came to a halt. Some people took sheep-skins from their saddles and began to blow them up by one leg. (Plate 95.) Gradually the skins filled, the tied legs stuck stiffly out, and soon the whole thing looked like a fat, unshaven pig. Then the men stripped, climbed down the bank to the edge of the water, laid the inflated skin across their chest, and swimming with both hands, successfully landed on the farther bank.

These same *tursuq* were used by Chinghiz Khan and Tamerlane for crossing rivers. In the desert the skins serve to carry the water-supply, and when you come to a river they offer you a boat. When flaying the carcase of a sheep such skins as are destined for these purposes are not slit down the belly, but carefully drawn off in one piece; the openings at foot and neck are tied with thongs while still wet, so that the skin is made both air- and water-tight. When you want to fill or blow them up, you can open either a neck or leg hole and firmly lash it again afterwards.

It took us hours to coax the water-shy camels through the water, so that we could only accomplish a march of three tash that day. The numerous skins were not deflated, but taken along blown out as they were, so as to be immediately ready for the next crossing. The Turkomans had, however, omitted to reckon with the expansion of air under the heat of the sun, and before long one float after another burst with a loud report, and when we came to the next wide canal the skins had all to be patched before they could be used again. All these delays made our progress so slow that we did not reach Narazim till the afternoon of the third day, though the distance from Charjui is well under sixty miles.

In its day, Narazim was a great fortress, which the

Bukharans had erected for their defence against the Turkomans, and during the War it was the headquarters of a large Russian garrison. Nowadays it is a place of no strategic importance, and its former barracks have either fallen into decay or been turned into storehouses for saksaul. But it is still the centre of a lively caravan traffic with the interior of Bukhara, for no district in the whole of Turkistan is richer than the neighbourhood of Narazim in the valuable saksaul. Although tens of thousands of camel-loads are dug up and dispatched every year, the supply seems inexhaustible. There is not much of it to be seen immediately near the river, for boatloads of it are carried off downstream year in year out, and the ships themselves use saksaul as fuel, so you must ride some miles inland into the desert to see regular forests of this curious tree.

The saksaul-tree—known to science as *Haloxylon ammodendron*—is only found in the salt-impregnated sand deserts of the Amu Darya and the Sir Darya, and grows under the ground, or, more exactly, under the sand. Its black or dark-brown wood is extremely hard, yet it splinters and breaks like glass, the fracture revealing a surface like artificial horn or solidified rubber. It is heavier than water and even when perfectly dry sinks like a stone. It is of no use except for fuel, for it cannot be either cut or planed. Carvings in saksaul are of the greatest rarity and literally worth their weight in gold. The only ones of any size that I have seen were in a mausoleum in the neighbourhood of Bukhara. The gnarled and many-branched trunk grows to a length of over thirty feet, and usually lies buried ten or twelve inches deep in the sand. It grows with many twists and turns and where parts of the stem come to the surface it suggests a

gigantic snake in movement. A cross-section of the trunk shows a sort of flattened ellipse. Thin little twigs with tiny, almost invisible leaves shoot up from the exposed portions of the trunk; the leaves are ashen grey and snuggle so close to the twigs that they are scarcely visible with the naked eye. When the wood is burned it gives off spicy, fragrant fumes which produce a kind of intoxication. The ash remaining is pure and white like snow and is used by the natives both as a medicine and as a disinfectant. The tree takes a hundred and fifty years to reach its maximum development, and the full-sized trunk is then thirteen or fourteen inches in diameter.

After Narazim we took a ford across the river, which is here nearly a mile wide, because the right bank, up almost as far as Burdaliq, is one immense swamp which is most tedious and wearying to travel through. The sandbanks and fords of the Amu are perpetually changing their position, so the guide we had engaged in Narazim crossed the river first by himself to explore the route. The water frequently reached his chin, but having got safely over he returned and piloted the whole caravan to the other side without a single casualty. At this point the left bank lies again in Turkoman territory, and is one of the most fertile stretches in the whole course of the river. The cultivated area, where cotton and cornfields succeed each other without a break, is only a few miles wide, and then merges into the southern Qara Qum.

Late in the evening we reached Talliq, a little place directly opposite Islam, whose occasional lights were reflected in the water. As it would have been folly to attempt a second crossing of the great river at night, we were obliged to camp in Talliq. Next morning, escorted by local guides, we crossed once more to the right bank

and rode back the five miles or so into Burdaliq. Some Qirghiz had pitched their yurts between the fortress and the river and I now got the chance to see them training eagles and falcons for the chase.

Burdaliq, which up to 1920 was a great Bukharan fortress, possesses high defensive walls, whose towers and parapets are still in as good a state of preservation as if they had been built a few months ago. The place is still one of the most important caravan junctions of Turkistan. Desert tracks radiate in all directions, and on the one hand connect the most southerly quarters of Turkistan with central and eastern Bukhara, and on the other the north-west and the north-east of Afghanistan with Turkistan. As befits their importance the bazaars and serais are extensive, very nearly equalling those of Bukhara itself. Lively business and traffic fill the narrow lanes of Burdaliq, which seems so far as little affected by the teachings of Communism as by its efforts to restrict production and regulate barter. Red flags and pictures of Lenin are rare curiosities, and it seems as if the prehistoric traditions of Bukhara had taken refuge here. All day long caravans were coming in from every quarter, but mainly from Afghanistan, richly laden with wares of every kind, and the short road that stretches from Islam to Burdaliq, which lies a trifle off the main route, was thronged from morning to night with busy animals and men. Never before had I been so much struck by the gay colours of men's robes, the dreary look of veiled women, and the briskness of bazaar life as I was here. Possibly the impression was heightened by the narrowness of lanes and bazaars, but it was certainly very strong.

Again I made the round of all the caravanserais, seeking news of a caravan that would be travelling by the

Four Wells route to Yolatan on the Murgh Ab railway. With so much business doing, my task was easy and I had soon struck a bargain with some Turkomans who owned a lot of transport camels. Four hundred camels, laden with charcoal, which had already been eleven days on the road, were going to start in a short time on the second half of their journey to Takhta Bazaar, and I proposed to join their company. The road from Burdaliq to Yolatan runs through some hundred and fifty miles of the south-eastern Qara Qum, in which there is neither plant nor human habitation. Nothing but the existence of four wells—Kulach, Imirsti, Jarjik, and Daali—make it possible to cross the desert of gravel. This part of the Qara Qum no longer consists of sand, but is for the most part composed of coarse gravel and patches of hard salt. It lacks even the miserable vegetation that is sparsely scattered throughout the sand desert.

Once more, and as it happened for the last time, I crossed the Amu Darya and bade farewell to its waters. Though it was only four days since we had last forded it, the water had perceptibly fallen, and we were able to wade in comfort from one island to another. We filled all our water-skins in Talliq and committed ourselves to the mercy of the desert. Though this part of the Qara Qum is exceptionally rich in salt we were pleasantly surprised to find that the deep wells yielded unexpectedly sweet drinking water. The last salt lakes must but recently have dried out, for the heavily laden camels frequently broke through the surface crust of salt and sank into the mud below.

The storms of the Black Desert are deservedly feared, but on this occasion we had the good fortune completely to escape them. The frequent lengthy wind-storms must

be the cause of the desert-floor's being swept completely bare of sand and left covered only with heavy gravel, while in the course of centuries the fine surface sand has been swept off westwards and there banked up. Storms always blow from the south-east, down from the mountains of Afghanistan, north-westwards up into the centre of the Qara Qum.

Never, either before or since, have I seen anything so desolate and dead as this gravel desert. Not even the unexacting camel-thorn or the saksaul is to be seen, and except round the wells there is not a bush, not a blade of grass. Even animal life is absent. Except for our own donkeys and camels I saw not a quadruped or bird or reptile, in which Turkistan elsewhere is rich enough. There was not even a beetle or a worm. The very horse-flies had quitted our animals in Talliq and remained by the waters of the Amu—much to the beasts' content, for they had been suffering sorely from the attentions of these blood-suckers.

On the fifth day after our start from Burdaliq we reached the oasis of Yolatan on the Murgh Ab. This was the place I had reached on foot by night when I escaped from Merv in 1916. The caravan now continued upstream along the Murgh Ab, while I waited for a train to Merv, which I reached by rail in a few hours.

This brought me back to the starting-point of my Bukharan journey, which had led me a round 5,600 miles through mountain and desert. To be candid, I had by now had more than enough, and my craving for adventure had for the moment been amply satisfied. I felt homesick for my peaceful life in Persia, for my carpet-buying journeys, and I dreamt of a return to my home in Vienna at no distant date.

XIV

How to Get Out?

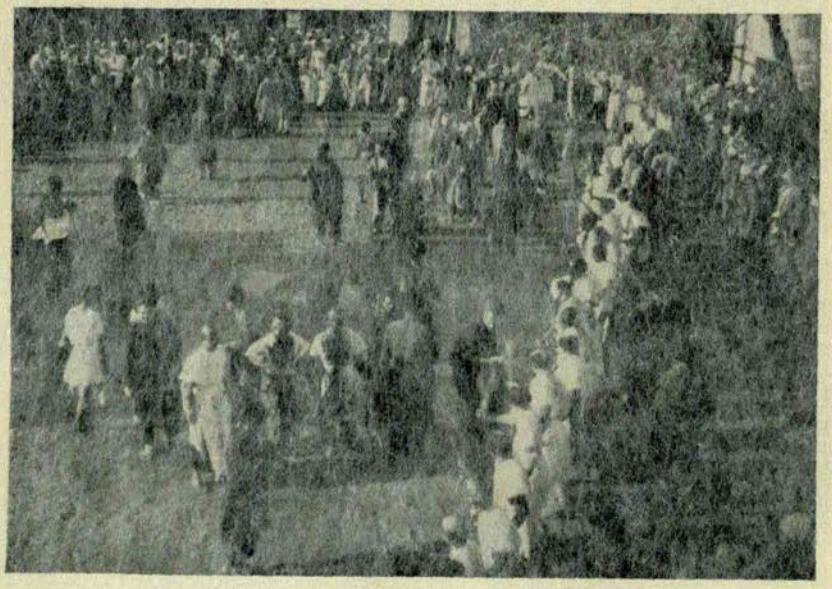
I had managed without too much difficulty to make my way into the forbidden land. But how was I to get safely out again? The simplest plan would have been to travel back by Qizil Arwat, join Alim Qul and his tribe, and return to Persia by the way I had come. But I dare not venture on the journey between Aidin and Qala Qaya, across the waterless Khambaghi Qum, without a guide. Khores had told me often enough that no caravans ever went that way and that only people knowing the desert thoroughly had any chance of getting through in safety. There was not the slightest hope that I, without a camel and water-skins, could safely risk a journey which even the Turkoman sons of the desert think twice about. My funds were so low that I could not afford to buy either a camel or the necessary equipment. This line of retreat was therefore cut off, for I had no means of communicating with Alim Qul and asking him to let some one fetch me from Aidin.

The only other course possible was somehow to sneak across the frontier in the strongly guarded district between Dushak and Ashqabad. As to exactly how it was to be done, my plans could only be improvised on the spot according to time and circumstance. I took a ticket

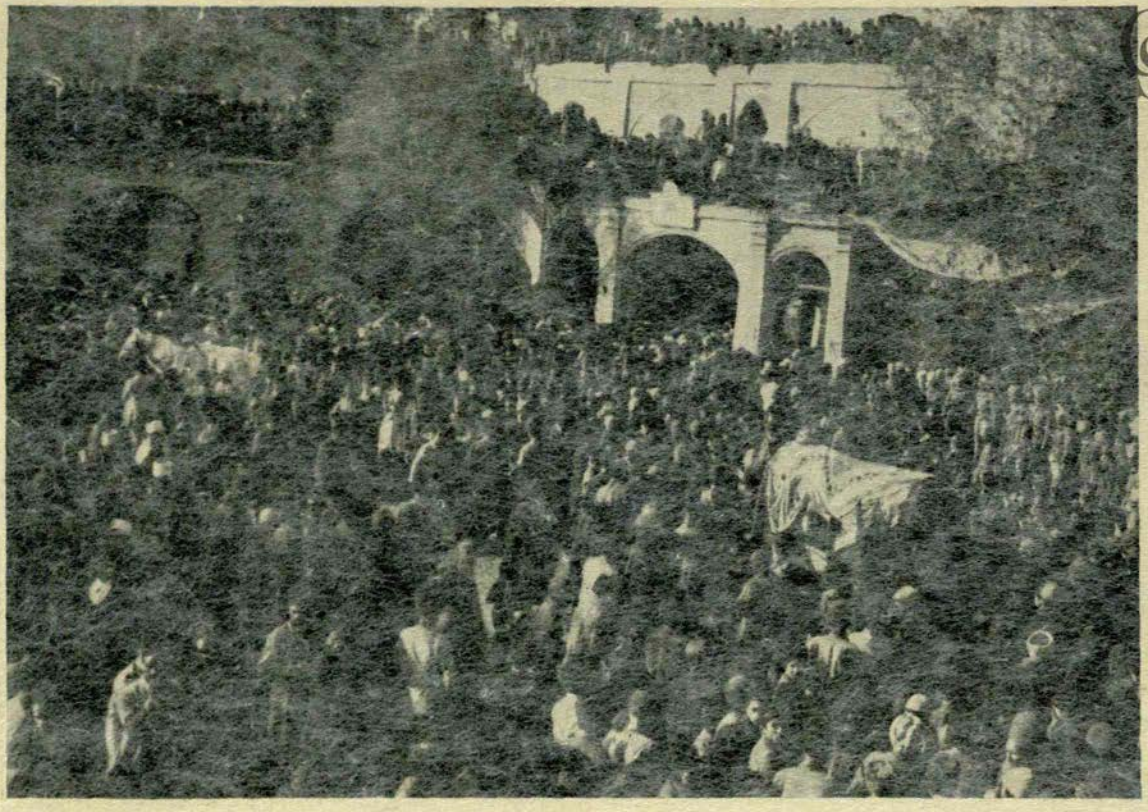
97. A holy well in the neighbourhood of the Sanctuary of Meshed

