

Pls return to  
Quane & Foxwell  
5/9/ Golden, Co USA

A  
HISTORY OF PERSIA

FROM

THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO  
THE YEAR 1858.

WITH A

REVIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS THAT LED TO  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF

THE KAJAR DYNASTY.

BY

ROBERT GRANT WATSON,

FORMERLY ATTACHED TO HER MAJESTY'S LEGATION AT THE COURT OF PERSIA.

*\*Ἔστι μὲν ἡμῖν ἡ ἀρχὴ ἢ πατρίς, πρὸς μὲν μεσημβρίαν, μέχρις οὗ διὰ  
καῖμα οὐ δύναται οἰκεῖν ἄνθρωποι, πρὸς δὲ ἄρκτον, μέχρις οὗ διὰ χειμῶνα\**

XENOPHON'S *Anabasis*, I. 7.

LONDON:  
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.  
1866.

TO THE  
ASSOCIATION

DS298

WE

HENRY MORSE STEPHENS

[The Right of Translation is reserved.]

517

TO

CHARLES ALISON, Esq., C.B.,

HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY AND MINISTER

PLENIPOTENTIARY TO THE COURT OF PERSIA,

ETC., ETC., ETC.,

THIS WORK IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

514297

# CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

Population of Persia—Cultivated Portion of the Country very small—  
Supply of Water—Artificial Irrigation—The Elburz Mountains—  
Attachment of Persians to their Native Country—Persia inhabited  
by Men of various Races—The Wandering Tribes—The Turkish  
and the Persian Languages—Two Classes of People in Persia—  
The Persians a robust Race—The Persian Character—Estimate  
formed of it by Europeans—Persian Government—Checks on the  
Royal Authority—Court of the Shah—Education in Persia—  
National Religion of the Persians—The Persian Army—Labourers  
and Villagers—Mendicants—Trade and Produce—Climate—Pro-  
spects of the Country ..... PAGE 1

## CHAPTER II.

The Sefavcean Dynasty—Fall of Ispahan—Expulsion of Affghans from  
Persia—Nadir Shah—Origin of the Affghan Kingdom—Adel Shah  
—Ibraheem—Shahrukh Meerza—Rival Candidates for the Persian  
Throne—The Chief of the Kajars—Herat and Seistan added to  
the Affghan Kingdom—Kereem Khan—Azad Khan—Zends and  
Kajars—Zeki Khan—Aga Mahomed Khan—His Escape from  
Sheeraz—Ali Murad—Jafer, Chief of the Zend—His Son Lutf'ali  
Khan..... 37

## CHAPTER III.

Origin of the Kajar Tribe—Its three Branches—Its settlements—  
Astrabad Branch of Kajars—Upper and Lower Kajars—Astrabad  
—Unsettled Condition of that Province—Ak-kaleh—Rihags—  
Rhei—Telran—Its early Condition—Aga Mahomed Khan—His  
Brothers—Cruel Treatment to which Aga Mahomed was subjected  
—Kindness shown to him by Kereem Khan—Lutf'ali Khan—

Cruelty of Aga Mahomed—Haji Ibraheem—His Defection from the Chief of the Zend—Decisive Battle—Siege of Kerman—Death of Lutf'ali Khan .....

## CHAPTER IV.

Relations between the Shahs of Persia and the Czars of Georgia—Interference of Russia in Affairs of the Caucasus—Campaign of Peter the Great in Daghestan—Taking of Bakoo and Derbend—Southern Coast of the Caspian Sea—Early Condition of Georgia—Mingrelia—Intolerance of the Georgians—Tiflis—Expedition of Aga Mahomed into Georgia—Fortress of Erivan—Annexation of Khorassan to Persia—Death of Shahrukh Meerza—Mission to Persia from the French Republic—Murder of Aga Mahomed—His Character .....

## CHAPTER V.

Sadek Khan endeavours to make himself King—Is defeated at Kasveen by the Shah—Kasveen—Province of Fars—Sheeraz—Sadek Khan delivers the Crown Jewels to the Shah, and is pardoned—The Body of Aga Mahomed Khan conveyed to Nejef in Arabia—His Assassins are put to Death—Fetteh Ali crowned at Tehran—Rebellion of Mahomed Khan—Ispahan—Rebellion of Sadek, Jafer Kuli and Mahomed Kuli Khans—Goorgeen of Georgia—Fresh Rebellion of Mahomed Khan—Rebellion of the Shah's Brother—Defection of Mahomed Veli Khan and Suleiman Khan—Clemency of the Shah—Revolt of Ishak Meerza—Herat—Rebellion of Nadir Meerza—Mission from India—Khorassan—Last Rebellion of Sadek Khan—His Fate—Mission of Captain Malcolm—Fall of Haji Ibraheem—Kashan—Fresh Rebellion of the Shah's Brother—Siege of Meshed—Fall of Nadir Meerza .....

