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Recent Happenings in Persia

BY

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TO THE PERSIAN GOVERNMENT

William Blackwood and Sons
Edinburgh and London

1922

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TO

MY WIFE
Carpentier

P R E F A C E.

THE following pages represent my first, and in all probability my last, attempt at authorship. That even this venture would have been undertaken is improbable in the extreme were it not that the great majority of those who are familiar with recent developments in Persia are, from the very nature of the positions which they occupy, debarred from making their knowledge public, and that events which have resulted in the extinction of British prestige in Persia, with inevitable consequences in the adjacent countries, ought to have a wider publicity than they at present possess. Moreover, although it is admittedly dangerous to argue from the particular to the general, it is not altogether unreasonable to regard the Cabinet's doings in Persia as exemplifying their methods in wider spheres.

Judging from the criticisms levelled against certain books during the last year or so, there exists a school of opinion which regards criticism of those in high places as little short of heresy, considering that their errors, however notorious in inner circles, should be carefully concealed from

the general public. The argument advanced in support of this position is, I believe, that such publicity strengthens the forces of disorder. To this view I cannot subscribe. To leave the blunderer in power is to invite the perpetration of further errors, and it is accordingly surely better to expose such mistakes in the hope that thereby some blindly given popular support may be diverted from the individuals concerned. The late war has furnished enough instances to prove to all the risk of leaving those guilty of one error in a position where they can cause further mischief, and in India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Palestine alike the Government seems determined to pursue a course which must certainly lead to disaster. In Persia the damage is meantime beyond repair. For these reasons I believe that it is the duty of all who become familiar with instances of mismanagement in high quarters to make their knowledge public, in order that others may have a clearer understanding of matters which vitally affect the Empire.

I must admit that when reading the following pages some months after they were written they have left me with the impression that I had set out to attack all and sundry connected with Persia. This was certainly not my intention, and if others receive a similar impression, I can only say that it has resulted from my endeavour to depict events as they occurred. That I set out to attack certain politicians in both countries and the policies for which they stand I do admit, but for the rest I have endeavoured so far as possible to avoid

mention of individuals, since the official is subject to the politician with whom the responsibility for errors of policy must rest. Too often, it is to be feared, the position is reversed—the politician claiming all credit, and the official, doomed by his position to silence, shouldering undeserved blame.

I would, then, ask my Persian friends to believe that my criticism is actuated by no feeling of unfriendliness, but solely by a desire to present facts in their true colours.

I have to acknowledge my great indebtedness to H. H. Hormoz Mirza for having kindly offered to read that portion of this book which had been written prior to my departure from Persia, and for having placed at my disposal his wide knowledge regarding events and conditions. The opinions expressed are, however, my own, since he agreed with me that it would be out of place for a native of the country to attempt to influence the impression formed by a sojourner.

J. M. BALFOUR.

February 1922.



CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY	1
II. THE PEOPLE AND RELIGIONS	32
III. THE GOVERNMENT	54
IV. FROM THE CONSTITUTION TO THE ANGLO-PERSIAN AGREEMENT	75
V. THE ANGLO-PERSIAN AGREEMENT	108
VI. FINANCE	135
VII. THE ARMY	165
VIII. FROM RAILHEAD TO TEHERAN, AND THE ENZELI LANDING	175
IX. TO THE FALL OF MUSHIR-ED-DOULEH'S CABINET	190
X. SIPHADAR AZAM'S CABINETS	206
XI. THE COUP D'ÉTAT	215
XII. THE GOVERNMENT OF SEYD ZIA-ED-DIN	231
XIII. QAVAM-ES-SALTENEH AND REACTION	254
XIV. THE OUTLOOK IN THE MIDDLE EAST	281



ILLUSTRATIONS.

PROCESSION AT THE SLAUGHTER OF THE CAMEL	<i>Frontispiece</i>
MOUNT DEMAVEND	<i>Facing page</i> 6
ON TREK	" 16
NEAR TEHERAN	" 32
A PERSIAN GARDEN	" 32
THEY CRIED ALOUD AND CUT THEMSELVES	
WITH KNIVES	" 40
PERSIAN COURT DRESS	" 60
COURT OF THE SALAM, SHAH'S PALACE	" 60
DOULEH GATE, TEHERAN	" 80
THE BOND STREET OF TEHERAN	" 80
THE SHAH'S PALACE, TEHERAN	" 112
KASR-I-KAJAR, TEHERAN	" 112
IN THE BAZARS, TEHERAN	" 144
PILGRIMS AT KANGAVAR	" 176
THE CITADEL, KASR-I-SHIRIN	" 176
HAMADAN BAZAR	" 180
TOMB OF ESTHER AND MORDECAI	" 180
STREET SCENES IN TEHERAN	" 190
GENERAL WESTDAHL, COMMANDING THE	
PERSIAN POLICE	" 202

MOHURRAM PROCESSION, TEHERAN	<i>Facing page</i>	202
KERIDJ BRIDGE	„	222
PERSIAN CHILDREN	„	222
A ROADSIDE HALT	„	256
BABYLON THE GREAT IS FALLEN	„	290
ISHTAR GATE, BABYLON	„	290

Recent Happenings in Persia.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

EVEN in these times of higher education and wireless telegraphy, it would appear to be inevitable that the first consequence of an attempt to describe either events of political interest or general conditions in one of the less generally known countries of the world is to be faced with the choice between the Scylla of redundancy and the Charybdis of omission, and to be compelled to determine whether to inflict upon the reader a more or less voluminous mass of data anent the conditions and history of the country in question, or alternatively to assume upon his part a knowledge of the requisite facts necessary to an adequate comprehension of the author's narrative.

That the country of the Shah is one with which the general reader is but little acquainted may, I think, be justly claimed, despite the mass of literature relating thereto. Much of this, however, deals with conditions which have long passed away, and is not, moreover, readily accessible; while another large section is the outcome of brief visits to the country, and deals either with isolated

2 RECENT HAPPENINGS IN PERSIA

episodes or individual experiences, which are in the main of ephemeral interest. Even Lord Curzon's monumental compilation, originally chiefly consisting of the experiences undergone during a rapid journey through the country nearly thirty-five years ago, and data collected during his residence in the British Legation in Teheran, the whole covering a period of about eight months, has, through the efflux of time and change in political problems, become chiefly of use as a *Baedeker de luxe*. Indeed, it could hardly be otherwise considering the changes which have taken place since Lord Curzon's brief visit. Three Shahs have succeeded Nasir-ed-Din Shah, the country has in name at least become constitutional, the situation of Russia has materially altered, the outlook of some Persians at least has been vitally altered through European travel, and the war has taken place.

Most books on Persia have, moreover, been perforce written after a more or less brief visit to the country by passing travellers or journalists, since the circumstances debar many of those best fitted for the task from making public their knowledge and experiences. In a small community such as the British colony in Persia, very many are debarred from authorship by the official positions which they hold, and by relations official, commercial, and social. It thus comes about that while Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, and Alexander the Great are household words, it is otherwise when more modern times are in question. Consequently, the name of Persia is apt to conjure up little more than a vision of the roses and nightingales of Omar, blended with the fairy pictures of Moore (so far, alas! from the truth), and varied by the adventures of the immortal Hajji Baba, that ever-living portrait of the Persian.

This lack of familiarity must, in the main, be attributed to the isolation of the country and its remoteness from the world's main traffic-routes. Even although Teheran might, prior to the war, be reached in a fortnight from London, there was little incentive to induce any one to make the journey. The country contains but little to tempt the tourist to face the discomforts of travel in a country where carriage-roads and reasonable accommodation are alike seldom met with. That little, moreover, is widely scattered, and only accessible to those who are prepared to undertake long and wearisome journeys not unattended by personal risk. In the latter respect things are very much worse than formerly owing to the decrease of the power of the central government.

An additional deterrent to travel at the present time lies in the fact that in many parts of the country the roads are unsafe to such a degree that even an escort does not necessarily ensure immunity from attack, as the Persian delegate to the League of Nations found to his cost in September 1920. It appears probable that this lack of safety will be very greatly increased in the near future in Southern Persia through the disbandment of the South Persia Rifles, which have hitherto maintained order in the south. Not only will the force which maintained order have ceased to exist, but some at least of the men alienated from their tribes by their service in a British force may be expected to take to the road for a livelihood.

Generally there is a disinclination to attack Europeans, since some governments at any rate show an unreasonable readiness to resent ill-treatment of their nationals. Judging by the delay in dealing with the claims for compensation of the British subjects who were imprisoned and robbed at Shiraz in 1915 and 1916, and those of

4 RECENT HAPPENINGS IN PERSIA

others, the British Foreign Office cannot be accused of any undue precipitancy in this respect. "Out of sight out of mind" appears to be the rule at Whitehall, specially when, owing to the censorship, the public can, as in Persia, be kept in ignorance of events. Unless rumour speaks falsely, one book at any rate published after the war was deprived of much of its interest by the censor. A striking contrast is furnished by the promptitude with which the German Foreign Office exacted compensation for the death of its Consul at Tabriz during the last year. In spite of the fact that there was a strong presumption that it was either a case of suicide or murder by the servants in the Consulate, heavy compensation was extorted. An ironical touch is supplied by the fact that the Consul in question was largely responsible for the arrest of the Englishmen at Shiraz just mentioned.

Partly owing to the fact that in all ages the chief constructive medium has been sun-dried brick, readily resolvable into its component parts, and partly through the destructive invasions of which the country has throughout the ages been the victim, Persia, in proportion to the length and fulness of its history, probably contains fewer objects of interest than any other country. These, apart from the remains of antiquity, which are in the main such as to appeal to the scientific inquirer rather than to the ordinary traveller, are to a very great extent forbidden to the infidel, consisting as they do of mosques, shrines, and other religious buildings. The non-Moslem is consequently compelled to content himself with such glimpses as he may be able to catch from a distance, or through doorways, or from adjacent roofs.

Owing to the fact that the French hold a

monopoly for research in Persia, modern archæologists have had but small opportunity of studying the antiquities of Persia. Apart from their work at Susa, the French have taken but little advantage of their privileges, and although it may be pleaded that the question of cost renders wider researches impossible at the present time, it is regrettable that such a dog-in-the-manger policy should deprive the world of the information which might be obtained were other nations permitted to excavate in other parts of the country. That fruitful results might be hoped for from such work may be inferred from the discoveries which have from time to time resulted from the *sub rosa* excavations undertaken by individuals.

At the present time there is a distinct need of a comprehensive and informed book upon modern Persia, its problems and history, by one qualified by residence in the country to deal adequately with his subject. To undertake such a task, much more than a passing visit to the country is required, since only by long residence can a proper understanding of Persian mentality and views be arrived at, and for this a knowledge of the language is essential, since otherwise the inquirer runs the risk of acquiring the standpoint of the political hack alone. The present book does not profess to be more than an attempt to describe the events which took place during a sixteen months' visit to the country, with such other matter as is necessary to an adequate understanding of these and their probable consequences. Indeed, my only excuse for venturing to inflict upon the public another book of this class is that, so far as I am aware, no account of recent happenings in Persia has appeared; and some of these, although comparatively unimportant in themselves from the standard of world politics, vitally affect

6 RECENT HAPPENINGS IN PERSIA

British prestige in the Middle East, with the inevitable repercussion upon India and Afghanistan. In addition, they throw an interesting light upon the mentality of those who are responsible for the direction of British foreign policy, and explain how our prestige, which stood very high at the end of the war, has practically ceased to exist.

To revert to the alternative presented in my opening paragraph, I must confess to having experienced considerable difficulty in determining which course to adopt in the present instance, since I hesitate to attribute to others the ignorance of the country to which I frankly own prior to a residence therein. What finally decided me to venture upon some detail at the risk of wearying the reader was a statement in Mr Churchill's speech in the House of Commons upon the Government's decision to withdraw the British force from North-West Persia. In explaining to the House the reasons which had influenced the Government in arriving at this decision, he stated, as showing the strategical unsoundness of the position, that the force had to be maintained at the end of an immense line of communications 600 miles long, by a service of Ford cars. From whence this figure was derived it is difficult to imagine. It is true that Teheran is 600 miles from Baghdad, but as railhead was approximately 120 miles from Baghdad, and the British Headquarters was at Kazvin, which is over 90 miles from Teheran, this hardly appears to be relevant to the question. The actual distance was something over 370 miles. It is, of course, possible that the official responsible for preparing the data confused the two distances; but having had experience of the care taken in preparing data for Parliament, and in particular to avoid giving a full and candid answer, I am



Mount Demavend.



loath to believe this. That the error did not affect the soundness of the argument may be admitted, but the mere fact that an error of 60 per cent relating to a country in British occupation could pass unchallenged, would appear to justify the belief that some information regarding the country may not come amiss—to members of the Government at least. I propose accordingly to mention some of the main facts relating to the country, the people, and their recent history, restricting myself so far as possible to what is necessary to give a picture of life and conditions in Persia, and avoiding unnecessary detail.

Geographically, Persia, or, as it is known to the natives, Iran, consists, in the main, of the western part of the tableland which separates Mesopotamia from the plains of Northern India. On the east it is bounded by Afghanistan and British Baluchistan, on the west by Mesopotamia, on the north by the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea, and Turkestan, and on the south and south-west by the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. In area it is slightly larger than France, Spain, Germany, and Belgium together. The plateau for the most part lies at an elevation of from 2000 to 6000 feet above sea-level, and is bounded and intersected by numerous mountain ranges. Of these, the highest peaks are Demavend, near Teheran, which is over 19,000 feet; Mount Dina Kouh, on the borders of Fars, 17,000; and Mount Ararat, in the extreme north-west, just under 17,000. To the above generalisation two exceptions must be made: the low coast-lands bordering the Persian Gulf, and the northern portions of the provinces of Ghilan, Mazanderan, and Astrabad, which lie along the southern shores of the Caspian. The latter are covered by dense jungle, where the Hyrcanian tiger may still be found, and are in-

habited by a rice-eating population, whose habits of life vary greatly from those of the inhabitants of the tableland. How the latter regard this district cannot be better illustrated than by the inquiry made upon the appointment of a certain official as Governor of Mazanderan as to what offence he could have possibly committed to merit such punishment. While these two districts, although politically part of Persia, do not form part of its geographical entity, the reverse is the case with Afghanistan, which, consisting of the eastern half of the plateau, has throughout the greater part of its history formed part of the Persian Empire.

Situated as it is between Western and Central Asia, Persia has in all ages sustained the first shock of the violence of the nomadic hordes on their movements towards the west, the massacres of Genghiz Khan and Tamurline being but extreme examples of what the country in whole or in part has suffered throughout history. Even to-day the desolation caused by the Afghan invasion during the first half of the eighteenth century is in evidence; while further injury was caused by the civil wars which raged during the latter part of the same century. The treatment meted out to Kerman by Mohamed Aga Shah, the founder of the present dynasty, is perhaps a somewhat extreme case, but indicates the brutality of these times. On capturing the town the barbaric eunuch directed his officers to collect twenty thousand pairs of eyes from the inhabitants.

The heart of the country consists to a very great extent of salt desert, the site of a prehistoric sea, which, approaching in many places close to the centres of population, breaks the country into separate entities, and adds materially to the difficulties both of communication and government.

The consequence has been that throughout history, except under a strong ruler, the local governors have attained to a high degree of independence, with a corresponding weakening of the central power.

Persia possesses few rivers of any size, the Karun, which flows into the head of the Persian Gulf, alone being navigable. For the most part the rivers, such as they are, are either mountain streams, or, flowing inland, ultimately lose themselves in the desert or in marshes. Moreover, they are for the greater part seasonal in character, the torrents of the spring and early summer shrinking later to mere trickles of water lost in wide stony beds, if, indeed, they do not entirely disappear.

The lack of water is in most districts the vital factor in the life of the country, for while the soil is generally fertile, cultivation is restricted to the vicinity of rivers, and to districts artificially irrigated. The value of water cannot be better realised than by considering the method of irrigation which is in general use in the plains. A well is sunk at the foot of the mountains until water is struck, and a lateral channel is then driven, additional wells being sunk every twenty or thirty yards. In this manner water is conveyed for very considerable distances—ten or fifteen miles, or even farther. The labour and expense of constructing and maintaining these kanats, whose lines of well-heads, stretching in all directions, form a conspicuous feature of Persian landscapes, is of course enormous, even in Persia, and only to be justified by the general scarcity and consequent value of water.

This scarcity is not indeed beyond remedy, or at least very great amelioration, for it must be admitted that at the present time no attempt is made to conserve the large bodies of water which

10 RECENT HAPPENINGS IN PERSIA

run to waste in the spring, often inflicting great damage in their course. Judging by the remains of ancient works, a very different state of affairs must have existed in former times, and, were conservation to be undertaken on modern lines, it would appear to be beyond question that the cultivated area could be very largely increased, and a very much larger population maintained upon the land. Such conservation would, in a country such as Persia, be by no means a difficult task, but is utterly beyond the country's powers at the present time. Lacking as she does alike the technical ability and the material resources (there is at the time of writing not a pound of cement in the country), she is incapable of restoring those works which were suffered to fall into decay during the anarchy of the eighteenth century, or of initiating new engineering undertakings. At the same time, given the necessary technical guidance and machinery, there is no reason, so far as I am aware, why such works should not be undertaken with the most beneficial results both to the country and to their promoters, for the crude materials exist in abundance. This, however, cannot be hoped for until such time as the country has been opened up by railway development, and a sufficient degree of security attained to attract foreign capital.

From the above it necessarily follows that trees, and, except in the spring, vegetation of every kind, are as a rule almost entirely confined to the vicinity of towns and villages, for Persian towns may in aspect be truly described as garden cities. Such timber as exists suffers heavily from the demands made upon it for fuel, some fifty thousand tons of wood being consumed annually in Teheran as against five or six thousand tons of coal. The moment that the boundaries of irrigated fields

and gardens are passed, the country, except in the spring, presents an aspect of brown desolation, and it is easy to understand the store which both ancient and modern Persians set by gardens. These differ radically from the European conception of a garden, grass being practically nonexistent, and they may more aptly be compared to groves of fruit and other small trees intersected by small streams. The great desideratum is shade. So great, indeed, is the dearth of timber that, when a former Shah decided to construct a navy upon the Persian Gulf, it was found necessary to transport the requisite timber from the shores of the Caspian—a colossal task truly, when it is remembered that the distance by road is not far short of a thousand miles. It will readily be understood that the construction of that navy was discontinued at a very early stage, and that no attempt to renew it was made.

Into the question of mineral resources I do not propose to enter, in view of the very scanty data which is available. These are generally regarded as being insignificant, but there is reason to believe that further investigation will greatly modify this view. The difficulty of arriving at any opinion on the matter is largely enhanced by the fact that much of the existing information is in the possession of private individuals, and is not generally accessible. The fact, however, remains, that whether from the paucity of the deposits, the lack of fuel, or the difficulties of communication, but little mining is done at the present time, or, at least, little publicly. A further deterrent to mining enterprise exists in the fact that since the beginning of the constitutional régime, minerals have been declared to be State property. Compensation may possibly be paid in theory, but for the average man this would in practice prove illusory. Con-

12 RECENT HAPPENINGS IN PERSIA

sequently, rather than incur the risk of losing his property, the owner prefers to keep to himself such information as he may possess, being well aware that the benefit of any discovery would accrue to some official or his associates.

A case which occurred during the winter of 1920 is typical of the arbitrary and tyrannical manner in which the right of the State is enforced. The inhabitants of a certain village between Teheran and Amol combined to sink a new well. When water was reached, it was found to be salt and useless for the purpose in view, but the villagers, being of a frugal turn of mind, decided that in the existing shortage of salt, an opportunity of earning an honest penny had occurred. But they had reckoned without their host—in this case that place of peace, the Ministry of Public Works, Mines, Agriculture, &c. For once some one in that department showed some activity, and the poor profits of the peasants were appropriated—in name at any rate—to the use of the State. Protests availed nothing; the Ministry had discovered a new mine.

By far the most important mineral product at the present time is petroleum. This—consequent on the active policy of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which, as holder of the D'Arcy concession, has a monopoly (except for the five northern provinces)—is being produced in rapidly increasing quantities in the Bakhtiari country, which lies to the north-east of the head of the Persian Gulf. Red oxide is mined upon the island of Hormuz, and copper, coal, and various minor products in primitive fashion. Early in the war, the Russians prepared to undertake active development in the vicinity of Lake Urmiah in Azerbaijan; but although large quantities of machinery were imported, production was not undertaken. Very

extensive coal and iron deposits exist here in close conjunction, the latter being reported to assay as high as 70 per cent. The greater part of the machinery has been stolen, and it may safely be assumed that what remains is of little value, and that no immediate resumption of the undertaking is probable. In any case these deposits lie within the Russian sphere, and it may be regarded as certain that any British activity in this region would meet with immediate opposition from the Moscow Government. Such exploration as has taken place would appear to justify the belief that these deposits are by no means an isolated case, and that there are numerous deposits of coal, iron, and oil throughout the north.

The cost of coal in those parts of the country where it is obtainable is very high. In Teheran, which is in the vicinity of the coalfields, it is in the neighbourhood of £9 a ton, and even higher in winter. In view of the cost of fuel, there would appear to be scope for the introduction of modern methods of mining, although it is doubtful whether the deposits would justify development upon a large scale. All things considered, there would seem to be little chance of any serious development of the mining industry in the immediate future. The two essential conditions are improved communications and cheaper fuel. The former cannot be hoped for in the absence of railways, but, given these, the oil-fields should ensure an ample supply of the latter. A revision of the present law, so as to give to the owners of land an incentive to development, and a termination of the present state of unrest are also vital.

In the matter of communications Persia has made but little advance from the immemorial methods of the East, and the horse, mule, camel, and donkey are still the most usual means of

14 RECENT HAPPENINGS IN PERSIA

transport. Prior to the war the Persian railway system consisted of six miles of narrow-gauge line running from Teheran to a local shrine. Before the Russian débâcle the Caucasian system was extended to Tabriz, and although this line is being now operated to a very limited extent, if at all, it is very probable that in the not distant future it will furnish the means for Germany to oust us from the trade of Northern Persia. In the south the British Army laid some forty miles of light railway from Bushire to the foot of the mountains. This the Persian Government was most anxious to acquire; but, whether through delay upon their part or not, it was sold to Indian contractors and torn up. This is to be regretted, in view of the nature of the country traversed and the fact that Bushire must be regarded as the base of British interests in Persia.

Prior to the war an international syndicate of French, British, and Russian financiers had interested itself in railway development in Persia, but beyond a survey being undertaken for a line to run north from the vicinity of Mohummerah, nothing was accomplished. Since the restoration of peace a line from the vicinity of Qaraitu to Teheran has been surveyed, and, I believe, an alternative route from the south. Whether this is to be regarded as the prelude to an era of railway development remains to be seen, but it is legitimate to doubt whether the promoters took the vagaries of the British Government into their calculations, for, should the country, in consequence of the British "bag and baggage" evacuation, fall into the hands of the Bolshevists (a by no means improbable contingency, although one which I do not anticipate), it may be found impossible to proceed with the undertaking.

In any case, it is very doubtful whether such

an extension of the Baghdad railway, although it fits in with the ultimate ideal of a direct line to India, can be regarded as being in the best interests of either Britain or Persia. Under normal conditions Northern Persia must be regarded as lying within the Russian sphere of influence, and a return to such a condition seems to be inevitable. Thus it might well come about that such a line might serve as an access for Russian trade to Mesopotamia rather than for British to Persia, to say nothing of serving Russia's military requirements. From the Persian point of view, it has the disadvantage that all goods passing over it would be liable to Mesopotamian customs duties, which, in the financial condition of that country, promise to be anything but light. I make no claims to any knowledge of strategy, but considering that British interests lie in the south, there would be distinct advantages in a line based on a Persian port and immune from attack so long as we maintained amicable relations with the local tribesmen. This should not be difficult, seeing that the development of the oil-fields is greatly to their pecuniary advantage.

The Baghdad route, on the other hand, suffers from the additional disadvantage of depending upon the line from Basra to Baghdad. The Arab rising in the autumn of 1920 showed the vulnerability of this, and, in the by no means improbable recrudescence of such trouble, the same damage to the line is to be anticipated. As regards the interests of the promoters, a southern route would tap an equally fertile territory, while the engineering difficulties are, I understand, no greater. In fact, the only interests who stand to lose by the adoption of such a route are the Mesopotamian Government and the Baghdad

Jews, neither of whom are entitled to consideration in the matter.

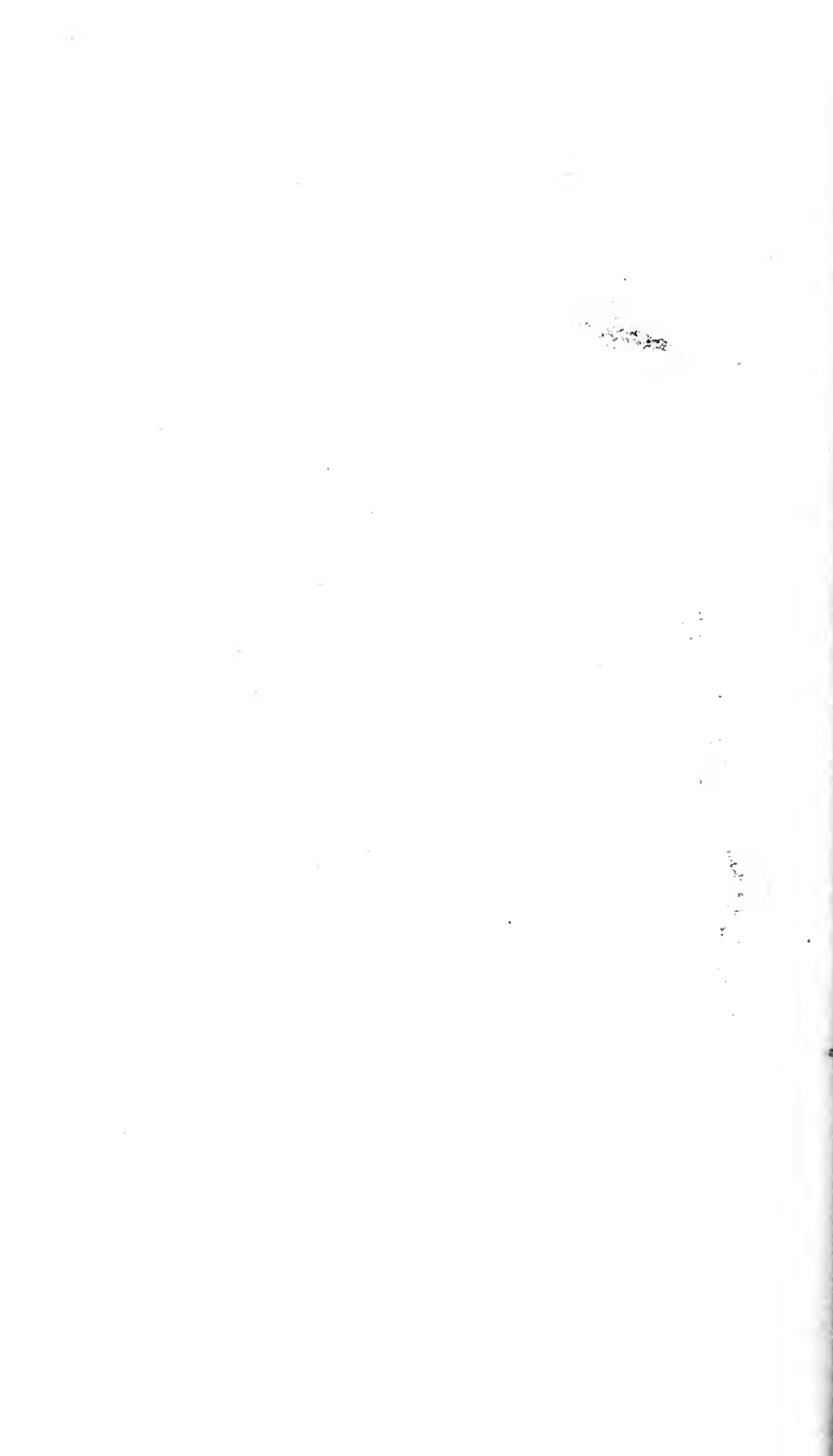
For the above reasons, a direct route from the Persian Gulf running through Ahwaz and Burojird (very much on the lines advocated by Lord Curzon in his book), with extensions to Teheran and Hamadan, would seem to be infinitely preferable. Moreover, on this route the line would pass in close proximity to the oil-fields and so simplify the fuel problem. I found that some such route was favoured by all the Persians with whom I discussed the matter.

Another though small development which *prima facie* has profitable potentialities is the extension of the line through British Baluchistan from the railhead at Dozdab to Seistan, something over seventy miles. This would tap one of the richest territories in Persia, and by rendering possible the export of wheat, cotton, and dried fruits, would not only develop the district, but would provide freight for the return haul, where at the present time there is but little export traffic.

The lack of roads in the European acceptance of the word is wellnigh as great as in the case of railways, the majority being little more than traffic-worn tracks, at times impassable for wheeled transport. In the winter and spring, even if not blocked to the depth of several feet by snow or floods, there is a very fair chance that the bridges may be washed away, or that, at the least, traffic may be seriously delayed by wash-outs. The best road in the country at the present time is that from Qaraitu to Kazvin, which, begun by the Russians, was brought to a very fair condition during the British occupation. Even on this, however, transport during the winter has taken as much as six weeks to cover the hundred and forty miles between Kazvin and Hamadan. What its ultimate



On Trek.



fate will be remains to be seen, but, judging by the extent to which it had fallen off when I travelled by it five months after the evacuation, it is more than doubtful whether it will be passable for motor traffic by the spring of 1922.

Meantime the Persians at least show sufficient interest in it to have established an endless series of toll-bars, with the result that travelling has become an expensive luxury, although it may be doubted whether the revenue derives any benefit therefrom. In all probability the road will shortly fall again into the hands of the Russian road company, although Russia abandoned the concession by the Russian-Persian Treaty of 1921. Truth to tell, it looks suspiciously as if the abandonment of Russian concessions was only intended to be temporary, the aim being to put Britain in the position of the grasping Power which insisted upon enforcing rights against Persia, as compared with Russia, which was ready to abandon all claims and meet her upon a footing of equality. That it was ever contemplated finally to abandon the concessions is most doubtful, and since the Treaty expressly stipulated that they should not be ceded to other nations, there was small risk that they would not be readily available when desired.

The paucity of roads and their poor condition has not prevented the Persian from taking up motoring, and considerable numbers of cars are imported at the present time, those in Teheran having risen from 10 in the spring of 1920 to 250 eighteen months later.

A country which is difficult to enter or leave is in these days somewhat of a curiosity, but Persia is at times difficult if not impossible of access. In normal times by far and away the quickest and most direct routes were either across the Caucasus or through Moscow to Baku, and thence

across the Caspian to Enzeli. To-day these are most effectually closed to the ordinary traveller by the Bolshevik régime, and it is necessary to resort to much more circuitous routes. Until recently an additional obstacle was a local republic established between Enzeli and Kazvin. Apart from the approaches to Eastern Persia, three alternatives are presented—the above-mentioned road to Baghdad, the road from Isfahan to Bushire, and the Lynch road from Isfahan to Ahwaz. Of these, only the first is passable throughout for wheeled traffic, although cars can be man-handled over the passes on the Bushire road. The last will only appeal to those who are attracted by the prospect of fifteen days on a mule. During the winter all three are at times rendered impassable by snow, so that the would-be traveller must perforce wait upon the weather. A very similar state of affairs arises at other times through unsettlement, as in the autumn of 1920, when the Baghdad route was closed by the Arab outbreak, while the southern route was for those unable to command a large escort a somewhat uncertain proposition owing to the number of robber bands.

The Persian thief is a very different individual to his European confrère. For the most part he is a petty thief, anxious, in the main, that his peculations shall not be discovered. This, in all probability, is due to the severity of the Koranic penalties, until recently in force. When, however, the Persian takes to highway robbery he becomes a very different person, although not usually blood-thirsty, provided that his victims are not so ill-advised as to offer resistance. Ali Baba's famous forty would compare poorly with some of the bands which from time to time come into existence. One which during 1918 terrorised the neighbourhood of Isfahan numbered at one time

over seven hundred, and although this was exceptional, very considerable numbers are not infrequently attained. The powerlessness of the Government is well illustrated by the difficulty experienced in dealing with the band in question. The only method which appeared practicable to them was to appoint a Bakhtiari Khan Governor of Isfahan, in the hope that he might induce some of the younger khans to assist him in suppressing the marauders. In this he was successful, and siege was laid to the robber headquarters. There, however, in so far as results were concerned, the matter ended. The robbers came and went as they pleased without being interfered with. The Bakhtiari had, it is true, two guns, but fearing the loss of prestige which would have resulted from an exhibition of their gunnery, preferred not to risk firing them. After the affair had dragged on for months, it was finally ended by a detachment of South Persian Rifles, who settled it in a matter of forty-eight hours. So much for the vaunted fighting powers of the Bakhtiari !

It is difficult to generalise about the climate of a country so extensive as Persia, but, excepting always the two low belts to north and south, it may be said that the extremes of temperature are modified in summer by cool nights and in winter by bright sun. At the same time the cold, specially in the more elevated districts, can be great, while in the south the summer heat is extreme. The Persian climate cannot be considered to have suffered at the hands of those who have troubled to describe it.

With regard to the population of the country, it is impossible to do more than hazard a conjecture. This is inevitable from the very nature of the problem, for, in respect of a country where no attempt is made to hold a census,—partly on

religious grounds and partly owing to opposition to the idea arising from the suspicion that such a proceeding could but be the prelude to further taxation; a country, moreover, in which a large portion of the population is nomadic and outside the ordinary machinery of government,—conjecture alone is possible. Since Europeans first visited the country the widest differences of opinion have existed on the subject. Nor is this difficult to understand. During the seasons when agricultural operations are being carried on, the country gives the impression of being much more densely populated than at other times, while much depends upon the route taken by the traveller, since the unsettled and arbitrary nature of the government offers an incentive to avoid the main routes of travel, with the result that much of the population is not settled near the main roads, as in a more civilised country. For these reasons the general impression left on the traveller is apt to vary greatly, and this would seem to have been a consideration in many of the estimates presented in the absence of more reliable data.

In the seventeenth century Chardin estimated the population at forty millions, while a native historian put forward the preposterous figure of two hundred millions. Even after making every allowance for the fact that Persia was at that time very considerably larger than it is at the present day, comprising as it did Afghanistan and Georgia, and keeping in view that the anarchy of the eighteenth century must have largely reduced the population, Chardin's figure is excessive. During the last century the population was greatly reduced by epidemics and famine, which recurred at intervals of less than ten years, and it is believed that between 1830 and 1880 the population fell by a third. For instance, Kerman in the

decade following 1840 is said to have lost, including emigrants, 700,000 inhabitants, while the decrease in Mazanderan and Astrabad is eloquently attested by the extent of the land which has reverted to jungle.

One of the most uncertain factors in the problem is the nomadic section of the population, which migrates in search of pasture for the flocks from which it derives its livelihood. Many of the nomads, particularly those near the centres of government, have come more or less under control, but the larger tribes such as the Lurs, Bakh-tiaris, and Kashghis, constitute *imperia in imperio*, and the estimates of their numbers are therefore largely conjectural. Consequently, too much weight must not be laid on the commonly quoted number of two millions.

Sir Percy Sykes, the last author to refer to the subject, is of opinion that, after making allowance for all the factors which have operated to reduce the population, the country cannot at any time have supported more than fifteen millions; but this would seem to be a somewhat conservative estimate, judging from the remains of ancient conservation works and from the decreases which are known to have occurred through famine and anarchy. At the same time, it is necessary to guard against forming an exaggerated estimate of the former population based on the remains of deserted villages scattered throughout the country. The Persian appears to have been in all ages a building enthusiast, and even to-day the first act of a Persian on the acquisition of wealth is to build, regardless of whether his resources are such as to justify the scale of his operations. The result is that there are to-day many families in Teheran which, if judged by the scale of their establishments, would be reckoned wealthy, but

which in actual fact are saddled with a white elephant of little or no selling or letting value. In addition, the country has been in all ages peculiarly liable to movements of population. The capital has been changed frequently, this being the usual consequence of a change of dynasty; and similar movements have taken place in the village population. When a man acquires a village, the usual form of investment, he is naturally anxious to increase the population thereof. Given that he is a person of influence, he will probably have no great difficulty in so manipulating the water supply as to deprive neighbouring villages of an adequate supply, and a movement of its inhabitants will take place. The Persian Naboth has indeed but poor chances, and little or no hope of obtaining redress. Other factors influencing the movement of population are the incidence of taxation and the military levy. These being based on an antiquated survey, it necessarily follows that once the population of a village has begun to decrease, the incidence of taxation on those remaining tends to become progressively heavier, until a point is reached when it becomes a vital inducement to a change of domicile.

In 1810 Sir John Malcolm placed the population at approximately six millions, and since that date published estimates have ranged from six to ten millions. In 1884 General Schindler considered that something over seven millions was the correct figure, while five years later Lord Curzon put it at nine millions. To-day reference books usually give ten millions, but this cannot be regarded as more than a conjectural figure somewhere between the two extreme estimates. These vary as widely to-day as in former times. For example, a high official put the population at something under fifteen millions, probably about thirteen, while at

the other extreme a European of long residence, who in addition had had opportunities of gaining an insight into the question in the north during the famine of 1918, considered that prior to that disaster the total population was seven millions, and that two millions had died at that time. This estimate was admittedly based on experiences in the north-west, but the extent of the mortality at least was borne out by my own experiences when inquiring into the affairs of the province of Teheran, when I found that approximately a quarter of the agricultural population had died during the famine.

Where experts disagree to such an extent, I do not venture to hazard an estimate as to the true figure, but am content to regard all estimates of population as being as empirical as most statistics regarding Persia. For what it is worth, however, I append a statement received from a Persian friend who has devoted considerable study to the question, and which was compiled by him from information gathered from local officials. At the least, it represents an honest attempt by a Persian official to arrive at the truth, and serves to indicate the general distribution of population according to men responsible for the administration.

	Lowest Figure.	Reasoned Higher Figure.
Teheran, town . . .	250,000	380,000
Do., province . . .	700,000	800,000
Azerbaijan	2,000,000	3,000,000
Ghilan	600,000	700,000
Mazanderan	500,000	600,000
Astarabad	500,000	700,000
Khorasan and Seistan .	1,000,000	1,300,000
Kerman and Baluchistan	600,000	750,000
Fars	1,000,000	1,400,000
Arabistan	400,000	500,000

24 RECENT HAPPENINGS IN PERSIA

	Lowest Figure.	Reasoned Higher Figure.
Burojird and Luristan	600,000	700,000
Kermanshah	700,000	800,000
Kurdistan	600,000	700,000
Khamseh	250,000	350,000
Kazvin	500,000	600,000
Hamadan	600,000	700,000
Araq	600,000	700,000
Kum	200,000	250,000
Kachan	350,000	450,000
Isfahan	800,000	1,000,000
Yezd	300,000	500,000
Other districts	350,000	450,000
	13,400,000	17,330,000

The most striking fact which is brought out by the above estimates is that even local officials are unable to furnish anything better than what are evidently wildly conjectural approximations.

As will have been noticed above, even in the case of towns it is difficult to arrive at any definite figure. The population of Teheran, for instance, I have heard placed at anything from two hundred thousand to half a million. The usual figure given is a quarter of a million. This, I believe, is based on a calculation of eleven inhabitants per house. In the poorer districts, however, this figure is largely exceeded, as many as seventy occupying a house, while amongst the upper classes very large households are maintained, ranging up to a hundred or more. When it is remembered that the middle class is of trifling dimensions, and allowance is made for those who sleep in their places of business and for the homeless, it is probable that the actual population is considerably in excess of the figure usually given.

I have somewhat laboured the question of population, since it serves to emphasise the fact

that all statistics regarding Persia must be received with the utmost caution. The best that can be said for them is that they *may* represent the true position.

It follows as a natural corollary to the invasions to which Persia has at all times been exposed that her population is composed of many and various elements. The original inhabitants appear to have been Aryans, but upon these have been superimposed Mongols, Arabs, and Turkomans, not to mention other races which in a lesser degree have contributed to form the present population.

A century ago Sir John Malcolm described the Persians as falling into four main groups—the Turkoman tribes, mainly located in the north and north-east; indigenous tribes whose chief habitat is in the mountains which form the western boundary of the country; the settled population of the towns and the agricultural population; and the Arabs on the shores of the Gulf. This classification, although not above scientific criticism, is probably still sufficiently accurate to give a general idea of the nature of the population. The various races have now become considerably mixed, not only through individual movements, but through former Shahs following the old Babylonian policy of moving their subjects for political reasons. Thus Kurdish tribes were transferred from the west to Khorasan to strengthen the defence of the frontier against Turkoman raiders; while some thousand families of Armenians were compelled to migrate to Isfahan in order to reinforce the trading community. In addition, tribes which had become inconveniently powerful would be broken up into two or more entities settled in different parts of the country. Consequently, to-day settlements of the same tribe are to be found widely separated, and the racial distribu-

tion of the population is subject to very many exceptions.

It has been usual to talk of the nomad tribes of Persia as a separate section of the population, but it is necessary, when considering them, to use the words tribe and nomad with extreme caution, and to have clearly in mind exactly what is intended. If we use the word tribe in the Persian sense, we must include at a low estimate 80 per cent of the population, for the vast majority of the townsmen keep up a connection with their tribal organisations. They cannot, however, be regarded as being part of a tribal organisation for practical purposes any more than members of clan societies or county associations. Nevertheless the Persian considers them to be tribesmen.

Equally liable to misconception is the use of the word nomad. If we are to regard those who move in search of pasture as nomads, then a large section of the population must be held to be nomads at one season and settled at another. In reality they are no more nomads than the Swiss herdsmen who move their flocks up to the mountain pastures during the summer, pursuing the same route, and returning to the lower levels in the autumn. The reason for moving and the routine are precisely the same in Persia. Thus the word tribe may equally describe the nomad and settled population, and, apart from a detailed examination, it is not possible to define accurately the extent to which each is under the control of the central Government. Generally speaking, tribe must be regarded as in the main meaning those communities in which the tribal entity is strongest, and which are most apart from their neighbours. Over many of these the Government in its present enfeebled condition has little or no control.

The largest tribes are the Shahseven, Turkoman,

Kurds, Arabs, Lurs, Bakhtiari, and Kashghi. Of these, the three latter are credited with being able to put into the field the first sixty thousand, and each of the latter thirty thousand men. Whether or not these figures bear any relation to their actual strengths, they are far higher than anything with which the Government can oppose them. It is extremely doubtful whether, even in the most serious emergency, anything approaching these figures could be put into the field, when allowance is made for tribal differences, and in any case their value and numbers would decrease greatly outside their own districts.

During the so-called revolution of 1909 the Bakhtiari, in spite of the active part which they took, at no time contributed more than two thousand men. The really large migratory tribes, which live permanently in tents, are few—Arabs and some Kashghis; while the smaller do not fall to be considered, apart from Government control. Some of these, such as the Assanlu, are even to be found in the vicinity of Teheran. Such tribes as the Bakhtiari and Lurs live in villages, and cultivate the land like their neighbours, from whom they only differ in the greater proportion of live stock in their possession. It is those in charge of the flocks who normally move in search of pasture, although naturally conditions are different in times of feud and disturbance, when, for reasons of mutual protection, it is unsafe to separate.

The tribes are ruled by their khans, the ilkani, or supreme chiefs, being nominated by the Government from the members of the ruling family, or, in the case of the Bakhtiaris, from one of the two ruling families. Many of the khans, particularly in the south, maintain considerable bodyguards, and lead a life resembling that of the mediæval baron. Some of the Bakhtiari khans since the revolution have discovered the attractions of town

life, with a consequent degeneration and loss of authority. This process is at present only in its infancy, but should it spread, must do much to weaken the cohesion of the tribe. The Bakhtiari khans, indeed, did very well out of the revolution, for in return for their services the four governorships nearest to their territory have since been allotted to them, and they have shown no difficulty in adapting their predatory instincts to their new positions, so that those under their control have little cause to bless them.

The tribes are taxed upon a special basis, a tax being imposed upon families and another upon flocks. These are collected through the chiefs, and whether or not anything reaches the hands of the Government depends largely upon the relations subsisting for the time being between the khan and the latter. That any progress is possible under such conditions in the south, where the more independent tribes are located, seems too much to hope for. The suicidal disbandment of the South Persian Rifles has meantime destroyed any hope of establishing a settled Government in the south, although this must be one of the first tasks of a strong Government, should such ever arise.

This would not be by any means a difficult task. What is required is to demand and obtain from the tribes the proper military quota, and to carry out a policy of disarmament. The latter should not require a large force if undertaken during a period of migration, but it is utterly beyond the power of the present Government, whose best troops, the Cossack Division, are well-nigh worthless for military purposes. Each district, however, requires special treatment. The Turkoman and the Lurs have proved themselves better able to grasp the necessities of the time than the southern tribes when they have been

called upon to co-operate in the work of local government and police, as the two years' administration of Qavam-es-Salteneh in Khorasan has proved to a remarkable degree.

With regard to opportunities for trade development, little can be said with advantage at the present time. Normally the greater volume of trade destined for Northern Persia passes through the Caucasus, but since the Russian débâcle it has been diverted to more southern routes. This change is brought out by the alteration in the incidence of the customs revenue since the war. Roughly speaking, the average customs revenue for the three years to 1914 was 39,000,000 krans, of which over 31,000,000 was derived from the northern customs, and the remainder from the southern. In 1919 the total was rather over 25,000,000, of which more than 18,000,000 was derived from the southern customs. From these figures it is evident that a purely artificial condition exists at the present time, dictated, not by economic conditions, but by political factors, and that sooner or later trade must inevitably return to the cheapest and most direct channel. Although the British Foreign Office may regard the southern customs as adequate security for Persia's indebtedness, they could not be so regarded from a business standpoint, and it must be frankly admitted that any calculations based upon present conditions are dangerous in the extreme, if they cover more than the near future.

An even more serious factor is that Persian export trade is to-day a small and rapidly diminishing quantity, which is utterly inadequate to pay for the imports. For example, the last return for the Baghdad route, which I obtained on my journey, showed imports at five hundred tons and exports at sixty. It is impossible for such con-

ditions to continue in the absence of foreign loans, and at the present moment it is difficult to see whence these are to be derived.

That the British merchant has enjoyed opportunities since the war is certain, but it must be confessed that adequate advantage has not been taken of these. Some concerns trading in Persia appear to have taken the view of letting the morrow take care of itself, and have exploited their opportunities to the utmost, regardless of the unpopularity which such a policy must entail, with the consequent certainty that Persians and Europeans alike would welcome any opportunity of dealing with competitors. Moreover, much British effort has not been conducted upon sound lines. For example, British catalogues usually contain the proviso that prices cannot be guaranteed. When the difficulty of communication at the present time is kept in view, it will readily be understood that changes in price frequently occur prior to the receipt of the Persian merchant's order. The latter probably receives a telegram to the effect that a rise has occurred, with a curt inquiry as to whether he wishes his order filled at the new rate. Even if he still desires to do so, he may very well be compelled for financial reasons to revise his order, with the chance that when his amended statement is received, he may in all likelihood be faced with a fresh rise in prices. In striking contrast are German methods, as instanced by a catalogue which reached Teheran shortly before my departure. Not only were the prices quoted firm, but they were quoted in terms of Persian currency. The merchant who brought it to my notice frankly stated that he would prefer to continue dealing with an English firm, but that under the circumstances he had no alternative in the matter.

That many good orders could be secured at remunerative rates (or could have been prior to the present financial difficulties) is certain, but it requires to be kept in mind, firstly, that the trade is seasonal, and secondly, that the Persian knows his own requirements, and that it is useless to endeavour to foist upon him anything which the manufacturer may have upon his hands. For example, an American firm shipped a large consignment of boots. On the assumption that what was good enough for the citizen of "God's own country" was good enough for the Persian, the consignment consisted of those square-toed, tip-tilted productions which brand the American globe-trotter throughout the world. The Persian, who, as a rule, has long and narrow feet, did not happen to see things from the same point of view; and although there was a shortage of boots at the time, the consignment remained in the importer's hands. Another factor which requires to be kept in view is the already-mentioned smallness of the middle class, from which it follows that there is a corresponding lack of demand for middle quality goods. Tea, for example, of which many million pounds are imported annually, must either be of the finest or the cheapest, and the same applies in other directions.

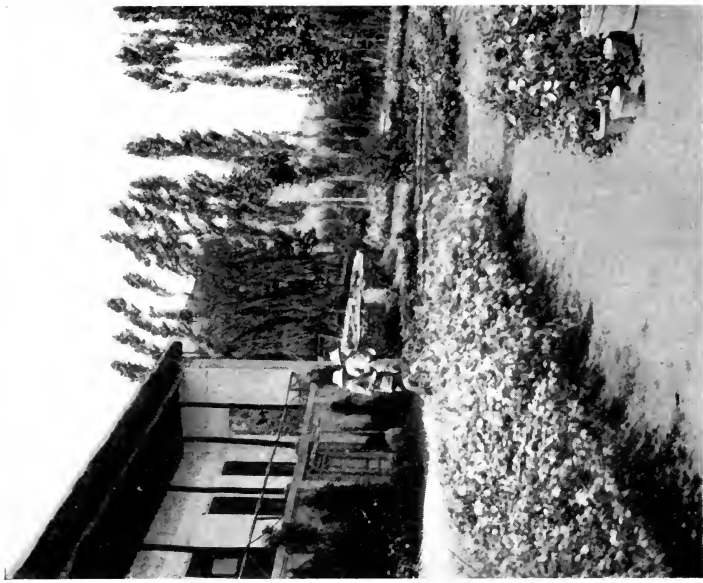
Even had the most been made of opportunities, only the most efficiently conducted competition could hope to be successful when faced with open northern routes, considering that freight from rail-head to Teheran is anything from fifty to a hundred pounds a ton according to demand. If ever the day comes that Persia possesses a railway the situation will be changed, but in the immediate future the outlook for British trade is far from rosy.

CHAPTER II.

THE PEOPLE AND RELIGIONS.

IN 'Herodotus' we read that the Persian youth of his time were taught three things—to ride, to draw the bow, and to speak the truth. The Persian of to-day is certainly taught to ride; but as regards the second item, the qualification is required that, while in so far as the bow was used for sport he certainly inherits the tastes of his ancestors, being a keen sportsman, it is far otherwise in the matter of war. Were it not that the South Persian Rifles, under British officers, have proved themselves fair material for second-class warfare, one would be tempted to describe the Persian as the worst soldier imaginable.

I shall return to the army in a later chapter, but meantime it is worth recalling the story of the man who exclaimed, "How the Persians would fight if there were no dying in the case." There is, indeed, a certain frankness about the way in which cowardice is admitted without shame. When the Russians in 1911 occupied Tabriz, they found it necessary to restore order with a firm hand, and, among other disturbers of the peace, certain mullahs were hanged. This caused consternation in the ecclesiastical community, and was made the ground of a violent anti-Russian agitation. In Kerman, in the south—and consequently far remote from the Russian sphere—this assumed an extreme form, and under



A Persian garden.



Near Teheran.



the supervision of the mullahs, active drilling was begun by enthusiasts with the avowed intention of dethroning and executing the Czar. As luck would have it, a band of robbers began very shortly afterwards to infest the district, seriously interfering with the trade of the province, and carrying their depredations to the very gates of the town. In their extremity the authorities appealed to the British Consul to come to their aid and drive away the robbers. After pointing out that, in the first place, it was not his business, and secondly, that even if it were, he could do nothing with the half-dozen sowars who constituted his escort, he added that since they had so many men training to fight the Russians, it should be a very simple matter to dispose of a few robbers. The reply was illuminating. "It is quite true," they admitted, "that there are many men getting ready to fight the Russians, but then the Russians are a long way off, while the robbers are very near!"

As regards Herodotus's third item, one is almost tempted to believe that the training of his time is now reversed. Sadi wrote that an acceptable lie is better than an unpalatable truth, and his countrymen are not slow to put his recommendation into practice. In addition, it must be confessed that in many cases a sense of the distinction between *meum* and *tuum* is not over-highly developed.

But the Persian has many admirable qualities, which go far to redeem his defects. Nimble-minded, witty, and a lover of poetry and philosophical discussion, he is an agreeable and cheerful companion. In his case certainly oriental gravity is conspicuously absent, and it does not require much to cause the laughter which is ever near the surface. His mind is subtle and alert, although he has a rooted objection to facing hard facts. *Carpe diem* would appear to be his motto, and his

optimism is of a kind which even Mr Micawber would have found hard to surpass. On one occasion, when the serious political outlook and the Bolshevik menace were under discussion, the argument was summed up by one who said that, after being an empire for three thousand years, Persia was certainly not coming to an end now. It seemed heartless to point out that, although the land had remained, there had been little other continuity, and that one race of conquerors after another had held possession, and we accordingly let the matter rest there. Further, they are fine and reckless horsemen, and untiring in pursuit of game, keen gamblers, and, I gather, good losers. The peasantry are of fine physique, most hospitable, and perforce frugal in their way of life. Above all, among all classes alike the standard of manners is of the highest, and in courtesy the lowest-class Persian could teach the European much.

One of the greatest bars to progress lies in the almost entire absence of a middle class. Of such as there is it may be said that the merchants constitute the best element of the population. Of them it may generally be stated that their word is as good as their bond, and that a verbal understanding in most cases will be scrupulously implemented. Their numbers are, however, limited, and thus the difficulty is—politically—that, apart from the upper class and religious, there are but few with sufficient education to undertake the direction of affairs. It is this that makes it difficult to see whence a reform of the present system is to come. The greater part of the population consists, at one end of the social scale, of the aristocracy, entrenched behind their privileges, theoretical and practical, who, if they concern themselves at all with affairs, are intent only upon

exploiting the country to their personal advantage. There are, of course, exceptions, but these are seldom men of initiative and ability. In this connection it may be worth mentioning that it has been suggested to me that the balance of power is gradually shifting from the politicians of Teheran (many of whose families are impoverished) to the provincial magnates, rich alike in men and resources, and that this has much to do with the centrifugal tendency so much in evidence at the present time. How much there is in this view, and how far, if it is correct, the movement is likely to spread, I am unable to say.

