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PERSIA IN REVOLUTION

WITH NOTES OF TRAVEL IN THE CAUCASUS

J. M. HONE & PAGE L. DICKINSON

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NOTE

Portions of this book have been printed in "The Irish Times," "The Manchester Guardian," "The Morning Leader," and "The Chicago Daily News," and we have to thank the Editors for leave to reprint here. We have also to thank Vahid-el-Mulk of Teheran, Messrs. Riding and Fergusson, and the Masters of the Georgian School at Kutais for allowing us the use of certain photographs which are not our own.

THE SIPAHDAR.

PERSIA IN REVOLUTION

WITH NOTES OF TRAVEL IN THE CAUCASUS

BY

J. M. HONE

AND

PAGE L. DICKINSON

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INTRODUCTORY

THERE are people who go to Persia adventurously and for travel's sake; and the result is, often enough, a book. The country seems to attract a wonderful number of writers. We do not, however, cast any aspersions on the literature of Persian travel; and indeed we regret that this book is not within its domain. Where this book of ours "comes in" we shall explain. Some voyagers have gone across Persia in motor cars, others on bicycles, but nearly all seem to have taken the same line—that from Bushire on the Persian Gulf to Enzeli on the Caspian. Now, on this road one passes over the graveyard of a great antiquity, and through many cities once renowned, and through some cities that are noted still; and the voyager, though he lack the seeing eye, will

have a happy excuse and occasion for writing a book, say, with this title—

THE HISTORY OF CYRUS

BY ONE WHO HAS SEEN HIS TOMB.

But this old native highway is now well worn by the horses and carriages of the feringhi; the "copy" which it can still furnish will be disdained by the true explorer.

We, who traversed but a part of this highway—and, this part, dully enough twice—need not, after the foregoing remarks, explain that our voyage was of a modest kind indeed. But we relate impressions and incidents upon the road and in the capital, which indicate the methods and manners of the Persian Revolution—a new thing, even under the sun—as it "raged" when we travelled to Teheran at the beginning of 1909.

Chapter IV. gives a summary of events leading to the deposition of the late Shah in July, 1909, with comments, and brings

the story of the Revolution and of its results up to date. Sometimes, as in this chapter, we have abandoned the narrative form in order to represent the general situation of affairs and that the reader may appreciate our allusions elsewhere to parties, persons, and circumstances of the moment.

The latter section of the book—in Transcaucasia—has, however, nothing to say of Persian revolutions or of Persian politics. Still, it is not a far cry from Northern Persia to Transcaucasia; the transition is not violent, both belong to the "Middle East"; the one is a Russian province, the other is in Russia's sphere of influence. What Transcaucasia said yesterday, Persia is saying to-day. To Western Europe the chief political interest of this part of the world lies in the doings of Russia therein; and there is a connection between the Persian section of the book and the section about the Caucasus, because both in Persia and the Caucasus the persons with whom we mostly came into contact represented,

variously, the anti-Russian feeling of the "Middle East."

We may appear to have treated too lightly the aims and aspirations of Persian Nationalism, but that has not been our intention. It has amused us to write of the Revolution and of its ways; and our Persian friends in Teheran, to whom we owe thanks for many courtesies, will acknowledge that much that happened must have been fantastic to a stranger's eyes. After all the cause triumphed; had it failed, we'd have written in another spirit.

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Map of Northern Persia and the Caucasus.

PERSIA IN REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I

FROM WARSAW TO RESHT

A YOUNG English subaltern who had been in India was asked by an acquaintance how Persia might best be reached, and replied: "It is near India, isn't it?" "Yes," said the other. "Then, take a liner to Bombay," advised the subaltern. "And then?" "Oh, then, take a camel."

There are other routes, and we, on the way to Persia, found ourselves upon one cold January morning in the town of Warsaw, having acted suddenly upon the advice of a distinguished Persian exile in England, who recommended the Berlin, Warsaw, and Baku line. From Warsaw

to Baku the train runs across Russia in a south-easterly direction—a four days' and four nights' journey. Then if the traveller be lucky, and barring strikes and other mischances, he may, on arrival at the Russian port of the Caspian, step on board a boat which will land him in a day or two at the Persian port called Enzeli, two hundred miles south of Baku on the same shore; and his seven and sixpenny passport is being examined little more than a week after issue. But Persia is a big country (lying somewhere near India), and the choice of route depends upon the district to which the traveller is going—whether, for instance, his goal be Teheran or Tabriz in the north, or Ispahan in the centre. We wished to observe the revolutionary movement now in progress (January, 1909), which might be done, as we understood, in any of these cities. It appeared that the struggle between the Shah and his enemies would be decided at Tabriz, now besieged by royalist troops. Now to reach

Tabriz we should have to turn westward from Baku, and travel by the Transcaucasian Railway to Tiflis. But the overland journey from Tiflis to Tabriz *via* Julfa on the Russo-Persian frontier is a very difficult one in winter on account of the great snows; nor were we certain that the road from Julfa was still open; moreover, Tabriz had already its share of newspaper correspondents. Indications pointed on the whole to Teheran. The capital is reached with comparative ease from Enzeli; and once there we might turn northwards, if we so desired, towards Tabriz. But we spent our four days in the train between Warsaw and Baku without coming to any definite decision.

Ispahan is, of course, *the* city of Persia from the point of view of the tourist. We could make our way there too from Teheran. However, we had pretty well given up any thought of seeing Ispahan. Having chosen the Warsaw-Enzeli-Baku route, we were not likely to go south of

the capital, for we wished to spend some time in the Caucasus on our way home, and the idea of going to Ispahan from Teheran, and then back to Teheran over the same road, was unalluring. Had we aimed for Ispahan we should have gone, in the first instance, by sea from Marseilles to Bushire on the Persian Gulf, whence one rides over the Kotals to Shiraz, and drives by "carriage-dâk" from Shiraz to the famous city. Teheran, the Caspian, and the Caucasus, are then stages on the homeward journey.

Warsaw is one of the few European capitals that the tourist has not yet wooed. A few governesses in high Polish families are practically the only resident British subjects, and these ladies are mostly Irish, because they must be Catholics. The Polish aristocracy cultivate the English language, like their fellow-subjects, the Georgian princes in Transcaucasia, though not perhaps to the same extent. There are

Georgians in Tiflis, as we afterwards discovered, who, unlearned in their own tongue, and unwilling to speak Russian, use English as the language of every-day life. In both towns quite a number of Irish governesses will be found. Sometimes young girls, the daughters of small farmers and shopkeepers in the West of Ireland, arrive in answer to advertisements, and, being usually unsuited to the positions to which they aspire, their passage home has to be defrayed by the Consular authorities.

The noble Pole calls himself a "realist" in politics, and cultivates a lofty indifference. He has formed an exclusive society from which he excludes the Russian. You may say that in his world the Russian does not exist. The best club in Warsaw contains only three Russian members. In Tiflis, too, there is a very sharp dividing line between native and foreign society. But a Georgian prince does really hate, or try to hate, the Russian. He has not yet

acquired the power of indifference; he is concerned, querulous; the stranger's presence keeps him uneasy.

About fifty years ago there was no bourgeoisie in Warsaw. The middle class that now exists is practically composed of Jews. Out of the 800,000 inhabitants of the town, 350,000 are Jews; and the Semitic element is in proportion to the population numerically more powerful than in any other town in the world except New York. It has a quarter of the city to itself, is well organised, aggressive, and independent, being entirely unaffected by such considerations as have brought about the present attempt to boycott German goods. Fifteen years ago the Jews of Warsaw were as weak as possible, but now they are the only people in the town who seem to see a future for themselves. The Governor-General of Warsaw has his hands full. He has to deal not only with the patriotic and revolutionary sentiment of the Polish democracy,

but with that advanced socialistic organisation, the Jewish *Bünd.* Of the two, the Poles will be the easier to satisfy.

Warsaw is said to be the brightest and most cheerful city in the Russian Empire. Socially it claims to be second in importance only to St. Petersburg. There is, indeed, a terrible enough poverty about the town, and the poorest people have on their faces that look of dumb animal resignation which one associates with the Slav. In winter it is a wretched sight to see the pitiable horses that drag shabby droschkies over frozen streets, but here, as in Rome, everyone who can afford it seems to drive. Of the other side of Warsaw's life it is easy to get a glimpse: one has merely to go any evening to the magnificent *Hôtel Bristol.* There Polish nobles and their ladies, Jewish financiers, Russian generals and Russian officials, see each other day after day and make no bowing acquaintance. Through the night the Poles play and dance, the Jews watch, the

Russians feast. Occasionally there are strangers in the midst of a gathering which, for variety and distinction, would hardly be matched outside the Russian dominions—German business men, Georgian officers of the Russian army, Asiatics. While we were in Warsaw a Persian prince, the Shah's brother, was a visitor at the hotel, but he had made himself disliked by remarking "You Poles are less barbarous than we Persians, but not so well educated."

In the *cafés* and theatres of Warsaw the crowd is always interesting. It has a variety. Women are usually handsome. There is an individual distinction and courtliness.

By no stretch of the imagination can Warsaw be called a beautiful city. The larger buildings are modelled on those of the western capitals of Europe, and are out of scale with their surroundings, and the town as a whole is shabby. If Warsaw is not a dirty city, it is an untidy one. Somehow

one fails to get the impression that it has had a heroic and terrible past. Still it has a damaged look, as though it had been battered from time to time by some sullen enemy. Here and there are large modern warehouses arising out of the midst of what seems mere debris, and on the other side of the frozen Vistula, chimnied Praga, a large manufacturing district, stretches across the lonely snow-covered plains.

The indescribable confusion of a Russian railway station remains with us as a last memory of the Polish capital. Long queues of travellers waited their turn at the booking offices. Peasants, returning from the monthly market, business men on their affairs, and Jew pedlars mingled with the brighter figures of Cossacks and priests. Having gone through many formalities we entered the train, which at length drew slowly out of the station. A commercial traveller and a prize fighter, both of them Belgians, were our companions. In execrable French they gave us a store of

information about themselves. The pugilist was bound for Tiflis, the man of business for Rostov. A restaurant car was attached to the train our first night on board. Next morning we had parted from it, and we breakfasted in the refreshment room of a wayside station. The food of these places is always good, and the rooms clean and comfortable, if overcrowded. All the world seems to attend the arrival or departure of a train, and you are invited to pray and to eat, a shrine and a statue being features of every *buffet*. The bookstall stands here too, and the works of Gorki and of Tolstoi lie side by side with Russian translations of "Sherlock Holmes."

Rostov, on the Sea of Azov, is the chief town on the railroad between Warsaw and Baku. As the train passed over the great bridge that spans the river Don, we looked down on the wharves and shipping of a frost-bound town. Graceful little Black Sea schooners lay amid the frozen waters; sledges and pedestrians

picked their way across the ice and through the shipping. The town, built on either side of the river, stood out, glistening and white, with an early morning emptiness—very lone and desolate. We left this outpost of western civilisation behind, and again we were moving across the Steppes.

The sense of enormous space and desolation that these give is indescribable. There is no break in the horizon, and the wide and barren plain stretches out as far as the eye can reach till it mingles with a white and patternless sky. No growing thing is to be seen, except, occasionally, a patch of scrub, on the north side of which the drift has gathered, or, more rarely, a wood of delicate silver birch ; and no sign of human life, except now and again the low sledge of a sheepskin-coated peasant, drawn by rough ponies across the plains. During the first three days we travelled under a grey light, and it was impossible to gauge distances, but the fourth day brought a wonderful sunrise with it. It was then

that we had our first sight of the Caucasus. There they were, far away across the desert; peak after peak jagged and pointed, their long ridges serrated like the Chamounix Aiguilles. Quite abrupt they seemed to rise from the plain, stately and beautiful. A cloudless sky, tinged with the faintest greens and lilacs, lay above the great peaks, which threw back the light from their glittering walls of snow. The western slopes were all in blue shadow, and each ridge stood out sharp and clear.

The passengers at the stations became less Slavonic in appearance, and the Semitic and Mongolian types were often obvious. Cossacks in their crimson coats, priests with their hair flowing to the waist, stood among men with huge sheepskin hats and great black coats, with long, tight coats and small Astrachan hats. Sometimes a turban or a fez was to be seen. The sight of these Tcherkesses, Georgians, Turks, Persians, Tartars, and of others, who would have been hard put to name them-

Nearing the Caucasus.

selves, made us realise that we were nearing the East, and would soon be on that well-worn threshold of Asia that lies between the Caspian shore and the eastern extremities of the Caucasus.

CHAPTER II

A GLIMPSE OF THE REVOLUTION

In Baku there is only one hotel at which the stranger cares to stay; and here we met two travellers en route for Teheran. They were a Georgian and an Englishman. The Georgian, B., knew Persia well, was keenly interested in Persian affairs, and spoke the language—he was, in fact, a Persian subject—and we gladly assented when he proposed that we should join forces and travel together. C., though he had been brought up in Paris, was of English birth, a calm and phlegmatic man, and a contrast to his companion.

Immediately on our arrival in Baku we were startled by the news that Resht, the town whose port is Enzeli, and through which we must pass to reach Teheran,

had been captured by the revolutionists. The royalist governor and a large part of his retinue had been done away with, and the administration was in the hands of the Nationalists. B. was bound for Teheran, and as he had already arranged to leave Baku at once, we made his destination ours without further ado. We went down with him to the Quay and took our passage-tickets in one of the little flat-bottomed steamers that run between Baku and Enzeli, the port through which, inefficient as it is, a great part of the trade of northern Persia passes. Resht is some seventeen miles from Enzeli.

We learnt that the Chooa-es-Sultaness was in Baku ; he was the brother of the Persian prince *en voyage* of whom we had heard in Warsaw, and the half-brother of the Shah himself. The Chooa was about to return home as a naturalized Turkish subject to face the dreadful monarch. It seemed that he might intend to join the revolutionary party ; for it was significant of some im-

portant undertaking that he was travelling surrounded by priests. We could not discover where he stayed, but it appeared that he had taken his passage on our ship, and so we hoped to be enlightened upon the subject of Persian politics during the voyage. We were disappointed. The prince was, indeed, travelling, but he and his suite had filled up all the decent accommodation. We, the four of us, were relegated to a wretched little box, some eight feet square, called the second-class cabin. B. declined to start under these conditions, and, after having interviewed the skipper, and received back the fares, he led us back to the hotel. Fortunately another boat, the mail, was due to leave on the following evening, and we had not too long to wait.

Subsequently our voyage down the "Lake on the World's Edge" was uneventful. The waters were without a ripple. We had our first sight of a true Eastern crowd in the powerful picturesque travellers—Persians for the most part, inter-

spersed with Caucasian Mohammedans—who lay stretched out in a shapeless heap on the lower deck. They would have made fine figures in a nautical melodrama; and, on one occasion at least, the captain and crew of one of these boats have been held up and the mails seized. The moment was the psychological one now that the "forces of disorder" were growing more and more triumphant in northern Persia—Russia's sphere of influence—and at dinner down below the Russian captain said that it was necessary to despatch 20,000 Cossacks to guard Russian and other foreign interests at Enzeli and Resht. He quarrelled with the mate, who differed from him in politics. But certainly the burden that the ship carried was docile enough, only stirring—and then heavily—when prayers went up at sunset.

We stopped at a port to take up and let down passengers, and here overtook the Chooa's steamer and lay alongside her for hours. She was off again before us; but

eventually we arrived at Enzeli only a few minutes after the prince had landed.

Looking across a harbour sea, noisy with the cryings of innumerable swooping sea-birds, to the soft and delicate outlines of the coast, one would imagine oneself come, at Enzeli, to an undiscovered country, were it not for the buildings on the Quay, and the gaily painted pavilion of the Shah's, rising beyond them above the reeds of the lagoon. This country was like one's fancy of Japan. But we knew from our books that this was not the real Persia, for we would have to cross swamps and climb majestic heights to find the plateau, the desert, the lights of gold and of rose—the true Persia, or, at least, the Persia that Loti discovered.

As we stepped on to the Quay the prince was addressing a crowd from the balcony of the Custom-house, but we failed to discover the gist of his harangue. His speech was completed before the authorities, who seemed to take very little note of his

arrival, had done with their examination of ourselves and of our baggage, and we watched him drive from the courtyard with his friends. A few moments later, however, we, having procured a couple of droschkies, were following him over a rough track into the swamp country that lies between Enzeli and the town of Resht. At the first post-house we came up with his cortège and passed it. He had retired within, but a couple of armed men sat in his carriage, and a few beggars lounged about the gates. Hearing us pass, he sent a messenger after us to invite our party in to share his rest and refreshment, but we had already been delayed on the Chooa's account, and it occurred to us that we had best reach Resht and engage our vehicles for the drive to Teheran before this more important voyager had put in his claims. As it happened, we need have had no fears on this account. We had not left his cortège two hundred yards behind us when a band of armed horsemen, headed

by a young man—evidently a foreigner—in a gorgeous green uniform, flashed round a bend of the road ahead of us. For a moment he mistook ours for the Chooa's party, and his men surrounded us, holding pistols in our faces; then, with apologies from their leader, they dashed onwards. Our driver naïvely remarked:—"They are going to kill the prince."

He was mistaken. The idea, carried out with success, was to take the Chooa alive, and to hold him for ransom at Resht. In about ten days' time the prince arrived in Teheran safe and sound, though a little out of pocket, as the result of his adventure on the road. But what sort of welcome he received from his brother we were never able to ascertain. The Chooa, in fact, dropped altogether out of sight. His captor on this occasion, Panoff, a Bulgarian (we afterwards learnt the name and nationality of the man), was a star of some account in the revolutionary firmament—we were told of his history in Teheran,

and read of his doings in the English and Russian newspapers. We were destined to meet this young leader of cavalry again.

Thanks to this slight adventure we had at once an indication of the character of a Persian revolution. The casual and haphazard way in which the Chooa returned home, the fact of his being allowed to proceed from Enzeli, the picturesque and theatrical style in which Panoff captured him, were all highly characteristic. Did the Chooa know that he was running into danger? Did the authorities at Enzeli know? If they knew why did they not warn him, or, if they were in sympathy with the Nationalists, why did they not arrest him themselves and save Panoff his trouble? It is inconceivable, of course, that they did not know. Possibly they looked upon the Chooa and the revolution itself as a mere joke. More probably they wished the Chooa to be taken in right dramatic fashion. Certainly Panoff's force, when on its way to capture the prince

and the droschky, was the most imposing military display which we saw while in Persia.

We entered the town of Resht early in the afternoon, and drove slowly across the market-place and through the narrow muddy bazaars into a *Meidan*, or open square where, after a violent jolting, our carriage drew up at the doors of the Hotel Europe. The proprietor, a pleasant-faced Greek, came out to greet us, and showed us over his premises, which were rather rickety indeed, but had quite an air of Western gentility.

Almost immediately we were honoured with a visit from two members of the revolutionary committee which now dominated the town. They were, naturally enough, in high spirits. Our conversation turned to the subject of Charles I. of England.

From our visitors, and, afterwards, from one or two resident Englishmen, we were given some details of the part Resht had

REVOLUTIONISTS, CAUCASIANS, &c., OF RESHT

taken in the constitutional struggle. Since the Shah had dissolved his Parliament by force of arms in June, 1908, there had been a certain amount of discontent in Resht, but the Liberal leaders there had for a long time confined themselves to a warfare of words. Resht is connected with Teheran by telephone; thus a party from one of the *Anjumans*, or political clubs, in the former town would now and again capture the line, and ring up his Majesty at the Bagh-i-Shah outside the capital, to tell him that his subjects in Resht demanded a constitution. With a startling suddenness the progressive party had adopted stronger measures. One morning the royalist Governor went to call at the pleasure house of a friend a few miles out of town. Two citizens of Resht, Serdar Homayun and Serdar Motamid, were of the party. After the mid-day meal the four men sat outside in the sun, and played cards until the trump of doom. Suddenly the quiet garden was raided by a band of Caucasians directed by

one Muiz-es-Sultan, a well-known Nationalist of Resht. The Governor attempted to hide; he was caught, and Muiz-es-Sultan, greatly daring, held his captive by the coat while the Caucasians killed him. Serdar Homayun and Serdar Motamid were dragged back to the town. There was a suspicion that these two men were in the plot, which appears unlikely, for it was pointed out that they would scarcely have run the risk of going where bullets were to fly.* The Governor's host escaped successfully. He lay for a while hidden under the roof of his summer-house, and had time to consult his conscience. He reappeared in public life as a pledged Nationalist.

In the town another section of the rebel "force" had already bombarded the Governor's house and had destroyed his guard. The revolt was over. "The entire movement," says an English observer, "was

* Mr. Churchill's Memorandum. White Book, Persia No. 2, 1909.

planned in the Caucasus and carried out by a determined band of Caucasians, *not exceeding fifty in number!*"

The Sipahdar, a relative of the Shah's, and a notable gentleman in many respects, happened to arrive at Resht on the evening of the great day. He was offered the vacant Governorship and accepted the post. A month or two ago a General in the royalist army that was besieging Tabriz, he was henceforth one of the most prominent figures on the Nationalist side.*

In the town order was being well maintained by the Nationalists, and the change of administration seemed to be working out smoothly enough. Resht was now ruled by a secret committee, which issued orders to the various civil departments. But there was danger for such people as were suspected of royalist leanings. In a shed by a house where we visited one evening, a servant of the late Governor, run to earth at our very doorstep, was

* See *infra*, Chapter VI.

hunted out and shot as we sat at dinner. On the road to Teheran at a post-house we met one of this man's fellows who, more lucky, had escaped the vengeance of the mob.

Resht is not by any means a typical Persian town. Turkish and Russian influences are evident. Still it has many Eastern features. The streets of the bazaar are generally about twelve to fifteen feet wide, open overhead. On either side little shops with deep projecting eaves line the way. Here the various merchants sit and cry their wares, while others, bakers, fishsellers, and the like, wander up and down, displaying their goods on large brass trays and calling on all to buy. Packhorses and donkeys push their way through the throng, and, when necessary, the foot passenger is upset—no one ever troubles to get out of the way. But a Persian crowd is good humoured.