## CHAPTER VI.

Abdication of Czar of Georgia in favour of Emperor of Russia, 1800—Prince Alexander defeated by General Lazeroff—Capture of Genja—Battle of Etchmiadzeen—Seeseceanoff routs Persians, and lays Siege to Erivan—Nocturnal Attacks—Siege of Erivan raised—Events on Eastern and Southern Frontiers of Persia—Bokhara, Nermansheer, and Seistan—Chief of Karabagh submits to Russia—Campaign in that Province—Russian Descent on Gilan—Capture of Genja by Persians—Assassination of Seeseceanoff—Mission of M. Joubert—Fall of Ibraheem Khalcel Khan—Turko-Persian Frontier—Establishment of Russian Authority from the Caucasus to Moghan—War between Persians and Afghans—Embassies from Napoleon and from the Talpoors of Sindh—Embassy from England—Treaty—Mission from India—Disaster to Persian Arms in Russian War—Capture of Lankoran—Peace of Gulistan, 1813 .....

## CHAPTER VII.

The Sons of Fetteh Ali Shah—Tabreez—Rebellion of the Chiefs of Khorassan—Isaak Khan, Karai—Hassan Ali Meerza—Herat—Tribes of Hezarch and Feeroozkoh—Treaty between England and Persia—Yeزد—Guebres—Their Temples and Customs—The Chief of the Assassins—Combination of Chiefs of Herat, Khorassan and Central Asia against Persia—Fetteh Khan, Barukzye—His Defeat by Hassan Ali Meerza—Dost Mahomed Khan—War between Persia and Turkey—Campaigns of Baghdad and of Turkish Armenia—Battle of Toprak-Killeh—Massacre of Christians at Salmas—Nestorians of Persia—American and French Missionaries—Peace between Turkey and Persia—Invasion of Khorassan by the Khan of Khiva .....

## CHAPTER VIII.

Vague Terms of Treaty of Gulistan—District of Gokcheh claimed by Russia—It is occupied by that Power—Excitement throughout Persia—War breaks out—Persians at first successful—They advance to the neighbourhood of Tiflis, and are defeated at the Zezam, and again near Genja—Avariciousness of the Shah—Division in his Council—Negotiations for Peace—The Russians checked on the Araxes—Erivan besieged—Siege raised—Abbassabad taken by General Paskiewitch—Defeat of General Karkofiski by Persian Commanders at Asterick—Final Siege and Capture of Erivan—Invasion of Azerbaejan by Prince Aristoff—Tabreez falls into his Hands—Renewed Negotiations—Treaty of Turkomanchai .....

## CHAPTER IX.

Provisions of the Treaty of Turkomanchai—Alteration of the Treaty between England and Persia—General Confusion in Persia—Supineness of the Shah's Government—M. Grebaidoff—Murder of the Members of his Mission—Terror of the Shah—Embassy to Petersburg of Prince Kosroo—Severe Earthquakes in Persia—Campaign of the Crown Prince in Khorassan—Fall of Ameerabad and of Kabushan—Assault on Serrekhs—Origin of the Afghan War—Death of Abbass Meerza—The Kaim-makam—Last Days of Fetteh Ali Shah—His Character—Burial-place of the Persian Kings .....

## CHAPTER X.

Three Aspirants to sovereign Power—Mahomed Meerza marches from Tabreez to Tehran—Submission of the Zil-es-Sultan—Mahomed Shah crowned at Tehran—Defeat of Hassan Ali Meerza by Sir Henry Bethune—Capture of the Firman—Firma—Ardabeel—General Revolt in Khorassan—Fall of the Kaim-makam—Haji

	PAGE
Meerza Aghassi—Ambitious Designs of the Persian Government—Expedition against Herat—Seistan—Prince Kamran and Yar Mahomed Khan—Reasons of Dost Mahomed Khan for distrusting the Government of India—Cruelty of Mahomed Shah—His Failure before Herat—Rival Influences in his Camp—The Siege of Herat raised.....	279

