THE HEART OF IRAN
By the same author
The Heart of Nepal
THE HEART OF IRAN

by

DUNCAN FORBES

Illustrated and with maps

LONDON
ROBERT HALE LIMITED
63 Old Brompton Road, S.W.7
Foreword

Iran is far better known than Nepal, which was the subject of my last book. The country's great bulk, nine-tenths of it desert, lies astride the land route to India, and ever since the end of the sixteenth century, when two Elizabethan knights, the Shirley brothers, went by way of Russia to the court of Shah Abbas at Isfahan and taught the Persians how to make cannons, there has been a continuous stream of travellers' tales in English describing the Persian scene.

Throughout the nineteenth century the British looked at Persia through the spectacles of India. More Englishmen approached the country up the Persian Gulf than ever took the short land route across Turkey, and British policy in Persia was usually decided in Delhi. But now all this has changed. Indian independence in 1947 was followed by the nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951. Diplomatic relations were broken off, and when they were restored, the British Embassy in Teheran became the largest in the Middle East, invariably dealing direct with London.

Yet the strange fascination of the country has not changed. Be it Persia or Iran, the English mind still leaps the Balkans and the Turkish mainland to light on the tawny deserts at its heart, and the vivid blue domes of its oasis towns, and the pale-green poplars of the Elburz.

Like the connection between England and Italy it is a liaison of opposites—of sober reticence with bubbling effervescence, of cloud and mist with bright sunlight, of practical orderliness with wild individuality, of quiet understatement with loud bravado. The Persians take us to their hearts with their zest for life and open-mindedness, and they infuriate us with their intriguing and squandering and feckless promises. In a world of militant republics pride in the age-old Persian monarchy remains. Many criticize it. Many do not see why the Iranians should be loyal to their Emperor, forgetting that we ourselves are loyal to our Queen. Yet it is another tie—the feeling for monarchy—that links us with the Persians.

In spite of this, there have been few books about Iran in
recent years, and they have mostly either been confined to factual information or to simple reminiscences. In this book I have tried to describe the ordinary people of Iran as I have met them, combined with the history and culture that have made them what they are.
# Contents

*Foreword*  
5

1 Hajji Baba and Company  
11

2 The City that Came Back  
23

3 Teheran Night  
31

4 The Caspian Shore  
39

5 The Shah and Mossadeq  
51

6 The Great Volcano  
56

7 Teheran Day  
66

8 Battered Caravansarais  
77

9 The Oasis Cities  
95

10 The Builder King  
108

11 The Road to Fars  
119

12 The Gardens of the Poets  
127

13 The Throne of Solomon’s Mother  
138

14 Jamshed’s Throne  
146

15 Rustam’s Pictures  
155

16 The Sassanian City  
162

17 The Road to the Gulf  
174

18 Early Spring  
185

*Index*  
188
## Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Caspian Shore—dragging in the net</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask in the Lar Valley under Demavend</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golestan Palace—the throne of the Zands</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The men of Tash</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rooftops of Gorgan</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isfahan—Ali Qapu</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coppersmith of Isfahan</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosque of the Chahar Bagh Theological College, Isfahan</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiraz: the Mausoleum of Saadi and the Tomb of Hafez</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasargad—Zoroaster’s Prison</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasargad—excavators at the Hour of Prayer</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persepolis—ritual slaying of the beast</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persepolis—frieze of men wearing Median hats</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panorama of Persepolis seen from the south-east</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persepolis—bird-headed capital</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naqsh-e Rostam—tomb of Darius the Great</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naqsh-e Rostam—triumph of Shahpur I over Valerian</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dasht-e Arjan</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shah Cheragh, Shiraz—the third holiest place in Iran</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## MAPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Iran</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Elburz and the Caspian</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Heart of Iran</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Samsun they had told us we would find Persian-speakers in Erzerum, but in that large, modernized garrison town of the Turkish Army we did not stay long enough to look for them. We had come up from Trabzon, the ancient Trebizond, on the Black Sea coast, and had crossed the seven thousand foot Zigana Pass over the western extension of the Tatos range, which separates the highlands of Eastern Turkey from the Pontic shore, finding ourselves in deep cloud in high summer. But we had started from Trabzon late, so we had to spend the night at Gumushane, and it was midday the following day before we got there. After a quick lunch we set out to inquire about obtaining a military escort to see us through the frontier-zone, and, with the help of a barber who had spent fifteen years in France, we found our way to the military headquarters.

But everyone at the headquarters was far too preoccupied with the political situation to pay us much attention. We were told to proceed as we wished, and taking them at their word, we set out again and came to Ağrı, which means Ararat in Turkish and is the new name for Karaköse, the last place of any size in Turkey before the Persian border.

There were three of us—two junior Foreign Office officials going to take up their first appointments, one in Iran and the other in China, and myself. I was hitch-hiking in the Land Rover belonging to the former, preferring, as usual, an approach by land to the sudden drop down from the sky. We had crossed Europe and most of Turkey with no worse trouble than getting bogged down in a lakeside meadow beside the Chiemsee in Bavaria, and now we were on the last stages of our journey.

At Ağrı we met our first Persian, whom before long we christened Hajji Baba after the resourceful and rascally hero of James Morier’s book on Persian life in the early nineteenth century. Out of a selection of “Palace” hotels we had chosen the Jan Palas, thinking that, being set back from the road, it
would be more peaceful and secluded than the others. It was a ferro-concrete cube, coloured mauve and set in the middle of a large expanse of pounded, stony earth. On the far side of it we could see the walls and decrepit buildings of the ancient caravansarai, utterly deserted, and beyond that lay the mosque.

As soon as we entered the Jan Palas Hajji Baba appeared. He was a short, thick-set, dark man, wearing oil-stained baggy trousers, a shirt that was once white, and a straw hat. His quick, bouncing movements and swaggering gait, and the torrent of words bubbling out of his mouth at once singled him out from the taciturn Turks. When he found out that two of us had a knowledge of Farsi, the language of the Persians, he seized his linguistic advantage over the Turks, attached himself to us firmly, and directed our comings and goings as if he were the maître d’hôtel himself. He led us up and down stairs and in and out of rooms, in spite of the bewilderment of the occupants, with complete freedom of possession, until we found a four-bedded room that suited us, being assured that we three would not be disturbed in the night by anyone coming in to claim the fourth. The room faced the caravansarai and the mosque, and after a missing panel in the door had been blocked up by the sheet of cardboard on which the hotel regulations were written, we pronounced ourselves satisfied.

Throughout this procedure Hajji Baba had been dashing here and there with a fine sweat welling up on his podgy face, only pausing to take breath when his straw hat was about to fall off, so we naturally assumed that he was something to do with the management. But when I went to consult the manager about our accommodation and hand in our passports and exchange a few words with a National Service lieutenant who was stationed in the town, not too far from his home in Diyabekir, I was told firmly that he was nothing whatever to do with the hotel administration.

Having taken his tip, Hajji Baba slouched away, and that seemed to be the end of him, except that one of us remembered having told him what time we proposed to leave next morning. We went off to eat our usual fare of yoghourt-like soup, stuffed egg-plants and shish-kebab, and were forgetting all about him when he passed us once more, walking along the pavement outside our restaurant with a roll of banknotes held tight in his hand.

We strolled up and down the main streets of the town in the darkness, and then we returned to the Jan Palas. But now it looked quite different. The wide expanse of ground in front
of the hotel was full of heavy lorries loaded with petrol-drums, wood and other merchandise. As we approached, a late arrival swung in off the road, headlights blazing, and bumped, creaked and rattled to a halt. The hotel was, in fact, the modern caravan-sarai, replacing the old, deserted one that lay behind it. It was the night-stop on the two day trail from Erzerum to Van.

Our Land Rover was dwarfed by the heavy vehicles, which completely surrounded it, but as we assumed that they would mostly get away soon after dawn, we were not particularly disturbed at being boxed in. What did disturb us was the sight of a flat tyre on the off-side rear wheel and the head of a nail that was embedded in it—one of those nails that the Turks call "snakes of the road" because they lie flat and peacefully dozing when there is no one about, but rear up their heads whenever a car approaches.

We were tired, and a night-watchman, wearing an official-looking peaked cap, was on the spot, so we shrugged our shoulders and went off to bed. For me it was a comfortless night. A madman was wandering about the old caravan-sarai making strange whistling noises, and at three o'clock, if my watch was right, a muezzin called out from the minaret of the mosque. At that time of night the Arabic chant, swelling out and ululating and swelling out again, cut short by the glottal stop of the letter ain and bursting out again into a torrential wail, seemed to me to be a fit accompaniment to the madman's whistling. Then, at first light, the trucks began to move. There was a loud whirring of starters, a roaring of engines and a slamming of doors. We got up early and started to change the wheel.

Delayed by trouble with the jack, we had only had time to get the spare wheel on and find that it too was flat, when Hajji Baba came waddling up to us over the dusty ground, saluting and salaaming with his hand to his straw hat. Seeing our difficulty, his eyes immediately lit up with a wild glare and his body convulsed into dynamic action. He seized the wheel that we had just taken off, flung it to the ground, and began to do a dervish dance on it, leaping up and landing with both feet on the rim. We protested that we would drive the wheel to a garage, but our protestations only caused him to ward us off, rush away to one of the few lorries that remained and return with a sledge-hammer with which to beat at the resistant rubber.

By this time there was an interested group of spectators, and our Persian friend, by his own account a native of the noble, beautiful and poetic city of Shiraz, felt himself to be on show to the crowd. Neither the blunt nor the pointed side of the
hammer being of any avail, he enlisted the aid of a lorry piled high with two-hundred litre drums of diesel oil. Placing the obstinate tyre carefully in the path of one of its front wheels, he caused the lorry-driver to drive backwards and forwards over it until, at last, the tortured rubber broke away with a pop from the rim of the wheel.

Hajji Baba, without pausing a second, rushed off to another lorry to borrow tyre-levers. Having got hold of two, he jabbed them under the rim of the tyre and broke it out over the edge of the wheel. Then, in a flash, he ripped out the inner tube and inspected it. We had marked the place of the puncture on the outer tyre, but Hajji had been too quick for us to tell him where it was, so in feverish haste he found the spot for himself on the inner tube, stuck a splinter of wood into the hole to mark it and ran off with his prize.

Being involuntarily in his hands, we took turns at pumping up the spare wheel whilst we waited for him to return. After ten minutes he came running back with the tube vulcanized and began the process of putting it back inside the tyre. Faced with the difficulty of getting the last segment of the tyre over the rim of the wheel, he tried first the tyre-levers and then the hammer, both unsuccessfully. As a last resort he began to chop away furiously at the rubber with the sharp side of the hammer, but it was time to resist at last. We pushed him away, and with more science and less sweat, we finished the job.

As soon as the tyre was properly in place, Hajji Baba bounced back and pitched in with a pump—not ours, of course, which he said was no good, but one he had borrowed from another driver. He took his straw hat off to pump, and begged for a cigarette, which he kept hanging between his lips, not wanting to waste time lighting it. He worked the foot-pump in explosive jerks, with a great grunt each time he came down with his weight on it, and allowed no one to take turns with him at it. Consequently we simply stood around, watching him get hotter and hotter and sweat more and more until the pressure reached the right level. When this had been achieved, he gathered the wheel up and put it in its place on the bonnet of the Land Rover, then shouted triumphantly, "Tamām! Tamām!"—finished, finished!

Naturally payment was the next thing, and although we had never asked him to do the job and might have done it equally well ourselves, I offered him a five lira note to complete the business. I might as well have offered him a stone. He shook his head contemptuously. "Five lira! What is five lira? I
paid myself out of my own pocket for the puncture to be mended, and all you give me is five lira! What kind of a reward is that? I must have ten lira!"

"Why should you have ten lira?" I said. "We never wanted you to do the work, and the cost of mending the puncture cannot be more than two or three lira."

"You do not understand. I pay. I pay for the puncture! And I do all this work for you. Five lira! No, no. It is not possible. It is a joke."

A large group of Turks had gathered, and they were now watching the bargaining in silent amusement. For the moment, my five lira note having been refused, I made no further move. There seemed to be a deadlock. Then I felt a quiet pull at my arm. One of the lorry-drivers was standing beside me and writing in the thick dust on the back of the Land Rover the figures 7.50. He nodded wisely. I nodded back wisely, and handed seven and a half lira to Hajji Baba, who looked quickly round the faces of the Turks, saw the prevailing sentiment, and decided to make himself scarce with what he had got.

The Turks, with friendly gestures, all agreed that he was a strange man, and so we set off eastwards from Ağri. The road, though unasphalted, was fairly good. Flanked on either side by high mountain ranges, it followed the level valley of the Murat River, which is the upper part of the Eastern Euphrates. But the country became more and more desolate. The primitive villages were built of stone, cemented with mud, and in all of them the neatly whitewashed police-post was the best building. Amongst the village huts stood dark-brown pyramids of turds, higher than the huts themselves, which had been collected by the women and children from the fields as fuel for the winter. The fields, such as had been cultivated in this barren expanse of land, had been harvested, except for patches of corn that had grown too feebly to be garnered. With hedges and walls unknown, the distance one could see was immense. At first sight the whole landscape appeared to be deserted, but soon one could pick out dots in the distance that turned out to be men or animals. There were flocks of sheep, with their huge sheepdogs, almost as big as the shepherd-boys, that raced alongside the Land Rover and snarled and snapped at the wheels as we drove past, and there were men on horseback wearing the flat, peaked caps that replaced the fez as the national headgear of Turkey after the Young Turks' revolution—caps broader and flatter than we had seen anywhere else in the country.

We crossed the seven thousand foot pass out of the Murat
valley, and for the third time Turkey surprised us by producing cloud, mist and rain in the hottest month of summer. The pass was over a range of rounded, grassy hills with rocky outcrops that reminded me of Ennerdale in the English lakeland, and the illusion was only dispelled when we reached another village full of six-foot high pyramids of turds. We then descended into the country of Mount Ararat, which forms the borderland between Turkey, Iran and the Soviet republics of Armenia and Nakhichevan.

Doğubayazıt, with an army cantonment much bigger than the village itself, is twenty-three miles from the Iranian border and the last settlement on the road before one reaches it. Here we were held up by a military policeman in his white puddling-basin, American "snowdrop" style hat, with red zigzags across it, and were told to take a soldier on with us. We assumed that this was the frontier escort, about whom they had been so vague in Erzerum. He was to see that from this point to the frontier we took no photographs and did not stray from the road. We had half expected him at Ağrı and at the other military camps along the route.

The soldier was a short, thick-set, slant-eyed youth, looking very like a Gurkha, who sat cheerfully on the luggage in the back of the Land Rover with his rifle pointing at our backs. We talked about his weapon, and gave him a cigarette to distract his attention whilst we made sure that the magazine was empty. Whereupon, seeing our interest in it, he insisted on demonstrating how it worked by loading a cartridge into the breach.

We motored on, sweeping round the broad skirts of Great Ararat, the Noah's Ark mountain, a sixteen-thousand foot volcanic cone with streaks of snow at the top and a cloud-cap hovering round the summit. We went past Little Ararat and the black lava flows which stretch out ten miles south-eastward from the peaks. And suddenly the soldier shouted, "Stop!" As soon as we had stopped, he got out and blew a whistle to attract the attention of a comrade a mile away in the distance. Then he thanked us for the lift, grinned, saluted and marched away to join the lonely border patrol.

So he was no escort after all, and alone in the wilderness with our own cloud of dust behind us, we rumbled on. Presently we came upon an ass which had fallen to the ground under the weight of two wooden crates, strapped one on either side of it. It was quite unable to get to its feet however much its owner belaboured it, so we decided to stop and suggest to him the only possible solution to his problem, which was to
unstrap the load and let the ass get up of its own accord and rest a while before being bowed down again. But as we slowed to a halt, he had the same thought and slipped the load over the ass's head, so we went into gear again and pressed on. A little further up the road we passed the skeleton of an ass that had not had the good—or ill—fortune to survive.

We reached the frontier at Bazargan before midday and found there a complex of new buildings combining the frontiers of Turkey and Iran in an admirable way, with no crumbling no man's land in between. On the Turkish side we had no difficulty whatever, although we had unfortunately mislaid the customs declaration form that we had filled in at Edirne on the Turko-Greek border, and the delay on the Iranian side was only due to the fact that we had arrived at their lunch-time, which we had forgotten was one and a half hours before the Turkish midday break because of the time change between the two countries.

In any case it is not a quick or easy matter to transcribe European names and dates and places of issue of passports into the Persian version of the Arabic script and enter them all into a ledger and check with the security police and ascertain the number of cameras and field-glasses (Why always cameras and field-glasses; why not razors and false teeth?) and examine vehicle documents written in English. So whilst all this was being done, we went to the adjoining restaurant for a meal and sat eating veal cutlets under pictures of the King of Kings of Iran and his Queen and the young Prince, and of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Charles.

The change in atmosphere between the Turkish and the Iranian sides was remarkable. There was an increase in animation, in courtesy and in confusion. Whilst we waited, a handsome woman with a cotton châdor framing her face harangued the customs official in a torrent of argument, complaining that she, a Persian, was being treated worse than a foreigner. Then a weird German couple were told that they would have to return to Tabriz because they had not got the requisite frontier-cards, and started abusing the Persians to me in their own barbaric language. And they were followed by a group of three Englishmen, who looked like tramps and had motored to Calcutta and back in a very short time as a feat of adventure training under the auspices of the British Army of the Rhine. As their only object had been to go as fast as possible, they had seen nothing and done nothing interesting on the way and seemed to have wasted their time. Apart from these, there was
a group of four hitch-hikers, who had been waiting for three days to get a lift into Turkey and were reduced to ordering one meal for two at the rather expensive restaurant. And contrasting with the shabbily-dressed, beggarly-looking Europeans, smart Persian women with beehive coiffures and winkle-picker shoes, and their spouses in tropical suits and palm-beach shoes walked to and fro.

As we motored south-east from the frontier the appearance of the countryside changed remarkably too. The hard, stony ground gave place to hills of bare, yellow-brown earth, like loess, criss-crossed by deep gullies eroded out by sudden rains. Where irrigation was possible the earth was fertile, but in most places it was barren desert, with nothing but a few herds of camels on it.

The first oasis on this road was Makou, fifteen miles from the frontier. A bright slash of green across the khaki landscape, it turned out to have a wide main avenue shaded by rows of tall poplar trees, called Tabrizis in the Persian language because of their origin and prevalence in the region of Tabriz in North-West Iran. Flanking the avenue at the feet of the trees were deep open ditches of running water, called jubes, such as are to be found in all Persian towns, some sparkling with clear spring water, others filthy with the refuse of the street.

Makou had “Welcome traveller” signs facing the west, in English as well as in Farsi, and “Careful drive please” and “Ararat hotel” and advertisements for soft drinks and German cars. At the end of the avenue stood a statue of Reza Shah, the father of the present Shah and founder of the Pahlewi dynasty, and near it the local lads were whiling away their time. As soon as we stopped, they came up to us, saying “Almān?” (German), to which we replied firmly, “No. Englīs.”

Behind the main avenue the houses of Makou were ranged in terraces, one above the other, in the south-facing cirque of a mountain. Made, some of stone and others of adobe on a wooden frame, with flat roofs, the same colour as the slope of the mountain behind them, they were hardly noticeable at first, and only when one looked closely did one see them in their hundreds stretching back half-way to the top.

Many of the houses of Makou, we were to find, were of the same pattern as houses all over Persia. Houses, walls, even fortresses, citadels and domes, are built of the same mud, or mud-bricks, bound together with chaff and baked in the sun, and they endure amazingly well, since rain, which is their greatest enemy, is so scarce. On the road south from Makou we
found all the villages built of this primitive material, usually in the lee of some cliff or hill and on varying levels, the floor of one house being close to the roof of another. Sometimes they were dug deep into the ground in troglodytic fashion, so that only flat roofs and an occasional dome were visible to the passer-by, with perhaps a yellow spread of apricots laid out on them to dry, or a pile of desert thorn for winter fires.

The road from Makou to Khoi, eighty-five miles, was very primitive, and there was no sign of any of the great mass of road-building machinery, imported from America, having reached this remote north-western corner of the country. We had now rounded the outworks of the Ararat massif, and we could see the mountains of the Caucasus in the distance. They were on the other side of the hidden Araxes valley, which forms the frontier of the Russian Empire in this region and lies about fifteen miles, at its nearest point, from the road we were travelling. Standing out blue in the distance, they gradually sank down behind us over the horizon as we headed southwards.

In this part of the world the railway connection between Turkey and Iran runs along the Araxes valley, but it is a Russian railway, built on the Russian side of the river. To get from Turkey to Iran by rail it is necessary to cross over into the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic at Leninakan and continue in Russian territory for about a hundred and fifty miles to Julfa, whence an Iranian line goes down to Tabriz. In practice nobody makes this tedious and politically hazardous journey, and a new railway is being built as a Central Treaty Organization project to link the Iranian branch line north of the great salt lake of Urmia with the Turkish Lake Van.

On the road to Khoi would-be hitch-hikers were numerous. They stood in the road and held up their hands to stop us, and if they were near a military or gendarmerie-post, they enlisted the aid of the local military policeman or gendarme to halt us officially. They were not seeking something for nothing and would have been quite willing to pay for their transport, but we had no room for them and had to leave them all to trudge along the road at walking pace or try for an unlikely place in the bus, whilst we drove on. Gradually we descended into a broad irrigated plain with the town in its centre.

Although a plain, the oasis of Khoi, like the greater part of Iran, is still well over three thousand feet above sea-level. It is bitterly cold in winter, but its altitude does not seem to temper the summer heat to any appreciable degree. The cool of evening did not exist as we entered the town past the remains of
mud-brick ramparts and the district headquarters, looking for a hotel.

In the Avenue Tabriz, which led away from a circular garden with a fountain in its midst, where large numbers of men were congregated, there was a choice of several inns. But we were not allowed to choose. We stopped to look at the Ramshah hotel and were immediately accosted by a police-corporal, magnificent in blue uniform with yellow trouser-stripes, large gold-braided epaulettes and lanyard, and cap bearing the big royal cipher of the lion and sun. He told us to enter, please.

"We're not sure whether we want to stay here yet," we said. "We may go and look at some other places first."

"You must stay here."

"But there's the Hotel Tabriz and the Hotel Jamshed. We may stay in one of them instead. Let's see."

"Excuse me, but this is the place for you to stay. All tourist stay here. You Almâni?"

"No. Englis. And we want to go and have a look at the others first."

"It is possible, but why should you not listen to what I say? It is nothing for me whether you stay at one place or another place. That is your own business. But I am here to help you. I wish to be helpful to you. So you should please listen to what I have to say."

As always a group of interested spectators had gathered round during this discussion, and it was obvious that the policeman would lose face if we refused to go where he wanted us to stay. He could then probably make things difficult for us, so we entered the Ramshah hotel without any more argument. We were then shown up a central stone staircase which divided round a ventilation hole for the kitchen and gave access, on the first floor, to a stone corridor with rooms on either side of it. Our room, though it had no privacy from onlookers in the street outside, was clean and tidy, and my Cooper's spray soon cleared it of flies. On the ground-floor, the eating-room, in the typical Persian style, had a circular stone cistern in the middle of it, full of water which was continually replenished by a constantly flowing jet and overflowed into a surrounding drain. Bottles of pop stood in the tank to cool, and it provided a permanent supply of fresh water for the cleaning of food and for washing-up.

As we sat drinking Pepsi Colas, a policeman of similar appearance to our first guide, but with the superior rank of sergeant, came to talk to us. He wished to see our passports and
he wished to help us. After giving us his name, he talked volubly in broken English piling word upon word as though his life depended on it, dominating us with his torrent of speech and yet in manner obsequious. He would not sit with us at the table, so we remained standing, whilst he showed us his English book. In four years he had reached lesson sixty-two in Book Two, teaching himself and having, as he said, “never been to school.” And his vocabulary was undoubtedly good, so the least we could do was to let him practise on us.

“Gentlemens there is one thing you may please help me,” he said. “I am dealing with the tourists’ passports. Please tell any your friends who come this way, they must have the frontier-card, so you may please tell them and save much trouble. So we help each other and not give trouble. I am here to help you gentlemens.”

We assured him that we would tell our friends, and I then explained a difficulty of my own, out of which he could perhaps help me. I was short of cash. But today was a holiday, the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, which accounted for the procession with religious banners going through the streets, and tomorrow was Friday, another holiday, and the day after tomorrow was Constitution Day, yet another holiday, to commemorate the day in 1906 when, after twelve thousand Teheranis had staged a sit-down strike in the grounds of the British Embassy, Muzaffar-ud-din Shah authorized the formation of a National Assembly. So the banks would be closed for three days.

The police-sergeant confessed that the problem was a difficult one, and was still saying how difficult it was when he left us. Nor could the manager of the hotel help, so I tried to change my Turkish lira in the street, but the rate offered was so bad that I refused to part with them, preferring to hang on to them for future use. The following morning the situation remained the same, but as we were packing our luggage into the Land Rover the police-sergeant rejoined us, wished us good morning, and said that, in order to help a tourist, he would change some money for me. The rate of exchange that he was prepared to give for a traveller’s cheque was hardly better than the street market rate for lira. However, I was prepared to do a deal for a small amount of cash, and this done, we hoped that he would find his next English lesson—number sixty-three—an easy one, and thanked him for his help.

Before finally leaving Khoi we ate an excellent breakfast at the Ramshah, consisting of tiny eggs, great khaki-coloured flat
sheets of unleavened bread, cream, butter and honey. We took with us one of the renowned melons of the district, which we ate on the road in the shade of a grove of poplar saplings. And so we made our way through hillocky country, flattening down into the plain of Marand, an oasis of over thirteen thousand inhabitants, which is watered by a tributary of the Araxes.

Another forty uninteresting miles, following more or less the line of the railway along a very dusty road, worn into washboard ridges brought us to Tabriz, the capital of the Persian province of Azerbaijan.
At the entrance and exit to every village on the road to Tabriz there was a wooden pole across the road, a barrier with soldiers on guard to supervise its opening and closing, and every bridge and railway station was guarded too. It reminded me of Malaya during the eight years of the Emergency, and underlined the uncertain political temper of Azerbaijan, which has been occupied twice in the present century by the Turks and twice by the Russians, and for a year after the Second German War was a self-proclaimed independent socialist state.

The first of the Turkish occupations in modern times was at the beginning of the First German War. At that time the Turks were the allies of the Germans against the Russians. The following year, in January 1915, the Turks were driven out by the Russians, who in 1916 built the railway from Julfa to link Tabriz with the Russian Caucasus. Next year the Bolshevist revolution broke out, and in the ensuing chaos the Turks seized the opportunity to return. After their defeat by the Allies they were thrown out once more and replaced by the Persians.

In the Second German War, when Iran was divided into Soviet and British zones of occupation after the enforced abdication of Reza Shah, the Russians returned. They remained until 1945, and during their occupation they brought political forces into existence which, on their withdrawal, seized power and proclaimed the independence of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan.

The republic did not last long. In the following year the Imperial Iranian Army moved against it and found the people not unwilling to return to the Persian fold. The Russians, as always moved by wider and more abstract political considerations than the safety or well-being of their puppets, held aloof and allowed their admirers to be carried off to jail. Thus Tabriz has the distinction of being the only city ever to have come back from behind the Iron Curtain. The event is
celebrated annually on Azerbaijan Day, a holiday on the twenty-first of Azār in our month of December, which is an occasion for stirring, patriotic speeches.

Entering Tabriz from the North you come to the familiar gendarmerie-post and road barrier, beside which advertisements for motor-tyres remind you of the reputation of the rough Persian roads that lie ahead. From there you look across a plain at a wide expanse of green oasis, poplar trees predominating, but no minarets or stately domes appear above the horizon to encourage you on your way. Even the Blue Mosque, or Gök Masjed in the local Turkish, does not dominate the surrounding buildings, and we discovered it only with some difficulty after twice motoring up and down the main boulevard, Pahlevi Avenue, and asking for directions from passers-by. Eventually we reached it by an unmetalled alley full of potholes and found ourselves facing a front door which looks away from the modern thoroughfare at a group of dilapidated houses of the old town.

In the concave quarter-spheres of this doorway we saw, for the first time, the enamelled faience work for which the Persian mosques are renowned. The colour was a glowing ultramarine, interlaced with black, and continued in part in the interior, which we did not enter as a Friday religious service was in progress. The mosque has been badly damaged by earthquakes in the past, and restoration work was being carried out. A new dome was being built with the aid of cantilever arches which, when finished, will double the size of the building as it exists today.

The other noteworthy relic of old Tabriz is the huge Ark, or citadel, which was built by II Khan Uljaitu in the fourteenth century. Because of its great size it is one of the few buildings that stand out above its surroundings. It is built of the typical sun-baked mud bricks, and its walls are massively thick in order to support its height, since they are really nothing more or less than enormous piles of khaki-coloured earth with their corners rounded off and pitted by the erosion of centuries. They lean inwards in such a way as to give the Ark the maximum solidity against earthquakes, and the only external windows are small apertures high above the ground. Indeed it looks more like a mighty desert fortress transported into the heart of the city, than an urban building. From the outside it gives the appearance of being completely solid, like a hill or a child’s sand castle immeasurably magnified, and it is difficult to believe that there are rooms and courtyards inside.
We drove down Pahlevi Avenue until we came to a hotel. The first thing that met my eye as we entered it was the face of a policeman staring down at us from a second-storey window. Presently the hotel manager informed us that we would have to go and get yellow frontier-zone passes and detailed a small boy to show us the way to the offices of the Security Police, where the passes would be issued. More photographs would be necessary for this, and the first care of the boy was to take us to a photographer's to have our passport photographs copied. As we were only staying in Tabriz for a day or two, we protested at first that we would make sure whether we really needed the yellow passes before having the photographs printed. But he was firm, and small though he was, we soon realized that it was no good arguing. No photographs, no visit to the yellow pass officials. And since the visit to the officials was obligatory, so was the purchase of photographs.

After obtaining the prints we drove eastwards up Pahlevi Avenue, then stopped outside a solid, high gate in a long, high wall and knocked twice on a brass doorknocker. No one came. I was for knocking again, but the small boy restrained me with the same firmness that he had shown concerning the photographs, and after a few more seconds we were let in by a silent-footed doorkeeper. After glimpsing a garden with a large house in the middle of it, we were taken into an office on the right.

In this office a civilian security officer looked after us. We filled in forms, handed over photographs, had our particulars entered in a ledger, and were given the yellow passes, which permitted us to stay in the frontier-zone of Tabriz for a week, but not in other parts of the frontier area, for which separate permits would be necessary. All this, though done courteously and expeditiously, took time, and half-way through the procedure two Russian-speakers entered, with hearty smiles for the official, to obtain passes in their turn. After the greetings they sat down in silence to wait for our clerical work to be completed. We sat in silence too, both sides trying to guess at the business of the other.

I never used my pass and nobody ever looked at it, although I had been assured that I could not get to Teheran without it. But I was only half a day in Tabriz. I had arranged to leave my travelling companions there and complete my journey to Teheran by train, since I had to be in the capital by the following morning, 5th August. So after receiving conflicting information about the time of departure of the night express and
being strongly advised to take the aeroplane, I went down to the station to find out for myself.

It was only after the Second German War that the Teheran line was extended from Mianeh to Tabriz and a new station built there, three miles west of the town, in place of the old terminus of the Russian-built line from Julfa. Like many new things in Iran, neither the station nor its approach-road were yet complete, and all was naked, rough concrete, dusty and comfortless.

Having made my inquiries and obtained my ticket and a reserved berth, in competition with a crowd of people who were catching the afternoon train, I went back to the city to the relative coolness of our hotel-room. A brief visit to the home of the British Council, which most Iranians still do not distinguish from the British Consul, deposed in the Mossadeq days and never reinstated, left me ample time to get back to the station for the departure at a quarter past seven. Although it had plenty of time in hand to complete the journey of four hundred and eighty miles in fifteen hours, the train left exactly on schedule. Relatives and friends, sweating uncomfortably into suits for the formal business of seeing somebody off, were left behind on the platform, and we trundled off into the desert-like country flanking the salt marshes of Lake Urmia, following the big loop the railway takes in order to include Maragheh in its itinerary instead of going by the direct route the main road follows over the Sibli Pass.

In my air-conditioned compartment, completely isolated from the dust and heat outside, I felt as though the landscape beyond the glass was unreal, an optical illusion, a cinerama show sliding slowly past. The stony desert, a brick hut here and there for no apparent reason, a ragged, tall, long-faced man in a grey skull-cap, perched on the rump of a donkey, two little girls waving, a group of camels sniffing the evening air—all in their silence were part of the unreal world of dust and dirt and poverty outside, the world one pretends one knows but never quite meets face to face, whilst mine was the world inside, the international world of air-conditioned travel and five-course meals and iced drinks at the bar.

Night fell. We reached Maragheh, which was the region chosen in 1962 by the Minister of Agriculture in the Amini government for a pilot scheme of land reform, intended, if successful, to be extended over the whole country. Briefly, the scheme involved compulsory surrender of land by the big landlords, who were only allowed to retain one village and the lands
that went with it. The land thus released was distributed amongst the peasants, who became smallholders. The landlords were to be paid for their land by instalments over a period of ten years, whilst the peasants were given fifteen years in which to complete the purchase. The financial gap between the ten and fifteen years was to be bridged by funds from the government Agricultural Bank.

This pilot scheme at Maragheh was, in a sense, a logical extension of the plan for the distribution of Crown Lands initiated by the present Shah. But it was a far more complicated procedure. Whereas the Shah was selling voluntarily land that had been taken by his father and that he had inherited, the Maragheh landlords were selling quite involuntarily. They asked why they, of all people, should be chosen for the experiment. They claimed that they were fathers to their people, who would henceforth only have some incompetent government official to go to if they were in trouble. Most of the peasants, they said, would only be able to farm their lands properly if an efficient co-operative system were brought into existence to deal with such matters as irrigation, the maintenance of the underground water-channels, the use of farm machinery and the marketing of produce, and this was most unlikely to come to pass.

The Minister of Agriculture replied that, if necessary, he would send University students on a month’s course during the vacation and then despatch them to Maragheh to see that the peasants were properly instructed and organized. This was a few days before serious student rioting took place in Teheran, and most people considered that, if students were sent to Maragheh, they would make confusion worse confounded.

So the debate continued. At Maragheh an engineer joined me in my compartment, who was doing sub-contracting work for a United States firm constructing soldiers’ barracks in the neighbourhood. Like many others, he used the word *mohandes*, meaning “engineer,” as a title to his name as well as describing his profession. For an Iranian he was an unusually silent man, but between his silences he passed on to me some interesting information about the neighbourhood in which he was working.

The whole of this area is centred on the great salt lake of Urmia, or Rezayeh, which is eighty-five miles long and as salt as the Dead Sea, with neither fish nor plant in it. It is gradually contracting in size, since the spring thaw never quite replenished the water lost by evaporation in the heat of summer and
leaves a ring of sterile marshes round it. Thus the Shahi promontory, which used to be a peninsula and in summer, after the lake filled up, an island, is now joined to the mainland by several tracks over the salt mud-flats. The Il Khan Hulagu, grandson of Jenghiz Khan, built a fortress on Shahi, and in it he deposited the treasure he seized from the sack of Baghdad. When he died he was buried there.

We settled down for the night, and when I awoke next morning, we were in the province of Zenjan, which links Azerbaijan with the Iranian plateau by means of a long, narrow plain with mountains rising to ten thousand feet on either side. This plain gradually widens out into the much larger plain of Qazvin. I saw the Elburz mountains come into sight to the north, a long, bare, lion-coloured rampart, unbroken as far as Teheran and beyond, which shuts out like a water-tight bulkhead the moist airs of the Caspian from the arid land over which we were travelling.

We ran along the southern outskirts of Qazvin through extensive vineyards. The vines grow close to the ground, each one in its own pocket in the earth to retain the water that is brought to it from the Taleqan hills to the north, and they produce the best wines in Iran. The varieties are numbered rather than named, and on the whole the red is better than the white. One Thousand and One, so numbered in deference to the Arabian Nights, is a reliable table wine, so is Number Six, and one of the best is a vin rosé called Number Five, which was difficult to get when I was in Teheran.

In the desert on the other side of the vineyards we came closer to the mountains which rose higher on our left. Before it was the capital of Persia during the long reign of Shah Tahmasp, Qazvin was often menaced by the wild men of these same heights to the north, until the crisis point was reached when the Old Man of the Mountains himself built his fortress in the Alamut valley between the Taleqan hills and the Elburz, at the head of which stands the sixteen thousand foot peak called Solomon's Throne.

The Old Man of the Mountains, as he was called by the Crusaders, was Hassan bin Sabbah, head of the heretical Ismaili sect, whose adherents pinned their faith to Ismaili, the younger son of the seventh Imam, instead of to the elder son, Imam Reza. The Ismailis are now eminently respectable, with many followers in Pakistan and East Africa as well as in the Middle East, and their leader is the Agha Khan. But in those days they were the Assassins. The Alamut valley, like the
Kalat-e Nadiri, north of Mashhad, where Nadir Shah stored his treasure, is completely enclosed by steep mountain walls, with only the gorge of the Alamut River and a few precipitous tracks giving access to it. Here the Assassins established their lair, emerging from time to time on their missions of murder incorporated, having first fortified themselves with hashish.

The followers of Hassan were promised all the delights of the Moslem Paradise in return for their devotion, and it was said that he made a kind of Shangri-La in the valley itself in order to give them a foretaste of what was in store for them.

The Assassins were drugged, taken for a while to a delightful garden, embellished with dancing-girls, drugged again and brought back to their own quarters. When they awoke from their stupor, they assumed that they had been in Paradise, whereupon Hassan would say, "We have the assurances of our Prophet that he who defends his lord shall inherit Paradise, and if you show yourselves devoted to the obedience of my orders, that happy lot awaits you."

Qazvin was saved from the Assassins by Hulagu, who destroyed their main fortress in the middle of the thirteenth century after a three year siege. Their castles have now fallen into ruin. Some of them, because of later rock-falls, are practically inaccessible. But with their romantic past they remain an attraction for adventurous expeditions. It is difficult to believe that the Alamut valley, austere and rocky as it is today, ever contained the delicate gardens described in the Middle Ages.

The road from Qazvin onwards runs parallel with the railway. Gradually the buildings on the roadside became more numerous, increasing density indicating that we were approaching the end tentacles of the capital. One saw small houses with a walled-in plot, where a brave attempt had been made to plant a garden in the desert, the remains of an unfinished iron foundry, which had been started in Reza Shah's day and then found to be a big mistake, a bottling factory for soft drinks in "ten different flavours," a graveyard for old army vehicles, fenced in with barbed-wire and under guard, and on the highway the big American cars fought for space with the freight lorries, children leaning out of the windows and waving at our train.

Past Mehrabad airport we were in the city, with blocks of rectangular buildings on either side. Engineer Ashraf, who had been talking about his period of training in the United States, bade me farewell and walked off the train with his light
grip. I, with heavier luggage, was commandeered by a porter, who ran off with my bags before I could tell him where to go. When I emerged into the blinding heat of the station-approach, I found that he had already piled my kit onto and into a battered Renault Dauphine taxi.

"Perhaps I don't want a taxi," I said. "I may have friends meeting me."

"This is good taxi. Where you go?"

"Tehran."  
"You Almān?"

"No. Englis."

"Two hundred rials."

"You take me for a fool."

"It is holiday today. We have to come here from the town."

"It's your job to come here."

"You do not understand, monsieur."

"I may not need a taxi."

"This taxi not all right?"

It was very hot and there was no sign of any friends.

"I'll give you fifty rials," I said.

"No."

"Then please take my luggage off this car."

By this time a knot of taxi-drivers had gathered round to watch us arguing. An authoritative voice spoke up. "Give him one hundred," it said.

Without realizing what I was doing, I agreed. "All right. A hundred." And knowing that I was being outrageously cheated, I climbed in and we drove away.
At night in Teheran the heat is stifling. I look out of the window of my second-storey room at the building opposite and at the flat roofs beyond it. Past the first few roofs the heat seems to have clamped down an impenetrable haze that blot out everything, including the mountain background, which one knows is there but cannot see. On balconies and roofs men are sitting about in their vests, but I have no balcony and no roof.

I leave my furnace of a room only to find that the streets are just as hot. The neon signs flash on and off—Pepsi Cola, Coca Cola, Canada Dry, motor cars, stockings, refrigerators, cinemas. I walk towards a roundabout containing a small garden and refreshing-looking fountains, with a statue in the middle of a gentleman wearing a robe that looks like a frock-coat, top-boots and plumed turban. His right hand is upraised as though about to hail a taxi. It is the poet Firdowsi, declaiming from the Shāhnāme, the Chronicle of the Kings, and he faces down the avenue named after him.

I attempt to cross over Shah Reza Avenue into Firdowsi Avenue, using one of the pedestrian crossings painted in white lines on the road, but the white is so faded as to be almost indistinguishable and the headlong traffic pays no attention. So I choose another point, where at least I can get a straight view of the road, and I remember the Teheran saying that “you’re either quick or dead.”

After scuttling across I stand looking about me rather uncertainly. A youth on a bicycle, dressed in white shirt and black trousers, accosts me with appealing eyes. “Pul-e khord dārid?” he says. And then “You know. Pul-e khord. Change. Small money.”

“I might have,” I answer. “How much do you want?”

He produces a green banknote worth fifty rials, about five shillings. I get out my wallet, which contains about a dozen hundred rial notes, a twenty and a ten. I feel in my pocket
for my loose change. "I might be able to help you," I say.

But before I have time to say more, he cuts me short. "Let me see what you have," he says. "You've got it here." He lays his hand on my notes. "Let me show you. You have it right here."

I keep a firm grip on my banknotes, remembering the pickpocket who fleeced me on the vaporetto on the Grand Canal in Venice. "Your note's not a thousand," I answer.

"You don't understand," he says, having meanwhile pocketed his own note. "Let me show you the other side where it's written on the back." Again he grasps my notes and again I hold tight. His innocent eyes look into mine. You mistrust me, they say. Foolish, suspicious foreigner, why should you mistrust a poor young Iranian? His eyes see uncertainty in mine. Perhaps I am wrong to be so mean and suspicious. "Just let me show you," he says again.

"Well, shouldn't I let him show me?" I think. But then the blessed Venetian pickpocket comes to my rescue, the man who, when accosted and searched, had already passed the money to someone else and produced only half-a-dozen sheets of sky-blue lavatory paper from his hip pocket to prove his innocence, but was gentleman enough to post my wallet, complete with all its documents, back to me.

I pull my notes out of the young Iranian's grasp and put them back in my wallet. "I can read Farsi well enough," I tell him. "I'm sorry I can't help you."

The young man looks at me pitifully. "You don't understand. Don't mind it. Don't mind it. I won't give you the trouble," he says and cycles away.

Down Firdowsi Avenue I come to the carpet shops. I recognize some of the patterns—the scarlet, green and yellow Kashan, the blood-red and black Turkoman. The shops are all together in a row of a dozen or more as is the way in the East. A stocky, sunburnt man, wearing a monocle, sees me looking in his window.

"Bitte, kommen Sie herein," he says.
"Vielen Dank, aber . . . "
"You are Swedish?"
"No. English."

