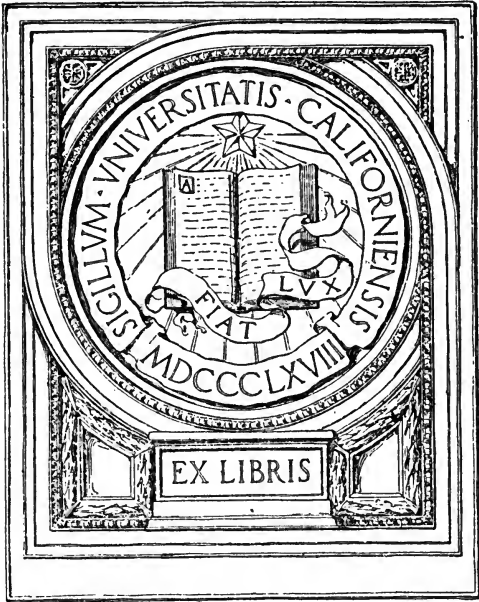
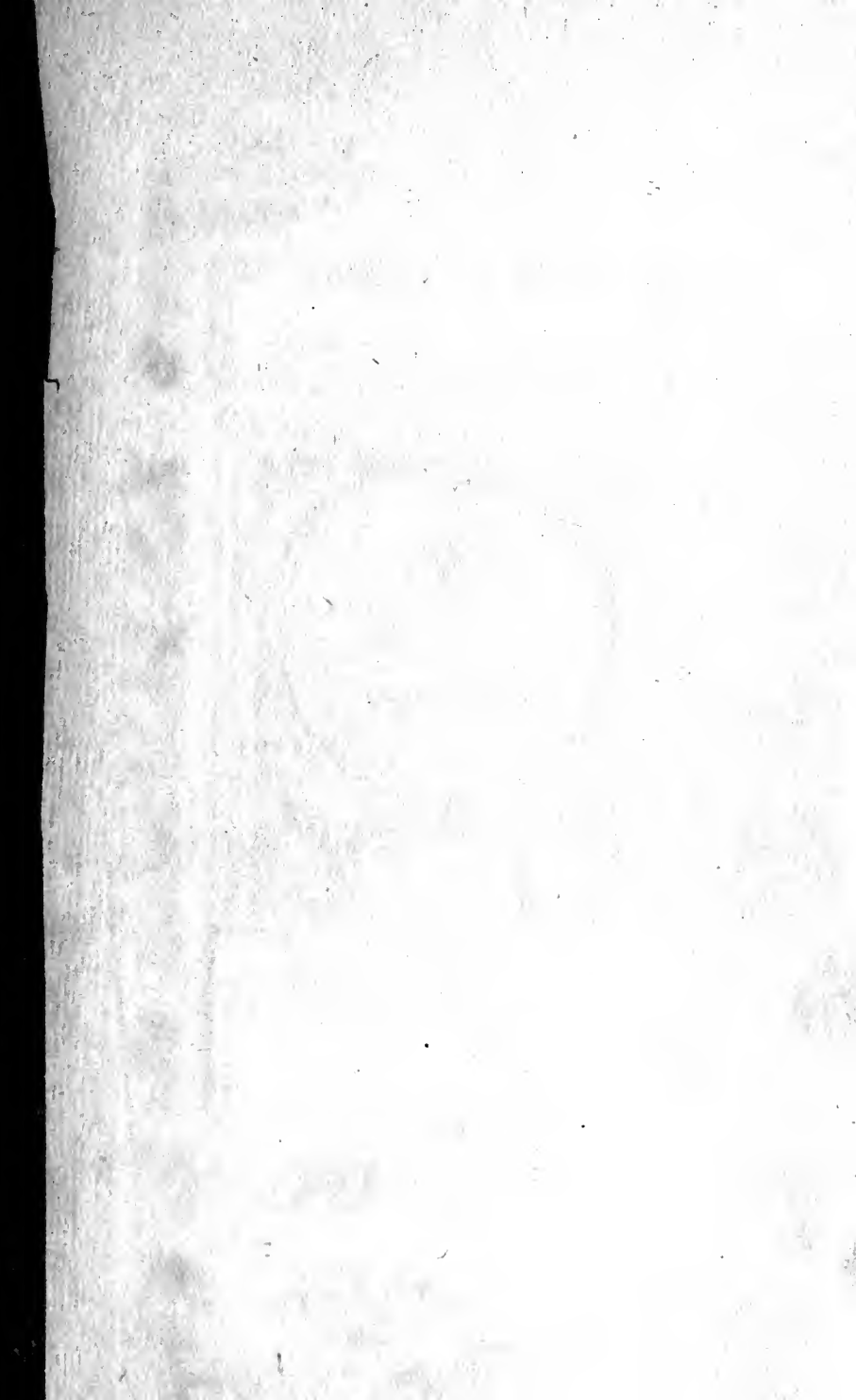




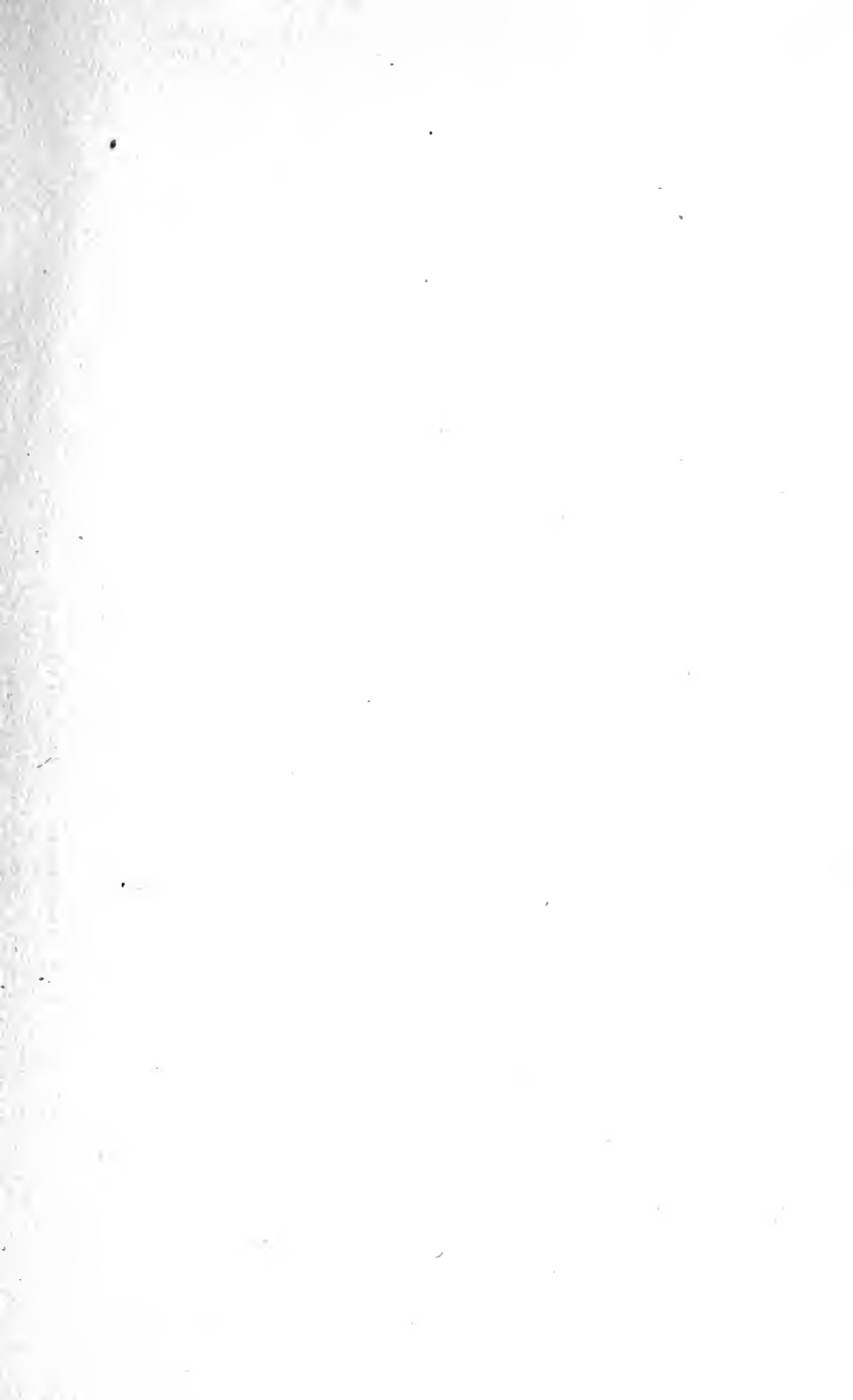
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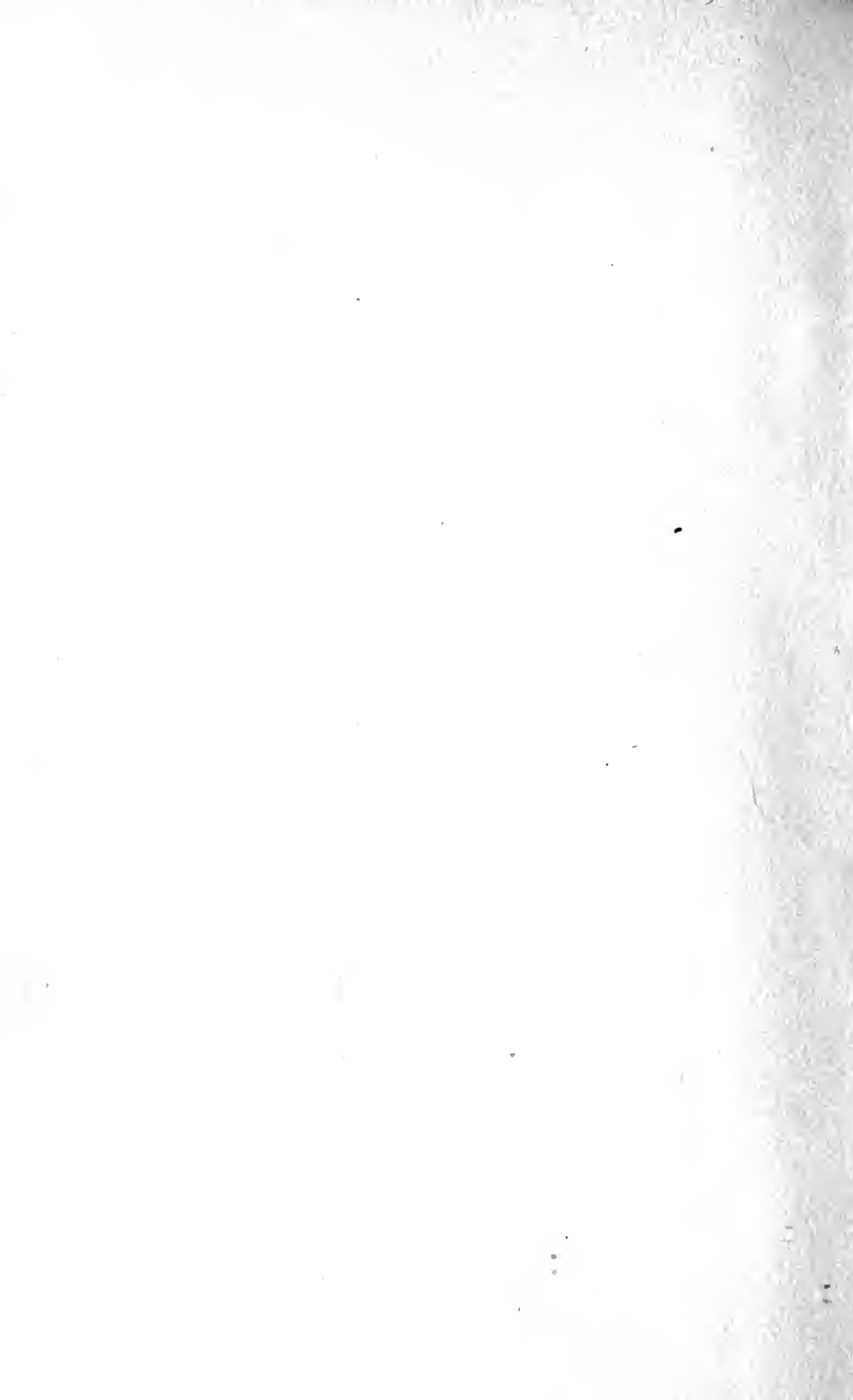
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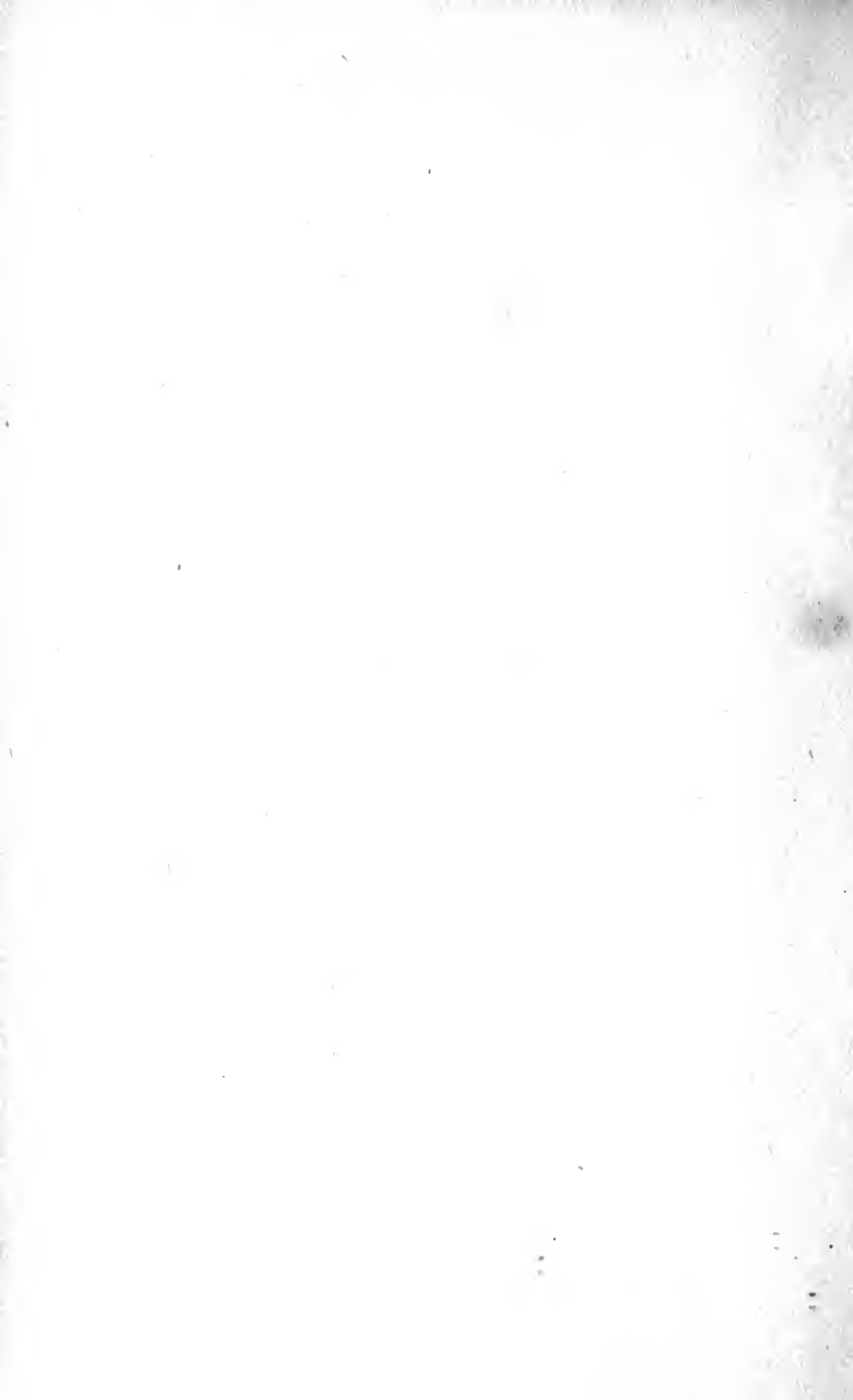


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PEEPS INTO PERSIA









His Majesty Ahmed Mirza, Shah.

# Peeps into Persia

BY

DOROTHY DE WARZÉE

(Baroness d'Hermalle)

*With 51 Illustrations from Photographs*

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# PEEPS INTO PERSIA

## CHAPTER I

### THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

**I**F you desire comfort, do not travel to Teheran ! There is only one way to do the journey, and that is as quickly as possible. But barring discomforts, it is a journey of intense interest, and I hope that some account of it, of the lives Europeans used to lead in Teheran, and of the life there now, may not be without interest.

I have spent much of the past six years in Teheran, and have done the long journey half a dozen times, always taking the route through Russia, across the Caspian Sea to Enzeli, to end with that most uncomfortable thing, a Persian drive of about two hundred and fifty miles.

During the past five years this journey, which for Persia is quite a short one, has altered so much that it is typical of the change that is gradually

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

creeping over all things Persian. One now begins to believe in the possibility, at some not too distant date, of a railway joining Europe and Asia in the north.

The trip in the small Russian boat on the Caspian is most amusing. It is used as a sort of movable club-house for the inhabitants of its different stopping-places. On warm evenings, the unfortunate Europeans doomed for some reason to live for a term of years at Baku, either as employés of the oil-fields there, or in minor positions under the Government, turn the boat into a sort of meeting-place amongst themselves, where they glean scant news from those luckier individuals who are on their way to Teheran. Two long tables fill the upper deck, and the captain, who has a rather more decent cook than most, has organized a cheap *table d'hôte*. The rates are low, and it is refreshing in the hot weather to sit in the moonlight after the torrid heat of the day. I sat and watched the arrival of these Europeans with the keenest interest; they came on board with their wives, and sometimes with their children, and either went the round of the Caspian coast, returning to their home in two days, or they merely came for

## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

dinner, and an hour's chat. Of course, all sorts and conditions of men spoke to me, and it would have been churlish indeed to refuse the scraps of comfort which they begged; just a word of Europe, just to see the clothes of those who had last arrived, was enough to interest them—they only wanted to find some means of keeping in touch with their past. Missionaries from America, doctors and consuls and custom officials hovered round with longing eyes, and I talked to them all, realizing for the first time the enormous number of human beings, less fortunate than myself, who were tied to little out-of-the-way places such as these.

I learned a lot between Baku and Resht on my first trip, and on my last I met several of these people again, and they greeted me with great pride, as old friends. We talked the tittle-tattle of Persia, and I told them of what I had seen in Europe, of flying machines, and the Russian dancers that were the talk of the hour; while they told me of the new pier and the new road. At Enzeli one has the pleasant excitement of the landing, and the joy of stepping actually on dry land. Life in Persia is made up of such small excitements. My first trip from Enzeli to Resht

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

remains in my mind as absolutely different to the one which has since become usual. In old days there was no road, it was in process of construction ; and a year later, I believe, I was the first to drive over it. I confess I prefer the former more picturesque arrival, but, of course, there is no question as to the convenience of the new road. Progress, however, is not so rapid that the traveller need look for any sort of comfort even now in a journey to Teheran. Even travelling with several Persian servants, speaking Persian yourself, and the servants with a smattering of English, the journey is to my mind the most uncomfortable that a European can imagine.

My first journey from Enzeli to Resht, five or six years ago, was done partly by water and partly by land. We took thirty-six hours to reach Enzeli in those days ; we did not come up to the quay, but left the steamer a little way out, and were landed in small boats at the Custom House—if we were lucky ; but it often happened that an unfortunate traveller was told he must return to Baku as it was too rough to land, so he had to repeat his two days tossing on a dirty boat with bad food and evil smells, and was made to pay for the trip a second, and sometimes even

## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

a third time. Now, on the new line of Russian steamers, the traveller has good food and clean accommodation, and is landed on *terra firma* at the end of eighteen hours. On my first trip, after a wash and a rest at Enzeli, we were given the Shah's yacht to cross the *Mord-ab*, or Dead Water, a small lagoon into which several rivers flow, giving it an additional name of the *Roud Khaneh*, or House of Rivers. There are numbers of birds to be seen on the lagoon—woodcock, wild duck and geese are there in large quantities. Birds migrating from Russia to the south, pass over the Caspian Sea and find a resting-place at Enzeli, where it is always warm and damp. At Enzeli there used to be a palace resembling a pagoda, built by Nasr-ed-Din Shah on his return from his first visit to Europe, in imitation of the lighthouses he had seen there, but this palace was pulled down last year to make room for quarantine buildings.

When we had crossed the lake in the Shah's yacht we changed into a small rowing boat manned by six or eight Persians who rowed us up a creek until the water became too shallow for their oars, and they were forced to leave the boat and tow us the rest of the way up the river

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

to Piribazaar. Piribazaar is a Persian village, where it seems to rain perpetually. There was no regular landing stage, the only recognized mode of landing was to spring on to two stones sunk into the mud.

There are two rather amusing stories *à propos* of these same stones. The Governor of Resht always met the new Representative of the Foreign Powers at Piribazaar. There, speeches were made, the usual compliments exchanged, the new Minister, of course, wearing his smartest uniform, and all the attending Persians gorgeous in theirs. One Representative of a great Power, in full uniform, landed on a very wet day in the centre of one of the stones. The Persian Representative arriving on his stone at precisely the same moment, neither was able to proceed, and there they were forced to stand in their bright uniforms reading their speeches and exchanging compliments. It would have made a splendid snapshot, but unfortunately a camera seems to have been lacking.

The other story tells of a European who, having daughters to educate and wishing them to keep up European accomplishments, sent for a grand piano. It reached Enzeli safely, and was taken by boat to Piribazaar. Here it had to be landed



## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

by hand. Pianos are heavy and Persians are weak : after much hesitation they attached ropes to this unknown quantity and hoisted it from the boat to the shore, but unluckily they dropped it in the soft mud where it immediately sank a few feet. The Persians gazed at it for some time in doubt, but eventually feeling tired, gave it up as a bad job, went home and left it there. For two years it sank deeper and deeper into the mud and ended by becoming an excellent landing-stage. The purchaser, waiting in vain in Teheran for its arrival, at last discovered its whereabouts ; it was raised with much difficulty and despatched to its owner, who received it with joy. He assured me it was in as good condition as when it left its maker, which speaks well for the make. I played on it myself, and must say I found it one of the best in Teheran !

After having safely landed at Piribazaar, we were packed into small Russian victorias and driven to Resht. My impression of that drive is vague. All I remember is mud—the walls made of mud, the houses made of mud, and the people dressed in different shades of mud colour. I spent one short night in the hotel. I say short, for my sleeping night was made up of but a few hours.

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

The bed I lay on was a board, and the chosen home of—were they only fleas? Anyhow, they found me the choicest morsel they had come across for a long time, and I was thankful when the servants came to tell me the carriage was ready.

A “landau” conveyed to my unsophisticated mind an idea of space and comfort, and I had engaged one as being more comfortable than the small victorias, but on leaving the hotel I found waiting for me a carriage which seemed to have descended from a pre-historic age, and which, like the one-horse shay “which ran for a hundred years and a day,” will probably drop into dust as it stands.

This much of the journey is in every way different to-day from what it was six years ago. The road which was then in process of construction is now finished; and it is not a bad road, though it lacks all wayside comforts. The fact that two thousand Russian troops have been brought to Kasvin within the last ten days by motor-cars shows that the one or two motors, which have till now been the property of royalty and Russians, have made their impression. Unfortunately, unless favoured with a Russian smile, you must still take the one-horse shay.

## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

On my second trip I found some of the small victorias awaiting me at Enzeli, and we had a comfortable lunch in the Belgian Custom House, where, before starting, the official and his wife did all in their power to give us of their best. Here I was filled with admiration for the young woman, just expecting her first baby, after a horrible hot summer, living in such a place with no distractions, lost to her friends and her family, and with no nurses or doctors nearer than Resht and Baku. She was pluckily standing it, and was only thankful that, after seven years of Persia, she was at last going to find a real occupation for her time, in the small being expected. That was her thought—something to do, and something to live for; really it was a pleasure to me when I received a telegram in Teheran a few months later announcing the safe arrival of a little girl, and I knew that at least one of the lonely lives being lived out in Persia was thus to find contentment, in spite of its enforced banishment from Europe.

On this occasion we packed into the victorias like sardines and started to Resht for the first time over the new road. It was a most lovely drive, despite the clouds of dust, running first

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

through low land, with wild commons and stunted trees and shrubs. At the toll gate, where we stopped to rest the horses, people crowded round, and we got out to stretch our legs, cramped with long sitting, and also to water our little Japanese dogs, who were bewildered with the drive. The people's amusement at the dogs was quite equal to my astonishment at all sorts of new sights, such as droves of little cows with humps, which grazed on the scant stubble in the fenceless fields near the road, and crowds of tortoises running in the ditches quicker than I thought it possible for a tortoise to move. The children all came to touch the dogs, who drank unheedingly from their own blue enamel saucers. These saucers evoked envy in the eyes of the men watching us, and I enjoyed the pleasure I gave when, on leaving, I saw those stately, Biblical-looking men cluster round and discuss the beauty of the saucers that I had presented to them; for I had not the courage to keep them myself after the longing looks I had seen cast in their direction. We climbed into the carriage again and continued on our way to Resht. There we went to the English Consulate, a charming house in a flower garden, which was such a contrast to my hotel

## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

experience of five years before that I think it worth a description.

There were big, rather bare rooms, kept spotlessly clean, and a comfortable bed. We had a hot bath, followed by good food, delicious pheasants with which the woods abound, and a quite exquisite delicacy called a "hump." It is the hump of the kind of little cow we had seen grazing as we came along. It is something between a ham and a tongue to taste: it is cut in large slices and salted. At Resht there is fruit in abundance, smaller than in Europe, but excellent, and there was also what is a rare thing in Persia, a good cake. We appreciate these simple things in Persia, I assure you. Several Europeans came to the Consulate to see us while we were at lunch, and I was told of the life they lead at Resht: work, shooting, and a game of bridge in the evenings to relieve the monotony, and that is all. No other distractions, and only about eight people to whom it is possible to talk. We met some Russian girls, hatless and riding astride their raw-boned little ponies, on men's saddles: nice girls, I was told, who are settled in Resht for two or three years, and who are a great addition to the attractions of the place.

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

The Bazaar was like all others in Persia, full of people who, to our eyes, appeared to be doing nothing in an extremely busy manner ; groups of idlers, doubtless fulfilling their daily duties of barter and sale, but who seemed to be only smoking or drinking tea. I had an impression of endless rows of little dark shops, of fruit and vegetables laid on slanting boards in front, and men and boys of all ages, dressed in all colours, lying, sitting or standing, doing nothing, their great eyes staring at us in silent wonder. They see us always passing from Europe to the capital of their country, and I am sure they wonder why we come and what we do, just as we wonder what they do as they stand about the streets ; and we get no nearer to each other than this passing glance.

I loved the garden at the Consulate, with its beautiful flowers, and we had our lunch under a trellis-work of green grape-vines. That garden, with its masses of colour and its deep black shade, must be what makes life possible in such a place as Resht. We had a long, peaceful night there, and stayed longer than we intended, only leaving after lunch next day.

The Consul had a plentiful supply of food



Between Resht and Kasvin.



Our Luggage leaving Resht.

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## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

packed for the forty-eight hours' drive which lay before us—cold pheasants and ham, besides a basket of bread and a hamper full of bottles of boiled water. I saw all the trunks being sewn into felt covers to prevent the dust getting in, and they were piled on to a rough cart. The luggage started on in front of us. I climbed on to a broad mattress, which had been placed in my carriage, and which just filled it from end to end; I lay extended on this improvised bed, heaped with cushions, with all my things tied on around me, and waved a farewell to the group at the gate.

Till Resht is left behind one does not feel as if the journey had begun. The heavier trunks are usually sent from Resht by the post; but the things one is likely to want immediately on arrival are packed in smaller trunks, and travel with their owners. These trunks, or parcels, or suit-cases, or whatever one may have, are tied on to the carriage in every available place—in front by the driver, or on the springs behind—and have to be very firmly fastened to resist the jolting they get.

On one occasion, a lady, leaving Resht with a large family, packed herself and some of the children into one carriage, and put the rest of

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

the family in another with the nurse. The two carriages went on gaily all through the night, and stopped at a station to change horses about two in the morning. The nurse, waking, and counting her charges, found one was missing: a little girl of about three years had slipped off her lap, and evidently fallen out of the carriage while the nurse dozed. The alarm was given and the other carriage stopped. The frightened mother and father, followed by several Persians with lanterns, started on a search; they found the child some way back along the road, unhurt and sleeping soundly in the ditch. This story has become so well known that on going to meet a friend who arrived last year, I was amused to see her two small children tied fast to herself with long blue ribbons.

The road to Teheran is a Russian road, and is kept up by tolls, the traveller paying toll according to the number of horses he employs. When the first motor passed over the road, there arose the question as to how many horses it represented, and the delight of the people whose duty it is to collect the toll was great when they were told it was a forty horse-power. They taxed it as forty horses, and it cost the poor owner a pretty penny

## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

to reach Teheran. The time the journey takes depends a great deal on the capabilities of one's "head man"; if he is clever at getting fresh horses at each change and does not allow himself to be put off with horses that have just done the journey, the trip can be comfortably done in forty-eight hours, but it also depends on the amount one is willing to spend. A large tip quickens the Persian's movements a good deal.

The scenery is constantly changing; first, one might think one was in Italy, then in Switzerland, and then finally, with no stretch of the imagination, find oneself transplanted to Russia, till after hours of travelling through endless dusty steppes one reaches the tiled gates of Teheran. Soon after leaving Resht the scenery is quite beautiful; the road winds through a forest of almost tropical trees and shrubs, as the surrounding country is constantly deluged with rain. Many of the trees are very large, their trunks covered with bindweed and virginia creeper, reminding one of Penang. One might imagine oneself in an unexplored South American forest, or even an Indian jungle, and one would hardly be surprised if an elephant thrust its trunk through the window of the carriage. The quaintly thatched houses

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

lying close to the road, with low, dark doorways, are exactly like those seen in tropical countries, and, as it was Ramazan when we passed, all the population was asleep during the day outside their houses, rolled in blankets, on their wooden trestle beds.

There is no system of forestry, and the beautiful trees are cut down ruthlessly for the needs of the people. One constantly sees turtles in the ditches that border the road. They are, however, uneatable, and their shells are valueless, which is a pity, as they are to be found in thousands.

At Koudoum we changed horses for the first time. And here I must say something about the coachman, who always on this road changes with his horses. He is absolutely the wildest creature imaginable in charge of human life on the box of a carriage, though one is always struck by the many politenesses that pass between him and his friends. Smoking the pipe of peace at the post station, they exchange the compliments which form their idea of courtesy. Persians, from the King of Kings to the most humble of his subjects, practise this with a refined art that wearies the patience of the European traveller. Only after all these have been exchanged, we are allowed to proceed on our road. Each change takes

## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

nearly an hour, and as there are eighteen changes much time is thus lost.

From Koudoum to Roudbar the road lies through a forest of orange-trees; the oil taken from them is sent to Russia to be refined. The finest scenery is, I think, between Roudbar and Mendjil; the road follows the banks of the river Sefid, which is very wide here, and runs at the base of a ravine, with wooded mountains rising on both sides, giving it a grandeur all its own.

There was a frightful wind raging. It appears that, owing to a cleft in the mountains, this wind blows nearly all the year round just at this part of the road, greatly endangering the bridge which crosses the river at this point. The bridge on my first journey was comparatively new, the old one having been carried away one night during a great storm, together with all the mules and people who happened to be crossing it at the time. I shivered a little as we passed, thinking of their fate. Many people stay the night at Mendjil, but we continued our journey, being anxious to reach Teheran, and not keen on sleeping in a bed on the pillow of which we could see a hair of the last visitor.

