

Before we leave Saidabad let me warn you not to allude too loosely to my description of it, for this name in Persia is like Eureka, or Cairo, or Summit, or those other names at home with which we tag so many places. If your friend knew only of some other Saidabad, he would probably tell you that the author you had read might be an imaginative but was not an accurate writer.

We found the road-guard commander had received a telegram about us from the high-ups in Shiraz about a week ago. He was obviously pleased to see us in the flesh, and relieved from having to think about sending out a party to search for our remains. Saidabad, like a railroad junction, is the point where several routes of travel intersect, and the little officer came out a short way in his Ford to see that we got started on the Kerman and not on some other road. On desert ground it's not always easy to tell where a road forks and where it merely splits to come together later on.

Gradually we gained higher ground. The road didn't waste its energy in many twists or curves, but it led through sandy spots which made Nanette (and us) labour and cost us time. By midday we reached hard uplands and were beginning to feel that Kerman was not so very far away.

We were eating our eggs and cheese and native bread by the roadside when a cadaverous youth appeared out of nowhere with his worldly goods

on his back and an envious look directed towards Nanette. Before our lunch was finished he imparted to Rahim his wish for a lift, 'for', said he, 'my mother is dead in Kerman. I have walked this far from Shiraz, but I have no longer either money or strength'. My servant, however, who knows the manner of Persian pleading as well as the cynicism of his master's heart, bade him get on as he had come. After lunch we passed him trudging onward; then did Christopher intimate his satisfaction that it had fallen on me and not him to act with such unchristian spirit.

We had still the mountain divide called Khan-i-Sorkh to cross, but according to the map it was a mild one. The ascent was very easy—so easy, indeed, it seemed hard to believe we were about to cross the watershed of a mountain range. At least we felt that way until we came around a larger bend than usual and saw straight before us a track zigzagging up its last rise. To our chagrin we perceived it was an incredibly steep ascent, and the way looked incredibly rough and tortuous. We stopped the car, and the more we looked the soberer we became. For the first time we wondered whether our original information about the Kerman road might not have had elements of truth after all. Why had not the General in Shiraz told us of this place? How in goodness' name had those spiteful little hairpin turns that regarded us so impudently treated his Italian car? However, there

was nothing for it but to proceed. Rahim was told off to his job on such occasions, and placed a few good-sized stones on the running-board for emergency use. Christopher and I assumed as nonchalant a manner as our dismay permitted, and Taghi stepped on the gas. Around one more corner the road turned before reaching the forbidding part of the ascent. When, lo! instead of continuing to the track we had been contemplating with such misgivings, our road, with a wink and a grin, turned sharply to the left, ran gently along an unsuspected little valley, and crossed the divide so gently we hardly knew we had left it behind till Taghi turned off the engine and we began to coast down the farther side.

We were still telling each other the best would have been fooled in the same way, when Taghi, usually so self-possessed, began gesticulating, both hands in mid-air, like a soap-box orator. We noticed he had turned the engine on, had put Nanette into gear, and that we still seemed to be coasting merrily along. But Christopher and I have not reached the stage where we necessarily see things about a car with our brains at the same time that we do with our eyes. Our attention, as a matter of fact, was concentrated on Taghi more than on the car. We wondered if he were having an apoplectic fit. No answer met our questions, only wilder and yet wilder pantomimic gestures. So to escape landing in the ravine which

was keeping the road company, we commanded him to stop the car. When emotion had somesubsided and vocal articulation returned, what he declared the propeller-shaft was broken. I knew from Taghi's performance something serious had happened, but before I realized the real horror of his pronouncement I had to be told that the propeller-shaft is to a car what backbone or heart is to you or me, and that upon its well-being depends the entire functioning of the other parts. It was broken in two; it was not a question of repair; it was a question of a new shaft. And, of course, we had no new shaft. Of all the spare parts we had so expensively acquired and laboriously brought from Teheran, none were of use. I have heard of women becoming hysterical and melodramatic in moments of calamity. For the first time I realized this could be a suitable artistic climax to certain situations, and I rather wished for an hysterical woman to complete the picture.

Misadventure seems a temperate term for it. We were actually at the farthest point from Teheran on our itinerary. It was the one stretch of the trip where we were not in company with a telegraph-line. We thought of our decision when we notified our host in Kerman of our probable arrival to-night that it would be unvaliant to suggest that he send out on the road in case of our non-appearance. No human being or habitation was in sight; no trees or natural cover than God's sky;

and of very real concern was the fact that Christopher was out of cigarettes (I do not enjoy the nicotine habit). A nice to-do in these wild wastes, eighty miles from Kerman! For once I failed to realize the glories of the sunlight on the careless, rolling uplands about us. Indeed, their indifference to our fate seemed almost an impertinence.

However, Christopher's matter-of-fact tones soon liquidated such unproductive reflections and called our attention to a distant flock of sheep. They, we knew, must have owners not very far away. So I climbed a near-by hillock and discovered, as luck would have it, the square outline of a small caravanserai squatting in a dip a mile beyond. A little red, white, and green flag above its entrance declared some road-guards were quartered in its precincts. Thither Rahim and I proceeded. Fortunately, the three 'blue-bottles' on duty were properly impressed with our importance and the importance of their being accommodating. One guided Rahim to the tents of some nomads, owners of the sheep, that, it transpired, were hidden behind a ridge, to procure—it is ignominious to record—some of those donkeys we have regarded so disdainfully and treated, I fear, at times rather ruthlessly, to help pull Nanette to the caravanserai. But it turned out there were no four-legged animals to be had, so before dark she was pushed there by as many two-legged animals as we could muster.

We put the two wooden boxes that held our gasolene tins under the running-boards. Nanette was mute and apathetic. Her spirit, like ours, seems wellnigh broken. Off came her back wheels; off came the back springs and the housing of rear axle and brakes. Propped on the two boxes, her skeleton only remaining, her dripping entrails scattered about on the stones, she looked to the eye as dreary as we felt. Poor Nanette! Taghi's diagnosis turned out too true. The propeller-shaft had broken just short of the pinion, although why it had happened coasting down a gentle incline instead of labouring up a steep mountain track is a puzzle. If the trouble had indeed begun at an earlier point, Nanette had been most considerate in postponing her collapse till getting so near a place of shelter.

We learned, again as luck would have it, there was a place thirty miles across the mountains that possessed a telephone, and we have made an arrangement with one of the 'blue-bottles' whereby he is to walk to Pariz (the capital of France is not its namesake) to-night, and telephone our host first thing in the morning of our plight and for assistance. We had to keep the message simple, for the mind of the messenger was simple; but we hope we may be able to tow Nanette along with the conveyance that is sent and not have to fall back on donkey or camel power.

Our shelter is an ancient brick structure, a

solitary mark on a bleak and wind-blown landscape. Its interior is dark and arched and vaulted and low, and rather like the crypt of a medieval church. We are the only travellers here, and therefore have a choice of quarters. The only travellers, I say, but not the only inmates, for on the walls and floors and in the heaps of straw that lie about are other permanent inmates, whose arrogant sense of proprietorship resents us transients as unwelcome intruders. We finally decided the stars and crisp evening air offered more congenial companionship, and in their company we have arranged to sleep.

KERMAN
October 6

As we spent last night ruminating on the perverseness of things, it is only fair to say that to-night we are reflecting on their propitiation. Although we had to leave Taghi and Nanette behind, the rest of us are in Kerman under the hospitable roof we had hoped to reach last night. It seems too good to be real—but let me tell you how it happened.

The messenger we dispatched to Pariz not only went there, but went there on schedule time. The telephone-lines were not only working, but he got our message through to our host without delay. And our host, who is the kind who gets things done in a hurry, found an available Dodge car and sent it after us just as soon as his cook had made

up a first-rate lunch. Things here rarely happen that way. Delay or bungling are so usual you inject them into your plans as well as into your subconscious mind; so when neither happens your expectations are agreeably upset.

We spent the morning speculating as to whether we should hear from Kerman before the week was out; we bathed in a small irrigation ditch and its green slime; we wondered where to-morrow's food was coming from. For we hadn't planned for a long stay *en route* when we prepared our commissariat at Shiraz, and though the nomads in our neighbourhood produced a few eggs yesterday, we ate the mother hen to-day, and for the future envisaged as chief article of diet unleavened bread.

And for the second time on the trip my heart became humble and contrite. The first person I saw this morning, coat off and besmeared with grease, helping Taghi nurse Nanette, was the cadaverous, plodding youth whose request for a lift yesterday I had so pitilessly spurned. He had caught up with us during the night, and showed once again the tortoise sometimes wins the race. It is perhaps hardly becoming for me to judge whether his sole motive in helping Taghi was a disinterested, humane spirit. Let others judge that. My mood was lowly, and I was quite ready to accept his gesture as a turning of the other cheek, and I felt considerably more virtuous after I con-

tributed some assistance to the remainder of his journey.

It was at the end of the afternoon, as we were sitting disconsolate on our camp-beds, feeling like the proverbial outcasts on a desert island, and more and more sorry for ourselves, that the toot of a horn broke the silence, a car scuttled into sight and —we held our breath to see if it would—turned, ran up the incline, and only stopped when it reached our beds. It brought an efficient representative from our host, a hamper full of good things to eat, and urgent instructions to pack up at once and proceed to Kerman, which it did not take us long to do. It turned out impracticable to tow Nanette, so we left her and Taghi to the mercy of Khan-i-Sorkh for a short time longer.

I cannot tell you very much about the road from Khan-i-Sorkh to Kerman, for we dozed much of the way with fatigue and good food. It soon got dark, and we lost the road for a time and made circles till we found it again. But I *can* tell you no artist could do justice to the colours which the setting sun played on the metallic mountains, which ordinarily along this road are red and tawny, but at this hour of the day glow with all the colours you could name and many that you couldn't. They were elusive and changing and varied as the chords upon an organ. And I *can* tell you the pink sky upon a postcard will never again appear to me exaggerated, and the camels

we saw that, filing along the ridges of some sand-dunes broke the pink transparency, made us glad that progress in the form of modern means of transport had not yet penetrated to this Province of Kerman.

CHAPTER VIII

KERMAN

KERMAN
October 8

THE big plain upon which Kerman sits gives its thorn-bush and other humble growths to the fires of the town, and looks in consequence greyer and more dusty than most Persian plains. You don't realize the bigness of it if you get set down in the town, as we did, in the night, for the town lies at one end in a bay sheltered on two sides by the rugged walls of what are rightly called the Kuhpayeh, or Palisaded Mountains. Away off in the south-east other mountains rise to thirteen thousand feet. Elsewhere sand-hills make the horizon gentler and living unpleasant when the wind blows strong. The mountains and sand-hills never had any bush or verdure to give, and look as heartless as the plain, except when a purple mist bathes them at sunset.

Kerman has even more than usual the mud colour of towns made of sun-dried bricks. But the plane-trees and poplars of its gardens, the bustle and din of its bazaar, the glidings of its veiled women who

here shroud themselves in white chadors instead of the usual crow-black, don't dispel the depression that comes over you almost before you've made acquaintance with the place. It's not because you are in the most far-off of Persian provincial capitals, or that every one you meet who knows a bigger world sighs that the hour of their departure is not yet come, or because the town lacks buildings of more than ordinary pretence, or because its water, which is brought from miles away through kanats, is scanty, and so its greenery scarcer even than in most places. The weirdness of these water systems is enough to make you feel a sympathy for any Persian town; and in Kerman, which lies in such a dry plain anyway, the idea of its means of life being brought from ten or fifteen or more miles away in a lot of different channels dug by human hands, sometimes one or two hundred or more feet under the earth's skin, makes you think of a shrunken body in which the spark of life is only continued laboriously by a carefully doctored circulation.