He laughs. "Then why don't we speak English together? Excuse me, but you know how it is in Teheran. One does not always know what language to speak. You would like to have a look at my carpets?"

"Thank you," I reply. "Some time I will. But I've only
The Caspian Shore—dragging in the net

Ask in the Lar Valley under Demavend
Golestan Palace—the throne of the Zands

The men of Tash
just arrived here and I already have some Persian carpets. Still, I may buy one or two more before I leave."

"You got yours in Iran?"

"In India about eighteen years ago."

The square-jawed stocky man throws up his hands. "Then I'll buy yours!" he exclaims. "The price has gone up twenty times since then."

"And the carpets are manufactured, and they use alkaline dyes instead of natural ones."

"Ah, ah! They are! They do! You may still have some natural ones from the tribes, but the factories use chemical dyes. Many years ago I was making carpets in Tabriz, always with natural dyes. I had three hundred children making them for me. They were the best. Then the king, King Reza Shah, who's now dead, asked me to come to Teheran to start his carpet factory. For a year and a half I worked without any pay. Soon I was writing to the bank at home to get money back here. But I couldn't carry on."

He looks ruefully across the street at the tall premises of the Iranian Carpet Company. "I bought the best Australian wool, but they wouldn't take care of it. They always mixed the other stuff in. I couldn't make them see. So here I am."

I point at a rug in the shop window, with the elephant's foot pattern on it, of the kind that used to be called Bokhara, but now that Bokhara lies in Russian territory, are usually referred to as Turkoman. Attached to its under-side is a price ticket with nine hundred rials pencilled on it.

"What does this one cost?" I inquire.

He fingers his monocle. "I can't quite see," he says. "My sight is bad. That's why I wear this. Five hundred rials, is it, or six?"

"I see. Thank you. I'll come back and look at your carpets later on."

"It will be a pleasure to show them to you."

I walk away from the German carpet-seller down the long wall of the British Embassy, which a century ago was built on the edge of the city. Now so greatly has Teheran grown that it is more or less in the middle. Cool and shady, overarched by the big Persian plane trees called chenars, with walnut trees, a lawn and a swimming pool, the grounds are an oasis in the turmoil of the overheated streets. Inside in the Victorian dining-room a silver plaque commemorates the dinner given during the Teheran Conference of 1943, with the names of President Roosevelt, Mr. Churchill and
Marshal Stalin, whilst across a narrow street the high wall of the Russian Embassy lies flank to flank with the British. When the Shah said that the walls of the Teheran compounds ought to be pulled down in order to give the city a more open appearance, the British said that they would pull their walls down provided that the Russians agreed to do the same.

I poise to cross the road again. Taxis keep pulling in towards me and sounding their horns, although I have not lifted a finger to summon them. The vast majority of the cars pouring down this avenue appear to be taxis. As in Istanbul there are so many of them and their driving is so fearsome that they have nearly driven the private car and pedestrian off the road. Most of the small ones are Renault Dauphines, Fiats or Austins, and the big ones are nearly all Mercedes. They have no meters, but are supposed to charge only fifteen rials to go anywhere in the city, though the green-looking foreigner may well be asked double. Fifteen rials is only one and fourpence halfpenny, which is not a great deal, so why walk? So the taxi-driver, for ever hawking his hire with darting eyes, seems to say. If the price were the same in London, we could ban private cars from the centre of town altogether and give the traffic a chance to move at last.

So they flood the streets, cutting in and out, coming to sudden halts, pulling out across the traffic, doing U turns, swerving round sheep and donkeys, getting dented and denting others. I step across the deep jube running alongside the street and stand waiting an eternity for a gap in the traffic. On the other side I find one of the great swarm of taxis is a casualty, a worker ant that has fallen out of the endless race for sustenance and gain. Shored up on a chock, with the near-side front wheel and part of the steering missing, it sits there strangely silent and dead, facing three boys who are squatting up against a wall.

This side of the street the art and antique-dealers show their wares. There are pictures of Shah Abbas, the great king, of Leila and Majnun, the great lovers, and of Rustam, the great hero, done in bright reds and blues and golds and framed in quotations from the poets. There too are boxes faced with inlaid marquerterie, miniature paintings of polo players and pastoral scenes on bone and ivory, filigree work in brooches and bracelets, earrings in the form of bells, brass pots and plates and dishes, old bronze from India, labelled “One God—1,000 rials, One Elephant—780 rials, One Wheel of God (broken)—600 rials,” and peasant jewelry, old daggers and guns.

“Come and see,” they say. But it is hot and they are not very
insistent. I come to a kiosk where European newspapers and European paper-back books with lurid, sexy covers are being sold. I buy yesterday’s *Times* for the equivalent of one and ninepence and walk on past street vendors who sit on the pavement with their wares spread out beside them, or on a plank of wood propped up with boxes. In their choice of goods there are certain things they always seem to go for—pens and pencils, razor-blades, penknives, cigarette lighters, matches, cigarettes of all nations, with some of the packets open for sale one by one, hairpins, envelopes, writing paper, watch straps, combs, sunglasses, rubber contraceptives, wrapped in golden foil like chocolate pennies. But some of the things are quite inexplicable—four pairs of doll’s shoes (surely they are too small for any baby), a whistle, a set of false teeth. Sales are rare, and if they dispose of a dozen things in a day, they have gained something to carry on with whilst they dream of owning their own shops and getting off the pavement.

Turning left into the street called Istanbul, alongside the Turkish Embassy, I find these street vendors in larger numbers. Here, they are more specialized. One sells vests and underpants, another trousers, another loose, short-sleeved shirts that hang outside the trousers, and another has hitched his star to ladies’ sandals with shining gilt or silver straps. Behind them there is a series of cavernous retreats containing row upon row of trousers and suits. The crowd is thick—mostly men, but some women too, dressed in the western mode, and also women with purdah cloaks over their heads. The châdors, as they are called, are either black, or blue with white polka dots or leaf designs on them, and they intriguingly cover the western clothes beneath.

In Istanbul, which is a section of the long Avenue Shah, there are cinemas showing American, Italian and Persian films. Everywhere one sees the soft drink stalls, selling Pepsi Cola and Coca Cola and Canada Dry orange juice. Some are set back from the street, complete with counter bars and cash registers, some are booths standing on the pavement, and some are just a crate of bottles in a corner, an ice box, and a block of ice in a sack, leaking out into the gutter. They are all singularly lacking in what one needs just as much as the drink itself—a place in which to sit down and cool off. For places to sit and watch the crowd go by, Teheran, where it never rains for three quarters of the year, is worse off than London, and infinitely worse off than Paris, to which the last generation, that built the new city, claimed to turn for culture and inspiration.
In the crush my folded London Times knocks a pair of sunglasses to the ground. I stoop to pick them up, look around and hand them to the man who claims them. He stares at me and takes them without a word. A little further on there are barrow boys selling grapes and apples. A donkey stands patiently with a load of cucumbers on its back, which its country yokel owner is trying to dispose of, whilst piled beside him there is a heap of melons looking like green footballs. A woman with the shaking palsy begs on a corner, and down on the ground, a man without any legs has his little stake of king-size filter cigarettes.

My feet are aching and legs quaking, although I have only walked half a mile across a small fragment of the vast city of a million inhabitants, which is a twentieth of the entire population of Iran. So I look for a haven and dive into one of the few restaurants in the neighbourhood. Inside there is an air of coolness and emptiness. Fans on standards are whirling the air around above, and most of the tables are virgin white and unoccupied. The waiter comes to me without a menu, so I ask him what there is to eat.

"Chelo kebab," he says.
"Anything else?"
"Chicken rice."
"No. I had that for lunch."
"Ah!"
"All right then. Chelo kebab it is."
"Kheili khub!" the waiter says happily. "Very good!"

He goes away and returns with a plate of gherkins, another plate with a raw onion on it, cut into four pieces, a glass dish with cream in it, a bottle of fizzy, sour milk called dugh, and a tumbler containing māst, which is more or less the same as yoghurt.

A victim to saturation advertising, I order a Pepsi Cola and start on the māst, which is excellently cooling, whilst reading page ten of The Times. I am still eating it when the waiter returns with a little Vesuvius of white rice, accompanied by a pat of butter from the refrigerator. This is indeed a white meal—white māst, white cream, white milk, white onion, white tablecloth. My Pepsi Cola is like a fiery purple intruder, and I cannot pour it properly because the neck of the bottle is iced up. I should have stuck to the gin bottle, which contains iced water. But now the waiter puts down a plate of kebab in front of me, about nine inches of grilled meat, pulled off the skewer but still sticking together, with three grilled tomatoes, which effectively break the monochrome colour scheme.
The mountain of rice is in front of me, so I have to assault it. But what about the onion and the gherkins? There is no knife, so I cannot cut them up and spread them over the rice. Likewise the mountain is too steep and fills the plate too completely for me to mix the meat and tomatoes into it. There seems to be only one solution—a mouthful of rice, followed by a piece of meat, some tomato and then a bite at a gherkin and a bite at the onion, held between the fingers, all in a kind of incessant rotation, mixing them in the stomach if not on the plate.

But it's heavy work in the heat, and I have to give up the effort when the mountain is still a hill. I would have liked a snack—a single stuffed egg-plant or an omelette or a piece of pie—but it seems that all or nothing is the general rule. I ask for the bill. The waiter finds a little piece of paper and writes two numbers on it Ag—eighty-nine rials. Does it include service or not? As I give him a hundred rial note, I think it must do, because outside the restaurant in red capital letters on the door chelo kebab is advertised at sixty rials, and the drink cannot cost more than ten or fifteen. The waiter returns with eleven rials change, which he holds in both hands across his chest with a smile on his face. What a mean fellow I am! take it out of his hands and walk out, with a nod of thanks, into the street.

It is getting late now, but I have no desire to return to my oven of a room, so I dive into a cinema. There are two ticket offices, one marked “winter” and the other “summer,” so I am perplexed. If “winter” means that is is like winter inside, then that is the one for me. I go down the lane for winter tickets, but the girl in the ticket office waves me away. Behind me I hear light schoolgirl voices. “It’s the other one, please, from half past seven.” “Thank you, thank you,” I reply, and after buying a “summer” ticket I am pleasantly surprised to find myself directed upstairs and out into the open, where there is an open-air screen on the roof of the building.

The film is an Italian comedy about three railway employees and their adventures with their girl friends. It is dubbed with simultaneous speech in Farsi. But in Farsi it usually takes even more syllables to say something than it does in Italian, so in order to synchronize the words with the action, the dubbing is set at a tremendous speed, and all the characters seem to be having a verbal race with one another.

I come out of the cinema with the crowd and face a mob of taxis, blocking the avenue trying to get the cinema-goers'
custom. Evading them and the crowd, I walked away down the street, which is now fairly deserted. An Austin Ten with a bashed in door and a starred windscreen comes rattling past. I hail it and tell the wrinkled, shaven-headed driver to take me up Firdowsi Avenue and to stop just short of the statue of the poet. When we get there I hand him a twenty rial note and start getting out. But just as I am leaving the car, I see his gnarled old hand stretched out towards me with five rials change. So much for the sharks at the station, the wide boys on the pavements, the smart operators and the tricksters. There is still an honest man in the business, who gives change back without being asked for it.

There are few people about now. A woman in a black châdor and high-heeled golden sandals turns beady eyes on me and mutters something as I go past. Another, with lean, staring face, meanders about the broad pavement, and as she does so, a taxi with two men in the back draws up beside her. One of them gets out and pulls at her arm. She pulls away and totters about like a mechanical marionette. He prances around her, laughs raucously at his own joke, and retreats back into his taxi.

A stocky young man, with a smooth, egg-shaped head, comes up to me and offers me a woman if I'll follow him up the next alley. "She's a Turk," he says, as if to be Turkish were to be specially attractive. Then three pallid, blond, European young men, in white shirt sleeves, cuff-links and cravats, walk past with eyes agog and safety in their numbers. I look up the long double rows of lights of Shah Reza Avenue, rising dead straight into the distance and the desert, and I turn away towards my own bolt-hole.
During the days that followed I wrestled with the Farsi tongue. The heat was unabated. It was the month of Mordād, the month of death, the month of the martyrdom of Imam Hassan and of Imam Reza, whose tomb at Mashhad is one of the holiest places of pilgrimage for the Shiite Moslems. It was the month of the great “grape-cooking” heat, with a haze so heavy hanging over Teheran that the mountains ten miles out of town were permanently invisible. Tempers were frayed. You could see men fighting in the streets, and the accident rate was high. It was no time for sight-seeing in the city.

Then, on the seventeenth of Mordād a wind rushed in from the desert, bringing dust with it and greater haze at first, but eventually cooling the temperature and clearing the air, so that once more the mountains appeared, limiting and giving finite quality to the flat roofs and the avenues, framing them in a backdrop like a scene painted in a theatre.

On the twenty-fourth of Mordād I set out to cross the mountains with Mohammed, an army man who was helping me with my studies. He wanted to visit the annual meeting of the Iranian National Athletics Federation, which was being held at Resht on the coastal plain of the Caspian Sea, and he invited me to go with him. We decided to travel by bus, which meant an early start at five-thirty in the morning from the Teheran Bus Transport station in Avenue Zahedi.

Mohammed, who asked to be called Mo, had told me to be there at five o’clock, so I arrived in the dark with a few other early passengers and surveyed the line of German coaches—Magirus Deutz and Mercedes Benz—with destination signs for Isfahan and Shiraz, Hamadan, Kerman, Resht and Bandar Pahlevi. Soon the bus station began to fill up. Mo arrived and we took our reserved seats.

“The driver is fat,” Mo remarked. “It is a good sign. Fat means steady. Dear Mr. Driver,” he called out. “How long will the journey take?”

39
“Seven hours, God willing.”

With all the passengers aboard we swung out into the avenue and away to the right down Shah Reza Avenue, heading West. Above the driver’s seat there was a coloured picture of the Prophet Mohammed with a halo round his head, and painted on the dashboard were the words, “God protect us.” In addition, the radio was tuned in to morning prayers, so we seemed to be well insured against disaster.

In the month of Mordād half-past five in the morning is the best time of day, and most of the buses had got away together. Bowling down the six-lane avenue to Mehrabad, many were running neck and neck, whilst the bus crews carried on last minute conversations, and other traffic had to stay in place behind. At the edge of the city hopeful travellers held up their hands to stop us, and further on, out on the open road, a car roared past and stopped dead in front of us, with its driver giving what I thought was the two fingers sign, but it turned out to be a late passenger for Hamadan, who had stopped the wrong bus.

Twenty-five miles from Teheran we reached Karaj, an oasis tucked under the mountains where the shortest route to the coast branches off to the right, up the valley of the Karaj River. Karaj supplies Teheran with water, depriving itself of the precious fluid in order to feed the great cuckoo in the nearby nest. The Karaj Canal enters the city from the north-west and is the basis of its finest boulevard—two carriageways divided by the channel of clear running water and strips of garden on either side of it. It was renamed the Queen Elizabeth the Second Boulevard in commemoration of the Queen’s visit to Teheran in 1961.

The Karaj River itself, when it is full after the melting of the winter snows, flows south of Teheran and dies in the great salt lake thirty miles across, which is on the edge of Persia’s desert heart, the Dasht-e Kavir. In order to avoid this waste of water a dam has been built, with foreign aid, at the point where the gorge that the river cuts through the mountains is narrowest. It is nearly six hundred feet high, and a new road, with many tunnels through the rock, has had to be built to circumvent it. On the lake behind the dam the Teheranis are trying out the new sport of water-skiing.

We did not stop at Karaj, but went straight on to Qazvin, where we halted for breakfast at a hotel in a noisy, chaotic alley, made noisier by the horns of drivers trying to summon their passengers together for departure. Two tiny eggs, with tiny
spoons to eat them with, bread, cheese and damson jam were served us, and dugh was available in Coca Cola bottles if we wanted it.

Back in the bus Mo spoke contentedly. "We have everything in these buses," he said. "Radio, air-conditioning, running very smoothly. Everything but television. Only a fool would trouble to take his own car and break it up on our wonderful roads."

And indeed, it was true. Everything seemed perfect. The asphalt road was not bad and we hardly noticed the bumps. A vast mirage over the plain—great, cool, silent lakes, with trees standing in and around them—only seemed to add to the coolness inside the bus, and even the howl of a singer on the radio seemed to be a pleasant addition to our comfort.

But then it began to get hot, with a heat that was not simply the sun shining on the window panes. The air conditioning was evidently not working. Windows had to be opened, and hot breezes came blasting in from outside. Forty miles out of Qazvin the asphalt came to an end, and the dirt road, winding into the mountains, began. Clouds of dust came in with the breeze. A sudden chatter arose amongst the passengers. Handkerchiefs went to noses. Apples and figs were eaten and limes were smelt to ward off car sickness. Some unfortunates, taking the remedies in vain, were indeed sick into paper bags, which were thrown out at the next halt.

Our road rose very little to reach the top of the rim of hills, and then began the long descent to the sea, first down a high valley and then through precipitous, barren gorges, where every rare piece of arable land was irrigated and cultivated. But deserted villages here and there indicated a losing battle with nature. The country looked worn out and desiccated. One poor peasant was fighting back with a row of Canada Dry bottles of fizzy orange, which were quietly cooking in the sun. But it still looked like a losing battle.

It was on this stretch that we met buses coming from the opposite direction, and there were stops in order to pass on news and greetings. We also had to stop from time to time for the road builders, as the whole road from Qazvin to Resht was being modernized at great expense by the Iran Rah Road Construction Company. Immense amounts of earth were being moved by bulldozers and mechanical excavators, rock was being blasted away, and embankments, bridges, and in one place a long viaduct, were being constructed in order to iron
out the twists and turns, and the long detours up re-entrant valleys, of the old road.

North of these gorges, in the heart of the mountains, we came to the broader valley of the Shah Rud, and stopped for people to get out and wash their faces in the river water, and damp their handkerchiefs to help fight the dust of the next stretch. The Shah Rud flows out of the Taleqan hills north-westwards, and then, having been joined by the Qizil Uzun from the opposite direction, it takes a sharp right-angled turn to the north to cut through the mountains to the sea. The joint river is called the Sefid Rud, or White River.

The precipitous gorge in which the river plunges through the ranges was the site chosen for the Sefid Rud dam, which we saw three-quarters completed by the French engineers who had been allotted the contract. Like the site of the Dez dam in Khuzestan in the far south, where the river pours through a deep crevasse to waste itself on the plain below, the gorge of the Sefid Rud at Manjil looks like God's gift to a hydraulic engineer.

When I asked Mo and other passengers the purpose of the dam, however, nobody seemed to know for certain. Some supposed the water would be carried down to irrigate the plains around Resht, but when I pointed out that the Caspian littoral has one of the heaviest rainfalls in the world and already supports the production of rice, tea, tobacco and cotton crops to saturation point, they thought perhaps that the lake created by the dam would be used to irrigate the valley of the Shah Rud above it. Others thought that the water might be piped over the mountains to the plain of Qazvin, and even to Teheran.

Of course the uses to which the dam is to be put have, in fact, been worked out in detail. Out of its storage capacity of one thousand six hundred and sixty cubic metres of water it is expected to irrigate a hundred and thirty thousand hectares of uncultivated land and to improve the yield of a hundred and ten thousand hectares of cultivated land. It will also produce electrical power for industrial concerns in the north of the country. Nevertheless nobody in the bus was able to tell me what the benefits would be, nor indeed did anyone seem particularly interested in what they were. It might prove useful. It might not. This was something that foreign aid was building for them. They would see what happened when it was finished, and then decide whether it was a useful or a useless thing.

Meanwhile the lake behind the dam was filling up, stretch-
ing its tentacles deep into the depressions in the land. Below it we crossed the river and went on down the deep valley into the province of Gilan. A short way down, the olive groves of Rudbar showed in slashes of green across the brown hills.

In the year 1961 Rudbar sprang into international fame amongst archaeologists because of the tremendously rich finds discovered at Marlik Teppe, one of five mounds on the far side of the river. In but two-thirds of one of these mounds over four thousand valuable objects were unearthed, making it easily the most fruitful of digs since the Second German War. Golden bowls, embossed with winged bulls and other mythological creatures, were found in the tomb of a prince. Beautifully made silver vases, iron toys, models of animals and ploughs, statuettes of women with curious shelf-like posteriors, cruses with animal spouts, and pieces of jewelry of gold and semi-precious stones were also brought to light, making a hoard so valuable that a plot to murder the archaeologist in charge and steal the treasure was hatched in the local village. The finds are thought to belong to a period before the rise of the Median and Achaemenid empires, when the Iranian tribes were still in the north of the country.

Rostamabad was the next village, and beyond it there was a startling change in the landscape. The glare of brown, waterless mountains, with bare rock strata in gashes of reds and greys zigzagging across the cliffs, gave place in the space of half a mile to green forests and meadows and thatched cottages. Where the valley opened out at last on to the flat lands, the bright green of paddy fields completed the contrast with the dry plateau we had left behind.

The flat coastal plain imperceptibly slopes downwards towards Resht, which is below normal sea level and in summer is just as hot as Teheran and much stickier. Since Mo was as much a stranger there as I was, we went first to the main square and into the Iran hotel for lunch. And there, whether it was because of the fatigue of the journey or the heat or the uncertainty of our plans or the high price of the meal or the filthy condition of the condiments, he decided that Resht was a no-good town, full of Russian-speakers, garlic-eaters and confidence-tricksters, such as no good Iranian would associate with. I said that what he meant was that it was a one-horse town. The phrase amused him inordinately, and so we carried on to the detriment of the provincial capital, until the time came to take a taxi and visit the athletes, who were housed in the local High School.
Our taxi driver was insured against disaster like the bus driver. The sun-visors above the windscreen on his car were painted black, and on them, written in white letters, were the words Yā Ali (Hail Ali) and Be Esm-e Allāh Al-Rehmān Al-Rahim (In the name of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful). During our ride Mo sought information.

"Dear Mr. Driver. This your city of Resht is a very fine city. Very, very fine. What is the name of this fine avenue, and what is that fine new building over there? This is a fine place for our games. Have you been transporting our athletes? Do you know what the arrangements are for today? What a fine place this is!"

The driver answered him less fulsomely, and in like vein the conversation continued until we reached the High School, where the athletes from all parts of Iran, from as far apart as Tabriz in the north to Zahedan in the far south-east, were having their siesta, and the President of the Federation was sitting with three or four companions face to face with tea cups and a cut water melon.

We went off to inspect the stadium by jeep, four in the back and three in the front, with the stars and stripes of America and hands clasped in friendship stencilled on the side. There we found men marking out the running lanes with white powder, and others trying to roll flat the dusty, dry cinders, and others with watering cans attempting to lay the dust.

"The heaviest rainfall in Iran and we have a water shortage," complained Mo. "We have no luck." And indeed it was a melancholy sight—three or four ragged men, like municipal gardeners in some remote Indian cantonment, trying to knock the track into shape, the bare concrete terraces of the little spectators' stand, the patchy football field in the middle, rough with uneven tufts of grass.

"I'm going to Bandar Pahlevi," I said.

Under pressure Mo agreed to come with me. Leaving his suitcase at the High School, he extracted a toothbrush from it, borrowed a pair of swimming trunks and set off with me again down the main avenue of Resht, under the banners publicizing the athletes, which had been donated by Pepsi Cola. Opposite the bus station we sought a savāri taxi—a taxi in which one pays for a seat instead of for the complete car—and having found a big, blue Chevrolet, we sat drinking Canada Dry in the neighbouring tea-house as we waited for three more people to turn up.

Luckily it was not long before our car load was complete and we were able to set out. The new road to Bandar Pahlevi,
with a water pipeline ready for laying beside it, took us straight over the plain for about twenty miles. The thatched houses, built up on posts above the fields, were reminiscent of Malaya, and boys stood on the roadside selling figs packed in cigar-shaped baskets made of rice-straw. After reaching the Caspian Sea, which is eighty-five feet below the normal ocean level, the road turned sharp left for another ten miles over a long peninsula between the sand dunes of the coast and the big, stagnant, marshy lagoon known as the Mordab—the Dead Water—which is a paradise for duck-shooting sportsmen. At the end of this narrow dyke of land we came to the little naval and civil port of Ghazian, which is joined by two bridges over the entrance to the Mordab with the bigger town of Bandar Pahlevi.

We had to leave the savari taxi at Bandar Pahlevi and commandeer another one to go and look for somewhere to stay. A patient driver took us back to Ghazian, on to the sea shore to inspect the rows of bathing cabins, along the private plages, as the beaches are called, and up to the pensions behind them, whilst Mo, with his “Dear Mr. Driver” methods sought information as to who was who, where the Admiral lived, who was the Chief of Police, where was the house of Mr. Shahbazi, a very wealthy man of the district, and so on. The driver, wise in his old age, limited himself to remarking that they were all “very, very good, courteous men.” When Mo had exhausted his inquiries, I persuaded him to tell the driver to take us to the naval barracks and look up a solitary Englishman, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, who was teaching Iranian sailors the technique and practice of diving.

Following the Lieutenant’s advice we went to the Grand Hotel. Whilst Mo went in to bargain with the manager, I remained outside, talking to a shoe-shine man at the door, who tried to sell me black-market caviare, which had presumably been side-tracked from the local factory. After a few minutes I was called in and met the Greek proprietor. I found myself facing a large patio, with wistaria hanging from the walls and a vine-clad pergola with fawns’ heads one above the other on the supporting posts. Here and there Doric columns completed the attempt at a make-believe civilization.

As soon as we had established ourselves in our room, I went to pay a visit to the barber’s shop just outside the hotel door. An old man was plying his trade there—an Armenian—with a Moslem boy apprentice from Teheran to assist him. In my journeying through Yugoslavia and Turkey into Iran I had
grown discriminating about barbers and had learnt to luxuriate in having this tiresome chore done for me by an expert for about sixpence a time. I had learnt to enjoy the whole process, except for the few brief moments of man’s faith in his brother man, when the blade runs across the adam’s apple and the throat itself and a wild stare comes into the concentrating eyes of the operator.

Something about the Armenian’s shop reminded me of the first dentist I ever went to. Perhaps it was the little spirit lamp over which he sterilized his razor, scissors and comb, or perhaps the bristles on the back of his head. Whatever it was, I chose the apprentice-boy to perform on me. He used a small razor, asked me for my approval after the first test stroke, and then did my face over with quick sharp movements. His pay, he told me, was two tousems, that is twenty rials or about one and tenpence, a day, and he had been in the business for three years in Teheran before his present master had sent for him a year ago. He lived in a room above the shop and got ticked off by his master if he did not clean the shop properly every morning and empty the dead flies out of the saucer of red fly-catcher paste. Now his master wanted to open a shop in Teheran and leave him in charge here. At the end of the shave he sprayed my face and head with a powerful scented spirit that left me with eyes shut and breathless for at least a quarter of a minute. He then stuck tufts of cotton-wool in the metal comb, which he pulled back through my hair.

After the shave Mo and I sat in the patio of the hotel. Not Farsi, but French and Russian were the principal languages spoken. At a long table a large party, including some relatives of the King, conversed in French, whilst small groups of bulky men, women and children talked to each other in Russian. I could not tell to which side the Russians belonged—whether they were members of some trade mission or off a Russian cargo steamer tied up in the port, unloading timber from Baku in exchange for caviare, or whether they were a second generation of refugees. But in any case, with the French spoken on one side and the endless gusts of Russian on the other, and the doddering waiters, and the immutable air of nothing ever happening in the damp summer heat, I suddenly felt myself transported into the pages of a short story by Turgenev or a play by Tchekhov. And there, indeed, were the Sisters, not three unfortunately, but two, sitting down with their mother, younger versions of Tchekhov’s characters, looking around and
waiting for something to happen, yet afraid to do anything to make it happen.

At dinner there was grilled sturgeon, which tastes rather like tuna fish if it tastes of anything at all. Though a very fine fish for caviare, it is not particularly good for eating. After dinner we picked up the naval officer and went through the old streets of Enzeli, as Bandar Pahlevi used to be called before the Russian-built port installations were handed over to the Persians in 1928. Small boys were pointing up at a shooting-star in the sky and shouting “Gagarin, Gagarin!” We went on through the streets to the beach. Firm, sandy and almost tideless, it was the motor road to the Gazino, a beach café which was known as the local nightclub.

When we arrived the owner and four or five cronies were at a side table engaged in one of the favourite occupations of Bandar Pahlevans—gambling. The rest of the place was empty, so we sat down to await developments. “The season must be over,” the Lieutenant said. But presently cars arrived and people got out of them. A naval officer sat down at a table with his wife and teenage daughter, home from school in England. A high-ranking police officer entered in uniform, accompanied by two gentlemen who looked like lawyers—tall, dark, bespectacled men with damp suits hanging on them. Then a gay party appeared, with two women in jeans—one pair striped and the other gold brocade. Then the Teheran students and the teenage crew-cut boys. Then a U.S. naval lieutenant, normally stationed with the other section of the Iranian Navy at Khorramshahr on the Shatt al-Arab at the head of the Persian Gulf. He joined us and ordered vodka.

Presently the pattern of things took shape. Music from the gramophone, Western style, was continuous, and dancing began when the lights were dimmed. It was divided into two classes—rock and roll from the Teheran students and less athletic performances from the rest, with no overlapping between the two groups. The biggest group, however, were the lookers-on. They sat at tables and stared as if at a theatre show. And suddenly I realized that we were doing exactly the same thing.

“The season hasn’t really begun yet,” the U.S. naval officer said. “That’s the trouble.”

“I thought it was nearly over,” I said.

“I guess that’s about the same thing,” he said. “It’s all the same to me. I’m going to Tabriz tomorrow to get me some chairs. You heard of Tabriz chairs?”
"No."
"Well, Sir. They’re chairs with kind of reversible backs. You can sit on them frontwards or backwards, just as you please. If I get those Tabriz chairs and then some Beirut chairs before I go home, I’ll be satisfied."

He ordered another half-bottle of Persian vodka, which is very good of its kind, and I looked at Mo, who though ready to drink Fargo beer, drew the line at spirits. He was sitting silently to one side, out of this curious conversation, and as for me, I had had enough vodka and of the season that either hadn’t quite begun or was nearly over, and of staring at other people dancing, so we left the navy to carry on and went back to our beds.

During the next two days I got to know the little Caspian Sea section of the Imperial Iranian Navy quite well and enjoyed the hospitality of the officers’ plage. They had all been abroad at some time or other in their careers on various training courses. But not all had been to the same country. One had been to the Italian Naval Academy at Leghorn and come back with a charming Italian wife, whose blonde hair stood out like a beacon amongst the Persian brunettes. Another had been to the United States and Scotland, and his younger brother was on a British naval engineering course at Plymouth.

True to the traditions of naval hospitality, the Captain of the Emperor’s yacht kindly showed me over his craft, which is berthed at Bandar Pahlevi except when it goes along the coast to Naushahr for the Emperor’s relaxation. It is a Dutch-built boat, which came to the Caspian by the only possible route—across Russia and down the River Volga—and is well fitted up with the sort of amenities of living one expects in a first-class ocean liner, but without ostentatious or gaudy luxury.

In contrast with the Emperor’s yacht, the locals go about in open boats, ferrying, and taking pleasure parties about, and fishing, usually with the wasteful throw-nets which gather up the small fry as well as the grown fish. The boats are rigged up with a little tented awning in the stern, rather like a Kashmir shikarra, and take one up and down the shore and in and out of the Mordab. But out of the holiday season some of the fishermen go further, if they can be believed. A young, schoolboyish lad related to me a tale of three-day cruises on the Russian side of the frontier in search of timber. Ten logs, he said, towed behind the little boat and landed safely, would fetch him a thousand toumans, or nearly fifty pounds. He usually went about two hundred miles up the coast, amongst
The rooftops of Gorgan

Isfahan — Ali Qapu
Coppersmith of Isfahan
the islands round the Araxes delta, anchoring in shallow water at night. Once he had been taken by the Russians, but he had played dumb and they had let him go.

"Aren't you afraid of storms?" I said.

"If I were afraid, I wouldn't go," he said.

We gave him three toumans for our boat-trip, and he was far from satisfied. It must have been small beer to a man who can earn a thousand at a time.

On the last day of the athletic meeting we left Bandar Pahlevi after lunch in order to be at Resht in good time for the finals of the races. I had felt guilty at keeping Mo away so much by insisting on staying at Bandar Pahlevi, and so I was determined that he should get there on time. But when we had got about half-way in our savāri taxi, a crisis occurred. The other party—a poor man with wife and baby—discovered that he had forgotten his jacket. In the heat of the afternoon he had hung it up on the stump of a broken lamp-post whilst waiting for transport. And there he had left it. He began to beat his head, and his wife's veil dropped back on to her neck as she gazed at him in pained reproach.

Half-way is a difficult position to be in at such a time. But Mo thought of the right words of consolation. "It will still be there," he said. "There are always many people waiting there, so no one will steal it for fear of it belonging to someone who is still sitting there."

The man sat fretting gloomily as we went on towards Resht.

"You don't need to go back yourself," the driver said. "I'll fetch it for you on my next trip back."

"Thank you, but I had better go back for it."

"Why take the trouble, when I can get it for you?"

"Thank you, thank you, Mister. I will come with you."

The driver grew angry. "Why don't you let me get it for you? I cannot understand you. If you come with me, you must pay the taxi-fare again."

And so we went on to Resht. Mo tapped the unhappy man on the shoulder. "Mister," he said. "It is better for you to go back for it yourself."

The man nodded. "I shall go back for it myself," he said. And before we reached the heart of town, he asked to be put down, hoping to catch another taxi back to Bandar Pahlevi before our driver, himself, could get back to the place where the jacket was. We could not persuade him to take us further than the main square, where he dropped us with bad grace.
The finals of the games were presided over by the King's brother, and mercifully in such heat, the programme was short. After the runners had run, the hurdlers hurdles and the discus and javelin-throwers given their demonstrations, the national anthem was played by a steel-helmeted band and the winners were congratulated in the space of a few minutes. Then the King's brother departed with his small son to a waiting U.S. Army helicopter, which took him to the nearby Rudsar airfield.

In the evening there was a farewell dinner for the athletes at the Marmar Hotel, and after dinner the drums were beating, and men, in this womanless world, were dancing like negro fetishists. The heat and sweat were all too much for me, so as soon as possible after the prize-giving, Mo and I went out to join the other inhabitants of Resht in the evening promenade.

"This is a town of one horse," said Mo. "There is nothing for them to do but walk up and down. Shall I tell you something about the people of Resht? Owing to the climate, the humidity, you see; what you explained to us all last night—we would not have known it was humidity if you had not explained it—owing to this, the men of Resht have no strength, and the women are always looking for a stranger."

"Well, well!"

"I wish I had brought my wife and baby with me."

"You could have done."

"I didn't know what the road would be like and where we would stay. Now we have friends here, it is different."

People were circulating round the cinemas, which were showing "Gun Fury" and a Norman Wisdom comedy. On the pavement two women giggled and looked up at us as they walked past, one fair-featured and the other dark under her veil. We walked further up the road and turned. The women had turned too and passed us again. They disappeared into the dark, and when we saw them for the third time, the fair-faced one had lipstick newly painted on her lips.

"Let's have a beer," I said to Mo. And we found a narrow passage of a bar with Sham beer for sale and curious bottles of spirits, including Gordon's gin with an old, unfamiliar red and yellow label and Czechoslovakian slivovitz.

"This is a one and a half horse town," I said.
Next day we returned to Teheran from Resht. In all the villages and townships along the road carpets were hanging in display on the walls of the mosques, and outside the municipal offices and the houses of the leading citizens. It was the twenty-eighth of Mordâd, commonly known as Mossadeq Day, which is a public holiday to commemorate the revolution of 1953. On that day Mossadeq, the weeping Prime Minister, who nationalized the Persian oilfields and the refinery of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company at Abadan, was overthrown, with the help, it is said of ten million dollars of the funds of the United States Central Intelligence Agency, and the Shah was brought back to his throne.

The oil of Iran is still nationalized, and is exploited by the National Iranian Oil Company, which like most nationalized industries everywhere, is busy building bigger and better offices for its administrative staff in the capital. The actual extraction of the oil is done by a consortium, with nationals of many different countries, including Britain, on its staff. It is called the "Concession," a term carried over from the old days in Persia, when mining, trading and even the customs organization were all farmed out to foreign companies.

After the take-over by the government of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company’s properties in 1951 there was a virtual standstill at Abadan, and when production began to rise again great difficulties in marketing the oil were experienced. But during the next decade there was a continual recovery, and in 1961 the Shah was able to say that, whereas in 1952 less than a million tons of oil were produced, in 1957 production surpassed the pre-Mossadeq peak of nearly thirty-two million tons, and in 1959 it was up to forty-five million.

Meanwhile, in addition to the big established oilfields at Masjed-e Suleiman, Naft Sefid, Gachsaran and other places in the foothills of the Zagros mountains, new fields were being discovered all the time. Prospecting goes on continuously. In
1956 oil was struck in considerable quantity at Qum, the holy city a hundred miles south of Teheran, which lies outside the area allotted to the Concession for exploitation. And so Iran, like her neighbours, continues to add to the world glut of oil, and selling petrol on the home market at two shillings a gallon only disposes of a fraction of her increasing output.

After a formal show of reluctance, the Shah agreed to address his people on Mossadeq Day, and an open dais was set up for him in the middle of Doshan Teppe military airfield, which lies near the capital to the east. A big crowd, thought to be about half a million strong, went out there from the city by every available means of transport to hear his hour-long speech, which ranged over subjects which are familiar enough in Iran, but will bear repeating elsewhere.

Firstly, the Shah stressed the fact that, whilst Iran always wanted to remain neutral in the conflicts between the great powers, nevertheless because of her geographical position, she was always dragged into their disputes. Secondly, he repeated firmly his unequivocal stand against Russia and Communism. And thirdly, he referred to the widespread corruption in the country, such as he thought might be found in every developing country, but which should, nevertheless, be wiped out in Iran.

The last of these three points is a perennial subject of conversation amongst the people and of discussion in the Teheran newspapers. Teheranis talk cynically about corruption as we grumble about the weather. Frequently even pride seems to glint in their eyes as some scandal involving public transport or fisheries or building contracts or land tenure is revealed. Sometimes the rackets are on a truly American scale. They show enterprise, force of personality and the ability to make good use of the opportunities sent by fate, and to get rich by any means available. The only real crime is to be found out.

When I arrived in Iran there were several hundred people in jail awaiting trial, who had fallen from power as a result of the recent change of government which resulted in the closing of the National Assembly. Dr. Amini, the new Prime Minister, appointed directly by the Shah, had promised to clean the Augean stables, and the prisoners were to be tried on a variety of charges, ranging from the use of government equipment for private purposes to fraudulent manipulation of import licences. However, although the Minister of Justice was quoted in the newspapers as promising the people a very good show, most individuals were sceptical as to whether the trials would
actually take place. One met people with relatives in jail, but no personal stigma seemed to be attached to their imprisonment. They were regarded as having had bad luck and as having been the victims of intrigue, and it was hoped that the wheel of fortune would soon turn for them.

To many people’s surprise the trials were, in the end, held. They began with the Caviare Case, which took place before a Civil Service Tribunal specially set up to deal with the various cases of corruption that had been investigated by the Public Prosecutor. This involved a retired General, who had been Head of the Fisheries Department, and his sales promoter in Europe, who soon became known to everyone as the Caviare Queen. The first of the charges could not have been preferred anywhere else but in Iran. It was that 148,545 rials, or about seven hundred pounds, booked as having been spent in celebration of the birthday of Ali, the first Imam, had in fact been spent on festivities at the New Year, and further that, although according to the books, the occasion should have been solemn and religious, there had been music and dancing, and alcoholic drinks had been served.

This charge may have been put first to catch the public fancy, but the charges that followed were concerned with much greater sums—7,500,000 rials paid illegally to the Caviare Queen; eight wooden houses on the Caspian shore bought for 560,000 rials that were not actually needed by the Department; a fraudulent contract for selling sturgeon in the Teheran streets; another fraudulent agreement for the sale of caviare in a shop in Teheran.

After the great publicity given to the show, it was very difficult to get into the court on the opening day. Those who did were entertained only by silence. All the accused, except the Caviare Queen, refused even to answer the arraignment, and played dumb even when asked to verify their names and addresses. This was in protest at the competence of the court to try them, since the General had insisted on a military tribunal and the others wanted a court with a jury.

The following day the General limped with his cane to the witness stand for another session of silence, whilst particulars of the first charge were detailed, and a list of the alcoholic drinks served on the birthday of the Prophet’s son-in-law was read out—thirty-six beers, two bottles of French wine and two of Shiraz wine, one bottle of vodka, four of cognac, five of whisky and one of martini.

The next day the silence was broken as the presiding judge
probed into the details of this irreverent celebration. A defendant claimed that only religious songs in praise of Ali had been sung, whereupon the judge wanted to know why a famous singer of popular songs had been engaged. And what about the dancers? Ah, they were only children aged ten to fifteen, the accused replied. Were there any girls amongst them? He could not remember. Were they all ten to fifteen? Well, there was a young woman amongst them.

The trial thus started dangerously near farce. Then it settled down to more humdrum daily sessions for the hearing of detailed evidence and the unravelling of documents and statistics. The accused, with the pained look of innocent scapegoats, sat through it all, occasionally bickering, but more often united in contempt for the whole proceedings and implying that they had got better things to do than to sit there day after day where, but for the grace of God, a thousand other people might be sitting in their places. Eventually the sentences were pronounced—three years’ imprisonment for the General, and one year, which she had already served, plus a fine for the Caviare Queen.

Other trials followed. High officials of the Iranian Carpet Company were accused of frauds in buying up wool and of substituting cheap price tags on carpets for expensive ones for the benefit of their friends. Four officials of the Ministry of Finance were accused of embezzling a million and a half rials from the funds of the Khuzestan Development Service. Thirteen men, amongst them the former editor of a newspaper, were accused of illegally registering in their own names large tracts of municipal land in the Shemiran area on the slopes to the north of Teheran. The former Director-General of the Railways was also accused of frauds, and meanwhile other irregularities were under investigation. A factory costing six and a half million rials had been set up to manufacture concrete sleepers for the railways, but had never produced more than a few hundred, which had rapidly disintegrated. The former Minister of Education had started building a school for two hundred and fifty boys to be run like a British Public School at Hesarak, near Karaj. Two hundred and fifty million rials had been spent on it and the headmaster of a well-known English Public School had been engaged as headmaster, but it had never been completed, and the new Minister had no intention of completing it.

Many other “files”, mostly involving great men, were scheduled for probing. The former Mayor of Teheran, who
once boasted in the National Assembly that he owned lands the size of Switzerland, was released on bail to the value of thirty million pounds.

And so the slow process of investigation and judicial procedure continued. The cases were symbolic of the diversion of public money into private pockets which has been an accepted fact in Iran for centuries. Everyone knew that they were not the whole story, for the millions received in foreign aid, together with the millions derived from the oil revenues, ought by now to have made Iran the richest country in the Middle East. Yet never was it more clearly demonstrated that money alone cannot make an advanced nation. Much of the money seems to have disappeared like water poured into the desert. But aid has been poured in at each successive financial crisis in such floods that here and there the desert has reached saturation point and things are beginning to grow. Dams, silos, fertilizer factories, steel plants, sugar refineries and the like have indeed risen above the ground, and there is something, after all, to show for the three development plans.