This district suffers from depression induced by fever, for, unfortunately, Ghilan,

which is the most beautiful province of Persia, is one of the most unhealthy places imaginable. Consequently, old people seem very numerous, because they are actually almost as numerous as the middle aged; in other words, if a Reshti reaches middle age, he must have the constitution of a Methuselah and is pretty certain of real long life. It is said that snakes brought from the valleys of the Elburz to the country about Resht lose their venom. Certainly the people of Resht seemed to lack fire and energy. Persia was, according to the newspapers, awakening from her sleep of centuries, but the populace did not seem aware of it. However, every well-to-do citizen carried arms, and that most peaceful of vehicles, the little *vis-à-vis*, was to be met with at every turn, with its four frock-coated occupants, a Mauser rifle between each pair of legs, and a plentiful supply of cartridge belts across each bosom. These highly respectable gentlemen were not, as we at first supposed, about to

drive to battle in the ancient manner; they were merely members of some *Anjuman* or committee.

Such spirit of revolt as there was in Resht must be credited to the foreign element, its own Armenian population, and the swashbuckling soldiers of fortune from over the border. The latter people were mostly Caucasians, Tartars, and so forth. It was supposed that the Shah's interests were Russia's, hence the presence in Resht of these enemies of Russian power at home and abroad. There were also Greek and Bulgarian mercenaries in the ranks, and others—fugitive Anarchists from south-eastern Europe for the most part. These men, who were afterwards described by the Persian correspondent of the *Times* as "walking arsenals," had, suddenly, on the very evening after the *coup-d'état*, dropped from the sky and swarmed over the town. Already a monster house for the manufacturing of bombs had arisen near the residence of the deceased Governor.

The native Armenians, on the other hand, kept in the background, but, no doubt, the movement was to some extent financed from their quarter. They are the well-to-do section of the inhabitants of Resht, being largely engaged in the prosperous silk industry.

At night a wonderful stillness would envelop the town. People did not care to face the challenge at the street corners in the electrical conditions that prevailed. From the balcony of our hotel, as we sat out at night, we could hear only the reverberating echoes of the sentries' footsteps and the cries of the night watchmen on their rounds. Once as we listened there came along the street below us the noise of hurrying, scuffling feet, and then a shot rang out in the vaporous air.

CHAPTER III

FROM RESHT TO TEHERAN

B——, our fellow-traveller, had no time to spare. He had business in the south of Persia, and was impatient to press forward lest the road should be blocked.

For our part, we would have liked to study further the methods of this revolution in Resht, which, as we were already growing dimly aware, had a strange originality of method. On the other hand, it would be a relief to leave the humid air of Ghilan behind us, and to be on the glittering plateau—" over the hills and far away."

So forty-eight hours after we had arrived in Resht our Greek host saw us packed with our luggage into a pair of old Russian carriages. Each vehicle had its four horses, which were to be changed at the

end of every stage. The distance from Resht to Teheran is about two hundred and thirty miles, and stages vary in length from about fifteen to twenty miles. The little post-houses, or "caravanserais," at the end of each stage, are controlled by a Russian company, which works the road under a concession from the Persian Government. Some of these post-houses are old and genuine Persian caravanserais that have been taken over by the company; others were designed for its special use; one is the old palace of a Governor; and while some of them again are mere huts by the wayside, the structure of others is of a quite fantastic magnificence. There are not always beds for all who come, but the traveller will often find his rooms furnished after a fashion with carpet and wash-stand. A tooth-brush is kept in the best rooms of the best houses (as in that Governor's palace).

This, the ordinary system of travelling along the Russian road, is known as

"chapar" or "carriage-dâk." When one caravans, one keeps to the same animals throughout, and consequently travelling is slower. Caravaning is the cheapest method and the more comfortable, but for us it was out of the question; we had decided that we were in a hurry.

The varying character of the "hotel accommodation" along the road constitutes the peculiar excitement of the journey. When one has driven, fifteen hours at a stretch, over rough roads in a springless carriage that is crowded with baggage; when one has grown weary of oneself and one's company, weary of watching the changes of scenery, weary of thought, the breaking point is reached. The journey has become intolerable.

One has to estimate at the start, each morning, what kind of establishment one is likely to be reaching fifteen hours later, and arrange one's strategy accordingly—that is to say, hurry or delay over certain stages, hurry or delay at certain post-

houses. B.'s knowledge of the character of every post-house was at his fingers' ends, and we came to trust him implicitly. Always the stage over which we drove towards midnight led to a resting-place that was of the better class.

It is possible, by going right through, to reach Teheran in fifty hours. Then it is best to shut oneself up in a closed carriage and cultivate, if possible, an utter indifference to languor and pain. This attitude in existing circumstances was impossible. We understood that our road was in a short time to become the scene of great events. A royalist army had been sent out from Teheran along it, and the revolutionists of Resht were among the hills. Perhaps we should witness the first encounter in a new sphere of the civil war.

The scenery throughout this journey is extraordinarily diversified. From Resht the road goes, mounting always, through a well-watered and well-wooded country—thus the first two stages are completed.

There are no villages in this forest country; the houses with their thatched and steep roofs, their timber-framed and wattled walls, are isolated, and built in the clearings of rice fields. Just as we were definitely leaving the low lands we passed through a big caravan station that was crowded with merchants and their camel trains, southward bound, busy Kalyan sellers, and shrill-voiced, ragged-haired Dervishes.

We covered another stage, and near the sound of waters in a wide and gracious valley found a resting-place. This was a big house with wooden balconies, old rickety stairways, a flat mud roof, and large bare bed-rooms opening into one another. We had just passed a military outpost and the caravanserai was full of revolutionists. We should say that now, as later, and as on our return journey through the same country, we received nothing but courtesy from these people. On this occasion a young servant of liberty joined us at our meal, and gave us information about the road; afterwards

A Hut in the Woods near Resht

he amused us with jests and stories which B—— translated for our benefit. For throughout the civil war the Nationalists were, above all things, anxious that no action on their part should give a foreign Government, were it British, or Russian, or any other, the excuse for intervention, and hence no revolution was ever carried out with such order and restraint—one might almost say with such ceremony—as was theirs.

The Nationalists of Resht and their allies held the country as far as the little town of Mendjil, and about fifty miles of the road to Teheran. We had left Resht early in the afternoon, and were still, at this caravanserai, some distance from their furthest outpost. All the country people had seemed to be working with a will. Driving through the darkness we had passed groups of peasants returning home after their labours at the fortifications. Here and there among the trees along the hillsides we had noticed the lights of bivouacing parties.

Communication between Resht and Teheran was naturally extremely uncertain, and the masters of the various post-houses were fluttered owing to the unwonted excitement that prevailed. Russia was supposed to be unfavourably inclined towards the revolutionists and awaiting her chance for intervention; they being the employés of a Russian company, and, at the same time, in sympathy with Nationalist projects, felt the difficulty of their position rather keenly. Indeed, the master of our post-house denied us the means of travelling any further that night.

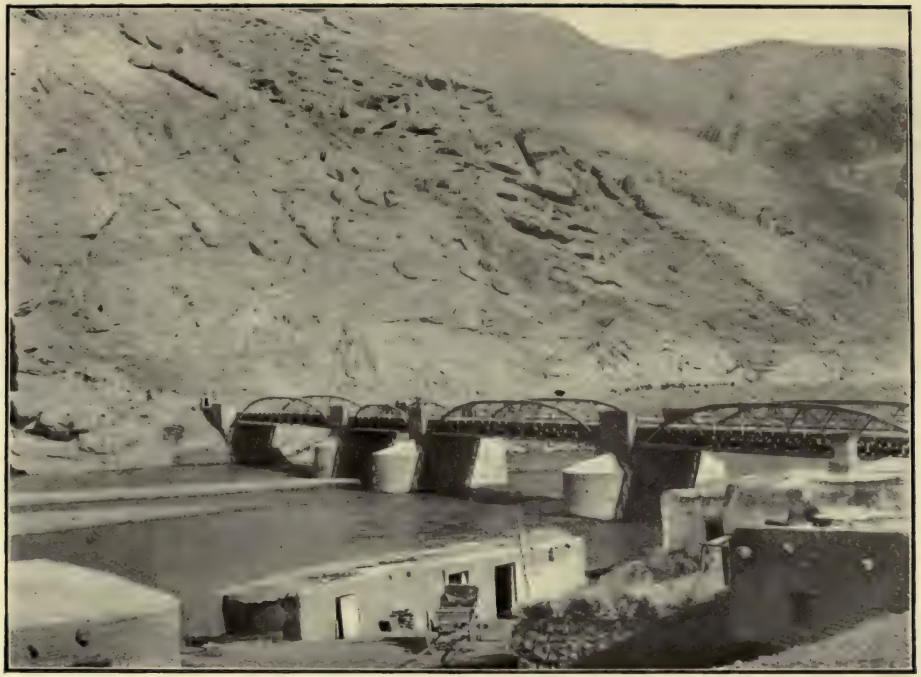
We were on the road again, by the light of a majestic sunrise, beginning our day early because we knew that its journey would contain the most difficult stages. Yet we hoped to reach the plateau before the next midnight. Our road ran first through a succession of wide, barren valleys, or along the lower slopes of the mountains, but suddenly we began to climb in earnest, and the view narrowed—we were high in

the wooded foothills of the Elburz. Ravines, streams, little stone bridges, crowded on our way. This was a land of trees. Here were plantations of elms and pines, of maples, silver birches and poplars, clumps of box, amid a dense undergrowth. We passed through the pretty village of Rudbar, with its groves of olive, and were stopped for a second by horsemen. . . . The wayside houses had quite changed their character. Doors and windows were larger, their walls, of split timber, their roofs, of bark, while their deep projecting eaves recalled a simple type of Swiss chalet. The people in this district seemed brighter, more active, busier. . . . .

From Rudbar we passed into a wilder country, where the road ran switchbacking along a great ledge which might have been blasted out of all but sheer rock—a precipice above us; and below, a precipice, the river, and the old Persian caravan route. About mid-day we crossed the Kizil-Ouzen by the bridge of Mendjil, which

is the most important strategical point on the road. The little town of Mendjil is perched on a peak, and over its crumbling mud walls we could see down winding, luxuriant valleys, and, far across them, to well-wooded slopes. A few smaller villages lay along the hills. Some women in orange-coloured dresses were working in the fields, and boys were driving goats and cattle out to pasture. The children of the town were playing around the public baths. The peach and almond trees were about to blossom, and the colour of early spring contrasted with many suggestions of a patriarchal undying civilization.

During the morning we had been constantly meeting bands of reconnoitrers from Resht, but after leaving Mendjil we saw no more of military display. We were in the Shah's country, and desolate enough it was. By nightfall we had penetrated into the barren heart of the mountains. In the dark we drove through the opening gorges of the Elburz. Steep slopes rise off



THE BRIDGE OF MENDJIL

these grim valleys, often to a height of four or five thousand feet to the ridge of the sky line. They are like the serrated edges of extinct volcanoes, and are devoid of any vegetation, but sometimes when one obtains a view down a valley, the sunlight on them—as we did on our return journey—their colours are extraordinarily vivid and beautiful. Pale tints of orange and of violet, of greens and of reds of all sorts, appear, and are accentuated by shadows of deep blue and purple on the rock faces that catch the light. On this night voyage there were certain formations to which the darkness lent wonderful effects. The overhanging peaks of tall lonely pillars of rock seemed like the castellated towers of some castle of romance in Provence or Bohemia; and the débris gathered about the outlets of a valley shaped itself into a great gateway that might have led into a stronghold of giants. It was a fantastic, horrible, miraculous scenery.

This district had an air of immense

weariness and incredible age, which made that stir of forces, of which we had had a glimpse in Resht, seem unreal and remote in the memory. Never yet had the road been so lonely. In the evening light, before the darkness had thickened, we had noticed villages belonging to the nomad Kurdish tribes, which shelter during the winter times in the hills—low mud cabins, lying heaped in the corners of valleys, indistinguishable but for the dark silhouettes of their interiors against a grey background of earth. But now we drove considerable distances and met none but the people of the post-houses.

We were on the edges of the great plateau of Iran before dawn, 5,000 feet above the sea level. Onward, two stages, was the town of Kasvin, an ancient capital of Persia. The road was intolerably rough; our driver and our horses were wearied; the air was piercingly cold. We were on those stages—the two between Kasvin and the point of descent to the

A Kurd Village

Caspian Coast—which are the most difficult ones of the journey between Resht and Teheran. In winter and early spring there are parts of this road which are impassable; one may as well go over the desert. The pathetic sight of a derelict coach by the wayside is not uncommon. Both on our outward and on our return journey we wrestled with these stages at their worst—on each occasion at night-time. The road is little more than a rutted frozen track among snowdrifts. On our return journey the driver lost it, perhaps purposely, and drove us for miles over the desert, until suddenly our vehicle lurched over, one of its wheels catching in the rocky bed of an old watercourse, the other trembling on the verge of the bank. We had expected a catastrophe, and were on the alert, ready to spring. By a miracle the carriage had not been shattered, and we succeeded in extricating it. But now one of our horses refused to do its share of the pulling, and our driver sank into a state of

despair. We loosened the animal and it was off like the wind. Presently we came up to it where it stood, panting, and then one of us rode it for a while, while another of us led the way with a lantern. The third man of our party sat on the box by the driver, who, whenever the carriage gave an unusually violent lurch, collapsed and fell among the hind legs of his horses.

On the outward journey our adventures in this district were slighter, and it was the sudden change of atmosphere—the intensely cold winds blowing across our faces from the plateau—that we found most trying. Our intention was to sleep not at Kasvin, but at the previous post-house. A circumstance delayed us. Somewhere about the middle of the stage we met a four-horse carriage, travelling Resht-wards. Now the driver has at the end of a stage to bring back his horses to the post-house from which he started, and to which they belong—the travellers resuming their journey with a fresh quartette. But he will

A Bad Piece of Road near Kasvin

save himself the double journey if on the way out he be lucky enough to meet a colleague going in the opposite direction. The drivers are then permitted, by the rules of the road, to exchange horses. Our two friends, who were ahead, had managed apparently to persuade their man not to exercise this right. Ours, on the meeting, descended from his box. We, absolutely bewildered—for we had not been informed of the custom—and half frozen, raged in dumb signs. It was of no avail. Our driver proceeded quite slowly and quietly to unharness his horses. The exchange took a good half hour to complete. Our fellow-victims—who were four Persians—in the other carriage, were more patient than we; during the whole time not one of them put his head out of the window to see what was happening. But they were perhaps asleep.

We took a long rest after our second day's journey, and it was almost noon on the third day when we sighted the walls of Kasvin. Our horses took us at a gallop through a

high tiled gateway. We were now in one of the cities of the real Persia, in an old capital of the Empire, and at a distance of but ninety miles from Teheran.

But the glory of Kasvin has departed, and it is to-day a ruined city. A mosque, a telegraph station, and a post-house should, as the guide books would say, be visited. The mosque is crumbling into ruin, but must once have been vast and imposing; the post-house is of enormous size and consuming desolation. The great bare chambers of the caravanserai, and especially the dining-hall, filled with row upon row of empty ginger ale bottles and biscuit tins, still linger in our memory. Somehow this caravanserai, where one could get more than eggs and tea to eat, and which is the nearest approach to an hotel on native lines in Persia, seemed to us the most inhospitable and horrible of shelters.

Kasvin abounds with picturesque associations. That mediæval personage, the Old

Ruined Kasvin

Man of the Mountain, lived not far away, and paid occasional visits to the city. Zerin Tay, the poetess of Babism, an emancipated Persian lady, was born in Kasvin. It had a share of the milder excitements of the civil war A royalist. army, which we shall have occasion to mention again, sat for weeks about its squares, and then fled in the end at the coming of the Nationalist enemy; the Nationalists of Resht in their turn occupied the city; and when at last the Sipahdar and his men moved onwards towards the capital, a detachment of Russian Cossacks marched through its gates to maintain a peace which in truth had never been disturbed.

The crossing of the ninety miles which separate Teheran and Kasvin constitute a wearisome journey. In the daytime the road seems never ending as it runs across the level monotonous stretch of stone and sand. But dawn and sunset on the plateau are beautiful, seen, as they should be seen, from vast spaces.

To the south and east rise an eternal succession of peaks and ridges.

We passed a few villages, the temporary settlements of wandering Kurds; we passed shepherds with their flocks of goats and of little black cattle; now and again the tinkling of camel bells sounded in our ears.

Sometimes the hills stretched out and, hiding the whole rim of the horizon, seemed to bar our path.

Distances on the plateau are very deceptive, and we always misjudged and underestimated them. The range of one's horizon alters constantly. In the early morning, peaks, purple and sharp, stand out against the light. The sun rises over them and they vanish. Where a moment ago a solid mountain had stood, there is nothing but sky.

We had not yet encountered the three thousand horsemen who, according to our information, had been sent out by the Shah against the Resht revolutionists. An army had, however, been seen at the post-house where we stayed on the third night; but

at that point it had left the main road and taken, for safety's sake, a bridlepath across the mountains. We say "for safety's sake" advisedly. At first we supposed that the royalists were taking a short cut into the revolutionary country. But that was an error. The army never reached Ghilan, and it spent another fortnight in reaching Kasvin.

We heard in Teheran that this army numbered three hundred, not three thousand, men. Certainly the authorities in Teheran had telephoned to the Sipahdar in Resht that three thousand men had gone out against the revolutionists. It is improbable that the Sipahdar believed the statement. However, by way of reply, he informed the Minister of War that the Reshtis had blown up the bridge of Mendjil. On our arrival in the threatened city we were able to reassure its inhabitants that their postal service was as yet unbroken; that the bridge was safe.

Later on we did meet an army of the Shah's, but it was not the particular army

that we had expected to meet. These troops were not setting out to battle, but returning from it. They were straggling over five or six miles of road when we passed, about four hundred of them, knots of weary and dispirited but good-humoured men, who allowed themselves to be photographed. Their baggage wagons and horses were laden with filthy rags and rotten rusty firearms, and their officers sprawled over the backs of mules in a half sleep. This regiment had been selected from the tribe of the Hamadans, who are hereditary soldiers, and it had been fighting, evidently with poor results, round Tabriz. We had been told that the presence of the Shah's soldiers was dreaded in every village, and now, seeing the condition of this lot, we did not wonder.

There are many ways of conducting a civil war. From a letter of the period we take the following extract:—

"There are in Persia several revolutions

THE SHAH'S SOLDIERS FROM TABRIZ

in progress; there is one at Resht, another at Tabriz, a third at Ispahan. Each of these towns is connected with Teheran by telephone or telegraph, and the Nationalist chiefs call up or wire the Shah in turn every afternoon so that His Majesty may not feel lonely. The telephone rings and the Shah goes over to the box and takes down the receiver. The conversation runs like this:—

'Hullo, is that the Revolutionary Party at Tabriz? Very well. Now, look here, the game's up. I've sent a couple of thousand men against you. What? Have I paid them?* That's not your affair. What? Mustn't fight after dark† No, certainly not, of course not. It's a *civil* war after all. Oh, you joker!'

"The rules of the game are very strict. If the Shah should send out an army, say against Ispahan, and if on the road, say at Kum, this army should find the enemy in possession, it must not fight at Kum

* Persian soldiers are not usually paid.

† It is not customary to fight after dark.

without permission. For it has orders to get to Ispahan, and, if it should fight at Kum, it might never go further. The General must wire to Teheran for instructions. Thus—' Kum. What are we to do ? The enemy is here. Reply paid.' ' Teheran. Assume you are certain to win. Have you reason to believe that there are any wealthy individuals among the rebels ? If so, fight, and take them alive. But casualties must not exceed one killed, three wounded.' *

" Fighting is very safe here, in fact it is almost dull ; soldiers here live longer than anyone else. They don't die of bullets but of boredom. The royal troops are very smart, as pickpockets. They don't wear much in the way of uniform—indeed, when you see one of them ten yards away, you

* A correspondence of this sort actually did take place, after the establishment of a Nationalist Government, between the Government and one of their Generals whose army having been despatched to quell certain disturbances in Ardehil, met with opposition on the road. (*Times*, Nov. 22, 1909.)

KASVIN GATE, TEHERAN

can't tell which side of him is towards you—back or front. Personally I like the view from the south-west. When you are fighting in Persia you don't attack unless your side is stronger than the other chap's; if he be weaker, he won't attack you.

"Some of our civilians are funny too. After the Parliament House was looted last June, a Persian brought a deputy's chair to a friend of mine, and asked him to buy it. My friend is a sentimentalist, and thought the original owner mightn't like it, so he didn't buy. He found out afterwards that the deputy had sold the chair to the other chap himself. It wasn't his own either, it belonged to the Government."

The road had become as lonely as ever. The evening mists were gathering. It had rained. Pools glimmered on the road, and the desert had the soft aspect of an Irish landscape. Far off yet were the low walls of the capital, hidden by a circle of trees.

Beyond the purple fringe of the poplars, above it—over the further edges of the city—a wonderful mist of blue was hovering. The lights upon the mountain peaks changed from white to gold and from gold to rose, and then were white again in the twilight gloom.

CHAPTER IV

A NOTE ON THE PERSIAN REVOLUTION

THE situation, manifesting itself in the curious conditions, which we now observed, had been shaped slowly and inevitably.

The Persian revolution did not lack for excuse. All through the latter part of the nineteenth century the very existence of the nation had been imperilled by the extravagance of the Persian court, and of the Persian governing classes, and their unconcern for the future of the country. "The (modern) history of Persia," says a pamphlet written by two distinguished Persian Liberals, "has been chiefly remarkable for two things—the steady increase of Russian influence at the Persian court and the increasing extravagance of the Shah's courtiers, for whose

selfish pleasures the national wealth has been squandered and the country's resources drained." The Liberal movement claimed to have a double purpose; it not merely aimed at the introduction of representative ideas of government consonant to Western ideas, but also sought to take the destinies of Persia out of the hands of European diplomatists and to place them in those of the nation. The powers of the Shah, and so the powers of Persia herself, were in pawn with Russia and England.

