solemnly placed his hand in mine and swore allegiance to me, not only on his behalf, but for the whole family, assuring me in a long and eloquent harangue that he (the speaker) would answer for Háji Šafar’s loyalty and devotion, and asking me in return to treat him kindly and not “make his heart narrow.” Having received my assurances that I would do my best to make things agreeable, they retired, and I forthwith betook myself to rest in preparation for the early start which we proposed to make on the morrow.

Next day we were astir early, for there was no temptation to linger in a spot from the inhabitants of which I had met with nothing but incivility; and, moreover, I was anxious to form a better idea of the muleteers who were to be my companions for the next fortnight. However, I saw but little of them that day, as they lagged behind soon after starting, and passed me while I was having lunch. The road, except for several large parties of travellers whom we met, presented few points of interest; nevertheless, a curious history is attached to it, which, as it forms a significant commentary on what one may call the “Board of Public Works” in Persia, I here reproduce.

On leaving Shāh ‘Abdu’ll-ʿĀẓam the road runs for a mile or so as straight as an arrow towards the south. A little before it reaches a range of low hills which lie at right angles to its course it bifurcates. One division goes straight on and crosses the hills above-mentioned to the caravansary of Kinār-i-gird; the other bends sharply to the west for about three-quarters of a mile, thus turning the edge of the hills, and then resumes its southward course. Of these two roads, the first is the good old direct caravan-route, described by Vámbéry, which leads to ʿĀmīn by way of Kinār-i-gird, Ḥawz-i-Sulṭān, and Pul-i-Dallāk; the second is the new “improved” road made some years ago by order of the Aminu’s-Sultan, the history of which is as follows:

1 It is given in Curzon’s Persia, vol. ii, pp. 2–6, but I have nevertheless decided to let it remain here, as I wrote it before the publication of that work.
and garnished at suitable intervals with fancifully constructed mihmān-khānts, situated amidst little groves of trees, supplied with runnels of sweet, pure water from the hills, and furnished with tables, chairs, and beds in unstained profusion. But all for the obstinacy of the majority of men, and their deplorable disinclination to be turned aside from their ancient habits! The muleteers for the most part declined to make use of the new road, and continued to follow their accustomed course, alleging their reason for so doing that it was a good many farsakhs short than the other, and that they preferred the caravansaries to the new mihmān-khānts, which were not only in no wise better adapted to their requirements than their old halting-places, but were very much more expensive. Briefly, they objected to “go farther as fare worse.”

There seemed to be every prospect of the new road being complete failure, and of the benevolent intentions of the Aminu-Sultan being totally frustrated by this unlooked-for lack of a precation on the part of the travelling public, when sudden the mind of the perplexed philanthropist was illuminated by a brilliant idea. Though it would not be quite constitutional forcibly overthrow the caravansaries on the old road, it was evidently within the rights of a paternal government to utilise the resources of nature as a means of compelling the refractory “sons of the road” to do what was best for them. Luckily, the means were not far to seek. Near the old road, between Hawz-Sultan and Pul-i-Dallāk, ran a river, and this river was prevented from overflowing the low flat plain which it traversed, ere lost itself in the sands of the Dasht-i-Kavīr, by dykes solidly constructed and carefully kept in repair. If these were removed, there was every reason to hope that the old road would be flooded and rendered impracticable. The experiment was tried, and succeeded perfectly. Not only the road, but an area of many square miles round about it, was completely and permanently submerged, and a fine lake—almost a sea—was added to the dominions of the Shāh. It is, indeed, useless for navigation, devoid of fish (so far as I could learn), and (being impregnated with salt) incapable of supporting vegetable life; but it is eminently salubrious, with its vast blue surface glittering in the sun, and owing into bolder relief the white, salt-strewn expanse of the arid desert beyond. It also constitutes a permanent monument of the triumph of science over obstinacy and prejudice.

The Aminu-Sultan might now fairly consider that his triumph complete: suddenly, however, a new difficulty arose. The management of the posts was in the hands of another minister, the Aminu-d-Dawla, and he, like the muleteers, considered charges which it was proposed to make for the use of the new (the only) road excessive. As, however, there appeared to be no course open to him but to submit to them (since the posts must be maintained, and the old road was irrecoverably subjuged), the Aminu-Sultan determined to withstand all demands for a reduction. But the Aminu-d-Dawla was also a minister of the ingenuity, and, having the example of his colleague fresh in his mind, he determined not to be outdone. He therefore deputed another road, which took a yet wider sweep towards the west, and, transferring the post-houses to that, bade defiance to his rival.

Thus it has come to pass that in place of the old straight road of Kum there is now a caravan-road longer by some fourteen miles, and a post-road longer by nearly twenty miles. The last, extended from leaving Tehran, follows the Hamadan road for about a half, diverging from it some distance to the south of Ribat-Karim, the first post-house, and curving back towards the east by way of Pilk and Kushk-i-Bahram to join the Aminu-Sultan’s road near the mihmān-khānt of Shāh-gird, about farsakhs from Kum.

Dr. Wills (Land of the Lion and the Sun) gives the distance from Tehran to Kum by the old road as twenty-four farsakhs. The present post-road is thirty and charged as twenty-eight farsakhs, but they appear to me to be long ones.
FROM TEHERÁN TO IŠFAHÁN

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ten farsakhás from Kúm.

1 Dr Wills (Land of the Lion and the Sun) gives the distance from Teherán to Kúm by the old road as twenty-four farsakhás. The present post-road is reckoned and charged as twenty-eight farsakhás, but they appear to me to be very long ones.
FROM TEHERÁN TO İŞFAHÁN

On the second day after leaving Teherán (9th February), soon after quitting the nimbán-kháné of Hasánábád, we entered the dismal region called by the Persians Malaku‘l-Mawt Déré (the "Valley of the Angel of Death"). Around this spot cluster most thickly the weird tales of the desert, to which I have already alluded. Indeed its only rival in this sinister celebrity is the Ḥazár dóré ("Thousand valleys"), which lies just to the south of İşfaḥán. Anxious to become further acquainted with the folklore of the country, I succeeded in engaging the muleteer in conversation on this topic. The substance of what I learned was as follows:—

There are several species of supernatural monsters which haunt the gloomy defiles of the Valley of the Angel of Death. Of these the gholūs and ‘şfrīt are alike the commonest and the most malignant. The former usually endeavour to entice the traveller away from the caravan to his destruction by assuming the form or voice of a friend or relative. Crying out piteously for help, and entreatingly the unwary traveller to come to their assistance, they induce him to follow them to some lonely spot, where, suddenly assuming the hideous form proper to them, they rend him in pieces and devour him.

Another monster is the nasrān, which appears in the form of an infirm and aged man. It is generally found sitting by the side of a river, and bewailing its inability to cross. When it sees the wayfaver approaching, it earnestly entreats him to carry it across the water to the other side. If he consents, it seats itself on his shoulders, and when he reaches the middle of the river, winds its long supple legs round his throat till he falls insensible in the water and perishes.

Besides these, there is the pā-šīr ("Foot-licker"), which only attacks those who are overtaken by sleep in the desert. It kills its victim, as its name implies, by licking the soles of his feet till it has drained away his life-blood. It was on one occasion circumvented by two muleteers of İşfaḥán, who, being benighted

in the desert, lay down feet to feet, covering their bodies with cloaks. Presently the pā-šīrs arrived, and began to walk round the sleepers to discover their feet, but on either side it found a head. At last it gave up the search in despair, exclaiming as it made off:

"Gashtē-am hazár u šī šī darē,
Ammā mu-šīkā-am marbā-i-du šīrē.

"I have wandered through a thousand and thirty and three valleys,
But never yet saw a two-headed man!"

Another superstition (not, however, connected with the desert), of which I heard at Teherán, may be mentioned in this connection. A form of cursing used by women to each other is "Al-at bi-zanad!" ("May the Al strike thee!"). The belief concerning the Al is that it attacks women who have recently been confined, and tries to tear out and devour their livers. To avert this calamity various precautions are taken; swords and other weapons are placed under the woman's pillow, and she is not allowed to sleep for several hours after the child is born, being watched over by her friends, and roused by cries of "Yā Maryam!" ("O Mary!") whenever she appears to be dozing off. It is worthy of note that the Al, as well as its congeners, is supposed to have flaxen hair.

The scenery through which we passed on leaving the Malaku‘l-Mawt Déré was savage and sublime. All around were wild, rugged hills, which assumed the strangest and most fantastic shapes, and desert sparsely sown with camel-thorn. As we reached the highest point of the road, rain began to fall sharply, and it was so cold that I was glad to muffle myself up in ulster and rug. Now for the first time the great salt-lake made by the Anišit’s-Sultan came in view. It is of vast extent, and the muleteers informed me that its greatest width was not less than six farsakhs (about twenty-two miles). Beyond it stretches the weird expanse of the Dash-i-Kavir, which extends hence even to the eastern frontier of Persia—a boundless waste of sand, here and there glimmering white with incrustations of salt, and broken
FROM ĖTERĀN TO ĖSFĀHĀN

in places by chains of black savage-looking mountains. The desolate grandeur of this landscape defies description, and surpasses anything which I have ever seen.

The mihman-khâne of 'All-ābād, which we reached an hour or so before sunset, presents no features worthy of remark except this, that in the room allotted to me I found three books, which proved on examination to be a copy of the Kur’ān, a book of Arabic prayers, and a visitors’ book! It was evident that here, at least, the prototype was afforded by the Bible and prayer-book which are usually to be found in every bedroom of an English hotel, and the visitors’ book which lies on the hall-table. I examined this visitors’ book with some curiosity. It was filled with long rhapsodies on the Aminn’s-Sultān penned by various travellers, all complimentary, as I need hardly say, “How enlightened and patriotic a minister! How kind of him to make this nice new road, and to provide it with these admirable guest-houses, which, indeed, might fairly be considered to rival, if not to excel, the best hotels of Firangištān!” I could not forbear smiling as I read these effusions, which were so at variance with the views expressed in the most forcible language by the muleteers, who had continued at intervals throughout the day to inveigh against the new road, the mihman-khâne, and their owner alike.