As the former President of the National Bank said. "Social and political unrest is a manifestation of the despair and the lack of faith of the people, of their distrust of incompetent and sometimes corrupt governments. It is a challenge which must be met." Shortly after making this statement in America he himself was arrested for allegedly irresponsible squandering of American aid funds. The bail was set at fifty million pounds.
The Great Volcano

Soon after Mossadeq Day I set out past Doshan Teppe on my way to Mount Demavend, an extinct volcano which is the highest mountain in Iran. The great, bare, tawny range was clear in view now, giving the illusion of being almost sheer above the ends of the avenues leading north from the city. The southward-facing mountains looked so barren and ragged and rocky that one could not imagine anyone having a use for them. Yet they are what Tehranis see in their minds’ eye when they are homesick and far from home. When one gets into them one finds they are not empty at all. Their deep folds hide villages, where orchards of apples and pomegranates and the tall poplars grow. Above Darband—a deep gully in the mountain wall due north of Tehran—the narrow fissures wind on and on, driving into the heart of the Elburz. In winter they are deserted, but in summer the tea houses straddling the running streams do a thriving business. The Tehranis sit on the low, carpet-covered platforms in the shade of the trees, smoke their hubble-bubble pipes and enjoy the cool air. They are comfortable and contented, and that is the highest ambition of most right-thinking men.

A few days before setting out I had been talking to a lady in a house in the northern suburb of Tajrish—a lady with soft, black eyes that her family called cheshm-e āhu, gazelle’s eyes, and so slightly built that one could not think of her taking more than two paces into that hard and stony wilderness—and yet she stood at the window, gazing at the mountains in rapture. She had married an American post-graduate student and was herself a teacher. They had moved from one place to another in the United States, and now she was home on holiday for the summer vacation. “I cannot look at them long enough, they are so beautiful,” she said. “They are the colour of lions.”

And then she broke the spell, pointing out the grid-iron framework of the new Hilton hotel, which was being built on a hillock between us and the heights. “The new Hilton,” she
said. It was a matter of pride. So many cities have Hilton hotels. If Istanbul has one, so surely must Teheran, for the Persians are never left behind by the Turks. It is like keeping up with the Joneses. Although there are already too many hotels in Teheran, a Hilton is a necessity of civilization.

So I set out for the mountains, with sleeping bag and rucksack, driving eastwards from the city. Immediately beyond Doshan Tappe I was already out on the desert hillside. A new sanatorium under construction on the slope of the hills to the right was the last attempt at cultivating the wilderness, then I was out in emptiness. Passing the ruins of some old underground water channels, I rose to the top of a ridge, then descended steeply into the deep valley of the Jaje Rud.

The Jaje Rud is another river, like the Karaj, that runs down to die in the great salt lake, and also like the Karaj, it is having a dam built across it to supply water to the insatiable capital and to extend cultivation in its own valley. The site chosen is at Latiyan, three miles north of the road, and the engineers are French.

After climbing out of the Jaje Rud Valley, a dozen miles further on I came to Rudehan and the end of the asphalt road. Significantly, the first thing one saw on entering the village was a row of old motor tyres hanging up in the branches of a tree, then a row of tea houses, for this is the first convenient stopping place on the highway to the East.

But I headed north. I was already in an amphitheatre of mountains, which closed in around me as I climbed to Ab Ali, a long straggling village squeezed in between them. It is a favourite stretch for outings from Teheran on holy days, which are treated by the city people much as we treat holidays, even such solemn occasions as the martyrdom of the Imams. I took this road on the twenty-second of Mordād, which was the first of the first month of Rabi in the religious calendar, taken from the Arabic, and the second day of the four days’ mourning for Imam Reza, the poisoned Imam. I found the cars there in such numbers that they were huddled like cattle in the shade of every approachable tree, whilst the narrow, rough street of Ab Ali was almost impassable.

This village bottles mineral water—hence its name, which means “the water of Ali”—and it also lives on a number of guest houses, and two hotels, owned by the Shah, the upper one of which is a winter ski centre, complete with ski-lifts up the mountainside.

It may seem strange that a king should be in the hotel busi-
ness, but so it is. The hotels are managed by the Pahlevi Foundation, an organization set up by the Shah in 1958 to carry out the distribution of the Crown Estates and to provide capital for various activities, broadly described as social services. Royal participation in the hotel business, as an adjunct of the tourist trade, was started by Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlevi dynasty. He had hotels built at Chalus, Ramsar and Babulsar on the Caspian, at Gachsar on the road to Chalus, and at several other places. Many new royal hotels, and modern additions to the old ones have been built in the present reign, and are still being built. The latest of these is the Hilton, which is financed by the Pahlevi Foundation, although the contract and name are foreign.

Beyond Ab Ali I side-tracked down into a broad, verdant valley, down which the qasabe—something between a small town and a large village—of Demavand lay hidden round the corner. In this valley there was a summer camp for army reservists and three words were writ large in stones on the hillsides above them—KHUDA SHAH MEIHAN (God, King, Country.) Lower down to the right, an older, smaller copy of the same thing could be seen—the original effort, which had been improved upon.

I met the military police lieutenant of this camp whilst he was engaged in searching peasants suspected of receiving from men engaged in the age-old pastime of flogging military rations and equipment. I watched as his men extracted a couple of old mess tins from a sack on a donkey and started a violent interrogation. When this had died down, he came over into the shade of a tree to talk, and sent a military policeman running up the hill to the camp for Pepsi Colas. During our conversation, which was mostly about pay and prospects in the Iranian Army as compared with the British Army, an old shepherd, who was standing by, ran into his crude, semi-underground stone shelter across the road, and with great courtesy brought out his quilt for me to sit on.

Leaving this valley, I traversed up towards the first pass. The camp grew smaller and smaller as the road climbed up to the seven thousand foot contour to cross a narrow col, a wind funnel on most days, which is, in fact, the watershed between the catchment areas of the great desert and the Caspian Sea. The point is marked by a rough stone building, with a simple whitewashed cone surmounting it. It is an imamzade, the tomb of a holy man named Hashem, and a place for worshipful veneration.
THE GREAT VOLCANO

From this high point the road descended a dry valley, with a small stream at the bottom of it, to Pulur, where the Lar River comes in from the west. Pulur is only a small hill village, but I found it swollen in size by a row of tents along the bank of the stream. Two tents on the far side were the genuine low, spreading, black tents of the nomads, but the rest, on the near side, were canvas pavilions of cuboid shape, such as the French tent makers have brought back into vogue in the camp sites of Europe in the last few years. These tents, in form like those the mediaeval knights used on the battlefields of centuries ago, were occupied by city-dwellers mirroring the nomads' custom of moving to the heights in the hot weather, from qeshlaq to yeilaq, that is, from winter quarters to summer quarters.

And well they might. The Lar Valley is a perfect place to which to escape from the great heats of the plateau below. From Pulur it rises westwards and a day's ride on horseback brings one out on to high pastures, where for the brief months of summer cavalry horses roam. There is not a tree in sight, the river is icy cold, and at a height of more than eight thousand feet the nights are bitter. But the clear light and the wide ranging views, and the trout, partridges and herds of horses, all combine to give it a unique fascination. The British Embassy has established a camp there every summer, wars or no wars, ever since Gertrude Bell went there nearly a century ago.

From Pulur the road climbed on to the flank of Demavend itself. The mountain is an extinct volcano, shaped as a regular truncated cone, and capped with snow even in summer, like Fujiyama in Japan. The cone can be seen on a clear day from Teheran and also from various high points on the road that leads to it. It looks remote and mysterious, half hidden by the intervening ridges, until one is actually on its lower slopes, and then one cannot see the top at all, as it curves away into the sky, as often as not obscured by clouds.

The mountain figures in many of the old legends of Iran, both because of its height and its remoteness. The heroes of old Iran came from Seistan, far off to the east, in the area which now borders Afghanistan and Baluchistan. To them the mountain range was like the end of the world, and they fancied the dark jungles on their northern side were peopled by demons and monsters. These jungles were the region called Tabaristan, and by the Romans Hyrcania, where the "bold Hyrcanian tiger", as Shakespeare has it, roamed.

Feridun, who in his old age, like King Lear, divided his huge kingdom amongst his three children, giving Iran to Iraj,
Roum, the modern Anatolia, to Selm, and Turkestan and China to Tur, first had to conquer the evil king Zohak. This king had defeated the great Jamshed, who introduced iron and weaving and embroidery and brick-making and other civilized arts to the Iranian people and divided them into the four Vedic castes of priest, warrior, merchant and farmer. Zohak came from the west, having killed his own father, King Mardas, after making a pact with the Devil. When the deed was done the Devil asked to be allowed to kiss his shoulders, whereupon, from each shoulder sprouted a black snake. Zohak had the snakes cut away, but they grew again, and the Devil, disguised as a doctor, told him that all he could do was to feed them on the brains of men and hope that they would eventually die.

Meanwhile a grandson was born in the family of Jamshed, for whom a glorious future was foretold. This was Feridun. As an infant he was kept hidden and suckled by a cow named Purmajeh. He was then taken for greater safety to the Elburz. There he grew to manhood and in time descended from the mountains to seek his fortune. Zohak was still at the height of his power, but haunted by a guilty conscience, which drove him to force his nobles to sign a document declaring that his reign had been beneficial to Persia. As this was going on, a cry of "Justice!" was heard at the palace gates. It was a blacksmith, named Kaveh, demanding redress for the death of his sixteen sons, who had been slaughtered to feed the snakes.

Zohak, terrified by the blacksmith's cries, ordered his last remaining son to be given back to him. Then he asked him to sign the document that the nobles had signed. The blacksmith swore he would do no such thing and stormed out into the market place, where he called upon the people to rise up against injustice. Feridun was summoned to lead them, and the blacksmith's leather apron was raised up on the point of a spear as a banner. It remained the standard of Persia right up to the time of the Moslem conquest.

Feridun rode to the Tigris at the head of the rebels, carrying an iron mace with a head shaped like a cow's head in memory of Purmajeh. They swam the river and seized Zohak's palace, releasing Shehrinaz and Arnevaz, daughters of Jamshed, whom Feridun subsequently married. But Zohak was not there. On hearing the bad news, he rushed home to expel Feridun, but the people turned on him and he was captured.

Feridun took Zohak in chains to Demavend, to a cleft in the rocks which led to a bottomless cavern in the heart of the mountain. There Zohak was stretched out like Prometheus on the
edge of the abyss, and clamped alive to the rock face. His shrieks and groans are still heard from time to time as the volcano rumbles.

Thinking of this old legend, I continued on the road to Demavend. It rose to about eight thousand feet to skirt a quarter of the way round the eighteen-thousand foot volcano, and at the same time the River Lar fell away to the right in an ever-deepening gorge. Then the road dropped a little to a place called Rehneh, the site of a construction job under the charge of an American engineer from North Carolina.

Though far from home, the engineer and his hospitable wife seemed to have come to terms with life out in the wilds, and were not only doing their best to keep their mixed team of Dutch, Swiss, German and Armenian assistants happy, but also doing what they could to give medical assistance to the nearby villagers. Unfortunately work was practically at a standstill because of trouble with their sub-contractors, who in trying to get rich quick, seemed to have been making an effort to get too rich too quick. As a result his men were under-employed and consequently much harder to keep happy. There was also the difficulty of the building specifications as laid down in the contract. High standards of construction with regard to such things as the flatness of walls and the rightness of right angles and the verticality of verticals had been laid down, which are, no doubt, commonplace in the U.S.A., but which were almost impossible to achieve with the tools and skills available at Rehneh.

And so the work was slowed down, and Mac, the engineer, had time enough to talk of local affairs. Land, water and trees—the three ever-constant topics of the Persian countryside—were to the fore. As there is, as yet, no accurate, detailed survey of Iran, the limits of peoples' land are perennially in dispute wherever there is no well-defined natural border. In this case the owner of the land lying below the construction site claimed that the requisitioned area had not been wasteland at all, but was actually his own.

As far as water was concerned, the same landowner, together with the village as a whole, claimed water rights when it was found that the site requirement was seriously reducing the amount of water in the village stream, and very occasionally cutting it off altogether. Mac said he had put in a piped water point for the villagers and always warned them before the rare occasions on which he was going to use all the supply of water and dry up their source for an hour or two. Nevertheless, my
instincts were still on the side of the villagers, and when he told
me that, as he understood it, the water right was his, because
he was closest to the source, I thought he was wrong.

I felt I knew something about this matter, having studied
the Persian Civil Code, in which many of the articles are con-
cerned with water. Article ninety-six of the Code states that,
"wherever anyone has, in the past, had a water course through
the house or property of another to his own, or has had the
right of passage, the owner of the house or property cannot
prevent him bringing water through or passing through, and
so it is with other rights, such as the right of having a door or
window or gutter and the right of drinking and so on." This
article could certainly be interpreted as meaning that, since
the village was there first, it had the prior right to the water.

But where the government has the power, the question is
academic. The villagers had become dependent on the con-
struction site for their water, and they were nervous about
what might happen after occupation of the site by some
hundreds of men. It may have been a final jerk of the nerve that
made them cut the trees down.

There was a row of poplar trees on the site, giving a little
shade and lending a splash of green to the grey-brown outlook.
One day, when the engineer was away, they started cutting
them down and had felled half a dozen of them before he came
back and stopped them bringing down the rest. Then began
the argument about the trees. The engineer impounded the
felled trees, which, since they were now on government land,
he considered to be government property. The landowner
claimed them as his own. Eventually it was agreed that he
could have the timber if he planted the same number of new
ones. This he did, and having done so, applied for the logs,
but then it was necessary to wait and see whether the new sap-
lings—simply branches cut off a full-grown tree—would take.
Half a dozen grew and the rest died, so half a dozen logs were
handed over. The others were thereupon replanted, and every-
one was waiting to see whether they would take too, and release
the rest of the timber from the engineer's store.

With the camp at Rehneh offering shelter and hospitality, it
became the favourite jumping off point for climbing the great
mountain. The climb is more monotonous than difficult as it
consists of a straight slog up for about ten thousand feet. One
takes a guide, if one is wise, although a man like Ali, who works
at Rehneh, will try to get about six pounds for the two day trip.
But this includes a donkey, without which it is very hard work
carrying up on one's back the kit necessary for the overnight camp. One expects to reach the stone walls of the sangar, which is a convenient stopping place, in about five hours, and if one starts at dawn the next day, one can get up to the top and back to Rehneh before nightfall. The sangar is at about twelve thousand feet, at the top edge of the pasture slopes, which are extensively grazed in summer by the flocks of the tribesmen who live there in their tents. Above that there is a stretch of rock and scree, waterless in summer, before one reaches the snowline, the height of which varies according to the time of year.

At the snowline one begins to feel seriously the lack of oxygen at that height, and breath comes very short and fast. Breathing is made even more difficult by the sulphur fumes, which wreathe up from the crater and lay an unhealthy-looking yellow deposit all over the top of the cone. If one is lucky, one gets a magnificent view from the summit, right across Mazandaran to the sweep of the Caspian Sea, and to the south over the dusty plateau as far as the great salt sea, but if one is unlucky one's head stays in the clouds.

The sulphur fumes also emerge at one point far down the side of the mountain, no higher than the village of Rehneh. At Ab-e Garm, which means "hot water", five miles beyond Rehneh, a sulphurous spring, not much below boiling point, emerges from the bowels of the earth. Here a spa was set up by the late King Reza Shah, and a large hotel was constructed, but it was destroyed by an earthquake and never rebuilt.

The earthquake also destroyed the road, which now continues towards the Caspian only as a very rough track. A new road, I saw, was under construction in the actual gorge of the river, linking up several large villages, which are squeezed in between the river and the mountain precipices. It was a mighty undertaking to drive this road through to Amol on the coastal plain, and one might question the necessity of spending so much labour on making another route through the mountains in addition to those that already exist. But the fact is that it is a question of city politics again. The ever growing city of Teheran looks more and more to the north, towards the fertile Caspian provinces, for sustenance and recreation.

Villages like Ask, in the gorge a thousand feet below Rehneh, will be opened up incidentally by the road, and their old customs will start to change, but they will still cultivate their hillside patches of soil by hand as they are too small for the use of machinery, and they will still send their sheep and goats up
into the mountains to pasture in the summer. All the same one hopes that steel ploughshares will take the place of wooden ones, and that the women will eventually discard the veil and stand up as equals of the men, and that the old, obsessive taboos will be relaxed, such as even the priest being blindfolded at the ceremony of the marriage contract, lest someone outside the immediate family circle should catch a glimpse of the bride’s face.

Life in these villages is generally colourless and dull. All the religious festivals are concerned with martyrdom and sorrow, and the harsh hand of Islam seems to have crushed all the joyful occasions, the harvest festivals and the birthdays of the Saviour, such as grace the Christian and Hindu years. The only period of merry-making that the Persians have salvaged from this desperate puritanism is the two weeks of Nau Ruz, or New Year, which fall in springtime and have survived from pagan times.

Apart from Nau Ruz, weddings provide the principal diversion of the mountain villages. A week or so after the marriage contract is made, a score of the men of the village combine to give a feast at the bridegroom’s house, which lasts all night, with singing and perhaps a dancer to add to the entertainment. When the feast is well under way, they send presents of mulberries, sorbs, apples and raisins, and eggs dyed various colours, to the bride’s house. Next day the groom’s men do the rounds of the relatives’ houses, which include most of the village, since nearly all the inhabitants are inter-related. At these houses they are entertained with tea and sweets. The traditional sweet on these occasions is halva, a crumbly, dry, brown cake, which is rather like glucose to eat. Hence the opprobrious epithet of “halva-eater” for a mullah who is only interested in turning up at births, marriages and funerals for the sake of the good things to eat.

Meanwhile the women have been preparing the bride. But the mule she rides, which is decorated with drapery and coloured tassels and has its head died yellow with henna, is more adorned than she is. It is led by one of the bride’s brothers in a cavalcade of the bride’s relatives, which halts about a hundred yards from the groom’s house. In some villages the groom stands on the flat roof of his house waiting, and when the cavalcade halts, he throws a lump of sugar or a pomegranate at the bride. If it hits her or passes over her head, they say he will be successful in consummating the marriage. If it falls short, the omens are bad. The same afternoon the couple are
left to consummate the marriage. Success is signalled by the beating of a drum, after which they are left alone for three days, whilst their neighbours feed them.

The village is soon back to its normal routine. The men plod about in their big canvas shoes called give, with rubber soles as likely as not made of old motor-tyres, skull caps on their heads and blue canvas trousers. The women, in their baggy trousers, work in field and home, for "man is the lord of women." Food consists almost exclusively of millet and milk products. Meat is only eaten if a goat has to be killed because of accidental injury.

So life goes on, the monotony broken by occasional fights over property or water or dowries or wages, for everyone tries to squeeze his neighbour in the struggle for life. I brought a man down from the mountains who was a foreman on road construction work. With typical Persian cynicism he expected most of the work to be destroyed by winter rock falls and avalanches. "Monsieur," he said, using the French word which is the usual form of address to foreigners, "we build the road in the summer, and it gets destroyed in the winter. But it is a good thing. It gives people employment. The people here do not want the road to be finished. When it is finished they will be out of work and have to look for something else to do."

I took this man with me down to Rudehan. Dusk was falling, throwing deep shadows across the mountains. Then I understood what the lady with the gazelle's eyes had meant when she said that they were beautiful. The shadows brought them out into relief, gave them multifarious shapes, produced a multiplicity of contrasts of light and darkness, gave them deep tints of brown and red and black, and etched out the roundness of the hills and the stark angularity of the cliffs behind them.

Back on the main road the night drivers were out in their lorries, which were piled three times the height of their side walls with merchandise. They moaned and whined up and down the hills, throwing the fog of dust across the highway.
Teheran Day

The month of Mordād gave place to Shahrivar, August to September, and the coolness of autumn could be felt approaching. Still continuing my Persian studies, I moved to a house on the lower slopes of the mountains above Teheran, rising in the world from my rented room in the city to the suburbs of the well-to-do.

Shemiran and Tajrish, the two northern suburbs, have grown in step with the city. Beside the royal palace and the older houses, with their high, brown walls, there is the bright rash of a new housing estate, with houses built in the modern style, mostly of glass. Land values have rocketed in step with development.

These suburbs are connected with the city by two broad boulevards about seven miles long, which are already beginning to get rush-hour traffic congestion at the peak times. Consequently the question of building a third boulevard is continually mooted not only in the circles of municipal administration, but also as a government matter. Property thought to be on the probable line of the third Shemiran Road is bought and sold on speculation as the possibility of it materialising waxes and wanes.

I did not really get to know Teheran until I was outside it. One looked down the long slope from the north, and the city lay there, spread across the plain, emerging at last from the heat haze of summer—not domes and minarets in the centre, but office blocks and apartment houses, with flat roofed houses and bungalows stretching out around them, built in such numbers in the boom years that not a few of them were still unoccupied.

My first visit to the Teheran bazaar was on the first of Mehr, the traditional day on which the universities and schools start the academic year, and the day on which the Shah was visiting the University of Teheran. All along the Khiābān-e
Bouzärjomehri, the avenue which runs along the north side of the bazaar, hawkers were selling exercise books and pens, and inside the bazaar the first alley I came to was the street of the stationers. Their narrow booths were piled high with paper and school books, whilst more and more came in on the backs of porters, either in crates or draped over their backs in sheaves of double foolscap.

It was one of the stationers who hailed me—a Mr. Nazerian, formerly employed by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company at Abadan and Masjed-e Suleiman, and now a commission agent for a wholesaler. He walked with me down the long, uneven corridors of the bazaar, talking wistfully of his safe and secure past, but I had little time for his reminiscences being engrossed in the sights of the present time.

Inside the bazaar it was like another world. One approached the covered ways from the broad, asphalted avenue down a flight of steps and round the wide courtyard of the Masjed-e Shāh, the King’s Mosque built by Fath Ali Shah, the second of the Qajars. Before descending the steps of the mosque one passed a row of shops stacked full of brass and chromium samovars. One then walked under a half-domed gateway, ornamented with bright blue, enamelled stalactites, into a porch with a small covered court containing the traditional fountain for ablutions. Beyond this court was the northern eyvān, as the half-domed, shady recesses which are a typical feature of Persian architecture are called, and above the eyvān towered two blue and yellow minarets. In the main courtyard, which lay beyond, stood and sat a crowd of ahkonds, priests of the Shiite religion, who wear loose black gowns, and black or white turbans according to whether they are reckoned to be descendants of the Prophet or not.

The through way to the bazaar, which was thronged with people, was a narrow, covered passage, skirting the left-hand side of the courtyard. Coming into it out of the bright light of the open court was like going into a cave. The pathway under foot was virgin ground, and the light filtered down, through a haze of dust thrown up by people’s feet, from round, chimney-like apertures at the top of each one of a series of domes which made up the roof. The air was fruity, and scented with the compounded smells of all the goods on sale—soap and clothes and perfume and metal ware and crisp flapjacks and baked potatoes, piled in a pyramid on top of a brazier—and of men and women. The crowd of passers-by was dense,
but every now and then it would part, like water round a rock, to let some poor blind man shuffle steadily onwards, with his stick to the fore, calling out for alms.

The shopkeepers did not call out to one to look at their goods, as they do in India, but once one had gone to a particular shop, naturally the merchant tried to make a sale. I had been told that, due to a financial crisis, money in the bazaar at that time was extremely short, and so it would be a good time to buy, as they would sell cheaply for the sake of getting the cash. But it did not seem to work out that way, any more than the surplus of houses resulted in a reduction of rents, and I failed to drive any startling bargains.

In the street of the goldsmiths gold coins linked together in the form of necklaces and bracelets were in great profusion. Many of them were Persian coins of the reigns of the Qajars, some were Maria Theresa dollars of the old Austrian empire, some were Russian, and a large number were English sovereigns and half-sovereigns of varying dates up to the reign of King George V. I asked the price of these sovereigns, and from the replies I got I concluded that it varied between forty-five and sixty tomans each, according to age. At the average market rate of twenty-two tomans to the pound that would work out at from about two pounds to two pounds fourteen shillings each—considerably below the market price in London.

Why should I not buy some and get rich? I thought. And then the inevitable thought followed. Why has this not occurred to everyone? Are the coins genuine? Where is the snag? I inquired whence they came, and the answer I got was that they were bought from the National Bank. So the next thought followed: What prevents the National Bank selling them in London at a profit and solving some of its financial problems in doing so, instead of putting them into the hands of the bazaar merchants? In fact I had so many doubts that I hung on to my money. Perhaps I lost a chance of making money, or perhaps I just escaped being diddled. I still don't know which.

I came out of the bazaar back into the Khiābān-e Bouzārjomehri and dodged across it in amongst the taxis in order to get to the Meidān-e Ark and the entrance to the Kākh-e Golestān, the Rose Garden Palace, which was built by Agha Mohammed Shah and his nephew, Fath Ali Shah, at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Golestan Palace is reckoned old in Teheran, which
even as late as the latter half of the eighteenth century consisted of little more than the marble hunting lodge of Karim Khan Zand and a small walled town. The neighbouring town of Rey, known in antiquity as Rhages, which lies a few miles to the south, was far more venerable. But, as has happened so often in Persian history, the founder of a new dynasty wanted to found a new capital.

Agha Mohammed, the first of the Qajars, came from Gorgan, then known as Asterabad, and was at home in the north of the country, whereas the Zands had ruled from Shiraz in the south. The fresh verdure of the slopes of Shemiran, which were much more wooded then than they are today, and the proximity to his native land, attracted him to the place. He threw up an Ark, or citadel, and buried the head of Lotf Ali Khan, the last of the Zands, under the steps leading up to it, in order to give himself the pleasure of trampling on it whenever he went out. He then went on to plan the palace as an extension of the ark. Fath Ali Shah completed it.

Facing the entrance to the garden of the palace stands the great eyvān containing the throne of the Zands, which Agha Mohammed brought from Shiraz. It is a large dais of Yezd marble, supported about three feet off the ground by six male and female figures and two long-toothed demons. The three walls round it rise to a lofty dome, and are lavishly decorated with mirror-work, which gives out a bright, crystalline sparkle, contrasting with the prevailing shade. The many-faced mirrors are interspersed with blue, yellow and rose faience, which is continued on the walls on either side of the eyvān.

The enamelled faience work, called kāshi in Iran from its origin in Kashan, was mostly done by craftsmen from Isfahan, and continues right round the main garden to the right of the eyvān. It is nearly all floral decorative work, with small insets depicting landscapes, buildings, lions and other beasts, and the lion of the royal standard, with vertically upraised standard in its right paw.

The entrance hall of the palace, like the eyvān outside, scintillates with glass. The whole of its ceiling is covered with mirrors, together with ornamental stalactites hanging from it, and with great cut-glass chandeliers added to the scene, a fairy tale effect is created as the light is thrown in all directions by the innumerable planes of reflection. The main stairway divides at the top, leading left into a very large audience hall and right into the state banqueting hall. It was in these rooms that Queen Elizabeth II was entertained and received the
members of the British community during her state visit to Iran in 1961.

On entering, one's eyes are immediately drawn downwards. The floor itself is made up of small red tiles, in some places not very even, and is extremely commonplace. But it is only in corners that one can see the floor, since it is almost completely covered by hundreds of carpets of various shapes and sizes. From Tabriz and Isfahan, from Kerman and Nain, from the tents of the tribes and the workshops of the cities, the carpets have been gathered in. Most of them are in the traditional abstract patterns of the carpet-weavers, and according to the fineness of the weave, calculated by the number of knots to the square centimetre, and the beauty and fastness of the dyes, they range in value up to ten thousand pounds. In addition there are one or two oddities. There are a few, not very successful, imitations of Gobelins tapestries, with Arcadian scenes woven on to them, and there is one, some six feet by four feet, depicting a large family tree, with a scene of the Capitol at Washington and the President of the United States at its roots, and a portrait of Mohammed Ali Shah on the topmost branch. The various heads of government of other countries of the world, including the Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria, Queen Victoria of England, the Sultan of Turkey and the Mikado of Japan, are shown on the other boughs of the tree.

I asked my knowledgeable guide why everything stemmed from Washington. Was it the fountain-head of progress and the modern world? No, he said. It was farthest away. The tree worked from far to near, from America and the Far East, through Europe to the Middle East, and home to Iran, with the male members of the Qajar family along the top fringe.

The audience hall, when not used for state occasions, is a kind of museum. In the place of honour at the far end is a colossal bed, encrusted with precious stones, which was made in Isfahan for the marriage of Fath Ali Shah. One stares in wonder at its size and magnificence, but formerly one's attention was always drawn away to the left, because there stood the famous throne encrusted with the gems which Nadir Shah looted from Delhi when he ransacked the city in 1739. It was removed for greater security to the vaults of the National Bank, the Bānk-e Melli, in Firdowsi Avenue, but one is still allowed to see it, together with the crown jewels, by arrangement.
TEHERAN DAY

In the alcoves of the rest of the audience hall are displayed the various presents which the Qajars received during their hundred and thirty years of rule. They range from Sévres china, the gift of Napoleon to Fath Ali Shah, to carved ivory from India; from engraved clam shells, encrusted with semi-precious stones, from Italy to Chinese porcelain; from two huge blue vases from Russia to a clock from Benson's of London and a bronze statue of Fath Ali Shah from Vienna. Amongst many other objects there is a model submarine from France, and a clock, with a ballet dancer inside it, which does not work.

These gifts testify to the rivalry of the great powers over the years in gaining the attention of the Persian monarchs and winning influence over them. This rivalry preserved Iran's independence through the centuries, until the two chief rivals in modern times, Russia and Great Britain, in temporary alliance, divided the country between them for the duration of the Second German War. I was interested to note that the more recent gifts from Britain—a pair of large golden goblets from King George V for the coronation of Ahmad Shah, the last of the Qajars, and a similar pair for the coronation of Reza Shah, the first of the Pahlevis—were separately and conspicuously displayed in the banqueting hall.

Beyond these principal halls lie a series of more intimate rooms, called the Kāh-e Javāher, or Jewel Palace. They are used as residential accommodation for state visitors, and were occupied by the Queen during her visit. They also are thickly carpeted, but the furniture, from France, is modern and the décor simpler. The only curiosity I saw in these rooms was a large painting on silk of Ali, the first Imam, but it was standing on the ground under a dust sheet and did not seem to belong.

From these rooms I descended to the waiting room, where logically I should have started. The walls were studded with paintings by modern Iranian artists. Pride of place was occupied by portraits of the Shah and of his third consort, Queen Fara Diba. Other paintings, though modern, depicted traditional country scenes, with people in the old style garb—the women in purdah and the men wearing tall, elongated skull caps. Shemiran was shown as it used to be—a small hamlet with nomad tents beside it—and there was a Caspian landscape, much greener than it was when I saw it on my way to Bandar Pahlevi.

The Golestan Palace, having been built in the early days of
Teheran's expansion, is very central. Ten minutes' walk to the north of it brought me to the Meidan-e Sepah, or Army Square, which is usually reckoned to be the centre of the capital. Skirting it to the north are the big office blocks of the General Post Office and the government ministries, with one or two shady avenues amongst them, which I found a relief from the hot turmoil of the main thoroughfares. One of them is entered by an ornate gateway, with three arches, on which one can see pictures of old time soldiers in long puttees, and maxim guns and piles of cannon-balls. Above it there is a turreted upper chamber, where the band used to play, and under its arches sit letter-writers penning epistles for the illiterate.

Three hundred yards westwards along the Khivābān-e Sepah, close to where it meets the Khivābān-e Qavam Saltaneh, lies the archaeological museum, which is a haven from the general hubbub as well as being the home of a very impressive collection of exhibits. Entering through the shady eyvān of this well-kept museum, one is immediately transported back five thousand years from the mushroom city to the earliest antiquity of the country, before the Qajars, before Islam, even before Zoroaster and Persepolis. Pottery and beads dug out of the ground at Susa and Tel Bakun in the plains of Mesopotamia, at Rey near Teheran, at Tepe Giyan near Hamadan and at Tepe Siyalk near Kashan, date back to three or four thousand years before Christ. The cylinder seals range over another one and a half thousand years up to the period of the Achaemenides between 600 and 300 B.C.

These stone seals are certainly the most fascinating objects in the front part of the museum. They vary somewhat in size, but are mostly about half an inch in diameter and an inch and a half long. Within that tiny area detailed cuneiform symbols and figures and complete scenes have been incised. These are revealed in all their complexity in the impressions on the clay tablets, which have been placed beside the seals in the museum in order to show clearly what is on them. Such seals were in use for fifty generations from Babylonian and Assyrian times by kings, governors and merchants as signatures to decrees and contracts.

On the seals there are figures of animals standing up on their hind legs like men, of processions of animals and fishes, of winged beasts, and of governors sitting in judgement. The old Assyrian and the later Achaemenid ones are all so animated that they seem to dance before one's eyes. One, in fact, actually
shows a king placed between two lions that appear to be dancing on their hind legs.

The high point of this art is reached with the famous seal of Darius the Great, which shows a lion hunt. The king is standing up in his chariot, about to release an arrow. The lion faces him, rearing up on its hind legs and towering above the galloping horses. The charioteer leans forward over the reins, a dog runs below, and behind the chariot stands a palm tree, whilst above all floats the winged god Ahura Mazda. And all this is included in one tiny cylinder. But one must go to London to see it, since it lies in the British Museum. In Iran the nearest one can get to it is the reproduction of the seal on some of the ten rial notes.

On the further side of the central courtyard of the museum the works of the same King Darius are transformed from the minuscule into the gigantesque. In this part are displayed the great blocks of a staircase, capitals of pillars, inscribed tablets and the huge head of a king, which have been brought up from Persepolis. A fragment of the capital of one pillar is a lion’s paw two feet across and one and a half feet high, another pillar is capped by two long-horned bulls’ heads, reminiscent of the Minoan bulls of Crete.

On the first floor of the museum the Islamic antiquities are to be seen. The contrast with the ground floor exhibits is absolute. The human form, the representation of which was forbidden to strict Moslems, has completely disappeared, and so have practically all forms of life, including the vegetable world. In its place, since architectural space must needs be filled up somehow, are endless decorative motifs—whorls and squares and oblongs and triangles and arabesques—repeated over and over again, with Arabic writing in various styles fitted in amongst them.

In this mode there are to be seen examples, in both enamelled tile work and sculptured plaster, of mehrābs—the alcoves in the mosques that always point in the direction of Mecca—and of other parts of mosques, including a finely-carved wooden pulpit. These things all have their separate characteristics, appreciated by the connoisseur, but to the layman they have a monotonous sameness about them. On the same floor beautifully illuminated Korans are on show—huge books full of the kind of brush work that the mediaeval monks lavished on their bibles, and which survived in the Islamic world long after, with the advent of printing, it died out in Europe.
Leaving the archaeological museum, I went a short way up the Khiābān-e Qavam Saltaneh and called in at the National Library to take a glass of tea with Dr. Sharifi, the director of the Iranian Library Service. The National Library is a reference library only, and Dr. Sharifi was engaged in forming plans for starting a public library service by opening libraries in fifty different places in Iran, from which books might be borrowed and taken away for study.

I wished him well in his project and set out again, this time eastwards along the Khiābān-e Amir Kabir, which was full of small shops selling motor-tyres and spare parts for cars. Each shop specialized in a particular part. For instance, one had to go to one shop for springs, to another for batteries, another for lights, another for dynamos, and so on. At the next round point I turned left into the Khiābān-e Modāres, past rows of barrow boys with peaches and pomegranates for sale, to get to the Masjed-e Sepahsalar—the Mosque of the Commander-in-Chief.

Like most of the other historical buildings in Teheran, this mosque was built in the nineteenth century. It is the achievement of Hajji Hussein Khan Sepahsalar, the Vizier of Nasser-ud-din Shah, and consists of a large shady courtyard, surrounded by a double storied arcade with eyvāns on the four sides. The eyvān on the western side, being the main entrance is surmounted by two minarets, whilst the southern one, facing in the direction of Mecca, extends into the domed hall of prayer and is flanked by four minarets.

The courtyard, when I visited it, had about it the air of a university quadrangle. Mojtaḥeds, the senior clergy of Islam, and ahkondis were going quietly here and there, a middle-aged man was pacing up and down reciting to himself, and young men were sitting peacefully in the alcoves of the arcades, some with books in their hands.

I sat down too. I looked up at the minarets and the big eyvān on the southern side, and the bright blue and yellow of the decoration seemed a perfect blend between earth and sky. Without a single life-form in it, it was completely abstract—the perfection of the protestant’s protest against idolaters. And the meaning of the mosque came to me there, as I thought back to the museum and to the human and animal, and half-human and half-animal pre-Islamic world on the ground floor contrasting with the world of Islam on the first floor. It was the abstraction of religion from the body that it stood for. It was Mohammed destroying the idols of Allat and Alozza and Manah and
the other gods and goddesses of Arabia in the Kaaba at Mecca. The body was nothing, the mind was everything.

I stayed for a short while in this abstraction, and then I left the mosque to plunge back into the human sea, into the tanāzā'ē baqā, as the Persians call the struggle of life. Next to the mosque there was an organization that had, for the time being, lost the struggle. The closed gates, leading to the gardens and assembly hall of the Majles, showed that the Iranian parliament was indefinitely prorogued.

From the year 1906, when the constitution was promulgated, to the present day, the Majles has had its ups and downs. When it was first formed, it was thought to be quite advanced by other peoples of the East. Indians studying in England formed Majles clubs to agitate for similar parliaments in their own country. But ever since then the conflict between King and Parliament has waxed and waned, and the best interests of the state have by no means always been on the side of parliament. By lavish and often dishonest squandering of money, the parliament of 1960 brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy. The Shah intervened, closed the gates with the help of the Army, and took upon himself direct rule through his appointed ministers. That was the position when I looked across the Meidān-e Behārestān at the gateway flanked by its two lions, each with one forepaw resting on the orb of the world and the other raising a curved sword to the sky. How soon the agitation for new elections, assisted by sporadic long-range fire from the many students overseas, would bear fruit, I was not prepared to guess.

I returned to the north of the town via the Khiābān-e Shāh and Lalezar to Fisherabad. From there I went along the Khiābān-e Takht-e Jamshed, and then to Jalalieh, the race course and polo ground. It was near here that Mo lived with his wife, Fatima, in a new block of flats.

He answered the bell. "Welcome," he said. "You have not eaten?"

"Not this time," I answered. "You asked me what I would like to eat, so I knew you had asked me to lunch."

"Istanbul pulau."

"Exactly."

The flat had but three rooms, together with a kitchen and the usual offices. Nevertheless Mo would have found it difficult to keep it going on his army pay alone. He added to his income by giving lessons, which was possible since his military duties usually finished at midday. He was always rushing here
and there, always in a hurry. Whilst Fatima, a dark-eyed beauty from Damghan, served the lunch, he tried to teach me Farsi. Omid, the baby, frequently diverted us. After lunch, half dozing over plates of cool water melon and pistachio nuts, I read extracts from the newspapers Ettila‘at and Keyhān and tried to translate them for him. When the midday heat had passed, we sat out on the verandah discussing the news.

The verandah faced a row of brand-new apartment blocks. "The landlord is a millionaire," Mo said, "but he cannot even read or write. He has to get his brother to keep the accounts. He got some land for nothing and built on it, and then he made money and bought more land and so on. Now he has all this."

He wanted to take one of the empty flats for me, but the task of furnishing one and organizing it for living in seemed too great as we sat comfortably chatting. Mo had many plans for the future. We were to go to Damghan and stay with his wife’s family. We would shoot ibex and search for more of the ancient earthenware plates he had in his possession, that had recently been discovered during the digging of a new irrigation channel. For Damghan, on the main route to Kohrassan, has been inhabited more or less continuously since prehistoric times. And we would write English books for Iranians and compile a dictionary, and visit his family in Isfahan and go to Rey and other places.

"I am your sacrifice," Mo said. "My house is your house. Without compliments. I will arrange everything for you. You must see all you can of Iran. It is all beautiful."

His hospitality, indeed, matched up to his intentions. He made me a member of the family, and many a time I lunched with Mo and his wife and their relatives and friends. Sometimes it was pulau, sometimes fesenjān—chicken with a thick sauce made of ground walnuts and pomegranate juice, sometimes āsh and dolma, sometimes pot-luck. But I knew full well that he was far too occupied with his various activities and with his young family for all his ideas for the future to come to fruition. We sat on the verandah with our pistachio nuts and melon seeds and made our castles in the air.
Once again I left Teheran, planning one more trip into the mountains before winter closed in on them. I caught the train heading east, and found that they served no beer on it because its destination was the austere prohibition city of Mashhad. Into the darkness from Teheran it ran, keeping to the belt of irrigated land between the mountains and the desert, through Garmsar and Semnan and Damghan, and early in the morning it reached the station outside Shahrud.

Though dawn had not yet broken, the train was late by the timetable, and all the taxis had returned to the town. I stood shivering on the station steps, looking out across the ornamental pond at the gendarmerie post opposite, which was decorated for the King’s birthday, and at the rough road stretching straight out into emptiness.

I watched my companions of the night—a gentleman wearing palm beach shoes and his wife with a chador over her Western clothes—climb into a private car and drive away. Then I waited. I went back inside the station building for warmth and watched an aged sweeper trying to sweep the pistachio nut shells out of the indented lines of the concrete floor. And I waited. Fellow passengers told the sweeper not to kick up a dust, so he went out for a pot with a long spout, called an aftabe and meant for use in a lavatory, and scattered water. I still waited. A small bus arrived, but it filled up so quickly, with such a rush of the remaining passengers, that I was left out and went on waiting.

The sky was lightening and the Elburz range was hardening against it, when finally an old Chevrolet rattled up the road and came to a stop. I threw my luggage in and held my breath as the dying battery just managed to turn the starter over and get the engine going again. Then I was away, down a mile of road to the crossroads with the inevitable statue of Reza Shah in the centre of the roundabout, which was the heart of
town. I was dropped at the Saadat (Happiness) Hotel a hundred yards west of the roundabout, and stirred a youth lying on a table out of a deep sleep in order to persuade him to give me a room for an hour or two and breakfast.

My plan was to cross the Elburz range on foot from Shahrud, on the southern side, to Gorgan to the north, following the mule track about sixty-five miles long, which Curzon calls the wasp waist of Persia. At this point the whole of Northern Persia is narrowed down by the Caspian Sea to the north, and the desert of the Dasht-e Kavir to the south, until it is no more than the Elburz range with the skirts of the mountains on either side.

With his pre-air age strategy Curzon, then Member of Parliament and later Viceroy of India, rightly said that he who lay astride the seventy miles between Bandar Gaz, on the corner of the Caspian thirty miles west of Gorgan, and Shahrud could cut the head from the body, the head being the extensive and productive province of Khorassan, of which Mashhad is the capital, and the body being Teheran and points west and south. He was thinking of the Russians, less than fifty miles from Gorgan, and where the Russians were then, they still are today, the other side of the Atrek river in the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic.