At Bala-Bala our coachman surpassed himself,

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

driving down a precipitous incline at full speed, whipping his horses frantically, standing up and shouting, until we were certain something unusual, even for Persia, was happening. Leaning forward, I saw, to my horror, an old man standing with his back to us in the middle of the road, and utterly unconscious of our arrival at break-neck speed behind him. We joined in shouting to him to move out of the way, but with no result; and almost before we were aware of the possibility of such an accident, we heard the scrunch of his poor old bones as the wheels of our heavily-laden carriage went over both his legs. We got out as soon as we could arrest our downward career, and, much against our head *gholam's* will, we insisted on the victim's family being sent for. We found he was deaf and dumb, and made a living as a beggar on the road. He was still alive when we picked him up, and we had him carried by the villagers (who collected around us to the number of about thirty) to a hut near the roadside. My husband asked the *gholam* what he should give, and was told five tomans (about a pound in English money) was more than enough. My husband, thinking a life worth more than this gave five pounds.

## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

We got back into the carriage with great difficulty, being hustled by the crowd, who clambered on the carriage with angry looks ; and it was only by standing with a champagne bottle in one hand and a bottle of hot soup in the other, and beating their heads and hands, that we were able to free ourselves. I was thankful then that the coachman was the wild man he was ; he behaved like a brick, and whipped up his horses till they tore down hill like mad things for the next half-hour. The bill for the stop at Bala-Bala was :

Persian bread	..	..	..	One Toman
Hot water and tea	..	..	..	Five Krans
Milk	..	..	..	Five Krans
Pilaw	..	..	..	Two Tomans
Cream cheese	..	..	..	Four Krans
One poor old man	..	..	..	Five Pounds

I was astonished, as night fell, to see that the coachman did not light his lamps, and when I asked the reason why, I was told that he preferred to trust to the eyes that God had given him, even on a starless and moonless night. He added that if I desired the lamps to be lighted my wish should be granted ; but he would turn the lights so that they would shine only on the inside of the carriage. I did not insist after this, as I saw there was no danger, and settled down to sleep.

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

I had not been asleep very long, when I was awakened by the sound of a deep-toned bell, and opening my eyes, I saw great shapes passing by. It was my first sight of a caravan of camels, which always travels by night in summer to avoid the great heat of the day, as they come and go across the plains of Asia to the coast.

I have since found that the particularly melodious bell that woke me is worn by the camel that has fathered the most children in the caravan. I lay and counted the camels as they passed in the moonlight, and there were one thousand one hundred and seventy-three of them. The delay caused by these caravans is sometimes very great where the road is narrow.

We travelled on up into the barren mountains—such barrenness as I have never dreamed of. The description which Browning gives in “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” is an exact picture of this part of the drive, for the picked bones of mules and camels strew the ground. They must die, and when they die they must lie rotting. The stench at times adds to the interest of the drive. It is an every-day occurrence that a camel, whose time to die has come, drops quietly out of the caravan of his own accord,





A. Caravan of Camels.



## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

and walks into the open a little way from the road. There he is relieved of his pack, which is added to the burden of one of his companions. The camel stands alone, knowing that nothing can save him from his destiny, and thus in solitude and hunger he dies, an admirable example of the Eastern attitude towards death.

Each turn of the road leads one to long for the end of the barren country, and yet still another sunlit peak of sand and rock seems to rise further ahead. This lasted till the middle of the following day, when we arrived at Kasvin, and entered the city by the usual Persian tiled gateway, the sole remains of past grandeur—for Kasvin was once for a short time the capital of Persia. All that now remains of the Sophis Kings, who reigned in Persia at the end of the fifteenth century, is the Palace. This was formerly covered with coloured tiles, but it has been nearly stripped of these for sale in Europe. The mosque is worth a visit, but we only had time for a glance at its outside walls; anyhow, we could not have gone inside, for nothing angers the Persian more than that a European should desecrate the interior of his Holy of Holies.

The country surrounding Kasvin is laid out in

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

plantations of pistache and almond-trees, whose blossoms make it most beautiful in the spring. The great vines near Kasvin are supposed to be the finest in Persia. The streets of the town are lined with plane-trees, which give magnificent shade, and add that touch of green so necessary to remove the impression of bareness that Persian towns must otherwise convey, where all the houses only present bare walls of mud to the view.

One of our wheels came off soon after leaving Kasvin, and our coachman, being a prudent person, tied it on with a bit of string. At the following change of horses, I was amused to see him remove the string and put it in his pocket, while the new man retied the wheel with a piece of his own.

Kasvin is only about fifteen hours from Teheran, and on leaving it we began to feel that the end of our journey was in sight. We had now reached the table-land of Asia, and those few hours of the journey are but a recollection of dust, dust, dust, nothing but choking dust. I think what actually happened to me and to a friend is as good an instance as I could choose of what this dust can do in three short days. After my arrival at

## THE JOURNEY FROM BAKU

Teheran I suffered from what seemed to me to be skinned mouth. On going to the dentist, he told me I had caught the well-known Persian dust microbe, which had settled at the roots of my teeth, and that had I postponed my visit to him for six months, my teeth would have dropped out! He cauterized my mouth with nitrate of silver, and I suffered agonies of pain and hunger for a week. My friend, terrified by this extraordinary experience of mine, also had her teeth examined; he expressed astonishment at what he saw, and taking his little hammer, knocked off what looked like a rather dark tooth; it was simply a lump of mud which had hardened with the saliva round a small tooth from the dust of the journey!

We continued for hours across the plain under the burning sun, the mountains stretching ahead in an endless range. The dust became so great that we were forced to put the carriage rug over the hood, as the front of the carriage refused to fasten, and it was better to stifle in the dark than to try and breathe in the ever-increasing clouds of dust. At five o'clock I felt as if I could not stand it any longer. Then the marvellous change, which always comes toward sunset on this high

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plateau, revealed itself to my astonished senses. A cool wind blew from the mountains, and the colours slowly deepened in the shadows of the hills. It was as if freshness were blown with almost the scent of flowers to our parched throats and smarting eyes. The dust itself turned to a golden mist around us; the peaks of the mountains became rosy till they seemed lighted from within; the world was melting away in ranges of violet and blue till the motion of driving through this land seemed an ecstasy. This marvellous transformation takes place every afternoon, year in and year out, in Teheran. To those on whom nature has little or no effect, Teheran will remain as a barren, rugged plain, surrounded by bleak hills; to those who are responsive to each change that passes before their eyes, like the smiles or the frowns on the face of a friend, Teheran will always remain the perfection of beauty. Some see the plains gold-colour, some see them only dust.

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF TEHERAN

**I**N old days it was the custom, on the arrival of a new Minister, to send him a richly-caparisoned horse as a present; on this he rode into the town in full uniform, surrounded by the staff of his legation and those Palace officials who had been sent to meet him. At one time this horse had a gold bit and bridle, but in the early nineteen-hundreds this degenerated to a silver one. There has only been one golden bridle given to a foreign representative lately, and that was to the Russian Minister in 1906. The bridle is always kept as a souvenir by the Minister.

During the ex-Shah Mohammed Ali's reign, a carriage from the Palace, drawn by four horses ridden by postillions, awaited new Ministers near the entrance to the town. This sounds very smart, but perhaps hardly conveys a true picture

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of the scene—the knock-kneed horses, the men in their varied and tattered livery, and the rabble of out-at-elbows retainers, who followed in the wake of the carriage.

All this has entirely changed since the Constitution was established, and the reception of the Belgian Minister, Mr. de Borchgrave, recently would not have discredited any Court in Europe. To a great extent this change for the better is due to the energy of the one man who has been able to bring order out of chaos. I told him he was the *maîtresse de maison par excellence* in Persia. The horse sent in old days had generally passed through so many hands between leaving the Shah's stables and reaching its destination, that its identity was often doubtful. I have known one Minister send back three horses in succession, saying it was not the one intended for him and was not good enough. Another Minister, on receiving his horse, inspected it in the courtyard of his Legation, and turning to the interpreter, said: "This is a very fine and costly animal; take this horse back to your master and tell him to pay his debts to the Europeans before he sends them presents." Since this incident, the custom of sending a horse has died





Photo by]

A Street near the Gate by which we entered Teheran

[Serruqin.

[To face p. 26



## FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF TEHERAN

out, and if a horse is sent now, it is as a personal compliment.

Unimportant people like ourselves, however, arrive with none of this pomp, and we rumbled in our big carriage through the town gates of Teheran unnoticed save by the beggars. The gates of Teheran are quaint; the town is very large and scattered, with broad streets lined with trees running between walled gardens.

There is a certain symmetry in the shape of the straggling town and the ramparts encircling it, which looks as if at one time there had been some intention of building the rampart in imitation of the Paris fortifications. This vain effort to copy Europe is often found in the palaces and houses in Persia, and one sees a distorted impression of Versailles, Saint Cloud, and other well-known buildings in all the constructions in Teheran made after Shah Nasr-ed-Din returned from his first trip to Europe.

The Teheran walls run in zigzags of mud, with a deep moat from gate to gate. There are fourteen of these gates, all made of coloured tiles, no two alike, but all similar, and not one straight line can be found in either gate or wall. The moat and high rampart run round the town,

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and into this moat the carcases of all the animals that die are thrown ; it is the usual thing to see a gorged circle of pariah dogs sitting in happy repletion after a mid-day meal off these remains. One can walk round the town on the dilapidated walls, and meet couples of Europeans, sentimentally inclined, at that marvellous hour when the sun is going down.

I had always dreamed of seeing Persian gardens, and as we drove through the town, and I saw the great tree-tops showing over the mud walls, I began to believe that my dream might come true. I am glad that I first came to Persia, before there were railways and factories, and all those things that go by steam and electricity and make life hateful in a large civilized town. I cannot picture the quiet streets of Teheran full of noisy motors, nor can I imagine the placid Persian hurrying to catch a train.

The Persian houses almost always stand in the centre of a garden filled with trees and flowers, even the poorest people having their own compound, or at least a courtyard, with its basin of water in the centre ; the water flows through the streets and ditches and under the walls into the gardens on either side of the road.

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The streets are far from safe, being full of dangerous holes, owing to the way the people are provided with water. It is a simple system; the water flows from the hills to the town and down the streets, and by moving a stone here and there the channels are diverted at will. Sometimes the outlet is a hole in the carriage road, sometimes at the side, and these holes are constantly changing their position according to the needs of the people living near. Every single act for which water is needed is accomplished openly by the roadside; the washing of linen and of household utensils is often done in the street, as well as the watering and washing of animals, and all those private ablutions which Mahommed the Prophet ordained for a good follower of Islam—all are performed in the water in the street. That the Persian suffers from skin diseases is not a marvel; rather is it a mystery that a single person remains alive to spread the infections which arise from these fever-and-plague infested pits.

Where the Europeans live, and in some other parts of the town, there is an attempt to light the streets with electricity. The roads in these parts are slightly better; there are fewer refuse heaps,

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a smaller number of dead dogs, and generally a more prosperous look ; but Teheran, as a whole, may be said to live at night in the mitigated darkness of a few petroleum lamps, and woe to the uninitiated who walk or drive unwarily by their faint flicker.

¶ We met several smart carriages accompanied by servants on horseback, from the different Legations or Government offices, on our first drive through the town, and I was glad of this : it gave me an impression that there was a life apart from what I was seeing, and drove away the slight depression which the entry into Teheran had given me, and which even the beauty suggested by its half-hidden gardens had not been quite strong enough to dispel.

A house had been taken for us by a friend, but a house in Teheran is to a stranger an insoluble problem. As we drove into its charming garden and were faced with the house, my heart sank. The house was a great barrack of rooms, with white walls of sun-baked bricks and cement floors ; the dust from the bad cement covered my dress at once ; the mere thought of carpeting such a place froze all my ardour ; we only looked at the house, and saw that it would be better

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to put up at some hotel. But we found the hotel to be even worse than we had believed possible. The hotels in Teheran are little better than the post-houses on the road, and are generally provided with a gambling hell; the habitués of such a hell are Europeans of the lowest class. We spent the night at one of these hotels, and having decided that it was impossible to stay longer, we thankfully accepted the hospitality which the small Teheran Club offered us, although I saw that it was only courtesy that made them allow a woman to become a guest. Here we lived for several weeks while furnishing.

I had been told to bring no furniture, as everything could be got quite easily on the spot. My first efforts, however, were certainly not a success. "Give them drawings," said a friend, "and they will make you anything you want." I did this, choosing a simple picture from a catalogue for a set of dining-room chairs. After an endless wait I was brought a beautifully-made little doll's-house set the exact size of the catalogue picture. I bought my furniture after this from friends who were leaving, and I soon found that every single thing, from hats and shoes to kitchen pots and pans, is bought or exchanged by those leaving

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and arriving; though now most of the simple necessities of life can be obtained from the little carpenters' shops which have recently sprung up to meet the growing demands of the Persians themselves for European things.

Servants in Teheran are all more or less bad and dishonest, according to European ideas, though I suppose that we naturally get the worst of the lot, and that they serve their Persian masters, whose wants they understand, better than they do us. The successful running of a European house entirely depends on the head-man, who will train the under-men to suit one. The Persian of the lower class appears incapable of doing a thing twice the same way; he must be shown each time anew. To bring hot water at the same hour every day to the same room is beyond them; they have no minds, and one gives up trying to make them orderly, leaving their ruling as much as possible to a *nazir*, or majordomo, who is a more or less educated man and keeps the accounts; he generally knows one foreign language, after a fashion, and acts as an interpreter.

The only real interest I found while furnishing my house was in choosing my carpets; they are



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the one thing in Persia worth spending any appreciable amount of money on. The manufacture of carpets is the oldest industry in Persia. The towns where they are made are numerous, but they are also made by the wandering tribes. It is easy to recognize, after a short study of their markings, from which town each carpet originates, as each has its own pattern; after I had seen a few hundred carpets, I could tell at a glance where one was made. The Persians themselves prefer the carpets of Kerman; their design of garlands of flowers interwoven with birds is always original and graceful. These Kerman carpets fetch the biggest prices, some of them only a yard or two square costing from forty to sixty pounds a pair. Persians always prefer to have their valuable carpets in pairs, and it is very remarkable that these pairs, which are made by different hands, should so resemble each other in design. The carpets from Tabriz are very like those from Kerman; those from Kurdistan are woven with a much softer and longer pile, with lighter colours and more gaudy designs. The carpets of Shiraz in the Fars country are distinguished from those of the rest of Persia by the fact that they are made more loosely, and

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are entirely of wool of a superior quality, which resembles velvet in its texture. They nearly always represent geometrical figures, usually in dark red, blue and white. Camel-hair carpets come from Yezd, as also the cotton carpets, which are almost exclusively used for the mosques. From Tabriz and Kashan Meshed, and Ispahan, come the beautiful silk carpets, which of course form the most important part of this industry. These silk carpets are pliable and soft; and though many of the new ones are crude in colour, the old ones are like early Italian fifteenth-century tapestry. The most decorative carpets, however, to my mind, are the Turcomans, and no smoking-room can be complete for anyone who has been in Persia without that deep plum-colour and white lozenge-shape pattern covering the divan or the floor.

Persian carpets are made in a very simple way, quite in keeping with the simple life of the Persian. The loom, which consists of two wooden bars between which the warp is stretched, stands always in the workman's house, at door or window, where the light is best; the workers are always women and children, who sit in a row on a bench. This bench may be lowered or heightened at

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will, as the carpet grows higher, for they work upwards, the part finished being rolled at the bottom. Often, seeming to tire, they will cut it off in the middle of a pattern, adding quite an irrelevant end, or putting it aside to be joined later. It is curious that they have no apparent respect for these carpets which they love; I have seen a dealer cut off the border of a carpet and sell it for a small price, the buyer not wanting to pay the price of a whole expensive carpet, and only requiring the border for a doorway.

The patterns of the usual models are learnt by heart by the worker, but the more complicated ones are reduced to scale. The very clever workers copy a pattern by sight, but there is usually a man who announces the number of stitches of each colour in a sing-song voice, as if he were reading a poem. A good worker will do a bit of about four inches broad and seventeen long in a day, so it is easy to understand that a large carpet takes years to make.

Unfortunately the Persian carpet is no longer as well made as formerly; less care is taken in choosing the workmen, and the colours are not so well combined. Orders from abroad are continually increasing, and the carpets are more

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hurriedly finished in consequence, the prices becoming perforce lower as the standard is lowered. Many of the carpets now made are rendered valueless by the use of aniline dyes from Germany—and this in spite of all the measures taken by the Persian Government to exclude the entrance of these dyes into the country. Societies have been formed to try and fight this growing danger to Persia's finest industry, on which a great proportion of the population depends for its livelihood, but their efforts have hitherto met with little success.

## CHAPTER III

### STREET SCENES

THE street scenes in Teheran merit a chapter to themselves; they are so amusing, and so much of the private life of the Persian man goes on out of doors as a matter of course. All the lower class is shaved and has its hair cut by a street barber, and this is one of the few opportunities one has of seeing the vanity of the Persian. The Persian thinks it modest to wear his hat always in the house, as well as the street, except in the privacy of his sleeping apartment, and it is only when he is taken at a disadvantage that one sees how he allows his fancy full play on his unprotected head. I have seen men with their heads shaved down the middle from the brow to the back of the neck, leaving a thick crop at each side, or a star-shaped place is left on the crown, while the sides are grown long and the

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back of the head cropped short. I have even seen one very coquettish young man with curly hair, who wore his kola a little on one side and allowed one lock to grow long and fall nearly to his shoulder, while the other was brushed short behind his ear, making him look like a Pre-Raphaelite artist. Hair dye in all shades of red, black, and brown is constantly used by the men; there are no old men in Teheran, for it is not polite to be wiser than the Shah; and here wisdom and white hair are synonymous. The ex-Shah nicknamed one of the foreign representatives "The Angel of Death," because he was a young man with white hair: on his presentation the Shah felt a presentiment of evil, and was deposed soon after!

The bath plays a very important part in Persian life, and a frequent sight in the streets is a naked man with a long two-pronged fork, pitching dung backwards and forwards in front of the bath house, where he leaves it to dry in the sun. This is used for lighting fires to heat the water of the bath, and is considered by the dogs a particularly comfortable bed in cold weather. One can always recognize at sight the people in Teheran who have just had a bath; their hair is a beautiful

THE  
CITY OF  
TEHRAN



The Trams



*Photos by*

*[Sevugin*

One of the Town Gates  
TEHERAN.

*[To face p. 38*





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bright red and their nails and hands, toe-nails and feet, are tinted the same colour, and they have a cleaner appearance generally. If anything goes wrong in the house because of the absence of a servant, it is a favourite excuse that he has been to the bath.

One is often struck by the recurrence of the colour emerald green among the passers-by: the new-comer always remarks on it, and is told green is the colour of the Prophet, who decreed that his descendants alone should be distinguished for all time by the permission to wear emerald green, as a sign of their connection with him. He further decreed that his descendants should be given a tithe from all men who were not connected with him.

Walking through Teheran and observing the people, one sees by their clothes how European civilization is creeping in; the upper class has adopted a compromise in many ways, some are dressed entirely in European clothes, both in the evening and in the daytime, while some wear a frock coat with no collar, and with the invariable Persian kola, protecting themselves by a flowing abba against the sun, rain, and dust.

The most interesting people in the streets

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are the Dervishes, who have long Biblical curls and wear no hats; they dress in white linen or camels' hair, with a twisted girdle round their waists and a sheep-skin over their shoulders, and carry a staff and begging bowl in their hands. In summer they build a small hut by one of the great main gates of the town, where they live on charity; for Mohammed, though he forebade them to beg, ordered the people to give to these holy men who he ordained should live by prayer alone. They also establish their huts along the country roads leading to the villages where the summer resorts are, and one waters one's horse at their stream, while they wash the carriage wheels, or pour a pail-full over the smoking flanks of the tired beasts; they usually offer a cup of tea to the coachman, and one gives a small gratuity for their hospitality: this is the only form of work they do.

The streets of Teheran are full of beggars who are worse than those in Italy, and more disgusting and pitiful than it is possible for anyone to believe who has not seen them; every deformity, every flesh-eating disease is laid open to the public gaze, and one cannot avoid the touch of these dregs of humanity, who dog one's footsteps in the street or bazaar.

## STREET SCENES

When the capital was Isfahan and not Teheran, begging at one time became such a nuisance that a certain Shah issued an edict forbidding it. It was always easier to issue an edict than to have it enforced, and the Minister told his master that he was unable to accomplish what he wished: so the Shah determined to do away with the nuisance himself. Disguising himself as a rich merchant, he started out on a tour of inspection on foot round his own city, but he had scarcely reached the street before he was besieged by beggars of every description, who said they were dying of hunger. He bade them follow him to the bazaar, where he would satisfy their cravings. Entering the bazaar he ordered the gates to be closed, and soon found himself the centre of a great crowd. He had the beggars drawn up in a line in front of him and, after examining them carefully, he chose the fattest, and asked him why he did not work and earn his own living. The beggar replied that he could not find work and was dying of hunger. The Shah repeated this question to all the fattest in turn, sympathizing with them equally; then turning to the crowd, he said: "I have so kind a heart that I wish to be charitable to you, but

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I will not be imposed upon ; I am ashamed to think that people should die of hunger in my kingdom, but I must be sure, before I help you, that you are telling me the truth. There is only one certain way to do this ; I will open your stomachs and look inside." The Shah's soldiers fulfilled this order, bringing him the proof of the lie in their hands. The fate of these beggars becoming known to all those outside the bazaar, and spreading throughout the kingdom, the remaining beggars took refuge in the mountains, and during the twenty years of his reign no more beggars were found in the capital. One regrets his decease daily.

The streets are full of tea- and eating-houses which are crowded with people ; and sweetmeats and Persian wares are carried on round trays on the heads of their vendors, who cry them as they walk. At all the street corners women are washing linen, and the tea-house servants their cups and saucers.

Opposite one of the Palace entrances is the cannon, where any criminal fleeing from justice may gain protection from his pursuers if he can but reach its shelter.

On the outskirts of the town are the brick-kilns

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where the fire-baked bricks are made, but most of the Persian houses are made with sun-baked bricks ; these are always to be found in the streets near a house which is being built, as the workmen themselves make the number needed from the mud in the road : it is pressed into small squares of wood and left to harden in the sun.

Dung is used in Teheran for the horses' litter, for the roofing of houses and for firing ; it is stuck against the wall in large flat cakes while still damp, and dries in the sun. In the summer it is watered and rolled on the roofs of the houses, and every roof has its own little stone roller.

The walls of the gardens are high, and prevent people seeing what goes on within ; but in the warm weather the women and children come out on the roofs of the houses and watch the passers-by.

Persians have a strange way of obtaining and preserving ice : they build high walls so that the sun's rays shall never touch the ground at any moment of the day ; the ground is flooded, and when the ice is sufficiently frozen it is cut out and stored in pits which are dug near. A dome-like roof of mud is made over them, and here the ice is kept until it can be sent on donkey-back to the bazaars and sold at market.

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One is often stopped in the street by the Jew pedlars who very soon know the face of a new customer ; they carry their goods round the town on donkeys, and are, in reality, curiosity dealers, plying their trade between the Europeans and the Bazaar. They invite one to visit their houses to see curios, but usually there is nothing to be found ; they are the go-betweens of Persians and Europeans, and sell on commission things lent them for this purpose by the Bazaar merchants.

At the street corners sit scribes on low benches, with their little lacquer "Khalamdán," or ink-box, always ready to write the letters of the illiterate. Every street has its money-changer, with his little glass case in front of him, who seems, by its contents, to drive a roaring trade.

The toll which is levied on every beast of burden passing through the gates of Teheran goes to the Municipality. At each gate there is a quaint little room where a man sits taking the toll, and there is always in the spring a small garden of flowers, in which he seems to take great pride.

Walking to the Bazaar through the Lalezar, one may meet the Shah's elephant taking his constitutional ; and in spring the street corners and



A Jew Pedlar.



*Photo by]*

*[Serugin.*

The Kasvin Gate.  
TEHERAN.

*[To face p. 44*





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open places are crowded with resting camels, as all the caravans pass through the town. There is a cab service, with Russian cabs, and the horses, though ill groomed and ill fed, are very fast. There is a tram line which runs across the town to the little railway, which seems to flourish notwithstanding its dirt. It has a separate compartment for women, but is only used by the very low classes.

Crowds collect in the streets and open squares in the warm weather, to watch the jugglers, who are really very good, and who can be hired to give an entertainment in one's own garden.

There are still also to be seen a few mummers wearing masks, with tame bears and monkeys, who collect crowds and ask for pence. Now and again one will still see a snake charmer. Sometimes there is a marionette show; and the other day I was asked to take my children to a party and I found our host had engaged the marionettes to amuse the young guests. As it is not possible to stand in the street and watch them, I was very glad of this opportunity. A small tent was erected in the garden in front of the verandah, and the stage, instead of being a raised platform, was merely a small carpet placed on the ground.

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Crouching beside the tent the owner of the show talks to the marionettes, asks them questions like the ring-master with the clown in a circus. The man behind the tent who manipulates the wires answers in a squeaky voice for the marionettes. In addition to these two people, there is also a musician who beats a drum and chants appropriate verses. The play I saw was supposed to be a day at the Shah's court. The scenery was composed of three arm-chairs, the herald appears in front of the stage and announces that the Shah is coming, and requests that there may be silence. Sentinels take their places on the stage; then come all the people belonging to the court, and at the end of the long procession the Shah appears in a carriage drawn by two horses. Having taken his seat in the centre arm-chair, and bidden the two ambassadors who accompany him take the other seats, the real show begins. To amuse His Majesty there were wrestlers, acrobats and dancers, and all performed on the miniature stage, accompanied by the beating of the drum and the chanting of verses. There was even a man who received the bastinado. At the end, the devil appeared and carried off each marionette in turn, except the Shah, who slipped out of a

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side door. This show has a great success in the streets of Teheran, where it is as popular as Punch and Judy used to be in London.

One can never be bored in the streets of Teheran, so long as one has any appreciation of the artistic or the grotesque.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BAZAAR

**M**OST people say that they have nothing to do in Teheran; that there is nothing to amuse them when they go out, and nothing to interest them when they come in. Personally, I disagree totally with this idea. The moment one steps outside one's house, every sight is so curious and everything is so new, that each walk is of interest if one has only learnt to use one's eyes. You will find no Whiteley's or Harrod's to tempt you to waste your money; but in the shops, which resemble little booths at an old-fashioned fair, what novelty is to be found!

The workmen make their goods under the eyes of the passer-by. They are always calm and placid, these Persians; if I want to buy something, they will tell me the price without leaving their work or even lifting their eyes from



The Bazaar (Interior).



The Palace, seen from the Bazaar.



## THE BAZAAR

it ; it is a case of take it or leave it. If I go away without buying anything, after having looked at everything in the shop, they do not seem to care, but go on impassively with their work.

There are a few European shops where tinned luxuries and European delicacies are to be found, but their prices are naturally exorbitant because of the heavy duties. There are quantities of second-hand shops, and I have seen my own old petticoats thrown across a beautiful Japanese jar ; it is rather a comfort to feel that, though there are many things one cannot buy in Teheran, there is nothing one cannot sell. One drives the quaintest bargains, and last week I gave a jasmin plant and a suit of old clothes in exchange for quite a nice little carpet.

Most of the shops are to be found in a street called Lalezar, which leads across the Artillery Square to the Bazaar ; but the sensible European goes to the Bazaar itself when in search of anything. The Bazaar is a little world ; it is roofed in like an immense tunnel, and is always cool, with scarcely any light. It is the centre of all conspiracies and plots, and a sort of gigantic club-house the members of which have different political interests ; all the mischief that can be

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planned comes from the Bazaar, and all the rumours, fantastic and otherwise, which disturb the public serenity, or the poor unfortunate Cabinet, which is for the moment in power in Teheran. All criminals, if they can but reach the Bazaar, are safe, because there it is very difficult to discover their whereabouts. It is like a great beehive, with endless cellars and dark little alleys leading by yet darker, cavern-like openings to courtyard or house, with always an outlet hidden somewhere behind, a maze only to be threaded by the native; the foreigner usually finds himself in a cul-de-sac, from which he will have to retrace his steps if he is without a guide.

One may still see how beautiful the Bazaar must once have been; in some parts the roof is arched like a Gothic church, and the ever-recurring Persian tiles border the high dadoes of the great bare structures used as tea-houses. These tea-houses are surrounded inside by low platforms covered with carpets, and are always filled with idlers, who sit smoking their hubble-bubble pipes and drinking cups of light Russian tea. I have never understood why, in a country like Persia, so much liberty is allowed to the lower classes—in these tea-houses they meet and freely discuss



## THE BAZAAR

all the current events—while the meetings of the upper classes are strictly watched. The Bazaar is like the pulse of Teheran ; from it a clever leader can take the temperature of the town. In all times of political difficulty the people close the Bazaar, as a sort of protest against anything the Government does of which they disapprove.

There are many entrances to the Bazaar, and one seems to plunge down into it by a few dirty steps, as if into a dark cave swarming with humanity ; one's eyes have to grow accustomed to its half-light before one can distinguish what the bright flashes can be which one sees here and there in the dimness ; then they resolve themselves into the brass shops, of which there are many, or shops where are the workers of white metal or copper. The different industries are grouped in their own quarters in the Bazaar ; glass makers in one, potters in another, furriers in a third, et cetera. According to the nature of the industry, the district is either a quiet or noisy one ; the din in the brass street is deafening ; the clinking of the hammers on the glowing metal, the breath of the heaving bellows which are worked by small boys, the scraping of the saws, all make one feel as if Bedlam had been let loose. One

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

looks instinctively for machinery to account for the noise, but of course it is not there. The street in which one is most jostled is the principal artery running straight across the Bazaar from the town to the country, to the big Shah-Abdul-Azim road; it is the short cut for all the endless caravans taking provisions to Shah-Abdul-Azim or going and coming from Meshed.

To ride through the Bazaar takes twenty-five minutes, and is really dangerous, but is quite amusing to those who have learnt the trick. It is impossible to walk, and one must never trot, but must keep up a steady hustle, with the horse touching the tail of the horse in front, otherwise one is sure to be cut off from one's companions; for the crowd at all hours is such that one has to force one's way through, and by shouting attract the attention of those in front. The delight of the Bazaar is just that. Every man and woman goes there to *flâner*—one falls oneself into this oriental habit. Often I have just missed being rolled over by a camel or mule, which are taught never to deviate from the straight path, and would no more pass to the right or left of you than an express train would leave its rails.



The Bazaar. Showing how the light comes through the roof.



The Cemetery.

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## THE BAZAAR

All Persians in need of money bring their family heirlooms to the Bazaar to sell. A dozen times you will be stopped, and some small object thrust before your eyes, the owner always sure of getting more from a European than from a shopman in the Bazaar. An old book, an old ring, a bit of lacquer may frequently be picked up in this way. A constant visitor may buy now and again a really old and genuine curio; but those going only seldom to the Bazaar will miss what a constant visitor will often find. You become known as a buyer, and they will find out who you are and bring things direct to your house, where they will reach you through your head man. It is generally a woman who carries a treasure hidden under her black chadur.

The Bazaar is the one place which is full of women; here you may see their faces, though not for more than a minute at a time.