98. Meshed. Procession of fanatics entering for the festival of Muharram

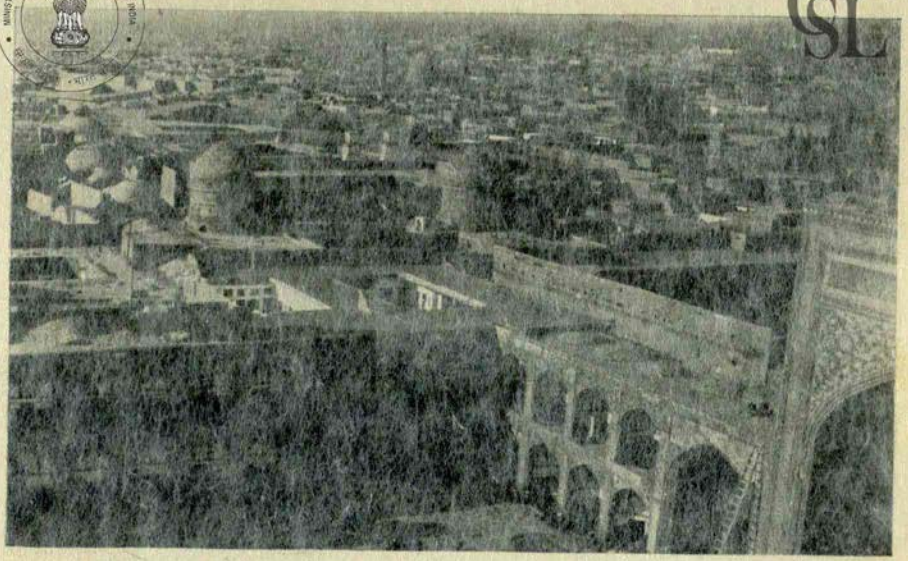
99. Muharram. The men slash at each other with sabres and daggers



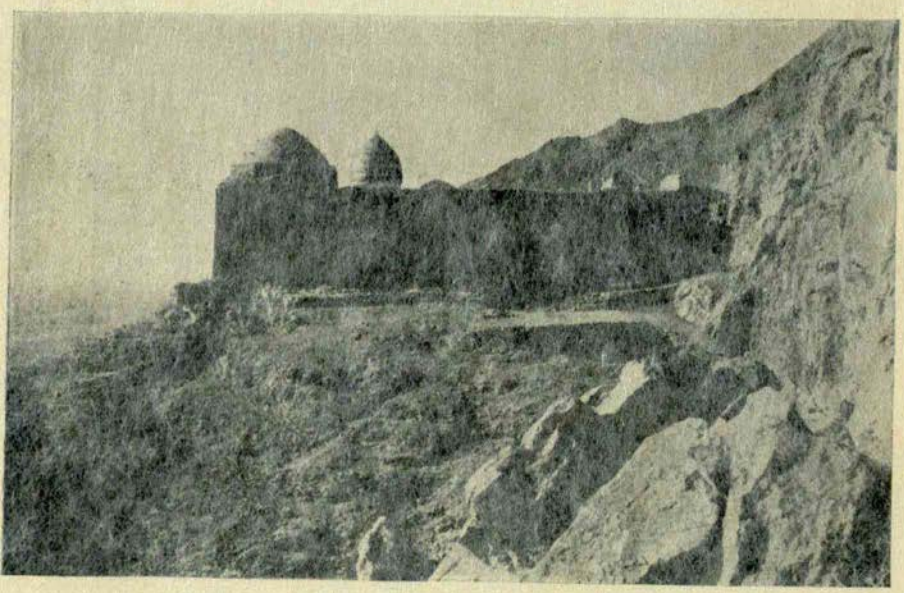
100. Muharram. Some of the seriously wounded are carried off. In the foreground men can be seen with blood flowing over their clothes



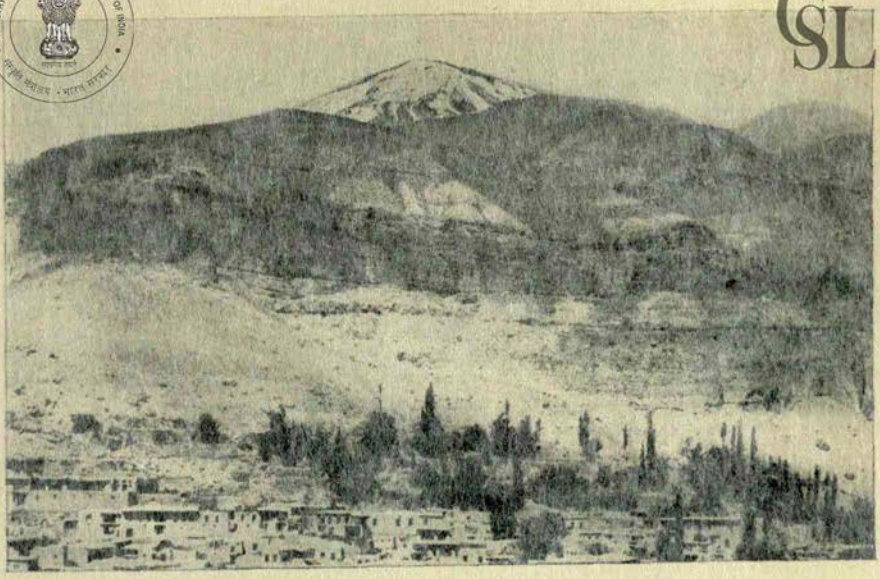
101. Muharram. The litter with the 'Corpse' of Ali being carried across the square



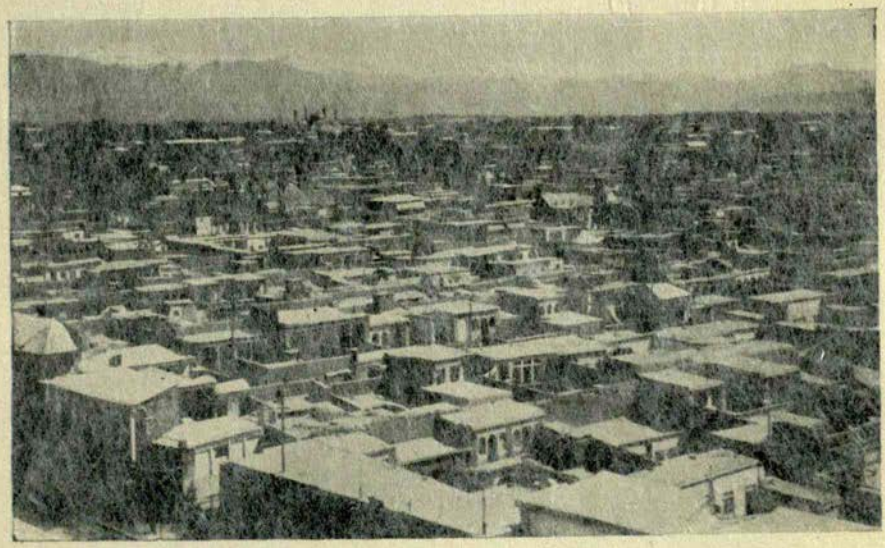
102. View over Meshed. In the distance the Masjid-i-Shah. In the foreground, a courtyard of one of the mosques adjoining the shrine of the Imam Rizah



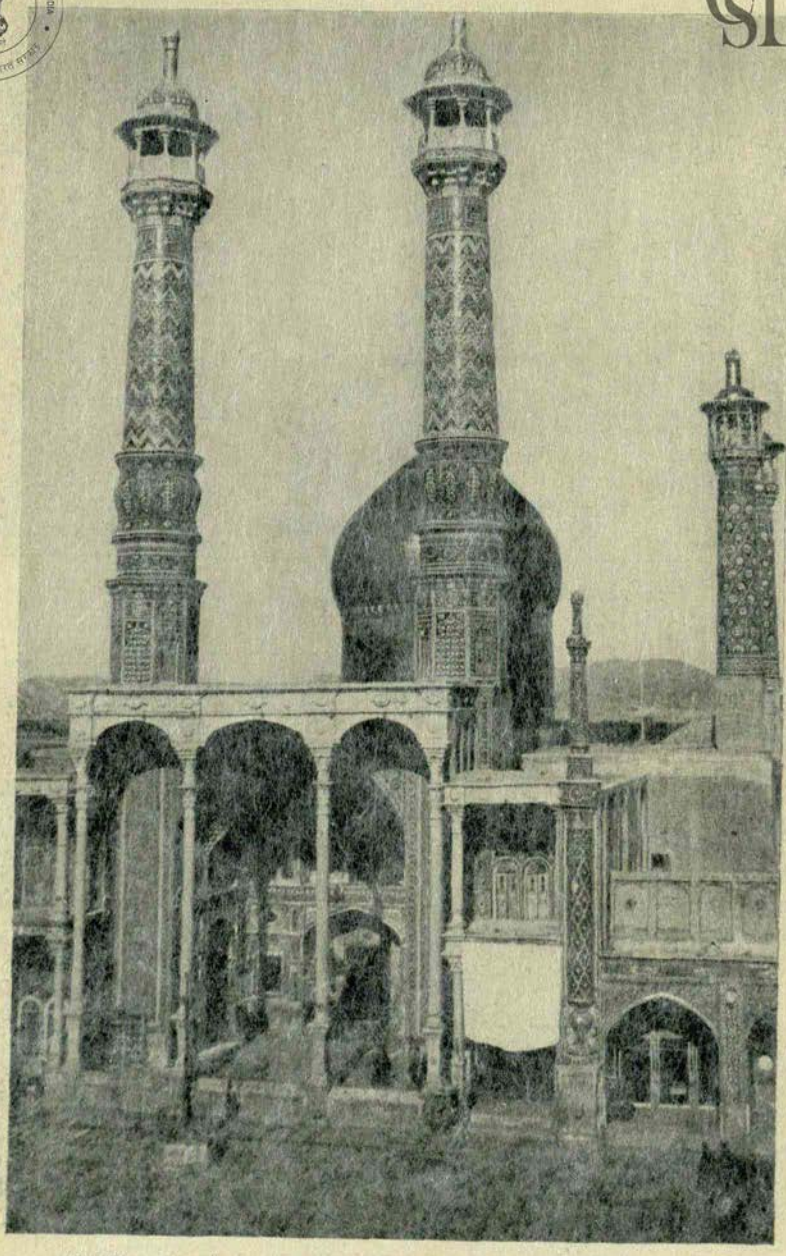
103. Grave of a saint on the highroad from Meshed to Tehran



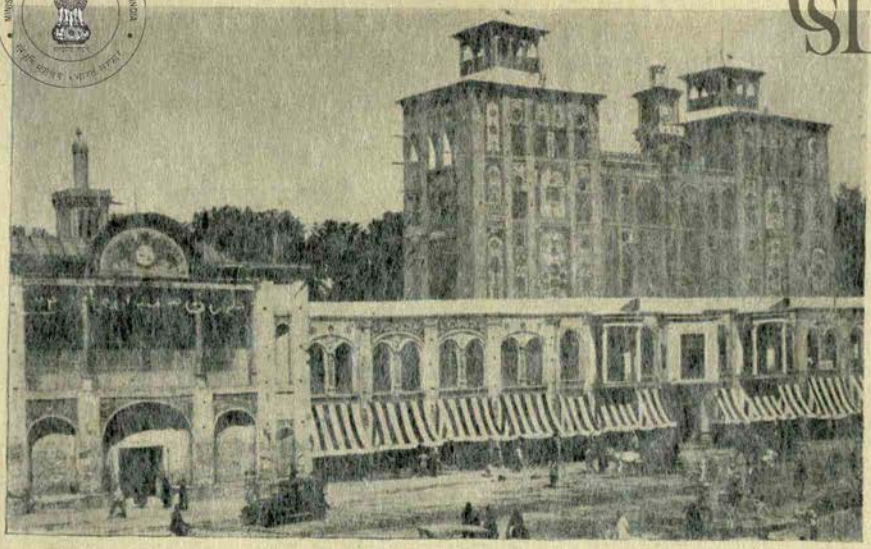
104. Demavend, 17,930 feet high, in the Elburz Mountains