The next day brought us to Ėnum, after a long, quick march of nearly ten hours. The muleteers were suddenly seized with one of those fits of energetic activity to which even the most lethargic Persians are occasionally subject, so that when, early in the afternoon, we reached the mihman-khâne of Shāshgīrd (or Manzarīyé—the “Place of Outlook”—as it is more pretentiously styled), and Ḥājjī Šafar proposed to halt for the night, they insisted on pushing on to the holy city, which they declared they could reach before sundown. A lively altercation ensued, which concluded with a bet of five krāns offered by Ḥājjī Šafar, and taken by the muleteers, that we should not reach the town before sunset. The effect of this stimulus was magical. Never before or since did I see muleteers attain such a degree of speed. With eyes continually directed towards the declining sun, they ran along at a steady trot, occasionally shouting to their animals, and declaring that they would fare sumptuously that night off the delicacies of Ėnum with the money they would earn by their efforts. The road seemed interminable, even after the golden dome of the mosque of Ḥagrat-i-Māṣūma (“Her Holiness the Immaculate”) rose up before us across the salt swamps, and as the sun sank lower and lower towards the horizon the efforts of the muleteers were redoubled, till, just as the rim of the luminary sank from sight behind the western hills, we crossed the long, graceful bridge which spans a river-bed almost dry except in spring, and, passing beneath the blue-tiled gate, rode into the holy city.

I have already had occasion to allude to the Indo-European Telegraph, and to mention the great kindness which I met with from Major Wells (in whose hands the control thereof was placed), and from all other members of the staff with whom I came in contact. This kindness did not cease with my departure from Ėsterān. A message was sent down the line to all the telegraph stations (which are situated every three or four stages all the way from Ėsterān to Bushire) to inform the residents at these (most of whom are English) of my advent, and to ask them to extend to me their hospitality. Although I felt some hesitation at first in thus quartering myself without an invitation on strangers who might not wish to be troubled with a guest, I was assured that I need have no apprehensions on that score, and that I should be certain to meet with a hospitable welcome. This, indeed, proved to be the case to a degree beyond my expectations; at all the telegraph offices I was received with a cordial friendliness and geniality which made me at once feel at home, and I gladly take this opportunity of expressing the deep sense of gratitude which I feel for kindnesses the memory of which will always
form one of my pleasantest recollections of the pleasant year I spent in Persia.

The first of these telegraph stations is at Kum, and thither I at once made my way through the spice-laden twilight of the bazaars. On arriving, I was cordially welcomed by Mr Lyne and his wife, and was soon comfortably ensconced in an easy-chair before a bright fire, provided with those two great dispellers of weariness, tea and tobacco. My host, who had resided for a long while at Kum, entirely surrounded by Persians, was a fine Persian and Arabic scholar, and possessed a goodly collection of books, which he kindly permitted me to examine. They were for the most part formidable-looking treatises on Muhammadan theology and jurisprudence, and had evidently been well read; indeed, Mr Lyne's fame as a "mulle" is great, not only in Kum, but throughout Persia, and I heard his erudition warmly praised even at distant Kirmán.

Perhaps it was owing to this that I met with such courtesy and good nature from the people of Kum, of whom I had heard the worst possible accounts. My treatment at Sháh 'Abdu'l-'Azím had not given me a favourable idea of the character of the holy cities and sanctuaries, and this prejudice was supported in this particular case by the well-known stricture of some Persian satirist on the towns of Kum and Káshán:

"Sag-i Káshán hí bí aq aákhir-i Kum,
Bá-sog-i kí sóg bí aq Káshán!"

"A dog of Káshán is better than the nobles of Kum,
Although a dog is better than a native of Káshán."

Whether the inhabitants of Kum have been grossly maligncd, or whether their respect for my host (for, so far as my experience goes, there is no country where knowledge commands such universal respect as in Persia) procured for me an unusual degree of courtesy, I know not; at any rate, when we went out next day to see the town, we were allowed, without the slightest opposition, to stand outside the gate of the mosque and look at it to our heart's content; several people, indeed, came up to us and entered into friendly conversation. Further than this, I was allowed to inspect the manufacture of several of the chief products of the city, the most important of which is the beautiful blue pottery which is now so celebrated. This, indeed, is the great feature of Kum, which might almost be described as the "Blue City"; nowhere have I witnessed a greater profusion of blue domes and tiles. Many small articles are made of this ware, such as salt-cellar, lamps, pitchers, pipe-bowls, beads, and button-like amulets of divers forms and sizes, which are much used for necklaces for children, and for affixing to the foreheads of horses, mules, and the like, as a protection against the evil eye. Of all of these I purchased a large selection, the total cost of which did not exceed a few shillings, for they are ridiculously cheap.

Besides the mosque and the potteries, I paid a visit to a castor-oil mill worked by a camel, and ascended an old minaret, furnished with a double spiral staircase in a sad state of dilapidation. From this I obtained a fine view of the city and its surroundings. It has five gates, and is surrounded by a wall, but this is now broken down in many places, and the whole of the southern quarter of the town is in a very ruined condition. Altogether, I enjoyed my short stay in Kum very much, and was as sorry to leave it as I was pleased to find how much better its inhabitants are than they are generally represented to be. Their appearance is as pleasant as their manner, and I was greatly struck with the high average of good looks which they enjoy, many of the children especially being very pretty. Though the people are regarded as very fanatical, their faces certainly belie this opinion, for it seemed to me that the majority of them wore a singularly gentle and benign expression.

I could not, however, protract my stay at Kum without subjecting my plans to considerable alteration; and accordingly, on the second day after my arrival (12th February) I again set out on my southward journey. As I was in no hurry to bid a
FROM TEHERAN TO ISFAHAN

final farewell to my kind host and hostess, the muleteers had been gone for more than half an hour before I finally quitted the telegraph-office; but about this I did not greatly concern myself, making no doubt that we should overtake them before we had gone far. In this, however, I was mistaken; for when we halted for lunch, no sign of them had appeared. Supposing, however, that Hājī Šafar, who had travelled over the road before, knew the way, I thought little of the matter till the gathering shades of dusk recalled me from reveries on the future to thoughts of the present, and I began to reflect that it was a very odd thing that a stage of only four farsakhs had taken so long a time to accomplish, and that even now no signs of our destination were in view. Accordingly I pulled up, and proceeded to cross-examine Hājī Šafar, with the somewhat discouraging result that his ignorance of our whereabouts proved to be equal to my own. It now occurred to me that I had heard that the caravansary of Pasangān was situated close under the hills to the west, while we were well out in the plain; and I therefore proposed that we should turn our course in that direction, especially as I fancied I could descrie, in spite of the gathering gloom, a group of buildings under the hills. Hājī Šafar, on the other hand, was for proceeding, assuring me that he saw smoke in front, which no doubt marked the position of our halting-place. While we were engaged in this discussion, I discerned in the distance the figure of a man running towards us, shouting and gesticulating wildly. On its closer approach I recognised in it the muleteer Rāhím. We accordingly turned our horses towards him and presently met him; whereupon, so soon as he had in some measure recovered his breath, he proceeded to upbraid Hājī Šafar roundly. “A wonderful fellow art thou,” he exclaimed (on receiving some excuse about “the smoke ahead looking like the manzil”); “do you know where that smoke comes from? It comes from an encampment of those rascally Shāh-sevans, who, had you fallen into their midst, would as like as not have robbed you of every single thing you have with you, including my animals. If you don’t know the road, keep with us who do; and if you thought you were going to discover a new way to Yezd across the desert, I tell you you can’t; only camels go across there; and if you had escaped the Shāh-sevans (curses on the graves of their fathers!), it is as like as not that you would have just gone down bodily into the salt-swamps, and never have been seen or heard of again, as has happened to plenty of people who knew more about the desert than you.” So he ran on, while we both felt very much ashamed of ourselves, till we finally reached Pasangān, and took up our quarters at the post-house, which looked more comfortable than the caravansary.

Next day was beautifully fine and warm, almost like a bright June day in England. Our way still lay just beneath the hills to the west, and the road continued quite flat, for we were still skirting the edge of the great salt-strewn Dashti-i-Kavir. About mid-day we halted before the caravansary of Shārāb for lunch; here there is some verdure, and a little stream, but the water of this is, as the name of the place implies, brackish. Soon after leaving this we met two men with great blue turbans, careless and loosely wound. These Hājī Šafar at once identified as Yezdis. “You can always tell a Yezdi wherever you see him,” he explained, “and, indeed, whenever you hear him. As you may like to hear their sweet speech, I will pass the time of day with them, and ask them whence they hail and whither they are bound.” So saying, he entered into a brief conversation with them, and for the first time I heard the broad, drawing, sing-song speech of Yezd, which once heard can never be mistaken. We reached the caravansary of Sisin quite early in the afternoon, the stage being six light farsakhs, and the road good and level. This caravansary is one of those fine, spacious, solidly constructed buildings which can be referred, almost at a glance, to the time of the Šafavi kings, and which the tradition of muleteers, recognising, as a rule, only two great periods in
history—that of Feridún, and that of Sháh ‘Abbás the Great—unhesitatingly attributes to the latter. The building, although it appeared totally neglected, even the doors being torn away from their hinges, is magnificently constructed, and I wandered with delight through its long, vaulted, dimly-lit stables, its deserted staircase, and untenanted rooms. The roof, however, solidly built of brickwork, and measuring no less than ninety paces from corner to corner of the square, was the great attraction, commanding as it did an extensive view of the flat plain around, the expanse of which was hardly broken by anything except the little group of houses which constitute the village, and a great caravan of camels from Yezd, kneeling down in rows to receive their evening meal from the hands of their drivers.