The important rôles played by Russia and England must be appreciated. Persia, under the old Shahs, had played off the rivalries of the one Power against those of the other; and in this way a semblance of a national policy had been maintained. With the rise of the Liberal party conditions were altered, for it occurred to the Shah's enemies that they also might turn English and Russian rivalries to advantage. Now it seemed that the success of Persian Liberalism would be a slap in Russia's

face, especially if the Constitutional party should have come to an understanding with British agents in Persia; and the Nationalists argued with some force that such an understanding would be to the mutual advantage of both England and Persia.

The Shah, Musaffer-ed-din, father of Mohamed Ali, would have been powerless to resist a serious revolution. But the Nationalists at the moment were equally helpless. Still, something had to be done. A move of some sort or other must be made which should attract English attention. This is what happened. The grounds of the British Legation were invaded one morning by a few thousand citizens of Teheran. It was the method called "Bast." In effect the agitators had declared war upon the Sovereign; they had also "touched wood."

Poor Musaffer-ed-din, who lay on his death-bed, was so struck by their daring and determination, that he acceded to

every demand. The Ten Thousand took the precaution of getting letters of safe conduct from the British Minister, and then sallied forth in triumph from the gates of the Legation.

The nation had given birth to a Constitution which was described by Persian Liberals and Russophobes as England's "spiritual child." Russian diplomatists agreed that England was its mother, but they called the child illegitimate. England, if she had not acknowledged her parenthood, had certainly been god-parent. Shortly after the ceremony she, however, made friends with Russia (the Anglo-Russian agreement), and henceforward, if we are to believe the Persian Liberals, she forgot to look after the child, which died, poor little waif that it was! She stretched out no hand to save.

Mohamed Ali Shah had now ascended the throne. He was another man from his father, and in no mood to accept limitations upon the royal purse and the royal

Rebuilding the Mejliss

prerogatives. Reading the signs of the times much as his enemies read them, he took his courage in both hands. By June, 1908, he had discovered that the Constitutional regime was contrary to the Law of the Prophet. So he decreed the dissolution of the Mejliss or Parliament, and sent out his Persian Cossacks, under the command of the Russian Colonel, Liakhof, into the streets of Teheran. In a few hours the Mejliss was destroyed, and all the Nationalist deputies in flight. The Shah of Persia was again an autocrat.

There is no doubt that the Mejliss had given clear proof of incapacity. It had been dependent upon revolutionary societies. It had confused administrative with legislative functions. The methods of election to it had been scandalous. Many of its members were corrupt and unscrupulous. The Constitutional regime had been established hurriedly, and needed revision. To revert to our metaphor the Mejliss had never learnt its catechism. On the other

hand, the Shah's action was taken on merely personal and selfish grounds. He wanted money which the Mejliss refused to vote. The excuses he gave were in part valid, but they did not represent his real motives. It is likely, too, that, at this time, he was receiving moral support, at least, from Russian agents in Teheran.

A struggle succeeded: a civil war. When we arrived in Persia early last spring the empire seemed to be at the point of dissolution. The situation for months had been kaleidoscopic. There had been no dramatic events—the progress of the Persian revolution was extraordinarily dissimilar in this respect from that of the Turkish—but the scene was constantly shifting and changing. By January the power of the Shah had become merely nominal. His treasury was empty; his army and his administration were unpaid, and had to live by plunder. He himself dared not stir, for terror of his life, from the pavilion in the Bagh-i-Shah outside Teheran. It seemed that only the

Persian Cossacks, a few hundred in number, stood between him and death.

Provisional revolutionary governments had been established in many of the more important towns—for instance, in Ispahan, by the Bahktiari tribe, as in Resht, as we had ourselves observed. Caucasian revolutionaries were over-running the whole of north-eastern Persia. Tabriz, in the province of Azerbaijan, had already sustained a lengthened siege against the Shah's troops and his tribal allies. To the outside observer it might have seemed as though Mohamed Ali's chances were negligible. But no one in Persia believed it.

The general indifference of the people, and the military incapacity of both sides were so marked, that no European observer within Persia anticipated a decisive conclusion. It was supposed, however, that the Shah's financial straits would compel him in the long run to accede to British and Russian representations, and to re-establish, though on a more limited basis,

the Constitutional regime. Otherwise there had been no reason why this pale shadow of a struggle should not continue till the world's end. The real question at issue appeared to be one between the British and Russian Governments; and was, at what point should monetary assistance be afforded to the Persian Government? The British Government were unwilling to sanction any loan before a representative assembly in Teheran had accorded its approval. M. Isvolsky, on the other hand, pointed out that the Shah could not be expected to grant concessions until he was certain of such assistance as would give stability to a reformed administration. Meanwhile, the condition of the besieged city of Tabriz with respect to the safety of British and Russian residents, caused alarm to both Governments. Its gallant defender, Satar Khan, the modern national hero of Persia, was at the end of his resources; and the entry of the "royalist" hordes into the city was fraught with frightful possibilities.

In May last it was decided to send a Russian army into Azerbaijan to relieve the situation.

From this time out Mohamed Ali seems to have lost his old obstinate determination. He had been in his youth Governor of Tabriz, and it was supposed that he cherished a deep hatred of the place, and that it was his heart's desire to capture it, and to have the inhabitants put to the sword. It may be then that, seeing his personal passion baulked, he had now less interest in the continuation of the struggle elsewhere. At all events, as soon as the siege had been raised, he issued a proclamation, in which he promised to restore the Constitution at the earliest possible date. The changed outlook, however, can have given little satisfaction to the sincerer Nationalists. It was the direct result of the Russian occupation, and had not been brought about by any efforts of their own. Russian prestige was in the ascendant, and

Russian influences would be paramount in the reformed administration. Only the prophets were jubilant, for it was an ending, futile as this, which they had always expected.

The unexpected was to happen. Suddenly in July our friends, the Caucasians of Resht, under the Sipahdar, and the Bahktiari at Ispahan, under their chieftain, Sardar Assad, at whose purposes all had mocked, decided to descend upon the capital. Coming from northerly and southerly points they joined forces near Teheran. The Shah's troops offered a futile resistance. Colonel Liakhof and his Cossacks parleyed with the rebels. The Shah drove under cover of night from his summer quarters to the Russian Legation, by the act tendering his resignation. The combined Nationalist forces took possession of Teheran, and Ahmed Mirza, Mohamed Ali's young son, reigned in his father's stead.

While we were in Persia little note was

Persian Notables Waiting the Arrival of the Young Shah

taken of the doings of Sardar Assad or of the Sipahdar. Interest was concentrated upon the fate of Satar Khan in Tabriz, upon the decisions of the Shah, and upon the action of Great Britain and Russia.

The Anglo-Russian agreement had stipulated that neither Power should intervene in the internal affairs of Persia. Nevertheless, throughout the struggle both Great Britain and Russia urged the Shah to come to terms with his subjects, and to restore the Constitution. Russia, moreover, robbed the Shah of an impending victory at Tabriz, which would have bolstered up his rule, at least for some time to come. An attempt was made to justify the despatch of Russian troops into Azerbaijan, by arguing that the lives of the foreigners of Tabriz were in danger; still it is clear on the face of things that action of this sort was contrary, at least, to the letter of the Anglo-Russian agreement. The Persians were not left to fight out their quarrel among themselves; the

fact being, for all the agreement might say, that the integrity of the country, marked as it had been into two spheres of influence, was already sapped. The conditions were humiliating then, and, indeed, are humiliating still, for Russia yet moves troops in and out of Persia at her will.

Thoughtful Persians perceived from the start that their country could not become "a nation once again" by its own efforts; the evil work of the Shahs had gone too far before the awakening. Half the terms of the bargain with Russia had already been signed by the Kajars. The fortunes of Persian Nationalism must depend upon extraneous circumstances. For complete success it was not enough that the autocracy should be destroyed. Russia's prestige in Persia, which had had its being under the old regime, must be lowered; and only England could lower it. But the Anglo-Russian agreement admitted the prestige of Russia in Persia; by it the five great cities of Persia—Teheran, Ispahan, Meshed,

Yezd, and Tabriz—were placed in Russia's "sphere of interest."

However, the disappointment caused in Persia by the Anglo-Russian agreement, though intelligible and reasonable enough, was not justified by events. Russia, unquestionably, would have interfered on the Shah's behalf during the civil war had the agreement not existed. She would have intervened necessarily on behalf of the existing Government, but not necessarily with an ambitious motive. Anarchy, such as ruled in the province of Azerbaijan, near her own borders, was her very direct concern. Nor is it certain that Great Britain would have cared to take, or would have been in a position to take, any effective counter-action which should have been favourable to the Nationalists. In short, the old regime would have received a new and long lease of life. The Anglo-Russian agreement, therefore, ensured for Persian Nationalism the half loaf which is better than no bread.

There is this to be said in excuse for

Persian grumblings, that Russia's good faith was not certain at all times during the course of the struggle. There was the *Affaire Liakhof*, for example, which had an ugly aspect. Liakhof was the Russian Instructor of the Shah's Persian Cossacks, whom he led in the attack upon the Mejliss, afterwards allowing himself to be appointed Commandant of Teheran, then placed under martial law. The Russian Government disclaimed any responsibility. "Colonel Liakhof," wrote M. Isvolsky, "acted without the orders, knowledge, or approval of the Imperial Government." But M. Isvolsky refused to withdraw Liakhof from the Persian service as he might have done, the Colonel being still on the active list of the Russian army. And the conduct of other Russian agents in Teheran was equally questionable.

A certain party in Russia did indeed clamour for adventure in Persia, but the policy of this party was not that of the Government, for whose attitude enough

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE (SEE CH. X)

allowance was not made by the friends of Persia in England. Threats were being directed against its agents in the country. The commercial interests of Russia were being imperilled. Northern Persia was filling with the most determined enemies of the Czar—terrorists from the Caucasus and elsewhere—who were an important asset to the Nationalists. The success of the Persian Constitutionalists, whatever the merits of their cause, would be in the nature of a triumph for all the revolutionary elements in Russia itself.

The Caucasian and other revolutionists, who aided the Nationalists, came to Persia, not merely as Persia's friends, but also as Russia's enemies. Their presence increased the difficulties of Russia and of her agents in Persia a thousandfold. "The agitations at Tiflis and Baku," writes a French observer, "had their natural counterstroke at Tabriz, Resht, and Teheran. It was Russian Mussulmen, taking advantage of the anarchy of the Caucasus whose action

determined the Persian Revolution." * Hence the nervous anxiety of Russia as she followed from their beginnings the course of events which led to the Shah's downfall. The strain was not relaxed when the Persian Nationalists, triumphant, appointed, as if to mark the accomplishment of their ends, a Russian subject of the Caucasus, "wanted" by the police of Tiflis, as Chief of Police in Teheran. †

Russia, therefore, was not able to view the dispute between the Shah and his subjects with impartial eyes. The Shah's overthrow would do harm to her prestige. At the same time the workings of the Anglo-Russian agreement seemed likely to ensure a shadowy triumph for the Nationalists in the long run. So she saved herself by intervening at Tabriz, becoming directly responsible for the insubstantial Nationalist victory, now in sight. It was a masterstroke, whether intended as such or no.

* *La Perse d'Aujourdhui.* By Eugène Aubin.

† *Contemporary Review*, Oct. and Nov., 1909.

The relief of Tabriz was the turning-point of the Civil War, and never can Russia's prestige in Persia have been higher than when she had saved the Nationalist garrison of this town from destruction. Later it fell a little, for the Sipahdar and Sardar Assad captured Teheran without asking for anyone's leave. Russia, on the whole, had, however, manipulated a very awkward situation cleverly and without moral discredit. Carrying out her undertakings with England she had run the risk of serious setback in Persia ; but eventually she gained in one direction what she lost in another. She has not tightened her grip upon Persia, but is in a position to do so when and if she should desire. She may be outside the counsels of the new Government, but, with debts due to her, and—by England's leave—with her troops in the north of Persia, she has come out of a doubtful affair decently enough, and more prosperously than the other parties concerned.

CHAPTER V

IN TEHERAN

ONE hundred and sixty years ago it pleased Agha Mohamed, the Kajar Shah, to establish his Court at Teheran. Tabriz was dangerously situated near turbulent frontiers, and at Ispahan his tribe was hated; so, moving in southerly directions, he stayed at a certain village as far from the one town as from the other. The site chosen thus lay at the junction of two caravan routes, where long camel trains, laden with rare and strange merchandise, were wont to pass, filling the air with odours of the South; and where fierce dark horsemen often stopped to plunder and to feast as they returned from battles in the North to the dear rosy and golden cities of Shiraz and of Ispahan. The monarch of the Elburz, Demavend, a giant even among the

mountains of Asia, stood sentinel over the new capital of Persia. Beneath it palaces and legations arose; gardens with trees and flowers and ponds were laid out; and the mud roofs of the ancient village stretched far and wide to the line of delicate poplars that broke the onward roll of the desert.

A deep ditch or bank, eleven miles in circumference, circles Teheran. We crossed a bridge and, passing under one of the thirteen gateways of the town, entered an untidy thoroughfare with low mud houses on either side. A tram crowded with passengers ran along the edge of the noisy and dirty street. Shopkeepers sat crossed-legged upon their stalls and among their goods. There was little colour or charm here and our hearts sank; we were reminded of Kasvin. Further on, the town opened out, and we passed on our left-hand side a barren stretch of stone and of sand, enclosed on three sides by a high wall, on the fourth by the brightly painted barracks of the Persian Cossacks,—low plaster buildings with

gleaming tin roofs. Through an opening we had a glimpse of this morsel of desert that lies unreclaimed in the very heart of the city—the Meidan-i-Mashk. It is the playground of the populace, and yet not a tree, not a blade of grass grows upon it. No benches have been set out, and there are no pathways, but such as have been scored from gate to gate by the wheels of carriages and the hoofs of horses.

Afterwards we often climbed to the roof of an adjacent house and looked over the great parade ground of Teheran. There one saw, as it were, the immemorial monotonies of the desert in miniature. Yet all the world passed by, for there is no place in Teheran where a citizen is more likely to encounter his friend or his enemy. Sometimes the sun blazed down and transformed the scene. Then one seemed to be watching under a microscope the little crowds and groups, the carriages, the riders, that dotted the passages from one gate to another. Now and again a

Cossack mounted at the doors of the barracks, and dashed madly, blindly, lengthways or breadthways, over the Meidan, his horse's hoofs resounding across the silent atmosphere.

In some of the villages through which we had passed we had noticed children playing a curious and rather ineffective game. The implements used were a stick and a light wooden fragment half a yard long and three inches wide. The "batsman" holds the sticks and hits the piece of wood as high as possible into the air; it drops among the "fieldsmen" who stand about fifty yards away. In our experience, as spectators, the "batsman" always got himself out. Efforts were made, but never once was the fragment caught in the crowd. The batsman retired when, wearied by his exertions, he missed his aim and the "ball" dropped to the ground untouched. The parade ground which we have described is the home of this amusement in Teheran. The more heroic game of football is also

played on its unkindly soil by the English employés in the Imperial Bank of Persia and the Indo-European Telegraph Company. Matches are decided under difficulties. Crowds of Persians assemble along the touch lines and shriek with delight whenever a fall occurs. These spectators have not yet grasped the more elementary idea of the game, and it has been suggested by some among them that each side should kick the same way, for then many goals would be scored. When a game is in progress all the dried fruit sellers of Teheran arrive on the scene, and erect their flimsy little wooden stands immediately behind the goals. The distracted owners have to be compensated for the full value of their stock whenever a misdirected shot showers their dates, nuts, raisins, and plums in wild confusion. A detachment of Persian Cossacks is always present throughout. Armed with their thonged cutting whips, they ride up and down along the touch lines, and prevent the crowds from encroaching over them.

THE MEIDAN-I-SHAH

We arrived in the Tup-i-Meidan, and were confronted by a fantastically shaped and gaily coloured pavilion—the Imperial Bank of Persia. In this square a detachment of the Shah's troops was being reviewed, prior to an expedition against the rebels, by the side of a line of cannon. Here we turned to the left and drove up the Avenue des Ambassadeurs or Khiaban-i-Dowlet, in which our hotel was situated.

Another road from the Tup-i-Meidan leads, through the Nasariyeh Gate, which stands by the side of the Imperial Bank of Persia, into the bazaars and native quarters of the town; and through the Dowlet Gate at the southern side of the square one reaches the royal palace of the Shahs. The Dowlet Gate also leads into the Meidan-i-Shah, which lies alongside the palace gardens. The large water tank in its centre gives to this Meidan a cool luxurious air. It is a little oasis occupied usually by ragged sentries, beggars, and camel trains, and contains the sacred and inviolate

Cannon of Pearls, under whose shadow the hunted politician or criminal may have sanctuary. He has a choice between the British Legation and the Cannon of Pearls. Personally we should prefer the British Legation, as being more favourable to one's material welfare; there the *Basti** is fed.

The Avenue des Ambassadeurs is the most important street in the Europeanized quarter of Teheran. It contains the various foreign hotels, Russian, French, and German; one or two photographers' shops; a library, and, at the northern end, the *Cercle des Etrangers*, the Russian Bank, and the British, Turkish, French, and United States Legations. It should not be supposed, however, that the avenue resembles at all a large westernised street, in Pera or Galata, for example. A part of its

* Basti = Refugee. In times of stress it is the custom of Persian politicians to take "Bast." Thus the late Shah, when overthrown by his enemies, took "Bast" in the Russian Legation. The British Legation was similarly favoured by the Nationalists in 1906 and 1908.

Outside the French Legation

space upon one side is occupied by native shops—stalls, that is to say, divided the one from the other by partitions, and protected above by boards laid crossways upon these. Armenians and other foreigners have also set up places of business in the street, but, as they have acquired for their purposes Persian dwellings, which have no window but at the back, there are no means of indicating to the passer-by that he should stop, as the case may be, to be photographed, to buy damp biscuits, or to purchase back numbers of the English, French and German comic newspapers. The houses of the Legations are, of course, built, with certain allowances for climatic conditions, in the European manner, and various rich Persian own, in the neighbourhood of the Khiaban-i-dowlet residences, gaudily decorated like villas of the rich French bourgeois, which rise, tall and narrow, over a desert of mud roofs. But most of the buildings in the avenue are of the ordinary Persian sort, as they are in the

similarly planned streets that run parallel with it to the east, and in the more open and wealthier districts of the town generally. The roofs are of mud, usually flat, but sometimes in the form of a dome, and the walls, of brick or of mud. Decoration is, as one would expect, geometric. Distemper is freely used, and coloured tiles are often introduced on wall spaces in odd formal patterns. The most important houses are built with double courtyards, round each of which runs a wide verandah. At least two of the hotels in the Avenue des Ambassadeurs must once have been the houses of Persian grandees. Their general structure has not been altered. Ours was a one-storied series of buildings, and contained a porter's lodge, a tower, and two pretty and well-planted courtyards on to which apartments opened across shady balconies. Within, however, English style reigned supreme. Truly British were food, furniture, and ornamentation. An enlarged photograph of the late Shah, Musaffer-ed-din, good lover of

Europe that he was ! hung upon the dining-room walls.

Nasr-ed-din Shah tried to turn his capital into a European city but failed in the attempt. He began by widening its borders. Consequently the circumference of Teheran is vast in relation to a population of 150,000 people. A part of the area is mere desert, on which the builder is not likely to operate for a long while yet. West of Legation Street is what may be called the fashionable suburb, one can note evidences of a deliberate plan. The roads are well laid out and run at right angles to one another. Space is abundant. Nearly every house has its garden. The architecture of this western district is poor enough, seen in detail, but the hot sun casts purple shadows everywhere, and there is a certain picturesqueness of light and shade, especially remarkable in the Avenue des Ambassadeurs itself. Then the snow-covered mountains, though in truth long leagues away over the desert, are always

in the picture, seeming to rise on the northern outskirts of the town.

Pierre Loti having first visited Ispahan, Shiraz, and the south, *la vraie Perse*, arrived at Teheran in a jaundiced mood; he has the airs of a very superior traveller indeed in that part of his beautiful book in which he describes the capital. We do not know whether that inn to which he went and from which he fled was called "The English Hotel." Perhaps. The sign over the gates would alone have deprived him of any judgment his vanity yet allowed him.

At the moment of Pierre Loti's arrival, Musaffer-ed-din Shah was about to start for Europe with his suite. His Majesty had a restless soul. No traveller during his reign ever reached Teheran, or at least no traveller who published his notes, but his Majesty was at the point of departure from it. Less happily circumstanced, his son only once travelled to Europe, and then, not only as Musaffer-ed-din could well do, at the expense of the State, but in its care, an exile.

What is there to be seen in this city? "Rien," says Loti, "de bien ancien ou de bien beau sans doute." There are numerous mosques, with Turkish outlines, often followed in gateways and other structures of a like nature; minarets and domes are of green and gold. Examples of an improper use of timber are frequent. Sagging results, no repairs are made, and ruin shows everywhere. At least there are the thirteen city gates, each of them imposing enough from a distance. But on a closer inspection they turn out to be ill-designed and ill-executed. They are generally of sun-dried brick or mud with a covering of queerly-patterned tiles in gay colours. The round arch, sometimes of simple mud, sometimes of a sort of extraordinary composite material, is used, as a rule; and, more rarely, the pointed arch in brick. There are the bazaars with their narrow streets and strange little booths, often but a few feet square, lighted only by ornamental holes in the brick vaulting. Itinerant traders

wander with trays through the dense throng which opens at intervals for the passage of carriages, camel trains, or the humble donkey. Life here is worth the watching. It is curious to observe the good tempered apathy which informs every proceeding. Suddenly someone has a momentary desire to act energetically. Tableau! All the rest would amiably give way, but know not how. There are the gardens of Teheran, the Shah's gardens, the gardens of his nobles. The art of formal landscape gardening is well understood, and many a gate upon the dusty road leads into an oasis of trees and flowers, lakes and water channels—a paradise of precise severe beauty. There is the palace of the Shah, whose wonderful eastern treasures have been so often descibed, and where yet the vulgarity of the west, brought hither by the Shah Nasr-ed-din, cries out in every chamber and along every corridor.