But the depression of which I speak comes from something more intangible than any of these things. It's a mean, not a stoical depression, that makes you restless and ready to get away. Perhaps the whisperings of ghosts of Kerman's past have something to do with it. Like Shiraz, its present size is but a shadow of its former self. 'Its wall is like Alexander's barrier (by which Persians mean

the Great Wall of China), with a ditch resembling a vast ocean, so that neither a vulture with its wings nor a boat with its sails can cross it', sang a Kerman booster in the twelfth century. Some of Kerman's ghosts could poison any air. Agha Mohammed Khan, for instance, the eunuch who became the first Kajar monarch, came hither about the time our capital was at Philadelphia to do what the books call consolidate his dynasty (*sic*). Not till he had given the Kerman women to his soldiers and gloated upon a pile of twenty thousand human eyes did he feel Kerman had been properly subdued. A nice man this Agha Mohammed! Slight of frame and mean of feature, with pursed-up lips and a furrowed, worrying brow. Fate and his people let him live for another three years; then he got killed with a knife in his back. I fancy the results of that little orgy of his in Kerman may have something to do with the melancholy feeling I have described. Festers don't heal in Persia as they do in a fecund country, like India for instance. Life is too hard where wood and water are so scarce. Before Agha Mohammed's day, Kerman, for years the capital of an independent kingdom, had been blessed with rulers enlightened and energetic. Some were females fit to head any feminist movement. I like the method of one early king. While on a tour he heard the price of bread had risen. He returned to his capital and asked why. No adequate reason was forthcoming, so he popped the bakers into their own ovens and roasted them instead of their bread as a lesson to would-be profiteers.

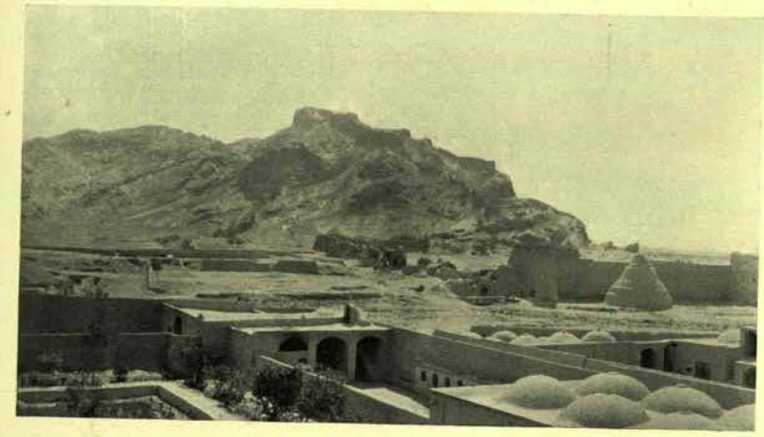
But I don't think the responsibility lies altogether with Agha Mohammed. Some of the greybeards here refer to the time of Nasr-ed-Din Shah, only two generations ago, as days of comparative prosperity. Then Kerman turned out its famous carpets and its woven *shals* (from which comes our word 'shawl') of goat's down or wool that competed not unworthily with the shawls of Kashmir, and felt goods and brass-ware. Its woollen 'abas', which is the loose Persian overcoat cut like the offspring of a collegiate gown and a Japanese kimono, were famous.

Now, Kermanis seem to be occupied only with rugs and opium. The new rugs are not like the old, and the addiction to opium seems to be increasing. You don't have to be told it's a curse.

As to the rugs, the conditions of their making have undergone great change in recent years. If you're in the habit of using the term 'rug' and 'carpet' synonymously, know that it is more exact to apply 'carpet' to that which covers the entire floor, perhaps in strips, and 'rug' to something usually smaller, but always in one piece, with a unity of design. The American and English companies, with their Armenian or Greek or Jewish managers, supply Kermanis with the patterns, supply perhaps the wool (which is sometimes

Persian and sometimes from India or even Bradford), and arrange with native contractors to engage labour, which gathers in the rooms of a house procured by the company and works on looms with the same principles of organization that you would find in any industrial centre.

The spirit of the carpet dies; it becomes an artificial, manufactured article, painfully attempting to resemble a spontaneous thing that generations have evolved. Some people like these new, rigid-coloured floor-coverings. They find a ready market in America and Europe. The salesmen point with honesty to the high quality of the wool, the fine texture of the weave, and to other tangible qualities; but to those who know the old productions, patterned by tradition in homes that knew not the supervision of foreigners, sold individually as craftsmen's creations, these new fabrics, turned out by the mass, that cover the floors of those who know not the difference between old wine and new, are a negation of the art. Sometimes, if you will, they are commendable copies, but they don't, can't, take the place of a 'Kerman' of sixty years ago any more, say, than a 1927 copy can take the place of an original Corot. However, much or little as the present output may appeal to our taste, the present basis is probably the only one that enables the business to continue, which has its happy aspects, for it at least brings employment and money to a community understocked with



THE DRY CRISPNESS OF THE ANCIENT CITADEL OF KERMAN, NOW CALLED THE FORT OF ARDESHIR, BITES THE CRYSTAL ATMOSPHERE

KERMAN WOMEN, UNLIKE THEIR BLACK DRAPED SISTERS ELSEWHERE IN PERSIA, WEAR WHITE CHADORS

both these commodities. Even the present industry seems on the decline. One company has just closed its Kerman branch, and others seem to be operating on an ever-reducing scale. They tell you the Kermanis can't work as of yore; they demand more pay and supply less skill; they get sick; the province furnishes less and less wool, and more and more must be brought from abroad—all of which means that the cost of the finished product is increasing, and makes more difficult successful competition with the growing carpet industries of China and India. . . .

And you hear at the same time of the increase of opium production. How during the last fifty years the poppy has gradually been supplanting wheat and cotton and other produce in the patches hereabouts where crops are grown, and how opium receipts represent, I forget how much, but altogether too much, of the provincial revenue. It is true that as opium-producing provinces go, there are several which stand higher on the list than the Province of Kerman. Perhaps it's because the atmosphere of its capital is so receptive to melancholy influences that the effects of opium strike you more forcibly here than they otherwise would. I won't name the percentage of the population that is said to be addicted to opium, for each source of information supplies a different estimate, and at best estimates offer a field for controversy, most of all in a country where statistics are either in

their infancy or else haven't seen the light, and Government control is none too effective. And I won't say it's a fact, but only hearsay, that opium pills are often given to children to make them sleep at night, and that not infrequently opium smoke is blown into the faces of new-born infants when they are trying to decide whether to live or die, and that it revives them as water does a flower, partly because of the previous saturation of the drug in the systems of the mothers.

KERMAN
October 9

You must travel night and day, getting little rest, get steeped in friendless, inhospitable wastes, get stranded in their bosom, to know how good it is to be a guest of our host. There is nothing depressing about him, I can assure you, although he has represented his country's interests at various odd outposts for a goodish number of years, and far enough away from the accessories of home-living to make him depressed ten times over. He is the kind who makes his neighbours glad he is around, the kind that Barrie has in mind when he talks of 'thin, bright faces'. And the place where he lives and where we are living for these fortunate few days is a veritable oasis. It is on the outskirts of the town, not far from where the walls and choked-up trenches of two ancient fortifications race about the tops of some crags that rise five hundred

feet above us, of mud colour unredeemed from top to toe, and so plum bare they seem to simmer with sterility. The one was built by the father of our friend Shapur, and so is called the Fort of Ardeshir; the other is called, I know not why, the Virgin's Fort. Here, as on the mountain by Shiraz, was formerly a well of infinite depth, which was filled up not very long ago to discourage a frequent and easy form of murder. These crags and the forts upon their crests were the citadel and centre of the Kerman of fourteen hundred years ago. The present dry crispness of their silhouette gives you the same potent suggestion of an ancient past as does the physical precision of an intact mummy.

Our host's house is split into two or three structures of cool corridors and deep, shaded, arched verandas. It is set amid acacias and willows and poplars and some streams of running water. In the centre is a lawn, which is a real lawn, with green grass upon which a venerable apricot-tree casts benign shade. Here we lounge and eat at play-time and bless our luck as fragments of mountain, guiltless of any greenery and covered only with vehement sunlight, peep at us through the trees.

This afternoon, when the sun got low and the others went to play tennis, I left the spell of the apricot-tree and our host's oasis, and followed a trudging donkey caravan across a stretch of plain outside the town till it began to climb up a pass in

the hills dominated by a ruin whose name, the Afghan Fort, identifies it with the most recent of those invasions from the East that have so often devastated Persia down the centuries. That is another reason for the heaviness of heart that weighs upon you: the ruins of human habitation and signs of men's past activity hereabouts are too constant. Upon the stretch of plain of which I speak is the Uzbeg Fort, now also naught but shapeless pinnacles, while all about are acres of amorphous mud, suggestions of what were once men's houses. I have not been there, but I'm told two other similar deserted quarters attach themselves like leeches elsewhere to the edge of the living town. These and the hill forts hold Kerman in a sinister embrace, and seem to nudge its living body to follow their example, while the silent mountains, with their palisaded crests and cardboard outlines, frown down silent, ominous approval. No, the spirit of Kerman is not a cheerful one.

This morning we made the usual round of calls upon those who turn the provincial wheels of government: on the military commander, a lean, affable colonel who hasn't seen forty; on the *kargozar*, who represents the Central Government in matters of discussion or dispute between Westerners and Persians; and upon the Governor. The Governor lives in what the Persians call the 'Ark', but so far as we could see it has nothing to do with the handiwork of Noah except that you enter

its portals in pairs. Before we knew it, Christopher and I became sandwiched into a procession of retainers antiquated in years and clothing, who shuffled along in the proper ark-like two and two. The Ark is what we would call the citadel, and is the heart of Government activity. The leader of our procession bore a baton, a head taller than himself, topped with a round brass knob, with as much solemn solicitude as if it had been a sacred symbol. He and his twins of assistants left us on a colonnaded portico to conjecture for a few moments as to what it was all about. Then in the doorway appeared the Governor, a little man in a black coat with stand-up collar, buttoned, as is the Persian fashion, to the throat, who set us down and inquired with habitual Persian courtesy about our trip, across an overgrown, out-at-elbows table, on which we drank tea and smoked Persian cigarettes. You wondered how much strength and action lay behind his mobile features and under his kola, which is the Persian fez, black and without a tassel, as he tried to fill his arm-chair before the big rug that was the only decoration on the unclean white wall. You thought of his predecessors and the system of which they were a symbol, and the mental play of hide-and-seek this building must be so familiar with. I read only to-day the account of the manner of a Governor's appointment here thirty years ago. The annual revenues of the province were nominally estimated at an equiva-

lent of $300,000 (not much for a land as big as half of Italy); the Governor perhaps collected in one way or another (ways that were never itemized) $450,000. Of this the present or 'pish-kash' (you soon learn that word in Persia), due to Imperial Majesty in Teheran, was $50,000. Largesse to almost every one in sight, augmented by payment of pensions to the descendants of deceased officials, didn't leave as much profit for his Excellency as you might imagine. Certain it is that most went into the pockets of some drone and a woeful mite to public welfare. It was a strictly personal, business proposition. You paid a fee, you got a province, you applied its income according to your own sweet will, and let the devil take the hindmost. The writer was not telling any secrets; the method was old as the hills and known to all the world. But it is gratifying to record that these things are changing, and the fact that an American is installed as director in the provincial office of the Ministry of Finance at Kerman is an index of the change. After leaving the Governor, we went to visit him. He has the same job for the Province of Kerman that Melvin at Shiraz has for the Province of Fars. He seemed somehow even farther away from his native hearthstone in the low, comfortable building, with its broad court and garden, that serves as the Kerman *malieh*.