After leaving my kit in the small, soiled room that the sleepy boy was eventually persuaded to find for me, I went out to seek local information. It seemed that the track marked on my twenty-five years old map as being a trade-route for camels and mules was, in fact, motorable for the first thirty miles as far as the village of Tash, so I walked amongst the cars and lorries to see what I could find.

As always on such occasions in Iran, a man soon came up to me and appointed himself, without permission, as my guide and dragoman. He wore a black leather jacket over a ragged shirt and trousers, and told me he had been working some time back as a labourer in the neighbourhood, laying a water pipeline from the mountains to the town. He had also been working on the oil pipeline from Teheran to Mashhad and showed me two of his old pay envelopes for eight toumans, about eight shillings, a day, and one of his foreman's for twenty toumans. The work was being done by a foreign contractor, so the pay envelopes were written out in English.

This man found another man, who told me to wait in a teahouse whilst he went to look for yet another man, who would drive me out there. So I sat in the tea house, which was at the
entrance to a yard full of buses, and the man in the leather jacket took his chance of pouring out his tale of woe.

I had heard his kind of tale before, and I was to hear it again—from steel erectors with no more steel to erect, from bricklayers paid off at the end of a job, from taxi drivers driving twelve hours a day, from out-of-work labourers dismissed at the end of a contract. “We want to work,” they say. “All we want is a chance to do an honest job.” They are the floating, landless unemployed, who gather where there is news of a new construction job, and, if they are lucky, get signed on—but only until the job is finished. Then they must search for

work again. If the Labour Exchanges, which are soon to be set up, can help them, they will be doing good work, because only a government service can give organized direction to them.

The man in the leather jacket stood whilst I sipped my tea. He wanted to know if I could help him. At least, he wanted my address, so that he could approach me at a later date. It availed nothing that I told him I was not an employer of labour, that I was only a visitor to Iran and unhappily could not help him. With the intensity of a man who must do something to support himself and his family, he refused to be told. His former employer had been a foreigner, and therefore, in his desperate
logic, another foreigner was the likeliest person to give him a chance. I tentatively offered him a tip, but it was refused. He wanted work, not charity. Meanwhile the second man returned with a driver and—a bus!

I had not expected to have to pay the hire of a bus, but at least it was a small one. As it was the King’s birthday, everyone was on holiday, and no one else was prepared to go. So I struck my bargain and gave the driver twenty toumans to get petrol, whilst I went to fetch my kit from the Happiness Hotel.

I was not sorry to leave the shabby courtyard, the half-eaten melon on the table of my room, left over from the previous occupant, and the thick-headed youth. The man in the leather jacket wanted to carry my baggage, not as a porter but because I was a guest in his country. He became insistent, and I had to tear my rucksack from him in order to carry it myself. “Please only give me your address,” he insisted again at the window of the bus. It was no good. I offered him money once more, but it was again refused. “All I want is work,” he repeated doggedly.

The bus drove off past the Security Headquarters, which was decorated with red, white and green streamers for the holiday, and ran out on to the Shahpasand road. As soon as it was out of the town, it turned left into the broad, dry bed of a river and jolted along a rough track, picking its way between the banks of stones. When I saw the roughness of the track, I decided that the sum I had paid for hire was not excessive and settled down to a two-hour ride.

Within a few minutes, however, I caught up three hikers with rucksacks on their backs, and gave them a lift on a hire-sharing basis. They had the latest style of rucksacks, manufactured in Iran on a combination of American and German models, but the rest of their gear was strictly everyday wear, except for the peaked cloth forage cap that one of them had on. He was a prominent member of the Gorgan Mountaineering Club, and had determined, with his two friends, to do exactly the same as I had planned to do. His friends were a schoolteacher and an employee of the Gorgan Telegraph Office, and the latter was still wearing his office suit, complete with collar and tie.

As we talked, the bus reached Mohammedabad, roughly half way to Tash, and we got out to drink tea in the tea house, whilst the driver filled his radiator with water. The edges of the stream running past the mud walled chāe khāne were still
Mosque of the Chahar Bagh Theological College, Isfahan
Shiraz: (above) the Mausoleum of Saadi and (below) the Tomb of Hafez
frozen, although it was three hours after sunrise. In October, at an altitude of seven thousand feet, some ice would remain all day, but the sun, shining out of a clear, cloudless sky, was warm, and the crystal clear visibility seemed to beckon us on to the hills around us. The track ran on towards the west, with a single wire telegraph line on one side of it, and the regular mounds of a fifteen mile long underground water channel, like bomb craters, on the other.

In spite of the new, piped water supply, men were still working on the qanāt, dropping down the narrow holes to the channel at the bottom, and crawling along to clear them of mud and stones, which were being hoisted out in goatskin bags on primitive wooden windlasses. How the qanāts remain firm in the dry, friable ground, without caving in, is a peculiarly Persian miracle, and the specialists who work in them are a miracle too, for without them many of the towns of Persia could never have existed.

After the tea break at Mohammedabad the bus went on to complete the second half of the journey, veering northwards after another eight miles to follow the main river valley. The bare hills were flecked here and there with small oases of cultivation—a field enclosed by a mud wall, a stand of poplars, an apple orchard—but the houses were few and far between, and every group of two or three had a separate name. Only when we reached Tash itself did we find a sizeable settlement. Divided into Upper Tash and Lower Tash, about a quarter of a mile apart, it consisted of two tightly packed groups of houses, comprising fifty or sixty in all, their flat, earthen roofs so close together that, from a distance, it looked as though they were solid ground.

We went to Upper Tash first, and stopped outside the butcher's shop, which was next to the mosque. As I waited to see what my friends would do, I watched the innards of a goat being discussed vociferously. It seemed early enough to start up the pass right away, since it was still only eleven o'clock, but there was the question of getting a mule and a muleteer. The villagers said we ought to wait till tomorrow, as the next halting point was eight hours away. This turned out to be untrue, but I was not to know at the time, and my three friends agreed that it was better to wait. So I attached myself to them, and presently the mountaineer announced that he was going to call on a friend in Lower Tash.

We had the bus turned round, and after a slight delay, during which the driver found a passenger for the return journey,
we rumbled back through the village, for the second time scaring the women washing clothes and pots in the stream. We came opposite Lower Tash and encountered a party that had walked a hundred yards up from the village to meet us. But the mountaineer told the driver to drive closer, so we went a quarter of a mile back to the road fork, churned through the stream, and felt our way up the narrow lane to the threshold. This was evidently the proper way to approach a village, for the driver made no objection. A party of half a dozen was waiting for us, amongst them a gentle, lean faced man, clad in drooping grey-blue jacket and trousers, with a brown felt bonnet on his head, who kissed the mountaineer on the cheeks and shook hands with the rest of us.

"Peace be on you," he said. "My house is your house. You have come well."

Bare foot boys took our kit and went ahead of us into the narrow village street. It was an alley about six feet wide, with a stream running down the middle of it and walls about six feet high on either side, unbroken by windows. They were monotonously brown mud walls, but here and there a whitewashed gateway broke their dullness.

It was into one of these that our host, Hajji Mohammed Ali, led us. Inside, there was a courtyard about twenty feet square. Two sides of it were built up into a ledge about two feet high, forming a roofed verandah on one side, but leading into proper rooms on the other. Leaving our boots on this ledge, we went into one of the rooms and squatted on the carpet, which filled it from wall to wall.

"Be seated, be seated," the Hajji said, and then left us for a moment to give orders to his household.

The room was whitewashed from top to bottom. It had no furniture in it, or windows, but at the end furthest from the door there were two enormous steel trunks, painted in patterns of mauve and green, which contained the family valuables. They had green, blue and red blankets and quilts piled on top of them, and above the blankets, in alcoves in the wall, there were two large samovars, one silver-coloured and the other golden, with a petromax lamp in a box, and a coloured picture of the King and Queen of Iran. On one of the side walls there hung a carpet, with mosques and minarets woven into it, and next to it there was a religious picture of Mashhad, inscribed with texts and an oleograph of the shrine and the open palm of a hand, with one eye in the middle of it.

The Hajji returned to do the honours. A cloth was laid on
the carpet in the middle of the room, and five flat cakes of bread, a yard round, were dealt out to us like gargantuan playing cards. To these were added saucers of powdery, salty cheese, and a brown delicacy made of cream, which tasted like dehydrated milk and was to be eaten with sugar.

The host's son brought in the samovar, and tea was served from china bowls, made in Japan, embossed with golden dragons. As we ate, conversation proceeded in the desultory way that good manners demanded. The mountaineer, after giving news of mutual acquaintances, asked what the game was like in the hills, and the Hajji told us that the wild goats were still plentiful and there were also a number of gazelle about, but they would not come really low down until there was more snow on the heights.

Then the telegraph man took up the talk, extolling the greatness of his native Khorassan for my benefit. "It was a poet of Khorassan who foretold the existence of the atom," he said. He called it the onsur-e jouhar, the element of the jewel. His meaning was the atom. We have had great men in our country—poets and philosophers who could see the real meaning of life. Even though some of them wrote in Arabic, they still belonged to Khorassan."

During this talk the schoolmaster said little, and the Hajji knelt by the door, concentrating on supplying us with food and tea, without inquiring into the purpose of my visit. Looking out of the room, I could see a small, square picture, framed in the doorway, of the kitchen on the opposite side of the courtyard, and a woman hiding behind her blue châdor as she went in and out. Above it were the flat village roofs, with magpies on them, poplar trees and the bare, brown mountain beyond.

Squatting cross-legged was becoming painful, and I was glad when, after an hour or so, it was decided that we should take a walk. In the courtyard every movement was controlled. If I wanted to go to the lavatory, which was through a low, tunnel-like entrance by the doorway, with a piece of sacking across it, a little girl went ahead with a long spouted pot of water and stood guard outside until I had finished. If I wanted something from my rucksack, I was not allowed to go for it myself, but the Hajji must get it for me.

In the village street one or two men stood about, some knitting the brown caps they wear, but the women all hid their faces or scuttled away at our approach. It made one feel uneasy, as if one really had got the evil eye or evil designs on them,
Centuries of Islam, and not only of Islam, but of invasions, insecurity, violence and rapine, have taught them to go through life cringing and hiding from the light, and now they have to learn from the cities and from the tribes how to stand upright again.

We walked downstream as far as the junction of the two valleys of the Gand Ab, where the remains of an old sangar, or stone strong point, were still visible on a pinnacle. It was a good position, dominating the two routes from the north—the Chilchilian Pass and the Vajhminu Pass, both about eight and a half thousand feet. Behind it the hillside was covered with dried-up herbal plants—aniseed, peppermint, asafoetida, lavender. In front lay the river, with its wide bed and small cultivated patches. A man was building up a terrace of stones to make a field, and another was slapping wet earth on a course of stones to repair a wall. Foolish to use the best soil on a wall, I thought, where a stone wall would be quite adequate. But they use the best soil on their houses too, and scrape at a few pitiful fields of wheat and barley, whereas efficient terracing, and irrigation from the streams, such as one sees in the Himalayas, would produce four-fold.

But little they care, so long as there is just enough to eat. They are not prolific. To use a woman to produce a few children is simply a duty. For the rest, they maintain their dignity with an infinite slow pride and courtesy, clinging to their Islamic traditions, to Ali and Imam Reza, and do honour to the stranger for the sake of that dignity.

Hajji Mohammed Ali was not the Headman of the village, who, we were told, did not play the prominent part he should, but was one of the principal farmers. We returned to him for a late lunch. More tea and more great slices of bread were served, but this time with an āsh, a soup made with meat dripping and milk, with diced greens and herbs added to it, and the main dish, liver kebāb, kept hot in folds of bread.

It was about half past three and already getting cold, so a brazier was brought in, with glowing wood embers in it, and we talked of the cold of winter, when the snow fills the courtyard and rises level with the roofs of the houses. “All the same, the people may be happiest in winter,” the Hajji said, “if they know they have enough food and fuel to last them.” But fuel was becoming a problem. One of the main activities of the men of Tash had been gathering wood from the northern side of the mountains, where it was plentiful, and bringing it over to the south. Now the government, in an attempt to check the serious
deforestation, had forbidden this trade. It looked as though wood was going to be scarce.

The talk in the Hajji's guest room went on for hours, wiling away time until nightfall, when we went off to a house in the lower part of the village for supper. It belonged to Hajji Ghulam Mohammed, the father of the local telegraph operator, and the introduction was through the telegraph man from Gorgan.

Hajji Ghulam Mohammed's guest room was larger than the other, with a profusion of carpets on the floor and a wood stove in a steel drum blazing away on one side. I relaxed, soporific, in the heat. It was like cooking oneself in the forest hut one had made at school. Hajji Ghulam's son, unlike Hajji Mohammed's, was a grown-up lad. He produced the samovar and tea, which was served in small glasses, Russian style, each in its own silver holder and standing on its own brass tray. Then he remained silent, whilst his smiling, genial father held court.

Hajji Ghulam said that he was an old man, and had to sit at home all day, whilst the others went out. But his ready flow of conversation and wit seemed to indicate that he did not feel sorry for himself. The dinner was of plain rice, with various *khoreshts*, or sauces, containing meat and vegetables lightly spiced—goat's meat, potatoes, egg plant, small plums—all mixed in various combinations. In addition, there were bowls of *mähst* and packs of flat bread.

Fresh breads were continually being brought in. One had hardly torn off and eaten a tenth of one before another, hot from the oven, was slapped down on top of it. It seemed that it was not the thing to do to plough through one before starting on the next. But what happened to the mutilated slices, I wondered. Were they given to the women to finish, or the animals, or both?

Before the evening was over, we were glad to stretch our legs out at the invitation of our host, my Persian city friends as much as myself. Without such an invitation, it would have been considered discourteous, but he realized that we were not used to sitting cross-legged, or on our haunches, for long periods at a time, and bade us be at our ease. Later he tried to persuade us all to sleep where we were, in the warmth of his stove, but we could not desert our previous host, so we split ourselves up between the two Hajjis. As a parting shot Hajji Ghulam tried to persuade the mountaineer, who was an official of the Department of Education, to provide a financial grant for the support of the *täziye* religious plays, but was met with
the universal, expected answer, "Alas, there is no money!"

Our host left an oil lamp burning for us all night and came to us at dawn, stirring us out of our blankets and producing a meal of bread, cheese and dried cream identical to the one with which he had greeted us. A pack-horse and a horseman were ready in the yard, and after gathering the two sections of our party together, we loaded our rucksacks and bedding on to the animal's back. There were two tough saddle bags, ornamented with borders of red and black carpet weave, which took some of it. The rest was piled on to the back of the patient beast and lashed down.

So we left the Hajji's house, unable, of course, to say goodbye to the women, but accompanied by the men to the outskirts of the village and the start of the trail. "You came well," they said. "A good journey. God protect you." We headed northwards up a gentle valley towards the steep pass at the end of it, and talked distances with our horseman. "A farsakh and a half to the top of the pass," he said. "Two farsakhs down the other side, and another farsakh and a half to the next pass, where we stop for the night."

He did not know how to reckon kilometres, but with the farsakh—a unit of measurement that goes back as far as Achaemenid times and is used by Xenophon in his "Persian Expedition"—he was perfectly familiar. Usually rendered as parasang in the classical texts, it is the distance covered by a man or a mule in one hour. On the plains it is greater than in the hills, where it should be reckoned as about three miles. It seemed we had about five hours to go.

The first place we reached after Tash was a small group of shepherds' summer shelters called Hajji Mohammed Khan, with a ruined caravansarai, which accounted for the place-name Sarai on my old map, made between the wars under the direction of the Surveyor General of India. It was the first of several staging points which attested to the importance of the route before the advent of motor transport. In those days, it was said, there would be an average of a hundred or more travellers a day, with their beasts of burden, but now there is hardly one, for although the route taken by the motor-road is three times as long, naturally it is the one used.

My quarter-inch survey map, though a noble effort in its time, abounded in inaccuracies both as to the sketched-in contour lines and the names of places and natural features. But coupled with our horseman's knowledge, it was a useful guide to the trail, and although a modern cadastral survey of Iran...
is now being undertaken, it was the latest thing available at the time.

At the top of the steep incline leading to the head of the Vajhminu Pass we found a light fall of snow, but the weather remained crystalline as we descended into the high valley of the Sotu Roba River, at this point about 7,500 feet above sea level. Two ranges of the Elburz now enclosed us—the Pirgerdeh Kuh to the north and the snow clad cliffs of the Shah Kuh, rising to twelve thousand feet, to the south. There were three small settlements in the five miles of this valley, which lay on our route. At the first, called Khuk, there was a man on his own, working on a water channel beside a large building containing cattle stalls, which was absolutely empty. At the second, which was a small caravansarai, with one traveller and his pack horse already there, we stopped to kill a goat.

It was the mountaineer’s idea to buy the goat, as his party had only brought bread and jam with them to eat. The keeper of the caravansarai brought him one, black and quite large, to look at, and he held its horns and bestrode it, feeling its flanks for the flesh on them, and glaring at it through his spectacles as if he knew what he was doing. It looked to me to be suspiciously docile, but none other was brought forward, so the bargaining began, and halted dead at forty toumans. The animal was then bled, slaughtered and skinned on the spot, and the meat was cut up into pieces small enough to be wrapped up in a cloth and transported. After this the lights were boiled up in an iron pot into what was meant to be a tasty midday meal.

All this took time, however, and it was about two in the afternoon when we went on down towards Jirin Birin, the third and biggest settlement. On the way we passed two of a series of conical watch towers, which had been gendarmerie posts in former days. Before we reached the village, our trail turned right and took us up steeply towards the next pass. There was no fear of missing the way, since the single wire telegraph line and the row of telegraph poles were permanent sign posts.

I talked to the telegraph man about this line, which he said was fifty years old and had, for many years, been the sole means of communication between Shahrud and Gorgan. Now all telephone traffic goes the long way round by the road, but telegrams are still sent by the single wire. I asked him how long it would take to sent a twelve word message. “About a minute,” he said. “I sent a telegram from Tabriz to Teheran,” I said, “and it took eighteen hours. They said it might take a long
time because it was a holiday." "That is impossible," he said. 
"There is no holiday in the telegraph office. They must have 
told you that, because they wished to conceal some technical 
fault." "Perhaps the telegraph boys were on holiday in 
are always open."

As we climbed higher, the telegraph man put his mackintosh 
on over his suit, and the schoolmaster retrieved his corduroy 
jack off the pack horse. The mountaineer, looking rather 
like a Japanese soldier in his peaked cloth cap and spectacles, 
plodded ahead in a pair of shoes with the backs bent down 
under his heels.

The next pass, which was not the main one and was not 
marked on the map, brought us to an open, gently sloping 
valley, now deserted, but showing signs of occupation by the 
shepherds and their flocks in summer. Though still sparse, 
trees were more numerous here, small and dried-up and aged-
looking, but giving a preliminary hint of the jungle on the 
other side. A long, gentle ascent took us northwards, whilst 
behind us the panorama of the snow covered north wall of the 
Shah Kuh opened out.

On our left we passed the disused caravansarai of Ribat-e 
Sefid, a substantial brick building of arches and domes, fallen 
into ruins and standing out in the emptiness. Another two 
miles beyond it we were marching up on to the whale back 
crest of the Quzluq Pass, and now we could see round the 
corner towards the northern flanks of the Pirgerdeh Kuh and 
the sudden transition from bare, dry uplands to dense forest. 
The two types of vegetation were divided, as if by a knife, by 
the crest ridge. As always at the end of the day, the ascent 
seemed longer than it ought to be. Qorban, our horseman, 
stopped to water his horse at a spring. The telegraph man 
began to sing and sag at the knees. I forced my heavy, rubber 
soled boots onwards, and was the first to reach the top.

The view in front of me was unforgettable. Heavily-wooded 
green hills fell away in front of me, tumbling steeply down, 
one below the other, from between 7,000 and 8,000 feet to the 
level of the sea. And between the hills, in the late afternoon 
light, lay the blue expanse of the sea itself—or so it seemed. 
I thought it was the sea, but in fact the eastern shore of the 
Caspian was too far to the west to be visible from that point, 
and what I was looking at was the open vastness of the Turkom-
man steppe, stretching as level as the sea itself into Turkmeni-
stan and the Russian territories beyond.
The horseman was the first to join me. A bitterly cold wind was blowing from the north, and he led us quickly down a few hundred yards to an adobe cottage, with a spring and a few fields of potatoes beside it. We called to the cottager, who came from inside—a loose-limbed, long-faced man—and offered us space on the outside veranda, where, he said, we could light a fire. The interior was already occupied by a shepherd, who was taking his flock down to the plains, and another man with three donkeys. It was a miserable dwelling, small and roughly finished, but being on the route, it was recognized, whether the cottager liked it or not, as a place of shelter, if not a tea house, and it had its own name—Dimulu.

It grew altogether too cold outside, so we crowded into the interior. We climbed up off the floor on to the platform built round the fireplace, and the local people made room for us to sit down, whilst we brewed up, using our own tea and sugar. "I don't think we shall sleep tonight," the telegraph man said. "We are dervishes. We will all stay awake in love and friendship. All is love!"

"Yā Ali, Yā Maulā!" the mountaineer exclaimed. Hail Ali. Hail the Master!

And so we sat there.

A shepherd boy retrieved his felt cloak from under me, so I replaced it with my sleeping bag to soothe my aching buttocks. The cottager lit up his hubble-bubble pipe and passed it round, but I was the only one besides himself and the shepherd who drew the sweetened smoke gurgling through the water into my mouth. The mountaineer tried, coughed and pushed it away.

I watched the cottager tending the wood fire, expert with the tongs, and I looked at his rude shelves, with their cooking pots and oil lamp and chopper and other utensils, as neatly arranged as the rough furniture allowed, though few in number. There was a pair of scales for measuring wood, meat and grain, and a haunch of a goat hanging from a hook on one of the rafters, and there were two sacks of flour. Apart from that, there was nothing, and yet the cottager had a certain grace of movement and politeness of speech and even refinement that was right above the coarseness of his surroundings. So had Qorban, the horseman, for that matter, who, unexpectedly, could read and write quite well, and whose conversation was fluent and spiced with wit. I watched these two together—the long faces and open eyes of the old Aryan breed—talking with infinite patience and infinite cynicism of the
affairs of their world. They seemed to be completely at ease with their poverty, even to love it as something that no one could take away from them, like a grown up girl still loving her first rag doll.

The mountaineer wanted his goat cut up, so the cloth with the meat in it was opened out on the floor between us. The meat was then hacked up into roasting steaks and stewing pieces, and the latter were put into a pot for stewing over the fire. The quantity was much too great, but the mountaineer would not listen to the cottager's advice, and went on filling the pot with chunk after chunk. "Your goat is tough and old," the cottager said, and laughed at him.

The hour of prayer had come. The cottager laid out his prayer mat, which was no more than a piece of thin cloth, and stood, hands on thighs, facing southwards towards the head of the pass. He raised his hands on each side of his face with the words "Alläh-o akbär!" God is great! He who had been granted least, prayed most. His hands went back to his thighs, and the recitation from the Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Koran, began. Bowing his head forward, he then dropped to his knees and kissed the ground with his head. Then he rose again, recited again — "Bismillâhi rrahmâni rrahim", in the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful, and dropped to his knees again, performing a second rakâh. My three companions took no notice. They went on talking and stretched out their legs into the space he had left vacant. "All is love!" said the telegraph man. "Yâ Ali, Yâ Maulâ!" said the mountaineer.

The goat's meat was too tough, so we ate corned beef. I climbed into my sleeping bag, alongside two boys who were staying with the cottager and had buried their heads under an old piece of carpeting. But I slept badly, and was up before the rest, ready to go before they had stirred.

The cottager came from the other side of his house. "Because of you lot we shivered all night!" he said. But he laughed it off, raked into the embers of the fire, poured his dough into the space he had made, and brushed embers over it to bake his unleavened bread. The others got up slowly, one by one, for a breakfast of bread and jam and tea. I went outside and was met by the dog of the house, a cowed creature that was shivering and pleased to lick my boots. And now I saw the stepp below more clearly, together with the range of hills to the north-east, which is the Russian border north of Bujnurd.

We got away at about eight, crunching the frozen ground
with our boots and shoes. Dropping down steeply through the forest and over patches of alpine pasture, we met no one until, after one and a half hours, we came to Quzluq, the place from which the pass takes its name. Here there was another cottage that did service as a tea house, but it was no better than the one where we had spent the night. A long building, half underground and covered with turf and small bushes, was the former caravansarai. Its entrance was blocked with brushwood, but inside, amongst the goat-droppings, it was unexpectedly spacious. There was a row of six domes, each with a hole in the top to let the smoke out, and side recesses blackened by the smoke of countless camp fires, now all empty.

The place was called Didgah on the map, which means the look-out point, and it overlooked a steep cliff falling away to the river below. With its pastures and forests it would have been a prosperous farmstead in Switzerland or Sweden, but here, in the Elburz, it was primitive and poor, the legacy of centuries of insecurity—centuries during which to produce anything worth having was to invite someone to seize it from you.

We ate medlars and small, purple plums, and a small, black, rather hard berry called valik from the trees beside the trail, and went on down the zigzag descent. With inefficient forestry methods, trees had been felled by burning and their trunks left to rot, whilst the smaller, more transportable branches were taken for firewood and the timbers of huts. Down in the river valley I saw a black boar and sow, with a family of four, rustling and rooting through the leaves, but there were no signs of the leopards and bears, which are still to be met with, nor of the Hyrcanian tiger, which is almost extinct.

"Hame eshq ast! All is love!" the telegraph man chanted. "Yā Ali, Yā Maulā!" We stopped by a meadow and lit a fire to make kebab from the rest of the goat’s meat. Skewering the pieces of meat on thin sticks, we laid them across two branches over hot embers, which we fanned with leaves. For an old goat it tasted fine, though the Persians complained that it was tough. As we ate, a family moved past, gipsy-like, with their donkeys and babies and pots and pans, migrating to winter quarters. We lazed over our kebab too long, then set out to complete the journey. "What time does the sun set here?" asked Qorban, the horseman. "Six o’clock," I said. "And what time is it now?" "Two thirty." "So we have three and a half hours."

He set a good pace, bringing us out of the valley on to the
slopes above the steppe, which were covered with fields of cotton and tobacco. But we still had a long way to go, if we were to reach Gorgan that night. The mountains receded behind us, and the country opened out. A white turbanned horseman rode past; and another, with his legs doing the splits over two bulging sacks of cotton, directed us onwards. I kept up with Qorban, who was watching the sun and spoke to me reproachfully when it set at half-past five instead of six. By then, however, we could see the dust clouds from the traffic on the road in the distance and hear the faint buzz of motors. By the time we reached it, we had covered twenty miles, and it was dark.

We settled up with Qorban on the roadside, giving him forty toumans for the two day's travel with a horse and the return journey. He was satisfied with this and wrote his address down in a very fair hand, which he must have learnt at some village maktab, then went off to the nearby village of Faizabad to stable his horse and sleep the night. We city gentlemen picked up a passing taxi and drove into Gorgan.

The next day I saw the town. It's long main street was full of contrasts. There were the turbanned Baluchis, itinerant labour for the cotton plantations, squatting with their families in odd corners, the Iranians with their women behind the veil, and the Turkomans off the steppe, erect, hard-faced, high-cheeked men, wearing huge shaggy hats of black lamb's wool, and their women in bright red flounced skirts, with trousers and cloth boots under them and faces open to the sky.

The Turkomans are the descendants of the hordes of Jenghiz Khan, which sacked the great Persian cities of Central Asia—Bokhara, Samarkand, Balkh and Merv. The once famous cities mouldered on through the centuries, becoming separate Khanates, surrounded by the Turkoman nomads, who never gave up their merciless, predatory way of life until the annexation of their northern territories by the Russians in the early twentieth century and the pacification of the tribes living within the Persian sphere of influence in the Iranian Army’s Turkoman campaign of 1925. Finally the Turkomans were tamed and made to surrender the men they had enslaved and the women they had carried off. But many of the women, having borne children for their Turkoman masters, were reluctant to return to the veiled seclusion of their Persian homes.

Apart from the Turkomans the most fascinating thing about Gorgan, which has been shaken too frequently by earthquakes for any ancient monuments to remain, is its roofs. Because of the heavy rainfall, the roofs of the houses are not flat, as in most
Persian towns, but gabled. They are made of rounded tiles, like upturned gutters, that break the sunlight up and give them depth and shape. And on the roofs the cats disport themselves, crouching, leaping at each other, or simply dozing motionless in the sun.

I boarded the train that evening for Teheran at the new, unfinished station, for the railway had only recently been extended to Gorgan from Bandar Gaz. In my compartment there was a farmer, with his wife, sister and son. Like most of the men on the Turkoman Sahra, he was a man with modern ideas, and he had mechanized his wheat farm with a tractor before he had even built himself a house. His wife, who was going to Teheran for treatment for her eyes, was out of the veil, but his sister, whom he apologetically described as a very pious woman, was completely covered from head to foot in a blue chador, under which she hid like some sort of animal that shuns the light.

As the train jogged along the shore of the Caspian between Bandar Gaz and Shahi, the farmer tried to press me to share his meal of pulau and kuku. But there was scarcely enough for all of us, and more important, if I remained, how was the pious sister going to eat? So I went to the dining car, which unlike the one on the Mashhad train, served beer.

The train began to climb up into the mountain range that I had crossed on foot, running on one of the most famous railway lines in the world. It is the northern section of the Trans Iranian Railway, the Sar tā sar-e keshvar, or "Head to head of country" Railway, that Iran's strong man, Reza Shah, caused to be constructed in the nineteen thirties. Ten years a-building, with work held up in winter by snow and ice, it was driven over the mountains by German engineers.

The difficulties were formidable. From Shirgah, in the valley of the Talar River, to the crest of the Elburz at the Gaduk Pass is thirty miles, but the rise is over six thousand feet, giving an average theoretical gradient of one in twenty-six. So the engineers, in order to lessen the gradient to one in thirty-six, had to increase the distance artificially by adding an extra nineteen miles. They did this by cutting tunnels into the mountainside in the shape of spirals, so that although the line emerged from the tunnel only a short distance beyond the point at which it entered the mountain, it would nevertheless be considerably higher up. There are no fewer than eleven of these spiral tunnels, and one of them is actually in the form of a figure-of-eight. In some places the line doubles right back
down the side of the valley to gain height, and rises zigzag fashion; and in three parts of the valley it can be seen at three different levels on the same section of mountainside. Altogether, in the twenty-two miles, as the crow flies, between Pol-e Sefid and Gaduk there are sixty-nine tunnels, with a total length of twelve miles.

It is sad to have to relate that one engineer, who had already faced more difficulties than most men ever encounter, committed suicide after finding that one of his tunnels, excavated as usual from both ends, did not meet in the middle. A monument to him, in the form of an obelisk, is to be seen on the roadside below Vresk, where a spectacular bridge spans the gorge.

South of the Gaduk Pass the boxwood forests and the jungles of the Caspian seem far away. We are back in the desert, in a strange, arid, jumbled moon-like land, with mountain peaks pointing, like fingers, at the sky. The line passes through the upland town of Firuzkuh and then descends to Garmsar, where it joins the line from Mashhad and Shahrud. But the drop in the descent to the plateau is only half the rise in the ascent from the sea.

We were already passing through the south-eastern approaches to Teheran when it grew light. We skirted Veramin, with its Mongol tower and cultivated fields, and Shahr Rey, with its domes and minarets grey in the light of dawn. A short while later I was back where I had started from.
The Oasis Cities

A few days after my return from Gorgan I was on the road again, this time heading south from Teheran for Kashan, the oasis town on the edge of the desert heart.

Many years ago, in India, I bought two Kashan carpets. They were a pair, with an intricate pattern of red, yellow and green on them, and ever since then I had wondered what Kashan was like. So when the opportunity arose to visit it with a Persian lady possessed of a deep knowledge of and love for her country, it was not to be missed. The road lay past Shahri Rey again, where the pilgrims come to worship at the tombs of three saints, two of whom rest under blue domes, and the third, and most important, under a golden one. This latter is Hazrat-e Abdul Azim, the teacher of the third Imam, Imam Hussein, who died at Karbala in Iraq.

Mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, which takes place in the month of Moharram, is the most important festival of the religious year in Persia, and it was natural that his teacher should receive high veneration also. But at this point it is necessary to say something about this unique religion of Iran, which at the same time as making the Persians part of the Islamic world, keeps them separate from it.

The Shia religion started as a separate sect of Islam when disputes arose as to the succession to the Caliphate. The Caliphs were the successors to Mohammed as spiritual and temporal leaders of the Moslem world. The first three—Omar, Abu Bekr and Othman—though all related to Mohammed by marriage, were not of his flesh and blood. Indeed, the third belonged to the family of Umayyids, who had been in bitter opposition to the Prophet before he came to power. The fourth Caliph was Ali, who was, in fact, a blood relation since, as well as being married to his daughter, Fatima, he was his cousin.

Ali, who is regarded as the last of the genuine Caliphs by orthodox Moslems, was murdered, and his son, Hassan, resigned his claim to the Caliphate. However, the Shites
believe that it is through Ali and his legitimate descendants that the divine power of the Prophet was transmitted, and they do not venerate the first three Caliphs. These descendants, twelve in number, they call the Imamsthe pontiffs or great religious leaders. 

Ali died in the year 661 and was buried at Najif in Iraq, and his son, Hassan, whom the Shiites say was poisoned, was buried at Medina. He had four hundred wives, but all of them were what the Persians call sighe, or temporary wives, so after him, his brother, Hussein, is regarded as the third Imam. 

Hussein revolted against Yazid, the Caliph at the time, but his small force, no more than two hundred strong, was surrounded at Karbala, fifty miles south of Baghdad, by vastly superior numbers, and refusing to surrender, was hacked to pieces. The head of the Prophet's grandson was cut off and sent to Damascus, but was returned later to rejoin his body at Karbala. The "Return of the Head" is the subject of the passion plays, which are performed forty days after the Ashura, or Day of the Massacre. 

Zein-ul-Abaddin, the only son of Hussein to survive the massacre, is reckoned to be the fourth Imam, and is buried at Medina. The Shiites say that Hussein took a Persian princess, daughter of the last of the Sassanian kings, to wife, and that Zein-ul-Abaddin was the fruit of this marriage, so that the subsequent Imams were actually half Persian. Of the next seven Imams four were buried at Medina and two at Samara, north of Baghdad, but the eighth Imam was buried in Iran, at the place now called simply Mashhad, "the place of pilgrimage."

The story goes that the Caliph Harun-al-Rashid, of Arabian Nights fame, went to Tus, the small town near Mashhad where the poet, Firdowsi, was born. Here he summoned Ali Reza to him and made him his successor. But then he changed his mind and poisoned him. Later he repented and decreed that he, himself, should be buried at the feet of the poisoned Imam. Thus Mashhad, with the tomb of the only one of the twelve Imams to be buried within the borders of the country, is the holiest place in Iran, and the pilgrims stamp on the grave of the Caliph and shout "Curses on Harun and on his son!"

The second holiest place in Iran is Qum, where the sanctuary of Hazrat-e Ma'sume, the daughter of the seventh Imam, is situated. Rey and Shiraz come next after these two in holiness, Shiraz being the city of Hazrat-e Shah Cheragh, the King of
Persepolis — ritual slaying of the beast

Persepolis — frieze of men wearing Median hats
Light, who was the son of the seventh Imam. Only the twelfth Imam now remains to be described. He is the living Imam, Mohammed al-Mahdi, who disappeared down a well at Samara in the year 880, and will return again as the Mahdi, the Guided One, to restore righteousness to the world.

The tombs of the Imams are, of course, the most venerated places of pilgrimage in the Shia world, and many make the pilgrimage to Karbala and Najif in Iraq as well as to Mashhad. At Medina the Shia sanctuaries were destroyed by the Saudi Arabians, but funds are now being raised for rebuilding them. Apart from these, however, there are countless tombs of imamzades, or sons of the Imams, scattered over the whole country. They range from the magnificent Shahzade Hussein at Qazvin to the humble building, with its whitewashed cone, on the road to Demavend. They are the tombs of holy men, not necessarily literally descended from the Imams.

We left the golden dome of Hazrat-e Abdul Azim and the oblong tower of the mausoleum of Reza Shah behind us and set out across the desert to cover the ninety miles to Qum. The road crossed a series of enclosed plains, divided by high ridges, through which it wound in unexpectedly sharp loops. The land was so treeless that when, at Aliabad, we saw a small grove of apricot trees behind the khan, or caravansarai, we were enchanted. Below it stretched the barren grey flats of the salt lake, which the road skirted dead straight for ten miles.

At Qum we crossed the dried up river and passed alongside the walls of the great sanctuary. Its history is as follows. Hazrat-e Ma'sume, whose birth name was Fatima, was on her way to visit her brother, Imam Reza, at Tus when she fell ill and died at Saveh, thirty miles north-west of Qum. Her body was brought to the town, which was already a colony of Shia Arabs, who had fled there to escape the persecution of the Umayyids. This was in 816. It was not until the seventeenth century, however, that Qum became a centre of pilgrimage, after Shah Abbas had built the magnificent shrine over Fatima's tomb. His three successors were all buried there.

Fatima's shrine, like the other three great shrines of Persia, is entitled to a golden dome, but when we passed it we saw that the two domes and five minarets had all been stripped down to the brick for complete renewal. This was an immense and costly work, and indicated the scale of the funds of which the leaders of the Shia religion are able to dispose. Sole arbiter of the disbursement of this money is the Ayatulla Ozma, whose decree says, "These are my orders and advice and you must
obey them." Ayatullah Brujerdi, who died at Qum in 1961, received thirty million tumans a year in tithes, but left a public debt of nearly ten million against twenty-five tumans of personal cash. Subsequently there was argument as to who should be his successor. The Afghan and Indian Shiites were for Ayatullah Hojjat who presided at Qum, whilst the Persians, paradoxically, favoured Ayatullah Hakim at Karbala.

The shrine is jealously guarded against all outsiders, and this was a source of sorrow to Leila, who regretted such exclusiveness, which seemed to be unnecessarily severe in comparison with the freedom of entry into the mosques in Turkey. But Qum has always had a reputation for fanaticism, and even when we only got out of the car to buy a tin of the local speciality—a round sweet wafer biscuit called a sohan—I felt many pairs of eyes turned on us suspiciously.

The next holy place we came to, however, we had no difficulty at all in entering. There was nobody there to turn us away. For over an hour we had been pounding down the broad, empty dirt road, between the jagged grey mountains on the right and the desert plain on the left. Only the telegraph wires and the railway, which is eventually, at some time in the distant future, to link up with the railhead in Pakistan, kept us company. We passed small oases of cultivation, where the streams ran down from the mountains, and a day’s march by camel out of Qum, we came upon a fine caravansarai of the time of Shah Abbas, its arcades occupied only by a miserable woman with two sickly boys and a baby swinging in a hammock, and her goats munching leaves in the courtyard.

Then, a few miles short of Kashan, we saw the building, standing within its mud-wall enclosure on the right of the road, with a conical blue tower rising above, looking large and imposing in its utter isolation. We went across the empty fields and entered the porchway. In front of us it was raised on a plinth half the height of a man, with a double tier of arches providing an imposing façade to the central core.

At first there seemed to be no easy way up, so we circled round to the right, looking up at the walls, which were patched extensively with daubs of straw-bound mud. Soon we found we were not alone. The mud plaster had been used as a nesting ground for hundreds of hornets which were buzzing busily about above us and looked ready to take a closer interest in us at any moment.

The back door was locked, but coming round to the front again, we found some steps close up to the wall of the mauso-
leum itself, which gave access, between the outer arches, to the main doorway. The wooden door was bolted, but not locked, so we were easily able to enter and stood facing the red cloth, under which lay the sarcophagus of the saint.

The interior was bare and plain and contained nothing but a couple of oil lamps. But to the left there was a room in which were three lesser graves. Between two of them lay a pile of rotting books. Some of them were in Arabic and some in Farsi, and as far as we could tell, except for some pages of a modern school geometry book near the top, they dealt with religious matters. Those at the bottom had decayed away into a pile of brown fragments like autumn leaves, and the rest were in various stages of disintegration.

"We should take them from here," Leila said. "They're obviously not being looked after. They may be valuable and old, and ought to be looked at by experts."

I picked up the one that was in best condition, handed it to her and thumbed over others. I took a foolscap sized hand written volume which, although partly tattered, was still readable in the main, and we started to leave the room. But since there was no one there, even though it was Friday, to ask about the books, we were scared of looking like thieves if anyone ran into us on our way out. There was a small bundle in the room, and a lamp, which proved that it was occupied at some austere anchorite-like level of life, and I think it was the geometry book that really made me feel I was taking someone else's property, and throw my manuscript back to join the dead, autumnal leaves a few years hence. I told Leila to hide her book under the jersey she was carrying over her arm, but by doing so I convinced her that she, too, was being a thief, and she threw her book back on top of mine.

We walked away from the imamzade empty-handed but conscience-free. Some will say we were being too sentimental, for our experience had been a living illustration of the discussion we had had earlier on. "If all the art and literary treasures taken out of Persia by the French and British were returned to us," Leila had said, "it would amount to more than we have in our own museums today. But if they hadn't been taken out of our country, I'm afraid not many of them would be left now."

"And now that your people have the means to look after them, you would like to have them returned?"

"I think so," she had said. "You may be honoured to have been their guardians."
And here were these books not being looked after at all. Why should I not join the ranks of some of our honoured orientalists and at least tear out a page or two? But no. If there had been someone to ask, it might have been different. But here there was no one but the saint in his tomb to see what we were doing.

We turned to look from a distance at the bright blue cone above and the tiers of arches in front. The central core appeared to be quite ancient, dating back to Seljuk times, the arches possibly added more recently. Later we asked at a tea house who the saint was. But we asked the wrong man. Grinning maliciously, with his legs tucked up under him, he said, "How do I know? I expect some animal died and they turned him into a saint just to amuse themselves."

So we left the tomb of the unknown Imam and went on to Kashan. The distant view was of a city of low, mud-brick houses, half hidden amongst the trees of their gardens, with thousands of small domes over them like the multiplicity of breasts of some nature goddess, symbolizing the fertility of the oasis.

Kashan is full of legends. It was said to have been founded by one of the sons of Feridun. According to Moslem tradition it was the home of the Magi, the three Wise Men of the Gospel, Balthasar, Kaspar and Melchior, who were priests of the Zoroastrian religion and journeyed across the Zagros and the Syrian Desert to Jerusalem, following the star. Later, the building of the town was attributed to Zobeida, wife of Harun al-Rashid. Kashan was destroyed in 1221 by the Mongol onslaught, but returned to importance under Shah Ismail and the Safavid kings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when it became famous for the manufacture of the enamelled tiles called kāshī. Shah Abbas the Great loved Kashan above all his dominions. He spent his happiest days in the pleasure garden he had created on the skirt of the mountains, and he was buried there in the heart of the alleys of the town.

The garden is called the Bāgh-e Fin, or alternatively simply the Bāgh-e Shāh or King’s Garden, and lies to the west of the town, below a magnificent broad jet of crystal clear water, which spurts out of the bowels of the barren hillside. The water flows right through the garden, and through the pavilion in the middle of it, in marble basins with fountains at intervals. Beds of begonias and petunias, flanked by rows of matured old poplar trees, giving deep and satisfying shade, complete the scene.
We sat eating our pears and grapes under these trees, and I still marvelled at the magical effect that any sort of decent garden has in the ragged wilderness of the Persian countryside. The accent on formality in lay-out serves to accentuate the contrast between the poverty of unaided nature and the richness of the artificial.