## CHAPTER XI.

Demands of her Britannic Majesty's Government from the King of Persia—Evasive Answers of Haji Meerza Aghassi—Suspension of Diplomatic Relations between England and Persia—Advance of Russia in the East—British Expedition to the Persian Gulf—Hussein Khan—Firmness of Lord Palmerston—The Shah yields—Rising of the Chief of the Assassins—His Success and subsequent Failure—Bunpoor—The Belooches put their Families to Death—Affairs of Kurdistan—Unsettled State of Turko-Persian Frontier—Commission appointed for its Delimitation—Persians' Sufferings at the Hands of Turkomans—Massacre at Kerbela—Banishment of the Asef-ed-Dowleh—War in Khorassan—The Báb—Death of Mahomed Shah .....	320
--	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

Flight of Haji Meerza Aghassi—Rival Parties at Tehran—The Queen-mother President of the Council—Serious Risings in the Provinces—The Salar—The Ameer-i-Nizam—Measures of Reform adopted by him—Combination against him—Mutiny of the Garrison of Tehran—Seizure of Kotoor by the Turks—Ascendancy of the Belooches in Seistan—Persian Claims to that Province—Protracted Siege of Meshed—Bahman Meerza—Prince Sultan Murad presses the Siege of Meshed—Foreign interference offered for the Pacification of Khorassan—Ravages of the Turkomans—Surrender of Meshed—Death of the Salar .....	357
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

Rising of the Followers of the Báb—Mode of carrying out Capital Punishments in Persia—Seizure of Zinjan—The Báb put to Death—Tenets of his Followers—Hopeless Contest at Zinjan—Reckless Bravery of the Bábis—Courage of the Women—Terrible Cruelties—Exhibition of Fanaticism at Tabreez—Results of Administration of the Ameer-i-Nizam—Occupation of Ashorada by Russia—The Caspian Provinces—Fall of the Ameer-i-Nizam—Interference on his Behalf—Meerza Agha Khan—Sedr-Azem—Influences brought to bear on the Shah against the Ameer-i-Nizam—Conduct of the Wife of the ex-Minister—The Ameer's Death—Remembrance of his Administration.....	385
--	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

Conspiracy against Life of the Shah—His Escape—Persecution of Conspirators—Ministers of State act as Executioners—Firmness of Followers of the Báb—Jealousy of European Interference at Persian Court—Alliance of the Shah sought by Russia in 1853—Tempting Offer made to Persian Government—Alternative placed before the Shah—His Alliance declined by the Western Powers—Neutrality distasteful to Persian Government—Angry Discussions between Sedr-Azem and the British Minister—Meerza Hashem—Arrest of his Wife—Conduct of the Sedr-Azem—Diplomatic Relations suspended between England and Persia—Mr. Murray quits Tehran—Persian Expedition against Herat—War against Persia declared at Calcutta.....	407
--	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

Policy of the Sedr-Azem—Embassy of Ferrukh Khan to Europe—Fall of Herat—Rules to be observed in carrying on English War against Persia—Singular Instance of Persian Levity—War against Infidels proclaimed at Tehran—The Sirkisikchi-Bashi—Occupation of Karrack by British Troops—Capture of Reshire—Surrender of Bushire—Sir J. Outram—Expedition to Burazjan—Action at Khushab—Bombardment of Mohamra—Defeat of Persians—Expedition to Ahwaz—Restoration of Peace—Terms of Treaty of Paris—Sultan Ahmed Khan—Murder of Prince Mahomed Yoosuf—Fall of the Sedr-Azem—Conclusion.....	428
---	-----

We have ruled and you have obeyed. What new thing is this, that the servant should rise against his master and the slave against his lord?" The mention of the word "slave" stung to the quick the proud Salar, who, replied to the prince's communication by a defiance to mortal combat; adding a Persian verse to this effect:\*

"What use my life to me,  
Since though I be Salar  
I still a *slave* must be?"