The most interesting thing he showed us was the opium operations of his office. There were explana-

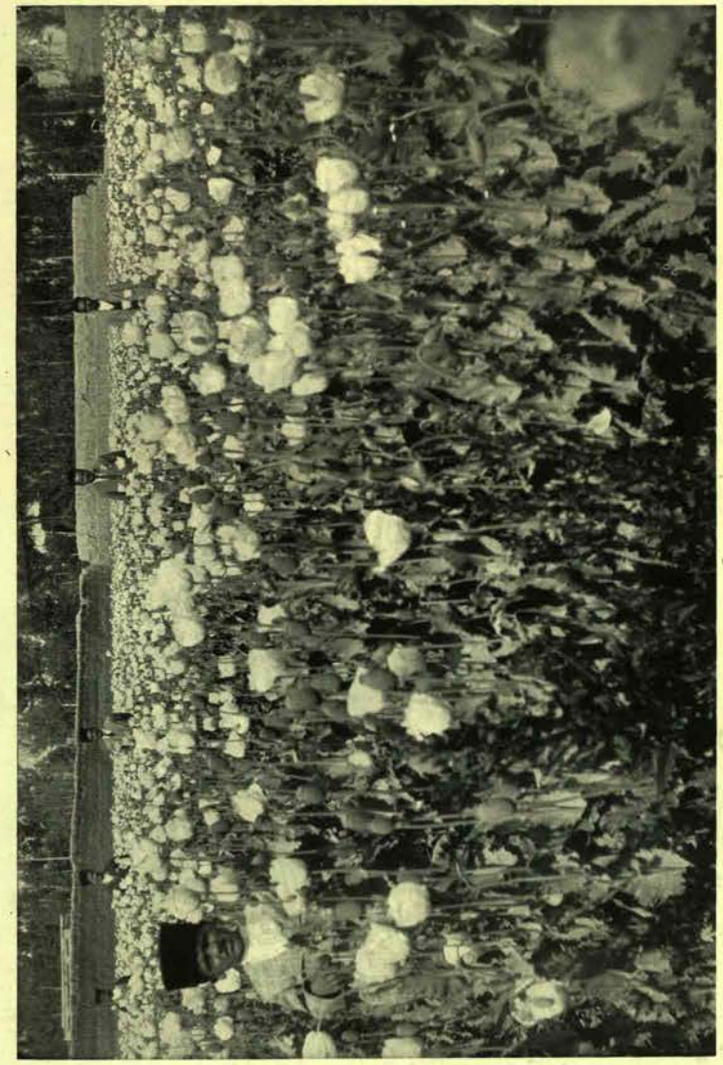
tions that Mirza Shir Khan was absent, and delay ensued in procuring the key to the rooms where the opium sap is brought by its owners to be stored while it undergoes registration, manipulation, and taxation before being given back. As with treasure-houses, means of ingress is limited to a trusted one or two. Indeed, the solemnity of the business of locating the key made us realize what is the fact, that opium in Persia is as gold. We were led to and through a succession of low, ill-lighted rooms in a wing of the main building. The floors were covered with rows of saucy-looking little cotton bags filled with the sap, which is of a putty consistency, and tagged with the owner's name and date of deposit. The stink was like a beet-root cellar when the beets are not one but many seasons old, and it was good to regain the fresh air and sunlight.

Then we were taken to a corner of the court-yard where men with pieces of flat wood were scraping and rescraping opium sap in the sunlight up and down on short boards. You probably know that this sap, which is the raw opium, is the juice that comes from the head of certain kinds of poppies; that incisions are made in the poppy-head with a knife when the plant is at just the proper state of maturity, and that a field is scratched usually late one day and the juice allowed to ooze out during the night and scraped off on poppy-leaves or into a bowl the following morning.

Those interested pray that wind or storm will not play havoc with the plants in the interval, which sometimes happens with disastrous effect.

Then it is brought—or at any rate an increasing proportion is brought, for you can't, no matter how hard you try, prevent some smuggling—to Government warehouses, such as the one we saw to-day, and the moisture and other impurities are removed in the manner I have described. The resulting article, which is harder and drier than the sap, is rolled into round sticks that look not unlike sticks of dull yellow-brown sealing-wax. In such shape the amount of pure opium can be accurately weighed for taxation and registration purposes, and is in practicable form for transport and in least harmful form for commerce. Banderols are placed around the sticks or cakes to indicate the regulations have been complied with, and the drug is then given back to its owners.

Opium is not a cheerful subject. You feel its baneful influence over all the land. But it is not an easy monster to grapple with. Her opium policy is one of the pressing questions of the moment for Persia. No one can live in the country and not realize both the curse of the drug and the practical difficulties which stand in the way of remedial measures. Public opinion abroad has become interested, as was shown in the sending by the League of Nations of an international commission last spring to investigate, and suggest



THE RAW OPIUM IS THE JUICE THAT COMES FROM THE HEADS OF CERTAIN KINDS OF POPPIES. THIS FIELD IS IN FULL BLOOM AND THE POPPY HEADS ARE NEARLY READY TO BE 'SCRATCHED'

whether, and if so how, a decrease and greater control of production could be effected. The commission's visit was welcomed by the Persian Government, which co-operated to make its labours fruitful. It has worked on the matter for several months, and its conclusions when announced will be interesting.

Don't think, however, the Persian Government has been altogether fatalistic in the face of its opium problem. Enlightened Persians realize that action must be taken, and would welcome the substitution of other crops for opium if practicable methods can be devised whereby such substitutes could absorb the capital and labour now employed in the opium trade. If the Persians haven't achieved the results which those interested in the international control and production of the drug would like to see, many of whom are in a position where it is easy to theorize, deliberate a little on the practical situation that faces the Persian authorities.

In the first place, let me explain that the basis of interested international public opinion towards opium is that production of the drug beyond medicinal and scientific requirements becomes abuse and should be prohibited. In line with this point of view, the Persian Government has for some time past declared a Government monopoly on certain harmful by-products of the drug; it has been making more drastic the rather complicated

system of opium taxation; it is making steady progress in the effective centralization of the raw product, the sap, in Government warehouses; and it requires that the transport of the drug shall be accompanied with Government permits, as you will realize when the official at any city gate comes around with a villainous pointed iron rod with which to prod sacks or bales or other cargo that look suggestive of smuggling. And the Government refuses to issue permits for the cultivation of the poppy in new areas, and is doing what it can to prevent the addiction of more persons to the opium habit.

The reason why the Persians can't just suppress opium cultivation off-hand to the desired extent is very simple. Opium contributes nearly nine per cent. of the revenues of the Persian Government, and it constitutes more than sixteen per cent. of the national export trade, exclusive of oil. Directly or indirectly, it is the present means of livelihood of many thousands of Persians. You may say, especially if you're emotional as well as virtuous, 'What is the money gain compared to the physical and moral curse?' And one might assent if Persia were not Persia. Unfortunately, nine per cent. of the revenues of Persia means to Persia, let's say, far more than nine per cent. of your income probably does to you. For Persia is poor, and her budget for the first time, at least in modern history, and then only with great difficulty and exertion, was balanced a year

or two ago. Her revenues only barely meet necessary expenditure. A large portion of the population are miserably poor, and, as it is, have a hard enough time to keep body and soul together. The country's entire annual income, mind you, amounts only to about $25,000,000. Moreover, in no purely agricultural country whose imports are about double its exports can you lightly abolish what amounts to nearly one-fifth of the national export trade. Lastly, and most important of all, is the fate of those in the community whose means of support you have taken away. In Isfahan and the region about, it has been estimated that something like one-quarter of the total population live directly or indirectly on the cultivation and commerce of opium. And the problem includes placating not only peasants and small proprietors, but considerable and important vested and clerical interests. Incidentally, you will have to convince a national Parliament, made up largely of landed proprietors, of the expediency of your programme. Interference with the liberty of the individual in his personal habits, let alone his property rights, presents difficulties, as has been seen in other countries than Persia, and in connection with other stimulants than opium!

It isn't as if Persia could just turn to something else. Therein really lies the crux of the problem. It is the practical difficulties that lie in the way of giving other means of livelihood, which in

Persia mean other crops, to those who now live by opium. Those who have studied the question most point out that opium is an intensive crop, giving a high yield for a small area, and the product is so compact in bulk that it offers no problem of transportation in a country of vast distances, where good roads and modern means of transport, for the purpose in view, simply don't exist; that the cultivation of the opium poppy is found not in one or a few localities, but in eighteen of the twenty-six provinces, over an area of some four hundred thousand square miles, a territory equivalent to eight times New York State. They point out, too, that opium needs little water, and only for a limited period in the spring, when water is most plentiful, which is no small consideration in a country which for its size is the most arid in the world. Finally, they point out that opium may be grown at times when the soil would otherwise have to lie fallow, that from seeding to harvest is so short a period—from late autumn to May—that often another crop can be grown on the same land the same year, and that such economy is rare. It is a demon that has many a lure!

The possibilities which have been suggested as substitutes for opium are various. Far be it from me to pass on their respective merits. Wheat, silk, cotton, tobacco, which are already grown in parts of Persia, have been mentioned. They all seem to present difficulties as adequate opium substitutes,

owing to transportation considerations, the need for initial capital, experimentation, expert instruction, and, especially in the case of silk, time to reach a producing stage. Beet-roots, tea, hemp and flax, as well as the raising of beef-cattle and the development of the present sheep industry, have also been discussed, but also with reservations.

CHAPTER IX

A DIGRESSION

KERMAN
October 10

THIS morning we were taken to the plant of a European rug company that is known all over Persia. You can't call it a factory, for its offices open on a little court that you reach through a lane of twistings and high walls and sometimes structures overhead, that leads off from the bazaar. Its designing-rooms and store-rooms are about another court; its looms, at least those we saw, are a mile away in the rooms of an ancient Persian mansion that has its own court and water-basin, while the wool is dyed in villages outside the town.

The Greek manager took us first across the court, through a passage, up rickety, dark stairs, to a well-lighted room, which you might have thought at first glance was filled with a class of engineering students at their drawing-boards—except they ranged in age from extreme youth up. They were working with paper, square-lined, for a clear exposition of the stitches; some doing the initial work in pencil, others finishing the designs

in water-colour. There is now a sensible reaction in favour of the old flower and bird and scroll designs, and the so-called 'American' patterns (with what blasphemies is that name associated!) and other excruciations that for a time were thought to 'improve' the old conceptions are now, thank Goodness, being scrapped. On some of the tables were drawings of old pieces in Western museums, 'but', said the manager, 'individual designs frequently accompany our orders, and in many cases we ourselves can improve on the old-time lines or colour scheme'. Ahem! I have my doubts. The idea being that when you copy the scheme of a rug in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum or the Louvre, that was woven in Isfahan perhaps in the days of Shah Abbas, the colours have had three hundred years to mellow in. Your purpose is to copy not the present, but what you believe to have been the original colours. And you become involved in a vast technical subject which it is better that I, being outside the rug fraternity, should not discuss. Only—the copy of a Cinquecento chair or a 'primitive' painting has to be very, very good to serve adequately even as a copy—at best it can be nothing more.

