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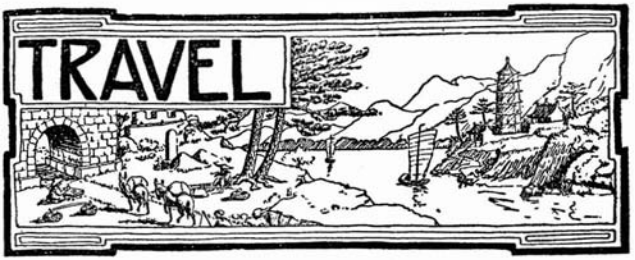


NOTES ON A JOURNEY ACROSS PERSIA

BY

A. M. TRACEY WOODWARD. F.R.G.S.

In these days of rapid progress and civilization, when most countries vie with one another to institute the latest modern innovations, it is rare to find a country which still marches in the footsteps of bygone centuries, living the same antiquated mode of life, clinging to old social customs, and imbued with primitive beliefs, economically, politically and religiously.

For Iran* (or Iroon, as Persia is pronounced in the South) is still a country holding the even tenor of its ways as it did when the Mahommedan hordes invaded the country and inflicted on the Zorastrians the crushing defeat of Nahavend in A.D. 639† With an area of 630,000 square miles and a population variously estimated at between seven to nine million souls, Persia consists of a conglomeration of races. Arab, Tartar and Mongol strains exist, but the original Irani‡ is from Aryan stock, and is best represented in the south and west. Tribal divisions of Lurs, Bakhtiaris, Kurds, Kajars, Turkomans, Afshars, Shahsavends, Hazaras and Baluchs are dotted all over the country ; many are nomads who exist exclusively in tents. The inhabitants are preponderately

*The word Iran is a derivative of the classic Ariana, which was the land of the Arii, of which Herat is still the capital. The original word Aryan is also the same. Other transcripts are : Sans. *arya*, Lat. *arare*, and Zend *airya*.

†"Yezdijerd, the last of the Sasanian Dynasty, fled through Sistan and Khorasan to Merv. Here he found no safe asylum. . . . . and concealed himself in a mill near the city. The owner received him with apparent kindness, but was tempted by the splendour of the King's accoutrements to kill him while he slept. He severed Yezdijerd's head from his body, which he cast into the mill stream." cf. Skrine and Ross. *The Heart of Asia*. p. 37. This outraged hospitality did not long remain unavenged, for the mob seized the murderer and tore him to pieces. Yezdijerd's body was embalmed and placed in his ancestral tomb at Istakhr, as Persepolis was then called.

‡Pronounced "Iranee."

Mahommedans,* but there still exist about twenty odd thousand Guebres (known in India as Parsees), the last followers of the principles taught by Zoroaster, and the original stock of Iran. Like small islands in the sea, the Armenians (about 45,000), the Jews (about 25,000) and the Nestorians (about 25,000), form entirely separate and individual communities.

Except for its desert sea-board, Persia is a huge plateau† averaging a height of from 4,000 to 6,000 feet, divided somewhat equally into a desert part which covers the centre and south-east of the plateau, and a mountainous section which accounts for the entire western portion. A characteristic physical feature is a strip of land from 30 to 60 miles wide from the north of the plateau and the shores of the Caspian, which is generally known as the northern slopes of the Elbruz mountains, and another strip from 40 to 60 miles in width from the south of the famous Kotals‡ to the shores of the Persian Gulf. The contrasts between the two strips are very striking in that the northern section has many rivers, a high rainfall, marshes and swamps near the sea, luxuriant vegetation with semi-tropical forests and a relaxing climate, whereas the south has few rivers that do not dry up during the summer, a low rainfall, wells of brackish water, an almost absent vegetation and great heat combined with an excessively low degree of humidity.

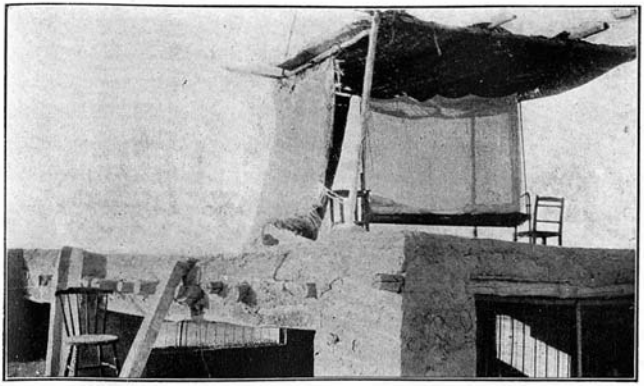
Under such conditions, it is not strange that 105° to 110° F in the shade is not an unusual experience during July and August, whilst from December to February, snow and hard frost is met with on the plateau. Much of this snow is collected and preserved underground until the summer, when it is sold as a substitute for ice, the latter not being obtainable at all excepting at such places as Teheran and Bushire, where small plants produce ice of a sort. During the summer, the many dust storms (shamals), the glare, the heat of the sun and the lack of water are most trying, but the great compensation derived from the scorching rays of the sun is that these act as a powerful disinfectant, whilst bacteria need moisture in order to thrive.

During my residence at Bushire on the Persian Gulf in 1924 and 1925, fortune placed in my path several opportunities to make excursions of

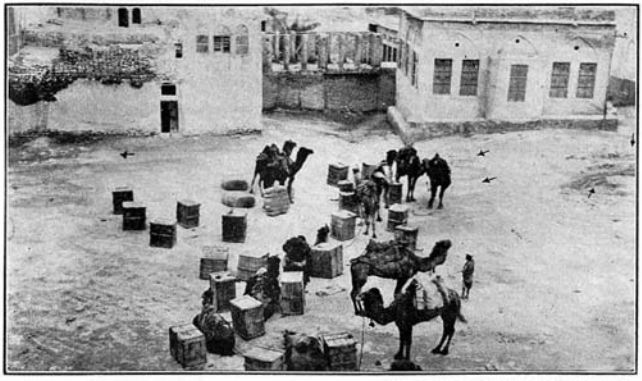
*Although the Mahommedan invasion of Persia began some fifteen years earlier, it was only in A.D. 651 that the complete overthrow of the Magian faith and final adoption of Islam took place.

†" Almost the whole of this vast plateau is dependent upon irrigation for the scanty vegetation which has been collected in a comparatively small portion of its extent. . . . . East, south and west these mighty plains roll away like a great sea, quivering with mirage, and dotted at long intervals by islands of verdure or reddish-grey ridges which rise above the plains like rocky headlands, until the vanishing sea-like horizon melts into the cloudless sky where the eagle and the vulture soar alone. The weary traveller turns with intense pleasure from the road over the arid wastes to the green oasis, with its streams and dense foliage nestling in a gorge. It is again with a sense of repose, a silent and solemn satisfaction, that he looks over the vast endless spaces ; the soul expands with the sense of space. It is because of these contrasts that to the thoughtful and poetic mind the landscapes of central Persia become, after residence there, exceedingly fascinating and quietly stimulating to the imagination." S. G. W. Benjamin. *Persia and the Persians.* p.p. 48-49.

‡This word really means a Pass, and not Mountain.



A Summer "Bedroom" in Bushire.



Photos by A. M. Tracey Woodward.

The "Plaza" of Bushire. Dilapidated Mosque at top right; Arrows pointing to Grave Frames.

from 150 to 200 miles at a time into the interior of that most interesting country. Truly, although those little cross-country trips were the acme of discomfort and a test of endurance, these very facts acted like a gentle perfume of flowers that tended to dispel the irritating and disconsolate sojourn in that coastal town of Bushire, of which the greatest, and most world renowned explorer of Central Asia, Dr. Seven Hedin* wrote: "Bushire was probably the most detestable city I visited in Asia! It must be a real punishment to have to live and work there. No vegetation, or at most a palm tree or two; two-storey white houses; alleys reduced to the utmost narrowness for the sake of shade and coolness; an all-year-round sun-bath, especially intolerable in the summer; a temperature which I once found mounting to 110° Fahrenheit, but which can rise to 113° and more, in the shade; and, finally, the glittering sun over the warm, salt, lifeless water-deserts of the Persian Gulf. I lived with kind European people. The beds, surrounded by mosquito netting, were on the roof. But even before sun-rise I had to hurry below to the shade, so as to avoid white water-blisters which produce a smarting pain." And yet, Bushire is only one degree of latitude further south than Shanghai. Still, after such an elaborate and correct description of that town, it would seem almost ungracious to add any further notes, but the illustration of my "bedroom," on the highest part of the flat, mud roof of my house, will enable the reader graphically to realize the truth of Dr. Sven Hedin's remarks. The bamboo matting at the side of my "bedroom" faced east, to shed shade from the rising sun. But before dismissing Bushire altogether, it is only fair that it should be briefly described. Built on an island or peninsula, according to the tides, correctly speaking, its name is Abushehr,† and the meaning of this word translates into the high sounding paradoxical title of "King of Cities." Yet that greatest of Persian poets, Aboul Kashim Firdausi, was not quite wrong when he wrote:—"Daliki‡ is the Gate of Hell, Borasjoon§ is Hell, and Abushehr is Beyond Hell." For such is Bushire, with its rainless ten months of the year; with the *shamal* (sand storm) from April to June

My Life as an Explorer. p. 21.