Teheran is the chosen city of the Kajars,

and by the will of that dynasty alone was it raised to its present level of importance. Poetry, romance—the words vanish at the mention of the name of these remarkable people, and there is no touch of either in in the modern history of Teheran. For the glamour of Persia you must travel further—to Ispahan, Shiraz, and the cities of the South. On the other hand it is best to stay in Teheran if you would understand the Persia of the last hundred years, the Persia of the Kajar Shahs. For it was under the Kajars that Persia first turned her gaze westward.

The Shahs visited Europe, and the members of their suites learned to talk of politics, and, perhaps, of kings also, in the phraseology of the West. Musaffer-ed-din thought, or, it may be, the first idea first occurred to Nasr-ed-din, that it would be nice to have a Cabinet. So one courtier was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, another, Minister for War, a third, Minister of the Interior. If the King of England

had a Cabinet, why should not the Shah of Persia have one too ?

It was appearances that they cared about, not the thing itself ; there must have been something essentially snobbish in the characters of these two monarchs. Not having the resources at their command, they were unable to transform the aspect of their capital. But they worked hard to turn the palace of the Shahs' into a Harrod's Stores of Pantomime, and the richer among their courtiers erected European dwellings for themselves and put ornaments from Birmingham upon their walls and chimney pieces. Teheran grew, but it never acquired the dignity of a capital, nor any charm. As a native product, it is a dull and over-grown village. As an exotic growth, it reflects the snobbishness and the senseless vanity of its masters.

These qualities of the Shahs' had a disastrous influence upon the national life. Western ideas spread, but the Shahs had not the will, nor the nation the means, to

adopt Western methods. The Japanese contrast is striking. In Tokio Western methods were adopted in order that the nation might compete with Europe, and, certainly not, at least in the first instance, for love. But in Persia the middle classes learned to talk the "shop" of English politics, merely, as it might seem, for the sake of displaying the appearance of a European culture.

The subject is a delicate one. It is questionable, let us say—for we would avoid suspicion of an insolent patronage—whether the East has anything to learn from the West. We may even ask why in Heaven's name should Persia want a Parliament, a Mejliss, Constitutionalism. . . .

Possibly, however, it is the will of God that every nation in the world should establish a Parliament on English lines, and listen twice a year to a speech from the Throne.

On this assumption such Westerners as frequented Nationalist society in the capital were at an advantage, their countries

having already performed the will of God at least in one respect.

Unconsciously they came to regard the Persian nation, in so far as it was represented by the reformers, as people do a family which apes the manners and conversations prevailing in higher stations than its own, and which yet has not the means or capacity of changing its milieu.

The atmosphere surrounding such a family must be one of futility, destructive of dignity. The snobbishness may in the long run have good results. But meanwhile those whose superiority is thus assumed cannot be blamed if they talk lightly upon the subject, laughing now and again at many a well-meant effort.*

* We are writing here from the point of view of the superficial observer; in other words, we are dealing with the more obvious aspects of things Persian. For instance, we have taken no account of the religious movement, called Babism, with which we did not come into contact. The rise of this native religious movement is, however, the most interesting circumstance of Persian history in the nineteenth century, as its growth and influence will probably be in the twentieth. Babism is, we are assured, indirectly connected with the modern political aspirations of the country.

A Garden in Teheran

We found it hard to realise that we were living in the capital of a country in revolution. One woke, indeed, every morning to the sound of mournful martial music, and, going out found soldiers, such as they were, everywhere in the street, or, passing by the Turkish Embassy, entered its garden to chat with the crowd of *Bastis* there. Yet Teheran remained absolutely quiet till the shelookh,* long attended, came at long last months later. At the same time Teheran was the city of Persia, in which the Nationalist cause was best understood; all the citizens, except such as were directly in the service of the Shah, were Constitutionalists. Even the miserable soldiers of the Shah must have looked forward to the day when the Sipahdar and the Bahktiari should enter the capital, and the shelookh, which neither they nor the populace had the courage to force, should take place. For a shelookh means loot, and there was some looting done upon that day of last July

† Shelookh = Street row.

when Teheran was captured by the Nationalists—it was the royalists, however, who seized the opportunity, on the principle, no doubt, that they might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. The average Teheranee is not a heroic figure. "Our friends in the capital," said Satar Khan, the defender of Tabriz, "might take the Shah and his palaces with sticks if they had the slightest energy and courage."

Talk was the order of the day. The educated Nationalists seemed to feel—mistakenly, as time showed—that the issue of the struggle depended neither upon the efforts of the Shah nor upon those of his enemies, but upon the actions of the British and the Russian Governments. Wherever one went brilliant talk reigned upon the subtler points of British and Russian diplomacy. And one might go anywhere, visit anyone. One day we called upon Colonel Liakhof, Commander of the Persian Cossacks and Governor-General of the city, another day upon Saad-ed-dowleh, the

Minister for Foreign Affairs, to whom we talked, through his secretary and interpreter, a young man fresh from Harrow. Occasionally an incident added some lighter element to those daily visits of ours. One such we recall. As we were being shown into the sittingroom of a prominent Nationalist, we heard a sudden noise as of a bumping on the floor. Our host entered and put the usual political conundrums.

Ought ciphers from the Shah's Government to be accepted by the officials of the Indo-European Telegraph Company ?

Ought not the Russian Government to inform the Shah that neither now nor at any future time would he be received as a *Basti* in the Russian Legation ?

From whom was the Shah in receipt of funds ?

Exactly in what sense was the word "non-intervention" used in the Anglo-Russian agreement ?

Was it not true that the Shah had sworn allegiance to the Constitution ? Had he

not broken his oath ? Was he not, therefore, an usurper ? Ought the British and Russian Governments to negotiate with an usurper ? Did not such negotiations imply a direct intervention in the internal affairs of Persia ? Did not the Nationalists, so long as the Constitution was in abeyance, represent Persia ? Therefore, had they not the right to any money that might be going ? Would not a loan to them be merely a question of business courtesy such as prevails between nations, compromising not at all the independence of Persia ?

What was the political significance of the term " Nationalist "?*

Suddenly, while we were in the very middle of the discussion, a scared face, over

* Several Nationalists were at pains to point out that the term was an unfortunate one. Being in bad odour owing to " those Irish," it would not attract the sympathy of English people. The point was brought before us by the [Persian] correspondent of the *Times* among others. Curiously enough at this very moment an Irish M.P., under misapprehension that the *Times* had dismissed this gentleman from its service, asked a question

which a look of relief was gradually dawning, appeared from beneath the sofa, followed by a body wrapped in flowing Persian robes. This was a Basti to whom our friend had given succour. Now he came from his hiding place and sat beside us. The host acted as interpreter, while the Basti talked about the marriage-adventures of the late Shah, Musaffer-ed-din.

The smart little *Kaleskys* in Teheran are a bright feature of the streets. Modelled upon the Russian droschky, built very lightly to carry two passengers, and usually drawn by a pair of Turcoman horses, they go at a terrific pace, and their drivers—usually Tartars—take a keen delight in

on his behalf in the English House of Commons. This gentleman's use of the phrase "those Irish" and his anxiety lest a parallel should be drawn between the Irish and Persian Nationalists were, in the circumstances, unkind. The ingratitude was of course unconscious; the English newspapers containing the Irish M.P.'s question and the *Times'* explanation of the facts had not yet arrived in Teheran.

shaving corners, and in racing their fellows. Collisions are frequent, but harm is seldom done, and the culprits, after exchanging torrents of abuse, continue on their impetuous ways.

Teheran ought to be one of the healthiest cities in the world, lying as it does 5,000 feet above the sea level in a great open plain, and owning one of the most delightful climates in the world. But the poorer parts of the town are terribly overcrowded, and possess no system of drainage; hence fearful epidemics sweep periodically over it. Native doctors are quite unable to cope with these situations as they arise; so that the year 1872, when the Board of Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of the U. S. A. established a branch, with a hospital in connection, should be a red letter year in Persian annals. The funds of the society were at first very limited, and the idea of opening a medical mission in this stronghold of Mohammedanism was

GARDENS OF THE ROYAL PALACE

met on every hand with prophecies of failure. Nothing daunted, however, the Board soon brought its ideals into the realm of fact, and a flourishing school and hospital stand to-day as witnesses to the soundness of their judgment and the reality of their courage. The Rev. Mr. Esselstein and John G. Wishard, M.A., M.D., are now the respective heads of the scholastic and medical departments; and the confidence reposed in them has more than justified their Board's choice, as for more than twenty years they have both remained in exile, side by side, steadily gaining ground in the city where they have chosen to work. The schools at present contain some 180 girls and 250 boys, about fifty per cent. of whom are Christians. Over 3,000 children have received their education in these schools; whose old pupils may be found occupying important positions throughout Persia, for both boys and girls on leaving them are much sought after by employers. The cost of

carrying on the work is borne practically entirely by American subscriptions. It is true that when possible the parents of the children are supposed to pay a small annual sum as a fee. But Dr. Esselstein assured us that this is a very elastic rule, and no child who wishes to enter is ever turned away. It is impossible to estimate the influence this work is having in a land where there is absolutely no education offered to any save to the children of the nobility.

The hospital is located in the north-east quarter of the town, near the Doshen Tepe Gate, about two miles from the schools. The buildings, including Dr. Wishard's own residence, stand in a large Persian garden, the main wing being a long low house of brick, with a simple façade. Dr. Wishard courteously showed us over the whole hospital, and explained the system on which the work is carried on. The wards are capable of accommodating about seventy persons, and are delightfully clean and

comfortable. Also, there are two small private wards for well-to-do patients who desire privacy. Patients of every creed, sect, and class are admitted, and the huge majority of cases are treated free. The patient is, however, asked to contribute, if possible, towards the hospital funds; but the amount received from this source is trifling compared to the annual expenditure. The value of the property is now about fifty thousand dollars. One of the most interesting features is a new wing for women, which has lately been added by a Mohammedan lady of high rank, who had herself been cured of a painful disease at the hospital. The operating theatres are three in number, and the largest is up-to-date in all respects, air tight, and lined with white glazed tiles.

Not the least important part of the work is that of the dispensaries. In them one may always see men and women of many Asiatic nationalities gathered together, waiting their turn to be attended to by the

doctor, or by one of his native assistants. The amount of private work is enormous, and both Dr. Wishard and Dr. Mary Smith have always their hands full. The total number of patients treated annually amounts to about 20,000, and this takes no count of the patients who are visited at their own homes. It is here that Dr. Smith plays so important a part, as she is permitted to penetrate into the women's quarters of the Persian native houses.

American interests in Persia are limited. Happily the United States has not the evil reputation for ceaseless intrigue against this unhappy country which belongs to more than one European State. Americans are associated in the Persian mind chiefly with the work of the Mission of which we have spoken; and to it even the late Shah—reactionary in religious matters though he was—paid a tribute. The death, too, of Mr. Baskerville, an American of Tabriz, who trained a band of men during the siege, and was shot by the royalist troops

in a sortie, will not be forgotten by the patriotic party, and is put to the credit of American ameliorative efforts in the land of the Sun and the Lion. However, America does not yet rival France in the affections of educated Persians, in whose eyes the latter country is indeed "mère des arts, des armes, et des lois." The United States is remote, as an American once remarked to us of Persia. By way of a joke they say in Teheran that the presence of the American doctors, and of the American clergyman, who are the heads of the Mission, is the only reason for the existence of a United States Legation.

CHAPTER VI

KAJARS

THE Shahs of Persia! The words evoke wonderful, strange, and mysterious visions which carry one's imagination back to the days of Solomon and of the Queen of Sheba, to monarchs who were above all the fears of life except satiety. But Ahmed Mirza, who is the ruler of Persia to-day, calls himself the unhappiest boy in the world—he is but fourteen years old—because he has been crowned Shah; he weeps in the Royal Palace at Teheran, and will not even be interested in the choice of wives that is being made for him. He is the seventh of the Kajar Shahs.

This remarkable dynasty comes of a tribe of Turkish origin which, during the period of the first invasions, encamped

upon the plateau of Persia. They claim descent from Turc, son of Japhet, and it is certain at any rate that their fame is old—they have figured prominently in Persian history for nearly one thousand years. In mediæval times they were granted the privilege of wearing the Red Turban, and henceforward ranked as one of the seven red-headed tribes of Persia. They aimed at a supremacy among the tribes; and the path of their ambition was stained with blood. During the seventeenth century one of the heads of the tribe, Fath Ali Khan, was made joint Commander-in-Chief of the Persian Army, with a certain Nadir Kuli Khan, of the Sefavis, son of the then Shah of Persia. Nadir Kuli Khan having quarrelled with his colleague, murdered him, and so began a blood feud between the Sefavis and the Kajars, which ended when every member of the Sefavi dynasty had been removed by death or torture, and a Kajar seated on the throne of Persia. This Kajar

was the great Agha Mohamed Shah. It was Agha Mohamed's nephew and successor, Fath Ali, who is famous for the number of his wives, though one doubts if they were, as history says, seven hundred. One of Fath Ali's progeny, Nasr-ed-din, was the most illustrious ruler that Persia has produced in modern times. The first Persian sovereign to visit Europe, he was much influenced by the new ideas with which he came into contact. He, too, the father of forty children, married often, and was, like most of the Kajars, handsome, strong, and a great sportsman. His rule was sometimes violent, but under it Persia became united and comparatively peaceful. Brigandage ceased. Travelling became safe, and so it is to Nasr-ed-din that we owe for good or evil the very considerable literature of Persian travel that now exists.

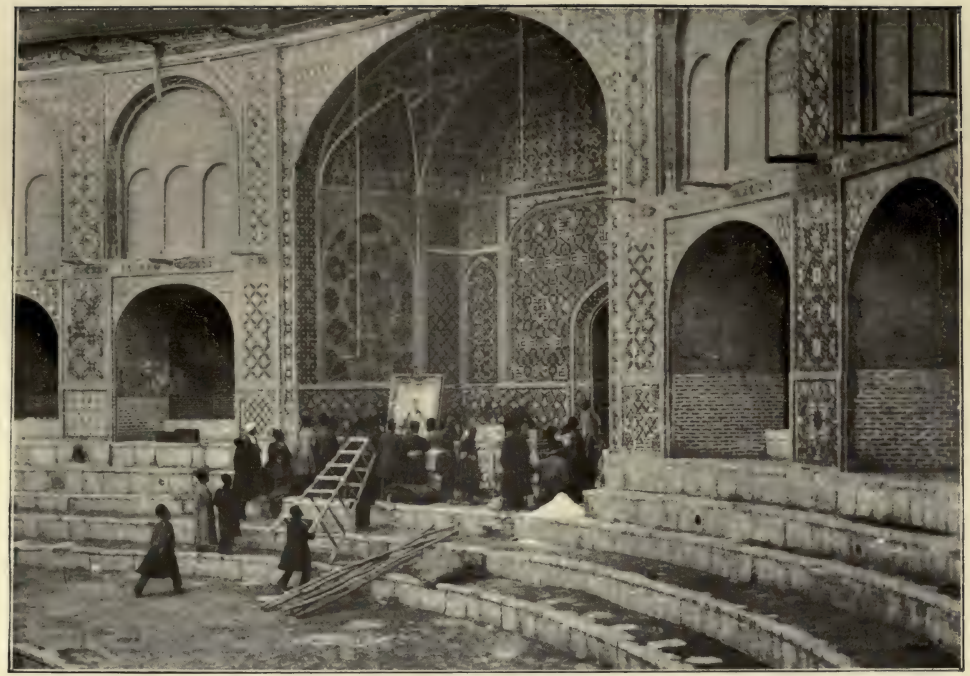
The House of the Kajars adopt the "blood royal" system of succession—that is to say, the eldest son succeeds only if his mother's blood be royal. She must

also be a wife, an *akdi* (four *akdis* are permitted), something more than an ordinary lady of the harem or *sighe*. Formerly, however, it was the custom for the Shah to nominate his successor from among his sons, without regard to the seniority or the nobility of birth of the mother. The new rule has been broken. For instance, the mother of the late Shah was of royal blood on one side only. One can see how a state of doubt as to the actual rights of succession must make for jealousy and hatred, and jealousy and hatred have always been, and are to this day, features of the relations between members of the Persian Royal House. There are, of course, an enormous number of Shahzadahs (king's descendants), and many Persians with royal blood in their veins occupy most modest positions in telegraph offices or in banks, but all must be provided for in some way or other. Hence these king's descendants are a severe drain upon the resources of the country. You may see at any Royal levée in

the Palace a row of seedy unhappy individuals with frock coats and jewelled swords—they are Shahzadahs. The royal family of Persia represents a very definite organisation, at the head of which stands that important official, called the Ilkhani, who has jurisdiction over it and the care of its interests.

As for daughters of Shahs, who know where they go, the majority of them, ladies who are named very charmingly—Pride, Purity, Chastity, Splendour, and the like ?

Nasr-ed-din was succeeded by his son Musaffer-ed-din, whose reign is still fresh in everyone's memory. His visits to Europe, during the course of which enormous sums were squandered, for the sake of a tawdry display, attracted much attention, largely owing to his habits and customs, which are, perhaps, the better without recapitulation. Innumerable photographs hand down to posterity the pleasant features of a monarch whose private life, like the rabbit's in the



MUSAFFER-ED-DIN'S BURIAL-PLACE IN THE THEATRE OF THE ROYAL PALACE

Bad Child's Book, was a disgrace. Musaffer-ed-din had, too, a scandalous taste in art. Otherwise he was a worthy and good-natured man, peaceful and anxious to live—

> Musaffer-ed-din the Good
> Lived just as long as he could

(the rhyme says)—and to let live. He granted, as we know, the Constitution, but, dying, left his country in a disastrous condition.

The newly enfranchised people of Teheran welcomed the young Shah, who came from Tabriz, with manifestations of joy; and Mohamed Ali was crowned on January 19, 1907, a date fixed by the Court Astrologers, with great pomp. He had been named *Vali Ahd* by his father, and was the eldest son; he had been Governor of Tabriz, as all *Vali Ahds* are—a cruel and violent Governor—but there had been a good deal of intrigue against his succession to the throne. Certain of his relatives argued

that they had a prior right. To begin with, his mother's father, Mirza Taki Khan, a distinguished statesman who married the sister of Nasr-ed-din Shah, and was afterwards murdered by order of that monarch, was not a Kajar. Moreover, the lady herself, who was the statesman's daughter, Mohamed Ali's mother, and Musaffer-ed-din's cousin-wife, had turned out so badly, and had become such a Scandal, that the brothers and uncles of Mohamed Ali had the gossip of the teashops to repeat, which gossip questioned the Vali Ahd's legitimacy.

Mohamed Ali put an end to the man whose mistress his mother had been, but even thus he could not silence the scandal-mongers who were embittering the days of his youth.

As Shah he had certain merits. He economised, worked hard, and kept himself well informed, to which end he used very direct methods, being ready to converse with the humblest of his subjects. His advisers found him generous, but at the

same time, obstinate and suspicious, always ready to believe the darker tale and to take the less generous course.

Born in 1872, he is still a young man. Stout and below the middle height, he is not at all kingly in appearance, and lacks that dignity for which his family have been noted. With his gold-rimmed spectacles, and the curious habit he has of moving his head from side to side, he is like some strange bird. He is little of a sportsman, and here again he differed from his predecessors, who spent much of their time hunting or shooting on the slopes of the Shimran. But his education is very fair, and he speaks two languages, at least, besides his own, and these fluently, Turkish and Arabic.

Once he was driving through the streets of Teheran in a procession formed of a motor car in front and a carriage behind, when a bomb was thrown at the former vehicle in which the would-be assassins supposed that he sat. Fortunately he sat

not in the car, but in the carriage. He remained quite cool, but, as he stepped from the carriage, three or four shots were fired from the roof of a house close by. Then he gave way to furious anger, seized a rifle from one of his guards, with the intention of returning the shot, and cried out that he would have the whole quarter destroyed and its inhabitants put to death. After a while, when his fury had abated, he went back to the Palace on foot and reached it safely. A week later he left the royal building, and took his wife and family, and a great part of his personal property, to the pavilion of the Bagh-i-Shah (the Shah's gardens) outside the town. Here, during the remainder of his troubled reign, he was practically a prisoner, and the sequel—his abdication and flight to the Russian Legation when the revolutionists entered Teheran in July, 1909—was really inevitable. No monarch ever had fewer friends than Mohamed Ali, and if there was one thing on which the Nationalists

were determined, it was that the country should be rid of his presence.

Some years before coming to the throne he had married the daughter of Naib-es-Sultaneh, his uncle, a former Commander-in-Chief of the Persian Army. This lady Malek-ed-Djehan, the Queen of the World, is an extremely capable woman, who exercises a considerable influence over her husband. He, in his turn, shows great devotion to her. This may account for the fact that he took but one legal wife, but one *akdi*. It is Malek-ed-Djehan's son Ahmed Mirza, who is the unhappy boy-Shah of Persia to-day. Mohamed Ali has two other sons, one of whom, the son of a *sighe*, is older than Ahmed Mirza. While we were in Teheran we used to see this lad, the *Etezad os Soltaneh*, standing on parade by the side of the giant Colonel Liakhof. He was second in command in the Persian Cossacks. Another Russian, Colonel Smirnoff, was responsible for the education of all three children, a fact, no doubt,

suggestive to those who suspected an all-pervading Russian influence at the Court.

Certain members of the Kajar family, near relatives of the late Shah, deserve mention.

There was a half-brother who, wishing to conquer India, began by practising the art of war in the province of Hamadan. He was not that brother, the Chooa-es-Sultaness, sometime Governor of Shiraz, and Panoff's captive. There was again a brother who had been thrown into chains at Teheran, and yet had managed somehow to escape to Europe; he was the tactless prince of whom we had heard in Warsaw.