At the other end is the peasant, who, in spite of his legal rights, is at the mercy of the local magnates and officials, and, in some parts of the country at any rate, occupies a position little better than that of a mediæval serf. For example, in at least one district of Mazanderan, the peasant is compelled to obtain the proprietor's consent to the marriage of his daughter, and also to use the proprietor's bath-house. Between the oppressions of the officials and the exactions of the landlord, his hope of redress is but small, and the wise man submits to the oppression to which he is exposed lest worse befall.

On one occasion, when in camp in the mountains, a nomad was brought in whose hand had been, in pure wantonness, half-severed by a Cossack. Fortunately for him there happened to be a doctor in the party; but there was no hope of obtaining the punishment of the aggressor, for those best acquainted with the country were unanimously of opinion that in the man's interest we must do nothing, since any protest, while having no effect so far as the punishment of the criminal was concerned, would in all probability lead to the murder of the victim by his assailant or his comrades.

With regard to the position of women, it is naturally somewhat difficult to speak, since a foreigner is compelled to judge by the scanty chances of observation available, and in Persia I am satisfied that these are misleading in the extreme. Polygamy is universally recognised, and in the towns the women are compelled to veil, but so far as I could observe, the degree of care exercised in this respect varied inversely with the proximity of a policeman. Of course, among the upper classes much greater care is observed, the ladies of the blood-royal and higher nobility seldom leaving their homes; but even among these the strictness of the supervision exercised is much relaxed, and far fewer eunuchs are employed than formerly, probably a dozen in the royal palace against a hundred a generation ago. In the country districts there is much greater laxity in the matter, while I understand that the women of the tribes attach little weight to the injunction. As a result of the higher education of women (everything is a question of degree), there has been some agitation for the repeal of the law making veiling compulsory, but hitherto the mullahs have succeeded in securing its continuance. So far as I can ascertain, it does not rest upon the Koran, but at the same time it is regarded as a religious ordinance.

The Persian woman must not be regarded as a slave by any measure of means, since even the disabilities under which she labours have their advantages. Even the veil has its uses, for one veiled and shrouded figure exactly resembles another, and intrigue, for those so inclined, is thereby vastly facilitated.

There are in Persia two forms of marriage, permanent and temporary. A man is restricted to four regular wives or akdis at one time, but in view of the ease with which divorce is arranged

this is no very serious limitation. The Koran lays down that a man shall not divorce and remarry the same woman more than three times unless she shall have in the interval married another man. In the case of temporary wives or sighehs, there is no limit to the number which he so disposed may take. These temporary marriages are based upon a legal contract for a fixed period, usually three or six months or ninety-nine years. At the end of the stipulated period, subject always to provision for any children of the union, the parties are freed from any claim upon one another, and at liberty to go their respective ways upon the payment of the sums stipulated in the contract. In many cases such marriages continue for years, even if not permanently, the contract being renewed from time to time. Of course, they may easily under certain circumstances degenerate into something little better than prostitution, and this occurs at places of pilgrimage such as Meshed, which entail long absences from home. There, under the auspices of the local ecclesiastics, the pilgrim is provided with a wife for the period of his stay.

It is not easy to say to what extent polygamy exists in practice, but some at any rate among the upper class content themselves with one wife. Among the lower classes the question is very largely an economic one. Thus among the peasantry, since much of the field work is done by women, every additional wife means extra labour, which provides an incentive to polygamy. Among the tribes it is more usual to be content with one wife. In the towns the economic factor has the reverse effect, since there the wife is an additional expense, which provides a restraining influence.

A further restraint lies in the fact that the woman may make it a condition of the marriage

that she shall be the only wife, and in this event a breach of the contract would give her a legitimate ground for divorce. This power of making pre-marriage conditions in the hands of a clever woman can be used to serve her whim in a way which can only excite sympathy for the hapless husband. A certain lady had married an ecclesiastic, whose home and means of livelihood lay in a provincial town. Being a prudent young woman, she had made a condition that she should choose their home, and to this the bridegroom had somewhat rashly agreed. Between the religious and civil marriages, as the homecoming of the bride is called, there is usually a certain interval, and during this time the lady came to the conclusion that she did not like her husband, and wished to be off with the bargain. Bethinking herself of the condition about choosing a home, she postulated the condition that her husband should provide her with a home in Teheran, and despite the appeals of the luckless mullah, who was in no position to give up his appointment and move to the capital, she stuck to her condition. The lady having the legal right under the contract, the husband was powerless. The matter had not been settled when I left Teheran, but certainly the bride's action bore out the dictum of a friend with regard to women of the upper class, that no Persian was a man in his own house. Instances are also quoted of viziers and other dignitaries who have been run politically by their wives behind the purdah, while the case of a certain grandee who was locked out by his wife is notorious. The views of the first wife have also to be considered by the man who would lead a quiet life when he thinks of a second venture in matrimony, and all have not the resource of a certain worthy of my acquaintance, who, contemplating a second mar-

riage, despatched his first wife on a pilgrimage to Meshed. If report speaks correctly as to the lady's character, it appears probable that even he may have had cause to regret his action.

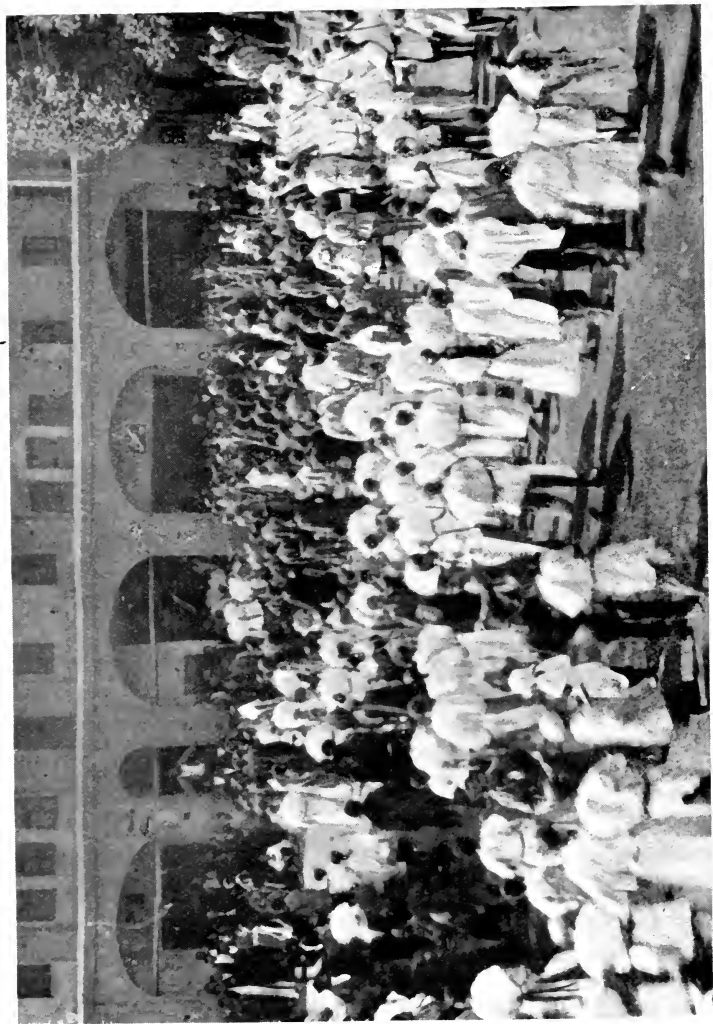
The Persian servant problem is exactly the reverse of the European, for the difficulty is not to get servants, but to get rid of them. The impression given is that to enter the service of one of the greater families is to ensure provision not only for life, but also to a great extent for the next generation. For example, one grandee complained to me that he had not only maintained his foster-mother during her life, but that he was in addition saddled with the support of her daughters and their families. Where son succeeds father and servants are not dismissed, staffs grow to the most fantastic extent. One friend admitted that he was uncertain whether there were eighty or a hundred servants in his town house, and such numbers are typical. They, nevertheless, sink into insignificance beside the establishment of the Sipah Salah, who is reputed to have three thousand hangers-on. When tradesmen and others who look to the great families for their livelihood are added, it will be appreciated that there is a large body in the capital vitally interested, for personal reasons, in the continuation of the present system.

The State religion of Persia is the Shiah form of Islam. The main difference between this and the orthodox, or Sunni, Mohammedanism is that the followers of the former regard the first three caliphs or successors of Mohammed—Abu Bekr, Omar, and Othman—as usurpers (from which it follows that all interpretations and rulings anent the Koran given by them are void and of no effect), and claiming that Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet, was appointed by him as his successor. Thus it comes about that the Shiah faith

centres round the family of Ali. He and his descendants, the Imams, are regarded as having been the spiritual heads of the church on earth, and it is generally believed that the twelfth and last Imam did not die, but will return in the fulness of time to subdue the world to the true faith, and ensure the triumph of the faithful. Holding this belief there is no room for a caliph, and hence the Persians do not recognise the caliphate.

Ali was murdered, and his son Hasan, who relinquished his claims to the caliphate on condition of being permitted to retain his harem and treasure, shared a like fate. Hussain, the younger brother of Hasan, encouraged by promises of support from the citizens of Kufa, left Mecca with a small body of kinsmen and followers, the seventy-two martyrs, and marched to Mesopotamia. The men of Kufa, proving true to their reputation for faithlessness, abandoned Hussain to his fate, and at Kerbala, on the banks of the Euphrates, the devoted band met their end. As a consequence of their fate, Ali and his sons have come to be regarded as the great martyrs of the faith, particularly Hussain, and his death is annually celebrated during Mohurram. Mystery plays dealing with the tragedy of Kerbala are given before grief-stricken audiences, and on the tenth day of the month, the great day of mourning, processions of devotees take place. As examples of fanatical lamentation these would be difficult to surpass, and accordingly for such interest as it possesses I propose to describe the only one which I had an opportunity of witnessing.

The first procession which I encountered was that of the Cossack Division. It opened with a contingent of lancers, with the led horses, which form part of the funeral of a man of rank in Persia, between each file. Thereafter followed a band playing a lament, and behind it came a large body



They cried aloud and cut themselves with knives.



of men with bowed heads, who slowly poured dust upon their heads ; then another band and a second body of mourners, who gently beat their breasts with their right hands in unison. Behind these followed more lancers, and amongst them children on led horses, typifying the children of Hussain who escaped from the slaughter.

So far things had been tame, and such as might have been witnessed in Europe. With the next troop of mourners the signs of lamentation became much more vehement. These were stripped to the waist, and beat their breasts in unison with their clenched fists. The whole were admirably drilled, and were it not for the resounding force of the blows, might have been considered as giving an exhibition of physical drill. At intervals the procession stopped, and the breast-beaters put in some violent work in time to their chant. This party terminated the Cossack procession, and I had an opportunity of reaching the place opposite the entrances to the bazars reserved for Europeans.

Almost immediately there emerged from the dark entrance of the main bazar a procession the like of which I had never seen before, and I must say that I have no particular desire to see a similar one again. It consisted of a long line of men walking sideways. They were dressed in smocks, which at the beginning of their march had been white. Each man held a sword or large knife in his right hand, and with his left clasped his neighbour's waist. These were the modern imitators of the priests of Baal. In front of them were men with stout staves with which to mitigate any unduly violent blows. Slowly the line crawled into the maidan, and as they emerged into the sunlight it was possible to realise the horror of their aspect. Each man's head was a blood-stained mass, the scarlet stains spreading over, and in some cases

all over, their white garments. Chanting and marking time with their swords, the line edged round the square, while ever and anon one and another would cut at the top of his head. Looking at them, it was almost impossible to imagine a greater exhibition of fanatical emotion. The end of their course was opposite the place where I stood, and there the procession broke up, all except those who sought the neighbouring first-aid station disappearing through an opposite doorway. The impression left by their exhibition was, I must admit, somewhat marred as, after a short interval, one watched orderly groups of Cossacks and mild-looking citizens, with nothing except the edge of a bandage showing below their kolas to mark them out from their neighbours, emerging from the doorway which had swallowed up the horde of blood-stained fanatics.

After some groups of civilian breast-beaters had passed, whose energy fully equalled that of their military brothers, the head of the main procession emerged from the archway. This was headed by the usual troupes of mourners with emblems of lamentation. Then followed a bier whereon lay Hussain's headless body with a child by its side. Immediately behind this came the chief mourners, a large group of mullahs and other ecclesiastics. In the centre of the maidan they halted, and while one delivered an address, the remainder sat upon the ground. All, and the spectators also, punctuated the speech with frequent outbursts of sobs, from which genuine emotion was markedly absent.

Following upon the mullahs came another bier, upon which lay a headless and blood-stained corpse, with two live doves attached to its feet. Men with swords and cleavers surrounded the bier, striking at it with their weapons, and when it was

lowered to the ground these were joined by others with bundles of reeds. The solemnity of the whole performance was, it must be confessed, completely marred by the fact that the corpse at regular intervals made spasmodic movements with its hands and feet. I am told that it was intended to typify the piety of the martyr, who in his dying moments endeavoured to perform the prescribed movements of prayer, but find it difficult to understand how even a martyred caliph could achieve this after being deprived of his head.

As to what followed thereafter I am unable to say from personal observation, although I understand that amongst others there was one party who flogged themselves with chains, for at that moment we were interrupted by an agitated major of police who insisted on our immediate departure. It appeared that an urgent message had just arrived from a leading mullah to the effect that the members of the next procession had expressed the amiable intention of beating the Europeans, and the police were taking no risks of a diplomatic incident.

The scenes described above may be regarded as typical of those enacted on a scale proportionate to the population throughout Persia upon the tenth of Mohurram. How far they are the outcome of genuine emotion it is difficult to say. That the spectators were much moved at the time is unquestionable; but, justly or not, it was impossible to avoid the feeling that the sentiments were artificially fostered, and were the quickly-passing emotionalism of the religious revival rather than the outcome of any deeply-founded conviction. As to the performers, one could not help wondering precisely what motives were responsible for their participation in the procession. One Governor of Kerman is credited with having

ordered that every male inhabitant should take part at least once in every five years, and the discipline and training of the Cossacks were such as to clearly indicate the interference of higher authority. In other cases those who participate in particular processions belong to some sort of society or guild, membership of which would appear to be regarded as an honour by those belonging thereto.

It is frankly somewhat difficult to regard Hus-sain and his relations as martyrs according to European standards. He did not meet his death through any question of adherence to his religion or in a struggle against the infidel, but simply in a bid for power against a more powerful rival. The claims of Hasan to be a martyr are even weaker. According to the Shiah tradition he was assassinated by the agents of his rival; but it is difficult to imagine how any one could be so foolish as to bring about the death of a weak and pusillanimous opponent in order to clear the path to the succession for a younger and more ambitious relation. Under these circumstances it is legitimate to suspect that the Mohurram ceremonies owe their prevalence to the fostering care of policy in the first instance, rather than to conviction; and that at the establishment of the Shiah cult in Persia they were encouraged by the Government with a view to fostering the national spirit. It is also interesting to wonder whether in these scenes of universal mourning for a dead hero there may not be embodied some traces of the cult of the dying god, which was so general around the eastern end of the Mediterranean some two thousand years ago. After all, Kerbala, the centre of the Shiah faith, is no great distance from the lands where Osiris, Attis, Dionysus, and Adonis were worshipped, and even in ancient times the communica-

tion was close and regular. It would thus not be surprising to find in Mesopotamia some traces of the worship of the deity or demigod who died and was mourned each year. Since I write under circumstances which preclude the use of books of reference, I have been unable to ascertain whether any such traces are known to have existed.

One custom which would appear to have come down from some previous religion is the annual slaughter of a camel at Teheran. The camel, which is presented by the Shah, is brought, richly adorned, to the principal square of the town, and there killed. Afterwards it is dismembered by the heads of the various trade guilds, each using an instrument of his calling. Formerly the camel was slaughtered by the guild chiefs and torn to pieces by the mob. The flesh is believed to bring good fortune to those fortunate enough to eat thereof. I have not heard any origin of the custom suggested, but it is impossible not to see here a survival of the camel sacrifice of the pagan Arabs.

The Shiah sect would appear to be more fanatical, or, in any case, more emotional, than the Sunnis. No heretic is permitted under any circumstances to enter their mosques and other sacred places, and it would be difficult to imagine anything more typical of fanatical ignorance and vice than the faces of many mullahs. They and the Seyds or self-styled descendents of Mohammed cannot be regarded as other than an unqualified curse to the country. It is at all times unwise to generalise about bodies of men, and I have been told that among the higher clergy there are many men of ability who only indulge in fanatical talk in order to maintain their influence, very much as do certain Trade Union officials. In spite of this, however, it is difficult to believe that the

Persian who said that a good man was very seldom found among them was very wide of the mark. These worthies are to be found in the greatest numbers in the great pilgrimage centres where, like the priests and Levites of Old Testament history, they batten upon the pilgrims who throng to the shrines. When it is remembered in addition that they and their endowments are immune from taxation, they can only be regarded as a drain upon the resources of the country with no counter-vailing benefits, even if they are innocent of the vices generally attributed to them, which one is tempted to doubt.

The dervishes, of whom there are a large number, especially in Khorasan, live the life of the begging friars of mediæval times, and are of equally little value to the country. A Persian friend puts the matter much more strongly, declaring them to be nothing short of a calamity. He describes them as being to the extent of 95 per cent hypocrites, who are incapable of earning a livelihood on account of being addicted to opium, hashish, bang, and other drugs, in addition to carrying on a regular traffic in these among the population.

The Waqf, or charity endowments, in Persia are immense, and sufficient in one sphere alone to maintain a hundred schools and universities sufficiently endowed to provide for five thousand students until the completion of their studies. The administration of these during the last fifty years, and in particular since the constitution, has become excessively corrupt, and the revenues are chiefly diverted from their proper destinations to the benefit of the ecclesiastical body. For example, the greater part of the accommodation in the educational establishments is occupied by the families of so-called students, who, established since boyhood, remain indefinitely, declaring sophisti-

cally that they have not finished their studies. There is at the present time a movement in favour of reform, and the disposal of the revenues in a manner more in accord with the intentions of the donors; but whether this will be more successful than other attacks upon vested privilege is doubtful.

As to the other differences between the Shiah and Sunni sects it is difficult to speak without careful study of the subject; but it may be stated that, while there is greater strictness in certain matters, there is a corresponding laxity in others. Thus while, as already stated, heretics are debarred from sacred buildings, and women are strictly controlled in matters such as veiling, the prohibition against strong drink is very generally disregarded, and upon occasion even pork and bacon are eaten, disguised under the euphemistic name of nightingale's flesh.

For the most part the other religions and sects which have followers in Persia call for only brief notice. The chief Christian elements are the Armenians, and the Chaldean or Assyrian Christians. The former are mostly found in the neighbourhood of Isfahan, where the majority are peasants inhabiting the same villages and occupying the same position as their Moslem neighbours. Like the Georgians in Mazanderan, they have mostly lost their original distinction. The chief settlement of the Chaldeans is in the vicinity of Lake Urmiah in the north-west. So far as it is possible to ascertain, their numbers have been largely reduced by the war and famine, but accurate information is not easy of access either as to the extent or origin of the troubles. The reduction would, moreover, appear to be, to some extent at least, of a temporary nature, for numbers of refugees are now finding their way back from

Mesopotamia, where there are still extensive refugee camps occupied by these people.

There are in addition representatives of numerous missionary bodies, but it is scarcely to be doubted that they have no following worth the name. Lord Curzon in his book expresses strong doubts as to whether any Mohammedans have ever become permanent converts to Christianity. Converts are indeed made, but sooner or later they revert to their original belief.

Two examples may be cited. One is the case of an elderly woman, one of the missionaries' oldest and most prized converts, who suddenly announced her intention of going to Meshed. On her surprised hearers inquiring the reason, she replied, "Well, after all, Meshed is a place of pilgrimage, and after being a Christian for twenty years, one must do something to put things right." The other concerns one of the chief servants of the mission, who, having persuaded his wife to go to Kum, promptly married two others, with whom he departed to Teheran. In this case retribution came quickly, for not only was the black sheep expelled from the flock, but upon their arrival the ladies, whose chief desire had been to be taken to the capital, promptly procured divorces. Nor is this lack of success to be wondered at when the fundamental disparity between the conception of the unity of God and the fatalism of the oriental on the one part, and many of the dogmas with which Christianity has been overlaid on the other, is kept in view.

This difference of view is brought out by the experience of an American medical missionary, who pointed out to his cook the potential risk of allowing his child to play in the drain. The unexpected reply was to the effect that the Americans were really very curious people, since, professing

to teach submission to the will of God, the missionary straightway endeavoured to persuade him to try to interfere with His designs. "For," he added, "it is clear that if it is the will of God that my child die, die he will, whether he plays in the drain or not; while if it is not His will, there is nothing to fear."

A possible exception to the failure to obtain converts may be found in orphans educated from infancy by the missionaries, and of these they have a considerable number, whom they have adopted during the famine. Whether these continue Christians after going into the world may be doubted.

Another reason for missionary failure, and for this I must rely upon my Persian friends, is that without distinction of church, they adopt too polemical methods, instead of relying upon appeals to philosophy and reason. One such friend, educated at a missionary school in Turkey, declared that throughout his residence there every endeavour was made to prejudice him against his religion and country. The reaction, which in the case of intelligent men results from the use of such methods, can readily be imagined.

In these circumstances the missionaries find it somewhat difficult to furnish the necessary number of converts who are required to make their annual reports acceptable to their financial backers, and hence it arises that Armenians are readily received into membership of western sects: a convert is always a convert. So far as I am aware the Persian missions are more fortunate than an American one in Asia Minor, which, while in a position to produce as a convert a Turkish lady, had a skeleton in its cupboard in the fact that two of the women members of the mission had embraced Islam and departed to Turkish harems.

In all the circumstances, even admitting that

in certain cases work of very considerable medical and educational value is accomplished, it is somewhat difficult to understand the mentality which expends upon what from its very nature is bound to be unproductive of any result or advantage, money and labour for which there is such urgent need in the slums of our great cities. That much good can be accomplished by education, which, leaving aside any attempts at conversion, contents itself with endeavouring to instil a higher moral standard is unquestioned. Indeed, the neglect to establish an English school at Teheran is one of the most regrettable of the long list of neglected opportunities of which our recent Persian policy is composed. There are an American and a French school, and before the war there was a German one, but no attempt at a British institution. The result is that the young Persian is never brought up to understand the British point of view, while many of those who under other circumstances might finish their education in England, proceed to France, Germany, or the United States. This contributes largely to the degree to which British aims and intentions are misunderstood, and had a fraction of the money squandered on secret service and bribes been devoted to this purpose, our position might well be far better than at the present moment.

There are also in some parts of the country communities of Sunnis, Parsees or Gabres, and Jews. The Sunnis consist of the Turkoman of Astrabad, some tribes in Khorasan, and the majority of the Kurds in the west. In all they amount to about a million. The Parsees, the survivors of the old Zoroastrians, have their largest settlements at Yezd and Kerman, where they are credited with ten and seven thousand members respectively. There are about seven hundred at

Teheran, but otherwise their numbers are small. They are not a growing community, for the greater opportunities offered by Bombay induce considerable emigration, a close connection being maintained between the two countries.

The Jews are for the most part to be found amongst the lowest class of the population, although in Teheran, where they number about twenty-five thousand, they have advanced in some cases from the status of petty hawkers. Many intermarry with Mahommedans, while others, as a half measure, embrace Bahaiism. Converted Jews, who are known as New Moslems, just as in mediæval Spain Jewish converts were known as New Christians, form a considerable body, twenty thousand in Meshed and ten thousand in Mazanderan.

Bahaiism is the only faith which makes a serious claim to be regarded as a rival to the State religion. First preached in 1844, and at first subjected to bitter persecution, it has made remarkable strides, and to-day claims a large following. As to its numbers it is impossible to speak with any certainty, for although active persecution has ceased with the exception of rare local outbreaks, it is by no means an advantage from the material point of view to be considered a Bahai, it being asserted by them that all suspected of such adherence have been dismissed from State service. It is claimed that the religion is making rapid strides, but in fairness it must be stated that this is disputed by many, who regard the mass of the converts as belonging not to the pure faith, but to bastard offshoots therefrom. They keep their numbers strictly secret, which furnishes some grounds for the allegation that they claim as Bahai all sceptics, and that they have actually lost, to a great extent, their proselytising energy.

Admittedly they have split into two rival sects, the Bahai and the Azali, between which there are many vital differences. They claim to higher standards of morality and honesty, but some of my informants assure me that their personal experiences do not bear this out.

A clear comprehension of their tenets is somewhat hindered by the fact that their most important books do not circulate in Persia, which, in view of the fact that the Persian is frequently strong in philosophy and theology, is as well for Bahaiism, if it is permissible to judge by the literature which emanates from the Bahai press in Chicago, and which cannot be described as presenting a strong case or of being devoid of errors. These publications bear a suspicious resemblance to other theological curiosities originating in America. For instance, the "time, times, and half a time" of Daniel are requisitioned, and do yeoman service in proving that the day of the Bab's birth was exactly foretold by the Prophet.

Generally speaking, Bahaiism claims to be the completion of former religions, and, while admitting that there is some truth in all, maintains that each revelation was limited in a greater or less degree by the conditions of the age during which it occurred, and that all are finally summed up and completed in itself. Thus it is claimed that the expectations of the Jews for a Messiah, of the Christians for the Second Coming, and of the Shiahs for a Mahdi, are alike implemented and fulfilled in the Bab. For the rest, ethical standards are the most important. A religion established on such a basis naturally makes no claim to exclusiveness, and embracing the Bahai beliefs does not entail the abandonment of the convert's former faith. Thus there are to be found in Teheran American Bahai missionaries; and Musulman,

Jews, and Parsees are alike to be found within the fold. How many are there because of belief in its tenets, and how many for the more practical reason that it affords an approach to Islam, without the abandonment of previous beliefs, is another question.

Incidentally, the execution of the Bab only failed by a hair's-breadth to provide a well-authenticated modern miracle. When placed against the wall for execution, the first volley, while leaving him entirely uninjured, cut the cords which bound him. These were the days of black powder. The Bab escaped and took refuge in a neighbouring shop. Unfortunately for him this had no exit, and he was recaptured and shot. It is permissible to speculate what would have been the consequence had he either made good his escape and appeared elsewhere, alleging a miraculous removal from danger, or had he had sufficient determination to stand forward and claim that he had been freed by a similar agency. In the latter case he might well have carried the surrounding multitude with him, while in the former all the materials for a legend of well-authenticated miraculous intervention would have been ready to hand. It would have been interesting to learn how contemporary thought would have dealt with them.

CHAPTER III.

THE GOVERNMENT.

IN theory Persia has since 1906 enjoyed the blessings of constitutional government, but for practical purposes it would be as correct to describe Great Britain as an absolute despotism as to say that Persia is governed in a constitutional manner. The Persian constitution may fairly be said to have come into existence, not as the outcome of any sustained and national demand, but almost by accident. The people, generally speaking, were not interested any more than they are to-day. During my stay in Teheran, fourteen years after the establishment of the constitution, one newspaper declared that the vast majority of the people were not yet clear whether constitution was something to eat or something to wear, and although this may be something of an exaggeration, it may be confidently asserted that popular interest in the matter ceased when it became clear that it was neither of these desiderata. To-day few outside the political rings take any interest in the matter, while the expense to Government of assuring the return of acceptable candidates is very considerable, and the consequent loss to the Treasury through the remission of taxation correspondingly great. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the loss would be so were it not for the general embezzlement which diverts

so much of the revenue for the benefit of individuals. Under the circumstances, it does not perhaps make so very much difference, particularly as elections are by no means universal.

Prior to 1906 the Shah was, in theory at any rate, an absolute despot, whose power depended upon the character of the reigning monarch, and was restricted only by custom, expediency, the power of the Government of the moment, and, during the last half-century, the influence of European opinion. The system, in form at least, had in all probability not changed materially during the last two or three milleniums. The monarch's word was like the law of the Medes and Persians, provided always that he had the power to give effect thereto.

The Ministers were the personal servants of the sovereign, dependent upon a continuance of his favour, and for the most part men of humble origin. Their position was by no means a bed of roses, for although they had unlimited opportunities of enriching themselves, it was a not unusual practice upon the part of the monarch to regard his viziers as collecting agents for his benefit, and ultimately to divert their ill-gotten gains to his own uses. This was by no means the greatest risk to be faced, for the loss of office was not infrequently followed by loss of life. As recently as last century no less than three grand viziers paid with their lives for the loss of their sovereign's favour. Even to-day a fallen Minister often finds it expedient to take a hurried trip to other countries. But these disadvantages have not occasioned any dearth of candidates for office.

In actual practice, it would appear that at most times the real power lay not so much in the hands of one man as in those of a small class, who,

having the ear of the Shah, either in council or private, had in addition influence in the country. In this respect there has been but little change since the constitution, and hence it is that so many mullahs and priests are to be found mixing themselves in political matters, and having their services recognised by political pensions. The effect of this outside influence is seen when the trifling forces at the disposal of those who expelled the late Shah are compared with those which Kuchek Khan for so long had at his disposal in Ghilan, with the avowed object of eliminating Teheranis and the old grandees from the government of the country.

In addition, the Shah has to submit in practice to many restrictions to his authority. Thus, while in theory he could appoint whom he chose to office, in certain cases (such as those of the Ilkhanis or head chiefs of the various tribes) in practice his choice was, as it is to-day, restricted to members of the ruling family, since any other nominee could only be installed and maintained by force of arms. The same held good in the case of many minor appointments, for only a magistrate acceptable to the people had the requisite support to enable him to carry out his duties efficiently.

Over the persons and property of his family, Ministers, and officers the Shah exercised absolute authority. He could, and did, put them to death, confiscate their property, and sell the families of disgraced Ministers into slavery. With regard to the mass of his subjects his power was much more restricted, since, while he was chief magistrate, his decisions were, in the main, regulated by law and custom, although doubtless punishments inflicted depended at times upon the whim of the moment. Indeed, arbitrary penalties no less terrible than those of past times have not been un-

known since the establishment of the constitution. I have heard of cases where men were blown from guns, and dipped head first in boiling pitch, while, as recently as 1919, some of the Isfahan robbers, already referred to, were walled up alive. This must not be regarded as indicative of brutality; but in a country where prisons in the European sense are practically non-existent, it is necessary at times to visit particularly serious crimes with punishments calculated to inspire would-be imitators with a wholesome respect for the law. The governor responsible for the punishment of the Isfahan bandits had the reputation of being a humane man, and he carried his humanity to the extent of directing that the criminals should be entombed head downwards in order to assure a speedy termination of their sufferings.

In judging an oriental monarch, it is necessary to guard against considering as acts of individual tyranny those which are actually dictated by the custom of the country or the necessity of making an example in times of weak government. Sir John Malcolm has justly pointed out that were such a system in force in England, under which the king sentenced criminals to death, the sentence being carried out forthwith in front of the palace, it would be difficult for the most humane rulers to escape being branded as bloodthirsty tyrants.

Prior to the accession of the Kajar dynasty at the end of the eighteenth century, the choice of his successor depended largely upon the whim of the monarch. Endeavours were made to assure a peaceful succession by removing the eyes of all those regarded as possible aspirants to the throne, and the new rulers usually took care to rectify any laxity which might have been shown in this

respect. With the Kajars a more humane system came into vogue, it being regarded as a *sine qua non* that the mother of the heir should be of the blood-royal and, in addition, an akdi or full wife, the children of all other members of the royal anderun being debarred from the succession. The inevitable result of this system has been to lead to intermarriage in the royal family to such a degree that serious degeneration has occurred.

To attempt to substitute at one stroke for such a system a constitutional government was to invite failure, and certainly that failure has followed. To define the position of the Shah to-day is somewhat difficult. His constitutional position is clear enough, but in practice that counts for little. It is probable that a strong and able man would find in practice that his position was but little weakened by a so-called representative body which at times does not meet for years. The present Shah is scarcely the man to take a strong line. Placed on the throne as a child at the time of his father's abdication in 1909, he has led a life very different from that of his ancestors, most of whom were keen sportsmen and often seen amongst their people. Nasr-ed-Din, who has been described as the last true Shah, used to spend several months each year moving about the country at the head of a retinue equal to a fair-sized army. The present Shah, on the contrary, leads an extremely retired life, and it must be confessed that, although quick and intelligent and possessed of a certain dignity, his prevailing characteristics are avarice and cowardice. Moreover, he is possessed of a morbid terror of infection and germs, to which he gives way to such an extent that at times he refuses to sign even the most important documents lest he should risk infection through a contaminated pen-holder. In a crisis his first idea is flight. In

appearance he is short and exceedingly stout. Owing, amongst other reasons, to his secluded life he is the reverse of popular, and in this respect is outdistanced by his brother the Valiahd, or heir-apparent. He has at present no regular wife. A marriage was indeed proposed in the beginning of 1921, but having refused the lady's condition that he should dismiss the ladies of his andarun and undertake not to introduce others, he was compelled to give place to his brother.

The Persian conception of kingship cannot be better typified than by the procedure at a royal salam. The European idea is that a subject attends at Court to be presented to the head of the State, whether king or president, but in Persia the same set of officials are expected to present themselves at very frequent intervals to reverence the monarch. The ceremony on the more important occasions takes place in an outer courtyard of the palace. At the upper end is the throne-room—a kind of portico open towards the court—which contains the celebrated marble throne. This resembles most nearly a species of billiard-table, accessible by a couple of steep steps, which His Majesty appears to find somewhat trying. Upon this is placed a chair which, Lord Curzon states, contains the fragments of the peacock throne looted from Delhi by Nadir Shah in the eighteenth century. Below the throne-room runs a broad terrace with a fountain in the middle, and some two feet lower the main court is divided throughout its length by a long tank. On either side of this is a double avenue with trees between.

On the occasion of a salam the space to the right of the throne is occupied by a group of princes dressed in sober black relieved only by jewelled swords and sword-belts, while on the left are the Ministers in all the splendour of robes of

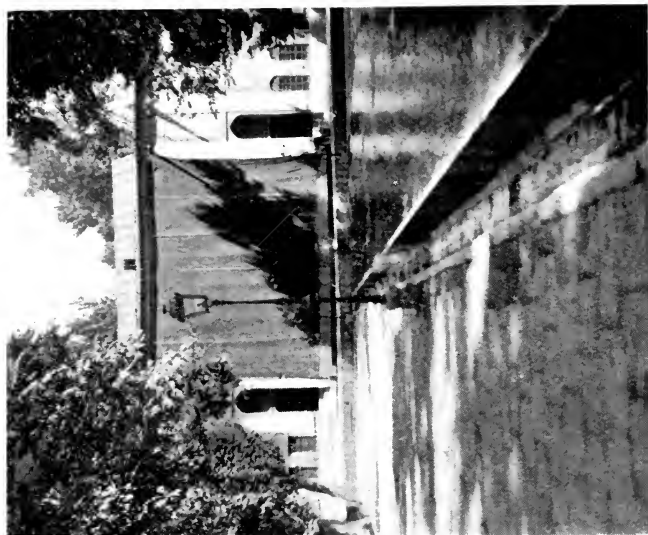
honour and kolas. A robe of honour may most aptly be compared to a Paisley shawl dressing-gown, and a kola to a truncated bowler hat minus a brim. On the terrace are grouped the chief officials; while the body of the court is filled on the left with gendarmes in sky-blue uniforms, and on the right with Cossacks whose uniforms comprise every variety of colour. They are sturdy-looking ruffians these Cossacks, Turkomans for the most part, and one would be inclined to credit the Cossack Division with possessing magnificent material were it not that when those who are to be seen everywhere in their ordinary uniforms are remembered, it is impossible to banish a suspicion that those who attend salams are a selected body permanently detailed for that duty. In front of the troops are grouped field-m Marshals, generals, and colonels, who in splendour would hold their own anywhere. Every one wears a cordon of one kind or another, while decorations abound. The regulations with regard to these do not appear to be over strict, and there is nothing to prevent the holder of the first-class of an order wearing the insignia of all five classes. Consequently, many of these gallant warriors have considerable difficulty in finding room for their many stars and medals.

Presently the national anthem plays and the Shah appears, preceded by servants and ushers, and followed by a seedy crowd of black-clad individuals—princes, courtiers, and others. The livery of the palace servants would be gorgeous were it either new or clean, and were their scarlet tunics, faced with blue and gold, supplemented by adequate nether garments and shoes. As it is, there would appear to be no rule relating to these.

As the Shah mounts the throne guns begin to



Persian Court Dress.



Court of the Salam, Shah's Palace.



fire, and continue to do so while he remains there. The proceedings open with a speech of welcome from a grey-bearded official, and then the Court poet gets to work. To admire Persian poetry is fashionable, although a literal and complete translation of even the much-quoted Omar Khayyám would hardly prove suitable for a drawing-room, but its merits I must leave to others. The sound on first acquaintance is sufficiently startling to the untrained ear. I shall never forget my first experience when, without warning, a sudden outburst of such sounds as it seemed impossible for the human throat to produce suddenly burst out immediately behind my back. The only comparison which occurred at the moment was a dog saluting the moon supported by a feline chorus, and although familiarity led to a somewhat modified view, I never ceased to wonder how such sounds were produced. Whether it was recitation or singing I have not the remotest idea to this day. When the poet has concluded his contribution, the Court orator gives a very similar performance, and then the Shah and his attendants leave, being in all probability compelled to edge their way through the spectators, who have left their places to obtain a better view.

The proceedings conclude with a march past in an inner courtyard, where, on less important occasions, the whole ceremony takes place. That the whole affair has its humorous side cannot be denied; but there is a certain pathos about this tawdry attempt to maintain a ceremony which must have been a magnificent spectacle in the days when the King of Kings was, for his subjects at least, the centre of the universe.

The fact remains, however, that although the Shah may in many respects be little more than a figurehead, he is a very necessary component in

the system of government. The constitution may mean something in the capital, and the idea may have become more or less familiar to the settled population ; but to the tribesmen it means nothing, and were Persia to become a republic, it is almost certain that a general break-up would ensue. Even to-day such may not be far distant. That the Bakhtiari took an active part in the constitutional movement is nothing to the point. Among themselves their system of government is purely mediæval and feudal, and with one possible exception they would appear to have been actuated by personal interest. Four governorships were their reward, but even this proved not entirely satisfactory. One of their chiefs complained bitterly that he had not been so well treated as a brother khan, and when it was pointed out that he also had been rewarded with a governorship, replied, "That is true, but his is richer than mine, and so he can make more out of it."

Probably in proportion to the numbers of the population Persia possesses more princelings than any other country. This is hardly surprising considering the productivity of the Kajar race, and the large numbers of ladies who have filled their *anderuns*. Fath Ali Shah, who reigned during the first third of last century, is commonly credited with having been survived by a hundred and fifty-nine children, although I have heard the number placed higher. As few of these cadets have private means, and even the elastic Persian civil service cannot provide for all, they are driven to earn their living as best they may, and royal princes may to-day be found working as peasant cultivators, shoemakers, and coachmen. I even heard of one who acted as body-servant to another prince.

Generally speaking, but little regard is paid to

the national interest in filling Government appointments, although at times the qualifications of the nominee are taken into consideration with a view to placating popular opinion. When, however, there is no anxiety in regard to this, appointments are apt to go either to the supporters of the Government, as in America, or to be reserved for the benefit of the vizier's private purse. Corruption throughout the Government service is almost universal. Governorships are sold to the highest bidder, and the new governor forthwith proceeds to recover his investment by selling off all appointments within his gift, lest a change of Government should lead to loss of office before he has made his legitimate profit. Needless to say, it is well-nigh impossible to bring home such transactions to those concerned. It is comparatively easy to obtain the evidence of the unsuccessful would-be purchaser, but his successful rival is less ready to speak, while the rejection of the tendered bribe can always be represented as due to rectitude and not to a desire for a higher price. Moreover, it is to the interest of all politicians and officials that such affairs should be hushed up.

The oriental appears to regard the State as a fair milch-cow for all who are fortunate enough to arrive at a position where they can take toll of the national revenues. An interesting explanation of this attitude of mind was offered by a missionary of many years' standing, which I give for what it is worth. His view is that the universal corruption in public life is due not to any inherent depravity in the individuals concerned, but to the fact that the standard of perfection laid down by the Koran is relative and not absolute. Thus assuming that the sum of an individual's actions is represented by 100, all that is necessary to assure his future bliss is that 51 per cent shall

have been good, although in the uncertainties of human life the more cautious may well regard this as a somewhat narrow margin for working purposes. From this it follows that when an individual has acquired an adequate credit balance in the recording angel's book, it is clearly unsound policy to increase this unnecessarily, and that consequently he who wishes to make the best of both worlds will be wise to draw upon his balance, provided always that this is not unduly depleted. It follows that a reasonable amount of evil may be indulged in without any fear of unpleasant consequences hereafter. My informant assured me that he had frequently seen the same principle at work in other spheres, and to it he attributed the general lack of thoroughness so noticeable in the Persian. Amongst his own pupils he found that this invariably held good, and that the time always came when the most promising scholar considered that he had done enough and began to idle. Another salve to the conscience lies in the fact that the giving of the prescribed tithe to charity purifies the remainder in the hands of the owner. Thus the politician who has sold a governorship for, say, five thousand tomans, may, by giving five hundred in charity, retain the balance with a clear conscience.

I need hardly say that my Persian friends will have none of this theory, nor does it appear to be entirely adequate, seeing that the Mohammedan religion is not universal in India, nor, for that matter, in America.

Tradition has it that when his elevation to the Papal throne was announced to Alexander Borgia, he exclaimed, "Since God has given us the Papacy, let us enjoy it," and it would be difficult to imagine a more suitable motto for the Persian politician and official. The former's view of his position

appears to coincide with the Irishman's definition of patriotism as, "To serve one's country for a good salary, and provide posts for one's nephews and other relations." The Persian must not, however, I think, be judged too harshly in this matter, for he acts according to the immemorial custom of the East, and every politician and official has intrigued for and won his position. It is well to remember that our boasted purity in public life is a plant of very recent and—if credit be given to certain scandals and rumour thereof—of somewhat tender growth. It is little more than a century since the office of Paymaster-General of the Forces was regarded as a road to rank and fortune for its fortunate holders. Moreover, in a country where a stock exchange, directorships, and party funds are alike lacking, the politician is compelled to resort to more direct methods of remunerating himself for his patriotic services, although the practices of his European confrère would, if open to him, prove much more in accord with the subtlety of his character. It does not, by any means, necessarily follow that, because he is compelled by force of circumstances to resort to cruder methods of enriching himself, he is inherently worse than his European or American brother, and at least Persia does not trouble to set up white-washing machines when a scandal occurs.

In England the official is regarded as existing because the State has need of his services, and as being fairly dealt with if paid a fair return for these; but in Persia it is different, and the public service is regarded as providing a means of livelihood for those who would otherwise be destitute. In England, prior to the establishment of the Civil Service Commission and competitive examination, the Civil Service was to a great extent reputed to be a refuge for the incompetent

who was possessed of influence, while the evil was increased by the fact that the range of professions which were regarded as open to gentlemen was very limited.

The same causes have been productive of the same results in Persia. Except the Army, the Civil Service is the only profession open to educated men who do not wish to embrace an ecclesiastical career. Consequently, every possible effort is exerted to secure the recommendation and protection of Ministers, and merit and long service count for little. The relation of a Minister will be found in enjoyment of a salary of a hundred tomans a month, while a clerk sharing the same desk and doing the same work, but without influential backing, is paid twenty. Naturally in such circumstances discontent is universal, and officials are compelled to look to illegal perquisites for a livelihood. An additional incentive to corruption exists in a system of disponibility which cannot be too strongly condemned. Under this an official, through no fault of his own, may find himself on what might be described as indefinite half-pay, were it not that the pay is almost if not entirely lacking. When to this is added the risk that a change of Government may at any moment result in the dismissal of the placeman, it is easy to understand that he makes the most of his opportunities.

Further incentives are to be found in the low scale of salaries and the immemorial sanction of custom. Indeed, so far is speculation from being regarded as disgraceful, that a man who does not make use of his opportunities is considered not only as a fool, but with suspicion, as one who is a potential spy, and at any rate an inconvenience to be got rid of at the first favourable opportunity.

In making use of the opportunities which a turn

of the political wheel may place in his hands, the Persian has little to learn from the American, and public opinion is as little against such practices as it is among many classes in New York against Tammany and all that it stands for. I remember some years ago when in New York during the course of a municipal election, listening to a tirade against the iniquities of Tammany. On inquiring how, if things were as bad as stated, the people supported the party, it was explained that in the past many people had become wealthy through their support of Tammany, and that were things to be reformed, those who so far had been exploited, or at the least enjoyed only minor pickings, would lose any chance in their turn of becoming the exploiters. The chance for each individual might in truth be remote, but it at least existed and appealed to the sporting instinct. This explanation showed a very similar outlook to that of the Philadelphia journal which, after a peculiarly disgraceful municipal scandal had come to light, pleaded that Philadelphia politics were at least only pale grey by comparison with the deep black of Chicago and New York.

The scale of salaries is inadequate in the extreme, and is, moreover, regulated more by personal interest than by the responsibilities undertaken. Under such conditions staffs naturally tend to reach utterly unwieldy proportions, two or three men pretending to occupy themselves with work easily within the capacity of one. In one branch of a certain Ministry some sixty clerks were employed, and a European, who had frequent occasion to visit the department officially, stated that on no occasion had he seen pen put to paper. When, during the government of Seyd Zia, an attempt was made to reduce the staffs of Government departments to reasonable proportions, it

was found that the central office of the Opium Department alone could spare four hundred employees, which indicates a scale of establishment of which some of our war-time Ministries need not feel ashamed. The result of staffs so vastly in excess of requirements is that the placemen, having no work with which to occupy themselves, pass their time in endeavouring to add to their own and their patron's incomes. The worst that can result from exposure is dismissal, and this is improbable, while in this event a present, judiciously placed, will almost certainly assure another appointment. The authorities, however, have no desire to be troubled with scandals, as is shown by the following experience of a young official who has been educated at the American College. While holding an appointment in the provinces, an unusually gross piece of corruption on the part of his chief having come to his notice, he announced his intention of informing the inspecting official upon his next visit. When the inspector arrived, he informed him that he had a complaint to lodge against his chief, and was instructed to go to the inspector's lodging that evening. Upon his arrival he found that worthy completing his report, and was asked as a personal favour to delay his complaint until this was finished, on the ground that he, the inspector, had been instructed to make a favourable report upon the official in question should this be by any means possible, presumably to serve as an excuse for preferment! The report having been completed, the complaint was duly received and noted, but it is legitimate to doubt whether it went any further.

It must not be assumed that there are not some, particularly among the younger men who have been educated under European and American

auspices, who would welcome reform, but, so far at any rate, circumstances have proved too strong for them. One Minister frankly stated that he would welcome the presence of a European adviser in his department, if only to occupy the position of whipping-boy. He explained that if, under present circumstances, he were to dismiss an official for corruption, he would be inundated with requests for his reinstatement from mullahs and other persons of influence, and that were these to be ignored, he would have to face the hostile intrigue of the writers when next a change of Government occurred.

Reform of the Civil Service would not by any means be a difficult task, provided always that those responsible therefor were invested with adequate powers. A regular and sole means of entry to the service, coupled with fixity of tenure, reasonable prospects of advancement and an assured pension, added to the certainty that the discovery of corrupt practices would inevitably lead to dismissal apart from other penalties, and, above all, removal of the service from the power of the politicians, would eliminate all excuse for and incentive to the present practices; and given this, I believe that a sufficient number of the younger generation, trained to higher ideals of public service, would be available. I must confess frankly that I see not the very slightest prospect of such reforms being introduced under native auspices. A foreign adviser vested with absolute power could alone carry through the necessary reforms, and it may be regarded as certain that, save in the very last resort, such powers will not be given. Anything less would be absolutely useless, and make the adviser's position a sinecure. Meantime there is no hope of reform from within through the influence of the younger generation,

for those of them who press for reform are likely to leave the public service after a very short trial.

The methods of corruption in vogue are legion, and a passing reference will be sufficient. Apart from the sale of offices, favourite devices are to give personal receipts for taxes, returning the official receipts with an explanation that owing to drought, locusts, or some similar cause the taxes are irrecoverable; to sell the grain collected in payment of the taxes in kind for a nominal price to a ring in which the official is interested, on the plea that there is a glut locally; to submit demands for funds for non-existent road guards, or at the least to divert the funds when received; and to extort payment for immunity from military service. The devices resorted to are, however, numberless, nor is great ingenuity required when the taxpayer is as a rule without the power of resistance or appeal, while should the matter come to the knowledge of higher officials, a division of the profits avoids unpleasantness. When the taxpayer is rich or powerful a present may be expected to secure immunity,—unless, that is, he happens to be sufficiently powerful to ignore the official entirely.

In attempting to outline the system of local government and the various links in the chain of authority, it will probably be most convenient to begin at the bottom. I must premise that, in view of the extent to which conditions differ in the various localities, and the modifications and breakdowns in the old system since the constitution, what follows cannot be regarded as more than a general description of the present condition, and is subject to modification and amendment.

At the bottom of the Government machine is the village community, presided over by a *kadkhoda* or mayor. This functionary, in cases where

the peasants are the proprietors, is usually chosen by the rich sefid, or grey-beards, as a rule the heads of the various families. Where the village belongs to a proprietor, the kadkhoda is nominated by him and approved by the villagers, or *vice versa*. But the methods of choice are very various, and the above are only examples. In cases of dispute the choice is usually made by the local governor. The kadkhoda is assisted by the Pakar, the executive man of the village, and the Mirab, who is in charge of the water distribution. With their aid in small villages, and with that of the rich sefid in large, he is responsible for the allotment of the village lands and the apportionment of the water amongst the respective cultivators. In owned villages this is a subject of great abuse, although the rights of the peasant are clearly defined, and in many cases codified or officially approved. When disputes arise the matter is usually referred to the arbitration of some mullah or other person of standing, while, in the last resort, the peasant can in case of injustice leave his holding, abandoning his fixtures and instruments of cultivation. As to what these consist of there are various opinions, but buildings and his share in such common articles as fruit-trees may be considered the most important. The proprietor has then to expel the cultivator, although in many districts this right is denied him, and to pay for the abandoned property. The mayor is also responsible for the general control of the work of the village, and for the maintenance of order and local policing. He approves and pays all common expenses, and collects all revenues and taxes.

Formerly the village entity was much more in evidence, but since the constitution it has been to a great extent ignored. The powers of justice

being largely in the hands of local magistrates, the local grandees have, in the absence of Government control and supervision, usually exceeded their legal rights. The modern Government has ignored the village community to a great extent, although in the past the kadkhoda was the representative of the Shah, and the Government retained the right of supervision, and to this many attribute the failure of the constitutional régime in the spheres of police, justice, and finance, considering that any constructive policy must understand and utilise the village entity. In the tribes the control exercised by the immediately superior chief tends to a much more thorough control and efficiency, but when for any reason this control is relaxed, greater disorder is likely to ensue on account of their migratory habits.

Next above the village comes the "blouk," consisting of a group of villages, and administered by a bloukkhoda. At times he is nominated by the local proprietors, but more often he is selected by the Government from among prominent local men. He represents the blouk in the civil governor's and the mullah's courts, and acts as adviser to the Government in matters concerning his district. Formerly his powers in matters of police and control of revenue were much greater, and in some remote districts, or through the influence of the proprietors, as, for instance, in Kolidjan-restagh and Kiakola in Mazanderan, he still retains these powers. This link in the chain of government appears to have been ignored more than the others, and the question of its reorganisation is one of the most vital.

Above the blouk come the groups of blouks controlled by sub-governors, and above these again the districts ruled by local governors. These are established units, but their efficiency may be

doubted, thanks to the incapacity of the central administration. In former times the central Government was the Shah's Court, and its actions represented the opinions of the men who were in intimate association with him. Usually the prevailing opinion was that of the Grand Vizier's party; but men with knowledge were consulted privately by the Shah or the *durbari* (counsellors), while important matters were often publicly debated and decided by the whole body of counsellors. Whatever the decision the minority were secure, while to-day even the parliamentary minority is not immune from pressure. Thus the *Durbar* was the mirror of the central Government, where every class was represented, including the *ulema* and *seyds*. At times, it is true, the Shah and Grand Vizier acted without consultation, but upon these occasions the reasons were always publicly stated.

The provincial governor always dealt with military affairs, his vizier concerning himself with financial and civil matters. This concentration of authority gave much more efficient results than the system introduced under the constitution, where there is a civil governor, and other officials are in control of military and financial concerns, all acting independently. Under the former system the local expenses, other than those of a general military character, were not paid by the central treasury, and consequently the exact local revenue was unknown to the central administration, the surplus only being remitted to the central treasury. This admittedly gave opportunity for irregularities in taxation, but the certainty that undue excess would be sharply dealt with if it became known to the central Government provided a wholesome deterrent.

Under the constitution, ignorance of details of local taxation and expenditure, aggravated by the diminution of the powers of the local governors

through the establishment of independent financial and military authorities, led to the financial difficulties which threaten to plunge the country in bankruptcy at the present time. Instead of attempting to reform the administration of the system of local government, Persian ways, customs, and history were ignored, and recourse had to panaceas derived from foreign sources or due to the invention of the would-be reformers. The result was what might be expected. Where under the old régime some seven million tomans were received annually from the provinces for the expenses of the central administration; the latter under the new system soon found itself compelled to find money for local expenses, and this has increased to such a degree that I doubt whether the treasury receives anything from the provinces at the present moment apart from a small contribution from Yezd. The weakness of the Government has been increased by the timidity which has been displayed under the constitution where popular demonstrations are concerned. This has led to an increase of such demonstrations by the dissatisfied, and it is said that the expenditure of ten thousand tomans will provide a demonstration sufficient to bring about the resignation of all except the strongest Governments.

The system of agriculture is primitive in the extreme, and more usually the villages are the property of the State or individual proprietors. The Koran lays down that the produce should be divided into five parts for the land, water, labourer, ox, and seed corn, but in practice the share falling to the peasant is more favourable. Usually it is seven-tenths, but in certain districts two-fifths or two-thirds. The proprietor generally recognises that the value of his property depends upon a contented and prosperous peasantry.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE CONSTITUTION TO THE ANGLO-PERSIAN
AGREEMENT.