The pavilion was a later nineteenth century addition, the original follies having disappeared. It, too, was gradually falling into disrepair, and the frescoes on the walls of the arches had mostly been whitewashed over. As for the little museum, it was so poor that it had to be eked out with such irrelevant matter as photographs of the Tomb of Cyrus and Takht-e Jamshid five hundred miles away.

Yet a little raggedness in a garden matters little in comparison with the vast raggedness outside. We would have been happy to wile away the day there, talking of the black scorpions of Kashan, and the Magi and Shah Abbas, if our thirst for seeing things had not called us onwards. As we left, I tried to buy two of the entrance tickets that the man on the gate had laid out on a table, but with an infinitely courteous smile, he turned my offer down. “It is really not necessary to buy any ticket,” he said. “We are glad you bring us honour here.”

We left Shah Abbas’ garden to look for his tomb. On the right, we saw the Imamzade of Baba Shoja-ud-din, which had a similar blue conical tower to the one out on the open road, but was a much better kept and more imposing edifice, with a rose garden in front of it. Cotton pickers were at work beside the imamzade, which reminded me of a joke about the agricultural prosperity of Kashan. A Kashani once boasted that his town had produced a marrow so big that a tent had been pitched over it and a hundred soldiers slept on it. The Isfahani, to whom the Kashani was boasting, replied that in his town they were making a saucepan so big that the hammering of a tinsmith on one side of it could not be heard by his mate working on the other side. “What’s the use of a saucepan as big as that?” the Kashani said. “To cook your marrow!” the Isfahani replied.

In our quest for the tomb of the king we were directed off the main road into a narrow alley, inches deep in powdery dust. As we walked, our feet stirred up a small cloud, which was magnified by the feet of the small boys who ran after us and alongside us, and of the veiled women coming and going. We had turned a corner, and the world of asphalt and concrete had disappeared into the earthen city of ages past. Leila,
though a Persian, was as conspicuous here in her European
dress as I was. Gleaming stares followed us as we went on our
way into the Kuche Ziaarat—the Pilgrim Street. It may be that
an unveiled woman in the setting of old Islam still looks rather
as might a lady walking down an English street bare to the
waist.

Officially the veil is banned by a decree of Reza Shah, which
has never been rescinded. But in practice the women them-
selves cling to it. The chador is a convenient garment. It does
not necessarily cover the face, but it can be drawn across if so
desired. It gives protection and anonymity. It serves as a useful
outer garment to keep the sun off in summer and the cold out
in winter. Among the poor it also hides clothes that may
be shamefully shabby. And so they still wear it, with the
religious authorities approving of their good sense.

At the corner of the Pilgrim Street we looked down a long
brick-faced tunnel, descending steep steps a hundred feet or
more to the water down below in the depths of the earth. Well
built and spacious, it must have dated from the time of Shah
Abbas, when public works were well conceived and admirably
executed, and it contrasted sharply with the uneven, unpaved
alleyways above it.

In the midst of these alleys stands the mausoleum of Habib
Ibn Mousi, flanked by two minarets, which contains the tomb
of the king. We entered with our retinue of boys and found
the courtyard well frequented by women bent on doing
obeisance to the saint, and by men who appeared to have little
to do besides watching the visitors. There is a large iron fram-
ework overhead, which supports a canvas awning in the hot
weather, but detracts considerably from the aesthetic appear-
ance.

In front of us the imamzade itself had a plain whitewashed
entrance, where two attendants wearing the green turban of
the Hajji, were posted. Leila had no veil, but borrowed a
scarf from one of the local women and tied it over her head.
This satisfied the clergy, as it would have satisfied the require-
ments of an English church. The tomb of the saint was
straight in front of us, enclosed in an iron grill, to which the
women worshippers clung with their fingers as they gazed im-
ploringly at the sarcophagus. Our gang of boys had followed
us in too, against the objections of the attendants, and watched
everything we did with the closest interest.

The tomb of Shah Abbas the Great, who died in 1629, lies
unobtrusively to the right of the main entrance. It is a plain
sarcophagus of grey-black marble in a plain whitewashed corner of the building, totally ignored by those who come to venerate the saint. Thus the simplicity of death has ended the colour of the life of the greatest of modern Persian kings.

Leila gazed at the tomb with solemn respect, for it represented to her a time when Persia was one of the greatest of the nations, and the capital, Isfahan, was the equal of London and Paris in importance and surpassed them in magnificence. It represented to her the high level of organization and civilization of which her people are capable, and the hope that they might be rising once again out of the muddle and maladministration of two centuries.

We talked for a few minutes with the Imams about the local saints, and then departed, with our retinue of boys still kicking up the dust around us.

A few weeks later we visited Qazvin, through which I had passed before on my way to Resht. In the heat of summer it had seemed decrepit, dull and dirty, but at that time all the Persian towns had seemed like that. When I returned there in the winter I was already half seduced by the vast, tawny countryside and its oasis towns. After the blazing heat of summer one could now lift one’s head again and gaze over the great distances without screwing up one’s eyes against the glare. In this country of emptiness everything was interesting—a clump of trees, a domed house, a hillock representing all the earthly remains of a mud-brick fortress, the rims of the shafts of the qanāts, the underground water channels, strung out across the desert, even a solitary man on a donkey.

Leila and I sat outside a tea house, facing a tank full of goldfish, and ate our second breakfast of flat bread and cheese. Inside the tea house there was darkness and the sweet smell of opium, but outside all was clarity and light. Then we went on to Qazvin, and turning south off the main road, I soon discovered why the town had seemed so nondescript before. The old road from Teheran, still used extensively by lorry drivers to get to the heart of town although not yet asphalted, branches off to the left three miles short of it, and leads one to the Teheran gate, which is light blue in colour and has three arches, surmounted by miniature minarets, like the old gates of Teheran before they were pulled down to make room for the modern boulevards. The other side of the gate one drives down Teheran avenue to its junction with the broad, tree lined Khiābān-e Sepah. And here is the real heart of the town, well to the south of the main through road. Here there were noble
vistas in all directions. To the north the Sepah avenue leads the
eye to the Ali Qapu, the High Gate, a Safavid building in the
form of a large eyvan, but whitewashed over like so many of
the old monuments. To the east one looks back at the Teheran
gate in the distance, while to the south the blue dome of the
Shahzade Hussein stands out against the sky.

We made our way to the Shahzade, walking up the shady
approach, which was occupied by hawkers and beggars. The
latter were aged men in the main. Some held brass bowls, with
a flat brass hand standing upright in the middle, the hand of
Hazrat-e Abbas, brother of Hassan and Hussein, who carried
water for the predestined martyrs at Karbala, and when his
hand was cut off, carried the goatskin water bag in his teeth
without stopping a moment to drink a drop himself. Others,
though dervishes are not supposed to beg, had the bowl and
chain of the dervish beside them. Though ragged and rheumy,
they all looked quite well fed.

As it was Friday, the pathway was thronged with people,
and so was the wide courtyard inside, where people were walk-
ing to and fro over the marble gravestones of pious Moslems,
which are set flush with the cobbles of the court. Some of
the gravestones had amusing line illustrations on them to indicate
the profession or trade of the deceased—a hammer and tongs,
a tree, two pistols and a smoking grenade.

Finding a welcome lack of curiosity on the part of the local
people, we strolled through the courtyard to the graveyard
beyond the Shahzade, which stretches out far into the desert.
Then we returned to view the shrine, and found no difficulty
about entry.

The Shahzade Hussein contains the tomb of one of the sons
of Imam Reza, the eighth Imam. It was originally built by
Shah Ismail as part of his policy of spreading the Shia faith, but
it was not until the time of the Qajars that the noble
mausoleum which we see today was constructed over his tomb.
It shows all the indications of its period—decorative stalactites
and flashy mirror work, reminiscent of the shrine at Shahr Rey
and the Golestani Palace in Teheran; a gateway with miniature
minarets like those on the Teheran gate; and an interior much
smaller and more circumscribed than the size of the dome, seen
from outside, would lead one to expect.

Leaving our shoes at the door, we entered the shrine, thread-
ing our way across the carpeted floor amongst those kneeling
in prayer. Although women were admitted to circumambulate
the sarcophagus, the genuflections and mechanics of praying
seemed to be a prerogative of the men, in which the women did not take part. The intricate marqueterie work on the tomb belongs to the original, early Safavid period. One could see the people feeling, almost caressing the wood as they walked past it. Some were actually kissing it, using in their ardour the sense of touch to reinforce the sense of sight.

As we were clearly strangers, an ahkond went round with us and showed us back to the door. Outside in the bright air again, we walked through narrow streets towards the Mosque of the Assembly. Such a mosque is usually the principal one in any town and is meant for the whole community, irrespective of the particular sect of any individual. Hence its name; for jām'e means "assembly" or "community" and should not be confused with jom'e, meaning "Friday," though modern guidebooks usually describe them as Friday mosques.

The gateway to this mosque was at the extremity of two converging lines of shops, lying back from the Khiabān-e Sepah. On its arch a date was written—1326, which is the equivalent of A.D. 1907—indicating the year in which it was restored. But the work of restoration must have been poor, since the plaster of the dome was already flaking away and there were ominous cracks in the brickwork itself.

The same was true of the great mosque, the core of which dates back to A.D. 1115. This part, built by the Seljuk King Malek Shah, was not in use when we visited it. It had been stripped of all its ornamentation, and looked as bare as an empty barracks, with the mehrrāb like an empty fireplace on the southern wall, and the steps in the corner leading up to a flat broken platform where the pulpit should have been. The damp silence of the place was only broken by the "jack jack!" of a jackdaw perched on the protruding end of one of the wooden rafters of the dome.

Dangerous looking fissures in the dome indicated the reason for this evacuation, and the handful of citizens who were using the mosque for afternoon prayer were doing so from the magnificent northern eyvān, which with its two tall blue minarets, is a work of the Safavid period. Thus they were still facing the mehrrāb, though across the ablution pond and the trees of the court.

Here again, as at the Shahzade, we had the enjoyable relaxation of not being a centre of attraction and curiosity. Whilst Leila sat in the sun in the courtyard, I went back into the shade, through a gap in the southern wall just to the right of the Seljuk prayer hall. Immediately I found myself in a great
empty expanse of domes and pillars, stripped to the naked brick and completely uninhabited. It was like entering the shell of a cathedral—some domed cathedral like Saint Mark's in Venice or Saint Anthony's in Padua—that has been gutted of all its contents, nor was there the slightest indication of builders at work to restore the building for use.

I passed through the empty halls into a deserted courtyard, from which I looked up at the blue Seljuk dome, with its geometric black whorls of decoration. Tufts of grass were growing from it and a flock of pigeons was using it as a roosting place. There was not a soul in sight. But then I heard voices. They were echoing, hollow voices, and they seemed to come from deep down in the earth below me. And then I saw that, in the floor of the court, there were three holes, into any one of which I could easily have fallen and killed myself, as I looked upwards at the dome. The confused sound of voices was coming up to me through these holes. Looking down, I expected to see below me the floor of a cellar, but I could see nothing, and even after my eyes had got used to the lack of light, I could only make out a hazy impression of a floor a very long way down.

The unintelligible voices echoed on. Who were they? I wondered. Conspirators? A religious meeting? A local gang? One thing seemed clear. They were not down there to get out of the heat of the sun, because it was quite cool enough out in the open air. I walked back through the pillared halls, and trapdoors here and there showed that these deep underground rooms extended under the whole building. It was like an iceberg, showing only a part of its bulk above the surface. And the trapdoors extended outside the mosque as well, into the streets of the town, where the waterways run deep below the surface, and are reached here and there by long flights of steps going down into the earth.

In fact Qazvin shows but a part of its face to the casual visitor. The other part lies below the ground, amongst the cellars and waterways, and is as dark and dim as the first is light and bright. We saw the importance of water to the town when we stopped beside the road that leads south from the Khiābān-e Sepah to the railway station. We wanted to investigate a brick dome towering above the surrounding houses, with a little square blue turret on its top. As we walked up to the front, which faced away from the road, we imagined it might be an imamzade. But it turned out to be something much more unique. When we rounded the corner we found that the
entrance, set in a façade not less brightly decorated with sky-blue kashis than many a shrine, led simply to steps going down to the water. The dome above it enclosed a large underground cistern which, if it ever became empty, would, the local youths told us, take two years to refill from the existing qanāts.

So it was that Qazvin, which was at first dead to me, came alive.
The buses start from Teheran as early in winter as they do in summer, in spite of the darkness and the cold. When I left for the south there was snow on the mountains above Shemiran, the leaves of the poplars had all turned brown, and the orange-red persimmons, the "date plums" as they are called—that curious fruit that seems to be a cross between an orange and a tomato—had finally ripened.

Plunging down the empty city streets and going through red traffic lights with the greatest unconcern, we were very soon out of town and on the open road to Qum. Here too, though lower than the Elburz, the peaks around us were powdered with snow, which shone brilliantly in the rising sun. And the thicker the snow falls, the better the Persians like it, for the winter snow is their water supply for the whole of the rest of the year. It melts and fills the streams, and it soaks into the porous rock and emerges lower down from springs, which flow throughout the torrid heat of summer, enabling life to be sustained on the skirts of the mountains and the plains, where the rainfall is practically non-existent.

So we went on into the great empty spaces. Beside me sat a young Lieutenant of the Iranian Army, who was returning home from a six weeks course in English in Teheran. Naturally he wanted to practise his English on me. "We have no English teachers," he said, "only Iranians, so we have not a good accent. I wish to learn the English accent, not the American accent. The Americans speak like they have hot potatoes in their mouth."

I told him a number of words like "bumpy," "Ministry of Transport," "careful driver," "tar" and "asphalt," and translated the sign which said, "It is forbidden to speak to the driver whilst in motion." Meanwhile we reached Qum, where the chief export, he said was priests, and the chief import corpses for burial. "It is an easy job to be a priest," he said. "Not like my job and your job." "Qum people," he said, "are
so fanatical that they hate all changes. In Isfahan they are money-grabbers and hard workers. But in Shiraz, where we are going, they know how to enjoy life. They spend on Friday what they have earned from Saturday to Thursday."

At Qum the asphalt gave out, and we went on over the stony, hilly desert, passing an occasional well built caravansarai of the time of Shah Abbas, but little else. The radio was switched on. In the great emptiness the voice of Marziye, the famous radio singer, sang at our heart-strings "Kojā mirāvī? Where are you going?" as we swept through the wilderness, along the plains with the crags on either side, over the passes and into the plains again. And Allahē sang "Negarānām. I am anxious" as if to tell us not to go at all.

We came to Isfahan in the early afternoon, passing through the closely cultivated cornfields ready ploughed for the winter sowing. But we were too tired to do anything but flop into the Iran hotel and sleep for an hour. When we stirred ourselves the sun was already low. We walked out into the main avenue, the Khiābān-e Chāhār Bāgh, which runs dead straight from north to south of the town.

It is a noble avenue, built by the great Shah Abbas shortly after he transferred the capital to Isfahan from Qazvin. He reigned from 1587 to 1629 and transformed Isfahan into a city that was acknowledged to be the most beautiful in the world. From the point of view of town planning and architectural magnificence it was well in advance of all the cities of Europe, for Shah Abbas concentrated on the city itself, whereas all the resources of the greatest king in Europe half a century later—Louis, the Sun King of France—went into the construction of the great building and park of his palace outside the capital.

Down the centre of the Chahar Bagh runs a broad pavement for pedestrians, on either side of which there are tracks for the numerous cyclists, mostly riding English machines. Outside the cycle tracks there are two canals of running water, and outside them are the one way carriageways, flanked by the outer pavements. All this conglomeration is shaded by rows of massive plane trees with silvery trunks, many of them the original ones planted when Isfahan was Nesf-e Jehān—Half the World. Some of the more aged have been truncated and shorn up for safety's sake.

We picked our way past the piles of dead leaves from the trees, and round the unguarded excavations for a new drainage system, to the Madrasseh-ye Chahār Bāgh. And there I had my first view of the blue and yellow kashi tile work of Isfahan,
which gleams and glows like highly polished marble in any light at any time of day. Compared with this, the earlier work of Qazvin seemed pale and primitive. Here, the blue and yellow were both deeper and richer, but it was in their quality of smoothness and translucence that the difference was most striking.

The Chahar Bagh religious school was the last of the great Safavid buildings, erected at the end of the seventeenth century, during the reign of "Parson" Hussein, who was himself killed in one of the hundred and thirty-four rooms that surround the courtyard. It was built at the expense of the Shah's mother, its proper title being the Madrasseh-ye Mader-e Shāh, and the rooms for theological study are ranged along the upper storey of the repetitive arcades which form the walls of a big courtyard over fifty yards square. We found these rooms still in use by the akhonds, and lights were being switched on in those that were occupied.

"They come here for the day," the Lieutenant said, "and talk. It is an easy job being akhond, not like our jobs."

To the right of the courtyard stands the mosque of the school, with two minarets and a matchless blue dome, traced with yellow and white arabesques and a band of deep ultramarine, on which Koranic texts are written. Under the dome, in the hall of prayer, the exquisite detail of the blue and brown prayer-niche contrasts with the simple white marble blocks of the steps leading up to the narrow pulpit.

Leaving the Madrasseh, we walked northwards up the Khiābān-e Chahār Bagh, or "Four Gardens," and turned right into the Khiābān-e Sepah to look for the Royal Square of Isfahan, which has been described by so many travellers. But first we stopped at a gateway about two hundred yards up the avenue in order to visit the Pavillon of Chehel Setun, another of the great Safavid creations.

I paid my touman at the gate, whilst the Lieutenant, being a member of the armed forces in uniform, was admitted free. Then I looked up from the gatekeeper across the gardens, and saw the great portico, where in hot weather the kings sat at their ease, surrounded by gardens flowing with water. Twenty tall, spindly, brown, wooden columns, supporting a hollow wooden roof, that looks too heavy for them, stand on a platform with an ornamental tank in front, which turns them into forty with the reflection from the water, and gives the pavilion its name of "Forty Pillars." It was the first wooden construction I had seen in Iran except for the peasant huts on the Cas-
pian coast, and it took me back immediately to Japan, especially to the great wooden columns at Nara, for wood imposes its own solutions on builders. As well as being carved, like stone, it can be morticed and jointed and painted. If all this is done to it, it results in buildings that look lighter and more colourful and more in tune with natural surroundings than the harder material.

The portico of the Chehel Setun is faded, and in comparison with the gleaming domes of the mosques, which were built for eternity, it looks roughly finished. In its emptiness it reminds one of a seaside bandstand after the season is over and the band has gone. Now it looks too big for the gardens that surround it, but in Safavid days the gardens stretched much farther, more on a Versailles scale, as far as the Royal Square a quarter of a mile away, and to the right, nearly a mile down to the bank of the Zayandeh River.

We went into the interior of the pavilion, past a film unit that was photographing the mirror-work on the half-dome of the entrance. After going through a surprisingly small doorway we reached the throne-room, which in the old days was often used as a hall of audience for foreign ambassadors. In Safavid times the walls of this hall and of the adjoining ante-rooms were painted from top to bottom with scenes of historic engagements and idyllic life.

After the collapse of the Safavids the Chehel Setun was sacked by the Afghans, who went a stage further than the British soldiers in the Shahjehan palace at Delhi when they blackened the walls and ceilings with smoke from their cooking fires. The rude Afghans obliterated the paintings with a thick coat of plaster, since the scenes of courtly and luxurious living offended their frugal, hardened puritanical spirit. In particular they seem to have disliked the languid princes and squires, reclining in a kind of Omar Khayyam bucolic paradise, and looking scarcely less feminine than the courtesans serving them and playing to them on the tar, the Persian guitar. “Pansy boys!” one imagines them growling, as they slapped on another coat of whitewash with a good, round Moslem oath.

Now, belatedly, as in the Bagh-e Fin at Kashan and in the Byzantine churches of Turkey, the plaster of puritanism is being prised off to reveal the beauties that lie beneath. In one of the ante-rooms I inspected a paradisal scene of feasting and wining that had just been uncovered to the light of day. The oval faces and almond eyes, the figures both male and female all
gentle curves, might have come straight from the Buddhist frescoes in the Ajanta caves in the heart of India. No wonder they were taboo to the strictly orthodox invaders.

It was nearly dark when we reached the Royal Square. There was a clanging sound of hammering, which grew more deafening as we approached, and soon we came upon a labyrinth of arcades under which, in the light of blazing furnaces, men were pounding furiously at copper plates, hammering them into pots and cauldrons and the lids for them. As we passed, they looked up at us momentarily and then doubled over their work again with renewed fury. No sooner had a man finished a lid or pot to his satisfaction than he flung it aside and seized another piece for shaping, with time, it seemed, breathing as hotly as the furnace down his back.

As we left the coppersmiths behind, the silence seemed almost a positive thing. We now emerged into the Royal Square, a vast enclosed space a quarter of a mile long. The traffic was sparse and people were few and far between. The Lieutenant did not like it. "There are not enough people here," he said. "It is old, you see." But I liked it. The peace and emptiness compared with the frantic traffic of Teheran was wonderful, and all around us there were noble buildings to delight the eye.

It should not be called a square, of course. For one thing it is twice as long as it is wide, and for another thing only the word meidān properly expresses the idea of a large space, as big as a fifteen acre field, completely surrounded by buildings planned to go with it. The Meidān-e Shāh is surrounded by a continuous double storey of arcades, which are used as shops and were built to complete the grand design of Shah Abbas after he had constructed the great buildings stationed one on each of the four sides.

When Shah Abbas moved to Isfahan in 1598 the meidān was simply a vast open space, used as a caravansarai and a market place. The first thing his courtiers did was to cover it with sand in order to make a ground for their favourite game of polo. After that a royal grandstand was constructed, for the king to watch the games and parades that took place there.

This grandstand is the top part of the Ali Qapu, the High Gate, and with its spindly wooden pillars and painted roof it recalls the portico of the Chehel Sétun. But in this case it is raised two stories above the ground, and the archway below it, from which it gets its appearance of a gateway surmounted by
a lofty superstructure, leads to the rooms below and behind the
grandstand, which the king used, like the Chehel Setun, for
receptions, and sometimes for residence. The Ali Qapu was,
in fact, built round an earlier Timurid building of the
fifteenth century, and faced the Chehel Setun across a vast
park called the Naqsh-e Jehān, the Image of the World, which
is now broken up by streets, the Police Headquarters, and
other administrative buildings.

On the opposite side of the great meidān, the Ali Qapu faces
one of the most perfect mosques in Iran, which means also
in the world—the mosque named after Sheikh Lotfollah, "the
Favour of Allah", whom Shah Abbas venerated above all
preachers. He preached in this mosque to the ladies, and per-
haps it was his influence over them that pleased the king so
much.

Today, after three hundred and fifty years, the dome of this
mosque gleams in polished perfection as if it had been com-
pleted yesterday. Unlike the other domes of Isfahan, and
indeed, as a rule, of Persia in general, where the blue
dominates the yellow, on this one the yellow is predominant—
a creamy yellow the colour of rum butter—and the blue only
appears here and there in the arabesques of the decorative
design. As we looked across at it in the deepening dusk, it
looked like some strange full moon rising above the arcades—
a Persian ladies' moon.

But, racing against the darkness, we went down to the end of
the meidān to see the ultimate masterpiece of the mighty
builder-king—the Masjed-e Shāh, or Royal Mosque. Begun
nine years after the Lotfollah Mosque, in 1612, and eighteen
years a-building, it was not finished until a year after Shah
Abbas' death, and its final embellishments were not completed
until seven years after that.

The tall gateway, flanked by two minarets, was built as an
integral part of the design for the meidān, balancing the gate-
way to the bazaar at the northern end, and it was completed
first, as early as 1615, before the mosque itself had risen far
above its foundations. Like the rest of the mosque, its walls are
covered with an abstract design of yellow on a background of
blue, which gives an appearance of lightness and airiness to a
construction which, in reality, is massive.

Stonemasons were at work in the entrance, chiselling new
paving stones to replace old ones, and we had to crunch our
way over stone chips to get in under the half-dome within the
gate and look up at the blue faience stalactites that hang down
from it. So lofty is the dome that I half expected to bump my head on the actual doorway which leads into the vestibule. The contrast made it appear pygmy size.

The custodian was reluctant to allow us in so late, but seeing that we were reverently interested in what we had come to see, and that one of us was a Persian and the other a Farsi-speaker, he allowed us to proceed, although the hour of evening prayer was imminent.

The mosque itself is at an angle of forty-five degrees to the gateway, since the latter faces the meidān, which runs from north-west to south-east, whereas the former faces south to enables the mehārab in the prayer hall to face towards Mecca without impairing the symmetry of the building. There is thus a peculiar, but interesting asymmetry about the northern eyvān, by which one enters the courtyard. But the resultant effect is, in fact, a happy one, as it enables the dome and minarets of the mosque to be seen clearly from the meidān, whereas otherwise they would be partly screened by the tall gateway.

In this eyvān the custodian showed us some of the restoration of the kashi tiles that was being done. “But look,” he said. “It is impossible to match the old tiles. In the factories of today they cannot make them the same colour. Either the blue is too dark, or it is too light. And it is the same with the yellow.” “But surely if they try for long enough, if they try again and again,” I said, “they will finally get the right colour, and then they can work out the formula.” “They have tried many times,” he said, “and they cannot do it.”

We looked up at the walls and saw the courses of new tiles plainly. They were, indeed, much darker than the old. Then we crossed the courtyard, the Lieutenant and I, leaving the custodian behind, and went to the southern eyvān under the towering minarets with their delicately trellised balconies. And from it we went into the prayer hall. Here again, in spite of its massive construction, the decorative yellow on blue, coupled with perfect proportions, and the square exterior cleverly transformed into an octagon, and then into a circle supporting the cupola, give an illusion of lightness which eliminates entirely the weight of the dome above. To those accustomed to the austere whitewashed mosques of Turkey one might be entering an airy pleasure palace.

There was no one else in the hall of prayer as we walked round it, but prayers had started. Men were praying towards us from the other side of the courtyard, throwing their voices
upwards to resonate on the four eyvāns and echo back to them. The glazed and polished tiles reflected voices as they reflected the light, gleaming with a sonorous glow, in which light and sound were mixed in one rich metaphor of magnificence.

We walked out of the Masjed-e Shah in the darkness and watched the craftsmen at work in the arcades of the meidān. Old men and young men and boys, intent on their work, hardly paused for a moment to look at us. Some were using little hammers and nails to tap out the designs on brass trays, large and small, some were cutting out the open lattice work in brass baskets and vases, some were working on silver ware with more delicate tools, working far into the night to complete more and more objects to fill the shops, for which there would never seem to be enough customers. One shop had two long-necked brass vases standing on the pavement outside, each taller than a man, cast in one piece and covered with intricate lattice work. The price was the equivalent of thirty pounds each. “But what use are they?” the Lieutenant said. “No one will buy them unless he is very rich.” Nor did the shopkeeper seem to expect to sell. He just went on making brass vases because that was what he was doing with his life.

I went alone from the Meidān-e Shāh to the fourth building of Shah Abbas’ grand design—the battered entrance to the bazaar, on the archways of which I could just make out the remnants of former frescoes. In the open space of the entrance itself, sellers of pots and pans were plying their trade, and to the right there were two or three shops stacked full of small wooden boxes, covered with inscribed blue paper, containing the gaz for which Isfahan is famous. This gaz is a substance like nougat, made into round cakes, packed in flour, which one breaks into suitable sizes for eating with a sharp rap from one of the laths of wood making up the lid of the box. It is made of sugar mixed with the sticky, white juice of the thorny gaz bush, the manna of the Bible, which grows abundantly in the desert round Isfahan, and flavoured with pistachio nuts. During the Second German War, when sugar cost twenty tournans a kilo and gaz only three, the manufacturers put three times as much gaz into the nougat as sugar, but now the situation is reversed, as sugar is cheaper than gaz, although the best proportion is half and half.

To the left of the entrance to the bazaar rows of shoe shops disappeared into the darkness, but straight ahead, in the broad main thoroughfare, the shops were more varied. In some the printed cloth of Isfahan was on sale, with red and black designs
of the poets or the knights of Persepolis on them, or simply abstract patterns. In others there was beaten copper and brass-ware, and in others white metal hammered out into bowls and dishes, cups and trays.

At first it was difficult to see in the dimness, but gradually one became accustomed to it, and what had been dark caverns became lofty brick vaults, and the troglodytes behind the merchandise became harmless salesmen, ready to show their wares. I stopped at one shop and was accosted by a plump, well-dressed man, wearing both hat and tie, who spoke to me in French.

"I would like to show you some interesting things we have here," he said. "Very near here we have a carpet factory, where they are making carpets on the hand-looms. There is also the factory we have for the printing of the cloth which you see here. These are very interesting things to see."

"I have no doubt," I said. "But I have little time."

"The carpet factory is only fifty metres from here," he said. "There you will see little girls and little boys working the threads of the carpets. It is very interesting."

"I would rather see the little children at school," I said. "Is that possible?"

He had his answer ready. "Ah, but you see, they go to night school," he said.

I turned to the shopkeeper from whom I had bought a table cloth. He and his assistant had been listening to the French conversation without understanding it.

"Is he your partner?" I asked in Farsi.

"Certainly not. He is nothing to do with us."

"I am a guide to the bazaar," the well-dressed man explained. And I left him, summoning up my best Farsi to tell him that another day, when I had time, I would be honoured to take advantage of his favour. I then continued, past these preliminary tourism shops, into the heart and centre of the place, where the sound of hammering, like the hammering on the corner of the Meidan-e Shāh outside, clanged and clattered in the endless vaults.

In these caverns they were beating out the objects in copper, brass and white metal that were on sale in the shops in Chahar Bagh. Sitting on the ground over their forges and anvils, they worked at the metal with a demoniacal concentration, and in and out amongst them, with sharp cries and yelps, darted small boys, carrying bits of metal about, running errands and calling out at each other. It was a scene from Dickens—the
dimness, the hard concentration on the work, the raggedness and drabness, the small boys running here and there—and indeed, amidst this poverty and grime, came at one moment Little Nell, herself, who held out her hand beseechingly, and I gave her money because she was young and clear-faced, and full of anxiety, but I would have brushed past her if she had been wizened and old, like the hags that hover round the doors of the buses and walk into the shops when customers are counting out their money to make a buy.

I went to one of the coppersmiths' shops and studied the engraved trays. The themes were very varied—knights and maidens on horseback, a musician with feasters seated on the ground, portraits of the poets, a pastoral scene with milkmaid and cowherd, bearded elders at the porch of a house. One of the smaller trays, a foot across, would take, I suppose, about a day to do (the shopkeeper told me three days), and the price was five and sixpence from the venerable man in the grey skull cap, whereas the same thing in the avenue cost three times the price.

The coppersmith asked his apprentice if he had said his evening prayers, and on being reassured in the affirmative, he turned to show me some of his finer pieces. He had round copper trays five feet across, engraved with all the kings of Iran of whom likenesses remain to us. He had ornamental bronze jars, made light by a network of perforations, and copper baskets of all sizes from the diminutive to the gigantesque.

I looked at his work, then went on through other caverns, where clothing was for sale, and shoes, and carpets. Laden donkeys went to and fro amongst the people, and at one point a horse and cart emerged from an alley and came down past me, taking up the whole width of the track between the rows of shops. The animals, the hoarse shouts of men, and the women shrouded in their chādors, all combined to give an impression of ancient times—and then the electric light was switched on, and out of the weak, unshaded bulbs gleamed a glimmer of the twentieth century.

I left the bazaar and visited the shops in the Chahar Bagh, which run right down to the river's edge and the Bridge of Thirty Three Arches. I went into a silversmith's shop, intending to buy a silver bowl with a silver touman of Nasser-ud-din Shah set in its base. The young man in the shop asked me what I desired, and picking up the bowl I fancied, he weighed it carefully on the scales, worked a calculation on a piece of
paper, and announced the price, which was nineteen toumans. Now, I was prepared to pay less than a pound for a silver bowl, but I felt that I had to bargain, and I started the usual procedure of saying his price was too high and that I could not pay so much and so on and so on. To my surprise he was unwilling to come down by a single rial, so I left him and went on to another, larger shop. There, a silver bowl of the same size and quality was produced, and this was also weighed with solemn ritual by a young gentleman in spectacles, who had the air of a chemist measuring out a medicine. The calculations were made and the verdict delivered in accordance with the number of mesquals of weight on the scales—thirty-two toumans. I was amazed. In the next shop the same result was produced, and in the next, after the ritual had been concluded and I had protested, I was told that, unfortunately, that very day the price of silver had gone up by one third. In the next, a small booth, there were no scales, and the price of thirty-one toumans was quoted. But by this time I was exasperated. I looked hard at the salesman. "I am surprised, very surprised," I said. "Please don’t joke with me, as I know the prices of these things. Don’t give me foreigners’ prices."

Perhaps I sounded angry or pained, or perhaps I had touched a spark of sympathy. The other, older man in the shop spoke across to us. "You are quite right," he said. "Sixteen toumans." And so it was, and I would have bought it, only the touman set in its base was a modern one, not a Nasser-ud-din Shah.
Next morning the bus left at half-past five. We crossed the Bridge of Thirty Three Arches in darkness, but we could just make out the familiar pattern of a row of double arcades. The bridge was the work of Shah Abbas' general, Allahverdi Khan. The lower arcades are the arches through which the water, when there is any, flows, and the upper arches form a wall through which the roadway runs.

Beyond the bridge lies Julfa, the namesake of the Armenian town on the northern border of Iran. It was founded by Shah Abbas on the south bank of the river for the Armenians he had transported from the north in order to avoid the risk of these talented people falling into the hands of the Turks. In Julfa there are thirteen churches, including the Cathedral of Saint Joseph, for the Armenian craftsmen always had freedom to worship in their own faith. British Christians have also been active in Julfa, for missionaries have founded there the thriving Stuart Memorial College and a hospital.

Passing through this suburb of Isfahan, we saw a few people already about on bicycles, heading for the factories. Then we were out in the desert again, with the first glow of dawn picking out the jagged profile of the mountains. At the breakfast stop in the little town of Shah Reza, fifty miles farther on, the Lieutenant proposed to eat nothing "in order to rest my stomach from the bad food last night," but they brought saucers full of delicious clotted cream to go with our bread, and this was irresistible.

Out of Shah Reza the road stretched on, empty of traffic except for an occasional lorry, and without a private car for fifty miles at a time. Some sections were asphalted, others were still strewn with the rough road metal of stones and a coating of gravel that billowed up into an opaque dust cloud behind us. All the way, the long plains that we crossed were enclosed by mountain ranges. On the right stood the snow-capped Zagros, summer pastures of the Bakhtiari tribe, culminating
in the twelve-thousand-foot crags of Kuh-e Alijuq. On the left the lower, but also snow-tipped, Kuh-e Qumbalwar screened us from the unsurveyed salt wastes of the dasht.

For the most part these plains were as bare as the mountains enclosing them, but here and there we passed patches of cultivation, or walled khans, with hemispherical towers at their corners, now used as fortified gendarmerie posts, or the ruins of former centres of prosperity worked out and fallen into decay. One such centre was Yezd-e Khasht, nearly a hundred miles from Isfahan, where the road did some unexpected twists to descend the cliff on which the village is built, and to cross the river beyond it. Looking back one saw row upon row of skeletons of mud houses dominating the escarpment, with the plan of their rooms exposed to the sky, like the broken honeycombs in some hive that has been smashed.

Another thirty-five miles of desert brought us to Abadeh. The name itself means "prosperous place" and it is the headquarters of a district, with seventy villages around it. Some of these villages, with their cylindrical fort-like towers dominating the low houses, we could see from the road. Others were tucked away in the skirts of the mountains.

We stopped here for a break of a quarter of an hour. The Lieutenant introduced me to the local speciality, which was hand-made backgammon boards, made of light wood inlaid in dark wood and ornamented with carvings at the four corners. Three men were working on them, sitting on thin mats on the floor, but the only one they had completed was bespoken, so we were unable to buy. I returned to sit in the bus and study the report of the fracas in England and the Commonwealth over the publication of secret papers concerning the Common Market, in my two-day-old copy of Ettila'at. But two blind beggars at the door, one wearing the green sash of the Sayyed, or descendant of the prophet, set up a howl. For my own sake I would do well to give them alms, the blind Sayyed said, since he who was oppressed at Karbala (meaning Imam Hussein) would then be disposed to watch over my safety on the journey.

So I gave them a little money, though with little increase in my confidence in my own safety. Up till now the driver had seemed a very prudent man—mohtāt, as the Lieutenant kept saying. Now, however, the long, straight desert stretches out of Abadeh seemed too much for him. Out of sheer boredom he swung the wheel from side to side, weaving the bus from side to side of the road. When he came up at his unvarying speed of fifty miles an hour to a slower lorry or bus, he would
drive up to within inches of its tail before swinging out to pass it.

These antics continued for about ten minutes and then died down as quickly as they had arisen. Twenty miles beyond Abadeh a narrow, rough track branched off to the left for the hundred and forty miles to Yezd. It was the only branch road in the whole three hundred miles between Isfahan and Shiraz. Another ten miles farther on, the road began to rise into the mountains, bending southwards to cross the ranges, instead of running parallel with them south-west. Here, as we crossed the grain of the land, it went into a series of switch-backs for a mile or two and then settled down to climb over the watershed to Deh Bid, the “village of willows.”

The stream at Deh Bid drains into the Pulvar River, which flows southwards out of the mountains and passes the two great Achaemenid capitals of Pasargad and Persepolis. And as we swung down the hill into an even barer and more monumental landscape than the one we had left on the other side of the range, my thoughts went back far beyond Shah Abbas and Islam to the old heart of Persia, the land of Fars, into which we were now descending.

“In 1842, that is the year 1963, we will celebrate the two thousand five hundredth anniversary of our monarchy,” the Lieutenant reminded me. “And we expect all the kings and the queens of the world will attend our ceremonies. Already we have set up committees and are making preparations.”

Cyrus the Great, the king who restored the temple at Jerusalem, who was admired as a paragon of rulers by Alexander and extolled as the epitome of a wise and beneficent monarch by Plutarch, was the Shahenshah of Iran two thousand five hundred years ago, and it was the plain of Murghab, where his capital city of Pasargad was situated, that we were now entering.

Pasargad, where the tomb of Cyrus remains to this day, was the first of the Achaemenid capitals. Persepolis, started less than half a century later, was the second. The latter, of which the remains are far more extensive, lies in another, broader plain of the River Pulvar, called the plain of Marvdasht, and the two are divided by a narrow passage through a range of the Zagros Mountains, with high cliffs on either side. The plain of Marvdasht is separated from Shiraz by yet another ridge of the same mountains, which the road crosses in a series of dangerous curves, whilst the river, like most in Iran, drains into a salt lake instead of into the sea.
As we emerged from the ravine, I saw that the range between the plains of Murghab and Marvdasht was of deeply faulted and stratified rock, in places sloping obliquely and in other places bent up into arches and into the shape of pillars. The rock looked ready split and cut up into the right sizes for building mighty works in stone. All it needed was a little shaping up in order to be put into a wall or pavement. And at one spot an ancient amphitheatre in the cliffs gave all the appearance of being an ancient quarry.

Certainly the materials for building a great capital city were ready to hand. But brickyards alone to not determine the site of a house, and I tried to seek a reason for the choice of these two relatively small plains for the inner heart of the greatest empire on earth. They were not central. They were not the focal point of communications. They were not fortress cities. What then was the reason for their existence there?

Of course, in those days, two and a half millennia ago, the character of the country was different. The rainfall must have been greater, and the heat of summer was tempered by forest groves. In Alexander's day the tomb of Cyrus was surrounded by trees. The land was probably something like a savannah or a prairie, supporting flocks on the hills and agriculture in the plains.

In this country, now the land of the Turkish-speaking Qashqai, the tribes of the Persians grew in strength, until they were able to defeat the Medes to the north-west and march on to take Asia Minor and great Babylon itself. But the Persians were still, in essentials, a tribe. They had no city of their own, and their capital was wherever the king was. And the king, like a true nomad, was continually on the move, campaigning, hunting, inspecting, usually under canvas, as often as not transacting the business of state in the open air.

Then he returned to his own home pastures to build his capital. But it was not a capital in an urban sense. It was a retreat, surrounded by mountains, a palace and a treasury, but not a city. The citizens were the tribes of the Persians roaming the surrounding prairies and mountains.

The same applied to the bigger capital of Darius at Persepolis. Although the administration of the empire had, by this time, been consolidated, and swift means of communication set up, the administrative capital, as in Cyrus' day, remained at Susa on the plains of Khuzestan in the Mesopotamian basin. Persepolis was simply a bigger and better mountain retreat, with a rather larger plain around it to sustain it—a Bucking-
The road took us along the front of the main terrace of this palace, then turned sharp right to cross the plain and climb the final range before Shiraz. This was a mass of broken hills, which gradually gave way to a valley descending in gradual curves. "The people all come here from the town in the summer," the Lieutenant said, pointing at the open slopes and hills. "They spend Friday here and enjoy themselves. There is the stream of Hafez (pointing at the bed of a brook with a trickle of water running down it). It is called Ab-e Rokni, or some call it Ab-e Khesr, after the prophet who drank the water of eternal life and is still alive somewhere in this world. The poet Hafez loved this place so much that he wrote many poems about it. He said that whoever drank from the water of this stream, even if he had already eaten his dinner, he would want another one, because it is so good for the appetite."

A little lower down the valley, where the bed of the brook was widening into a river at a place called Akbarabad, he pointed at three concrete pillars on the right of the road. "This is where we were having our new national university," he said. "This will be a big university for the whole of Iran, called Pahlevi University, not only for Shiraz. It was to be built here, and the Shah himself came here for the ceremony to start the building. But then it was decided that it was too far from the town, and there would not be enough buses to bring the students backwards and forwards, so it is to be built somewhere else. Those three pillars you see were for the lines of students to greet his Majesty."

I agreed that it was too far from town, and that they had been right to change the site. It was not even within view of that city which has been famous throughout the ages for the beauty of its setting and surroundings. It would have been as if they had wanted to hide the university away out of sight, for the brook disappeared and there was another defile before we were over the last fold of hills and looking down the long straight descent into the Vale of Shiraz.

"Allāh-o! Allāh-o! Allāh-o akhbār! God is great!" passengers exclaimed behind me, as they had exclaimed on dangerous parts of the road before. But now they exclaimed the words out of relief and delight at reaching their destination, which lay spread out before them.

At the top of the pass stands the Koran Gate, a recent replica, erected by a public-spirited merchant, of the thousand-year-old one which was destroyed in the first fever of modernism a
quarter of a century ago. From it the road leads downwards through an avenue of trees as straight as a die to the Vakil Mosque at the bottom of the slope. There it levels off into a plain before rising, a mile or two beyond, to the next mountain range. On either side the buildings of the city are spread out, interspersed with the domes of mosques and imamzades and the trees of the avenues and gardens.