On receiving this reply the prince advanced towards the camp of the rebels; but as he did so, the forces opposed to him began to disperse, and their leader found himself compelled to consult his safety by retreating to Boojnoord. Thither he was followed by Hamza Meerza, and the Salar and the chief of Boojnoord were forced to fall back upon the Turkomans. It was the intention of Prince Hamza to pursue them, but he was recalled to Meshed by the news of a rising at that place. The governor whom he had left at Boojnoord contrived to make himself so disagreeable to the people that they opened communication with their former chief, Jafer Kuli Khan, who, with the Salar, returned from the Turkoman desert, and once more took possession of Boojnoord. Twelve thousand men flocked to their standards, and the prince had to hasten from Meshed to oppose them. They retired on his approach and fell back on their Turkoman allies; but this time they were pursued to the deserts bordering the Attrek river. The chief of Boojnoord, after a number of adventures, succeeded in making his way to Herat, where he was

\* "Muran ar ayed az zendagee, ke salar basham kunam bendagee."

detained for some time in captivity by Yar Mahomed Khan. The Salar found his way to Serrekhs, and, falling in with a body of several thousand Turkoman horse, he doubled upon the prince, who was pursuing him, and attempted by means of a forced march to gain the city of Meshed. By the orders of Hamza Meerza a body of cavalry was sent to oppose him; but the Salar was victorious in the fight which ensued, and he continued his way to Meshed. He was not, however, in a condition to face the artillery which the prince now brought up against him, and he was once more driven to seek safety in flight, and shelter amongst the Turkomans of the desert.

At this time there occurs the first mention in the Persian records of a man whose name is destined to hold an enduring place in Persian history.\* The East, so prolific in originators of creeds, had produced a fanatic who was able to obtain spiritual authority over the minds of hundreds of thousands of his countrymen. Syed Ali Mahomed, though boasting descent from the lawgiver of Mecca, was the son of a grocer of Sheeraz. Being of a religious disposition, he was sent in his youth to Kerbela, where he sat at the feet of a celebrated doctor of the Mahomedan law. From Kerbela he proceeded to Bushire, and at the latter place he endeavoured by

\* Bábism, though at present a proscribed religion in Persia, is far from being extinct, or even declining, and the Báb may yet contest with Mahomed the privilege of being regarded as the real prophet of the faithful. Bábism in its infancy was the cause of a greater sensation than that even which was produced by the teaching of Jesus, if we may judge from the account of Josephus of the first days of Christianity. Far from foreseeing the future spread of that religion, the Jewish historian contents himself with observing—"And the tribe of Christians, so named from him (Christ), are not extinct at this day."

the practice of certain austerities to acquire the reputation of peculiar piety. One of his singular proceedings at this period was to expose himself bareheaded to the rays of the burning summer sun, in order that men might see that his power extended even over the orb that had been the object of the veneration of the Persians of old. It is said, however—and any one who has visited Bushire in summer will readily believe the statement—that the sun's influence had the effect of rendering his brain disordered. He now gave out that as Ali had been the gate by which men had entered the city of the prophets' knowledge, even so he was the gate through which men might attain to the knowledge of the twelfth Imam. It was in accordance with this doctrine that he received the distinguishing appellation of Bāb, or gate; from which his followers were styled Bābis. His pretensions rose in proportion to the credulity of those who placed faith in his mission from above. We are not informed in what manner he reconciled his new statements with preceding declarations, with which they were not consistent; but we may infer that after each new revelation he told his disciples that it had been necessary to prepare them for it by the preceding one. Not contented with the character of the forerunner of the twelfth Imam, he presently gave out that he was no other than the long-looked-for Mehdi himself; and finding that the higher his pretensions rose the more his followers increased in numbers and in zeal, he next gave out that the holy prophet of Medina had revisited the earth, and appeared in his person. His impiety lastly reached the blasphemous height of his declaring that he was an incarnation of the eternal God.

The success which had attended the preaching of the Bāb at Bushire induced that personage to attempt the dangerous experiment of endeavouring to bring over to his doctrines the inhabitants of his native place. He assumed the pretension of being able to work miracles; but the only two said to have been performed by him of which I can obtain any record were certainly of the most simple description. One was his foolhardy attempt to brave the power of the rays of the sun on the shore of the Persian Gulf; the other was the assertion of being able to write faster than merely mortal fingers could ply the pen. But if his actual performances would scarcely have entitled him to whatever credit may be due to a clever deceiver of men's senses, his deficiencies were fully made up for by the power of imagination and of belief possessed by his followers. These spread his fame far and wide throughout Persia, and his naib, or vicegerent, was sent to Sheeraz to pave the way for the approach of the Bāb himself. But the naib was unfortunate enough to have to deal with a hardened unbeliever in Hussein Khan, who after his return from England had been appointed governor-general of the province of Fars. By his orders the naib was seized and bastinadoed, and, in order to prevent him from going from house to house, the governor ordered that the tendons of his legs should be severed. But this ungracious reception of his forerunner did not deter the Bāb from carrying into execution his project of visiting Sheeraz. On his arrival there he was sent for by the governor, with whom he had a private interview. In order that he might the better prove the secret thoughts of the Bāb, the governor pretended to be half disposed to believe in