IN order to understand modern Persian history clearly, it is necessary never to lose sight of the fact that, since the days of Peter the Great, Russian policy has regarded Persia as lying within the Russian sphere of influence, and as destined ultimately to become a Russian possession. Whether or no the will of Peter is a genuine document, it embodies clearly the motives which have actuated Russian statesmen. During the last century, Russia's steady advance resulted in her becoming Persia's neighbour for the whole length of her northern frontier, while Persia's Caucasian provinces were absorbed by her northern neighbour.

This being the position, it will readily be understood that opposition to Russia has at all times been the motive underlying Persian policy. That her rulers have been compelled to resort to the weapons of the weak must be admitted, but this follows from the very nature of the case; and the policy of intrigue which this has entailed must always be viewed from this aspect. Thus, during the war, Persia to a great extent favoured Germany, not because of any particular liking for Germany, but because a German victory would, through weakening Russia, result to her advan-

tage. We, as Russia's ally, shared in the dislike entertained for her.

In 1906 British prestige was, as it is to-day, at a singularly low ebb in Persia, although for different reasons. The British Foreign Office had been busily occupied in endeavouring to make bricks without straw, while Russia, on the other hand, had not hesitated to spend money freely; on the Cossack Brigade, on road construction, and on the development of trade and banking.

The Cossack Brigade, although part of the Persian Army, was commanded by officers upon the active list of the Russian Army, assisted by a numerous body of Russian N.C.O.'s, and consequently formed a very useful outpost for Russian influence. The roads were naturally designed to facilitate Russian strategic needs and trade requirements. The Russian Bank, being, like the sister institution in Peking, an offshoot of the Russian Government, was enabled to undertake business of a class which could not justifiably be accepted by an institution doing a legitimate banking business, and was consequently able, by means of loans and mortgages, to secure a strong grip upon the resources of Teheran and of many who exercised great weight politically. Lastly, a customs revision had secretly been concluded a few years before, skillfully designed to foster Russian trade at the same time that it crippled that of the British Empire. Moreover, the Russian Army was ever imminent upon the frontier, while the British Navy was a very shadowy thing to a people whose centres of population are remote from the sea, for which they have at all times evinced a marked disinclination. Consequently upon all these factors Russian influence was supreme at Teheran, while the British position was at best a poor one.

To enable the reader to understand clearly subsequent events, it is necessary to refer briefly to the causes which had occasioned the internal condition of Persia at this time.

After the death of Nasr-ed-Din Shah in 1896, the control of affairs had fallen into the hands of the cabal which surrounded his successor, Mozaffer-ed-Din Shah. This group, whose sole object was personal benefit, sought its advantage in pandering to the ignoble vices of the monarch, an easy-going voluptuary. Pensions were increased, and the Persian pension, if not a free gift to a favourite, is usually given in payment for political services, active or negative, and Crown lands were distributed to the favourites and their associates. The successive Sadr Azam (Prime Ministers) were the only persons from whom this group had anything to fear, and these being nominees of the Shah, could do but little, even when so disposed.

The consequence of this course was, that when the Shah, or rather the cabal, decided upon a journey to Europe, the treasury was empty, and for the first time Persia was compelled to contract foreign indebtedness. It need hardly be said that the requisite loan was obtained from Russia. Thereafter the situation went steadily from bad to worse, robbery increased, and rebellion became more general. It was impossible to obtain justice, and bribery and tampering with judges became universal.

In this crisis another Russian loan was secured, and the Shah and his favourites departed upon another visit to Europe. In his absence the Valiahd (heir-apparent) and his counsellors, in an endeavour to find a remedy for the disastrous condition of the country, introduced amongst other reforms some radical changes in judicial procedure. For example, it was decreed that a bureau be

established in connection with every court of justice, whether civil or religious, whose function was to see that after final judgment had been delivered, all previous documents relating to the case were destroyed. The object in view was to ensure that cases were brought to a final conclusion, and so eliminate the chance of their being reopened in some other civil or religious court, for which an adequately bribed official could usually find an excuse in one or other of the voluminous mass of accumulated papers.

This reform, striking as it did at the perquisites of the almost universally corrupt officials and mullahs, met with violent opposition, which was instigated and fostered by them. A riot was organised by the talabieh (law students and assistants in religious schools), and after three days the hated reforms were repealed. Whatever may be thought of their wisdom, and although it must be admitted that the Government made many false steps in attempting to deal with the situation, its efforts represented a serious attempt to grapple with the prevailing corruption. The vested interests and the influence of the mullahs were, however, too strong, and from the agitation fomented at this time against the Valiahd dates his unpopularity, which was finally to lead to his enforced abdication.

Visits to Europe, which had become much more frequent since Nasr-ed-Din's foreign tours, had opened fresh aspects of life to some of the more thinking travellers, so that the possibility of finding in representative institutions a panacea for the national misfortunes had begun to be considered. Although such ideas were restricted to a limited circle, it was largely felt amongst the educated that some serious action was necessary, and consequently from this time the intellectuals and the

better type of religious functionaries began to press for the convention of a representative assembly where the reform of justice might be considered, with a view of tendering to Government the advice of those best qualified to assist in the direction of affairs. But this was still far from the conception of a constitution which was shortly to develop.

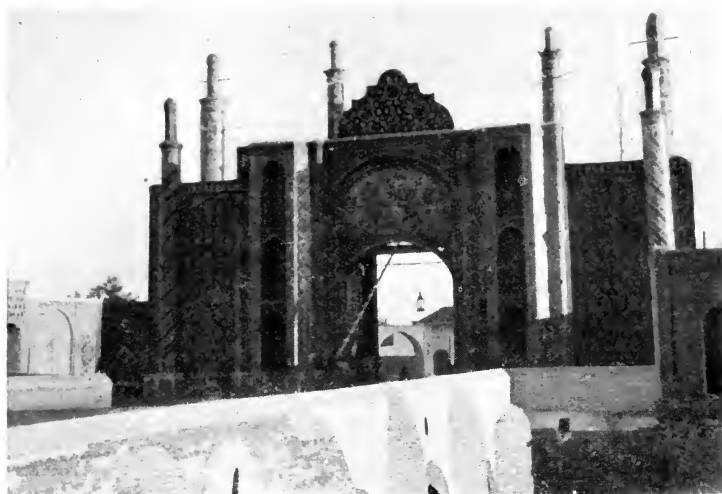
Upon his return from Europe the Shah, instead of supporting the Valiahd's attempts at reform, or endeavouring to find alternatives therefor, ignored the growing demands for reform, and dismissed the Sadr Azam. Thereafter matters drifted along as before, until they terminated in the disturbances which led to the establishment of the constitution.

The situation was finally brought to a head by a demand for the dismissal of the then Sadr Azam, who, even more rapacious than usual, had carried his interference in judicial matters to such an extent as seriously to interfere with the emoluments of those usually accustomed to concern themselves therewith. Accordingly it was decided to organise an agitation for the removal of the offending Minister, but before describing the form which this took, it will be necessary to say something about the peculiarly Persian custom of bast.

In its original form bast was not so usual, nor the opportunities therefor so extensive, as they have become to-day. In its origin it appears to have been very similar to the mediæval idea of sanctuary. A man flying before a more powerful enemy would seek the protection of some chief or ecclesiastic, or, at the least, of some one more able than himself to negotiate upon equal terms with his pursuer. In periods of strong Government no one was, of course, strong enough to protect against the Government itself, so that in such

cases the help of those possessing personal influence at Court could alone avail to secure immunity. Under weak Governments such interference naturally tended to increase. It was also customary at times to take refuge in mosques and shrines, although in such cases the onus of permitting the fugitive to remain appears to have devolved upon the official responsible for the care of the place in question. Refuge appears to have been as a rule admitted by the Government, when any of the few higher religious dignitaries intervened, if only to avoid friction and to ensure justice where the viziers and durbari (through whom alone access to the royal ear could be obtained) were concerned. But at no time did the Government admit the theory that the sanctuary was inviolable, and both at Meshed and Kum refugees have been removed by military force and executed. The Government might find it inexpedient to exercise its rights, but these nevertheless remained, so that although the fugitive might obtain time for his case to be heard he could not be sure of ultimate immunity. Even this was a valued privilege, and the greatest fault alleged against Mirza Taki Khan, Nasr-ed-Din's first Sadr Azam, at the time of his fall was that he had not left anywhere to take bast, not even the royal stables, which from time immemorial gave absolute security against all save the Shah alone.

At first sight this form of bast would seem to introduce an element of comedy into the matter, but on closer inquiry the custom is found to have a logical and reasoned origin. As has been said, it was customary to give ear to the requests of the higher clergy, but when the Shah was on a campaign or travelling (and the old Shahs were accustomed to spend at least six months in each year travelling through their dominions), neither



Douleh Gate, Teheran.



The Bond Street of Teheran.

ulema or shrines were available. Then, in the words of Nasr-ed-Din, "the thoughtful and industrious Ministers established the custom that the royal stables could extend protection to those who were in fear and dread. The reason for this was that when any one was summoned to the royal presence he might not fly to foreign countries through fear of being without a refuge. If soldiers, whose faults require to be more severely dealt with than those of others, had not this last refuge, then, being accustomed to risk their lives and to take desperate decisions, they might in despair attempt something desperate." But if this is the historical origin of bast, the custom depended more on the strength or weakness of the central Government, according to which the number of places of sanctuary extended or decreased.

At a later period bast also extended to telegraph offices, in the belief apparently that the telegraph ended at the Shah's throne, and also to Foreign Legations. This latter cannot, however, be regarded as true bast. Originally the Persian Government extended immunity to foreign representatives alone. In the reign of Mahomed Shah, 1837 to 1847, this was extended to nationals of the legation in question, but no right of protecting Persians was admitted. As the Government grew weaker, lists of protégés came into existence, and the question became political and one of influence and prestige. In the troubled period which followed Nasr-ed-Din's death the question assumed great importance, and from that time has played a vital part in internal politics. Partly out of respect for the feelings of the refugees, and partly to disguise the weakness of the Government, such foreign protection was described as bast, although in reality it was foreign interference in internal affairs. Thus it came about that the original

custom of sanctuary was turned by the nimble-witted Persian into a means of political agitation, and on the principle that the more powerful the person to whom you made yourself a nuisance, the greater your chances of success, legations were specially favoured.

The only attempt at taking bast which took place during my stay in Teheran was upon the dismissal of the Russian officers of the Cossack Division in the autumn of 1920. Upon that occasion, in return for a cash payment an anti-British demonstration was organised, but instead of demonstrating against the persons and property of British subjects, the demonstrators attempted to take bast in a mosque and the American Legation. The attempt came to nothing, for the police barred the way to the mosque, while the official who at the moment was in charge of the Legation was, having recently arrived, unaware of their intention, and regarding the demonstrators as a gang of riff-raff, refused them admission. Whether the matter would have proceeded further it is impossible to say, although it may safely be assumed that demonstrations would have continued so long as funds were forthcoming; but the news arriving that the provider of the funds had left Teheran, the agitation came to an abrupt conclusion, the organisers deciding that the best method of disposing of the money available was to act upon the adage that charity begins at home.

During last summer an instance of bast occurred in Luristan which tends to show that the political basts were really based upon foreign protection and not upon the ancient custom. Upon this occasion two Cossacks took refuge in a mosque, but were promptly taken out of sanctuary by the military authorities. As a protest a general bast took place, but this did not obtain the release of

the original bastees. Thus, while foreign protection secured immunity, sanctuary did not. I shall have occasion later to refer to an episode which throws an interesting aspect upon the Bolshevik attitude towards diplomatic immunity, but this will be better dealt with when discussing recent events.

To return meantime to the agitators of 1906. In considering what form of demonstration would best suit their ends, it was not to be expected that bast would be lost sight of, since this entailed no personal risk. The season was summer, the British Minister was at his country residence, and the British Legation possesses one of the most agreeable gardens in Teheran. A bast under British protection appeared to be clearly indicated, and having previously ascertained that they would not be ejected, a body of demonstrators marched one evening to the Legation and established themselves in the garden. The weather was hot, and it is no hardship to sleep in the open at Teheran during the summer. Life in the garden was pleasant, being passed in the Persian fashion in discussion and poetry. The consequence was that the number of bastees increased rapidly, and before long there were fourteen thousand persons established within the precincts of the Legation. Under such circumstances ideas readily take hold of the popular imagination, and constitution became to the bastees what the ever-blessed word Mesopotamia was to the Scottish divine. That the vast majority had but the very haziest idea of what was implied is, I think, clear, and certainly in the provinces it was translated into the right to do as you like, with the result that the provinces declined to remit revenue, while the individual taxpayer declined to pay, and the tribes interfering, mild anarchy ensued in some places. But understood or not, the word "constitution" came

to be regarded as the infallible remedy for the national evils, and a demand for a constitution became one of the conditions of the bastees.

Whatever the origin of the agitation, and however far the claims of the bastees had veered from their original demands, the fact remained that an impossible situation had arisen. After an attempt to blockade the Legation and starve out the bastees had been promptly countered by a forcible diplomatic representation, the Government found itself helpless. On his side the British Minister saw his garden being rapidly ruined, while, as the season drew on, the time approached when he would require the Legation for his own use. Consequently there was every incentive for those concerned to bring the situation to an end, and upon the representations of the Minister the Shah undertook to grant a constitution and to agree to the assembly of a body which should prepare a scheme. Therefore the whole episode was regarded as a British diplomatic triumph of the first rank, and for a time British prestige ranked high, since the British were regarded by the party in power as their protectors, and as responsible for having brought about the achievement of their objects. Thus British prestige was restored, a constitution was obtained, and the contractor who fed the bastees made a fortune.

It is unnecessary to enter into the details of the discussions which ensued. The Shah, who was already failing, when presented with the concrete proposals, used every artifice to avoid giving his final consent, but was in the end compelled to sign the constitution presented to him—a paste and scissors compilation, mainly derived from French and Belgian sources, which, ignoring national methods of administration, was utterly unsuited to the requirements of the country. Very

shortly afterwards the Shah died, to be succeeded by the Valiahd, Mahomed Ali Shah, who was emphatically opposed to the new scheme of government.

To obtain a constitution and to be able to administer it are entirely different matters, and when the Majlis or Parliament did assemble the deputies very quickly showed themselves utterly unfitted for their task. Discussions were of the most general description, spectators who so desired joining freely in the debates, while the deputies showed their zeal by interfering upon every possible occasion with the work of administration, even instructing the police as to the execution of their duties. Later a British Minister stated in a report to his Government that the Persians were, and would continue for another two generations to be, utterly unfit for constitutional government, and this would not appear to be in any way an overstatement of the case. What had been accomplished, however, was to break down the authority of the executive and the central Government, and so pave the way for anarchy and eventual Russian intervention. Thus the British Government's mania for scattering constitutions broadcast irrespective of whether the people are fitted for them or not, was to be largely responsible for Persia's subsequent troubles, and Persia's experiences are not devoid of interest in connection with recent efforts in India and Mesopotamia.

A fact which cannot be too strongly emphasised is that the Majlis has at no time been a representative assembly in the European sense. In the first and second Majlis some deputies were elected, and these co-opted others, while at all times the influence of the mob was a potent factor in the decisions of deputies. Moreover, at no time has

a sitting ever taken place at which the number of deputies present exceeded a hundred. There is no attempt to hold the elections at any one time, those for the present Majlis having extended over the better part of two years. Indeed, it may be doubted whether they are even now complete, or for that matter ever will be.

Even when it has been duly elected, it by no means necessarily follows that the Majlis will meet. When it was finally decided to convene the present Majlis, it was only with the utmost difficulty that a quorum was brought together; while, in the critical days at the beginning of 1921, when the Government made repeated efforts to get a quorum together to consider the Anglo-Persian Agreement, this proved impossible. There were, it is true, sufficient deputies in Teheran for the purpose; but some twenty members, who were opposed to the Agreement, took the simple method of ensuring the triumph of their views by refusing to attend, thus rendering the assembly of a quorum impossible. The remainder, seeing that this attitude met with popular approval, and anxious not to be outdone in bidding for popularity, signed a declaration not to accept the Agreement.

It is only natural that under such circumstances provincial deputies should be reluctant to undertake the expense and risk of the journey to the capital, and consequently it comes about that when it does meet the assembly contains a preponderating majority of Teheran deputies. Under these conditions it will be readily understood that the Government and the civil and religious magnates have little difficulty, by bribery and intimidation, in ensuring the return of acceptable candidates. I do not propose to repeat the current reports of the intimidation exerted at the last elections, since these are of altogether too per-

sonal a nature, but of the methods of bribery I had an interesting experience when looking into the finances of the Province of Teheran. In certain instances I noticed a falling-off of revenue, and this was explained on the grounds that the Government had in those cases found it necessary to grant remissions of taxation in order to ensure the return of their candidates.

When, in addition, it is remembered that the Majlis at times does not meet for years, it will be appreciated to how small an extent Persia is in actual practice ruled in a constitutional manner. But it must not be thought that because the magnates still retain control the Majlis serves no useful purpose. This is far from being the case, since the very fact that there is a constitution is of the utmost value to the Government in its dealings with foreign nations. The one thing which the Persian desires to avoid, in pursuing his policy of evading bringing matters to a head, is to be forced to come to a decision. In this the Majlis is invaluable. For example, when the British Government endeavoured to obtain a definite decision with regard to the Anglo-Persian Agreement, Sadr Azam after Sadr Azam was enabled to profess his desire to bring this about, but at the same time to plead his inability to act since the matter came within the competence of the Majlis, while at the same time assuring himself that that body did not assemble (no difficult matter when the small number of available deputies is considered). I may be doing the Persian Government injustice with regard to this, but I do not think so.

The subsequent adventures of the first Majlis have frequently been narrated. As stated, the deputies from the first proved themselves incapable of anything except obstruction. For over a year

the state of tension between them and the Shah continued to increase, and finally in June 1908 matters came to a head after an attempt upon the Shah's life. Pathetic pictures have been drawn of the simple democrats being slaughtered in defence of their beloved Majlis; but although it is difficult to obtain exact information with regard to the casualties which occurred, such statements must be received with the utmost caution, since they would appear to have little foundation save in the imagination of those who first transmitted them to Europe.

What is clear is that in the fight which occurred, the supporters of the Majlis were the aggressors. What actually took place was that a body of Cossacks was sent to effect the arrest of certain agitators accused of plotting against the Shah. In anticipation of some such development, the supporters of the deputies had assembled to the number of some three thousand, although it is uncertain how many were actually present at the time. That nothing in the nature of an attack was contemplated upon the side of the Government forces seems to be plainly shown by the fact that the Cossack officers were not with their men, but only drove up in cabs after the first collision had taken place.

Upon the arrival of the Cossacks in the square in front of the Majlis building, the defenders of the constitution fired upon them, inflicting a score of casualties, whereupon the Cossacks immediately and hurriedly retired. The firing was apparently due to a party of Caucasians who took the most active part in the fighting. Indeed, when in Persia's political upheavals bloodshed occurs, the credit must as a rule be placed to the account of Caucasian adventurers. Upon the arrival of the Russian officers, one of them loaded, trained, and

fired a gun. This was more than sufficient for the vast majority of those who had sworn to die at their posts, and they effaced themselves with the utmost speed. There was some further firing, but it is very doubtful whether the constitutional party sustained any considerable number of casualties.

Some arrests occurred, and the Shah was credited with the intention of dealing severely with his prisoners. This was, however, denied upon the intervention of the British Legation. It was finally agreed that certain leaders should go abroad, and a Gilbertian touch was introduced by the fact that they declined to do so until the Shah defrayed their expenses. Such was the end of the first Majlis, and it must be admitted that the members of subsequently elected bodies have proved themselves to be little better fitted for their task.

There are special circumstances which, in the case of Persia, help to explain the failure of constitutional government. These lie in the consequences of the foreign diplomatic and military intervention, as a result of which the people have come to regard foreign relations with such nervousness that these have assumed an importance far in excess of constitutional questions. Those in power, appreciating clearly the internal weakness of the Government, direct all their efforts to cope with the aggressive action of foreigners, aiming at the preservation of the country rather than of the constitution or the law. Although we may consider the policy of successive Governments as one of intrigue and weakness, we must admit that they have so far been successful in their object, and if the situation is looked at impartially, the continuity of this policy of weak efforts may be discerned. That more might have been effected with popular support may be admitted, but it has been customary for the people to regard the Gov-

ernment with distrust, and mainly as a tax-extracting machine.

Such, briefly, is the Persian view of the question, but the failure need occasion no surprise when it is remembered that the idea of popular government is directly opposed to oriental conceptions on the subject, and that, moreover, a constitution is regarded by many as contrary to the precepts of the Koran, to which in Persia the final reference invariably lies. Not that this weighs with a large portion of the upper classes, among whom, on the surface at least, scepticism is very general, in spite of the strain of mystical fanaticism which underlies the characters of so many Persians.

It is necessary to keep in view that the native of such countries as Persia and India who visits Europe for purposes of education or amusement cannot be regarded as typical of the mass of his fellow-countrymen, and that beneath surface resemblances of dress and deportment, there exists an attitude towards the basic facts of life which differs fundamentally and vitally from that of the European. Thus the clamour for popular government, of which we hear so much in certain oriental countries, cannot be regarded as being the outcome of any genuine popular aspirations. More often, it is to be feared, it has its origin in the discontent with existing conditions engendered by the injudicious attitude adopted by people in Europe towards the oriental student, and his consequent disillusionment upon his return to his native country. It is also to be found in the desire for personal advantage, or in the aspirations of a former ruling class, such as the Brahmans, to recover their pristine powers, with the consequent opportunity of exploiting the lower ranks of society for their own advantage—a right so un-

reasonably denied to them by the British Raj. With regard to India I must rely upon the opinions of others, but in view of the extension of so-called popular government, the experiences of Persia are not without interest.

While the greatest deference must be rendered to the opinions of tourist politicians (with a main eye upon the popular vote, and more often than not preconceived ideas), the opinions of men who have spent their lives in the administration and study of a country are not entirely unworthy of consideration, even though they are from their official positions debarred from making these opinions public when distasteful to the politicians in power. The harm which may be caused by the ignorant meddling of the politician in the affairs of a people of whom he has little or no knowledge cannot be estimated. For example, when a member of Parliament proceeds to address native strikers through an interpreter, regardless of the risk that his remarks may inadvertently or of set purpose take on a new significance in translation, what proportion of the blame for the subsequent riots and the suffering resulting therefrom may be fairly apportioned to him?

Whether those will prove true prophets who consider that the first result of the new Indian constitution will be an extension of corruption to a higher class than at present remains to be seen, but it is difficult to understand how the increased number of native officials can be successfully carried by their British colleagues. Even to-day it is, I believe, notorious that many of the natives who rise to the higher ranks of the Civil Service, drawn as they more often are from a class unaccustomed to rule, can only be efficiently maintained by placing them under the strongest superiors and giving them the very best British assistants. Also it is difficult to understand how

a class like the Brahmans, set apart from the common herd by divine origin, can have any genuine aspirations after democratic institutions. Probably in India, as in Persia, not one per thousand has any real interest in, or understanding of, the matter; or, if they have, are lacking in the practical ability to apply their knowledge.

As regards Persia at any rate, it may safely be affirmed that the chief consequence of the introduction of constitutional government up to the present has been to saddle the country with an additional swarm of political parasites, whose demands have to be satisfied at the public expense (with an appalling consequent increase in the pensions list), to bring the country to the verge of bankruptcy, and to diminish law and order throughout the country. In practice the country is run, one cannot say ruled, by small rings of politicians co-operating with a powerful and corrupt bureaucracy, whose aim is to enrich themselves so far as possible before a turn of the political wheel brings their tenure of office to an end. For any Government to remain in power for more than a few months is regarded as an unreasonable retention of the sweets of office.

Persia, in so far as it is ruled at all, is ruled by Teheran, and Teheran is ruled by perhaps three hundred men, including the ins and the outs. It is difficult to see what other state of affairs is possible so long as the constitutional farce continues, considering that the vast mass of the population is utterly unfitted, both by education and experience, to take any part in political life, while of those qualified, few are actuated by anything except self-interest. At the last election the officials of one province applied to the British Political Officer to tell them whom to elect. In

conversation he mentioned two individuals as being suitable, and they were duly returned.

As has been said, Russia had ever since the time of Peter the Great regarded Persia as destined ultimately to be absorbed by her, and as the period of her active intervention in Persia may be considered as dating from the dissolution of the first Majlis, it will be well to review briefly the previous steps in her advance.

As a consequence of two unsuccessful wars, which were concluded by the Treaties of Gulestan in 1813 and of Turkomanchi in 1828, Persia was compelled to cede to Russia, Georgia, Baku, and her other Caucasian provinces. From the latter date Persia must be considered as having to some extent lost her former independent status, since she was henceforth powerless to offer active opposition to the aggression of her more powerful neighbour. Thus, when in 1840, in response to a request by the Persian Government for assistance against the Turkoman pirates, the Russians established a naval base upon the Persian island of Ashurada, in the south-east of the Caspian, which she thereafter refused to evacuate, Persia could only lodge a protest, and when this was ignored, submit as best she might. Another development which brought about a change in the relations of the two countries was Russia's advance towards Central Asia, which, after absorbing the Khanates of Khiva and Bokhara, terminated with the suppression and annexation of the Turkomans. The freedom which Persia thereby gained from Turkoman forays was more than counterbalanced by the fact that, instead of having for neighbours on her north-east frontier a group of native states, she was confronted by Russia throughout the entire length of her northern frontier. The adjustments which occurred along

the new frontier were, it need hardly be said, entirely favourable to Russia.

Such was the position which had developed by 1881, and Russia did not hesitate to push her advantage in every possible manner, with the consequence that during the ensuing quarter of a century British diplomacy waged a hopeless struggle, unsupported by either force or money, against an opponent ready to squander both to achieve her ends.

As has been said, the constitution was regarded as a British triumph, with a resulting increase of prestige and popularity. This, however, proved to be short-lived, for in the following year the Anglo-Russian Convention was signed. This was designed, by clearly defining the spheres of influence of the two nations, to eliminate occasions of friction and misunderstanding. Stated shortly, the Convention recognised that Isfahan and the country to the north thereof lay within the Russian sphere, while the Gulf littoral and the hinterland thereof was declared to constitute the British zone. The intervening territory was declared to be neutral. The Convention would appear to have been an advantageous one for Russia; but while Britain was not prepared to maintain her position by either money or force, the terms were in all probability as good as could be obtained, while it must in fairness be recognised that at that time a good understanding with Russia was regarded as of vital importance, in view of the European situation. Under these circumstances the Convention must be considered from the wider aspect, and not regarded merely as an abandonment of our position in North Persia, which, in spite of the recent "coup," was of little value, while in the case of Russia it did little more than recognise the actual position.

However that may be, the fact that remains of chief importance is that from that time onwards we were regarded as Russia's accomplices in her designs upon the integrity of Persia, and although upon occasion we were able to intervene to mitigate the severity of her actions, this did little to lessen the unpopularity which we thenceforward shared with her.

That the Convention should raise a storm of protest in Persia was hardly surprising, since it was not unnaturally regarded as a preliminary to a contemplated partition of the country. This belief was in no way allayed by the attitude of the signatories, which was that the matter did not in any way concern the Persian Government, seeing that it merely effected a settlement of the outstanding questions between the two Governments, and did not in any way contemplate a partition of the country. So far as our position in Persia was concerned, we were, in addition to our loss of popularity, doomed to play second fiddle to Russia at Teheran, and when the war came, Persian feeling was almost entirely in favour of Germany, or rather against Russia and ourselves.

For the greater part of the year following the dissolution of the Majlis, the struggle between the Shah and the democrats centred round the siege of Tabriz, the principal stronghold of the party. Prior to his accession, the Shah, as is usual for the Valiahd, had been Governor of Tabriz, and as such had earned great unpopularity. The siege was as remarkable for the heroism displayed by the population under conditions of famine, as for the total lack of military courage exhibited by the vast majority. There was no lack of arms, but out of a city of some hundred thousands only about two thousand fighting men were available.

The besiegers were of little greater military value, consisting partly of Government troops and partly of tribesmen, neither of whom had any desire to assault the walled gardens with which the town was surrounded. They were divided into three bodies which acted independently, and upon no occasion did they combine for concerted action. All were more intent upon loot than fighting, and the capture of convoys was of greater interest for them than the risk of an assault. Indeed, the whole affair was fruitful in episodes which were little short of farcical. For example, upon one occasion a remittance of specie belonging to the Imperial Bank of Persia was captured. The Sipadhar, who commanded the royal forces, sent into the town to purchase from the local branch of the bank a draft for a thousand pounds on Teheran, which was duly cashed long before the bank had obtained compensation for its funds with part of which the draft was purchased. That the defenders had an equal eye to the main chance may be judged from the fact that after the siege fourteen grand pianos were found in the house of one of the heroic leaders. The actual fighting was of a similar nature. Upon one occasion a sortie was attempted by the besieged. Some six hundred men were to take part, but when the moment for the assault arrived only some twenty-seven were found to have followed their leaders. Notwithstanding this the royalists were attacked, and in spite of the fact that they were about two thousand strong, driven back a considerable distance. Nevertheless, apparently feeling that enough had been done for one morning, the attackers gradually melted away and returned to the town.

At last, when success appeared to be within the Shah's grasp through the effects of starvation, the defenders spread a report that a massacre of

Europeans was contemplated, with the result that Russia intervened and deprived the Shah of the victory.

This intervention was shortly followed by the advance from Enzeli of a small force chiefly composed of Caucasian adventurers, who, nominally at least, were under the command of the Sipadhar, who, having been captured by the revolutionaries, had promptly been chosen as their leader. This body acted in co-operation with a force of Bakhtiari, which moved on Teheran from the south. Some skirmishing occurred between the Enzeli force and Cossacks; but the former, under cover of night, avoided their opponents, and entered Teheran through one of the northern gates, which had deliberately been left unguarded. With such success was this movement executed that some two hours elapsed before it was realised that the democrats were in the town. That the tactics of the latter were sound cannot, however, be admitted, since a march of a very few additional miles would have resulted in the capture of the Shah at his summer quarters, and so assured the triumph of their cause. For some days thereafter an active battle was waged between the revolutionaries, who had established themselves in the vicinity of the Majlis building, and the Cossack Brigade. Numerous dogs and cats were killed, and certainly a few civilians, while it is even asserted that a few casualties were sustained by the combatants. Hostilities were terminated by the Shah, who, feeling that further resistance was useless, took refuge in the Russian Legation. Upon this an armistice was arranged.

By his action the Shah was regarded as having abdicated, although a demand for his surrender was disregarded. Considering that the revolution had been fostered under the protection of foreign

Legations, and saved from destruction by foreign intervention, this demand shows an utter lack of sporting instinct in the victors. The present Shah, then a child, was declared to have succeeded his father, and after considerable negotiations regarding a pension, the latter left Persia under Russian escort.

Russia's action in supporting the revolutionaries is surprising when her internal policy is remembered, but it would appear that a constitutional Persia was considered as likely to prove weaker than a country under a strong Shah. If this was the reason, the judgment of the Czar's advisers was certainly not at fault, for whatever the constitutionalists have failed to do in effecting reform, they have most certainly succeeded in reducing their country to the last stage of weakness and bankruptcy, and the situation as I write would seem to be utterly hopeless were it not that in Persia the laws of cause and effect do not seem to apply. The situation has been as bad before, and something has always occurred to relieve it. Whether this will continue only the future can show, but it may be safely asserted that the politicians will not make any effort in that direction, since it is useless to attempt to convince them that any action on their part is necessary to save from disaster the ancient empire of which they boast.

The first effect of the revolution was a general outbreak of disorder throughout the country. Local officials saw fit to withhold the revenues, while the new Government inundated the provinces with instructions and sent out new officials from its own ranks. All were eager to earn the reward which, in their own opinion, their patriotic services entitled them to receive. The Bakhtiari occupied Isfahan to protect the reluctant citizens

from an imaginary enemy, and generally every one appeared to consider that constitutional government was equivalent to the right to do what was desirable in his own good sight. Probably those feudal democrats, the Bakhtiari, made more out of the event than any one else. Since that time the khans do not hand over to the Government the maliat, or land tax. They receive the military tax, in addition to that for their own districts, for parts of the province of Burojird, and the districts of Galpaigan, Shuster, and Isfahan. In addition, they receive twenty thousand tomans monthly from the Treasury for road guards, who, according to common report, are in the main non-existent. They hold the governorships of Burojird, Sultana-bad, Isfahan, Yezd, and Kerman. Directly and indirectly their toll upon the Government resources is reported to amount to a hundred thousand tomans a month. Hence the remark of a noted robber, Naib Hussain of Kachan, who made a point of robbing Bakhtiari, saying, "this is my share of the spoils." Truly in Persia democracy is not without its reward.

The only facts calling for notice during the following year were two badly-organised insurrections in favour of the ex-Shah, which were suppressed without difficulty.

The second Majlis had meantime realised that financial reform was of vital importance to the future of the country, and that to carry out this with any prospect of success was utterly beyond their power without foreign assistance. To obtain this they turned to America, and Mr Morgan Schuster was engaged as Financial Adviser to the Government. 1911, therefore, witnessed a serious attempt to reorganise the finances of Persia. Upon his arrival Mr Schuster realised that the only prospect of his success lay in his obtaining

the maximum powers possible, since only these would render it possible for him to counter the opposition which he was certain to incur. Therefore upon his arrival he demanded and obtained from the Majlis the position of Treasurer-General, with powers which made him virtual dictator. But nominal authority is of little value in Persia without force to maintain and enforce it, and accordingly one of his first acts was to set about the organisation of a Treasury Gendarmerie under European officers selected by him.

That the lines upon which Mr Schuster proposed to proceed were sound, and the only ones upon which success was to be hoped for, cannot, I think, be questioned. Genuine co-operation is not to be hoped for from politicians and officials whose personal interests will inevitably suffer from the successful establishment of a reformed administration, and accordingly anything short of the most absolute authority will prove useless for the object in view. Promises of support will not be lacking, but these will be accompanied by opposition, active and passive, which must inevitably defeat any reformer not endowed with absolute authority, and he who relies upon Persian professions is foredoomed to failure.

Unfortunately for the success of his mission, Mr Schuster from the first adopted an attitude which, whether justified or not, was certain to bring him into opposition with Russia. Firmly convinced of the injustice of the Anglo-Russian Convention, he carried his opinions to the extent of refusing even to call upon the British and Russian Ministers. However technically correct this may have been in view of his opinions, it must be admitted that in following this course he debarred himself from the opportunities for informal personal discussions which in a small community

may so often be of the greatest value in clearing away difficulties and misunderstandings.

Thus from the beginning there was latent opposition to the Treasurer-General upon the part of Russia. The first serious clash was occasioned by the former desiring to appoint as chief of the proposed Treasury Gendarmerie, Major Stokes, a British officer, who was beyond question the most suitable man available in view of his experience and qualifications. As, however, it was contemplated that the new force should operate throughout Persia, it is hardly surprising that Russia should oppose the contemplated appointment. That objection should be taken to the appointment of a British officer to a high executive position within the Russian sphere can hardly occasion wonder, and was, indeed, to be anticipated from the beginning. Had it been proposed to appoint a Russian officer to a similar position in the British sphere, a protest upon our part would almost certainly have followed. The British Foreign Office, in the first instance, offered no opposition to the loan of Major Stokes' services, but thereafter, as the result of Russian representations, adopted an entirely different attitude, and absolutely refused to sanction the proposed appointment.

Sir Edward Grey's attitude in the matter meets with unqualified condemnation from Mr Schuster in his book, but his criticisms and denunciations reveal the lack of grasp of European problems so often manifested by his countrymen. That, in view of the threatening situation which was developing in Europe, consequent upon Germany's action, and after all the efforts which had been made to eliminate causes of friction between ourselves and Russia, we should risk a quarrel upon such a matter was unthinkable. Mr Schuster

nevertheless chose to regard the appointment as essential, and to consider the refusal of sanction as part of a concerted scheme to ruin his mission. The first quarrel led to others, and in the end of the year Russia made a formal demand for his dismissal, which Persia was powerless to refuse.

So ended the attempt to reform Persian finances with American assistance. The official cause of the failure was Russian opposition, but there are some, whose opinions are worthy of consideration, who consider that the true reason lay in the fact that Mr Schuster realised that in the face of the latent Persian opposition which existed success was impossible, and that he deliberately forced the quarrel with Russia to an issue, preferring to be defeated by the action of Britain and Russia rather than by Persian opposition.

At the same time that she insisted upon Mr Schuster's removal, Russia, growing tired of the increasing anarchy upon her borders, marched a force to Tabriz, and after hanging several mullahs and other mischief-makers, and insisting upon the dissolution of the Majlis, effectively restored order. In the same year the British Government felt that action was called for in the south, and a regiment of Indian cavalry was despatched to occupy Shiraz. From this time until the outbreak of war, Persia was compelled to give way to all Russia's demands, while British policy did not consist of more than at times acting as a restraining influence upon our ally.

At the beginning of the war, as a result of the Anglo-Persian Convention, and the events consequent thereon, anti-British feeling was only less than anti-Russian, which, as a natural corollary, led to a predisposition in favour of Germany. Moreover, both before and during the war, Germany neglected no opportunity of conducting an

active and efficient propaganda in Persia and the adjacent countries. The efforts of Germany and her allies were in this respect efficiently co-ordinated and controlled, while those of ourselves and Russia were ill-regulated and without cohesion. A further influence in favour of Germany lay in the fact that the gendarmerie were commanded by Swedish officers, who, by training and education, were naturally predisposed to favour and believe in the success of Germany's cause. With few exceptions they did what lay in their power to support her, and although they ultimately failed and were compelled to fly the country, they were able, prior to that time, to inflict serious injury upon us, since their views had naturally great influence upon those under their command.

The time has not yet come when a clear account can be given of the events which took place in Persia during the war, nor of the several individual campaigns which were waged. In the north and north-west considerable fighting took place between the Russians and Turks. At one time a Russian force actually reached Keradj, some twenty miles west of Teheran, but was at the last moment diverted to the south-west in the direction of Kum. So imminent had the occupation of the capital become that under German advice the Shah had decided upon flight to Isfahan. The motor by which he was to travel was actually ready when the forcible entreaties of two of the highest dignitaries in the country, coupled with the undue insistence of the German Military Attaché, induced him to reconsider his decision.

The Russian revolution brought this campaign to an abrupt conclusion just at the time when connection had been established with our Mesopotamian army, and when practical co-operation between the two forces appeared to be assured.

The British occupation of Mesopotamia, coupled with the Russian débâcle, materially altered the situation, the former increasing our prestige, and the latter removing the Russian menace which had engendered Persian sympathy with Germany.

A fresh difficulty was at the same time created by the fact that the disintegration of the Russian army removed the obstacle, which had hitherto existed, to Turkish action in the Caucasus, with the possible opening of the route to the east. It was in an attempt to counter this that General Dunsterville's force was despatched. The original idea was to send a body of officers and N.C.O.'s to Baku in the hope that they might organise the defence of that town against the Turks. The adventures of the force read like a romance, although any author who attempted to attribute such doings to his hero would risk being ruled out of court, upon the ground of their inherent improbability. Originally consisting of twelve officers and two clerks, the little party succeeded in traversing the three hundred and seventy miles between the frontier and Kazvin in the middle of winter, and through a population which in the main was at the least passively unfriendly. At Kazvin the really dangerous part of the journey began, since the forest-covered country lying between the mountains and the coast was in the possession of the Ghilan rebels, known as Jangalis, whose leader, Kuchek Khan, had announced his intention of opposing any attempt to pass through the territory which he controlled. Kuchek Khan played a prominent part in Persian politics, and continued to do so until his death, which was announced at the end of last year. His policy consisted of reform upon a more or less socialistic basis, which included the elimination of the grandees and Teheranis from the government of the country,

coupled with the establishment of a republic with himself as president, and the removal of foreign influence and advisers. He maintained himself in the forests of Ghilan for several years, but failed to extend his authority beyond their limits. As, however, the only road to Resht and Enzeli runs through this district, his tactical position was a strong one. During and after the Zia régime attempts were made to come to an agreement with him, but these failed, as until recently did such force as was used. In the autumn of last year he declared a republic, and a large part of Ghilan was under his control. In spite of his threats, General Dunsterville and his party not only reached Enzeli, but, finding that in face of the opposition of the local Bolsheviks further progress was impossible, achieved the more remarkable feat of returning in safety.

For the details of how the force retreated to Hamadan; gradually increased in numbers; returned to Enzeli, and from thence reached Baku; took part in the defence against the Turks, and finding that the Armenians would do nothing to help themselves, returned to Enzeli, I must refer the reader to General Dunsterville's book. Subsequently fighting took place with Kuchek Khan around Resht, and thereafter a treaty was negotiated with him. For present purposes it suffices that out of "Dunsterforce" grew the North Persian force which was based on Kazvin.

Meanwhile another force had been pushed north to Meshed through East Persia, in order to check Bolshevik movements towards Afghanistan and the frontier of India. About this it is unnecessary to say anything beyond that it fulfilled its mission, since it has become well known through the extravagance and waste which are now notorious. The Persian Jews reaped a rich harvest out of its

surplus stores, for which, unless current reports are wildly in error, ludicrously inadequate prices were obtained. One example commonly quoted is that five thousand greatcoats were sold at a toman each, say five shillings. Circumstances may be conceived under which it is cheaper to sell at almost any price than to remove stores, but what is more difficult for the lay mind to grasp is the reason which rendered necessary so large a reserve for the small force employed. As in Mesopotamia, the distance from parliamentary control seems to have acted as an incentive to the wildest extravagance.

In the south our enemies had in the earlier stages of the war practically a free hand. The British Consul and other residents at Shiraz, at the instigation of the German Consul, were arrested by the guards told off for their protection, and handed over to the Tangestanis, a local tribe, in November 1915; and despite every effort of General Douglas's force, which was based on Bushire, were not released until August 1916. As has already been mentioned, an interesting instance of Foreign Office zeal is furnished by the fact that no compensation has by 1921 been obtained for these men who were robbed of all their possessions, and in some cases at least seriously injured in health. So far as I have been able to ascertain, this is typical of the manner in which outrages against Englishmen are dealt with, and is largely responsible for the changed attitude towards the British, who, before the war, had the reputation of being the only nation which could travel anywhere in Persia with absolute impunity.

The position was restored by troops from India, and a small force was despatched under Sir Percy Sykes, which reached Shiraz by a somewhat round-about route. There local levies were raised under

British officers, which became the South Persian Rifles. Whether through ignorance of their feelings, or because it was believed that if disbanded and left without means of support they would take to robbery, a large part of the Swedish-trained gendarmerie, which had hitherto acted in German interests, was not only incorporated in the new force, but given their arrears of pay from British funds. The result was what might have been anticipated. A mutiny and plot to murder their officers was organised, in which the whole six thousand men constituting the force took part, with the exception of a few hundreds. The officer and N.C.O. in charge of one post were murdered, and another and larger post sustained a protracted siege, but the officer in command of the Indian troops declined to fall in with the mutineers' plans and leave Shiraz at their mercy. The force, which amounted to some two thousand men, was ultimately relieved by General Douglas, but a third had died of influenza and others from cholera, in addition to the casualties sustained in action.

In addition to armed intervention, the British Government had recourse to an extensive system of subsidies and bribes, which were, under one name and another, distributed broadcast. For example, one governor received a hundred thousand tomans a month towards the re-establishment of order. It need hardly be said that while disorder proved so remunerative, he was not so foolish as to bring it to a termination. But this subject will be more fittingly dealt with later, since it was the continuance of this policy after the war that is responsible for much of the distrust with which we are to-day regarded.

CHAPTER V.

THE ANGLO-PERSIAN AGREEMENT.

RECENT British policy having centred round the Anglo-Persian Agreement, a clear understanding of the circumstances under which this was negotiated, the respects in which it represented a reversal of previous policy, and the reasons for its universal unpopularity in Persia, are necessary to an intelligent appreciation of why it has resulted in converting the predominant position which Britain occupied at the termination of the war into one of diminished prestige and universal unpopularity.

At the conclusion of hostilities, Russia, formerly supreme in Northern Persia, had, as the result of the revolution, for the time being at least, ceased to be a serious factor in the situation. The very fact that the Russian menace was no longer present had removed the cause of British unpopularity—or rather, since such potential menace as remained was in opposition to British interests, had predisposed Persia to regard us as possible supporters. Germany had also been eliminated, and those who had hitherto been most active in forwarding her interests were only too anxious to manifest beyond question their change of heart. Britain on the other hand, in addition to having gained prestige from the outcome of the war, had become the active protector and financier of Persia, and

the only Power from whom she was likely to obtain practical assistance against Bolshevist action.

At that time the British force at Meshed protected the north-east frontier. The force based on Kazvin, and having detached bodies thrown out as far as Enzeli on the Caspian and Zinjan on the road to Tabriz, covered, in conjunction with a British flotilla upon the Caspian, the approaches to the capital, while the north-west frontier was rendered secure by the British cordon running from Batoum, through Tiflis, to Baku. In the south order had been established, and was being maintained, to an extent utterly beyond the power of the Persian Government, by the South Persian Rifles, the expenses of which were borne by the British and Indian Governments. Thus, if not officially in British occupation, Persia was most emphatically under British protection, and freed from all danger of Bolshevist aggression in the north and tribal disturbance in the south—both vital matters when it is remembered that, while the Cossack Division is of very doubtful value, the remainder of the Persian Army can only be described as utterly valueless from a military point of view.

Not only was Persia under British protection, but she was being enabled to a great extent to defray the expenses of government by British monthly advances. Apart from personal and local subsidies, Britain was furnishing her with three hundred and fifty thousand tomans monthly towards meeting the ordinary expenses of government, and a hundred thousand tomans for the upkeep of the Cossack Division—altogether about £225,000 monthly.

It was, of course, self-evident that of necessity such a condition of affairs must, in respect of both military and financial assistance, be of a temporary

nature; but nevertheless since Persia could not hope to receive practical assistance from any other quarter, national and personal interests alike rendered it essential for her that the closest and most friendly relations possible should be established with Great Britain. Under such conditions, it should have required no great measure of diplomatic skill to secure the confidence of the Persians, and, by a judicious combination of support and education as to British aims, to consolidate our position against any possible Russian revival. It is true that we are not in a position to offer military opposition to a serious advance by a restored Russia, but there was no reason why we should not have come to be regarded as Persia's protectors, to whom she might look for assistance and diplomatic support. One thing, however, was essential in order to arrive at this result—namely, that we should succeed in convincing the Persians of the absolute disinterestedness of our actions. Any suspicions that we had ulterior aims to serve must inevitably cause us to be regarded with the same suspicions and distrust which had previously been shown towards Russia.

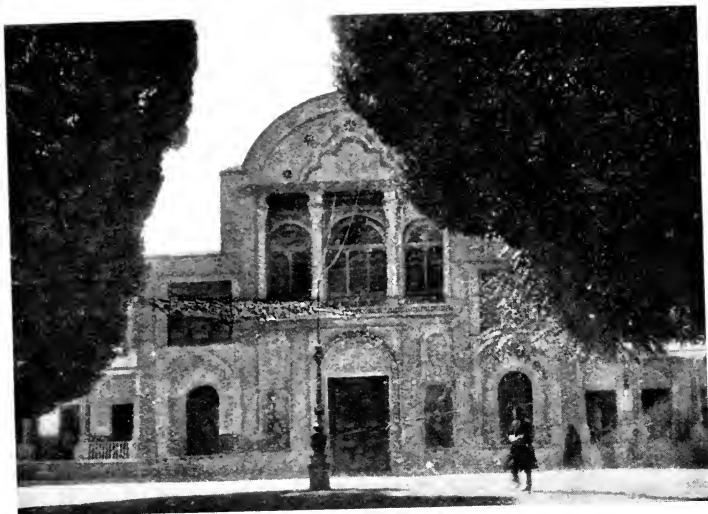
It should have been obvious that the very strength of our position was such as—when taken in conjunction with the fact that, by our occupation of Mesopotamia, we had become Persia's neighbours upon her western as well as her south-eastern frontier—might excite in a weak and helpless nation, jealous of its independence, the most serious apprehensions with regard to our intentions towards her, and that in view of her experiences at the hands of Russia, she would be prone to look for any indication that a powerful neighbour cherished designs inimical to her freedom. From the British point of view such apprehensions may appear to be so groundless as to be little short

of ludicrous, but when the history of the last two centuries and the high value which Persians set upon themselves and their country are remembered, they are readily understandable. In such circumstances the greatest frankness and tact were essential in order to avoid the risk that our intentions might be misunderstood, since any equivocal action upon our part was certain to be misapprehended, and to occasion suspicion and distrust. It is surprising that Lord Curzon, a reputed authority upon everything relating to Persia, should have so failed to appreciate this aspect of the Persian character, and so misapprehended the situation as to embark upon the policy afterwards followed.

Apart altogether from the reasons which have just been mentioned, there existed a very special and vital factor in the situation which alone rendered the utmost circumspection essential in order to avoid the misconception which was almost certain to result regarding British intentions. I refer to the fact that, although the war was over and the consequent necessity for combating German intrigue was removed, subsidies and advances were still being continued. How far it may have been necessary to buy the support of individuals during the war is not a question which I propose to discuss, although it is at least obvious that by adopting such a policy we were endangering the reputation for straightforward dealing which is the Englishman's greatest asset in dealing with orientals. But when the subsidies and advances were continued after the war, the matter assumed an entirely different and much more serious aspect. It cannot be claimed that the British Empire is generally regarded as a charitable institution, and Persians state frankly that the advances occasioned apprehension as to our intentions both

amongst the recipients and those who were aware of what was taking place.

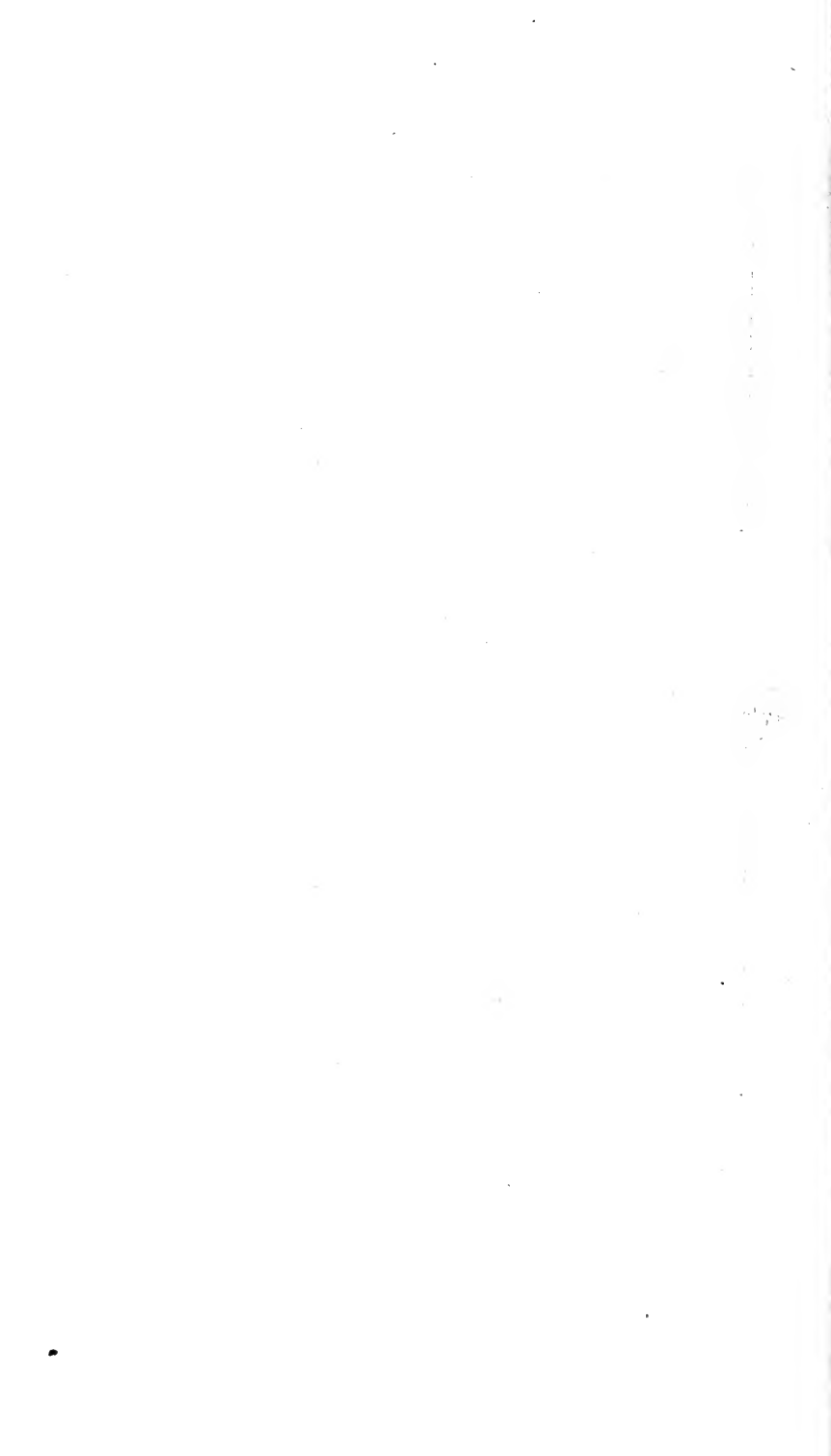
Apart from doles to individuals, under whatever name camouflaged, the Foreign Office continued to advance the above-mentioned monthly payments of three hundred and fifty thousand tomans for general purposes of administration, and a hundred thousand for the Cossack Division, for a period of two years after the Armistice. The Foreign Office may have suffered under the blissful illusion that the money was being expended under careful supervision upon the intended objects; but it is difficult to credit this, and if it was the case that such a view was adopted, it was certainly not shared in Persia. The general subsidy was credited monthly to the account of the Persian Government with the Imperial Bank of Persia, but was not infrequently transferred to native bankers in the bazar, and it is legitimate to infer that the fact that any record of its ultimate disposition was thus removed had its due weight when this was done. In one case the failure of the firm with which the money had been deposited resulted in a large loss to the Government. The money would appear to have been arbitrarily disbursed by the Government of the day, and as, so far as I could ascertain, no record exists at the Ministry of Finance of either these or other sums received from the British Government during the war, it is legitimate to assume that there is an equal lack of information with regard to their ultimate disposal. There exists, it is true, a department of the Ministry whose particular concern is to keep a record of the national debt and all information relating thereto, but a request for full details only resulted in the reply that they had no information whatever upon the subject. The advances would accordingly seem, to a great extent



The Shah's Palace, Teheran.