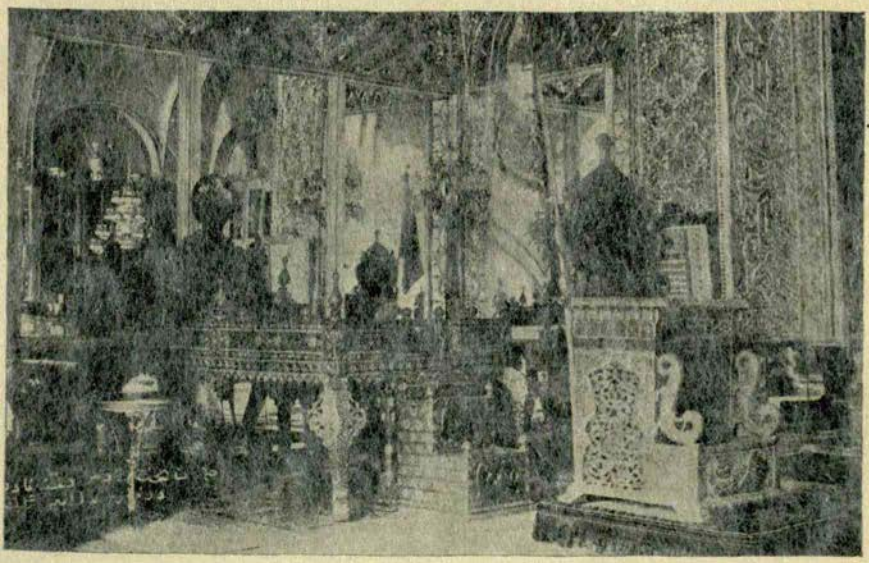
105. View over Tehran with Elburz in the background



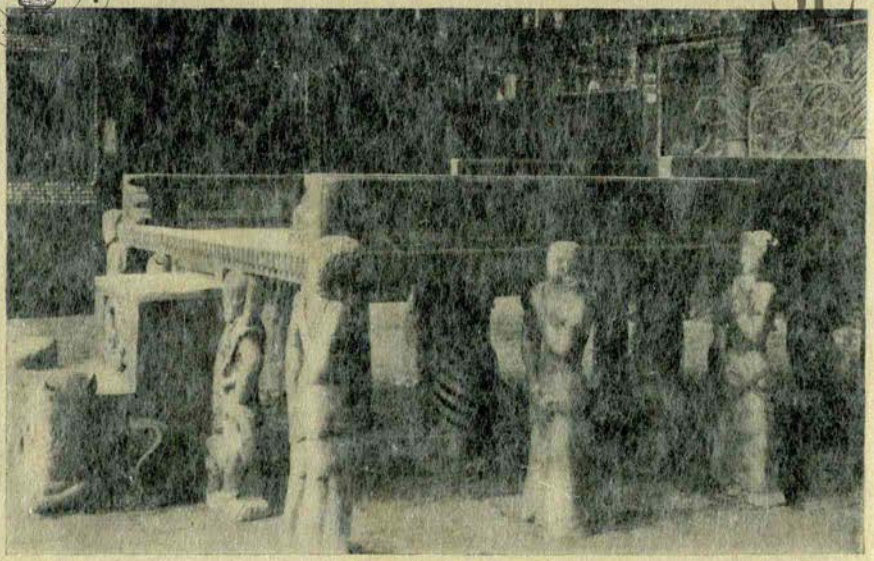
106. The second most sacred shrine in Persia, the shrine of Fatima, sister of Imam Rizah, with golden dome



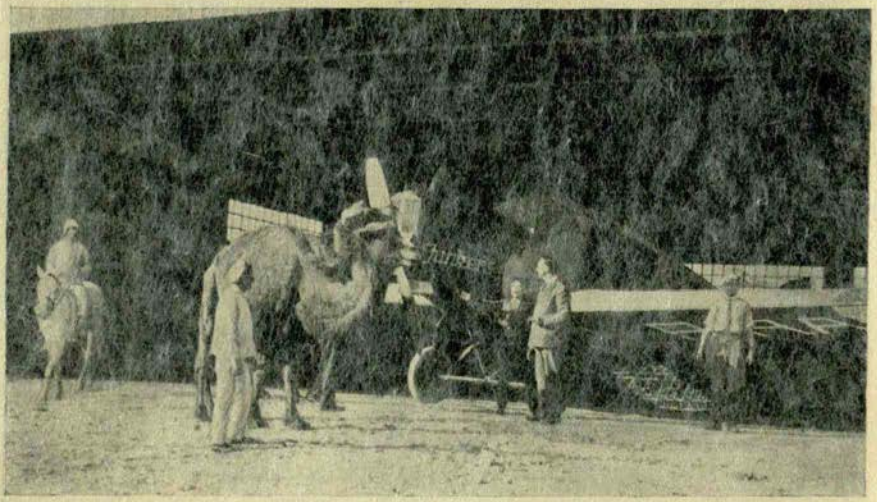
107. Tehran. The towers of the entrance gate of the Shams ul Amara



108. The Throne Room with the famous Peacock Throne in the foreground



109. The great Marble Throne in the Gulistan



110. Contrasts of modern Tehran: camel and aeroplane

to Dushak, from which there is a caravan route across the frontier mountains to Kalat and Darband. If it was not possible to get over somewhere in this direction I must just take my chance at Lutfabad and aim at reaching Imam Gah, or else aim at getting from Ashqabad to Shirwan. Whichever route I decided on I should need to take every precaution not to be collared by Soviet troops on the border. What made the business peculiarly dangerous was that a decree was posted up everywhere, forbidding any one whomsoever, on any pretext whatsoever, to approach within six and a half miles of the frontier. Frontier posts were instructed to shoot at sight any one attempting to contravene the order.

I made cautious inquiries in Dushak and learnt that all the frontier passes were well watched and garrisoned, for this was the chief line of communication with north-east Persia. So I went on by rail to Nurak and took up my quarters in the only *chai-khana* in the place. I gradually succeeded in winning the confidence of the *chai-khana-chik*, and after some questioning I told him that I wanted a guide to smuggle me by unfrequented by-paths into Persia. For many years the Turkomans, when not occupied in raiding, have carried on a brisk smuggling business. Knowledge of secret tracks is inherited from father to son, and one fine evening I found myself seated opposite the eighteen-year-old scion of a trusty smuggler-dynasty. Our negotiations lasted for hours, till at last we had fixed a price, in return for which the promising youth undertook to land me safely across the border.

In addition to sixty roubles in cash I was to hand him over my watch, my shaving gear, and compass, and also my rifle—which it is true was strictly the property of the

Uzbeg Soviet and had been only lent to me. But I did not indulge any qualms of conscience on this score. In any case I dare not take it with me, for it would have been far too dangerous to be caught with firearms near the frontier. My guide was to get the watch, rifle, etc., before we started, and the cash as soon as we were safely over the border. I sewed my pistol and a few cartridges into my thick quilted coat in such a way that the weapon lay under my armpit. I similarly sewed my Persian passport into the leg of one of my long boots. I burnt all my notes and other papers except the genuine Steinschneider document and my permit from the Samarqand Soviet.

The day before I meant to leave, the devil of overconfidence took possession of me and I addressed one of the picture postcards which I had bought in Merv to the Russian consul in Enzeli who had forbidden me to attempt to enter Turkistan. Then I put Steinschneider's paper in an envelope and posted it and the card in the mail waggon of the passing train, for I could not face the double journey of 250 miles to Qizil Arwat and back to deliver the paper in person. My camera, films, and other scanty possessions I then packed in a small *khurjin* or saddlebag.

My guide duly turned up on the morning of the 26th of August 1925; we mounted our donkeys and turned them back in the direction of Dushak. We followed the railway line at first till we came to the little Kalat river whose bed at this season was completely dry, then we rode up the empty river-bed for a couple of hours. At last my guide called a halt and we lay down under some half-withered mulberry-trees to sleep, so as to be fresh for our night adventure. At the first streak of dawn we climbed and climbed up a steep mountain side covered

with loose stones. So far we had not seen a trace of any path or track. According to the guide we were nearly two miles away from the nearest road, so that there was no fear of our being discovered. We sought shelter from the sun under an overhanging rock, allowed ourselves a gulp of water and a few flaps of dry bread, and sank into a sleep of exhaustion.

Towards noon, when the sun was at its highest, I woke up and automatically stretched out for the sheep-skin to quench my thirst. The movement roused my companion. He snatched the skin from my lips and explained that our drinking supply had to last us for two days if we were not to perish of thirst. So I pulled my little pebbles from my pocket and offered him one. As so often before, they greatly helped to mitigate our thirst.

The youth told me that the first three ridges of the Kupat Dagh have only one spring amongst them. In springtime, when the snows begin to melt, there are plenty of little torrents and pools of snow-water, but all moisture has evaporated again by April. Like a great wall the mountains cut Persia off from the Qara Qum. From the Caspian Sea to the Afghan frontier—a good six hundred miles—the Kupat Dagh and its outliers form a natural barrier between Persia and Turkistan. The mountains rise steeply from the desert of sand and there are very few traversable passes, a fact which makes this long frontier comparatively easy to guard. There are in all only six passes through which the roads are possible for men and beasts. Since the Soviets assumed power three of these have been permanently closed and only the Kifan, Firuza, and Lutfabad left available for traffic. Naturally there are dozens of secret tracks, but

they are known only to smugglers and it needs courage to cross them, for they run through waterless, rocky desert, and involve serious mountaineering feats. So much so, that in fact it often happens that out of a smuggling gang only a small number, or none, return.

The view which we had from our first halting-place in the mountains was overwhelming. To north and east and west the great Qara Qum stretched out into infinity. Not a patch of green broke the uniform grey-yellow surface which blended into the distant horizon. But for the darker lines of the dunes you would have imagined you were looking down on an immense sheet of glass strewn with sand. Though I was looking at only a small fraction of the great desert I got some conception of its immensity; it covers about 75,000 square miles—roughly two and a half times the area of Austria, or of Scotland.

Night came again, and we continued our climb. My guide must have known the country like the palm of his hand, for he never halted nor hesitated, but continued to climb straight up. I followed as closely as I could, so as not to lose him in the darkness. The moon presently rose, and by her light I was able to make out that we were crossing a lofty plateau covered with great boulders and broken rocks, but otherwise completely bare. About midnight we halted for a rest. The Turkoman bade me lie quietly where I was while he went to fetch water from the spring near at hand. An hour passed and I was getting anxious, wondering whether he had left me in the lurch and was perhaps already well on the way home to Nurak. Just then he returned with a sheepskin full of fresh water, which I greedily drank.

The night was distinctly chilly, and, newly refreshed, we stepped out more briskly to warm our stiffened limbs.

The high plateau now gave way to a steep gorge, along the bottom of which we tramped downhill. According to my Turkoman, we had one more mountain ridge to climb and we should then have reached our highest point, some 9,000 feet above sea-level. I felt completely secure, and after having been assured by the guide that there was not the slightest danger, I lit myself a cigarette. It had just caught, and I was in the act of flinging away the still burning match, when the youth pulled me to the ground beside him and at the same moment I heard a voice: 'Halt! Who goes there?' Even if my companion had not put his hand over my mouth I should not have been able to answer, so terrified and surprised was I by the sudden challenge. With one leap the Turkoman was on his feet and had vanished in the darkness. Simultaneously I saw a flash within a few yards of me, a shot rang out and struck sparks out of the stone before me, then other shots followed my fleeing guide. I lay low, as still as death, till I heard the invisible marksman say: 'Stand up!' I rose obediently and held up my hands.

'Who are you?'

'A state geologist of the Uzbeg Soviet.'

'Have you got papers?'

'Of course,' said I, and made to take them from my pocket.'

'Halt! Hands up! Why have you run away?'

'You can see that I haven't run away. My friend fled because he thought you were a bandit.'

'Where have you come from?'

'From Merv.'

'Lie down. No, not like that, flat on your face. If you turn I'll shoot. Make no mistake about it.'

I lay down on the ground as he bade me. He put his rifle behind a stone and drew his pistol. Then he knelt on my back, and while with one hand he pressed the pistol against the back of my head, he tried to rummage through my pockets with the other. At last he found the grubby, well-thumbed document of the Soviet of Samarqand. He shoved a box of matches into my hand and made me strike one after another until he had deciphered the paper. Then he let me stand up again and keep my hands down.

'I'm awfully sorry, Comrade,' he said, 'but I must take you along with me to the frontier post. We have had no notification to say you were authorized to do geology in the frontier zone. So come quietly. If you try to resist, it is my duty to shoot.'

I stood up and went in the direction indicated, while the soldier kept close on my heels and shouted instructions as to which way I was to turn. By degrees I had mastered the first shock, and was racking my brains for some method of escape. After about an hour's marching we were up again on the high plateau. My guide and I had come from the north; my captor now led me due east. I begged that we might have a short halt. The soldier didn't mind, he sat down a few paces off, but never for a moment left his rifle out of his hand. I flung him a couple of cigarettes, which he gratefully accepted, and we smoked in silence for half an hour or so. Then we started off again.

Quarter of an hour later I gave a cry of pain and fell to the ground. My captor asked what had happened. I said I had slipped on a stone and thought I must have broken my ankle. I seemed to have damaged my arm too in the fall, for I found I could not move it. The soldier

sat down near me and seemed to be thinking what his next move ought to be. Such a contingency was apparently not foreseen in the textbooks of the Red Army.

I groaned with pain, and begged a drink of water. The soldier knelt beside me and held his water-bottle to my lips. I drank slowly and in little sips. Slowly and unobtrusively I raised my right hand till I felt the hilt of his pistol. With one wrench I snatched it from his belt and held it in a flash against his breast with a cry of 'Hands up!' while the contents of his drinking-flask poured over my face.

'Now, my son, just you lie down nicely on your face and put your hands behind your back.'