The bus took us down to the Khiābān-e Zand, the broad boulevard which runs north-west to south-east across the town on the same axis as the mountain ranges, then turned into a caravansarai to deposit us. There I left my companions of two days and went off to find the hotel that had been recommended to me. It proved to be a fine building, decorated with blue kashi and mirror work, standing in a handsome garden, but when I entered my heart sank. The venerable building echoed with emptiness, the narrow rooms were bare, there was no hot water, and two apologetic servants advised me to go to the three star tourist hotel, since discomforts tolerable in a peasant’s cottage are not to be supported in a town hotel.

The aged-desk clerk welcomed me to Shiraz and talked to me in gentle tones about the South Persia Rifles of the First German War, in which he had served as quartermaster. This force originated in a small detachment of Indian troops sent to Bandar Abbas from India in 1916, under the command of Sir Percy Sykes. Its main purpose was to check the influence of the redoubtable German agent, Wassmus, who had succeeded in stirring up the tribes against a government friendly to the British.

In Iran, by means of recruitment from the gendarmerie, whose Swedish officers had sided with the Germans, and from other sources, Sykes increased his strength to eight thousand, and then marched through hostile tribal territory to Shiraz. The occupation of the town was relatively peaceful until 1918, when the tribesmen, believing that Britain was going to lose the war, invested Shiraz with about six thousand men against the garrison of some two thousand. With some difficulty they were beaten off.

Not only the desk clerk, but several others of the elder citizens of Shiraz were to testify to the considerable impression this force had made on the region. It was active, not only in pacifying the tribes, but also in converting camel tracks to wheeled routes, surveying and opening up communications generally.

In the Second German War also, the Indian Army was in
Shiraz. History repeated itself with the aerial descent of German saboteurs on Fars to work on the grievances of the tribes. But it was not until after the departure of the Indian Army that serious tribal disturbances took place. This was during the tribal rebellion of 1950, when at times it was impossible to leave the town without running the gauntlet of armed hold-ups on the road.

Talking about these things with the desk clerk I came to feel that I was now in regions where the British connection was strong. Shiraz looks south towards the Persian Gulf and India as well as north towards bustling Teheran. The oil-rich Bedouin, millionaires by a chance turn of the wheel of fortune like winners of football pools, come to Shiraz to hawk and hunt in the coolness of the hills. With their musicians playing monotonous thin music on the pipes, they entertain their guests and retainers in the big new tourist hotel.

Later I went out into the Khībān-e Zand, where the creepers trained to climb up the lamp posts lent a peculiarly tropical appearance to the scene. After I had been walking a few minutes a schoolboy accosted me.

"What is your name?" he asked.
"Forbes," I said. "What is yours?"
"Abbāsian. What are you doing here, please?"
"Nothing."
"You are an explorer?"
"No."
"I am studying at the technical school. I am a welder."
"I see."
"I am also a Bahai. I am not an ordinary Moslem, you see. I am a Bahai. We Bahais have our headquarters in Israel and we have our holy book also."
"I see. And who wrote your holy book?"
"I do not know, Sir. Please, have you no job here?"
"No."
"Then you must be an explorer. You are Almān?"
"No. Englis."
"I see. Can you answer me a question, please. How far is it from here to London?"
"About four thousand miles, I think. More or less."
"Are you certain?"
"Yes."
"And how much does it cost to live there?"
"For you or for me?"
"Let us say, for me."
"You might live on twenty toumans a day, but it would be difficult."

"Thank you. I will write that down."

"You are thinking of going there?"

"Perhaps I will go there, if it is possible."

I left him writing down the answers in his note book, and thought about the Bahai and their curious history. They originated in this same city of Shiraz with Sayyed Ali Mohammed, who called himself the Bāb or "gateway", through which men must communicate with God. He preached that he, himself, was the Twelfth Imam, or Mahdi, returned to earth for the salvation of mankind, and gained an enthusiastic following. But in 1850 he was taken to Tabriz and executed on the orders of Nasser-ud-din Shah's vizier. They say that when he was shot by the firing-squad, the bullets cut the rope with which he was bound without hurting him, and that he escaped and had to be caught and shot a second time.

On the death of the Bāb a certain Baha-Ullah of Mazanderan announced that he was the appointed successor, and was a greater man than the Mahdi himself. This was heresy, and he was banished. But the followers of the Bāb and of Baha refused to be repressed, and as a consequence the Shah ordered a general massacre at Zenjan, between Teheran and Tabriz, at Yezd, and at Niriz, to the east of Shiraz. Bahaism continued underground, however, and because of its unorthodox beliefs became liberal in outlook and unsettling to the established Moslem dogma. Some called it an invention of the English, because the British offered sanctuary to the Bahai in their colonies. Baha-Ullah, himself, went to Palestine, where the temple of Bahaism was set up on Mount Carmel. His brother went to Cyprus.

Today there may be as many as three million Bahai throughout the world, including many educated men and women. They persevere in their liberal beliefs, which include equal pay and rights for women, a fair average income for all, and free intercourse between all races. The book of the Bahai is called Iqān, meaning "certitude."

Happy are the Bahai, if they have certitude.
I had not been in Shiraz for many days before the spell of the poets fell on me, for the Shirazis love their poets, know them, and as convincing proof of their devotion, can quote them at length on any suitable occasion.

I went first to visit the mausoleum of Hafez, which is situated in the place known as Mosalla. As I walked down the avenue, with the high brick wall of a hidden garden on my left, a large station-wagon drew up alongside me.

"Can I take you anywhere?"
"Thank you very much, but I am just taking a walk."
"Let me show you some of the sights of Shiraz."
"Don't let me trouble you."
"It is nothing. I have plenty of time. Please."
"Very well. Thank you very much."

So I climbed into the station-wagon and the Member of Parliament for Abade introduced himself. "I am a Member of Parliament," he said, "but unfortunately now we have no parliament, so I am now just looking after my lands."

We reached the mausoleum, which in Hafez' day was well outside the town, in the groves to the north, but has now been caught up by the development of the municipal stadium and the Faculty of Letters of the University. It is still a delectable garden, however, which was completely modernized in 1936, after it had been closed to public burials. As one enters one faces palm trees as well as pines and poplars, reminding one that this is the deep south, not far from the Persian Gulf. In front, a long colonnade, inscribed with lines from the poems on a blue background, acts as a façade to the interior garden, in which the tomb itself is situated under a domed roof, supported by more columns.

The inner garden, which is interspersed with the graves of those who have sought to capture something of the aura of the poet by being buried near him, is planted out with orange trees and mulberries, with roses and geraniums below them.
The branches of the mulberries droop over like weeping-willows, giving them the picturesque name of tut-e majnun, after Majnun, the despairing lover of Leila in Nezami's celebrated romance.

After Reza Shah had decreed that no one else should be buried in the vicinity, the marble of the tomb itself, which had become very dilapidated since the poet's death in 1388, was renewed, and inscribed with one of his noblest poems—an ode which can be fairly construed as his own epitaph.

This ode, or ghazal, as is usual in Persian lyric poetry, contains a number of beits, or couplets, each one of which is complete in itself, though naturally the theme—that of the poet's resurrection from this life—is common to all. The seven famous beits have been translated into English by many eminent men and women, including Hermann Bicknell in his Hafiz of Shiraz published in 1875, Gertrude Bell in Poems from the Diwan of Hafiz (1897), John Payne in The Poems of Shemseddin Mohammed Hafiz of Shiraz (1901) and Richard le Gallienne in Odes from the Diwan of Hafiz (1905). The translations vary widely both in length and content, for such is the concentration of meaning and double-meaning of the words in a single beit that the problem of rendering them fairly into a foreign language is particularly difficult. Most translators feel obliged to paraphrase rather than translate in the strict sense of the word, and to expand the concentrated phrases of Hafez in order to render a full account of what they mean.

In Gertrude Bell's paraphrase entitled Where are the tidings of union? which seems to me to be the most satisfying of all the translations, the seven beits have been turned into twenty-two lines of English hexameters. But, good as it is, it will not be read much today except as a scholastic exercise. The expanded phrases, such as "Thy voice shall ring through the folds of my winding sheet" and "With the flush of youth on my cheek from thy bosom will rise" belong to the age of Lawrence Hope and her "Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar" and "Less than the dust beneath thy chariot-wheels". And the fact is that most of the translators of Hafez have dropped into a turgidly expanded style, full of artifice, which both dates the poems badly and blunts the bite of the original. This has meant that, whilst many Westerners today admire Hafez in theory, few really enjoy him in practice.

Putting my foot in where angels fear to tread, I made my own rendering of the ode on the sarcophagus. With the help of
Dr. Bassiri, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Letters at the University, I tried to squeeze as much of the essence of the original as I could into an equal number of English lines, sacrificing rhyme to sense in doing so. Here, in English, is the poem which begins with the famous Persian lines “Mojhdeh-e vasl-e tou ku kaz sar-e jān bar khizam?”

Where is the news of your coming, as a bride that will set free my soul?

I am a bird of heaven, and I rise from the snare of the world.
I reject the lordship of lands and dominion over the earth,
If but in loving kindness you deign to call me your slave.
Oh Lord, from the cloud of guidance, send rain to my thirsty heart,
Before like dry dust in the desert, I disappear from the midst.
Come to my tomb with musicians, don’t sit without wine on my grave,
So that I may rise dancing, and leaping towards your perfume.
Stand up and show your stature, idol of my old eyes,
And teach me to leave this life with gestures as sweet as your own.
Though I am withered and old, embrace me just for one night,
And let me arise from your side young in the light of dawn.
Grant me the day of my death the chance of a moment to see you,
So that in leaving my life, I may rise from the world like Hafez.

In the third beit I have translated bi mei o motreb maneshin—don’t sit without wine and musicians—as written on the tomb, not bā mei o motreb beneshin—sit with wine and musicians—as appears in some of the manuscripts.

On the old tomb of Hafez, as well as this ode, which was surrounded by the lines of another ode, less well known, there were two beits which formed a cryptogram known as an abjad. In this form of puzzle, which is often to be found on the graves of great men, certain letters of the alphabet are given numerical values, which, when added together, give the date of death. In the case of Hafez the couplets run as follows:
The light of spiritual men was venerable Hafez,
A candle shining with the light of glory,
Who made his home in Mosalla's earth
Find his date from "Mosalla's Earth."

The numerical values of the letters of "Mosalla's Earth"—Khāk-e Mosallī—when added together, give 791, the Moslem year of his death, equivalent to our 1413.

Behind the tomb I saw the small library, which contains photographs of the dilapidated mausoleum as it was before restoration. On the further wall there was a painting of the apotheosis of the poet, as he "rises dancing" from the grave, with a girl in a white dress looking up to him, who is perhaps his sweetheart Shakh-e Nabāt—"Stick of Candy."

Set amongst the ripening oranges, the tomb was a fitting resting place for a man who all his life had sought peace and quiet, and apparently found it, though it would be hard to choose a more turbulent and violent age than the one in which he lived.

His poems reflect none of this trouble and strife and it is perhaps because of his very aloofness from the physical realities of the world and his concentration on that other, mystical world, expressed in terms of wine and love, that Westerners
find it difficult to class him with the greatest poets like Homer and Dante and Shakespeare, who were in the midst of the passions of life.

I talked with many people in Shiraz about the meaning and symbolism of wine and the tavern and the love of women and the love of that equivocal personage designated by the Farsi pronoun ү, which can be either “he” or “she”, that runs through the work of Hafez and Saadi and Omar Khayyám and other great Persian poets. As usual, opinions were divided. Some took the view that, following the long tradition of the Sufi poets, going back to the Arabs of the twelfth century, and in Persia to the poems of Sana'i, wine and love were pure symbols, expressing the mystic intoxication with and yearning for the divine spirit. One professor quoted the poet, Nezami, to me with the lines in which he says

“If ever I pollute my cup with wine, may all things clean be unclean for Nezami:—”

Gar az mei shodam hārgez ālude jām,
Halāl khudā bar Nezāmi harām.

And again:

Mapendaram, ei Khesr-e piruz-e pei,
Ke az mei marā hast maqsud-e mei.

“Don’t think, victorious Khesr, that by ‘wine’ I mean wine.”

He thought that in Hafez the interpretation was symbolical, whereas in Saadi wine and love were to be considered earthly. Dr. Bassiri, on the other hand, considered both literal and allegorical meanings to be present in Hafez, being part and parcel of the ibham, or ambiguity, of which he was so fond.

Indeed, if we consider the ode which is Hafez’s epitaph, it is obvious that his lover is meant to be the divine spirit, to which he goes dancing ecstatically like a Mavlavi dervish, and yet the imagery of carnal love is so strong that we find it difficult not to believe that the memory of less abstract nights is lingering in his mind:

Garche piram tou shabi tang dar aghusham hash.
“Although I am old, clasp me tight for a night to your breast.”
And again in the gay lyrics of springtime, of Roknabad and Mosalla and maidens amongst the nightingales and roses, so reminiscent of the Elizabethans and Shakespeare's "Amid the acres of the rye," one would have to be a pedagogical contortionist not to take eyes and lips and cheeks at their face value, especially in Shiraz, where the girls are the most renowned in Persia for their black-eyed beauty.

In this vein, though they are not exactly what the Farsi says, the renderings of Sir William Jones (1746—94), who was the first Westerner to study the Persian poets seriously, and lived to see the first printed edition of Hafez's poems appear from the Calcutta Press in 1791, can hardly be beaten. They are in the style of his contemporary, Herrick.

Sweet maid, if thou wouldest charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck enfold,
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.

Boy, let yon liquid ruby flow,
And bid thy pensive heart be glad,
Whate'er the frowning zealots say:
Tell them, their Eden cannot show
A stream so clear as Roknabad,
A bower so sweet as Mosellay.

O! when these fair perfidious maids,
Whose eyes our secret haunts infest,
Their dear destructive charms display;
Each glance my tender breast invades,
And robs my wounded soul of rest,
As Tartars seize their destined prey.

But these eighteen lines represent only three couplets of the Persian, which, in my literal translation, run something like this:

If that fair Shirazi Turk gets my heart in her hand,
For the black mole on her skin I give Bokhara and Samarkand.
Pour the rest of the wine, boy, for in Paradise no one sees
The waters of Roknabad and Mosalla's flowers and trees.
These mischief-making gypsy beauties, tearing peace asunder,
Seize on the patience of my heart like Turks the feast of plunder.

Are these real or mystical beauties the poet is describing in his clipped, economical phrases? Hafez has the last word himself in his truly enigmatic style, in two lines which are written on the wall behind the tomb:

Chou beshenavi sokhan-e āhli del, magou ke khatāst.
Sokhan shenās ne'i, delbāra, khatā injāst.

When you hear the talk of the high in heart, don't say that it's wrong.
You are not versed in their talk, my friend, that's what is wrong.

From the tomb of Hafez we drove on, away from the town, and turned left towards the khaki hills. On their lower slopes lay the vineyards from which the sweet wine is produced that has been praised by the poets for centuries. Unfortunately most of it is too sweet and fruity for the taste of today, and it does not travel well, but a tolerable red wine is sold by the Jews.

There, in a green garden, against the naked, brown background of the hills, stood the tomb of Saadi, Hafez's predecessor by a century, who was born probably in 1184 and lived, they say, to be a hundred and eight years old. The life of Saadi presents a complete contrast with that of Hafez, for whilst Hafez was a stay-at-home, Saadi spent most of his life on the move. As a young man, through the generosity of his patron, Sa'ad bin Zangi, the ruler of Fars, from whom he derived his pen name, he left Shiraz to study in Baghdad. Whilst he was still studying abroad, the first of the great Mongol invasions, led by Jenghiz Khan, swept through the land like a pestilence. Saadi remained abroad, travelling in India, Arabia and North Africa. Whilst living in Jerusalem he was carried off by the Crusaders, who set him to work on the fortifications of Tripoli in Syria. When, eventually, he returned to Shiraz, he found that it had been far enough south to escape devastation by the Mongols, and he was given a place at the court of his old patron's son, where, in his venerable old age, he was known as the Sheikh.

Saadi was as earthly and practical as Hafez was unworldly and mystical. Although he was well versed in the doctrine of
the Sufis and in the manners of the dervishes, their symbolism does not obscure the meaning of his poetry. His two great works, the Bustan (orchard) and the Golestan (rose garden), are an old man's dissertations on justice and government, love, sacred and profane, and happiness, and on humility and other virtues. The Golestan is the more racy of the two, written partly in prose and spiced with pungent anecdotes about the great of this world. It is consequently the more popular, and was translated into English prose by James Ross as far back as the end of the eighteenth century.

Here are two examples of his anecdotal style:

“They tell the story of a gentleman who had a slave singularly handsome and her he regarded with an eye of fondness and affection. He observed to one of his friends: What a pity that this slave, with the beauty and grace which she possesses, should be a termagant and vixen. He replied: O brother, now you have made her your companion expect not the service of a waiting woman; for where the lover and mistress come into play, the distinction of master and slave is done away: When the gentleman begins to joke and toy with his angel-faced and handsome handmaid, it should not surprise if she order like a master, and he bear the burthen of coquetry like a bondswoman. It becomes the bondswoman to be a watercarrier and brickmaker. Let her be a charmer and she becomes a boxer and bruiser.”

And:

“They asked a doctor of Laws, saying: Were a man closeted in a private chamber with a moon-faced damsel, the door shut, her attendants gone to sleep, his appetite craving and lust domineering, as the Arabs say:—The dates ripe, and the gardener inviting us to eat—might it be possible by the virtue of his chastity to escape her temptations? He answered: If he might resist dalliance with the damsel, he would not escape the scandal of the slanderer:—“For though a man be safe from the mischief of his own lust, yet he is not secure from the evil report of his rivals.—It is possible to restrain thy own passion; but thou canst not curb the tongue of man. By repentance he may depreciate the wrath of God; but he cannot escape the slander of his fellow-creature.”

We entered the mausoleum, which like that of Hafez, is a modern construction. The old brick building was demolished
in 1948, and after four years, this handsome new monument—a twentieth century imamzade—designed by a Frenchman, was completed. Unlike Hafez's tomb, which is open to the winds, Saadi's is in an enclosed building under a blue dome. On the four corners of the interior extracts from his poems are inscribed—from "The Golestân", "The Bustân", "The Tayabat" (a collection of risqué jokes) and "The Badaye" (novelties). Behind the tomb, which is kept fragrant with flowers and incense, are written the words:

_Agar mara bedo'â'i madad koni, shâyad ke aferin-e khoda bar ravân-e Sa'âdi bad._

If you help me with a prayer, perhaps the blessing of God will be upon Saadi's soul.

The colonnade of white pillars to the left of the mausoleum leads to a library of Saadi's works, and beyond it there is a stone stairway, leading to an underground stream, which flows below the gardens that might fitly be called the Golestân itself. As we went towards it, the Member of Parliament for Abade spoke to me in French. "The water is as clear as crystal," he said, "and there are many fishes in it. The young ladies, when they are thinking of love, think that, if they drink this water, they will find the lover they want."

I descended into the depths, to a platform above a running stream, rather like a miniature tube station, with the stream disappearing into the darkness of the tunnels on either side. A swarm of grey fish, which looked like goldfish that have never seen the light of day, moved slowly to and fro. I bent down, cupped my hands in the water, and brought out some to drink. It tasted warm and earthy.

Leaving Saadi's tomb, I bade farewell to the Member of Parliament, who was due to lunch with his cousins. Thoughts of the two gardens of the poets occupied my mind, for it is in Shiraz that the Persian garden reaches perfection. The autumn oranges ripen in December, roses bloom all the year round, and after two months of crisp, sunny winter, spring is there again with the narcissi and geraniums.

In the casually hospitable Persian manner most of the gardens are open to visitors. One calls at the gate, and the gatekeeper summons the head gardener, who presents one with a stalk of whatever flower happens to be in bloom, or if there are no flowers, with an orange, and shows one around. The
gardens are owned by the great families of the South, but as often as not there is no one living in the mansion set in the middle of the garden, and one is shown over that too. But things are not organized on a shilling a head basis as in England.

The Bāgh-e Delgoshā, alongside the road back from Saadi's tomb, is the property of the Qavami family. In the midst of the groves of bitter oranges stands a tall house with decorative tiles all over its walls. Inside the high porch are ranged photographs and pictures of four generations of the Qavami. In the central hall inside, the water cistern in the old style of Persian houses has been paved over because it used to attract too many mosquitos, but the old picture postcard mementos and magazine cuttings of Bombay, Calcutta and Edwardian Europe remain nostalgically on the walls.

On the opposite side of Shiraz lies the Bāgh-e Behesht—the Garden of Heaven—which the small boy who guided me there, through the playground of a primary school, facetiously referred to as the Garden of Hell. This is more woodland than garden—a grove of poplars and plane trees, planted close together. The plane trees grow fastest, and are cut down first for timber, giving the poplars room to spread to their full stature. Rows of narcissi border the avenues through the trees.

This garden forms a delightful woodland scene, in contrast with the emptiness beyond the wall, but perhaps the finest garden of all is the Bāgh-e Eram on the northern side of the town. It used to belong to the leaders of the Qashqai, but was sequestered by the government after the tribal disturbances, and is now looked after by the police. It contains in abundance the three essential ingredients of a Persian garden—water, trees and flowers. A large square pond, permanently overflowing with abundant water, stands in front of the Qashqai mansion. The water flows down an avenue of cypresses and pines, in which one of the cypresses has the reputation of being the tallest in the world. On either side there are low, clipped hedges, bordering beds of roses and narcissi.

The mansion is covered with painted Persian scenes. At the main entrance the "immortals" of Darius the Great stand guard, and beside them there are scenes of tiger hunts and tigers attacking bulls. Inside the mansion the traditional pool in the middle of the central hall remains. Upstairs the rooms have world wide scenes painted on their walls. In one of them one can see Holborn Viaduct, but instead of Farringdon Street in front of it, there is an avenue from one of the parks,
with the statue of the Duke of York from Carlton House Terrace.

I visited these three gardens, but it was the memory of another one that remained imprinted on my mind. Walking up the hill towards the Koran gate, with a twenty-foot brick wall on my right, I came to a zinc door that was half open. Inside, two children were playing on the ground outside a small gate house, beyond which were rows of orange trees. I walked inside, with no one to prevent me, and up a path between the orange trees, bordered with jonquils, towards a tank, from which water was running to irrigate the ground. Cypress trees stood along the line of the outer wall, and a part of the garden was planted with apricot trees. Two or three gardeners salaamed me as I walked past.

It was a simple garden, less ornate, certainly less tidy than most in Europe, yet somehow, like the gardens of Hafez and Saadi, it seemed, against the bareness of the mountains, to be dripping with verdure, and against the blinding clarity of the sun, to be a perfection of shade, and against the untidiness and troubles outside, secluded by its high wall, to be a haven of orderliness and peace. I looked between the dark green triangles of the cypresses up at the ridge of hills, and at the little whitewashed towers on their peaks, where every rock stood out distinct in the bright, clear air, and I wished for the peace that Hafez had desired.
The days in Shiraz passed quickly, and it was several weeks before I found the opportunity to visit Pasargad, the first Achaemenian capital, founded by Cyrus the Great. But when I finally got there, with two of the lecturers from the University of Shiraz, I found that it was well worth going. Pasargadæ, as it is called in its Romanized form, is more than twice as far from Shiraz as Persepolis, and consequently is far less frequented. Although it is not far from the main road, one could easily pass it by without noticing it. Every truck driver on the Isfahan to Shiraz route knows Takht-e Jamshed, as Persepolis is called, but not one in ten can tell you anything about Pasargad.

We drove past Persepolis and followed the loops of the Pulvar River into the mountains. Half-way across the next stretch of plain we passed a track leading up to a village a quarter of a mile away on the skirt of the hills, where a Persian squire farms with his English wife. A few miles beyond, we stopped at Sivand for a meal in the "coffee house" as the tea houses are usually called in the South. Facing me, as I sat on the carpeted bench on the roadside, was a poster of a starving, ragged wretch, hanged by the neck from the bowl of an opium pipe, with the legend "Opium destroys life." But in spite of official condemnation opium is still widely smoked—by the professional classes as well as by the common people.

Five miles beyond Sivand we parted company with the river to climb over the range which the latter cuts through in a deep ravine. We went through another village, called Saadatabad, which contains the nearest telephone to Pasargad, and then we swept down the gentle slope of the Plain of Murghab, with the tomb of Cyrus visible, like a white dot, from five miles away.

The village at Pasargad, which looks big enough for five hundred people, but actually has a population in the region of four thousand, is called Mādar-e Suleiman, meaning Solomon's Mother. This name dates from Islamic times, when all the striking Achaemenid relics in the plain were named after
Solomon and his mother. Thus the great tomb, itself, was called *Mashhad-e Mādar-e Suleiman*, the Shrine of Solomon’s Mother, the massive platform on the northern edge of the plain was called her throne, and the ruined tower, which was probably of religious significance, was called the Prison of Solomon. For centuries the tomb of Cyrus was regarded as holy. On the right hand wall of the chamber inside it a mehārab, facing Mecca, was carved, and to this day, as I saw for myself, village women hang bits of red cloth beside it in the hopes of a successful pregnancy and a male heir.

The fields around the tomb of Cyrus are so flat and open that it is only when one gets close to it that one appreciates its great size. It stands on seven terraces of big stone blocks, which bring the ridge of its roof up to forty feet above the ground. The tomb itself is a simple rectangular building of white stone with a gabled roof, which is thought to be a king-size representation of the primitive hut of the Persian. There are no steps up the ledges of the terrace, the highest of which is over three feet high, but suitably sized pieces of stone have been put on them to make it easier to get up. Inside the empty chamber of the tomb I saw the old mehārab, the word Allah carved several times, and a roof blackened by the smoke of lamps. Above the main chamber there is another cavity, which can only be reached by a ladder, and was discovered recently, when the task of cutting out a bush, that was growing on the roof and threatening to split the slabs of stone apart with its roots, was undertaken.

But both chambers are empty. No sooner had the Achaemenian Empire crumbled than the despoilers were there. When Alexander first saw the tomb, the main chamber contained a golden casket with the holy book on it, and red velvet carpets. When he returned from India all this was gone. Plutarch says that it was a native Macedonian from Pella who looted and desecrated it. Other sources blame Orxines, an Iranian satrap. Whoever it was, Alexander had him put to death for his greed and impiety. Plutarch also says that the following epitaph was written on it in both Persian and Greek: —“O man! Whosoever thou art, and wh ensever thou comest (for come I know thou wilt), I am Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire. Envy me not the little earth that covers my body.” The inscription “I, Cyrus, King of Kings, lie here” was also said to have been written on its face, and Kerr Porter, visiting the site in 1821, claimed to have read “I am Cyrus the King” in cuneiform over the entrance. But none of these real
or fancied inscriptions remain, and the only writings on the tomb itself are graffiti in the Arabic script.

The years went by, and even the fact that it was Cyrus' tomb was forgotten. As late as fifty years ago the dispute as to whether it was his last resting place or not raged furiously. None of the recorded inscriptions were to be found there, and it was so completely different from the rock tombs of the kings that succeeded him, that the doubts were perfectly justified. Curzon, who weighed the evidence in detail in his encyclopædic work _Persia and the Persian Question_, came down decisively on the side of the believers. Since then, the unbelievers have faded into the background with the uncovering of more and more of the palaces that lay near it.

All this time, however, the holiness of the place was felt. Though the groves of trees mentioned by earlier writers had disappeared in Islamic times, Moslems still felt the sacred aura and had themselves buried in the precincts, which came to resemble a cemetery. Three big stones were erected, like the triliths at Stonehenge, facing the entrance door, and inscribed in Arabic writing. But nothing was done to replace the golden casket and red trappings, which would have made the interior look like the central shrine of a rich imamzade.

We turned from the tomb, which now stands in a treeless, open expanse, and went to the house nearby—a small museum—which was occupied by the members of the British Archeological Expedition led by David Stronach, the Director of the new British Institute of Persian Studies in Teheran. They were preparing to leave in two days' time, having been in that lonely place for two months, working mainly on one site—the Throne of Solomon's Mother.

To reach this throne we went a mile north-eastwards to where a hill with an artificial corner of massive stone masonry dominated the skyline, dwarfing the remains of two palaces and a ruined tower that lay between. When we got to the top of this huge platform, which is as high above the ground as the platform at Persepolis, though not so large, we found the workmen still on the site, although it was Friday. They were local villagers, happy to earn seven toumans a day for digging instead of doing nothing. They were in the middle of their lunch break, but one of them who, although there was no appointed foreman, seemed to be their natural leader, took us in hand to show us what had been done.

Only one end of the platform had been unearthed, but it was enough to show that the whole platform covered, or was
intended to cover, an area of about two acres round the natural core of the hill. It was faced with enormous roughly dressed blocks of stone, some as much as twelve feet long, which were originally bound together with iron clamps. The space behind them was filled in with a layer of more loosely packed blocks, and between these and the living rock of the hill there was a filling of uncut boulders.

On the part that had been excavated traces of buildings and a bath house with its drainage system had been found, but nothing at all palatial. It seems that, whilst the platform may well have been begun at the same time as the palaces on the plain below, it took so long to build that it was still uncompleted when, after the disastrous rein of Cambyses, Darius the Great abandoned Pasargad in favour of Persepolis. It may, for a time, have been used as an acropolis for the garrison instead of for a royal residence.

On the north-eastern side of the platform, which towers above the valley that divides it from the surrounding ridge, the British archaeologists had found the entrance stairway. With steps steeper than those at Persepolis, and left rough-hewn to give a good grip, it led straight up at the wall to a landing halfway, then turned right, parallel with the wall, to reach the top at the north-western corner. Many steps were missing, and may indeed never have been put in place, but the smoothly-chiselled surface of the wall, ready to receive them in a glove-tight fit, contrasting with the rougher finish above, showed clearly where it had been intended that they should be.

It was midday. Some of the ragged, excitable workmen were praying to Mecca, and it looked as though they were praying to the great steps themselves. Others, including many little more than children, followed us with eager shouts. They seemed to take an enthusiastic pride and interest in what they had been doing, pointing to the walls of the buildings, the courtyards and the bath houses that had been found.

It was all on a Cyclopean scale, with the huge stone slabs at one point penetrating deep into the hillside, and the lonely sweep of the surrounding mountains backed by the snows of Kuh-e Khātun, and the infinite vault of cloud-flecked sky above, nor was there anything intimate or small to be seen. The only small object, apart from the ubiquitous potsherds, that had been discovered in two months' heavy digging was a small cylindrical seal in black stone, showing the wheel and wings of Ahura Mazda, with a creature on its hind legs, which, I was
assured, was a lion, but which, to me, looked more like a unicorn or an ibex.

I looked at the laughing, capering villagers, and I wondered why they seemed so happy and gay. Cylinder seals at one time were common, and as recently as five years ago, could be had for five toman each. Very many went into private, amateur collections. Now the price has multiplied a thousandfold, and one pays up to two hundred and fifty pounds a-piece for the genuine article. For the benefit of the undiscriminating, the forgers have got to work in Teheran, but there is still a strong market for those who want only the real antique. How many, I wondered, had found their way into the pockets of these tatterdemalion excavators, and how many other precious little objects, with the prices so high for anything old and the temptation so great?

I stood on the top of Solomon’s Mother’s Throne and looked around. One of my two companions pointed out the line of a perimeter wall half a mile away across the valley. In its wide sweep it would have protected the north-eastern approach to Pasargad. In the opposite direction two faint lines across the fields, at right angles to each other and difficult to see without a trained eye, were thought to be the vestiges of a wall protecting the royal palaces.

To these palaces we now descended. We found them both neatly enclosed within modern mud-brick walls. The one to the south-east, called the Palace of Audience, contained a single column that was still standing, with a stork’s nest sprawled across the top. In addition, the bases of other columns were to be seen, and some very finely fitted paving stones. There were also two curious reliefs, which showed the legs and hind quarters of a bull, standing up like a human being, face to face with the legs of a man, part covered by the tail of a fish. The latter would seem to represent the fish god Ea, though it is not clear why only the lower parts of the body are shown, since, as the stone forms an overhanging rim above the reliefs, it does not look as if, at any time, they were continued upwards to show the figures in full.

The north-western of the two palaces is called the residential palace of Cyrus, and it is here that the most primitive of the trilingual cuneiform inscriptions is to be found. The Old Persian on a huge stone block at one end of the building reads, *Adam Kurush Khshayathiya Hakhamanishiya—I, Cyrus, King, Achæmenian—conclusive proof that we are, indeed, at Pasargad, “the Persian Camp.”* The fact that there is no
"great" in the inscription leads one to suppose that when Cyrus built this modest palace, he was still a vassal of the Median king, Astyages. If this is so, however, it does not make sense to say that Pasargad was chosen as the site for the royal retreat because it was the place where he won his victory over the Mede that was the first necessary step in the creation of the Persian Empire.

These palaces are certainly primitive in comparison with Persepolis. So are the two small fire altars to the north, with bases that have been cut into by the ever-hopeful seekers after loot; and one cannot help thinking of the vast increases in resources and facilities which enabled Darius and his successors to build their great edifices. But the epitaph of Pasargad is the huge Throne of Solomon's Mother, prepared to receive the stately colonnades, but left untenanted. If Darius had not decided to move house to the more extensive plain to the south, undoubtedly Persepolis would have been built here.

The main route between the two places probably did not follow the line of the present main road, but plunged south-westward into the river gorge called Tang-e Bulaghr, which is the most direct way. We walked into the first part of this gorge. Cliffs of volcanic limestone closed in on either side of us, dotted with towers of stone blocks so regularly formed that it was difficult to realize that they were not artificial. Here and there the dark mouths of caves marked the cliff face, and in addition there were innumerable vestigean caves in the form of hollows in the rock of circular shape or in the form of Gothic doorways, which also looked like the work of man until one saw how many there were and in what inaccessible places.

Below us the Pulvar River ran strong and muddy with the recent rain, flooding round the trunks of tamarisk trees. The gorge narrowed into a sheer cliff. And here there was no mistake. The work of ancient man was as clear as the light of day. For a distance of two or three hundred yards a ledge, four to five feet wide, had been cut into the living rock. The ledge traversed the rock face, winding in and out on the one contour line at a remarkably constant height. It had a pronounced rim, six inches or more high, on its outer side, which led one to think that it must have been built as an aqueduct.

The deep puddles lying in it after the rain pointed to the obvious possibility that it might have been a water channel. But at both ends of the cutting the stone work seemed to peter out, and there did not seem to be anywhere to take the water
to, so the theory that it was an old aqueduct faded. It was, in fact, more likely to have been a road, in which case the rim would have acted as a safety wall and there would have been some system of one-way traffic for mounted men or wheeled vehicles.

We passed through this cutting to a slightly wider part of the gorge, where an archaeologist had dug a deep pit in front of a cave in search of prehistoric remains. The track carried on down the gorge, to join up with the main road ten miles further on. But the light was fading, so we returned, scrambling back along the rim on the edge of the precipice to avoid the waterlogged Achaemenian road. I loitered a few minutes to climb some primitive steps up a broad slab of rock, and was rewarded by finding an old piece of iron, which seemed to indicate that iron tools were used in those far-off days.

The crags now towered above us in the dusk. High above, on their crests, the fortress-like rock formations were outlined against the sky, and amongst them a great bird was flying. I shouted. The echo came ringing back, and shouting again and again in this deserted place, I slithered down the soft earth of the riverside to where we had parked the Land Rover.

Now there was trouble. The ignition key was lost. We fixed a jumper wire from the battery to the coil, but we fastened it to the condenser terminal instead of the dashboard terminal, and in doing so we burnt out some wire which we could not locate. After further suggestions and efforts, growing less and less confident, we were forced to take a ride back to the museum with the archaeologist, and accept the hospitality of the archaeological team whilst an attempt was made to start the machine with a substitute coil.

This too proved to be in vain, so there was no alternative to abandoning the vehicle until expert help could be obtained from Shiraz. I decided I would hitch-hike back, and the other two agreed to do the same. So we went down to the main road and walked into the gendarmerie post, where we were invited to sit on the floor and eat pomegranates, whilst the most junior of the gendarmes stood on the road, waiting to stop one of the long distance lorry drivers.

After ten minutes a knight of the road came to a halt outside. We ran out and climbed up the iron ladder into the well of a big, empty Mercedes Benz truck, with a grinding, knocking diesel engine. But the driver would not let us stay there. He said it was too cold, and made the two most lightly-dressed of us squeeze into the cab. So we set off, the knight him-
Panorama of Persepolis seen from the south-east

Persepolis—bird-headed capital
Naqsh-e Rostam—tomb of Darius the Great
self, his mate, a passenger, and two of us, making five, all in the
driver's cab. We pressed on to Saadatabad, where they stopped
for their supper of eggs and rice, whilst we drank tea.

Then, on the moonlit road, all the places of the morning
passed us again in slow motion—Sivand, Istakhr, the old
Sassanian city, Persepolis, Marvdasht, with its blaze of electric
light visible far across the plain, the "God is Great" pass, and
Shiraz. With difficulty I made the knight accept some money
for his help, then walked away, bidding goodbye to the
lecturers, down the empty street. I fingered thoughtfully the
piece of iron I had picked up in the Tang-e Bulaghr, then threw
it away. At Pasargad they had told me it was part of a tele-
graph pole.
I went to Takht-e Jamshed with Mohammed Hassan Zamani, stopping for a moment at his home town, the large village of Zarqan, on the way. Seven miles beyond Zarqan we reached the narrow, old bridge of Pol-e Khan, where the road crossed the Pulvar River, guarded by a whitewashed and crenellated gendarmerie post. The new girder bridge was not yet in use, so all traffic was still negotiating the sharp bends on to and off the old one, past an overturned car on the sharpest of them, which should have served as a gentle warning to others.

The river was fairly full, and the whole of the plain of Marvdasht in front of us had grown a coat of green. Mohammed Hassan pointed up a track on the left to the new chemical fertilizer factory, which had nearly been completed by British and French contractors, and when we passed through Marvdasht, which has grown enormously in recent years from a village to a qasabe, we saw lorries piled high with sugar beet, waiting to drop their load at the sugar refinery.

Amid such signs of fertility the first impression I had had of the old Achæmenian capital stranded in the dry dust of a semi-desert obviously needed revising. Though the plain was treeless, it was still eminently fertile, and even the lack of trees was being rectified in parts with plantations of cypresses.

Persepolis was known to Marlowe, the Elizabethan poet. In his play Tamburlaine the Great he makes the young superman hero say: —

"Is it not passing brave to be a king
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?"

But in Persia from the Middle Ages onwards, it was called Takht-e Jamshed, or Jamshed's Throne, after the legendary king of the Pishdadian dynasty, descendant of Kaiomurs, Siamak, Houschengan and Thamauras, who is credited with
civilizing the Persians and instituting the spring festival of Nau Ruz, the New Year. It was built against the Kuh-e Rahmat, the Mountain of Mercy, which runs along the north eastern side of the plain, thus enabling the Achaemenian kings and their retainers to look out from the high platform of their palace-city over the wide expanse of their home domain.

With this mountain background the ruins do not stand out as one approaches, and one prepares oneself for something smaller than one had expected, something disappointing after all one had heard about them, and when one gets nearer and is able to pick out the pillars, like flagpoles, against the hillside, the façade of the platform takes up most of the picture and belittles them. It is only when one gets really close that the immense size of the construction becomes apparent, and a sense of awe at the gigantic conception of the whole complex of buildings develops. Up till then it has been like a photograph without a human figure in it to show the scale. When one eventually sees the people at the foot of the great platform, and on the steps leading up to it, completely dwarfed by the courses of huge blocks of stone, which take the platform up to fifty or sixty feet above the ground, one realizes, that, far from being disappointing, it exceeds anything one had expected or thought possible.

This great platform, a quarter of a mile long and over three hundred yards from the front to the mountainside at the back, was in fact high enough off the ground to constitute an almost impregnable wall against anyone below, and the monumental double staircase at the front was the only way up. The lower flights of this staircase slope away from the centre, but it then zigzags back from both sides to the top. It was wide enough to take eight men abreast and had a slope gentle enough for horses to negotiate. East stair was cut out of a single block of stone, bound in place with iron clamps, set in lead.

To see this stairway and the ruined palaces to which it led, I paid ten rials, or less than a shilling. As a man who was standing near me, a builder by trade, said, "If this were Teheran, they'd charge you five toumans and there'd be great crowds of people." But this was not Teheran, it was Fars, the ancient heart of Iran, and at that hour—nine o'clock in the morning—there were few people. Leaving the builder wistfully wishing he could build such things himself, I scaled the staircase alone, as Zamani had gone back to Zarqan to spend the Friday holiday with his family.

It was warmer than I expected. Half-way up the steps a large
lizard, about a foot long, looked up at me, and without haste
wiggled away under a stone. I thought of Fitzgerald's lines:

"They say the lion and the lizard keep
The courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep."

Or as Omar Khayyám of Nishapur has it in the less resonant
original:

"An qasr ke Jamshid dar u jām gereft
Ahu bache kard o rubah arām gereft.

In that palace where Jamshed quaffed his cup
The deer gave birth and the fox lay at ease."

At the top of the stairs I found myself on the platform itself,
looking south-east at the columns and terraces and doorways of
the ruins, silhouetted against the morning sun, and dominated
by the skeleton of the palace of Darius the Great. He it was who
abandoned the palace of Cyrus and of his son, Cambyses, at
Pasargad, for he was not of their lineage, having come to the
throne because of the forethought of a groom. It happened in
this way.

Whilst Cambyses was away in Egypt, back in Fars a pre-
tender arose, claiming to be his younger brother, named
Bardiya or Smerdis, whom, in fact, he had caused to be assas-
sinated in order to make his throne secure. The pretender was
a Magian named Gaumata, who by remitting taxes and en-
couraging a revival of the old religion, gained most of the
provinces to his cause. Then Cambyses died, it is said, in an
epileptic fit, and Gaumata seemed to be firmly in power. But
the army remained loyal to the Achaemenides, and seven young
men of the nobility conspired to kill the pretender. They made
a pact that they would choose as king the one whose horse
 neighed first after sunrise. Coming to know this, the groom of
Darius, or Daryush as the Persians more correctly call him, son
of the Satrap of Parthia, made sure that his horse was the first
to give tongue, and so Darius won the empire.

The story of the pseudo-Bardiya is told in cuneiform in the
huge rock inscriptions on the cliffs at Behistun on the road
from Baghdad to Hamadan, which follows the line of the old
route from Babylon to Ecbatana. They were first deciphered
by Rawlinson, a British Army officer appointed as instructor
in the Persian army of the Qajars.
These events took place in 522 B.C. The first palace Darius built was at Susa, the city of the plain, but he had hardly finished it before, about 520 B.C., he started Persepolis, where he continued building for about five years. The buildings were added to considerably by his successor, Xerxes, and to a lesser extent by the later Achæmenides up to Artaxerxes the Third, the last but one of the line.

The private palace of Darius, which is called the Tachara and is situated on the highest raised part of the platform, was the one whose doorways I could see silhouetted against the light. But between me and this relatively modest apartment stood the twelve flagpoles, which had grown before my eyes to immense, fluted stone columns over sixty feet high. They are all that remain standing of the seventy-two pillars which originally held up the roof of the great hall of the Apadana, which was started by Darius and completed by Xerxes.