his mission. He declared that a few days before, the Bāb had appeared to him in a dream, and while reproaching him with his treatment of the naib had declared that he considered it beneath his dignity to punish him for the same. The Bāb, it appears, had unlimited belief in the powers of credulity of those whom he encountered; it never occurred to him to suppose that Hussein Khan was not sincere in what he said, and he therefore determined to complete his conversion by affording him a proof of his superhuman power. "You have correctly stated what I said to you," he replied; "but it was not in a dream that I appeared: I was present to you in the body." Upon this Hussein Khan declared himself to be convinced of the heavenly mission of the Bāb. This was a great accession to the ranks of the faithful, and the powerful neophyte was forthwith promised that he should one day sit on the throne of Stamboul. It was a satisfactory prospect for the future; but in the meantime Hussein Khan suggested that the Bāb should come with him and confront the assembled moollahs and ulema of Sheeraz. It would not have accorded with the Bāb's pretensions had he declined to accede to this proposal; and he faced the priests and doctors of the Mahomedan law with all the more confidence that he believed himself to be secure of the support of the strong arm of the governor of Fars. He boldly declared to the astonished assembly that the mission of Mahomed, which had served its purpose, was now at an end, and that he had come down from heaven to dwell amongst men for the purpose of inaugurating a new order of things. The doctors gave him an attentive hearing, and as some parts of his discourse were con-

fused, they requested, not unreasonably, that he would furnish them with a written statement of that which they were required to believe. The Bāb made no objection to this request; but when the statement came to be read it was found to be written in some other language than the Arabic or Persian. Upon this the assembled priests declared that the fanatic was mad, and in conformity with this opinion, they decreed that, instead of the sentence of death which the Bāb deserved to have passed upon him for having declared that he was God, he should receive the punishment of the bastinado, and be confined for life. The execution of the first part of this sentence is said to have had the effect of causing the Bāb to acknowledge that he had been guilty of egregious folly; but it produced little or no effect on the spread of his fame and of his doctrine.

Many of the principal priests of Persia became secret converts to Bābism, and, while the Bāb languished in prison at Sheeraz, and afterwards at Ispahan and at Chereck in Azerbaejan, his naib, who had contrived to escape, was successfully engaged in preaching his religion at Yezd. So numerous in a short time were the followers of the Bāb that a decree was issued by the chief religious authorities in Persia, making it a capital crime for any one to profess the tenets of the false prophet of Sheeraz. Some of the followers of the Bāb, full of new-born zeal, thought that they were doing a service acceptable to the Almighty by assassinating some of the chief priests who had issued decrees condemnatory of Bābism; and, on the other hand, the priesthood authorized a persecution of the followers of the Bāb. In this way the feelings and interests of a large body of



men were entirely engaged in this religious question, and the blood of those who were martyrs for the faith contributed greatly to the spread of the tenets of Bābism; since the fact that men were found willing to lay down life for the cause, convinced waverers that it must rest on the everlasting foundation of truth.

The reader of this volume will probably before reaching this page have made to himself the observation that the history of modern Persia is for the most part a mere record of deeds of violence and blood. Such deeds, it may be observed, occupy a large space in the annals of every nation, but it is painful for a writer to find so little else worthy of being recorded in the history of the modern occupants of a country which so early and for so long a period filled a conspicuous place in the world. But though fully aware of the monotonous nature of the task I have undertaken, I can find little or nothing in the pages of the Persian chronicler, or in the volumes and documents upon which I have drawn, that would either interest or instruct the European reader. I have therefore confined myself to the relation of such facts as seemed to me to show the spirit of the times of which I have written, and to have had more or less influence in shaping the destinies of the nation ruled over by the princes of the Kajar dynasty. I am now drawing near to the end of the reign of the third Kajar king, and having recounted the wars and massacres of that reign, it remains to me to describe the more peaceful events which marked it. The greatest of these would be considered by philanthropists to be a decree of the Shah strictly forbidding the application of torture to any of his subjects. It is not to be supposed, how-

ever, that this decree was sufficient to put a stop, once for all, to a practice so congenial to the habits of petty governors placed in positions where they were independent in a great measure of the central authorities. Some governors still continued to torture at their pleasure, but one of these having been brought to justice through the representations of the British Minister, the practice came gradually to be looked upon as unsafe, and thus a greater regard to the laws of humanity came to be observed.