Without a word he complied with my wishes. In frontier encounters there is no room for argument. Death is prompter than speech. Besides, my surprise attack had so completely taken his breath away that he didn't think of resisting. I first made his hands fast with the belt of my trousers so that he could not use them. Then I turned him over and helped him to sit up. When he was comfortably seated, his first words were: 'Then you didn't break your ankle after all?'

'No, my son. Now listen! If you'll take me safely across the frontier into Persia, not a thing shall happen to you, and you shall return to your post safe and sound. If you refuse, or if I think you are trying to betray me, I shall shoot you down on the instant. You can take my word for it that I am dead in earnest.'

I now began to search the fellow. Apart from a few roubles, a packet of tobacco, and a bundle of paper for twisting into little holders to smoke it in, he had nothing in his pockets. His haversack contained a little dried meat and a few rifle cartridges. I left him all his things,

subtracting only the Caucasian dagger from his belt. Then I took his rifle, and in exchange loaded my saddle-bag and the half-empty water-skin on to his shoulders. We now set out for Persia with roles reversed. At his request I unstrapped his hands during the march. When we returned into a cave at dawn to pass the day there I tied him up hands and feet so as to be able to sleep in peace myself. Then I fed him with his own dried meat, of which he genially offered me the half.

Before we were ready to start out again that night we were chatting happily together like old friends. My prisoner told me that for the last few years every one who wanted to leave Russia secretly chose the Persian in preference to the Russo-Rumanian border, because the latter was now so well guarded that there was no hope of slipping across the Dniester, whether over the ice in winter or in summer by boat. It happened almost daily that some would-be fugitives fell to Russian bullets on the Dniester, some even after they had reached the Rumanian bank. Moscow reckons the total number of those who previously escaped across the Dniester at round about a million and a half, while so far not more than about 200,000 have succeeded in crossing into Persia. The Persian frontiers are now being carefully watched to make this route also impracticable. Hence the guards' instructions to fire at sight.

This time we ventured to start our march while it was still daylight, for the soldier maintained that we had already left the Russian guard-houses well behind us, and that in fact when he had arrested me we had actually been on Persian soil. When it got quite dark we halted on the southern slope of the second range to wait for morning. I again tied my guide up and built a three-

foot wall of stones, behind which I ventured to light a fire and make tea for us both, with which we ate the last of his meat. My absolutely last remaining iron ration was two pounds or so of dried apricots. After our modest supper I assured myself that my companion could not free himself, rolled over in my robe, and went to sleep.

I was wakened by kicks on my leg, and leaped up, afraid that my prisoner had managed to set himself free after all. But he was there all right, and only raised his head to listen. He whispered that he had wakened me because he had heard footsteps. I listened too. It certainly seemed that several people must be making their way over the loose stones, for we could distinctly hear the shuffling sound of shoes and the rattling of stones. I crept over to Vassili Andreyvich, put my lips close to his ear, and asked who he thought the night wanderers could be. He replied that it must either be smugglers or else Persian gendarmes out on a smuggler hunt; in either case we had better lie low. The night was still and for a long time we continued to hear the sounds growing steadily more distant. Day broke soon after they had ceased and we resumed our way, turning down the valley. We passed a little cave, where I hid the soldier's rifle and pistol along with his cartridges, so that he could pick them up on his way back to duty. He would just have to explain his lengthy absence as best he could. Then I took off my *khilat* and under the astonished gaze of Vassili Andreyvich I ripped open the place where I had stowed my Browning. For safety I shoved a set of cartridges into the magazine and put the loaded weapon in my pocket ready for use.

Towards midday we saw far below us a fairly well-made road, along which some armed horsemen were

riding at the trot. The Russian diagnosed them as Persian gendarmes. I then pulled off my long-boot and took my Persian passport out of the leg, while I tore my document of the Samarqand Soviet into tiny fragments and scattered them to the winds. If the Persians were to find it on me they might suspect me of being a Bolshevik agent. I then restored to Vassili Andreyvich his freedom. He assured me that now that he had got to know me he would have been very sorry if he had handed me over to the frontier post. As a reward for his services as guide and in payment for the Caucasian dagger I gave him the half of my remaining cash, namely thirty roubles, for which he thanked me with genuine and effusive gratitude. I for my part apologized most heartily for having had to use trickery and force against him. Whereupon we parted the best of friends.

After a lot of handshaking and repetitions of 'Au revoir, Comrade', I climbed down the scree into the valley and tramped along the road in the direction of Marish. By the afternoon I had scaled the third mountain ridge and had, by an excellent road, reached the blooming and fertile valley beyond, with the fourth ridge still ahead of me. I soon came into a small, delightfully clean village surrounded by high walls. (Plate 96.) I went to the headman of the village and introduced myself as a buyer of carpets. The man laughed me to scorn for being such a fool as to look for carpets in the Kupat Dagh. I had achieved my purpose, however, for the hospitable fellow invited me to spend the night as his guest. Next morning he put a horse at my disposal and sent a gendarme with me to the next village to bring the horse back. Profiting by this experience, I repeated the same experiment in every place I came to, which greatly

aided my progress and saved me the cost of my keep. In this wise I crossed the fifth and last ridge of the mountains at the foot of which lies the village of Quchan. Here I came once more into the kingdom of rich ricefields and slender silver poplar. The method of irrigation used on the southern slopes of the Kupat Dagh was new to me. The water of the mountain springs is collected and led by underground canals, called *karéz*[1] to the fields, where it emerges for the first time into the open. The water is kept thus under cover to prevent its evaporating in the great heat on its way down into the valley.

By way of Imam Quli and Chinaran—both of them surrounded by fortification walls—I reached Meshed, the Holy City of the Shiahs. My first visit was to Qannadi's uncle, who lived here and acted in eastern Persia as buyer for his nephew. From him I borrowed a hundred tumans. The worthy Husain Zada almost had an apoplectic fit when he recognized me. Laughing, I gave him an outline of my adventures, and heard that Qannadi had long ago given me up and had sent my savings to my relatives in Vienna. I begged Husain Zada not to breathe a word to Qannadi of my reappearance, for I wanted the pleasure of surprising him in person in Tabriz.

The sole European shop in Meshed belonged to an Englishman called Tink. Here I bought myself a decent suit, along with some shirts and collars. Then I betook myself to the *hammam* or Turkish bath and submitted to a thorough cleansing. I cannot deny that for the first few days I felt thoroughly uncomfortable in my new

[1] These underground *karéz* are found in the Turfan oasis of Chinese Turkistan, all through Baluchistan, and in many parts of Persia. In Persia they are more usually called *qanat*—E.O.L.

clothes. The collar of my shirt was the worst. I had got so unused to a collar that I had to keep taking it off, and only by slow degrees did I reaccustom myself to this badge of civilization.

The baths in Persian provincial towns, in contrast to those in Turkistan, are usually above and not below the ground. The bather is not permitted to wash himself as with us. Whether you like it or not, you must put yourself in the hands of the servants, who simply take possession of you and get on with their job.

After being stripped I had several buckets of ice-cold water thrown over me, which were immediately followed by several buckets of hot, then cold again, and so on. When I fled into a corner of the room, breathless and swearing at the prospect of another threatened cold douche, I was seized and forcibly dragged into the centre of the bathroom while half a dozen eggs were broken over my head, so that their contents flowed all down my body. Three pairs of hands now began to massage me with the yolk and white and that with such vigour that after this procedure I fell to the ground and just lay there, half-dead with exhaustion. A few more ice-cold douches brought me hastily to my feet again. If I had not been at the moment too weak and tired I should certainly have hammered the conscientious bathmen, who were after all only doing their duty by me and would have been justifiably offended. As it was, I meekly submitted and endured what was to follow. They rolled me over on my stomach and began to rub down my back with balls of camels' hair, then turned me over and treated the other side in the same way till I looked like a boiled lobster. Next, every joint was kneaded and tugged till it cracked as if it were being dislocated, then

my whole body was beaten and pommelled with the back of their hands by my tormentors, as if I were a tough beefsteak. Finally I was indulged with another cold douche. Then, like a living corpse, I was carried into an ante-room and regaled with tea. There are no story-tellers in the Persian baths such as are provided in Turkistan, obviously because after their violent manhandling the guests are in no condition to listen to them. I slept soundly for two hours and woke feeling as if I had been reborn.

Qannadi's uncle had insisted on my taking up my quarters in his house, which was much to my advantage, for he would accept no payment. I wanted to spend a few days in Meshed to recover from the hardships of my travels, and then proceed by forced marches to Tabriz and thence—HOME. I made no further attempt to keep homesickness at bay, and in imagination I often saw myself quietly seated in a Vienna café, reading a paper and drinking Mocha.

During the day I strolled about Meshed and visited the tombs of Ali, Imam Riza, and Harun ar Rashid, but they are strictly closed to Unbelievers. In Turkistan the Faithful are unperturbed if they see a European in their mosques. I saw once more the magnificent mosque of Gohar Shad, with its cupola of water-blue tiles and its golden minarets; and the most lovely building in all Persia, the shrine built beyond the north-west gate by Shah Abbas, which, with the Sanctuary of the Sacred Quarter, is the pride of Meshed. The Sacred Quarter is enclosed all round by chains and strictly reserved for mullas and muftis. It may be entered by pilgrims and the ordinary Muslim inhabitants only on certain days of festival. It is possible to continue down

the main street of the bazaar, which runs through the sanctuary, only by making a long detour round the sacred enclosure. Carriages must likewise drive round, for the chains may in no circumstances be violated. (Plates 102 and 97.)

Husain Zada conveyed to me one day that I had better be getting off, for the ceremonies of the Muharram would be starting in a few days, and most of the Europeans settled in Meshed took care to be absent for at least the first ten days of it, to avoid any possibilities of friction, which were as unwelcome to the Persian authorities as to the foreign consulates. Only a year ago (July 1924) the American consul, Major Robert Imbrie, had been stoned in the open street and literally torn to pieces when the fanatical Shiahs observed him taking photographs of the Muharram procession. The celebrations themselves had nothing new to offer me, for I had watched them at close quarters in exceptionally favourable circumstances in Meshed in 1916; I had now thoroughly recovered, and homesickness was growing acute, so I willingly fell in with his suggestion.

But Fate saw otherwise. I had made all my preparations for the start and booked a seat in the motor-bus which had been running since the preceding spring between Meshed and Tehran. The very day before the weekly bus was due to leave I went down with a severe attack of fever and could not think of travelling. It was six days before I was well enough to get up, but by that time Muharram had begun and a start was for the moment out of the question, so willy-nilly I had to stay where I was, till the tenth day of the solemnities should be safely over.

Muharram is the ceremonial mourning for the deaths

of Husain and, in a lesser degree, of Hasan, the grandsons of the Prophet Muhammad, and wherever Shiahs are found the anniversary is most solemnly celebrated. The tenth day is the most eventful and impressive of the whole ceremonial. I have described these mourning scenes in full detail in my earlier book, *Pascholl, Plenny!* already alluded to. What I saw on this occasion was an exact repetition of the scenes of 1916.

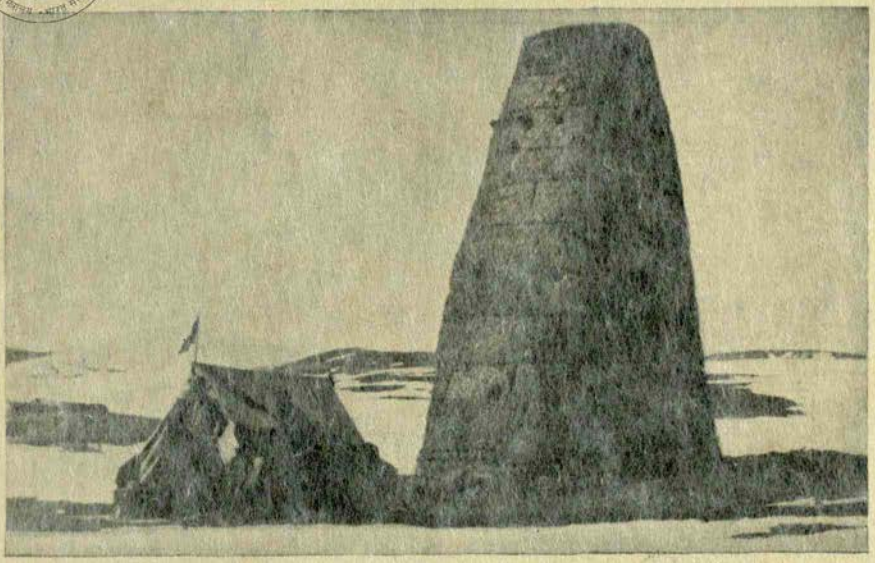
After the usual circular procession (Plate 98) and the mimic battle, which passed off somewhat more quietly this year, some two hundred men with closely shaven heads appeared in the open square, wearing white trousers and long white shirts, and each holding a short, well-sharpened sabre in his hand. When they arrived the whole immense multitude went mad and began shouting 'Husain!' without intermission. The men took up their positions in pairs facing each other and stamped the ground with their bare feet in time to an intoxicating music, till they were soon smothered in a cloud of dust. Presently they began to smite each other with their sabres, inflicting wounds on head and arms till their white clothes were soaked with blood. With grotesque leaps they bounded round the square shouting: 'O Husain! O Hasan!' Each could look into the other's face and see the wounds he had inflicted, the sight of the other's blood inflamed his passion, and presently the shouting faded into gutteral groaning. Puddles of gore formed on the ground, and the sweet, sickly smell of blood combined with the intense heat made me feel so ill that I was actually sick. Fortunately I was so well concealed on the roof of a serai belonging to an Englishman that I could not be seen by the fanatical mob.