The late Shah was well able to deal with these exuberant young men; but a person whom he really feared was his uncle, the Zill-es-Sultan, a brother of Musaffer-ed-din's. Marriage takes place early in Persia, yet it is curious to think that Mazid Mirza, Shadow of the King, who was born no further back than 1850, is a great uncle of

the present Shah's. The Zill has ever just missed the tide that bears to the highest fortune. But even in Nasr-ed-din's reign he was a prominent figure on the political stage. He was older than Musaffer-ed-din, but Musaffer-ed-din was nominated Vali Ahd, for the Zill's mother had been of simple birth. For a time, however, the Zill was regarded as a candidate for the succession, such evidence of capacity did he give as Governor of Ispahan. Under the old regime it was the custom to farm out provinces to the highest bidder, who in turn farmed out this or that district, and was quite independent in the matter of the levying of taxation, and the Zill acquired governorship after governorship in the South of Persia, made an immense fortune, trained an army, and practically ruled over an independent kingdom. His justice was heavy, but he was known as a man of ideas and culture, a "free thinker," the friend of many distinguished Europeans, who offered free hospitality to every

traveller who passed through the wonderful city where he reigned.

Naturally his activities aroused the jealousy of the Court at Teheran. Then Musaffer-ed-din died, and the Zill was again passed over, although Mohamed Ali's claims were as questionable as his own, and on much the same account. Lively passages were exchanged between the Shah and his nominal subordinate. On June 26, 1908, a few days after the destruction of the Mejliss, Mohamed Ali telegraphed to King Edward VII., his "good and exalted brother." He complained that his Government had been thwarted by the actions of certain members of the British Legation, and incidentally named the Zill chief "mischief-maker." It was the opinion of the British Minister that the Zill's presence in Persia would render the restoration of tranquility difficult, and he was advised to arrange for an immediate departure. The Zill accepted the advice and left his native land for Europe. His house in

Teheran had meanwhile been pillaged, but he carried guarantees as to the safety of his other properties.

The Zill's politics have always been a mystery. Certainly the Liberals loved him no more than they loved his nephew. They did, indeed, succumb at last to the boyish charms of Ahmed Mirza, but the cry, while we were in Teheran, was "Not another Kajar."

The Zill returned to Persia in July, 1909. He landed at Enzeli just at the time that the Bahktiari and the Caucasians, united under Sardar Assad and the Sipahdar, had begun seriously to threaten the Court and the capital. We at home read of his arrival, and it struck us that the Shah's suspicions of his uncle were being justified. It scarcely seemed an honourable thing that the Zill was doing. The understanding had been that he was retired from politics. Now he was on the stage again—for the third time a candidate for the throne.

The Zill landed at Enzeli, indeed, but he

proceeded, at least as a free man, only as far as Resht. For at Resht the same fate that had overtaken the *Chooa* a few months previously overtook him. The Nationalists gave him board and lodging, and a ransom of £400,000 was demanded. The new administration that was being established at Teheran needed money, and the Zill is the richest man in Persia. He proved more obstinate than his nephew, and had to be brought inland and confined in a fortress among the groves of Rudbar.

Apparently it was just a chance that he arrived in Persia when a new Government, in desperate financial straits, strove to establish itself. By his coming he indicated characteristics as naïve, a faith as simple, as even his relative, the Sipahdar, or his nephew, the Chooa, could boast. All three quietly put their heads into the hornet nest of Resht without troubling to enquire as to the nature and intentions of the little insect world.

The Chooa sailed from Baku, landed at

Enzeli, and drove to Resht so soon as he heard that the Nationalists had killed a royalist governor, yet he himself had been a royalist governor in Shiraz, whence he had had to fly a few months previously. The Sipahdar, at one time an active royalist, arrived at Resht on the very evening of the successful uprising. Three political somnambulists!

The Sipahdar (a Kajar, too, being the Shah's cousin), was charming and handsome, but a poor man. In fact his estates were in pawn with the Russian bank, and had also been confiscated by the Shah. Both processes took place simultaneously. However, it would be a pity, the *Reshtis* thought, if they made no use of so distinguished a passer-by.

To be just to the Sipahdar, he was by no means a figurehead governor. His management of affairs in Resht, as, later on in Teheran, on the occasion of the pourparlers with Liakhof, was excellent, and won golden opinions from all parties.

After the deposition of Mohamed Ali the Sipahdar was appointed Minister for War *vice* Emir Bahadour (Reactionary, resigned). Nasr-el-Mulk of Paris, however, refused the Premiership, and the Sipahdar was given the vacant post Thus the one-time royalist general became the leader of the new Nationalist Government, in spite of the suspicions entertained of him by more advanced politicians.

We have imagined the following conversation between the Sipahdar, Mohamed Ali, and Panoff. It is supposed to take place through the telephone. The Sipahdar is Governor of Resht, the Shah is Shah still. We put it down because it seems to illustrate the fantastic side of things which is uppermost in one's mind as it runs on the Kajars:—

The Sipahdar.—Hullo! Are you there? Is that Mohamed Ali? Well, I'm the Sipahdar.

The Shah.—Oh, you old villain! What are you doing in that galley?

The Sipahdar.—Never you mind, my boy.

But, look here, we've just blown up the damned Russian bridge at Mendjil.*

The Shah.—Talking of Russian bridges reminds me of Russian banks; and I'm hoping to get a loan from Exemplaroff† on the security of your estates, which I've been obliged to confiscate.

The Sipahdar. — My dear sir, they're already mortgaged with Exemplaroff.

The Shah.—Damn!

The Sipahdar.—You'd better reach for your hat and take the jewels out. Hullo! Can you hear? We've caught your brother, the *Chooa.* A splendid fellow, called Panoff, just arrived here, did it.

The Shah.—For God's sake, keep him. Don't let him come along here. He'd be a frightful expense at the Palace.

The Sipahdar.—All right! As I was saying—about this Panoff. A regular devil, I assure you. He and his Caucasians will

* Important strategical point on the road between Resht and Teheran.

† Director of the Russian Bank at Teheran.

be off down the road like an express train in a second. . . . So take care of yourself. I should advise you to take out your pa's motor.* What? You've sold the engines. So sorry. And the road that Panoff 'll be coming by is the only one in this beastly country that a motor can go. Poor fellow! Try the Russian Legation.

Panoff (seizing the receiver).—Is that you, you monstrous old reactionary. I tell you I've the very best line in bombs. Just you wait and see! How's Liakhof? Tell the brigand he'd best put his red and blue dressing gowns† in a safe place—the Russian bank or somewhere — BEFORE HE JUMPS. Just you look out, you two! I shan't be long—due in China next month.‡ . . .

The Shah rings off.

* Musaffer-ed-din was the proud possessor of a motor-car.

† Sarcastic allusion to the beautiful uniforms of the Russian colonel.

‡ It was said of Panoff and his comrades from Europe that when they had put "Persia on its legs," they intended to go and do the same for China. (Letter from the *Times* correspondent, *The Times*, Nov. 22, 1909).

CHAPTER VII

COLONEL LIAKHOF

We visited Colonel Liakhof, Instructor of the Persian Cossacks, who was then Governor-General of Teheran. The correspondent of the *Novoe Vreyma* drove with us to the Colonel's house and introduced us to the man whom we had heard called "Dictator of Persian Destinies," "The Shah's Evil Genius," &c.

We saw a young officer, six feet four inches high, with a small bullet-shaped head and a trimmed yellow beard. He wore a beautiful dark uniform, and walked with graceful, light movements that gave him an air of great distinction; in ordinary civilian dress he might have seemed too slight. He had blue, deep-set, gentle eyes, and a strong chin. We had supposed, from what we had

read of him in the newspapers, that his demeanour would be overbearing and brutal; but he looked like a character out of the New Testament.

Before coming to Persia Colonel Liakhof, then on the General Staff at Tiflis, had been employed several times on reconnaissance work in Eastern Asiatic Turkey. He received his appointment in Teheran in September, 1906.

His term of office fell during a particularly trying period. At the start a big difficulty was that his men had to go without their wages. It had formerly been the custom of the Exchequer to hand over at regular intervals to the Cossack Colonel a sum out of which he should pay his men; but soon after Liakhof's arrival the practice lapsed. The Government trusted that the Russian Bank would provide the necessary funds. The Brigade, they argued, is not our concern. Personally we regard it as rather a nuisance. However, we must put up with it to please the foreigners. But let the foreigners them-

Colonel Liakhof with Cossack Officers

selves support it! Had not a British military attaché written that "in case of disturbance they (the Cossacks) are the only organised body of troops available for the maintenance of order in the capital, and for the protection of the lives and property of foreigners, and it is, therefore, to the interest of all Europeans, that they should be maintained in an efficient state." Well, the Russian Bank advanced 80,000 tomans, and the Shah smiled shrewdly.

Of course, the Shah used those troops, when the time came, against his subjects. Some of them besieged Tabriz, and the others watched over his precious person at the Bagh-i-Shah, or cantered about the streets of Teheran. The pro-British Nationalists raised an outcry, arguing that but for the Russian Bank's loan he would have been without his Cossacks, and helpless; asserting, too, that the Bank was secretly advancing from time to time further sums for the maintenance of the brigade.

Liakhof struck out a new line when he ordered the bombardment of a mosque, on the occasion of the attack on the Mejliss, in June, 1908. Whether he had the right even to lead the Cossacks in this encounter remains undecided, but it seems certain that his determined, ruthless, momentary violence saved Teheran from a great deal of bloodshedding.

His life must have been in real danger, if not from the Nationalist, at least from the religious fanatic; and, though liked at the Legations and in the foreign society of the town, he spent most of his time between his house, that was closely guarded by Cossacks, and the barracks over the way, where it was supposed that he presided in person at the cross-examination of political suspects. Our impression was of a shy and retiring man, a simple soldier, wrapped up in his military duties. His talk was mostly of his Brigade—"My men," "My regiment."

"I saw His Majesty this morning," he said, and that "His Majesty was well,"

and that "His Majesty was *always* well." Because there was no human being but he whom we ever knew to speak respectfully of Mohamed Ali, we convinced ourselves that the picturesque colonel was deeply attached to the Shah, as to a lost cause; and we seemed to see a halo of romance settling around the brows of the Kajar. There was at least one man who would never desert the King. But when the Sipahdar and his allies attacked Teheran, though Liakhof indeed commanded the royalists, his resistance was half-hearted, for he gave the order to cease firing before the victory of the Nationalists was certain, and allowed the rebels a walk-over. Then, having run the Russian flag up over his house, he hobnobbed with the Sipahdar, and they made a handsome pair as they rode amicably through the streets of Teheran. And then, a month or two later, he left the country, unnoticed, forgotten and forgiven.

Liakhof was accused of being in league with the jingo party in Russia, and of having

acted on its behalf in Teheran. But the secret history of Russian intrigue, if intrigue there was, in Persia during the civil war, remains yet to be revealed. Meanwhile the Colonel's " policy " admits, on the outside, of a straightforward and simple explanation. Twice, when the consequences must be serious, was he called upon to make up his mind as to a course of action—first in June, 1908, and again, a year later, in July, 1909. On the earlier occasion he saved the Shah. But he did more than that, for he saved the foreigners of Teheran from a great deal of inconvenience and discomfort. There was no more street fighting in the capital—he had put the fear of God into the hearts of people—until July, 1909, on the arrival of outsiders—namely, the Reshtis, the Caucasians and the Bahktiari. Again Liakhof seems to have acted in the interests of the foreigner; he fought, for decency's sake, awhile; and then abandoned a cause which had become hopeless. According to this view, Liakhof regarded his responsibilities

as being, in the first instance, towards the foreigners of Teheran; and only in the second towards the Shah, or Persian Government.

That the commander of a native Persian regiment should dare take such a view as this of the duties and uses of his men, and act upon it, illustrated the topsy-turveydom of Persian national life; and the moral, as usual, went to strengthen the Nationalist case, at least in theory.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BULGARIAN ADVENTURER AND BRITISH PRESTIGE

WHILE we were in Teheran a piece of news arrived which greatly excited the town's talk, and raised the hopes of the Nationalists, though only for a moment, to fever pitch. A young man had sent word that he was about to enter Teheran at the head of an army in order to kill Colonel Liakhof. The prospect attracted our special attention, because on enquiry it turned out that the young man was none other than Panoff, the Bulgarian, by whom we ourselves and the *Chooa-es-Sultaness* had been "captured" on the road from Enzeli to Resht.

It appeared that Panoff had already been in Teheran. From June to December, 1908, he had acted as the Teheran correspondent of an important Liberal newspaper in

Foreigners and Natives

St. Petersburg, whither he had sent a great deal of sensational news, mixed with violent abuse of Colonel Liakhof and other Russian agents. Subsequently he was sent out of Persia by order of the Russian Legation. He then spent some time in St. Petersburg, where he delivered a course of lectures on Persian affairs, becoming a favourite with many ladies in advanced society. Later on he raised a band of men, set out for Persia, and marched into Resht while the banners flew and the drums beat to the tune of the *Marseillaise*. He had said: "I shall come again. Mark my words!"

A very close watch was kept by the authorities so that Panoff should not enter Teheran by stealth. Colonel Liakhof observed to his men how important it was that a certain Bulgarian, whom he described in detail, should be arrested at sight. The man would probably be carrying bombs upon his person. Next day, to show their zeal, a body of the Cossacks arrested a

very well-known citizen who bore no resemblance whatever to the redoubtable journalist and soldier, being a middle aged man of blameless airs, whose business constantly brought him to Teheran, for he held the responsible position of the agent for the Parsee community in Persia. The event occurred in the following manner:—

The Parsee, on leaving his house in the morning, noticed that he was being "shadowed" down the street by Cossack horsemen. He did not think that he was in for serious trouble, but surmised he was being annoyed in this deliberate manner on account of his reputation as a friend and counsellor of the Persian Liberals. However, he took "bast" in a photographer's establishment, where he remained for three quarters of an hour, hoping to wear out his tormentors. But as soon as he had again crossed the threshold he was seized and hustled into a carriage, in which he was driven at a gallop to Cossack headquarters,

the road on either side being closely guarded. On the way his capturers insulted and ill-treated him, the while they quarrelled among themselves over the spoil. His protests that he was not their man, and that in fact he was a British subject, were completely disregarded. Fortunately he was recognised at headquarters, and released; later on he had the satisfaction of receiving through the British Legation an ample apology from Colonel Liakhof himself. He was a master of fluent English, who had the Nationalist arguments at his finger-tips; and for the next week he was occupied in relating the incident to every British resident, and discussing it, as he himself would have said, in relation to the general situation. It was an evidence of the sad plight of British prestige in Persia when the Cossacks dared thus to handle a British subject in the broad daylight. So he argued, and could not be convinced that his captors had truly mistaken him for Panoff. Did not the case of the young man

from Tabriz, who had been publicly executed in the *Meidan* a few days ago, point the same moral ?

The unfortunate Tabrizi had been seized in the bazaars by the Shah's police. It was alleged that he was carrying bombs. Nationalists denied that he had had any explosives in his possession. Who had seen them ? True, a pair of bombs were on show at the Bagh-i-Shah, whither the captive had been dragged. But, as everyone should know, the Shah always kept bombs in his house, and this pair had already done service in incriminating a number of captives.

The real reason why the Shah had wished to destroy the Tabrizi was that the man had once been a " Basti " at the British Legation. The trial seemed to be proceeding in favour of the prisoner until he had brought forward in defence his British letters of protection. It was then that the Shah had said : " You must certainly be hanged at once."

Refugees in Turkish Legation

There were no gallows in Teheran, and the Tabrizi was brutally killed in the Meidan like a sheep. Then his body was brought to one of the city gates there to be hung up, and thither came the crowds day after day to gaze at it sadly and solemnly. It sickened one to see that there was never any sign of protest, never a movement of disgust on the part of the spectators; and yet the spectacle was protected only by a thin cordon of the most miserable of the Shah's soldiers.

The atmosphere of Teheran was not favourable to men of daring, and Panoff never executed the move which he had threatened. On our way homewards some weeks later we found him still at Resht. And, alas, in what altered circumstances! The captor of the *Chooa-es-Sultaness* and of ourselves, the dashing young leader of cavalry, was in disgrace. He sat through the livelong day in his hotel, in a gloomy and taciturn mood, a few faithful allies round him, not daring to stir from beneath

that roof, which flew the flag of some European Power or other. Two explanations of his sad case were offered to us. One was that he had exhibited, as a military leader, a folly so marked that his activities constituted a public danger. He had tried, for instance, to insist that a fort should be raised in the middle of the town for the purposes of defence. Another explanation had already been given us by one of the revolutionary bands which we had met upon the road. Being asked how Panoff fared, they had repudiated the man; he was a member, said they, of the Azeff tribe, a spy, or an agent-provocateur. Later on a writer, whose sources of information were obviously quite different from ours, brought an accusation of the same sort against Panoff. We quote from an article in *The Outlook*:—"This Panoff deserves special mention. By birth a Bulgarian, he was for some time with the Macedonian bands. Later he attempted to betray his former comrades; both in

Vienna and to the Russian authorities he offered for sale plans and documents useful against his late comrades. Still later he drifted into Persia. A St. Petersburg paper was ill-advised enough to engage him as a correspondent, and his stories were wired to London. When expelled from Persia he reappeared in St. Petersburg in company with a ' very holy man,' a Persian mutjahid, who gave interviews to mislead correspondents of London papers. . . ."

Panoff seems to have left Resht very shortly after our own departure. The writer in *The Outlook* (April 17, 1909), states that he was living at Astrabad, where he commanded the countryside, and had hoisted a flag of his own, bearing the words, " Down with the Shah ! " over the Governor's house. So, apparently, he again saw better days. During the summer, however, a telegram was published in the English newspapers, which announced his death. Wounded in several places during an affray with the Turcomans, and deserted by his men, he

shot himself to avoid capture. But again we heard that he had neither fought nor died. So difficult is it, in writing of Persia, to establish the simplest of one's facts. Who was Panoff anyway ?

CHAPTER IX

THE SHAH'S PALACES

SINCE his accession the late Shah followed the practice of the Kajars, and resided entirely in Teheran, or in the immediate vicinity. After the attempt upon his life in December, 1907, he, however, as has been said, left the Palace and retired to the pavilion of the Bagh-i-Shah. So when we were in Persia last Spring all the picturesque order of a Persian Court was practically in abeyance for the time being. We had not the opportunity of witnessing during our stay in Teheran any of these interesting ceremonies such as the often-described levées that are held in the Royal Palace. We did, however, see the annual performance of the Tazieh or miracle play, which represents the martyrdom of Hasan

and Husein, but it was a private performance in the Bagh-i-Shah, and not the usual public one that is held in the Takieh or theatre in the grounds of the Royal Palace. The representation was carried out with extraordinary dignity, despite such humorous features as the entry of Solomon upon the stage in a motor car, the leisurely meals taken by the performers, and the constant prompting of an ubiquitous stage manager, who read every speech aloud before it was made by the actor.

All the Shah's residences, his great palaces in the city, and his numerous country seats, are in Teheran and the neighbourhood. They are set in a beautiful inheritance, for Teheran is nobly framed by the Elburz range, whose lofty peaks would seem, owing to the wonderful clarity of the atmosphere, to rise just beyond the very walls of the city. And always Demavend, with all its legendary associations is in sight, though sixty miles away, that royal mountain, the third highest in Asia.

THE MARBLE THRONE—SHAH'S LEVÉE

The Royal Palace is hidden away by the walls of the grounds in which it stands, and only one façade is visible from the street. It is within a part of this building that the Salaam or Royal levée takes place, when the monarch shows himself at a window to his favoured subjects in the garden below. It is a curious function but one that is rather unsatisfactory from the point of view of the guests, to whom no hospitality is offered. By the way, the late Shah, being of an economical disposition, always dined alone in the Palace. State banquets were unknown during his reign. However, he would dine now and then upon his own invitation with an important dignitary, such as the Foreign Minister. When he was seated, Persian fashion, at table, he would find beside him a large plate into which the hundred guests were expected to drop a certain sum in gold. Sometimes His Majesty departed a thousand pounds the richer for his visit.

One enters the Palace through a large

garden court, with two-storied buildings of white stone round it. An erection at the end opposite to the modest gateway has an opening covered by a great curtain, and this hides the Takht-i-Marmor or Marble Throne of the Shahs. A long tank, paved with blue tiles, of running water runs the whole length of the garden, which is laid out with geometrically planned flower beds. Tall maples and pines throw a pleasant shade, and the picture is delightful, and an excellent example of the art of landscape gardening. The curtain of the loggia drawn across, the gleaming white throne stands out from the gloom of its background. When a public salaam is given, it is in these grounds, opposite the loggia, that the people assemble, while the Shah sits within, crossed-legged on the Tahkt-i-Marmor, smoking a kalyan, and listening to the odes of his head poets. The loggia is a fine example of mirror work, walls and ceiling being a mosaic of small mirrors set at varying angles. The throne

itself, which is made of the marble of Yezd, and came from Shiraz, is carried on twisted columns and fantastically carved figures; it is over six feet in height, and the seat is about the size of a billiard table. The great columns before it, that support the roof of the loggia, came from Meshed, and it took twelve years to drag them across the desert sand to Teheran.

There are other groups of buildings in the Palace enclosure, and one goes through the private apartments of the Shah, some of them left almost as they were when Musaffer-ed-din died, also through a truly mediocre but pretentious picture gallery, and again through a series of rooms, where are deposited the objects which Nasr-ed-din and Musaffer-ed-din Shahs brought back with them from their European tours. Some Royal personages have presented the Kajars with fairly good portraits of themselves, but for the rest, one finds in these rooms only cheap oleographs, terra cotta statuettes, Swiss clocks, toys,

Austrian glass, and those musical boxes for which Persian Monarchs have such a fancy. It is a collection of bizarre rubbish. In the grounds, which, from every aspect, are always beautiful, stands also that theatre, the Takieh, which has been mentioned, deserted now but for the mollahs who pray for the repose of Musaffer-ed-din, for it is there that the father of the late Shah lies, awaiting burial in some special shrine; while across the rose garden, or Gulistan, rises a very charming pavilion, the Shems-el-Imaret. The women's apartments or anterooms were not to be visited while we were in Teheran, as they had still their occupants.