Kasr-i-Kajar, Teheran.



at least, to have been disposed of by successive Governments without any reliable accounts being kept. This failure to keep any record of indebtedness gives rise to the uneasy suspicion that when the time to discuss terms of repayment comes, the Foreign Office may find itself faced with the contention that the monthly advances, at any rate, were not loans but subsidies. One Minister of Finance frankly stated that they would never be repaid, and it cannot well be believed that he was alone in this opinion.

However remarkable it may appear that the advances for the purposes of general administration should have been continued after the restoration of peace, this is not so calculated to excite surprise as the continuation of the payments for the upkeep of the Cossack Division, since, had there been any indication that during the continuation of the former, an attempt was being made by the Persian Government to put its finances upon a basis which would render the country self-supporting, an argument would have existed for assisting it through the period of transition. The latter, however, must be considered as belonging to an absolutely different category. From the time of its formation as a brigade some forty years ago, the Cossack force has formed a centre of Russian influence and has acted in Russian interests. This has been carried to such an extent that its training and discipline have not been brought to such a standard that in the event of its being called upon to act in opposition to Russia it would be capable of offering serious resistance. When the results achieved by British officers with the South Persian Rifles are considered, it would be paying a poor compliment to the Russian officers concerned to believe that they were incapable of producing a better force than

they did with the material at their disposal. In any case, the fact has, I believe, been admitted.

Naturally, when the Russian débâcle took place, the Russians then with the Division continued to do what lay in their power to maintain the prestige of their country, as was only to be expected. No secret was made of their attitude and sympathies, the Commander of the Division openly stating that, were the position reversed, he would not use kid gloves in dealing with the British. In the face of such an attitude upon the part of the Russian officers, it is difficult to understand the motives which induced the Foreign Office to continue to place at the disposal of the commanding officer a sum which, with the sixty thousand tomans provided monthly by the Persian Government, was, according to inside information, greatly in excess of the amount necessary to defray the expenses of the Division, or why, indeed, any contribution at all should have been made for this purpose.

It might be argued that upon the ultimate departure of the British forces the Cossack Division would be the only body of troops capable of offering any effective opposition to a Bolshevik advance; but if it was considered necessary for Britain to finance a body of Persian troops for this purpose, common prudence should surely have at least indicated the advisability of eliminating the anti-British element, even although it might be considered inexpedient to insist upon this being replaced by British officers. But at that time it is improbable that there would have been any Persian opposition to such replacement, since, apart from other considerations, it was placing a severe strain upon the loyalty of the Russian officers to expect them to offer strenuous opposition to their own countrymen with all the con-

sequences for themselves which defeat might entail. For some abstruse reason this course at no time commended itself to the Foreign Office, and it was only when confronted with an accomplished fact that it grudgingly concurred in the dismissal of the Russian officers, although this is hardly what would be inferred from Lord Curzon's statement upon the subject.

Further, it might reasonably be assumed that some attempt would have been made to ascertain whether the sums advanced were essential for the object in view; but, so far from this being the case, the Foreign Office was content to continue payment at the same rate as had hitherto been paid by the Russian Government, oblivious of the fact that such payments might have been intended to provide for expenditure which could hardly be regarded as consistent with British interests. The monthly payments were placed at the uncontrolled disposal of the commanding officer, and no questions were asked as to how the money was disbursed. Usually no accounts of even the most general description were submitted; twice only, I believe, in recent years. I was privileged to see the latter of these two documents, and can only say that it is impossible to imagine a less informing statement. Although it dealt with a sum equivalent to over a million sterling at the time of receipt, the whole could have been written upon a sheet of notepaper.

Thus the Gilbertian situation existed that the Foreign Office was placing at the disposal of those who were avowedly acting in opposition to British interests, funds which they would otherwise have lacked wherewith to carry on anti-British propaganda. Were it not for rumours current in Mesopotamia regarding the source from which the rising of 1920 was financed, one would be disposed

to say that never had the long-suffering British taxpayer been mulcted for an object less in accordance with his interests.

Hitherto I have been content to assume that reasons existed which rendered it highly desirable, if not absolutely essential, to the interests of the British Empire that Great Britain should, if possible, occupy a dominating position in Northern Persia. I now propose to consider how far such a position appears to be not merely desirable, but necessary, since under present conditions nothing short of necessity can be regarded as justifying us in undertaking fresh commitments. However unpalatable the truth may be, it is futile to endeavour to conceal from ourselves that at the present time Great Britain is in a condition of insolvency. In fact, she is in the position of a man who, accustomed to maintain a large and costly establishment, is suddenly confronted with the loss of so great a part of his income that the remainder is no longer sufficient to defray his expenses. The alternative presented in such a case is obvious: either expenses must be reduced within the limits of available income, or sooner or later bankruptcy must inevitably result. There is no third alternative. The position of Great Britain is indeed actually worse, seeing that she is not in a position to meet her obligations. The fact that her creditors find it contrary to their own interests to demand repayment in no way alters the position. Her assets are, it is true, amply sufficient to pay off her indebtedness, but they are not at the moment realisable, and it is solely due to her creditors not pressing for payment that she is not a declared bankrupt. When the time arrives at which, after balancing income and expenditure, she has accumulated a sufficient surplus to discharge her foreign indebtedness, she will once

more be in a position to indulge in the luxury of such diplomatic and military adventures as may appeal to the imagination of the Government of the day, in so far at least as the taxpayer can be induced to provide the necessary funds. That time is still in the distant future, and meantime all expenditure upon objects, whether at home or abroad, which cannot be shown to be vitally essential, can only be regarded as criminal extravagance, delaying as it does the re-establishment of the national finances upon a sound economic basis. The actual amount of the expenditure involved is merely a question of degree, and in nowise of principle.

Applying this standard to the Foreign Office policy in Persia, upon what grounds can the expenditure incurred and the undertaking of the commitments entailed by the Anglo-Persian Agreement be justified? Frankly, I do not know.

Leaving aside the fact that our interests in North Persia cannot have been regarded as of vital importance in pre-war times, since otherwise the Government of the day would not have entered into the Anglo-Russian Convention, thereby recognising that North Persia lay within the Russian sphere of influence, let us endeavour to ascertain whether any reasons can be found which rendered insufficient for British interests the position of friendship and prestige which we occupied, and necessitated our entering upon an attempt to establish ourselves in a dominating position such as that occupied by Russia before the war, entailing as this did recourse to the same methods of intrigue and intimidation, and the employment of the same agents of doubtful reputation.

That British interests in the south are of great importance, comprising as they do the protection of the approaches to India, our position in the

Persian Gulf, and the oil resources of Bakhtiari, is obvious. None of these, however, necessitate a strong position in North Persia, and indeed were the country to relapse into anarchy they would be but little affected. They may then be ignored.

Let us assume, in the first instance, that the Agreement was nothing more than a benevolent attempt to rehabilitate Persia. Philanthropy is admirable, but there are circumstances which at times render it quixotic rather than justifiable. It is, moreover, difficult to believe that it was seriously hoped that a small group of advisers could, without strong backing from their Government, succeed in effecting reforms which were diametrically opposed to the interests of all Persians concerned. If it was seriously hoped that the Persian Government would without external pressure place the advisers in such a position of authority as would enable them to effect the root and branch reforms from which alone success could be hoped, a striking ignorance of Persian mentality and the history of previous attempts are alike displayed. If such pressure was contemplated, either much greater financial assistance was intended than indicated, or else the Agreement must, as many Persians claim, be regarded as quite other than appears on the surface, and in this event the argument that the chief aim in view was the reform of the Persian Army and finances falls to the ground. In any event, there would not appear to be any reasons why such reform was of importance to British interests.

To turn next to the question of strategy, it is scarcely possible to believe that the defence of India weighed with those who negotiated the Agreement. If so, they had forgotten the advice (the late Lord Salisbury's, if I remember rightly) to consult large-scale maps. A very brief experi-

ence of the difficulties of travel in Persia is sufficient to demonstrate the almost insuperable difficulties which any attempt to move a large force across Persia would entail; and even assuming that such an undertaking was practicable, sound strategy clearly indicates the desirability of meeting such a force when at the end of a long and precarious line of communication, rather than attempting to oppose it close to its own bases. Mr Churchill's admission of the strategic unsoundness of the Kazvin force's position shows that this point was clearly appreciated, and we may accordingly dismiss the question of India from consideration. Were any further evidence required, this would be found in the fact that the Indian Government attaches so little importance to the position in Southern Persia that it has not considered itself justified in continuing the expense of maintaining the South Persian Rifles; much more then must it fail to be concerned with the position in the north. Very similar arguments apply in the case of an attack on Mesopotamia. Nothing is to be gained by defending the country upon foreign soil, while even admitting the improbable contingency of an attack through Persia, we could not expect the Persians to do our fighting for us. Equally, as in the case of India, a strategic ground for the policy pursued would imply the intention to offer serious opposition in North Persia, an intention which cannot be imagined. To attempt to offer opposition on a small scale would only be to invite defeat, with the consequent loss of prestige.

I have already referred to the trade position, but even were our commercial interests very much greater than they are, a dominating position in Persian affairs is not essential to the maintenance of our trade interests. In any case, few British groups are vitally interested in Northern Persia,

and if some of these are not as popular as they might be, the reason lies in the opinion which the Persians have formed of their business methods, and is not to be altered by our political position becoming more influential. Political influence counts for little when opposed to economics and initiative.

If the object in view was to create an obstacle to a Bolshevik advance, the method followed was singularly ill adapted to secure the desired end. Unless we were prepared to adopt the policy, which we have seen to be unsound, of fighting near the enemy's bases, we were powerless to stop a serious Bolshevik move upon Persia. Although the country may be ripe for a very drastic reform, Bolshevik principles are so opposed to its religion that there is little danger of their finding general acceptance. As things stand there is little to tempt the Bolsheviks to turn their serious attention to Persia unless provoked to do so. This provocation was exactly what the Agreement and the military occupation in the north provided. Had we been content to rest satisfied with our position and prestige, it is improbable that the Bolsheviks would have been provoked to action as they were; but instead of this, we deliberately chose to run the most serious risks when no corresponding advantage was to be anticipated. Then, when we had provoked the Bolsheviks into action, we showed that we were not prepared to follow our policy to the logical conclusion, with the result that we sustained a reverse which destroyed our military prestige and rendered our diplomacy helpless.

It is difficult not to feel a certain sympathy with the Bolshevik view. We must remember that Russia had regarded North Persia as falling within her sphere of influence for the last couple

of centuries, and that by the Anglo-Russian Convention we had recognised this in the most solemn manner. That the Foreign Office should seize upon the moment when Russia was in the throes of revolution to repudiate the Convention, and should enter upon a policy avowedly aimed at supplanting Russian influence, could only be regarded from the Bolshevist point of view as an act of deliberate aggression. As such it could only be justified by success; but as it is, it must be considered as displaying a singular lack of both vision and breadth of view. To employ a vulgar simile, Lord Curzon acted exactly like a tramp who steals the clothes of a bather who happens to be in difficulties. If the bather drowns good and well, but prudence indicates the desirability of being sure upon this point prior to committing the theft, particularly if the bather happens to be the bigger man of the two. Otherwise the consequences are likely to be somewhat unpleasant for the tramp. In the present case the bather has not only declined to drown, but has in North Persia proved to be the better man, and consequently we have only ourselves to blame if to-day our prestige in Persia stands as low as it is well possible to imagine.

If I have correctly stated the position, there were not any reasons which, in view of the condition of the national finances, could be held to justify the initiation of a forward policy in North Persia, while there was at least one which furnished a strong argument against such a line of action. Assuming that the Agreement was nothing more than what it purported to be—namely, a disinterested attempt to assist Persia—its completion was obviously of greater importance to Persia than to Britain, but this would scarcely be inferred from the methods adopted and the anxiety displayed to secure its signature and ratification.

The first proposals for an understanding, which resulted eight months later in the signature of the Agreement, came from three members of the Persian Government. These were the Sadr Azam, Vossugh-ed-Douleh, Persia's strong man; Akbar Mirza, Sarem-ed-Douleh, a son of the Zil-es-Sultan and nephew of Muzaffer-ed-Din Shah, a man of character and ability, who some years before had earned an unenviable notoriety by killing his mother; and Firouz Mirza, Nosrat-ed-Douleh, on his father's side a grand-nephew of Mohamed Shah, and on his mother's a nephew of Muzaffer-ed-Din Shah. The latter, who is well known in England, is at the present time our most active and subtle enemy in Persia. The family connections of the two last are alone sufficient to indicate that they belonged to a class whose interests were bound to suffer by any successful attempt at reform, and the group with which we were negotiating must be regarded as representative of the royalist and reactionary faction which was afterwards described in the Teheran press as robber princes. Of all three it must be admitted that their reputation for probity could not even in Persia be described as of the highest.

The proposals of the triumvirate having met with a favourable reception, negotiations were entered upon and carried on with the greatest secrecy. The latter fact is illuminating regarding the value to be attached to the statements of our Ministers in favour of open diplomacy, to which they were so freely giving utterance at this very time. What open diplomacy is I do not profess to understand, since the two words would appear to be self-contradictory.

The Foreign Minister, Mushavim-el-Mamaulik, not being considered simpatico to what was proposed, was despatched to Paris to lay Persia's

case before the Peace Conference. It is freely alleged that this was done by arrangement with the British Foreign Office. Certainly his experiences were sufficiently unfortunate to furnish ground for such an allegation. Refused an interview by a plenipotentiary, lectured by a high official, and refused permission to visit England by Lord Curzon, it is hardly surprising to learn that from that time his sentiments have been violently anti-British. Should he at any time become Sadr Azam, for which position his name was freely mentioned after the fall of Seyd Zia-ed-Din, we must expect consistent opposition from an enemy of our own creation.

The negotiations progressed steadily, and by June the Agreement had assumed its final form, and only awaited the approval of the Foreign Office. This was for some reason delayed, and it was not until the 9th of August that the Agreement was signed. Keeping in view the extent to which Persia was at the time receiving military and financial assistance from the British Government, the Agreement can hardly be considered as one concluded between two free and independent states.

Before proceeding further, however, it will be desirable to give the text of this much-discussed document, which accordingly is as follows :—

PREAMBLE: In virtue of the close ties of friendship which have existed between the two Governments in the past, and in the conviction that it is in the essential and mutual interests of both in future that these ties should be cemented, and that the progress and prosperity of Persia should be promoted to the utmost, it is hereby agreed between the Persian Government on the one hand, and His Britannic Majesty's Minister, acting on behalf of his Government, on the other, as follows :—

1. The British Government reiterate, in the most categorical manner, the undertakings which they have re-

124 RECENT HAPPENINGS IN PERSIA

peatedly given in the past, to respect absolutely the independence and integrity of Persia.

2. The British Government will supply, at the cost of the Persian Government, the services of whatever expert advisers may, after consultation between the two Governments, be considered necessary for the several departments of the Persian Administration. These advisers shall be engaged on contracts and endowed with adequate powers, the nature of which shall be the matter of agreement between the Persian Government and the advisers.

3. The British Government will supply, at the cost of the Persian Government, such officers and other munitions and equipment of modern type as may be adjudged necessary by a joint commission of military experts, British and Persian, which shall assemble forthwith for the purpose of estimating the needs of Persia in respect of the formation of a uniform force which the Persian Government proposes to create for the establishment and preservation of order in the country and on its frontiers.

4. For the purpose of financing the reforms indicated in Clauses 2 and 3 of this Agreement, the British Government offer to provide or arrange a substantial loan for the Persian Government, for which adequate security shall be sought by the two Governments in consultation in the revenues of the customs or other sources of income at the disposal of the Persian Government. Pending the completion of negotiations for such a loan, the British Government will supply on account of it such funds as may be necessary for initiating the said reforms.

5. The British Government, fully recognising the urgent need which exists for the improvement of communications in Persia, with a view both to the extension of trade and the prevention of famine, are prepared to co-operate with the Persian Government for the encouragement of Anglo-Persian enterprise in this direction, both by means of railway construction and other forms of transport; subject always to the examination of the problems by experts and to agreement between the two Governments as to the particular projects which may be most necessary, practicable, and profitable.

6. The two Governments agree to the appointment forthwith of a Joint-Committee of experts for the examination and revision of the existing Customs Tariff, with a view

to its reconstruction on a basis calculated to accord with the legitimate interests of the country and to promote its prosperity.

Signed at TEHERAN, 9th August 1919.

PREAMBLE: Contract between the British Government and the Persian Government with reference to an Agreement concluded this day between the two Governments. It is agreed as follows :—

Article 1. The British Government grants a loan of £2,000,000 sterling to the Persian Government, to be paid to the Persian Government as required in such instalments and at such dates as may be indicated by the Persian Government after the British Financial Adviser shall have taken up the duties of his office at Teheran, as provided for in the aforesaid Agreement.

Art. 2. The Persian Government undertakes to pay interest monthly at the rate of 7 per cent per annum upon sums advanced in accordance with Article 1 up to 20th March 1921, and thereafter to pay monthly such amount as will suffice to liquidate the principal sum and interest thereon at 7 per cent per annum in twenty years.

Art. 3. All the revenues and Customs receipts assigned in virtue of the contract of 8th May 1911, for the repayment of the loan of £1,250,000, are assigned for the repayment of the present loan, with continuity of all conditions stipulated in the said contract, and with priority over all debts other than the 1911 loan and subsequent advances made by the British Government. In case of insufficiency of the receipts indicated above, the Persian Government hereby assigns to the service of the present loan, and of the other advances above mentioned, in priority and with continuity of conditions stipulated in the foresaid contract, the Customs receipts of all other regions, in so far as these receipts are or shall be at its disposal.

Art. 4. The Persian Government will have the right of repayment of the present loan at any date out of the proceeds of any British loan which it may contract for.

On the same date the British Minister addressed two letters to the Persian Prime Minister. The first of these expressed the British Government's

readiness to co-operate in the revision of the existing treaties, to aid Persia's claim for damage suffered at the hands of other belligerents, and to agree to the rectification of the frontier at certain points. The second stated that the British Government did not intend to claim for the maintenance of troops whose presence had been rendered necessary by Persia's lack of power to defend her neutrality.

It will be seen from the foregoing that five objects were contemplated: the reorganisation of the Persian Army, and the provision of such expert assistance and munitions as might be necessary thereto; the loan of the services of such advisers as might be necessary to effect a similar reform of the civil administration; the provision of such credits as might be necessary for carrying out these reforms; the revision of the existing Customs tariff, which had been negotiated in the interests of Russia; and the development of communications, railways in particular. Such being the objects in view, the impression is left that the arrangement was of a distinctly one-sided nature, and that if any one had a right to object it was the British taxpayer. Such was not the view which was taken by Persian opinion.

The Agreement, being on the face of it such a one-sided bargain, it was not unnatural that suspicions should have been aroused that all had not been disclosed, and that there existed secret clauses which would put an entirely different complexion on the matter, and subsequent events only tended to increase this suspicion. While some suspected the existence of secret clauses, others read into the British undertaking to respect the integrity of Persia the implication that this was equivalent to implying that henceforth she was only to remain independent on the sufferance of the British Gov-

ernment, or, in other words, under British suzerainty.

In other cases the opposition was due to the secrecy with which the negotiations had been conducted, and personal pique on the part of individuals who considered that they should have been consulted. It is possible that had the Persian Government adopted a somewhat less high-handed attitude, and taken the leaders of other parties into consultation, much of the later opposition might have been avoided. It was only natural that the bureaucracy should be whole-heartedly opposed to the proposed reforms, for should these be carried out in the spirit as well as the letter, their opportunities of speculation would at the least have been greatly curtailed.

Further, the proposal to employ British advisers throughout the administration struck at the policy beloved of Persia and Turkey of employing advisers of different nationalities in different departments in order that by playing the one off against the other they might render of null effect any action upon their part. Advisers in such countries are desired not in order that they may effect reforms, but that under cover of the camouflage of reform under European guidance credits may be more readily obtained in Europe and criticism disarmed. Clearly with British advisers in all Ministries, this would no longer be possible, and with all advisers enjoying the support of one Legation, it would be difficult to maintain the pretence of reform without submitting to some practical results.

Lastly, the Agreement was in some quarters regarded as a corrupt bargain, and unfortunately it is almost impossible to disprove this accusation. It will have been noted that under Article 1 of the Loan Agreement the loan of two millions was "to be paid in such instalments and at such dates

as may be indicated by the Persian Government after the British Financial Adviser shall have taken up the duties of his office at Teheran." From this it is clear that it was contemplated that the two millions, which it will be remembered were, under Article 4 of the main Agreement, to be expended upon the contemplated reforms, were to be disbursed under the supervision of the Financial Adviser. At the last moment, however, the Persian trio stipulated, as a precedent condition of signing the Agreement, that a sum equivalent at the then rate of exchange to £131,000 should be turned over to them. This was agreed to, and the payment was made very shortly after the signature of the Agreement. It is utterly impossible to explain away this payment upon any straightforward view of the transaction. Firstly, it was diametrically opposed to the intention of the Agreement that all advances thereunder should be expended under the advice and control of the Financial Adviser; and, secondly, the method of payment was so peculiar, and the ultimate destination of the money so veiled in secrecy, as to justify the most sinister inferences regarding the transaction. The money was paid direct to the three Ministers, with, I believe, the express proviso that no inquiry should be made as to its expenditure. So great was the secrecy observed, that when the Siphadar Azam, who was a member of the Council which was supposed to have negotiated the Agreement, became Sadr Azam some fifteen months later, he was in absolute ignorance of the transaction. It need hardly be added that the one thing which is certain is that the money never reached the Treasury.

It is impossible to consider as well founded the contention that this payment should be regarded as having been made in terms of the Agreement,

and to justly hold Persia as liable for its repayment. It cannot be believed that the British Foreign Office failed to realise that the payment was not in accordance with the terms of the Agreement, nor from the very nature of the transaction can it have been under any delusion that the money was destined for legitimate purposes. In all the circumstances, and considering the total absence of any explanation as to how the money was expended, it is hardly to be wondered at that the very worst construction has been placed upon the action of the Foreign Office.

It has been suggested that it was contemplated that the money should be expended in securing the confirmation of the Agreement by the Majlis, but no one appears to have troubled about this at the time, and when the Majlis finally met nearly two years later, the question of obtaining ratification no longer existed. In any case, if this was the intention, it in no way enables a less unsavoury interpretation to be placed upon the transaction, for there is no difference between buying the signatures of Ministers and bribing deputies to endorse these signatures, and it is difficult to think of any other purpose which can have necessitated the secrecy insisted upon. The question was not discussed until over a year later, when, it being obvious that the Agreement was a dead letter, the British Government, apparently desirous of being quit of its liabilities, pressed for acknowledgment of the debt.

Although the Agreement had been signed, it was not, according to the Persian Constitution, binding and operative until it had been confirmed by a vote of the Majlis, a fact which was either overlooked or disregarded by Lord Curzon. Had it been possible to bring the issue to a vote forthwith, it is possible that a favourable decision

might have been arrived at, since the opposition had not yet had time to take form, while some of the most active opponents had, on one excuse or another, been banished to Kum.

That Vossugh-ed-Douleh intended in the first instance to submit the Agreement to the Majlis, and endeavour to obtain its ratification, is, I think, clear. The Teheran deputies had been already elected, and it was not anticipated that they would support the Government, nor that others, if the choice was left to the unfettered discretion of the electors, would be returned whose support could be counted upon. Accordingly the elections which followed were accompanied by every circumstance of fraud, intimidation, and corruption, in which, according to local belief, the British Legation was concerned. It is to this belief that the extreme anti-British attitude adopted by the present Majlis must in the main be attributed. The anxiety uppermost in the minds of the deputies is to clear themselves of the suspicion of being British nominees.

Long, however, before the elections could be completed the situation had changed, so that there was no longer any hope that the deputies would consider the Agreement favourably. The first cause of this change was the evacuation of the Caucasus, and this apparently so shook the confidence of Vossugh-ed-Douleh that he abandoned the idea of convening the Majlis, considering that, in spite of the manner of their election, there was little chance that the deputies would support him. He is also reported to have alleged that he had been let down by the British, and would in his turn let them down. The consequence was that during the ten months in which he continued in office he made no attempt to convene the Majlis, and was content to merely mark time.

What would have been the result had active steps been taken to carry the Agreement into effect immediately after signature it is now idle to surmise. Nevertheless it is permissible to consider that had prompt action followed, the ultimate result might well have been different. Had British officers been despatched forthwith from Mesopotamia to sit upon the Military Commission, and a Financial Adviser sent instanter from India, while the question of railway construction was at the same time actively taken up, the result might have been that by the ensuing spring the formation of an army under British officers and the reform of the finances might both have advanced so far as to render the Agreement *un fait accompli*. Had there been, in addition, concrete signs that railway construction was about to become a reality, a situation would have been created which the deputies when they met would have hesitated to overturn. In the event, the development of the situation was entirely different, since it was not until the ensuing year that any active steps were taken. The Military Commission did not complete its deliberations until the end of March, while it was not until the end of April that the Financial Adviser arrived in Teheran. By then both the termination of the subsidies and the fact that military evacuation was contemplated had become known; while the Bolshevik landing at Enzeli, which utterly shook Persian confidence in our capacity to defend them, and the fall of Vossugh-ed-Douleh's Cabinet, which followed thereon, were imminent.

From the date of the Bolshevik landing the Agreement may be regarded as dead, although it did not receive its *coup-de-grâce* at the hands of Seyd Zia-ed-Din until nearly nine months later.

The history of the Agreement during the eighteen months which elapsed between its signature and

repudiation is, to a great extent, the history of Persia during that period. But it will be well to indicate briefly here the main facts.

So far as practical results were concerned, the only intention to which effect was given was the revision of the Customs tariff. This was carried through early in 1920, and the revised tariff was immediately put into force. The only criticisms which the new tariff invites are that the duty on sugar was maintained at too high a rate, and that Manchester goods were very leniently treated. A Financial Adviser and assistants, two Advisers to the Ministry of Public Works, and four officers to organise a gendarmerie in Azerbaijan were indeed engaged, but it is scarcely too much to say that none of these were given an opportunity of showing of what they were capable. A mixed Commission also sat and drew up a scheme for a reformed Persian Army, but it may be doubted whether this ever received serious consideration from either Government; certainly there were no visible results. Lastly, a railway survey was carried out during the summer of 1920.

In June 1920 Vossugh-ed-Douleh fell, and was succeeded by Mushir-ed-Douleh, who immediately suspended the newly-arrived advisers from their functions pending the ratification of the Agreement. That he ever seriously contemplated summoning the Majlis, I for one never at any time believed, and I do not stand alone in this opinion. Mushir-ed-Douleh was succeeded in November by the Siphadar Azam, who followed a similar policy, with the exception that he did attempt, without result, to convene the Majlis in the beginning of 1921.

What is most difficult to understand during this period is the persistency with which the Foreign Office clamoured for ratification. Considering the

changes which had taken place, it is incredible that it can seriously have been believed that there was a possibility of any Majlis voting favourably, least of all that which was in existence.

I have already pointed out how, at the time when the Agreement was concluded, Persia was being defended and financed by Great Britain. By the autumn of 1920 the situation had changed in every respect. The Meshed force had gone, as had that in the Caucasus. The Caspian flotilla was in the hands of the Bolsheviks. The Kazvin force was to depart in the spring, and, owing to the restraining orders under which its commander acted, had suffered seriously in prestige, and had been compelled to fall back before the Bolsheviks (of which more hereafter) and to evacuate Ghilan. Lastly, the subsidies to Government and individuals alike had ceased.

The consequence was that Persia found herself abandoned to her own resources, and left to the tender mercies of the Bolsheviks, deprived alike of military and financial aid. When there was nothing to be hoped for from the British Government, and the ratification of the Agreement could only result in incurring the resentment of the Moscow Government, it would have been pure folly to attempt to comply with Lord Curzon's demands for ratification.

In such circumstances Lord Curzon's statements that he was the best friend that Persia possessed only resulted in provoking an outburst of fury, derision, and contempt throughout the country, where he is considered to be Persia's greatest enemy and would-be oppressor.

Why, then, did he press so strongly for ratification? There would appear to be only two explanations: either he utterly failed to understand the situation, or the British Government desired

to be free of the Agreement, while throwing the onus of repudiation upon Persia. The argument adopted by those who favour this view is that the Agreement was a *jeu d'esprit* of the Foreign Office, and that the War Office and Treasury had, if consulted at all, not had the nature of the obligations implied brought home to them; and that when the two Departments appreciated the possible commitments in which they might find themselves involved, they not unnaturally protested, with the result that the Foreign Office, in the prevalent wave of feeling in favour of nominal economy, found itself alone, and left to save its face as best it could.

That there was something in this view one is almost tempted to believe, judging by the attitude adopted by the Foreign Office when the Agreement was finally denounced by Seyd Zia-ed-Din. Although repudiating the Agreement, and renouncing any desire to profit by the loan thereunder, he expressed himself anxious to avail himself of the services of Military and Financial Advisers, so that, the Customs having been revised and railway construction never having been opposed, the policy of the Agreement would have been given effect to practically in its entirety. The Foreign Office, however, was unwilling or unable to distinguish between the form and the substance, and one is tempted to wonder whether they were unable to realise that they had obtained the nominal results at which their policy had aimed, or whether they would have preferred that the Agreement should be repudiated both in spirit and in letter.

CHAPTER VI.

FINANCE.

CONSIDERING that any hope of a successful attempt to re-establish Persia's position must be based upon the reformation of her finances upon such a scale as will once more bring expenditure within the limits of revenue, an inquiry into the Persian financial system, and the possibilities of effecting a reform thereof which would achieve the desired object, is necessary to the appreciation of whether such financial adjustment lies within the sphere of practical possibilities, or whether the Persian financial position must be regarded as being irretrievable.

At the outset, let me say that I am absolutely satisfied that the resources of Persia are amply sufficient to provide an adequate revenue for all her legitimate requirements without increasing the burden of taxation in any respect. Readjustment and honest administration are all that are required to render the country independent of foreign assistance, but these are precisely what cannot be obtained under the present Government; and just as I am convinced that adequate reform is possible, equally I am assured that it will never be carried into effect so long as the direction of the affairs of the country remains in the hands of the present ruling class, unless such external pressure is brought to bear as it is beyond their power to oppose.

Were the League of Nations a practical body with power to intervene in the internal affairs of nations when these reached such a state of disorder and complexity as to be adverse to international interests, the matter would be simple ; but, as it is, I cannot see any hope of serious reform being undertaken unless either a revolution occurs or foreign intervention terminates the present régime's control, and such intervention can only be looked for from Russia.

We must not consider the Persian as not appreciating the position and as failing to realise the defects of the present position. There is no lack of young men who have been educated abroad, and have returned fully supplied with ideas upon the subject, while the discussion of theoretical reform is fully in accord with Persian mentality ; but, unfortunately, there is no accord between words and actions, and for practical purposes there is as much result as ensues from the discussions of a village debating society. In theory everything is admirably organised, but when it comes to practice, there is the same objection which a cynic alleged against running away with another man's wife—namely, that it does not work.

I cannot take a better example of this than the present organisation of the Ministry of Finance. It will be remembered that Mr Schuster was invested with what were little less than dictatorial powers. After his elimination at the instance of Russia, he was succeeded as Treasurer-General by a Belgian official. While the Majlis had been content to invest Mr Schuster with unusual powers, it was by no means prepared to agree to these being exercised by any official who happened to occupy the post which he had held. For the time being it was not possible to alter the position, since one of the first acts of Russia when she inter-

vened in 1911 had been to dissolve the Majlis. When, however, during the war a new Majlis found itself free to act, it took the opportunity of framing a law for the constitution of the Ministry of Finance, which greatly diminished the importance of the appointment in question.

A scheme was evolved and put into operation of which it is hardly too much to say that it defined in the minutest detail the duties of every official in the Ministry. In their anxiety to provide adequate safeguards against any official enjoying excessive powers, the legislators succeeded in producing an organisation which, apart from the objection that it called for a large staff, was for practical purposes unworkable. This would not appear to have occasioned them any concern, and the consequence is that Persian finances are to-day controlled by an organisation which, while adequate to provide in theory for all possible contingencies, is either unduly involved or unnecessary for practical purposes. As a consequence staffs have been inflated to a grotesquely excessive degree, and departments are fully staffed which have never been called upon to carry out their functions.

As an example I will take one branch into whose organisation I had occasion to inquire—that supposed to deal with national debt, the budget, accounts, and auditing and pensions. On perusal of the section of the law which defined its functions, the only criticism which appeared to be called for was that too many departments were concerned with the same matter, and that the safeguards provided were excessive. On inquiry the results proved to be somewhat surprising. The department whose duty it was to deal with the budget had never functioned, for the good and sufficient reason that there had never been a

budget for it to deal with. The national debt department readily undertook to provide a full statement of the foreign debt, but upon receipt this proved to stop prior to the war. The feelings of the officials concerned appeared to be so hurt at the idea that they should be expected to be conversant with the debt incurred during the war, that I refrained from pressing them further. In this I must confess to being influenced by the accuracy of their information, which was indicated by the fact that the service of the largest British loan was stated to be in default for the last seven years, whereas actually both interest and sinking fund had throughout the loan's duration been punctually met. The department which was supposed to examine the accounts of the various Ministries was practically in a state of suspended animation, since the latter seemed to have a rooted objection to rendering accounts in anything under three or four years. The section whose duty it was to consolidate the accounts and produce a record of the national expenditure was, as a consequence, in the same position as the department responsible for the budget. There remained the section which dealt with pensions, and this readily undertook to provide a statement of the annual amount of these. Now there are in Persia two classes of pensions—those paid monthly and those paid annually. The former have usually been given for political services, although in some cases annual pensions have been converted. These, which generally speaking have been legitimately earned, are, as a rule, paid to the extent of 25 per cent, although some are paid to the amount of 50 per cent, and some fortunate individuals are even paid in full. The occasions which this gives for corrupt practices may easily be imagined. Even the 25 per cent is not at all times forth-

coming, and nothing is simpler than for the friends of a Minister to buy their rights from the pensioners, disheartened by long waiting. So soon as purchase has been effected the period of waiting comes to an end, and, in addition, the pension is placed in the list of those which are paid in full, the profits being shared by the parties concerned. When I received the promised list, it was so far below my expectations that it was obvious that something had been omitted. On inquiry it proved that the monthly pensions had been disregarded by the compiler, while a further inquiry elicited the fact that, although the list had been declared to comprise all pensions paid by the Government, other Ministries, such as those of War and the Interior, had their own pension lists. A second list was in due course forthcoming, and upon this occasion I received a solemn assurance that it was really complete, subject always to the qualification that the same pension might in some cases be included in both the monthly and annual lists. As to whether this was actually the case, it was utterly beyond the power of the section to say.

The above may, I think, be regarded as typical of a Persian Ministry, the facts being in no way exaggerated. As I stated when discussing the question of population, Persian statistics cannot be depended upon, and this is especially the case when dealing with questions of revenue and expenditure.

Such being the condition of the central administration, it can readily be imagined that the system in force in the provinces leaves much to be desired. As has been mentioned, the control of local expenditure and the collection of revenue were formerly in the hands of the local governor. Under the new régime a Financial Agent was appointed in each province, the larger provinces being divided

into districts under subordinate agents. Since in Persia the custom of collecting taxes by force is universally in operation, except in the case of persons of influence, who in all probability do not pay at all, close co-operation between the Financial Agent and the Governor is called for in the collection of the revenue. The consequence is that usually these worthies are to be found working in close co-operation, with the result that oppression can be indulged in with impunity, and the peasant is not infrequently called upon to pay his taxes two or three times over. A contributory cause of the irregularities which exist in the collection of the revenue is the lack of practical organisation existing in the central administration. All departments of this meddle in the matter, with the consequence that, by playing off one of these against another, endless delays can be occasioned by officials whose actions are called in question.

The principal tax in Persia is the *Maliat*, which in theory is based upon the Koran, and consists of a tithe of the revenues or produce of the land of an individual village (not of the revenue of an estate or individual proprietor), which is payable in money or kind, or partly in one and partly in the other. Although in theory based upon the Koran, the tax, or at least a tax upon land revenue, existed in Persia prior to the introduction of Islam. By successive reforms the tax was gradually evolved until it assumed its present form of 10 per cent plus the military tax, with which I will deal later. Avoiding as it did any dependence upon individual declarations, and being easy to collect, it worked well both from the point of view of the revenue produced and the justice of its incidence, so long as the Government possessed the strength and experience necessary to effect periodic revisions, without which it is obvious that, by movements of

population and other causes, it might fail in producing revenue, and also become an instrument of oppression and injustice. In the time of Shah Abbas the Great (about 1600) it was considered necessary to effect such revisions every five or six years.

At the present time the tax has ceased to be either productive or just in its incidence, owing to the long period which has elapsed since the last revision. The last general revision was undertaken over half a century ago, and although local revisions have been undertaken from time to time, it is probably considerably understating the case to assert that from three-quarters to four-fifths of the country is assessed upon a basis adjusted at least thirty years ago; some authorities, indeed, put the figure at a much longer period. The local revisions which have been undertaken, not being based upon any general principle, and being influenced by the point of view of the officials concerned, have resulted only in increasing the inequality of the incidence, while in later years they have usually been the result of an arrangement between the taxpayers and the officials. The consequence is that the revenue derived by the Government bears no relation to the real taxable liability of the country. This is well brought out by the fact that tax-farmers have been willing to pay more than the whole sum at which their district was assessed for the privilege of collecting the revenue. The chief source of hidden revenue lies in the villages which have grown or sprung up since the last revision, and which are consequently unknown officially to the Government. Correspondingly other villages have decreased in prosperity, and so soon as the population begins to decrease, the incidence of the tax naturally falling more heavily upon the remaining inhabit-

ants, an incentive is provided for these also to migrate, with the result that unless a rebate is granted the village ceases to exist. Generally speaking, the oldest revisions show more sense of equity and appreciation of the problems involved.

As collected at the present time, the tax consists in the main either of the 10 per cent mentioned, or of a fixed proportion of the revenue, agreed under a contract, where the land is Crown land, which has been ceded to individuals. In some cases it is replaced or augmented by a poll-tax upon the inhabitants or upon their flocks, while in all classes of taxes a percentage is very frequently added (nominally to cover the cost of collection), and in many a reduction has been granted for one reason or another.

Attempts have from time to time been made to centralise the tax rolls, and to regulate centrally the collection; but, so far from getting a grip upon the collection, the central administration did not even succeed in getting a complete list of the rolls. Such as they did get together were destroyed by a fire at the Ministry of Finance some three years ago, which is commonly believed to have been caused by interested parties. The difficulty of consolidation arose from the fact that the tax rolls were a legacy from the time when the whole administration of a province was under the governor. At that time the rolls were kept by a close corporation of accountants, who, using a peculiar scrip, came to regard the rolls as their hereditary possessions. I met with a case of this in Teheran when visiting an official who belonged to such a family. He showed me with pride an entire cupboard stored with what were admittedly Government records inherited from his father. When an independent financial system was established, and the old accountants saw their privileges threatened,

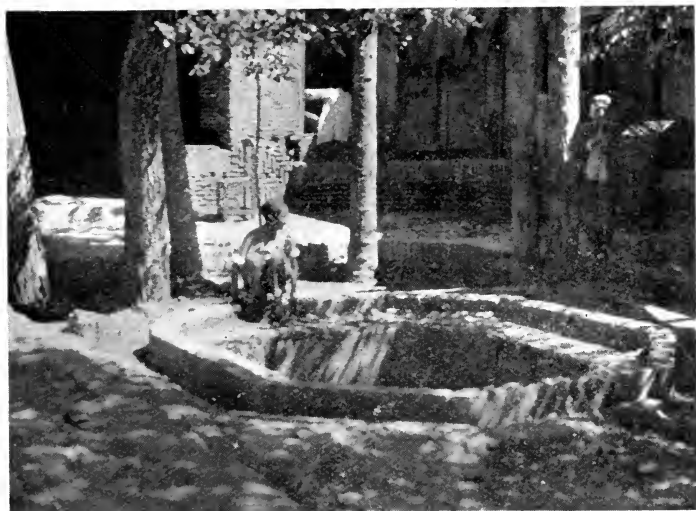
they had every incentive, so far as lay in their power, to hinder the success of the new organisation, and rolls were handed over in a mutilated and defective condition. In spite of the eighteen years which have elapsed and considerable expenditure, the Government have so far been unable to complete their records, and in the lack of knowledge and state of uncertainty which exist there has been ample opportunity for irregularities to continue without fear of detection.

With the exception of certain individuals, who are strong enough or possess sufficient influence to defy the officials, and of certain persons and tribes, such as the Bakhtiari, who not only do not pay but collect tax from others, the whole tax is collected subject to such abatements as may from time to time be granted. It does not follow by any means that the revenue reaches the national exchequer, partly through incapacity or bad faith on the part of the agents employed; partly through a favourite device of giving a personal receipt for the sum collected, and then returning the official counterfoils with an explanation that for one reason or another the tax is irrecoverable; and partly because of collusion between the officials and the taxpayers. It is impossible to prevent these frauds without radical reform of the whole system, and the introduction of an adequate system of inspection, coupled with prompt and drastic punishment of delinquents.

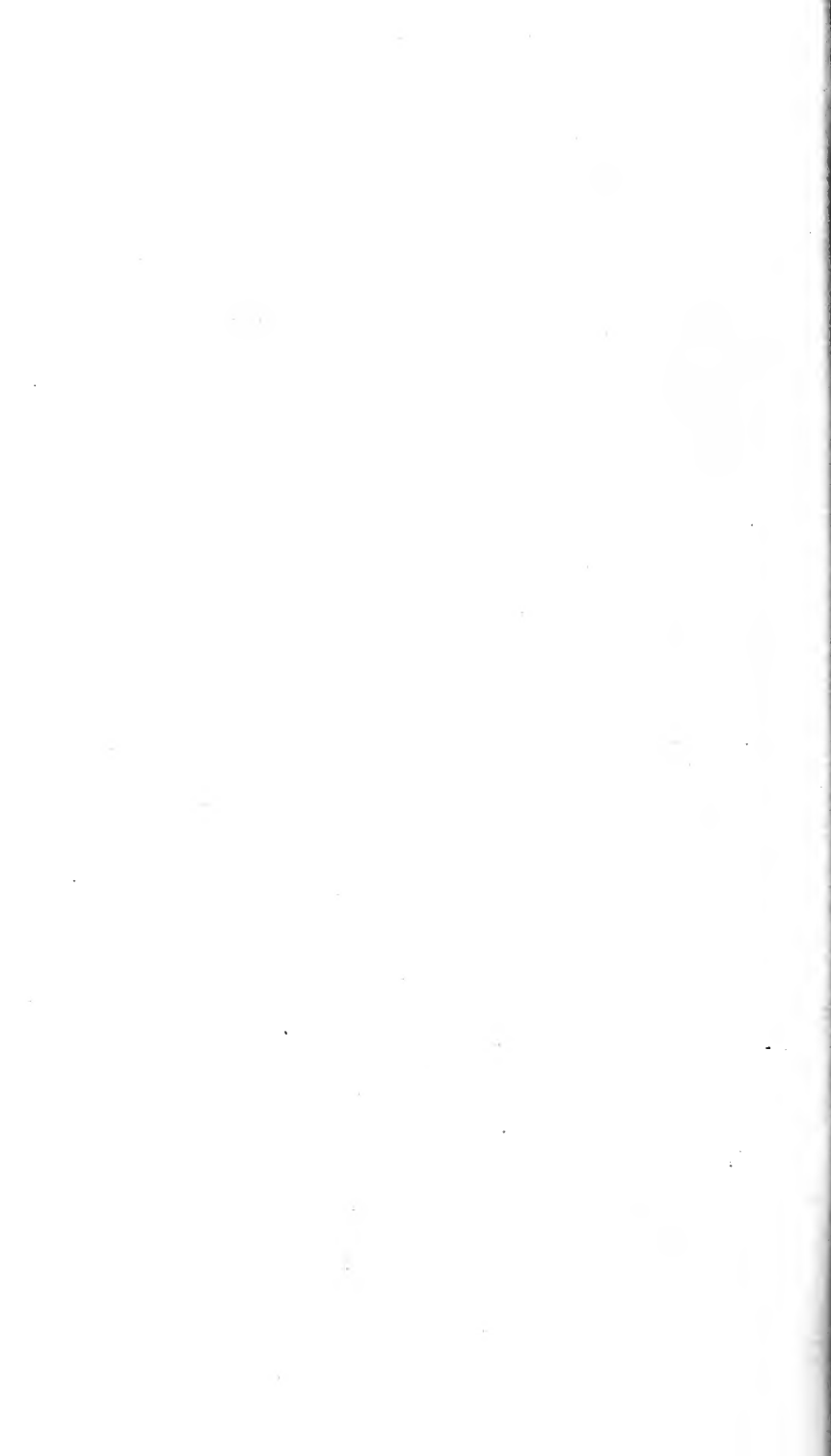
The great and obvious disparity between the revenues of the properties and the tax collected have recently brought home the vital necessity of attempting some revision and reform of the present system. In the provinces of Ghilan and Mazanderan attempts have been made in the last few years to bring the Maliat revenue into greater accord with the actual revenues of the proprietors,

by establishing what the actual 10 per cent amounts to in practice. The Ghilan attempt may be disregarded, since, owing to the local unsettlement occasioned by Bolshevist and Jangali activities, it cannot be considered as having had the chance of a fair trial.

In the case of Mazanderan, however, results have been obtained which are sufficient to indicate what might be hoped for from a thorough revision carried through to a conclusion. The opinion of one of the officials concerned in the revision was that the revenue could be increased by from 40 to 50 per cent on the basis adopted. The method proposed was the separation of assessment and collection, coupled with that of an annual declaration, and an examination and collection of data relating to the various properties, such as water, arable land, population, and draught oxen. From such statistics it is possible, by comparison with neighbouring properties, to ascertain whether the returns submitted are approximately correct, or whether further inquiry is necessary. The 10 per cent having been assessed upon the returns where there is no reason to doubt the correctness of these, the sum due is intimated to the taxpayer, and the collecting office advised of what must be recovered. The system of returns, coupled with the separation of the assessing and collecting agencies, rendered extortion upon the part of the collectors much more difficult of concealment. In better organised countries, it is only necessary to guard against evasion by the taxpayer, but in Persia an even greater evil to both revenue and taxpayer must be guarded against in the dishonesty and extortion of the officials concerned in the collection of revenue. The above method provides safeguards against the larger part of the existing abuses, since it assures that the



In the Bazars, Teheran.



amount due is known to both taxpayer and collector.

At the present time slips showing the sums due are given to the taxpayers, or in cases where small taxpayers are grouped together, to one of them, with the result that very frequently the slips are in the course of a few years either lost or destroyed, and the taxpayer is consequently left at the mercy of the collector, and in ignorance of the sum due. Since the collector is supported by the governor's gendarmes, it may readily be realised that full advantage is taken of this ignorance. To exercise any control over the amounts collected it would be necessary to collect the slips from the individuals concerned, and compare them with the tax rolls. Under the circumstances, it would be impossible in view of the loss of many of the slips to effect such a comparison, and actually no attempt has ever been made to carry such an examination into effect.

In dealing with the tax in kind the difficulties of supervision are very much greater, and no control whatever is exercised. Since the amount due depends upon the price at which the grain is disposed of, and seeing that, being without storage accommodation of its own, the Government is compelled to leave the grain in the taxpayer's barn, the opportunities for fraud and collusion are infinite. As a consequence a cash payment is very frequently agreed upon with the farmer in commutation of the tax in kind. Where this is not arranged, the Government, in the absence of transport facilities, is compelled to rely upon the local officials for the price obtained, and more often than not these will be found to be acting in collusion with a local ring. For example, upon one occasion when there was a shortage of grain in Teheran province, application was made by the

responsible official for the transfer of grain from a district of an adjacent province. This was refused, and the grain was sold locally, only to be bought back a week later by the Government in the same village at a greatly enhanced price. Numberless instances of the manipulation of grain could be given, but the above is sufficient to indicate the methods employed. At times the consequences may be vastly more serious, for, in the event of famine, there is nothing to prevent the governor of the afflicted district from prohibiting import and profiteering with accumulated stores, while the governor of an adjacent province may prohibit export on the plea of the risk of a spread of the shortage, and so force the local holders to dispose of their stocks at his price, after which the need for an embargo upon export will suddenly disappear. There is not the slightest doubt that the distress of the 1918 famine was gravely accentuated by manipulation on the part of those in high authority. Such opportunities would be eliminated by the imposition of a fixed 10 per cent, for it would then be easy to ascertain whether the proprietor, upon whom the onus of disposing of the entire crop would fall, had rendered an honest statement of the prices obtained.

At present the collector takes from 5 to 10 per cent in excess of the sum due under plea of expenses, while, moreover, he is entitled to an additional percentage in the case of the tax in kind to compensate for dross. Two years ago a collector in a province adjacent to Teheran collected between 35 per cent and 50 per cent in excess of the sum due upon this plea. In addition, the collectors and their retainues billet themselves upon villages, and should these prove reluctant to pay the sums demanded, pressure is brought to bear by protracting the visitation.

By the system proposed these irregularities are to a great extent eliminated, since once the taxpayer is in possession of information regarding the exact amount due, any further demand must be admitted extortion. Further, much information is collected regarding the financial and commercial possibilities of the various districts, while the collectors and assessors act as spies upon one another's actions.

The above method cannot be regarded as other than a palliative pending the inception of a comprehensive scheme of reform. Manifestly the ideal method of effecting this would be by a complete cadastral survey of the country, but this is at the moment a counsel of perfection, and beyond either the technical or economic resources of Persia. Moreover, when the long periods which were found necessary to effect such a survey in France and Belgium (forty years in one case) are remembered, it is obvious that, although a Persian survey would not entail such a mass of detailed work, it must nevertheless prove a very long and costly business, and involve the employment of a large number of European surveyors. Such being the case, it is necessary to endeavour to find a method of bringing about a radical increase of revenue within a reasonable period, even if a cadastral survey is decided upon as essential to the ultimate reform. This result might, I believe, be arrived at by a system of returns such as instituted in Mazanderan, or alternatively by an annual assessment of the value of the crop by a body representative of the Government and proprietors, reinforced by assessors familiar with local conditions. In either case at the end of five years an average would be struck which would form a fair basis of taxation for a further period of five years. It would also be necessary to separate the assessing officials

from those concerned with collection, and to establish a system of provincial audit in order to ensure that the revenue collected corresponded with the amounts noted in the assessment rolls. Provided that an adequate system of inspection is established, and adequate supervision exercised over the auditors, it would be unnecessary that details of individual properties should be submitted to the capital. In view of the difficulties of communication, the figures could not be supervised efficiently from the centre, and the forwarding of details would only furnish an excuse for multiplying officials. If the totals due from the individual districts are in the possession of the Ministry of Finance, sufficient data would be available to ensure that the revenue was being collected in a satisfactory manner. The method indicated above, necessitating as it does the preparation of annual statistics, is far from perfect, but pending a cadastral survey it would, I feel confident, produce results more than justifying the necessary expense, which would not be excessive under proper control.

In close relation to the Maliat there exists the problem of the Crown lands, both those still in the possession of the Crown and those which have been alienated to individuals. The latter form the most difficult part of the question. In theory these were alienated as a reward for special services, in return for a proportion of the revenue which they produced, and in the hope that the individual proprietor, being in a better position to give attention to their improvement and development, would be enabled to show a better return, with consequent benefit to the revenues of the Crown. In many cases, it must be admitted, the lands have been alienated to favourites for merely nominal sums. The difficulty of dealing with the question is increased by the lands having

in many cases changed hands for a legitimate consideration, and in these cases they would appear to be beyond recovery. The matter is one which is of vital importance to the national revenue, and calls for immediate investigation, since there is the strongest reason for believing that land is being lost at the present time through a system of encroachment—not a very difficult matter for a magnate possessed of influence in official quarters. The data for such an inquiry still exists, or did recently; but there is always the risk that it may share the fate of the tax rolls, and be destroyed in a nominally accidental conflagration, or simply disappear, a not uncommon event in the case of official documents.

Given that the Crown lands could be adequately administered and supervised, they would prove most productive of revenue if retained in the hands of the State; but, in the absence of expert advice, the most satisfactory results would be obtained if let by a system of open tender. Private arrangements cannot be regarded as other than undesirable, considering the opportunities which are provided for an understanding between the tenderers and the officials concerned. Seyd Zia's Government announced its intention of distributing the lands among the peasants, but the difficulties involved do not seem to have been appreciated. So great were these that the officials concerned regarded them as impossible of solution without foreign assistance, and it was proposed to employ American experts. The matter is rather one of finance than agriculture, and it cannot in any case be considered that the best choice was contemplated when the difference between conditions in Persia and those in America are kept in view.

The chief indirect taxes are the opium and

tobacco excise, and the customs. Until very recently there was also a tax upon wines and spirits, but at the moment the policy of the Government is the suppression of all alcohol, with, I gather, very much the same result as in America. The revenue from tobacco and opium is not what it should be, since, like all other taxes in Persia, the excise seems designed to be productive of the smallest possible revenue with the largest possible expenditure of time and labour. The tax at the present time is upon the finished article, and the opportunities for leakage which occur at every stage of manufacture are endless. To take opium, for instance, it is necessary to keep a watch upon every field in order to ensure against illegal picking by the owner as the plants become ripe. Although the preparation is supposed to be conducted under Government control, opportunities for speculation arise both during the periods of concentration and compression, when it is impossible to check accurately the evaporation which occurs. Also, when worked up into its final form, substitutes may be introduced. Banderoles are not only used a second time, but forged freely, and there is the risk of theft during transport. Lastly, exported opium, which is immune from duty, is largely reimported by smugglers. I heard an interesting tale of a Bakhtiari khan, who shall be nameless, who drove into Teheran, after declaring that there was no opium in his possession, in blissful ignorance that he was sitting upon a large package of the drug, which belonged to a confidential servant.