Numbers of bleeding men had fallen unconscious to

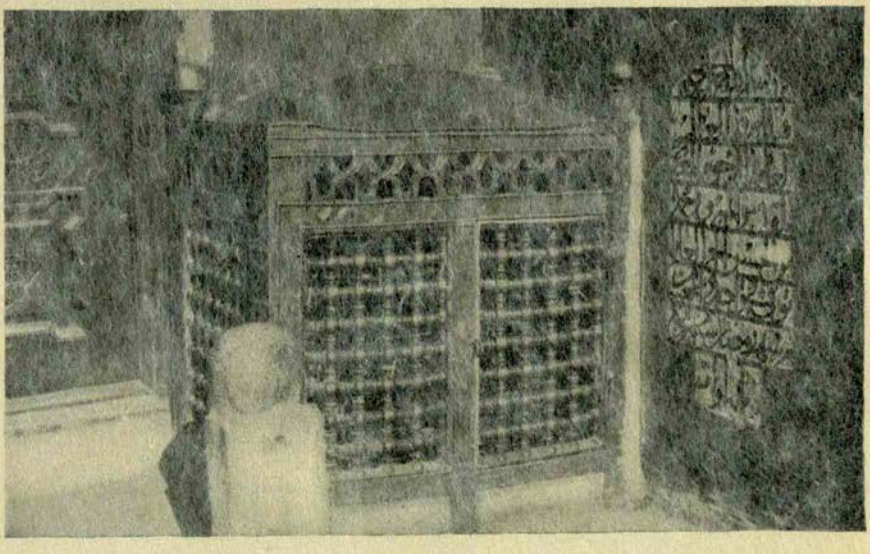
the ground, and the rest of the leaping fanatics struck at them with their sabres till at last some police forced their way through the howling crowd, lifted up the victims, and carried them away. (Plates 99 and 100.) Another troop of police, greatly daring, attempted to persuade some of the more seriously wounded who seemed about to faint to allow themselves to be removed before they were completely cut to bits.

This religious fanaticism is highly repugnant to us, but to the Shiahs it is a supreme act of holiness which arouses their highest admiration. The men who thus cut themselves to pieces have attained the certainty—whatever sins they may have committed in this life—of being received direct into Paradise when they die. Even the spectators are absolved from all transgressions against the Qurān.

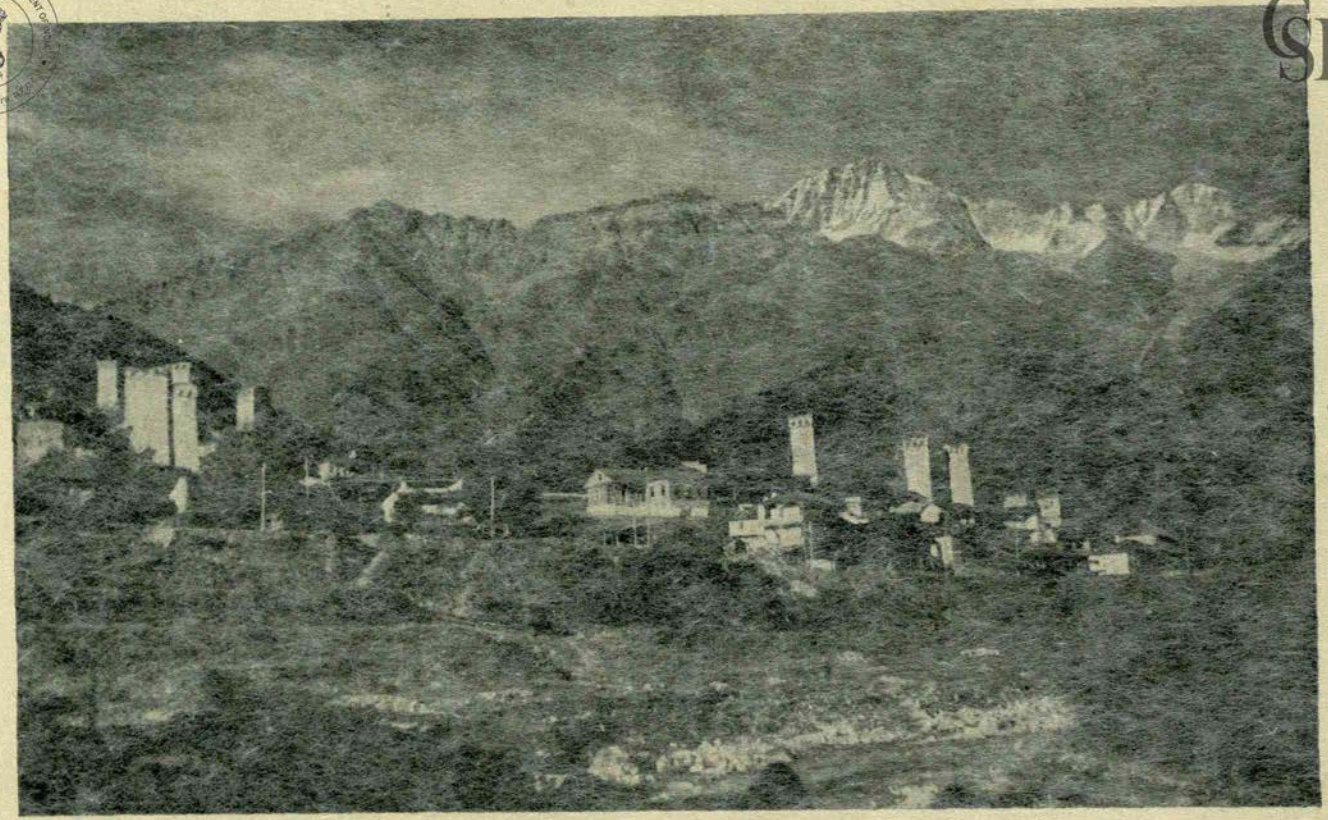
When the butchering episode was over, a new troop of men approached, bare to the waist. These began also to cry: 'Husain!' and with their clenched fists beat their breasts till they resounded. Their chests were soon bruised and swollen and red with unshed blood; then they started an incoherent dance, thrusting their heads forward with a sudden jerk till foam issued from their lips, and one after another fell to the ground and rolled in the blood-soaked dust left by his predecessors. After this, a large covered litter, representing the tomb of Ali, was carried across the square and the day's ceremony was over. Not for me, however. For days I could not rid myself of the smell of blood or the vision of those gaping wounds—though my nerves, thank God, are pretty tough.



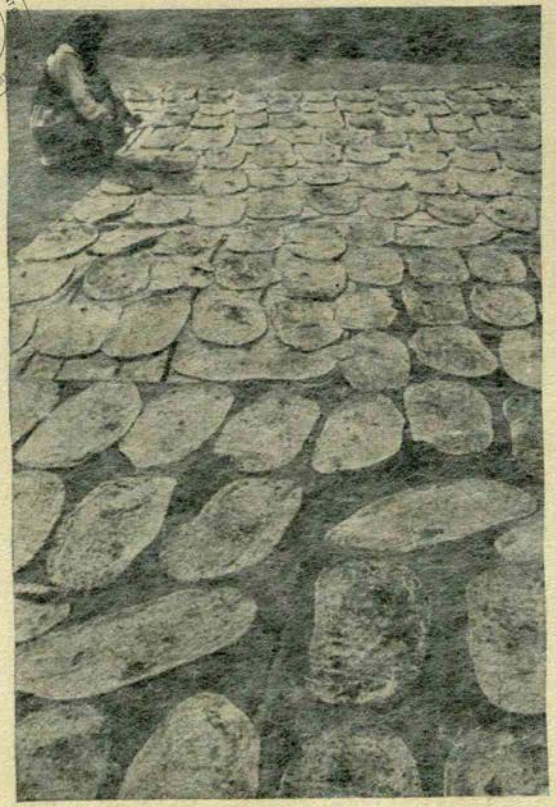
111. Watch tower in the mountains on the road to Tabriz



112. Shrine of a Saint



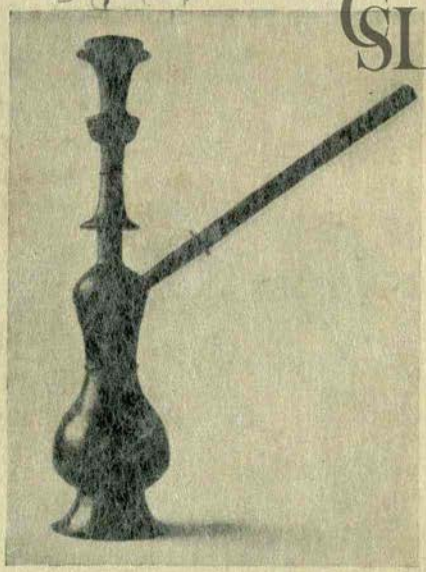
113. Fortified mountain village in north-west Persia



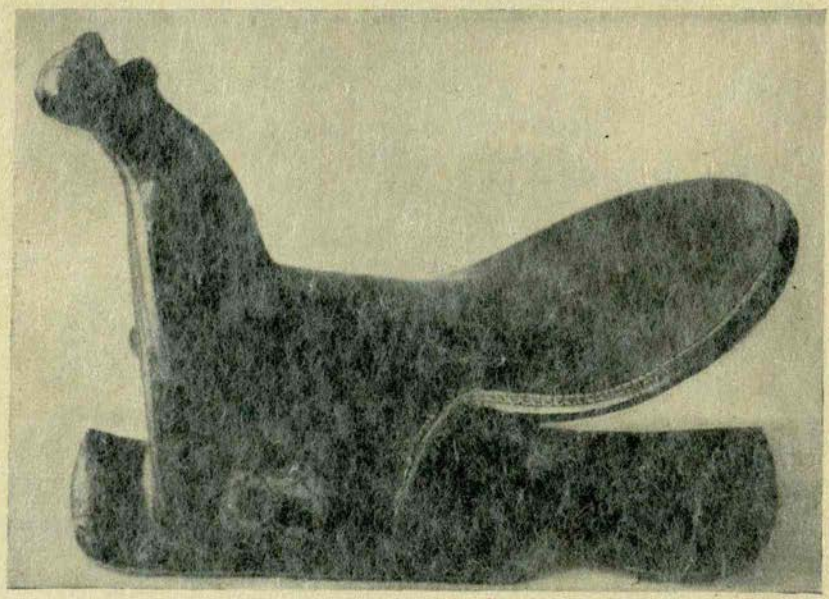
114. Kurdish bread drying in the sun

115. A Kurdish beauty

116. A Turkoman water-jug, hammered from one sheet of brass



117. Bukharan hubble-bubble. The body of the pipe is filled with water and rests on the ground. The tobacco is lighted above and the smoke drawn through the water



118. A Qirghiz saddle from the Pamirs, carved out of one piece of wood and ornamented with beaten leather and camel-bone

XV

The Caravan Roads of North Persia

There was nothing further to prevent my setting out. The rattling tin kettle—a production of General Motors, Ltd.—carried me via Nishapur, Sabzawar, Mihr, Mazinan—where one famous day the march through of the British troops had badly put the wind up me—Abbasabad, Miandasht, and Maiamai to the town of Shahrud, where I had to wait for a further bus connection.

The Persian towns and villages which we passed through were as uniform and monotonous as the serais of the places where we put up for the night. We would halt at midday, either by a tea-house or somewhere in the desert or amongst the hills, and make a fire close beside the road to prepare a primitive meal. I felt happy and light-hearted when a breeze from the north, blowing down off the Jaghatai mountains, brought a breath of refreshment. These mountains run parallel to and on the right of the road the whole 375 miles from Nishapur to Shahrud. When the wind, on the other hand, blew from the south across the great *kavir*, or salt desert, forever carrying sand and salt-dust in its train, I cursed like a trooper and wished the drive well over. When we came to a serai at night I first washed off from my body

the thick crust of sweat and sand, drank a few bowls of tea, and sank at once, dead weary, into a heavy sleep, from which even the biting of the lice and the crawling of spiders and scorpions were unavailing to wake me before morning.

From Shahrud the new bus took us via Deh i Mulla, Damghan, Daulatabad, and Gusha to Simnan, where my fellow travellers and I were held up for three days in consequence of a breakdown that occurred just before we reached Simnan. A broken axle had to be removed and a new one fetched from Tehran. Simnan is one of the most important caravan junctions of Persia, for it is the terminus of the one and only route across the western *kavir*.

I was within an ace of embarking on a new journey from here. The Devil, who is lord of all dangers and adventures, waged a long and bitter battle with my longing for home—and nearly won the victory.

'Look here,' he cried, 'in all your life you will never have another chance of seeing the *kavir*! Seize it while you may! After all what does it matter—a few weeks more or less?'

'No,' said Home. 'You must not venture into the salt desert. For years you have been possessed by the devil of adventure, and have yielded to his wiles and travelled quite enough over mountains and across deserts. It is time to return.'

'Stuff and nonsense!' retorted the Devil. 'How many Europeans have ever crossed the salt desert? Shouldn't you love to be one of the few?'

'Don't listen to him!' whispered Home. 'Thousands have perished in the *kavir*. Do you want to be one of the many? Think of the mountains and forests of Austria!

Aren't they preferable to these sun-cursed wastes of salt?'