These columns stand on round or square pediments nearly a yard across, and originally had enormous capitals of the heads and forequarters of bulls with heads of horse-like appearance, and dog-like horned lions, and griffins with the curved beaks of eagles. The creatures were in duplicate, supporting the cedarwood roof on the flat space between the two heads, and the capitals alone weighed several tons. Their weight probably helped to bring the pillars toppling down through the ages, but where the majority of them have gone to is a mystery, since there are hardly enough stone cylinders lying on the ground to account for the thirteen which have fallen since Pietro della Valle counted twenty-five in 1621, let alone the remainder of the seventy-two.

I walked straight across the Apadana to the Tachara, from which the brick walls have disappeared, leaving only the stone doorways and window frames standing. In the doorways facing north and south the king is shown walking with stately step, followed by an attendant who, in the main doorway, which faces south, away from the great staircase, perhaps for greater privacy, carries a parasol. The reliefs on the jambs of the doors facing east and west show the king ten feet high in mortal combat with two monsters. They are usually referred to as evil genii or representations of Ahriman, the devil. But I consider there is more to it than that. They are similar in appearance to the creatures found on the great Gate of Ishtar in Babylon. One is a unicorn, and the other is a hybrid, known as a Mushush, combining a single-horned lion with the wings of a bird, the hind feet of a griffin and the tail of a scorpion.
They stand on their hind legs whilst the king, facing them, grasps the horn in one hand and plunges a dagger into the belly with the other. Surely they are the old gods of Babylon, which the Persians overthrew.

This small palace, where the black stone, which gives it its nickname of the Hall of Mirrors, still shines with polish, contains inscriptions in at least five languages. The two big lintels of the southern porch, one of which has fallen to the ground, have trilingual inscriptions on them in cuneiform—Elamite, Babylonian and Old Persian—written by Xerxes to describe the construction of the palace by his father. Two of the windows have had inscriptions in the Arabic script added under them, whilst scattered here and there haphazardly are the names of several British Army servicemen, mostly Royal Engineers.

Below the impressive porch of the palace are some of the earliest friezes, with motifs that recur in the later buildings—a row of thirty-two guards armed with lances, the so-called immortals, a lion leaping on to the back of a bull, men walking up the steps bringing tribute in the form of lambs and sacks of corn and cups of wine. These friezes in relief are cut in grey-black volcanic stone, and in the middle of the day, they appear flat and dull, but in the early morning and evening, when the sun is low and picks out the relief with lines of deep shadow, they spring to life as if they were new-born from the stonemason’s chisel.

I was just in time to see those in the courtyard of the Tachara under such conditions, and thought that I had seen the best that Persepolis has to offer, but then I crossed over the highest point of all—the holy place terraced upwards like a smaller version of a Mesopotamian Ziggurat or a Mexican Teocali—and down the other side of it to the staircase of the Apadana that faces inwards towards the mountain. On this, and on the wall of the Apadana on either side of it the frieze theme was developed many times over, with a triple frieze on the lower course and another triple frieze on the upper one.

This eastern staircase and terrace wall of the Apadana is perhaps the finest single thing at Persepolis, for unlike the northern staircase, it has been preserved for centuries under the earth, and now the sculptures, protected by a recently constructed adobe roof, look as sharp-cut as if they were done yesterday. Indeed, they are so distinct that the watchman in charge of that section can easily distinguish for you two unfinished figures at the top of the stairs.
The friezes are a picture gallery of the vast Persian Empire, which was consolidated by Darius, and the peoples in it are distinguished clearly by variations in their dress and in the animals they bring with them. From the remotest south-west the frizzy-haired Ethiopians bring a giraffe and the Somalis a mountain goat. The Arabs come with a dromedary and a bale of cloth, the Thracians with a horse, Bactrians with a camel, Elamites with lion cubs, Medes with bracelets and clothes, Assyrians with a buffalo, Lydians with cloth and other valuables, whilst from the furthest east the Indians come with a donkey and with offerings carried in baskets suspended from a pole, after the manner of the present-day Newars of Nepal. Above the tributary peoples stand two rows of Persian and Median citizens. The Persians wear cylindrical hats and carry big quivers of the arrows that played a decisive part in their victories over the known world. The Medes wear round hats shaped very like those that are still worn today. The Persians are dressed in long robes and walk casually, some turning their heads back to talk to the next man behind. In contrast, the guards, alternate Mede and Persian, stand rigidly erect, Persians with shield and lance, Medes with lance alone. Above them, to complete the picture as it might have looked in reality on some special occasion, such as an annual rendering of tribute, perhaps at Nau Ruz, the charioteers drive one behind the other.

From this mass of figures I walked across an open space towards the mountainside to get to the Palace of a Hundred Columns. Here, in an area hardly smaller than that of the Apadana itself, but with a much lower platform and no staircases or friezes, Xerxes built a secondary hall of audience. Not a single column remains, possibly because they were made of wood, but more probably because, in a later age, the stone cylinders of which they were composed were removed to build Sassanian palaces. The doorways remain, however, and repeat, on a bigger scale, the motifs of the king as killer of monsters that appeared first in the palace of Darius. Here too, as everywhere at Persepolis, one sees the winged disc, the symbol of Ahura Mazda, whom the Aryan conquerors considered to be their all-powerful deity, though the winged disc, as such, is very much more ancient. One sees it on the victory memorial of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser at Nimrod of the ninth century B.C.

Xerxes, as the Greek historian Herodotus called him, or Khashayasha, built this huge audience hall in the full pride of
the power he had inherited from his father. His grandiose ideas included a giant porchway for it, flanked by winged bulls in the Assyrian manner, which was never completed, as well as the triumphal archway at the head of the grand staircase, which was finished as planned. But he, like Darius before him, still administered his empire from Susa. He was the Ahasuerus of the Bible "which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces."

I passed through the great porch of the Hall of a Hundred Columns, with its half-finished winged bulls, with cloven hoofs, each two feet across. Huge pieces of stone lay about haphazardly—the head of a bull which was once part of the capital of a column, parts of pedestals with lotus motifs carved on them, blocks carved with warriors; and further on, across the courtyard, there were capitals with the double heads of dogs and eagles; and below, deep in the ground, unseen except where a hole had been opened up and left unprotected, ran the tunnels in the stone for the sewage system.

Returning thus to the main staircase, I approached from the back the most gigantic of the relics of Xerxes that remains. It is his gateway of the nations, which stands at the head of the stairs and was, in his day, the portal through which all visitors had to pass. It was originally a massive square porch, with four interior columns, and great rectangular blocks of stonework forming gateways at both ends. These blocks and two of the columns are now all that remain. On the former, Xerxes has imitated a creature borrowed from the mythology of Assyrian might—the winged bull with the head of a man, his face framed in a cylindrical headdress and long, curled beard and hair.

These androcephalous bulls tower above one as one walks through the gateway, and seem to have inspired lesser creatures to leave a diminutive record of their existence on this earth in conjunction with the great Achæmenides. For every signature carved on the walls of the palace of Darius there are ten on the Gateway of Xerxes. The two westward-facing bulls, which are those one first reaches at the top of the stairs, have been most heavily inscribed, and British diplomats seem to have been the worst offenders. In large letters, as if in a puny attempt to approach the scale of the material, we read "Cap John Malcolm Envoy, etc., etc." and the names of two other captains under his, dated 1800.

This is none other than Sir John Malcolm, the brilliant soldier and diplomat, whose second mission from India to
Persia is evocatively recalled in his *Sketches from Persia*. The inscription was evidently made in the course of his first mission, at the time of Napoleon's ambitious plan to invade India through Turkey and Persia, during which an agreement was made with the Shah for the "extermination" of all French agents in the country. As a result of his experiences and of his interest in Persia that grew out of them, Malcolm also wrote the first comprehensive account of the country's past in his *History of Persia*.

Matching with Malcolm, on the other side, is the name of another "envoy, etc., etc."—Samuel Manesty Esquire, dated 1804, together with a captain, a lieutenant and two other esquires. Much later Lt.-Col. Malcolm J. Meade "H. B. M. Consul-General 1898" saw fit to add his name to the immortals and to add "and Mrs. Meade." As if with the permission of the Consular Service, the military then added their graffiti. A prominent inscription, complete with regimental crest, records that the 99th K.G.O. Central India Horse were there from 1911 to 1912, and latterly, in a half-hearted attempt to achieve immortality during the Second German War, which someone has tried to obliterate, some members of the 3/11 Sikhs have added the name of their regiment.

With pride of place already taken by the British, Stanley of the New York Herald—he who found Livingstone in Africa—found a space on which to write his name in 1870, whilst a certain MacIrath of Chicago Inter-Ocean presumed to match his better-known compatriot's name with his own in 1897 on the opposite bull. In addition, there are some few French and Russian inscriptions, but hardly any have been written by the Persians. Now they are too late in the field. I saw a group of four college girls remonstrating with the custodian when he stopped them doing the same. "But why not?" they complained. "Ah, but those are a hundred years old," he replied.

Following the custodian, I went into the middle of the great platform again, and there I watched a group of Qashqai tribespeople darting about, the men in tight black trousers and the women in flounced skirts of bright red and green, shouting in excitement at the figures on the walls, with the children running round them. They were like the people I had seen the day before at Badej in the mountains north-east of Shiraz, Turkish-looking, more volatile and excitable than the Persian peasants, the women with faces open to the winds under their head-bands of black or coloured cloth.

As the sun went down all the stone figures came to life again
—the Medes in their bulbous, balloon-like hats, which remain to this day in the form of the kollā-ye namadi, the felt hats which they sell in the Shiraz bazaar; and the Persians in truncated cones, the serried ranks of the soldiers, and the lines of civilians conversing and holding hands. The giant pillars, dwarfing the mere human beings below, threw long shadows right across the scene, and the great, statuesque mountains encircling the plain—table-top blocks like the mesas of Arizona, and ridges showing the naked strata of the rock, like the vertebrae of a backbone—grew hard and sharp. This was the view Darius had, and Xerxes and Artaxerxes, and it was what Alexander saw when, having made himself master of Persia, he felt himself to be master of the world. And after Alexander Persepolis crumbled into ruins, and became the haunt of the lion and the lizard, or if you will, the fox and the deer. Men even forgot who built it, and called it after Jamshed of the legends. So the poets imagined Jamshed making New Year wassail in the palace all the year round, and the Achaemenides and the complex and detailed administration of their empire, were forgotten, the cuneiform inscriptions, called "nail writing", were undeciphered.

And interest in the Achaemenides and in the past is still largely superficial. The money for archaeological research comes from abroad, in spite of Persia's wealthy thousand families, and Old Persian and Cuneiform are taught at the University of Shiraz by an Englishman, the Reverend R. N. Sharp, whose profound knowledge of the subject, after thirty years' residence in the country can hardly be equalled. Yet cuneiform is not difficult to read. It consists of an alphabet of only thirty-six letters, and is far simpler than the complicated hieroglyphic writing that preceded it. In all the inscriptions there are no more than five hundred words of Old Persian to learn.

As I turned to leave and join Zamani, who had just arrived with his car, a monstrous fat man with seven children came up to me and shook me warmly by the hand. "You know these buildings have been here five thousand years," he said. "We are certainly a great people. If ever you need anything, please let me know." And he wrote his name and address down for me in red pencil in my notebook, taking up a whole page.
Rustam’s Pictures

In Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* the Wife of Bath, whose prologue is longer than her tale, talks to the pilgrims about her five husbands. The first three were licorous old men she married for their money and ruled with a rod of iron. The fifth was a young man she married for love, and the more he beat her the more she loved him. But the fourth had been a good man with whom she had hoped to live long, and yet it was not to be, for:

> He died when I came back from Jordan stream  
> And he lies buried under the rood-beam,  
> Albeit that his tomb can scarce supply us  
> With such a show as that of King Darius.”

The tomb of King Darius, famous throughout the ages and thus mentioned by the Father of English poets, was what I now set out to see. Four miles to the north of Persepolis, on the far side of the River Pulvar, three great crosses can be seen cut into the mountainside, and to their right a fourth stands obliquely facing them. They are so large that they can easily be seen from the neighbourhood of Persepolis itself. Of the four, the tomb of Darius the Great is the second from the right, the others being those of his successors, Xerxes the First, Artaxerxes the First and Darius the Second.

The tombs were built during the lifetime of the kings who were destined to be buried in them, and were all constructed according to the same plan. They are seventy-five feet high and sixty feet wide, cut back into the sheer face of the rock, with a ledge level with the lower line of the horizontal arm of the cross giving access to a door. The rest of the horizontal arm is occupied by imitation columns, cut in high relief, with capitals of the same horse-like bulls’ heads that graced the columns at Persepolis. Above the capitals are shown the ends of imitation roof beams, which reveal how the great halls at
Persepolis must have been constructed. These support an ornamental frieze. Above the frieze, in the upper part of the vertical arm, two rows of men are shown, representing the nations of the empire. They hold on their heads a table, with bulls’ heads at its corners, on which the dead king stands, facing the sacred flame on the fire-altar. The bird-like winged god, Ahura-Mazda, floats above, between the king and the altar, whilst behind the altar can be seen the disc of the sun.

The feet of the crosses are more than twenty-five feet above the ground, and the ledge is another twenty-five feet of sheer rock above that, so the tombs would have been inaccessible to any casual marauders. But, of course, they have been rifled long ago. None of the ingenious tricks employed by the Egyptians to outwit grave-robbers were used by the Achæmenians, and two longish ladders were all that was necessary to reach the tombs.

Five hundred to a thousand years later the Sassanides added their panels of carvings below the four great crosses. They gave the place its name of Naqsh-e Rostam—Rustam’s pictures. Facing the four crosses stands the well-preserved building of the biggest Zoroastrian temple known to us. Similar, perhaps, to the now vestigeal tower at Pasargad, Zoroaster’s shrine at Naqsh-e Rostam is a solid square tower about fifty feet high, with a long staircase leading up to a door half-way up one side. The building is now twenty feet below the surface of the ground, and part of the staircase, shaken down by an earthquake, is spanned by a metal ladder. But the main structure still stands solid and four-square. It is dark inside, for the six windows on each side are blind ones, mere indentations in the stone, and admit no light. The only light admissible inside would have been the sacred flame.

The tower is called the Ka’aba-e Zardosht, using the same word ka’aba as is used for the old shrine of black stone at Mecca, but it is, of course, far older than Islam. It is older than the Parthian and Greek and Pahlevi inscriptions on its three blind sides, and has been preserved from the earliest times of the Zoroastrian religion.

Today in Iran Zoroastrianism is a thriving, living religion, with over twenty thousand adherents. It is more tolerated than it used to be, for with the modern emphasis on the past greatness of Iran, and on the continuity of the monarchy from the great days of the Achæmenians and the Sassanians, it is hardly possible to oppress the religion of those days. In the heyday of Islam, however, when the greatest of the mosques were being
built in Isfahan, the Zoroastrians were in a sorry state. The doctor, John Fryer, in Isfahan in 1677, found them much degenerated.

"The Gabers or Gaures," he says in his New Account of East India and Persia, published in 1698, "are the true Persian Race, the undoubted Heir both of their Gentilism and Succession, attributing Divine Honour to the Fire, maintaining it always alive in their Delubriums or Places set apart for their Worship; and if by Chance they should let it go out, they must take a Pilgrimage to Carmania (i.e. Kerman), where their most Sacred Fire was never extinguished.

"These," he continues, after describing their dress, "seem to me the most lively representations of the Figures both on the Rocks, and on the Palace itself at Persepolis: These are instances how momentary the Grandeur of this World is: These, once the Lords of all the Earth that the Ocean washes on this Side, and the Hellespont shuts in on the other, forgetful of the everlasting name of the Grand Cyrus, who first subjugated the Medes and Assyrians under the Persian Yoke, and established the Seat of Empire among their Renowned Ancestry: These, unhappy for their Sloth and Cowardice, are the reproachful Relicks, nay, Dregs rather of the former Glory of their Name and Nation, which once gave her Laws, as Unalterable Decrees to all People, Nations and Languages: These thus dwindled and degenerated, are the miserable Posterity of the Persians; who for so many Ages have with a tame Patience submitted by a sordid Servitude to those whom their Forefathers would have scorn'd to have admitted to be their Slaves; only that they might idely enjoy their Country Gods, Adore the Eternal Fire, and the Influence of the Sun upon their Altars, now Beastly Impious more than ever, because they have contaminated them with the Impure Rites and Diabolical Customs of the worst of Pagans.

"For there are some of them Couple together in their Sacred Feasts (as they term them) promiscuously, when they meet in their Delubriums, where they spread a clean Table-cloth on the Floor, on which they place their Banquets to inflame their Lascivious Heat, which must be acknowledged to be set on Fire by Hell, whatever the Extract that they Worship as a Spark of the Sun, may be defended to be."

Fryer goes on to describe their "Impure Feasts," which are reminiscent of, and contemporaneous with the tantric rites in India. But it would be unwise to accept his description at its face value, as we may assume his information was received
from Moslem or Armenian Christian sources and was probably biased.

Another false trial, confusing the nature of true Zoroastrianism, has been laid across Western minds by the megalomaniac outpourings of the German professor, Nietsche, who presumed to take the name of Zoroaster, or Zarathustra, in vain as a title for his own unbalanced effusions. “Also sprach Zarathustra” is no more Zoroastrianism than was the Nazi creed of the super-man and the super-race, but it certainly coloured Westerners’ minds concerning Zoroastrianism.

I was fortunate in meeting one of the leading Zoroastrians of Iran—a General who was a great athlete in his youth, and was still full of vigour, both of mind and body, at the time of our meeting. In the course of several sessions, during which we were together, he told me about the beliefs of his people.

The basis of Zoroastrianism is very old indeed, and goes back to the ancient Vedic hymns of the Aryans, and the worship of the great forces of nature, as they were seen by the nomadic herdsmen on the open prairies of Asia. Wind and fire, water and earth are all personified in the old Vedic religion, and it is from this that they retained their sanctity in Zoroastrianism. And of these, fire was the most vital, not only because it seemed to be a spark of the sun, without which there would be no light or life, but also because, in the days before matches existed and before the general use of flint and tinder, it was essential to preserve it.

The fire was an offshoot of the sun, and the sun, as to so many primitive religions, was the supreme moving force, the symbol of light, which was personified in Ahura Mazda. The central core of the religion was the endless drama of the struggle between light and darkness, between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. As the General said to me, “Children are afraid of the dark and reassured by the light, and so it is in the world. But Ahura Mazda and Ahriman are both under God. Ahura Mazda is like an intermediary. Just as the Battalion Commander cannot go straight to the Divisional Commander, but must go first to the Brigadier, so we go to Ahura Mazda.”

Zoroaster was born into this religion in Azerbaijan, known in classical times as Atropatene, and hence regarded as the cradle of Zoroastrianism. He lived about a hundred years before the Buddha, and like him, he was a reformer of existing beliefs rather than a founder of anything entirely new. He preached against the bloody sacrifices of the Magi. Much of his time was spent in the eastern part of the empire, where he
is said to have converted Darius' father, the Satrap of Parthia.

Like the Buddha, leaving the comforts of his home, he travelled up and down the land, crossing forests and deserts, sleeping in caves or under the stars, but failing to make any converts and remaining alone. At last, after twenty years, he made a convert, and thenceforth the number of his followers increased rapidly. Cyrus the Great accepted his teachings and took them as the official state religion, reserving for himself the office of high priest.

In Zoroaster's vision the battle between Light and Darkness was constant, and demanded eternal vigilance on the part of mankind. The light was equivalent to the good; and the three tenets of right speech, right thought and right action had to be constantly upheld. Likewise the four holy elements—water, wind, earth and fire, which are the old gods Apam Napat, Vahyu, Zam and Atar—must never be defiled. A dead body cannot be washed, since it would defile the water; it cannot be buried, as it would defile the earth; and it cannot be burnt for fear of defiling the fire. Therefore the Zoroastrians were constrained to simply expose the dead in special places set aside for the purpose—high places or the mouths of caverns, called dakhme.

Zoroaster, or Zardosht, to give him his Persian name, also gave light and darkness geographical bounds. In the south, in Persia, lay the blessed Kingdom of Light, whilst to the north were the kingdoms of darkness and evil. And from the north, after he had lived to the ripe old age of seventy-seven, came his death at the hands of a soldier of one of the invading Turanian hosts.

There are certain hymns, called gathas, said to have been the actual sayings of Zoroaster, but they cover less than a thousand lines in all. The holy books of the Zoroastrians, the Avesta and the Zand, were written much later. By this time, as with Buddhism, the simple vision of the master, and his simple abstract principles of devotion, purity and goodness, had been made complex and personified in the deities they had been intended to supersede. The abstract virtues became concrete, and were represented as angels. Mithras, the ancient sun-god, who killed the primaeval bull at Ahura Mazda's command, became the angel, and indeed the god, of Empire. In time he was taken over by the Roman legions and transformed into something very different from pure Zoroastrianism. Likewise, Sraosha, an angel representing devotion to the divine law, became represented as living in a great palace, supported by a
thousand columns, eclipsing Persepolis itself, and Anahita, 
the ancient goddess of the waters and of fertility, who was 
presented as the gentle shepherdess of the human flock, rode 
in a chariot drawn by four shining white horses.

These concepts, which gave to early Christianity its ideas of 
winged angels populating heaven, have tended to drop out of 
modern Zoroastrianism, except as poetical fancies, and the 
religion concentrates on the moral principles. Under the 
Moslems there was oppression to a greater or lesser degree, 
according to the feelings of the ruling kings. As non-Moslems 
they were required to pay heavy taxes, and most of those who 
could afford to do so took ship from Bushire or Bandar Abbas 
for Bombay, where their descendants became known as Parsis 
and soon became leading members of the mercantile com-
munity. They spread to other parts of India also, and some of 
them, switching their interests from trade to industry, have 
become the leading industrialists of the sub-continent.

In Iran the Zoroastrians that remained were called gabr, and 
lived mainly in Yezd and Kerman. Latterly they have in-
creased in number in Teheran, and recently a complete new 
suburb was built in the north-east of the city with financial 
backing from three wealthy Parsis. It is called Teheran Pars, 
and although not confined exclusively to Zoroastrians, they are 
encouraged to live there. It is the proud boast of Teheran Pars 
that, as far as possible, only good men are permitted to buy or 
rent property there, and that there has never been any need 
for a police-station in the area. The religion does not actively 
seek converts, and is handed down within the family. Strictly 
speaking, no Zoroastrian may marry outside his religion, but 
nowadays quite a number of them do, especially those who 
have been abroad to Europe or America. Nevertheless the 
numbers are becoming greater, and they live on equal terms 
with other citizens, assured of more and more consideration 
with each new attempt to revive Iran’s ancient glories and 
curb the power of the Shia theologians.

Thus much the General told me, as we sat over tea and 
oranges. On the fourth occasion I went to see him as usual, but 
the soldier at the door of the Officers’ Club said that he was ill 
and had been taken to hospital. I was surprised, because the 
previous week he had looked well and full of energy. “I’ll wait 
till our time—half past four,” I said. “And then, if he doesn’t 
come, I’ll go away.” I waited. “I don’t think he’ll come,” the 
soldier said. “You had better go and see the Brigadier. “All 
right,” I said. “I will take you there,” he replied.
Naqsh-e Rostam—triumph of Shahpur I over Valerian

Dasht-e Arjan
Shah Cheragh, Shiraz— the third holiest place in Iran
We went upstairs to the Brigadier's office, which was unexpectedly occupied by five or six officers in conference. "Please excuse me," I said. "I arranged to meet the General. Can you give me any news of him?" The Brigadier spoke softly. "I am sorry to have to tell you he is dead."

It was only too true. He had died tragically young as a result, I learnt later, of an unexpected allergy to an injection. His body was taken to Teheran, and there, on a bier borne on the shoulders of his fellow generals, he was given a military funeral. His mortal remains were taken to the dakhme-ye gabrhā—the Caverns of Silence in the hills to the south of the city, whilst a memorial service on the occasion of his "fortunate" death, as the saying is, was held by his brother officers. His name was Rustam too.
After Persepolis had been gutted and Alexander's meteoric career had come to an end, Persia became the Satrapy of his most powerful lieutenant, Seleucis, and for a hundred and fifty years the kingdom of his descendants, the Seleucids. They, in turn, gave place to the Parthians for three and a half centuries. But when the Parthians declined, power returned to the true Iranians with the dynasty of Sassan.

Sassan himself was high priest of the temple of Anahita at Istakhr, which lies three miles to the north of Persepolis, and in A.D. 224 his grandson, Ardashir, priest-king of Persis, revolted against Artabanus V and killed him. Ardashir founded the dynasty of the Sassanians, and thus the seat and centre of power returned to the south, to the heartland of Fars, replacing the Parthian summer capital of Ecbatana and winter capital of Ctesiphon on the left bank of the Tigris. There followed four centuries, during which the Persians more than held their own against the Romans and Byzantines, and wrote another brilliant chapter of their history.

Ardashir the First was succeeded by his son, Shahpur, who built the great city to the west of Shiraz that bears his name. One fine winter's day, in the company of one of my lecturer friends, I took the coast road to visit its remains. It was the road to Bushire on the Persian Gulf, and we found it asphalted for a couple of miles up to a new cement factory. But then it went off into the rough, climbing over an uneven conglomerate of hump-backed hills into the country of the Qashqai.

At intervals there were Beau Geste-like forts, some as big as caravansarais and others simply towers by the roadside, where gendarmes might hold out against a tribal attack until the arrival of reinforcements. During the tribal disturbances soon after the Second German War banditry was common on this road, but now, with considerable truck traffic plying between the Gulf and Shiraz, it is considered fairly safe, though further east, in the Lar province, the poor and neglected south-east
corner of Iran—hold-ups still occur. In one such, two Americans met their quietus, trying unsuccessfully to return rifle-fire with their pistols; in another, two members of the British survey team which has been ranging all over these remote areas with Land Rovers and helicopters, narrowly avoided being hacked to pieces with long knives, by stamping on the accelerator in the nick of time.

But although banditry has waned, family feuds continue, and sometimes break out into violence, Wild West style. The disputes of the great land-owning families are over land tenure and water rights, and since the land settlement still remains obscure, no court of law can give a reasonable judgement. In any case, neither side wishes to bring the matter to court, and members of the opposing families may well meet each other with the greatest appearance of amity and exaggerated expressions of courtesy at social gatherings in Shiraz. But out in the hills it will be different. One fine day a party belonging to one side, stuffed into a Land Rover, will be peppered by shot gun fire from a mounted gang. A while later, at night, a member of the other side will be shot down at the wheel of his Mercedes by an unknown assailant. And so the feud goes on. But on two things both sides are agreed—firstly, never to invoke the law, and secondly, to keep the peasants in their place.

The first village of the Qashqai which we reached was at the northern end of a plain some five miles long, in the lee of the mountain crags behind it. The houses were built of stone, with wooden roofs covered with branches stuck in adobe. There were also a number of black tents, attached like temporary annexes to the permanent establishment. In a wide space between the village and the road lay the graveyard, covering almost as large an area as the village itself. Half a dozen of the graves had stone animals on them about four feet long, which looked like a cross between a lion and a dog, the rest were merely inscribed. As I walked about in the graveyard, women passed, carrying goatskins of water in their arms and cooking pots on their heads. A man who had been eyeing me from a roof came down to speak. “Is this village Dasht-e Arjān?” I asked. “Evet,” he replied—the Turkish for “yes.”

At the end of the plain, or dasht, of Arjan the road rose to cross the first of the six fearsome kotāls that bar the way between Shiraz and the coast. They are gigantic escarpments of rock, lying in a series of parallel ranges, that run from northwest to south-east and form the outer edge of the high plateau of Iran. They rise up a thousand or two thousand feet, and
then plunge down the other side in great slabs of sloping rock
two or three times that height.

The road reached the top of the first one, called the Kotal
of the Old Woman, in a series of dangerous, tight, hairpin
bends. From there one could see the ranges of the other kotāls
blue into the distance, and the enclosed plain far below, lead-
ing up into a broad valley, savannah-like in character, but
apparently deserted. Half-way down the three thousand foot
drop stood a fort on a bluff of rock, with a tea house and a
rough village nestled round it. We stopped here for glasses of
tea, which the local gendarmerie insisted on paying for.

From the small plain below, the road rose again to cross
the Kotal of the Daughter. The rise was insignificant, but the
descent again was formidable. A blind beggar, wearing an old
army greatcoat, stood at the top, to receive the rials that most
people thought it prudent to give him before going down.
Away below, on the steep mountain slope three hundred feet
lower down, lay the metallic blue wreck of a car that had
taken its last plunge.

The road traversed under the crags, where a shelf had been
blasted out for it, and then did a sweep to the north in order to
make the descent. I could see the old track zigzagging down
the almost sheer bluff of a cliff. It was the old trade route
between Bushire and the interior, built up with masonry
work in steps, like the old Inca trials in the Andes, and it
seemed incredible that the Persian Gulf ports like Bushire had
been so flourishing in the past, when one actually saw on the
ground the difficulties of the route on which precipitous moun-
tains alternated with scrub, and further north, with actual
desert. There were long stretches without a town and with
hardly a village, and there was little protection against armed
robbery.

The next plain below the Kotal of the Daughter is only half
the height above sea level of Shiraz, and as we looked down on
it, the appearance of warmth and greenness raised our spirits.
An extensive lake on the left was no mirage, but real water. A
herd of dromedaries was grazing by the roadside. And further
down, approaching the town of Kazerun, we saw the first palm
trees.

From Pol-e Goman, the village at the foot of the kotāl, the
road ran level and mainly straight across the plain to Kazerun,
where we stopped for lunch. We had been told that there was
no hotel in this small town, set beside plantations of date
palms, but we found that this was not true. The Shahpur hotel
provided us with an excellent meal of rice with a *khoresht* of stewed mutton and lentils, all for three toumans, one-fifth the price of a meal in the upper-class hostelries of Shiraz. This we ate amongst the truck drivers of the Shiraz-Bushire route.

Kazerun, which rose to importance after the decay of Shahpur, had considerable fame in the Middle Ages. It dealt mainly in cloths and fabrics, and had its own bank for the convenience of merchants trading between Iraq and Persia. Ibn Battuta, who must have visited the town in the middle of the fourteenth century, mentions the world renowned shrine of Abu Ishaq situated there.

"I left Shiraz," he says, "to visit the tomb of the pious sheikh Abu Ishaq al-Kazeruni at Kazerun, which lies two days' journey west from Shiraz. This sheikh is held in high honour by the inhabitants of India and China. Travellers on the Sea of China, when the wind turns against them and they fear pirates, usually make vows to Abu Ishaq, each one setting down in writing what he has vowed. When they reach safety the officers of the convent go on board the ship, receive the list, and take from each person the amount of his vow. There is not a ship coming from India or China but has thousands of dinars in it vowed to the saint. Any mendicant who comes to beg alms of the sheikh is given an order, sealed with the sheikh's seal, stamped in red wax, to this effect: "Let any person who has made a vow to the Sheikh Abu Ishaq give thereof to so-and-so so much," specifying a thousand or a hundred more or less. When the mendicant finds anyone who has made a vow, he takes from him the sum named and writes a receipt for the amount on the back of the order."

Now Kazerun is again reduced to unimportance. The truck drivers ate and went, and we followed in their dust on the main road, which goes north-west out of the town, past the fortified military barracks. About seven miles out, we took the right fork, along the long trail to Ahvaz, nearly four hundred miles away on the Mesopotamian plain. But we had a mere eight miles to go along this track, which keeps close to the mountain range on the right hand side, where an aqueduct skirts the base of the slope.

We were not quite sure how far we would have to go before reaching the antiquities, so as soon as we saw a large ruin on the rocks to the right, we decided to go up there and investigate. It was only about two hundred feet above the road, and in a short time we had reached it. In the past it had obviously been a large fortress, built of roughly-fashioned blocks of stone,
uneven in size, which were crudely cemented together. There were a number of walls and arches still standing, but most of the stone work had fallen away, leaving a massive scree of boulders strewn down the hillside.

The fortress was clearly of Sassanian origin, and a citadel. It was ponderous and thick-set, with Roman arches like a mediaeval castle, and appeared to be much cruder than the older Achæmenian work. The use of large amounts of fairly hard cement had enabled the later builders to do without carefully dressed stone blocks for their constructions, and to make do with rough materials, even in big buildings.

But where was Shahpur? I turned round from the rough walls of the fortress and looked down at the plain. I saw patches of cultivation, interspersed with stony, barren areas, with here and there a village or a walled and fortified plantation, and one or two groups of nomad tents. But where was Shahpur? Was it where some ruined walls stood out from the ground about three-quarters of a mile away, or was it behind the gendarme post on a hillock to the right, or was it round the corner in the curve of the mountains?

Then I saw that the plain in front of me was pitted with an unusually large number of holes, which I had taken to be qanāts, and that the barren, stony patches were more in evidence than cultivated areas. The hillocks, too, seemed to be more thick on the ground and regular in shape than on the rest of the plain. And as I looked, I noticed a long mound with a long dip in the ground to the left of it, running in a straight line away from the fortress towards the ruined walls in the middle distance. And suddenly the whole thing came into focus. I was looking at a colossal square, surrounded by a wall and a moat. The qanāt-like holes were really buildings that had caved in over their cellars, the stony patches were piles of stone rubble from the larger buildings, and the hillocks were unexcavated artificial mounds that must have been occupied by more important edifices. It was Shahpur itself, and it had been under my eyes the whole time—a city built in a vast square, with sides three-quarters of a mile long, according to the most modern principles of town planning as expounded by the Greek, Hippodamus of Miletus, with avenues and streets intersecting each other at right angles, as in Teheran and New York.

We descended from the citadel, but not to the plain. First we wanted to see the author and founder of this great urban development, and to do that we had to go away from the plain,
turning the corner to the right in order to penetrate into the mountains. Going upstream along the course of the Shahpur River, which forms the northern moat of the ancient city, we drove eastwards through the jaws of a narrow ravine, which has rock-cut reliefs on either side of it. Beyond the gorge we found a mountain valley, in which the bare rock faces made a stark contrast with the thick vegetation round the river bed.

Four or five miles up, just before the valley narrowed again into another ravine, there was a ford across the river, and a track which doubled back half a mile down the right bank and then climbed up the lower, less precipitous slope of the mountain face. Above us, we could see the object of our journey—the mouth of a mountain cavern, shaped like a half-moon just below the sheer rock. It looked scarcely accessible, and we were only able to tell it from the other cave openings in the cliff by the zigzag path leading up to it.

The cave appeared to be quite close, and I thought a quarter of an hour would give us enough time to reach it. But its great size had deceived me. It took more than half an hour to climb the track, which wound its way up round a moraine of fallen boulders, and what had looked like a small platform below its mouth turned out to be a series of terraces, with no less than two hundred and thirty steps leading up them. These had been built recently in order to enable visitors to reach the cave without the use of mountaineering skill and equipment.

When I reached the top, I was able to appreciate the size of the cavern too. A flight of pigeons came swishing out of the entrance, which was more than fifty feet across. A short way back, extending from the roof to the floor, and in the middle of the entrance, as though dividing it into two vaults, stood an enormous statue of Shahpur the Great. His huge body, twenty feet high, and full-featured head, with thick bunches of hair bursting out from under the royal crown, seemed to emerge from the very rock itself. And this, indeed, was originally the case, for the figure was not carved separately and erected there, but was cut out of a giant stalactite that had existed from time immemorial in the cavern's mouth. In later times the statue either fell or was knocked down, and arms and legs were broken. It has now been re-erected in its original position by the army engineers of Number Five Corps, who have also meticulously labelled the broken pieces and tabulated all the vital statistics, even down to the length of the eyebrows.

This is not all, however. Beyond the statue and the entrance
gallery, the walls of which show evidence of having been smoothed off by the Sassanians, the cavern opens out into a vast circular hall, with domed and vaulted roof almost hidden in the shadows above, and floor lying in the gloom below. I judged this hall to be not less than two hundred feet across, and high enough to contain the dome of Saint Paul's cathedral. It appeared to have been evened out and improved artificially, although there were few other signs of human occupation. A circular cistern in a cavity on the far side, for the storage of the water dripping down from the roof, may have been built in Sassanid times or at a later date. Beyond it, two narrowing galleries led into the heart of the mountain, one of which ended in an empty tomb. Further investigation was unfortunately precluded by the weakness of my torch batteries.

So we returned to the entrance, wondering at the use to which the cavern had been put. With the statue of the king standing guard at the door, but little else inside, it may well have been a storehouse—a treasury, perhaps, like a giant safe—or a last-ditch retreat, an antique Berchtesgaden, which, with sufficient food stored inside and water dripping from the ceiling, could hold out indefinitely except, possibly, against the danger of being smoked out. Certainly the cave must have been close to the secret heart and core of the Sassanid Empire, and if the lack of traces of any ancient track leading up to it is anything to go by, the secret was kept for the few rather than for the many.

As I stood wondering, I heard footsteps padding up the steps. Soon a man carrying a service rifle and a large bandolier of .303 ammunition, and wearing canvas shoes, appeared on the entrance platform. He was a Qashqai, and had been out hunting since midday, he said, hoping to bag a mountain goat, but he had got nothing. He paced about the cavern, looking at me out of a rather small and dark, but very well-formed, smooth face, then looking away, swinging his rifle about and looking back at me.

My companion had disappeared for the moment into the depths of the cavern and I was alone. Could the hunter be considering whether I might do instead of a goat? I wondered. But still I had nothing with me except the old clothes I stood in and a cheap German camera, bought in Singapore for twelve pounds. I stood my ground, studying the statue and its statistics again, and gazing at the Farsi translation of an old Pahlavi inscription which has been removed from the wall to the safety of a museum. It has been wisely removed, too,
for already some vandals have broken the inscribed tablets left by the engineers, either out of sheer malice or in the ancient superstition that stone tablets contain treasure.

Eventually the hunter thought it was not worth staying any longer. Having asked for a cigarette, with which I was unable to oblige him, he said, "God protect you," and went on his way. A few minutes later we followed him. Gangs of jackdaws were out for the evening, jack-jacking and wheeling about in front of the cave holes in the cliff above. Three-quarters of the way down we came upon a boy who looked the image of the hunter, and told us he was his son. He too had a rifle—a .22—and had been sent out to shoot partridge. Even allowing for sitting shots, I thought, hunting wild fowl with a rifle is a pretty exacting test of marksmanship.

On the way back down the ravine it was growing cold and dusky, so we decided to camp. There seemed to be no better place than amongst the ruins of Shahpur itself, and accordingly we crossed the main road and drove past the gendarmerie post into the scarred and pitted area of the ruins. Choosing a flat patch well down from the average level of the ground, and concealed beyond a distance of a hundred feet, we pitched our tent and settled down for the night. Camping may be officially discouraged for tourists, I reflected, but half a million people in Iran camp every night of their lives, so why should we not do so too?

In fact we had some Qashqai nomad neighbours, whose black tents were pitched near a walled building, used as a guest house and inhabited by the custodian of the ruins. But it was good to be out in the open. Orion's belt and sword shone brightly above, the village dogs barked at moonrise and barked again at dawn, accompanied by the complaining ee-aw of reluctant asses, disturbed too soon from their stables, and I thought back to the old days in India, looking at deserted cities in the Deccan.

Soon after dawn we beat the bounds of Shahpur, or Bishapur, as the city is sometimes called. We walked about the remnants of the buildings, now on the stone blocks of old streets, now climbing over the rubble of a wall, now on the edge of a well so deep one could not see the bottom, now on the flat rectangle of a city square, and now on a field seized by a local farmer out of the ruins where the stone detritus was least.

The building in the far eastern corner, which I had seen from the citadel the day before, proved to be a palace enclosed by a high stone wall, close to the perimeter wall and the broad
outer moat, which is now dry, but which must in ancient times have been fed with water from the Shahpur River. Within the wall of the palace there were a number of fragments of large pillars lying on the ground, a stone pavement, and some terraces in rough stone and cement construction like that of the citadel. It all seemed to be a retrogression from the great days of Persepolis. The work was cruder, and the pillars were not constructed in six-foot lengths, but in slices shorter than their diameters, fitted into one another with a square knob and socket. One such pillar, lying on the ground, looked as if it had been sliced up like a swiss roll with a giant cake knife.

From this palace we walked back along the village track, which cuts through the heart of the ruins and has a qanāt running down the centre of it. The villagers were on the move now, with their asses and short, inefficient ploughs. They wore pyjamas, coloured either green or blue, and some of them had the round, brown felt hats on their heads that look like a watered down version of the bulbous headgear sported by the Sassanid kings. A short way down the track we reached the village mosque, which had a crude blue dome, with the hand of Hazrat-e Abbas sprouting out of the top of it like a weather vane.

Returning along the track to our tent, we found a trio of Qashqai standing in front of it, who looked like a mother and two daughters. The elder of the two looked very handsome in her green head band and muslin scarf, with bright red, speckled dress. It was the mother who spoke, however, and she was dressed as shabbily as any Persian peasant. She had come to sell us two pullets, not her daughter, and was not interested in carrying on the conversation when we told her we did not want them. We were interrupted by the watchman of the ruins, who asked us why we had not slept in the guest house.

We left the site of Shahpur, telling the watchman that we had no time to see any more, but in fact we had reserved the most interesting items for the end. These were the six stone reliefs on the cliffs of the ravine of the Shahpur River, two on the left bank and four on the right. Two of them we could see plainly from the road, and the others, we knew, were quite close to them, so it seemed that a few minutes would be all that was required to reach them, and that there was no need for the watchman’s guidance.

We soon found, however, that no one had tried to improve the approach, as they had improved the access to the cave. On the contrary there was every obstacle in the way. The path
was blocked by a barrier of thorn bushes, leaving the alternatives of either scrambling over the rock face, which grew more and more precipitous, or going down into the thick cane-brake on the riverside. By trial and error the latter proved to be the only practicable route, but it led into a jungle of brambles and fig trees between the river on the right and an aqueduct on the left, built up against the side of the cliff.

Quite suddenly I came upon the first of the reliefs—two mighty men on horseback, facing each other with hands outstretched and grasping a large ring between them. It represents the investiture of a Sassanid king by the god Ormuzd as Ahura Mazda had come to be called, who is handing the ring of office to him. The cavalier god, who is on the left, wears the same kind of crown as the statue in the cave, and altogether looks very like the man who is supposed to be Shahpur I. The king, himself, wears a crown that is surmounted by the big egg-shaped excrescence ballooning out above it that one sees on nearly all the representations of Sassanian kings, including Shahpur. By climbing to the edge of the aqueduct I was able to reach their level and see the features of god, king and horses through an intervening screen of bullrushes.

We went on to seek the others. The path grew worse, dived into cavernous depths of undergrowth and petered out altogether, forcing us to clamber through brambles and thorn hedges and over boulders without success, until we had rounded the jaws of the ravine and knew we must have missed them. There was a small village here, together with some Qashqai tents. A man was bathing naked in the clear water of a spring, and further up, at its source, women and girls were washing clothes. I asked an old man how to get to the other side, for we had decided that the only thing to do was to cross the river and see exactly where the reliefs were, viewed from the other side of the gorge. He pointed towards a path leading through an orange grove towards an aqueduct, which served also as a footbridge.