For all these reasons it would be much sounder economically to tax the crop at the source by imposing a tax upon the acreage under cultivation. This would not only eliminate the leakage which at present exists, but would render un-

necessary the retention of the large number of officials at present employed. Genuine cases of crop failure would be easy to investigate and prove. So far as exported opium is concerned, a drawback might be allowed, if it is considered that the export trade would suffer through taxation. Considering the limited extent to which throughout the world opium cultivation is in these times permitted, I do not anticipate that this result would ensue. What has been said about opium applies equally in the case of tobacco cultivation.

The customs, being under Belgian control, are the best administered department of the revenue, but they are in no way above criticism. Leaving aside the question of the tariff, both the staffs at the frontier posts and the guard upon the frontier are inadequate in numbers, and the Belgian staff is insufficient to properly control the service. Many officials maintain a scale of expenditure out of proportion to their salaries, which not unnaturally causes suspicion of smuggling if not worse. A sinister light was thrown upon the doings at some posts by the answer of a European, to whom I happened to remark that I imagined that he seldom got an opportunity of picking up good carpets at such an out-of-the-way place. "Not at all," was the reply, "it is often possible to buy from customs officials."

Another defect exists in the immunity from duty on their property enjoyed by certain Europeans, which it must be admitted is in some cases abused, articles being imported and used for trading purposes, as in India in former times. The internal staff of inspectors is totally inadequate, and it is quite in accord with Persian methods that separate staffs of inspectors are maintained by the customs and excise departments, and in addition by the department of in-

direct taxes, each inspector concerning himself with offences against his own department alone. A consolidation in this respect would lead to greater efficiency, and also render it possible to pay the officials concerned upon a higher scale.

When we come to consider the other indirect taxes the same characteristics are apparent in all—namely, inefficient and costly methods of collection coupled with utterly inadequate control. Indeed, in some cases, one is almost tempted to believe that the creation of officials rather than the increase of revenue was the object aimed at when the taxes were instituted. A few examples will suffice to indicate the nature of these taxes.

There is, for instance, a tax upon trades, but, like the *Maliat*, it is based upon statistics which are completely out of date. The collection is made from the trade guilds, the sum due from each guild being apportioned by the headman of the guild amongst its members. Apart from the occasion which this provides for the display of partiality upon the part of this official, the apportionment of the tax amongst the various guilds is grossly unjust. No allowance is made for the fact that industries increase and decrease, and that others come into existence. The result of this is that out of some eighty-four guilds in Teheran, only thirty odd pay any tax, while amongst those which escape are such wealthy bodies as bankers. In addition, no traders outside the guilds are liable to taxation.

Just as inequitable in its incidence is the *Mostagelat*, which is 5 per cent of the rent of all houses which are let. Since all those who are in a position to live in their own houses escape, the tax falls upon those who are compelled to let their property. The combined effect of these two taxes is that there are many wealthy men, merchants

in particular, who are practically immune from taxation, which is transferred to the shoulders of those less able to support the burden. In this case the remedy would appear to obviously lie in the abolition of the present taxes, and the institution of a system of rates and trade licences.

Amongst other taxes in vogue, in towns specially, are those upon auctions, brick-kilns, animals slaughtered for food, and goods and vehicles entering towns, but these and the other forms of taxation vary so greatly in different localities that a detailed statement is impossible in the space available. What is perhaps the most remarkable of all may, however, be mentioned—namely, a tax on lotteries. These being prohibited by the Koran as a form of gambling, the tax was declared illegal by the Majlis; but this in no way acted as a deterrent to the officials concerned, who continue to collect the tax whenever they can find any one who can be induced to pay. Being somewhat curious as to how a tax which had been expressly vetoed by the legislature could be enforced, I inquired from the responsible official what method he adopted, to be met with the frank admission that he was powerless in the matter. The only conclusion was that the tax was only demanded from Armenians, Jews, and other infidels, who concerned themselves in such matters, and were content to purchase immunity for their operations. In any case, it scarcely appeared worth the trouble, as the gross revenue collected was somewhere in the neighbourhood of a hundred pounds. For the rest, it need only be said that no attempt is made to account for such items as police fines and similar minor revenues, which are collected by individuals and departments which do not admit the claims of the Treasury to be concerned in the matter.

For example, the Ministry of Commerce receives and retains all revenues derived from mines.

One other source of revenue calls for mention—namely, the royalty paid by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, amounting under the concession to 16 per cent of the gross profits on its operations. As the concession covers the whole of Persia, with the exception of the five northern provinces, this royalty is one of the most important items, and a growing one, moreover, in the Persian revenue. For the current year it should amount to somewhere in the neighbourhood of six hundred thousand pounds, a vital sum to a bankrupt administration, to which it has the additional value of being the only pledgeable asset of considerable value which remains unencumbered. It is true that by hypothecating the royalty in return for a loan the country will be deprived of one of the few sources of revenue upon which the central Government can count, but to those whose motto is *carpe diem* this is a matter of small account.

As to what the revenue amounts to at the present time it is useless to hazard an opinion. In former times sufficient was derived from the provinces to defray the expenses of the central Government, but to-day the position is reversed, and in the large majority of cases the central Government is compelled to subsidise the provinces, only one or two of which contribute trifling sums to the Treasury. The consequence is that the Government is compelled to subsist upon loans, seeing that the monthly deficit is anywhere from five hundred thousand to a million tomans. This is a condition which obviously cannot continue for long without occasioning a crisis, or, perhaps it would be more correct to say, could not continue in any European country, since such countries as Persia and Turkey do not apparently experience

any inconvenience from being in a condition of bankruptcy. Were any attempts being made to improve matters, there might be some justification for financing the Government during the period of transition, but under present circumstances those who supply Persia with credits which are in the main misapplied, can only be considered as assisting to accelerate her rake's progress, and the almost inevitable consequences thereof.

Under such circumstances any financial adviser who is not invested with practically despotic powers must certainly fail, as both Mr Schuster and Mr Armitage-Smith found by experience. The Persian is delighted to have an adviser, particularly if he is able to arrange credits for him, but he objects most strongly to that adviser interfering in administration or attempting to effect reforms. So long as he is content to draw his salary and look on, he may remain for an unlimited period, since Persians are loath to dismiss European officials; but so soon as he attempts to effect any practical effort to carry reform beyond the stage of proposals, opposition will immediately be experienced.

So far as the mission sent out under the Anglo-Persian Agreement is concerned, a very brief reference will suffice. In the circumstances success was already out of the question when the Financial Adviser arrived in Teheran at the end of April 1920, for although the fact was not yet realised in England, the Agreement was in a semi-moribund state, while the Enzeli episode, which occurred within a month, finally disposed of any hopes of its being ultimately confirmed. In this situation successful reform was not to be hoped for, and although many proposals were put forward by Mr Armitage-Smith, results were almost

nil. The only practical results were that on his recommendation a reform in the opium excise was effected, and that he brought to a successful conclusion certain negotiations with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, relating to the royalty payable, which were conducted in London. Like the other British Advisers, the Financial Mission were suspended on the fall of Vossugh-ed-Douleh, and in the end of August Mr Armitage-Smith left for London on the mission just mentioned, not returning to Teheran until the following May, while I remained to occupy the sinecure of directing the activities of a suspended mission. The only subsequent Government which availed itself of our services was that of Seyd Zia-ed-Din, of which it may be said that, although their intentions were excellent, their knowledge was rudimentary, with the consequence that work under them resolved itself into lodging caveats against every proposal upon which advice was asked. With their fall all genuine attempts at reform disappeared, and henceforth the paramount question was what money the Financial Adviser, who had just returned, could procure for the Government. The farce came to an end on the 1st of September, when, the Bolshevist Minister demanding the dismissal of the Financial Adviser and his staff, and the Majlis, under the leadership of Prince Firouz, having shown itself violently opposed to all British Advisers, while the Foreign Office had lost interest in the matter, the Persian Government terminated the contracts and dismissed the mission.

As I have said, subsequent missions may assay the same task, but unless invested with powers which no Persian Government on the present model will willingly concede, they will share in the failure which their two predecessors experienced, after occupying a sinecure for a more or less

brief period. Reform is possible, but will never be willingly submitted to by the class at present in power.

The Persian external debt is of interest in that much the greater part is due to the British Treasury for advances made during the war.

At the outbreak of war the Persian National Debt consisted of three loans due to Russian, and two to British creditors. The former were two rouble loans for twenty-two and a half million, contracted in 1900, in connection with Muzeffer-ed-Din Shah's first journey to Europe, and ten millions additional, which was negotiated two years later for his second journey; and of a kran loan for sixty million krans representing indebtedness to the Russian Bank, which was consolidated in 1910. There was also an advance made by the Russian Government of the equivalent of £200,000, which was repayable in three annual instalments. These are all of academic interest, as is the Russian share of joint advances made in conjunction with Great Britain, which amounted to £409,000, since they have been repudiated by the present Russian Government by the treaty concluded this year. Whether, once British influence has been eliminated, a pretext will be found to revive these claims remains to be seen. There is nevertheless a certain irony in the fact that Britain paid the Russian share of the joint advances, debiting Russia with that amount in London, so that a bad debt has been obtained; whereas, had the whole advance been made by Britain, there would at least have been some claim to repayment, which might ultimately have proved to be not entirely valueless.

The British pre-war loans consisted of two loans, or rather the outstanding balances thereof, of £314,281, 16s. 4d. concluded in 1910, and £1,250,000 which was issued in 1911 (the service of these has

been maintained up to date and appears to be well secured), and British advances amounting to £490,000 made during 1912 to 1914 inclusive. The principal security for all three is the customs revenue of Fars and the Gulf ports. The advances were intended to be repayable out of the proceeds of any large loan negotiated. Interest has been paid to date at 7 per cent, but no instalments towards repayment have been made, although these should have been begun in 1915 at the rate of quarter of a million tomans each half-year. Up to this point the finance was sound in that the security was sufficient if not ample, but with the war the Foreign Office became the financial representative of the lenders, and of their operations the best that can be said is that they may have been dictated by political necessity, but that regarded from a purely financial point of view they were both speculative and remarkable.

The first war advances were the British share of the moratorium advances, already referred to in connection with Russia, which amounted in all to £409,000. The terms of these are somewhat curious. That the service of the advances should be suspended during the war was natural under the circumstances, but that the Imperial Bank of Persia should be authorised to arrange the terms of repayment after the conclusion of the war may, without being unduly hypercritical, be described as a somewhat casual method of doing business. Since it is not stated what is contemplated by the conclusion of the war, it is uncertain whether these advances can, in the absence of the conclusion of peace with Turkey, be regarded as due.

The next two items are comparatively small in amount, consisting of Krs. 3,939,000, made for the restoration of order in Fars during the years 1916 to 1919, and Krs. 1,465,190 in 1916, which have

not as yet been even acknowledged by the Persian Government.

We now come to the largest item of all, the advances made monthly in aid of the general expenses of government. These began with sums of Krs. 2,500,000 in August and September 1918, and were thereafter continued at the rate of Krs. 3,500,000 monthly until October 1920, so that they amount in all to Krs. 92,500,000. Like the moratorium advances, these were to be adjusted by the Imperial Bank of Persia when the time came to consider terms of repayment, and were secured upon the southern customs. No interest has so far been either paid or agreed upon, but assuming that 7 per cent is the rate ultimately fixed, the interest to February 1922 amounts to about Krs. 15,500,000. The most unsatisfactory part of this loan is that repayment is to be made in krans. Seeing that for many years before the war the kran exchange had stood in the neighbourhood of fifty-five to the pound, while during the period of the advances it was between thirty and twenty and even higher, the Foreign Office took all the obvious risks of the exchange, with the result that were repayment to be made at the present time, when the kran stands at fifty-two approximately, 60 per cent of principal and interest would be lost. ✓

In a practically similar position are the advances for the upkeep of the Cossack Division, which have been referred to in a previous chapter. These now amount to Krs. 40,000,000 odd, and assuming that, as in the previous case, interest is charged at 7 per cent, the arrears to date are about Krs. 8,400,000.

The remaining advance, consisting of the £131,000 to account of the two million loan under the Anglo-Persian Agreement, I have already discussed, and

propose to ignore for present purposes, since it is difficult to believe that payment will in the circumstances be seriously pressed for.

The larger advances detailed above depend for their final adjustment upon the view taken by the Imperial Bank of Persia of its duties under the terms of the letters by which the advances were arranged, and it may well be that the Persian Government will dispute their responsibility for certain items. It is also uncertain what rate of interest will be determined upon. I will, however, assume for the moment that the rate fixed is 7 per cent, since this is the rate proposed in the Anglo-Persian Agreement, and upon that assumption I will endeavour to ascertain whether the security pledged is sufficient to meet the interest and an adequate sinking fund upon the amounts involved.

For practical purposes the British Government security for the advances which it has made are the southern customs. In two cases additional security is given—in the case of the pre-war advances, the spirit and opium revenues of the south, and in the case of the Fars advance it is stated that repayment shall be made out of the revenues of Fars. The spirit excise has now ceased to exist, while in the present financial situation the value of the other two items is, at the best, problematical. On the other hand, no security is named for the Bushire loan, nor, so far as I am aware, for the Cossack advances. The British Government desired to debit these against the loan under the Anglo-Persian Agreement, but the Persian Government refused to concur in this proposal.

It was provided by the Anglo-Persian Agreement that the Persian Government should give as additional security all customs revenues at its disposal,

which, had the Agreement been confirmed, would have increased the security by the amount of the northern customs, which, previously pledged in security for the Russian loans, were released when these were cancelled by the Bolshevik Government. Since the Agreement has been denounced this additional security must be held to have lapsed. In 1920 the Kermanshah customs, which had hitherto been included in the northern customs, were included in the southern customs for purposes of administration, but for the purposes of the security of loans made prior to this time they must be excluded from a conservative estimate. We are accordingly compelled to look for repayment of capital and interest to the southern customs as they existed at the time the advances were made.

The net customs revenue in recent years has been as follows :—

	Southern Customs. Krs.	Northern Customs. Krs.	Total. Krs.
Average three years to 20th March 1914	8,400,000	31,400,000	39,800,000
Year to 20th March 1918	14,400,000	4,800,000	19,200,000
Year to 20th March 1919	18,800,000	6,700,000	25,500,000

After 1919 a comparison is impossible, on account of the regrouping which took place respecting the Kermanshah customs.

From the above it appears that the sum available in the three years to 1914 averaged, taking the kran at fifty to the pound, £168,000, while in 1918 it was £376,000.

Let us take next the loans and advances for which these sums are the security, again fixing the kran at fifty to the pound. The two pre-war loans which are privately held amount at the

present time to approximately £1,300,000. The sterling advances made by the British Government may, with arrears of interest, be put at £1,050,000, and the kran advances, after allowing for interest and the loss of about 60 per cent through the exchange, at £3,240,000. This gives a total debt of £5,590,000, against which there was available in the three years to 1914 £168,000 to meet interest and sinking fund, and in 1918 £376,000. We cannot, however, safely consider the latter figure as being in any sense an indication of the revenue which may be anticipated in future years, since it is manifest from the figures quoted that the southern customs are at the present time inflated by artificial conditions, and that when the northern routes are reopened, upon the restoration of order in the Caucasus and Russia, a large decrease must clearly be anticipated. At the same time it must be remembered that under the new tariff higher duties are imposed.

Taking, then, the figures for 1914 and the two previous years, we have £168,000 to meet the interest and sinking fund upon £5,590,000. From the point of view of the British Government's advances the actual position is much worse, since the two privately held loans are a prior security, and require for their service £98,000. This leaves £70,000 available to meet the interest and sinking fund upon the British Government's advances of £4,290,000, whereas the interest alone at 7 per cent would amount to over £300,000. The position will be slightly improved after the completion of the repayment of the first private loan in 1928, but the additional sum available will only be £29,000. Thus the deficiency on the 1914 figures will amount to over £230,000, leaving altogether out of account the question of repayment. If we take the 1918 figures the position is somewhat

better, since there will be available, after providing for the underlying loans, £278,000 to meet interest charges of £300,000. Thus there would still be a deficit, even were it probable that the 1918 standard would be maintained, which, apart altogether from an ultimate trade adjustment, would appear to be more than doubtful when the growing adverse balance of trade is remembered. The question of paying for imports has already become a serious matter, and unless further lenders can very shortly be found, it is hardly too much to anticipate something in the nature of a trade deadlock.

Such is finance as conducted by the Foreign Office. It may be pleaded that political necessities justified the expenditure, although this may be questioned, but in any event political necessities do not constitute a reason for not taking such security as is available. In the case of Persia ample security was obtainable, which was immune from the risks to which the customs revenues are exposed, and which was, moreover, readily realisable. This consisted of the annual royalty due from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. From the point of view of the Foreign Office, in its attempt to control Persia, this would have had the additional advantage that when the royalty had been pledged, Persia would have been without security to offer to other lenders. It would be interesting to know why the Foreign Office omitted to safeguard the interests of the Treasury when such action would have been in accordance with the policy which it was pursuing. Was it because such questions as finance are below its notice?

It must be admitted that the Joint Anglo-Persian Committee which revised the customs tariff came to an understanding that were an acceptable measure of currency reform not introduced within two years, the position should be

considered. In addition, it was agreed that should the value of the kran in terms of gold so diminish that the customs revenue was likely to be insufficient to guarantee the external loans, the Persian Government should, if requested by the British Government, increase all specific rates of duty by such a uniform percentage as to meet the case. Apart from the doubt whether an increase dictated by such reasons might not defeat its own end, this would scarcely appear to justify the taking of a potential security when a sound one was available.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARMY.

BEFORE proceeding to deal with the history of events subsequent to the signing of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, it will be advantageous to briefly describe the constitution and condition of the Persian Army at that time.

The Persian military system may be described as a modified form of conscription based upon the area of cultivated land. This is divided into units corresponding to what is considered to be the amount of land which can be tilled by one plough, and for each such area the village to which the land appertains is liable to provide a soldier. In addition, the liability extends to a monetary contribution, one portion of which is applied towards the expenses of the recruit's family and paid direct to them, while the remainder is paid to the Government in order to provide a fund for the support and pay of the soldier. There is no limit to the length of service, but this hardship is modified by the fact that for long periods the soldier may be so in name alone.

The chief objection to this system as at present in force is the injustice of its incidence. Like the Maliat, it is based upon an antiquated survey, which took place in 1842, and owing to changes of population an even greater hardship is caused than in the case of the land tax, for where it is clear

that the village cannot spare the number of recruits, there is an unusually favourable opportunity for extortion on the part of the official concerned. The son of one of the more prosperous villagers will be pitched upon, and, faced with the loss of both son and labour, the father mulcted in a considerable sum, as much as a hundred tomans being at times demanded.

The total force so recruited is in theory supposed to amount to about 86,000, but in practice nothing approaching this number is actually called out for service, however many may be threatened by the recruiting officers for personal reasons. The country is divided into certain districts or "fouj," each of which is liable to provide the equivalent of a regiment. Some of these are embodied for service, while the remainder remain liable for service. From time to time changes are effected, one body being temporarily disbanded, while another is embodied to act in its stead. Setting aside certain special corps, to which I shall refer presently, the number of men called out annually depends in a great degree upon the whim of the local governor. During 1920 something under ten thousand were called out for the Nizam or regular army. It by no means follows that, because ten thousand were called out, anything like that number were serving, or indeed expected to serve, either by the civil or military officials concerned. Like every one else in Persia, officers of the army are not overpaid, and, also like every one else, they endeavour to augment their incomes in whatever way presents itself. In the case of senior officers there is no great difficulty in the matter, since the colonel can usually retain the majors' pay for his own use with impunity, the majors in turn compensating themselves at the expense of the captains, while the latter, in their turn, penalise

their company officers. For the junior officers the matter is not so simple. It is always possible to keep back a portion of the men's pay upon one excuse or another, or when pay is in arrear to advance the man a small portion of the sum due in exchange for the whole amount when received. Much trouble is saved, as well as a larger remuneration received, when there are no men to pay; and so it comes about that the—to Europeans—surprising situation arises in which officers are to be found conniving at the desertion of their own men. The situation is still further simplified if an entire regiment can, by arrangement with the governor, be quietly disbanded; but as this is at times liable to lead to awkward inquiries, a simpler method is to demand additional subsidies for operations necessary to local safety, which operations do not, for one reason or another, take place. In such circumstances the command of a regiment may prove a very remunerative appointment, and at least one wealthy man has been pointed out to me as owing his fortune to his father having held such a position.

It need hardly be said that a force administered in such a manner is absolutely worthless, even for maintaining local order, as is instanced by the case of the Isfahan robbers, which I have already mentioned. Its arms are of every kind and description, while uniform, rations, and pay are in the main problematical, the latter at the best being usually months in arrear.

Outside the Nizam, the army consisted of three special corps, two of them of foreign formation and training—the Cossack Division and the South Persian Rifles. Of the three, the Cossack Division alone survives at the present time. Originally formed in 1879 as a weak brigade intended nominally to act as a bodyguard to the Shah, it has

gradually expanded to its present strength. At the end of the war it was about eight thousand strong, and to-day it probably numbers fourteen or fifteen thousand, although its commander claims a much higher figure, which he is bent upon increasing. As in the days of Xerxes, the Persian pins his faith in numbers, regardless of the fact that, according to modern ideas, such trifles as transport and medical service are desirable adjuncts for an army. The brigade was formed upon the Cossack model, and a number of Russian officers and N.C.O.'s being in charge, was practically under Russian control. It need hardly be said that in efficiency it was far superior to the regular army, although no secret was made of the fact that this was not raised unduly lest future events should at any time place it in opposition to Russia. Throughout its existence the corps has been regarded as specially attached to the person of the Shah. It was the Cossack Brigade which in 1908 blew the constitution out of existence, and which a year later made a last stand for Mohamed Ali. Although it has not of late acted in his defence, the present Shah regards it as the chief guarantee, if not for the safety of the State, at any rate for that of his own person.

The Russian personnel were dismissed on the demand of the local British representatives in November 1920, after the Division had for a second time demonstrated its capacity to execute a long-distance retreat in record-breaking time. Since the proposal to replace the Russians by British officers, which was made by Seyd Zia-ed-Din, was immediately dropped after his fall, and the officers appointed dismissed, the efficiency of the Division has naturally suffered. While the younger officers show keenness, and, like the men, are capable of improvement, they lack both training and experi-

ence, while the senior officers, who under the Russians occupied what were practically honorary positions, are only an incubus for the greater part. The men are very largely drawn from the Turkish-speaking portion of the population, and, were it not for the enormous percentage of venereal disease, might be considered useful material.

The Division is organised in otryads, which are mixed formations of cavalry, infantry, and artillery, formed upon territorial lines. There is no fixed establishment, the strength of the otryads ranging from a company, a weak squadron, and a few machine-guns, to a battalion, a cavalry regiment, and some batteries. This organisation possesses almost every possible disadvantage. Each otryad possesses its own staff, which necessitates a large waste of personnel upon unnecessary work, the greater part of the mounted troops in some of the smaller formations being employed on orderly and other duties, while the organisation is overburdened with superfluous senior officers. In addition, the units of each arm are in many cases too small for practical work, and reorganisation into bodies of a useful size is essential to genuine efficiency. The division possesses no transport of its own, civilian transport being impressed or hired as occasion arises, more often the former. As is only natural under the circumstances, the civilians in charge of the second line transport take the first opportunity of removing themselves to a place of safety whenever there is a likelihood of hostilities. The position is even worse as regards first-line transport, which is non-existent, with the result that the troops in the fighting line, being compelled to disperse in search of provisions from time to time, are in no better position than the bandits and irregulars to whom they are opposed. Fortunately their Bolshevist opponents

are of much the same order. Their fighting value is shown by a brush which some two hundred of them had with rebels in the summer of 1921, when, after firing twenty-four thousand rounds and sustaining three slight casualties, a retreat was considered advisable. In justice it must be admitted that there are cynics who explain the affair on the ground that the rebels were ready to pay a handsome price for ammunition. Incidentally, the efficiency of the medical service is illustrated by the fact that all three casualties died of tetanus. Later in the year this episode was followed by a victory, when a number of prisoners were captured, including Russian personnel and nurses. The latter were, of course, declared by the Russian Minister to belong to the various Caucasian republics, but the fact of their presence illustrates the value to be attached to Bolshevik promises.

The second special corps consisted of a body known as the Central Brigade, which was a unit of the regular army specially organised for duty in the capital. This has since been absorbed into the Cossack Division. Its total strength amounted to about two thousand of all ranks, divided into a cavalry regiment, a regiment of artillery, and three battalions of infantry. The artillery possessed in theory ten field and five mountain guns; the latter actually had been lost, while the greater part of the former were useless through lack of buffer springs, a defect shared by almost all the forty-eight 75's which the Persian Army possesses. Moreover, there was only enough equipment to turn out four guns, or two guns with ammunition waggon. The training was on a par with the equipment, as the experience of a British officer, who inspected one of these batteries, shows. After the first gun-crew had gone through their drill,

energetic attempts were made to induce him to leave the ground for at least a brief interval. Other inspections were suggested, and an anxiety evinced lest he should suffer from prolonged exposure to the sun. His suspicions being aroused by the solicitude shown for his health, he persisted in continuing the inspection, to be rewarded by the discovery that the first gun-team alone had been taught the necessary evolutions, and that it was customary at inspections for this team to perform at each gun in turn. Another experience of the same officer cast a lurid light upon the quality of the personnel. Happening to be present upon one occasion when the men were being paid, he was surprised to see two small children present themselves. On inquiring what they wanted, they replied that they had come for their pay. When he said that he was afraid that they did not pay little boys, the colonel explained that it was quite all right, as they were his sons; and when it was pointed out that this did not make any difference, complained that he really did not know what things were coming to when a colonel could not pay his own sons.

The third special corps was the South Persian Rifles, which was raised by the British Government during the war to maintain order in the south. This force, amounting to about six thousand men, under British officers and British and Indian N.C.O.'s, consisted of two brigades based upon Shiraz and Kerman, although its activities extended as far north as Isfahan. Under British instruction this force proved itself capable of dealing with the forces of disorder in an absolutely efficient manner, and showed what could be made of the Persian as a soldier if properly trained and led.

In the course of last summer it was proposed

that the Persian Government should take over this force to avoid its being disbanded. At one time they appeared disposed to agree to this, subject to the dismissal of the British officers, and their replacement by officers of some small country. The ostensible reason given was that, were the British officers retained, Russia would demand the re-employment of Russian officers in the north—but it may be suspected that it was only a part of the general anti-British movement. At the same time it must be admitted that the maintenance of special corps under officers of different nationalities is fatal to any attempt to introduce reform upon uniform lines. The proposed transference of the corps having finally been refused by the Persian Government, it is in course of disbandment, if indeed this has not already been completed. This can only be regarded as a misfortune from every point of view, since the increase of disorder in the south is certain to ensue, both because of the removal of the only force capable of maintaining order, and because it is to be feared that many of the men will have to have recourse to robbery for a livelihood, alienated as many of them are from their tribes through their service in a British force.

A further quasi-military body existed in the gendarmerie, which, composed of all arms, and organised upon a military basis by Swedish officers, is nevertheless concerned mainly with police duties, and until very recently was responsible to the Minister of the Interior and not to the Minister of War. Further, its efficiency had been seriously affected by the fact that the large majority of the Swedish officers, having been active in the interests of Germany, had thought it advisable to make a hurried departure from Persia upon the failure of Germany's efforts in Persia.

Thus there were in Persia British-trained troops in the south, Russian-trained troops in the north, and Swedish-trained gendarmes scattered throughout the country, in addition to Swedish-trained police in the towns of Teheran, Meshed, Kazvin, and Resht. For the rest, there are native-trained police and gendarmes throughout the country, who are under the native governors. All that need be said of these is that they are as often a source of danger to the peaceably inclined as to evil-doers.

The Persian War Office is precisely what would be inferred from the condition of the forces over which it presides. Like the Ministry of Finance, its paper constitution is admirable, the duties of all officials being fully defined. What these consist of may be gathered from the fact that one of the duties specially assigned to the Minister is "to appoint deserving persons to suitable posts." There the matter may be left.

The Persian arsenal is probably unique, and of its kind without a compeer. It will be sufficient to describe the visit paid by the Military Commission which sat under the Anglo-Persian Agreement to give a clear idea of the nature of its activities. The visitors were conducted through long ranges of empty rooms, where there was no vestige of either munitions or work. At length they reached a room which contained promise of better things in the shape of numbers of large packing-cases. It was explained that these cases contained machinery, but the hopes of an improved standard which this occasioned were quickly damped by the information that, although they had been there since shortly after the Franco-Prussian War, no one had hitherto seen fit to unpack them. Somewhat discouraged, but still determined, the visitors pursued their investiga-

tions, and were at length rewarded by reaching a department where there was every sign of activity. The answer to an inquiry as to the nature of the manufactures which called for so much energy was "Fireworks."

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM RAILHEAD TO TEHERAN, AND THE
ENZELI LANDING.

THE passes and connecting valleys, which are to-day traversed by the road from Baghdad to Kazvin, may justly be considered as constituting one of the historic routes of the world. The length from railhead at Qaraitu to Kazvin is three hundred and seventy miles, divided by the towns of Kermanshah and Hamadan into three sections of a hundred and ten, a hundred and twenty, and a hundred and forty miles. One of the three main passes is situated in each sector—the Aveh Pass between Kazvin and Hamadan, the Asahabad Pass between Hamadan and Kermanshah, and the Takh - i - Girreh Pass between Kermanshah and Qaraitu. The latter may be regarded as the door-step of Persia, since, rising over three thousand feet in a distance of four and a half miles, it carries the road from the foothills to the plateau. There are other minor passes, but these three constitute the serious obstacles of the route.

In all ages this route has been followed by the nomadic hordes in the course of their migrations from the plateaux of Central Asia to the fertile plains of Mesopotamia and the regions of Western Asia and beyond; while, conversely, it has furnished access to Persia for the armies of the great monarchies of Mesopotamia on their invasions of

the east. In former times, as to-day, it constituted the most convenient route for commerce between Middle and Hither Asia, and for the constant administrative communication which was necessary when the countries to the east and west of the mountains owed allegiance to the same monarch. It must be kept in view that this has been the more normal condition, and hence it is that at different periods the vicinity of the road has been found suitable for the establishment of centres of government from which both territories could be conveniently administered.

At the present time there are, it is true, but few traces of the glories of the past, but these few are sufficient to indicate the wealth and power of the monarchs whose palaces were situated in the vicinity, and to justify the expectation that were the excavations undertaken, meantime rendered impossible by the French monopoly already referred to, much of interest might be brought to light.

Within a few miles of railhead the road passes the ruins of Kasr-i-Shirin, which consist chiefly of the remains of the city walls, which run for miles along the road. These are constructed of massive blocks, a foot square by three or more in length. The Belgian Customs officer at the frontier post, who, being of a practical turn of mind, was using the walls as a quarry, informed me that the foundations were over five metres in depth. At some of the gateways the pavement is still visible, and, I understand, more interesting remains may be seen at more remote points. I had, however, no opportunity of examining these. The ruins are believed to be Sassanian, and to take their name from the queen of one of the later monarchs who reigned during the early part of the seventh century A.D.

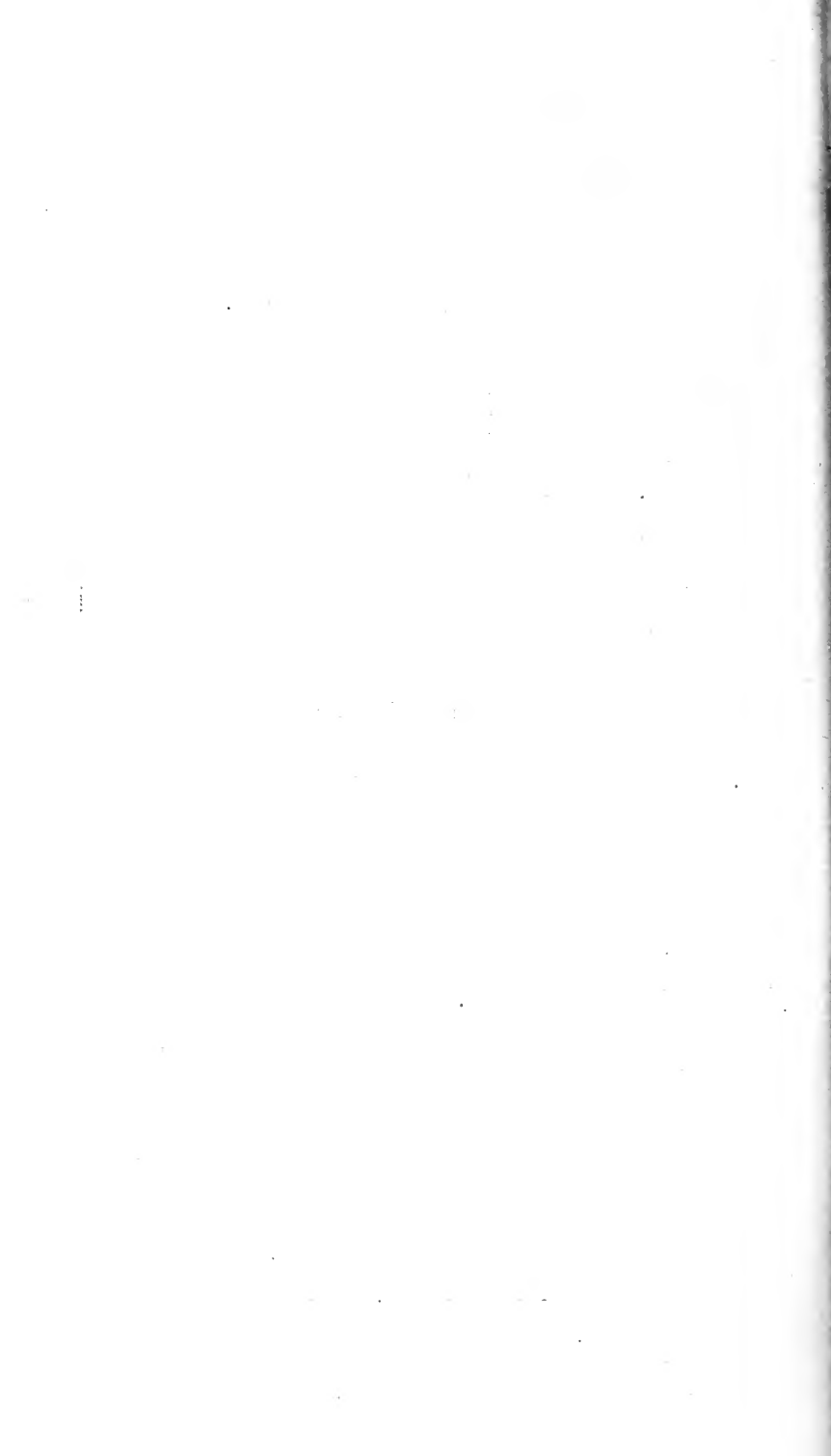
It may be well to mention here that the greater



Pilgrims at Kangavar.



The Citadel, Kasr-i-Shirin.



part of the monuments of antiquity which have survived in Persia are associated with one or other of the two great native dynasties. These were the Achæmenians, who reigned from the time of Cyrus the Great until their overthrow by Alexander the Great, and the Sassanians, who held the throne from 226 A.D. until the conquest of the country by the Moslem Arabs in the middle of the seventh century. The most famous monuments—such as Persepolis—must be placed to the credit of the former dynasty, but the latter endeavoured to emulate wherever possible, and in so far as their resources permitted, the achievements of their illustrious predecessors.

On the Takh-i-Girreh Pass is a small chamber built of massive blocks, the arch from which the pass takes its name, but I have not heard any date assigned to this.

Far the finest Sassanian remains in Northern Persia are found at Takh-i-Bastan, within a few miles of Kermanshah. Here, on the site of a former palace, various relics are to be seen, the most famous of which are two arches cut in the face of the cliff and covered with carvings, of which the best record the hunting feats of the sovereign at whose order they were made.

The Sassanian carvings, however high their artistic merit, are in inception and situation but trivial memorials when compared with the famous carvings and trilingual inscriptions of Darius, the son of Hystaspes, the Achæmenian. Some twenty miles to the east of Kermanshah, the valley through which the road passes narrows sharply, the ridge which forms the north wall of the valley terminating in a great spur, about fifteen hundred feet high, which projects to the south. Since this approaches close to the river, the road must have in all ages passed close below its base, and con-

sequently no one travelling towards Persia could fail to observe any inscriptions upon its face. This was the spot chosen by the great king to bear the inscription which should record for future generations the triumphs of his arms. It is almost impossible to conceive of a site better fitted for the purpose in view.

At a height of between two and three hundred feet above the road a large space had been smoothed upon the face of the rock, the cracks being filled with lead in order to present a smooth surface for the craftsmen. Here may still be seen the figures of the king and his attendants, with before him the rival monarchs over whom he triumphed. Below, a long inscription sets forth in three languages the victories by which he established himself on the throne of his ancestors. The language of the inscription is upon a par with the site chosen, and it would be hard to surpass the haughty tone of the great king's words beginning, "I am Darius the king, the king of kings, the king of Persia, the great king of the provinces, the son of Hystaspes, the grandson of Arsames, the Achæmenian." Similar titles are used by the Shah at the present time, but the greatness survives in the words alone. These inscriptions played an important part in the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions, and it was not until this had been accomplished that the monument was assigned to its true author. Prior to this date the wildest attributions were made. Even in last century the captive kings were regarded as the ten tribes of Israel, while the whole group has been described as Christ and the Apostles, and one traveller has even considered that Darius was a portrait of Esther.

But if the Bisitun inscription of Darius stands alone in dignity of conception, and is to-day the

most outstanding memorial of the Achæmenians in Northern Persia, it, at the time of its execution, served in addition to warn the traveller that he was approaching the summer capital of a monarch whose sway extended from Egypt to the frontiers of India, and who, with justice, claimed the title of king of kings—a title which to-day evokes bathos rather than reverence. A hundred miles farther east Hamadan is reached, which is generally believed to have been the Ecbatana of ancient times. Hitherto, in the absence of serious excavation, nothing has been discovered locally to confirm this hypothesis, the only remains which have been brought to light, or at any rate those which have been reported, which is by no means the same thing, consisting of some pillars and a stone lion. In addition, two stone tablets (as a matter of fact there are three, although the third is not inscribed), which Lord Curzon mentions as lying among the foothills of Mount Elvand, may, I think, be regarded as among the antiquities of Hamadan. The place where these are situated is locally known as Ganjnamah, which may be translated as “the record of a treasure,” from the belief that they in common with all other cuneiform inscriptions contain the secret of hidden wealth could they only be read.

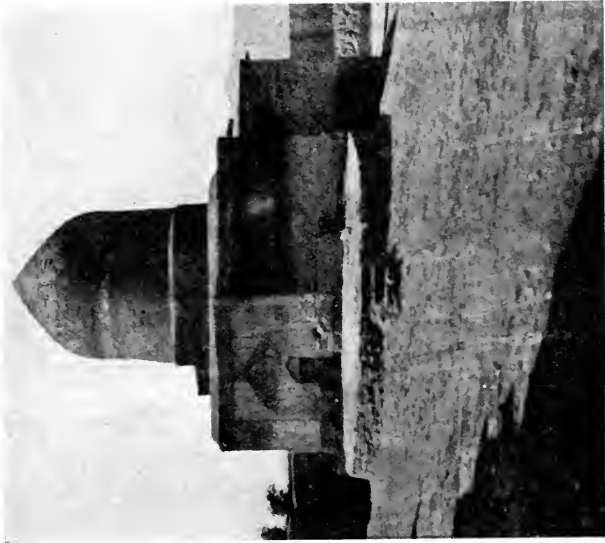
A sharp walk, at times approaching a scramble, up a narrow valley strewn with large boulders leads in an hour and three-quarters to the entrance of a side gorge. Upon most of these boulders were neat piles of pebbles, which, my guide explained, it was customary to place there in memory of a great battle of which the valley had been the scene. Further inquiry only served to extract the information that it had all happened very, very long ago, so that I did not feel that I was much the wiser for his explanation. A short way from its

mouth the gorge is almost closed by a rock which only leaves room for a small stream to pass, and upon this the inscriptions in question are carved. The two tablets, which are each about seven feet by four, are placed side by side, the one being about a foot lower than the other, and contain an inscription in three parallel columns, which, Lord Curzon states, is a narration of the titles of Darius and his son Xerxes, together with an invocation to Ormuzd. That there have been at one time some metal attachments is indicated by six deep holes which surround each tablet. The third tablet, which has never been utilised, lies round the angle of the rock, and is not visible from below. The inscriptions are as clear-cut as on the day when they were engraved. I must confess that to me the most surprising thing about them was their situation. Just as in the case of the Bisitun inscription, it is difficult to imagine a site better suited to ensure the widest publicity for the fame of the monarch whose deeds are recorded, so in the present instance it is difficult to understand the motive which led to the choice of this isolated gorge for such a purpose unless the inscription had some local significance. At no time can the gorge have led anywhere except possibly to the top of the mountains, and this the time at my disposal did not enable me to ascertain. It is, of course, possible that there was a fire altar upon the summit in Achæmenian times, but I could hear of nothing except the tomb of a saint. In all the circumstances the fact that such a site was chosen may perhaps be regarded as indirect evidence that Ecbatana was in the near vicinity, since isolated inscriptions are more likely to be found close to the capital than in more remote districts.

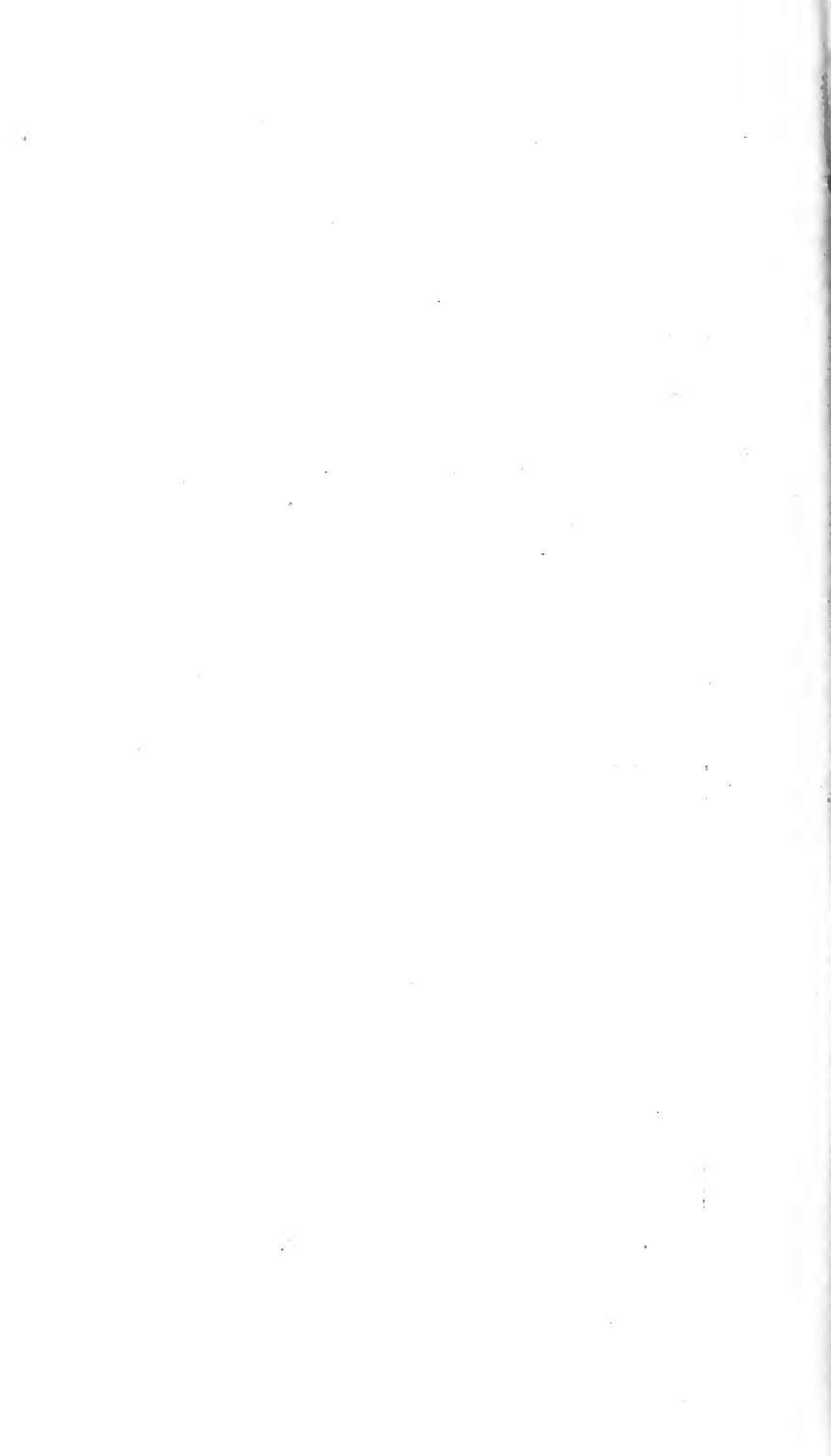
Hamadan is also credited with possessing the



Hamadan Bazar.



Tomb of Esther and Mordecai.



tomb of Esther and Mordecai, although if modern critics are to be believed this must take rank with that of Juliet at Verona. The building does not, it is true, differ from any other saint's tomb, and whatever may be the antiquity of the remains which they contain, the coffins themselves, judging from the sharpness of the wood-carving, are comparatively modern work. The only thing, indeed, about the tomb which gives any impression of age is the door. This, with the accompanying door-post, consists of a single block of stone, so corroded with age that it is impossible to say whether in its original condition it has been carved or not. The only thing certain is that it is vastly older than the tomb with which it is now incorporated.

At Kangavar, between Kermanshah and Hamadan, are the remains of a temple of Anahita. These consist only of portions of some pillars incorporated in a modern building. So far as I am aware, the remains which I have mentioned are the only relics of classical times in the immediate vicinity of the route, although there is every reason to believe that a serious investigation would bring others to light; but when we traversed the road in May 1920 the circumstances were hardly conducive to a study of antiquities.

Since the signing of the Anglo-Persian Agreement in August 1919, the military situation had materially altered. The British force had been withdrawn from the Caucasus, with damaging results to British prestige. The East Persia force was engaged in preparations to evacuate Meshed and Eastern Persia. The Caspian flotilla had been handed over to General Deniken, and, upon his defeat, had been interned at Enzeli. There was a proposal on foot to man it with British ratings, at any rate partially; but as these were despatched

through the Caucasus, it is hardly surprising that they did not arrive, with the consequence that the British Navy was represented in Persia by a commodore minus a fleet. The South Persia Rifles and the Kazvin force still remained, it is true, but the departure of the latter was already under discussion, although not as yet treated very seriously.

The situation in the country between railhead and Kazvin was somewhat anomalous. The British force was theoretically operating in the territory of a friendly Power, but it was difficult for the passing observer to understand in what way their position differed from that of an army in occupation of hostile territory. Garrisons and rest-posts had been established at regular intervals, the road was under the care of British officers, and representatives of the Provost-Marshal were to be found at all the chief points, who, according to their own accounts, exercised considerable control over the local population. Such conditions were, of course, essential in the circumstances to ensure the safety of the force, but it was obvious that the situation was one which called for the exercise of the greatest possible tact upon the part of all concerned—and it must reluctantly be admitted that, although this was displayed by the great majority, there were regrettable instances where the reverse was the case, and that many of the temporary officers employed could not be regarded as suited in this respect for their employment.

One instance will serve to illustrate the kind of conduct which I have in mind. A group of Persians of the better class was gathered by a bridge close to the entrance to Hamadan, some on horseback and some on foot. As we approached an Air Force tender dashed through, scattering men and horses in all directions. Later in the rest-

camp mess we heard the officers concerned discussing the episode, which they appeared to consider a wholesome lesson to the Persians to get out of their way. It was upon this occasion that we began to wonder whether the British were quite as popular in Persia as we had been led to understand.

The force at Kazvin was then, in May 1920, the only body of British troops in Persia so far as defence against Bolshevik aggression was concerned. It consisted of the Guides cavalry, one British and three Indian battalions, a field battery, a mountain battery, three or four aeroplanes, of by no means the latest type, and corresponding establishments from other services. When the troops necessary to maintain the line of communications had been deducted, and allowance made for weak battalions, I doubt whether the force ever possessed a fighting strength of two thousand five hundred even including outlying detachments, although at least one member of the Cabinet calculated on a number some hundreds per cent greater. That the position was thoroughly unsatisfactory was fully appreciated by the responsible officers upon the spot, and representations had been made to this effect; but, acting apparently upon the principle that no error can be made if no instructions are given, those in authority had tactfully avoided giving any more definite orders than that the force should act strictly upon the defensive.

The potentialities of the position will be readily appreciated. While sufficient to hold in check any minor raids, the numbers available were utterly insufficient to oppose a serious Bolshevik movement. Under such conditions it is apparent that circumstances might easily arise which would necessitate a retreat, with disastrous results to British

military prestige, as actually occurred. Moreover, the transport was not by any means such as could be regarded as satisfactory. The drivers were mostly Indians, and the results of their efforts were in evidence in the large numbers of damaged cars—those at Kermanshah alone could be counted by scores; while the greater part of the transport officers were temporary, and many not over-skilled in either engineering or the language of the men whom they commanded. Further, in its desire to placate the skilled trade unions, the Government had shown such zeal in demobilisation that all British mechanics having been released, the only men available to execute repairs were some score of Russians who had been brought from Baku shortly before the evacuation. To expect absolute loyalty from such men in a serious crisis would have been trying them somewhat high. Thus the situation generally was full of disquieting possibilities, although it was only on closer acquaintance that we learned of these.

It was under such circumstances that we left railhead upon the 23rd of May. Everything, however, was peaceful, so far as country under military occupation and with an ever-present potentiality of trouble can be considered so, nor was there any rumour of disorder. This was a condition which continued for a very brief period, for that same evening we were met with alarms of war.

A summer camp for the troops in Mesopotamia had been established at Kerind, midway between railhead and Kermanshah, and another, complete with golf course and every other convenience, a few miles away for General Headquarters. The latter was rendered famous, or rather notorious, by a parody entitled "Half a lak squandered," which has since, I understand, been made public in the pages of 'Truth.' It was at Kerind that we

spent the night, and there we found the mess full of rumours that the Bolshevists had occupied Resht. No one knew exactly what had happened, but from the fact that the Berkshires and the Yorks and Lancs were being hurried up to reinforce the troops at Kazvin, half of each battalion in motor lorries, it was evident that there was something in the reports.

At Kermanshah, which we reached the next evening, the bazar rumours were to the effect that our troops were back in Resht, and that the Bolshevist commander had graciously intimated that he had no desire to fire upon them. Beyond this, of what had exactly happened nothing was known, nor were the two half-battalions which arrived the next evening any better informed. Indeed, their knowledge of the situation was even less than ours, for they had been despatched without a single map amongst them, and were consequently somewhat vague as to where they were going. Fortunately, we were able to remedy this to the extent of a loan.

During the next two days we learned nothing further of the situation, and, even at Hamadan, all the additional information was that General Champain, who was in command at Kazvin, had had an interview with the Bolshevist commander. In contrast to the general tension which was in the air, the population of the villages along the road were busy erecting triumphal arches to greet the Shah, who was due to pass on his return from Europe within the next few days. The Persian triumphal arch, although primitive, is by no means ineffective. A rough framework is erected which is covered with the carpets and decorated with the lamps, pictures, and other possessions of the inhabitants. The result can be quite striking.

It was evident that Hamadan was intended to

be the British advanced base for the road, and accommodation between it and Kazvin showed a marked deterioration, although, from the solid construction of the rest-houses, it was obvious that we had entered the former Russian sphere.

It was not until we were within a day's run of Kazvin that we were able to obtain a definite statement as to what had actually occurred. We then met an officer who had been at Enzeli at the time of the attack, and, although his narrative was not altogether complete, it was sufficiently so to give us a clear idea of the position which we would find. In a country such as Persia, where the only newspapers which exist are printed in the native scrip, and where Reuter's news is subjected to diplomatic censorship, it is necessary to rely in the main upon personal narratives in arriving at a clear understanding of events. Subject to this qualification, I believe, after frequent conversations with those more or less directly concerned, that what follows is a substantially correct account of what occurred.

Enzeli, which is the chief Persian port upon the Caspian, lies at the extremity of the eastern of two narrow peninsulas, which enclose a large salt-water lagoon, while Resht, then a prosperous town, is situated slightly to the east of the point where the peninsula joins the mainland. From Resht the road runs south, first through jungle, and afterwards by the pass of Manjil, where it passes the mountains to Kazvin over a hundred miles away. Kazvin forms the junction where the road from Resht to Baghdad crosses that from Teheran to Tabriz. The British force was based upon Kazvin, which was the eastern boundary of its operations, with outlying detachments thrown out as far as Resht and Enzeli to the north, and to beyond Zinjan in the direction of Tabriz.

Such was the situation when, some new 4-inch and 5-inch guns having been installed at Enzeli, some senior officers, including, I believe, the general, went down to see them tested. This took place upon the 18th of May with satisfactory results, but upon the morning of the 19th, general disgust was aroused by the lack of consideration for the morning slumbers of others displayed by the gunners, for firing recommenced at a very early hour. This feeling was not of long duration, for the arrival of sundry shells soon made it evident that those who were thus manifesting their activities must be sought for elsewhere. It was then discovered that a flotilla was in the offing, and since the General felt himself debarred by his orders from replying, a motor boat was sent out to endeavour to get in touch with the raiders. This was fired upon, but escaped without being hit.