The State apartments are in another courtyard. They contain the Library which holds, or used to hold, many priceless Indian and Arabic MSS., and the Museum, where stands the famous so-called peacock throne. This "beautiful imposter," as Lord Curzon has called it, was not the Delhi throne of the

great Mogul, but an article made in Persia, called by the pet name of the favourite of some long dead Shah, and intended for her marriage bed. Many of the fine stones embedded in it, emeralds and rubies for the most part, have been picked out by thieves, and some have gone to the making of Nasr-ed-din's jewelled globe. The thing is, indeed, more like a bed than a throne, with its wide seat, ten feet by five, and the small flight of steps at its base. On it the late Shah was crowned. For the occasion the real throne of the great Mogul was produced, or the remains of it, and the splendour of its jewels made it the cynosure of all eyes, but Mohamed Ali ascended the "beautiful imposter," while his heir, the present Shah, sat on the steps. An enormous melon-shaped crown, adorned by spoils won in India in the old times, was placed on the Monarch's head, but being found too heavy, had to be replaced by an ordinary Persian hat, on which sparkled a magnificent aigrette, once

the property of the Emperor of Delhi. Afterwards the Shah received the felicitations of the Court Herald and Poet, of his ministers and courtiers, and of the foreign representatives. It is to be feared that Ahmed Mirza was not surrounded on a similar occasion by so many symbols of the past magnificence of the Shahs. Before his fall, Mohamed Ali sold, it is said, the jewelled globe, the old MSS. and many more of his heirlooms. At least he would not divulge where they had gone; and it was over what remained of the personal property descending to him as Shah that he and the new Government had such long and futile negotiations. The squabble was amusing from one aspect, as Ahmed Mirza, on whose behalf the Government were in a sense acting, cared for none of these things, and only desired to be allowed to accompany his parents to their exile to the Crimea.

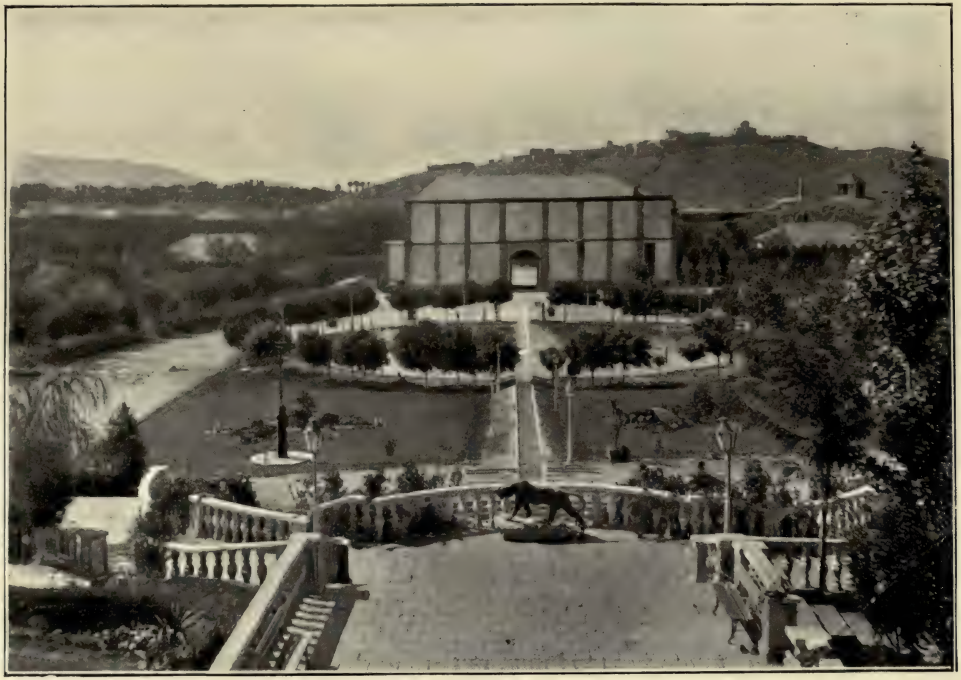
The Shah's country seats are delightful places, owing to their grand situation

Kasr Kajar

beneath the mountains, and some of them have escaped the vulgarization, which is a feature of the Teheran Palace. Musaffer-ed-din used to spend much of the summer in the country, for the sake of sport and of health, and often changed his residence month by month. Kasr Kajar, which stands about five miles from Teheran, is, perhaps, the most attractive of these Palaces. The garden is about half a mile in length and a quarter in breadth, and its plan is rectangular. From the wide avenue, terrace after terrace carries the eye up to a great white house. There are in all six of these terraces, and they rise some 150 feet to the base of the actual building. On the fourth a miniature lake is laid out. Round it is planted a stately row of pines and poplars. Next comes a stone-faced terrace forty feet high which has at the centre a wide flight of steps. When these are climbed a large space laid out in flower beds is reached, and immediately opposite is a final series

of steps, forty of them in beautiful coloured lime and sandstones over two hundred feet in length, which make an extraordinarily impressive base to the white Palace above them. The Palace, framed by the peaks of Elburz in the background, is of simple design, being divided into two stories, each of which consists of arches carried on slightly projecting piers with a high pointed doorway in the centre.

The other country houses of the Shah's—Sultanatebad, built by Nasr-ed-din right under the shadow of the Elburz, and again on the cool slopes of the Shimran Hills—Eshretabad, Nieveran, Agdasieh, Doshan Tepe, where the Shah keeps a menagerie, and Fahrabad a shooting-box—have each of them their charm, notably Sultanatebad, with its stately gardens and its domed and mirrored hall. In Sultanatebad we went through long-deserted anterooms into a little courtyard with a blue tiled bath in the middle, and apartments like bathing-boxes opening on to it. These



FAHRABAD

women's quarters, though pretty, are simple enough in design, and certainly do not suggest that the country life of the harem is over luxurious. It was in Sultanatebad that the Shah spent the two last months of his reign; he was there when the invading army arrived in Teheran, and thence he fled to the Russian Legation. Many of the rooms in Sultanatebad, both in the women's and in the main portion of the building, have queer mosaics in large tiles on the walls representing the Persian monarch in various heroic attitudes, as lover, as warrior, and as hunter. In this, as in other haunts of bygone Shahs, such evidences as these of a picturesque life that is passing away have a melancholy interest.

CHAPTER X

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

More fortunate than our previous journey, we left Teheran in a big roomy vehicle, half-landau, half-wagon. And we were again accompanied by a first-rate linguist, F., who was travelling to Constantinople.

On the first evening there was a sunset, glorious even for this land of sunsets, and, as we looked back at the city, its minarets were purple against the rosy slopes of the mountains. We felt acutely that strange feeling of depression that one has on leaving a place in which one has been more than a passer-by, and to which one will not return. We could not afford the time for bed that night, and pushed on through the darkness, only allowing

ourselves an hour's halt at midnight for food and a brief sleep.

The next day was laborious and uneventful. In the late afternoon our carriage rolled into the big Meidan at Kasvin; for we had been lucky with our horses and were making a rapid journey. Here we found the Shah's troops encamped, those troops which had been despatched towards Resht weeks ago. We understood that their apparent fixity of tenure was due to a rumour that had spread. It was whispered that the Reshtis were in possession of a quick-firing gun!

This force never got beyond Kasvin, and when the Reshtis eventually marched into the town it was empty of soldiers, and the ancient capital was taken without the firing of a shot! The Reshtis wisely sent word that they were coming.

Meanwhile the royalist army, which numbered about three hundred men, slept about the streets in the sun.

It made room for the revolutionists from

Resht; and then, when the Sipahdar, his Afghan second-in-command, and his army, after long delay, moved onwards towards the capital, a detachment of Russian Cossacks filled the city again. The Russians took up a position in Kasvin in order that they might be at the call of the foreigners in Teheran in case of danger. The capture of the capital by the Nationalists was, however, carried out in so peaceable a manner that the presence of a foreign force was not required, and the Russian troops never advanced nearer Teheran than Kasvin, though they stayed at Kasvin throughout the summer and longer. Kasvin, in fact, had a fine time of it during the year 1909. Three separate armies upon their various purposes were there. It had all the excitement incidental to the presence of the military. And not a shot fired in anger!

Twilight saw us moving slowly over the desert, upon the exceptionally bad bit of road which we have described in Chapter IV.

CHANGING HORSES

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Dawn promised a good day: and the hope that we might at any moment meet the army from Resht tempted us to make an early start. In the course of an hour, during which the carriage had performed amazing feats of gymnastics over banks and water-courses, we came to the edge of the plateau, and entered the first of that series of strange gorges that lead to the foot hills and the coast.

Here was no sign of life at all, and the sun beat fiercely on the brown rocks that rose sharply to the right of our road. On our left a sloping cliff of perhaps 300 feet carried the eye from a loosely built parapet of stones to the dry bed of a stream. Our horses cantered merrily; the only sound to be heard was the sharp ring of their little hoofs on the ochre road.

But in a moment, in this theatrical setting, we saw round a projecting spur, some fifty yards in front of our team, four armed and mounted men. Held up in the approved fashion, we were approached by the leader

who had dismounted, and came to the side of our carriage to have a word with us. All four were bearded, rugged, and determined-looking men, clothed in the high astrachan hat and long sheep-skin cloak of the Caucasian. This was a scouting party of the Reshtis. F. addressed the leader, first in Turkish, then in Greek, and it was amusing to note the surprise on the excellent fellow's face. F.'s second shot, however, was correct, for the revolutionary soldier was a Greek. We asked what had brought him to Persia. "Is not poor Persia in need of help," said he, "and must we not give all service to a country in distress!" Of his companions, two were Armenians and one a Georgian, intelligent men who had read "Haji Baba." It was hard to judge how far they were mere adventurers, how far they were genuine servants of liberty. But they were four typical representatives of the foreign revolutionary and anti-Russian element that did so much to ensure the victory of Persian Nationalism.

THE REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIERS

They were anxious to know all about events in Teheran, and the number and condition of the troops in Kasvin. After, perhaps, half an hour's conversation we parted: they galloped wildly up the gorge, waving their rifles over their heads, and we continued down it. Out of sight we watched them, and then urged our boy to hurry his horses. About mid-day we encountered a single horseman. Seeing him some way off riding rapidly towards us, somebody said: "I am sure he is not a Persian." The surmise proved correct, and when he pulled up beside us, we saw that he was a Caucasian. He was riding in haste with orders for the other four. He asked us how far ahead they were. We told him, but he hardly waited to thank us. This was our first experience of the Caucasian soldier on active service, and we were moved to admiration of a reckless courage. For the man rode alone, apparently perfectly indifferent to the fact that he was in the

enemy's country, and, moreover, in the kind of country in which an army might be concealed anywhere.

Towards evening we met a troop of about forty horse, heavily armed. They were bivouacking near a lonely post-house. They crowded round us for news, and we had leisure to examine them. There were not half a dozen Persians in the lot. One was a professional photographer, an Armenian, who offered to send us prints of any interesting pictures he might take.

We pushed on after dark, although our driver was anxious to rest, and at about 10 o'clock were again challenged and stopped ; being then a mile outside the village of Mendjil where we intended to pass the night. Our baggage was searched, apparently for despatches, but when the officer in charge of the patrol had satisfied himself of our innocence he gave us a body-guard for escort. By this time we were accustomed to the casual way in which

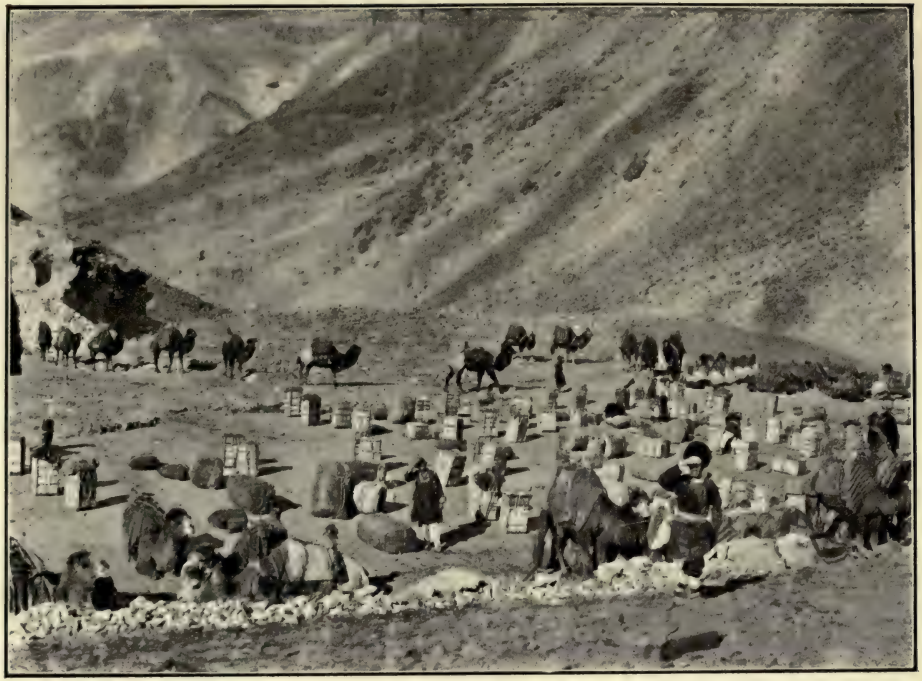
Caucasian soldiers handled their rifles, and the proximity of the man on our step who kept his cocked, his hand on the trigger and the muzzle waving about in the carriage, did not prevent us plying him and his friends with questions about the Sipahdar, Panoff, and their own intentions and opinions.

In the morning, after some little delay that occurred owing to a difficulty in procuring horses, we hurried to the bridge of Mendjil to inspect the fortifications. There were none. However, the formation of the mountain and river bed made an ideal natural fortress. All day we drove on and on in great heat. Our skins began to peel, our limbs grew cramped. Presently we left the mountains and dropped down into the wooded slopes through which the pass winds, crossing little stone bridges that spanned deep ravines. There was a glow of great blue violets, primroses and stars of Bethlehem over the undergrowth of the fresh green woods. It was a new country,

and one forgot the fierce mountains and the little fighting men who were crossing them. After a passage over the desert a wood in leaf is pleasant to see. From time to time we met small bodies of troops, each of which stopped us as a matter of form. At nightfall we entered Resht, our post boy for the last stage (an excellent driver, by the way) being supplied by the authorities; and the Greek landlord of the one hotel in the town, that little hotel where the floors are dangerous and the food excellent, served us immediately with the first real meal we had had for four days.

We found that no ship left Enzeli for Baku for three days, and so had plenty of time to send the wires we had promised to a correspondent in Teheran, and also a detailed account by post of what we had seen on the road.

In the square soldiers drilled, and on inspection of the types it was clear that not all of the six hundred men who com-



A Caravan in the Elburz

posed the fighting force of the Nationalists were of Persian blood.

The situation in Resht had developed rather than altered since we had passed through the town on our outward journey. Everything was orderly then, though it was but a week since the Governor had been killed and replaced. Everything was orderly still. But we noticed a general increase of activity, a consciousness on the part of the people of big events. We looked out upon the public gardens of the Zadzi Meidan, where in the afternoon all the town seemed to congregate. At one corner a large crowd of both men and women was being addressed by various orators. Between the speeches a band within a square wooden palisade struck up when the cheering had died down. The orators' platform was the balcony of a pretty house, and on it were mollahs, Caucasian men-at-arms, important citizens, members of the committees. Most of the people in the Zadzi Meidan were listening

to the speeches, but here and there were other small groups. Old men walked up and down in a leisurely fashion among the barren almond trees. "Young Persians" sat on benches and read the "North Wind," the re-established journal of Resht. Dervishes, beggars, cake-sellers with their booths, and bootblacks, dotted the scene.

Our hotel, which had been lonely enough on the occasion of our first visit, was now full of life. A serious-looking and pale-faced man, with a thin beard and sunken eyes, occupied a room on our landing; he was a skilled artizan in the bomb business. All night long he received visitors, and talked in a high-pitched voice. We liked better the rough Caucasian soldiers who played cards, and ate and drank so heartily in the diningroom below.

We visited Panoff, who, as we have already told, was now in disgrace. It was a melancholy occasion. We sat at one end of a long deal table, and he at the other. Occasionally he glanced at us, and we

glanced at him. He had but little French. Two friends of his marched in, in the middle of the doleful proceedings. They glared at us. We made our excuses and went out.

In the afternoons we rode out across the rice swamps and through the woods around Resht, and had a glimpse of the notoriously unhealthy jungle where tigers were to be found fifteen years ago,

The last stage of our journey from Resht to Enzeli, although only some eighteen miles, proved very wearisome. The road runs through the swamp and jungle, or scrub, and is quite monotonous and devoid of interest. On the way a curious incident occurred, which would have been a godsend to the collector of fishing tales. When about ten miles from the coast we noticed two huge hawks (called eagles locally) flying almost overhead. We lay back in our carriage, lazily interested, and, as they drew near, we could see that

one bird carried something or other in his talons. We shouted loudly together, and the big fellow swerved and dropped his burden. It was a fish. Jumping out of the carriage we ran to where it lay, some forty yards off, and picked up a carp between two and three pounds weight, and alive. It was an unusual experience to see a great fish drop out of the skies, many miles from any water.

On the Quay the usual crowd of beggars with distressing deformities gathered and asked for alms—some pleading, some fiercely demanding. Most of them were sound in mind and body, others evidently were not (as our photograph shows). In the crowd there was one complete beggar family, composed of a girl and a boy, and a veiled woman, their mother. Both brother and sister were remarkably beautiful children, and the girl, whose manners, however, were mature enough, could not have been more than

A Smaller Caravanserai between Resht and Teheran

twelve years old, for her whole face, and not her wonderful dark eyes only, was uncovered. She had mastered her trade already. All the coins that were thrown from the ship were thrown to her, and, what was more, reached her in the end. Every official upon the Quay was her ally, and there was no chance for the less attractive mendicants. One coin was seized by a monstrous cripple whose mind was wandering. Then she stormed and she raged in a wild and graceful fashion. Then she became pitiable, and appealed to the passengers. In despair she withdrew her family to the background. Meanwhile the big beggar was being interviewed, and at last gave up the coin to his tormentors. It was carried to her and she came forward again to the ship's side, serenely radiant, to bow her thanks.

Then as we sailed from the harbour of Enzeli, a red flag was hoisted on a staff over the topmost cupola of the Shah's pavilion—the flag of the cause that was to win.

CHAPTER XI

BAKU

LEAVING Persia sooner than we originally intended, we were now able to carry out the original part of our plan of voyage which included a visit to the Caucasus. While on board the ship between Enzeli and Baku we decided to stay a while on landing there, at the latter port, and then to travel to Batoum—whence many ships sail to Constantinople—by the Transcaucasian Railway, making stoppages in several other towns—Tiflis, Kutais, &c.

We had letters of introduction to various representative persons in this part of the world, most of them Georgians. None were, however, resident in Baku. But we wished to see more of this town, of which

a glimpse on our outward journey had made us curious.

Baku has had, recently at any rate, a very exciting history. The remarkable properties of its naphtha wells attracted many of the more adventurous commercial spirits in Europe, and the town was erected into a great industrial centre. Always the home of violent primitive peoples, this change in its fortunes has produced social conditions as bizarre as it is possible to imagine. It has been a Mecca of adventurers, and is strewn, as it were, with the flotsam and jetsam of the Middle East. One understands that every nationality west of Suez is represented in Baku, and that you may hear seventy different languages spoken in the streets—Tartars, Russians, Lesghians, Persians, Georgians, Greeks, Armenians, and Turks, being the predominating elements of the crowd. It is said again that an enemy may be disposed of in this town at a cost of five roubles, and that the average number of

murders per day is five. Prosperous citizens are kidnapped in broad daylight. A stranger must avoid being seen entering the banks, which, by the way, are always closed before mid-day, because at that hour the populace is at leisure. Here all the romance, if you care to call it so, of Russian political life may be studied in miniature—there is no feature of the Czar's police system that is not represented, and nowhere in his dominions are democratic organisations more terrible and earnest in purpose. In another aspect Baku is a city of gamblers, and passions are as crude and violent, nerves are as highly strung, as they were in any of the digging towns of California at the era of the great gold rush.

The town has always been of some importance. Being situated at the foot of the eastern extremities of the Caucasus, it is on a high road from Europe to Asia, and has had connections with Persia as a port of trade for centuries. Consequently its vicissitudes have been many. The Persians

Beggars on the Quay at Enzeli

captured this city of the Tartar Khans, and then the Turks: then again the Shahs were its masters, until 1723, when it became Russian. Its close connections with Persia are, however, still maintained; and, as we have pointed out, the revolt in Resht was partly engineered in Baku by the Persians and cosmopolitan revolutionists of the city.

On three sides of Baku are huge dreary wastes of stone and of sand; on the fourth, the almost tideless Caspian. From the harbour at night the Mosque of the Shah Abbas stands out darkly, and from a great tower at the bay's mouth, that is called the Maiden's Tower and crumbles under the weight of tragic memories, lights twinkle round the curves and up the slopes of the hill on which the town is built. Beyond are the barren uplands of the Eastern Caucasus, than which there can be no unfriendlier country in the world. Within the town shoddy buildings in the European manner jostle shoulders with Oriental booths and tea-houses; renaissance

villas in white stucco face squalid rows of Tartar shops. There seems to be no design whatever in the structure of the place. One passes through laneways of hateful aspect into pretensious modern streets, or beneath the gateways of the old walls into districts which would appear to consist entirely of scrap iron. The oil springs themselves are outside the town near the coast. They break the monotony of the view as the train approaches the town from the north—a far-stretching, closely-huddled collection of wooden conical chimneys, which are continuously belching forth thick clouds of black smoke.