While I was on the roof I was joined by a muleteer called Khudá-bakhsh, whom I had not noticed at the beginning of the journey, but who had cast up within the last day or two as a recognised member of our little caravan, in that mysterious and unaccountable way peculiar to his class. He entered into conversation with me, anxiously enquired whether I was not an agent of my government sent out to examine the state of the country, and refused to credit my assurances to the contrary. He then asked me many questions about America ("Yangi-dunya")—not, as might at first sight appear, a mere corruption of the term commonly applied by us to its inhabitants, but a genuine Turkish compound, meaning "the New World"), and received my statement that its people were of the same race as myself, and had emigrated there from my own country, with manifest incredulity.

Next day brought us to another considerable town—Káshán—after an uneventful march of about seven hours, broken by a halt for lunch at a village called Naşríbád, at which I was supplied with one of the excellent melons grown in the neighbourhood. On leaving this place we fell in with two Kirmánis—an old man and his son—who were travelling back from Hamadán, where they had gone with a load of shawls, which had been satisfactorily disposed of. They were intelligent and communicative, and supplied me with a good deal of information about the roads between Shíráz and Kirmán, concerning which I was anxious for detailed knowledge.

About 3.30 p.m. we reached Káshán, but did not enter the town, alighting at the telegraph-office, which is situated just outside the gate. Here I was kindly welcomed by Mr Aganor, an Armenian, who spoke English perfectly. Though it was not late, I did not go into the town that day, as we received a visit from the chief of the custom-house, Mírzá Huseyn Khán, who was very pleasant and amusing. Besides this, a man came with some manuscripts which he was anxious to sell, but there were none of any value. In the evening I had some conversation with my host about the Bábis, whom he asserted to be very numerous at Yezd and Abádé. At the former place, he assured me, the new religion was making great progress even amongst the Zoroastrians.

Next morning we went for a walk in the town. Almost every town in Persia is celebrated for something, and Káshán is said to have three specialities: first, its brass-work; second, its scorpions (which, unlike the bugs of Miyáné, are said never to attack strangers, but only the natives of the town); and third, the extreme timorousness of its inhabitants. Concerning the latter, it is currently asserted that there formerly existed a Káshán regiment, but that, in consideration of the cowardice of its men, and their obvious inefficiency, it was disbanded, and those composing it were told to return to their homes. On the following day a deputation of the men waited on the Sháh, asserting that they were afraid of being attacked on the road, and begging for an escort. "We are a hundred poor fellows all alone," they said; "send some horsemen with us to protect us!"

The scorpions I did not see, as it was winter; and of the alleged cowardice of the inhabitants I had, of course, no means of
judging; but with the brass-bazaar I was greatly impressed, though my ears were almost deafened by the noise. Besides brass-work, fine silk fabrics are manufactured in large quantity at Kâshân, though not so extensively as at Yazd. The road to this latter city quits the Isfahân and Shiráz route at this point, so that Kâshân forms the junction of the two great southern roads which terminate respectively at Bandar-i-‘Abbás and Bushire on the Persian Gulf.

In the afternoon Mîrzâ Ḥuseyn Khân, the chief of the customs, came again. He had his little child of seventeen months old (to which he seemed devotedly attached) brought for me to look at, as it was suffering from eczema, and he wished for advice as to the treatment which should be adopted. Later in the evening, after the child had gone home, he returned with his secretary, Mîrzâ ‘Abdu’llâh, and stayed to supper. We had a most delightful evening, the Khân being one of the most admirable conversationalists I ever met. Some of his stories I will here set down, though it is impossible for me to convey an idea of the vividness of description, wealth of illustration, and inimitable mimicry, which, in his mouth, gave them so great a charm.

“What sort of a supper are you going to give us, Aganor Şâhib?” he began; “Persian or Firangi? O, half one and half the other: very good, that is best; for this Şâhib is evidently anxious to learn all he can about us Persians, so that he would have been disappointed if you hadn’t given him some of our foods; while at the same time, being fresh from Firangistân, he might perhaps not have been able to eat some of the things which we like. How do you like our Persian food so far?” he continued, turning to me; “for my part, I doubt if you have anything half so nice as our pilâw and çêhêlêw in your country. Then there is māst-khiyâr (curds and cucumbers); have you tasted that yet? No? Well, then, you have a pleasure to come; only after eating it you must not drink water to quench the slight thirst which it produces, or else you will suffer for it, like Mânakîş, the chief of the Guebres, who is now residing at Teherân to look after the interests of his people.

“How did he suffer for eating māst-khiyâr? Well, I will tell you. You must know, then, that when he was appointed by the Parsees at Bombay to come and live in Persia and take care of the Guebres, and try to influence the Shâh in their favour, he knew nothing about Persia or the Persians; for, though of course the Parsees are really Persians by descent, they have now become more like Firangis. Well, Mânakîş Şâhib set sail for Persia, and on board the vessel (being anxious to remedy this lack of knowledge on his part) he made friends with a Persian merchant of Isfahân, who was returning to his country. In the course of the voyage the ship touched at some port, the name of which I have forgotten, and, as it was to remain there all day, the Isfahânî suggested to Mânakîş Şâhib that they should go on shore and see the town, to which proposition the latter very readily agreed. Accordingly, they landed, and, since the town was situated at a considerable distance from the harbour, hired donkeys to convey them thither. Now the day was very hot, and as the sun got higher, Mânakîş Şâhib found the heat unbearable; so, espying a village near at hand, he suggested to his companion that they should rest there under some old ruins, which stood a little apart, until the sun had begun to decline and the heat was less oppressive. To this his companion agreed, and further suggested that he should go to the village and see if he could find something to eat, while Mânakîş rested amongst the ruins. So they arranged with the muleteer to halt for an hour or two, and the Isfahânî went off to look for food. Presently he returned with a number of young cucumbers and a quantity of māst (curds), with which he proceeded to concoct a bowl of māst-khiyâr.

“Now Mânakîş (like you) had never seen this compound, and (being a man of a suspicious disposition) he began to fancy that his companion wanted to poison him in this lonely spot, and take his money. So when the māst-khiyâr was ready, he refused
to partake of it, to the great surprise of his companion. "Why, just now you said you were so hungry," said the latter; "how is it that you now declare you have no appetite?" "I found a piece of bread in my pocket," said Mánakjí, "and ate it while you were away in the village, and now my hunger is completely gone."

The more his companion pressed him to eat, the more suspicious he grew, and the more determined in his refusal. "Very well," said the Isfahání at last, "since you won't join me, I must eat it by myself," and this he proceeded to do, consuming the mást-khiyár with great relish and evident enjoyment. Now when Mánakjí saw this, he was sorry that he had refused to partake of the food. "It is quite clear," said he to himself, "that it is not poisoned, or else my companion would not eat it; while at the same time, from the relish with which he does so, it is evident that, strange as the mixture looks, it must be very nice." At last, when his companion had eaten about half, he could stand it no longer. "Do you know," he said, "that my appetite has unaccountably come back at seeing you eat? If you will allow me, I think I will change my mind and join you after all." His companion was rather surprised at this sudden change, but at once handed over the remainder of the food to Mánakjí, who, after tasting it and finding it very palatable, devoured it all.

"Now certain rules must be observed in eating some of our Persian foods, and in the case of mást-khiyár these are two in number. The first rule, as I have told you, is that you must not drink anything with it or after it; for, if you do, not only will your thirst be increased, but the food will swell up in your stomach and make you think you are going to die of suffocation. The second rule is that you must lie down and go to sleep directly you have eaten it. Now Mánakjí Šahib was ignorant of these rules, and so, when his companion lay down and went to sleep, he, feeling somewhat thirsty, took a draught of water, and then lay down to rest. But, so far from being able to rest, he found himself attacked by a strange feeling of oppression, and his thirst soon returned twofold. So he got up and took another drink of water, and then lay down again, but now his state was really pitiable: he could hardly breathe, his stomach swelled up in a most alarming manner, and he was tormented by thirst. Then his suspicions returned with redoubled force, and he thought to himself, "There is no doubt that my companion really has poisoned me, and has himself taken some antidote to prevent the poison from affecting him. Alas! alas! I shall certainly die in this horrible, lonely spot, and no one will know what has become of me!"

"While he was rolling about in agony, tormented by these alarming thoughts, he suddenly became aware of a strange-looking winged animal sitting on a wall close to him, and apparently gloating over his sufferings. It was nodding its head at him in a derisive manner, and, to his excited imagination, it seemed to be saying, as plain as words could be, 'Ahdál-i-shúnd ché=tawr-ast? Ahdál-i-shúnd ché=tawr-ast?' ("How are you? How are you?"). Now the animal was nothing more than one of those little owls which are so common in ruined places, but Mánakjí didn't know this, having never seen an owl before, and thought it must certainly be the Angel of Death come to fetch his soul.

So he lay there gazing at it in horror, till at last he could bear it no longer, and determined to wake his companion; for, thought he, "even though he has poisoned me, he is after all a human being, and his companionship will at least enable me better to bear the presence of this horrible apparition." So he stretched out his foot, and gave his companion a gentle kick. Finding that did not rouse him, he repeated it with greater force, and his companion woke up. 'Well,' said he, 'what is the matter?' Mánakjí pointed to the bird, which still sat there on the wall, nodding its head, and apparently filled with diabolical enjoyment at the sufferer's misery. 'Do you see that?' he enquired. 'See it? Of course I see it,' replied his companion, 'What of it?' Then some inkling of the nature of Mánakjí's terrors and
suspicious came into his mind, and he determined to frighten him a little more, just to punish him. 'Doesn't it appear to you to be saying something?' said Mánakji; 'I can almost fancy that I hear the very words it utters.' 'Saying something!' answered the Išfahání, 'Of course it is; but surely you know what it is, and what it is saying? 'Indeed I do not,' said Mánakji, 'for I have never before seen anything like it; and as to what it is saying, it appears to me to be enquiring after my health, which, for the rest, is sufficiently bad.' 'So it would seem,' said the other; 'but do you really mean to tell me that you don't know what it is? Well, I will tell you: it is the spirit of the accursed 'Omar, who usurped the Caliphate, and whose generals overran Persia. Since his death he has been permitted to assume this form, and in it to wander about the world. Now he has come to you, and is saying, 'I, in my lifetime, took so much trouble to overthrow the worship of Fire, and do you dare come back to Persia to attempt its restoration?''