The jewellery quarter is always crowded with women buying little gold ornaments, which are commonly worn even by the very poorest classes. If you look at the hands of the roughest men, who elbow you out of their way, you will find that nine out of ten among the artisans and soldiers wear a turquoise ring, which, for its colour, is

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

supposed to bear a charm ; the very poor wear a blue bead, and all camels and horses have some bit of blue woven into their trappings. At the present time, when all are selling, I have bought some beautiful turquoises for the absurdly small price of one or two pounds. The jewellery made is of the simplest description—crescent-shaped ear-rings with dangling drops, small necklaces of round gold beads. The tiny clasps, with which every woman clasps her white veil, are all made in little dark shops, with a small glass case standing on the counter beside the worker. In these glass cases everything which might be saleable is placed, such as old cigarette-holders, little boxes, spoons, knives, etc., which the worker has bought as a speculation. If the jeweller happens to be a rich man and a good worker in precious stones, and if he is also ambitious, you will often recognize, lying in his case, old orders, portraits of the Shah set in brilliants, or gold epaulettes with a Shah's name in brilliants, which some unfortunate palace official has been forced to part with. Here the constant visitor will often find some fine bit of old European work, such as a French watch, or an enamel coffee cup, which has drifted from hand to hand for perhaps a century, till it has

## THE BAZAAR

finally found its way into the Bazaar. Everything in Teheran sooner or later comes into the Bazaar, and everything worth buying comes out of the Bazaar.

The workers of seed pearl embroidery are also in great demand; but the aniline dyes of the satin on which this embroidery is done are so crude, that it is seldom of any use save as a curiosity, though it is very valuable and takes a great deal of time to do. Mixed in among these shops, there are the booths of cotton goods and cheap European haberdashery, which are so incongruous in their purely oriental setting.

Leaving the busier quarter, with its hum of life, one passes into lighter and more empty streets, where one gets a glimpse of the sky through the openings in the roof. Here the saddlery and shoes and other leather goods are made. The saddles are still of the old high, pointed shapes, with the stirrup made of wood, which are of rich colour and design, though they are no longer adorned with gold and silver as of yore. Carpet cloths for these saddles are often to be found of very beautiful old manufacture, and even the modern trappings used in one's own stables have a beauty of their own, being ornamented with

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

fringes and tied round the horses' necks with a nice little bow. An ordinary horse in a European stable is delightfully swathed, like a new-born baby, with yards and yards of bright-coloured bands. These same bands can be bought, old and new, in the Bazaar, and the old ones make a beautiful border round the top of a dado! The Turcoman bands are most artistic, and an old one is of considerable value.

There are streets of shoemakers in the Bazaar, and Persian and European shoes are made in the same shops. The most popular shoe among the Persian is the *ghiveh*, which is made of rags, with a string sole; they are cheap and comfortable, and are often worn by Europeans for playing tennis. I cannot understand why Persians should prefer European footgear, but you will always find Persian women and children trying on Louis Quinze shoes, which they very often wear on the wrong feet.

One great disappointment is in the lovely Persian cottons, which come from Manchester when they do not come from Germany, but which are bought by the casual visitor as a genuine article. Common cotton goods with a hideous pattern, the brighter the better, have an enormous sale



## THE BAZAAR

among the Persian women of all classes, as they all wear an indoor shawl of cotton or silk round their waist. This shawl plays a very important part in a woman's dress.

Near the brass workers are found the workers in silver, but there is no distinctive silver work of Teheran as of Shiraz and Ispahan; it is of all shapes and for all purposes, boxes, vases, tea-services, modern and sometimes old. The Shiraz work is rather clumsily embossed with figures and flowers, and is very heavy and ungainly—the Ispahan silver is engraved and much finer. The speciality of this silver is the open-work over glass, which is very original, for liqueur bottles and flower-vases.

A place closely connected with the Bazaar is the great Persian cemetery, which lies just behind it. It stretches out, a dusty square of sand and rock, with little heaped mounds for graves. No names denote the resting-places of the faithful, only a three-cornered bit of turquoise tile laid flat on the top of the grave, and two larger three-cornered, sun-baked bricks at head and foot, mark this primitive bed.

The Persian burial is so simple that its very simplicity makes its sadness impressive. Carried

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

by four of his family, the Persian lies, wrapped in grave clothes, on a rude stretcher, and is laid in his last resting-place under a few feet of earth. The women come on Fridays to the graves of their dead and sit wailing round them ; they bring their children, their food and their carpets, and spend the day in the indulgence of their grief. A beautiful blue-tiled monument, surrounded by cypress trees, stands just inside the wall of the Bazaar facing the graveyard ; it is called Gabra Agha Mosque, and is the tomb of the father of the preacher in the mosque near, whose name is the Imam Djuma. This lovely blue-domed tomb was built about twenty-five years ago, and is very effective, facing as it does the desolation of the graveyard.



The Mosque.



## CHAPTER V

### THE WOMEN OF THE ANDEROUN

**U**NDER the law of Mohammed every Persian man is entitled to four wives, but the Koran says they shall all be treated in the same manner. Any man, who thinks for a moment what a strict application of this rule would mean in daily relations with four different wives in four different households, must realize that such a staff of wives would become not only a drain upon his purse, but also upon his tact, his patience and his manhood. One understands why it is that, while revering the Prophet and abiding by his laws as far as he can, the Persian of the present day does not take advantage of all the matrimonial privileges permitted him, but prefers to husband his resources for the gratification of one, or at most two wives.

The Persian of the peasant class, unlike the lower and the upper classes, finds four wives an economy rather than an expense, as he sets them

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

to work in the fields, and thereby combines much profit with some pleasure. The allowance of four wives often leads to trouble, and on two separate occasions I have had working in my house, for three krans a day and her food, an unfortunate deserted wife. She was forced to work for the support of herself and her four children in the house of a *ferranghee*, which must have been a sore trial for her; and one of these women told me that her daughter had been deserted in the same manner.

Each Persian garden has two houses in it—the *anderoun*, or women's house, the *biroun* for the men. The *biroun* is kept up with men servants only, the *anderoun* is served by women. The bath is always in the *anderoun*, and I know one old house, in which there is a marble slide leading into the bath, in which the Shah's wives used to slip into the arms of their waiting spouse.

In both houses the luxury is the same, and in summer both households are moved on donkeys and mules to the country garden, where the accommodation is the same. It will, therefore, be seen that every added wife in Persia is, indeed, an additional luxury.

No Persian of any social standing allows his

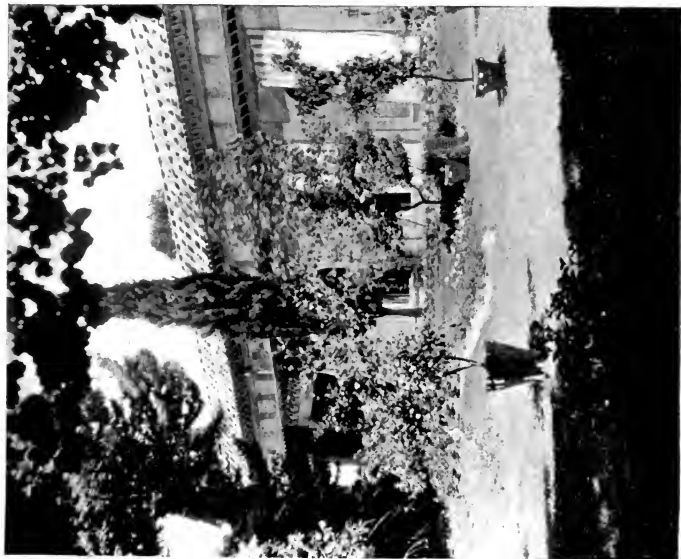
## THE WOMEN OF THE ANDEROUN

wife to travel abroad. It is forbidden by the Shah, though permission may be obtained with great difficulty. If a woman saw foreign lands, it would put ideas into her head that are bad for her, and a spirit of unrest would be imparted to her sons. I do not doubt that the wonderful placidity that one sees on the faces of most Persians comes from this fact. The wish to see sights other than those of their native land has not yet been born in the minds of the women here, and how can the child have any enterprise, when no such thought is ever instilled into him by his mother? In a household, where the father has been to Europe, one will find that a certain amount of curiosity has been aroused in the children. A few upper-class women have the ambition to send their children to school, and their sons eventually to universities in Europe, and I have met one or two who long to leave Persia with their husbands. I have been asked question after question by these few, to whom their husbands have brought back wonderful travellers' tales, which they find it hard to believe. One or two exceptions have been made, in which permission has been given to an ambassador to go to his post accompanied by his wife.

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

One lady, who became famous for her escapade, went to Europe alone and without permission; she was the daughter of Nasr-ed-Din Shah and the wife of a great noble, and she was considered one of the choicest jewels in the Kadjars' crown. Very happily married to a good-looking man with plenty of money, she was in no way to be pitied; her life was passed in pleasant places. She and her husband, however, ran through their money without considering the future, and a great fire on their property brought about the final crash. The Princess appealed to the Shah for aid, but met with a blank refusal; she therefore decided on a desperate step. Turning to an Armenian friend for help, she passed out of Persia disguised as her maid, and her flight was only discovered after she had left the country. Her husband was in the plot and helped her, and she reached Paris, where she lived as a European. Every effort was made to induce her to return to Persia, but she declined to do so, except on the condition that all her debts and her husband's should be paid, and that an income should be given them, as well as an appointment for her husband as Governor of a Province. Things having been settled to her satisfaction, her son was sent to





The Palace Anderoun Garden.



A Room in a Country Palace.



## THE WOMEN OF THE ANDEROUN

fetch her. (Her husband had been of no use during the negotiations, as, not being of royal blood, he had no control over her actions.) So she returned to Teheran, where she still is. Curiously enough, as a result of her visit to Europe, she has taken such a dislike to Europeans that none are admitted to her house.

Persian houses are furnished in such a way that they give the impression of a general emporium. There is no system, or apparent reason, why anything should stand where it does, or why it should be made of the stuff chosen for it. I have seen a red plush piano; an advertisement of fish-hooks in a gorgeous gold frame hung upside down as a picture; a drawing-room where the walls were entirely covered with illustrations from *Punch* and the *Graphic* since the year 1900; also a lady's bedroom, where the walls were covered with nothing but coloured postcards of well-known actresses and ballet dancers (with and without their clothes), that the husband had collected while in Europe and sent back to his wife; they formed a curious background to a beautiful coloured scroll in Persian writing, describing the Persian lady's birth and descent, and blazoned with the name of her father, Nasr-ed-Din.

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

I have sat with a family, composed of father, mother, two daughters and three sons, in an absolutely bare ball-room, where the windows had dropped out and not been replaced, and watched the tutor of the family, a full-bearded man, dance a woman's dance for my benefit, while the daughter of the house, dressed in full Persian dress, played the *Dollar Princess* with a hundred mistakes on a tin-kettle piano; on the floor, leaning against the wall, sat an Ethiopian slave, who had one of the prettiest faces I ever saw, notwithstanding her sepia colour. The daughter of the house spoke of her and treated her as if she had been a favourite kitten, though she had been brought up on equal terms.

Nasr-ed-Din, after his return from Europe, introduced a complete change in the costume of his country. Until then the women had worn loose baggy trousers, tied round the ankles, and a short jerkin-like coat; but Nasr-ed-Din Shah's artistic eye was so attracted by the costumes of the *premières danseuses* he had seen in the ballets in different European capitals, that he issued an order that all women in Persia should adopt the ballet skirt. This was done at once; but at

## THE WOMEN OF THE ANDEROUN

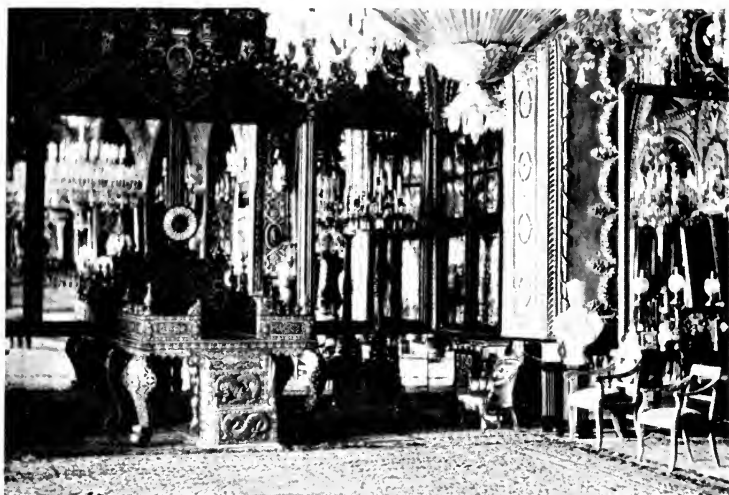
this inopportune moment the cold weather came, and the shivering women, to find more comfortable clothing for their legs, adopted men's straight trousers under a funny little short-pleated skirt of pale blue or rose-coloured calico, these trousers being made of velvet, cloth, silk, or cotton, according to their wearer's means and station in life. I can only explain the use of the cope-shaped shawl, which they wrap round their waists indoors on top of their trousers, by the possibility that even their artistic taste was shocked at the incongruity of their very ill-assorted garments. The frequent readjustment of this shawl, which, like the trousers, is chosen to please the fancy of the wearer, allows one to have glimpses of the most fantastic underwear.

The new European dressmaker just settled in Teheran was greatly taken aback by one of her first clients. The lady, who was a princess, arrived with her waiting-woman to try on her first frock, for which she had been measured, but not fitted. She removed her chadur, and appeared in trousers and a "woolly"; the dressmaker demurred at the woolly, saying: "The dress will fit better if you take the woolly off." The lady at once acquiesced, removed the pin which had secured

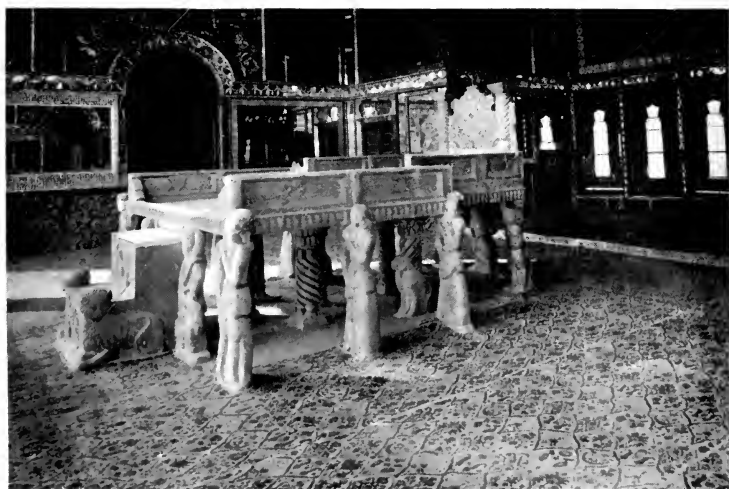
## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

the woolly to the trousers and ballet skirt, and the three garments fell to the ground, revealing the lady in a state of nature: which shows that smartness in the Persian woman's dress is, as yet, a thing of the dim future.

Persian upper-class women are seldom seen on foot, or in the streets, and even people who live in the country know little of their private life. If one goes to a garden outside the town, one often meets a closed carriage with quite a cavalcade of servants surrounding it, and a lady and her daughters and as many attendants as possible squeezed into it. One of the few amusements the Persian woman has are these drives to the distant gardens, where she can throw back her veil and feel at liberty to be natural and at her ease. The foreigner who is used to Persian ways will instinctively ask before entering one of these gardens if he is disturbing any such family party, and if so, he will discreetly withdraw to a far end of the garden to drink his tea, feeling that the sight of him will force the women to cover their faces and spoil their enjoyment. This drive, or a visit to the Bazaar, is about the only outdoor amusement that the Persian woman has. The women will smile and speak to the



The Peacock Throne.

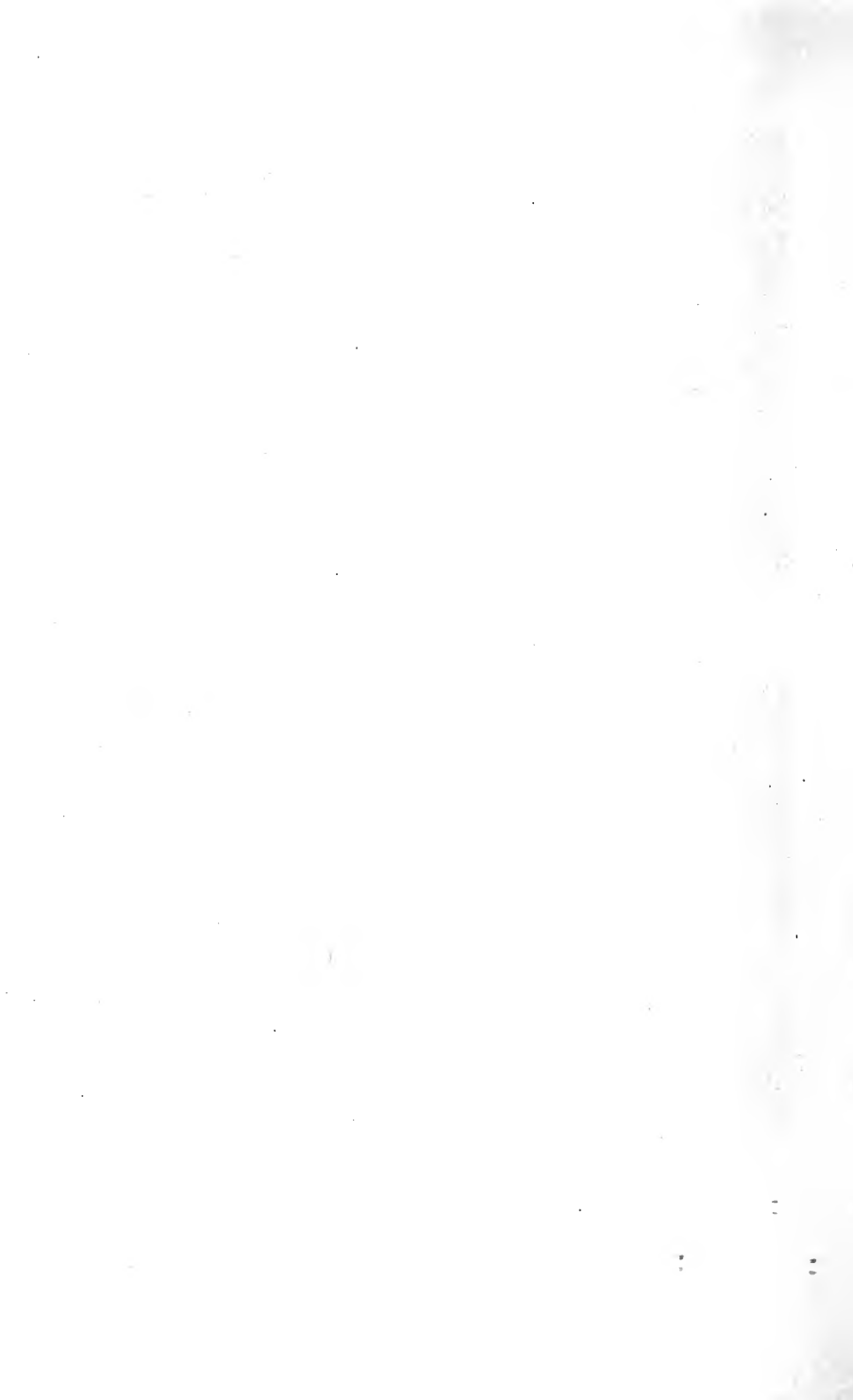


*Photos by*

*[Serugin.]*

The Marble Throne.  
THE ROYAL PALACE

*[To face p. 66*





## THE WOMEN OF THE ANDEROUN

foreign woman if she is alone, but the sight of a man makes them cover their faces and they hurry away. I would not have it thought that this apparent horror of the sex proves the Persian woman a model of virtue ; the freedom with which all but the upper-class women are allowed to circulate in the streets leads to the carrying-on of endless intrigues, and their domino-like dress makes an excellent disguise. They can leave their houses for hours at a time without being missed, and this liberty leads to a degree of immorality which is difficult for us to imagine. The women in the streets make a very strange impression upon one at first ; the silent moving about of hundreds of black shapes wearing dominoes that cover even the hands, and long white linen veils over their faces, with a lattice-work of darning thread for the eyes, produces a curious ghoul-like effect. Pierre Loti's name, "*les dames fantômes*" gives the best idea of them.

Before the Constitution Teheran boasted of what may be called a museum—a sort of treasure-house in the Palace ; it was a long gallery, with the crown jewels exhibited in cases in it. At one end of the room stood the famous Peacock Throne, which was brought back from Delhi by one of

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

Nadir Shah's generals, after the victory gained against the Great Mogul.

The throne was given by the Shah to Taous Khanum, meaning Mrs. Peacock; its value was estimated at sixty thousand pounds. It is like a small church, with a railing running round three sides of it and two steps leading up to it. The platform, which is of solid gold, rests on eight legs in the shape of elephants' trunks; the arm-chair-like throne stands on the top, its back finished by a great sun formed of diamond rays with a huge diamond in the centre. On each arm of the chair stands a peacock; the whole throne is studded with precious stones.

Most of the objects were of great intrinsic value—jewelled clocks and boxes, china from all parts of the world, and very beautiful and valuable carpets. Under a glass case stood a terrestrial globe in solid gold, with the countries and towns marked out with precious stones, which is reputed to have cost two hundred thousand pounds.

In another case was the beautiful tiara of Fath Ali Shah, which was worn by Mohammed Ali at his coronation; its weight of gold and precious stones was about fifteen pounds. In cases all about the room there were jars and cups full of

## THE WOMEN OF THE ANDEROUN

uncut stones and pearls. It is hard to estimate what the treasure was worth, but it compared well with the treasure-house in Constantinople which may still be seen. This museum exists still, but the treasures have disappeared; one looks in vain for the golden globe and the cups of jewels, and finds in their places mechanical toys, a few good rugs and china, and many advertisements of Pears' soap, though the beautiful Peacock Throne still stands in its place and is well worth seeing.

We fully appreciated how much the Persian woman is to be pitied, when we went to our first Persian wedding. All marriages are arranged by the families. In Europe, however ambitious a family may be for the alliance of the sons and daughters, there are yet limits to what they expect from them; and that two people should solemnly enter into a lifelong partnership without having had either speech or sight of each other seems criminal to us. Persian parents have meetings which last for hours, at which they recount the virtues of their respective children. When their good qualities have been agreed upon, the marriage becomes a settled fact. However, in all countries each ugly duckling is his parents'

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

swan, and even when they are sincere there must be a certain exaggeration in this practice; think what disillusion must follow where the parents are not sincere!

When a marriage is agreed upon, the parents are satisfied that they have done their utmost to promote the happiness of their respective children, and the religious ceremony takes place. A Mollah is sent for by the bride's parents, to celebrate it, and the marriage itself resembles a European one in form, in that the priest asks the bride and bridegroom whether they willingly consent to be man and wife.

Before the ceremony takes place a reception is held which lasts five hours. Two archways at the end of the room lead into a smaller one; the bride's mother led us up to one of these, and, looking through, we saw that the floor was entirely filled with cushions embroidered with seed pearls; and sitting in the middle of them, dressed in gorgeous cashmere and covered with emeralds and pearls, sat the grandmother of the bride, alone, looking like a funny owl with her big eyes and beaky nose. We bowed and smiled through the archway and then were settled on red plush chairs, each behind a little gilt table, and left

## THE WOMEN OF THE ANDEROUN

to examine the sweets, fruits, salads and nuts with which the table was laden, and to watch the entrance of the arriving guests at our leisure.

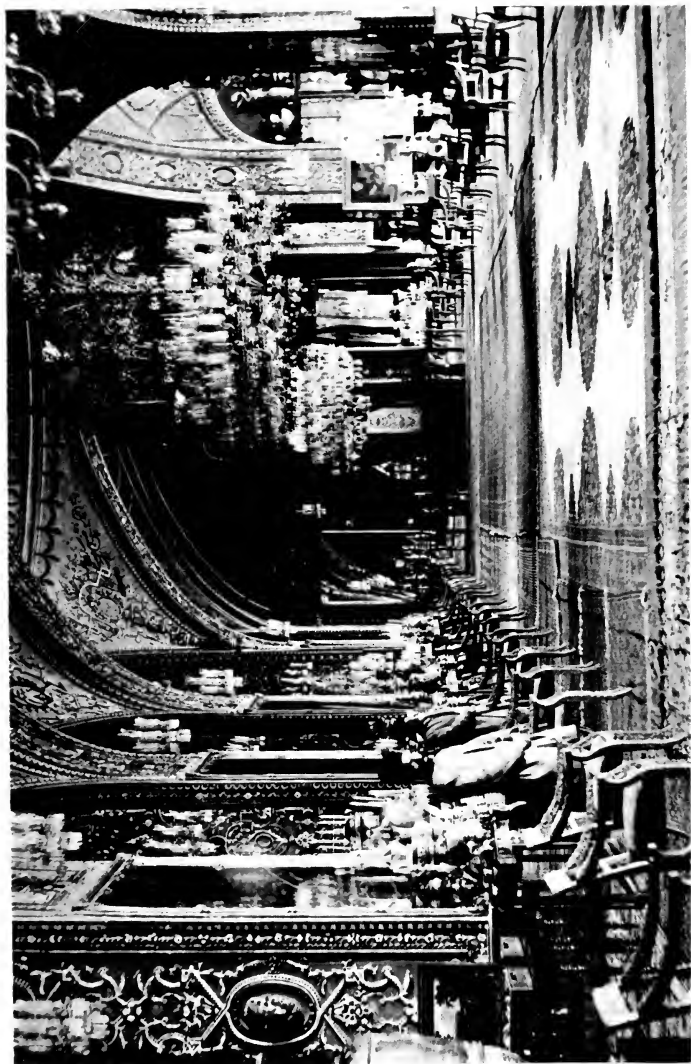
The guests were ushered in by women slaves and servants, and shown to their places behind the little tables according to their rank; it was a little like Alice's tea-party, as now and again a guest would misjudge her rank and have to move up or down, according to the higher or lower rank of the latest arrival.

After all were seated, the grandmother came into the room, clutching her cashmere round her fat legs, and disclosing the gentleman's nice comfortable woollies in which they were encased; she took a little three-pronged fork from a table, and sitting down by us, jabbed the fork into a quarter of peeled orange, which she buried in the salt and then handed to me with a smile. I swallowed the nasty mixture with great difficulty. This action on her part was the signal for everyone to begin eating, and we found politeness consisted in the exchanging of tit-bits from plate to plate. To pick out with your fingers what you think nicest from your own plate, and hand it to your neighbour, is the acme of good manners in Persia, which shows how two countries may regard the

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

same act from exactly the opposite point of view.

Eating was continued for two or three hours; hubble-bubble pipes and cigarettes were smoked, and women talked incessantly, but in subdued voices. There was no chattering and no fuss, and very little laughter, and what there was was half concealed behind the hand, as is the Persian fashion. It was evident from the hush that fell at each new arrival, that there was keen interest evinced in clothes. At times these were startling to a degree. One girl wore an evening frock with a man's dickey and collar, another had a spangled lace veil falling round her face and a dark blue cloth coat and skirt, and the majority were dressed in European brocades of bright colours and large patterns. A sacque coat and a three-cornered shawl, and a stiffened lawn head-handkerchief is the usual indoor costume of a lady. The kerchief is stiffened round the forehead, and flows over the shoulders and down the back, being held together under the chin by a big jewel. Unmarried girls wear their hair parted and braided in forty or fifty little plaits, while the married women have it cut in a heavy fringe, which is often curled on their forehead and also



*Photo by*

A Dining-room in the Palace.

*[Scruggin,*

*The face p. 72*





## THE WOMEN OF THE ANDEROUN

braided down the back. All women wear mittens or gloves of various colours, and often men's evening gloves, and many, if they have rings, wear them outside.

The bride herself, when she arrived, which she did after the eating was finished, was led by her mother across the courtyard and up the steps of the house from her private apartments. The dancing girls danced backwards before her, throwing a few flowers, and the family scattered money in small gold pieces to the crowd of wedding guests. The bride herself merits a full description. She was the most fantastic little figure I have ever seen; her face was rouged and enamelled so that it shone; her eyebrows made one straight line of black paint an inch broad across her brows, and she had a heavy black moustache of paint on her upper lip, which is supposed to render a woman beautiful in Persia. She wore pale green kid gloves and a cherry-brocade dress, and carried a dark-blue striped handkerchief and a yellow ostrich-feather fan. From ear to ear there hung three enormous diamond necklaces fastened to her head under her chin, and looking as if she wore a helmet.

After the arrival of the bride, the reception at

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

the house was over and the religious ceremony took place.

The Mollah stood behind a curtained doorway, separating himself thus from the crowd of gaily-dressed women who surround the little bride; he called in a loud voice, asking whether she was willing to accept the bridegroom as her husband. After each request her family urged her to say "Yes," and she hesitated, the idea of this being that her maiden modesty should not too quickly succumb; a second reason for this apparent reluctance is that a loophole should be allowed her to escape from the marriage should she seek a divorce, as she uses this hesitation to prove that the marriage was forced upon her. At the third call, however, the bride gave her consent, and there was a rustling noise like a flight of pigeons all over the room, as the veils of all the women present were flung over their heads.

At the far end of the room in which the marriage took place, stood a large mirror, and the bride, crossing the room with uncovered face, knelt before the looking-glass, which is always the last gift of the bridegroom before he comes himself to claim his wife. A door behind the bride opened, and the bridegroom entered the

## THE WOMEN OF THE ANDEROUN

room alone, and crossing to the curtained doorway behind which the Mollah stood, was questioned, in his turn, by the hidden priest, as to his willingness to marry the bride. He was asked once only and answered "Yes" unhesitatingly; then turned, and, walking to the mirror, stood behind the bride as she knelt. It is thus that the bride and groom see each other for the first time.

The bridegroom stayed but a moment after that look, and then left the room; the wedding ceremony was over.

The bride was fifteen, quite old for Persia, and she left her home the same day for her husband's house. But it often happens that children of eight and ten go through the marriage ceremony, remaining afterwards in their homes until they are of a riper age.

In Persia there is no register kept of marriages, births, or deaths. Each family keeps its own records, which are usually written in the Koran, and, like the family Bible with us, is found in every household.

## CHAPTER VI

### RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

THERE are certain anniversaries, sacrifices and festivals kept by the Persians which are rather curious, and some of them are extremely annoying to the European. They begin by celebrating their new year, or *Nov Rooz*, on March 21st, on which day all Persians exchange formal visits, and the lower class clamour for presents; the servants ask double wages for the month. One receives small gifts, in the shape of nasty multicoloured sweets, cheap glass vases filled with flowering bulbs, and obnoxious cakes from the tradesmen and the servants, who all hope for a gift of money in return. One's Persian friends present one with seed-pearl embroidery on hideous bright pink or royal blue cotton-backed satin. I was so bothered with some of these presents, not knowing what to give in return, that

## RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

at last I took refuge in saying that my Government would not allow me to accept presents of any kind, or to give them either. New Year in Persia is a great tax on rich and poor alike. At the hour of sunset, when it is only half dark, the Persians indulge in their favourite pastime of letting off fireworks, but naturally they then pass almost unnoticed.