The hero Schamyl, himself a native of the Eastern Caucasus, being once asked to explain the multiplicity of races and of tongues about Daghestan, replied:—"Alexander the Great took a dislike to this district on account of its barrenness, and he turned it into a place of exile for all the criminals of the world." It is, however, improbable that Alexander was ever in the

Caucasus. Baddeley, in his "Conquest of the Caucasus," suggests that the real explanation is a geographical one. Transcaucasia is, or was, one of the great highways of the world where all the proud races of ancient times passed, driving before them in turn innumerable vanquished tribes, who eventually found refuge in the mountain gorges. However, the traveller in Baku will hold that Schamyl's theory ought to be, if it is not, correct.

The violent disturbances which shook the power of Russia a few years ago were quelled, more or less successfully, in Transcaucasia, but in Baku the forces of anarchy and of authority still struggle on fairly even terms. The police are still extremely nervous, as we proved to our satisfaction. For we succeeded on one occasion in being arrested as spies on the ground that one of us had taken a photograph of a group of mounted Cossacks. A sergeant watched us, and, when we had refolded the camera, he arrested us and

marched with us to the jail under a guard composed of the subject of our pictures. We had a hopeless and helpless half hour with the police officer in whose care we were left, until at last he offered to release us if we would give up the films. We could but refuse. M. André, of the Hotel Europe was sent for, but he proved an inefficient and timid interpreter, who complicated rather than eased the situation. Hours passed, and eventually we were let go on signing a document, the purport of which we did not, however, grasp. But we went carrying the films with us.

A form of brigandage, much in favour in Baku, is simpler even than blackmail. Suppose you should be a successful man, and it is obvious that your oil mill or other business is paying well. You arrive at your office one morning to find a letter in which is an order to pay a sum of money—very often out of all proportion to what you can afford—to a certain individual who is named, and who, it is explained, will

call upon you at such a day and hour. If you be wise, you will raise the money and pay; it will be a foolish thing to have the man arrested when he comes, for, in that case, you will surely be shot, sooner or later, or forced to pay a very much larger amount. In the hotel we met a Russian who had just received an intimation of this unpleasant kind. He was unable to raise the amount required, yet he could not communicate with the secret society which threatened him, as he had no knowledge of its personnel or head-quarters. He was in actual fear of death, and could do nothing, and was in this predicament when we left. Kidnapping is the second, more or less common, method of obtaining money, used by the secret societies of Baku. In the hotel we were shown a citizen, well known to our informant, who had recently been kidnapped from his own office in broad daylight. Two respectable-looking Tartars had entered his rooms; placing revolvers to his head they had ordered him

to accompany them. They put him into a droschky that waited outside, and told him to behave as though they were friends who drove with him, threatening him with death should he give the alarm. A house occupied by Armenians was reached. But Tartars and Armenians fell a-quarrelling, for the Tartars wished the Armenians to hold the captive until the ransom should arrive. The Armenians, however, refused to have a share in the adventure unless paid in advance. The unfortunate captive, fearing the Armenians less than he feared the Tartars, implored his hosts to look after him. They consented, and the Tartars disappeared. Immediately the Armenians drove the prisoner back to his office and released him unconditionally in order to annoy their partners. This was the victim's story, but it is probable that he paid a large sum to the Armenians, but feared to admit it. Our informant dined with us one night, and arrived rather late at the hotel, because he had stayed out to see two policemen

Doorway, Georgian Church of Bagrat, Kutais

shot. The thing happened in broad daylight, and in a principal street.

This is the most famous story in the annals of Baku. We relate it from Dumas' "Impressions de Voyage" ("Le Caucase," Vol. II., p. 19), where alone we have been able to find it. It has to do with the lovely daughter of a Persian Khan, and is the legend of the Maiden's Tower at the harbour's mouth.

"One of the Khans of Baku conceived an evil passion for his daughter. In despair she made certain conditions; she would yield if, in proof of his love, he would build a tower which should be stronger and higher than any other tower of the town.

"Immediately the Khan called together his servants and set them to the work.

"The tower began to rise rapidly; the Khan spared neither stones nor men.

"But, in the opinion of the girl, the tower was never high enough.

"'Another stage,' said she, whenever her father thought that the work was completed.

" And the tower, although it rose from the edges of the sea, that is to say, in the lower part of the town, grew until it reached the heights of the minarets in the upper part.

" But at last she had to admit that the tower was ready.

" There was the question of furnishing it.

" It was furnished with the richest cloths of Persia.

" When the last carpet had been put down, the daughter of the Khan climbed to the top of the tower for the first time.

" She arrived on the platform and said a prayer. Then, recommending her soul to Allah, she threw herself from the battlements into the sea."

CHAPTER XII

TIFLIS

From Baku the train takes one to Tiflis in about eighteen hours, which is slow going over the distance of five hundred versts. Elizabetopol, the capital of the Government of that name, is the only town of any importance which is passed. The country remains lonely and barren until one is in the heart of Georgia proper, the modern province of Tiflis, the old province of Karthli.

Georgia to-day comprises, according to the political division imposed by Russia, the Governments of Tiflis and of Kutais. But before the Conquest of the Caucasus these were the provinces of Georgia—Kakhetia, Khartli (*i.e.*, Georgia proper), Mingrelia, Imeritia, Swania and Guria (*i.e.*, the Western Georgian Kingdom).

The historical and geographical divisions are still fairly well marked by differences of language and customs.

Transcaucasia is a mere political expression, and denotes the group of Russian provinces which extend from the Caucasus southwards to where the Persian frontier runs for the time being, and, east to west in that area, from the Caspian to the Black Sea littorals. It is, in fact, a part of the world which has always been No Man's Land, neither definitely European nor definitely Asiatic, always a cockpit of the races. The Georgian chieftain-king, the Shah, the Sultan, have all been supreme here, turn and turn about. To-day Russia upholds the Cross against the Crescent with some difficulty. Nevertheless, the traveller in this city of Tiflis will understand how rapid has been the growth of European influences, if he contrast present appearances and conditions with those described by Alexandra Dumas and others who were there fifty or sixty years ago.

In 1762 the Georgian monarch, Heraclius of Karthli and Kakhetia, became the Czar's vassal; his successor, Gregory XIII., yielded up his Kingdom in 1801; and in 1810 Imeritia was also ceded to Russia. Russia then undertook the Conquest which the Georgians had never been able to accomplish. In 1829 the great Schamyl, a Mussulman of the Eastern Caucasus, to be precise, a Lesghian from Daghestan, set up his heroic opposition which lasted till 1859.

Throughout the centuries the only civilisation native to Transcaucasia has been Georgian. The Georgians are what the Germans call a "culture-folk," and one of the oldest of such in the "Middle East." Converted to Christianity in the fourth century, they have had written traditions since that date, a long unbroken line of kings; they have produced scholars, poets, preachers, historians. Always a weak people numerically, and often, too, divided among themselves, their country has been

plundered by the Saracen, the Kajar, the Turk, and the Persian; and yet at times they were able to establish a sort of Empire over the other peoples of the Caucasus, extending their dominions on every hand. Their neighbours, meanwhile, never emerged from tribal conditions. Caucasian civilisation has been marked indeed by Byzantine influences, but these influences were imposed from without by the conquering Shah or the conquering Sultan. The Tartars, the Lesghians, and the rest of the Moslem peoples are energetic and turbulent, they have causes and ambitions of their own, and will be found in every dangerous organisation that is started. Now and again they unite with the Georgians, but always only for some immediate purpose, and never under the banner of an ideal patriotism.*

The heritage of Caucasian patriotism has, therefore, been always in the keeping of the Georgian people, although the Georgians

* Schamyl fought for a religious idea.

proper in Transcaucasia are a comparatively small minority of the whole population. In Tiflis itself, which has a population of 160,000, the Georgian element numbers not more than 20,000; adding the representatives of a kindred race, the Armenians, to it, the total is not yet 40,000. In Baku the proportion must be even smaller. But, putting the Russian garrison out of consideration, the Georgians are, socially and intellectually, the most active citizens of Batoum and Baku, Tiflis and Kutais; and they also take the lead in politics and in the learned professions. The Armenians, however, who are the most industrious of the Caucasian peoples, have established a commercial supremacy.

It was a Georgian, the King Vahktang, who founded in this valley of the Kur, the old Tfilisi, the modern Tiflis. That was in 453.

The contour of the town is like that of a saucer, and one climbs from the hollow centre up rims that are crowded with the

ruins of old castles and forts, to view campaniles and domes, gardens, streets, and squares, red and green roofs that shimmer in the sun. From the summits of the hills the eye can follow the Kur for great distances, from the gorge to the north where it emerges, then through the town, a whirling flood, then away over the Eastern plains until it is lost at the horizon. The Kur is a winding river, and it takes in its course through the town more than one great bend to the confusion of the stranger who is learning his way. Houses are crowded about its banks ; there is one point at which their walls stand on the very edges of great rock, sheer and perhaps a hundred feet high, through which it has had to cut its way. Where the current is less rapid there are many little floating mills moored near the shore. Higher up the river a very ingeniously arranged ferry makes the passage. Two boats are laid side by side by means of a deck upon which passengers stand. Two steel cables run

A Georgian School

from shore to shore, and the boats are attached to these by short chains, running on pulleys. The bars are swung with an oar until they meet the force of the stream which drives the boat before it.

But Tiflis has been described too often !

Over the southern hills a road, running to Julfa upon the Persian frontier, carries the smart and trim telegraph poles of the Indo-European Company, and we who had come to Tiflis from Teheran *via* Enzeli and Baku, greeted them again as old friends, for had we not had them by us all along the road from the Persian capital to Kasvin ? It was at Kasvin that we had last seen them ; there they had turned off towards Tabriz, taking the Julfa route into Russia.

Indeed, to be in Tiflis is to have many recollections of Persia. Agha Mohamed once devastated the town ; and the name of the Kajars is not hated here less than in Tabriz or Teheran. During the Persian revolution committees were as active in Tiflis as in Baku. And from Tiflis a

Russian army was sent later on in the year to relieve Tabriz and make its occupation in the north of Persia.

When Doctor Wachtang Hambachize, a Georgian, and a well-known citizen of Tiflis, called upon us at the hotel on the first afternoon of our arrival, he was ready to survey for us the whole field of Georgian politics and history; and, indeed, there is no man in Tiflis better qualified to give the visitor his information. But we had to ask him first to translate for us any news of Persia that might be in the Russian and Georgian newspapers. He did so. It appeared that the Shah and his sons had fled from Teheran, and that they were at this moment in Tiflis, at the Palace of the Governor-General. Liakhof had been recalled, &c.

In Tiflis manners are less violent than we had found them in Baku. Public gardens and public buildings grace this town. It is divided into four quartors, one called the German, and inhabited by the descendants

of a religious sect which emigrated from Würtemburg in 1818. The other quarters are the Russian, the Armenian, and the Georgian. To the chief thoroughfare of the Russian quarter, the Golovinsky Propect, belong the *Grand Théâtre*, the Cathedral of the Garrison, the Palace of the Governor-General, the National Library, and the Museum of the Caucasus. All these buildings are of nineteenth century date, all are Russian. We did not enter any of them except the superb *Grand Théâtre*, where we heard an opera that was a mixture of operas. The fact was that we had decided to interest ourselves in Georgian life; and we did not use any of our introductions to Russian officials or do more than note the obvious features of the Russian development of Tiflis.

But though this town has changed so much, it is always interesting to wander in, even blindly, especially when one has reached the Persian and Armenian bazaars which lie to the south, near the Georgian

quarter. These bazaars are a ceaseless delight, these bazaars in which each nationality has its own streets, and each street its own trades. Nor has the life of the democracies lost its old excitements. For the populace carries on the violent civic traditions of Tiflis, and its spirit has evidently not been daunted by the violent repressions in which the authorities now indulge. We did not walk out any day, but we saw an arrest being made; and a really serious street fight occurs, we understand, at least once a week.

Only how hard it was to believe that the handsome Georgian, the debonair Tartar, whom we passed in the meaner streets, framed in the doorways of those curiosity shops in which Tiflis abounds—noble figures in their long cloaks, covered with cartridge holders and silver daggers—were the owners of the premises and versed probably in all the trickery of their craft.

Behind Tiflis there rises a steep conical

hill—eight or nine hundred feet of crag and cliff shadowing the town. The summit, to which a cable railway runs, is a pleasure resort of the citizens, who, on a fine evening, fill a dozen or so little cafés. One Sunday we went up the zigzag path and stopped half way to enter the old Georgian Cathedral, which, seen from below, seemed to hang precariously enough from the rock face of the hill. The building is quite small, built on a cruciform plan in the Byzantine style, with white stucco walls that gleam against the brown cliff. The congregation was composed of shopkeepers, soldiers, and very devout peasants with their children whom our presence made uneasy. The singing was beautiful, but, as in the case of all Georgian Churches, without accompaniment.

Patriotic Georgians are discontented because the native language is not taught in the schools which the Government provides. Indeed, until a few years ago even in private schools the teaching of Georgian was forbidden. Now, however, Georgian

is an optional subject. Encouraged by the withdrawal of various prohibitions, the patriots have, in spite of the "bad times," erected, or all but erected, a magnificent college on a site at the outskirts of the town. This great school is the chief novelty in Tiflis at the present moment, and an important architectural undertaking indeed. It is hoped to accommodate one thousand students. Unhappily the building was planned on too lavish a scale, and the money needed to finish the work has not been forthcoming. We saw a few boys wandering from one vast class-room to another on the ground floor, and a master took us up improvised stairways and through long corridors leading to a chapel and a gymnasium. Outside it was dreary, with piles of rubbish stacked where gardens and playgrounds ought to be. But the place interested us after what we had heard of the extravagance of the Georgians; and we were already noting that they lacked a sense of proportion.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GEORGIANS OF TIFLIS

Tiflis loses its Asiatic character, but the Georgians—although their sympathies are mostly Western—seem to take little pride in the new European dignity of their city. It stands to the credit of a hated garrison with which the patriot must have as little as possible to do. Dumas *père*, travelling in the Caucasus, compared Georgia to a light-hearted slave, gay even in her servitude; Russia to a heavy-hearted queen, sombre in her grandeur, bowed beneath the weight of her cares. Times have changed. To-day what strikes the visitor among the Georgians is, above all else, the serious attitude of the upper and middle classes towards public affairs—their concern

for the people's education, their reforming energy, their delight in abstract thought, their hopes for the destiny of their country.

Russia is now the enemy, no longer the Shah or the Sultan, although the Georgians hate the Turk and the Persian still. Yet their Russian governors were well disposed towards them at the beginning, when, about the middle of last century, as the conquerors of Schamyl, and certain at last of Naboth's Vineyard, they breathed freely. The great Lesghian chief who had made so mighty a war could not but have stirred their imaginations; and the traditions of this land of barbaric splendour and chivalry seemed worthy of incorporation in Russia's own heritage. They were in a mood to be generous, and looking round them they saw the Georgian people, who had suffered so much—like themselves at the hands of Schamyl, but back, too, beyond Schamyl's days, down the centuries, at the hands of every heathendom—a people of their own religion, a people of high and mysterious

lineage, of a race, scholars said, older than the Egyptian.

Georgia, enjoying at that moment an unaccustomed security, rejoiced. She allowed herself to be made much of by the stranger. But she has realised again that she is a disappointed nation. Now when Georgians curse their fate they curse Russia too.

There are land questions and language questions, and other discontents exist of whose reasonableness the passer-by cannot be certain. It is said, for instance, that no Georgian need apply for work to any Russian corporation, and that this explains why the able-bodied vagrant in town and country is usually a Georgian. The Russians argue that he is lazy and idle, and less efficient than the Armenian and Tartar. Who knows? Rivalries and hatreds between the Georgians, the Armenians, and the Tartars, took from the recent revolt any small chance of success it might have had. And now the Tartars have given up the struggle, while the

Armenians consider that the continued unrest is bad for trade. The Armenians are the Jews of the Caucasus. The Tartars are the spoilt children—fancy a Tartar being a spoilt child! But the Georgians say that it is so.

They are great political theorisers, the Georgians, especially those that belong to the professional classes. We spent many an evening among men of this type. All would agree in their hatreds, but some would have their special cure for the evils of the world. Social democrats raised issues with disciples of Henry George, with obvious Tolstoyans in blue smocks, and with landlords who (luckily) did not want their rents. There were patriots, pure and simple, in these parties, who distrusted the theorisers. They, when Government in the abstract was denounced, would say heartily enough, *Bien entendu!* And yet on a point of policy they disapproved of the wild dreamings of their comrades. How could a great national movement be

STONEWORK, GEORGIAN CHURCH OF BAGRAT, KUTAIS (SEE CH. XIV)

conducted if every man had his private ideal ?

In method the Russian administration has been violent and probably unscrupulous, so that no one race in the Caucasus has really much advantage over another in the matter of practical grievances, although the grievances of the Georgians, the Tartars, the Armenians, are not necessarily identical. However, if one people has been at all favoured, this is the Georgian, and yet the Georgians are, least of any, likely to be reconciled to the occupation. It is because they have a stronger sense of patriotism than their fellows; the intellectual headship of the Caucasian peoples being theirs, they alone possessing a sense of nationhood. Meanwhile the intelligent Russian official occupies himself with the customs, the history, the language, the antiquities of the Caucasus, and vies in this respect with the patriotic native student.

There is a Government Museum in Tiflis,

called the Museé du Caucase, which contains a remarkable collection of pictures, antiquities, and objects of natural history relating to the Caucasus. "Do not visit it," our Georgian friends said to us, "you will only be deceived by the officials there." We went instead with them to the rooms of the Society for the Propagation of the Georgian Language, where the poet Tsérételi, like Mistral in the Provençal Museum at Arles, presides. His enthusiastic assistants were arranging a precious collection of coins, ornaments, illuminated manuscripts, and minute editions of the Gospels, which displayed the ecclesiastical characters still used in the Georgian Church. Tsérételi himself, a handsome man of about seventy, arrived while we were inspecting the treasures. Two years ago he celebrated a jubilee. He showed us numerous presents and addresses, which were laid out on certain shelves in this museum. The money collected on the occasion was devoted to the founding

of a national academy for the encouragement of Georgian literature.

Tsérételi was born in 1840, in a feudal castle near Kutais, the capital of the old western kingdom of Georgia, and was in youth and middle age the comrade of the now famous Tchavtchavadze. His first essays, "Bagrad the Great," "Theornic Eristhavi," &c., epics of various heroic periods in Georgian history, were published by Tchavtchavadze in a Georgian journal called *The Dawn* (Tsiskari). He has since written a great deal of historical drama and romance. But it is apparently as a lyrical poet of considerable technical excellence that he has achieved his greatest fame and popularity.

According to history the Georgians are not a warlike people, and it is significant that their national hero should be a literary man and a language propagandist. The portraits of Tsérételi and Tchavtchavadze are to be found side by side in most Georgian houses, with prints near by representing the

poets, like Rustaveli, Wachtang Orbeliani, Eristhavi, of older epochs.

Tchavtchavadze was assassinated in Tiflis in 1907, after having been the prophet of his people for many long years. He had been the inspirer of a new literary tradition, a chief of romanticism, the Hugo of Georgia. His activities during a long life must have been extraordinary, for he established and edited several periodicals, wrote romances and epics one after another, translated Pushkin (whose statue is in Tiflis) from the Russian, was a politician (a land reformer—the preacher of a new way of life to the aristocracy), the president of a bank, and the first Georgian prince to take his place in the Russian Council of State when it was opened to members of his nationality.

Another poet, Lermontof, the Russian, met with a violent death in the Caucasus, of which in his exile he had sung. He was killed in a duel during the era of the Murid war.

Tsérételi is styled a prince, so was

Tchavtchavadze. Among the Tartars to own so many head of cattle is to be a prince. The writers do not know what it is that makes a prince in Georgia, but the title is a common one, and there is no other rank. On the other hand, there are princes and princes, and two or three great families stand out from the ordinary ruck of the aristocracy; for instance, the family to which the poet Ilia Tchavtchavadze belonged. These families are closely connected, have the blood of the old Georgian kings, and boast of wonderful origins—the ancestor of one noble house is said to have come from China in the fourth century. The ups and downs in their fortunes must represent the ups and downs in the fortunes of Georgia through the centuries. The interest of the stranger among them is heightened when he realises this, and that every dramatic period in Georgian history is indicated by a dramatic incident in the history of the people whom he is visiting. There is a house in Tiflis where we met a

very old lady—the daughter of a Georgian princess, whose country estates were raided by Schamyl's Lesghians in 1854. She is proud now when she tries to recall a terrible journey across the mountains of Daghestan, a meeting with the Lesghian chief, his chivalry toward his captives; proud above all that they had a part in the drama of the great man's life. For Schamyl had a son who had been taken as a child to Russia and brought up in St. Petersburg. The Czar Nicholas purchased her mother's liberty in returning the boy.

The Princess' brother Ellico had already been Schamyl's prisoner. She was captured with his wife—her sister-in-law—the French family governess and her daughter. Dumas, from materials that the captives afterwards supplied to him, gives the following account of their meeting with Schamyl:—

"Varvara," said he, without giving the princess her title, "I hear that you are wife of Ellico, whom I knew and whom I

loved. He was my prisoner; he was a man of courage, with a noble heart, and tongue that could not tell a lie. I mention this because I, too, have a horror of lying. Do not then try to deceive me, you would do wrong, and you would fail. The Sultan of Russia has taken my son; I wish him to give me back my son. Nina and Varvara, I hear that you are the grand-daughters of the Georgian Sultan. Write, therefore, to the Russian Sultan; tell him that he must give me back Djemal-Eddin; I will then return you to your friends and relations. My people will demand a ransom as well, but for my part I only want the boy."

The interpreters translated Schamyl's words. The Chief added:—

"I have letters for you; but one of the letters is neither in Russian, Tartar, or Georgian. It is useless for people to write to you in an unknown language; I have everything translated, and what can't be translated shall not be read. Allah recommended us to be prudent; I follow his counsels."

The Princess Vavara replied:—

"Schamyl, we have not sought to deceive you. Amongst us is a Frenchwoman. She belongs to a nation with which you are

not at war, and which, on the contrary, is at war with Russia. I demand her liberty."