'On hearing this Mánakji was more frightened than ever; but at last his friend took pity on him, and picking up a stone threw it at the bird, which instantly flew away. 'I was only joking,' he said; 'it is nothing but an owl.' So Mánakji's fears were dispelled, and he soon recovered from the müst-khayyár; but though he subsequently found out the proper way of eating it, I am not sure that he ever had the courage to try it again.'

We laughed a good deal at this story, and I remarked that it was an extraordinary thing that Mánakji Šahib should have been so frightened at an owl.

'Well,' he said, 'it is. But then in the desert, and in solitary, gloomy places, things will frighten you that you would laugh at in the city. I don't believe in all these stories about ghuls and 'ifris which the chârâyâdârs tell; but at the same time I would rather listen to them here than out there in the kâwîr. It is a terrible place that kâwîr! All sand and salt and solitude, and tracks not more than two feet wide on which you can walk with safety.

D eviate from them only a hand's breadth, and down you go into the salt-swamps, camel, man, baggage, and everything else, and there is an end of you. Many a brave fellow has died thus.

'Have I seen anything of the kâwîr? No, nor do I wish to do so; hearing about it is quite sufficient for me. I was once lost in the salt-mountains near Semnân when a boy, having run away from my father, who had done something to offend me. I only remained amongst them one night, and, beyond the bitter brininess of the bright-looking streams at which I strove to quench my thirst, and the horror of the place and its loneliness, there was nothing half so bad as the kâwîr, yet I wouldn't go through the experience again on any account. You have probably heard plenty of stories about the desert from your chârâyâdârs on the road; nevertheless, as you seem to like hearing them, I will tell you one which may be new to you.'

We begged him to give us the story, and he proceeded as follows:—'A poor man was once travelling along on foot and alone in the desert when he espied coming towards him a most terrible-looking dervish. You have very likely seen some of those wandering, wild-looking dervishes who go about all over the country armed with axes or clubs, and fear neither wild beast nor man, nor the most horrible solitudes. Well, this dervish was one of that class, only much more ferocious-looking and wild than any you ever saw; and he was moreover armed with an enormous and ponderous club, which he kept swinging to and fro in a manner little calculated to reassure our traveller. The latter, indeed, liked the appearance of the dervish so little that he determined to climb up a tree, which fortunately stood close by, and wait till the fellow had passed.

'The dervish, however, instead of passing by, seated himself on the ground under the tree. Of course the poor traveller was horribly frightened, not knowing how long the dervish might choose to stop there, and fearing, moreover, that his place of retreat might have been observed. He therefore continued to
watch the dervish anxiously, and presently saw him pull out of his pocket five little clay figures, which he placed in a row in front of him. Having arranged them to his satisfaction, he addressed the first of them, which he called ‘Omar, as follows:—

"O ‘Omar! I have thee now, thou usurper of the Caliphate! Thou shalt forthwith answer to me for thy crimes, and receive the just punishment of thy wickedness. Yet will I deal fairly with thee, and give thee a chance of escape. It may be that there were mitigating circumstances in the case which should not be overlooked: inform me, therefore, if it be so, and I promise thee I will not be unmerciful. . . . What! thou art answerest nothing at all? Then it is evident thou canst think of no excuse for thy disgraceful conduct, and I will forthwith slay thee."

Saying this, the dervish raised his mighty club over his head, and, bringing it down with a crash on the little image, flattened it level with the ground.

"He next addressed himself to the second image thus: ‘O Abū Bekr! Thou also wert guilty in this matter, since thou didst first occupy the place which by right belonged to ‘Ali. Nevertheless thou art an old man, and it may be that thou wert but a tool in the hands of that ungodly ‘Omar, whom I have just now destroyed. If it be so, tell me, that I may deal mercifully with thee. . . . What! thou too art silent! Beware, or I will crush thee even as I crushed thine abettor in this offence. . . . Thou still refusest to answer? Then thy blood be on thine own head!’ Another blow with the club, and the second figure had followed the first.

"The dervish now turned to the third figure: ‘O Mūrūqā ‘ Ali!,’ he exclaimed, ‘tell me, I pray thee, now that these wretches who deprived thee of thy rights have met with their deserts, how it was that thou, the chosen successor of the Prophet, didst allow thyself to be so set aside. After all, thou didst in a manner acquiesce in their usurpation, and I desire to know why thou didst so, and why thou didst not withstand them even to the death. Tell me this, therefore, I pray thee, that my difficulties may be solved. . . . What! thou also art silent? Nay, but thou shalt speak, or I will deal with thee as with the others. . . . Still thou answerest nothing? Then perish!’ Down came the club a third time, while the poor man in the tree was almost beside himself with horror at this impunity.

"This horror was further increased when the dervish, turning to the fourth clay figure, addressed it as follows:—‘O Muḥammad! O Prophet of God! Since thou didst enjoy Divine Inspiration, thou didst without doubt know what would occur after thy death. How, then, didst thou take no precautions to guard against it? Without doubt, in this, too, there is some hidden wisdom which I would fain understand, therefore I beseech thee to tell me of it. . . . Thou answerest not a word? Nay, but thou shalt answer, else even thy sacred mission shall in nowise protect thee from my just wrath. . . . Still thou maintainest silence? Beware, for I am in earnest, and will not be trifled with. . . . Thou continuest to defy me? Then perish with the rest!’ Another heavy blow with the club, and the figure of the Prophet disappeared into the ground, while the poor man in the tree was half-paralysed with dread, and watched with fascinated horror to see what the dervish would do next.

"Only one clay figure now remained, and to this the dervish addressed himself. ‘O Allāh!’ he said, ‘Thou who hadst knowledge of all the troubles which would befall the family of him whom Thou didst ordain to be the successor of Thy Prophet, tell me, I pray Thee, what divine mystery was concealed under that which baffles our weak comprehension. . . . Wilt Thou not hear my prayer? . . . Art Thou also silent? . . . Nay, Thou shalt answer me or——’

"‘Wretch!’ suddenly exclaimed the man in the tree, his terror of the dervish for the moment mastered by his indignation. ‘Art thou not satisfied with having destroyed the Prophet of God, and ‘Ali, his holy successor? Wilt thou also slay the Creator? Beware! Hold thy hand, or verily the heavens will fall and crush thee!"
he had in his hand. The blow wounded the snake and caused it a great deal of pain, but did not kill it, and it succeeded in dragging itself back into its hole. From this time forth it was filled with a desire for revenge, and a determination to watch the gardener’s movements carefully, so that, if ever it saw him asleep, it might inflict on him a mortal wound.

"Now, the gardener knew that the snake had escaped, and was well aware that he had made a deadly enemy of it, so he was afraid to go to sleep within its reach unprotected. He communicated his apprehensions to his friend the bear, which, eager to give some proof of its gratitude, readily offered to watch over him while he slept. The gardener gladly accepted this offer, and lay down to sleep; while the snake, concealed in its hole, continued its watch, hoping for an opportunity of gratifying its revenge.

"Now, the day was hot, and the flies were very troublesome, for they kept buzzing round the gardener’s face, and even settling upon it. This boldness on their part annoyed the bear very much, especially when he found that he could only disperse them for a moment by a wave of his paw, and that they returned immediately to the spot from which they had been driven.

"At last the bear could stand it no longer, and determined to have done with the flies once and for all. Looking round he espied a large flat stone which lay near. ‘Ah, now, I have you,’ he thought, as he picked up the stone and waited for the flies to settle again on the gardener’s face; ‘I’ll teach you to molest my friend’s slumbers, you miserable creatures!’ Then, the flies having settled, thud! down came the stone with a mighty crash on—the gardener’s head, which was crushed in like an egg-shell, while the flies flew merrily away to torment some new victim, and the snake crept back into its hole with great contentment, muttering to itself the proverb in question, ‘A wise enemy is better than a foolish friend.’"

And now, just outside the walls surrounding the telegraph-
office, rose a prolonged and dismal howl, followed by another and yet another; while from the city, like an answer, came back the barking of the dogs. “Are those jackals howling outside?” I asked, “and do they come so close to the town?” “Yes,” answered the Khán, “they always do so, and the dogs always answer them thus. Do you know why? Once upon a time the jackals used to live in the towns, just as the dogs do now, while the latter dwelt outside in the desert. Now, the dogs thought it would be much nicer to be in the town, where they would be sheltered from the inclemency of the weather, and would have plenty to eat instead of often having to go without food for a long time. So they sent one of their number to the jackals with the following message: ‘Some amongst us,’ they said, ‘are ill, and our physicians say that what they need is change of air, and that they ought, if possible, to spend three days in the town. Now, it is clearly impossible for us dogs and you jackals to be in one place at the same time, so we would ask you to change places with us for three days only, and to let us take up our quarters in the city, while you retire into the desert, the air of which will doubtless prove very beneficial to you also.’

“To this proposition the jackals agreed, and during the following night the exchange was effected. In the morning, when the people of the city woke up, they found a dog wherever there had been a jackal on the previous night. On the third night the jackals, being quite tired of the desert, came back to the gates of the town, filled with pleasant anticipations of resuming their luxurious city life. But the dogs, being very comfortable in their new quarters, were in no hurry to quit them. So, after waiting some time, the jackals called out to the dogs, ‘Ná-khách-i-sháma nárush shudeh-e-e-e?′ (‘Are your sick ones well yet?’), ending up with a whine rising and falling in cadence, just such as you heard a minute ago, and (as Mírzá ‘Abdu’l-Láh, who is a native of Isfahán, will tell you) just such as you may hear any day in the mouth of an Isfahání or a Yezdí. But the dogs, who are

Turks and speak Turkish, only answered ‘Yokh! Yokh!’ (‘No! no!’) and so the poor jackals had to go back into the desert. And ever since then they come back at night and hail the dogs with the same question, as you heard them do just now; and the dogs always give the same reply, for they have no wish to go back to the desert. And that is why the jackals come and howl round the town after dusk, and why the dogs always answer them.”