Another step in the path of civilization was the prohibition of importing into Persia African slaves along the seaboard of the Persian Gulf and by the harbour of Mohamera. This measure was the result of the continuous efforts of her Britannic Majesty's Government. A third event of this reign which it is a pleasure to record, is the conclusion of a treaty of commerce between Persia and England. Negotiations were long in progress for making a similar treaty between Persia and France. Following the example of her Majesty's Government, that of King Louis Philippe had sent out to Persia a congratulatory embassy upon the Shah's accession to the throne; the ambassador being permitted to enter into arrangements for the conclusion of a commercial treaty. No results followed this measure, and the embassy obtained permission to return to France; its chief, and the Marquis de Lavalette, his secretary, being made Khans of Persia. A few years later the Count de Sartiges renewed the negotiations which had been begun by his predecessor. But these were not attended by the wished-for result, and his Excellency had to content himself with confining the practical work of his mission to the protection of his co-religionists in Persia.

During the administration of Haji Meerza Aghassi some attention was paid to the development of the internal resources of the dominions of the Shah. The cultivation of the mulberry-tree, to supply food for the silkworm, was anxiously watched over in the province of Kerman; and, amongst other projects, the prime minister entertained, and endeavoured to carry into execution, that of diverting into the plain of Tehran the broad river of Kerij, with a view to procure an abundant supply of water for the wants of the city. On the whole, the minister of Mahomed Shah showed himself, during the thirteen years of his administration, to be a man not altogether unqualified for the duty of ruling over an Oriental nation. He was not deaf to the claims of expediency, of justice and of mercy, and if his merits scarcely deserved the high opinion which he entertained of his own performances and his own capacity, he is at least entitled to the credit of having meant well to his country and his sovereign. That sovereign was now about to close a career the years of which had been evil as they had been few. In the autumn of 1848 he was overtaken by a combination of maladies which it was feared would speedily bring him to the grave. Gout and erysipelas had together effected the ruin of his constitution, and on the evening of the 4th of September, 1848, his Majesty, being then in his fortieth year, expired at the palace of Mahomediah in Shimran, without having at the last suffered pain. That palace, as well as the once splendid abode of the Vizeer hard by, has long since been stripped of its treasures; in accordance with the Persian prejudice, which makes a son object to dwelling in the house in which his father has died. The marble baths and halls

that were built for the use of Sultanas are now the refuge of the jackal and the owl. But at the epoch of the death of Mahomed Shah the palace of Mahomediah contained two ladies of princely rank, in the relative condition of whom a wonderful alteration was effected by the demise of the king. During the lifetime of his Majesty his affections had been centred, and his confidence bestowed, on one alone of the many fair women who formed the royal household. But that princess was not the mother of the heir-apparent, and she had now the mortification of being forced to yield the place of dignity and influence to her rival, the new queen-mother.

Nasser-ed-deen Meerza, the heir-apparent of Persia, was absent at the seat of his government in Azerbacejan at the time of the death of his father. It was of the utmost importance, for the establishment of a feeling of public security, that the young Shah should be brought to the capital without any unnecessary delay. The Russian Minister, in conjunction with the English chargé d'affaires, had determined to send members of their respective Missions to Tabreez so soon as they should receive intelligence of the demise of the king. But certain persons, whose interest it was to prolong the state of lawlessness which commonly prevails immediately after the death of a Persian monarch, had, before the demise of the Shah, begun to assemble in threatening bands on the roads between the palace and the city, with the view of stopping the messengers who should be sent to announce to the hundred and thirty provinces or governments of Persia that the monarch of the land was no more. Under these circumstances, Colonel Farrant, who was then in charge of the English Mission,

determined to act upon the medical information he had received to the effect that the king could not possibly survive for many hours; and by thus anticipating the event he enabled his messenger to arrive at Tabreez long before any other courier could reach that town. The crown-prince was thus enabled to make timely preparations for his march to the capital, and the mischievous designs of these intriguers were frustrated.