The inconvenience of *Nov Rooz* is really only a matter of a little extra expense, and everyone is made happy, so it cannot be compared to that terror of all housewives, *Ramazan*, the Month of Fasting. During that month the people may only eat, drink, and smoke between sunset and sunrise. All regular service in the house becomes a penance, for you can hardly expect a man to do his daily work when he passes all night feasting; he cannot do otherwise, as the Persians at this time turn night into day: and when a servant goes home to his wife and family at night (as he always does here), and finds them enjoying their well-earned food and smoke, how can he go quietly to bed and sleep through the revelry that the neighbours indulge in? It would not be human nature: so we are obliged to content ourselves with what work they will do of their

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

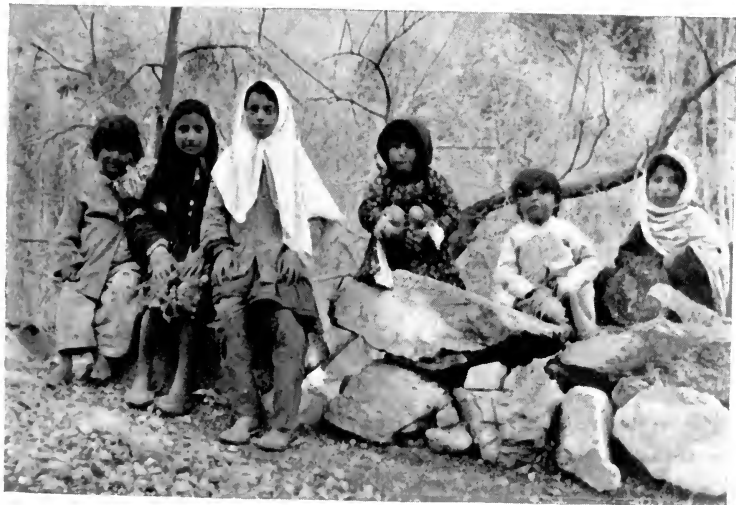
own accord, and think ourselves lucky to get anything done at all.

The people are warned of the approach of the longed-for hour when they make their first meal by the firing of cannon at the four points of the town. If one is out riding or driving one naturally hurries home, for the tightened belts and pale faces of the servants in attendance remind one of what they must be suffering, and how they must be longing for their food. And if, as sometimes happens, one is very far from home at the moment, one stops at a chai khaneh (tea-house) to let them have their drink or smoke.

I must own that all this is very upsetting to one's nerves, which are in a shattered condition before the first sight of the new moon relieves the strain of the Mohammedan Lent. The first time I saw the observance of this custom of watching for the moon to appear, was when I was out riding in the small village of Tajreesh which stands on the top of a cluster of rocks, just at the foot of the mountains. On every rock, large and small, stood a man, woman, or child, separately or grouped together, and all the housetops were covered with families, all with their faces turned



Tajresh.



Gardeners' Children.





## RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

upwards, to catch the first glimpse of the silver crescent, which they were waiting to see come up over the horizon and go sailing over the mountains behind the village; for the sooner they see the moon, the quicker comes the end of the last painful hours of Ramazan. I think the Europeans are as glad as the Persians when that terrible month is finished.

Perhaps the most disagreeable day to the European is one in the month of Moharrem, which is given up to religious mourning. I cannot say the whole month is so great a trial to us as the month of Ramazan, but there are a few hours so very horrible that they seem to be magnified. On this day the Persians commemorate the death of their holy martyrs, Hussein and Hassan, grandchildren of Mohammed. All the fanatical Persians martyrize their bodies in public and go through the streets of the town in religious processions, while the women line the tops of the bazaars and houses and watch them pass, uttering lamentations, and crying bitterly, to see the knives and the chain flails with which the men, bared to the waist, inflict injury on themselves and each other, while they keep up a rhythmic motion in time to the chant, which is more moaned than

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

sung by the whole crowd, whether looking on or taking part in the procession.

Those playing an active part in the procession are dressed in white calico and move slowly step by step, cutting themselves with large knives on the top of their shaven heads. Their faces and naked bodies stream with blood; the streets show a trail of blood where the faithful have gone through, and, though there is undoubtedly a good deal of other animals' blood added to enhance the realism of the scene, yet quite enough damage is done to convince the spectator that there is still a great deal of reality in this barbarous custom. The monotonous cry they give is a constant repetition of the names of the martyred brothers. Many small children are carried in these processions, and I have seen some tiny mites armed with swords bigger than themselves, and covered with blood.

The observance of this ceremony was a great trial to me the first year I was in Teheran. On the day of the procession my cook appeared, half an hour before our usual luncheon hour, with his head bound up with rags and very weak from loss of blood. I thought lunch would be preferable if cooked by some one else, so I told

## RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

him he could go home till the next day, and contented myself with what the other servants could cook. The following year I took my precautions beforehand and gave my cook three days' holiday, and we lived on eggs and tinned provisions until the cook's wounds were healed.

During the month of mourning it used to be the custom to give Mystery Plays in a theatre belonging to the Shah, called the Takke-ed-Dowleh, but this custom is dying out. There are still many representations, however, in outdoor theatres under tents in the streets, the actors in these playing in their every-day clothes. A street crowd collects in a very few minutes and silently watches the rough mummers filling their rôles.

I once went to a representation in the Takke-ed-Dowleh, which is inside the Palace: the theatre itself is a holy place—it was there the coffin of Mouzaffer-ed-Din was placed after his death. The building is a vast amphitheatre encircled by three tiers of boxes; the dome is still unfinished and, in its place, there is a canvas top. The theatre has many exits, and the stage is a round platform raised about a yard from the ground and surrounded by a broad track, which track is separated from the boxes by tiers of benches where the

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

people sit ; the places are not paid for, as the performance is more of a religious ceremony than a paying concern. The Shah nominally pays the expenses, but the strain on his purse cannot have been very great, as, when he attended the performance, he visited all the important merchants present, who each made him a contribution.

The walls of the theatre are, as usual, of tiles, and countless mirrors, which is the Persian form of decoration for great occasions ; these reflect the light of hundreds of candles, which stand in glass chandeliers on tables in front of the boxes. The boxes on the first tier are furnished with carpets and are occupied by men only ; those on the second tier belong to the Shah, and some of them have wooden lattices, behind which the Royal Anderoun sit and watch the play ; the boxes in the third tier are also latticed, so that the ladies of the highest Persian society may be present. It was to one of these boxes that we were conducted the day I went to see a mystery play, but the lattice had been removed. His Imperial Majesty, accompanied by his suite, honoured the performance that day, consequently every seat was occupied.

There are only a few plays which the Europeans



A Fanatic.



A Dervish.



## RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

are allowed to witness, the real mystery plays being far too sacred to be desecrated by our presence. The play which we were privileged to see was the well-known story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. (It must be remembered that up to the coming of Mohammed, the sacred history of both Christian and Mohammedan is largely the same.)

The piece began by a parade round the track of a military band ; this was followed by a number of ferrashes, stripped to the waist and chanting rhythmically while they struck themselves with their open palms. Then a second military band, and, finally, the actors on horses and mules. After passing round the track they took their places on the stage. Scenery there was none ; the bare stage being occupied by a large old-fashioned four-poster bed, a bench, and a hole in the ground.

In speaking, the actors intoned their words so that they could be heard at the farthest point of the great auditorium. The plot of this play is too well known for me to dwell on it ; it was fortunate that we knew it so well, as the Persian rendering made it most difficult to follow. We were only able to keep our gravity for about

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

half the play, and, as it is a sacrilege to laugh, we were forced to leave the theatre.

The performance is exceedingly primitive, and the only part that really had a touch of local colour, was the arrival of the caravan with Pharaoh's servants; these rode on magnificently caparisoned horses, whose necks were hung with precious stones, and were followed by a string of camels laden with carpets and rugs as if prepared for a long journey. Then came the climax. A European dog-cart, smartly turned out, and a first-class motor-car, inside which sat a man in a frock coat and a tall hat, who was supposed to represent the French Ambassador, sympathizing with Mohammedans for their grief at this anniversary of their martyred saints. A messenger was sent to the French Minister's box to ask him if this attention pleased him.

As this caravan of Pharaoh's servants passed, the actors fished Joseph out of the well (wearing quite different clothes from those in which he had disappeared into it), and sold him as a slave to the chief eunuch, who perched him on the top of a camel and carried him off. Joseph was a small boy of about ten years old.

The bed, meanwhile, had been placed beside the



## RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

well, and at this stage of the performance Mrs. Potiphar came in and put herself to bed. She then caught sight of the small Joseph, who had been picked off his camel and returned to the stage. Mrs. Potiphar, filled with a desire to attract Joseph, called for her attendants to bring her beautiful garments, with which they proceeded to array her: as a final touch, to make her quite irresistible to the "man" of her choice, she opened a pale pink silk parasol and reclined under its protection on the very solid bed. After which Joseph was coaxed into climbing on to the bed with some difficulty, and the parasol was lowered. At this point we hastily took our departure, as we were behaving too badly to stay any longer.

I afterwards heard the finale was only a filing past of regiments of artillery, cavalry and infantry. The Persians think these plays wonderful; but one visit to a Persian theatre is sufficient to satisfy the curiosity of most Europeans.

Once a year a camel is sacrificed to Allah. This is treated as a solemn act, though the actual religious ceremony of the present day has lost much of its old-time splendour. The sacrifice is made to commemorate the sacrifice of Abraham, and a white camel, which is very rare, is kept

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

for the purpose. This camel is carefully looked after, and when well fattened and cleaned is brought before the people. The Shah is represented at the sacrifice by a Court official, who, it is ordained, shall be dressed in brand new clothes for the occasion. He arrives on horseback, sparkling with jewels, the camel being led behind him to the Palace to be shown to the Shah, after which the two proceed to an open space near the Bazaar known as the Camel Square. The procession grows very large, and usually has great difficulty in forcing its way into the square, which is crowded with thousands of people. The procession itself is composed of the heads of certain Corporations, who ride on mules, and who each have a right to a particular part of the camel when it is cut up, the head being always reserved for the Shah; they wear white aprons with bibs fastened round their necks, in which bibs they place the sacred meat which they receive.

The roofs of the houses are black with women, and the trees filled with men and boys seeking for the best view. The pestilential smell of the crowd detracts from one's enjoyment of the scene, and, owing to its density, we did not see the actual killing of the poor beast,

## RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

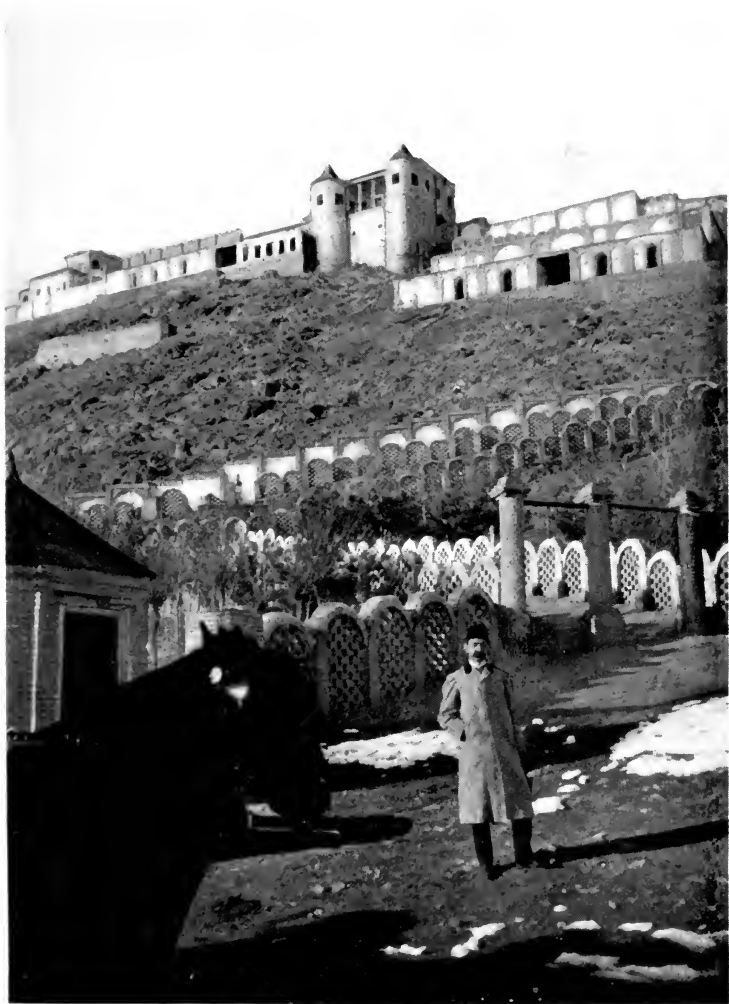
although his hoarse bellow reached us. When the sacrifice was accomplished the crowd pressed forward to snatch, if possible, a piece of the camel's sacred flesh. The heads of the Guilds defended the body of the animal to the best of their ability, while they separated their own already-appointed parts; and then the remains were left to the people, who strove with all their might to stain even the tiniest bit of cloth with a drop of the camel's blood. Those lucky enough to get a piece of the meat eat it in memoriam.

In addition to this official sacrifice, thousands of lambs are offered up on the same day, which has no fixed date, save that it always comes at the end of Ramazan, the Month of Fasting. The Persian Government on this day gives fifty lambs to the Turkish Embassy.

The thought of sacrifice is carried even into the intimacy of one's own private life. I had lost a beautiful silk abba, which had belonged to the late Regent, and which was so well known that the Jew to whom the stolen goods were taken brought it back to me eight months afterwards, when I had given up all hope of seeing it again. After it was returned, one of my servants begged to be allowed to explain to me that he had sinned

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

against me, and told me with tears that, when the abba had first been stolen, he had dreamed a dream in which he had been told to sacrifice two lambs for its recovery. Being a poor man he had cheated the Deity and only sacrificed one, but his conscience troubled him severely, and he had finally sacrificed the second two days before the abba was returned. He begged my forgiveness, realizing that it was his dishonesty that had caused the delay! Needless to say, I paid for the two lambs.



The Dochan Tepe and the fenced slopes

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## CHAPTER VII

### GARDENS OF DELIGHT

ONE of the charms of Teheran is its gardens. These are mostly the property of the Shah, and it is our pleasant custom to ride or drive out of town in the morning to one or other of them, and take our lunch and tea with us.

I was taken to one of these gardens the day I arrived in Teheran; and after being cramped up in a stuffy carriage for forty-eight hours, the drive was beautiful, through the Dochan Tepe Gate and a lovely avenue of Judas trees in full bloom, to a castle which belongs to the garden. It was built on top of a steep hill by Nasr-ed-Din Shah, who fondly imagined it was like Windsor Castle.

Mouzaffer-ed-Din bought a wonderful telescope in Europe and placed it here; he used it to sight the mouflon on the mountains, and having ascertained their whereabouts, would leave his suite

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

at Dochan Tepe and proceed to Kasr-i-Ferous, a shooting-box right at the foot of the mountains. The Castle is more or less furnished, and I remember being shown the Shah's bed—a red velvet mattress on the floor was all His Majesty needed after a long day's shooting.

On the right is a garden with the Shah's menagerie, or, at least, all that is left of it. There used to be several tigers, panthers, bears, foxes, and even two lions; but it is now reduced to a pair of small panthers and a lynx. The rest died of hunger and neglect.

Leaving Teheran by the Shah-Abdul-Azim Gate, one can make two easy excursions to Rhaye. I have picnicked many a time by the stream running through the village Chesm-Ali, and visited the excavations now going on. There is a bas-relief carved on the face of a rock near this village; it was done in the reign of Fath Ali Shah, who wished to leave some memento to posterity, and who chose to imitate those left by Xerxes and Darius at Persepolis and by Cyrus at Kermanshah. From this village there are numerous rides to outlying gardens belonging to rich Persians of Teheran. One goes to them in the early spring, as they lie low on the plains



## GARDENS OF DELIGHT

and more to the south in the full heat of the sun, and therefore blossom earlier than the Teheran gardens. From here, also, one rides to the Tower of Silence on the spur of the mountain, where the few remaining Parsees who have lived in Teheran are taken after their death. According to the rites of their religion, they are laid upon a gridiron which covers the top of the tower, and here, under the sky, they lie, till the birds of prey have picked their bones clean.

The second excursion from the Shah-Abdul-Azim Gate is direct to Shah-Abdul-Azim itself, which is the sacred tomb of the saint who has given his name to the town. It is in every way a miniature Teheran. This tomb has a beautiful gold dome, and is a famous pilgrimage for Persians on Fridays; it is also a sanctuary for criminals. Here it was that Nasr-ed-Din Shah was assassinated.

From the Haniabad Gate there are, perhaps, the best riding roads near Teheran; here, by long, winding roads edged with willows, and beside fields of growing corn, one may have a three-mile gallop, and always find a garden in which to rest and take one's tea. There is a delightful drive up towards the mountains to an Armenian village

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

called Vannek ; it is, of course, a Christian village and possesses a little church.

From the Dowlat Gate one drives to Shimran, which is five hundred feet higher than Teheran and the summer residence of the Europeans. From Shimran the excursions become difficult, and must be done on horse or muleback, or on foot, as there are no carriage roads worthy of the name. A favourite excursion in the hot summer is to Pascaleh, a village hung in a cleft of the mountains. The day I went, we sent off the cook with chairs and tables and his cooking things at five o'clock in the morning, and ourselves followed on horseback an hour or two later, before the great heat began. We went through the winding lanes of Tajreesh, which end in a narrow stony path, leading in zig-zags up the lower half of the mountain. Here we had to go single file, and one admired the sure-footedness of the little Persian horses ; the one I rode was twenty-two years old and never stumbled ! At times the ground was so steep that we had to cling to the pommels of our saddles to keep from sliding off backwards, and in several places we had to get off and climb up the rocks. We left the horses at a little village

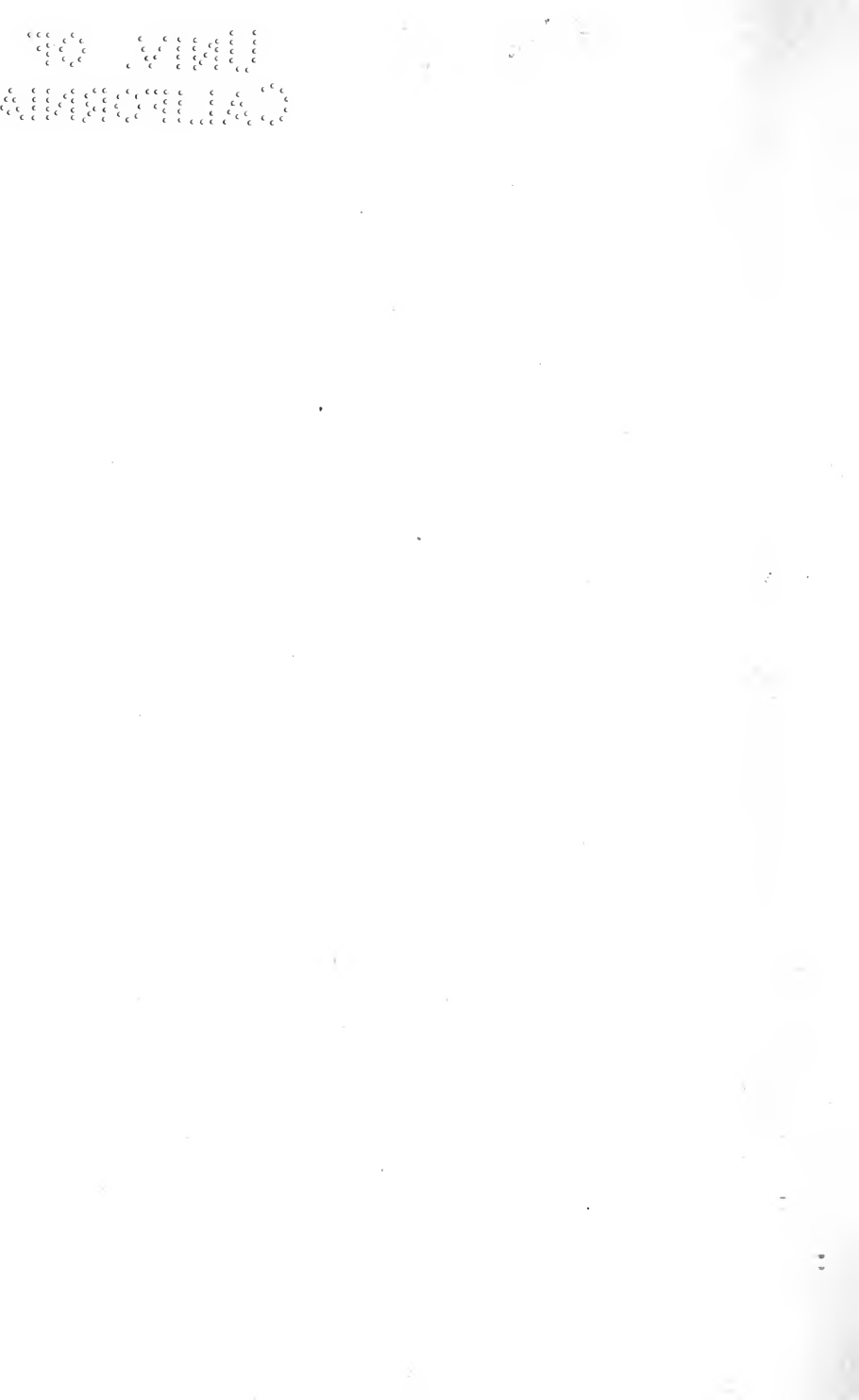


*Photo by*

*[Serrugin.]*

The Tower of Shah-Abdul-Azim at Rhayeh.

*[To face p. 92]*



## GARDENS OF DELIGHT

half-way up, as the descent would have been too risky for their knees ; here mules waited for us, and I should advise those who are not used to this mode of riding to stay at home. I myself got off the mule after half an hour, and continued on foot, not liking to skirt the edge of a precipice on anything but my own legs. We reached a tiny plantation of green willows growing out of the rock, and were delighted to find a dainty lunch awaiting us here. The things had been cooled in the stream, and everything was nice and refreshing after our hard climb. Wash-basins and soap, in a retired spot behind the trees, were a blessing ; comfortable camp arm-chairs and cushions, and rugs under our feet, made this alfresco lunch one of my pleasantest memories of Teheran.

After an hour's rest we started up the gorge again, the stream from the cascade guiding us to our destination. After an hour's climb we reached the waterfall, and here some of the party bathed in the deep pool under the cascade. We had had enough for one day, though some energetic people go to the top of the Tochal from here. We had tea in the willow grove before starting down, and I must say that I was very thankful to get safe home again.

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Another excursion worth doing is to what is known to the foreigners here as the Mushroom Rock, so named from its peculiar shape; it is a huge rock balanced on a small one. It is easy of access; one rides across the sand-hills beyond Tajreesh to another gorge, where after a short climb one leaves the horses and goes on foot, skirting a spur of the mountains, into the gorge where the rock stands, balanced over a dry river-bed. The Persians call it the old woman's rock; they think it looks like an old woman's head. But since I wrote of it there has been a rather severe earthquake, and the rock has fallen into the dry river-bed over which it hung. This is rather a pity, as we used to have tea under its shade after our ride.

The Iman Zadé Salek, above Tajreesh, is very interesting; it is built round one of the biggest plane trees I have ever seen, and is one of the few mosques one is allowed to enter. It is of the usual blue-green and yellow tiles and has a very lovely arched doorway; from the open space in front of it one has a magnificent view. This mosque can be seen a long way off, and makes a patch of brilliant colour against the red-brown rocks.

By far the best ride during the summer is to



A House belonging to a rich Parsee



The Mushroom Rock at Villenjach, near Tajreesh.





## GARDENS OF DELIGHT

Shahabad, a little villa belonging to the Shah ; it is situated in a peculiar position right on a ledge in the mountains, and it gives the impression of being at the seaside. I have been there several times with different people, and each time we arrived in front of the house we felt as if we were by the sea. I cannot explain why this is, but the feeling is there. The house seems built on the edge of the cliff, and the plains stretching far away give an impression of the sea. The air is extremely transparent ; one can see miles away across the plains to Koum. To reach this very attractive little villa one rides across the corn-fields to the east of Gulahek on to what is known as the Sultanetabad road. This road leads from the Mint straight up to the mountains for about four miles. It is one of the very few roads in these parts without stones, and we gallop our ponies up past gardens belonging to the Shah and the royal princes, until suddenly the road ends at a beautiful garden, the favourite summer residence of His Majesty. The villa is entirely furnished ; the yellow-brocaded satin curtains match the furniture, and it all looks quite new. Red mulberries are a feature of the place, as in most gardens here the mulberries are white. An

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

elaborate fountain is another feature of this garden and its greatest attraction to the Persians ; but what tempts the Europeans most to visit Shahabad is the view. In every room there are electric lamps with pretty fittings, but of course all quite useless, as there is no electric installation and never has been ; but the glass bulbs coming out of coloured china and crystal flowers look pretty in the daytime ; and at night, if it should please His Majesty to honour this villa with his presence, lamps can easily be procured ! The house is full of photographs of Mouzaffer-ed-Din on his foreign tour, and on the staircase hang panther-skins and other souvenirs of the chase. It is strange to find hidden away behind the sand-hills this beautifully furnished little house built on the edge of a rock.

Persians have always been lovers of nature, and their poets sing of the beautiful gardens ; but, I fancy, in the days of Saadi and Hafiz the gardens must have been better kept, for though some of them are worth visiting, they are now, for the most part, cruelly neglected. The Persian loves to sit on a cushion at his window, smoking his pipe and looking at his garden, down alleys of beautiful trees, with water running over blue

## GARDENS OF DELIGHT

tiles. He likes his flowers to make a blaze of colour, and he loves the sound of running water. He has masses of scarlet geraniums up all the steps leading into the house, and no garden is complete without several tanks. One garden, belonging to a rich Parsee, has a huge tank, where the owner allowed us to go and fish. I caught in one afternoon over sixty little fish, which made a good "friture" for dinner.

Nearly all the gardens round Teheran are looked after by Parsee gardeners; there is only one European gardener here now, and he used to be head gardener to Kameran Mirza, the ex-Shah's father-in-law. His gardens, one in Teheran near the Kasvin Gate and the other near the foot of the mountains, were a blaze of colour, and the glass-houses well worth seeing. We used to send there for flowers, as the Prince allowed them to be sold. The gardener has now left the Prince and set up a garden of his own, which is the only place where we can buy flowers in the winter.

Anyone can visit these Persian gardens. A few krans to the Parsee gardener, and he will give you flowers or fruit and allow you to take your tea in the shade of the trees. His family

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

sit at a distance and watch you drink your tea, and come up and get the cake you leave.

The life of these peasants is simple. They live on the garden produce, and on Friday they lock the gate, leaving their women inside, and walk across the plain to Teheran, to buy the few necessities of life which the garden cannot supply. One soon learns not to go garden-visiting on a Friday, as the women indicate smilingly through the gates that they cannot allow one to enter if they would. The farther away the garden lies, the more pleasure is shown at the reception of a visitor; this detracts a little from the charm of the excursion, as one excites so much curiosity.

Mohammed recommended three fruits to his faithful: the banana, which bears fruit at all seasons; the water-melon, because it serves as food and drink to the thirsty child of the desert (to whom he said: "If thou give a slice of water-melon to a beggar, it shall be laid to thy account"); and the palm, because it is the father of all plants, its head living in fire and its feet set in water. Of it the prophet said: "Honour thy father the palm, as it is formed of the same earth as Adam. He who plants a palm tree will grace the best place in Paradise,



Ferahabad.



A Palace of the Shah.

[To face p. 98.]



## GARDENS OF DELIGHT

for it is the emblem of man ; if a man cut a limb, it shall never grow again." The Persian gardener has followed the wishes of the Prophet, so far as he can, by planting these three life-giving fruits.

The banana, of course, will not grow in Teheran, and palm trees, too, are rare ; but the melon has become one of the chief supports of life, both to the peasant and to his beast, in both country and town. An amusing sight is an old Persian, sitting doubled up on his heels, feeding his sheep and lambs, chickens, cows and donkeys, with pieces of rind of the melon which has just served his family for their meal.

There are no public gardens here in town, but all the European children are allowed to go to one garden, which belonged to the Grand Vizier, who was murdered in 1907 ; it is now the property of Arbab Jemshid, a rich Parsee, who lets the house to the Persian Government for the Treasury. The gardens belonging to the Royal Palace are lovely and well kept up. They were laid out by a French gardener, who left after the Constitution was established. The chrysanthemums and roses are glorious, and there is an excellent tennis-court where His Majesty sometimes plays.

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

Owing to the great heat and dust in summer, it is very difficult to grow grass; some of us have tried to get a nice lawn for the spring, but it is a tremendous trouble and expense. The seed must come from Europe and must be resown every year, and the question of watering is all-important. To have a good green lawn, the ground must be kept practically under water during the very hot weather; and if you do not personally superintend it, you will get no grass. Some gardeners sow clover, but, of course, that ruins all hope of good turf.

There are plenty of conservatories in the Teheran gardens, but instead of using them for plants that will not thrive out of doors, the Persian gardener, if left to his own devices, fills them full of geraniums, which, of course, look very lovely; but as they grow out of doors almost as well, it is a pity to waste the space. My gardener fills my conservatory with his own plants, and then tries to sell me the blossoms for my dinner-table; when I suggest that I should like to buy some plants myself, he says there is no room, so his plants crowd mine out.

Flowers in Teheran are not what the poets would lead us to believe, though the wild flowers are



LIBRARY OF  
GARDENS OF DELIGHT

very beautiful, and the wild roses are more luxuriant than I have ever seen elsewhere. They are trained from tree to tree in garlands, and the Persians have garden-parties occasionally, to show off their beauty. The "La France" rose is magnificent in all the gardens; and in spring the iris and violet and jasmine make the air sweet with their perfume; but flowers in Persia are never properly cultivated.

There are no good perennials, as the second year the flowers degenerate; but I have found that if one takes the trouble to have out a yearly supply from Europe, one only needs to plant them and water them well to have a very fine result. Leaf-mould is so plentiful, and everything that is planted grows so fast, that it breaks one's heart to see so few gardens properly tended.

The fruit gardens are quite beautiful in the early spring, with their blossoms seen against the snow mountains seeming to grow from the desert. A wonderful effect, which I have seen nowhere but in Persia, is given by the Judas trees, which are the first to flower, and which outline the roads in all directions with a blaze of violet. There is a great difference between the European and Persian lilac, though both abound here. The

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

Persian lilac looks rather like a diminutive mauve jasmine; the flowers grow separately down a stem which has small green leaves, so that the shrub looks like a tuft of feathers.

One of His Majesty's uncles has a lovely garden and house near the Kasvin gate, far away from the European quarter of the town and in a district where the best gardens are to be found. The entrance is in a wide road full of water holes, but once inside the gates it is a Paradise of lovely trees and flowers.

This garden is one which has been well cultivated, having had in former days a first-class European gardener. There is an avenue of plane trees leading to the principal house, and it branches off in two directions towards the other houses. These avenues are bordered with geraniums, and here and there a blue-tiled tank with a fountain greets the eye. Behind the principal house is a small lake which is covered with water-lilies of various colours. I have seen canary-coloured water-lilies growing by the side of crimson ones, flame-coloured and white. The lake is bordered with rose trees, some of the Maréchal Niels being as big as peonies. There are many glass-houses, which, unfortunately, are going to ruin for want of care.

## GARDENS OF DELIGHT

In the house there is a large hall, in the centre of which there is a tank and a fountain. Here it is that His Highness received us once last year when we went to visit his wives. This hall is decorated with facets of mirror and plaster carvings, and large mirrors are hung everywhere ; it is divided into four archways, forming the separate divisions. When we went there to tea, we found in the first room arm-chairs and sofas in bright-coloured plush, and standing round about fifty ladies of His Highness's *anderoun*. They were all dressed in Persian fashion, long garments open in front, but held up to prevent the opening from disclosing what was beneath. For the most part the ladies were dressed in light-coloured brocades, and some wore lovely jewellery. They were not all his wives, these ladies ; some were his sisters, and some his sons' wives ; but it was not possible to know which was which, and I was much too shy of talking Persian to make any inquiries. Even the servants are not always distinguishable from their mistresses.