At this point our host interrupted the conversation to tell us that supper was ready. “Supper!” exclaimed the Khán, who had already commenced another story, “Supper, indeed! Am I to have my stories cut short and spoiled by supper? No, I shall not go on with what I was saying, even though you do beg my pardon; but I will forgive you, provided always that you ask an ‘English pardon’ and not a ‘Persian pardon.’”

“What do you mean by a ‘Persian pardon’?” I asked; “please explain the expression.”

“No, I shall keep my word and tell you no more stories tonight,” answered the Khán. “I have told you plenty already, and you will probably forget them all, and me too. Now you will remember me much better as having refused to satisfy your curiosity on this one point, and whenever you hear the expression ‘Párdum-i-Irán’ (so he pronounced it) you will think of Mírzá Huseyn Khán of Káshán.”

After supper we had some songs accompanied on the siár, all present, except myself, being something of musicians, and thus the evening passed pleasantly, till the guests announced that they must depart, and I was astonished to find that it was close on midnight, and high time to retire for the night.

Next day (16th February) our road continued to skirt the plain for some twelve or fifteen miles, and then turned to the right into the mountains. We at first ascended along a river-bed, down which trickled a comparatively small quantity of water. I was surprised to see that a number of dams had been constructed to divert the water from its channel and make it flow over portions
of the bank, whence it returned charged with mud. On asking
the reason of this strange procedure, I was informed that it was
done to prevent the water evaporating, as muddy water evaporates
less readily than that which is clear!

On ascending somewhat higher, we came to a place where
there was a smooth, rather deep, oblong depression in the face
of the rock. Inside this, as well as on the ground beneath, were
heaps of small stones and pebbles; while in every cranny and
chink of the cliff around and below this spot were planted little
bits of stick decorated with rags of divers colours placed there
by pious passers-by. As we came up to this place, Khudā-
bakhsh, the muleteer, who was a few paces in front, sprang up
towards the depression, shouting "Ya 'Alī" and drew his hand
down it, thus affording an indication of the manner in which the
wonderful smoothness of its walls had been produced. He then
informed us that the depression in question was the mark left
by the hoof of 'Alī's steed, Duldul, and that there were only two
or three more such in the whole of Persia. Near the village of
Gez, he added, there was the mark of 'Alī's hand in the rock.
Hājī Šafār, on learning these facts, added his quota of pebbles
to those already collected on the slope.

Proceeding onwards through very fine scenery, we suddenly
came upon a mighty wall of rock wherewith the channel of the
stream was barred, and beyond this a vast sheet of water formed
by the damming-up of the water-course. This splendid, half-
natural reservoir, which serves to keep the city of Kāshān well
supplied with water during the hot, dry summer, was constructed,
like so many other useful and beneficial public works, during
the period of prosperity which Persia enjoyed under the Šafavī
kings, and is known as the Band-i-Kohrū. Winding round the
right side of this great lake, we presently began to see around
us abundant signs of cultivation—plantations of trees, orchards,
and fields laid out in curious steps for purposes of irrigation, and
already green with sprouting corn. Soon we entered tortuous
lanes, enclosed by stout walls of stone, and overshadowed by
trees, and, after traversing these for some distance, we arrived
at the village of Javīnān, the strange-looking inhabitants of which
came out to see us pass. The women for the most part wore
green shawls and did not cover their faces. As we passed we
could hear them conversing in the curious dialect, incompre-
prehensible to the ordinary Persian, of which I shall have to speak
directly.

About a mile farther on we came to the village of Kohrū,
where, the chdpār-khānā (post-house) being occupied, we found
quarters at the house of a Seyyid, who appeared to be one of
the chief men of the village. I had already heard from General
Houtum-Schindler, who possesses probably more knowledge
about the geography, ethnology, and local dialects of Persia
than any man living, of the curious dialect spoken in and around
Kohrū and Naţanz, and, anxious to acquire further information
about it, I mentioned the matter to my host, who at once volun-
teered to bring in two or three of the people of the place to
converse with me. Accordingly, as soon as I had had tea, a man
and his son came in, and, bowing ceremoniously, took their seats
by the door.

I first asked them as to the distribution of their dialect, and
the extent of the area over which it was spoken. They replied
that it was spoken with slight variations in about a dozen or
eighteen villages round about, extending on the one hand to the
little town of Naţanz, in the valley to the east, and on the other
to the mountain-village of Kamst. Of its age, history, and
relations they knew nothing definite, merely characterising it as
"Fars-i-kadim" ("Ancient Persian"). From what I subsequently
learned, I infer that it forms one branch of a dialect or language
spoken with greater or less variations over a large portion of
Persia. With the dialect of Naţanz it seems almost identical, so
far as I can judge from a comparison of the specimen of
that vernacular (consisting of some thirty words) given by
Polak with my own collection of Khorud words. With the so-called Dari language of the Zoroastrians of Yezd and Kirmán it has also close affinities, and it would also seem to be near akin to the dialect spoken about Şvand, three stages north of Shíráz. The relations of these dialects to one another, and to the languages of ancient Persia, have not yet been fully worked out, though excellent monographs on several of them exist, and the quartains of the celebrated Bábá Táhir, "the Lur," have been published with translation and notes by M. Clément Huart. It would be out of place here to discuss the philological bearings of this question, and I will merely observe that the wide distribution of these kindred dialects, and the universal tradition of their age, alike point to something more than a merely local origin.

I now for the first time realised the difficulty of obtaining precise information from uneducated people with regard to their language. In particular, it was most difficult to get them to give me the different parts of the verbs. I would ask, for example, "How would you say, 'I am ill'?" They gave me a sentence which I wrote down. Then I asked, "Now, what is 'thou art ill'?" They repeated the same sentence. "That can't be right," I said; "they can't both be the same." "Yes, that is right," they answered; "if we want to say 'thou art ill' we say just what we have told you." "Well, but suppose you were ill yourself what would you say?" "Oh, then we should say so-and-so." This readiness in misapprehending one's meaning and reversing what

2 On this dialect, see Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, vol. xxxv, pp. 327-414, Ueber die Mundart von Yezd, by Ferdinand Justi; and ibid. vol. xxxvi, pp. 54-88, Die Persen in Persien, ihre Sprache und einige ihrer Gebrieche, by General A. Houtum-Schindler. See also Journal Asiatique, 1888, viii série, 11, where M. Clément Huart protests against the application of the term Dari to this dialect, which he includes along with Kurdish, Mézandarání, the patois of Semnán, etc., under the general appellation of "Pehlevi Musulman," or 'Modern Medes.' Cf. p. 426, infra.
3 Journal Asiatique, 1885, viii série, 6, pp. 302-345.

one had said gave rise to one class of difficulties. Another class arose from the extreme simplicity of the people. For instance, after asking them the words for a number of common objects in their language, I asked, "And what do you call 'city'?" "Káshán," they replied. "Nonsense!" I said, "Káshán is the name of a particular city: what do you call cities in general?" "No," they said, "it is quite right: in Persian you say 'chahar mi-ravam'; 'I am going to the city': we say 'Káshán mi-ravam': it is all the same." It was useless to argue, or to point out that there were many other cities in the world besides Káshán: to these simple-minded folk Káshán remained "the city" par excellence, and they could not see what one wanted with any other. Finally I had to give up the struggle in despair, and to this day I do not know whether the Khorud dialect possesses a general term for "city" or not.

I here append a list of the words and expressions which I took down during the short opportunity I had for studying the Khorud dialect, as I am not aware that anything has been published on that particular branch of what M. Huart calls "Pehlevi Musliman." For the sake of comparison, I place in parallel columns the equivalents in the Naţanţ dialect given by Polak, and those of the so-called Dari of Yezd given by General Schindler and Justi. The transcription of these latter I have only altered so far as appeared necessary to convey the proper pronunciation to the English reader, e.g. in substituting the English y for the German j.

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1 In this table the second column contains the Persian words; the third their equivalents in the Khorud dialect as taken down by myself; the fourth the Naţanţ equivalents given by Polak (loc. cit.), which are marked (P.); and the fifth and last the equivalents in the Dari of Yezd, as given by Schindler (S.) and Justi (J.) respectively.
FROM TEHERÁN TO ISFAHÁN

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Water | Áb | Ó | Au (P.) | Vó (Yezd), Ó (Kirmán) (S.) |
Fire | Átāzh | Atāzh | Tázh (J. and S.) | Tázh (J. and S.) |
Apple | Só | Só | Só (J.) | Só (J.) |
Garden | Raz = vine | Raz | Raz | Raz = vine (S.) |
Night | Sháb | Shágy | Shágh (J. and S.) | Shágh (J. and S.) |
Bird | Kárgh | Kergh | Kergh (P.) | Kergh (P.) |
Dog | Ság | Sádp | Sádp (S.) | Sádp (S.) |
Cat | Góra | Góra | Malí (P.) | Malí (P.) |
Snow | Barf | Várfr | Várfr (Bérésine, quoted by J.) | Várfr (Bérésine, quoted by J.) |
To-day | Irá | Irá | Ermár (J.) | Ermár (J.) |
Yesterday | Dá-rágh | Dágh | Dágh (S.) | Dágh (S.) |
To-morrow | Férda | Férda | Aráda (S.) | Aráda (S.) |
Begin! | Bér-sháw | Bósht | Bósht | Bósht |

From this sample of the Khoorádí dialecte it will be seen that the following are some of its chief peculiarities, so far as generalisations can be drawn from so small a vocabulary:—

1. Preservation of archaic forms; e.g. pár, ipá, sáfrac (Zend, safra), etc.
2. Change of B into V; e.g. vózha (Pers. bézama), várfr (Pers. burg, leaf); but this change does not go so far as in some other dialects, B for instance being preserved in the prefix to the imperative, as in Bósht (Pers. bi-shaw, Yezdi, vs-šé). The change of Sháb (Pers.) into Sháw or Shó (Yezdi) and Shágh (Khoorádí); of Só (Pers.) into Só (Yezd) and Só (Khoorádí); and of Ab

1 Bérésine, Recherches sur les dialectes persans, Kazan, 1833.
2 Zend, span (see Darmesteter, Études Iranennes, Paris, 1883, vol. i, p. 15).
my head—Bādī bā yā bārya, zīr-i-saram na. Why art thou such an ass?—Chira nandagar khārī? It has laid eggs—Takīm yā dddī.