As it happened I was at the moment almost dead of thirst, and would gladly have given every penny I possessed for a drink of cool spring water, so the Devil lost the battle, ar ; as the motor-bus spluttered up the steep road to Firuzkuh on its way to Tehran, I contented myself with a glance over the northern margin of the *kavir* and the immense salt basin that stretched away out of sight below. Just after this the bus drove into a gorge and the desert vanished from my sight. Farewell, *kavir*! It was not to be. What good would it have been, anyway!

After we left the gorge the road afforded a view northwards to an ancient holy place, the grave of some saint, built like a small fortress on the mountain side. (Plate 103.) Then the highest mountain in Persia came in sight, the eternal ice and snow-fields of Demavend. (Plate 104.) It lifts its blunt crater cone nearly 18,000 feet into the sky, into which it seems insensibly to blend. Immediately afterwards we passed through the town of Demavend, and all the way to Tehran the great mountain kept peeping at us through valleys and ravines, till in the later afternoon it donned a cap of cloud and withdrew itself from human gaze.

O Tehran! How you have changed since I last saw you! (Plate 105.) Immense revolutions have taken place in Persia. On the 12th of December 1924 the Grand Wazir and Dictator, in defiance of Parliament, drove the last of the Qajars from the throne and so ended a dynasty which had ruled Persia for a hundred and thirty-one years. He wrested from Parliament the hereditary kingship and the title of Shah Riza Pahlavi, and since then styles himself, after the fashion alike of the great

Darius and of his inglorious recent successors: Shahan Shah, or King of Kings. When I reached Tehran it was a bare nine months since the accession of the new Shah, and some four years since his march on Tehran, but the force of his personality, his indomitable will, and his inexhaustible energy—a characteristic incomprehensible to the Persians—had worked genuine miracles even in this short space of time. With relentless severity he opened campaigns against banditry, the filth of the towns, the corruption of officials, and the general passion for slavish imitation of the foreigner.

The safety of the great caravan routes is as much the work of the new Shah as the installation of motor-buses. The robber bands of Shah-Sewand and Kurd were threatened with annihilation; corrupt officials—and their number was legion—were prosecuted, masses of them were dismissed from office and executed: a proceeding which won the Shah the unqualified approval of his people, who had at first eyed askance his rise to power.

In the last ten years Shah Riza Pahlavi has raised the strength of his defensive forces to a pitch which would make an attack on the country a catastrophe for the aggressor, where in olden days it would have been an uneventful picnic. An admirably disciplined army, a railway from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf nearly completed, and an excellent network of roads throughout the country have prepared Persia for any contingency, and now in 1936 she has no mind to let herself be passively partitioned between Russia and England.

The age-long rivalry between these powers, quickened anew by the battle for the oil wells of Persia, would sooner or later have been bound to lead to the dismemberment of the country.

This danger was imminent during the World War. But in the hour of her greatest need an unexpected factor came into play which ultimately set Persia's feet on the road to freedom. German, Austrian, and Hungarian soldiers, escaping from the Russian prison camps of Turkistan, rallied in Tehran to the number of three hundred, and under the leadership of the German Military Attaché, Count Kanitz, and of Consul Schünemann formed a nucleus of picked men which was quickly joined by all the Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, and Turks in Persia at that time. Several Swedish officers with their Persian gendarmes came to swell the little force. When it had shown its mettle by various victories over British and Russians in Persia, Persian adventurers and patriots flocked to its colours. It reached its zenith in numbers and success after Count Kanitz had proclaimed a Holy War. The miniature army suffered sorely both by casualties and disease, and the incompetence of the Persian Government ultimately compelled it to withdraw into Turkey by way of Baghdad. Nevertheless its exploits had destroyed the myth of British and Russian omnipotence. Bands of volunteers and free lances carried on guerrilla campaigns in all directions and inflicted severe losses on the armies of occupation, till the two governments decided to give up their plans for dividing Persia between them.

After the end of the War the diplomatic battles for Persia began. It was highly inconvenient for the Soviets to be obliged to set aside large forces to garrison a perpetually rebellious territory, the more especially as they were sufficiently occupied putting down rising after rising in Turkistan, and were therefore, as it were, continuously between two fires. They thereupon decided on

a magnanimous gesture, withdrew their garrisons, and made the Persians a gift of the roads they had constructed, and the fifty-three or fifty-four miles of railway from Julfa to Tabriz.

Riza Shah maintained friendly relations with Soviet Russia, and Persia was one of the first countries to recognize the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. The Russians did not neglect to use their opportunity to make their influence felt. There was at one point great danger of the Bolshevization of Persia. But in the bloody campaigns of many years against recalcitrant provinces the new Shah demonstrated that his object was not Communism but the unity of Persia. When his last opponent, Kuchak Khan, fled to meet a tragic end in the forests, Riza Shah was left the unquestioned and independent monarch of all Persia.

In the bazaar in Tehran I lighted on Russman, Kuchak Khan's ex-adjutant, officiating—as a tailor. Russman started as a sergeant-major of Dragoons in the Austrian Army and was taken prisoner by the Russians. He was confined in the prison camp at Ashqabad and succeeded in escaping to Bukhara, where he attained the rank of a general of cavalry. The story goes that at the end of each week—the Muslim Friday corresponds of course to the Christian Sunday—Russman always got so drunk that the Amir took his rank and titles from him every Friday, but he was obliged to reinstate him every Monday morning, for there was no one else who could command his divisions. Russman knew no Persian, which is the language of the Bukharan Army, and had consequently introduced German when training his cavalry regiments, which consisted entirely of new recruits. Incidentally he had thus rendered himself indispensable,

since there was no one else in the place who knew German. From Bukhara he found his way to Persia, offered his services to Kuchak Khan, and was sent to Baku as his plenipotentiary. The Soviets placed at his disposal a ship loaded with guns, rifles, and ammunition. Russman sailed with it to Enzeli and handed it over to Kuchak Khan, who was thus enabled to take up the struggle against Riza Pahlavi. When Kuchak Khan's army was defeated Russman felt he had had enough of adventuring and bethought himself that he had once upon a time learnt the tailoring trade in Linz. He set up in Tehran and has been busy ever since stitching European clothes for the inhabitants of the Persian capital.

I had been hearing endless legends about him for years, but it was quite by chance that I learned of his presence in Tehran. When I addressed him in German the sometime cavalry general and Communist commandant of a man-of-war, now the Tehran tailor, responded with a somewhat wistful smile. He was sitting on his hunkers on the floor of his workshop, exactly like a native, and vigorously turning the handle of his sewing machine. 'Well, how goes it, Herr Russman? Aren't you longing to get home to Austria again?'

No, he wasn't. He had almost forgotten his mother tongue. His whole appearance and manner betrayed that he had come to feel himself more of an Oriental than a European. Ten years of adventure amongst Bukharans and Persians had metamorphosed him completely. He had long ago embraced Islam and taken an Afghan wife. I had the greatest difficulty in persuading him to tell me something of his variegated career. But once he got started the flood-gates of his eloquence suddenly burst, and I could scarcely contain myself for

astonishment—though I have lived through a thing or two myself. Russman's reminiscences would fill a library. I must confess that I believed only about 10 per cent of what he told me, till various Persian officers with whom I discussed him showed me my error. There is probably no European who has got to know Bukhara and Persia so thoroughly as the modest little tailor at No. 71 Muremda Khan, Tehran.

The new Shah, who was fifty-eight at the time of my stay in Tehran, had already built himself an aerodrome and set about revolutionizing the architecture of his capital.

After being overwhelmed by the impression of the monumental Shimran Gate with its frescoes and tile-work, and the Qaswin Gate with its brilliant mosaics and its four little towers, and by the Qajar Mosque (Plate 106), the sightseer is strung up to the highest pitch of expectation when he comes to visit the Shams ul Amara, the world-famous Palace of the Persian Kings. (Plate 107.) This lofty building, some five stories high, towers above the roofs of the city, its entrance gate flanked by double towers clothed with blue-green tiles. It seems to promise all the wonders of the Orient. But disappointment awaits you. Your first hope is to get a sight of the loveliest of lovely things, the famous Peacock Throne (Plate 108) and the immense Marble Throne (Plate 109). The Peacock Throne of Delhi, composed of pure gold and precious stones, was brought from India by Nadir Shah: its jewels have long since been replaced by glass imitations! The later Qajars sold some of the jewels in Moscow and Paris, and used the rest to cover loans in London. Even the tiniest sliver of diamond in the most hidden cavity is common window glass. The

precious stones, literally beyond all price, have been scattered to the four winds of heaven, and nothing genuine is left but the gold itself. The Marble Throne has fared little better. The great monster stands over twelve feet high in an open loggia. If you want to see it at close quarters you have to go round a large basin, paddle across a spring, and climb some steps up past twisted columns. The throne itself stands on a sort of platform borne aloft by marble figures, in a large niche adorned with mirrors the glass of which has all gone black. The mirror ceiling of the great hall itself has suffered almost equally. One might reasonably expect to find in Tehran, 'The Centre of the Universe', as the Qajars used to call it, such genuine oriental art as rejoices the heart at every step in Isfahan, for instance. The remaining rooms of the great palace are equally disappointing, but it is understood that they are all soon to be overhauled by the express order of the Shah.

The Picture Gallery, which contains portraits of a large number of European rulers, including the Tsar Nicholas II, the Emperor Franz-Josef I, the Kaiser William II, etc., shows about as much sense of style as a jumble sale. The staircase leading to the State Rooms suggests an old curiosity shop such as abound in the Tandelmarkt in Vienna. Gilded plaster statues, glass balls in red and silver, like those that disfigure the public gardens in small provincial towns, ornament the wide balustrades, while here and there between these monstrosities there stands a really valuable Chinese or ancient Japanese vase. Behind a large oil-lamp with an impossibly hideous shade there is a magnificent casket of loveliest alabaster, on which some barbarian has scribbled his name in ink. These various 'treasures' were collected by

the shahs Muzaffar ud Din, Muhammad Ali, Ahmad, the last of the Qajars, and his heir the Waliahd, and here they have been indiscriminately dumped together in complete confusion. A bathroom dedicated to the use of the royal heir was papered from top to bottom with worthless oleographs of female nudities. Riza Shah has already thrown out a lot of rubbish and before long the whole palace will no doubt be cleared of its trumpery. The only thing which is to be retained in its original form is the hall with the Peacock Throne, on which the new Shah took his seat that the crown of ancient Persia might be placed upon his head.

With a sigh of immense relief the visitor quits the tawdry interior and steps into the glorious gardens of the palace. The guides murmur with awe as they confide that all the 'artistic treasures' have been removed. The whole park used to be desecrated by stags in sheet iron, abominable grottos, and every imaginable horror of the kind. The immemorial trees and the basins of water, skilfully connected with each other by ingenious channels, need in truth no other ornament than the gay flower-beds and the many spring-fed streams which skirt the narrow paths.

One of the well-known sights of Tehran is the Maidan i Sipah, the Square of the Guns. Along one side of the high stone walls that enclose the palace and the ministries there stood until a few months ago a long row of cannon, which served a triple purpose. First they formed a collection of every kind of firing implement from every epoch of Persia's rise and fall; secondly they were a symbol of the rulers' might and silently proclaimed to malcontents: 'Behold, the strength of Persia's Kings!' and thirdly, until the coming of Riza Shah, they were used

as the means of public executions. Until 1921 the cannon would thunder across the square and every shot cost some Persian his life. Riza Shah had these symbols of terror taken away, and ordered the whole blood-soaked ground to be dug over, so that no Persian need tread on his brethren's blood. Where once the executioner's cannon stood there is now a large pillar on which are posted up the announcements of cinemas and places of entertainment. A few paces off a white-gloved policeman stands on a raised plinth under an umbrella and regulates the considerable traffic. The rest of the Maidan i Sipah has been converted into a park with a conservatory, and outside the iron railing of the park is the terminus of the many lines of motor-buses which connect Tehran with every corner of the kingdom. A wall two stories high sheltering an enormous number of bazaar booths forms a worthy background to the square.

Clouds of dust are rising, beams are crashing, old walls are toppling—the ancient *chai-khanas* and coffee-houses round the square are being pulled down to make room for broad streets down which a few months hence electric trams will be running. Up till now the 300,000 inhabitants of the Persian capital have been served by leisurely horse-trams, which dawdle through the streets with clanging bells. 'Haste is of the devil,' says a Persian proverb! High poles are springing up everywhere, which are to carry telephone, telegraph, and electric light to the remotest corners of the city. Hitherto only the very centre of the city boasted electric light; a few paces behind the Maidan i Sipah oil-lamps burnt dimly in dirty lanterns. Uncovered water-channels—distributing disease as liberally as water—have coursed through the town, as through every other oriental town, since the

memory of man, and are dreaded by Europeans as much as they are loved by the native population. They likewise are doomed to disappearance in favour of a modern water-supply. We of western Europe, who take underground sewers, pipe water, gas, electricity, and water-closets for granted, can only dimly conceive the courage needed to impose such installations on a backward people. Hand in hand with the Shah's campaigns against Persian indolence and indifference marches the development of an organized school system. A new law makes school attendance obligatory in every town of over 20,000 inhabitants, most of which have hitherto possessed no educational establishment of any kind. Intermediate schools and universities where the exact sciences are taught are crowding out the religious madrasahs, which in future may be attended only by students desirous of entering the priesthood. The people must learn reading, writing, and Persian history in recognized schools, for the new Shah is determined to restore Persia to its earlier fame as a land of culture, in defiance of the saying current this hundred years: 'Persia is an ancient land of culture. It has lost its culture and kept nothing but its age.'