We went through another room, filled, too, with drawing-boards on kitchen tables, and some thirty men and boys in aprons and black kolas on their heads, quiet-voiced, and undisturbed by inquisitive visitors.

Downstairs again, to where men sat cross-legged and half hidden in the folds of rugs, clipping with hand-made shears the 'pile'. Suffice it for you and me that the 'pile' is the surface of the rug, i.e. the threads that stand up (like the hair on some men's heads). And it made the creeps go down our backs to watch the snip-snip of the shears running about the face of the thing. A slip of the hand or the eye would have meant a gash that might cost the rug its value. Different markets have different demands and tastes. This clipping business is to even the surface of the rug and to make especially close the pile of rugs that are destined for Europe, where they happen to like the thing short-haired; also they prefer the lighter colours. The pile is kept longer for the United States.

Then we were led to the storeroom, which was big, with rafters overhead, where lay stacks and stacks of mostly unfolded rugs, ready, like stock in a pen, for shipment to market. The nice manager was very proud. At his command ten workmen seized a huge folded bulk, and not without exertion spread it before us. It was just finished—I forget how long it had taken to make—was twenty-five feet by fifteen, of the finest English wool; the mingling of its birds and flowers was from ancient conceptions 'improved' in the company's designing-room, and it was going to the president of the company for his house on Long Island. Great pains and much labour had been taken with it, and the manager

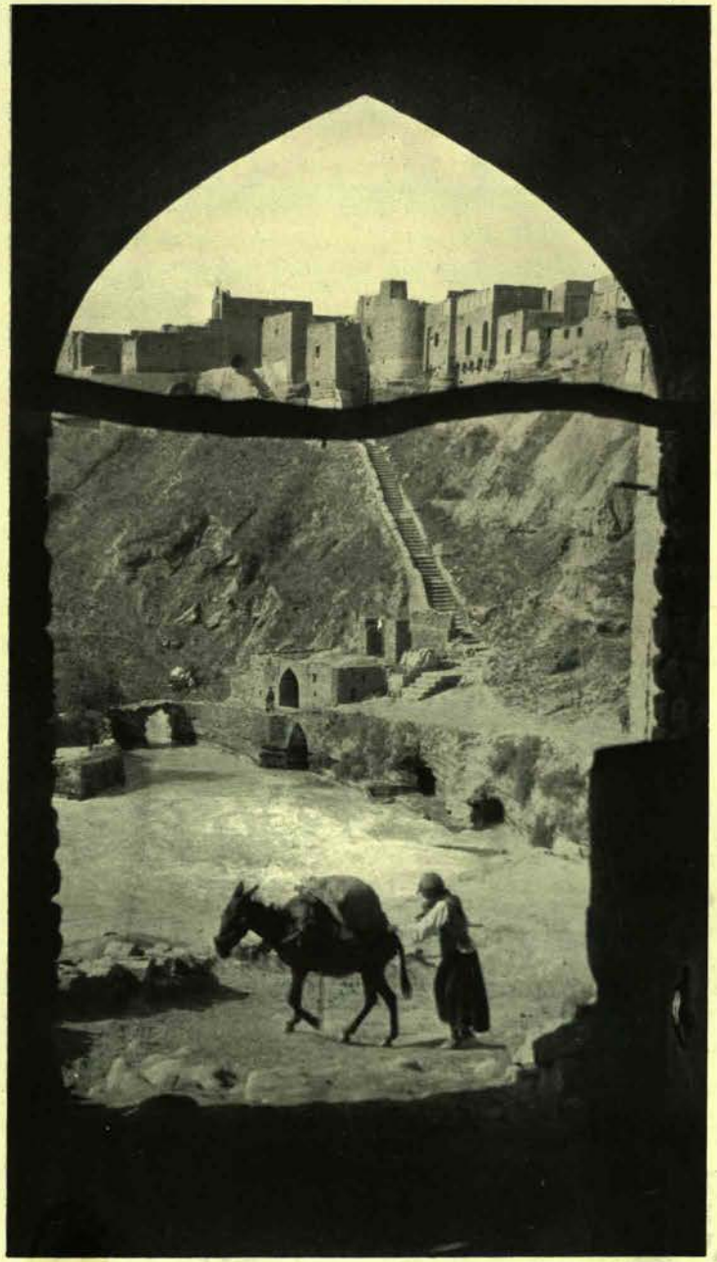
puffed like a ruffed sandpiper at mating-time while he showed it off. But let me whisper what I wouldn't dare to say aloud: I wouldn't have had that rug in my house, no, not as a present; for beside a real Kerman rug its colours were hard and raw, its pattern artificial, its size exaggerated. It shouted: 'I am made by order; my colours are put together by plan and not by instinct, by men hired and paid by foreigners; see how they have crammed me full of virtues' (as they would cram a basket full of carrots), and you knew at a glance the rug was overdressed and ill at ease and lacked the quiet simplicity of innate good breeding. Of course, if you're in the business, you're hard-headed and strive to satisfy the markets where you sell. Only it wrings the hearts of us who aren't in the business, to whom the romance and beauty of the old art appeals, to see industrialism commercialize production and kill the spirit of the thing.

We were told a variety of facts: of the ignorance of the American rug-buying public, who prefer that a new rug be washed in chemicals, which cuts its life in half or more, but which produces a glossy sheen for a few months that old rugs get through years of contact with woollen-stockinged feet; that certain colours don't 'go' commercially, such for instance as a cream ground (there is something radically the matter with American taste, for a cream ground often sets off a rug like old ivory,

and is like nectar to a tired soul); that the European market doesn't demand the washing, but wants smaller rugs—not building, I suppose, just now so many big hotels or business offices or houses.

I didn't know till afterwards our guide had fever, and should have been in bed, and I cheerfully asked where were, and might not we see, the looms? And the manager as cheerfully acquiesced. The looms, it appeared, were not here, nor were they all in one place, but there were some in a house close by, which turned out to be near a mile away, and down some crooked, high-walled, uneven alleys that even our hired Ford couldn't tackle.

I was glad to see these looms, for, after all, the loom is the genesis of the rug: where it is created. We progressed through several rooms, none large or airy, each in charge of a foreman, and each containing between two and six looms, and watched flying fingers making knots and manipulating thread, hand-shuttles, combs and shears. The size of the loom is according to the size of the rug. The parallel threads of the warp, which are the lengthwise threads of a rug, are stretched up and down vertically between two transverse poplar beams, which rest on two heavy upright posts. As the rug advances toward completion it is wound around the lower of the two transverse beams, or perhaps the platform of a plank or two, on which the weavers squat, may climb up ever higher by means



THIS VIEW IS EXCEPTIONAL, FOR A LARGE STREAM OF RUNNING WATER VERY RARELY RELIEVES THE INTENSELY ARID ASPECT OF A PERSIAN TOWN

of pegs in the upright posts. When you inspect rug-making it is as well to know that a *gareh*, which is about two and a half English inches, is the unit of measurement, and the quality of a rug is indicated by the number of stitches to the square *gareh*; also that the flying fingers are paid for their work by the amount of rug they make, and not for the number of hours they spend upon the platform. When you know Persia, you will realize this is the only practicable basis of contract for many kinds of work. Perhaps you will ask, as I did, how long did it take to make that rug, and will be politely informed that a rug's growth varies according to its texture, but that a month will see the creation of about a square yard of many rugs.

When you come into a new room, do you ever notice the rugs on the floor? I never used to. I was apt to notice everything else first. But live in Persia for a while, and the course of your observations will begin where it formerly ended. It's almost like acquiring a sixth sense. I conclude it's partly because music and theatres and other forms of diversion that absorb surplus energy at home still shun Teheran and other Persian towns. Whatever the reason, you soon become engulfed in the atmosphere of rugs, and you must watch yourself, or else when you come home you'll be thought to have acquired a misplaced sense of humour or downright bad manners. For in Teheran, while waiting to go in to dinner, let us say, one may

stoop, quite casually, throw back a corner of the rug one is standing on, finger it critically, and at dinner start conversation by asking one's host its origin and price. No offence is taken, and it is done, I assure you, in the best circles. Rugs are as recurrent and more interesting than the weather as a topic of social conversation. 'Have you got a new rug?' is the most natural of queries to address taciturn neighbours and loosens the tautest silence. When you move from most localities you don't ask your friends if they care to sell you this or that which takes your fancy; but when you leave Teheran it is not amiss to tell your neighbour of your admiration for his Veramin or Turcoman, and ask whether he cares to sell it. Unless he's got an especially warm spot in his heart for it, the answer is as likely to be 'yes' as 'no'. And after you're gone he'll have the fun of getting something else to put in its place.

Now I don't pose as a connoisseur of rugs. God forbid! But it's not easy to reside in Persia without getting swept into the current. It doesn't matter whether you're rich or poor, only in the former case you're a bit more likely to waste your money.

For which there are various reasons. You need rugs to cover your floors, which in most cases are of mud or sun-dried brick. Teheran's stores don't carry linoleum or machine-made carpeting. Your servant buys strips of straw matting in the bazaar,

but neither comfort, cleanliness nor the fitness of things allows you to stop there. Rugs must cover your floors as they do those of all your friends and neighbours. Getting rugs is part of the atmosphere. And getting rugs has zest, because, as I have said, other diversions that amuse and take energy are scarce. That is why, when a pedlar of rugs comes round with his donkey loaded with runners and prayer-rugs and bed-rugs and gelims, you leave your breakfast or your desk and adjourn with your friend and your pipe to look over his new stock, even though most of it is trash. And if you don't, he camps on your steps and awaits your advent for half a day or more, unless your dog or your servant or your own blasphemous words send him away.

And the funny part of it is that Persian rugs cost as much or more in Persia to-day as they do abroad. I have friends who have brought Persian rugs to Teheran purchased in London or Constantinople that excel anything you can find in Teheran, and purchased for considerably less than what is paid in Teheran for commoner pieces. There is a Caucasian rug, for instance, with a pattern of much character of brick-red medallions on a deep blue ground that lies before a hearth in one of the great houses of the town that I'll wager you couldn't get in Persia to-day for thrice the amount which the owner paid for it in a London auction-room. Similarly, you may find

rugs in the big department stores of the West for sums no greater and often less than what you pay in Persia. I'm not talking now so much of 'modern' rugs as 'antiques', which term is applied to rugs perhaps ten years old and more. The rug companies make their own products or buy wholesale, and 'antiques' often stray into lots of new rugs unnoticed by those who do business in quantity. The 'antiques' get noticed, however, by the local Jew dealers, who have learned there is a thing called taste, and that special prices will be paid by Westerners for rugs possessing a certain flavour. The Jew dealers nab the antiques, which for the most part are very commonplace antiques, for the really good ones left Persia long ago, and if not in private hands, are in a Paris or New York or London show-window. They pick them up in the bazaar, or occasionally from a Persian family that is in special need of cash, and hawk them among the foreign colony in Teheran.

Of course there is the game of bargaining for the rug. A pedlar comes with his donkey load to your house, or you spend a morning in queer corners of the bazaar, or go into an unkempt room off Tulip Street, which is the name of the Rue de la Paix of Teheran. And you assume a contemplative attitude and poker face and protest and argue. Later the rug you want, with others, is usually brought to your house, and you probably get it, if you have a trader's patience, at a price which neither you nor

the vendor originally mentioned, but which you both suspected would be the final one.