At last I asked my informants (whose number had been greatly increased by additions from without) what they said in their language for pīdar-sāhkhtē (“burnt-father,” the commonest term of abuse in Persian). “Bādī bā-sāhī,” they cried unanimously, and with much relish; “but we have many other bad names besides that, like bādī bā-nār, ‘dead father,’ and ——”; here they poured forth a torrent of Kohrūdī objugations, which would probably have made me shudder if I had understood them. As it was, confusion being prevalent, and supper ready, Hājī Šafar turned them all out of the room.

That night snow fell heavily, and I was surprised to see that the Kohrūdīs appeared to feel the cold (though they were well wrapped up) much more than any of us did. In the morning there was a layer of snow on the ground nearly six inches deep, and much more than this in the hollows. Luckily there had been but little wind, else it might have gone hard with us. As it was, we had difficulty enough. We were delayed in starting by the purchase of a quantity of jīrgāhī (a kind of sweetmeat made with sugar and walnuts), in which, as it was a peculiar product of the place, Hājī Šafar advised me to invest. Then various people had to be rewarded for services rendered, amongst these my instructors of the previous night. The people were a grasping and discontented lot, and after I had given the man who had come to teach me the elements of Kohrūdī a present for himself and his son, the latter came and declared that he had not got his share, and that his father denied my having given him anything.

At last we got off, accompanied by another larger caravan which had arrived before us on the preceding evening. The path being completely concealed, one of the muleteers walked in front, sounding the depth of the snow with his staff. At first we got on at a fair pace, but as we advanced and continued to ascend it got worse and worse. Once or twice we strayed from the road, and had to retrace our steps. The last part of the climb which brought us to the summit of the pass was terrible work. The muleteers lost the road entirely, and, after blundering about for a while, decided to follow the course of the telegraph poles, so far as this was possible. In so doing, notwithstanding the sounding of the snow, we kept getting into drifts; many of the baggage-mules fell down and could not regain their feet till they had been unloaded; and every time this happened the whole caravan was brought to a standstill till the load had been replaced, the muleteers uttering loud shouts of “Yā Allāh! Yā Allāh!” and the women in the kajāvīs (a sort of panniers) sending forth piteous cries whenever the animals which bore them stumbled or seemed about to fall. Altogether, it was a scene of the utmost confusion, though not lacking in animation; but the cold was too intense to allow me to take much interest in it.

After we had surmounted the pass, things went somewhat better; but we had been so much delayed during the ascent that it was nearly 6 p.m., and getting dusk, before we reached the rather bleak-looking village of Soh. Here also there is a telegraph-office, whither I directed my steps. Mr M’Gowen, who was in charge of the office, was out when I arrived, but I was kindly received by his wife, an Armenian lady, and his little boy. The latter appeared to me a very clever child; he spoke not only English, Persian, and Armenian with great fluency, but also the dialect of Soh, which is closely allied to, if not identical with, the Kohrūdī vernacular. His father soon came in, accompanied by two Armenian travellers, one of whom was Darcham Bey, who is well known over the greater part of Persia for the assiduity with which he searches out and buys up walnut-trees. I often heard discussions amongst the Persians as to what use these were put to, and why anyone found it worth while to give such large sums of money for them. The general belief was that they were cut into thin slices and subjected to some process which made...
“pictures come out in the wood”—these pictures being, in the opinion of many, representations of events that had occurred under the tree which had supplied the wood.

I had a good deal of conversation with Darcham Bey, though much less than I might have done had I been less overcome with somnolence induced by exposure to the cold. He had travelled over a great part of Persia, especially Laristan, which he most earnestly counselled me to avoid. “The only people that I have seen worse than the Lurs,” he said, “are the Kashkais, for though the former will usually rob you if they can, and would not hesitate to murder you if you refused to give up your possessions to them, the latter, not content with this, will murder you even if you make no resistance, alleging that the world is well quit of one who is such a coward that he will not fight for his own.”

Next day’s march was singularly dull and uneventful, as well as bitterly cold. I had expected a descent on this side of the pass corresponding to the rapid ascent from Kashan to Kohrud, but I was mistaken: it even seemed to me that the difference in altitude between the summit of the pass and Soh was at any rate not much greater than between the former and Kohrud, while from Soh to our next halting-place, Murchkhar, the road was, to all intents and purposes, level. At the latter place we arrived about 5 p.m. It is an unattractive village of no great size. Finding the caravansary in bad repair, I put up at the post-house, where I could find little to amuse me but two hungry-looking cats, which came and shared my supper, at first with some diffidence, but finally with complete assurance. They were ungrateful beasts, however, for they not only left me abruptly as soon as supper was over, but paid a predatory visit to my stores during the night, and ate a considerable portion of what was intended to serve me for breakfast on the morrow.

The following day’s march was a good deal more interesting. Soon after starting we saw three gazelles (âhû) grazing not more than 100 yards off the road. The wind being towards us from them, they allowed us to approach within a very short distance of them, so that, though I had no gun, I was almost tempted to take a shot at them with my revolver.

A little further on, at a point where the road, rising in a gentle incline, passed between two low hills before taking a bend towards the east and descending into the great plain in which lies the once magnificent city of Isfahan, we came to the ruins of a little village, amidst which stood a splendid, though somewhat dismantled, caravansary of the Safavi era. Concerning this, one of the muleteers told me a strange story, which, for the credit of the Kâjâr dynasty, I hope was a fiction. “The Shah,” he said, “was once passing this spot when his courtiers called his attention to the architectural beauty and incomparable solidity of this building. ‘In the whole of Persia,’ they said, ‘no caravansary equal to this is to be found, neither can anyone at the present day build the like of it.’ ‘What!’ exclaimed the Shah, ‘are none of the caravansaries which I have caused to be built as fine? That shall be so no longer. Destroy this building which makes men think lightly of the edifices which I have reared.’” This command, if ever given, was carried out somewhat tenderly, for the destruction is limited to the porches, mouldings, turrets, and other less essential portions of the structure. But, indeed, to destroy the buildings reared by the Safavi kings would be no easy task, and could hardly be accomplished without gunpowder.

A little way beyond this we reached another ruined village, where we halted for lunch. We were now in the Isfahan plain, and could even discern the position of the city by the thin pall of blue smoke which hung over it, and was thrown into relief by the dark mountains beyond. To our left (east) was visible the edge of the Dashat-i-Kâvir, which we had not seen since entering the Kohrud Pass. Its flat, glittering expanse was broken here and there by low ranges of black mountains thrown up from the plain.
into sharp rocky ridges. To the right (west) were more hills, amongst which lies the village of Najaf-ábád, one of the strongholds of the Bábís.

Resuming our march after a short halt, we passed several flourishing villages on either side (amongst them, and some distance to the east of the road, Gurgáb, which is so celebrated for its melons), and, about 4 p.m., reached our halting-place, Gez. I think we might without much difficulty have pushed on to Išfahán, which was now clearly visible at a distance of about ten miles ahead of us, but the muleteers were natives of Gez, and naturally desired to avail themselves of the opportunity now afforded them for visiting their families. Personally, I should have preferred making an attempt to reach the city that night, for Gez is by no means an attractive spot, and I could find no better occupation than to watch a row of about a dozen camels kneeling down in the caravansary to receive their evening meal, consisting of balls of dough (nawali), from the hands of their drivers. Later on, Khudá-bakhsh, the second muleteer, brought me a present (pshkesh) of a great bowl of midst (curds), and two chickens.

Next day (20th February) we got off about 8.30. Khudá-bakhsh, having received his present (jinám), testified his gratitude by accompanying us as far as the outskirts of the village, when I bade him farewell and dismissed him; Raḥím, assisted by a younger brother called Mahdí-Ḵulí, whom he had brought with him from the village, undertaking to convey us to Išfahán. I had, while at Tcherán, received a most kindly-worded invitation from Dr Hoernle, of the English Church Mission, to take up my abode with him at the Mission-House during my stay in the city; and as that was situated in the Armenian quarter of Jullá, beyond the river Záyanda-Rúd (Zindá-Rúd of Háfiz), the muleteers wished to proceed thither direct without entering the city; alleging that the transit through the bazaars would be fraught with innumerable delays. As, however, I was desirous of obtaining some idea of the general aspect of the city as soon as possible, I requested them to do exactly the contrary to what they proposed, viz. to convey me to my destination through as large a portion of the bazaars as could conveniently be traversed. This they finally consented to do.

During a portion of our way to the city we enjoyed the company of a mukanná-bíshí, or professional maker of khudáts—those subterranean aqueducts of which I have already spoken—with whom I conversed for a time on the subject of his profession, since I was very desirous to learn how it was possible for men possessed of but few instruments, and those of the rudest kind, to sink their shafts with such precision. I cannot say, however, that my ideas on the subject were rendered much clearer by his explanations.