I had had a thorough rest and was feeling fit again. In the Maidan i Sipah I boarded a motor-bus bound for Tabriz. When we got to Qazwin our driver was ordered by the police to abandon the good route by Sultania and Kekben in favour of the much worse road by Manjil and Qabakh, for large bands of rebels were reported to be active between Kekben and Mianah. We left Qaswin followed by a motor-lorry carrying twenty soldiers and a mounted machine-gun. The soldiers had instructions to see us safely to Mianah. Along wretched roads and

over half-crumbled bridges we drove through the valley of the Qizil Uzen. (Plate 111.) On steep bits of the road we often had to get down and help to push our bus over the obstacles. Wherever we halted the soldiers swarmed out of their lorry. They rightly felt that the great boulders that had held us up might well prove to be an ambush. Nothing untoward happened, however, not a shot was fired, and not a single Shah-Sewand obliged the soldiers by presenting a target for their machine-gun. It was the last rainy season which had brought down large rocks and masses of débris from the mountain sides and flung them across the road, but the officer in command of our escort preferred to see in the business the hand of rebels rather than the hand of nature.

We reached Qabakh unmolested. From this on we were accompanied by a second motor-bus carrying soldiers and a searchlight, whose dazzling beams explored the road and the rock walls alongside for hundreds of yards in front of us. Riza Shah was certainly doing his utmost to ensure the safety of travellers on the Persian roads. It was almost midnight before we drove through the Ardabil Gate into Mianah.

It seemed doubtful next morning whether the motor-bus would proceed to Tabriz or not, for the road ahead lay in the main sphere of the restless and rebel Shah-Sewand. They are the last real nomads left in western Persia and hitherto they have succeeded in maintaining their independence. The tribe can put in the field 70,000 armed and well-mounted men, and in their impregnable mountain fastnesses of Azerbaijan they have successfully defied every attempt to subdue them. Under the preceding rulers such attempts as were made to render them innocuous were very half-hearted, for they maintained

an undying feud with the equally rebellious Kurds, and thus saved the Government the trouble of keeping the Kurds at bay. They also formed a valuable buffer against both Russia and Turkey. (Plate 113.) Both these states had interests of their own in the frontier regions between Lake Urmia and the Caspian, and each sought to enlist the help of the Shah-Sewand against the other and against the Persian Government. This game of political intrigue delighted the Shah-Sewand. They accepted gold and weapons impartially from Turk and Russian and then acted as best suited themselves without regard to the plans or wishes of their patrons. In recent years, however, when Riza Shah found that the Shah-Sewand completely disregarded their promises to keep the roads safe for travellers, he sent some of his best troops against them and was successful in executing the leaders and disarming several of the clans.

It grew towards evening and the postmaster could still say nothing definite about the prospects of our starting. There were rumours of heavy fighting in progress round Haji Agha, while the alternative, more roundabout route by the shores of Lake Urmia to Tabriz was reported to be in the hands of the Shah-Sewand, who were engaged in battle with a large body of Kurdish levies. The Kurds had responded only too gladly to the invitations of the Shah so as to pursue the feud against their hereditary foes under the guise of legitimate warfare. The net result was that the whole region to the west of Mianah was one great battlefield. Troops and detachments of gendarmerie were marching through the town or taking up their quarters there. The whole little place was soon overcrowded with military and the price of provisions had soared within a few days to ten times the normal.

There are few towns in Persia with which I have not a direct personal acquaintance, and, though the average of attractiveness is not high, I know none to compare with Mianah in dismal misery, so I was impatient to shake the dust of it off my feet. Our hopes of an early start seemed to grow more and more uncertain, and I was seriously thinking of buying myself a horse and continuing my journey in company with one or other of the military forces passing through. On the fifth day, however, we were told that some motor-buses were going to set out with a detachment of military lorries.

About thirty lorries with soldiers and some light artillery drove ahead of us, then followed four civilian motor-buses and some dozens more military lorries, while a Persian Cossack regiment brought up the rear. In the rare moments when the appalling cloud of dust raised by motors and horsemen opened for a second I caught glimpses of the distant snowfields of the Sahend Mountains, the guardians of Tabriz. There must have been severe fighting at Haji Agha, for we saw exhausted horses, the corpses of Shah-Sewand and Persian soldiers, weapons and equipment of every kind, lying strewn along the road, and the place itself had been bombarded and burned down. There had been no time to tidy up, for the military were pursuing the flying Shah-Sewand towards Sarab, hoping to drive them into the arms of the Cossacks advancing from Ardabil. The villages in East Persia are all provided with strong and lofty fortress towers as a defence against the raiding Turkomans, and here we found the villages similarly fortified against Kurds and Shah-Sewand. All these village strongholds were now garrisoned with armed soldiers to guard against surprise attacks. Cannon and machine-guns had been

mounted on all the surrounding heights, showing that in spite of their recent victory the troops felt none too secure in a country where every ravine might at any moment disgorge a strong body of rebels. Soldiers of every arm were encamped in Turkman Chai, on their way back after a battle on the Aji Chai. They had many Shah-Sewand prisoners with them, whom they fettered hand and foot and flung about like bales of goods. An officer noticed me as the sole European amongst the travellers and addressed me in German. I ventured to call his attention to this inhuman treatment of the prisoners. He only shrugged his shoulders and told me that not a single Persian soldier had survived who had had the misfortune to be taken by the Shah-Sewand; they had been tortured to death. In corroboration of his statement he bade me look at some of the soldiers' bodies which the rebels had left behind. I saw masses of almost unrecognizable human flesh, gruesomely mutilated. Death must have come to these wretches as a release.

As we proceeded we heard heavy rifle fire and isolated cannon shots near Shibli. Presently a dip in the valley gave us a view of a pass ahead in which fighting was going on. While the Persian soldiers in their dark uniforms were clearly distinguishable among the grey rocks, the enemy remained invisible. Only the frequent little puffs of smoke which appeared and vanished on the crest of the pass gave a clue to their position. An invisible Persian battery kept up continuous fire without inflicting any perceptible damage on the enemy, whose fire seemed to increase rather than diminish. We had halted a little while to watch this unusual spectacle of fighting actually in progress. The Shah-Sewand apparently spotted us, for I heard the all too familiar 'whizz-

whizz' of bullets unpleasantly close, and splinters of stone sprang into the air as one struck the ground near our bus. Our driver accelerated and fled at top speed beyond range.

We passed through various Kurdish villages, whose inhabitants were coolly going about their daily work, and ultimately reached Tabriz. (Plates 112, 114 and 115.)

In Tabriz all was quiet. The Shah-Sewand had not dared to attack the strong garrison and nothing save the presence of the wounded gave a hint of the battles which had been taking place so near the town. In Tabriz I was at home. The lanes and squares, the mosques and tea-houses were old and well-loved friends. Through numerous orchards I made my way on foot to Lilava, the European quarter, in which Abul Qasim Qannadi, hundred-per-cent Persian though he is, has his house, his ware-rooms, and his office. I had bidden him good-bye for a month that day in Barfurush; the Prodigal was returning at last, sixteen months later. It was afternoon as I came to Qannadi's, climbed the steep wooden stair, and peeped cautiously in through the open door. My worthy chief was sitting at his writing-table, painting figures into his account book.

As my shadow darkened the door he looked up.

'Salam aleikum, Brother Qannadi!' I cried.

A loud crash followed. Qannadi had fallen off his chair in sheer amazement.

Notes

The 'Rishta' or Guinea-Worm (p. 26)

Krist's assumption that this unpleasant and dangerous parasite is found only in the stagnant waters of Bukhara is baseless.

As its English name 'Guinea-worm', and its Latin names *Filaria* (or *Dracunnunculus*) *medinensis* imply, it is all too well known in West Africa and Arabia. His estimate of maximum length as nine feet is also unduly pessimistic, though doubtless to a sufferer from whom the worm is being extracted by tiny fractions of an inch, it may well appear miles long.

I summarize an article on the subject from A. C. Chandler's *Introduction to Human Parasitology*, New York and London, Fifth Edition, 1936:

The guinea-worm is one of the scourges of life in western Asia from central India to Arabia, as well as in Egypt, much of central Africa, and some localities of tropical America.

The 'fiery serpents' which molested the Israelites by the Red Sea were not improbably guinea-worms.

The adult female worm lives in the deeper layers of subcutaneous tissue till it breaks the skin of its host to give birth to myriads of wriggling young. It reaches a length

of from two and a half to four feet, with a diameter of one to one and a half millimetres, thus resembling a long piece of cord or coarse thread (Persian: *rishta*). The males are scarcely known, but would appear to be mere midgets of one to one and a half inches.

When ready to bring forth its young, the female is instinctively attracted to the surface skin of its host, especially to such parts as frequently come into contact with cold water: the arms of women who wash clothes on a river bank, the legs and back of a water-carrier.

The infant worm at birth is about 0.60 to 0.75 millimetres long. It can survive in the water only for a few days, unless it can find harbourage in a cyclops. Twelve days to two months inside this minute crustacean fit it for its next adventure. It is by then about one millimetre in length.

Human beings become the unwilling hosts of the guinea-worm by drinking water from wells and ponds containing the minute cyclops which is harbouring the guinea-worm. In some places up to twenty-five per cent of the population are incapacitated for a month each year by the septic ulcer caused. This first appears as a blister, the poison of which may bring on urticaria, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, giddiness, or fainting.

The primitive method of extraction practised by Krist —though modified by anti-sepsis and longer incisions— is still the essence of up-to-date treatment, drugs and ointments having proved almost valueless. If the worm breaks in the process of extraction blood-poisoning, involving amputation or even death, may ensue.

If water is even roughly filtered through muslin this is sufficient to remove the cyclops and therewith the guinea-worm larva. It is a curious fact that if methods

of drawing water are adopted which do not involve the immersion of the drawer's body, guinea-worm disappears. Government education and intervention have completely eliminated the plague from many places in India.

The 'Chervonitz' (p. 48)

I owe the following note on Soviet Russian currency to the courtesy of Messrs. Thos. Cook & Son (Bankers), Ltd., London, W.1.:

'In 1924 all the old currency having been demonetized, a new currency was issued by the Soviet Government on a gold basis. The unit was the chervonitz of ten roubles, and the gold parity against sterling being £1 1s. 1¾d. per gold chervonitz.

'By 1926 this new currency had already depreciated by about 10 per cent, but with practically no dealings in the currency outside Russia the internal value was artificially maintained.'

Calculating on these data Krist's 31 roubles would in 1926 have represented approximately £2 18s. 6¼d. of English money.

E.O.L.

List of Vernacular Words

Whatever may have been the original languages of Central Asia in prehistoric times, the country has throughout history been swept by successive waves of invasion and conquest—Mongol, Arab, Persian, and more recently Russian. Probably the majority of the inhabitants of Central Asia to-day speak some dialect of Turki, itself a variety of Turkish proper, but various dialects of Persian, such as Tajiki, are also widely current, and the Turki vocabulary is full of Persian elements as Persian is of Arabic.

A large number of Central Asian place-names are significant: Tash Qurghan = Rock Fortress is pure Turki; Surkh Ab = Red Water (river) is pure Persian; while Char Su is a hybrid—Persian *Char* = Four, plus Turki *Su* = Water (river).

Many names whose meaning is less immediately obvious may be of Mongol origin. I know of no comprehensive study of the Mongol language elements surviving in Central Asia whether in the ordinary vocabulary or in place-names; but the following tentative list of vernacular words will enable the curious reader to interpret such names occuring in the present book as are composed of Arabic, Turkish (Turki), or Persian elements.