The feature of the entertainment provided for us was a tremendous feast of cakes, sweets, fruit, cucumbers, lettuces and spring onions : while one of the ladies played Persian airs on a piano which

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

sadly required tuning. Several of the younger ladies sang, all different tunes. I knew some of the younger ladies quite well; they go to the school directed by Mlle Secousse, and I am on the committee of it and have to assist at the examinations, so that when I met some of the pupils I asked them if they had left school, and found half a dozen had got married since the last examination. They woo and wed quickly in high circles in Teheran.

Some of my friends showed me their needlework; they usually subscribe to a French paper that gives a piece of work every month, with instructions how to do it and the silks to work with, and they work fairly well, only that they cannot learn to finish off their thread, so that they have long pieces of silk hanging all over the back. It does not show, so they think it does not matter. When left to their own devices in the choice of a piece of work they find a reel of cotton and a crotchet hook quite sufficient to occupy their fingers. They make heaps of little rounds of crotchet which are of no use whatever.

Sometimes, however, one of the girls gets ambitious, and with a bit of bright blue or cherry satin will make a cushion embroidered in silk

## GARDENS OF DELIGHT

of a contrasting shade with a design of birds and flowers. Some of the Persian ladies who are not so civilized and do not take in French papers copy Persian pictures, and very well they do it. I have two small pieces of linen embroidered by a Persian lady which are typical. One is a picture of a renowned story-teller sitting in his own home with his wife and smoking his pipe. The lady's face is done in pale pink silk; her hair and eyes are black, her hands pink with red nails, her frock blue, magenta and emerald green, outlined with yellow, and her head-shawl is white. The man is in brown, yellow and blue, and the whole thing is done in shading stitch. The other piece of work is larger, and represents some court officials in their robes of honour slipping off their shoes before appearing in the presence of His Majesty; the colours are very bright, but the detail is really extraordinary. Unfortunately the piece of linen is too small to be used for anything.

The Regent's daughter does beautiful needle-work. I have seen a screen copied from a Japanese cushion done by her just as well embroidered and finished off, back and front, as the model. Fatima Nasr-el-Mulk has also made some pretty rugs which were designed by her father.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOCIAL LIFE IN TEHERAN

**S**OCIETY in Teheran is difficult to describe. It is made up of every nationality; there are about two hundred Europeans, mostly Russians or English. The question of precedence always has been, and always will be, a troublesome one. Persians have different ideas to ours on the subject, and this often leads to trouble. However, we are better satisfied lately with the way things are done.

In the old days I have assisted at dinners where practically no one was in his right place; now, these things do not occur, and there are less heart-burnings, for, strange as it may seem, there are people who think that when they have not their right place at table they are less considered and have been insulted. It is funny how some people get a "swelled head" once they have crossed the Caspian Sea, and consider themselves above

## SOCIAL LIFE IN TEHERAN

the neighbours who, in their own country, would be on terms of equality with them. I do not try to suggest why this should be, I only state a fact. But in spite of this, which is rather a drawback at dinner-parties, Teheran has great advantages. One does pretty well as one likes, the fashions are very little studied, and the climate is perfect. It is never really too hot, and although I have experienced some pretty severe winters here, it is always so dry that the cold is quite bearable.

Some few people suffer from the altitude, which has a bad effect on the nerves.

There is practically nothing to do in Teheran, so we fill up our time with gossiping about our neighbours. Everyone is carefully watched, and their doings retailed at "At Homes" and dinner-parties; a walk, a drive, or even a ride with a friend is criticized and condemned; and those who object to being the subject of conversation are obliged to forego many innocent amusements.

Luckily, bridge is much played, and people who pass their time playing bridge can scarcely be gossips. It is a godsend, for it fills up many hours which otherwise would be spent in destroying someone's reputation.

In the winter, once everyone is settled down in

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

town, most of the ladies have a weekly reception. In old days, everyone sat and gossiped; news failing, they invented tittle-tattle, and woe to the helpless person who was in someone's black books, not a shred of his or her reputation would be left; and though no one ever believes the gossip, still it is unpleasant to be the subject of converse in every drawing-room.

Now the weekly receptions are really bridge-parties; three, four, and even more tables are arranged, and people get up their own little party and sally forth to someone's house and there play bridge, ignoring the hostess save for a greeting on arrival.

There are a great many dinner-parties in the winter months, and also a few balls. The Clubs give balls and sometimes a small theatrical performance, which is a pleasant change.

Teheran is a place where people make mountains out of molehills, and everything is a grievance. A picnic is naturally a failure, when spoken about by those not invited; a dinner not eatable, if you happen not to have your right place.

In the summer, however, things are easier. No one gives large dinner-parties, and bridge-parties with a small dinner are the order of the





Persian Football.



A Hockey Match.



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day. The hottest part of the day is passed in bed, and after five p.m. one goes out to tennis or bridge. A tremendous lot of tennis is played from March to November, and sometimes even in December, if it is dry enough. There are two Clubs in town, and one goes up country. The German Legation has a good court both in town and in the country, and the Russian one in the country is the meeting-place on Sundays. I think everyone in Teheran plays tennis.

Sometimes it is possible in the spring to get up a polo team. It is great fun to watch, and at one time some of us used to take tea down to the ground and spend a pleasant hour there. Now there is hockey and football to while away the time, and in summer the very enthusiastic play cricket.

It is a pity that there is nowhere to go to spend a week-end just for a change, but everywhere is so unget-at-able that a short journey for a few days is impossible save for bachelors. They, of course, can get off to the mountains for a day's shooting, with only a servant and a few tins of food; but we women, who have families as well, are obliged to spend all our time in Teheran and only move up country for the summer months

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with everyone else. I wanted to go away once for a few days—my health was not very good and I needed a change. I was told to go to Lar, a place in the mountains, not far from here, and I immediately made my plans and began to collect information as to the journey; but when I found I should have to go over mountains, down precipices and perilous places on a horse, and that I should get nothing to eat but what I took with me and the trout I could catch in the river, I changed my mind and stayed at home.

In the spring and autumn, however, picnics and short excursions are numerous, and many a pleasant day have I spent in various gardens not too far off. We sent servants in the early morning with lunch and tea, and when we arrived at the chosen spot everything was well arranged and a good lunch waiting for us. All the servants know how to cook enough to give us something hot, and I have lunched out of doors in January, so marvellous is the climate.

One of our amusements is paying calls on Persian ladies. My knowledge of Persian is limited to about a score of words, so that if I go to houses where the ladies only speak Persian, conversation is difficult. In some houses, however, the daughter

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has learnt to speak French, or perhaps the host is at home and can be interpreter; but if there are Persian ladies other than the hostess present, he cannot enter the room, and I have had to do the best I could.

I went once last year to call on a lady, and, knowing she spoke no language but her own, I asked her son if he could act as interpreter. But there were Persian guests, so he could not, and I had to sit for more than an hour, trying to make conversation out of the few words I knew. It was not a success.

Persian ladies, when they receive European guests, prepare a tea as if for a regiment. There are innumerable women servants continually offering tea, cigarettes, sweetmeats and fruits. These servants are dressed in coloured muslins, made like dressing-gowns, and they wear muslin shawls on their heads, which cover the back of their necks. The Persian ladies wear lovely brocaded gowns, some of them made in European fashion, but for the most part they are Persian; long, flowing gowns which they wrap round them and hold up with both hands. On their heads they all wear muslin or tulle shawls. No Persian woman would allow the back of her neck to be

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seen, and I believe the following story to be true.

A Frenchman was out riding one day when he came to a stream, on the edge of which stood a woman washing clothes. She was clad only in a loose chemise and her head was entirely uncovered. Catching sight of the young Frenchman, her first instinct was to cover her head and neck. She had nothing near her except the clothes she was washing and which were in the stream, so she hastily raised her chemise and covered her head.

The Persians have strange ideas once they get into European clothes. I have seen Persian girls of seventeen who are still unmarried wearing, as their very best reception dresses, serge coats and skirts, with a silk blouse of the same colour, and diamond ear-rings, necklace, bracelets and rings. The effect is queer, but some of the girls are so pretty that really it matters little what they wear. I am sorry that they will not allow themselves to be photographed, but at present it is impossible.

Occasionally the Shah holds a levée, or salaam, as it is called here. I have seen levées under three Shahs, and they certainly have improved.

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On the 21st of March, 1911, I attended one which was quite interesting. The army was passed in review by the Shah, and really it has wonderfully improved. The diplomatic corps was, of course, present in full uniform. It is a pretty sight to see the beautiful horses of the Russian Minister trotting swiftly through the streets, with the servants in their blue and silver liveries riding in front of the carriage, and the Russian Cossacks behind.

When I reached the Palace, I was escorted by the Court Ferrashes, or ushers, to that part where the Regent has his apartments, and where a room was reserved for ladies wishing to see the salaam. This room is decorated in the usual Persian fashion, with facets of mirror and plaster carvings; it has seven large windows on to the gardens, and from here we saw the troops go past the Shah. His Majesty was in a room parallel to ours, so that we were unable to see him then. After the troops had all passed, we went down to the garden, and then I saw the little Shah for the first time. He expressed a wish for the ladies to be presented to him, and we went into a large, bare room where he was. He was dressed in the classical costume worn by the Shahs since the reign of

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Nasr-ed-Din, save when they wear a uniform or the robe of honour, that is to say, the sardari or black frock coat with numerous box pleats and buttoned up to the neck.

On his breast he wore five rows of lovely diamonds, and naturally the diamond aigrette adorned his hat. This aigrette is the insignia of royalty; it is fastened by a magnificent diamond, called the Daria-o-noor, second only in size to the famous Koh-i-noor. Fath Ali Shah, afraid that his memory would die out of the minds of his descendants, caused his name to be engraved inside this wonderful stone and thus deprived it of some of its value.

His Majesty wore a sword with hilt and sheath inset with precious stones.

The Regent, Nasr-el-Mulk, translated for us, and we were each given some little gold coins as a souvenir.

The Court officials were all beautifully dressed in long flowing robes of cashmere, fastened with pearls and precious stones.

These robes are always a present from the Shah, who gives them to his Ministers and favourites. They are fastened with hooks and eyes of various stones, which denote the rank of





Interior of a Castle.



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the owner ; for instance, the Prime Minister has large emeralds hanging from pearl chains.

These robes are said to have originated in the time of Alexander the Great. When this monarch took Babylon, he found among the spoils of the city several beautiful cashmere robes ; these he took and bestowed on those of his generals he most wished to honour ; now, however, they are given exclusively to civil personages.

The Persians all wear lovely decorations. The highest honour the Shah can confer on anyone is the Timsal ; it consists of a portrait of His Majesty set in diamonds, and it is meant to be worn round the neck. A great many of these portraits in their jewelled frames are to be found for sale in the Bazaar. A favourite is not always a favourite in Persia, and when the Sun ceases to shine, then why not turn gifts into bread ?

The size of this decoration and the stones that compose it vary according to the class given ; there are three classes. Sometimes the Shah gives his own portrait, sometimes the portrait of his predecessor.

Fath Ali Shah founded the Order of the Lion and the Sun in 1808. There are five classes of

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this decoration ; the ribbon is bright green, but sometimes the Shah bestows a red one on the favoured recipient. This is given to military and civil personages alike. The Persian very often wears the insignia in diamonds, and very lovely it looks on the robes of honour among the tassels of pearls and emeralds.

Another order much worn is the Order of Public Instruction ; it was founded in 1851. It is a simple gold star, with an enamelled Lion and Rising Sun in the centre, and it is worn on a dark red ribbon. This is given to men and women alike. A decoration reserved for the fair sex is the "Sun" or "Aftab" ; there are three classes ; the first class is given only to Royalty ; it consists of a diamond star, with the face of a Persian woman in enamel in the centre. It is worn on a pale pink ribbon with a green stripe. The second class is exactly the same as the first, but the ribbon is smaller ; the third class is different. The decoration, instead of being a star with rays all round, has the rays only half-way round ; it is extremely pretty.

The Shah sometimes gives a present to the wife of a departing diplomat instead of a decoration, and I have seen some very pretty rings and

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other bits of jewellery bestowed by His Majesty on European ladies leaving Teheran.

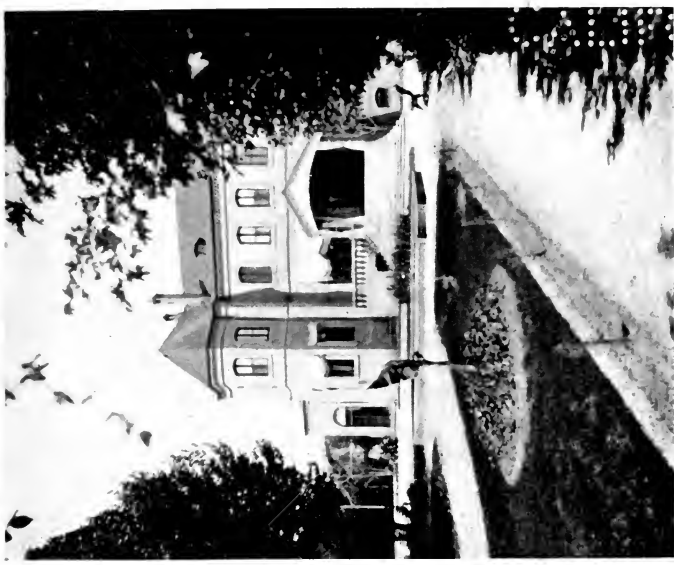
There are other decorations given here, or rather other varieties of the same. Some of the Royal Princes wear a pale blue ribbon with the Order of the Lion and the Sun, and some wear a pale blue with a white stripe. The field-m Marshals wear the ribbon in pale blue too, but with a green stripe, and the Shah often presents them with a beautiful sword, the hilt of which is one mass of precious stones. I believe there are also some religious decorations, but these are very rare. Gold and silver medals are sometimes given to the intendants and head servants about the Court, and to some of the Legation escorts who have been many years in service.

Besides these decorations the Shah confers titles on his favourites and Ministers. These titles are called "Lakab," and they replace the name of the person who receives them. The lucky man who receives a Lakab becomes the "Maintenance," the "Grandeur," the "Splendour" of the Sovereignty-Sultaneh of the State-Dowleh-the-Kingdom-Molk, the country Mameleh and so on. Thus we find in a single family a member who is the Maintenance of the State, and

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another the Maintenance of the Kingdom. The Shah sometimes gives the dead father's title to the son; these titles are, however, essentially personal. It also happens sometimes that a title having been given to a personage who falls into disgrace, that title is taken away and bestowed on someone else. This makes it very difficult for the European, who finds the titles hard to remember, and it very often leads to confusion.

Another of our amusements here is a dinner-party given by an important Persian official. These dinners are too rare to my mind; during the whole of last winter there were only two. But this summer the Shah's birthday falling on the eleventh of August, a dinner was given by the Prime Minister to celebrate the event. It took place in a big garden to the east of Gulahek, known as Sultanabad, and as very few of the Europeans here now had assisted at a dinner given in a garden, it was the subject of conversation for weeks before. The cost of a dinner like this is tremendous: I suppose that is the reason they are so rare, but the Government bears all the expenses. To begin with, all the glass and china had to be bought in Teheran and sent to Sultanabad, a distance of about seven miles,



The French Legation in Town.



Sultanabad.





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and everything went by Tabarkesh—that is, men who carry the things on large wooden trays on their heads. The mere transport of the things needed cost about one hundred pounds. The reason that the Government has no glass and china of its own is that all Persians are very fond of souvenirs, and usually after a big dinner the servants pocket the china, glass and plate as keepsakes, or more probably to sell. I was told the other day of a journey made by His late Majesty Mouzaffer-ed-Din; he was on his way to Europe, and was travelling with an enormous suite as usual. He arrived at a village, where everything was prepared for his dinner in a tent; after partaking of the meal, His Majesty went off to another tent, where his sleeping apartments were. He had barely reached the door, when everything, even to the tablecloths, had already disappeared, and the whole night had to be spent by worried officials in buying back all the stolen goods for the royal lunch next day.

The Government has large water-holes in the neighbourhood of Sultanabad, and it sells the water to the villages round about; but in order to have plenty of flowers in the garden for the dinner on the eleventh of August, the water

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supply was cut off from the villages and all used for watering the flowers and filling the tanks at Sultanabad. This was an additional expense and cost about two hundred pounds, which the water would otherwise have brought in. I was told the whole fête cost about twelve hundred pounds in all, and that two hundred pounds was spent in champagne.

Sultanabad is about three miles from Gulahek, and the dust on the road was awful. We all tied up our heads in thick veils, but even that was not really sufficient to protect us. But the sight that met our eyes when we reached our destination made up for the disagreeable drive. The whole garden was lighted up with candles in glass chandeliers and by red and white Chinese lanterns. The immense tank, almost a lake, in the middle of the garden was beautifully lit to show the masses of scarlet geraniums surrounding it, and there was a boat floating about entirely covered with red Chinese lanterns. We were received by the Prime Minister in a sort of pavilion, in the centre of which was a blue-tiled tank full of clear water, on which floated masses of pink roses. This pavilion is all decorated with facets of mirrors and white plaster carvings, and it has

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three storeys, each with a balcony running all round. We dined in an immense tent in an alley of plane trees, and there were ninety-four people at dinner, of which number only about twelve were ladies.

Towards the end of dinner the Prime Minister made a speech in Persian, and as he drank to the health of each nation in turn the band played the national air of that country. I noticed some of the diplomats had a difficulty in recognizing their own!

The dinner-table was lovely, decorated with pink roses and white tuberoses; in the open air the scent was not too strong; the lighting was with candles in white glass shades, which is much more becoming than electricity. His Majesty was not visible; it was rumoured that he was in a tent in the garden, looking on. The evening terminated with a display of fireworks, which was very good. In former days the Shah had a special person, a Frenchman, to make him his fireworks; but since the Constitution the salary would have to come out of His Majesty's private purse, so the post has been done away with.

Some of the Legations up country are old

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

Persian gardens, with houses improved and rebuilt to suit the tastes of Europeans; but one can always trace the Persian in them. The Turkish Embassy is the finest, but has been neglected.

The French Legation is the best specimen of a perfect Persian garden, properly tended, that I know, though it is not Government property. The house for the Minister is extremely small, but it possesses a verandah, from which one can see the mountains—a great attraction, for which one would sacrifice much in the way of comfort. The garden is laid out in terraces; there is an avenue of trees running from the house towards the mountains. This is very unusual, as the gardens here, as a rule, look towards the plains. Between the trees is a stream, and here and there a tank. One of these tanks nearest the house is over nine feet deep. The mountains, snow-topped even in summer, are reflected in the water, and all down the avenue are beds of yucca and bright-coloured geraniums. The stream and tanks get their water from a series of little waterfalls at the top of the avenue.

The French Legation in town has a very pretty house, but there is no place for the staff, and they are obliged to rent houses outside. The house



The American Legation.



The German Legation.



## SOCIAL LIFE IN TEHERAN

is built in imitation of an old French château with two storeys, and a long flight of stone steps leading up to the front door; the entrance-hall is a beautiful corridor of plaster carvings and mirrors. The drawing-room, furnished by the French Government, has a lovely suite of furniture in Beauvais tapestry. The garden is extremely pretty in the late spring, being famous for its guelder roses and roses. There is an avenue of tall trees in front of the house, and a tennis-court has been made recently at one side.

The German Legation in the country is the envy of many of us. These houses are the best here, because they are newly built; the Legation was only finished in 1906. The Minister's house has large reception-rooms, an unusual thing in a country where large receptions are not the order of the day except in the form of a garden-party. The tennis-court is perfect; there are lovely trees all over the garden, and the flowers are very well looked after; there are houses for the secretary and the doctor, the former exactly like an English cottage, with a view across the fields to the mountains. There is a blue-tiled tank in the upper garden, where those who care to swim may do so, and the water is renewed

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

every day. The Germans are very lucky in their Legation in the country, but in town though the houses are nice the garden is very small; there is, however, a tennis-court, which makes up for the lack of space for flowers. Behind the secretary's house there is a wonderful Christmas rose tree, which is a mass of white blossom in the spring.

The English possess a village in Shimran called Gulahek, which is looked after by the English Consul; it is about seven miles from Teheran, and the Legation and racecourse form part of it. The way in which it came into the possession of the English is rather curious. About forty years ago an English Minister, seeking change of air, pitched his tent on the plains above Teheran; this tent was a beautiful Indian one, decorated with embroideries, and the Shah, passing on his way to Shahabad (a shooting-box high up in the mountains), paused to admire it. The English Minister, as in duty bound, offered the tent, and His Majesty accepted it, and presented in return the whole village round.

The English property in town is a lovely park, with houses for the staff; each house has its own little garden, and in the spring the members of



## SOCIAL LIFE IN TEHERAN

the Legation can be seen, each having tea on his own particular green lawn, of which he is very proud. The Minister's house is like an old abbey. Above the chancery is a clock tower covered with ivy, and it is by this clock that most of the Europeans who live near enough to hear it strike set their watches. Time is a difficult problem in Teheran. At approximately midday a cannon is fired on the Cossack parade-ground, but the approximation depends entirely on the soldier who fires it. We all think he fires it when he feels hungry, as it is very erratic. Anyhow, when invited out to dinner, we always inquire of our host whether he keeps Legation or gun time. Sometimes there is half an hour's difference. Neither of these times is ordinarily correct. Correct time, not a commodity in request in Teheran, is kept by the Indo-European Telegraphs, for whom it is telegraphed from London every morning at daybreak when the line is clear, so that connection is practically instantaneous. The difference between Teheran and Greenwich is three hours and twenty-six seconds.

The great pride of the English Legation is the wistaria ; there is a long verandah running on one

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

side of the house, which in the spring is one mass of mauve blossoms, and I have heard people who have been in Japan say that even there they have seen nothing prettier.

The Belgian Legation is quite new, having been acquired by the Government in 1908. It is very pretty, not unlike an Italian villa; the house is a two-storey building, with a balcony to each, and is lighted throughout with electricity. The garden, though not very big, is very shady and cool; the roses in the spring are glorious, and the masses of crimson ramblers and yellow Maréchal Niels growing up the side of the house are worth seeing. Leading from the drawing-room there is a winter garden full of orange and lemon trees, which makes a cool sitting-room in the spring. There is also a very nice one-storey house for the secretary, with an orchard of apricots. Between the two houses there is an ornamental lake, with white water-lilies. The Belgian Government has no property up country, therefore the Legation rents a house for the summer months.

The Russian Government was given a village in 1850 by Nasr-ed-Din, and here they built their Legation, and very beautiful it is. The village



The Belgian Legation.



The Russian Legation



## SOCIAL LIFE IN TEHERAN

itself is fairly large, and is very well looked after by the first dragoman, who makes weekly journeys round the property to see it is all in order and kept clean. The Legation itself is very large; there is a beautiful park, several houses for the Minister and staff, a chapel, a well-kept tennis-court, and a flower-garden in front of the Minister's house, which the first secretary looks after. This year this garden is particularly lovely; with its green lawns and huge beds of dark red geraniums; in front of the house there is a tiled verandah and a large tank with a fountain. The Minister's house has a very pretty drawing-room, which has been lately redecorated; the walls and ceilings are white, picked out with wedgwood blue and facets of mirror. At the entrance of the Legation stands a statue of M. Griboédov, a former Minister, who was murdered in Persia.

The Russians have owned a Legation in Teheran since 1860; unfortunately since it was built Teheran has developed very much in its direction; in 1860 it was right at the end of the town; it is now almost in the centre, and to reach the Legation one has to drive through a part of the Bazaar. The garden of the Russian Legation is at its best in the early spring, when the violets

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

grow in great profusion ; there used to be a tennis-court, but it has been transformed lately into a drilling ground for the Legation guard. The Minister's house has a lovely ball-room, and the whole building is lighted by electricity. When the Minister gives a ball the whole place looks like fairyland.

The houses for the staff form the wings of the Minister's house. There is also a chapel, and a house for the priest. The Cossack Brigade has a parade-ground half-way between Teheran and the Shimran (a district comprising, among other villages, the Russian Zergendeh and the English Gulahek); behind the parade-ground there are several houses, where the Russian officers and their wives pass the summer months. It is rather hot there, and infested with mosquitoes ; but, at any rate, it is cooler and less dusty than Teheran.

## CHAPTER IX

### ANIMAL LIFE AND SPORT

**I**N thinking of the Persian people, it is impossible to separate them in one's mind from their friend and support in times of joy and sorrow—the patient, long-suffering camel. During the whole of my stay in Teheran I have been fascinated to watch the life and habits of this animal; his calm, supercilious disregard of all things human, his simple life and food, and his indifference to climate and change. He is the only animal I have ever seen who looks as if he considers a human being a negligible quantity.

One of my amusements in Teheran has been to stop and watch the camels being fed, which is always done at sunset in the open plain, at the caravans near the town. It is most interesting to see the business of the camp going on at the end of the day, when the tired men and beasts come to a halt; with their packs laid round them

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

on the plain, the camels form themselves into little circles of eight or ten, their heads turned to the middle, and sink to the ground on their knees of their own accord, the man who is to feed them standing in the centre with a huge bag of food. This food looks like sticky white dough, and is rolled into big soft balls, about the size of a croquet ball, which he holds against the palms of his outspread hands; the beast and the man press towards each other, for the man seems to have to push the ball and help the camel to get it down its throat. The circles of animals give little guttural cries of impatience and keep turning their heads, till the men come and the food is served, shuffling close round the man on their knees, and nosing him and squeezing him in their excitement. They get a surprisingly small quantity of this food in comparison with their great bulk, and after being fed are turned loose, without their packs, to graze on the scant crop of thistlelike grass which, I believe, is called camel-thorn. They seem to enjoy it; it is also dried and used by the Persians for firing.

In the spring the camels are turned loose in the plains and on the low hills in charge of a camel-herd, to give birth to their young; the mothers



## ANIMAL LIFE AND SPORT

are left with the young ones, till they are old enough to follow their parents. The camel has never lost his sense of freedom or become a domestic animal, perhaps because his life is so much respected by the Persians, whose chief support he has become. Sometimes Persians arrange a camel fight—in reality a duel between two male camels for the female. The lady is allowed no choice in the matter; she is introduced to her two admirers and then removed from the arena, and the males fight it out, the victor carrying off the prize.

The camel's companions in bondage are mules and donkeys; the former are animals with which the foreigner has a great deal to do, for it is they who transport one's entire household goods to the country. They are owned in droves by muleteers, who hire them out as they are required. The livelihood of many Persians depends on the health of their mules, and a sickness among them causes much poverty. A very fine mule fetches a high price, and much money is spent by the upper class on the saddle-cloths and bridles for those reserved for riding. A rich man's caravan of mules is a fine sight. For long journeys, the women travel in a sort of glorified, double donkey-basket

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

made of thin lathes of wood, like an oblong cage with an open front and a white linen top. These cages are slung in pairs on the mule's back.

If the camel is the Persian's friend, the donkey is his slave. Poor little donkeys! I have often pitied them as they limped along. The dust in Persia is so great that every donkey has his nose slit up about two inches, to make it possible for him to breathe on the caravan roads. The donkeys, like the mules, are owned by drivers, and hired out. Everything that is too small for a mule or camel is carried on a donkey for long distances. They carry all the market produce from village to village—for there are no country carts; thus the villagers high up on the mountains can get the provisions necessary to carry them through the severe winter. Existence would not be possible for them, were it not for these sure-footed little beasts of burden.

Another great interest to me has been to watch the life of the birds on the road. They are a world by themselves; blue jays, wagtails, crimson orioles, hoopoes, storks, herons, woodpeckers, eagles, quails, partridges, wild pigeons, blue finches, all live and nest in the trees along the roads and in the gardens dotting the plains, besides

## ANIMAL LIFE AND SPORT

the hawks, crows and magpies, with which the country swarms.

The hoopoe is the forerunner of spring in Teheran, and the first sight of the dear little creature brings delight to the household; it knows no fear, and will hop along a foot or two in front of one down the garden path, with its crest held high and its graceful form moving just beyond one's reach. The soul of Fatima, Mohammed's daughter, is supposed to have passed into the hoopoe; Fatima's spirit must have been the daintiest of its kind, for a more charming creature to watch than this bird will be difficult to find.

The bullfinch is made a pet of in Persia, where they are caught in great numbers. I have bought thirty or forty in a cage from a peasant on the road for a few shillings, just to give myself the pleasure of letting them go free. Quail are caught by the whole population in small butterfly nets, and are usually fattened for the table in one's poultry-yard. The heron will drop over one's garden wall and fish for his dinner of gold fish as one sits sewing under a tree in the spring. The wild swan is brought now and then as a delicacy to be served at dinner. The royal partridge is another great delicacy in Persia;

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

it is a little larger than a hen pheasant, and comes from the high mountains. The blue jay is magnificent in its colouring, and for years I have resisted the temptation to order enough to make myself a stole and muff and hat of this beautiful bird, which would cost but a few krans; I have tried in vain to convince myself that it would be a kinder death than the one they are likely to meet with, when I have seen their battered little remains lying on the sand, where they have been dropped from the talons of their natural enemy the hawk.

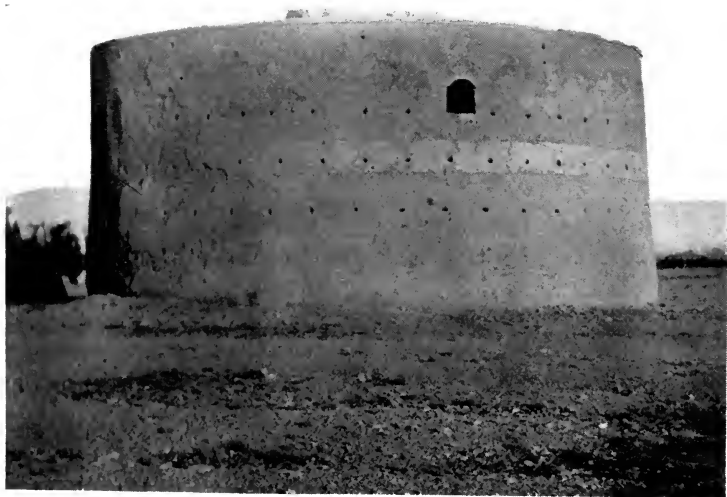
The nightingale, the subject of poetical rhapsodies in all lands, makes such a noise when he is at home in Persia, that one is almost inclined to end by disliking him. I have even heard someone remark: "He really is a beastly bird."

In the spring birds in cages hang outside all the houses, and the servants asked me to allow them to hang theirs during the winter in my orange trees. Love of birds seems to have endured here through all time.

Wild pigeons flocked round Teheran in such quantities in the old days, that large circular towers were built outside the town, where they used to roost; the provident Persian collected



A Group of Persians.



Pigeon Tower.



## ANIMAL LIFE AND SPORT

the guano for manure. The pigeons have been so massacred of late years, that the towers, which still go by the old name of "Pigeon Towers," have fallen into disuse and the industry has died out in Teheran; in Ispahan, however, I believe it still flourishes.

It is to be hoped that a new rule, which makes a gun licence necessary, will prevent the indiscriminate butchery of the pigeon, which has hitherto been uncontrolled.

The owls are a delight in the garden in summer; their long, soft cooing call from tree to tree—the call, as the Persians say, of one lost soul to another—suits the warm air, and the moonlight flooding the garden, and their fluffy, ball-like bodies, plumping down in the light of the lamps while one is dining in a tent, is a distraction as charming as unexpected. To help the poor bewildered little bird back into the dark again, is the least one can do.