As we drew nearer to the city, its numerous domes, minarets, and pigeon-towers (kaftár-khánát) began to be clearly discernible, and on all sides signs of cultivation increased. We passed through many poppy-fields, where numbers of labourers were engaged in weeding. The plants were, of course, quite small at this season, for they are not ready to yield the opium till about a month after the Nawrúz (i.e. about the end of April). When this season arrives the poppy-capsules are gashed or scored by means of an instrument composed of several sharp blades laid parallel. This is done early in the morning, and in the afternoon the juice, which has exuded and dried, is scraped off. The crude opium (tirýdák-khánát) thus obtained is subsequently kneaded up, purified, dried, and finally made into cylindrical rolls about ¼ inch or ½ inch in diameter.

At length we entered the city by the gate called Derwázé-Chářchá, and were soon threading our way through the bazaars, which struck me as very fine; for not only are they lofty and spacious, but the goods exposed for sale in the shops are for the most part of excellent quality. The people are of a different type to the Tcheránís; they are not as a rule very dark in complexion,
and have strongly-marked features, marred not infrequently by a rather forbidding expression, though the average of good looks is certainly fairly high. The character which they bear amongst other Persians is not altogether enviable, avarice and niggardliness being accounted their chief characteristics. Thus it is commonly said of anyone who is very careful of his expenditure that he is "as mean as the merchants of Isfahán, who put their cheese in a bottle, and rub their bread on the outside to give it a flavour." Another illustration of this alleged stinginess is afforded by the story of an Isfahání merchant, who one day caught his apprentice eating his lunch of dry bread and gazing wistfully at the bottle containing the precious cheese; whereupon he proceeded to scold the unfortunate youth roundly for his greediness, asking him if he "couldn’t eat plain bread for one day?" Not have the poets failed to display their ill-nature towards the poor Isfahání, as the following lines testify:

"Isfahán jannátist por u’mat; Isfahání dar-é nānī-hāyad."

"Isfahán is a paradise full of luxuries;
There ought (however) to be no Isfaháníns in it."

At last we emerged from the bazaars into the fine spacious square called Meydán-i-Sháh. On our right hand as we entered it was the ‘Alí Kápi ("Supreme Gate"), which is the palace of the Zíllu’s-Súltán, the Prince-Governor of Isfahán, of whom I have already spoken. In front of us, at the last end of the square, was the magnificent mosque called Ma’djíd-i-Sháh, surmounted by a mighty dome. Quitting the Meydán at the angle between these residences of ecclesiastical and temporal power, and traversing several tortuous streets, we entered the fine spacious avenue called Chahár Bágh, which is wide, straight, well-paved, surrounded by noble buildings, planted with rows of lofty plane-trees, and supplied with several handsome fountains. This avenue must have been the pride of Isfahán in the good old days of the Safaví, and is still calculated to awaken a feeling of deep admiration in the mind of the traveller; but it has suffered considerably in later days, not only by the state of dilapidation into which many of the buildings situated on its course have been allowed to fall, but also by the loss of many noble plane-trees which were cut down by the Zíllu’s-Súltán, and sent to Teherán to afford material for a palace which he was building there.

On reaching the end of the Chahár Bágh we came in sight of the river Záyanda-Rúd, which separates the city of Isfahán from the Christian suburb of Júfá. This river, though it serves only to convert into a swamp (the Gávkháné Marsh) a large area of the desert to the east, is at Isfahán as fine a stream as one could wish to see. It is spanned by three bridges, of which the lowest is called Pul-i-Hasanábád, the middle one Pul-i-sháh-i-sib chashmáh ("the bridge of thirty-three arches"), and the upper one Pul-i-Mádín, all of them solidly and handsomely built. We crossed the river by the middle bridge, obtaining while doing so a good view of the wide but now half-empty channel, the pebbly sides of which were spread with fabrics of some kind, which had just been dyed, and were now drying in the sun. The effect produced by the variegated colours of these, seen at a little distance, was as though the banks of the river were covered with flower-beds. On the other side of the stream was another avenue closely resembling the Chahár Bágh, through which we had already passed, and running in the same line as this and the bridge, viz. towards the south. This, however, we did not follow, but turned sharply towards the right, and soon entered Júfá, which is not situated exactly opposite to Isfahán, but somewhat higher up the river. It is a large suburb, divided into a number of different quarters, communicating with one another by means of gates, and traversed by narrow, tortuous lanes planted with trees; in many cases a stream of water runs down the middle of the road dividing it in two. After passing through a number of these lanes

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1 See Haggard and Le Strange’s *Vagir of Lankarán*, translation of Act I, p. 48, and note on the same, pp. 91, 92.
FROM TEHERAN TO ISFAHAN

we finally reached the Mission-House, where I was met and cordially welcomed by Dr Hoernle, who, though I had never seen him before, received me with a genial greeting which at once made me feel at home. Dr Bruce, who had kindly written to him about me, was still absent in Europe, so that all the work of the mission had now devolved on him, and this, in itself no small labour, was materially increased by the medical aid which was continually required of him; for Dr Hoernle was the only qualified practitioner in Isfahān. Nevertheless, he found time in the afternoon to take me to call on most of the European merchants resident in Julfā, and the cordial welcome which I received from these was alone necessary to complete the favourable impression produced on me by Isfahān.

\[\text{\textit{I\textsc{s}fah\textsc{\text{\text{a}}}n}}\]

"Isfahān is the idea connoted by the word ‘world’; ‘World’ is the word, and Isfahān is the meaning."

"If the world had no Isfahān,
The World-Creator would have no world."

"Whosoever seeketh a thing, and is strenuous in search, findeth it."

JULFĀ is, as I have said, situated at some distance from Isfahān, and to walk from the Mission-House to the bazaars requires the best part of an hour. Hence it happened that, although I remained a fortnight in this place, I did not visit the city more than five or six times, and then chiefly for business in the bazaars or caravansarys. Four or five days after my arrival, however, I accompanied Mr Aghanor, the British agent, into the town, and he kindly devoted several hours to showing me some of its more interesting features. Some of these I have already noticed, and it only remains to say a few words about the rest.

The first public building which we visited was the Madrasa, or College, built by Sulṭān Ḥusayn, in whose unfortunate reign (A.D. 1694–1722) the glory of the ʿĀfāvī dynasty, and with it the glory of Isfahān, was brought to a disastrous end by the Afghan invasion. The Madrasa is built in the form of a hollow square, and contains about 120 rooms for students and teachers,
but of these two-thirds are untenanted. In the centre of the spacious courtyard is a large tank of water, pleasantly overshadowed by plane-trees. The entrance to the college is through a corridor, now used as a small bazaar, furnished on the side towards the road with massive gates overlaid with exquisite brasswork, and adorned with Arabic inscriptions in the centre and Persian on the margin. The walls of the corridor are also ornamented with tiles bearing inscriptions.

Leaving this, we proceeded to the Chabil sultán ("forty columns"), so-called because of a double row of plane-trees standing by the side of a stream which traverses the garden. The trees in question are only twenty in number, their reflections in the limpid water beneath constituting the other twenty "columns." At the farther end of this garden is the beautiful little palace called Hashti Bibi-iht ("Eight Paradises"). This had belonged to the Zillu-s-Sulṭān’s minister, Sārinu’d-Dawla, whose life had recently been brought to an abrupt close by an obscure and rapidly fatal disease which defied the skill of the physicians. Such was the official report received from the capital, where his decease had occurred: popular rumour, however, ascribed his death to a cup of "Kāfār coffee," which had disagreed with the unfortunate nobleman. The walls of this palace are beautifully decorated, and adorned with six fine paintings representing scenes of battle or revelry. Concerning the latter, an old Seyyid, who was present, remarked with indignation that they were productions of a later age, since such scenes of dissipation never disgraced the court of the pious Šafavi. Of the three battle scenes, one represented the rout of the Uzbegs by the Persian army; another, an engagement between the Persians and the Ottoman Turks under Selim I; and the third, one of the wars of Nādir Shāh with the Indians. Besides these, and the two banquet scenes which had roused the indignation of the Seyyid, there was a picture representing Shāh Ťahmāsp I receiving the fugitive emperor of Hindūstān, Humāyūn.

Signs of the prevailing vandalism were apparent alike in the palace and the garden. In the former, the beautiful mural decorations (except the pictures) were being covered with hideous brick-red paint. In the latter, the plane-trees were falling beneath the axes of a party of woodcutters. A remonstrance addressed to the latter merely elicited the thoroughly Persian reply, "Dīgar . . . būkm-ast" ("Well . . . it is ordered"). They seemed sorry to be engaged in destroying the relics of the glorious past, but—"dīgar"—what else could they do? They could no more refuse to carry out the Prince's wishes than they could venture to criticise his decision.

In another room in a building at the other end of the garden were two portraits of a former governor of Iṣfahān, Minūchīr Khān, the Georgian eunuch, who died in A.D. 1847. He is described by Gobineau as a man "redouté et redoutable par ses talents et un peu aussi par sa cruauté," and was so powerful that it is related that on one occasion the king, Muhammad Shāh, summoned him to Ťeherān and said to him, "I have heard that you are like a king at Iṣfahān," to which the wily old minister promptly replied, "Yes, your Majesty, that is true, and you must have such kings as your governors, in order that you may enjoy the title of 'Šahinshāh' ('King of kings')."

We passed through a portion of the palace and paid a visit to the Roman-Catholic, who was acting as deputy-governor during the absence of the Zillu-s-Sulṭān. He was a fine-looking Shirāzi, and received us with great urbanity, bidding us be seated, and ordering tea and kāfyūn to be brought to us. At his side sat the Mumajjim-bābšī, or Chief Astrologer. We presently asked if there was any news from the capital, wherupon he informed us, without any outward sign of the emotion which so startling an event must have produced in him, that a telegram had just arrived announcing that the Prince-Governor, the Zillu-s-Sulṭān, had "resigned" all his extensive governments in Southern Persia, retaining nothing but the city of Iṣfahān. From what I have
already said in a previous chapter, it will be sufficiently evident that the term “resignation” was a euphemism.