†This word may probably be a contraction of *Bokht-ardashir*, the name that was given to this place by Ardashir I, the first Sassanian King who reigned A.D. 226-241. The town occupies the northern extremity of the island-peninsula which is 11 miles long by 4 miles broad. Many of the houses are built of a cream conglomerate stone of shells and coral which compose the geology of the peninsula, these being excavated in cut square blocks. Evidently Bushire must not always have been the desolate place it is to-day, for, speaking of two thousand years ago, Nearchos says: "This country is a peninsula, and called Mesambria; in it they found many gardens, and in them fruit-bearing trees of all kinds." *Indika*. p. 39. During the Anglo-Persian war of 1856-57, Bushire surrendered to the enemy and remained in British occupation of some months.

‡Daliki is the first small village that is reached at the foot of the Kotals as the Persian plateau is descended, and is situated in the Tangistan country.

§Borasjoon is the only village in the plains of the Gulf boasting of a caravanserai, which Lord Curzon describes as the finest he saw in Persia. This is indeed still true. This town is the first place reached on the borders of the Mashilleh Desert, across which it is a run of about 50 miles to Bushire.

lasting days at a time, when the gritty sand penetrates even the folds of one's clothing snugly placed away; with its lack of drinking water, unless one is fortunate enough to have an *ambar*, or artificial cistern, to gather one's roof water during the rainy season, and which a month later is infested with the larvae of breeding mosquitoes. . . . But let us stop: enough has been said.

I lived in the building that once housed the old firm of H. C. Dixon & Co. This was a two storied mud construction, facing an old cemetery disused for forty years, and employed in our days as the "Plaza" of Bushire, and the general dumping ground of merchandise by the *charvadars*, or caravan drivers, treeless indeed, but at least ornamented with some still visible stone grave frames. Facing my residence, due east, across the "Plaza," stood a dilapidated mosque, where each evening I could tell the hour of sunset—the Mahommedan high noon—by the initial religious cry of "*Allah Ha Akbar*" (God is Great). The European population consisted at one time of the high average of sixteen souls. The native element is variously computed at from twenty to thirty thousand—no census having at that time been made.

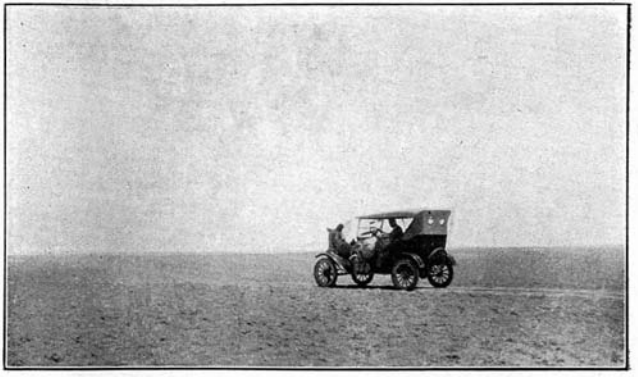
Such isolation—surpassed probably only by Jeddah in the Kingdom of Hejaz on the Arabian shores of the Red sea—naturally drove the foreign residents to form groups. One section lived out at Reshire,* and Sabzabad, seven miles out of town, and the other section resided only about a mile or two away. I formed a unit in the latter. Recreation being absent, I took a great delight in driving over the sands of the surrounding districts, and of the Mashilleh Desert in a little Peugeot 10 h.p. touring car.

After several minor trips to wonderful and poetical Shiraz, famed for the production of that wonderful flying carpet so prominently featured in "The Thief of Bagdad," a more extensive one of 1,600 miles to Teheran and back was undertaken during the most torrid months, July and August, of 1925. I was advised to be armed in my excursions, but, notwithstanding that I followed this advice, never an occasion to place my hand on my holster occurred. Tact and a humorous remark†, combined with patience, achieved more than a display of power could

*This locality has evidently become Reshire as a derivative of its original name of Riv-ardashir. At one time it boasted of extensive ruins among which bricks bearing cuneiform inscriptions were found, which would tend to prove that the place was a very old Elamite settlement.

†"Though Persia reached a high degree of civilization when most other nations were still savage, she has made slow progress since, and is at the present day one of the most backward of states. In this latter fact lies no small charm. Nevertheless it must be owned that the European who visits this country should be prepared to put up with a good many inconveniences and annoyances, and if he intends to travel at all extensively, to have a pretty rough time of it. In order to make the most of his stay, he will do well to arrive in that fortunate frame of mind which makes the best of things. His fund of philosophy will not seldom be taxed. He will remember that the Persian, like everyone else, has his own point of view, and that this, though perhaps utterly incomprehensible to us, is none the less real or less worthy of recognition. However, he will find himself among an intelligent and friendly people, whose customs and crafts have not changed in many instances for hundreds of years; he will be able to observe, too, at close quarters, the changes that are taking place;

The Author with a Party eating Water-melons at Bushire. Mirza Ali Akbar on the extreme right.



Photos by A. M. Tracey Woodward.

A Stop in the Mashilleh Desert, Persia.

accomplish, for the Persian has a happy-go-lucky disposition combined with a *bonhommie* rarely surpassed by other Asiatics.*

Luggage was always reduced to a minimum, but an ample supply of socks and handkerchiefs was included, for the Persian servants, as in some other Asiatic countries, go shares in their master's equipment. The principal parcel was an Indian " hold-all " wherein my camp bed and bedding were the chief contents. For the rest I " lived on the country," and used the heavens as my roof when camping for the night in desolate localities. There are no inns or hotels in Persia, except for two in Teheran, one each at Resht and Enzeli, and the Chahar Bagh (Four Gardens) Hotel in Ispahan, if the word hotel can at all be ascribed to them ; but many *Serais* commonly called *Caravanserais* are to be found dotted all over the land, and it is said that the great Shah Abbass who remodelled and adopted Ispahan as his Capital in A.D. 1585, commanded that 999 caravanserais be built in Persia, this odd number having been purposely selected so that it might not be said that he built a thousand. At the best of times, the caravanserai† is a place to be avoided, some are tolerable, some impossible, since they shelter both man and beast, not to speak of a great variety of this world's entomological population. The fortunate traveller with letters of recommendation, however, will always receive the hospitality of village inhabitants and obtain a room or rooms in a private house. On one occasion when no camp bed was carried, a night in June was spent in Borasjoon, and the carpeted courtyard of a villager with the stars above made a capital substitute for a bedroom. My slumbers were disturbed, however, at three in the morning by the appearance of the large foot of a roaming camel near my head, but the beast carefully avoided tramping on the sleepers which included the head of the house who had carefully placed under his pillow, when retiring, a loaded mauser pistol, an act which did not tend to inspire much reassurance in us‡. But it was common knowledge that the country between the border of the Mashilleh Desert and the Kazeroon district was at the time infested with

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he will find an agreeable climate at one season or another in the different parts of the country ; and he will have opportunities of seeing ancient remains, and for travel and sport." A. R. Neligan. *Hints for Residents and Travellers in Persia.* p. 14.

*For a complete description of the Persian character, cf. C. J. Wills, *In the Land of the Lion and Sun,* (1883).

†" The caravanserais were most uninviting-looking places. They are put up as an act of charity by various Persian benefactors, and are open to all, man, horse and mule alike. No one is expected to pay a penny for the accommodation thus provided, and I believe that Persians never do so, although Europeans usually give a couple of *Krans* to the man in charge, who makes his livelihood by selling forage and occasionally firewood. He does not consider it incumbent upon him to keep the place clean, and, as it is no one's duty to repair it, it slowly falls into ruins, the mud walls crumbling away as the years pass by." Ella C. Sykes. *Through Persia on a Side-Saddle.* p. 43.

‡In *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia,* Major Percy M. Sykes writes : " In 1893 I had marched by land to Borasjun, but this route was now unsafe, owing to the Tangistanis, who indeed robbed and murdered with more or less impunity all around the town." p. 313.

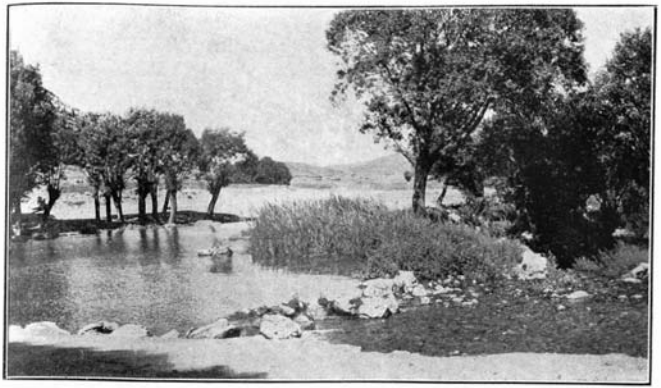
nomadic *tefanchis* (semi-bandit militia). Yet many pleasant nights were spent on the road to and in Kazeroon itself, some in the open, many by accepting the hospitality of Mohamed Ali Khan and Nasri-Sirdar, who were the representatives of the great landed proprietors in Kazeroon, the brothers Haji Golam Ali* and Haji Mohamed Bawker Behbehani. During one visit to Kazeroon, I was informed that a new track† enabling motor cars to proceed to the ruins of Shahpur had been discovered. The Khan of Kazeroon, Nasr-di-Un, expressed the wish to be one of the first men to drive over to the ruins, so with my host, Nasr-i-Sirdar, I drove the first car over the new trail, past the village of Diriz for three *forsakhs* (about nine miles), to these Sassanian remains, which now consist mainly of sculpture on the massive rock.‡ Horses that had been ordered the evening before by special messenger were here waiting for us, and a lunch party with the inevitable roast chicken to boot. It was during this excursion that a most remarkable phenomenon illustrated how one ill sometimes destroys a greater one. We had left Kazeroon at about noon, and reckoned that due to the continual descent to sea level (excepting for a short ascent over the Rudek pass) we would reach Daliki at about four and Bushire at about eight in the evening. We proposed, but man disposed. My mild-tempered driver, Bashi, felt some apprehensions as to the gasoline holding out for the entire journey, so we poured into the car's tank without examination four gallons more at Kazeroon. Not until we reached a 1 in 2½ grade up Rudek pass did the car came to a dead stop. It was at once discovered that the four gallons we had taken in consisted of two parts gasoline and two parts water.§ It was an intensely hot day in early July, and the process of draining off the water occupied a considerable time, during the course of which, aided by the dry atmosphere, we all consumed much of the drinking water we carried. As we passed the last village of Konar Takhtar we were three hours behind time, and being anxious to reach the plains and leave the mountains behind