One of the terrors of the place in summer is the bat, both inside the house and out; another is the tarantula, which drops down unexpectedly from the doorway or ceiling, an opalescent soft body with moving legs, always turning up where you least wish to find him. Scorpions and

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centipedes, these latter at least an inch long, add another terror to country life.

The flies are a pest, and if one has the misfortune to have stables near the house it is impossible to get rid of them. The wasps are even worse; and *Punch's* picture of a family at lunch cutting wasps in two may only be a joke in England, but in my house here last summer it was a fact, as we found it the easiest mode of execution. The only thing I found to keep wasps quiet while I ate was raw meat on a plate near the dinner table.

Bees are carefully cultivated in the villages near Teheran, and Tajreesh honey is the nicest I have ever eaten. Persians share the European superstition that all one's secrets must be told to the bees, or ill-luck will fall on the house where they are kept.

The ants in Teheran are of every description, and the sand-lions live in thousands near the ant-hills along the roads. They make a house like a thimble upside-down, sunk in the sand, and the sand-lion lies inside, in wait for the unwary ant, who may happen to cross the opening to it. He stretches up his skeleton claw and clasps the intruder, when he feels the grains of sand slip.



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down on to him from the feet of the moving ant above.

The absence of fish is really quite a serious question for a housekeeper, who has to have a made-up dish to replace this course at dinner. Lar, a village about two days' journey from Teheran, is the nearest place where trout abound in the streams, and this fish may be bought in the Bazaar, dried, or what is called fresh, but unless one sends a man specially for it to Lar it is never good. One can make an arrangement also with people in Enzeli to have a weekly service of fish by the Persian post, and a good deal of frozen salmon and badly dried Caspian fish can be had in the Bazaar, but it is very nasty.

The caviare industry is larger on the Caspian than seems generally to be known; I passed a ship coming here whose cargo of caviare was valued at twenty thousand pounds sterling. One would think that caviare would be cheap and plentiful in a town like Teheran, which is only two and a half days' journey from the sea; but, although the caviare is packed at Enzeli, on Persian soil, it is a monopoly given to big European houses and only comes to Teheran as contraband, and is therefore very dear.

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The dog life in Teheran is the same as it was in Turkey up to a few years ago ; the pariah dog is the town scavenger, and the only means by which the streets are cleared of part of their rubbish : they live on the rubbish heaps and rear their puppies in deserted doorways. Near the slaughter-houses, where they are given the refuse, they become very fierce, and attack the horses in an alarming manner, sometimes following one in packs ; one always has to ride with a long-lash whip to beat them off. They are in far better condition than those in Turkey, and are sometimes very fine animals. When they die, if they do not eat each other, their carcasses lie rotting in the streets. They are a pest in one's garden, where they will lie hidden by day so as to thief by night, and make life so hideous by their howling that I have often heard them being shot by those whom they have exasperated.

The horse has always been the favourite animal of the Persian, and as far back as the sixteenth century the accounts of the stables of Shah Abbas read like a tale from the " Arabian Nights." Shah Abbas's horses wore gold harness studded with precious stones ; they had velvet cloths embroidered in pearls, and each horse had at least two attend-

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ants. Now, of course, such luxury would cost too much, and things are different, but the great personages here have many horses, and when Nasred-Din moved up to his summer quarters twenty years ago he took with him ten thousand horses.

In the present day every Persian has a stable; they like very young horses, and begin to use them directly they are over a year old. A Persian of any importance always has out-riders to his carriage, and if he be a Prince he has led horses as well. The horses that come from the Shah's stables usually have their mane and tail dyed violet. Horses have now become much more expensive than formerly; six years ago, when I first arrived in Teheran, I bought a little five-year-old bay pony to ride and drive for twenty-five tomans (about five pounds in English money); now no horse is obtainable under a hundred or a hundred and twenty tomans, and then only an old one for that price. I remember in 1906 some one gave one hundred and fifty tomans for a Turcoman and we were all very much surprised at anyone paying such a price. But only the other day a European gave five hundred tomans for a small Arab. Horses in Teheran are not fed on oats, there are none grown in the

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country round ; they are all fed on barley, which is extremely dear. In Enzeli and Resht the horses are fed on rice, barley being too heating and unsuited to the climate.

Persian men have few sports, except coursing, shooting and hawking ; one constantly meets parties going on hawking expeditions, or finds them in some distant garden, which they have chosen as their head-quarters, whence they stalk the gazelle and mouflon which abound in the mountains around Teheran.

My first experience of mouflon shooting was on the far side of the Talhous Pass, one of the many in the Elburz range of mountains ; the pass itself is a narrow gorge through which all the game near Teheran must go in spring to reach their haunts behind the snows of Tochal.

I made my head-quarters about three hours from Teheran in a peasant's funny little rough hut, on the steep mountain-side ; we slept on the floor in the only place which could be called a room, and at night, through the chinks of the ill-fitting door, we could see the peasants live amidst the squalor of Persian poverty. We forgot the discomfort of our own quarters, in the glorious sense of freedom which the view of the mountains

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gave us, and the peasants amongst whom we lived were quite worth knowing. Their childlike acceptance of the life they live as the only possible in this world, their unfailing good-nature and their ever-ready proffers to help, made up for many deficiencies, and in the evening twilight we used to sit with them on the mountain-side, watching their few thin goats being milked and tended, and discussing the relative merits of their out-of-date old guns and matchlocks. Teheran, lying in the plain below, was to them but a name; and even if you called it Teheran they looked at you uncomprehendingly; to them it was the "Shahr"—the city—the only city, from which came riches and rumours. Of politics they knew little and cared less; all was in the hands of God, and Mohammed was his Prophet. When they died they would be buried behind the rocks, among which they had passed their days, and their flocks would still be brought home by their sons and grandsons in the sunset.

Game is so plentiful about Teheran, that it is indeed a blank day when one goes out at dawn and comes home at sunset without seeing one herd; but for success in sport one relies entirely on one's shikarhee, or native hunter. These

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

men are trained from boyhood to utilize their already marvellous power of sight ; soft-footed as cats, and agile and untiring as the game they seek, they are, to my mind, among the few people one can really admire in Persia. They dress entirely in comfortable warm clothes of black and red-brown, and are indistinguishable from their surroundings ; they crouch motionless for a few minutes at a time against the rock, searching the country for miles around with their wonderful beady eyes, moving quickly from one spot to another, till they see the game, when they stiffen all over with excitement. Although they themselves never shoot, they are as keen as the sportsman who follows them. Once game has been sighted, the shikarhee becomes the master of the situation, and, if his employer be wise, he leaves all to him, and occupies himself as far as he can with copying the shikarhee's proceedings—usually with indifferent success ! I will not further describe the stalk, which is much the same in all countries.

Hawking is very expensive here, and it is only the very rich Persians who are able to indulge in it ; every bird has to have its own keeper, and horses and pointers are needed in great numbers.

## ANIMAL LIFE AND SPORT

All small game is pursued by the yellow-eyed hawk, while the hawks with black eyes always attack the larger birds, and have even been known to pit themselves against a gazelle. My first hawking expedition was undertaken in the company of Persian friends. We started off towards the mountains in the early morning of a glorious day, and I felt as if I had been dropped into the Middle Ages: each man, in Persian dress, held his hooded hawk on his wrist, while the hounds, trained to flush the birds, gambolled with excitement round our horses' feet. The chase is over broken country and at breakneck speed, as the partridge has to be rescued from the hawks, who only get the brains.

Leopards and panthers are still found, though panthers are getting very scarce now. They have always been reserved for the Shah, but this does not prevent Europeans from having a shot at them whenever they get the chance.

The present Shah went out last winter to shoot his first panther. His Majesty is not a very keen sportsman, but all the Kadjars have shot panthers and the tradition must be kept up. I am afraid Sultan Ahmed will never be the first-class shot his grandfather Mouzaffer-ed-Din was, so arrange-

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ments have to be made in order to encourage him. The Shah was taken to the spot where the panther had been seen, and the trackers began to separate in order to beat the animal up towards His Majesty. Presently one of the suite placed a rifle in the Shah's hand, and pointing to a place where the brambles and undergrowth were very thick, bade him shoot. The rifle went off; loud applause burst from the onlookers, and they rushed off to the place at which the Shah had aimed. The shot seemed indeed a good one, for there lay the panther stone dead. Everyone was very pleased; His Majesty promised to become as good a shot as his grandfather. But some inquisitive European touched the animal and found him quite cold. Turning to some of the trackers he asked how long it took an animal to get stone cold in Persia. By dint of many questions he finally gathered that the panther had been dead two days and put there to prove to his suite he could shoot, and also to encourage His Majesty to continue.

I once, and only once, went for a porcupine hunt; I had been told the animal was quite good to eat, so we arranged a day's sport, meaning to bring back a porcupine for dinner.

We started off very early in the morning with



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several dachshunds, and went to the sandhills where the porcupine holes had been found. We erected a tent to protect ourselves from the sun, and sat and waited while the dogs drew the holes. The whole day long those dogs went in and out of the holes trying to dislodge the occupants, and getting very badly wounded for their pains. We were kept quite busy taking the quills out of the poor little dogs, and bathing their wounds; we ran out of water, and had to use the mineral water we had brought for our lunch. Finally, we set our Cossacks to work to demolish the hole, and at last the porcupine decided to leave. He made a rush for the open plains with the dogs at his heels, but he was a great fat beast and could only go slowly. I was given a gun and told to shoot; I fired and missed, and the animal ran back to his hole, the dogs barking at his heels. One of our party seized his hind legs as they were vanishing into the hole, and held on until we got ropes and pulled him back to daylight. Someone then gave him the *coup-de-grâce* with a knife, and then I was told that it was not possible to eat a porcupine. Had I known I should never have gone to the hunt. What is the good of killing an animal which is not dangerous if one cannot eat it?

## CHAPTER X

### THE CIVIL SERVICE AND THE ARMY

**I** WONDER how we should have managed to live in Teheran forty years ago, when there was no post. We get a mail twice a week now, and what a calamity it seems when, owing to a storm on the Caspian, we get our post a few hours, or even a whole day, late!

People used to confide their letters to the conductors of caravans or to travellers, or to pilgrims who were going to visit the Holy tombs at Kebela or Meshed, or even to merchants going to the great fair at Nijni-Novgorod. The important merchants of Teheran and Tabriz who were in correspondence with Europe, and the few foreigners living in Persia, confided their letters to the couriers of the French, Russian and English Legations.

But there were special couriers, whose work was to carry dispatches from the Persian Govern-

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ment to the provincial authorities, and urgent private letters were sent by them. These couriers left Teheran twice a month and went in every direction all over the country. Directly a courier received the bag containing the official letters for the governors and the civil and military authorities at the place which he had to visit, he took up his abode at the Caravanserai and announced to the merchants there that he was leaving the next day. These merchants were only too glad to be able thus to correspond with their families and clients in the provinces; and they also informed the other merchants around who came in large crowds to the courier, and gave him their letters and small parcels. These he undertook to take to their destination in return for a payment which he himself fixed. He allowed no bargaining; "Take it or leave it," he said. Of course, the heavier the letter the more he charged; sometimes he asked two shillings for an ordinary letter. No one murmured; they were only too happy to be able to send a letter at all, never mind what the cost. When the courier was ready to leave he came out of his room, booted and spurred; the guide who was to accompany him was waiting at the door with two horses.

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The bags were then strapped on the guide's horse, and off they went amid shouts of "Farewell," "Speedy return," and "Good luck" from the bystanders. On arriving at each town he distributed its letters, taking care to make the recipient pay as much, if not more, than the sender. If you sent a letter you had to pay the transport, and if you received one you had to pay too, a double profit for the courier. I was told of a courier who received eighteenpence for a letter from the sender, and charged two shillings to the person to whom it was addressed. Sometimes people sent money to their relations or friends, but it very seldom reached them intact. In fact, the chief of the post-houses got very rich by lending money at thirty per cent., and his capital was derived from the money confided to him to be sent to the provinces.

But in addition to these Government couriers there were the foreign legation couriers, who also left once a month—the French by Tabriz and Trebizond, the Russian by Tiflis, and the English by Bushire. But as commercial relations with Europe developed, the want of better postal arrangements made itself felt, and at first a trial was made to establish a postal exchange between

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certain of the principal towns of the country. About the year 1873 the Government obtained the service of an Austrian to put the post into working order. He arrived with two colleagues and set to work without loss of time. Of course, he met with tremendous difficulties, for the post was by then an institution, the management of which the Shah conceded to any of his favourites or nobles who would pay him for it. Naturally the purchaser was entitled to make as much as he could out of it. Perhaps the greatest difficulty the Austrian Director met with was the reluctance of the Persians to trust him with money; they preferred giving the money to his Persian interpreter, who put most of it into his own pocket. Notwithstanding all this, the Austrian worked wonders in a short time, and the first postal service was inaugurated between Teheran and the Shivran in 1875. Everyone was very pleased, and the Director then sent his colleagues to Tabriz, and looked after the departure and arrival of the mail between Tabriz and Teheran himself. Little by little other lines were created—first Kerman, then Shiraz, Bushire, Khorassan and Kirmanshah. In a short time Persia was traversed by postal couriers, and regular weekly mails were instituted. This

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was great progress; Persia seemed no longer isolated, and in 1877 she was admitted to the Universal Postal Union; stamps were ordered in Europe, and in spite of many difficulties caused by Russia, the country obtained a proper postal service. In 1884 Persia signed a postal convention with France and Algeria, which shortly after was extended to Tunis, and in 1890 a convention was signed between Turkey and Persia.

The Austrian Director having retired, the Persian Government engaged other Europeans, who all introduced innovations. By the year 1900, however, things were getting slack, and the Persian Government asked Belgium to help reorganize the Post. A director was sent out, but after having worked wonders in a short time, he unfortunately met with an accident when out riding, and was obliged to retire.

The Customs were then in the hands of the Belgians, so it was decided to put the Post under the same administrator. But in 1907 the Shah, owing to intrigues among the Persians, decided to separate the Post from the Customs. This separation had as its immediate effect to deprive the Post of twenty officials in the provinces, and therefore several improvements projected could

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not be carried out. There is now only one European official in the Postal Service ; he is a Belgian, and is under the orders of the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs.

Since 1905 the Russians have allowed parcels under eleven pounds in weight to pass through their country and go to Enzeli ; so we all have our things, when possible, sent by parcel post and addressed "Poste Restante, Enzeli," and from there they are forwarded to us in Teheran.

The latest innovation in Teheran is the putting up of letter-boxes about the town. I am afraid, however, they are not a great success, though I believe them to be quite trustworthy, and there are several collections a day. The first stamps that appeared in Persia were made in Paris in the reign of Shah Nasr-ed-Din ; but with the exception of two series, one made in Paris and the other in Holland, all the stamps used here from the year 1876 to 1896 were made in Vienna. From 1897 till now they have always been printed in Holland. A few stamps printed by means of hand seals were struck in 1901 at Meshed, and there were some stamps printed in Teheran a few years ago, owing to the dearth in the supply from Holland.

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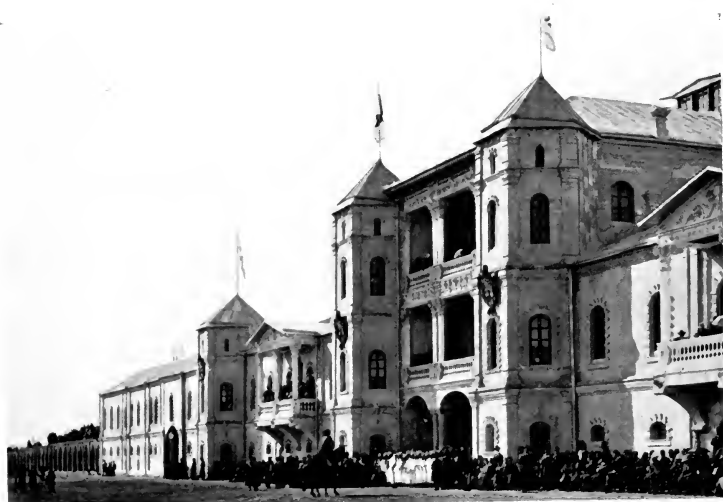
A great difficulty in Teheran is the distribution of the letters. Persians have no family name, so that if the address on the envelope does not include the profession, origin, parentage and all sorts of details concerning the person for whom the letter is destined, the probability is that the postman will never find the owner. Then again, if the letter is addressed to a woman, how can the postman reach her? She lives in a part of the house where he is not allowed to penetrate, and the houses have no letter-boxes. As there is so much difficulty about the distribution of letters, the Post Office has about fifty letter-boxes which can be hired by the public; strangely enough, however, only two are let. Persians usually register their letters, and in addition pay an extra tax to receive a notice that the letter has been delivered.

In olden days there were no postmen in Persia. When the courier reached his destination the post office was immediately closed and every one set to work to sort the letters. When all were sorted, the post office was opened, the public rushed in, and a clerk read out the names on the envelopes in a loud voice, and as the owner claimed his letter, it was thrown to him over the heads of the crowd.





The Post arriving at Teheran.



Cossack Barracks.



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Travelling by post is a cheap way of travelling in Persia, but, oh, how uncomfortable it must be! It is bad enough to be shaken to pieces in a carriage where you can arrange everything as you like, but when you travel by post you are obliged to settle yourself so as not to disarrange or damage the mail-bags; you are dependent on the good will of the courier for the shortness of the time you stop at the relays. One advantage, however, is that you travel quickly, as the post goes before everything.

Of course, in some parts of Persia the roads are quite impracticable for carriages, so that one can only travel on horseback or on mules.

The post is carried on the backs of camels between Kirman and Bender Abbas, and in 1904 all the horses belonging to the post on the road between Shiraz and Abadeh died, owing to an epidemic, and the post was carried by cows and oxen for more than six months! Between Teheran and the Demavend mountains the post is carried by people on foot, as the road is too steep for any four-footed animal. These Casseds, as they are called, are intrepid walkers; they know the mountains thoroughly, they are familiar with every

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short cut, and can do from thirty to forty miles a day, carrying a load of at least fifty pounds.

Some of the roads are very unsafe, owing to the unruly state of the country ; on these roads the couriers are usually given an escort. Though decidedly necessary, this guard is unfortunately not always very efficient. It is usually composed of a couple of men only, whose method is to try and recognize the brigands who attack the mail, and then gallop off as fast as possible to the nearest village or post-house, and there collect enough courageous people to pursue the brigands. These latter, however, usually force the courier in charge of the mail to give up his road ticket at once. This enables them to discover without loss of time the bags containing the valuables. Having securely tied up the coachman and courier, and blindfolded them, the brigands take possession of the valuables, and escape to the mountains, where they hide in caves known only to themselves. As a rule the guard recognizes them, and if the individuals themselves are not captured, the whole village or tribe to which they belong is made responsible and punished for their theft.

The post-houses between Resht and Teheran, which I described in my first chapters, are palaces

## THE CIVIL SERVICE AND THE ARMY

compared to those on other roads. These post-houses, or *chapar khaneh*, as they are called, are in the hands of a contractor, who places a Naib, or deputy, in each house. They have houses for the transport of travellers and the post ; there is usually a distance of fourteen to twenty-four miles between each *chapar khaneh*. Luckily the coachmen generally carry a good supply of string in their pockets so that if anything happens to the harness or carriage between the relays they can repair it.

These *chapar khaneh* are all made on the same plan. The entrance is a large gate and leads by a wide corridor to the principal court-yard in the middle of which is a tank. The stables are built round the court-yard. A carpet is laid down near the tank, and here in summer the traveller crouches while waiting for his water pipe and a steaming samovar to be brought to him ; a cup of tea with many lumps of sugar, and a few whiffs of good Shiraz tobacco suffice to make any Persian forget his fatigues.

During the bad weather, however, the travellers are obliged to take refuge in the rooms that are built all along the corridor. The Persians have a peculiar and economical way of keeping warm.

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In a hole in the floor in the middle of the room, they pile up dried manure and coal dust ; this they set light to and cover with cinders, over the hole they place a wooden frame about eighteen inches high and twenty-eight wide, and cover it with a very large cotton or woollen rug, which is spread all over the floor. This *koursi*, as it is called, becomes the shelter of the owners of the post-houses ; here they sleep, eat, smoke and live ; here they receive travellers who are very grateful for the comforting warmth after twenty miles in the snow or rain.

There is, of course, a room reserved for the traveller of note or the foreigner. This room is usually built over the entrance, and it is the most awful place imaginable. In the summer it is a little better than in the winter, for the windows can be opened and a little fresh air let in at nights ; but in the cold weather the doors do not shut, there are no panes in the windows, and the fireplace is filled with damp wood which, when lighted, gives out nothing but suffocating smoke. Very few people use this room, every one prefers the open air. One must always bear in mind when travelling in Persia that the more one opens one's purse the quicker one will travel. Only a

## THE CIVIL SERVICE AND THE ARMY

good tip to the Naib will ensure you a good horse.

The Belgian officials lent by their Government to Persia during the last fourteen years have done a great deal for the country. The earliest arrived in 1898 to reorganize the Customs. Mouzaffer-ed-Din, short of money as usual, wished to borrow large sums from Europe, and having naturally been asked for a security, had offered his Customs; but, as the system of farming them out still prevailed in Persia, they were not much of a guarantee. The Shah was advised to get Europeans to help put his Customs in order, and Belgians were chosen because they belong to a neutral country. They completely reorganized the system, revised the tariff, suppressed the octroi, and I believe I am right in saying that the revenues have increased seven hundred per cent. since their arrival!

To enter into details about their work would entail too much politics, the Customs having been used as a security for the loans from England and Russia, so I will only say that the Belgians have now the entire management of the Customs, Post, Treasury, Taxes, and Mint, which will suffice to show that the Persians have full confidence in

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them. The Americans who held the Treasury and the Mint last year have all left Persia and have been replaced by Belgians. As far as the Mint is concerned the Belgians were the first Europeans to have anything to do with it; they built it, and from 1901 to 1907 it was always managed by them.

In 1907, however, the Persians took it over, and this state of affairs lasted till last year, when for eight months an American was at its head. Since then it has returned to the care of the Belgians, and it is now managed by M. Peerts, who was in charge of it from 1904 to 1907, and helped to build it. It forms part of the Treasury, and, like the Customs, is under the control of M. Mornard.

There is no gold money current in Teheran now, though there are a few gold coins obtainable still; these are usually coins that have been struck specially by order of the Shah. In olden times the toman was made in pure gold, though afterwards it was mixed with copper, and very often the coin was chipped round the edges, thus taking away some of its value. In those days the merchants before accepting a coin insisted on weighing it.

The gold itself came, I believe, from Russia.



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The coin most in use now is the silver two-kran piece ; it is a little smaller than a florin, and its worth, roughly, eightpence. There is also the one kran, but it is less used, and the five-kran is even rarer.

It was the custom for each city to make its own money, which was struck by hand ; but about the year 1872 a spinning factory near the Shimran was transformed into a Mint, and the money for the whole country was coined there. This building was soon declared unsafe, the chimneys threatening to fall, so it was decided to build a new Mint on the latest European model. The old one has been used this year during summer for the Treasury and Customs.

The New Mint, as it is still called, was begun in 1900 and finished in 1903. It was designed by a Belgian architect, and the work was carried out under his orders and under the supervision of M. Peerts. The machinery was difficult to obtain ; it had to come out from Europe in small pieces and be put together at the Mint. This was done by a Belgian mechanic, M. Petrez. Finally it was finished and ready for work, and during the summer of 1905 Mahomet Ali, then heir-apparent, inaugurated it.

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During the first year it only worked for four months, but during the last three years it has been working without stopping.

It is managed on exactly the same system as in Europe. The silver comes chiefly from England by parcel post, a block in each parcel. In its first year about twenty thousand tomans (four thousand pounds) were coined per day; now, however, the daily sum is about thirty-four thousand tomans (six thousand eight hundred pounds). The workmen are at work ten hours a day, and it must be pretty trying during the summer to work at stoking the furnaces for the small sum of one or two shillings a day; the minimum wage paid to any workman at the Mint is one shilling, and the most they can get is four shillings. They are not allowed to carry money on them during working hours, and they are very carefully searched when they leave. This does not always prevent thefts being committed, and during last summer seven were arrested because money was found on them.

The money most current in Teheran is paper, the smallest note being a toman. This paper money is issued by the Imperial Bank of Persia, which has the monopoly, and the notes are all

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printed in England. It is to this bank that the Customs remit their takings in the Southern provinces to be sent to Teheran, and it has branches all over Persia.

There is another important bank in Teheran, and that is the Russian Bank. It is under the orders of the Finance Minister of Russia and has a political *raison d'être*. Its chief business is to collect the payment of the interests and sinking funds of the two Russian loans which are guaranteed by the Customs in the North of Persia. The Customs remit their takings to a branch of this bank in the Northern Province.

### ARMY

The Constitution has altered many things; the most striking is the army. I am afraid, however, that it is only an outward change; recent events show that Persians, as soldiers, leave much to be desired. Certainly, enough different systems have been tried, and all without success. Instructors from various countries have been appointed, and have worked hard towards the necessary improvements, but Persians do not seem fond of fighting, so it is very difficult to help them. There are some warlike tribes who would make fine soldiers

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if properly trained, but intrigues are too numerous to allow anything serious to be done. One man in every ten of the population is taken for military service, and the private soldier gets about eight shillings and eightpence a month and his meals, bath and barber free. One thing that prevents the Persian going willingly to his military service, is the irregularity with which he gets his pay. He is obliged, therefore, to make his living some other way while doing his service, and usually he sells poultry, vegetables and eggs. Officers are paid from twenty-five to one hundred tomans a month (a toman is about four shillings in English money, but the rate of exchange varies). The rank of officers is hereditary, they have no military training, and, as a rule, are very ignorant.

Owing to the different nationalities of the instructors, the drill of various countries is employed. The artillery and infantry are drilled according to the Austrian system, and the cavalry use Russian tactics. There is a brigade of Persian Cossacks who have Russian officers, and these constitute the Shah's guard.

Since last year there has been a new gendarmerie, organized by several Swedish and two American officers. There are eleven hundred men at present



Photo 64

Persian Soldiers with their small cannons.

[Serraglio,



## THE CIVIL SERVICE AND THE ARMY

dispersed over Persia—two hundred and sixty at Kasvin, one hundred and thirty at Shiraz, fifty at Ispahan, forty-one at Zendjan, and the rest in and around Teheran. The drill regulations are a combination of American, Austrian, French and German tactics, the idea being to adopt the best from each country and to avoid all unnecessary movements. The gendarmes are better paid than the soldiers in the regular army, they get four tomans a month and their food, or, if no food, an extra three tomans in money, and the pay is regular.

There is an arsenal in Teheran, but no rifles are made there; the Persians generally use Lebel carbines, and the artillery are Schneider, Maxim and Hotchkiss. Some black powder is manufactured, and a little ammunition is loaded at the arsenal.

## CHAPTER XI

### EDUCATION AND MEDICINE

**I**T is very difficult, even for those who have the *entrée* into some of the Persian households and can see the family at home, to understand them. In those homes where I have been received, the parents seem to educate their children themselves. Some few have foreign governesses of mediocre capacity, who teach a smattering of things European; their unlucky charges learn just enough liberty of action and thought to be rendered thoroughly dissatisfied with their lives as they grow older. A few boys and girls up to the age of eight or ten are allowed to go to European children's parties and have a really good romp, or to come and play with a little contemporary in the Legation garden; but the small boy at home is doomed to spend most of his life with the women servants in the Anderoun, listening



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with his sisters to conversations which are quite unfit for children's ears.

I have been told by an American missionary that in many cases parents have seen the harm which comes of this undermining influence at home, which they are unable to combat, and have begged that their small sons might be taken as boarders in the Mission, and thus bodily removed from the contaminating atmosphere of the Anderoun.

The American Mission has a boarding school for boys, which is self-supporting and self-governing. The upper boys themselves keep the accounts—of course, under the supervision of the superintendent. The food is also ordered by the boys. If the profit on the management permits of it, free pupils are taken, and one free pupil was admitted this year on this system. There are forty boarders, and over three hundred day boys. The education which the boys receive qualifies them for the University, being a public school system; they are forced, however, on account of their nationality, to learn Persian and Arabic, and this of necessity excludes Greek and Latin, which would be excessive. A great effort is being made by Mr. Jordan, head of the Mission school, to found a University in Teheran through

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which the boys may pass after leaving the school. A donation has been received from America, and it is hoped it will be sufficient to purchase the land necessary for this college. The boys, of course, study English and French in addition to the usual subjects. The Mission takes all classes and all nationalities, as well as boys of different religions; and one of its rules is, that no religion shall be criticized within the Mission walls. Apropos of this, a story is told of a boy who asked one of the teachers if she would give him her opinion of Mohammed. She replied: "We are not allowed to speak against each other's religion, so I cannot answer you." The boy, evidently no fool, smiled broadly at her answer. The missionaries teaching in the school are of both sexes.

Attached to the Mission there is a girls' school on the same lines as the boys', and giving the American High School education. There are over three hundred girls in the school, of which one hundred and fifty are Moslems; fifteen years ago there was only one Moslem girl, and it is only since the Constitution that others have joined.

There are at present sixty girls' schools in Teheran, under the direction of the Persian



The American High School, Teheran.



The American Mission Church.



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Government ; two years ago there were, I believe, one hundred.

The study of the Mohammedan religion is compulsory in these Persian schools. Religion is not compulsory in the Mission schools, and Christian teachers, who have graduated from the Mission school, teach the Mohammedan religion in those of the Persian Government. A graduate from the boys' Mission school wrote to a lady teacher at the girls' school, to ask her to recommend him a suitable wife. She was to be chosen from the school ; he preferred her religion to be Christian, but he would accept anything except a Jewess.

In 1906 the Germans, in conjunction with the Persian Government, founded a German school for boys only. This school is composed almost entirely of Persian boys. There are six German and six Persian professors, who follow the gymnase system of Germany ; but, like the American Mission, teach Arabic and Persian instead of Latin and Greek. It will generally be found that the Persian young man educated in Europe loses his Persian cultivation and style ; he has not received the grounding necessary, through the omission of Arabic, which is to Persians what Latin is to the English.

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

It will be seen, therefore, that these European schools play a very important part, giving Persian boys the education necessary to fit them for European universities, while keeping them in Persia until they are old enough to be sent to Europe.

There is only one private school for girls in Teheran, which was founded in 1906 by Richard Khan, a French Mohammedan. There are fifty or sixty girls of the upper classes, whose ages are from six to twenty-seven. The usual course of study is pursued under a French lady, Mlle. Secousse. When the school was first opened, the girls, through shyness, all wore their veils over their faces; but they soon became emancipated, and now very few wear veils during school hours. It is a great pity that there should not be more such schools in Teheran, as the girls in many cases are very intelligent, and one cannot help wishing that they should benefit by a development which should lead to the quicker emancipation of the Persian woman; this would also be the means of bettering the Persian man, and might even mean salvation to Persia.

There is also a Technical School in Teheran, whose object is to educate doctors and engineers;

## EDUCATION AND MEDICINE

but it is so elementary in the branches of science, chemistry and mathematics, that the only side which has given good results is the medical, which has developed considerably during the last six years. The school was founded about fifty years ago, during the reign of Nasr-ed-Din Shah, but failed in 1905. Since then, though the medical side has been carried on, the engineering course has been entirely abandoned. The pupils study for two years physics, chemistry, natural history and elementary anatomy, after which they have a three years' course on the theory of medicine. The professors in the polytechnic are Dr. Gachet, Dr. Galley, Dr. Emir Khan, Dr. Ali Khan, M. Lattes and M. Leblanc.