I took several walks round the environs of Julfâ, and one of the first places which I visited was the Armenian cemetery. Here, after some search, I found the grave of the Swiss watchmaker who was put to death by the Muhammadan clergy two centuries ago, for having, in self-defence, killed a Musulmân. He was a great favourite with the king, who exerted himself to save his life, but the only condition on which this was possible was that he should consent to embrace Islâm, which he refused to do. The heavy oblong stone which marks the spot where his body rests bears the simple inscription “Cy git Rodolph.” Round about this are the graves of a number of European merchants, for the most part Dutch or Swiss, who had been attracted to the then famous capital of the Șâfavîs during the latter part of the seventeenth and earlier part of the eighteenth century. Of the few English tombstones which I discovered, one bore the following curious inscription:—

MEMENTO MORI
HIC IACET INSIGNIS DOCTOR R. EDWARDVS PAGETT ANG.
S. TRINITATIS COLLEGIAP. APVD CANTABRIGIAN SOCVS
THEOLOGVS ET MATHEMATICVS LIVSTRABAT ORBEM TER
VY IVINA COGNOSCERET ET VNVDANA
SIB MVNDSN VERI SPVTANS VT PNCYTVM
EXTENDERAT LINEAS VITRA TEMPS
VY PVLCRVM IX ETERNITATE CIRCULVVM FORMARET
"TANDEM QVINQVAGNERIVS VLTIMO PIUNCVTOティAM CLAVSTT
IN PATRIAM PER TERRAM REDTVNTM SIBERAT MORS
OBIT ENIM SPANIIE DNI 21 IANV. A. 1702 SECVN P. STYL. VIT.
ARI VITATOR ET AB INSIGNIS DOCTORE
DISC IN TEMPORE ETERNITATIEM.

I also ascended two of the mountains which lie beyond the cemetery to the south of Julfâ. One of these, situated just to the west of the Shfráz road, is called Küh-i-Sâfî. On the northern face of this is a ruined building, whence I obtained a fine view of Ɨsfahân, the size of which now became apparent, though the miles of ruins which surround it show how much larger it was in former days. The whole of that portion of the plain in which the city lies was spread like a map at my feet. To the east was the ill-famed Ḥazâr Derê, the fabled abode of șâalis and șîfîs, a waste of conical hillocks; and near that side of it which bordered on the Shfráz road could be seen the single tree which marks the site of the “Farewell Fountain” (Chashmî-i Khudâ-

I ƗSFÃHÂN

The other mountain which I ascended is called the Takht-i-
Rastam, and forms the extreme western limit of the range which terminates to the east in the Küh-i-Sâfî above described. This mountain is crowned by a great crest of overhanging rocks, along the base of which I had to creep before I could ascend to the summit, where stands a small building of brick in a very dilapidated condition. From this point I could see far away to the west, in the direction of Châr Maĥâl and the Bakhûyâr country, and a wild, forbidding landscape it was, hemmed in by black lowering mountains. Straight below me, on the farther side of the road leading to Châr Maĥâl, was a remarkable mass of rock, which, seen from certain points of view, looks like a gigantic lion. It is often called “the Sphinx” by Europeans. Beyond this were gardens and walled villages on either side of the river, and beyond these a background of mountains, in the bosom of which lies the village of Najaf-şâbûd, one of the Bâbi strongholds. The exquisite clearness and purity of the atmosphere in Persi, enabling one as it does to see for an almost unlimited
distance, lends an indescribable charm to views such as the one which now lay before me, and I long gazed with admiration on the panorama to the westward. But when I glanced down into the dark valley to the south of the ridge on which I now stood, towards which the mountain fell away so rapidly that it seemed as if one might cast a stone into it without effort, a feeling akin to terror at its savage loneliness and utter isolation overcame me, and I was glad to commence the descent with all speed, lest some uncontrollable impulse should prompt me to cast myself down into this gloomy ravine.

Another day I paid a visit to the celebrated, but somewhat disappointing, “shaking minarets” (mindré-i-jumblin) situated to the west of Julfá, which were duly rocked to and fro for my entertainment. Beyond these is a curiously-shaped hill called the Arosh-gah, on which, as its name implies, there is said to exist a ruined Fire-temple. To this, however, I had not time to extend my excursion.

Thus passed the time I spent at the ancient capital, partly in walks and sight-seeing, partly in the genial society of Dr Hoenle and the other European residents. In the late afternoon we often played tennis, there being two very fairly good grounds in Julfá. Of Persian society I saw but little, and indeed for the first week I hardly had occasion to talk Persian at all except to the Mírzá employed by the Mission—a man of considerable erudition, not devoid of a certain degree of scepticism in religious matters. I several times questioned him about the Bábís, and begged him to put me in communication with them, or at least to obtain for me some of their books. Whether he could or would have done so I know not, for an occurrence which took place a week after my arrival rendered me independent of such help, brought me into immediate contact with the proscribed sect which had hitherto eluded all my search, and gave an entirely new turn to the remainder of my sojourn in Persia. The event which thus unexpectedly enabled me to gratify to the full a curiosity which difficulties and disappointments had but served to increase, was as follows.

One afternoon, rather more than a week after my arrival, and the day after the ascent of the Takht-i-Rustam above described, I was sitting lazily in the sitting-room which overlooked the courtyard, wondering when I should again start on my travels, and turning over in my mind the respective advantages of Shíráz and Yezd, when two dailasts (brokers, or vendors of curiosities), armed with the usual collection of carpets, brasswork, trinkets, and old coins, made their appearance. Rather from lack of anything else to do than because I had any wish to invest in curiosities which were as certain to be dear as they were likely to be spurious, I stepped out into the porch to inspect the strange medley of objects which they proceeded to extract from their capacious bags and to display before me. None of them, however, particularly took my fancy, and I accordingly refused to treat the prices which they named as serious statements, and offered only such sums as appeared to me obviously below their real value, hoping thereby to cause the dailasts, of whose company I was now tired, to withdraw in disgust. The dailasts did not fail to discern my object, and the elder one—an old man with henna-dyed beard—ventured a remonstrance. “Sáhib,” he said, “we have come a long way to show you our goods, and you have taken up a great deal of our time. You will not be dealing fairly with us if you send us away without buying anything.” I was about to remind him that I had not asked him to come, and had only consented to examine his wares at his own request, and on the distinct understanding that by so doing I was not in any way binding myself to become a purchaser, when the younger dailast stepped up on to the platform where I was standing, put his mouth close to my ear, and whispered, “You are afraid we shall cheat you. I am not a Musulmán that I should desire to cheat you; I am a Bábí.”

To this day I am at a loss to account for the motives which prompted this extraordinary frankness. Perhaps some rumour
had reached the man (for rumours in Persia get about in the most unaccountable manner) that I was anxious to make acquaintance with the sect to which he belonged; perhaps he imagined that all Christians were better disposed towards the Bábis than towards the Muḥammadans; perhaps the admission was merely a random shot, prompted by the consideration that at least it was unlikely to expose him to any risk. Be this as it may, the effect produced on me by these words was magical. Here at last was the long desired opportunity for which I had waited and watched for four months. All my apathy was in a moment changed into the most eager interest, and my only fear now was that the dalil would take me at my word and go.

"You are a Bábi!" I said, as soon as my astonishment allowed me to speak. "Why, I have been looking for Bábis ever since I set foot in Persia. What need to talk about these wares, about which I care but little? Get me your books if you can; that is what I want—your books, your books!"

"Sahib," he said, "I will do what is possible to gratify your wishes: indeed I can promise you at least one or two books which will tell you about our beliefs. But how is it that you are so desirous of these? Where did you hear about us, if, as you say, you never yet met with one of our religion?"

"I heard about you," I replied, "long before I came to Persia, or even thought that I should ever do so. A learned Frenchman who was living in Teherán soon after the Báb began to preach his doctrines, who witnessed some of the terrible persecutions to which his followers were exposed, and who was filled with wonder and admiration at their fortitude and disregard of death, wrote the history of all these things in his own language when he returned to Europe. This history I have read, and this wonder and admiration I share, so that I desire to know more of what you believe. Hitherto I have sought in vain, and met with nothing but disappointment. Now, please God, by means of your help I shall attain my object."

"So the news of the 'Manifestation' has reached Firangistán!" he exclaimed. "That is indeed well! Surely I will do all in my power to assist you in your search for knowledge of this matter. Nay, if you would desire to converse with one of us who is learned and pious and has suffered much for the cause, I will arrange that you shall meet him. He is our chief here, and once a fortnight he visits the house of each one of us who have believed, to assure himself that our households are maintained in a becoming manner, and to give us instruction and encouragement. I am but a poor ignorant dalil, but he will tell you all that you desire to know." Our whispered colloquy was now brought to an end, as the elder dalil began to manifest unmistakable signs of impatience. Hastily selecting a few small articles, I presented him with a sum of money sufficient to compensate him for his trouble and restore his good temper, and took leave of him and his comrade, entreating the latter by no means to fail in bringing me the books, which he promised to do, if possible, on the morrow.

Next day, at about the same hour, my anxiety was brought to an end by the reappearance of the Bábí dalil, who signified, in answer to my look of enquiry, that he had brought the books. I immediately conducted him to my room, but for some time I had to restrain my impatience owing to the presence of Háji Saffar, who seemed possessed by a desire to inspect the wares brought by my new friend, which was as unaccountable as it was exasperating. I was afraid to tell him to go, lest I should still further arouse that curiosity which I had learned to regard as the dominant characteristic of Persians in general and Persian servants in particular, so I had to wait patiently till he chose to retire.

No sooner was he out of the room than the Bábí produced the books, telling me that he expected his companion momentarily, and that as the latter was a Musulmán we should do well to make the best use of the time at our disposal, since his arrival would put an end to conversation on religious topics.