You pick up much information of a geographic kind through this playing with rugs, which is useful, for Persian rugs are usually given the name of the region where they are woven. Only don't be too sure. A Baluch rug is not woven in Baluchistan, but by nomad Baluchis far to the north in Khorassan; a Kermanshah is not woven in or near the city of that name, but in Kerman miles to the east; and a Bokhara, a name adopted by Western trade and familiar at home, is made by Turcoman tribes, rarely, I am told, in the political state of Bokhara. You should have at hand an historical as well as modern atlas, for boundaries have changed since many rugs were named, and the regions of the Caucasus and Turkestan and Afghanistan and Iraq, that once were in, are now outside, Persia. Then the Western carpet companies who make their own rugs in Persia not infrequently adopt arbitrary geographic names to denote different grades of their output. But such surprises are exceptional; your Saruk, Kerman, Bijar, Haris, Veramin, Shiraz, come from the districts named, and there's no deception.

Occasionally you get a surprise when you learn, as I did, that a rug of a typical Caucasian geometric design was woven way down in south-west Persia by a Bakhtiari tribe, or one with the typical Minakhani scroll-work on a sapphire ground, which

for hundreds of years have been characteristic of rugs from the region of Veramin near Teheran, was in fact woven in the province of Khorassan. You don't learn this until some day a friend who really knows will bend down, feel a corner of the piece, pet its texture, and then as casually enlighten you. For to such a one it is the knotting and the nature of the weave that give the real clue to source of origin.

But from then on rugs are full of guile, and offer more pitfalls to the buyer than precious stones or fur or even horses. Truly did Edgar Allan Poe observe: 'A judge at common law may be an ordinary man; a good judge of a carpet must be a genius': and if someone tells you that you can learn to judge a rug from books, you may know he is a fool or very ignorant. For a book can teach you as much and no more in the way of judging a rug than it can teach you how to ride a horse or swim. You must live with them, handle them, risk and at first lose some of your money on them, before you get a real rug sense.

What you lose in time and perhaps in cash you reap, to my mind, not only in fun but knowledge. Rugs are one of the corner-stones of this part of the world, and contact with them breeds familiarity with many an interesting local way of thinking and doing. Designs, for example, are a world in themselves. My own knowledge includes chiefly realizing the extent of my ignorance and the end-

THE PATCHES OF SCRAMBLED BLACK AND TAN AND GRAY AND DRAB OF PERSIAN FLOCKS ARE AS TYPICAL ON THE BARE LANDSCAPE AS THE RUGS ARE IN THE SPARSELY FURNISHED HOUSES

A MONOTONOUS LANDSCAPE, THIS OF PERSIA, IF YOU WILL, BUT OF A SUBLIME GRANDNESS AND PEACE

less field of exploration they offer. Birds, flowers, trees, animals; storks, peonies, cypresses, crabs, elephants' feet, coffins, a thousand and one symbols are here, each region with its own signs and patterns, each region reflecting in its rugs superstitions, traditions, history. Migrations, conquests, arbitrary transportation of peoples by despots are here. Rug *motifs* born in one place you may find transported two thousand miles away. They are archives of cultural and historical change and development. . . .

The fact that the life of so many Turcoman rugs has departed perplexes you, till you learn these rugs often serve in tents to cover bare and sometimes damp ground. That, remember, is one of the first tests to make: to find out by pulling and twisting the under side whether the threads are strong or rotten. You should pull and twist in a special manner, holding the part close to the ear, and if they are rotten the threads crack with the dry sound your knuckles sometimes make. Sometimes only a part of a rug is rotten, has only a rotten spot or two. Where the family samovar trickled perhaps day after day, or where the roof of tent or house leaked in winter. If it is thus maimed, but colour and pattern and flower still tempt you, the question is whether you want it enough to use only on the wall or sofa, as is the custom in Asia; or, if you only buy rugs that may be used underfoot, whether the weak parts are of

a nature and size that may be properly repaired by the cross-legged sewers in the bazaar who make such work their business, either with silk reinforcing thread or by inserting new pieces.

You must also note, before you settle on a piece, whether it lies flat, for many rugs are nervous and wrinkle because the fingers of the weavers have flown too fast or carelessly; and whether it has been repaired or patched; and whether there are streaks of different shades in those parts of the pattern which should not alter, for when one supply of wool is ended Ahmad or Mohammed may have been careless in choosing other wool that seemed but was not quite akin; and whether the pile is so worn that the knots are exposed and it may not serve much longer underfoot, which is often the case with rugs whose colours are mellow and friendly.

Then the colours themselves present a multitude of considerations. Before the days of chemical laboratories they used colours that were made locally from plants or inorganic substances of the country. Then soon after the middle of the last century came chemical dyes, which spread like a prairie fire, for they weren't too costly and saved work and time.

Chemical dyes are a complicated business into which only the initiated may profitably enter. So it would be unwise for me, who am but a blundering layman, to try to discuss them. Know, however,

that there are to-day in the neighbourhood of four thousand chemical 'synthetic' colours. The mere number shows how easy it is to get into labyrinths of perplexity. And when one is told that there is much loose talk among laymen about synthetic colours one hardly wonders. For instance, it is the fashion when alluding to these matters to curse the aniline and tolerate or even compliment alizarin dyes, these being the two main classes. I believe you will find there are perfectly innocuous fast colours among the aniline and many that are not fast among the alizarin. For myself, I give up the attempt to understand their intricacies.

The outside aspects of the thing, however, are simpler. Look at a catalogue of alizarin reds ('Made in Germany'). It is easy to acknowledge that the little red squares look just like the red that comes from madder-root after it has been in companionship with fermented milk. But look at that same laboratory-made red after it has been inserted in a rug, and you sense the difference between man's and Nature's colours. The synthetic red is rigid, while the vegetable red is soft and pleasant. The vegetable colour, too, co-operates with its fellows; the tune it plays is melodious and does not jar. It reacts organically, we might say, to its surroundings, while the chemical colour reacts mechanically. The Persians have a plan on foot, and rug-lovers hope it will succeed, to limit gradually the use of even the so-called good syn-

thetic colours and replace them with their old-time vegetable prototypes. It will necessitate the co-operation of Government, rug companies, and local opinion. But there is hope, for all three are becoming educated in the matter by the growing popularity abroad of other rugs than Persian, and a realization that through a return to the original manner of colour as well as of design lies the best chance to reinstate the Persian in its premier place as the rug *de luxe*.

A real rug man need only glance at a rug to sense defective chemical colours. You or I will test it with handkerchief and water or alcohol, at which the real rug man shrugs his shoulders as being the way of the amateur and inconclusive. Or we will send the rug to be washed at Cheshmeh Ali. This Spring of Ali—every town in Persia has its Cheshmeh Ali, each of which started from the ground at the touch of Ali's stick—is a pool at the foot of a cliff some miles from Teheran. Because its water contains no calcium it gives a sheen and purity to the surface, even of rugs whose wool was torn from dead instead of shorn from live sheep, that delights the eye. Here rugs are sent whose colours may seem questionable, for if they are defective the water makes them run about the rug and trespass outrageously and painfully on their neighbours' precincts. It is well to be sure if your colours are fast, for a *little* defective colour in a rug affects its reputation about as effectively as a little lack of

freshness in an egg or a little lack of chastity in a lady affect their reputations.

I have had no end of amusement in acquiring my rugs. They teach you the weaknesses of your neighbours; bring you friends; they teach you much about the Persian language, especially in the realm of vigorous and picturesque expression; they promote self-control and shrewdness; and, as if that weren't enough, I have now a few rugs which for me have companionable personalities and whose presence gives me more pleasure than many acquaintances.

Rugs are so bewildering a field that when you come upon them as a novice it is a good rule not to buy till you've been in Persia a certain time. I refused to buy, except in one sad instance, any rug till I'd been here almost a year. Meantime you get a perspective and acquire a conscious taste, for we all have our preferences for certain types. You may get more interested in the texture than the design and colour, although not so I. I came to realize silk rugs didn't appeal to me, nor rugs depicting human figures, which many Persians like. I like shahs on thrones and lightly clad women and cherubim in tapestries perhaps, but not in rugs. And wonder and horror mingle at those occasional products, the apples of managers' as well as weavers' eyes, small in size, with I don't know how many stitches to the square *gareh*, priced at small fortunes, with designs copied from that type of highly coloured,

inexpensive Western lithograph of sea or landscapes that are likely to be found (and should remain) in the sitting-rooms of stuffy boarding-houses.

You learn among other things not to buy a rug because you think it's cheap or to swap rugs, in which transactions you invariably get left. You learn whose advice may be worth something, and whose is certainly worth nothing—as in horse-trading. A friendly neighbour last year—he's an enthusiast by nature, begins by thinking and talking staccato, then increasingly crescendo-wise—knew of a 'Mir' he had happened on tucked away in one of those stalls which correspond in a bazaar to a cell in a beehive. (A 'Mir' is one of those that is no longer fabricated, and the worst of them is now a treasure.) It was a good three *zars* long, and oh! the vintage of its full, red ground! and so very little was being asked. I visualized it as an heirloom before my neighbour, as a favour, took me to see it. It did look nice, but especially, I realize in retrospect, because it was so cheap. How easily when the phantom of a bargain looms we lose our cold perspective. It was a cloudy winter's day when we went to the bazaar, and the light there at best is uncertain and full of whims. But my neighbour had been in Teheran for many years, and I knew the good rugs he possessed. So I asked him to conclude the deal, paid down my money, and with joy brought home my bargain—four, five,

sixfold was it in fact worth, staccatoed he. Next day when I laid it on my porch in the sunlight without him near by it had somehow lost its rich, pristine shade. For the first time I noticed the looseness of its texture. That red that had so gripped us now seemed almost weak and streaky. Perhaps because 'Mirs' are ancient and have been much used, thought I. But uneasiness became alarm when a hunchback friend in pigeon-English and a catchpenny grin came by and vouchsafed his comments. 'Who brought you that to look at?' he inquired. 'Don't buy it', he warned. 'No, of course not', said I; 'pretty miserable for a "Mir", eh?' 'It's no Mir', quoth he, 'but a "Saraband" ' (which to a Mir is as a temperance drink to good Scotch whisky) 'worn threadbare. See, its knots which are exposed have been touched with paint.' And he bent down, and with only a touch the end of his wetted finger became all red. It was too true. The thing was pocked with barn-door paint like a measled body. They hadn't even taken trouble with the faking. I will draw a curtain on my feelings toward myself, my neighbour, and the vendor, and only record that with the assistance of another friend and the police I got back, after more perseverance than I usually exhibit, more of my money than I deserved.

CHAPTER X

THE LAST STRETCH

YEZD
October 13

I DID not attempt to record each crisis regarding Nanette as it arose during our stay in Kerman. We learned that motor repair facilities in Persia are scarce, and when they can be found at all, cost much time, money, and patience. Perplexities succeeded each other with such well-ordered regularity that I suspect they contributed to the feeling of despondency I have attributed to the place.