The Persian medical students are increasing yearly in numbers, although the very severe examination which takes place twice a year discourages all but the very keen. The doctors graduating from this school are not of a high standard; but that is not surprising, since in Teheran no subjects for dissection are obtainable, and there is no clinic for confinements or autopsy. Up till now the pupils have been asked to visit at their discretion the Persian and American hospitals, where permission has been given them

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to study cases. A military hospital is now to be built, which will, it is hoped, supply these two essentials and complete the medical instruction of the polytechnic. In 1911 thirty pupils were sent to France to complete their medical studies. Although, in August 1911, the Medjliss proposed to pass a law regulating the practice of medicine, it was not passed, as it was too much against the interests of the Persian doctors already in private practice and the native chemists' shops. Therefore, anyone having no knowledge of even the rudimentary rules of medicine may become a doctor or sell drugs. A Persian chemist's object is to buy a powder cheap and sell it dear, and to dilute it so that it does not immediately kill his patient. Fortunately there are two or three European chemists in Teheran.

A Persian proverb says, "The last doctor who sees the patient before his death is responsible for it"; and though the Persian doctor who has any pretence to pride in his reputation often calls in the European doctors in consultation, he never does so till the last moment, when it is usually too late. The European doctors have, therefore, earned with reason the title of being "the doctors of the dead."



## EDUCATION AND MEDICINE

There are several European hospitals in Teheran, all working regularly. The Persian Government hospital has always been in the hands of the Germans. It is now under the direction of a German doctor who belongs to the Prussian army, and he is aided by another German military doctor, a Persian doctor, a chemist, and a band of male nurses who are very well trained. The hospital has two good operating rooms, and has sufficient beds for from sixty to eighty patients. It has also rooms arranged so as to be able to take in Persians of a better class and Europeans. All the poor are given consultations, medicine and bandages free, and there is a free vaccination surgery attached to the hospital.

The American hospital was built by the Evangelical Mission of New York; it has been practically closed for a year, as there is no doctor just now. The women's ward, however, is open, as there is an American lady doctor there, and this year there is also an American trained nurse.

The Russian hospital is almost exclusively reserved for Russians, and is under the supervision of the doctor attached to the Russian Legation. There is an infirmary in the Russian Cossack Brigade buildings, where the brigade

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

and their families are attended. There are over a thousand consultations monthly in this infirmary and the dispensary is free.

The English Legation has a dispensary, consulting-rooms for men and women, and an operating theatre attached to the English Legation doctor's house ; it is financed by the English Government and the consultations are free.

A Persian sinner who had misdirected public funds repented of his sins at the eleventh hour, and just before his death gave a large sum of money to build a hospital. He was told that by doing so he would gain Paradise. A great building was erected outside Teheran towards the mountains, but, unluckily, the money was not only insufficient to run the hospital, but also to complete the building, and until now it has stood unfinished and useless. It is to be turned into barracks for the new Persian gendarmerie.

There is a Sanitary Council, which has its seat in Teheran, which has done a great deal towards making the country healthier, and in times of epidemics does excellent work. It was established more than twenty-five years ago by Dr. Tholozan, Physician to H.I.M. Nasr-ed-Din, Shah of Persia ; Dr. Tholozan was vice-president and the Minister

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of Public Instruction was president. Apparently the object was to obtain information concerning the various epidemics of cholera which visited Persia from time to time and to combat them. The Council led rather a precarious existence, only awaking from its lethargy when a cholera epidemic threatened. On Dr. Tholozan's death, Dr. Basil carried on the work for some two years, when it came to an end. In 1904 Dr. Schneider, Physician to H.I.M. Mouzaffer-ed-Din, was granted permission to re-establish and reorganize the Council, which he did at very considerable trouble ; all the European doctors then in Teheran were made members, besides several well-known Persian physicians, but the latter were not given a vote. Ultimately they insisted on a vote and better representation, which was granted them. During Dr. Schneider's period of office he took great trouble to put the Council on a sound basis. During the plague epidemic in Seistan, and also during the cholera epidemic in 1904, much good work was done. Several Commissions sat and drew up pamphlets for the guidance of the people during the cholera epidemic, and for the prevention of tuberculosis, etc. ; public washhouses and other sanitary innovations were installed.

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Dr. Coppin succeeded Dr. Schneider and carried on these duties till he retired, when he was succeeded by Dr. Georges. Dr. Georges, professor of medicine in the King's College, threw himself with great energy into the work of the Sanitary Council, drawing up regulations for the conduct of business; putting the archives in order; establishing a free vaccination service and a quarantine station at Enzeli on somewhat similar lines to that already established at Bushire through the efforts of the Government of India.

The Sanitary Council possesses no executive powers; it only advises. It is at present composed of a doctor from the Persian hospital, twelve Persian doctors resident in Teheran and chosen by the Government, the delegates of foreign Governments, the Legation doctors and the veterinary surgeon of His Majesty. There is a president appointed by the Shah, a vice-president elected yearly by the members, a secretary and his assistant, and a representative of the Administration of Customs. All members have votes, and they are obliged to attend the meetings of the Council, which take place every month. If they cannot attend, they must send their vote on the questions under discussion.

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The vaccination institute and the bacteriological laboratory is under the supervision of the Sanitary Council. It also establishes the rules concerning the transport of corpses to Kebela and other holy places, and it looks after the health of the pilgrims; it gives notice to the Foreign Office, to the Minister of the Interior, to the Administration of Customs, and to the Legations and foreign delegates of any epidemics that are raging, and details the sanitary precautions that should be taken against them. Local efforts at sanitary reform are undertaken and looked after by a committee of Persian doctors with European diplomas, who are under the Governor of Teheran.

The president of the Sanitary Council receives five hundred tomans (about one hundred pounds) a year for current expenses; the European secretary receives three hundred and sixty tomans, and the natives nine hundred and sixty a year.

All corpses taken to holy places pay a tax, and this goes entirely to the Council, except for the deduction made for the keeping up of the hospital at Kermanshah.

Although the vaccination service is free, the

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Council receives ten per cent. of the tax levied on all carriage expenses connected with it.

When there is an epidemic, the Administration of Customs pays the expenses of quarantine, sanitary inspection, doctors' fees, etc., and it superintends these services.

A sum of fifteen thousand tomans (three thousand pounds) has lately been given to create sanitary establishments in the ports of the Caspian Sea; the work has already been begun.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE ARTS IN PERSIA

#### MUSIC

**P**ERSIAN music is an evolution of the Arabian, and a good many Turkish airs also are used nowadays. These are played by ear on native instruments, and both the music and words of their songs are handed down orally from father to son; no Persian music was scored until about forty years ago.

Persians simply love their music, and no feast, holiday or entertainment is complete without it. Important personages hire the regimental bands when they give a garden-party or dinner, and very rich Persians usually keep their own musicians, who are classed among the servants; but for those unable to afford this luxury there are troupes which can be hired for the evening. These usually consist of musicians, dancers and a clown. Sometimes the dancers are women, but more

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often they are boys; the Persians prefer them, and they are very graceful in their long tunics. Their dancing consists of movements from the hips and waving of the arms, keeping time to the music, and sometimes the clashing of cymbals over their heads while they dance. The Court has a private band, which follows it everywhere, and which salutes the sun at its rising and setting with a terrible din of trumpets and drums.

Native instruments are of both kinds, stringed instruments called *Zavatol-Ovtar*, and mouth instruments called *Zavatol-Nafkh*. These are said to date from the time of David, and certainly they are very primitive; I was asked by a friend last year to buy a collection of Persian musical instruments, and I bought a few that are in use now. Some resemble a guitar, some are like drums; some, again, are like pipes; but how anyone can say they give forth melodious sounds I cannot understand. The same tune is heard for hours together, and it reminds me more of a small child crying than any music.

We were up country for the summer months once, when Teheran was going through a troublous time, and I forbade the servants to go to town



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lest they should accidentally get shot. They, therefore, got leave to amuse themselves in the stables in the evenings. As soon as we had finished dinner and were settled down for a game of cards, weird sounds were heard; the servants had hired musicians for the night, and they played the same air from nine till three, when I finally sent and begged them to stop. I almost prefer the gramophone.

Things were better before the reign of Shah Ismail, who issued an edict causing the execution of all musicians because one had proved himself a traitor and tried to put a usurper on the throne. For this crime, committed by a musician, a ban was placed on music. The poets, Ferdousi and Wizani, speak of the early Persian musicians, among whom the best known was Barbod. He is still famous in Persia for his work, "The Thirty Airs of Barbod," which are sung of in all the early Persian writings.

Farabi, also a great musician, came much later; in his time Persian music was at its best.

### PAINTING

No art in Persia is what it used to be; music is not considered as it was; the great poets have

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no successors, and painting also appears to be dying out.

Formerly beautifully illustrated manuscripts were to be found, and lovely miniatures on the top of boxes, and mirrors with painted covers could be picked up in the Bazaar for small sums. Now the modern painting is taking the place of the old, and the Persians have a school of art, founded within the last two years. It is kept up by the Government, and instruction is free. The professor is a wonderful artist, and has painted a picture of one of the rooms in the Palace which is simply marvellous. It represents one of those reception-rooms, whose walls and ceilings are composed of little pieces of mirror. The carpets and furniture are depicted as reflected in these small mirrors, and I was not surprised when I heard the artist had taken five years to paint it. Every detail is exact, just like a miniature painting.

The pupils of the school show decided taste for painting, and can copy exactly anything set before them. I visited the school this year, and saw boys of ten and twelve years old, who had been learning to paint and draw for three months, copying exactly, line for line and shade for shade,

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an oil painting of a nude female figure. I cannot help wondering what they will produce when they attempt to copy nature.

I have been trying to buy a few little old water-colours lately, and the Jew pedlars bring me a great many; but most of them are modern, badly done and crude in colour. The subjects of the only old ones I have seen lately have been too improper to buy. I have, however, succeeded in getting one or two which are perfectly lovely, and whose detail is simply surprising. I am sure if some of those boys I saw copying nude life-size figures in oils were to go in for painting Persian figures in water-colour, with the same detail as the older artists employed, they would be more successful. Perhaps after trying European fashions they will return to their own and do better.

### POTTERY

The art of pottery has been known to the Persians for about two thousand years, and the specimens which have been unearthed during the last three or four years bear a striking testimony to the high standard of excellence they had achieved. The chief centres of the earthenware manufacturers seem to be traced to Nain and

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Kashan, and possibly to Kerman. The number of old Chinese porcelains and potteries found in Persia, which were sometimes original and sometimes Persian copies of Chinese, are to be accounted for by the fact that trade passed from India and China to Europe through Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. The Persian copies were identical with the originals in design, form, colour and varnish, even going so far as to imitate the marks of the Indian and Chinese makers.

Earthenware found in Persia may be classed under two heads, Chinese of China, and Kashee of Kashan. It is doubtful if true porcelain of hard paste was ever made in Persia. There is a continual discussion between dealers and connoisseurs as to whether some particular pot is Persian or Chinese, but, to my mind, the pottery and china of Persia differs from the Chinese to such an extent in colour, design and glaze, that a real connoisseur may satisfy himself as to which is which. The more closely Kashee resembles the Chinese porcelain, the greater its value. The legend runs that one hundred families of Chinese artisans came to Persia with Hulaku Khan about A.D. 1256, which would account for Chinese porcelain having been made in Persia, and it is

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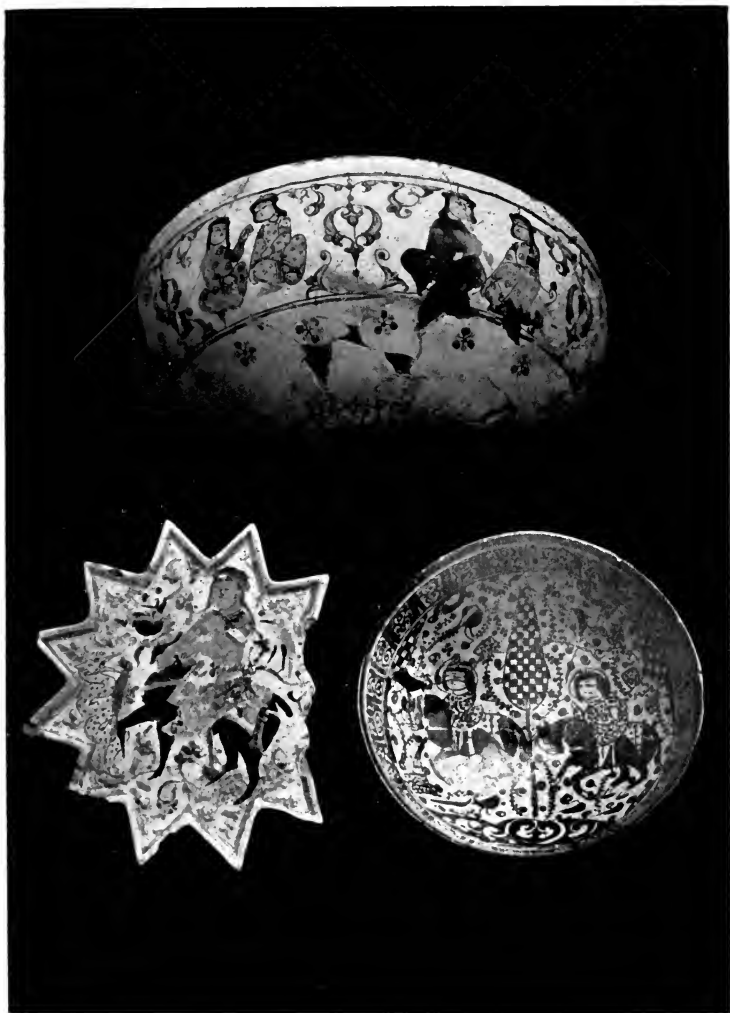
undoubtedly from them that the Persians learnt the art.

Both in the past and the present, pottery was made for practical household purposes in Persia. Little has been found made purely for ornament, though a few objects in the shapes of animals and vases have come to light. This applies to modern pottery as well as to the old. Since the reign of Shah Abbas the art has degenerated, and to-day only very inferior earthenware is produced.

During the last four years, digging at Rhaye has been done more or less seriously, and specimens of Kashee, which until then had been unknown, were found. These specimens are very fine; the designs are well drawn and very like the Chinese. They consist of human figures, horses, birds, camels and other animals, some of which have human faces. These designs are usually on a background of smooth surface, turquoise blue or cream colour, with occasional incrustations of gold. So far, I do not know of any one single object that has been found intact, but sufficient pieces to complete an object have been found, and are very valuable. One small vase, nearly complete, was sold recently in Paris for thirty-five thousand francs.

## PEEPS INTO PERSIA

Rhaye, or Rhages, lies about six miles south of Teheran. The ancient tower was built partly on a spur of the mountain running out into the plain, and partly on the plain itself. The Apocrypha tells us that Tobit, led by the Angel Gabriel, journeyed to Rhaye and stood looking down from its walls: also that Nebuchadnezzar razed this city to the ground. It has since been twice destroyed, and now, after centuries, it lies under heaps of mud along the ridges of the mountain; its walls of later dates can still be dimly traced, in mounds of mud round the base of the jagged rocks and across the fields, where they have been strong enough to withstand the elements. It is here that excavators are at work. Rhages was finally destroyed by the grandson of Genghis Khan about A.D. 1250, and as the first town existed two thousand years ago, objects found in the ruins to-day may be anything from seven hundred to two thousand years old. Each time the town was rebuilt the new town was smaller than the one previously existing, hence it follows that the farther away from the centre the pottery is found the older it is likely to be. Unfortunately no system is followed to ascertain the exact spot from which the object came; so



SOME OLD PERSIAN POTTERY

A cream-coloured bowl found near Rhaye and bought for 3,000 tomans.

A wall tile found at Rhaye. An ancient dish.





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experts find it almost impossible to determine its age.

There is a second kind of pottery found at Rhaye, which is also Kashee, but has a metallic reflet ; it is found in two colours, lapis lazuli and white ; the blue is much the rarer of the two. Tiles are also found in this pottery, with raised figures ; very bad copies are made and sold as old by the dealers.

A third sort of pottery has come to light which closely resembles the Chinese, the paste being very hard ; the designs are blue and white, and the pottery thin ; the colour, not being blended with the glaze, is very brilliant. It often bears marks of Chinese makers. A less good pottery has also been discovered of softer and more porous paste, which is more Persian in design. It is very beautiful, though clumsier of shape, the designs less well drawn and the glaze not so good. Others are found of hard paste, with designs of a brownish-black colour on a white ground, and where the human figure is drawn in these rougher potteries the face is left a blank, showing that they were made by good Mussulmans of the Sunni sect ; the Prophet forbade the drawing of a human face.

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Yet another pottery is found called Kashee sefid, or white Kashee ; this is generally very thin and sometimes ribbed. It bears no maker's marks, and is very rare and costly ; it was usually made in very small pieces. Besides these very fine potteries a common kind is found, made of reddish clay and varnished with a single colour ; the green or bronze colour in this pottery is exceptionally fine. It was often made also in imitation of the Celadon porcelain and is said not to be very old ; large unbroken dishes of this red pottery may be bought for from one to three pounds.

As tiles have always been used in Persia from the earliest date for the decoration of mosques and tombs, there are very fine ones to be obtained. Those most worthy of mention are like the best pottery of Kashee Menie and Kashee *reflet métallique*, the smoother the surface the finer the tile, for those in relief are of a much later date. The manufacture of tiles is said to date from the time of the Mogul sovereigns down to Shah Abbas, and it is from his reign that one may date some of the finest specimens which have been found.

## THE ARTS IN PERSIA

### LITERATURE

The Persian language is extremely old, but the language now used in Persia is not the same as that spoken in the early ages. It has undergone many changes and has suffered from the influence of the Turks and the Mongols. In the seventeenth century there were three languages used in Persia—Arabic was used for science, religion and law; Persian for poetry and romance; and Turkish as the language of war. The Persians say that these three languages were used ever since the world began, and were even in use in the Garden of Eden. The Serpent spoke Arabic, because it is very persuasive; Adam and Eve Persian, which is soft and flattering, and therefore suited to women; while the Angel spoke Turkish, the language of command, and thus terrified Adam and Eve into obedience. The Persians say that their language is a soft language, Arabic an eloquent language, and Turkish a severe one.

The invasion of the Arabs considerably altered the Persian language. The Arabic alphabet was adopted and Arabic became the basis of Persian, and in order to be able fully to understand the

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beauty of Persian poetry, young Persians are obliged to study Arabic literature and grammar.

The Persian language is one of the richest in the world, and to this admixture of Persian, Arabic and Turkish have now been added French, English and Russian expressions, owing to their frequent intercourse with foreigners. The language has always been the civilized tongue of all the tribes, and even now the Afghanistan and Belouchistan talk Persian, and Indian literature is largely composed of Persian words.

Up to the fifteenth century there were many famous native poets, and the literature of the country up to that time is well worth reading. But during the last few centuries it has been decaying, and I think I am right in saying that modern Persian literature is in no way to be compared with the ancient. Poets seem to have disappeared from here lately—why, I cannot tell. The wonderful atmosphere is as inspiring as ever, the roses as lovely, the mountains and waterfalls still exist, but where are Ferdousi, Saadi and those great poets who charmed the Persians in early days. The people seem as poetic as ever, and are still great lovers of nature, but they are content with learning the works of their great men and

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do not now try to express their own thoughts and feelings.

The first well-known Persian book is "Avesta," the holy book of the ancient Persians. It marks the beginning of the religious era, the first in Persian literature, and was written some time during the fourth century; it was the book of the Zoroastrians, and it told of a good genius who created all things that could do good in life, and of an evil genius who tried to destroy all these good works. The good genius was Ahura Mazda; he created the world from nothing, and the evil genius, Angra-Manjus, created another world which was full of lies and wickedness; and to all the marvels which Ahura Mazda gave to mankind for their happiness and prosperity, the evil genius added a gift to counteract them. The "Avesta" was in reality a book of prayers, with invocations to God, a divine being, to the Sun, the Moon, water and fire. "Let us adore the fire, well-meaning warrior. He who brings dry wood to the fire shall live in the joy of a quiet conscience, he shall have many herds of cattle and beautiful male children."

After the religious era came the day of the epic poem; this is the greatest epoch in Persian

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literature, and of all the poets of that time the greatest is Ferdousi, "the Lion of poets," as he is called. His great work is the "Shah-Nameh," or Book of Kings, and is really a collection of Persian traditions of all times, edited by him and made into a book; he is supposed to have declared that he only followed the traditions and invented nothing.

He was not, however, the first Persian who tried to collect the traditions and put them together; the first attempt was made by Daneshver in the Pehlevian tongue during the sixth century, and Ferdousi gives the following account of it. "There was once a book of ancient times in which were written many tales. All the men, learned and wise, had a part of it, and every intelligent man carried a fragment of it about with him. There was a man named Daneshver, brave and powerful, famous and full of intelligence, who loved to collect tales of past times. He searched through the provinces for any who had stories of those times, and asked them to tell him all they knew of the Kings and famous warriors, and what they had done to leave the world in such a miserable state."

The work of Daneshver was in the Pehlevian

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tongue, and the founder of the Saffaride dynasty caused it to be translated, with many additions, into Persian during the tenth century.

Sultan Mahmoud, a Prince of the Ghaznevide race, collected many tales about the ancient Kings, and sought for a man who would sufficiently respect the traditions to put them into verse without altering or exaggerating the sense. Ferdousi was the chosen man; he was born in the tenth century, and he had a good education and was a good Arabic scholar; he also knew the Pehlevian language. He was thirty-six years of age when he began his great work, and it took him about twenty-two years to finish it. The great attraction in his book is the wonderful language in which it is written; he is supposed to have kept so closely to the text of the traditions, and the book is supposed to be so true, that the Persian historians take Ferdousi's work as a foundation for their books on the history of their country.

The poems always begin with an address to God; then the poet sings praises to intelligence. The history of the creation of the world comes next, and lastly the traditions are told.

After the era of Persian epics came the great

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lyric poets. Lyric poetry developed considerably after the invasion of the Arabs, and the end of the Saffaride dynasty marked a new era in Persian poetry. At that time there were many poets of great genius, but I will only mention those who are the best known and most appreciated in their own country.

One of the most famous is, of course, Omar; he was born in 1062, at Nishapore, and his profession was that of a maker of tents. He derived his surname of Khayyám from this, Khayyám meaning "tent-maker." Owing to Edward FitzGerald's masterly version, the best known of Omar's works, and that for which he is famous in Europe, is "The Rubaiyat," a series of quatrains which are both sceptical and voluptuous.

Another great poet was Manoucher, who lived in the twelfth century. At this time the Mohammedan religion was beginning to establish itself in Persia, and the Persian language, as it is now used, began to develop. In the twelfth century Persian literature made a fresh start.

Manoucher is the ideal poet for this country. Oriental poets, and perhaps more especially Persian ones, love life and to live luxuriously in the midst of scented flower-beds, full of roses



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and jasmine. The poet greets the dawn with joy—the dawn a generous fairy, who, with handfuls of dew, creates golden lights and enchantments. The birds, just awaking from their night's rest, sing; the women pass to and fro, graceful and smiling, through the green woods. The breast of the poet swells with joy, and in this feast of nature his verses come readily to his lips. He calls for his cup-bearer and quaffs the ruby wine, drinking to the glory of love, of which he sings in a naïve and simple manner with youthful sincerity, without stopping to give a thought to that day which must surely come, when his beloved of the heart of stone will leave him.

Manoucher sings chiefly of Nature in his poems, and his verses to the seasons are quaint and simple.

“The mountains and plains are red and mauve with tulips and violets. The violet holds up her skirts, so that they shall not be soiled by the earth, and she places a mauve veil upon her head.

“The narcissus flowers in a garden; full of love, he opens the silver petals that surround his heart of gold. He wears a silken shirt lined with ivory, and he sheds a delicious perfume; he resembles a lightly-wielded fan.

“How sweet it is, this fresh springtime! It

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is sweet as the kiss of my beloved. Oh, friend of my loving heart, bring wine and press me to thy breast! Let us live happily in this glorious spring; let us be merry amid the music and flowers.”

Manoucher wrote some allegories, which are typical of his love of Nature, and perhaps the prettiest is his allegory of Spring and Winter:

“The Spring resolved to attack the Winter and to do battle against him. The hills and plains are the domain of Spring, but he went on a journey, and meanwhile Winter took possession of all his property and damaged it. He robbed the jasmines of their crowns, cut off the hands of the trees, carried off the turbans of all the shrubs and the golden boxes from the fruit trees. In the gardens and on the hills he placed his soldiers; here warriors in white garments, there others as black as negroes.

“The North wind on its course told of all these doings to the Spring, and added: ‘Winter has stolen everything in thy house—thy pearls and all thy golden ornaments; he has torn the ear-rings and bracelets from the roses, thy beloved ones; he has broken the flutes of the nightingales, thy musicians.’ Then the Spring cried out!

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‘I will be revenged on this impious Winter. I will assemble my troops, dressed in green brocade, my soldiers with curly hair, slight as cypress trees ; the elms shall be my cavalry and the young elms my infantry. The rainbow I shall use as my bow and the willow branches as my arrows ; the tulips shall give their petals to be my flag ; I will take the clouds for battle elephants, and the thunder shall pass them in review.’

“The Spring sent out his advance guard to the Winter, and commanded him to light great fires, splendid as the dawn, and to say : ‘Great King, in fifty days I shall have taken your place with all my wealth and a hundred thousand cups of ruby wine ; the little red-headed nightingales will sing ; the jasmine with coral cheeks will weep perfumed tears, and we will sit on the green sward and listen to the musicians.’ ”

Perhaps the most popular poet in Persia, and the one whose verses are the best known to all classes, is Saadi ; he was born in the twelfth century and he fought against the Crusaders. His verses are so simple that even the small children learn them, and one often hears them being recited in the streets. His best-known work is the “Gulistan,” or Garden of Roses.

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The greatest mystic poet in all the Orient is Jelal-ed-Din Roumi; he lived in the thirteenth century, and is famous for his allegory "El Masnavi," which has forty thousand verses and consists of the outpourings of a soul given up to contemplation, and nearly every verse ends with "O God, we have greatly sinned!"

'After him came the great Hafiz; he was born in Shiraz, and was a baker's apprentice in his youth; he was a born poet and soon became very celebrated. He is a favourite with the Persians because of his dreamy nature; all true Persians are dreamers. He writes very tersely, and seems to have taken for his motto "Less words than sense." And his works are, therefore, rather hard to understand. He sings the praises of wine and love; in spite of the commands of the Prophet as to abstinence from wine all Persian poets sing of it.

The humblest Persian knows Hafiz by heart, and will sing his verses as he works; and the muleteers repeat his poetry as they lead their mules across the mountains. His tomb in Shiraz is always covered with roses; he is not forgotten and his songs will never die.

After Hafiz, the poet of whom we hear most is Khodjindi, who lived in the fifteenth century.

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His principal works are three volumes of short poems and a book called the "Baharistan," a sort of imitation of the "Gulistan" of Saadi; it is a description of springtime, but although the style is good, these poems have not the charm of the epic poems in the time of Sultan Mahmoud Gagnevi, who did much to encourage the poets to cultivate their art.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century the country was upset by the conquest of the Persian provinces by Genghis Khan. He ordered a general massacre of the people, and spared neither women, children, aged men, nor men of letters. At the head of a large army he put Persia to the sword, and his successors, Tamerlan and his sons, had no liking for Persian poetry, which was neither to their taste nor in their tongue. Thus many centuries passed away without Persian literature coming to the front again.

During the sixteenth century, in the reign of the Sefevi Kings, no progress was made either; the Sefevis called themselves descendants of Ali, and propagated the Shia doctrine definitely in Persia, and the national spirit was submerged by religious fanaticism. The Mongols disdained Persian literature, and under their rule it took

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a new form ; the poets no longer sang of Nature and the Spring, but the holy wars led by Ali's son Hossein against the heretics were the sole topics of their songs, and it is from this time that the mystery plays date, which are still performed during the first days of Moharrem. Persian eloquence was used only for sermons preached by the priests in the month of Ramazan.

The invasion of the Afghans (1688-1747) was not more propitious to Persian literature, and it was only under the Kadjars, towards the middle of the eighteenth century, that literature made a fresh start. Even the Princes wrote verses, and a book by Reza Ghouli Khan called " Medj-ma-ol-Fassaha " gives a general *résumé* of the eighteenth and nineteenth century poets. The best known of that period is Quani, surnamed the Prince of Poets, whose verses resemble those of Manoucher, I think.

" Are those violets that are growing on the edge of the stream, or is the grass strewn with the hair of the houris ?

" The narcissus became old in his infancy, and never having tasted blood, he is the colour of milk. It appears he is like me, weighed down with sorrow ; his beloved has forsaken him.

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“ Oh, my beloved, a truce to hostilities, and let me kiss you as a sign of peace. If your feelings will not allow you to do this, seek advice from your friends and tie a hundred knots in your hair and consult it as if it were the beads of a rosary.

“ Cup-bearer, fill my cup, there is not in all Paradise a garden or river-bank like those of the town where my beloved dwells.”

At the present day poetry is encouraged in Persia. Is it not curious how the Oriental spirit of all time has a fancy for the ideal and the fanciful ? It is not the supernatural that inspires these poets ; it is their own imaginations, from which their brains draw ideas both light and profound. Voluptuousness, wine and flowers are the subjects about which these delicious poets sing. They await death smiling, for even death appears to them but a new delight.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SUPERSTITIONS

**I**N spite of my long sojourn in Teheran I have never mastered the Persian language. I know about twenty-five words, just about enough to order something to eat and to say what time I want the carriage and which way I want to go. This ignorance of the tongue has naturally barred me from intimate association with the Persian ladies: the men I have met have all been high officials, or people belonging to the Court, who could speak French. Nevertheless, I have learnt a little of the superstitions of the Persian people and some of the ways of the lower classes.

Persians always have an answer ready; they are never taken unawares, and their inventive powers, when needed to get them out of a difficulty, are very great. A foreign Minister, travelling to Teheran from Resht, stopped at one of the small stations for some food. The head of the tea-



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house being asked by the dragoman what he could give them to eat, replied he had very little, only two eggs and a chicken. The Minister, being informed of this, said they would eat anything they could get there and have a better meal at the next station. After a little while one egg was brought in and set upon the table. The dragoman asked where the rest of the meal was, and was told that "The chicken shows every sign of laying the second egg, and when she has done so I will bring it to you, and then I will kill her and cook her for you"—a neat way out of the difficulty!

When one first comes to Teheran one sees things done by the servants which make one wonder what sort of hygiene the Persians have. For instance, at a tea-party at a bachelor's house we were given excellent ices, and afterwards tea was handed round, but there were no spoons. Someone asked for a spoon. Our host, a new arrival, explained by gestures to his servant what was needed; the servant took the spoons with which we had eaten our ices and placed them in the saucers; our host tried then to explain, still by signs, that he wanted the spoons washed before being used for tea, whereupon the servant drew

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out of his pocket a soiled handkerchief and proceeded to wipe the spoons on it! No one asked for anything else after that.

Persians have some superstitions which are the same as those in our country. If a dog howls, it is a sign of death; two meeting on a staircase must not pass each other—the one coming up must go down and wait till the other is at the bottom—and so on.