We followed his directions, and seeing the boys coming home from school, including the young partridge hunter of the evening before, we realized how much time we had spent staggering through the undergrowth. But once across the river we could see all the reliefs clearly. There was the investiture, which we had, in fact, found. There, too, were two more to the left of it, one of them through an archway under the aqueduct, and there was the fourth one to the right of it, but higher up, above a point where the aqueduct was cut into the cliff itself.
It seemed incredible that we had missed them, but now, having pin-pointed them, it was not difficult to reach them by wading through the river lower down. The one through the arch showed Shahpur I in triumph, with Roman prisoners, framed by their captors, facing the Persian conqueror, all on a large scale, with the head and hump of a camel rearing up above the heads of the rest. But it had been much damaged half-way up by the aqueduct which, before it was diverted to the bridge over the archway, ran along the face of the relief itself. The action of the water down the centuries had gouged a broad, semi-circular furrow out of it.

The relief furthest to the right, which we could only reach by clambering up a slippery, steep path through the undergrowth, looked the most primitive. In it the king is seen half-squatting in a hierarchic pose, with his big sword in his left hand, standing vertically between his flexed knees, whilst his abundant hair spreads out over his shoulders in two big balloons. His soldiers face him on the left, and his tributaries, like faint shadows of the vassals depicted at Persepolis, come bearing tribute from the right. But primitive though it looks, it is thought to be the most recent of them all, representing Khosro I, surnamed Anushirvan the Just, who reigned in the sixth century.

The one furthest to the left, which we had first missed, it now appeared, through sheer inadvertence, was another, more detailed triumph of Shahpur I. Here the moment of Rome’s disaster and disgrace at the hands of the Persians is clearly shown. The Emperor Valerian crouches kneeling before the king, whose horse tramples on a prostrate man. The Persian cavalry on the left faces the defeated Roman infantry and the civilians in their togas to the right. This theme is repeated in the two reliefs on the left bank of the river. The Persian cavalry, in their tubular helmets, whose equestrian tactics were responsible for the victory, face the Roman foot-soldiers, one of whom clutches a Persian stirrup in the act of begging for mercy. The battle took place at Edessa, in the borderlands between the two empires, in the year A.D. 260 and resulted in complete surrender of the Roman legions.

The fate of Valerian is uncertain. His skin was preserved as a trophy, but whether he was killed for this purpose before his natural decease, or whether he was kept prisoner until he died is not known. Certainly the Horsemen of the Apocalypse, to whom the Jews had looked hopefully to save them from the Roman yoke, had done their work well, and seventy thousand
men of the Roman empire were set to work to build the city of Shahpur and other public works in the Persian empire.

So we left Shapur and returned to Shiraz, discussing the triumph of Shahpur the Great, which is represented four times over at Shahpur alone, and again at Naqsh-e Rostam, and at Naqsh-e Rajab and at several other places in the Persian heartland. The great victory symbolized the revival of Persian power, which was to flourish brilliantly for another four centuries, until its decline and the Arab conquest. So the Sassanians may perhaps be excused for repeating the theme so often.
Shiraz to Bushire is a hundred and eighty-five miles, eighty-five of them over very dangerous mountain roads, so I thought thirty toumans was a reasonable price to pay for a seat in a car for the whole journey. At nine o'clock on the birthday of Imam Hussein I arrived at the garage office just beside the archway leading into the courtyard of the Iran Hotel, paid my money, which was duly recorded on an official list of passengers under the eyes of a policeman, and sat down to wait for the departure at nine-thirty.

Sitting there I said good-day to my fellow-passengers—an officer without badges of rank on his uniform, who said he was a third Lieutenant in the transportation corps; a bearded gentleman, wrapped in a brown felt cape, who had a young fir tree with him in a flower pot; and two other men of the merchant class, bound for the coast on business. At nine-thirty nothing happened. I was prepared for this, but when there was still no move at ten o'clock I began to get irritated. The car was there—a smart Chevrolet Bel-air station wagon, which had started its career in Abadan. The driver was there too. But nobody invited us to embark.

The Lieutenant then told me that they had been waiting for a fifth passenger, who had not turned up, and that I would have to pay another ten toumans as, otherwise, it would not be worth the driver’s while to go. I paid ten toumans, and then saw everyone else paying only five. Why was this? I asked. “Ah, you have been given the front seat,” the office clerk replied. “I didn’t ask for it,” I said. “But you’ve got it,” was the answer.

I did not bother to argue about five toumans, nor did I voice a complaint when the Lieutenant pushed in beside me in the front seat. After all, I said to myself, I do not have to go to Bushire as these good people do, so why should I make a fuss? Having each given a rial to the beggar at the door, we set out and proceeded down the avenue towards the Kazerun road.
The driver was a man of mature years, with greying hair
and quick, explosive gestures, ill-suited to a man behind the
wheel.

“What are your brakes like?” I asked.

Quick as a flash he stamped his foot down and brought us
up with a jerk.

“You see! Good! I bought this car three days ago. All
good!”

“How much?”

“I paid twelve.”

“Twelve?”

“Twelve thousand rials.”

“It should be good.”

He shouted out at the garages we passed, calling out for
passengers for Bushire, without success, until, at the last one
before the road ran out on to the plain, an army doctor ap-
peared and asked for transportation for himself, his wife and
baby to Kazerun. A full complement having been found, I
hoped to see some of my own money back. But this was not to
be. The doctor was asked to pay for the petrol, and whilst we
filled up, he went to get his family and his suitcase. After ten
minutes he returned, and begging to be excused by the gentle-
men passengers, he settled his wife and child in the back seat.

Now at last we left town, and set out through the hills
towards the kotalis of the Old Woman and her Daughter. As
soon as we were on the rough, however, a peculiar rattling
noise started, which seemed to come from under the dashboard,
close to the radio, which the driver said only worked at night.

“Perhaps it’s the speedometer cable,” I said. (The speedo-
meter did not work.)

“Perhaps it’s the clutch,” someone else said. (We had all
heard the grinding noises when the driver changed gear.)

“It sounds like the fan hitting the radiator,” the doctor
called out from the back.

The driver stopped. The noise stopped. He started again.
The noise started, gathering frequency as the car gathered
speed. We put our hands under the dashboard, feeling for
things that might be loose. The driver stopped and did some-
thing under the bonnet. He started the car again and the noise
continued.

“It can’t be helped,” the driver said. And as we went ham-
mering on over the stony surface of the track, our ears became
attuned to the noise, which was like the rattle a small boy
makes with a stick along a row of railings. But ten minutes
later the noise stopped with a final crash, rattle, bang. The silencer had fallen off.

We all got out, peered underneath the car, and stamped about the road. Some of us seized the opportunity to relieve ourselves. The driver borrowed my little penknife with a stencilled picture of the Abadan oil refinery on it, and cut through the cord that was holding the luggage down on the roof rack. "The pipe is cut," he said. "We must tie it up."

"But cord will burn through in five minutes," I said. The doctor supported me. "We must have wire."

" Telegraph wire," one of the merchants said, looking hopefully at the telegraph line on the bank beside the road.

"Yes, wire," the driver agreed.

We stood about, waiting for some deus ex machina to bring wire.

"On journeys it is not possible to foretell the future," stated the bearded gentleman, still sitting in his place in the car. "The car should be retired," the doctor said.

"I don't believe he paid twelve thousand rials for it," I said. "And if he did, he was a fool. How old is your baby?"

"Four months. His name is Bardak. You know Ardashir Bardak?"

'"The first king of the Sassanids."

"Yes."

A few minutes later a blue Dodge utility truck, which we had passed with a great blast on the horn some distance back, appeared over the brow of the hill. We stopped it and extracted a couple of feet of copper wire from it's driver's tool box, with which we bound the exhaust pipe to the chassis. We drove gently to the next coffee house, where we again dismounted, and some of us seized the opportunity to relieve ourselves more seriously, whilst the desired telegraph wire was produced and fixed to the car.

"Now we are all right," the driver said. "And that is what was making the noise. If God wills, we reach Kazerun for lunch."

He drove with a swinging, confident style, and soon we were up with the Dodge again and passing it with another blast of the horn. But when he took his hand off the horn-ring it went on blasting. He rattled the ring up and down and swung the steering wheel to and fro. It was no good. The horn went on blasting. So there was nothing for it but to stop again and disconnect it from the battery.

We went on. Every time we passed a lorry I held my breath
lest it should casually swing across the road and push us over the side. Roadmenders, wearing Median hats, who leapt out of the way at the last moment, cursed after us, "Why don't you blow your horn!" And thus we successfully made progress, until we started up the Kotal of the Old Woman.

On the second and steepest hairpin bend of the kotāl the engine quietly died. I grabbed at the hand brake. "It doesn't work," the driver said, and whilst he kept his foot on the foot brake, gentlemen travellers got out and placed large stones behind the wheels. The doctor's wife remained inside, until I suggested it might be safer for her to get out too.

This time we discovered that the battery had been too full and had overflowed and covered the distributor and high-tension leads with acidulous water. Drying them out took time, and when the job was done, the engine still only worked on five cylinders, which was not enough to carry us all up the mountain. Consequently the doctor and his family crowded themselves into a passing bus, leaving his suitcase with us, whilst the rest of us walked up the kotāl behind the faltering station wagon. At the top we got in again.

"It will be all right when it's dried out," the driver said.
"Never have I had such bad luck."
"It is not bad luck," the bearded gentleman said. "Your machine is bad. We paid to travel in a good machine and we have to go in a bad one."

"When we tested it it was quite all right," the driver said.
"We drove out to Takht-e Jamshed and back with seven passengers, and we drove around the town. There was no trouble at all."

"Asphalt roads"?
"If I had known this was going to happen, I would not have come outside the town. I am very unhappy on account of you passengers."

"We are very late now."
"But still we cannot go any faster. It is better to be cautious when there is danger of death."

We were going down the Old Woman now, approaching the fort and coffee house half-way down. When the driver spoke, he liked to turn round to look at the man to whom he was talking, and each time he did this, I prayed that the conversation would end before we reached the next hairpin bend. So we came to the coffee house, but although it was already half-past one, we thought we would wait till we got to Kazerun before having lunch. Two lieutenants, friends of my fellow-
passenger, who were on their way to Abadan in an army vehicle, stopped to join us. They offered me arak to drink, but before lunch I preferred tea. So we drank a glass each, and then we thought that we were ready to move, only to find that the bearded gentleman had ordered himself a chelo khoresht. Whilst we waited for him to eat it, the doctor rejoined us from the bus, which we had caught up and passed on the road. “I had to go with those people,” he explained. “They used to be my patients and they felt obliged to me.”

We climbed the Kotal of the Daughter successfully, but half-way down the other side the bearded gentleman had to answer the call of nature. “He is ill,” the driver said. “He should not have eaten so much. When he gets to Kazerun he should eat an orange and that will put him right.”

On the plain below the kotāl the motor was still misfiring, and the driver decided that it must need a new plug, which he would try to get in Kazerun. For this purpose we stopped in the town whilst he went into a repair shop.

“The driver does not want to buy a new one,” one of the merchants said. “He has two hundred toumans from us, but he does not want to pay.”

“He'll have more trouble if he buys a second-hand one,” I said.

“And so will we,” the Lieutenant added.

“At this rate we won't be there till midnight,” I said.

But we had maligned him. He emerged from the shop with a brand new plug, which he fitted whilst we had our three o'clock lunch at a coffee house further down the road. The doctor had already left us in the town, but our driver's confidence in his machine was now so shattered that he refused to take on any more passengers or loads.

At a quarter to four we set out once more, passing the turning to Shahpur and Ahvaz, and turning west to climb the Kamarej Kotal, scene of a battle in 1752, when Karim Khan Zand fought back Assad Khan, who was pretender to the throne after the death of Nadir Shah. A carpet of fresh green grass on the hillsides after the recent rain came as a blessed relief to the eyes after so much barren rock. In one or two corners, where the mat of grass over the boulders was thickest, there was even a glimpse of a Scottish moor, and the pleasure of familiarity came rushing in like a flood tide. We surged happily upwards with the power of all six cylinders and came to the point of changing gear only where the gradient was really steep.

A full-throated, grinding, rasping noise. The car slowed,
stopped, began to run backwards. The driver held it still with the foot brake, and gentlemen passengers leapt out and put rocks behind the wheels.

"It's the gear selectors this time," I said. "This is serious."

Nobody paid any attention to me. The bearded gentleman took the opportunity to relieve himself again, whilst the driver crashed the gear lever backwards and forwards more and more furiously in a desperate effort to get the gears to engage. He wiped his face. Tears were about to well out of his eyes. "Never in my whole life," he exclaimed. "Never has such a thing happened to me. In twenty-eight years of driving it has never been so bad. I have driven in the snow of Tabriz and in the desert of Yezd. I have driven in fog on the road to Chalus so thick you could not see a metre in front of you. I have driven in the sun of Kerman so hot you could not touch the handle of a door. But it has never been as bad as this."

Slowly he climbed out of his seat, removed his coat and crawled under the car. He emerged again to get a hammer from amongst his tools in the boot. The road was empty and as silent as the dead. The gentlemen travellers looked about them, down at the Shahpur plain and up at the kotāl. The sun was setting and it was getting cold. "There is a nomad camp up there," said one. "Perhaps they will attack us." "No. It is a ruin," said another. The sound of hammering under the car was heard.

Presently a car came down the pass. It belonged to Iranair and was taking passengers to Shiraz, who had waited that morning for a plane that had not arrived. The driver got out, took our driver's place under the station wagon, and told us after a few seconds that the selector shaft was broken, and that there was nothing that could be done about it. The Iranair car moved on, and our car was free-wheeled backwards down to the bottom of the hill. Then gentlemen passengers climbed into it and wound up the windows to keep warm. Some said there was no traffic at all on the road after dark, others that it was plentiful. "There's a car coming now," said one. "No. It's a man on foot," said another. And so we waited. Even the radio was dead.

Then, at last, the hum of an engine was heard. A vehicle was indeed approaching. But it turned out to be a lorry, which already had a full house of five people in the driver's cab. We were luckier with the next one. It was a truck with a home-made body built on it for passengers, and there was room in it to spare. We took enough money off our first driver to satisfy
the second, then prepared to mount. But the bearded gentleman set up a howl. "You have not given enough money back," he complained. "You have only brought us half-way, and that, too, very late. So you should give half the money back."

The bearded gentleman was right, since the driver had fulfilled less than half his contract. But unfortunately he had no support from the rest of us, who were only anxious to get away as soon as possible. The voice of the driver, who was to be abandoned on the open road, rose above the argument. "And what if you were dead? Would you get your money back then?" he cried. "No, sir. I would be buried," the other replied. We all shouted at them to stop arguing, and rather stupidly, since he was a grasping and improvident man, but after all, we were abandoning him, I tapped our driver on the shoulder and said, "Bad luck."

Our new vehicle was slower, but more reliable. I sat on the left of the driver, with my leg down on the step and my right arm behind his shoulders. The Lieutenant, falling into the most comfortable place again, was on his right, next to a woman in black. We had four more kotals to cross—the Kamarej, which we were now ascending, the Rudak, the Malou and the Felfeli. By the time we had breasted the first one it was already almost dark. At the beginning of the descent a leopard walked across the road and stood at the side of the track, watching us pass. It was full grown, about five feet from head to tail, with a fawny skin beneath its spots, and it would have done a lot of damage if it had decided to leap into the back of the truck.

The descent of the Kamarej was even steeper and narrower than the Daughter. We pulled in to the side to let three laden lorries pass. They were toiling up the mountain in bottom gear so slowly that it was easy to understand why the journey between Bushire and Shiraz is a twenty-four hour trip for them. Their fronts were decorated with a row of red and green lights, like a Christmas tree, and on their tails they had the words, Bar cheshm-e bad la’anat—Curse on the evil eye.

The Rudak was less fierce, and after we had crossed it, we pulled in for an evening meal at the coffee house at Kenar Takhteh, which was, as usual, a plain and austere whitewashed building, with no decorations and no comforts. I was offered a stool on a rush mat in the passage, but preferred to go through to the room behind, which was completely open to the sky on one side, where customers were sitting on low stools round a wood fire.

Seated there with the bearded gentleman, I consumed half
a chicken with flat bread, served up to me on a large, round aluminium tray. And as I ate, a Mercedes car arrived, and a schoolmaster, whom I had known in Shiraz, got out of it with three other passengers. He sat down with me and told me he was taking advantage of the holiday for the birthday of Imam Hussein to visit friends in Borazjan, the small town at the foot of the mountains, which was the next place on our route.

I was pleased to see him, but I was also in a sour mood, engendered by the delays and frustrations of the journey. Seen through my distorted mind’s eye, the whole of Iran seemed to be populated by liars and thieves, and the whole country appeared to be a crumbling desert of squabbling ineptitude.

So thinking, I launched out very unfairly at the schoolmaster, with the coffee house customers sitting on their little stools listening. “I bought a place in a car for thirty toumans,” I said. “Then I was obliged to pay ten more to get it to start. Then the car wouldn’t go. There were six things wrong with it—the silencer, the horn, the battery, the handbrake, the plugs and the gear box—and it only got us as far as Kazerun. I paid more than any other passenger, and I did not get any money back. I am sorry to say it is a very bad habit in your country to charge the foreigner more than anybody else. I shall have to make a complaint when I return to Shiraz, and if the manager of the garage doesn’t listen, I shall go to the Chief of Police, and if the Chief of Police doesn’t listen, I shall go to the Governor, who is a friend of mine.”

The last words were my own lie, but they produced an effect. “Unfortunately there are some people in our country who do try to take advantage of foreigners,” the schoolmaster said. “It would have been better if you had asked someone to be your guide. If you had had a friend to direct you, you would not have been put upon. Next time will you please consult me. I shall be very happy to be of service to you. I have learnt much from you. Our prophet Ali has said, ‘Even if one learns but one word from another person, one should be his servant and his slave for the rest of one’s life’.”

I wished I had not spoken so strongly, and asked for my bill, but the schoolmaster would not allow me to pay. “Let me,” he said. “Please. I choose to pay for you.” And as the serving man would not tell me how much it was, I left without paying, and would have shaken the schoolmaster by the hand, but he drew it away, saying it was dirty. So we pressed on, over the last two kotäls—the Malou and the Felfeli—and came to the gendarmerie post at the bottom of the latter. There we found
the schoolmaster again, having passed us on the road, offering me a seat in the Mercedes, which he and his party were vacating at the next town.

So at last, coming down to the coastal plain, I was in comfort. We caught a wolf in the headlamps—a well-fed creature with a large, bushy tail. Further on, the road was littered with the bodies of locusts which, the schoolmaster told me, from time to time come over from Arabia. They are called sea locusts because they cross over the Persian Gulf, and they come to lay their eggs on the Tangestan Coast, but fortunately cannot cross the mountains and penetrate the Vale of Shiraz. Nevertheless, the damage they do in the southern regions is enormous, and in this winter of 1961 to 1962 the Bandar Abbas, Chahbahar, Jahrom and Lar areas had been ravaged and stripped bare, as no effective measures had been taken to combat the pests.

At Borazjan the schoolmaster and his friends left the Mercedes to me, and I was joined by the other gentlemen travellers as soon as they arrived in the truck. From then on the road ran flat and straight another forty-five miles to the port. The row of lights was visible for half an hour, first in front, then moving round to the right, as the road dipped south to cross the isthmus which joins the Bushire peninsula to the mainland. We crossed the isthmus on a causeway over the sand. Then, passing the police post at its seaward end, where vehicles are searched for smuggled goods, we turned right to meet the lights and arrived at our destination at half-past eleven, beating my forecast by half an hour.

“You have to pay fifteen tomans to the driver of this car,” the Lieutenant said. “If you have anything for me to do, please telephone me.” He left me at the Pahlavi hotel, the former Shahdari, where one, Bagher Hussein, an ancient who had started service as a boy with the British Army, gave me a bed and a Coca-Cola.

Next morning I was not up early, and when I went out along the Shore Avenue, which faces out to sea across the Gulf, I expected to see some signs of activity. The road curved round a row of tall buildings, which placed it in shadow—the town hall, the office of the labour department, the hospital, the shipping headquarters, the Red Lion and Sun charitable organization—all municipal offices which might be expected to have people continually going in and out. But it was a holiday, and there was no one. The small promenade around the statue of the Shah, where they had tried to make a few
orange trees grow, was empty, and so was the rest of the sea front. An unoccupied jeep standing under the fat, crooked columns of the entrance to the town hall, two or three nondescript men in turbans, a naval rating, two women picking over the green seaweed for things to eat—this was all the human life that the business centre of Bushire had to show. A mile off shore lay a single cargo steamer, unable to get closer because of sandbanks.

I walked round the nose of the peninsula, which points towards the north, and came to the harbour, which is situated in the enclosed bay on the landward side. Here there was more going on. Twenty or thirty motorized dhows were tied up against the sea wall, and members of their crews were coming and going, some in ragged trousers and others in the grey nightshirt-like garment that the Arabs wear. They were the craft used to carry the cargoes to and from the ships that have to lie outside. But their heavy, clinker-built wooden hulls, each with its round barrel-like "heads" on the port side of the stern, lay high out of the water and empty. There was no cargo being transported.

The trade of Bushire has, indeed, dwindled. A certain amount of cotton is exported, together with liquorice and katira, the curious white sap of a desert plant which goes by the name of gum tragacanth and is used in mercerizing cloth. The most important import is sugar, which has been hard hit by government regulations designed to bring about self-sufficiency in this product. Apart from this, a small revival has been brought about by the importation of the steel and machinery needed in various "aid to Iran" projects, such as the crates of British goods I saw on the quay, stencilled with the letters H.I.M.G.—Her Imperial Majesty’s Government. But this, and the smuggling of Winston cigarettes, are ephemeral things on which to support solid citizens, and the volume of lorry traffic toiling up the kotâls is deceptive, for it would only need one dhow to fill twenty of them.

However, the dhows do not only go out to the rare ships which anchor beyond the sandbanks. When the weather is right, and especially in winter, when they can hoist their sails to the north-west wind blowing down from the head of the Gulf and sail out on a broad reach, saving their fuel and engines, they go across to Arabia. They go to the boom towns which, backed by British genius and money, have mushroomed out of the desert—the oil sheikhdoms of Bahrein and Kuwait.

They all talk in Bushire about Kuwait, and look longingly
across the Gulf, and although the trade is forbidden, every now and then a dhow leaves the Tangestan Coast and goes across to the other side to drop its human cargo on some deserted shore in the sheikhdom and swell still further the large numbers of Iranians already there—and empty still more the narrow, sandy alleyways of Old Bushire.

I walked through these alleyways of blank, white walls, bare of all ornamentation or artistry, except for an occasional door with fine work of beaten brass upon it. There were windows high above, going up to three or four storeys, with a doorway above the top storey giving access to a flat roof. The roofs had rows of pillars on them, from which an awning would be stretched in the great heat of summer, and some of them had tall chimneys, called bādgir, to catch the breeze and bring it down to the rooms below. Through these alleys I came to the street of the bazaar, where there was, indeed, a little activity.

Out of town, along the seaward shore, I followed a group of women carrying water on their heads in kerosene tins. Across an open expanse of beaten sand, with a track across it used as a roadway to the airfield, we came to a small white-washed dome, with the green flag of the sayyeds flying over it and a single tamarisk beside it.

I went back to the hotel and talked to Bagher Hussein. At Rishahr, he told me, six miles south along the coast, there were the ruins of one of the old Portuguese forts. Close to it, but separate from the town, as is the manner of the British, stood the former British Residency, where the consul used to live, though he also had an office in Bushire itself. Now the Residency is the Naval Headquarters and the office is taken over by one of the Iranian government departments. He could remember serving the British as a boy when, in the First German War, British troops were stationed at Bushire for the security of the line of communication in the Mesopotamian campaign. They had consisted of a battalion of infantry and two captured Turkish thirteen-pounder guns. Afterwards, he had gone to Abadan and continued to serve British families, until they were all turned out during the Mossadeq putsch.

His story was like a breath from the distant past. It seemed as long ago as when Alexander's admiral, Nearchus, put in at Bushire on his way back to Susa from India. I watched a string of dromedaries set out across the sand of the isthmus for the mainland. Nearchus, two thousand three hundred years ago, might have done just the same.
IT WAS EARLY SPRING in Shiraz when I returned to the end of winter in Teheran. From there I flew back in ten hours over the land it had taken a fortnight to cover by road. London was still in the depths of winter—ice under foot and heavy clouds above. I was talking to a Persian friend who had recently arrived from Teheran. "I like London," he said, "but there is one thing I cannot understand. Why is everyone so silent? I walk in the streets. I go on the buses. I travel on the Underground. Everywhere everyone is silent. They are like people walking in their sleep."

I laughed because the same thing had occurred to me. The Persians sometimes call themselves the Italians of the East, and they cannot understand the deathly silence of the northern races, or the deep emotions that this silence conceals. I thought back to Iran, where it was already spring. I had started by despising and distrusting Persia. I had seen nothing but dust and muddle and confusion and intrigue. I had seen the desperate insecurity in everyone's life. I had seen the dervish begging-bowl held out to all the nations of the West. I had seen the bare poverty of a country where a half-empty stream with a few faded trees beside it can be called the Waters of Paradise, and where people will travel miles to sit outside a battered tea house on the side of a hill. But then the magic of the country had begun to work. From being the critic I became the defendant. In this great country, half the size of Europe, where more than three quarters of the land is desert, man is still the most important thing on earth. He still exists for himself. He is still not yet the means to some other end, such as greater productivity or the defence of democracy or flying to the moon.

I thought back to the last trip I did in Iran. It was along the coast of the Caspian, first past the tea gardens of Gilan, then amongst the rice fields of Mazanderan. The clouds hung low over the mountain range of the Elburz to the south of us, and
we were in another world again, cut off from the Persia of the plateau that lives in most people’s mind’s eye, and facing Russia across the empty sea.

Down on the shore fishermen were dragging in a net. They hauled in pairs on ropes at each end of the net, a hundred yards apart—a dozen to each of the two ropes. They were well-equipped with waders and waterproof smocks, and most of them had narrow-eyed Turkoman features. Shouting and chanting at their work, they gradually closed in on the net, which came to the shore, suspended on its white floats, in an ever-diminishing arc. Two cormorants waited about hopefully. After two hours the net was landed, but produced only twenty small sturgeon that rolled about in the sand. The fishermen grinned, shrugged their shoulders, and went off to their midday meal. They hoped for better luck in the afternoon.

Along the beach white cranes flew off reluctantly at our approach and settled down again a few yards further away. Further on, the sea was black with teal—great patches of them in their multiple thousands, floating far enough from the beach to avoid the breakers, but close enough for the shelter of the shore. Soon they would be following the thaw to Siberia.

We drove along the coast between the box forests and sand dunes. Then, leaving the coast, we went inland to Babul, and then to Shahi. The whole of the surrounding countryside was migrating into town for the market, with gum-boots on their feet and country produce on their heads. We bought a basket of a hundred oranges, and admired the necklaces of turquoise-blue balls, which the people use to decorate their horses. Then we headed south towards the mountains.

The clouds had cleared, it seemed, especially for our benefit, and given us a perfect spring day. We walked up the valley of a stream, with an open grass slope on one side and a forest of box wood and oak on the other. White, yellow and pink primroses and primulas were in bloom on the bank of the stream; and violets and delicate wild cyclamen, pink and white and mauve, showed their heads above the grass. And this was February—Bahmān, the month of avalanches. As we dug out the plants to take back to the dry side of the mountains, we listened to the thwack-thwack of the woodcutters, hidden amongst the trees, and to the jangle of the sheep bells on the slope on the other side, where lambs were prancing about in the midst of the flock.

I thought again. And I thought of all the places in Iran that I had not yet seen—the Persian Gates in the mountains north-
west of Shiraz, which Alexander passed on his way to Persepolis; the oasis of Tabas in the centre of the desert heart; the mouldering town and caravansarai of Abarqou, which at one time was on the great trade route from China to the Mediterranean, but now lies empty; Zabul, the birthplace of Rustam in far Seistan, where the wind of a hundred and twenty days whips up the ground to furnace heat for a third of the year.

I thought that I would be happy to suffer any number of cars that break down, of buses that fill up with dust, of meals contaminated with grit, and any amount of endless arguing and arranging in order to see these things.
Index

Abadan, 51, 178, 184
Abadeh, 120, 121
Ab Ali, 57
Abarqou, 187
Ab-e Garm, 63
Ab-e Kheyr, 123
Ab-e Rokni, 183
Abjad, 129
Abu Ishaq, 165
Achaemenides, 72, 121, 147, 148, 152, 154
Afghanistan, 59
Afghans, 98, 111
Agha Khan, 28
Agha Mohammed Shah, 69
Agri, 11, 15, 16
Ahansuerus, 152
Ahkonds, 67, 74, 105, 110
Ahmad Shah, 71
Ahriman, 149, 158
Ahura Mazda, 141, 151, 156, 158, 159, 171
Ahvaz, 165, 178
Ajanta, 112
Alamut, 28, 29
Alexander, 121, 122, 139, 154, 162, 187
Ali (1st Imam), 89, 95, 96
Aliabad, 97
Ali Qapu, 104, 112
Allah, 90
Allahe, 109
Allahverdi Khan, 119
Allat, 74
Alozza, 74
Americans, 19, 44, 55, 61, 163
Amini, 26, 52
Amol, 63
Anahita, 160, 162
Anatolia, 60
Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, 51
Anushirvan, 172
Apadana, 149, 150, 151
Arabia, 75, 133, 182, 183
Arabs, 97, 130, 151, 173
Ararat, 11, 16, 19
Araxes, 19
Archaeological Museum, 72
Ardashir, 162
Ark (Tabriz), 24
Ark (Teheran), 69
Armenia, 16, 19, 119, 158
Armenaz, 60
Artaban, 162
Artaxerxes, 149, 154
Aryan, 89, 151, 158
Ash, 76
Ashura, 96
Ask, 63
Assassins, 28, 29
Assyria, 72, 151, 152
Asyages, 143
Atrek River, 78
Atropatene, 158
Avesta, 159
Ayatollah Ozma, 97, 98
Azerbaijan, 22–4, 28, 158
Bab, 126
Baba Shojia-ud-din, 101
Babul, 186
Babulsar, 58
Babylon, 72, 122, 149, 150
Badgir, 184
Baghdad, 95, 133, 148
Bagh-e Bchesht, 136
Bagh-e Delgosha, 136
Bagh-e Eram, 136
Bagh-e Fin, 100
Bahai, 125, 126
Baha-Ullah, 126
Bahrein, 183
Bakhtiari, 119
Balkh, 92
Baluchistan, 59
Bandar Abbas, 124, 160
Bandar Gaz, 78, 93
Bandar Pahlavi, 44, 45, 47, 49
Bardia, 148
Bazargan, 17
Behistun, 148
Bell, 59, 128
Bishapur, 169
Blue Mosque (Tabriz), 24
INDEX

Bokhara, 33, 92  
Bombay, 160  
Borazjan, 181, 182  
British, 71, 111, 119, 183  
British Council, 26  
British Embassy, 33  
Buddha, 158, 159  
Bunjurd, 90  
Bushire, 160, 162, 164, 174, 182–4  

Caliphate, 95  
Caliphs, 95  
Cambyses, 141, 148  
Carpets, 33  
Caspian, 28, 39, 42, 58, 63, 78, 88, 93, 185  
Caucasus, 19, 23  
Caviare, 45, 46, 53  
Central Treaty Organization, 19  
Chadores, 17, 35, 36, 77, 83, 93, 102, 117  
Chahar Bagh, 109, 117  
Chalus, 58  
Chaucer, 155  
Chechel Setun, 110, 112  
Chehol kebab, 36, 37  
China, 60, 165, 187  
Communism, 52  
Constitution Day, 21  
Ctesiphon, 162  
Cuneiform, 142, 154  
Curzon, 78, 140  
Cyrus, 121, 122, 138, 159, 142, 159  

Dakhan, 159, 161  
Damascus, 96  
Damghan, 76, 77  
Darband, 56  
Darius the Great, 73, 122, 141, 148, 154  
Dasht-e Arjan, 163  
Dasht-e Kavir, 40, 78  
Deh Bid, 121  
Delhi, 70, 111  
Demavend (mountain), 56, 61–3  
Demavend (town), 58  
Dervishes, 104, 131, 134  
Dex dam, 42  
Didgah, 71  
Dimulu, 89  
Diyabekir, 12  
Dogubayazit, 16  
Doshan Tepe, 51, 56, 57  
Dugh, 41  

Ea, 142  
East Africa, 28  
Ecbatana, 148  
Edirne, 17  
Egypt, 148  
Elburz, 28, 56, 60, 77, 87, 91, 93, 107, 186  
Elizabeth II, 17, 40, 69, 71  
Erzerum, 11, 13  
Eyvan, 67, 69, 74, 104, 105  
Fara Diba, 71  
Fars, 121, 148  
Farsakh, 86  
Farsi, 12, 32, 37, 39  
Fath Ali Shah, 69, 70  
Fatima, 95, 97  
Ferdun, 59, 100  
Fesenjan, 75  
Firdowsi, 31, 96  
Firuzkuh, 94  
Fryer, 157  

Gabr, 157, 160  
Gachsaran, 51  
Gaduk pass, 93  
Garmser, 77, 94  
Gathas, 159  
Gaumata, 148  
Gaz, 115  
Germans, 124, 125  
Ghazian, 45  
Gilan, 43, 186  
Give, 65  
Gök Masjed, 24  
Golestan Palace, 68  
Gorgan, 69, 78, 92, 93  
Gum tragacanth, 183  
Gumushane, 11  

Habib Irb Mousi, 102  
Hafez, 123, 127–33  
Hajji Baba, 11  
Hajji Ghulam, 85  
Hajji Mohammed Ali, 82, 84  
Hajji Mohammed Khan, 86  
Hail of a Hundred Columns, 152  
Halwa, 64  
Hamadan, 40, 72, 148  
Harun-al-Rashid, 96, 100  
Hashem, 58  
Hassan (2nd Imam), 95, 96  
Hassan bin Sabbah, 28  
Hazrat-e Abbas, 104, 170
Hazrat-e Abdul Azim, 95, 97
Hazrat-e Ma’sume, 96, 97
Hazrat-e Shah Cheragh, 96
Herodotus, 151
Hilton hotel, 56
Hippodamus, 166
Hulagu, 29
Hussein (3rd Imam), 21, 94, 96, 120
Hyrkania, 59
Ibham, 131
Ibn Battuta, 165
Il Khan Hulagu, 28
Il Khan Uljaiatu, 24
Imam Reza (8th Imam), 57, 96, 97, 104
Imams, 96
Imamzades, 58, 97, 102
India, 112, 124, 125, 133, 152, 153, 157, 165, 184
Indian Army, 124, 125
Iraq, 60
Iranian Army, 28, 92
Iranian Navy, 47
Iraq, 95, 97
Isfahan, 69, 103, 109-18, 157
Ishtar, 149
Isma'ilis, 28
Istakhr, 145, 162
Istanbul (street), 35
Jaje Rud, 57
Jamshid, 60, 146, 154
Jenghiz Khan, 28, 92, 133
Jerusalem, 100, 121, 133
Jewel Palace, 71
Jirin Birin, 87
Jones, 132
Julfa (Armenia), 19, 23, 26
Julfa (Isfahan), 119
Kaaba, 75
Kaaba-e Zardosht, 156
Kalat-e Nadiri, 29
Karaj, 40
Karaköse, 11
Karbala, 95-7, 120
Karim Khan Zand, 69, 178
Kashan, 69, 72, 95, 100-3
Kashi, 69, 100, 114
Katira, 183
Kaveh, 60
Kazerun, 164, 165
Kerman, 160
Khoi, 19
Khorassan, 78, 85
Khoresht, 85, 165
Khorraramshahr, 47
Khosro I, 172
Khuzezstan, 42, 122
Koran, 73
Koran Gate (Shiraz), 123
Kotals, 163, 164
Kuh-e Aljuq, 120
Kuh-e Khatun, 141
Kuh-e Qumbaral, 120
Kuh-e Rahmat, 147
Kuwait, 183
Land reform, 26, 27
Lar (province), 162
Lar (valley), 59
Latiyan, 57
Leila, 54, 128
Leninakan, 19
Liquorice, 183
Locusts, 182
Lotf Ali Khan, 69
Madrass-ye Chahar Bagh, 109
Magi, 100, 148, 153
Mahdi (12th Imam) 97, 126
Majles, 74
Majnun, 34, 128
Makou, 118
Maktab, 92
Malaya, 23, 45
Malcolm, 152
Malek Shah, 105
Maragheh, 26, 27
Marand, 22
Marlik Tepe, 43
Marlowe, 146
Marvdasht, 121, 122, 145, 146
Marziye, 109
Mashhad, 29, 77, 78, 82, 94, 96
Masjed-e Jam-e (Qazvin), 105
Masjed-e Lotfullah (Isfahan), 113
Masjed-e Sepahsalar (Tehran), 74
Masjed-e Shah (Isfahan), 112-14
Masjed-e Shah (Tehran), 67
Mast, 36, 85
Mazanderan, 185
Mecca, 73, 75, 139, 141, 156
Medes, 122, 151, 154
Medina, 96, 97
Mehrabad airport, 29, 49
Mehrabs, 73, 105, 139
Meidan-e Ark (Tehran), 68
INDEX

Meidan-e Sepah (Teheran), 72
Meidan-e Shah (Isfahan), 112
Merv, 92
Mesopotamia, 122, 165, 184
Mianeh, 26
Mithras, 159
Mohammed, 95
Mohammedabad, 80, 81
Mohammed Ali Shah, 70
Moharram, 94
Mojtaheds, 74
Mongols, 100, 133
Mordab, 45, 46
Mordad (month), 39, 40, 51
Morier, 11
Mosalla, 127
Mossadeq, 26, 51, 184
Mount Carmel, 126
Murat River, 15
Murghab, 121, 122, 138
Muzaffar-ud-din Shah, 21

Nadir Shah, 29, 70, 178
Naft Sefid, 51
Najif, 96, 97
Naqsh-e Jahan, 113
Naqsh-e Rostam, 156, 173
Nasser-ud-din Shah, 117
National Assembly, 21
National Bank, 55, 68, 70
National Library, 74
Nau Ruz, 64, 147, 151
Naushahr, 48
Nearchus, 184
Nezami, 128, 131
Niriz, 126

Old Man of the Mountains, 28
Omar Khayyám, 148
Ormuzd, 171

Pahlavi Dynasty, 18, 58
Pahlavi Foundation, 58
Pahlavi Script, 156, 168
Pakistan, 28, 98
Parthians, 162
Pasargad, 121, 138-43
Persepolis, 121, 122, 145-57
Persian Gates, 187
Persian Gulf, 47, 127, 162, 182-4
Persia, 162
Pirgerdeh Kuh, 87
Pishdadian Dynasty, 146
Plutarch, 121, 139

Pol-e Sefid, 94
Pulur, 59
Pulvar River, 121, 138, 143, 146, 155
Purmajeh, 60
Qajar, 68, 69, 71, 104
Qanats, 81, 103, 107, 170
Qashqai, 122, 136, 153, 162, 163, 168-71
Qazvin, 28, 29, 40, 42, 97, 103-7
Qizil Uzun, 42
Qorban, 88, 89, 91, 92
Qum, 52, 96-8, 107, 109
Quzluq, 88, 91

Ramsar, 58
Rawlinson, 148
Rechnic, 61-3
Resht, 99, 42, 43, 49
Rey, 69, 72, 94, 95
Reza Shah, 16, 23, 29, 58, 63, 77, 95, 97
Rezayeh lake, 27
Rhages, 69
Romans, 159, 172
Ross, 134
Rostamabad, 43
Roum, 60
Rudbar, 43
Rudkehan, 57, 65
Rudresar, 50
Russia, 19, 46, 52, 71, 88, 90, 92, 187
Rustam, 34, 187

Saadatabad, 138
Sadri, 138-5
Safavids, 105, 110, 111
Samarkand, 92
Samer, 96
Samsun, 11
Sana’i, 131
Sassanians, 156, 162
Saudi Arabia, 97
Sefid Rud, 42
Seistan, 59, 187
Sceucius, 162
Seljuk, 100, 105, 106
Selim, 60
Semnan, 77
Shah, 52, 66, 82
Shah Abbas, 34, 97, 98, 100-2, 109, 112, 113, 115, 119
Shahi, 28, 93, 186
Shah Ismail, 104
INDEX

Shah Kuh, 87, 88
Shahname, 31
Shahpur I, 162, 167
Shahpur (city), 165, 166, 169, 170, 178
Shahpur (river), 167, 170
Shah Reza, 119
Shah Rud (river), 42
Shahrud (town), 78, 94
Shah Tahmasp, 28
Shahzade Hussein, 97, 104
Shakhr-e Nabad, 130
Shalmanezer, 151
Sharp, 154
Shatt-al-Arab, 47
Shehrnaz, 60
Shemiran, 66, 107
Shia, 95-7, 160
Shiraz, 96, 123-5, 162, 163
Shirgah, 93
Shirley brothers, 5
Sibl pass, 26
Sighe, 96
Sivand, 138, 145
Skiling, 57
Sohar, 98
Solomon’s Throne, 28
Sotu Roba, 87
Sroasha, 159
Stanley, 153
Stuart Memorial College, 119
Sturgeon, 47, 186
Sufi, 131, 154
Susa, 122, 148, 152, 184
Swedes, 124
Sykes, 124
Syria, 100, 133

Tabarestan, 59
Tabas, 187
Tabriz, 17, 18, 22-6
Tachara, 149, 150
Tajrish, 56, 66
Takht-e Jamshedd, 138, 146
Takht-e Madar-e Suleiman, 189-42
Talar River, 93
Talqan hills, 28, 42
Tamburlaine, 146
Tar, 111
Tash, 78, 80-5
Tat mountains, 11
Taxis, 34
Taxiye, 85

Teheran, 25, 27, 28, 31-8, 42, 63, 66-75, 94
Teheran Pars, 160
Tel Bakun, 72
Teppe Siyalk, 72
Trabzun, 11
Trans-Iranian Railway, 93, 94
Trebizond, 11
Tripoli, 133
Tur, 60
Turkmenians, 159
Turkestam, 60
Turkey, 11, 15, 17, 19, 98, 111, 153
Turkmen S.S.R., 78
Turkomans, 33, 92, 186
Turkoman Steppe, 88
Tus, 96, 97
Umayyids, 95, 97
Urmia lake, 19, 26, 27
Vajhminu pass, 84, 87
Vakil Mosque, 124
Valerian, 172
Van, 13
Van lake, 19
Vedic, 158
Veramin, 94
Volga River, 48
Vresk, 94

Wassmuss, 124
Wine, 28, 130, 131, 133
Xerxes, 149-51, 154
Yezd, 121, 126, 160
Yezd-e Khasht, 120

Zabul, 187
Zagros mountains, 51, 100, 119, 121
Zahedan, 44
Zand, 159
Zarathustra, 158
Zardosht, 159
Zarqan, 146
Zayandeh River, 111
Zein-ul-Abbadin (4th Imam), 96
Zenjan, 28, 126
Zigana pass, 11
Zobeida, 100
Zohak, 60
Zoroaster, 72
Zoroastrians, 100, 156-60