*Islamic believers who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca are called *Haji*, in Central Asia, India, Arabia and Persia. Greeks also give this appelation to pilgrims to Jerusalem.

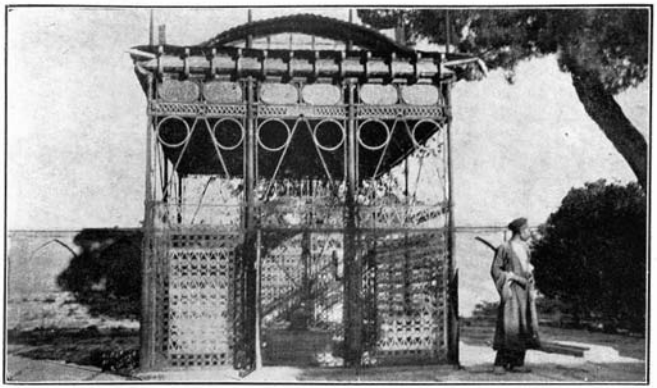
†There are really in all Persia five short roads aggregating about 900 miles in length; the rest are mere tracks trampled by mules, the engineers of Persia. Those tracks are suitable for carriages in most parts during the dry season, but totally unfit for continuous wheeled traffic when the snows melt.

‡Shahpur is situated at the mouth of a grand gorge less than a hundred yards wide at its west end. There are two tablets on the left bank. The first portrays the submission of the Roman Emperor Valerian to the King Shahpur who ruled circa A.D. 241-272. The second one represents the investiture of Cyriadis in the presence of Valerian. Shahpur is here depicted riding a charger. The tablets on the right bank consist of four representing similar scenes, but only one is in a fair state of preservation.

§This act of roguery is typical of the Persian temperament. I was informed in Bushire that when a Persian enters into a commercial contract, it is generally the case that whilst this is being negotiated, he is already devising a scheme whereby he may sooner or later violate it. A statement which I found by experience to be only too true, as indeed in other respects the commercial morality of the Persian merchant is to be deplored. The common invocation of the name of Allah in their business dealings is a mere sham to cover a latent scheme of prevarication.



The Drinking Pool of Dasht-i-Arjan.



Photos by A. M. Tracey Woodward.

The Tomb of Hafiz at Shiraz.

us before dusk, we sped on at a good pace. Our drinking water had been consumed and a keen thirst developed as we skirted the salty waters of the River Daliki, which, by the time we reached the base of the mountains, became unsupportable. Such was the torment I experienced that at the sight of the only trickle of brackish water, I plunged my mouth into it, despite the protestations of my servant Mahmud,* that the water was polluted with the germs of typhoid. Indeed, from not a foot away from where I was drinking, the green vegetable slime which pollutes more or less stagnant water was slowly drifting on to my drinking pool, but that water, slime and all, alleviated my thirst, and produced no ill-effects. When relating the incident to a doctor passenger on board of the oil burner "Vasna," later on when crossing the Persian Gulf to Karachi, he informed me that the parched state of my physique at the time, and the intense craving for water, must have been so strong that this may have rendered my system immune to contagion.

On each excursion inland, a different driver was engaged, for, whatever the meagre comfort a Ford car can afford, it was preferable to the caravan when speed was so essential between the far distanced serais, and the still farther distanced villages. On the initial tour to Shiraz in June 1924, Hassan was our driver. A wily liar of the first order, Hassan took every opportunity to idle our time. At about 5 p.m. on the third afternoon, we found ourselves at the foot of Kotal Daukhtar,† that most famous pass in Persia so romantically immortalized by Pierre Loti.‡ Hassan stopped the car midway up the defile, and, suddenly rolling himself on the baked soil, declared that he had fever and could not proceed. I felt him and finding he was normal, realized that he lied. When I taxed him with it he said solemnly that he suffered from "cold fever"—a malady of the most extraordinary variety to say the least. It was only after an hour and by the use of threats that the distance to the next serai would be walked, which we begin to put into practice, that he lazily resumed driving the passengerless car up the defile. My companion, Mirza§ Ali Akbar, and I had by then reached the top of the track shown in the upper section

* My servant Mahmud was quite a bright fellow; despite the fact that that exceedingly common scourge of Persia, conjunctivitis (due to the bright glare and dust in summer), had already taken toll of his right eye, he nevertheless proved useful. Unable to either read or write, he spoke five languages—Persian, Arabic, French Hindustani and English.

†The etymology signifies "Pass of the Daughter" which is 6,469 feet in height. This daughter may be related to the next pass on this trail, further on, at an altitude of about 9,250 feet, which is called *Kotal-i-Pir-i-Zan* or "Pass of the Old Woman."

‡In all his writings, Pierre Loti was an enthusiast *par excellance;* he saw everything through native eyes—certainly his mistaken eulogy of the Kotal Daukhtar was penned from the Persian view. Cf. also his works in *Le Desert* and *Madame Chrysantheme.*

§The word *Mirza* when written before a name strictly signifies "Secretary," although it is a contraction of *Amirzada* which means "Son of an Ameer." Mirza Ali Akbar was, indeed, the private secretary of Haji Mohamed Bawker Behbehani of Bushire, and, coming from the village of Dewan, he was occasionally called "Dewani." Besides Persian he spoke French, Russian and English.

of our illustration. As the evening shadows were casting their dusky veil, we got to the top of Kotal Daukhtar and came upon the camp of Mr. Diamanti, who, in the service of the Persian Government, was superintending rock blasting operations to widen the pass. I carried a letter from Mrs. Diamanti at Bushire to him, and accepted his hospitality for the night. At eight o'clock the Governor of Bushire who was also on his way to Shiraz, arrived, having abandoned the idea of sleeping in the small village at the foot of the mountain on account of a plague of mosquitoes there. When the journey was resumed at five o'clock the next morning, Hassan's " cold fever " had disappeared.

On the tour to Teheran and back, as on a former occasion, Mirza Ali Akbar, the intelligent but intemperate private secretary of the great but blind Haji Mohamed Bawker Behbehani of Bushire, accompanied me, Abdullah Komi, for such was the Mahommedan name that the Persians had given me. Leaving Bushire at about noon, we drove fast and furiously across the Mashilleh Desert and the Dashtistan plain, with an ample provision of raw cucumbers* to alleviate our thirst. Just before reaching Daliki, we crossed a stream running emerald green and with a putrid odour, and I was informed that although unsuccessful borings for petroleum had been made in this locality, the stream nevertheless consisted of a mixture of brackish water and kerosene oil. Anxious to reach Konar Takhtah well before dusk, we soon reached the mountain base beyond Daliki, and began to ascend the rugged hills along the winding defiles. Up and down the defile we went amid frowning cliffs and grand scenery.† Circumventing the first pass of Kotal-i-Mallu,‡ we were soon speeding along the banks of the salt river Daliki, here startling a covey of sand partridge *(tehoo)*, there disturbing a vulture or two feeding on the carrion of a mule fallen by the wayside. After we had partaken of the Persian " standing joke," the omnipresent chicken and rice pillau, my camp bed was pitched on the roof of the villager at Konar Takhtah who had received us. Five o'clock the next morning with an invigorating cool and dry atmosphere, saw us on the road. We soon struck the bank of the salt river Shahpur and sped through the village of Churoon, where, three days after I had passed it during an excursion in 1924, Mr. Price of Shiraz was shot through the heart by a local *tefanchi*. We

*Raw cucumbers are served as fruit in Southern Persia, and experience has taught that as a thirst quencher, the peeled raw cucumber is only excelled by the expressed juice of the ordinary water melon. The latter is commonly served in big tumblers during the summer months at Bushire.

†" In the south the mountain ranges trend with remarkable regularity from south-east to north-wast, separated by regular valleys like wavehollows and intersected by tremendous defiles. The road between Shiraz and Bushire traverses these ranges, and the difficulties encountered prove a serious bar to a large commerce over that route." S.G.W. Benjamin. *Persia and the Persians.* p. 52.