A strange thing is the Persian calendar. It is brought out every twelve months with prophecies of good and evil for the year. No Persian goes on a journey or undertakes any enterprise without first consulting the calendar. Sometimes it foretells things that come true, as, for instance, in the year 1909. At the end of 1908 Mohammed Ali was living at Bagh-i-Shah, a garden just outside Teheran, in the midst of his troops and adherents; he had been having sore trouble to defend himself against the Medjliss. The calendar for 1909 foretold evil things. The front pages, which are usually devoted to wishes for the prosperous reign of the sovereign and prophecies of his successes, were silent, and the only allusion to crowned heads at all was a prophecy that a misfortune would overtake an Asiatic king. Mohammed

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Ali caused this calendar to be destroyed, so it disappeared from the Bazaar, and by order of the Shah a new calendar was prepared and put into circulation. The chief astronomer, author of the fatal calendar, was severely punished. All these precautions, however, did not alter the fate of the Shah, and the punishment of the astronomer for seeing the future was rather unjust.

The calendar for 1911 foretold war in the East and the taking of the town of Hamadan; both these events came true. When one out of thousands of prognostications happens to come true, the popular belief in the astronomers is strengthened and the people talk of nothing else for a long time.

The calendar for 1913 is already prepared; it consists of twenty-four pages, one page for each fortnight, the Persian year being of forty-eight weeks. At the top of the page one reads of the events which are to take place during the month, and opposite the date are the particular things it is good or bad to undertake that day. The page devoted to events to take place in the month of February, 1913, begins: "God knows all. The stars are propitious to kings; the kings wish for justice and their desire is towards benevolent

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works. The priests and philosophers have a leaning towards pleasure, costly garments and much state and parade. A very great personage will inspire much fear; several military successes will take place; prosperity will reign in holy places and merchants will thrive and grow rich. Many ancient inscriptions will be discovered; some Government officials will act unjustly; there will be trouble in the Province of Fars. Children will suffer from an epidemic; terrible, cold and dangerous winds will be experienced. There will be probably an earthquake, followed by snow and rain. Wonderful lights will appear in the sky."

Then comes that part of the calendar which the Persians consult for each day. February 8th, 1913, is a good day to undertake something new, to buy what is needed, and to wear new clothes. February 9th is good for some things, to buy land, pay visits to notables of the town, and to shoot big game. February 10th, three hours after sunrise, is favourable to attend the Shah's reception and to present petitions to him. To enter a town, change houses, draw up a marriage contract and plant trees, choose February 11th, four hours before sunset. Cut out new clothes, go a journey, learn to write, arrange a marriage,

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on February 14th, two hours before sunset. February 12th and 13th are very unfavourable ; nothing should be done on those two days.

There are, of course, other things which determine the doings of the credulous Persian. I have been told of a Persian going to consult a doctor, and on entering the room, someone sneezed. Sneezing once is very unfavourable, so the Persian hastily turned to leave the room, when the person sneezed again ; two sneezes are good ; the Persian returned to his place. Once a Persian leaves his house to go anywhere he must pause a moment and see that the passer-by does not sneeze, as that is a sign of danger, and he must not make one step ahead until he has recited a verse of the Koran to conjure away the evil ; but should the passer-by sneeze twice he goes happily on his way. Should a third sneeze be heard, alas ! that is a sign of serious danger, and means that he will not succeed in anything he undertakes, and that he had better stay at home that day.

On leaving his house in the morning, the superstitious Persian will always recite a verse from the Koran and blow it in the direction of the four points of the compass, to chase away the devil.

Persians always take off their shoes when entering

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a house and leave them outside the door. On coming out, they look to see if their shoes have fallen on top of each other. Should this happen, it is the sign of a journey within the year. Should the Persian to whom this happens be averse to travelling, he is obliged to find a talisman to prevent evil coming upon him. The best talisman is a nail, which he must mark on the head with two straight lines, recite a verse from the Koran, blow on the nail, and, on the next Friday, knock the nail into the corner of his room nearest his bed.

The Persians also push their religious veneration rather far, and in some cases it becomes a superstition. I am not going to speak of the Persian religion; it would take me too far and my knowledge is too slight; but there are certain customs which are founded on Mohammed's laws which are worth mentioning. There are two sorts of ablutions which form a very important part of the Persian's daily life. A pious Mohammeden should wash himself four times a day—morning, midday, afternoon and evening; this is the small ablution; it consists of washing the face, the hands and the arms up to the elbow, passing the wet fingers over the toes, and from the top of the head to the eyebrows. On Fridays

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and certain holidays the big ablutions take place, and then the body must be washed entirely! If any part of the body touches anything considered impure, that part must be plunged from three to seven times in the water and must not be dried; the water must be allowed to drop off drop by drop before each new plunge. Sometimes in winter, when a Persian cannot obtain hot water, he is obliged to break the ice on the basin in front of his house before daybreak and plunge his head into the icy water to perform his morning ablutions.

Another quaint superstition, if I may call it so, is what is known as the *istekhara*. This custom consists in writing a question on a piece of paper, sealing it up, and sending it to the mollah to answer. The mollah slips the paper into the Koran, says a verse over it, and opens the Sacred Book at the place where the paper has slipped in. What is written at the top of the left-hand page is the answer to the question.

I remember when Mouzaffer-ed-Din was dying the European doctors in the Shah's service were anxious for another opinion, and suggested to the Persians that a great professor should be sent for. As the European doctors were French,

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German and English, the question arose as to the nation the great man should be chosen from. The Persians decided on holding an istekhara; a mollah was called in, and he arrived with the Koran and proceeded to recite verses from it. Then the paper on which was written the solemn question was placed between the leaves. The first paper contained the question concerning a French doctor; the answer was: "Deliver him not unto his enemies," whereupon the mollah declared that the answer was unfavourable. Next the English doctor was suggested, but the Koran gave another decided negative, and the German professor finally being approved of, he was sent for. Unfortunately even the istekhara could not save the Shah's life.

I have known cases where the istekhara decides a dispute in a family. Only this summer my head-man was very worried about his eldest daughter; she was just thirteen, the marriageable age here, and her mother wanted her to marry a man of forty. The father was very much against the marriage, and the parents could not agree. Finally they made up their minds to consult the istekhara, who decided in favour of the father. For once, anyhow, I think it was right.



THE  
MUSEUM  
OF  
THE  
MIDDLE  
EAST



Mollahs.



Photo by]

A Severe Winter.

[Sevragin.

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## SUPERSTITIONS

I heard a story the other day about the origin of the Koran, which I think worth relating to show how cunning Mohammed was. The faithful were hanging back and clamouring for a sign from above, so Mohammed promised that if the people would meet him at a certain spot near a well he would cause a sign to be shown them. At the time stated there was a great crowd round the well. Mohammed then appeared and showed a sheaf of blank parchment to the people. He told them that he would cast it into the well, and in return God would send out of the well His wishes. The Prophet then let down the parchment on a piece of string, and a few minutes after he drew up another covered with writing. The people cried out: "There is only one God, and Mohammed is His Prophet!" and were convinced that a miracle had been performed!

Mohammed then suggested that they should all walk past the well, and, in commemoration of the miracle that had been performed there, they should all throw a stone into the well. This they did, stoning to death a Christian priest who, having written the Koran at Mohammed's request, was hidden in the well to help the Prophet to perform his miracle.

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Superstition has even, in bygone days, led to the changing of the capital of the country. Belief in astronomers has always been very strong in the Persians. In the sixteenth century the capital of Persia was Tabriz, but the King, finding himself unable to defend the city against the invaders, moved to Kasvin and made it his capital, which it remained until the reign of Shah Abbas the Great. This King was assured that the stars were unfavourable to that city, and if he persisted in living there great misfortunes would befall him. Very much frightened, the Shah moved his capital to Ispahan, and consoled himself with the thought that to create a new city would do more towards immortalizing his memory than anything else. Teheran only became the capital of Persia when the throne of Persia came into the possession of the Kadjar tribe, it being nearer their own country than Ispahan.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ISLAM AND THE CHURCHES

**I**N Teheran—as, in fact, in all Persia, save perhaps in the Parsee quarters of Kerman and Yezd—the religion of the Persians now is that of Ali; that is to say, an Islamic form of dissent following the Shiite tradition. Other Mohammedans who are partisans of the pure Sunni tradition hate the Shiites even more than they hate Christians. It is almost impossible to convert a Mohammedan from his religion to Christianity. The Mussulman who is a fanatic will not become a Christian because of the difference in customs and in way of thinking, the ancient rivalry and hatred of race; and if he is not a fanatic there is no one more indifferent to religious convictions. The Mohammedans look on Christ as a prophet like Moses.

The Sunnites and Shiites differed over the successor to the Prophet Mohammed. The former

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think that he left the leading of the faithful to his lieutenant, the Caliph ; the latter refuse to admit that Allah would choose out a single man to lead his flock, and consider that the descendants of Mohammed would be the natural spiritual successors of the Prophet. Thus they acknowledge the son-in-law of Mohammed as the Imam, or leader of prayers. The Caliphs and Imams used to be constantly at war with each other. For three centuries there were recognized descendants of Mohammed, and twelve Imams were acknowledged. They all met with violent deaths brought about by their enemies ; most of them were poisoned. At one time the Caliph thought of bringing peace to Islam by a marriage uniting the Caliphs and Imams, so he gave his daughter in marriage to the eighth Imam ; but repenting of his plan he caused his son-in-law to be poisoned.

The last Imam, the twelfth, was only a child when his father died and he disappeared mysteriously. His followers say he will reappear, and each time there is a new prophet some of the faithful believe him to be the twelfth Imam. It is said that in reality the Caliph thought it better to get rid of the family, and caused him to disappear. The entire family was not then disposed of, how-

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ever. There are still some descendants of Ali, Imam Zadehs, that is, sons of Imams.

At the time of the first Sefevi king, Shah Ismail, who reigned in the beginning of the sixteenth century, the dissenting religion of the Shia sect became the national religion of Persia. This was owing to the fact that, firstly, Shah Ismail was the son of an Imam Zadeh; and secondly, Hassan, grandson of Mohammed and son of Ali, had married the daughter of the last Sassanide king, that dynasty which reigned over Persia from A.D. 250 to A.D. 640, and claimed descent from the Achemenides (650-330 B.C.), thus mixing the blood of the old dynasties with that of Mohammed. Shah Ismail discovered he was connected with the Sassanides, and was thus easily acknowledged the leader of the Shia sect, and nominated for his capital the High-Priest who was recognized by all the Shias. When the Kadjars took the throne of Persia they could not pretend to be related to Mohammed, and therefore could not name a High-Priest. All they could do was to nominate a priest to preach in the royal mosques, but these priests have little influence. All the religious power is in the hands of the free clergy now, and *à propos* of this, at the coronation of

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Mohammed Ali, in order to prevent a dispute between the official and free clergy, the privilege of placing the tiara on the sovereign's head, which belonged originally to the priests, was taken from them, and the tiara was placed on the Shah's head by the Prime Minister.

The free clergy in the holy towns of Arabia like Nedjef Kerbela and Kazemein, where some of the Imams are buried, act as judges in cases put before them by the pilgrims, and they are strong enough to resist all other authority.

There are but few feast days in the Shia religion. The holidays are kept on days of mourning, which I have described in another chapter, and the Shiites show their religious feelings in long pilgrimages to the tombs of their saints. As a matter of fact there is no need to go far, as the massacres of their sects have peopled every corner of Persia with the tomb of a martyr, but the pilgrims prefer to go a considerable distance. These journeys give them a privilege by which they are recognized as having travelled to holy places. They are entitled to put the name of the town they have visited before their own names; thus the lucky man who has made a pilgrimage to Meshed can put Meshti before



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his name. A pilgrimage is no easy matter to undertake; it means, as a rule, a lot of expense and great fatigue. It is usually arranged by a special person who makes this his profession. Each person pays as much as he can afford, and the professional agent arranges everything—mules, tents and food. The pilgrimage usually starts in the spring, in order to allow the people to reach their homes in the late autumn and to avoid travelling in the winter months. The time spent in the holy cities is quite short in comparison with the time taken to reach them. Most of the principal cities regarded as sacred are in Arabia, but those most frequented in Persia are Meshed and Koum. But with the Shiah, as with the orthodox Sunni, the greatest pilgrimage of all is to the tomb of the Prophet himself at Mecca, and this alone confers upon the pilgrim the title Hadji.

Although the Shia are more severe than the Sunni about non-Mohammedans they are more ready to accept innovations. There are some who make of Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law, a god, and these are known as the Ali-Allahis. Then, again, there are several sects of Dervishes who get their inspiration from Suffiism—that is to say

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they aim, or are supposed to aim, only at the higher life, and take no interest in earthly things.

In 1844 a prophet arose who, in spite of his youth—he was barely twenty-five—found many disciples even among the older and more serious-minded men of all classes. This was Ali Muhammed, better known as the “Bab.” The word Bab means door or gate, and he proclaimed himself as the door to knowledge of a better life. Unhappily he was the cause of a great deal of trouble; his followers were persecuted, and on several occasions many were massacred in cold blood. He himself was arrested, and, finally, after having been treated as cruelly as possible, he was shot at Tabriz in 1855. He nearly escaped, as the first volley fired at him only loosed his bonds; had he kept his presence of mind he could have fled in the direction of the bazaar. There he would have been safe, and his cause would have been strengthened by what would have been regarded as a miracle. But he was weakened by imprisonment and ill-treatment, and he fled towards the citadel, where he was immediately captured and killed. After his death there followed a discussion among his disciples as to his successor. Some said the Bab had

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designated to succeed him a certain Mirza Yahya, who, having lost his mother at an early age, had been brought up by the mother of the chief follower of the Bab. He had, however, a half-brother, who also claimed the succession, and rivalry broke out between their respective followers. This half-brother of Mirza Yahya is known as the Behai'ullah, and his disciples in Teheran are many. When he died he was succeeded by his son Abdul Bahai, who lived until 1911 at Acre, when he went on tour in Egypt, Europe and America. The Bahais claim to have nine million followers, of whom a considerable number are in America. The Bahais can conform to other religions and believe chiefly in a progression of ideas; as new ideas come, as new things are invented or discovered, a new prophet is needed who should not contradict former prophets, but should improve on their sayings and doings. For instance, women needed to be kept in seclusion before men became properly civilized; now that men have made progress it is time to think about the women.

The Bahais count Behai'ullah as greater than the Bab, who was merely his forerunner, as John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ.

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When Nasr-ed-Din Shah was murdered in 1896 the act was put down to the Babis, and a terrible persecution began against that sect, which reached its height in 1902. At one time the councillors of the Shah conceived the horrible idea of giving any Babi they captured to a great personage, when His Majesty would be able to judge of their fidelity and loyalty to him by the tortures they would cause to be inflicted on their prisoners. One can imagine the horrors that took place, the tortures that were inflicted. But even this did not suppress Babism. I was talking to a Persian the other day, and he told me that lately the Babis had suffered much less persecution, and since this was the case the sect was dying out rapidly. I do not know, however, if this is really so.

One of the Bab's great ideas was to place women on a different footing, to give them a place in the world, and to raise them to a higher place in the regard of the men. He strongly condemned polygamy and divorce, and recommended his followers to be kind to their women and children. He has naturally many followers among the fair sex.

## ISLAM AND THE CHURCHES

### CHURCHES

The Persians will not allow anyone but Mohammedans to visit their mosques. Many Europeans have tried to enter the principal mosque in Teheran, but I have not heard of anyone succeeding.

There are, however, churches of all sorts of denominations in Teheran, so that everyone can go to their own place of worship. A special feature of all the churches here is that there are nearly always schools attached to them.

The Roman Catholic Church is under the protection of the French; they have two churches, one in town and one up country. There were Roman Catholic missions in Persia from the end of the sixteenth century until the invasion of the Afghans, then they disappeared. At the beginning of the nineteenth century a few Roman Catholic families were found living in Persia, so priests were sent to minister to them in different parts of the country, and in 1840 the Lazarists started a mission at Ourmiah. It is there that they have established their headquarters.

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In 1901 the Lazarists came to Teheran and started the school which is attached to the church, which has two hundred pupils, some of them being Mohammedans. Before 1901 there was no church. In 1904 the Sisters of Charity established a girls' orphanage ; there is of course a small chapel attached and the Lazarists say mass there on Sundays.

The Caldeens use the same church as the Roman Catholics, and there is very little difference between the services, except that the Caldeens say mass in their own language instead of in Latin.

The Protestants use the American Missionary Church, which is, I fancy, Presbyterian ; and the Russians have a chapel in their Legation, to which they go when there is a priest, but all this summer he has been away on leave and there has been no service.

The Jews, of whom there are a good many in Teheran, live in a quarter of their own ; they have several synagogues, and two schools for girls and boys alike ; one is the Jewish Alliance, founded in 1898, and has branches in several other towns, the other is the London Jewish Society. The houses in the Jewish quarter are built on a different

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model to the ordinary Persian ones ; they have very narrow entrances, because their owners live in perpetual fear of being massacred, and therefore try to build their houses with a view to barricading them easily.

The Parsees, or Guebres, as they are called, are the most ancient people of Persia, but there are very few left in Teheran. Some of the richest people here, however, are Parsees. In order to preserve their religion and to prevent it dying out altogether they have a school, but I believe there are not many pupils. Most of the Parsees are gardeners ; it is a profession that goes well with their religion.

I was reading a book on Persia the other day ; it was published in the early eighties, and it stated that the Parsees were only allowed to ride on donkeys, horses and mules being considered too good for them, and that when they met a Mohammedan they were obliged to dismount until he had passed them.

It also said that they were forced to wear a special colour, so that they were easy to distinguish from the faithful.

As far as I can discover, these customs no longer exist ; the only remnant of them being that the

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Guebres women usually wear red ; they do not mind their faces being seen.

The Parsees have always been an object of hatred to the Mohammedans ; but nevertheless I cannot find that they have ever been molested in any way ; I have been told that this is owing to a letter given them by Ali, who promised them protection.

The Parsee marriages are nearly always between relatives ; this, however, does not seem to have had any bad effect on the race ; they are usually tall, well-set-up people.

Their disposal of the dead is peculiar ; they take the dying person out of the house and let him breathe his last in the open air. They have what they call a "Tower of Silence" near Teheran, where they take their dead, and there they leave them to be devoured by the birds of prey.

The Parsees in Persia are no longer what they used to be, and even their religion has suffered many modifications.

There are a good many Armenians in Teheran, nearly all under Russian or Turkish protection ; they are all engaged in commerce here, and very clever and successful they are at it. In fact, the





Rhaye.



The Tower of Silence.

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## ISLAM AND THE CHURCHES

following anecdote, which I have taken from a book by Claude Farrere, depicts them well :

“When Allah had finished making the world, He got a big cauldron full of honesty and He called all the people to Him to give each of them a share.

“The first to arrive were the faithful followers of Islam, because they lived nearest to Him ; they received half the contents of the cauldron as their part of honesty. Then the Christians came, and they were given nearly all that was left, and there only remained a few scrapings. These were given to the Jews, who arrived breathless with the haste that they had made. Finally, when the Armenians reached Allah the cauldron was empty and they got nothing.”

There is another sect of people to be found in Teheran, who are also very ancient and are rapidly dying out ; these are the Nestorians, but they are said to be going over to the Russian Orthodox Church.

## CHAPTER XV

### A SKETCH OF RECENT EVENTS IN PERSIA

**W**ITHOUT wishing to criticize either Persia or her neighbours, I should like to mention a few of the historical facts of the last five years.

The Revolutions of 1906 and 1909 have been fully described by so many different authors, that I will do no more than recall them to mind ; but I think that a short account of the historical events of 1911 and the beginning of 1912 will not be without interest.

The first Revolution took place in 1906, and was brought about by the Persian people themselves. They objected to Ain-ed-Dowleh (who was then Grand Vizier), insisted on his dismissal, and clamoured loudly for a Constitution ; as this was not granted them at once, the chief merchants, to the number of fourteen thousand, appealed to the British Legation and made a formal demonstration against the Shah by taking " bast " in

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the British Legation for some days, until their demands were complied with. Taking "bast" means seeking protection from danger; but the Persians often do it as a political demonstration. Mouzaffer-ed-Din Shah was at this moment dying, though still at the head of affairs, and one of his last official acts was the granting of the Constitution to his people. It was made public by the following decree :

"God Almighty having entrusted into our hands the task of leading the people of Iran into the ways of progress and happiness, and having chosen Our August self to safeguard the rights of our faithful subjects, it is our intention, in order to procure the well-being of the inhabitants of our kingdom and to consolidate the basis of our Government, to give all our attention to the study of necessary and gradual reform.

"We have decided to create a National Assembly in the Capital, composed of Deputies who are to be taken from the Ulemas, Kadjar Princes, high dignitaries, people and landowners, and tradespeople and merchants.

"This Assembly will have, as mission, to undertake to examine attentively, and to deliberate on, all questions relating to the interest of the Govern-

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ment and the Empire. It will give its collaboration to the Ministers to help to realize reforms necessary to the welfare of Persia.

“The Members of the Assembly will be able, in all confidence and security, to bring to our knowledge, through the medium of the Grand Vizier, the decisions to which they may come for the good of the nation and the Government, or which concern the interests and general wants of the inhabitants of the kingdom, in order that our signature may be affixed and they can be put in execution.

“We command by this Imperial Decree that the regulations, and all that is necessary for the organization of this Assembly, shall be approved of and arranged for at once, so that a National Assembly, mainstay of our justice, may meet immediately and begin to occupy itself with the affairs of the Empire and the carrying out of the religious laws.

“We ordain that a copy of our Decree be brought to the knowledge of the public by means of printed Proclamations, in order that all the inhabitants be informed that our intentions aim only at the welfare of the Government and of the Persian nation.”



The Regent, Nasr-el-Mulk.



Monsieur Mornard, Treasurer-General.





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There were, as will be seen by the above, six classes of people eligible for voting : the nobles and commoners, the clergy and students of theology, landowners, farmers, and members of trades guilds. Only Mohammedans were eligible for election, and they were expected to be well known in their place of residence, and to have a knowledge of reading and writing in the Persian language.

Shortly after the Constitution became an established fact the Shah's condition became desperate, and his son, the Valihad, was hastily summoned from Tabriz. He was proclaimed Regent during the last days of his father's life, and took the oath to the Constitution, which he broke three separate times. At his father's death, in January, 1907, he succeeded to the throne. In September, 1907, the Anglo-Russian Agreement was signed, while the first Medjliss was sitting. In December, 1907, the Shah made an abortive attempt to get rid of the Medjliss, and caused Nasr-el-Mulk to be arrested. However, he was set free through the intervention of the British Legation, and left for Europe.

Finding the Medjliss difficult to manage, Mohamed Ali ordered it to be bombarded in June, 1908. This was done with the help of the

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Persian Cossack Brigade, which was commanded by Russian officers.

What may be called a civil war then broke out. The Nationalists fought against the Shah's adherents all the summer of 1908 in Tabriz, and the latter were finally expelled from there in the late autumn. The Shah's forces then started to besiege the town; this siege lasted three months, and at the end of April, 1909, the Russian troops entered.

In May the English and Russians succeeded in inducing the Shah to revive the Constitution, and in July the new electoral law came into force. This law differed from the first in that those eligible to vote not only had to be able to read and write Persian, but they must also have reached the age of twenty, and were expected to possess property to the amount of two hundred and fifty tomans, or to be in receipt of a yearly income, or to be earning fifty tomans a year.

On July the 13th, 1909, the Nationalist force from Resht, and the Bakhtiari from Ispahan, converged on Teheran, and after three days' street fighting the Shah was obliged to abdicate; he took refuge in the Russian Legation. His second son, Ahmed Mirza, was placed on the

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throne, and the chief of the Kadjar tribe, Azad-el-Mulk, was made Regent. Azad-el-Mulk died in September, 1910, and the Regency was then offered to Nasr-el-Mulk, formerly Finance Minister, who was then in Europe. He was with difficulty persuaded to accept this position, but finally returned to Persia in 1911; the following month he took the oath of Regency.

At this moment the finances of Persia were in a sad state, and the Medjliss applied to the American Government for someone to help to reorganize them. The American Government chose Mr. Shuster, who had formerly been in the Philippines, but it undertook no responsibility for him. Mr. Shuster arrived in May, and immediately gained the confidence of the Medjliss, who invested him with full power as Treasurer-General.

The Sipahdar, who was Prime Minister at this time, then began to get uneasy, feeling certain he would suffer under the reform; so, on coming out of the Medjliss one day, he ordered his coachman "to drive to Europe." He only went as far as Resht, however, and, on the insistence of his friends, he returned to Teheran and prepared to resume office. But at this moment a piece of news startled Europe and Persia: the ex-Shah,

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Mohamed Ali, had landed in Gumeshteppe on July the 18th. The Sipahdar was accused by his enemies of being in connivance with the ex-Shah, and was forced to resign. The Medjliss appointed in his place the head of the Bakhtiari tribe, Samsames-Saltaneh, who at once formed a new Cabinet, and a proposal was made to put a price of one hundred thousand tomans on the ex-Shah's head; this was agreed to by the Medjliss.

The ex-Shah's forces advanced in two divisions; he himself accompanied one by Barferush and Savad Kuh. Sardar Arshed led the other, with two thousand Turkomans, by Damghan and Semnan to Imam Zade Jaffar, near Verameen. There an engagement took place; the Government forces were under Yprém, a Russian-Armenian exile, and Sardar Bahadur, a Bakhtiari. Sardar Arshad's army was defeated and he himself captured and shot. After this reverse the ex-Shah was defeated at Savad Kuh, and escaped during a fog to Gumeshteppe with only seven followers.

Salar-ed-Dowleh, the ex-Shah's brother, had meanwhile been raising an army in Kermanshah, which was reputed to be twenty thousand strong, and coming up from the west, moved towards Teheran; his nominal intention was to aid his

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brother to regain the throne, but it was suspected that his efforts were all being made to take it for himself. The victorious leaders, Yprém and Sardar Bahadur, were at once despatched to meet the pretender, and at Bagh-i-Shah, a place between Sultanabad and Teheran, they routed the advance guard of the pretender's army, which consisted of no more than six thousand men, and pursued it to Hamadan, which Salar-ed-Dowleh hastily evacuated with the rest of his forces.

While Persia was thus trying to set her affairs in order outside the capital, inside Teheran Mr. Shuster was actively engaged in reforming the finance of this distressed country. Of course he met with many difficulties. His very American directness itself militated against success in an oriental country.

The first serious dispute arose over M. Mornard, a Belgian employed by the Persian Government as head of the Customs.

The law which had been passed giving Mr. Shuster full control as Treasurer-General not unnaturally brought him into contact with M. Mornard. Mr. Shuster's immediate act was to request M. Mornard, as Administrator, to place all Customs receipts, with any balance which he

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might have at the English and Russian banks, to his, the Treasurer-General's credit. He asked him to apply in future to the Treasurer-General for the funds to carry on the Customs; owing to an unfortunate postal delay, M. Mornard received Mr. Shuster's communication considerably later than the banks received their instructions; M. Mornard attempted to draw money and his cheques were dishonoured. In the discussion that ensued, most of the Legations supported M. Mornard, and it was pointed out that in the agreement for the consolidation of the Persian Government's debts to the Russian Bank, it was definitely stated that the charges for the upkeep of certain institutions must be paid "*à l'intervention de l'administration des douanes.*" A *modus vivendi* was, however, arrived at, and Mr. Shuster left in M. Mornard's hands many of the payments under discussion.

No sooner had this incident lost its acute form than another arose: Mr. Shuster desired to appoint Major Stokes, the Military Attaché at H.B.M.'s Legation at Teheran, to organize the gendarmerie which he was proposing to form in Persia. Russia objected to the appointment of a person who was accused of having anti-

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Russian leanings, and Major Stokes was recalled to India.

Then came another serious incident.

Shoa-es-Saltaneh, the brother of the ex-Shah, and fighting on his side, possessed three properties. The Persian Government gave instructions to Mr. Shuster to have these properties confiscated, and the Russian Consul-General, hearing of this order, sent two Russian Consular officers, with a force of Russian Cossacks, to prevent its being carried out. The Cossacks arrested the gendarmes, disarmed them, and took them to the Russian Consulate; but they were soon set free, and subsequently the Russian Cossacks were withdrawn from the property, and only Persian Cossacks left on guard. Then Mr. Shuster sent a large force of gendarmes to take possession, which gendarmes, the Russian Consul-General stated, insulted two of his staff who were passing the principal property. The Russian Government demanded an apology, which they received. However, a letter criticizing English and Russian policy in Persia had already been written by Mr. Shuster to the *Times*, and was published on November the 10th. The Russians then found it necessary to put forward fresh demands,

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and on December the 5th they issued a second ultimatum, which contained three demands, viz.: that Mr. Shuster should be dismissed; the English and Russian Legations should be consulted before appointing foreign officials; an indemnity. They gave forty-eight hours for the acceptance of this ultimatum, and the Medjliss flatly refused to comply.

Fighting broke out simultaneously in Tabriz, Resht and Enzeli on December the 21st, and the Regent, seeing how bad the outlook was, induced the Medjliss to delegate its powers to a Commission. The Commission and the Cabinet together accepted Russia's ultimatum.

The Regent, fearing public opinion when this should be known, made a *coup d'état* and dissolved the Medjliss. Police were stationed at the gates to prevent any attempt at demonstration, and a few days later the order for new elections was signed by the Government. On Christmas Day Mr. Shuster received his dismissal, and the acceptance of the Russian ultimatum became an accomplished fact.

There has been some difficulty in naming a successor to Mr. Shuster, and the most likely candidate was M. Mornard, not only on account



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of his knowledge of things Persian, but also because he is strongly supported by the English and Russians. However, to avoid too many difficulties, he was appointed temporarily.

Salar-ed-Dowleh gave a lot of trouble all through the winter. He took Kermanshah and kept his army in the neighbourhood, doing much mischief. In the beginning of March rumours of atrocities committed by his orders reached us here ; the banks and business houses in Kermanshah were closed for a long time, causing serious trouble. At the end of March the Russian and English Consuls in the town were directed by their Governments to advise Salar-ed-Dowleh to leave the country, and a pension was even offered to him, which he refused. The ex-Shah meanwhile, seeing he could do nothing just now in Persia, accepted the pension of seventy-five thousand tomans offered to him, and left Persia ; this was a decrease of twenty-five thousand tomans on what he was getting before. His followers were all paid off by the Persian Government with the money lent by Russia and England for that purpose.

Salar-ed-Dowleh, finding that his brother had left the country, allied himself to some tribes

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south of Kermanshah, and tried to proclaim himself Shah. The Government sent troops against him in the charge of Firman Firma, but they were defeated, and the rebels advanced towards Hamadan. The Government then sent a small force against him, headed by Yprém, which gained a decisive victory in the middle of May, but their leader was killed. There were many versions as to how he met his death, and, as a matter of fact, the truth is even now not known for certain. The version generally accepted is that after the great battle Yprém was walking near a fort which was thought to be unoccupied, when he was shot. He had been Constitutional Persia's best leader since 1909; his place will be hard to fill. His body was brought to Teheran and buried amid great demonstrations. Though Yprém was an Armenian, a Mollah made a speech over his grave. The victory which cost Yprém his life put an end to Salar-ed-Dowleh's hopes, and he was left with only a few followers. In the beginning of June the Government forces under Firman Firma took Kermanshah and Salar-ed-Dowleh fled. His actual place of refuge is not known, but is thought to be Turkey.

Since June M. Mornard has been made

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Treasurer-General permanently. At the same time he retains his place as Administrator-General of the Customs. Such is the actual situation at the moment of writing. It cannot be said that the political prospect is free from clouds, or that the friends of Persia can view it without misgiving. But in spite of many mistakes and misfortunes, Persia has always shown a persistent power of recuperation ; and perhaps this quality may again be exemplified. May a happy solution be found for all her troubles and may peace and prosperity descend upon her.



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