"Quite right," said Schamyl; "if her village is near Tiflis, I will have her sent home."

"Her village is a great and beautiful town which has a million and a half inhabitants," replied the princess, "and to reach it one must cross the seas."

"In that case," said Schamyl, "she shall be free when you are free; and she may then return to her country as best she may."

Then, rising:

"We will give you," said he, "some letters that are written in Russian; only remember that every lie is an offence in the eyes of Allah, and in the eyes of his servant, Schamyl. I have the right to cut off heads, and I shall cut off the head of him who seeks to deceive me."

Having spoken thus, he retired with a supreme dignity.

Here is his description of the son's return. The boy was first presented to the two princesses, who thanked him as their liberator. Then he was led towards

Schamyl by the Russian officers who had accompanied him from Petersburg.

His (Schamyl's) Oriental dignity, his spiritual calm, had not allowed him, however he may have desired it, to go forward and greet his son. He waited, motionless, seated beside two old Murids. One of them held a parasol over his head.

His beauty was so perfect, his attitude one of such simple majesty, that the Russian officers stopped, dumbfounded.

Djemal-Eddin, meanwhile, had approached to kiss his father's hand. Schamyl could no longer contain himself; he opened his arms, pressed his son to his heart and breast, and, broken with emotion, burst into tears.

The first embraces over, Djemal-Eddin sat down at his father's side. Schamyl continued to look at him, pressing his hand. His eyes seemed to devour the boy. He sought to recapture all the long absence of his son from him.

The two officers remained motionless, and said not a word, as with respectful emotion they witnessed the spectacle. But a too lengthy absence on their part would have made the General

uneasy, and at last they had Schamyl informed that they were the two officers sent to hand his son back to him.

Having carried out their duty, they asked to be dismissed.

Schamyl saluted them and said:

"Hitherto I was doubtful whether Russians kept their word or no. Now I know that they do. Thank the Baron N. on my behalf, and tell Prince T. that I have behaved towards his wife and sister-in-law as though they were my own daughters."

Then he thanked the two officers in their turn.

They approached Djemal-Eddin to say farewell to him. The young man threw himself into their arms, and gave to each of them, according to the Russian custom, a triple kiss.

Schamyl was not annoyed by these demonstrations of regret, but, on the contrary, watched them with a kindly air.

The officers then saluted Schamyl for the third time. Their horses were brought forward, and, accompanied by fifty Murids, they rode off.

Now they heard the noise of gunshots behind them; but this was quite a pacific

A Piece of Kutais See Ch. XIV)

demonstration. Schamyl's men were welcoming Djemal-Eddin on his return home after a long absence.

Meanwhile the two Russian officers and the fifty Murids said farewell to each other and separated. The Murids returned to Schamyl, and the officers continued on their way to meet their General and give him an account of what had happened.

A story of the sort is told. The visitor rubs his eyes, recalling where he is—in a forgotten corner of the world—among the representatives of families with whose fate all the wonder and glamour of a romantic barbarism has mixed—not in the remote past only, but yesterday—and mixes still today. He sees the life of the Georgian people in its tribal aspect. Thus the poet of the tribe belongs to one of its great families. It may be that he avoids violent adventures in his youth. But in a blameless old age he is assassinated. Yet how incredible it all seems in the drawingroom of a Georgian house, in this company with its note of

cosmopolitan culture, with these people who are, many of them, ignorant of their own language!

Dumas saw at the house of the Orbelianis a young and beautiful girl, evidently a daughter of the peasantry, and on making enquiries he was told how she—then a baby in arms—with her mother and her grandmother had been captured by the Lesghians. After a time relatives sent the ransom that was required, and the unfortunate beings were set at liberty. But hardly had they left the camp when the old woman died. The Lesghians seized her body. The bargain had said nothing about a corpse. If the grandmother was to be buried (as she had prayed she might be) in Christian soil, a further sum must be produced. "Go home," said they to the mother, "get more money from your friends, come back, and we will give you the baby and the body." The woman had no choice but to return home alone. She found

the money and went back with it to Schamyl's people, who, honourable always according to their lights, handed her back her belongings. She set off again with the child and the corpse, but, at the journey's end, died, owing to the privation she had suffered. The Orbelianis, having heard the sad story, brought the survivor into their own family.

We spent our last evening in Tiflis with a Georgian doctor and his children, who have a great reputation for their dancing. Two young girls first sang, to the accompaniment of a guitar, duets describing episodes in the lives of the great dead of Georgia. The feeling of the songs was easy enough to follow, though, of course, we missed the detail. Afterwards these two girls and one or two of their guests danced in turn with the son of the house, a young Cossack in red leather boots. These were the national dances of Georgia. One of them, a very beautiful dance, pictured a

wooing. The accompaniment for the opening steps was low ; the girl scarcely moved ; the man made slow circles round her with dignified, restrained steps. Then the tune quickened. The man advanced, he caught the girl's hand—she retreated. Again the tune quickened, but the girl's steps grew faster and faster, and she hurried from her pursuer. Now one could scarcely follow the rapid bewildering movements of the dance. Both girl and man went on feet light as thistledown. Sometimes the girl advanced towards her wooer, but when he made to hold her, she was away again, looking at him across her shoulder. Suddenly there was a crash of music. The man held the girl in his arms for a brief second, and the dance was over.

Other dances followed ; sometimes one pair only, sometimes two or three, held the floor. All the Georgian dances have had their being and developed on great open plains, and in wild mountain gorges, and know nothing of stages, crowded floors and

orchestras. But there is no note of barbarism in them. They are the dances of proud and happy people, dances such as the Queen Thamar might have taught to her courtiers after a banquet on the night of a great chase.

The Georgians ought to send a troupe of their dancers to the capitals of Europe. The repertoire would be sure to delight audiences in London and in Paris, and the name of Georgia, unheard of by many, would become known. It would be a way of attracting the attention of the West towards the circumstances of their nation, which is what the Georgians desire to do. The project has occurred to several enthusiasts; and once it seemed about to leave the world of day-dreams, but negotiations which were being made with a theatrical manager in Paris fell through.

The family which supplied us with this excellent entertainment was, we should say, fairly typical of its class. Dr. —— regretted that it was not summer time,

when he could have invited us to spend a week in his country house. He belonged, no doubt, to a family which had lost most of its lands and wealth during one or other of the turbulent periods of the last century. Its sons now adopt professions. After serving their time in the army they become doctors, bankers, lawyers or schoolmasters, and spend the greater part of the year in cities. The medical profession seems a favourite one. The doctor can work at home during the hot months of the year. He is occupying the strong castle of his ancestors, and the little Jew practitioner of the countryside is cut out for the time being. His children look forward to the summer months, when they will live a wild life hunting the eagle and hawk by day time, dancing at night, merry-making at all times. Removal is a great enterprise, for the country house is left stark and bare and utterly deserted during winter, so that every stick of furniture, down to the last broom, has to be brought hundreds

of miles, it may be, out into a country that is often served neither by train nor by coach.

The dancing over, we feasted on nuts, raisins, sweets, and apples. Dumas, by the way, states that it was thus too that he was fed in most Georgian houses. Perhaps this diet accounts for the sprightliness of the Georgian intellect. At all events nuts, raisins, sweets and apples are very suitable things on which to discuss, from eight to eleven at night—according to the custom of intellectual society in Tiflis — Tolstoi, Henry George, and the prophets. The young people of the house spoke Georgian only, and only two or three people out of a big group could communicate with us in French or English. Hence long pauses and the cracking of nuts in a silence.

Russians appreciate food that is more solid. There being no restaurants of a continental kind in Tiflis, the hotel, a German establishment, was crowded every

evening with great bearded officers of Cossacks. These poor fellows, most of them in mild disgrace at St. Petersburg—or they would not be beneath the alien skies of Tiflis—grew happier at the approach of dinner hour. We had the feeling that they might at any moment open their mouths and roar as caged lions do at the coming of their food.

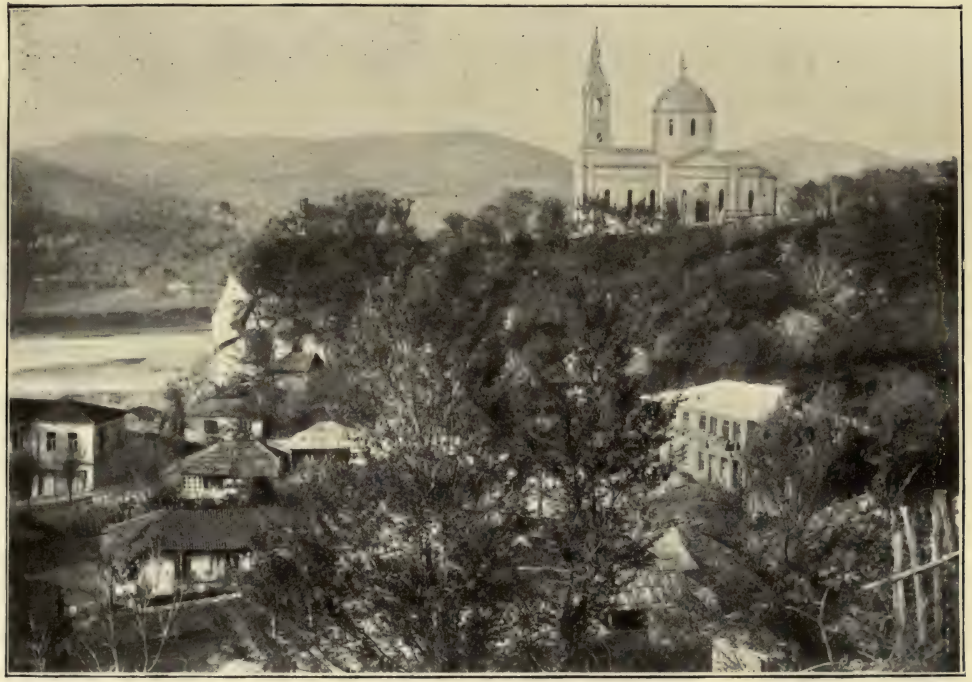
CHAPTER XIV

WESTERN GEORGIA

We left Tiflis for Kutais, the capital of the modern province of that name, the old capital of Imeritia, and of the Western Georgian Kingdom, which is the land of the Imeritians, the Mingrelians, the Swanians, the Gurians, and of who knows whom. The town is situated about half way between Tiflis and Batoum, and is connected with the main line at Rion by a branch line two or three miles long, which runs up into the shadows of the mountains. On the way to Rion the railway crosses the ridge that connects the Caucasus with the Armenian mountains, after which the country becomes very beautiful. One descends into a plain that

is framed on either side by high wooded mountains, passing thus from the valleys of Georgia into the valleys of Imeritia.

The western division of Transcaucasia is incomparably more fertile than the eastern; and we were immediately convinced on our arrival at Kutais that it was the most haunting spot in the Caucasus. Kutais is situated on a terrace at the base of the hills. The slopes to the north are dotted with the Swiss-like chalets of the peasantry; laneways between innumerable fruit gardens of walnut, apple, and peach lead downward into the town, which is itself full of verdure and colour, with mossy paths, grassy byways, lawns, and orchards. In the town the better houses are detached, and have grown up here and there without asking their neighbour's leave. They are a bit ramshackle, even the best of them, and not unlike a Persian caravanserai in structure; they have wide verandahs of wood, and airs that are deliciously cool. There are no big buildings in Kutais, and,



GARDENS ON THE RION, KUTAIS

as our idea now is, no regular streets; nor could we rid ourselves of an impression of novelty, as of an experiment; for, indeed, Kutais is at the time of rains—and it was then that we had come—a garden city of fruits and of flowers.

The age of Kutais is great; the city, however, which stood hereabouts in B.C. 1100, has utterly disappeared. Relics in the neighbourhood—two monasteries and a Cathedral—attest its mediæval grandeur. It contains a quarter that is obviously Jewish, and the bazaar, which is a poor one, is busy on market days when Hebrews bargain with grave-eyed mountaineers and folk of the valleys, the representatives of peoples as old as their own.

The Christians of Western Georgia are bound by ties of history and of race to the Kakhetians and Karthlians of Georgia proper, as are their neighours, the Mingrelians, the Gurians, and that people which has not changed its name since

the time of Pliny, and is now the obscurest and most wretched of Caucasian peoples—the Gurians.

It was the Imeritians who supplied the Christian slaves one reads of in the stories of Turkish harems. But the Imeritians ought not to be confused with the Circassians or Tcherkesses. For the Circassians are Mohammedans who occupied until 1864, the date of their great emigration westward, a strip of coast between Anepa and Pitzunta on the Black Sea. "Who are the Circassians?" was a question which we were constantly asking, but we never received a definite answer, until, on our arrival home, we consulted authorities. Probably the Georgians whom we questioned were aware that the word "Circassian" conveys to the European romantic associations concerning beautiful girls in distress, and were, therefore, unwilling to let us know that they and the Circassians are different peoples.

Our cicerones, four masters from the

Georgian school of Kutais, called the school of King Bagrat, spoke French and German, and, being vehement patriots, omitted to show us the model nursery gardens and farms established by the Government. However, it was better to go with them to the wonderful monastery of Ghelati in the hills, or among the ruins of the Cathedral of Bagrat near the town. The architecture of this Church represents the best Georgian period—the eleventh century—and we reproduce illustrations of some of the stonework and ornamentation, which is exceedingly beautiful. To Ghelati we went one afternoon by a zig-zag road up hillsides crowded with wild almond and cherry blossom, through a smiling and happy country. But life in this part of the world is often violent enough; and our companions told us that Kutais had been a storm centre three years ago. The carriage in which we drove had belonged to a murdered Governor of the province, and we saw the patches in its

hood which marked where a bomb had damaged it. Then at a bend of the road near the monastery we met the Abbot setting out for Kutais—a venerable, bearded man, in the robes of a Patriarch of the Church, who rode a mule with solemn dignity. He was attended by a solitary guardsman on foot. One of the monks welcomed us to Ghelati, and showed us over the shapely Byzantine Church, in which priceless ecclesiastical manuscripts and vestments, the crown of Imeritia, and the shoes of a queen are kept.

There was a Georgian monarch named Tamara, who was celebrated for her wisdom and beauty, the kindliness of her rule, and the success of her arms. She reigned from 1184–1212, succeeding King David, who, having expelled the Seljuks, extended the Georgian dominions towards Armenia, and beyond Trebizond into Asia Minor, and to Tavan and Kars. Tamara sent out missionaries far and wide, and built churches

everywhere. Yet her court was a gay and extravagant one, and the traditional Georgian—sensual and pleasure-loving, a poet and a dancer, a great huntsman—dates from her days, About the time lived Rustaveli, the celebrated poet who wrote an epic, "The Man in the Tiger Skin"; and, indeed, such was Tamara's reflected glory that she was called "King."

The shoes that we saw in a cupboard within the Church of Ghelati had belonged to this great lady.

After Tamara's death Georgia retained its prosperity until the end of the fourteenth century, when Tamarlane, the invader, laid waste the land. In 1403 Alexander I. left his three sons each a part of the dominions, and an internecine strife followed. Henceforward the independence of the Georgians was threatened by rivalries between Imeritia or Mingrelia, Karthli, and Kakhetia, by Persian and Turkish invasions, and by the growing ambitions of Russia, who interfered spasmodically in their affairs, and, indeed

definitely took the three kingdoms under her protection in 1755.

We have already spoken of the final Conquest of the Caucasus and of Schamyl who resisted that Conquest. But here, in writing of storied Ghelati, it seemed well to recall the glorious days of the Queen Tamara, when all Georgia was united, and to note the separation of interests, consequent upon Alexander's division of the kingdom, which marked the beginning of the end of the country's greatness.

The cloisters of Ghelati command a wonderful view across the valleys to the mountains of Imeritia, and glimpses of a panorama of forest and plain beyond. May was blossoming; and here, upon such a day as this, the Prince Ilia Tchavtchavadze might have written his lament.

"Now the benign sun laughs once again; the lark sings once again; there is nothing that does not revel in the sweet delight that the Spring is carrying.

"Fresh flowers already sparkle on the plains and in the woods. But, when will our Springtide reappear?"

Ruins near Kutais

Of Ghelati Wachtang Orbeliani, the poet wrote: "The Eden that man lost at Adam's fall is found again." But alas! the peace of Eden is broken sometimes even at Ghelati. The monastery was destroyed in the old times by the Turks. And more recently a community of nuns established itself in a house opposite. The nuns went elsewhere after a while, but then bandits of the Caucasus came to disturb the quiet of mind which should of right belong to the people of Ghelati's cloisters and of its grass-grown courts. A few soldiers are now quartered in Eden—it is an incongruous thing.

Our companions told us that the Abbot had to beware of others beside the bandit and the outlaw. This Russian Governor, or that, or, it may be, his wife, takes a Georgian heirloom to have it "reported upon" in the Museums of Petersburg and of Moscow, and it never returns. We realised again the loneliness of this people. Intensely patriotic as they are, yet their

patriotism is, as it were, an acquired habit, unnourished by the soil, the air, the colour of their home, which awake the sense of their isolation only. It is rather of the nature of a fellowship; and this fellowship is so artificial, and at the same time so keen, that the visitor among this people may imagine them passing westward one day in a united movement, searching for happiness and success. They are, as a family, lost, knowing itself lost, here in this corner of the world, dropped on an old highway. Once there were other wayfarers along it, companions, whose voices from Europe their ears are strained to hear, but these passed by long since.

One night we went to the theatre of Kutais. A smart young man was lecturing upon the poet Tsérételi. Here and there we could catch a word. Part of his argument had to do with Oscar Wilde, Symbolism, and the rest of it; and apparently this young man in the frock coat was contrasting the poetry of Tsérételi with the poetry

of what he would surely have called the cliques, the decadence. The theatre was crammed, which seemed very wonderful on first thoughts. There were young and old folk, of every class and type, crowded in the theatre of a provincial town. And the lecture was about poetry! Fat elderly officers with their wives and daughters sat in the boxes, students lined the galleries on one side, schoolgirls lined them on the other. In the parterre were all sorts and conditions of people—long-haired priests, fierce heavily-cloaked patriots, young Cossack officers, and workingmen. Our companion, however, told us that none but Georgians were present; all belonged to the fellowship. In short, the affair was a sort of patriotic demonstration. The audience would have been the same one had the subject been another, say, astronomy or engineering, and the hero—the astronomer or engineer—a Georgian. To-morrow a provincial Russian company would perform, and the theatre would be almost

empty. A few of the garrison might come.

The lecture was divided into three parts, between each of which the lecturer retired behind the curtain. We sat it out heroically, feeling that we paid a compliment to Georgian patriotism by listening to a three hours' speech in a language of which we knew not a word. The audience apparently thought so too, and we were rewarded prettily, a present of flowers being sent to us during one of the intervals.

We stayed in Kutais for three days; on the fourth day we were called about 2 a.m., and an hour later were being driven from the hotel to the railway station. Railway stations in Russia are apt to be crowded at every hour of the day and night, and the departure platform was full of bustle and activity. The journey down to Rion is a pretty one, the railway running alongside a stretch of delicate forest until

it reaches the main line. At Rion we had a long wait for the train from Tiflis.

It was dawn when we stopped at the little station of Santrédi—the junction for the port of Poti. The way to Poti lies among great forests of oak, through the marshy, feverous plains of Mingrelia, which is the land of the Golden Fleece. Batoum is about sixty miles south of Poti on the Black Sea, and we kept always under the shadow of the Armenian mountains, the level lands to the north stretching out towards Mingrelia and Akbhasia. Soon we were on the Riviera of the Black Sea approaching Batoum, passing the gardens of the numerous villas that have sprung up upon this fertile and flowery piece of coast.

Batoum is a town which has prospered exceedingly since it was annexed to Russia. It had previously maintained for centuries the level of a dirty Turkish village. Now it has become the most important Russian port on the eastern side of the Black Sea, and, with the ships of the Nordeutscher

Lloyd and the Messageries Maritimes calling there, a quantity of pretentious hotels have been built on the Boulevard along the harbour. Its modern streets are fine, wide thoroughfares; in one of them one of the great financiers of the world has a house in which, however, he seldom stays. Batoum, being the westerly gateway from the Caucasus, has had, from a commercial point of view, a very important situation during the past few years, sharing the fortunes of Baku. In the older part of the town there are two decayed mosques; and, in the newer, a big Russian Church. But although there is in Batoum nothing of any historical or architectural importance, we had a difficulty in shaking off a guide. He wished to show us over the park, a vast place lying off the shore, with lakes, lawns, and tropical plants, which is an example of the excellent manner in which the Russians dispose of the public spaces in their towns. This park contains two tennis courts—surely the only ones in the

Caucasus—and we saw a girl and a boy, Russians, playing.

Batoum, it is said, endeavours to rival Baku in the violence and nastiness of its manners. During the recent disturbances, some of its Georgian inhabitants played a gruesome trick, by means of which they hoped to attract the sympathy of the newspaper correspondents. They went to the mortuary at night time, and, having carried off a number of bodies, dressed them up in Georgian costume, put bullets into them, and laid them out along the corner of streets where they might be seen in the morning. People were asked to believe that the Cossacks had perpetrated a horrible massacre of Georgians.

Early in the afternoon we went down to our ship. She did not start till night, and we had for long a view of the coast and of the succession of snow-covered mountains that seem to rise straight from the water's edge.

A Georgian prince came to see us off, and on board were two other travellers from Persia—an Italian who had escaped from Tabriz, and a Turk from Teheran. Both were glad to have seen the last of Persia, and the Turk's spirits were tumultuous. His gaiety suffered an eclipse during the voyage, for the Black Sea was the most disturbed area that he had yet crossed. He had had an escort from Teheran to Enzeli, making safety doubly certain, and now was he to be cast to the mercy of the waves? The storm abated, but his sense of a grievance remained. A week later how he must again have longed for the security that only a Persia in Revolution affords, when battle and sudden death had fallen upon his city, and the Young Turks were at its walls!

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