‡*Mallu* being a corruption of the word *Malun*, means "accursed," and well does this Pass merit such a name. With a corkscrew path up a sheer precipice, one need not wonder at the building of a new winding track, which the British Expeditionary Force were obliged to construct in 1916 as a Great War emergency measure.

Sassanian Rock Sculpture of Shahpur. Nasr-i-Sirdar on the left and Nasr-di-Un on right.

Photos by A. M. Tracey Woodward.

The famous Kotal Daukhtar.

reached the formidable Rudek Pass,* and scrambling over the luggage roped at the sides of our car, I ascended on foot in the cool of the early morning. The next ascent lay through the Tang-i-Turkan† on to Rah Dar,‡ from whence it is a straight and level run of about four *forsakhs* due east to Kazeroon. Passing the S.P.R.§ ruins we stopped outside of the town for only a slight rest and a few *stachan*¶ of tea.

Safely negotiating Kotal Daukhtar we traversed the oak forests, or whatever is left of them, and began the mountainous ascent of Kotal-i-Pir-i-Zan (the Old Woman's Pass) with its one hundred and eleven hair-pin bends. Midway up we passed the caravanserai of Mian Kotal near which considerable road repairing was going on. The top of the pass, about 9,250 feet in altitude, commands a very fine view indeed, but unfortunately was clothed in that heat-mist so well known to the inhabitants of the Persian plateau. It is the highest point reached in the southern mountains. Down the northern slope the pleasing green turf and marshy Dasht-i-Arjan comes into view, and soon the locality haunted by the

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*Although built in a width just sufficient for the passage of a motor-car, and with an incline of about 1 in 2½ in some places, Rudek Pass is a tribute to British engineering skill. The summit is about 6,500 feet in height. Formerly the track ascended a neighbouring "ladder," the Kotal-i-Kamarij which was considered the worst and steepest of all the passes in Persia. This passage is now discarded. But it is evident that the British constructed the Rudek Pass as a military and strategic road, for the natural course of the track should have been by skirting the river Shahpur and emerging at the caravanserai of Rahdar beyond the Tang-i-Turkan defile. The dangers of the zigzaging of Kotal Rudek are well known, and during the six times I crossed it, I always walked both ways. During an ascent a year previously, I was in the company of six armoured cars in charge of Russian crews, escorted by the Colonel of the Garrison at Bushire who was driving his own Ford. At one of the hair-pin bends, the Colonel's car ran over the edge down the steep slope into the mass of boulders 300 feet below. With rare presence of mind, the Colonel threw himself out of the car, avoided being crushed to death, and escaped with only a number of cuts and bruises on his head, face and hands.

†This gorge has been rendered famous by the Persian poet Sa-di who suffered from the difficulties of the trail, and, moreover, was there robbed by marauding tribesmen.

‡Rah Dar literally means "On the Road," consisting, as it were, of a solitary caravanserai adjoining the road with a barrier station of road toll collectors, sheltered under a reed-roofed erection.

§When the British Expeditionary Force occupied Bushire in 1915, a corps denoted the South Persia Rifles was created, which was billeted in barracks built of dried mud—the only real Persian architecture—erected about two miles to the west of Kazeroon. Upon the conclusion of peace, the corps was disbanded, and the building vacated. Wind and weather did the rest, so that now only roofless walls in ruins are all that remain.

¶A stachan is a small glass standing about three inches in height, and in the shape of the numeral 8. There is a curious custom in Persia that wherever the weary traveller stops, a glass of pure Ceylon tea with a chip of lump sugar is offered to him. If the stranger drinks it, another glass is brought, and so continually, until enough has been imbibed and more is declined.

maneless lion was entered. Attracted by the very excellent drinking* water which runs here, a halt for lunch was made, and leaving behind this small corner of Kashmir, we ran through the valley of the Kara Aghach, where a royal partridge (snow cock) of immaculate whiteness darted from a nearby† bush. Without stopping at the filthy small village of Khan-i-Zinian, we drove on through the long stretch of thirty miles of desolation to the barrier station of Chinar-i-Rahdar ‡ and towards 4 p.m. Shiraz came into view in the distance. An hour later we were met at the outskirts of the city by Haji Mulek Tuhjar¶ and partook of the delicious fruits of Shiraz in one of the gardens at Afifabad,§ and having rested, drove thence into town.

(*To be continued*)

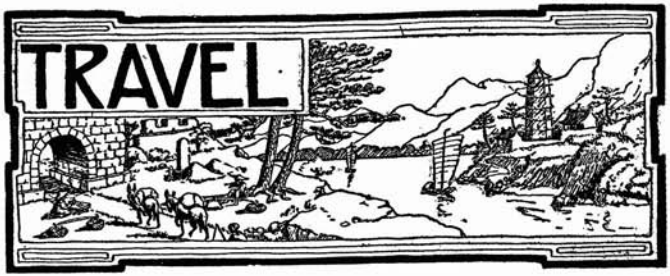
*The village of Dasht-i-Arjan lies at 6,600 feet altitude at the bottom of a high cliff in a hollow out of which the limpid water flows as from a source in the ground. Falling in small cataracts of from one to three feet in height, on the flat it forms a refreshing pool across which a permanent way was built in the autumn of 1924. Curiously enough, this precious water has no exit but looses itself in the marshy plain a mile or two beyond, in like manner to the Tarim River which disappears into the Lop marshes in Central Asia. Most curious of all, this water of wonderful purity emerges from underground passages situated underneath and through a graveyard now disused for many years; but despite this gruesome fact, the water here obtained is certainly most fresh, translucent, sweet and invigorating, and nowhere else in Persia have I met with any water that could compare with it.

†Truly a remarkable occurrence, for the snow cock always lives at a high altitude, that is to say at or above 10,000 feet. We were at an elevation of 6,500 feet, and in a valley during the summer.

‡*Chinar-i-Rahdar* means "Poplar on the Road." Indeed, a large solitary poplar gives shades to the right end of the bridge.

¶*Haji Mulek Tuhjar* means "Pilgrim King of Merchants," a patent granted by the Shah to only one distinguished merchant in a city.

§Shiraz boasts of many pleasant gardens in its vicinity, the most notable being Bagh Jehan Nema, Bagh-i-Takht-i-Kajar and the Bagh-i-Dilgusha. Earthquakes have often shaken this city. In modern times, two—in 1824 and 1853—caused much destruction of property, and great loss of life.



NOTES ON A JOURNEY ACROSS PERSIA

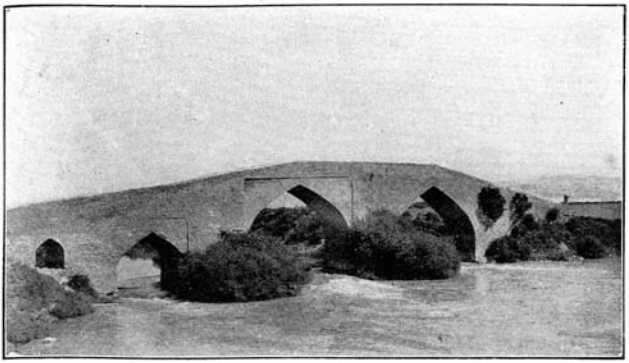
BY

A. M. TRACEY WOODWARD. F.R.G.S.

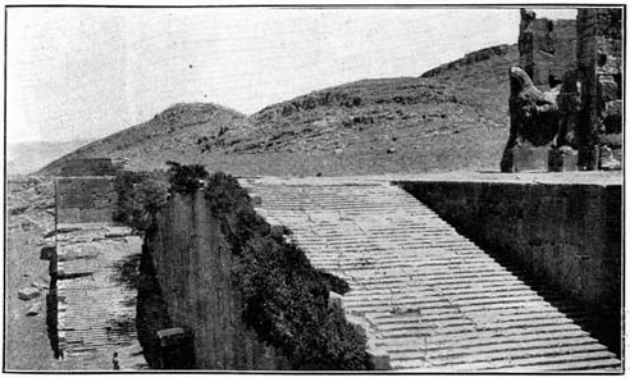
(Continued from Vol. VIII, page 312)

Despite the fact that this was my third visit to Shiraz, having on a former occasion remained twelve days as the guest of Mohamed Ali Khan, I, nevertheless, accepted the hospitality of the more genial and jovial Haji Mulek Tuhjar. Of Shiraz much has been written, mostly by authors engaged in the diplomatic or consular* services, yet the capital of that historical and rich province of Fars, that city which is reputed to "turn aside the heart of the traveller from his native land," cannot be treated with a mere allusion to it. Shiraz has an altitude of 5,200 feet and is claimed to be a sort of terrestrial paradise. "See Shiraz and die" says a native proverb, and the main theme of any conversation is the purity of its water, the beauty of its scenery, the deliciousness of its fruits, the fame of its poets and the excellence of its wine. To a casual observer like myself, I found its water nebular, its scenery much below ordinary, its fruits just palatable and much below average in size, its wine over-alcoholic, in fact nearer *arrak* than wine, and its poets—at least they merit respect. But its verdure is captivating after its barren surroundings, and its flowers are of the highest perfume. The odour of jasmine pervades a distance of twenty yards whilst, the famous *Attar de Rose*, which

*I may be pardoned in pointing out that no foreign merchant has written anything on Persia. Officials in the service of some government, archæologists, historians and geographers who have come to Persia on special missions have recorded their impressions and the facts they learned, but their scope did not lie in the same direction as mine, who sojourned in that country on account of commercial interests. Hence I have seen Persian life under different circumstances, and, coming in contact with the moneyed section of their business men, things were revealed to me from a different angle to what is generally ceremoniously dished out to officials.