A., Arabic
T., Turkish or Turki
P., Persian
R., Russian
PA., Persian, borrowed or derived from Arabic, and so forth

E. O. L.

ab (P.), water
abad (P.), city, habitation, cultivated land. Used as suffix forming names of towns and villages
afshan (P.), verbal root signifying 'scattering'. *Zerafshan*, gold-scattering
aji (T.), bitter
al (A.), the definite article 'the'. In compounds frequently assimilated to a following consonant: *ar-*, *ash-*, *ad-*, etc. In certain cases appears as *ul* or *il*, the vowel representing the case-ending of the preceding word
ala (T.), piebald, multi-coloured
amir (A.), king, 'Amir', pl. *umara*
airan (T.), thick, sour milk (camel's, goat's, mare's)
aq (T.), *white*
aq-saqal (T.), white-beard, elder, headman
arabah (PA.), high-wheeled cart; v. page 172
archa (T.), juniper
archa-chik (T.), guardian of the juniper forests
arghali (P.), species of wild, mountain sheep
ariq (T.), irrigation channel, water-course, canal
arwat (A.), pl. of *rabat*, q.v., rest-house, inn
aul (T.), semi-permanent nomad encampment, village
baigha (T.), wild game played on horseback in which the 'ball' is the carcase of a sheep; v. pp. 41, 150
bala (P.), upper, raised, above
bala-khana (P.), balcony, upper room
baqsi (T.), medicine-man
bashi (T.), leader, person in command, head, 'boss'
batir (T.), cattle-thief. Possibly a corruption of P. *bahadur*, hero, champion
bazar (P.), shopping-centre, street (frequently roofed-in) of open, booth-like shops, 'bazaar'
bazar-jik (P. + T.), pedlar, hawker
beg (T.), Turkish official, governor
bulak (T.), spring (of water)
bumaga (R.), passport, permit, identification papers
buran (T.), sandstorm
buzah (T.), intoxicating drink, made by Qirghiz from mares' milk

1. *chai* (T.), river
2. *chai* (P.), tea. Drunk in Central Asia with salt and fat. *Chai i shirin*, sweetened tea, drunk with sugar

chai-khana (P.), tea-house, tea-shop, inn

chai-khana-ji, chai-khana-chik (P. + T.), keeper of tea-house

char (P.), four

chilim (P.), hubble-bubble pipe. The tobacco-smoke is drawn through cold water before being inhaled. (Probably derived from Hindi)

charas, chars (P.), preparation of Indian hemp. Used as narcotic

-chik, -jik, -ji (T.), person in charge of, or professionally connected with, something

chimat (T.), woman's horse-hair veil

chol (T.), desert

chuchka (T.), pig

dab (T.), customary law amongst Qirghiz. A corruption of PA., *adab*

dagh, tagh (T.), mountain range, mountain

dasht (P.), desert

dil (P.), heart

din (P.), faith, religion. Especially 'The Faith', i.e. Islam

deh (P.), village

feringi (P.), 'Frank', any European. A word common throughout the Near and Middle East and probably dating from the time of the Crusades

garm (P.), warm, hot

gök, kok (T.), blue, green. A large number of eastern languages use the same word to denote 'blue' and 'green', adding, if necessary, some qualifying word to distinguish the two colours

gul (P.), flower

gulchem (T.), edible, garlic-like root. Found in the Trans-Alai and used by the Qirghiz as a bread-substitute

guzar (P.), ford, crossing-place

haji (PA.), one who has performed the Pilgrimage to Mecca

hauz (PA.), reservoir, tank, artificial pond, or basin of water

hazrat (A.), noble, holy; title of respect. Prefixed to proper

names of saints, etc., and hence used in names of places called after them

i (P.), 1. denoting genitive case: Deh i Mulla, *the mulla's village* 2. linking noun and adjective: Deh i Nau, also Deinau, *the new village.*

insha' Allah (A.), God willing, please God, 'Good-bye'. A phrase in constant use throughout all Muslim countries

Islam (A.). The religion of 'submission' (to the will of God) taught by the Prophet Muhammad. Its votaries object to being called 'Muhammadans', since they do not worship their prophet nor claim divine honours for him

-istan (P.), place of . . ., country of . . . Rigistan, place of sand, open square; Tajikistan, the country of the Tajiks, etc.

-jand (T.), v. *-qand*

-ji, -jik (T.), v. *-chik*

kafir (A.), Unbeliever, i.e. non-Muslim

kand (P.), town, village

kavir (P.), salt-ground, salt desert

khan (TP.), chief, lord

khana (P.), house, dwelling

khilat (AP.), man's robe or cloak. Often used of a robe of honour

khoja (P.), gentleman, merchant, person of distinction. The usual pronunciation of original *khwaja*

khurjin (P.), saddle-bag. Used as portmanteau

kok (T.), variant of *gök*, q.v.

kuchak (P.), small, minor, junior

kuh (P.), mountain

kumancha (P.), musical instrument like violin

kurt (T.), worm

madrasah (A.), religious school or college. The place where 'lessons' are learnt. A word in use throughout all Muslim countries

manqal (A.), basin to hold burning charcoal

meddah (T.), professional story-teller

mast (P.), thick, boiled milk

mazar (A.), grave, tomb, shrine

mian, miana (P.), centre, middle

mirza (P.), writer, scribe, clerk
mirza-bashi (P. + T.), head-scribe, private secretary
muezzin (PA.), man who sounds the Call to Prayer five times a day for faithful Muslims
mufti (PA.), expounder of the religious law of Islam, 'mufti'
mulla (PA.), learned man, priest
murgh (P.), bird, fowl
Muslim (A.), person professing the faith of Islam; relating to Islam. This word is general throughout the Muslim world
nan (P.), bread
nau (P.), new
nihan- (P.), verbal root denoting settlement
panj (P.), five
paranja (T.), woman's loose dress
pendinka (T.), virulent species of septic ulcer
pulau (T.), savoury rice cooked with fat or butter and served with chicken, meat, etc., embedded in it
-qand, -jand (T.), town, village
qara (T.), black
qara-kurt (T.), 'black worm', large species of spider
qara'ul (T.), observation post, guard, look-out
qaya (T.), rock
qishlaq (T.), winter nomad camp, semi-permanent village
qizil (T.), red
qala (PA.), fort
qum (T.), sand, desert
qumiz (T.), mares' milk
qun (T.), fine of 500 sheep, 50 horses, and 25 camels imposed by Qirghiz on murderer. (Possibly derived from P. *khun*, blood, blood-shedding)
Qurān (A.), Muslims' sacred scriptures
qurghan (T.), fort
Qush Begi (T.), Chief Minister
qoyun (T.), sheep
quyu (T.), well (of water)
rabat (A.), rest-house, inn. Pl. *arwat*
rabat-bashi (A. + T.), caretaker of rest-house, innkeeper
rishta (P.), thread; thread-worm, Guinea-worm; v. p. 258

rud (P.), river-bed, river
sai(l) (PA.), flood, torrent
sariq, sari (T.), yellow
Shariah, Shariat (PA.), religious law of Islam based on the Qurān and on sacred tradition
Shiah (PA.), large and important sect of Muslims to which most Persians belong
shishlik (T.), strips of meat grilled on a skewer
shams (A.), sun, brightness, glory
shir (P.), lion
shirdil (P.), lion-hearted
Sunni (PA.), orthodox Muslim
surah (A.), chapter of the Qurān
surnai (P.), musical reed-pipe
tagh (T.), v. *dagh*
tal (T.), vine
tang (P.), narrow, strait, defile
tapa (T.), hill
tash (T.), 1. *stone*
2. measure of a short and dignified day's journey
tovarish (R.), comrade
tuman (P.), money of account = 10 qrans (not used in modern Iran). In pre-war years the tuman varied in value between 3s. and 4s. 6d. The word originally meant '10,000', one tuman being supposed to be the equivalent of 10,000 dinars, Arabic silver drachmas
türa (T.), sir, master
tursuq (T.), skin for carrying water, or inflated with air as an aid to swimming
uch (T.), *three*
ul (A.), the definite article 'the'; v. *al*. Occurs also as *ur-, ush-, ud-*, by assimilation
umara (A), pl. of *amir*, q.v.
urús (T.), Russian, any European
yurt (T.), nomad, semi-permanent tent. Constructed of stout poles set in a circle and covered with felt; v. p. 144
zar (P.), gold
zindan (P.), prison

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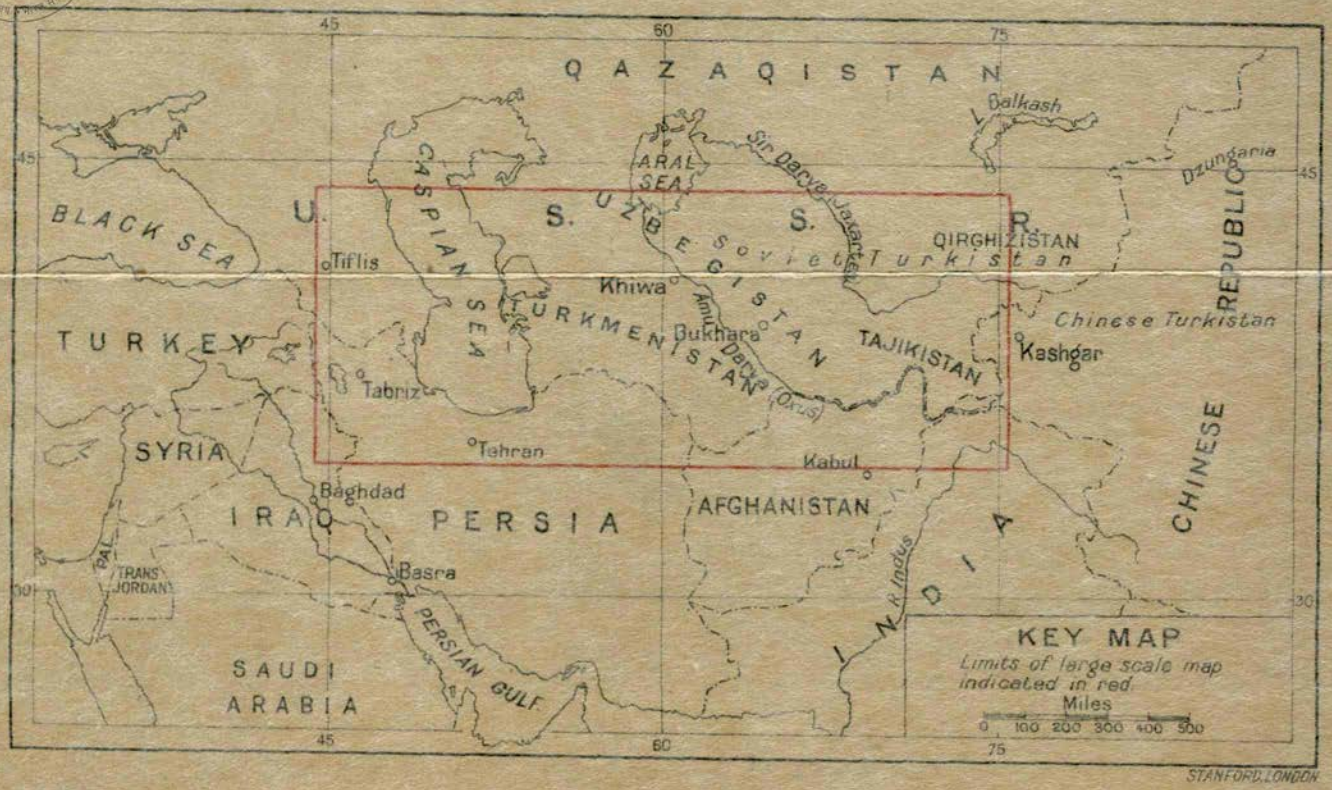
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Sir Darya (Jaxartes)
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UZBEGISTAN
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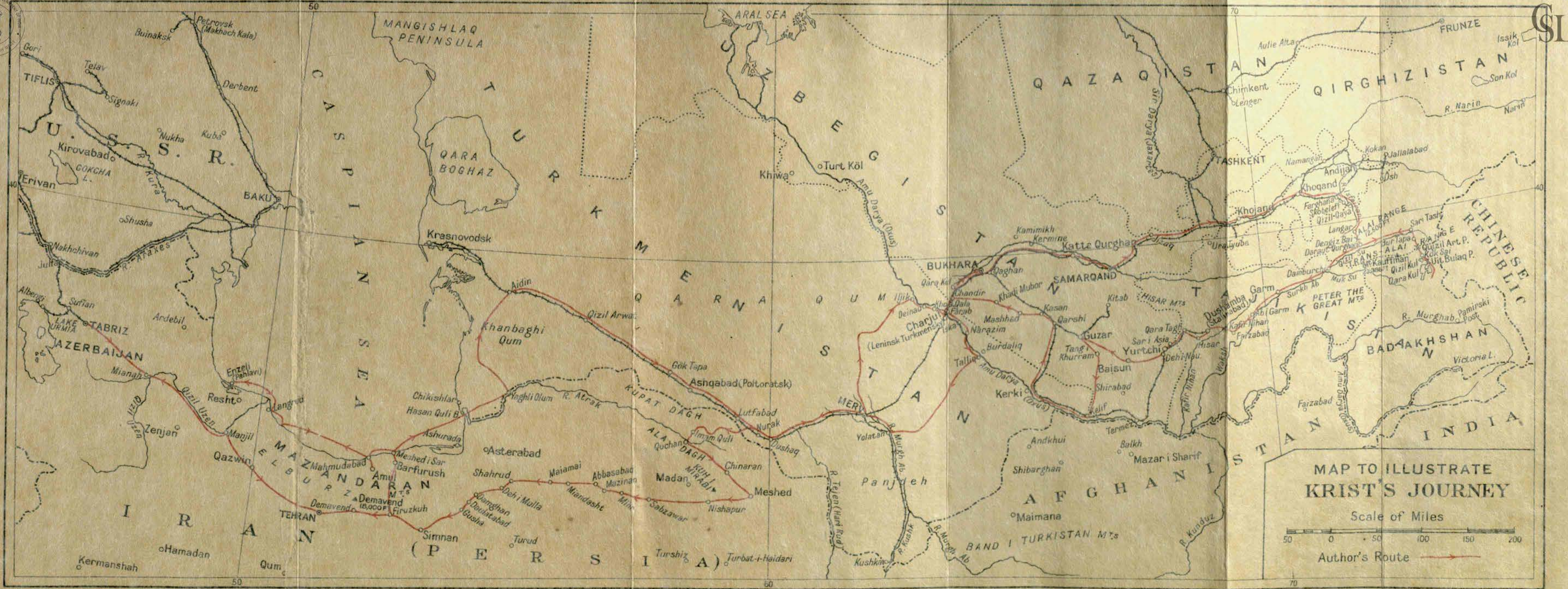
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Scale of Miles
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Author's Route
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TURKMENISTAN
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Abbasabad
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Kauffman
Muk Su
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Shibarghan
Maimana
Balkh
Mazar i Sharif
R. Kunduz
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