The position being manifestly untenable, a retreat to the mainland was decided upon, and the small garrison, consisting of about a company of Gurkhas, began to retire along the peninsula. Before they reached the mainland, it became clear that the Bolshevik plans had been well laid, for they found an enemy force in position across the peninsula in their rear, a strong body having been landed under cover of night. A skirmish ensued between the Gurkhas and the enemy, which resulted in one being killed upon either side before orders to parley were issued. The promptitude with which negotiations were entered upon, coupled with the reluctance to return the Bolshevik fire, leave the impression that the orders to avoid injuring the Bolsheviks must have been somewhat stringent, an impression which subsequent events during the remainder of the Kazvin force's existence only tended to strengthen. Whether this was due to a reluctance to incense the Bolsheviks

with whom the Cabinet was coquetting, or whether it was desired to avoid casualty lists at any costs, I do not know, but our policy in Mesopotamia scarcely lends support to the latter motive.

Negotiations were accordingly opened, and a meeting was arranged between the commanders. The Bolshevik disclaimed any desire to make war upon either Britain or Persia, stating that he had merely come for the fleet and the remains of General Deniken's army. To the objection that these were interned in neutral territory, and were accordingly immune from attack, he replied that the rules of war did not apply, since there was no war, the refugees being rebels who had been interned after creating local disturbances. General Champain refused to surrender the refugees, and eventually this point was dropped, and after hostages had been given for the return of the breech-blocks of the ships' guns, which had been taken inland, the British troops were permitted to depart, and retired to Resht, a retreat which was very shortly afterwards continued to Manjil.

The whole Bolshevik scheme was evidently carefully thought out, and was perfectly executed. In addition to the attacking ships and the landing party, which was very strong, two other forces were, I was informed, moving from the direction of Tiflis; and although I have not obtained confirmation of this, I believe it to be correct. Except for bombarding Enzeli without warning, and for a reported forced levy, two somewhat serious exceptions, the Bolshevik behaviour would appear to have been unexceptionable—a somewhat rare occurrence.

The whole episode can in its effects only be regarded as deplorable. The control of the Caspian passed to the enemy, almost without a hope of recovery, while British military prestige received such

a set-back that I do not believe that any Persian Minister could thereafter have secured the confirmation of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. So obvious was this that no attempt to do so was made, even by the Ministers who had negotiated it. The details of the affair give rise to various unpleasant speculations. Why, when what occurred had been foreseen, was the British force permitted to remain in a position which could only lead to disaster, greater or less; why was Enzeli, a clearly untenable position, occupied; and why were no preparations made either to block the entrance to the harbour or to destroy the ships? For an answer to all these questions we must refer to the higher powers, with whom, in view of the warnings which they had received, the entire blame must rest.

The remainder of our journey to Teheran proved somewhat tame after the crisis in which we had been indirectly involved, the only inconvenience being occasioned by the necessity of leaving the road clear for the Shah and his retinue and baggage. One incident may be mentioned, which served to indicate that we had passed from the zone of British military discipline to that of a more primitive régime. We were having tea at a wayside rest-house, which rejoiced in the title of the Grand Hôtel de France, when a Cossack came up to the window of the room next to that in which we were, saluted, and reported to some one within. Evidently the communication was displeasing to its recipient, for the door flew open, and a stout individual shot down the steps and soundly boxed the ears of the messenger.

CHAPTER IX.

TO THE FALL OF MUSHIR-ED-DOULEH'S CABINET.

TEHERAN, the modern capital of Persia, only attained to its present position with the accession of the Kajar dynasty in the closing years of the eighteenth century, prior to which event it was a place of no importance. It is, it is true, situated close to the site of the ancient Rei, but after the final destruction of the latter by Genghiz Khan early in the thirteenth century, there was not any place of importance in the neighbourhood. In the East the national life and traditions do not centre round one town to the same degree as in Europe, and a change of dynasty, or at times of monarch, is not unusually the prelude to a change of capital, so that at one time or another most towns of any importance have been temporarily the national centre, to say nothing of those which are to-day little more than a name. Much the same condition, I believe, existed in India. Thus Delhi was at no time the capital of the whole country. From time to time there have been several Delhis, and the new capital, situated some five miles from the city, is a continuation in name alone, and for a large part of the population even the name can have no associations. Thus the creation of the new Delhi has chiefly resulted in the duplication at enormous expense of the administrative buildings which

were already in existence at Calcutta, and in assuring that the Government, spending part of the year at Simla and the remainder at Delhi, will be immune from contact with the outside world, as represented by the trading community, and free to evolve its policies without the active intrusion of unacceptable opinions. Whether this is desirable is another question.

With the accession of the Kajars, then, the turn of Teheran to be the national centre arrived. The choice would appear to have been dictated partly by the fact that the Kajar strength lay in the north, and partly by the fact that there also lay the chief national danger, consisting of the Russian menace. Apart from the scarcity of water, the site had much to recommend it. The town lies at a height of about four thousand feet, and some nine miles from the foot of the Elburz Mountains, which, rising at this point to thirteen thousand feet, and only traversed by a few by no means easy passes, offer effectual protection from both hostile movements and wintry breezes from the north. A subsidiary range of hills running in a semicircle protects in a lesser degree towards the east. In addition, the main road from east to west passes the town.

Although Teheran became the seat of government a century and a quarter ago, it was only during the reign of Nasr-ed-Din Shah that it attained to any considerable size. He being desirous of modernising his capital upon European lines, erected a circumvallation very similar to that at Paris. It is impossible to believe that the mound and ditch, which extend over eleven miles, can ever have been seriously intended to serve any useful purpose, and the whole costly erection can only be regarded as the outcome of a despot's whim. The town is exactly what might be ex-

pected from its history. The older portion is in the main a typical oriental city of narrow and tortuous lanes, intersected here and there by more modern boulevards, while the houses situated in the new area stand for the most part in their own grounds. The space within the circumvalation is moreover greatly in excess of the population's requirements, and since in addition there is not sufficient water for the whole area, there are large stony tracts within the town which differ in no respect from the surrounding desert. The prospect of most of these being used for either building or cultivation is remote. Consequently while the older area is very congested, the modern has the unfinished aspect which it is usual to associate with most American towns.

Many of the larger streets are bordered by trees, but the roads themselves are beyond description to such a degree that speed regulations for motors are entirely unnecessary. A further trouble for the unwary is formed by the openings of the water channels which run under the streets in places; for, although these are in theory closed, in practice they are usually open, so that the streets, being generally unlighted, the wayfarer may at any moment find himself up to his knees in a hole, with the chance of a broken leg. When I add that the authorities do not condescend to attempt the removal of snow, which lies for months, it will be appreciated that Teheran cannot be regarded as an ideal place for the nocturnal stroller.

Of buildings of any architectural merit the town is utterly destitute. Such decoration as is attempted upon the more pretentious public buildings consists in the main of tile-work, the crude colours of which instance the appalling degree to which the art has degenerated. Some of the private

houses present, it is true, an attractive aspect when seen amongst their trees, but the construction is poor, and the chief effects are obtained with paint, and pillars consisting of plastered posts, which give a somewhat Italian effect. The Shah's palace is situated in the centre of the town, with the principal bazars to the south; while the legations, and the quarter frequented by foreigners, are in the extreme north. Owing to the houses in the outer area being for the most part surrounded by gardens, the whole city from a little distance presents the appearance of a wood rather than a town.

In the beginning of June 1920 the political situation could not by the wildest stretch of the imagination be regarded as settled. The Shah had only returned from Europe upon the 2nd of June. The Cabinet, which was already tottering to its fall, after enjoying the sweets of office for the, in Persia, unpardonably long period of two years, had received its deathblow from the Enzeli episode. The Sadr Azam, having no desire in the circumstances to embark upon an active policy, was, officially at least, unwell. The Majlis, which was to confirm the Anglo-Persian Agreement, showed no signs of meeting, although many deputies were already elected and in Teheran. Sir Percy Cox, the British Minister who had negotiated the Agreement, was only awaiting the arrival of his successor, Mr H. C. Norman, to start for Mesopotamia. Lastly, no one had the slightest idea what was going to happen.

It is true that the Bolsheviks had protested vehemently that they had no intention of interfering in Persia, but no one had any particular faith in Bolshevik promises, which is hardly to be wondered at, and a movement in the direction of Teheran was always possible. Under the cir-

cumstances it was scarcely surprising that rumour was busy, and in the matter of rumours Teheran is fully qualified to hold its own with any town upon the face of the globe. Were it not that a very brief experience proves that Teheran rumours are even more groundless than those of other places, and that only one in hundreds materialises, Teheran would be the reverse of a soothing abode. As it is, save for those who are naturally timid, the reports of *coups d'état*, revolutions, and other convulsions serve in some degree to take the place of the daily press.

At the time the most popular report was that the Russian officers who were with the Cossack Division contemplated a *coup d'état*. Exactly what they expected to gain thereby was not entirely a point of agreement, but the most general belief was that they would endeavour to make their peace with the Bolshevists by handing over the capital to them. Needless to say, nothing of the kind was ever attempted, nor do I believe that it was ever considered. Others were of opinion that an arrangement might be come to between Colonel Storroselski, the Cossack commander, and Kuchek Khan. The latter, taking advantage of the Bolshevist landing, had declared an independent republic in Ghilan; but when, after a brush with a detachment of Cossacks a few days later, he returned his prisoners naked, this theory lost its popularity. Another rumour, which at this time gained considerable credence in the bazars, serves to show what incredible reports find acceptance amongst the Teheranis, it being reported that at a reception immediately after his arrival, Mr Norman had made a speech in which he explained that his predecessor had been sent home in disgrace. The fact that Sir Percy Cox had just been appointed High Commissioner for

Mesopotamia did not appear to offer any difficulty to the rumour-mongers.

The political situation came to a head upon the 24th, when it was announced that the Sadr Azam's resignation had been accepted by the Shah. His demission of office was immediately followed by his hurried departure for Baghdad *en route* for Europe. The new Sadr Azam, whose appointment was not announced until ten days later, was Mushir-ed-Douleh, a moderate politician of great wealth, with a reputation for honesty, and for not having made any serious mistakes during his political career. As his avoidance of error was commonly attributed to the fact that he invariably resigned whenever faced with a situation which called for a serious decision, it may be doubted whether this was as great a recommendation as appeared at first sight. It must be confessed that the circumstances under which he vacated office three months later were such as to support this opinion.

The new Council was very much what might be expected under the circumstances. The policy announced included the holding of new elections, on the ground that those recently held had been conducted in a corrupt manner, and the consideration of the Anglo-Persian Agreement by the newly-elected Majlis. Meantime the Agreement was to be regarded as being in suspense, and all advisers appointed thereunder were to be suspended from the exercise of their functions. I must admit that, like many others, I never attached the smallest value to the Government's professions of a desire to bring the matter to a head. If indeed such intentions were ever entertained, nothing whatever was done to give effect to them. The Cossacks were sent against the Bolsheviks in Ghilan, a reform in the opium ad-

ministration was given effect to on the advice of the Financial Adviser, and a new road was, I believe, made to the Sadr Azam's country residence; but I cannot recollect any other action upon the Government's part which calls for mention.

The Government's career may not unfairly be described as an exhibition of how to mark time and avoid decisions. That a group so devoid of initiative should have been in control at this time was little short of calamitous for the country. The subsidies which the British Government still continued to pay were finally to terminate three months later; while, although the date of evacuation had not been definitely announced, it had been made clear that the Kazvin force would be withdrawn in the not distant future. In these circumstances it was vital that both the reform of the financial system and the reorganisation of the army should be actively proceeded with. The Council, however, resolutely refused to face the situation, or to make any serious attempt to put Persia into a position either to defend or finance herself. If the truth were known, I suspect that it would be revealed that the Council were so obsessed with the belief that Persia was of importance to Britain, that they considered that all the warnings which they received that both troops and money would be withdrawn were merely part of a scheme to compel them to proceed with the confirmation of the Agreement, and that, when they realised that this was not the case, and that the warnings were seriously meant, it was too late to make the necessary reforms effective in the time available.

Upon the 7th of July an additional cause of excitement for the panic-mongers was provided by the report that the Bolshevik troops were

moving along the coast, while at the same time reports of trouble upon the railway in Mesopotamia arrived, this being the beginning of the outbreak which was shortly to close the most direct road to the outer world for several months. The conduct of a body of gendarmerie which had come in contact with Bolsheviks near Balfrash had also been such that it was evident that no reliance could be placed upon this corps should a situation arise which necessitated serious fighting.

By the middle of the month the situation had so far developed that Colonel Storroselski had been appointed commander-in-chief, and was actively preparing to move against the Bolsheviks. It required no great foresight to realise that were he to be successful he would for all practical purposes be dictator, since the only troops worth the name were under his orders—a situation which developed under the Sirdar Sipah a year later. It was also becoming evident that the Government were anxious, so far as they dared, to dispense with British assistance. The treatment meted out to British officers was in at least one case such as could only be construed as being due to a desire to induce them to resign, while I do not think that it is too much to say that had money been obtainable from other sources the financial mission would have had but a brief life. In addition, the anti-British feeling was being actively fostered by certain Legations. For some reason which it is difficult to fathom, it was the policy of France, or at least of certain French diplomatic officials, to do all within their power to render England's position as difficult as possible. Since French interests in the country are almost entirely confined to her archæological interests and the protection of certain professors and doctors, it is difficult to understand the motives

which actuated such a policy. As to the activity of the propaganda there could be no question, even French Freemasonry being dragged into service.

In the end of July an episode occurred which did more than any foreign intrigue could possibly achieve to injure the British position, and which, indeed, according to my Persian friends, had an even more disastrous effect than the Enzeli episode upon British prestige amongst their countrymen. On the 28th news arrived that the Bolshevists had begun to shell Manjil, and that it would in all probability be found necessary to evacuate the position, since the orders under which the British troops were operating seemed to preclude the clearing of the hills, which was essential if the position was to be maintained. Seeing that the Manjil position was the last before the open plain, the possibilities which such a retirement opened up were sufficient to impart a certain excitement to the position, since, were the Bolshevists contemplating a serious advance, the difficulty of offering a successful opposition was very greatly increased.

From the personal point of view an additional uncertainty was caused by the fact that, when the news arrived, we were in the act of starting on a fortnight's shooting and fishing expedition in the mountains, so that we departed knowing that, if we got any news during the ensuing period, it would in all probability consist of an imperative recall to take part in the evacuation of Teheran. Actually it was not until ten days later that we learned that the contemplated retirement had been found necessary, and that the British troops had had to abandon the key position.

The incident, although the fact was not ascertained until long afterwards, furnished an interesting, although disastrous, example of the mis-

understandings which may arise in mountain warfare when accurate observation is impossible; for, had a counter-attack been possible, it would have been found that the evacuation was absolutely unnecessary, the enemy having assumed the initiative in retreat. What actually happened was that the Bolsheviks had got a gun into a position from which it was possible to shell the British lines, and had begun to do so. It was this which had led to the retirement. Before this actually occurred one of the British guns, in endeavouring to return the enemy's fire, had, although it was impossible at the time to discover the fact, dropped a shell close to the enemy gun, and they, alarmed by this, had immediately retired. Thus the danger had ceased to exist before the retreat took place, and had an advance instead been undertaken, it would in all probability have been unopposed.

The position in Mesopotamia had now become very bad, and the inevitable consequences of endeavouring to hold the country with an utterly inadequate garrison were being reaped. The position was, however, at last being faced by the Government, and large reinforcements were being despatched from India, so that, provided the position could be maintained until their arrival, improvement was to be looked for. The situation was bad enough as it was. At the beginning a majority of the political officers throughout the country had been killed, while serious military set-backs had been experienced. One battalion had been virtually annihilated, and several posts were besieged by the enemy, and in a very critical position.

The position of the British troops in Persia was not one which could be contemplated with equanimity in the event of a further set-back in Meso-

potamia. Already the railway had been cut, and railhead isolated from Baghdad for a fortnight, and were such a position to develop again for any time, the Kazvin force might well find itself deprived of supplies in the face of hostile forces. For the individual the worst to be anticipated was a somewhat uncomfortable journey to Isfahan, where the South Persian Rifles would be met, but for the troops a retreat under such circumstances could be little less than a disaster.

In Persia the position was assuming one of these quasi-farcical phases from which it there seems impossible to escape for any lengthy period. The Bolshevists were in the vicinity of Resht and some distance south upon the Kazvin road, but what they consisted of was by no means clear. While ever ready to reap any advantages gained by their troops in Persia, they were equally ready to soothe the feelings of the British Cabinet by repudiating these same troops when their actions gave rise to possible difficulties in trade negotiations. Upon such occasions the Bolshevists in Persia were represented as being subjects of the Republic of Azerbaijan, or independent adventurers; and, although it is difficult to think that any one really believed that the Moscow Government was unable to control them, the explanation was sufficient to salve Mr Lloyd George's conscience to the degree of allowing him to continue his flirtations with Lenin. Thus it was impossible at any given time to say whether the Bolshevists based on Enzeli were supposed to be Soviet troops or otherwise. In the jungle, between Resht and Manjil, Kuchek Khan was established, but his position was equally uncertain, for, although in favour of a republic, he was even more emphatically against any foreign interference in Persia. To the south of Manjil lay the British troops, debarred from an offensive, but

prepared to offer resistance to any active Bolshevik aggression.

A new element was now introduced into this situation, for Colonel Storroselski, having disposed of the hostile forces in Mazanderan, moved to Kazvin, preparatory to an advance against Resht. For the next two months the state of affairs was for the most part a struggle between the Bolshevik elements and the Cossacks, the British holding the ring, and acting as a rallying base for the Cossacks, when, after their meteoric advances, they executed even more meteoric retirements. The latter, although disadvantageous, had at least the advantage of diminishing in some degree the unfavourable criticism of the British, which had grown rapidly after the first Cossack successes.

The initial Cossack successes were rapid in the extreme. By the 24th of August it was announced that they had reoccupied Resht and were moving on Enzeli; but the reaction was even speedier, for, four days later, word arrived that they had sustained a serious repulse, and were in full retreat, with a loss of seven hundred casualties. What had happened was exactly what might have been expected in view of the tactics employed, and evinced an utter lack of grasp of the elementary principles which underlie sea power. After occupying Resht, the Cossacks had advanced upon Enzeli, which, as has already been mentioned, lies at the end of a narrow peninsula. The enemy fleet from the sea, and their gunboats from the lagoon, opened a flanking artillery fire, with the result that a precipitate flight immediately ensued. This continued until the protection of the British lines was reached, the casualties being in the first instance placed at the number of those who had failed to reach that haven. Subsequent returns reduced the original seven hundred to a tenth,

and even less. One officer, who, having been the reverse of backward in the retreat, and was as a result threatened with a court-martial, was reported to have urged as a defence that no troops could be expected to stand in the face of artillery fire. I do not think that that court-martial ever took place, but it would have been interesting to learn the court's views on the question.

To turn for a moment from the military side of the situation, the dismissal of General Westdahl, the Swedish chief of police, which took place at this time, furnished a typical instance of official methods. The new Government, burning to pay off old scores, dismissed two police officers, who, under the former Government, had been responsible for the arrest of some of its partisans, and did not trouble to intimate the dismissal to the commanding officer. The General's retort was prompt, consisting in a curt intimation that the officers had been reinstated. The result was his own dismissal, to which he replied that since he held his commission from the Shah and the Majlis, the Minister was powerless to dismiss him. Too late the latter realised his false step, and the consequence was that, until the fall of the Government, Teheran was diverted by the spectacle of a high official leading a peaceful life in mufti, while the Minister sought for a course which would both save his face and adequately compensate the insulted General.

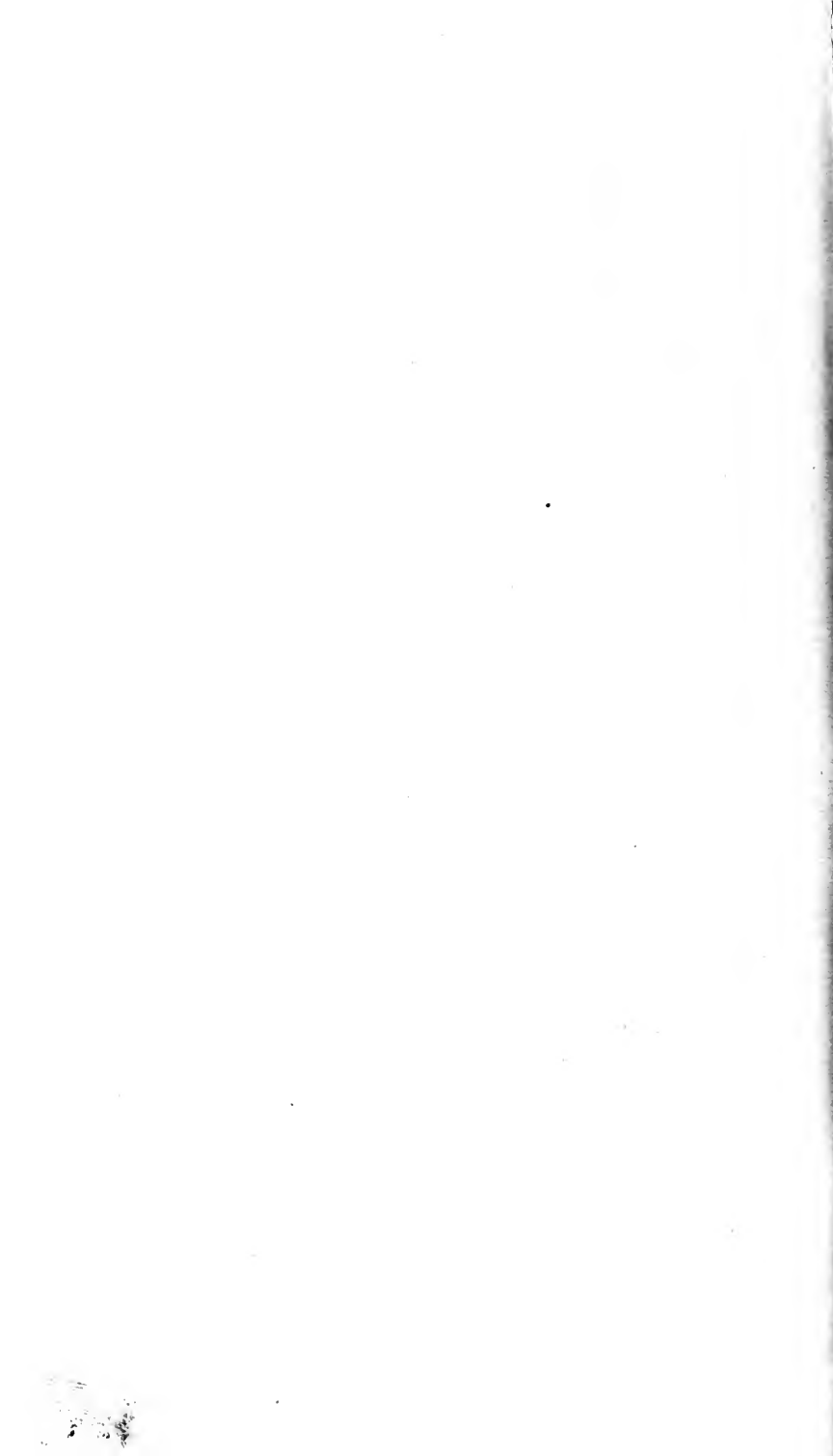
The British missions meantime were in a state of suspended animation. The majority of the military officers had left the country, and when it became evident that this state of affairs must continue for several months to come, the Financial Adviser was despatched on a mission to London with his secretary, while two other members of the mission departed on leave, I being left with



General Westdahl, commanding the Persian Police.



Mohurrum Procession, Teheran.



the four remaining members in case any unexpected developments should occur. The two advisers to the Ministry of Public Works also remained. As events turned out, we who stayed had much the most interesting experience, since the only genuine desire for reform was evinced by the Government of Seyd Zia, which fell immediately after the return of the Financial Adviser.

By the latter half of September the situation had so far improved that the road to Baghdad was open, while the Cossacks were back in Resht.

In the beginning of October General Ironside took over the command at Kazvin from General Champain, while the force was at the same time strengthened by the arrival of four badly-wanted modern aeroplanes. The position in Mesopotamia had now greatly improved with the increase of the army to four divisions. Samawa and Kufa had been relieved, and Kerbala had surrendered.

In the end of the month the question of the employment of Russian officers with the Cossack Division was brought to a head by their sudden evacuation of Resht, scarcely a shot being fired. General Ironside immediately proceeded to Teheran, and, since time did not permit of a reference to the Foreign Office, a demand for the dismissal of the Russians was made by the British Minister upon the Sadr Azam. The latter proved true to his reputation, and rather than face the decision, which involved the question of the employment of British officers, promptly resigned. The Shah, however, agreed to the supercession of the Russians.

In view of the above, the following question and answer (recorded in Hansard 1920, Vol. 134, p. 1519) are of interest as illustrating the Government's dislike for a straightforward reply:—

“Mr Waterston asked the Under-Secretary for

Foreign Affairs whether the recent Government crisis in Persia arose as a result of the British Minister's intervention on questions connected with the Persian Army."

Mr Harmsworth : "The recent Cabinet crisis in Persia arose from the unwillingness of the former Persian Cabinet to carry out the decision of the Shah to dismiss the Russian officers in command of the Persian Cossack Division."

If the above implies anything, it is that the action of the British Minister had nothing to do with the Cabinet's resignation, whereas it was the real cause. Could *implicatio falsi* be carried further?

The matter did not altogether terminate here, for there was very considerable panic as a result of the Cossack retreat, while it was still an open question whether the Russians might not give trouble. The extremists freely circulated a report that the Cossack retreat was the result of a British trick. On the 29th Colonel Storroselski returned to Teheran. Some hundreds of Cossacks endeavoured to do likewise, but were rounded up by General Ironside, with the Guides and an armoured car. The next two days were by no means devoid of excitement, for rumours were freely circulated that the Russian officers intended to resist their dismissal. On the 30th Colonel Storroselski had an audience with the Shah, the new Sadr Azam, the Siphadar Azam, being also present, and received his dismissal. The same day he left for Kazvin, but the next morning the Sadr Azam was informed that he had doubled back during the night and was in one of the barracks. This report proved to be groundless, and the only further event of interest was the anti-British demonstration, of which I have spoken in connection with bast, and the most remarkable feature of which was that no attempt was made to interfere with the British.

So ended, after half a century, the Russian connection with the Cossack Division, and it is a somewhat curious coincidence that at the same time the British subsidy for its support was terminated. It is true that this had been decided upon prior to the dismissal of the Russians, but it was hoped that in the changed circumstances under which British officers were very closely associated with the control of the division, some extension at least might have been granted. This was not, however, the view of the Foreign Office, which, if well-informed reports are to be credited, was not best pleased at what had occurred. According to these it would be exaggeration to say that Lord Curzon's first replies to the report of what had happened damned with faint praise. Whether this was due to fear of the possible consequences, whether resentment was felt at the men on the spot acting upon their own initiative in an emergency, or whether the dismissal of the Russians was displeasing to those in authority, it is impossible to say. Whatever the cause of its displeasure, the Cabinet did not hesitate to publicly approve once it was clear that no untoward consequences would follow.

CHAPTER X.

SIPHADAR AZAM'S CABINETS.

IN certain respects the Council which was formed by the Siphadar followed the policy of their predecessors, particularly in their refusal to consider the Agreement as operative, pending its consideration by the Majlis, and to utilise the services of the advisers and their staffs pending such consideration. Their policy differed from that of Mushired-Douleh in so far that attempts were made to assemble a Majlis and bring the matter to an issue. At the same time, they appear to have cherished the belief that at the last moment the British Government would relent, if not on the question of continuing the subsidy, at any rate on that of allowing the troops to remain at Kazvin beyond the early spring, which was now fixed for their departure.

At the very outset the Siphadar nearly resigned upon the refusal of the Foreign Office to continue the subsidy for a further period, but was persuaded to remain in office. His period of office was far from being a peaceful one, for, particularly towards the end of the four months during which he retained power, reconstructions of the Council were frequently either occurring or imminent. As a large landlord in Ghilan he was very vitally concerned with the doings of the Bolshevists in that province, and although not in every respect an

ideal Sadr Azam, he was a man who was popular and generally respected. The worst that I ever heard said of him was that he paid himself while in office the somewhat excessive allowance of three thousand tomans a month as a refugee, in addition to his official salaries, for he held two portfolios, being Minister of the Interior as well as President of the Council. The opinion generally held of him cannot be better illustrated than by the fact that, when after his Government had been overthrown, and a general arrest of those suspected of speculation was being effected, he was given full assurances of immunity if he left his refuge in the British Legation. To avoid misapprehension, it may be well to mention that he was not the same Siphadar who has already been referred to as having been commander-in-chief alternately on both sides during, and after, the siege of Tabriz.

The position of the Kazvin force had considerably improved at this time, General Ironside having asked for and obtained a free hand in dealing with the Bolsheviks. It was not long before the results of this policy showed how ill-advised had been the previous attitude of pacivity. As early as the end of October a reconnoitring party of the 126th Infantry had a brush with the enemy, in which, with a loss of two wounded, they inflicted over forty casualties upon their opponents, and very shortly the chief difficulty with which our troops had to contend was to find the enemy. Before the end of the month the advance which General Ironside had undertaken had so far progressed that his advanced guards were approaching Resht, and upon the 1st of November the news arrived that the town had been captured by an isolated party of Cossacks, in conjunction with some of Kuchek Khan's Jangalis.

Although the question of replacing the Russians

with British officers was still unsettled, some British officers were now attached to the Cossack Division in an undefined capacity, and the division was acting in close conjunction with the British troops under General Ironside's direction. On the 18th, in connection with an attempted offensive, three aeroplanes bombed Enzeli, obtaining direct hits upon stores. The offensive itself came to nothing, since the enemy could not be found. No attempt was made to occupy Enzeli itself, since, so long as the enemy retained control of the sea, the position must have been untenable.

The feeling against the Anglo-Persian Agreement was meantime on the increase, and in the beginning of the month a deputation of merchants had had an audience from the Shah, at which they submitted representations against its ratification.

At the end of November the Siphadar made an attempt to deal with the situation, and, in the absence of a quorum necessary for the opening of the Majlis, an assembly of Ministers, ex-Ministers, and deputies was convened to consider the question of ratification. They, however, declined to commit themselves, and the only decision arrived at was to hurry on the assembly of the Majlis. The decision may in some degree have been influenced by the report that most favourable peace terms had been offered by the Bolsheviks, and, in view of the approaching British evacuation, it was not to be expected that any expression of opinion likely to incense the Moscow Government should have been risked. An additional deterrent was a terrorist committee which had been formed by the anti-British extremists. Whether anything would have been gained had the Majlis been induced to assemble at this time is very doubtful, since, as one official in close touch with the situation told me, the deputies would in all probability

decline to accept the onus of dealing with the situation, and would take the line that the matter was one for the decision of the Council.

The situation now took a marked turn for the worse. A reorganisation of the Council had been mooted, under which Seyd Zia-ed-Din and others of the younger group of politicians would take office, but they had been sufficiently alive to the dangers of the situation to decline to join the Government unless there was a reasonable chance of saving the situation. For this they considered that a force of not less than fifteen thousand men was necessary, and that to enable this to be adequately equipped, and other necessary expenditure to be met, a loan of two and a half million tomans was essential. The Foreign Office was now experiencing a change of heart in the matter of expenditure, and while it had been ready enough to subsidise troops controlled by foreign officers, declined to consider the matter favourably when there was a prospect of British officers occupying a similar position. The proposed reconstruction accordingly fell through, and, in the absence of new blood, the Council continued to follow its *laissez-faire* policy, and to trust that something might happen to prevent the Bolshevist invasion, which all anticipated upon the departure of the British troops.

By the beginning of January it had become evident that nothing was to be hoped from the Government in the way of the organisation of a force to replace the British upon their departure, without assistance from the British Government, and that the latter was determined not to render any help. It was now generally known that the evacuation would take place so soon as the condition of the passes permitted, and active preparations for a fighting retreat were under way, the

troops having been told off for their respective duties. The probability that the enemy would follow up the retirement was increased by the fact that the strength and quality of the opposition in the direction of Resht was steadily increasing, two additional brigades having recently arrived from Azerbaijan.

To the Shah the position appeared so serious that he proposed to leave the country, unless the seat of Government was immediately transferred to Shiraz. As a result of the representations which were made by deputations, he was ultimately induced to reconsider his attitude, and consented to remain, for the time being at any rate.

Such being the situation, it became essential that arrangements should be made for the evacuation of the European colony, but this was not altogether easy since certain Legations insisted on considering the Foreign Office's action in advising evacuation as a British device to secure the removal of rivals. Instructions were, however, received that all British women and children, and also all dispensable men, should be evacuated at the earliest possible date. A meeting of the heads of the principal British undertakings in Teheran was accordingly convened at the Legation upon the 6th of January, at which this decision was intimated. It was somewhat surprising to discover upon this occasion that the decision had not been anticipated by all present. The results of the meeting were, however, immediately manifested, for the principal commercial firm dismissed its European employees forthwith.

The report of the contemplated evacuation tended both to increase the general feeling of nervousness, and to add to the unpopularity of the British. The latter was considerably increased by the policy, or lack thereof, adopted by the Imperial

Bank of Persia at this time. Upon one day cheques were only received to such an extent as was necessary to liquidate overdrafts, while upon another no difficulty was made in crediting customers' accounts; silver was taken at the bank to-day, while to-morrow notes only were received, and to such an extent was this carried that notes actually commanded a premium of about 3 per cent over coin. I cannot recollect a case of this occurring elsewhere. In addition, the sale of European credits was severely restricted in the case of Europeans, while they were absolutely refused to Persians. That, in the circumstances, the utmost caution should be observed in this respect was only natural, but the discrimination which was observed against the inhabitants of the country cannot be regarded as being in the bank's own interests, unless it contemplated abandoning its concession and evacuating the country bag and baggage. So far was this discrimination carried that even small remittances were refused to those who had dependants in Europe.

There was an incentive to this policy apart from the general situation, for the native press had been making violent attacks upon the bank officials, accusing them of manipulating the exchange to the disadvantage of the Persians. So far as I was able to observe, the sole result was to foster a wish for a rival institution, and, should such be established at a future date, it should prove a very formidable competitor, since it will be assured of very general support, which even the monopoly of note issue enjoyed by the present institution may not be sufficient to counterbalance.

Although full preparations had been made to feed and house the refugees during the contemplated evacuation, a serious hitch now occurred over the question of finance, for a number of

British subjects were not in a position to meet the very considerable expenses of the journey. The matter was referred to the Foreign Office, with a request that the expenses of those who were not in a position to pay should be met by the British Government. This only produced a reply to the effect that payment might be made upon arrival, which was not particularly helpful to people who found themselves deprived of their means of livelihood, and without resources. Whether this attitude would have been modified at the last moment it is impossible to say, for as it turned out, the contemplated evacuation never took place. Indeed, the ladies evinced the utmost reluctance to leave, some flatly refusing to do so. In the end, I do not think that more than three or four British were evacuated.

Meanwhile the Government was having a somewhat difficult time, for, in addition to the troubles, actual and prospective, which have been mentioned, the negotiations with the Bolsheviks were by no means going smoothly, opposition being experienced from a section of the mullahs. Matters came to a head on the 19th, when the Siphadar resigned. An interval of four days ensued, during which various political leaders were approached with a view to forming a Government, but in the circumstances none of these were prepared to undertake the task, and in the end the Siphadar agreed to resume office and reconstruct his Cabinet.

The position upon Persia's western frontier was very uncertain, and it was most difficult to obtain accurate information. Regarding Mesopotamia, there was strong ground for believing that the British Government were contemplating the evacuation of the whole country, with the exception of the Basra hinterland, although in the end this

benefit was denied to the taxpayer. In the Caucasus the Shahseven tribe were reported to have occupied Lencoran, and to be moving upon Baku, while anti-Bolshevist risings were understood to have occurred at numerous points. The ninth and tenth Bolshevist armies were also stated to have been moved to the Polish front, but there was reason to believe that the greater number had returned to their homes.

This was all to the good, in that there was less prospect of Bolshevist aggression if they were occupied elsewhere; but it was counterbalanced by the fact that, after a successful outpost affair in Ghilan at the end of January, in which our troops, without sustaining any casualties, inflicted twenty-one casualties and captured twenty-nine prisoners out of a total enemy strength of sixty-five, it was discovered that the prisoners were Russians. It was also believed that fighting had occurred between the Bolshevists and Turks, while the revival of religion in Russia was reported to be making rapid strides. It was difficult to know what value to attach to these various reports, for it was practically impossible in most cases to obtain either confirmation or the reverse.

The chief events during the earlier part of February were the formation of successive Governments by the Siphadar, and their prompt resignations. The new Cabinet had taken office upon the 3rd of February, but since it wished to drop the Agreement, and refused to convene the Majlis, it proved unacceptable to the Shah, and upon the 6th it resigned. The following day the Siphadar undertook to carry on with his old Cabinet, but two days later he again resigned. The same day a manifesto signed by forty deputies was issued against the Agreement. After this the Siphadar gave up his efforts for a time, but by the 16th he

had again formed a Government. This was not expected to last long, and upon the evening of the 20th of February the situation could not be described as anything but desperate were it not that in Persia the unexpected always happens.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COUP D'ÉTAT.

ON the morning of the 21st of February my awakening was of a somewhat unduly exciting nature. I was roused at a very early hour by an extremely agitated servant, who, having gained possession of my automatic, was gesticulating with a tremulous hand in which the weapon was clutched in an endeavour to attract my attention. Now it is one thing to have a loaded pistol in one's room, and quite another to find the muzzle thereof in a line with one's head, especially when in the possession of an individual as to whose knowledge of firearms you have no assurance. In such circumstances I must confess that the one thing which occurred to me was the desirability of separating servant and pistol at the earliest possible moment, regardless of the cause of their conjunction. This having been accomplished without damage to either of us, I endeavoured to ascertain the cause of my retainer's alarm. My knowledge of Persian being distinctly limited, and the servant's speech never over clear, the task proved by no means easy, and I did not succeed in getting beyond the fact that, on account of something which had frightened him, he wished to take the pistol to his room, which was beside the front door and across the courtyard. I could at the moment think of nothing more alarming

than an attempted burglary, and as it was now daylight, and the servant's physique would not have disgraced a prize-fighter, I saw no reason for entrusting him with firearms. Accordingly, having ordered him out, I returned to my interrupted slumbers. When I next awoke all was quiet—in fact, the general silence was that of a Scottish Sabbath. But this was nothing particularly surprising in the locality, and I thought no more of the matter until in the middle of the morning one of my assistants arrived to report that a revolution had taken place during the night. The unexpected had happened with a vengeance.

Coups d'état are not such common events that it is possible to regard with equanimity the fact that one has slept through one, particularly when artillery fire has occurred within a mile. My first feeling was accordingly one of regret that I had not shown greater interest in the ferash's alarm; but, as all was now over, there was nothing to be done. I found out subsequently that I had been by no means alone in missing the excitements of the night. The only facts which were clear at the moment were that a body of Cossacks had marched in from Kazvin late the previous evening, and were now in possession of the town, and that Seyd Zia, who was mentioned in the preceding chapter, was at the head of the movement.

Seyd Zia-ed-Din el-Tabatabai is a somewhat remarkable individual. At the period when he became, for a time, the actual ruler of Persia, he was in the early thirties; a slender man of medium height, with a pale and rather narrow face, good features, and a black pointed beard. His expression had about it much of the mystic and dreamer, but he had in addition a very practical side to his character. On account of his descent,

he always wore the ecclesiastical turban, which in Persia serves to distinguish the religious from the layman, who wears a kola. Although he had upon one occasion headed a mission to Baku, it was chiefly as a writer that he was an influence in politics, since, in addition to being the owner of the 'Radd,' after the semi-official 'Iran' the principal newspaper in Teheran, he was reputed to be the best writer of modern prose.

His worst qualities were probably his obstinacy, and, I believe, an over-valuation of his own knowledge, to both of which I can speak from experience during his period of office. In that they led him to ignore the opinions of others, and show little regard for their wishes, these contributed in no small degree to his fall. In fairness it must be remembered that his Government was very much a one man affair, and that, had he possessed a competent and informed body of assistants, many of the errors which he committed might have been avoided. As it was, he lacked an intimate with the necessary knowledge and experience to supply the complement to his own defects. His right-hand man was an Armenian named Epekian, the editor of the 'Radd,' who, although always intensely busy, never seemed to bring anything to a conclusion.

Personally I never knew Seyd Zia intimately, although we had been members of the same camping party the previous summer. Our official relations, which invariably consisted in my throwing cold water upon his projects, did not conduce to a closer acquaintance. Generally, in appearance, manner, and expression he gave me a curious feeling that he might well have served as a model for a black-haired Christ.

To dogmatise regarding the origin of movements such as the one under discussion is always

difficult, and this particular plot, which resulted in making a poetically-inclined newspaper owner the virtual ruler of Persia for three months, like others of its kind, appears to have originated by chance rather than design. One thing, I believe, may be affirmed with absolute certainty—namely, that the movement was not engineered either by or with the knowledge of the British Legation. Such a statement may appear to be superfluous, but since, after the fall of Seyd Zia, a declaration was published by Prince Firouz and his anti-British associates in which it was definitely asserted that the coup was organised by the British Minister, a passing notice would not appear to be altogether out of place, although the jaundiced spite and lack of veracity of this group hardly merit attention. It is somewhat ironical that a few months before Prince Firouz had been fêted in London, and that he was considered as so devoted to British interests that a G.C.M.G. had been conferred upon him. A short period of imprisonment, for which he chose to consider the British responsible, had, however, been sufficient to convert him into a violent Anglophobe, and to drive him into an unnatural alliance with the Bolshevik Minister. From that time he became the leader of the anti-British party in Persia, his chief incentive for adopting this attitude being, it was believed, a desire to dissociate himself from the policy of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, now that Britain was no longer willing to play the part of milch-cow. In spite of his Anglophobia, it may be observed that his sons are being educated at a leading public school in England.

To return to the genesis of the *coup d'état*, this, so far as I have been able to ascertain, was the result of the conjunction of two separate movements. Seyd Zia had beyond question been for

some considerable time of the opinion that the only hope for the country lay in some such action, since it appeared to be certain that nothing was to be hoped from the regular political hacks who succeeded each other in office. This opinion naturally led to the consideration of whether he and his friends could not undertake the necessary effort. The great difficulty in adopting such a course was the absence of an instrument sufficiently powerful for the purpose in view, since the average Persian is notoriously averse to violence. He was driven, accordingly, to consider whether a sufficient body of men could be recruited amongst the Armenian and Caucasian inhabitants of the capital, but, so far as I am aware, no action in this direction had been undertaken when proposals were received from another group.

Since the dismissal of the Russian officers, the main body of the Cossack Division had been located in the vicinity of Kazvin. This was under the command of Persian officers, but certain British officers, who had during the previous year been engaged by the Persian Government to organise a gendarmerie in Azerbaijan (a project which political developments had rendered impossible of fulfilment), had been attached to the division in a quasi-advisory capacity. This had been arranged at the time when, after the departure of the Russians, the British commander had, on account of the Government's neglect, been obliged to look after the feeding and clothing of the men. It was the presence of these officers which furnished the ground for the accusation just mentioned, that the British Minister was privy to the plot.

When it became clear that the departure of the British troops was imminent, and that the Government did not propose to make any effort to oppose a Bolshevist advance, the officers of the division

met to consider the position of themselves and the men under their charge. It was agreed that if no resistance was to be offered to an invasion, the only course was to allow the men to disperse and return to their homes. To some of the bolder spirits this appeared to be a somewhat ignominious course, since they felt that the division represented the only hope of Persia. Foremost amongst these were two young gendarmerie officers, Masud Khan, afterwards Minister for War, and Kasim Khan, who became Military Governor of Teheran. They had both been trained in Europe, and at the time were serving upon the staff of the division. The latter in particular struck me as being possessed of much greater hardihood and resolution than the average Persian officer.

Since the departure of the Russians, a considerable change had taken place in the moral of the division. Formerly the Persian officers had occupied positions which, in the case of the seniors, were little better than sinecures, the practical command being in the hands of the Russian officers and N.C.O.'s. When left to themselves, there seems to have been a genuine effort towards improvement, so far as lay in their power. In these circumstances the bolder spirits succeeded in securing the acceptance of the policy which they advocated, the support of the men being secured by the representation that the Shah was in urgent need of their help.

The next point was to secure a civilian to act as head of the Government, once they had brought their schemes to a successful conclusion and secured control of the Government. Seyd Zia's name was mooted, presumably brought forward by Kasim Khan, who had served under him on his mission to Baku, and it was decided to approach him with a view to concerting a course of action. He having

consented to join his fortunes with those of the Cossacks, it became necessary to decide immediately upon a plan, since the time available before the departure of the British was becoming very brief, and here fortune favoured the conspirators.

It was customary for a portion of the Cossack Division to be stationed at Teheran, and in February 1921 a detachment about seven hundred strong was in quarters there. The effect of town life upon their discipline, never of the best, had been somewhat unfortunate, and it was decided that the detachment in question should be replaced by a new contingent, drawn from the main body of the division. What finally brought the matter to a head was the action of an officer, who, having been refused the appointment of staff officer to the commander, for which he had asked, showed his resentment by a personal assault upon his chief. Orders were accordingly issued for a contingent to proceed from Kazvin to Teheran, and, upon the receipt of these, the conspirators determined to avail themselves of the opportunity to move a much larger force to the capital. It was decided to divide the available troops into two bodies, one of which should march to Teheran, while the other was held in readiness to support it should occasion arise. At the last moment a hitch occurred, for the Council changed its plans, so far as it can be considered to have had any, and cancelled the proposed move. Then—and here we meet with a fact which has never been explained—a telegram was received ordering the new detachment to proceed as originally proposed. The authorship of the telegram has never been admitted, but the promptitude with which it was acted upon furnishes a clue to the source from which it emanated.

The force which had been detailed to march

upon Teheran, and which totalled about two thousand five hundred of all arms, moved off at once. This force had been placed under the command of Raza Khan, one of the senior officers of the Division. In spite of great educational limitations, he was a man of very considerable military ability, as he subsequently proved, while in appearance and manner he possessed all the qualities calculated to win the confidence of the men under his command. He also possessed a considerable aptitude for intrigue, which had been proved some years before, when, after the revolution in Russia, the officers of the Division had removed Colonel Clerge, the then commander. The initiative and organisation of the plot had rested with the Russian officers under Colonel Storroselski, but to Raza Khan had been entrusted the task of winning over the Persian officers, and he it was who at the crisis had marched the troops from their billets to the Cossack Headquarters.

Since that time he had exercised a very great influence in the Division, although by no means the senior officer, and when the conspirators looked round for a man to lead the striking force, his record clearly indicated him for the task.

In Teheran meantime everything favoured the plotters, for the state of the public moral had reached a very low ebb, while the Government was virtually in a state of anarchy, the Siphadar's Cabinets following one another with lightning-like rapidity. Masud Khan had proceeded to Teheran to be with Seyd Zia at the critical moment. So far as I am aware, these two and Epekian, his Armenian editor, were the only persons in Teheran who were in the plot, and it says much for their courage that during these days the two journalists quietly continued to pursue their literary avocations, and that at the very moment when the march

upon Teheran began, the future Sadr Azam was reading modern poetry to a circle of British intimates.

The Council would appear to have remained in a state of absolute ignorance of the contemplated coup until the 19th, when, the news having been received that a considerable body of Cossacks was marching upon the capital, Sirdar Homayoun, the commander of the Division, was despatched to order them to return to Kazvin, the Government having in the circumstances no wish for large bodies of troops in the city. The Sirdar encountered the advance-guard some twenty-five miles to the west of Teheran, where the road crosses the gorge of the river Keridj, and having issued his orders, proceeded to the village beyond the bridge to pass the night. During the night he was awakened by the sound of men and guns moving in the direction of Teheran, and realised that his orders were being set at defiance. Appreciating that he was helpless, he remained in his billet till daylight, when, the last of the troops having departed, he had his car dragged down the river to a point where it was fordable, and drove back to Teheran by a road which runs farther to the south.

To fully appreciate the state of panic into which the Shah and the Ministers were thrown by his news, it is necessary to remember that the only fact which was known was that Cossacks were marching upon the city in defiance of the Government's express orders, but as to their intentions nothing was known, and the chance that they might contemplate action in favour of the Bolsheviks was always possible. It was this lack of information which led to the subsequent bloodshed, such as it was. One of the Ministers was immediately deputed to meet the insurgents and ascer-

tain their intentions. He was accompanied by the Shah's secretary and two members of the staff of the British Legation—the latter, I assume, on account of the fact that the British troops were the only force fit to deal with the Cossacks were any violence proposed towards Europeans. The party found the Cossack headquarters at a village some dozen miles outside the town. Here Seyd Zia appeared for the first time, having doffed the ecclesiastical turban in favour of the civil kola, thus symbolising his intention of undertaking civil office.

The delegates were well received, Seyd Zia taking the leading part, and explaining the objects of the movement. Shortly stated, these amounted to an intention to remove from power those who, declining to consider the national interests, were engaged upon securing personal advantage alone. The Cossacks' position was that, after the removal of the Russian officers, they might have starved, so far as the Government was concerned, and would have done so had not the British intervened and undertaken the care of the men. They also stated that, having first-hand knowledge of the Bolsheviks and of what their rule really implied, they had come to dissipate any delusions which the people of Teheran might entertain upon this point. The Cossacks' loyalty to the Shah and their friendship for the British were emphasised. Every attention was shown to the delegates, but they were informed that it was necessary that they should remain until the advance had reached the city.

I may here say that the conduct of the troops, both while on the march and after they had occupied Teheran, was most orderly in every respect, whilst almost surprising consideration was shown for Europeans. For example, the advance-guard when some miles from Teheran encountered a party

of Europeans upon a motor excursion, but instead of detaining them, merely asked them to give their word of honour not to mention what they had seen until the next day. One is inclined to doubt whether in Europe those engaged upon a similar enterprise would display the same consideration for persons who were in a position to furnish the threatened authorities with information regarding their movements.

Meantime in Teheran the Government were occupied with such measures of defence as lay within their power. The Central Brigade, with such of its guns as worked, and could be moved, was ordered to oppose the Cossacks at the Kazvin Gate, by which they were expected to enter the town, and a Swedish Colonel of Gendarmerie was ordered to take over the command. He did indeed succeed in reaching the gate, but by the time of his arrival his command had ceased to exist, for, upon the appearance of the Cossack advance-guard, the defending troops had gone over to them in a body.

The first act of the troops was to send detachments to the ten principal police offices of the city and arrest the police. At the headquarters alone was any resistance offered, and here occurred the only bloodshed of the night. The whole thing was indeed due to a misunderstanding, partly on account of a lack of definite orders, and partly owing to the absence of any clear information as to the intentions of the Cossacks. As a result two policemen were killed, and three and one Cossack wounded. The Swedish Major in command had a narrow escape—one room was wrecked by a shell, and in his enthusiasm one hero discharged the time-gun. That was all, and the fighting was over in ten minutes. An agreement was then come to with the Swedish General in command of the

police, to the effect that he undertook to apply to the Shah on the following morning for permission to co-operate with the Cossacks, and meantime gave his parole not to interfere with the actions of the new régime. Very early next morning he obtained an audience with the Shah, whom he found ready for flight. He was, however, induced to reconsider his decision, and also to grant the desired authority, and from that moment the police co-operated with the Cossacks, and the most absolute order was maintained. The only occasion thereafter when I heard firing was when some Europeans were sufficiently ill-advised to ignore an order to halt. Fortunately for them the marksmanship of the patrol left much to be desired.

By the following morning perfect quiet reigned throughout the town. All vehicles had disappeared from the streets, having, as possible means of escape, been impounded pending the contemplated arrests. All persons were forbidden to leave the town, and strong guards were posted at the gates, at various points throughout the town, and also at the Legations. The object of the latter was to check any attempts to take bast upon the part of those whose arrest might be intended. In the main they were successful, although certain persons succeeded in reaching the American Legation, while the Siphadar walked unobserved into the British. He was not, as it happened, included in the list of persons who were wanted by the new Government either because they were dangerous or because they were believed to have robbed the country to an undue extent; and, the new Government having guaranteed his immunity from arrest, he was induced to leave his refuge during the course of the day. From the beginning the streets had been patrolled by groups of Cossacks, and as the day wore on these were reinforced by police and

gendarmes, for example is infectious, and the sight of the Cossack bayonets inspired all those who were possessed of these impressive instruments to produce them. Thus by the afternoon Teheran looked exactly what it was, a town in military occupation.

During the two following days large numbers of arrests were effected, the new authorities showing themselves sufficiently catholic in their tastes to include amongst those whom they placed under lock and key both members of the old princely régime and Bolshevist agitators. Amongst the former the Firman Firma and Prince Firouz were conspicuous. A certain piquancy indeed attached to the arrest of the latter by the fact that he had only returned from Europe a few days before, and that there is the very strongest reason to believe that, when passing through Kermanshah, he had plotted a coup of his own with his former colleague, Sarem-ed-Douleh, who was then governor of that town. Their scheme was that Firouz should proceed to Teheran, and, if he considered the time ripe for overthrowing the Government, should summon his fellow-plotter, who, on the plea of a visit to the dentist, should thereupon leave his post and proceed to the capital. Unfortunately for them the plans of the rival plotters were somewhat more advanced, with the consequence that, instead of dictator, Firouz found himself in jail. The general public, apart from those who fell under the suspicion of the new authorities, was but little inconvenienced by the change of rulers, the only interference with the ordinary routine of life, after the first few days, being the establishment of an eight o'clock curfew. But, provided that the main thoroughfares were avoided, it was fairly safe to anticipate that one would not be molested, and personally I never

experienced any difficulty in going where I wished.

It had originally been intended to deal with those of the prisoners who belonged to the former governing class by way of an inquiry, in order to ascertain the extent of their defalcations; but it very quickly became evident that such an inquiry might, in some cases at least, result in revelations which, if made public, would cause a public outcry which could only be satisfied by bringing the prisoners before a court-martial. As many of those under arrest were protégés of the British Government, which had already begun to interfere on their behalf, this would have brought about an awkward situation for the new Government, which was strongly Anglophile. Thus, as a result of its lurid past, the Foreign Office was at the very beginning thrown into a position of potential opposition to the only government in Persia which showed a desire for genuine reform, and whose success must have been of the greatest benefit to Britain.