The Bridge over Moore's Bendemeir.



Photos by A. M. Tracey Woodward.

The wonderful Double Stairs leading to the Platform of Persepolis, with the Porch of Xerxes on the right. Note the comparative size of the Man at the bottom left.

serves as the basic ingredient in many Parisian perfumes, is produced here, as also are the swarms of sand-flies which turn one's skin into an abominable possession. Two of Persia's great* poets repose in their eternal rest here, Sā-di, author of the *Gulistan* or Rose Garden, whose tomb is unimposing, and Hafiz, whose grave lies in an ordinary cemetery in a suburb of the city. And yet immortal Hafiz wrote :

> " May every blessing be the lot,
> Of fair Shiraz, earth's loveliest spot !
> Oh, Heaven ! bid time its beauties spare,
> Nor print his wasteful traces there."†

We enjoyed for five days the real and very friendly hospitality of Haji Mulek Tuhjar, then set out with a new driver, Jalil, our original one from Bushire, Zeki, having given us trouble. A mile or two north of Shiraz, from the narrow‡ pass, a fine birds-eye view of the city and environs is obtained ; thence over rocky hills we sped past Zarghun, and across the Marv Dasht marshy plain with its dilapidated Sassanian causeway of small boulders, and, passing some minor ruins, we crossed the bridge over Moore's¶ Bendemeer. Imbued with a great expectancy, my feelings of romance were quickly chilled by its bare banks and atmosphere of desolation. We did not tarry, as we were advised at Shiraz that the ground thence to Sivand was in a very bad state, so reserving our visit to Persepolis for the return journey, we skirted the right bank of the serpentine river Pulvar, the Medus of the ancients, and, leaving Hajiabad§ far to our left, lunched at the quaint village of Sivand nestling between crags.

A month earlier I had leisurely visited Persepolis and seen more of it than on the return journey from Teheran. The second visit, however, served not only to confirm the glorious impression that still remains vivid in my mind, but also to dispel much bewilderment which only one visit caused. The marvels in this neighbourhood are manifold. Lord Curzon

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*Persia has had at least five great poets, the greatest of which was Firdausi. Sa-di ranked with Hafiz in glory, and Omar Khayam with Ba-ba Tahir are known for their Rubaiyat.

†Sykes. *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia.* p. 322. Alluring indeed ! but recalling the words of the Japanese proverb, " The frog in the well does not know the mighty ocean."

‡" So overwhelmed with astonishment at the beauty of the panorama is the wayfarer expected to be, that even the pass takes its name of Tang-i-Allahu Akbar, the Pass of God is Most Great, from the expression that is supposed to leap to his lips as he gazes upon the entrancing spectacle." Lord Curzon.

¶This is the dull muddy salt river Band-i-Amir (The Amir's Dam) known under the modern name of River Kur, the ancient Araxes, which flows into Lake Niriz.

§Abad means "built." Hence many village names terminate with this word, the prefix denoting who built the place. On one occasion at night, when we had lost sight of the trail across the Mashilleh desert and the car had plunged into a two feet deep excavation, we were obliged to await the dissipation of darkness. Digging a bed into the soft sand, we passed some hours of the night there, and, upon resuming our travels, my servant Mahmud named the place : Abdullahabad. Abdullah was the Persian name that I had been invested with.

in his work* devotes about eighty pages to it, and the toil of a visit to Persia is certainly well repaid by this imposing spectacle ; but the visitor must not view the remains in the state that they are to-day ; he should conjure up a mental image of what it must have been in the days of its ancient triumphs.† The carvings were exquisite and some are as clear and fresh as if chiselled but yesterday.

As the base of the huge platform with its quarter of a mile frontage of blocks of hewn stone is reached, one is immediately struck with the magnitude of this once state palace of Achaemenian kings. Passing through the Porch of Xerxes flanked by two bulls, about sixty feet in height, and betraying kinship to Assyrian art, a turn to the right and through the northern staircase leads up to the Hall of Xerxes. Twelve huge pillars yet stand, and, counting the bases and the traces of bases that still remain, I conjured a mental picture of this great hall with seventy-two pillars in uniform rows. Beyond are the palaces of Artaxerxes and Xerxes, but the most interesting part of the ruins was the Hall of a Hundred Columns, which, alas, having suffered frightful devastations in the earthquake of the 18th century, is a chaos of fallen architraves, cornices and pillars. Still, among these relics of this phenomenal ancient glory, much of beauty and wonder was found, for the bas-relief on the doorway representing a king stabbing a griffin, and the carvings on the broken dark grey marbles of fallen pillars were wonders of ancient art. To me who resided thirty-three years in Japan, there was much in those carvings which recalled to my memory that which I saw in the Land of the Rising Sun.‡ At the rear of the great platform, hewn out of the rock in the hillside, are what was in the past, three sepulchres, two completed, the graves of Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III, and the third unfinished, probably the grave of Darius III. Cuneiform inscriptions, which were deciphered by Sir H. Rawlinson, are to be found carved in many places.§

As Sivand was left behind us, the modern and more easily negotiated track through the village of Sāadatabad was taken, thus avoiding the

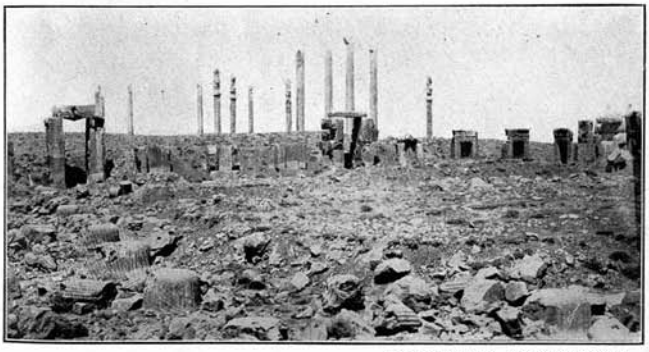
**Persia and the Persian Question.* Cf. also G. Perrot and C. Chipiez : *Histoire de l'Art dans l'antiquite*, Vol. V. ; Flandin and Coste : *Voyage en Perse* (1851), and F. Stolze, *Persepolis.*

†When during our return journey from Teheran we visited Persepolis, Mirza Ali Akbar expressed surprise at the sight he saw, declaring that the place was only a conglomerate mass of ruins. " Ah ! but then," I retorted, " you are only looking at this place with your own eyes veiled with invisibility, whilst I am viewing it with eyes of 2,500 years ago, rebuilding in my mind a picture of what Persepolis was at the summit of its glory."

‡It was not at Persepolis alone that I observed the reflection of a great many Japanese symbols. Indeed, I paid particular attention to Irano-Japanese affinities during my travels, and the century of coincidences that I have observed can well make up a scientific treatise on a subject which has heretofore remained unnoticed.

§Darius, circa 521-485 B.C., built " Parsa " as his capital, the Persepolis of the later Greeks. It was sacked and destroyed by fire by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. A mass of ruins, it became known during the Arsacid Empire as Istakhr, under which name it lived through the rule of the Sassanid Kings (A.D 226-651), and the Arab domination. The place is now called Takht-i-Jamshid ("the sepulchre of Jamshid ").

The Porch of Xerxes at Persepolis.



Photos by A. M. Tracey Woodward.

Ruins of Persepolis with what remains of the standing Columns.

climb over the Tang-i-Kamin defile and the ruins of Pasargadae.* We emerged from this new trail back into the old one at Mashad-i-Murghab, whence over low hillocks and down dale on through Abbasabad, we reached Deh-Bid,† the highest village on the entire route, its altitude being 7,500 feet, and which Mirza Ali Akbar promptly dubbed *Des Beer*, probably inspired by his froth-loving tendencies.

From Deh-Bid the track branches off on the right in the direction of Yazd. We were now going through the Quli-Kush Pass, and I was struck with its nickel mining possibilities. It is a descent of 500 feet down to Khan-i-Kureh, which really consists of only a caravanserai. From here to Surmaq is a straight run of about thirty lonely miles with dark brown hills on the right. When across this plain, we come upon a flock of about ten gazelles. The next stop was at Abadeh where we arrived long after dark, because we had had three punctures since leaving Kahn-i-Kureh which necessitated the replacing of inner tubes.‡ Despite that it was nearly 9 p.m. the road toll collectors were quite alert, but we were hospitably received and nourished by a kind villager. The room at our disposal was small, and, as it entailed my sleeping in a cramped position with our driver Jalil, my servant Mahmud and Mirza Ali Akbar, I chose the open air near the edge of the carp pond. Upon emerging from the gates at the north-east end of the village the next morning, we passed the two pillars wherein a former governor had walled up alive two brigands. A little further on, upon turning a double corner, I observed several houses each with a cross painted white on the door. The speed of our car did not allow me a closer examination, but on our return journey I gave the order to slow down through this passage, and discovered that the symbols, in one case of an anchor as well as several doors with hearts, were the symbols of Faith, Hope and Charity, which are certainly not Mahommedan.§

*A city of ancient Persia. It was founded by Cyrus after his victory in the last battle against Astyages which was fought here. Cyrus gave it the name of Pasargadae after the tribe. It surrendered to Alexander the Great in 336 B.C. Cyrus, who built his own tomb outside the town, was buried there. It was plundered, however, later on. The remains of the tomb is a square building of enormous blocks of white limestone about 40 feet high. Describing Alexander's visit, Arrain says the tomb bore the following inscription: "I am Cyrus, the son of Cambyses, who founded the Empire of Persia, and was King of Asia. Grudge me not therefore this monument." The place has now been called for centuries by the Persians Mashhad-i-Madar-i-Suleman, which means "The Tomb of the Mother of Solomon."