It did not turn out an easy thing to treat and cure Nanette, and our time was largely spent in devising ways and means. At first it all looked simple, for the driver who brought us into Kerman declared there were several members of Nanette's sorority in the town, and that we could doubtless procure from one of them the propeller-shaft we so badly needed. He himself would return with the shaft to Khan-i-Sorkh the very next morning, and we credulously looked forward to a reunion of our party before night. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the next morning we found that

the owner of the most likely shaft had left town (with his shaft) to get married somewhere that was distant enough to remove him from our list of possibilities. The owner of our second best was a young officer whose acquaintance we had made near Isfahan. He was aide to the military commander in Kerman, but when we desired to reach him, the incontinency was pointed out of calling on him without first paying our respects to his senior officer. Though I would dislike to be considered more immodest than my neighbour, I may mention that Christopher and I are travellers of a certain consequence. And so we had to wait a day, for the military commander was away shooting. When we did finally present ourselves and he heard of our disaster, he offered to contribute a motor-cycle to transport the shaft out to Khan-i-Sorkh, which was welcome, because our driver, for motives we could not fathom, refused after all to use his own car for the purpose, and asserted a motor-cycle was the only proper means of transport. So we felt our observance of the conventions *vis-à-vis* the military commander had brought its reward. As soon as we had secured the military motor-cycle, however, there turned out to be no shaft to send, for the car of our friend the aide proved to be of a more ancient and slightly different structure than Nanette. Perhaps you can see how our mood was becoming receptive to depressing influences! The third and last shaft on our list belonged to the

manager of a rug company who possessed an American passport. Though he had attended Robert College in Constantinople, he hadn't acquired altogether that attitude which it is agreeable for castaways like Christopher and me to meet. Perhaps it was because, like us, he was new to cars, and ignorance lent terror to the idea of disembowelling his recently acquired toy. Charity, however, aided perhaps by a weighing of ulterior as well as immediate self-interest, finally ruled supreme. But our driver, whose pronouncements we were beginning to regard in much the same light as the mirages of his native plains, meantime developed, or said he developed, fever, and now declared the military motor-cycle an impossible means of conveyance for the shaft. We failed to account for this last display of temperament, till he suggested going in a Ford belonging to a friend who was taking to Saidabad one of those parties of a dozen or so persons that make you as a traveller in Persia so very glad not to be of the common social and financial clay. I will not weary you with further details of this matter, but will only record that after one or two further delays the Ford, our driver-mechanic and our borrowed shaft departed, and that Taghi and Nanette, some twelve hours later, arrived in Kerman. The owner of the borrowed shaft, however, was not to be moved by representations that once in Nanette it would be a pity to take it out again, and that by waiting a

short time he would benefit by the new one we had telegraphed for to India (for Kerman for nearly all purposes of outside supply faces east). He apparently felt, with Lord Dundreary, that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. So we had to return it and leave Nanette behind in Taghi's care, and are now travelling on our homeward way in a hired car that is larger and more comfortable, I must admit, but gives us the irksome feeling of a correctly polite and totally impersonal stranger. . . .

Yesterday in the heat of the early afternoon we left Kerman and its sheltering mountains and started back to Teheran, with the feeling of heading for the home port after a cruise in far, strange waters. Like a desert island, Kerman, with its remoteness and relics, gives one a feeling of communion with the past that is intimate and real.

We ran out on the broad stretch of desert at one end of which the city lies, and here at Yezd, two hundred and twenty miles away, haven't yet come to its end. For our way has been north-west, which is the direction of so many Persian mountain ranges, and our road and the shaft of desert along which it runs shoots on without interference from the mountain chains which bound the way on either side. It makes for weary travel, for they are wide apart, at most points too far away to be more than impersonal, streaky barriers, and the desert is of an unvaried, stupid dirt colour. If we hadn't had mirages to chase over its level sameness, the

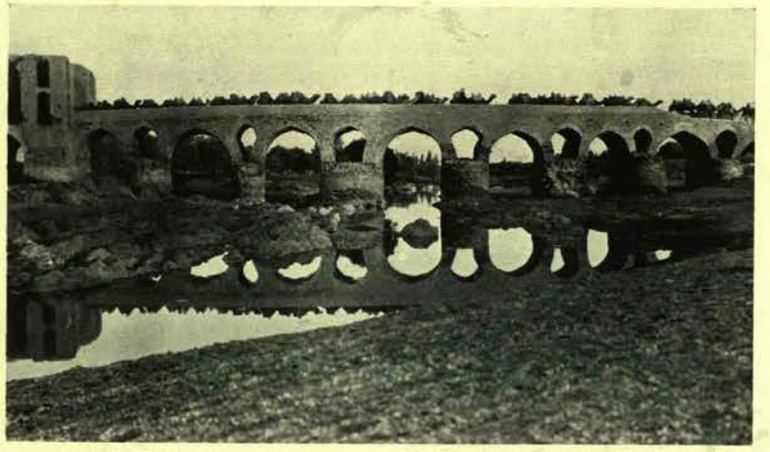
journey would have been very tedious indeed. Occasional villages broke the monotony, hiding within mud walls. They grew (oh! in such an ancient, primitive way it made your heart ache for live, thrifty farming methods) cotton, opium, wheat, nuts, and fruit, fed by kanats that brought water from the mountains. After night had fallen and seventy miles were behind us, we reached the town of Bahramabad, the centre of Rafsinjan, a district quite productive for these parts. By its gate a horseman was waiting to lead us to his master's house.

Our car tooted its way through the narrow alleys of the bazaar, choking them almost like a locomotive in a tunnel. The bazaar at Bahramabad, like the bazaars of the majority of Persian towns, covers a considerable portion of the central part, and constitutes the town's topographical as well as commercial heart. Bazaar thoroughfares are usually the main and sometimes the only arteries for traffic to get from one end of a town to another. Progressing through them in a car is risky. Corners are sharp and unexpected, humankind is abundant and careless, and the way is not always level. You might be feeling your way through the intricacies of an animated ant-hill.

When we emerged into open air again and had no longer even the lamps on top of the swaying piles of fruit on donkeys' backs to light the way, we found ourselves in a blind road at the farther

PERSIAN SCENERY

IT IS TRULY A LAND OF WIDE, WASTE SPACES : A ROMANTIC SUPERWORLD, LONELY, VAST AND NAKED, BUT BRIGHT WITH SUNLIGHT AND ENTRANCING COLOURS



THE TRUE PERSIA

A CARAVAN OF CAMELS, A BRIDGE OF CARELESS ARCHES, A RIVER BED THAT POSSESSES ONLY STAGNANT POOLS ; ALL AGAINST A BLUE SKY THAT CUTS LIKE CRYSTAL

end of the town. Here our guide was joined by a group of retainers in whose lantern light we were escorted to our destination. It was the house of an affluent citizen to whom our host in Kerman had sent word of our arrival, and in true Persian style he put himself out to do the honours. We found him waiting, a tall figure with a quiet dignity well set off by a closely coiled turban and flowing *aba*, in the little courtyard of the *biruni* (the 'outside' or men's quarters, as distinct from the *anderun* or women's quarters) of his house. During the twelve hours we were there we never heard once the sound of a woman's voice nor caught sight of a woman's skirt. The half-dozen rooms of the biruni were built compactly about the little court, towered with a bad-gir, and clean and neat as a whistle. We were taken first to a domed and bare-walled chamber adorned with rugs, a few chairs, and a small dining-table placed comfortably in a windowed recess. Here we sat with our host and his brother, wishing rather for a wash instead of the tea that soon joined the plates of cakes and sweets that littered the table.

Christopher, being the only linguist, did his duty valiantly *vis-à-vis* the cotton crop—which is now being picked—the wool market, and trading in the bazaar, from which sources our host, we understand, derives his income. Then appeared a little hatchet-faced *mirza*, our host's secretary, who supplied diversion for the rest of the evening with

his few English words, Cockney accent, and absurd confidence in his own proficiency. He promptly monopolized the conversation, leading it into the realm of politics, which is a tabooed subject in polite Persian circles. Eventually his insistent comments and questions were interrupted by servants entering with basins and pitchers of water, which were operated over our outstretched hands in the middle of the room in true Biblical style, the secretary zealously standing by, apparently to see that we as well as the servants did our duty. When we indicated a desire to go to our room, he crisply said 'Good-night', the brothers and he shook our hands, and we withdrew in a thoroughly perturbed frame of mind, for the evening was young and our appetites keen. In our dismay we dispatched Rahim to reconnoitre, who soon reported that 'good-night' merely conveyed a hope the period of darkness would be auspicious and that supper was preparing. In half an hour's time our peace was broken by the mirza articulating at our door, 'Gripes, gripes', and emerging, we found him holding a large dish of grapes which we intimated would be more welcome on the supper-table than in our bedroom. A little later, on our way across the court in the dark, we ran into a shot-gun levelled at our heads. But it proved to be empty, and the mirza merely wished to know its cash value. It was an ancient 'St. Etienne', which we discussed with tact, and then proceeded

to the eating-room. Our host and his brother received us like long-lost friends, shook hands vigorously, and the mirza again formally announced, 'G'd-night'. But we were no longer dismayed, returned the greeting, and joined the others in settling comfortably into chairs. We went through the convolutions of further conversation till servants brought in a welcome supper of broth, fowl, rice, grapes, pistachio nuts, and tea for Christopher and me, and the brothers departed to the *anderun* for theirs. Persians consume their last meal of the day just before retiring to bed, a custom for which I cannot explain the reason. It seems to destroy much of the social pleasantness of the evening and is not conducive to good digestion.

This morning we got off just as the sun peeped above the horizon. The two brothers escorted us to the gateway of the town, where we clambered into our car, asking us on the way to give no parting donation to their servants, for, said the host, 'it is we who are indebted to you for giving us the privilege of extending our hospitality'. . . .

This day has been the most monotonous of all our days upon the road. The shaft of desert we followed became wide, the mountains liked us no better than yesterday, and for the most part kept aloof and distant. They have never been so far off or so constantly away. Usually they have hopped and skipped and turned and made wry faces in an ever-changing pantomime.

But the sameness of the way was at least appropriately suggestive, for across two mountain ranges to the east—that's quite close at hand in Persia—lies the great void of desert that covers in the form of a triangle so much of the central and eastern part of the country. Since leaving Kerman we have been running parallel to its western limit, which runs north-west–south-east for more than six hundred miles. In the south it makes an angle that cuts deep into the Province of Kerman, and is responsible for so much of it being sterile waste. Its eastern boundary runs north and south, keeping more or less company with the eastern frontier of Persia. Then in the great north-west Province of Khorassan it turns and runs west for three hundred miles to not far from Teheran. It is as if Nature had got tired by the time she reached this desert region or forgetful of it. Its bigness is one reason why trade between India and China and Central Asia with the West took so abruptly to the sea when sea routes became practicable for commerce in the sixteenth century. It is said to have been the bed of what was once a great inland salt sea, but geologists can speculate upon this aspect of its past with more intelligence than I. There is a theory that in the north Teheran and even Kazvin, and in the south Kerman, were upon its shores, and that Yezd was an island. And if you like picturesque surmise, you may take for what it's worth the allusion by one writer to a village

called Yunsi, from 'Junas' or 'Jonas', on the eastern limits of the present desert, as being the spot where our old Biblical friend was cast forth by the great mammal of the deep.

Descriptions of these wastes include glittering white sheets where water has evaporated and left saline incrustations like those parts of Nayriz Lake I have described and the strip of salt desert we crossed before reaching Saidabad; places where salt and water together look like mush ice, regions of quicksand, expanses of black clay and mud baked hard in the sun, sand and gravel stretches, undulations and even hills, and, in places, desert grass and small bush. These wastes, too, are the home of the wild ass, the shyest of all big game in Persia, which is to be found much more frequently and easily in literature and folk-lore than on its native heath. I have heard stories of this animal ever since I've been in Persia, but I have yet to meet the man who has actually killed one.