In these circumstances it was decided not to bring the prisoners to trial, but to demand from each a sum which was believed to correspond to the amount of his defalcations. Since the relation of the prisoners to the British Legation precluded the resort to extreme measures in the case of those who proved recalcitrant, it will be readily understood that the Government success in making them disgorge was but small, although at times it was believed that large sums were almost within their grasp. Upon one such occasion information was laid that six chests of money and jewels belonging to the Firman Firma were hidden in the house of a relation. These were immediately seized, and a son of the Firman Firma who was not under arrest was summoned to be present when they

were opened. His feelings must have been somewhat unenviable, since, being unaware of the contents of the chests, they might for all he knew contain a considerable portion of the family wealth. When the first was opened, a layer of sacking was revealed. As this was followed by others, the excitement increased with their number. Finally the last was removed, only to reveal old account-books and nothing else. The contents of the other chests were similar, and it is hardly surprising that it was much more difficult to ascertain the final *dénoûment* than the earlier stages of the episode.

Both from the point of view of the new Government, and in the interests of genuine reform in Persia, it must be regarded as regrettable that some of the worst cases were not brought to trial, and, in the event of the charges being brought home, dealt with so drastically as to form a wholesome deterrent to future would-be embezzlers. So long as those who exploit the State for their own benefit can rely upon foreign protection in the event of their being brought to book, it is hopeless to expect that any genuine attempt at reform will meet with success. Personally, I am inclined to go further, and to believe that until the present class of politicians is absolutely rooted out, there is little hope of improvement in the standard of Persian national morality. Violence in politics is at all times to be deprecated, but there are occasions, as in pre-revolutionary France, when a privileged and self-seeking class is so firmly entrenched that there is no other way of dislodging them in the national interest, and of such would appear to be the present condition of Persia.

Considering that they were not prepared to proceed to extremes in the face of the British Legation's protests, the policy of arrests followed by the reformers, or at any rate the indefinite

detention in prison of those arrested, must be regarded as a cardinal error of policy. The only result of following this course was to secure for the new régime the inveterate hostility of the most powerful men in the country, and to assure their active opposition so soon as they secured their liberty. The choice was certainly a difficult one, but unless prepared to proceed to extremes, it would probably have been wiser to avoid a policy of wholesale incarceration, while, if this was considered essential, it would assuredly have been wiser to remove the prisoners to some distant place of detention instead of keeping them in and about the capital, where they formed a centre of intrigue.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GOVERNMENT OF SEYD ZIA-ED-DIN.

WITHIN a week of the coup a new Cabinet was formed, with Seyd Zia as Sadr Azam. The remaining Ministers included two senior officials of the Ministry of Finance, Mirza Eissa Khan and Mudir-el-Mulk, who were appointed Minister of Finance and Minister for Foreign Affairs respectively, both somewhat contrary to their own wishes, I suspect; Major Masud Khan, who became Minister for War; Movaquar-ed-Douleh, an elderly ex-governor of Bushire, to whom was assigned the portfolio of Public Works, and who died in harness; and certain other individuals without experience of administration. Of the Cabinet as a whole, it can only be said that it was unfortunate that its experience and knowledge did not equal its zeal and good intentions. At the same time, Raza Khan was appointed commander-in-chief, with the title of Sirdar Sipah, and Kasim Khan became Military Governor of Teheran.

From the beginning the Government contained elements of weakness which ultimately led to its fall. It consisted, with the exception of the two ex-officials, entirely of amateurs, with the consequence that it was peculiarly liable to commit errors in administration. This liability was increased, both by the fact that the Ministries had all been closed pending their reorganisation, and

that from the start the new Government was, upon the civil side, a one-man affair. Nothing was too small for the Prime Minister's attention. On military tactics, financial problems, and social and official reform alike he held decided views, and his opinion once formed, it was difficult in the extreme to induce him to reconsider his attitude. His religious upbringing also had its influence, and was probably responsible for many items in his programme of proposed reforms. Had he had the benefit of strong and well-informed assistance, the ultimate fate of the new Government might have been very different. As it was, he had a free hand in civil affairs, and although differences of opinion soon developed between the civil and military sides of the Government, the Sirdar Sipah at first concerned himself only with military matters. In addition, the new Council had to reckon from the start with the hostility of the Shah, and although this was at first passive, he only awaited the beginning of disputes amongst the reformers to take an active part in affairs. His hostility was only increased by the somewhat domineering attitude adopted towards him by the Sadr Azam, and which was bitterly resented upon his part. A suspicion also arose, based upon the fact that, while reducing the Shah's civil list, the Sadr Azam increased that of the Valiahd, that he contemplated the dethronement of the Shah in favour of his brother. This I believe to be incorrect, since, so far from endeavouring to prejudice the Shah with his people, he insisted upon his showing himself more frequently in public than had been his practice, and although this caused His Majesty no small perturbation, it undoubtedly added to his popularity.

At the same time that the formation of the Council was announced, a proclamation was issued

outlining their policy. The chief points of this were the denunciation of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, which, as I have endeavoured to show, was already dead for all practical purposes, and only existed as a ground for suspicion against Britain; the increase of the Army; and the distribution of the Crown lands amongst the peasants. Various measures of social reform were also included. Of the proposed reforms it may be said that they showed the same characteristics as the others which followed them during the next three months. Courage and honesty of purpose were never lacking, but experience was, and consequently reforms were announced, and entered upon, without any appreciation of the difficulties involved, and these, as experience showed, were in some cases wellnigh insurmountable.

Although it was proposed to denounce the Anglo-Persian Agreement, the Council's policy closely approached that defined in the Agreement. It will be remembered that the four main points of the Agreement, apart from a loan, were the revision of the Customs tariff, the loan by the British Government of military and financial advisers, and assistance in railway construction. The Customs revision had already been carried through and put into operation; the financial mission already existed, and although the adviser himself was absent, those of his staff who were in Persia were already functioning, while application was now made for military advisers; lastly, the Council were entirely in favour of railway development. It was, it is true, proposed to offer adviserships in other departments to America, France, and Belgium, but with British Missions in the Ministries of War and Finance the avowed aim of the Agreement would have been achieved. In fact, Seyd Zia was freely accused of putting

the Agreement into operation while nominally denouncing it. This point did not appear to have occurred to the British Government, or if it did, it by no means suited their policy that the Agreement should be revived, for the reception of the new Government's advances evinced both a sulky and a vacillating attitude.

In connection with the increase of the Army, which if carried out along sound lines had much to commend it, it was proposed to employ British officers as instructors, and to endeavour to purchase British munitions, particularly from the Kazvin Force, whose departure was imminent. Application was accordingly made to the Foreign Office for the loan of officers and an opportunity to purchase the munitions. The reply was clear beyond question, and unfriendly to a degree. So far as possible all munitions would be removed, and the remainder would be destroyed, while no officers could be lent. Fortunately, before the Council could apply to another nation for assistance, some one in Whitehall must have changed his mind, for a second message was received to the effect that no action should be taken upon the first. This was followed by a third, in which the sale of munitions was agreed to, and also, upon certain conditions which had always been contemplated by the Persian Government, the loan of the officers desired.

Whether the episode was the result of a moment of pique upon the part of the Foreign Secretary at the denunciation of the Agreement, followed by speedy reconsideration; whether the War Office was responsible for the first cable, and the Foreign Office for the later ones; or whether the first represented Lord Curzon's policy and the others that of the Cabinet, will probably never be known. Fortunately, Seyd Zia had a sense of humour,

but the incident did not add to the prestige of the British Foreign Office. The eventual outcome of this negotiation was that a considerable quantity of stores was taken over, but as this was done without any conditions as to payment or the engagement of British officers, the latter were never really effectively employed. A very few were, it is true, attached for a short time to the Cossack Division, but their contracts were terminated shortly after the fall of Seyd Zia's Council.

The opposition to the employment of British officers was partly due to jealousy of outside interference on the part of the Sirdar Sipah, and partly to opposition to the proposal amongst the officers of the Division. These, since the dismissal of the Russian officers, had enjoyed a new independence, and had no desire to come again under foreign control. According to a Persian friend, the Cossacks, when they heard of the coming of a new foreign mission, their experience being confined to Russian methods, could only conceive of the British acting as the Russians had done. They also believed that the former, being more intelligent, would be more difficult to deal with, and would never relax their grip. The men, who were for the most part volunteers, began to desert, and in the circumstances the officers, or a great proportion of them, met and swore on the Koran never to serve under British officers. Thus in the end the only result of the proposed army reform was an increase, very largely on paper, in the numbers of the Cossack Division. The Sirdar Sipah claimed that they were increased to thirty thousand, but it is very doubtful whether during Seyd Zia's régime they ever numbered more than twelve thousand, while, on account of disease, three-quarters of these might be ruled out so far as serious fighting was concerned.

Further, such trifles as first and second-line transport and medical services were disregarded, and no attempt was made to improve the otryad organisation, the defects of which have been already referred to. Verily the fallacy of numbers would appear to have survived the days of Xerxes.

The proposal to distribute the Crown lands amongst the peasants was admirable in principle, in so far as it proposed to establish a class of peasant proprietors, and to improve the lot of the peasantry, but the problems involved were, if not insoluble, at any rate of such a nature as only to be satisfactorily solved after long and expert study. Consequently the proclamation of the Government's intention, before full consideration of the difficulties, or the evolution of a definite plan, only served to raise hopes which must be doomed to disappointment.

To show the complexity of the question, it will be sufficient to indicate only a few of the difficulties involved. In some areas the peasantry are in excess of the land available for distribution, while in others the reverse is the case. In the former circumstances the distribution was certain to cause discontent amongst those who did not share in the apportionment, while in the latter it was essential to induce immigration from outside districts, were the output to be maintained at the former standard. Again, many of the Crown lands had been admittedly given to favourites of former sovereigns, or had been illegally encroached upon by local magnates, but not infrequently they had subsequently changed hands for a full price, and were in the possession of *bona fide* purchasers, whose ejection could only be regarded as the grossest injustice.

Further, the financial aspect of the problem was one which presented many complications.

Were taxation to be continued upon the ceded lands at the same rate as previously, the gift would be without advantage to the recipients, while, upon the other hand, the state could not afford the loss of revenue which would ensue were the donated lands to be placed upon the same basis for taxation as lands which had previously been in private ownership. The establishment of the new proprietors upon a sound financial basis was one which did not present an obvious solution. The state was in no condition to undertake fresh financial obligations, being reduced to a hand-to-mouth existence, based mainly on loans. Apart altogether from the ordinary expenses of maintenance, there was the problem of the kanats, which, upon occasion, call for the expenditure of large sums, and these must be immediately forthcoming if the irrigation of the land is to be continued. There were other difficulties involved, such as the incidence of the military tax, and the question as to whether land which had been alienated and allowed to go out of cultivation had reverted to the Crown; but the above furnish a sufficient idea of the problems which drove the officials faced with their solution to such a degree of desperation as to declare them to be insoluble without the aid of outside experts. The Government proposed to employ American agricultural experts—a decision which, whatever its political advantages, can scarcely be regarded as the best possible, considering how diametrically the small irrigated cultivation of Persia differs from the mass production of the United States, and how Americans must perforce be without experience of the financial problems involved.

The light-hearted way in which the agricultural problem was entered upon was typical of the

manner in which reform was undertaken in all directions. In my own sphere three examples will suffice. I was one morning summoned to the Ministry of Finance to be informed that the Prime Minister had decided to issue twenty millions of Treasury Notes, and was requested to make the necessary arrangements for giving effect to this decision. An inquiry into the nature of the cover which it was intended to provide for the contemplated issue elicited the fact that this aspect of the question had not occurred to the Council, and it was not without the utmost difficulty that they were brought to realise that they could not with impunity set the printing press in motion at will.

Upon another occasion I was asked whether there was any objection to the bank increasing its note issue. I replied that I saw no reason against this, but that the advantage to the Government of such a procedure did not seem obvious, since they had announced their intention of dispensing with foreign loans. The reply was to the effect that the new notes might be handed over to the Treasury, and a suggestion that this was the same thing as a loan, since the bank must, under the terms of its concession, provide cover for all additional notes issued, was disposed of with a statement that this was really quite unnecessary, since all the notes in the country would certainly not be presented at the same moment. This scheme was also abandoned.

After this the Prime Minister took matters into his own hands, and announced that he had solved the financial difficulty. On inquiring the nature of his proposed remedy, I was informed that he intended to melt down a large number of old brass guns which were in the town, and convert them into a brass coinage to rank *pari*

passu with the silver issue. My objections, based upon such grounds as Gresham's Law, were brushed aside with the reply that a Turk had done the same a century before, and that there was consequently no reason why he should not follow a similar course of action. In the end I induced him to suspend action pending the arrival of the Financial Adviser, but I felt certain that he regarded my arguments and objections as frivolous and beside the point. I was not again called into consultation.

Meanwhile no time had been lost in initiating the consideration of administrative reform, and two days after the coup I had been requested to take part in the proposed reform of the Civil Service. The proposed reforms certainly showed no lack of courage. Shortly put, the proposals of Seyd Zia were to throw the whole Civil Service into the melting-pot, reduce staffs largely, and cut in half the salaries of such officials as survived the purge. Pending a decision, all Government offices were closed, a proceeding which did not appear to interfere with the national life to any appreciable degree.

The reform of the Ministry of Finance was first undertaken. A somewhat amorphous committee, consisting of various Persian officials, the Belgian Director-General of Customs, and myself, without a chairman to keep the discussion to the point under consideration, sat and discussed anything and everything which occurred to those present, whether it had any direct bearing upon the subject which we were supposed to be considering or not. The commissioners could not be accused of any lack of zeal, for their sittings frequently lasted from early morning till late in the evening. I must confess that personally I abandoned these gatherings after a very few experiments, and

contented myself with bombarding the commission with memoranda the gist of which was that their proposals were fundamentally unsound and should be suppressed. Truth to tell, I do not believe that much attention was paid to my representations, or to the schemes for a Civil Service, national audit, &c., which were from time to time demanded.

I imagine that much the same might be said about most of the schemes which were evolved at this time. For instance, a pet hobby of the Prime Minister's was a municipality for Teheran upon modern lines, and a commission was established to evolve a scheme. It succeeded in producing a plan for a town council, which, if I remember rightly, was to consist of two hundred members, chiefly, I believe, because one of the members of the commission who had once been in London believed this to be the number of the London County Council. A budget was also prepared, the chief features of which were that the taxes proposed were mainly the most economically unsound imaginable, and that, so far as I could ascertain, they were unlikely to produce much in excess of half the amount budgeted for. The leading spirit in this affair was the ex-editor Epekian. There were also other Armenians upon this commission, and their conduct formed an interesting indication of what might be expected from them when in authority, and as to the cause of their unpopularity. All spoke Persian fluently, but upon every possible occasion the conversation was carried on in Armenian to the exclusion of their Persian colleagues. The luckless Epekian was indeed before the end equally unpopular with Persians and Armenians, for later the task of seizing the stocks of wines and spirits upon which many of his compatriots relied for a living was

deputed to him, with the result that he very narrowly escaped being mobbed.

Prohibition of alcohol was one of the first measures of the new Council, but this must have proceeded rather from policy than conviction, since the Seyd and several members of his Council were by no means averse to the pleasures of the table. The report, however, that opium also had been prohibited, and that the entire staff of the opium office, some four hundred strong, had been dismissed, was incorrect. A pious aspiration was indeed expressed that, at some future time, such prohibition might become possible, but for the moment financial considerations were paramount, and the revenue derived from opium was essential. As to the four hundred, they were, it is true, dismissed, but so far from being the entire staff of the office, they only represented the unnecessary surplus, which should never have been there, and had only obtained their positions through influence.

Prohibition, then, had its origin partly in the fear that if they had access to unlimited supplies of liquor the Cossacks might get out of hand, and partly in the fact that wine is prohibited by the Koran, and must, in my opinion, be regarded as part of an attempt to foster a national and religious sentiment as a counterblast to Bolshevism. This would explain several measures which in themselves were trivial, and which at first sight appeared only calculated to irritate and inconvenience one class or another of the population. Persian women were, or were about to be, forbidden to take service in European households; Persian subjects were compelled to take down all notices and advertisements over their shops which were not written in Persian; all shops, whether owned by Persians or Christians, were ordered to

close on holidays—a large portion of the year; and preference in the public services was given to married men. This last caused an undue amount of alarm, for it was at first reported that in future a prerequisite to employment in the service of the Government was to be the possession of at least three wives.

Externally the policy of the Government aimed at being on friendly terms with all nations, and tied to none. With respect to advisers, an attempt was made to return to the policy beloved of Persian and Turk, of employing nationals of different countries in different branches of the Government service. The object of this policy is to play off one nation against another, so that unpalatable measures may be avoided by the opposition of one nation to that which is acceptable to another. It was proposed to retain the British advisers in the Ministry of Finance, and to obtain others for the Army. The Swedes were to remain in charge of the police and gendarmerie, the Belgians in control of the customs and posts, and the French at the Ministry of Justice. In addition, America was to be asked to supply agricultural experts; and Belgium, engineers. Except for the employment of some British officers who were no sooner engaged than they were dismissed, nothing came of these proposals.

The new Government was generally well received throughout the country, the only province where there was any opposition being Fars, but this did not lead to open violence and was presently overcome. The nationalists of Tabriz found themselves in a somewhat difficult position, for, while the new régime stood for everything which their programme represented, the fact that it was on terms of close friendship with the British was in their eyes an objection of the first magnitude. In

two other provinces, Khorasan and Kermanshah, it was considered necessary to arrest the governors. In the former case the measure was in the main precautionary, since the governor, Qavam-es-Salteneh, who was the next Prime Minister, was suspected of plotting against the Government. The arrest was entrusted to Colonel Mahomed Taki Khan, the chief of the Khorasan Gendarmerie, and was cleverly effected, the entire Government being gathered in as they returned from an evening drive without any bloodshed being necessary. This arrest was the cause of subsequent difficulties after Qavam-es-Salteneh had succeeded to office, for Mahomed Taki Khan, not unwisely perhaps, being apprehensive of vengeance, declined to acknowledge the new Government, with the consequence that hostilities became necessary. In the second case the governor concerned was Sarem-ed-Douleh, a man of much sterner stuff, and, the arrest not being over-well arranged, was only carried out after some sharp fighting, in which fifteen persons were killed. In this case, as has been already mentioned, the Government had good grounds for regarding Sarem-ed-Douleh with suspicion, despite his professions of loyalty.

The financial situation, always critical, threatened at the outset to become desperate for the new administration through the action of the bank, which proposed to terminate the working arrangement which had existed with previous Governments, and to confiscate the Government credits in London against overdrafts in Teheran, which were regulated by a standing arrangement. Although this was, strictly speaking, justified in the interests of the shareholders, if the situation was regarded as so desperate that there was a chance that it would be necessary to evacuate the country and cease to carry on business, it, like similar

outbreaks of caution upon other occasions, was unfortunate, in that it gave rise to an impression that the policy was dictated by partiality, and also fostered the feeling that, in the interests of Persia, a competing institution should, if possible, be encouraged. Moreover, it was not altogether clear what benefit would accrue to the shareholders by driving a desperate Government to extremes when so large an amount of the bank's assets was at the mercy of that Government.

The difficulties of the Government were greatly increased by the imminence of the departure of the British troops, since, were the Bolsheviks contemplating a serious attack, there was not time to organise an adequate force to deal with the situation. Personal appeals from the Shah and the Prime Minister that the evacuation might be delayed until the autumn met with a flat refusal from London, and it became clear that Persia must stand or fall by her own efforts. The position was complicated by the uncertainty which existed as to what was occurring in Georgia and Armenia. On the one hand, Tiflis was reported to have fallen, but on the other it was believed that the anti-Bolshevist forces were making head in Armenia, and a warning had been received that in the event of the Bolshevik forces being driven out of Armenia, they would in all probability retire upon Tabriz. The forces locally available in such an event had been weakened by a disastrous incursion which the local commander had, against advice, made into the Kurdish mountains. Thus the available troops might be required either in the vicinity of Resht or in the extreme north-west; while, to send an adequate force to either place must deprive the Government of much of the military support to which it owed its being. The uncertainty as to the Bolshevik intentions

was heightened by the interception of a telegram from the Azerbaijan commander at Enzeli to Tiflis, in which it was stated that his men's discipline was bad, that he could not send them to the front, and that with them an offensive was impossible. While this was highly satisfactory as to the quality of the opposition which was to be anticipated, everything so far as regarded the enemy's plans depended upon whether the information was volunteered or whether it was sent in reply to an inquiry, since, in the latter contingency, an offensive might be anticipated.

The most critical position was that in the direction of Resht, and it accordingly became necessary to run risks in the other cases. Consequently, in the first days of April, Cossacks from Kazvin marched to take over the British positions at Manjil, while the Hamadan Otryad, one of the best in the Division, left Teheran for Kazvin, to support them if necessary. A few days later an intimation was received that the Bolshevist troops would leave twenty-four hours after the British, which would have been reassuring were it not for a habit of the Moscow Government of repudiating the force at Enzeli when convenient, while at the same time taking advantage of their successes. By the 17th the Cossacks had taken over all the British positions, and ten days later the British rearguard left Kazvin, so that from that time everything depended upon the fighting value of the Cossacks as against that of the Bolshevists. Whatever the individual standard may have been, the organisation was such that it is difficult to imagine worse. There was no first-line transport, so that the men in the front line had to leave their posts in search of food and ammunition, while the second line, being civilian, was prone to disappear at critical moments. Thus the troops

possessed in this respect few advantages over irregulars, but some consolation was derived from the fact that there was reason for believing that the enemy were in little if any better case.

At this time a new element was introduced into the situation by the arrival on the 24th of April of the Bolshevist Minister, a Monsieur Rothstein, who had been for many years a prominent member of the staff of the 'Manchester Guardian,' a somewhat interesting association. He immediately showed that he did not regard his position as a sinecure, for by the 1st of May I found that he was showing an unpleasant interest in the financial mission, while the same day at his first reception he delivered a violent propagandist speech. The Bolshevist conception of a Minister's duties cannot be regarded as conforming to the accepted diplomatic standard, and from the beginning Monsieur Rothstein, a man of very marked ability and strength of character, set himself to conduct an active propaganda. For example, the Legation gardens were thrown open to all and sundry every Friday, while a close alliance was developed with the gutter press, which gave prominence to every imaginable anti-British assertion. Upon one occasion when one of the Bolshevist chauffeurs had run down and killed one of the bank's mounted messengers (the fourth casualty which stood to the credit of the Bolshevik Legation), it was announced that the car belonged to the British Minister. For funds reliance was placed upon Persian silver which was coined in Moscow from some old dies which had remained in Russian possession.

The Bolshevist régime has now been sufficiently long in existence to enable us to form some idea of the methods which it follows in its endeavours to subvert other Governments. The process may, I believe, be divided into four stages. During the

first every effort is directed, by appealing to sentiments of humanity and personal interest, to secure under the guise of a trade representative the establishment of a permanent agent in the country against which designs are entertained. This manoeuvre would seem to be sufficiently obvious to deceive no one save those who are wilfully blind. During the second stage the established trade agent pursues actively a propaganda directed to the double purpose of alienating the working classes against their Government, and of creating a public sentiment in favour of the resumption of diplomatic relations. Money is freely provided to finance revolutionary speakers and newspapers, and subversive literature is subsidised. This would appear to be the position reached in Great Britain to-day.

In the third stage, a diplomatic representative having been installed and an ex-territorial base secured, where revolutionary meetings may be conducted and propaganda openly carried on without fear of police interference, the campaign enters upon a more advanced stage. Funds are liberally advanced to revolutionary bodies, and, if possible, they are supplied with arms. Given that the country concerned is a small one, little secret need be made of what is intended, and in any event the leading conspirators can shelter under diplomatic immunity. Persia is at the present time in this position. Lastly comes the armed rising, to which all that has gone before is but the prelude. It is not necessary that the revolutionary forces should be possessed of such strength as to render success probable. All that is required is that they should have such momentary success as will furnish a pretext that the Soviet troops, who are in readiness, have been invited to come to the assistance of the oppressed population of the country who

are struggling against their oppressors. This was what happened in Armenia, where a body of revolutionary exiles was equipped in Russian territory, and, when it had gained a momentary success, invited the Soviet army to come to its assistance.

The initial popularity of the reforming Government was not maintained for long, very largely owing to the unsoundness of the new municipal taxes, which, in addition to being economically unsound, were to a great extent imposed upon the necessities of life, and consequently were generally felt. A contributory cause was furnished by the vexatious restrictions already referred to. While this unpopularity continued until after a change of Government had taken place, there was a very general revulsion of feeling, except amongst the upper classes, when, under the succeeding Government, the forces of corruption were again uncontrolled.

In spite of all its errors and the difficulties with which it was faced, it is very probable that the Government, learning from experience, might have established itself firmly, and given effect to the reforms for which it stood, had it not been for internal dissensions between the military and civil elements, or, to be more exact, between Seyd Zia and the Sirdar Sipah, for these were the two men who really counted. As has been mentioned, the Shah had been from the beginning violently opposed to the new Government, and this opposition had been increased by the alterations in the civil list to which reference has been made, and by the Prime Minister's attitude towards the Shah, which the latter considered to be lacking in proper respect. This antipathy was fully shared by the Court party, and accordingly every endeavour was made to sow dissension in the reforming ranks,

and, since Seyd Zia did not furnish promising material for intrigue, every effort was directed towards winning over the Sirdar Sipah.

The first crisis occurred towards the end of April, but this was got over by the 25th, upon an arrangement being arrived at that Sirdar Sipah should be permitted to become Minister for War, in addition to continuing to act as commander-in-chief, the former Minister, Masud Khan, continuing to act in an advisory capacity. But the truce was of brief duration, and meantime the Cabinet was weakened by the death of one Minister, and the necessity of another leaving for Europe on account of the state of his health. The Shah had also again become nervous, and was desirous of leaving the country.

Matters again came to a head upon the 6th of May, when the Prime Minister offered to resign. The reactionaries were not yet ready to act, and again an agreement was arrived at, the price of peace upon this occasion being that the gendarmerie—after the Cossacks the most important force in Persia—should be transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of War. Thus Sirdar Sipah gained control of both forces, and from this time the Government, and indeed the succeeding Government also, existed upon his pleasure. The British troops being out of the way, the time became ripe for a change.

By the 21st matters came finally to a head, the pretext being the question of the employment of British officers. For reasons which have been already stated, Sirdar Sipah was determined that these should not be given executive control, and without this their position would have been an entirely false one. He was also somewhat nervous, and ready to credit any reports. For example, he on one occasion complained of twenty odd

officers being sent to Kazvin without his knowledge. On inquiry these were reduced to one, who had been already engaged. His nervousness was added to by an unfortunate misunderstanding which resulted in a British officer, who was to advise at the War Office, presenting himself in the uniform of the Cossack Division. As Seyd Zia was regarded as the friend of the British, this suspicion only tended to strengthen the Sirdar Sipah's resolution to be rid of the Prime Minister, and it seems clear that he believed that one or other must go. By the 24th the end was certain, and upon that day many of the prisoners were permitted to go to their own houses. The Prime Minister had realised that the position was hopeless, and early the following morning he left for Baghdad accompanied by Epekian and one or two others. Orders were sent to stop him at Kazvin, but on consideration the victor was induced to withdraw these. The Shah, unless my information is astray, was for much more drastic action, and wished that all those who had been associated with the late Government should be dealt with as though they were guilty of high treason. Actually, however, the matter ended with some arrests and dismissals from office.

Thus terminated an honest and self-sacrificing attempt to save Persia from bankruptcy, and to preserve her from foreign invasion. The causes of its failure were many. Although personal ambition may have played some part in influencing those who participated, we must do them the justice of admitting that they risked their lives in the attempt, and that they did so, as I know from personal intercourse with them, with their eyes open. Seyd Zia was in many ways not suited for the rôle he undertook, his obstinacy leading him to ignore the advice of those whose experience

might have enabled him to avoid many of the errors into which he fell. In the words of one of his countrymen, he was too satisfied with himself, his ability, and his knowledge, and never owned to or recognised his faults. But justification for this attitude may be found in the lack of men with the requisite knowledge and ability amongst his active supporters. The aristocratic and official classes were in the main opposed to him, and, outside these, educated men are not easy to find in Persia.

In addition to the unpopularity which he incurred through hasty and unwise measures, his manner and actions were not such as to conduce to personal popularity, although I believe that what might have been taken for arrogance of manner was in fact due rather to innate reserve. However this may be, it cannot be denied that his aloof attitude tended to alienate popular sympathy, and that, had he frankly avowed that but for the national crisis and the fact that he had been chosen by the army as the man best fitted to deal with a desperate situation, he would not have felt justified in assuming the responsibilities which he had undertaken, he would have secured a body of support which he always lacked. So far from adopting this attitude, his behaviour was too much that of a dictator with whom alone rests the success of the cause for which he stands. To be perfectly frank, I believe that throughout he failed to appreciate his true *point d'appui*—namely, the army, and as a consequence made no attempt to conciliate—no easy task for a man of his type—king, courtiers, army, ecclesiastics, or people, the result being that when the crisis came he found himself practically alone.

A contributory factor to the fall of Seyd Zia's Government was the attitude taken up throughout

by the Foreign Office. With the denunciation of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, Lord Curzon's interest in the country seemed to terminate. That the new Government was heart and soul pro-British, and, indeed, incurred considerable odium on this account, and was anxious to carry out in the spirit, if not in the letter, the policy of the Agreement, counted for nothing; the word alone had merit, with the consequence that the support extended was at all times grudging and half-hearted. There were moments when strong British support would have been sufficient to turn the scale, but at such times it was lacking. Indirectly also the chances of the reformers were weakened by the protection extended to the reactionaries. Had it been possible to make a well-deserved example of some of these, the result might have been different, but since British support had been extended to the corrupt aristocracy, such a course was impossible for the pro-British democrats.

Such was the end of a somewhat interesting experiment in oriental politics. It required no small degree of courage for a group of men, who were admittedly amateurs in the art of government, to attempt to undertake the government of their country in a moment of crisis. That they committed many errors it would be futile to deny, but these were in the main due to inexperience, and when the time comes when the history of the attempt can be written with full information, I believe that it will be universally admitted that upon the civil side those responsible were actuated by motives of patriotism and self-sacrifice. By civil side it must be understood that I intend the party headed by Seyd Zia, whether civilians or soldiers, like Masud Khan and Kasim Khan.

Possibly the greatest compliment which it was possible to pay was rendered to Seyd Zia by the

governor of a province which shall be nameless, who, after abstaining from attempts at peculation during his rule, applied for a large sum on the usual frivolous excuse of necessary road guards upon the very day that the news of Seyd Zia's fall was reported.

CHAPTER XIII.

QAVAM-ES-SALTENEH AND REACTION.

THE chief indirect consequence of the acts and fall of the Zia Cabinet was that Great Britain was left practically friendless in Persia, and with not one but four sets of enemies.

The party of the nobility, the leaders of which had been amongst the prisoners, were extremely bitter with regard to their imprisonment, and vented their spite against the British in every possible way, considering that the British Legation should have rescued them from the clutches of the late Government, and ignoring the fact that had it not been for the action of the Legation they might have found themselves in a vastly worse case, and possibly in another world. The degree to which they displayed their hatred varied with the individuals. Sarem-ed-Douleh contented himself with a mild intrigue with Rothstein, Sirdar Sipah, and Prince Firouz, than whom it would be difficult to imagine a more incongruous quartette. The Persian princes appeared to be under the impression that they could play with the Bolshevik with impunity, but it was not possible to avoid feeling that the reverse was more likely to be the ultimate outcome if the alliance continued.

In practice I do not believe that it was of long duration, for Sirdar Sipah, after being guilty of gross discourtesy towards the British officers, found

that the Jew turned a deaf ear to his appeals for funds. Becoming alarmed at the prospect of being alienated from British and Bolshevists at the same moment, he made somewhat later friendly advances to the British Legation. Sarem-ed-Douleh also, after giving vent to his feelings, departed to the family estates in the south. Firouz, however, gave full rein to his spite, actuated possibly in some degree by the fact that for the moment there was nothing more to be got out of the British, and for the next three months Britain had no more inveterate enemy in Persia. Curiously enough, just before I left Persia in the following September, there were distinct signs that he and his family were thinking things over, and tentative advances towards the British Legation were beginning.

Our second group of enemies consisted of the supporters of the late Government, for, by a strange irony, they also believed that they had been betrayed by the British. Such was the result of the policy followed by Lord Curzon, that both the party of corruption, which he had supported, and the party of legitimate reform, which had looked towards England for at least moral support in their struggle for freedom, had been driven into adopting an attitude of hostility. In addition to these two groups, there were also the regular democratic party, which was habitually opposed to Britain, and the extremists who enjoyed the Bolshevik support.

After the departure of Seyd Zia there followed several days of uncertainty as to who was to be his successor. Many names were freely canvassed, and at one time it appeared probable that the choice would fall upon Mushavim-ul-Mamaulik, whose treatment in Paris by the Foreign Office has already been mentioned. Had this proved true, it would have been impossible to conceive of a

choice which could have been worse for the interests of Britain, but fortunately the final decision rested not upon him, but upon Qavam-es-Salteneh, the Governor of Khorasan who had been arrested by the late administration. He is a brother of the Vossugh-ed-Douleh, who was Prime Minister at the time of the signature of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. His Cabinet was not announced until the 4th of June, and calls for no comment beyond the fact that Sirdar Sipah remained at the Ministry of War, and that the Prime Minister introduced his brother into the Ministry of Finance.

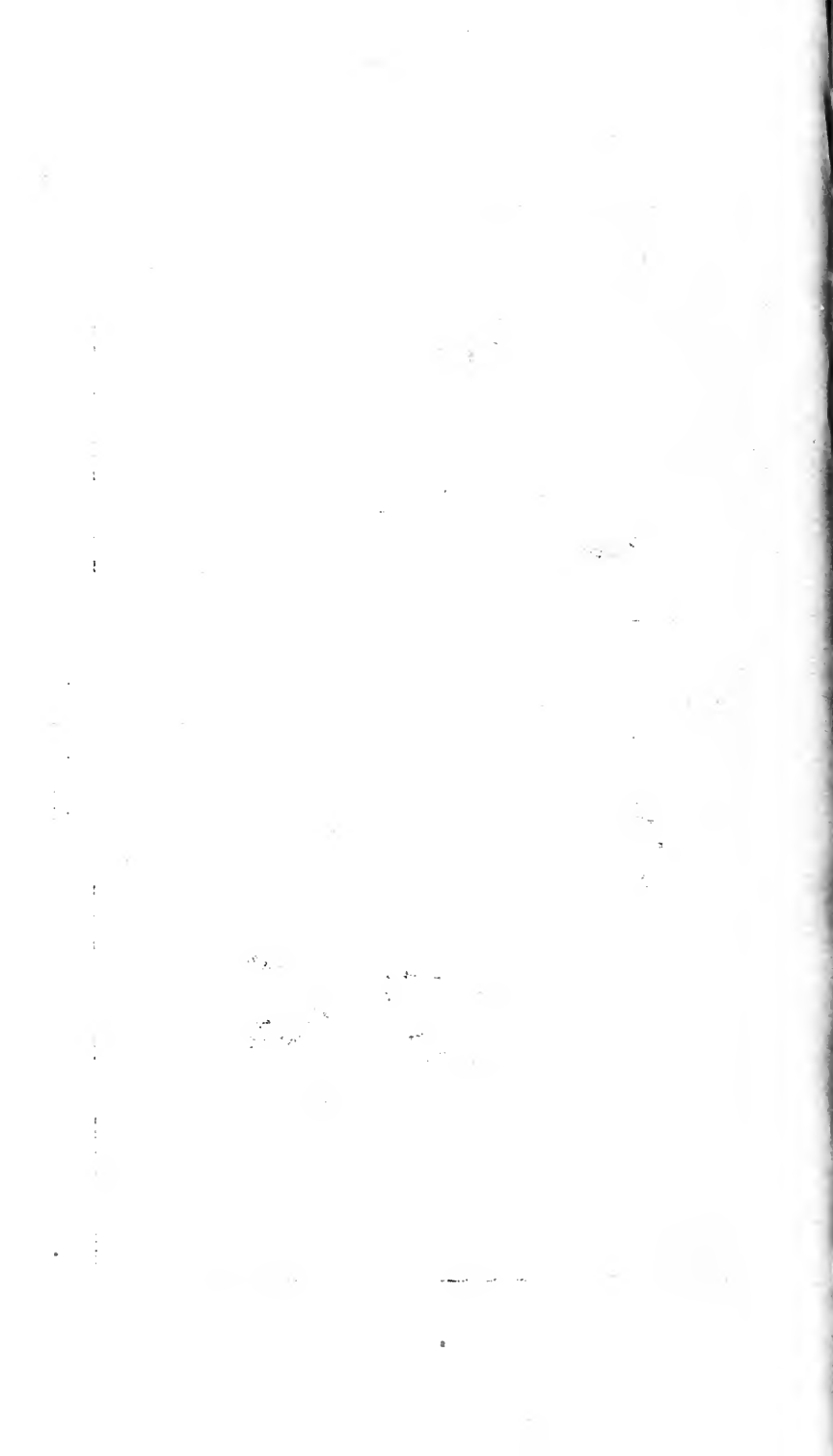
As though actuated by an impish malignity, the Foreign Office chose this moment, when the new Government was looking everywhere for funds, to press for the repayment of the £131,000 which had been paid over to the signatories of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, failing apparently to appreciate that from henceforth all available funds were destined to be placed at the disposal of Raza Khan.

As has been mentioned, the Shah's suspicions had been aroused by the fact that while his own civil list had been reduced, that of his brother had been increased. A further cause for estrangement between the brothers had arisen in the fact that the Valiahd had in the beginning of May married a cousin who had refused the Shah, he not having accepted her conditions. It was not therefore in all probability a pure coincidence that at this time the Valiahd and his bride left Persia upon a lengthy foreign tour.

The only occasion upon which I personally met the Valiahd was when I was presented to him under somewhat quaint circumstances. It is customary for the Prime Minister to hold a diplomatic reception upon the day following the Persian New Year. Learning that we were expected to attend, I and



A roadside halt.



my companions presented ourselves at the palace at the appointed time, where we were received with such extraordinary deference as to lead us to believe that we were mistaken for the staff of a Legation. Explanations, however, seemed unnecessary, and we accordingly followed our conductors and were in due course ushered into a room adjacent to the throne-room. Failing to observe the Prime Minister amongst those present, I assumed that he had not yet arrived, and turned to converse with a friend, only to receive a vigorous nudge, and to hear the anxious voice of the Foreign Minister adjuring me to take some notice of the Valiahd. Realising that things were not as we believed them to be, I was under his guidance presented to a young man who was sitting upon a sofa in the corner of the room.

Looking back on the episode one could not help feeling that his identity might have been suspected from the fact that the American Minister shared the sofa, while the Belgian Minister sat beside it; but I must confess that I was somewhat misled by the attitude of the former, who, with one leg tucked under him, was, with a countenance wrapped in meditation, engaged in the national occupation of chewing gum. In my ignorance of democratic customs, I had not hitherto associated this delicacy with the imminent presence of royalty.

During the remainder of the reception we were consoled to observe that as the members of the various Legations arrived, they almost, without exception, fell into our error.

I heard of His Royal Highness later in the course of my voyage home, he having been a passenger on a previous trip. He had not been forgotten. His desire to dine at midnight had made a distinct impression, while his appreciation of comfort, which resulted in placing a liberal supply of pillows in

his bath, will ever live in the memory of those concerned.

What might be expected from the new Cabinet was indicated by the release of the Amir Afshar, a notorious chief of North-West Persia, who had been captured under the late Government. Of him it is sufficient to say that his government had been such that he had the reputation of having made more Bolshevists than every one else in Persia.

It very early became evident that there was no intention of employing the British officers who had been engaged, and there is reason to believe that had another milch-cow been immediately forthcoming the financial mission would have also been dismissed. It was known that the party headed by the Firman Firma and Prince Firouz aimed at this as a mode of venting their spleen against the British Legation; but the Government, being of opinion that there was still something to be got from British capitalists, delayed adopting this policy meantime. The Financial Adviser did not impinge upon what the Sirdar Sipah regarded as his own preserves, and therefore did not incur his immediate displeasure like the military officers. There were prevalent rumours at this time that the Shah was endeavouring to free himself from the old man of the sea who had established himself in an unduly secure position, but whether these were correct or not the position was not in any way affected. Meantime it was decided to suspend the financial mission from its functions on the old plea that the approval of the Majlis was necessary for their employment. Profuse promises as to good intentions were made now as later, but in almost every case the matter ended with the promise.

For what it is worth, I mention a complaint

made to us by the doyen of the Majlis, from whom we received a call about this time. His grievance was that the Legation for some years had ignored the deputies, and had had dealings only with the professional politicians, and had thus failed to get adequately in touch with the national feeling. Upon another occasion a very similar criticism was made to me, the chief difference being that upon the latter occasion the criticism was directed against all the Legations, and was to the effect that formerly Persians of standing, whether politicians or not, had found it possible to obtain access to the representatives of foreign powers, but that to-day this was no longer the case.

The British Government in the middle of June, while the question of employing British officers in Northern Persia had not yet been finally decided, seized the opportunity of raising the question of the future of the South Persian Rifles. Hitherto the expense of these had been borne by the home and Indian Governments, and, although previous discussions on the subject had taken place, nothing had been decided. As it was, the result of raising the matter at the moment was to prejudice the slight chances of achieving anything in the north. The sentiment of Sirdar Sipah and the Cossacks at this time was evidenced by the behaviour of a Cossack officer, who, on being refused payment of a cheque on divisional funds which was not in order, threatened to return with his men and take the required money by force. Needless to say, this did not tend to reassure the bank officials, which in all probability was the object in view.

On the 22nd of June the long-awaited Majlis was at last opened, a quorum of deputies having been found who were willing to meet, although their attendance could not be described

as other than scanty. The most striking thing about them was the very large proportion of ecclesiastics, these forming from a third to a half of those present.

The Majlis was opened by the Shah in person, and I must admit that his State equipage was striking. The horses and their furnishings were reminiscent of Cinderella, while the coach itself aroused memories of our old friend the growler. The speech from the throne only occupied about ten minutes, and was practically inaudible. The proceedings then terminated, and the assembly proceeded, with no great zeal, to consider the credentials of the members, a process which occupied them for the ensuing couple of months.

At times the sittings were uproarious, and upon one occasion it was necessary to telephone for the assistance of the police to restore order. Amongst others, Prince Firouz's election was challenged, and, ironically enough, the whipping-boy in the ensuing debate was Great Britain. The leader of the attack based his argument chiefly upon Firouz's relations with Britain, his motive being, I was informed, that he himself had been somewhat closely associated with Germany during the war, and wished to pose as one who believed in Persia for the Persians. Firouz, who also wished to be done with the past, outvied his assailant in abuse of his former friends, and at one time the debate became distinctly lively. For a time it appeared that Firouz would be unseated, but a timely adjournment taking place, he was in the end triumphantly elected. The price of the Majlis was thereafter commonly reported to be ten thousand tomans.

In the end the only deputy who was unseated was one of the few whose election was beyond question. He had been guilty of a much more

heinous crime than election irregularities, in that he had held office under Seyd Zia. When the decision was announced, he relieved his feelings by telling the deputies a few home truths. However justified such a course may have been, it resulted in his sojourning in the police station for a considerable period.

About this time, the weather being fine, a certain amount of what can only be described as comic-opera warfare took place in the mountains. The Bolshevists were believed for the moment to have left Enzeli, but some of Kuchek Khan's bands were reported to be on the move. By the 24th the news was so far public that I received a visit from an alarmed Persian, who informed me that two thousand rebels were in the mountains to the north-west of Teheran, that they had annihilated a force of five hundred Cossacks, and that they were coming to Teheran to kill the Shah and the nobility. My suggestion that the news would prove a useful tonic did not appear to soothe him, but the startling character of his information was somewhat detracted from by another arrival, who reduced the Cossack casualties to twenty-five, and declared that the country between the scene of the engagement and Teheran was absolutely impassable. I am not sure that number one was altogether satisfied at having his fears dissipated by such a refutation of his news. Such is the form that current gossip takes in Teheran.

Upon the following day it became possible to ascertain definitely what had so far occurred. Kuchek Khan was apparently in the jungle to the west of Resht, conferring with delegates from the Government. To the north of Resht were two hundred and fifty of his men with two guns, which they had got from the Bolshevists. The latter appeared to have made by no means a bad bar-

gain, since there was strong reason for believing that only one gun worked. The party to the north-west of Teheran amounted to about twelve hundred men, and were under the command of a worthy by name Saat-ed-Douleh. He was a son of that Siphadar who, at the time of the siege of Tabriz, had distinguished himself by commanding both sides in turn, and who in his old age, under the title of Sipah Salar (which may be translated commander of armies, a title which, in view of the event just mentioned, was quite appropriate), was one of the leading dignitaries at the Court. According to one account, Saat-ed-Douleh's skirmishing was a purely family affair, the Sipah Salar having divided his estates amongst his three sons. The impartiality of the division was attested by the fact that all three were equally dissatisfied, and to this dissatisfaction they gave vent upon occasion by harrying each other's domains. This detachment were believed to be followers of Saat-ed-Douleh rather than Jangals proper, although working in conjunction with these.

For the rest the outstanding fact was that both sides—for Sirdar Sipah was taking a hand—had at the beginning violated every rule of strategy. Saat-ed-Douleh had opened operations by sending out three parties, one of four hundred to a point north-west of Teheran, a second of three hundred to the north-east, and a third some hundred strong to a point midway between the others. His aim was apparently to outflank Teheran in one or other direction. Sirdar Sipah, not to be outdone, had also sent out three detachments—two hundred to the north-east, one hundred to the north-west, and seven hundred straight north. Thus the mountains were filled with isolated parties, and some excellent opportunities for skirmishing practice were provided.

In addition to the detachments mentioned above, there were two thousand Cossacks with guns in the vicinity of Manjil, and there was no apparent reason against these occupying Resht, except that this would have been a rather too drastic action for the class of warfare which was usual in the circumstances, since it would be prejudicial to a future alliance between Kuchek Khan and the Sirdar Sipah, should political developments at any time render such a realignment advisable in their mutual interests.

A few days later a sharp engagement was fought between two hundred Cossacks and a party of the rebels in the mountains towards the north-west. The Cossacks, as already mentioned, finally retired after firing twenty-four thousand rounds and sustaining three casualties. Cynics were not indeed absent who declared that the market price of ammunition was at the moment high in rebel circles.

There had been reasons for believing, despite Bolshevik denials, that the operations in Mazanderan were upon the rebel side being directed by a small Russian staff, but in the middle of July a new development occurred which gave an even more Gilbertian turn to affairs. This was a new Russian landing at Enzeli, the avowed purpose of which was to recover from Kuchek Khan the arms and guns with which the Bolsheviks had been supplying him during the four previous years. Needless to say, the Jangali leader had not the smallest intention of facilitating their ends.

The immediate result was a quasi reshuffle of parties. Kuchek Khan continued in alliance with Saat-ed-Douleh, but in addition proposed to the Government that they should join forces against the Russians. Saat-ed-Douleh took another line, for, having nothing to apprehend from the new-

comers, he proceeded to co-operate with them. Thus the situation was now that each of the allies was acting in co-operation with the enemies of the other. The next development was that the Bolshevik Minister assured Sirdar Sipah that the new Enzeli landing had been made by Azerbaijan troops; that it was quite unauthorised, and that they would be recalled. In view of what had gone before, it hardly occasioned surprise when Saat-ed-Douleh was, a couple of weeks later, reported to have scored a success on behalf of the Government.

In the middle of August the fighting took a more practical turn, the Cossacks defeating a rebel force with a loss of two thousand prisoners according to first reports. The interest of this lay for the most part in the fact that Russian personnel and nurses were found with the rebels. As a result of this victory the country to the east of Resht was cleared of rebels to within thirty miles of that town. It was announced that if the negotiations with Kuchek Khan came to nothing, he would be the next objective. This produced an immediate protest from the Bolshevik Legation, the reason for which was that Kuchek Khan had sold to the Bolsheviks the entire Ghilan rice crop at a price which was only equal to about 15 per cent of what was usual. I am unaware whether this sale was given effect to, but if it was, it can only have resulted in transferring some of the Russian shortage to Persia. Since returning to England I observe that Kuchek Khan is reported to have been put to flight and killed by the Cossacks, but one is tempted to wonder whether that Persian Robin Hood's career has been actually brought to a conclusion.

Meanwhile, to return to more peaceable matters, the Government was by no means free from domestic worries. The Majlis, as already mentioned, showed no great alacrity in beginning the

task of examining the members' credentials. The President was believed to be loth to make a start, upon the ground that he considered that practically all had been illegally elected. Popular feeling also, after a very brief experience of the methods of the old régime, which, like the Bourbons, had learned nothing, was, with the exception of the upper classes, swinging round in favour of the late Government. There was, in addition, the ever-present question of funds, for the demands of Sirdar Sipah were daily becoming more exacting.

Prior to the Zia Cabinet the Cossacks had cost a hundred and sixty thousand tomans a month, out of which there was unquestionably a considerable diversion of funds to purposes other than were intended. One officer, who had a close personal knowledge of the internal affairs of the Division, declared that a hundred and ten thousand would be ample. The Gendarmerie had cost a somewhat smaller sum, so that the two together had a monthly budget of something under three hundred and twenty thousand a month. When, after the *coup d'état*, the policy of increasing the number of the Cossacks was adopted, it naturally followed that the monthly cost had increased, but at the end of Zia's rule the total was still in the vicinity of three hundred and fifty thousand. After the change of Government a rapid increase began, which progressed in geometrical ratio as Sirdar Sipah came to more fully appreciate his power. The Cabinet made feeble efforts from time to time to curb his rake's progress, but they knew their master, and always submitted to his demands in the end. The consequence was that by August his monthly demand amounted to a million. The fact that this was over four times the civil budget will give some idea of what such a sum means to a bankrupt country like Persia. It is true that the

numbers had increased to some extent, but it is certain that they amounted to nothing approaching the figure which was reported, and, even had this been correct, the cost had risen at a rate utterly out of proportion to the numerical increase.

Sirdar Sipah's own position was not altogether a happy one. It is true that at the moment he was supreme in the Cossack Division, but, as has been said, he was not the senior officer of the Division at the time of the coup, and his rise to power had not been looked upon with unqualified favour by his seniors and contemporaries. Consequently he had to be ever upon his guard for disaffection within his stronghold, since, were he to lose the Shah's favour at any time, his power would be but short-lived. Threatenings of trouble in the Division appear to have been the reason of a flying visit which he paid to Kazvin at the end of June, this being of so hurried a nature that he had returned before his absence was generally known. The Gendarmerie were, in addition, showing that they could by no means be disregarded. Those in Kurdistan were quite out of hand, while in Khorasan the colonel in command had adopted an attitude which was shortly to call for the greatest possible efforts upon the part of the Government. In addition, Sirdar Sipah, after, as stated, alienating British sympathy by his attitude towards the British officers, had succeeded in so conducting his relations with Rothstein that, after being refused even a small sum of money, he had begun to be seriously alarmed at the prospect of having antagonised the rival Legations simultaneously. So great had this apprehension become that by the middle of July he had so far revised his attitude that he was adopting a distinctly more friendly attitude towards the British, even offering to support the

officers' claims to compensation for their dismissal. His alarms were by no means soothed by the news of the Russian landing, which was received at that time.

The news from Russia now began to assume a serious character, since, in addition to famine, typhus and cholera were reported to be rampant. The latter alone was stated to be responsible for four hundred deaths a day in Baku, and a hundred and fifty in Astrakhan, but the epidemic was general throughout South Russia. As the voyage from Baku to Enzeli is a short one, and there was considerable intercourse, it was not improbable that the epidemic would spread to Persia, the Government of which might be trusted not to introduce any adequate precautionary measures. For the moment, however, we were much more interested with an outbreak of typhus in the Russian Legation, a very near neighbour, an interest which was by no means abated by the discovery that our servants had seen fit to get our water from the Legation well. The effects of the Russian famine were also being accentuated by a very general shortage of salt in the interior.

In the Caucasus meantime there were signs that the supporters of the Pan-Turanian movement were preparing to become active. Nuri Pasha had arrived at Baku, and Enver was expected shortly, although the presence of eighty thousand Soviet troops in the Caucasus was for the moment serving as a deterrent to other than cautious action. In Armenia both the Turks and Bolsheviks seemed to be taking a hand, while in Georgia the Bolshevik influence was confined in the main to the towns. Even in these only a very modified form of Bolshevism prevailed, for except in the case of large undertakings nationalisation had not been attempted. The Bolshevik reports

also indicated that risings were taking place at Odessa, Kharkof, and Saratof; while the description of life in Moscow which was brought by a recent visitor to the Bolshevist capital can only be described as appalling. Not only was famine general, and the quality of such food as there was, save for the Jewish despots and their supporters, indescribable, but in addition the sanitary arrangements had absolutely broken down, while the shortage of fuel was so great that many houses had been demolished for the sake of the timber utilised in their construction.

Altogether the condition of Russia seemed to be going from bad to worse. Persia's interest in Russian conditions was very vital, since, in addition to the chance of disease spreading over the frontier, there was always the possibility that the troops in the Caucasus might be driven by famine to make an incursion in search of provisions, and that, with this end in view, the Moscow Government would seek for a cause of quarrel. Whether this was ever seriously contemplated it is impossible to say, but the attitude adopted by the Bolshevist Minister shortly after this time was such as to make it appear that this possibility was being prepared for, and potential grounds for a breach of relations made ready. For some reason or other Rothstein now ceased the propaganda which he had actively carried on since his arrival.