†The "Dehebeth" of Josafa Barbaro in *Travels to Tana and Persia* No. 49. Hakluyt Society. 1873.

‡For a distance of about 150 miles, every motor-car must carry at least one spare tyre and eight or nine changes of inner tubes. Where trails are those created only by the trample of thousands of donkey and mule hoofs, it is to be expected that a great many nails are strewn about. During one trip from Shiraz to Bushire, our inner tubes had to be replaced six times, involving a great loss of time and energy.

§The houses exhibiting those signs were all in one district, and it is possible that Abadeh shelters more than one religious denomination. Outside of the village there is a cemetery claiming the graves of about 200 Babis massacred at Abadeh during the rebellion of 1854, and to-day there are more Babi believers there than Mahommedans.

A run of fifteen miles brought us to Shulgistan, and another of twenty miles gave us the picturesque view of Yazd-i-Khast, that fortress-like village built on a high rock with its mud houses bordering on the precipice. again crossing the River Pulvar, which has here formed a diminutive Once canyon, the road toll officials were met at the village end of the bridge. We sped through the minor villages of Aminabad and Maqsud Beg, and reached Qumisheh,* the last a place with mud battlements and white pigeon towers where manure is collected for melon beds, and also where the tomb of Shah Reza is situated. The trail in these districts for a distance of about fifteen miles was undulating, and to avoid being constantly thrown out of the car, we had to reduce our speed to five miles an hour. This delay made us speed on through the Kavir† to Mahiar, after which, passing a caravan of about fifty camels and crossing a chain of low hills adjacent to two groups of peaks which we styled the "Two Brothers" and the "Three Sisters" from their general resemblance to one another, we came upon the straight, constructed road of about ten miles, taking it at thirty miles an hour. We soon reached the low hillock overlooking Ispahan where the Armenian cemetery is situated.

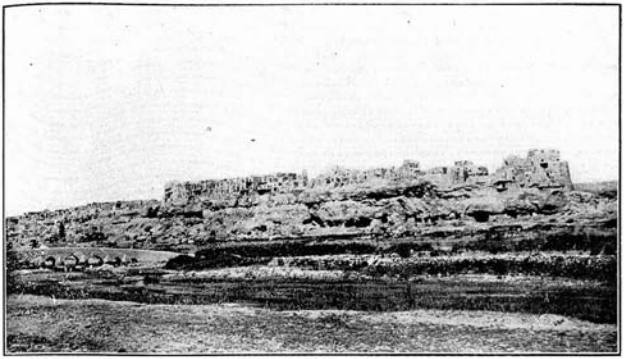
Ispahan with its verdure lay down in the plain below, and we eagerly descended to the pretty vista of poplars along the mile long avenue of the Chahar Bagh with its long lost plenitude of fame so vividly described by Lord Curzon, and over the great Khajar bridge‡ spanning the Zender Rud. We registered at the Chahar Bagh Hotel just at sundown. It would be out of place to refer to the many sights of Ispahan since it has already been so minutely described in other works. We stayed there three days, each meal being a succession of invitations from the leading merchants of the town, but time was found to visit interesting Julfa,§ the colony specially founded by Shah Abbas the Great three hundred and fifty years ago for the separate residence of the three thousand four hundred Armenian families which that progressive ruler brought into Persia from the town of Julfa on the Arras (or Araxes) in Azarbaijan.

*Qumisheh is more of a district enclosing many insignificant villages, said to be 40 in number. Formerly it was a flourishing city of several miles in circuit, but in 1722 it was destroyed by the Afghans and is now a decayed place. In the plain to the south of this district, a battle was fought on February 28, 1835, by a loyal force of 2,000 men commanded by Sir H. Lindsay-Bethune against the combined forces mustering 6,000 men of Firman-Firma and Shuja es Sultana, the two rebellious uncles of the King Mahommed Shah, defeating them into a rout.

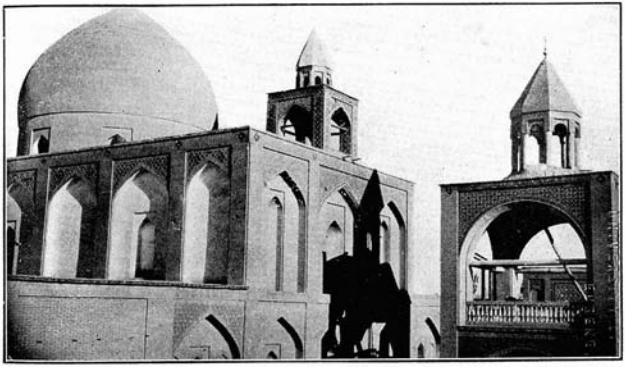
†The word *Kavir* is a possible derivation of the Arabic Kafr, which means saline swamp. It is in common use in Southern Persia, and a term that is applied to any of the many small saltpetre deserts all over the country.

‡"The great bridge which spans the Zender Rud, and connects Ispahan with Julfa, the Armenian city, was built in the sixteenth century by Ali Verdi Khan, one of Shah Abbas's generals. It is 360 yards long, and has three separate stories, and an arched side-walk running outside the parapet." Clive Bigham. *A Ride Through Western Asia.* p.p. 129-130.

§The principal object of interest at Julfa is the Cathedral of St. Gregory—the Nestorian St. Gregory, not the one in our calendar. The interior mural paintings were executed during the 17th century by Italian monks, and are grotesque but of fine workmanship.



The Fortress-like Village of Yazd-i-Khast.



Photos by A. M. Tracey Woodward.

Upper Structure of the Cathedral of St. Gregory at Julfa.

The descendants of those immigrants live to-day much the same mode of life as their forefathers did, but are now all of Persian nationality. We also visited the shaking minarets of Guladan after passing through miles of crumbling mud walls and roofless houses, for Ispahan* is not to-day what it was during Chardin's time (middle of the 17th century).

Upon leaving Ispahan, we had decided to make a bold attempt to reach Teheran the same night, a distance of about two hundred and sixty miles by road, three quarters of which was over trackless wastes. We started at 5 a.m., covering ten miles of ground from just outside of Ispahan which could only be described as a deep mire in wet weather. From Amirabad to Murchehkhur the going was good. Here we branched off on a new trail to the left, avoiding Kashan which is on the old route to the right, and not convenient for wheeled traffic. Murchehkhur is at an altitude of 5,630 feet, but in the plains beyond the region is hilly, and the next village of Mehmeh is at 6,650 feet altitude although, being thirty-five miles away, the incline is gradual. Kurukchi, fifteen miles beyond, is 300 feet higher. Along this section, the traffic is very small, as the caravans usually take the shorter but narrower trail *via* Kashan, consequently the ground is not so trampled upon, but remains uneven, and in parts difficult to drive upon, thus reducing speed. For miles, also, we hardly met any sign of life, and probably, affected by the intense silence,† we drove along in mute company. All along this part of the country I was struck with the number of mounds spaced about every five or six miles, each with a small mud hut on the summit. They appeared rather ancient and artificial, both in shape and in the striking feature of the regularity of their distance one from the other.‡

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*The site of the modern city of Ispahan was first known as Gabae before the time of Cyrus, although during the Susian Dynasties the district was known in Assyrian notices as Anshan or Assan. During the Sassanian period Gabae gradually corrupted into Jai up to the Arab invasion. It then became Sheheristan, and in the 10th century adopted the present name. Ptolemy refers to the city as Aspadana. Ispahan flourished greatly until the time of Timur, A.D. 1387, but was ravaged by both Tamerlane and Jenghis Khan. Reviving as the Sefavid metropolis in 1585, it was in 1722 reduced to ruins by the Afghans, and has not since reassumed its ancient grandeur.

†In *Persia and the Persians*, Benjamin writes :—"A marked characteristic of Persia is the silence that prevails there. The tendency of the age is unquestionably towards the increase of sound, and especially of sounds harsh and discordant, trying to the nerves and bewildering to the brain. What silence everywhere existed in old times we know from the stillness that yet pervades oriental lands. As one travels over the vast plains or lonely mountain passes of Persia, such is the profound stillness that he is often startled at the sound of his own voice. . . . . There time seems to wear velvet on his feet as he silently speeds us on the chase after rainbows in this vale of tears. Is not this an important compensation for the absence of many of the advantages which are wanting in that ancient land ?"

‡"The feature of the scenery of the central plateau of Persia, is found in the artificial mounds which extend at regular intervals through the country for hundred of miles. These mounds are from eighty to hundred feet high, and are shaped like the tumuli on the plains of Troy. But that they are not tombs is evident from their position, ranged as they are at intervals of about two miles. That they must be artificial is proved by this regularity of position, while their antiquity must necessarily

Passing Robat Turk and Hastijan, which boasts of only a solitary farm, we reached the village of Dalijan at the low level of 5,050 feet. Here lunch was welcome, and then on we went through the villages of Dudahak and Daulatabad. We struck the Hamadan-Kum main road at Salafchagam, which is about eighty-five to ninety miles by our last reckoning from Kurukchi. Another thirty-five miles of gentle decline brought us to far-famed Kum at about four in the afternoon, and here the thirst of our car had to be satiated with a fresh supply of gasoline.