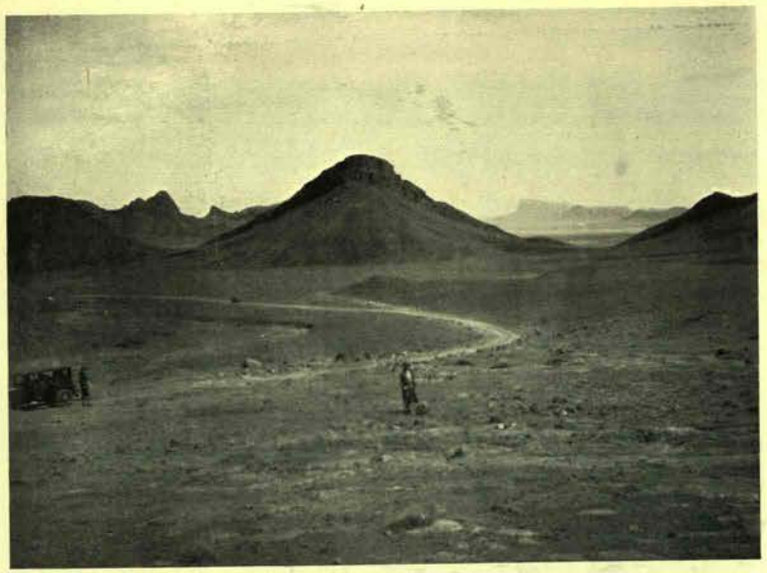
About half-way up the triangle of the Great Desert it is divided by a range of sand-hills that has afforded for many centuries a crossing for caravans. In certain other places, too, it has been traversed, but I judge usually when one can't do otherwise. Large sections of it are still marked 'unexplored'. Perhaps there is nothing very much to find.

Maps name the northern portion the Dasht-i-Kavir, or Salt Desert, and the southern, the Dasht-

i-Lut, or Bare Desert. Accounts describe neither as an altogether ordinary desert. The most curious thing on the Dasht-i-Kavir is the Daria-i-Nemak, or Sea of Salt, where there are fields of solid rock-salt, not just a thin covering such as we saw near Saidabad, but accumulations of deposits whose thickness may be measured in feet, that are described as much harder to chip than ice, and which extend for miles upon miles, giving, one would imagine, the same sense of solidity as pack-ice in the Arctic Ocean.

The southern portion of the desert is called the Dasht-i-Lut, not because it is devoid of salt, but from the greater extent and fierceness of its sandy wastes. The word 'lut' in Persian means 'bare' or 'desolate', and practical-minded people are apt merely to accept this obvious application of the term; others, more imaginative (who, however, can hardly accept the theory of a former inland sea), tell you 'lut' has acquired its present meaning from 'Shahr-i-Lut', or City of Lot, the ruins of which may still be seen at a certain locality on the Dasht-i-Lut. In other words, that Sodom and Gomorrah formerly flourished on what is now the Great Desert of Persia. But it seems, if one prefers fact to fancy, that these alleged ruins of Lot's city are only clay hillocks which have been cut by the wind into a striking resemblance of what might once have been the walls and towers of a man-made city. Many Persians will tell you seriously,

ON THE ROAD FROM ISFAHAN TO TEHERAN



ON THE ROAD SOUTH OF ISFAHAN
OF A SOLITUDE AND LACK OF GARMENT THAT BESPEAK UNCHANGING CONTINUITY'

however, that it was once actually the home of Lot, so it is well not to be too arbitrary.

The fancy is a pretty one, and at any rate more pleasant to contemplate than the description of other parts of the Dasht-i-Lut, where 'the prevailing north-west winds have swept the sand together and banked it up in huge mounds and hills, ever shifting and eddying. A fierce sun beats down upon the surface, which is as fiery hot as incandescent metal; and almost always the *bad-i-sam*, or simoom, is blowing, so desiccated by its passage over hundreds of miles of burning desert that if it overtakes man or animal its parched breath in a moment sucks every atom of moisture from his frame, and leaves him a withered and blackened mummy'.[1] About as near an approach, I should imagine, to the infernal regions as can be found on the face of the earth.

We would like to have seen the Lut and the bones of camels that travellers say are strewn in such numbers along its one or two caravan routes, and, who knows, perhaps get a glimpse of a herd of racing wild asses, which are much bigger than the domestic variety, and, according to report, of a fierceness that would amaze their tamed brethren. Its vastness and desolation and untraversed tracts entice you like a malign siren who inveigles helpless creatures into her power for the pleasure of torturing and destroying. Lack of time and proper

[1] Curzon, *Persia*, vol. ii, p. 252.

equipment precluded such an adventure on our part, and we are pursuing, instead, the straight, uninteresting way over patches of sand and corrugated road, with bare, flat vistas on each side stretching to the line of far-off mountains.

Just before the sun set we espied a topsy-turvy disturbance on the horizon ahead. It was a mirage floating above the flat plain. Then as we drew nearer, Nanette panting through sand, then getting back her breath on black gravel, the mirage came and rested on the earth, and finally the outline of Yezd, broken by innumerable *bad-girs*, assumed a definite and reasonable shape. The desert about Yezd is as one conceives an eastern desert should be, sand and gravel unredeemed, without the stubble or bush or other ornament that so many so-called deserts in reality can boast. It is said that Alexander chose the site of Yezd for a prison for his enemies, so sterile and uninviting is the spot. Yet there is a grandness in the quality of such monotony that suggests association with great deeds.

Kanats converged from out of the distance on every side like innumerable spokes of a huge wheel. They are even a more pronounced part of the view here than in the vicinity of Isfahan. Each one was marked by its line of tiny craters a hundred or two feet apart, formed by the earth taken from the vertical shafts which, you will remember, are sunk in the process of construction and kept

open for purposes of repair. Picture a comb and its teeth. We are told there are not far from one hundred of these subterranean channels that bring water to Yezd from the mountains twenty miles away, and that owing to the prevalence of sand strata most of them must be dug far below the surface of the ground. The shaft in the garden where we are staying goes down about two hundred and fifty feet. When you think of the number of these water-tunnels and of their depth, and that they are still being made in the same manner as they were many centuries ago, each with its series of vertical shafts which wind and sand are for ever choking up, you cannot cease to marvel at the patient toil such a system represents. Eighteen hundred years ago Strabo wrote about them, the same then as now, and for all we know they seemed to him as ancient as they do, to-day, to us.

No one seems to know when Yezd first became a town, although its present name, I believe, is taken from the Sassanian monarch, Yezdigird I, who ruled about fifteen hundred years ago. The name signifies 'God', and the town seems to have lived up to the spirit of piety which is indicated by its name, if a reputation for fanaticism is an index. Not such extreme Moslem fanaticism, however, as to prevent the existence of a Zoroastrian community, but sufficient fanaticism in the old days, I take it, to make a Zoroastrian's existence unpleasant and often precarious. When the Arabs,

holding aloft Mohammed's banner, invaded Persia in the seventh century and converted so many of the Persians to Islam, many of those who remained steadfast in their fathers' faith took refuge in Yezd as a place remote and inaccessible. Here their descendants have remained, and to-day they are pointed out, with turbans of a special form and colour, as a sober and industrious people and as controlling to a large extent the trade of the community. In the last century they began to emigrate to India, following the drift of trade; for Yezd, like Kerman, turns its face commercially toward India, and its silk, opium, and wool have gone south and east rather than north or west. Many in the flourishing Zoroastrian community in Bombay to-day trace their origin to Yezd.

The relief which the green patches of occasional gardens on the outskirts of the town gave was more or less offset by the same stretches of forsaken, ruined habitations that gave such sinister suggestion to the borders of Kerman. But all that we forgot at the friendly welcome from an official of the I.E.T.D. and his wife, who took us into their home in a manner that only weary travellers can adequately appreciate. The light was fading, and our departure being scheduled for dawn, I left Christopher to the comforts of a bath and tea, and continued with our somewhat disgruntled driver through the town, through the endless maze of its bazaar, which again was the only way to

traverse it, through crooked alleys, to the Musjid-i-Jama, stared at by groups of Yezdis, who all, contrary to custom elsewhere, wear turbans, and turbans you may tell from afar from their huge, jaunty bulge on one side, as if dryly winking at the contrariness of life.

See the Musjid-i-Jama, if you see nothing else, when you come to Yezd. It was built in the time of Tamerlane, about five hundred years ago. Although you are not allowed to pass its portals, being an infidel, you may view its lofty minarets and its paved courts and ancient groining and dreamy blue tiles through arched gateways and from vantage-points in the alleys that run riot on the uneven ground about its precincts. Probably it is more lovely so, for at a distance you get an effect of poise and faded grandeur which nearer inspection, I suspect, would turn into much decay and lack of care.

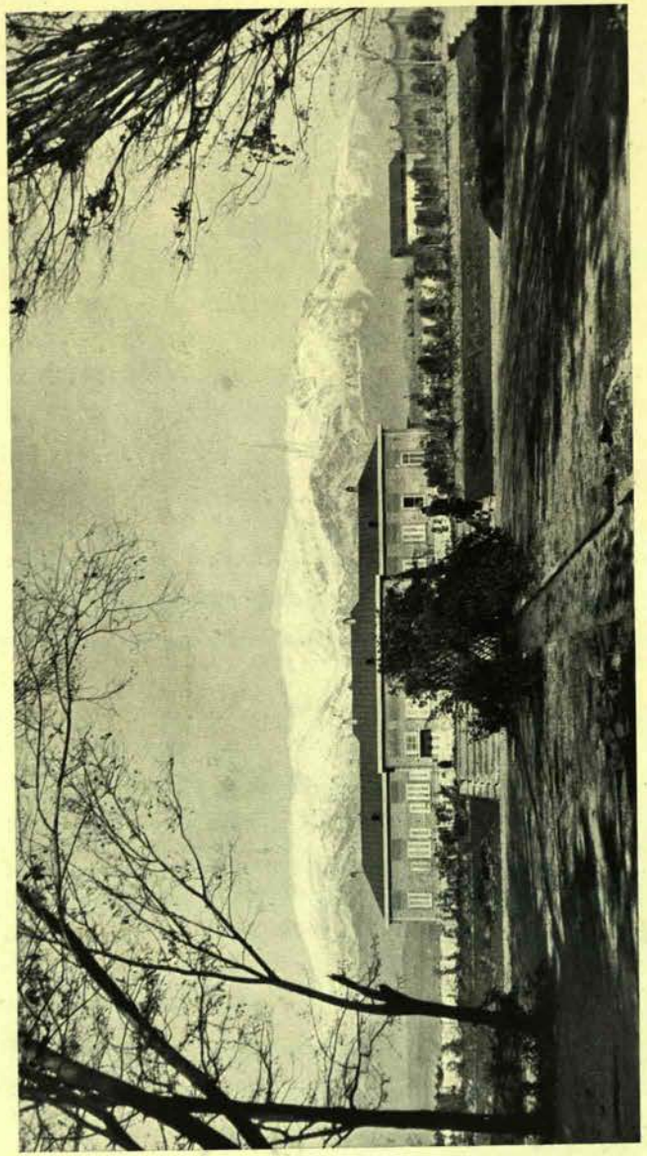
On the way back the wise-eyed urchin on our running-board who acted as guide pointed out the sights. We passed the citadel, which occupied the highest point, which isn't high. Within its crenellated walls of mud was once a famous library and college and observatory, which in its day had few peers. Now only a ruined dome remains. The story goes that the founder, in the eleventh century, who was not ostentatious with his wealth, became suspected and imprisoned for the murder of a rich Christian, whose funds he had supposedly appro-

priated in order to complete his public benefactions. It is also said he was finally released, but you and I are left to speculate as to whether he was innocent or whether the worthy Yezdis of nine hundred years ago finally concluded that murder for such a purpose was a creditable matter.