By the middle of August the Bolshevist concentration in the Caucasus was reported to have increased to two hundred thousand men. An episode now occurred which bore the appearance of an attempt to pick a quarrel upon the part of Rothstein. There was at this time in Teheran a certain Polish Jew named Azrelenko, who, like so many of his kind, had been a Bolshevist Commissar. The field of his activities had been Baku,

but, for some reason or another, a difference had arisen between him and his colleagues, and he had found it advisable to fly to Persia. Rothstein now demanded his extradition upon the charge of embezzlement, an offence which must be the reverse of uncommon amongst Bolshevik Commissars if those who from time to time passed through Persia on their way to Greece (which is the haven sought by these gentry after enriching themselves at the expense of the Gentiles) were fair samples.

Now extradition treaties do not exist with Persia, and consequently, whether or not Azrelenko was guilty of the charge against him, the demand for his surrender was without justification. In the circumstances there was strong ground for believing that the real motive underlying the demand was political, and for inferring that Azrelenko knew more than was convenient regarding Bolshevik intentions in Persia. Sirdar Sipah, simple soldier that he was, was not concerned with such trifles as treaties, and anxious to oblige Rothstein, had Azrelenko arrested and imprisoned in the Cossack barracks outside the town. The latter proved to be a man of resource, and taking a leaf out of the suffragette and Sinn Fein book, promptly hunger-struck. As a result, he was removed with a guard of four Cossacks to the hospital in the town. Here he succeeded in getting into communication with his friends, and arrangements having been made, managed to escape through a skylight. A motor was in waiting, and he and certain other anti-Bolshevist Russians, who were apprehensive of sharing his fate, were immediately driven to the country residence of the French Minister, where they took bast, or, to be more exact, sought diplomatic protection. France in Persia looks after Polish interests.

Rothstein immediately lodged an ultimatum demanding that the refugees should be removed from the Legation. This was picketed by troops, and I believe that I am correct in stating that at one time Sirdar Sipah issued an order that the Legation should be entered, and that, had not the Cabinet received word in time, this would have been done.

Rothstein now modified his demands, only insisting that a formal demand for Azrelenko's surrender be made, and also a demand for the recall of Monsieur Hoppenot, the French Chargé d'Affaires. In addition, he required that the Foreign Minister should be dismissed. The latter demand was complied with. The Corps Diplomatic now intervened, and an undertaking was obtained both from Rothstein and Sirdar Sipah that the immunity of the French Legation would be respected, the matter being referred to Paris.

In the end an arrangement was come to whereby Azrelenko was surrendered to the police upon the understanding that he was to be tried by a mixed commission under the presidency of Monsieur de Raymond, the Belgian Minister, Rothstein having undertaken not to apply for his extradition, and the Persian Government not to agree if he did apply. How such a commission could be expected to deal satisfactorily with such a legal case I must confess that I do not understand.

Rothstein's conduct throughout was rather surprising in the disregard for diplomatic usage which it displayed, and one cannot, as I have already said, help feeling that the reason for his action lay elsewhere, and that either he was desirous of finding a pretext for covering his own dismissal, which was reported, or that he desired to take advantage of a clause in the Bolshevik-Persian Treaty, whereby Soviet troops were in

certain conditions authorised to enter Persia, and thus to billet troops upon the country. Whatever the reason, he was not supported by Moscow in his extreme action.

The two principal results of this diplomatic storm in a teacup were that for the moment Rothstein's propaganda received a very decided setback, Persian national feeling having been offended by his dictatorial attitude; and that the Government was badly frightened at its narrow escape from alienating the entire diplomatic body.

The discussion as to the future of the South Persian Rifles had meantime dragged on without any arrangement being arrived at. Both Governments were agreed as to the value of the corps, but neither was willing to bear the expense of maintaining it. The British Government, while adhering to its policy of getting quit of its Persian commitments, was willing that a limited number of British officers should remain, if the cost was borne by Persia. The Persian Cabinet, on the other hand, adopted the attitude that were they to continue to employ British officers in the south, they would have no valid excuse for not employing Russians in the north. They were fully alive to the fact that in the event of the South Persian Rifles being disbanded, there would be no troops left in the south capable of maintaining order, since numbers and distance made it impossible for the Cossacks to operate there; but they failed to appreciate the fact that the policy of the British Government had changed, and that no longer would doles and subsidies be continued indefinitely. The consequence was that, just as a year before Mushir-ed-Douleh had refused to believe that the termination of the subsidies was really proposed, and consequently refused to take any steps to reorganise Persia's finances, so now Qavam-es-

Salteneh was confident that the British would continue to defray the expenses of the South Persian Rifles. This is not a question of opinion, since Sirdar Sipah himself admitted that this was the attitude of the Government.

The consequence was what might have been expected where one side was determined to be quit of its commitments, regardless of the future, while the other was satisfied that the first would never risk the adoption of such a course. No arrangement was arrived at, and orders were issued that disbandment should be proceeded with, a third of the corps being paid off each month from August to October. Since returning to England I have seen it announced in the press that seven hundred men were to be retained, but for what purposes and on what conditions of service was not stated. It is obvious that seven hundred men cannot have been intended to carry out the duties which formerly required six thousand.

That the disbandment of the corps was an error from the point of view of the Persian Government is, I think, obvious, since it will not be found possible to maintain anything approaching an equal degree of law and order in the south with any other corps, or at anything approaching a similar cost. That Persia can but ill afford military expenditure is true, but a small proportion of what was being squandered in the north would have sufficed to keep the South Persian Rifles in being, and the south consequently in a state of law and order. The south, however, was a long way off, and with the intriguers of Teheran, "out of sight out of mind" is a favourite motto.

Whether the British attitude was well advised or not time alone can show, but it is not improbable that the policy will eventually be found to have been of the penny-wise description, for,

while the expenditure in North Persia was in the nature of reckless extravagance, being made in country where we had no real or permanent interests, money laid out in the south falls under quite a different category. The Persian Gulf has for centuries been a British sphere of influence, and in the south India and Persia have a mutual frontier, while British oil interests, of vital importance to the Navy, promise to develop greatly in the not distant future. As a consequence the British Government cannot afford to regard with equanimity the possibility of Southern Persia relapsing into a state of anarchy, a condition from which it is never very far distant. Even before the war it was found necessary to send troops to Persia, and in 1911 an Indian cavalry regiment was established at Shiraz for a year. It may thus very well eventuate that it will ultimately be found that the course which has been followed is the most costly one for Britain and India; but, so long as the British Government continues to squander money in places where it has no genuine interests, while the Indian Government indulges in unproductive and unnecessary luxuries like the new Delhi, the genuine interests of the Empire must continue to be ignored.

The British position in Persia was by no means improved by the speech which Lord Curzon made in July upon Persian affairs. In particular, his statement that he had been a friend of Persia for thirty years was not well received, and, to put it mildly, was not concurred in by the Persians.

As has been already mentioned, the new Government had experienced difficulties in Khorasan. Meshed, the capital of the province, lies five hundred and sixty miles to the east of Teheran, and although it is possible to travel by motor between the two towns, the road is none of the best. On

account of the distance, it is not easy for the Teheran Government to exercise efficient control in the province.

It will be remembered that during the Government of Seyd Zia, Qavam-es-Salteneh, who was then Governor of Khorasan, had been arrested by Mahomed Taki Khan, the colonel in command of the Khorasan Gendarmerie. It was not therefore to be wondered at that when, after the fall of Seyd Zia, Qavam-es-Salteneh became Prime Minister, Mahomed Taki Khan should have felt rather apprehensive of the consequences to himself, particularly since the Qavam, having been robbed at the time of his arrest, might be expected to harbour thoughts of revenge.

Mahomed Taki Khan was a man who had received his military training abroad, had a very respectable record as a soldier, and had under his command a force of three thousand men. In addition, he was believed to have in his possession two guns and five thousand rifles which the British Government had sold to Persia, although a certain vagueness existed as to what had become of these. In these circumstances it was not to be expected that he would prove a willing and submissive victim.

To begin with, the Government considered it wiser to take no action against him, and when, upon the division of the spoils of office, the Governorship of Khorasan fell to Samsam-us-Salteneh, an ex-Prime Minister and former Ilkhani of the Bakhtiari, he deemed it expedient to nominate Mahomed Taki Khan as Deputy Governor. The latter sent a polite reply to the effect that while he would be delighted to receive Samsam, it must be understood that it was only upon the distinct understanding that he did not bring any Bakhtiari in his train.

Upon this the Cabinet decided that Mahomed Taki should be superseded, and Colonel Glerup, the Swedish Commandant of the Gendarmerie, was despatched to Khorasan with a Persian colonel who had been appointed to take over the command. Mahomed Taki had meantime been extending his influence towards the west, and at Sabzawar met Colonel Glerup and his companion. It is to be feared that he did not show the respect due to his superior officer, for Colonel Glerup's explanation that he was upon a tour of inspection was received with incredulity, while the Persian colonel's statement that he was upon a pilgrimage to Meshed excited open derision. After being detained for a short time they were both permitted to depart, and returned to Teheran after a somewhat uncomfortable experience.

The Government had now to admit that Mahomed Taki Khan was in what amounted to open rebellion, and accordingly steps were taken to deal with him. The Cossack success in Mazanderan had eased the situation, and it was found possible to divert a considerable force to deal with the menace in Khorasan. Accordingly it was determined to despatch a force of four thousand Cossacks to restore order in the eastern province, and, by the 1st of September, the first detachment had left Teheran. Mahomed Taki Khan was not idle, and there was reason to believe that he was incorporating into his forces some of the tribesmen who, during the war, had been trained in the East Persia Levy under British officers. In addition, it was reported that Mahomed Taki Khan's brother, Hadir Kuli Khan, who commanded the Gendarmerie in Isfahan, was actively recruiting amongst the men discharged from the South Persian Rifles, whose disbandment had now been begun. He had as yet made no move, but there

was always the disturbing possibility for the Government that were the Cossacks, who had been sent to the east, to meet with a reverse which entailed a further weakening of the force in the capital, he might move on Teheran with a force possessing a considerable stiffening of British-trained troops.

It is a little difficult to form an exact appreciation of what exactly Mahomed Taki Khan's movement stood for, and to ascertain whether it was primarily defensive, or whether it contemplated a restoration of the Zia régime, and all that it stood for, which, in the event of its re-establishment, would almost certainly have included the deposition of the Shah. Mahomed Taki Khan was generally reported to have stated that the restoration of Seyd Zia would follow his success, and it is equally unquestionable that the new Government had succeeded in bringing about such a revulsion of feeling amongst the humbler classes that any rebel success would have met with support in the capital. This was not to be, for in October a brief statement appeared in the papers to the effect that Mahomed Taki had been defeated and killed.

By the middle of August the Majlis had at last finished its internal squabbles, and was ready to proceed to business. The first matter to be dealt with was naturally the reply to the Shah's speech, and here Prince Firouz came out strongly as the leader of the extreme anti-British party—it might almost be said the organiser. The speech had contained a statement to the effect that Persia's relations with all other countries were satisfactory, and to this Firouz moved an amendment expressing regret that Great Britain formed the one exception in this respect. This proved rather too much for even the Majlis, and only five deputies were found to support the motion.

But if they were not prepared to proceed to the same extremes as Firouz, the deputies were nevertheless violently anti-British, and we began to appreciate that we were destined to be the next object of attack. Abuse of the mission now began in the press, the line taken being that since the military advisers had been got rid of, it only remained to secure our removal in order to eliminate the last consequences of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. Rothstein was also known to be pressing for our removal, so that expediency was added to inclination upon the part of the deputies. Seeing that if the matter came up for discussion in the Majlis a defeat was certain, the Government determined to be beforehand with its critics, and upon the 1st of September an intimation was received from the Prime Minister that he could no longer avail himself of our services, and that our contracts with the Persian Government were therefore cancelled. So terminated the plans of reform which were aimed at under the Agreement, the sole remainder of which was a revised Customs tariff.

It seemed possible that we would not be the last victims of anti-European feeling, for, having disposed of the British in Persian service, the popular agitation was next directed against the Swedes. The feeling was, however, against all Europeans, irrespective of nationality, which caused it to vary in degree alone. Of this a striking instance occurred upon the 13th of September, the great day of lamentation of the Persian year, when, as I have mentioned elsewhere, the anti-European feeling became so extreme that under threats of violence the police deemed it necessary to remove all Europeans from the vicinity of the processions, an unheard-of incident in Teheran, where hitherto courteous treatment at the hands of the inhabitants could always be counted upon.

One more episode during these months calls for mention in view of possible after-effects. It was known that the Government were negotiating with American interests during the latter part of our stay in Teheran, and in the end of November an announcement appeared in the press that a concession to explore for and work oil deposits in the five northern provinces of Persia—Azerbaijan, Astrabad, Ghilan, Mazanderan, and Khorasan—had been granted to the Standard Oil Company. Now if nothing had previously occurred regarding the oil deposits in these provinces, this would not call for any remark, but in actual fact the position was as follows. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company hold the D'Arcy concession, which entitles them to a monopoly of oil production in all the Persian provinces with the exception of the five just mentioned. In the days before the Anglo-Russian Convention, a concession to a national of one country had usually resulted in a compensating concession to a national of the other, and, in the case of oil, the D'Arcy concession had, although at a later date, been counterbalanced by one which covered the five northern provinces, which had been granted to a Russian named Khastoria. With the introduction of the Constitution it had become necessary to the validity of concessions that they should be ratified by the Majlis. There was, I believe, a certain vagueness about the Khastoria concession, but this was not considered to affect its validity, for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had considered it worth while to acquire it for a large payment. Thus the concession which is now reported to have been granted to the Standard Oil Company was already in the possession of a British company. It would accordingly be of interest to know what steps the British Government will take to assert the Anglo-Persian Oil

Company's rights. Apart from this, the granting of the concession should be an advantage from the British point of view. It cannot be questioned that in pursuit of concessions the Americans have been pursuing an anti-British policy in Persia and Mesopotamia, and now that they have obtained what they aimed at, and that the Standard Oil Company has spread its tentacles into yet another country, it may be hoped that this line of action will cease. Even if this is not the case, the result should be beneficial, for in future the American interests in North Persia will serve as a useful buffer between the real British sphere in the south and the Russian pressure and intrigue from the north, and upon American interests will fall the first brunt of Russian aggression when next the bear resumes his move towards the south. In view of the selfish policy which the United States pursued during the late war, and their evident intention of making the most of the peace at the expense of those who fought, there is a certain satisfaction in the possibility of their embroiling themselves in future complications. Lastly, although this is only a personal opinion, there is very little prospect of the Bolsheviks allowing either English or Americans to work extensive concessions in what has been for centuries regarded by Russia as her sphere of action. Thus, although the Anglo-Persian Oil Company has been dispossessed by American intrigue, there is a fair chance that they will have the satisfaction of watching their supplanter's difficulties in the future.

Here I must leave the record of events in Teheran, for a fortnight after our dismissal I left Teheran in company with an Arab driver, who had been a Turkish officer during the war. My baggage had preceded me in the charge of a very charming

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Kurd, who, as I was informed during my journey, bore a somewhat lurid reputation in his own country for bloodthirsty propensities. Be that as it may, it was impossible to wish for a more agreeable or helpful servant on such a journey, and my only regret was when on our arrival in Baghdad he declared that he had had enough of service.

The journey was by no means so exciting as had been that of a year before. It is true that I found Hamadan in a state of excitement due to the discovery the previous day of an attempt upon the part of local Bolsheviks to assassinate the governor, Salar Lashkar, who was a brother of Firouz. The British Vice-Consul having to some degree been instrumental in the discovery, this tended to an improvement of relations between the family and the British, a desire for which upon the Persian side had been inferred prior to my departure from Teheran. It is to be hoped that any such advances will be received with caution should they proceed further. The plot was not so much the work of Persians as of various returning refugees with whom the town swarmed at that time, it being believed that there were over five thousand Armenians, Assyrians, and other Caucasians of sorts established in the locality.

For the rest, the journey was practically devoid of interest, the only events which broke its monotony being the news that one of the villages which we passed had been raided three days before, and our driving into a hole in the dark which resulted in a smashed wheel. The former was, however, so much an event of everyday occurrence as to excite no interest, while the latter might have happened anywhere. On the 21st I reached rail-head and left Persia, never, I imagine, to return.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OUTLOOK IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

IT is at all times difficult to forecast the future, but particularly so in a country such as Persia, where the greatest certainty would appear to be that the unexpected will happen. It may, however, be of some service to state the position as it seems to be at the present time both in Persia and the adjacent countries. With regard to the latter I must in the main rely upon second-hand information, since my experience of India and Mesopotamia has been of the briefest, while the others I have not visited. Persia cannot, however, from the British point of view, be considered apart from the rest of the middle east, and in particular from Mesopotamia, and I have accordingly ventured to touch upon the state of affairs in countries whose future must directly or indirectly react upon that of Persia. I am aware that my views will meet with the reverse of approbation from many, and that I shall be told that I do not know what I am talking about; but while ready to admit this as regards many points so far as I am personally concerned, I cannot do so with respect to many of those with whom I have had the opportunity of coming in contact, and discussing the various countries with which their work had made them acquainted.

The position in Persia in the middle of Septem-

ber 1921 was as follows. In the north-west the position of the Government was weak, a considerable part of the province being directly or indirectly under Turkish or Kurdish control. In the spring the Government troops had, through the rashness of their commander, sustained a somewhat serious set-back, while Tabriz, always a centre of extremists, was very much disposed to go its own way. Farther to the east the greater part of Ghilan was under the control of a native republic, which the Jangalis had established under Kuchek Khan. The Cossacks were certainly sufficiently strong to deal with this in many places, but it was questionable whether they would be able to effect anything against the Jangalis should they take refuge in their thorn jungles. It was in addition doubtful whether the elimination of Kuchek Khan could at the moment be regarded as entirely advantageous, since, by bringing the Persian Government into direct touch with the Bolshevik base at Enzeli, occasion might arise for various grounds of quarrel, such as the disposal of the rice crop already referred to. Moreover, while Resht, formerly the chief town of the province, and now reduced by the Bolsheviks to a state of semi-ruin, could at any time be occupied, no advantage was to be gained from such action so long as it was not possible to gain control of Enzeli. The Cossacks, after their experiences during the previous year, might be expected to be very chary of again venturing upon an advance towards Enzeli unless definitely assured against the intervention of the Bolshevik fleet, while it might be anticipated that the Moscow Government would be reluctant to give any assurance which would hinder them from intervening to protect the local soviet, or to prevent the suppression of the influence of the party of revolution in a base

which might at any time be necessary to their plans.

Khorasan, as already stated, was in open revolt under Mahomed Taki Khan, and were he to be successful in defeating the Cossacks who had been sent against him, it was probable that he would risk the march upon the capital, with the object of overthrowing the Government and re-establishing the reformist rule. In this event it was to be anticipated that Hadir Kuli Khan would co-operate from Isfahan, where he was meantime engaged in strengthening the force under his control by the enrolment of British-trained recruits. In the south the only force capable of maintaining order and keeping the tribes within bounds was in process of dissolution. In the western provinces there was considerable unsettlement. Some of the younger Bakhtiari khans were occupied in family squabbles. In Luristan a general bast had only recently been brought to a conclusion, while the situation in Kurdistan was such that serious developments might at any time occur.

In Teheran the Government existed upon the sufferance of Sirdar Sipah, who in turn depended largely upon the favour of the Shah. At the same time the Cabinet was endeavouring to maintain the appearance of a constitutional Government by securing the support of the Majlis, which, in number but little above a quorum, was—under the control of an extremist group—mainly concerned with its own interests. There was reason to believe that both Prince Firouz and Sirdar Sipah were anxious that the Shah should make a second foreign tour, each aspiring to the regency in his absence. Such a course would have probably met with His Majesty's approval, were it not questionable whether, if he left the country, he

would ever return, and even this contingency he might have been prepared to face if permitted to take the crown jewels with him.

Lastly, there was every prospect that after the middle of October the Treasury would be empty, since no attempt had been made to put revenue-producing reforms into effect, with the only prospects of refilling it consisting in the chance that the bank might be content to continue lending indefinitely upon the security of future oil royalties, or that an American loan might be arranged upon the same security. Either of these contingencies would, it is true, have been but putting off the evil day by squandering the future revenues of the country, but this process had been in full swing for some time, and the difficulties of future Governments weighed lightly with one whose main concern was to satisfy the demands of its taskmaster. Should this be no longer possible, there were those who anticipated an outbreak on the part of the Cossacks, although this was not the general view. It must always be remembered that a state of bankruptcy, which in a European state would unquestionably precipitate a crisis of the first order, seems to make very little difference in states such as Turkey and Persia, where the officials rely upon outside emoluments to an extent which renders a lengthy suspension of salaries possible.

Lastly, and most important, there was the Bolshevist menace; and what the Bolshevist intentions were was a matter of utter uncertainty. It might be that, having eliminated British influence, they would be content to trust to peaceful penetration, or rely on the expectation that the alienation of the interests which had hitherto provided funds would result in

internal disturbances which would furnish an excuse for armed intervention under the treaty. Also there was the possibility that if Sirdar Sipah was unsuccessful in dealing with Mahomed Taki Khan, these two, with the addition of Kuchek Khan, might engage in a three-handed indecisive contest, which, besides paralysing the forces of law and order, such as they were, would furnish the excuse for armed intervention. If European relations rendered this inexpedient at the moment, the same result could be attained by an incursion by the troops of one or other of the so-called independent republics, who could always be repudiated once their aim was accomplished.

Since September, if press reports are to be relied upon, Sirdar Sipah has succeeded in achieving decisive victories against both his opponents, while the Government troops have sustained a serious defeat in Azerbaijan. It is impossible, however, from the meagre reports in the daily press to assess these facts at their true value, and accordingly they may mean more or less than appears at first sight. In addition, it is possible that the concession to the Standard Oil Company may have resulted in either a considerable cash payment, or a loan, either upon the royalties payable by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, or those which are presumably payable under the new concession. Apart from these facts no change has, so far as I am aware, occurred since my departure.

Such being the present position in Persia, what is the outlook for the immediate future? There are apparently three possibilities—that things will continue much as at present, that another revolution will take place, or that a general break-up will occur. In a more highly-organised country the chances in favour of one of the two latter alter-

natives would be considerable, but we cannot apply European standards of conduct to Persia with any expectation that they will furnish a reliable gauge of action.

The chance of any revolution taking place which would effect a vital change in the position is, I believe, remote. That Sirdar Sipah might expel the present or some future Government by force of arms, or that, conversely, he might be overthrown by a conspiracy on the part of the politicians and his military rivals, is always possible; but such an event would only result in the transfer of office from one group of the same class to another. The hope that such an event would import more than the transfer of the sweets of office from the dispossessed to their supplanters, or that a change of Government in such circumstances would be the prelude to an attempt at reform, may be disregarded.

That any genuine revolution will be attempted is improbable in the extreme. The Zia coup was only rendered possible by the fact that the probability that the British evacuation would be followed by an advance upon the part of the elements of disorder in Ghilan, induced the only military force in the country which seriously counted, to co-operate with the reformers in an effort to dislodge a Government which declined to do anything. Now that the military are in the position of controlling the Government, the chances of such an event are almost negligible. It must be kept in view, as has already been pointed out, that the numbers from whom men with sufficient education and knowledge of modern methods can be drawn are, apart from the present ruling class, extremely limited. Seyd Zia had the utmost difficulty in finding suitable members for his Government, and even these were almost

entirely destitute of administrative experience. Moreover, the failure of the Zia Cabinet had a very disheartening effect upon the rational party of reform.

Action by the extremists seems equally improbable, apart from Russian intervention. That there is a certain amount of discontent is unquestionable, but that there is any considerable body of opinion in favour of Bolshevik doctrines I do not believe. Had the reverse been the case, it was to be expected that Kuchek Khan, who openly advocated the overthrow of the aristocracy and the establishment of a republic, would have met with more success during the years for which he exercised control over very considerable numbers of rebels, but in practice his influence was almost entirely confined to Ghilan.

A general break-up is equally unlikely meantime, provided always that the Bolsheviks refrain from armed intervention, and that nothing occurs to induce the Shah to fly the country. An armed occupation of the north by Russia would almost certainly result in the provinces throwing off all pretence of adherence to any Teheran Government, which might result from such interference. The Persian does not understand the conception of a republic any more than the peasants of Southern Russia understood the policy of "pale-pink imperialism" imposed upon General Wrangel by the Western Powers, and were the Shah removed the only cohesive influence would have been eliminated, and local and tribal influences would have full play. Such a contingency would almost of necessity involve British intervention in the south.

Any hope of financial reform may equally, I believe, be considered as out of the question. That the resources of the country are adequate

to make it self-supporting is undoubted. That no great measure of reform would be necessary to achieve this end I for one believe, but an essential condition would be the suppression of the present corruption, and this would entail the employment of foreign advisers with practically dictatorial powers. Such powers will never be given by the present ruling class. Financial advisers may be appointed, and will be welcomed from any country which is prepared to advance money, but when they endeavour to make their posts other than well-paid sinecures, excuses will be found to get rid of them, or at least so much energy will be concentrated on rendering their reforms nugatory that matters will remain as before. It is true that in the past Persia has been in a position when her income and expenditure failed to balance, and that reforms have been given effect to which have put her finances once more upon a sound basis. At the accession of Nasr-ed-Din Shah there was a deficit of one million tomans upon a budget of ten, and Amir Nizam, his first Prime Minister, restored matters within the brief period of two months; but in these days there was no foreign debt to be faced. As it was, the unpopularity which he incurred was so great that the intrigues which resulted ultimately cost Amir Nizam both the favour of his sovereign and his life.

In all the circumstances it would appear probable that, apart always from foreign intervention, matters will continue much as at present, one semi-bankrupt ministry succeeding another for brief periods, each in turn considering the present alone, and pledging such of the country's assets and future revenues as are within its power to foreign lenders, thus rendering more certain and bringing nearer the time when a final crisis

must occur. Side by side with this rake's progress we may expect that the centrifugal movement, which first manifested itself at the time of the deposition of Mohamed Ali Shah, will continue to grow, and to become more fully realised. As has been mentioned, there is a school of opinion which regards the events of that time, not as having consisted of a revolution, but as having been the first outward manifestation of the fact that the real power had passed from the town khans, who like the country were semi-bankrupt, to the heads of the great country families and tribes. As yet this fact seems to be appreciated by few, even of those concerned, apart from the Bakhtiari khans and the Amir Afshar. The former to-day constitute for all practical purposes an *imperium in imperio*, and it would require little to render them entirely independent. Azerbaijan is to a great extent outside the control of the Government, and, in addition to Bakhtiari, Fars and Kermanshah are even now almost ready to disregard the central Government. Whether events will be permitted to proceed to such an extent as to bring this about, or whether a statesman will arise possessing both the support and force of character necessary to bring about the necessary reforms, time alone can show. There are not wanting amongst those of the younger generation who have been educated abroad, men who fully appreciate their country's needs, and who have learned to adopt a more altruistic attitude than is at present customary; but whether any such will be able to gain sufficient support to enable him to embark upon drastic reforms, and whether, having obtained such support, he will have the strength to proceed ruthlessly, regardless of personal risk and class interests, is very doubtful. Such men are rare.

Let us now turn for a moment to the position in Mesopotamia. My first feeling upon entering the country—and it is, I believe, a common one—was amazement that any one should have the smallest wish to have anything to do with it; and my second, to admire the wisdom of the soldier who, on having the reputed site of the Garden of Eden at Gurmiah pointed out to him, said that “it would take no . . . flaming sword to keep him outside.” Proceeding from the individual to the general, one was tempted to wonder what had induced the British Government to occupy Mesopotamia, and why, the war being over, it continued to do so instead of clearing out at the first opportunity.

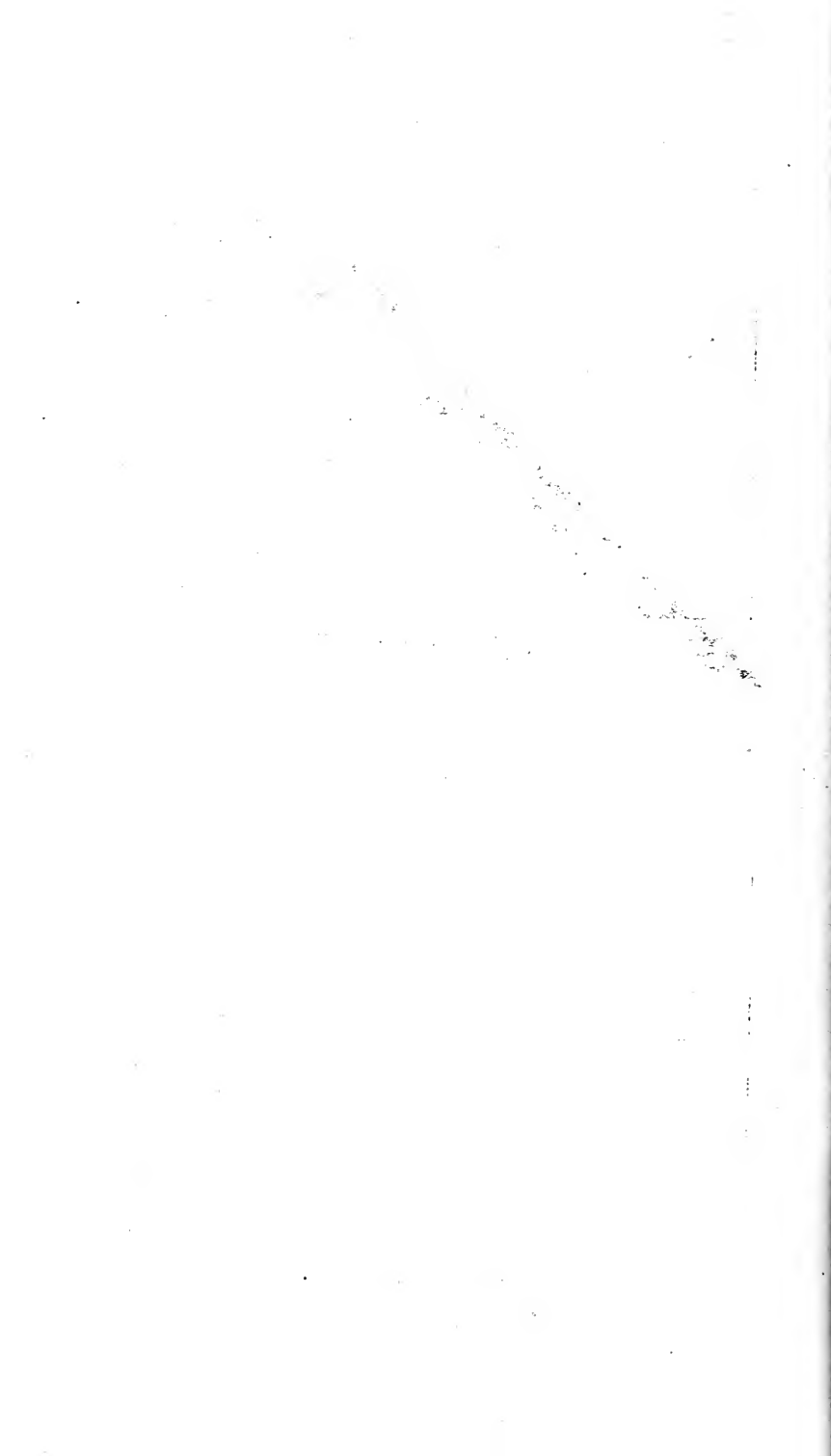
It is easy to understand the motives which led to the first expedition at the beginning of the war. The preservation of the Persian oil-fields was of vital importance, as was also the denying of the Persian Gulf littoral to the Germans and Turks. These objects were adequately secured by the occupation of Basra and its hinterland, and it is notorious that the original expedition was directed to securing these objectives alone. What it was hoped to accomplish by extending the objective of the expedition to the occupation of Baghdad, and ultimately of the whole country, it is impossible to say. We have been told that the result was to hold up large numbers of the enemy, but if the truth were known we may suspect that we would find that the reverse was the case in the ultimate result. In a recent book the odds in our favour have been stated as having been six to one. I have suggested that the reason may have been that some of our amateur strategists, determined to pursue side-shows at any cost, considered that the capture of Baghdad might serve to divert popular attention from



Babylon the great is fallen.



Ishtar Gate, Babylon.



failures in more vital directions, or it may be that recollections of the 'Arabian Nights' stirred the War Cabinet, which, ignoring more dependable if less romantic records, trusted that the Baghdad of good Haroun-al-Raschid had survived the intervening millenium. Whatever the reason, to Baghdad they went, but why they stayed it is even more difficult to say.

Imperial necessities cannot have had anything to do with the matter, for the occupation of Basra and its hinterland would effect all that is necessary in this respect. The extension of our rule further to the north only provides a potential field for future trouble, and serves as an irritant to Turkey and the native population alike, since in these parts religion counts for much. At no time have our interests lain in that direction. It is true that the evacuation of the greater part of Mesopotamia would deprive Mr Winston Churchill of a fruitful field for his ingenuity; but while I must admit that, from what I have heard of his schemes, these evince indications of genius, they at the same time possess characteristics which lead to the belief that Mr Heath Robinson must have been called in to assist in their framing.

We have all heard that Mesopotamia was once the granary of the world, and that it might easily once again occupy that position, but the cost of bringing this about has not been pointed out with equal clarity. Great Britain is not the only country which is alive to the advantages of developing such countries as Mesopotamia, and it is scarcely surprising to learn that the Turks had been occupied with the problem of restoring it to its pristine prosperity. The question had been investigated by an eminent engineer employed by the Turkish Government, and he re-

ported that the project was perfectly feasible. The matter was not proceeded with for the same reason that it will not be proceeded with to-day—namely, the question of expense. If I remember rightly the estimated cost was not far short of forty millions, and allowing for the unforeseen developments which almost invariably arise in schemes of such magnitude, probably fifty millions would have been nearer the actual cost. It might be thought that there was no reason against dealing with the country piecemeal, but the factors of desert and marsh are of such a nature that the question of irrigation and drainage must, as regards the main parts of the project, be handled as a whole. What the cost would be to-day it is impossible to say,—probably a hundred million would not be in excess of the ultimate cost,—and if one thing is certain it is that neither Great Britain nor Mesopotamia will be able to provide a fraction of such a sum for this purpose for many a day to come.

Moreover, even assuming that the money could be provided, there is no labour available to cultivate the newly-irrigated land. The entire population of Mesopotamia only amounts to about three millions, and that section of it which lives by agriculture is already fully employed. I have heard it suggested that the wandering Arabs of Arabia would be glad to settle and take to an agricultural life, but I am unaware that this is more than a supposition. There always remains coolie labour from India, and it must be admitted that the Indian element in Mesopotamia is on the increase; but any proposal for the importation of such labour upon a large scale would meet with opposition from the present population, and would, in all probability, raise violent opposition in India. Truth to tell, there is strong reason

to believe that a great part of the objection, of which we hear so much, to the conditions of coolie labour abroad is based not so much on philanthropic grounds, as on the fear that the depletion of the home market will compel native employers to pay better wages. For the above reason it is impossible to regard irrigation projects as furnishing the *raison d'être* of the British occupation.

After agriculture, oil is frequently mentioned as a reason for retaining control of the country, but, on the face of it, there would seem to be sufficient oil available under the Persian concession to provide for the needs of the British Navy for many years to come. That being the case, the expenditure in blood and treasure which the continued occupation of Mesopotamia must of necessity entail would scarcely appear to be justified upon this ground, particularly since it has been declared that there is no intention of making Mesopotamian oil a British monopoly. It has, of course, to be kept in view that a syndicate, prior to the war, obtained a concession from the Turkish Government for oil territory in the vicinity of Mosul, and it would be of interest to know who are concerned directly and indirectly in this venture.

Setting aside Imperial necessities, agriculture, and oil, it is difficult to discover any redeeming feature in Mesopotamia. Off-hand, those which are readily called to mind are dates, ruins, and the beauty of some of the fabrics in the bazars, but none of these impress one as legitimate reasons for occupying the country.

None of the obvious reasons seeming to furnish the real reason, it is impossible not to call to mind large numbers of prosperous-looking and furtive-eyed individuals, attired in scarlet fez and white ducks, who throng the streets of Baghdad in

particular, and to wonder whether they might not have something to do with the matter. They also appeared to furnish a solution of the problem which has exercised many worthy people—namely, the ultimate destination of the ten tribes of Israel. I have never been able to understand why these should be supposed to have decided to remove themselves from the neighbourhood of the places to which they were transported, and in view of their numbers in Mesopotamia and adjacent countries there is every reason to believe that they did not do so. In Baghdad alone the Jews form a third of the population, and if appearances go for anything, much the most prosperous third.

The suggestion that Jewish interests may furnish the reason for our retention of Mesopotamia must, I admit, be regarded as a somewhat frivolous one, but I am not sure that there may not be something in it all the same. It is notorious that Jewish influence with the present Cabinet in general, and the Prime Minister in particular, is great. Mr Lloyd George and King Feisul alike have as financial advisers members of the house of Sassoon.

To appreciate how far this influence may extend, it is only necessary to consider the position of Palestine at the present time. Our reasons for occupying the country are about as unsound strategically, I imagine, as those for going to Mesopotamia, but as to those for remaining we are left in no delusion. Palestine is to be turned into a national home for the Jews, and the British taxpayer is to have the honour of bearing at least a considerable part of the expense. The reason for this is that the Jews wish for Palestine, but I have yet to learn that desire alone is a sufficient title to the possessions of others. What is the Jewish justification for claiming Palestine ?

About 1200 B.C., during a time when internal weakness compelled Egypt to withdraw her garrisons, the Jews crossed the Jordan, and in a series of campaigns, conducted in a manner which must have made the German General Staff despair of being able to emulate their barbarity, conquered part of the country. That they ever succeeded in establishing themselves in the whole of Palestine would seem to be somewhat doubtful. In any case, their tenure of the more fertile parts was at all times precarious, seeing that the country lay on the route between the great civilisations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. In due course they were conquered, and large numbers deported to other countries, and of these only a fraction evinced any desire to return when given the opportunity of doing so by Cyrus the Great. Thereafter those who had returned continued in more or less subjection under Persians, Alexander's successors, and the Romans in turn, until the latter, to whom they were in the nature of an Irish problem, growing tired of their perpetual riots, suppressed them under Hadrian, and banished all from Jerusalem.

Thus the Jewish claim to Palestine is grounded upon the fact that they succeeded over three thousand years ago in conquering the country with every circumstance of barbarism, that they more or less continued to occupy it for some thirteen hundred years, and that they were expelled nearly eighteen hundred years ago. I am unaware of any other claim which was based upon a similar title ever being given one second's consideration. With far greater justice could Spain be turned into a national home for the Moors, or New York for the Red Indians, since both these evictions are much more recent, but so far the consciences of America and Britain

do not seem to be seriously stirred over these questions; but then neither the Moors or Red Indians have become the money-lenders of the world.

The Government is liberal of assurances that it is proposed to govern Palestine with strict impartiality as between Jew and Moslem, but there is every reason to doubt whether any effect is being given to such protestations. The Arab point of view cannot be better stated than in the words of the Arab Delegation, which at the time of writing is visiting this country in an attempt to obtain justice for their fellow-countrymen. These are as follows:—

“Let it be understood that the Arabs of Palestine are not anti-Semitic. As a matter of fact, they are more tolerant of the Jew than the Christian peoples of the West have been. What the Arab will not tolerate is the political Zionist, the Zionist who has come into his country with the idea of dominating him and becoming his master.

“No amount of assurance that this is not the intention can avail when the Arab sees the Hebrew language, which is spoken by barely 1 per cent of the population, recognised as an official language of the State; when the tide of Jewish immigration pours into his country, bringing in a mass of undesirable aliens who are a burden to the community; while this foreign immigrant labourer deprives him of his daily bread, and is paid at a higher rate of wages than himself for half the amount of work which he, the Arab, can accomplish; and when contracts for public works are, in the majority of cases, given to Jews whose quotations are usually higher than those of Arabs; when he sees that the High Commissioner is a Jew and Zionist, the Legal Secretary, the Controller of Stores, the Director of Commerce and Industries, and the Chief of Immigration are all Jews. Every department of the Government has been swamped by Jews, the majority of whom are new and without previous experience. Laws and regulations are enacted aiming at checking the liberty of the Arab and preventing him from expansion. The press is muzzled. Patriotic Arabs are arrested on the pretext that they are a danger to the State. Farmers, who for generations have

owned their lands and lived on them, are asked to sign leases, the Government claiming that these lands had reverted to it as the successor to the Turk. The idea behind this action is to establish the Government's title to these lands so that in time they could be sold to the Zionists.

“The Government of Palestine desires to exert her influence in the management of the Islamic wakfs, in spite of the fact that Moslem law emphatically prohibits any one but Moslems managing Islamic wakfs; and in spite of the fact, too, that the opinion of the Islamic religious body, which the High Commissioner convened, had plainly expressed its unwillingness that the Government should interfere with their wakfs, it still hesitates to put the direction of these wakfs into Moslem hands. The wakf properties of the Greek Orthodox Church, with which the Turks never interfered, holding them as the sacred property of the Church, which can never be sold, are being offered for sale by a Commission appointed by the administration in such large lots that only the Zionist can buy them, while if they were divided up into smaller lots they would find many Arab purchasers.

“This, and much more, the Arab sees daily passing before his eyes, and his soul burns in him.

“The Arabs put their case before Englishmen and ask them to judge if justice has been done in Palestine. They put their case before the whole civilised world and ask it to decide whether there is not reason for complaint.”

Wakfs, it should be explained, are charitable endowments.

The above is admittedly an ex-parte statement, but so far as I have been able to ascertain from those familiar with the country, it presents an accurate picture of what is being done at the present time. That the British public has been to a great extent kept in the dark respecting a policy so diametrically opposed to British sentiments of justice is certain. Almost as certain is it that the Jewish influence in Downing Street will render the Arab appeal vain, and that the appeal to the civilised world will equally fall upon deaf ears, since the prospect of getting rid of one of the least desirable elements of their

populations will outweigh any sense of justice in other countries. An additional incentive to do nothing lies in the fact that the ultimate odium will fall upon Britain. Not to mince matters, the Cabinet appears to be following a policy which will result in a very nasty piece of oppression being fixed upon the British, without their being aware that they have been guilty thereof.

Let us now turn from the moral aspect to the more material one of self-interest.

There is, I think, an undue tendency to regard the Jews as a race, rather than as followers of the same religion, and to judge of all Jews by those whom we see in England, who, to a great extent, are British by birth and education, and differ in their outlook but little from those amongst whom they live. Whatever may be the case at the present time, there is every reason to believe that in earlier times the Jews were by no means averse to proselytising. If I remember rightly, the Jews in the Roman Empire are estimated to have numbered between five and six million, and it is difficult to believe that all these had their origin in a country the size of Wales.

In order to appreciate clearly the way in which Jews are regarded in the East, it is only necessary to consider the alien Jews who swarm in the East End of London. Political refugee is a wide term, and not infrequently it covers those who have left their former country with the approval, if not the actual assistance, of the police. Many of these East End Jews are of criminal and revolutionary tendencies, while the effect which they may be expected to exert on the race amongst whom they settle is well shown by the result of the effort made by the Ministry of National Service during the war to utilise them for national

work. While no attempt was made to take them for the Army, it was considered that it might be possible to use them for manual labour. Some five thousand were medically examined, but through disease their physique was found to be so low that only about a hundred and eighty were considered fit for work upon the roads, or less than 4 per cent, and that at a time when even for the Army no high standard was exacted. In the ultimate result the number proved to be much less, for a trial of a few weeks resulted in the greater part of the hundred and eighty being proved to be utterly useless.

Were it intended that the result of our present policy in Palestine would be to free this country of these aliens *en bloc*, there might be some excuse for risking the odium which will be incurred in other quarters; but as a matter of fact what is actually happening is, that we are relieving other nations of their undesirables, and that at the risk—nay, certainty—of incurring the hatred of the Arabs who assisted us during the war in particular, and our Moslem fellow-subjects in general.

When discussing the matter with an official who had recently returned from Jerusalem, I mentioned my apprehensions as to the oppression of the Arabs, only to be told that these were, he believed, groundless, since seven hundred thousand Arabs were not going to submit indefinitely to oppression at the hands of seventy thousand Jews, and that sooner or later a massacre would result. Since this would almost appear to be justified, and the direct result of the Jews' own actions, there might be nothing in such a result to cause apprehension to Great Britain, but, as matters stand, the British Army would be called in to slaughter the Arabs. In other words, the

situation will be that, having by a course of oppression and dispossession goaded the Arabs to rebellion in self-defence, the Army will be utilised to crush them; so it will appear to Moslems. The effect in India may readily be imagined.

I cannot do better than conclude this portion of our inquiry with a few sentences from the speech which Lord Sydenham, who has great experience of the East, made at a luncheon to the Palestine Arab Delegation. Mr Balfour's declaration on Zionism was, he said, loaded with dynamite. It had caused the loss of many lives, and threatened the peace of the Near East. It had been obtained, and support secured, by a long course of underground proceedings of which the British people had no idea. The Jews were a ruthless people, who had no more right to Palestine than the descendants of the Romans to Britain, which they ruled longer and benefited far more than the Jews in Palestine. The Zionist grip was rapidly tightening upon the unfortunate people of Palestine. "If we do not give peace to Palestine now," he concluded, "there is no doubt that we shall light a fire in the Near East which it will strain all our resources to extinguish by using military force against the people fighting for the freedom of their own land." Such is the view of an ex-Governor-General, and there I will leave the question of Palestine.

Returning to Mesopotamia, and leaving aside the motives which have led to the British occupation, let us consider the present position of the country. The rebellion of 1920, if it effected nothing else, served to show that to the mass of the population our occupation was by no means welcome, and although this was crushed at a cost of very heavy casualties upon both sides, there is every prospect of further trouble when-

ever a suitable opportunity arises. I was rather surprised to learn that it was regarded as a matter of common knowledge that the rebellion had been to a great extent organised by the supporters of King Feisul, and that it was believed that the necessary funds therefor had been provided from the subsidy which Britain pays to the King of the Hedjaz. If this is correct, and I received the most definite assurances upon the subject, it furnishes an even more flagrant instance than the Persian Cossacks of the reckless way in which money is being squandered in all directions, regardless of the method of its ultimate employment.

With regard to King Feisul, we are led by the press to believe that his elevation to the throne of Irak was at the general wish of the population, and we read of the treaty which has been negotiated between the new king and the British Empire. It all sounds very satisfactory that there should be friendly relations between the Arab ruler and the British, but in practice the whole affair is little short of farcical. Feisul owes his throne to British bayonets, and were these removed there is small chance that he would remain on his throne, or even risk a continued residence after the departure of his protectors.

For the reasons of Feisul's elevation we have not far to seek. Many persons, Feisul in particular, are of opinion that Britain is under great obligations to the King of the Hedjaz and his family. A king was thought a desirable adjunct to the new régime in Mesopotamia. There was nothing simpler in the circumstances than to bring king and kingdom together. The only objection was that the greater part of the kingdom had no particular desire for the king. The young Arabs were in favour of Feisul, but unless my information is very far astray, ulema, traders,

Kurds, and the tribes upon the Euphrates were quite clear that they were not.

The British Cabinet had, however, decided that Feisul should be king, and so king Feisul became. The decree went forth that all British officers should support his candidature, and those who were reluctant to do so were left under no delusions as to where their interests lay. When last in Mesopotamia I heard of three cases where officers had been deprived of their posts for offences ranging in gravity from holding and advocating that a genuine attempt to ascertain the popular will should be a prelude to his election, to merely stating a conviction that Feisul would not last for long. Native opposition was similarly dealt with. One prominent pasha, who was guilty of a somewhat emphatic speech at a banquet, was seized and deported to Ceylon. Then, the opposition having been silenced, a plebiscite was held. I received a lurid account of the methods employed by those who went round collecting signatures in favour of Feisul, but these may be summed up in the emphatic phrase of my informant, that it was a "straw" vote. So Feisul became king.

Unfortunately, I did not arrive in Baghdad in time for the coronation, which, judging from all accounts, must have been worth seeing. Since there was no Mesopotamian national anthem, "God save the King" was made to serve, to the no small indignation of some at least amongst the soldiers present. The finishing touch came at the end, for a too-zealous underling began to strip the throne of its trappings prior to the dispersal of the gathering. This revealed to the interested gaze of the spectators the fact that the seat of the throne had been repaired, and that the material used had once served to protect

the produce of a well-known firm of proprietary whisky manufacturers. Thus throned on whisky and supported by British bayonets, Feisul entered into his kingdom.

What will be the outcome it is difficult to say. The immediate effects have been to add to the costs of an already over-burdened exchequer, and to cause discontent. The new king's civil list is to be a *lakh* and a half of rupees a month, and thirty *lakhs* have been earmarked to build a suitable palace for him. Where the money is to come from is not evident. Prior to the adoption of the new policy the country seemed to be in a fair way to become self-supporting, but now the reverse is the case.

At the present time the British Government is anxious to realise its investment in the railways of Mesopotamia and the port of Basra. It is of vital importance that the country should own and control these, since otherwise there is the very gravest danger of the transport monopoly falling into the hands of one group. Those with practical experience of the railways are satisfied that they can be made self-supporting, but the State is not in a condition to purchase them unless the terms of payment are of a very extended description. Should they fall into the hands of the company which at the moment exercises a practical monopoly upon the Tigris, and the same fate befall the port (the only one in Mesopotamia), the country will be utterly at the mercy of a group of capitalists who are reputed to be fully capable of appreciating that their own interests are of primary importance.

As to the discontent which has resulted, I need only mention the case of the Sheikh of Gurmiah, at the junction of the Tigris with the old mouth of the Euphrates, who has paid taxes regularly

since the British occupation. Upon Feisul's election he intimated that he had issued instructions to the tribesmen that they were not to pay taxes to the new régime. He added that when British rule was resumed he would be happy to return to his former practice. He was presenting a problem to the administration at the time of my departure, for it is difficult to take strong measures against those whose professions and acts alike are loyal.

The possibilities of trouble are numerous. The feeling amongst officers from the districts with whom I talked appeared to be that the tribes would be ready enough to take advantage of the first opportunity to renew the trouble of 1920. The Kurds and the Euphrates tribes do not want Feisul or any one else. Sooner or later trouble may be anticipated from the Turks in the north, either actively or by the support of some rival candidate who is a native of the country. The most fruitful source of potential trouble is, however, to be found farther south in Arabia in the person of Sultan Ibn Saud of Nejd. This potentate rules over the fanatical sect of the Wahabis, who might be described as the Puritans of Arabia. What his following amounts to it is, I imagine, not easy to say with accuracy, but I have heard it put as high as two hundred thousand camelmen by officers in Mesopotamia. This may be an excessive estimate, but in any case he was before the war vastly more powerful than the family of the now King of the Hedjaz. What is even more important, he is the bitter enemy of the family of that sovereign, and naturally cannot be expected to relish the establishment of a member of that family upon the east of his possessions. Whether or not the threats which Feisul is reported to have uttered against him are well founded, it

is only natural that he should not wait until his enemy's family was well established upon both his frontiers. Quite what this Arabian feud has to do with the British taxpayer is not clear, but the latter is at the moment paying Ibn Saud sixty thousand pounds a year to let the King of the Hedjaz alone. According to recent reports even this sum has proved insufficient, for Ibn Saud is stated in the press to have opened a campaign against his rival, a campaign financed upon both sides by the British Government. Thus in Mesopotamia as in Palestine the Government would seem to be busily engaged ensuring further trouble, and yet further outlay in men and money.

The case of India I will leave to others. There also the Jewish rule has extended, and its result is already evident, although it appears that Lord Reading does not share Mr Montagu's desire to excite unrest. Briefly the position to-day is that an assembly has been put into power whose chief ambition is to pass legislation prejudicial to Englishmen; that the treatment meted out to General Dyer, generally regarded as having saved the situation at Amritsar, has been such as to render it probable that upon the next occasion when there is trouble, firing will not be resorted to until the mischief has been done; and that in the world of finance Simla refuses to face the question of munitions scandals and grant the inquiry desired by Europeans and Indians alike. The latter action is, justly or not, giving rise to gossip which is the reverse of complimentary to the Simla entourage. Talk of an outbreak compared to which 1857 would be a trifle one is tempted to consider as exaggerated, but it is impossible to deny that certainly some people regard the situation so seriously that they have sent their families to England. That reforms cannot rest where they are is

clear, but in what direction the next move will be it is yet too early to say. Probably the best from the British point of view would be an extension of the system of Native States, since under this the British Residents would come to be regarded as the protectors rather than the oppressors of the masses.

With regard to Russia, Turkey, and Egypt nothing need be said, since the press makes their affairs sufficiently public, although it is not realised how narrow an escape the last-mentioned country has had of also coming under Jewish control.

What can we deduce from the facts as being the Cabinet's policy in the Near and Middle East? To recapitulate briefly. In India and Egypt they are truckling to extremists; in Mesopotamia and Palestine, imposing their policy by force regardless of the wishes of the inhabitants; in Afghanistan, adopting a policy which is in accordance with the facts of the position; in Turkey, standing back and letting Greece do her best; and as to Russia, adopting a line of action which is neither one thing nor the other. The Caucasian republics we need not consider, since these hothouse growths will almost certainly fall to Russia or Turkey. With Persia I have dealt in full. So far as it is possible to gather anything from this hotch-potch of diametrically-opposed policies, it is that weakness is being shown where the interests of the Empire demand strength, and that reckless expenditure of men and money is being incurred where no interests of any importance are involved. The one thing markedly absent is a comprehensive policy.

The future policy in Persia would then seem to be that called for throughout the Near and Middle East—namely, firmness where our interests call for it, as in India and Egypt, and the dropping of the wild-cat schemes in which the Cabinet de-

lights. In Persia, British interests, whether political or commercial, are confined to the south, while in the north they are non-existent. All that is called for, then, is a reversion to the policy of the Anglo-Russian Convention, which incidentally was negotiated by a Cabinet of which Mr Lloyd George was a member. A clear indication that we meant to maintain our interests in Southern Persia, by force if necessary, in the event of the country relapsing into anarchy, but that there our interest ceased, coupled with a refusal to be drawn in future into intrigue and a policy of bribes, would in time cause the Persians to realise that Great Britain had not designs upon their cherished independence, and would lead to a return to the condition before the war, when it was said that Englishmen alone could go anywhere in Persia with absolute impunity.







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