Kum is the well-known city that contains the tomb of Ma'asuma Fatima, who died there in A.D. 816, and who was the sister of Imam Reza, himself buried in that most sacred of all Persian cities, Mashed. Kum* is the sepulchre of many Persian sovereigns, including Fath Ali Shah, who had the dome of the tomb of the Immaculate Fatima covered with gilt copper. The four marble minarets exhibit a wonderful art of blue and green enamel work.

The road from Kum to Teheran is given as 92 miles, and as it was somewhat late, we pushed on after replenishing our petrol, which the dealer had half mixed with kerosene oil. Skirting the Salt Desert, we reached the first range of hills, where I observed several peculiar little piles of stones on either side of the road.† We reached Manzarieh, and from there to Kushik-i-Nasrat is a perfectly straight run of about sixteen miles. The view is one of the most picturesque seen in Persia, and I regretted that the low visibility prevented me from taking a photograph. Both villages are situated on an eminence, and, as viewed from either end, the road falls in a depression, then on the flat to rise again at the other end, it looks like a veritable semi-circle hung on air. Added to this charming picture, a good view of the Salt Lake of Daria-i-Namak with its salt-encrusted shores and bright blue water‡ is obtained. Kushki-i-Nasrat consists of a solitary caravanserai, and a little beyond, after rounding the hill, Aliabad is met not far from the next village of Khan Ma-

be very great, because the mound-building period was in pre-historic times. The Persians themselves can give no facts regarding the origin of these mounds, except the general tradition that they were thrown up in the time of Shah Jamshid. This is a common phrase used in Persia concerning objects of great age, and simply means that they antedate any precise historical knowledge." Benjamin. op. cit.

*The inhabitants of Kum have a bad reputation for turbulence, but on our return journey we stopped here for half a day and were very kindly received and cared for by carpet merchants. The mosque of Fatima shares with only three other places, the privilege of being sanctuary, for so long as a criminal has taken refuge in the buildings he cannot be arrested, and this the Shah himself cannot violate. Kum is situated on the Anarbar river in 34° 39′ N and 50° 55′ E at an altitude of 3,100 feet.

†These miniature shrines are made by the collective efforts of caravan drivers, who individually place a single stone above the others, muttering an " Alhum dul Allah " (Praise be to God), as he succeeds in having laboriously reached the summit of the hill, a custom much the same employed by Japanese pilgrims.

‡" Some twenty years ago there was no water here at all, but the road to Koom passed across what is now its bed, and a large caravanserai gave refuge to travellers. This did not suit the Sadr Azem, or Prime Minister, who was interested in the present route, so, by destroying the dam of a river, he flooded the caravanserai and a large portion of the plain, thus compelling all travellers to use the road he wished them to take." Ella C. Sykes. op. cit.

Shrines consisting of Piles of Stones on the Road.

Photos by A. M. Tracey Woodward.

The Father of the Murderer of Major Imbrie.

homed Ali Khan. We were then about midway to Teheran,* which we reached at about nine in the evening, covering the distance from Ispahan in a day at an average speed of sixteen miles an hour, taken over a score of inclines much of it over rocky ground, with many slow downs when fording waterways, and two-thirds of the distance over trackless wastes. When registering at the Hotel as from Ispahan that same day, we were disbelieved as having accomplished the impossible.

We arrived at Teheran on July 29, which coincided with the first week of Moharrem, the period when the *Tazieh* or Passion Play of Persia began. It is naturial that in the capital the ceremonies occur with more pomp and pageantry than in other cities. The ceremonies and processions consist of dramatizing the death of Hussein, grandson of the Prophet and the commemoration lasts the first ten days of Moharrem. But it is only during the last three or four days of this period that the *testeh* by which name the processions are known, become demonstrative and turbulent.† I saw several processions carrying black banners bearing inscriptions accompanied by other regalia, and followed by a body of some fifty to sixty men stripped to the middle, who, with one accord and rhythm of voice, smote their bare bosoms with their right hands. From the repeated blows at short intervals, their breasts were raw. On the day of Ashoura, or the 10th day, which corresponds to the day of Hussein's death, these men dressed each in a white gown, and carried unsheathed swords or daggers with which they gashed themselves on the crown of the head, streams of blood covering them and the white gowns intensifying the sickening sight. In some instances, men fall dead, overcome by the high pitch of excitement or loss of blood, or both combined. Others, again, of more timid disposition, smear themselves with sheep's blood in an endeavour to inspire more applause from the onlookers.

It was during the re-enaction of this Passion Play a year before, 1924, that Major Imbrie, the American Consul-General at Teheran was murdered by these fanatics, his only fault being his abortive desire to photograph a small shrine by the road side temporarily erected during this period. This cost him his life while his murderers were executed. Such is the thrill of danger, that this shrine held out a great temptation to me to obtain a snapshot of it, twice with my camera hidden under an *abbass* (Persian overall, usually brown), in a carriage at a walking

*The capital of Persia, 70 miles south of the Caspian Sea in 50° 25′ E and 35° 41′ N and at an altitude of 3,810 ft. It was almost entirely destroyed by the Afghans in 1723. It was made the capital by Agha Mahomed Khan, the founder of the Kajar dynasty in 1785. The city is 12 miles in circumference and has twelve main gates. Early visitors were: Pietro della Valle who slept at Teheran on June 6-7, 1618; Sir Thomas Herbert on June 14, 1627, and Dr. Olivier who visited the place in 1796.

†" In those days a large part of the male population leave the shirt loose in the neck, and the testeh parade at all hours of the day, yelling with loud and monotonous cadence, " Ya Hossein, ya Hossein ! " Sometimes they vary this by shouting " Ya Hassan, ya Hassan ! " During the last two or three days of this public demonstration of mourning it is considered prudent for all foreigners and unbelievers to attract as little attention as possible, lest, if seen by those excited throngs, they be insulted or even assaulted by some of the mob, now frenzied by religious excitement to an extraordinary degree." Benjamin. op. cit.

pace, did I cautiously attempt to secure a picture, and twice did the heavy shade of the trees on the side-walk blur the photograph black. My next endeavour was to secure a picture of the Mollah who was the father of the murderer of Major Imbrie. I had been informed that it was his wont to sit daily by the road-side near the residence of Reza Khan, the present Shah of Persia, who was then Prime Minister and held the Portfolio of War, and that he always refused to allow anybody to photograph him. I addressed him expressing sympathy in his sorrow, and, pleading that I wished to help him to alleviate his distress, handed him a Toman.* " Khuda hafiz " (God keep you) he replied. Having won his confidence, I returned the next day and once again sympathized with him substantially. I asked him to allow me to take his photograph, he at first demurred, but eventually consented when I appealed to his sentiments, saying: " Khaili Khub (very well) but take two pictures and give me one." I promised, taking the first one in a squatting position, and the other as he stood erect. Three days later I brought him a copy of both postures, explaining that as I did not wish to go contrary to his principles, I would give him both pictures, he invoked the blessing of Allah upon me!

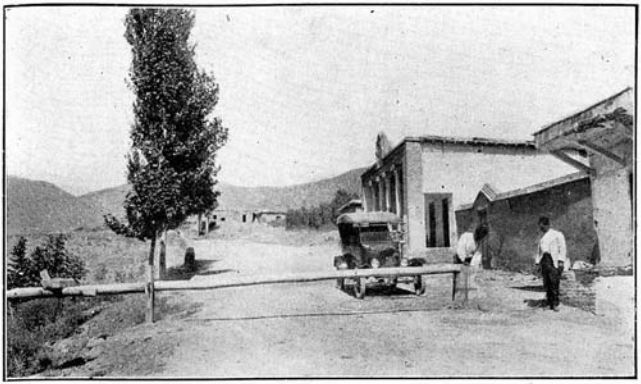
After visiting Shimran,† a longer tour to picturesque Demavand in the hollow of a fertile valley was made. This town is given as about eighteen *forsakhs* (54 miles) from Teheran, and is at the base of the greatest of all the mountains in Persia, Mount Demavand,‡ towering 19,621 feet above sea level in pyramidal form, a scenic beauty with an almost savage sublimity in its perpetual mantle of snow. Mention has several times been made of the road toll barriers of Persia. This consist of the simple mode of creating a barrage across the road by means of an ordinary *chanar* (silver poplar) pole lowered on a pivot, and raised again after that most important commodity of life has changed hands. On the road from Teheran to Demavand a particularly typical one was encountered in the hollow of a deep valley. On our return journey, as we reached about the middle of the very long hill on the other side of this valley, our supply of gasoline, which had been much reduced, could not reach the carburetor owing to the sharp gradient of the incline, and the only solution to our difficulty was to ascend backwards the rest of the distance to the summit, in the very novel manner of the constant use of the reverse gear.