I am sorry we have no time to see how Yezd silk is made, of which Marco Polo speaks, or how the henna, with which so many Persians dye their nails and hair and beards, and which Yezd exports in quantity, is prepared. Although silk and Yezd are almost like coals and Newcastle, I looked for mulberry-trees in vain, and wondered at being told they are all within the high mud walls that hide the abodes of its townspeople. Each family apparently has its few mulberry-trees and its quota of worms, and the industry is on an individual rather than a mass basis.

TEHERAN
October 16

We left Yezd at sunrise on Thursday morning, ploughed over the ridges of sand that impede egress on its northern side, and travelled for six hours along the still endless tongue of desert. Then at Na'een, after lunch in the cool rest-room of the telegraph house, and after Christopher had acquired some local pottery made from powdered stone (which to me seemed commonplace, but then most pottery does), we left the ancient main route



THE AMERICAN LEGATION LIES JUST OUTSIDE THE NORTHERN GATE OF TEHERAN
BACK OF IT RISE THE ELBURZ MOUNTAINS WHICH SO EFFECTIVELY SEPARATE CENTRAL PERSIA FROM THE CASPIAN SEA

that keeps on in its everlastingly north-westerly line till it reaches Kashan, and turned west to Isfahan over a newer and better track that abruptly leaves the desert and winds gently up over the Bilabad Pass.

Oh, cross that pass just after the sun has set behind the mountains forty miles away across the sweep of intervening desert! Imagine a silhouette of giant crystals heaped pell-mell together and strung along in an endless line, and the whole thing of one solid colour. No shades, no wrinkles, no perspective—smooth like the face of cardboard. Such was our horizon: a sheet of solid purple, whose broken, jagged outline cut in wild disarray the pink halo above.

It is slow and weary to pick your way in the night through the maze of gardens and among the network of irrigation channels, some unsuspected and deep, with toothpick bridges, that extend in a wide fringe around Isfahan. We arrived there late Monday night, a hundred and ninety-six miles from Yezd, later than we would have if our driver, who owns his car, had not had a sheepish caution. Perhaps all Kermanis are cautious. We could not blame him for careful driving. But before reaching the intricacies of Isfahan's suburbs we came to a region of watercourses where his conduct upset our tempers. It was already dark, and supper still seemed far away; perhaps that was why. But after stopping the car for the tenth (or

twentieth) time before one of the improvised little dykes that help water across the road when the crop on the other side has special need to quench its thirst, and looking and talking but doing nothing else, as if he were confronted with an abyss, Christopher decided it was time the farce stopped, sprang out in no uncertain manner, roughly yanked up a castor-oil plant with its roots, and plumped it into the water channel, which, fair to say, was of some width. The dreaded barrier proved to be three inches deep, and the dykes not being much higher, the comedy of the thing struck even the driver, and our progress thereafter was more rapid.

We spent a short night at Isfahan, and Friday night at the holy city of Ghom. It was the same road we had already covered which I have told you about in Chapter I, so two things are all I need say here: that in Persia, as perhaps in some other places, when you travel on the same road, but the other way, it and its accompaniments seem almost like a new adventure, so different does it appear. The second thing was the sunset and its prelude that we watched yesterday. Truly the late afternoon is the fairy hour in this land. It was after we passed Dilijan—you remember, where I spent my first night listening to the cadences of a donkey's bell—when the shadows began to crawl ever faster and the rose-reds and browns and buffs and lemons and blues and violets became ever more elusive. Colours like honey and sherry wine became

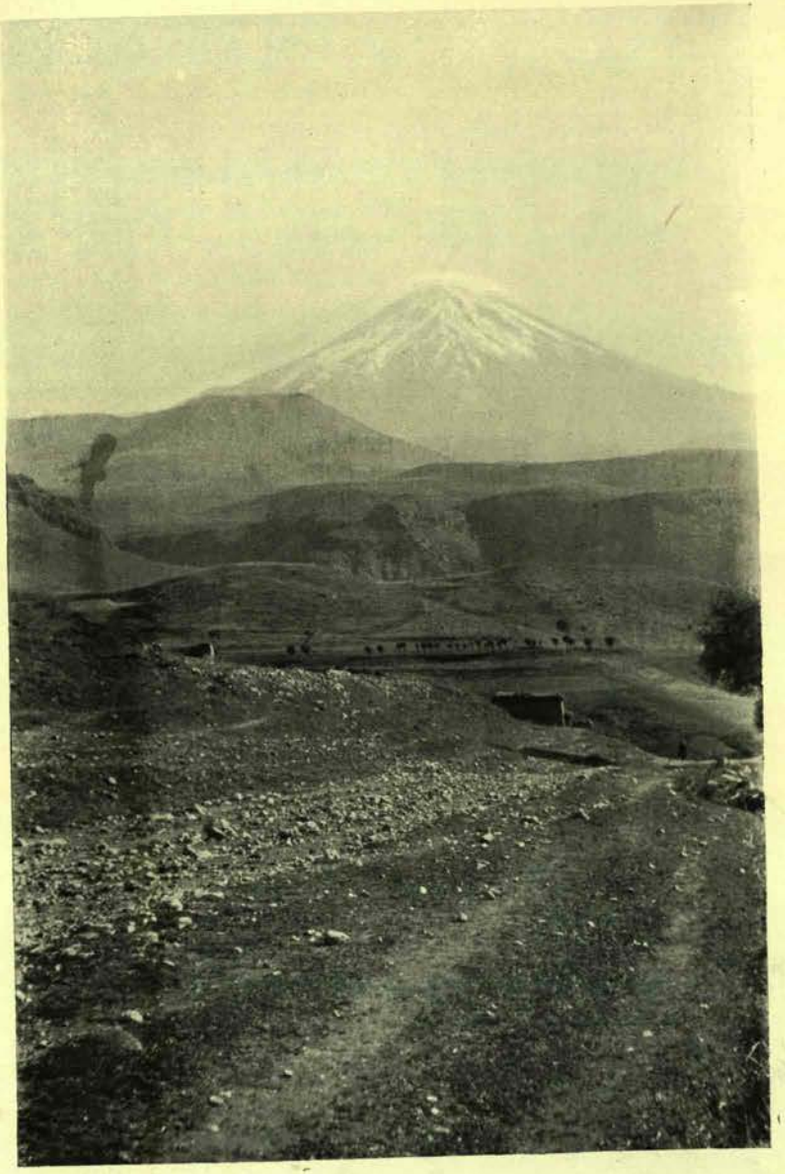
misty greys and dusky gold; the rose-reds became violet; the drabs shimmered and couldn't decide what to become. Rock and cliff and peak and plain laughed and danced and glowed. Their colours had the vitality of precious stones and the mellowness which old tapestry would envy. Down the side valleys they peered through misty veils like phantoms, till the sun finally sank behind their walls. Perspective vanished, and the frame about us became one huge purple drop-scene that turned into grey, and finally, with the night, into black.

This morning we discussed the future of Nanette, for whom we have acquired much affection. We speculated on the chances of her arriving safe back in Teheran and the business aspects of entrusting Taghi with securing a load of passengers in Kerman wherewith to replenish our account. In case we sold her, Christopher suggested that drill might be a timely garment with which to hide holes and wear and tear from prospective buyers, with which I heartily concurred. And we made other practical, hard-headed plans. And then suddenly we saw with something of shock, when still miles and miles away, Demavand's cap of snow and its white ribbons floating high in the dour space of the sunless morning. For long it remained like a cloud unattached and free of any base; then, as distance lessened, it dropped earthward, till it rested finally on the rigid outline of its mountain cone.

After we passed the marshes of Hassanabad, where we come on Sundays duck-shooting, and crossed the belt of hills called Kenaregird, the sun came out and burnished the plain of Teheran, which lay before us like a vast carpet at the feet of the Elburz mountains. They rose thirty miles to the north like a great wall to the sky.

You forget the garbage heaps of Teheran and their ever snarling, cringing canine custodians; the hands that pick up the filth from the streets; those who take their baths in vacant corners in the sun because they can't afford admission to a bath-house; the water that courses in the city's gutters that is used for drinking and washing and all other needs; you forget the half-finished, out-at-elbows, ill-nourished aspect of the town, its side-walks that chase you into the streets and its beggars that know no shame, and wonder only at the beauty of the scene. The colour of its tiled and pinnacled gateways flickers in the sunlight, the notes from a shepherd's pipe mingle faintly with the breeze; and you remember only the walks at sunset on its robust earth ramparts, the patience of its song, its good humour, its space, and wonder whether, after all, it hasn't seeds which may some day take a shape that will upset conjectures of to-day.

Teheran has not been Persia's capital for a hundred years for nothing. The panorama of its broad plain, though more simple and austere, is to Teheran much as the Roman Campagna is to the Eternal



MOUNT DEMAVAND

City, and is dotted, thanks to the existence of the town, with more bits of greenery than we saw on any other plain. The plain itself is broader and the mountains that guard it from the north higher than any we saw elsewhere. Water from those mountains is handled with more zeal, which means more food and a living for more people. A veritable Persian carpet, with a pattern formed by the clusterings of its trees and gardens on a plain, subdued, tawny ground. The giant scale and simplicity of mountains and plain make them seem above rather than of the world. It is like so much of Persia, a superworld of space and light, where Nature's work seems only half finished, a place for clouds and storms and sunlight, but not for the trivialities and meannesses of men. Where distances have no end and men seem but accidents, where silence and remoteness are your companions and eternity your destination.

Persia has indeed a subjective power. It did not strike me especially at first, but later my thoughts harked back to a remark I heard a few days after my arrival. I was somewhat scandalized, in fact. An American missionary, who has given thirty years of her life to the country, and who had recently returned from a year at home in Pennsylvania, remarked: 'I was so glad to get back; I yearned for the mountains.' 'Yes, your Pennsylvania country is very fine', quoth I. 'Oh', was the rejoinder, 'I mean Persia and the mountains here,

yonder', pointing to the Elburz and Mount Demavand, two dozen miles away, towering, rugged and naked, to the sky.

So it is. When you come to Persia one of two things, I predict, will happen. The place may grip you at first sight, and you will be blessed. Or the endless sweep and unadornment of plain and mountain will seem desolate, and you will say as others have, 'Persia is only rock and stone.' But if you stay awhile, I'll wager that will pass and its elemental strength and sense of romance will soothe you like a tonic. Babbit should have come to Persia. If you do not stay awhile and leave disgruntled, I'll also wager a time will come, after you're halfway round the world, when you'll feel humble and yearn for this place you cursed. You will think with our missionary compatriot of Mount Demavand and say with one who *was* blessed:

> . . . The power is there,
> The still and solemn power of many sights,
> And many sounds, and much of life and death.
> . . . The secret Strength of things
> Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
> Of Heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
> And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
> If to the human mind's imaginings
> Silence and solitude were vacancy?

INDEX TO PLACE-NAMES

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED
LONDON AND WOKING