On the return journey from Teheran we sacrificed six hours visiting Kum, and passed a night in the hamlet of Dalijan, reaching Ispahan the following day at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. From here our next stage was to Khan-i-Kureh, which we reached at nine in the evening. Whilst

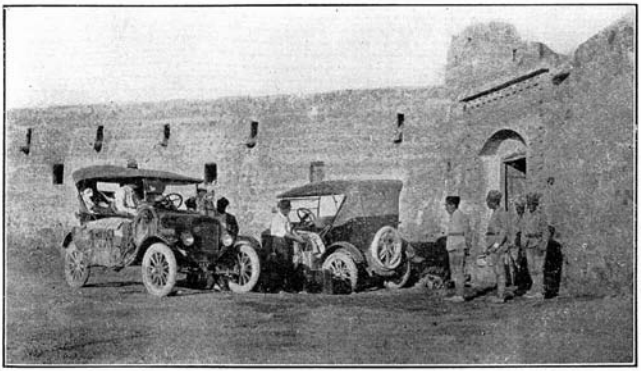
*A Toman is the equivalent of an American Dollar.

†Shimran or Shim Iran means " Light of Persia." It is the summer country seat of the elite and Diplomatic Corps of Teheran, and consequently contains many beautiful and lavishly built residences. It is ten miles from Teheran.

‡" Demavand or " dwelling of the genii," is a mine of Persian folk-lore. Here Noah's ark rested, so they say; here lived Jensheed, Subduer of Devils, and Rustam the Iranian Hercules. Here is buried the giant Zohak, a tyrant and usurper, and the flames of the volcanos are said to come out of his mouth. All round are caverns full of enchanted treasures guarded by gnomes." Clive Bigham. op. cit.



A Typical Toll Barrier on the Road to Demavand.



Photos by A. M. Tracey Woodward.

Strapping the Luggage to the Car early in the Morning at the Caravanserai of Khan-i-Kureh, with Persian Soldiers looking on.

driving through the darkness in the long stretch of wastes from Surmaq to Khan-i-Kureh, our headlights had to be switched on, and we discovered a new form of sport. Attracted by those lights, many hares came on to the track of the motor car from the darkness, and stood across our passage. When we came up close, blinded by the lights, their eye sight failed to penetrate the darkness, and they rushed helter-skelter ahead of us. Our driver chased a few with the car at a high speed, but this form of destruction, as if the game were held in a trap, did not appeal to my sporting instincts, and I ordered Jalil, the driver, to desist and to drive on post-haste to our prospective night's lodging. Spending an hour once again at Persepolis, we reached Shiraz the next evening, where we were entertained during a week by various merchants in the surrounding gardens of the city. Another night spent at Kazeroon, and we were back in Bushire after an absence of a month.

A few weeks subsequently, circumstances directed a change of the future which enabled me to leave Persia. On the day previous to my departure, I drove in solitude the little Peugeot car, for the last time over the dear Mashilleh desert in the hinterland of Bushire, the scene of many pleasant memories. Penetrating far into it, a halt was made, for a strong impulse once again to contemplate the solemnity of those grand waste spaces clothed in their impressive and dominant silence proved irresistable. Alighting, I sat on the soft, velvety sands much in the same manner as Orientals do, with a sore heart at leaving that country, and beseeched Allah to protect Persia where I had received so much kindness from both Europeans and Persians, the memories of whom would be cherished in my heart, and where so many happy days were spent which have been re-lived in writing these notes. Such feelings have been inspired in many travellers in Persia, and I crave forgiveness for quoting Miss Ella C. Sykes, who aptly remarks : " Then again the great solitude of Persia strikes the imagination. Days may pass without coming across a village or meeting an inhabitant. Man seems indeed a small thing, as he slowly crawls over some vast plain always encircled by peaks, flushed with many a shade of madder or mauve, standing up, sharply silhouetted against the intense blue of the great cloudless vault above them. Such a contrast to the bustle and hurry of the West—a contrast between lands, in one of which time is money, and in the other of no account at all—forces the mind to view everything form a new standpoint. Civilization appears to fall away here, and man is brought back to the simple facts of humanity, and has an uneasy sense that up to now his life has been sadly unreal and artificial. He feels that he has been vouchsafed a broader, truer glimpse of existence, and as he mingles with a people whose standpoint of morals and manners is an entirely different one to his, he learns not to judge at sight, and the precept of ' live and let live ' becomes deeply engraved on his soul."

TRAVEL AND EXPLORATION NOTES

PROPOSED EXPEDITION TO THE ORDOS AND THE ALASHAN: A geological expedition to Kansu and Inner Mongolia is being undertaken by Dr. George B. Cressey of the Department of Geology, Shanghai College, this summer. He left Shanghai on June 5, and expects to return in September. He took steamer to Hankow, whence he will proceed by the Peking-Hankow Railway to Chengchow, Honan, then by the Lung-Hai Railway to Shanchow in Honan, automobile to Sianfu in Shensi and Pingliang in Kansu. Pack mules will be taken from there to Ninghsia in North-eastern Kansu.

The return will be by the same route or across the Ordos Desert to Paotowchen at the end of the Peking-Suiyuan Railway in North Shansi, and thence to Peking.

The area which it is proposed to study lies in Western Inner Mongolia, north of the Great Wall from Kansu. Except for irrigated strips along the Yellow River all of this region is a desert. In the centre of the area lie the great Alashan range of mountains, which rises to over 10,000 feet and divides the desert into two distinct regions the Alashan Desert on the west and the Ordos on the east. The Ordos includes the district within the great northward bend of the Yellow River outside the Great Wall.

Although an ancient Mongolian trade route crosses this district, it has seldom been followed by foreigners. Except for the few trails most of the Ordos and Alashan is quite unknown, both geographically and geologically.

Marco Polo crossed the area on his journey to China, and over much of the summer the expedition will be following in his footsteps.

The Chinese city of Ninghsia and the Mongol trade centre of Wangyehfu will be the headquarters for work.

The chief geological problem to be tackled by Dr. Cressey deals with changes in the climate of central Asia during the last few geological periods. During the Glacial Period in Europe and North America, Asia was free from ice. Mongolia, furthermore, apparently had a much more moist climate. This problem is of more than theoretical interest for climate controls vegetation, and thus influences animal life. Since Asia seems to have been the centre of human evolution, climate throws light on the habitability of this area. The record of climate is written in sediments and erosion cycles, and the preliminary studies made in 1924 indicate that this area contains critical information. While no direct search is to be made for ancient man, it is important to note that the best evidence of early man so far found in central Asia is on the borders of the Ordos near Ninghsia.

The Alashan Range present some interesting problems in Structural Geology, for they are formed as the result of a great thrust from the west. Similar mountains are known in other countries, but no detailed studies of this type have been made in China. It is planned to examine the general geology of the range and map its structure.

The desert is the geologist's paradise. All the agents of erosion and transportation are actively at work, for despite the limited rainfall with which they carry on their work there is no protecting vegetation. Geologic processes are demonstrated on every hand, often in text book perfection.

Many writers have pointed to Mongolia with its great expanses of empty land as the place to which people may emigrate from the overcrowded plains of China proper. It is hoped to study the agricultural possibilities of this area.

Both the Ordos and the Alashan were visited by Dr. Cressey in 1924 on the way back from an expedition to Koko Nor in Tibet. There was no opportunity for detailed studies at that time, but hasty examination indicated several promising areas. Since that time the few available reports of earlier explorers have been examined and definite projects mapped out.

An attempt to continue work in 1926 resulted in an attack by brigands, before the area was reached. Mongolia itself is characteristically peaceful, but the Chinese borderlands are often in an unsettled condition. Reports indicate that conditions along the route which it is now proposed to follow are quiet.

This is the land of wandering nomads, who pasture their flocks of sheep and camels on the sparse desert grass. The rainfall is less than ten inches, and wells are few and far between. It will often be necessary to carry water. Camels are commonly used, but they travel at night and only ten miles a night. For the most part pack mules will be employed.

Geologically the map is white, and large areas are geographically unknown as well. Prjevalsky and Obruchev, two Russians, visited the region sixty years ago, and most of our knowledge dates back to them. Since then Sowerby and Anderson, on a zoological collecting expedition for the British Museum, visited the Southern Ordos in 1908,* followed by the Clark Expedition in 1909.†

SVEN-HEDIN RETURNING TO EUROPE: News has been received in Peking, according to newspaper reports, that Dr. Sven Hedin, the Swedish explorer, who left Peking last year with a party of Swedish and Chinese scientists to explore Chinese Turkestan and neighbouring regions, is returning to Europe for a rest.

GOOD ROADS FOR CHINA: Interest in the question of good roads for China has recently been re-awakened by the visit to China of Mr. Walton Smith, field representative of the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce, New York, who has delivered very interesting lectures upon this subject. We fully endorse all he says. China being what she is, the immediate future of transport lies in the construction of good roads and the wholesale importation of motor vehicles of all kinds. Of course, if and when things settle down there will be a great recrudescence of railway construction, but in the meanwhile it is the motor road that is the solution. Shansi province has set a very good example in this, Yen Hsi-shan, the Governor, having long ago decided that with the difficulties in the way of railway building motor roads and traffic were the thing. More recently Kueichow province has been following suit, and we have good reports of what the Governor of this province is doing in this line.

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* "Sport and Science on the Sino-Mongolian Frontier," by A. de C. Sowerby.

† "Through Shen Kan," by R. S. Clark and A. de C. Sowerby.