The character of the deceased Shah must have been apparent to those who have perused the preceding pages. He was just in his intentions and pure in his private life: no indulgence in any vice is laid to his charge. On the other hand, he was bigoted and cruel; but for his bigotry he was indebted to his early education, and for his cruelty, the bodily pain under which for so many years he suffered, and which soured his temper, may be admitted as some palliation. The custom prevalent in Persia during his reign, by which the monarch was not only the judge of criminals but the witness of the execution of capital punishments, could not but deaden the royal heart to sentiments of compassion. On the whole, Mahomed Shah's memory is entitled to the respect accorded to that of a man who, in the face of obstacles and infirmities, has consistently persevered in what he believed to be the path of duty. His obsequies were performed with the pomp and splendour usually observed at the burial of a Persian king, and his body was placed by the side of that of Fetteh Ali Shah in the mosque of Koom.

## CHAPTER XII.

Flight of Haji Meerza Aghassi—Rival Parties at Tehran—The Queen-Mother President of the Council—Serious Risings in the Provinces—The Salar—The Ameer-i-Nizam—Measures of Reform adopted by him—Combination against him—Mutiny of the Garrison of Tehran—Seizure of Kotoor by the Turks—Ascendancy of the Belooches in Seistan—Persian Claims to that Province—Protracted Siege of Meshed—Bahman Meerza—Prince Sultan Murad presses the Siege of Meshed—Foreign Interference offered for the Pacification of Khorassan—Ravages of the Turkomans—Surrender of Meshed—Death of the Salar.

SOMETHING of that feeling of satisfaction with which one listens in a warm room to the roar of thunder and the pelting of rain without, ought to be experienced by the reader dwelling in a settled country while perusing an account of the condition of affairs in an unsettled country after the death of its ruler.

Mahomed Shah had scarcely breathed his last when a large body of his most influential courtiers hastened at night through the lanes and gardens of Tajreesh to the encampment of the British Legation. To them it was as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, under which they sought refuge till the calamities which they dreaded should be past. These courtiers had formed themselves into a council, with the purpose of carrying on the administration until the arrival of the Shah. Whilst they made the strongest professions of allegiance to their new sovereign, they one and all declared that

they would no longer submit to the authority of Haji Meerza Aghassi, whom they were prepared to resist by force. They were informed by the English chargé d'affaires that he would act, in the emergency which had arisen, in concert with the Russian representative; and on the following day, they took part with him in a consultation with Prince Dolgorouky. A paper was sealed by most of the influential persons of the court, by which they gave in their allegiance to the young Shah; but in it they stipulated that Haji Meerza Aghassi should withdraw himself from public affairs until the commands of his sovereign should be received with reference to the formation of the new government: they also required that the Haji should disperse the armed force with which he had surrounded his person. In order to prevent loss of life, Prince Dolgorouky and Colonel Farrant agreed to request the minister of the late Shah to remain quietly at his village, and to abstain from interfering in public affairs. To the latter proposal he at once agreed; but on the morning of the day after the council had been held, he suddenly made his appearance in the citadel of Tehran, where he surrounded himself with twelve hundred followers, and shutting the gates, he cut off all communication with the city. He did not, however, remain there long, but, after wandering for a time about the plain of Tehran, took sanctuary in the shrine of Shah Abdul Azcem; to which he was pursued by some Shahzevend horsemen.

In the meantime much disorder ensued in the capital; the popular fury being vented on the retainers and clients of the Minister. The roads in the vicinity of Tehran became impassable; but the chief priest

exerted himself to restore order, and after a time his efforts were attended with success. The government in the meantime assumed the form of an oligarchy. Every member of the council issued orders as he thought proper, and each aspired to fill the post of prime minister so soon as the Shah should arrive at the capital. But the president of the council was the queen-mother, who, under very difficult circumstances, showed herself to be possessed of judgment and of ability—qualities not often to be met with in Oriental ladies. There were two principal parties at this time in Persia: one of these was called the Azerbacejan party, the other was that of the Asef-ed-Dowleh. The queen-mother was readily persuaded that it would be impolitic to exclude the members of the latter from all participation in power, and her Highness accordingly invited its chiefs to attend the council, and to take part in the deliberations on public affairs. Her Highness received visits from the foreign missions, and while she thanked them in the name of her son for the support they had given to his cause, she expressed her readiness to be guided by their friendly advice. To the party of the Asef-ed-Dowleh belonged one of the most influential noblemen of Persia, Meerza Agha Khan. He had formerly filled the post of Minister of War, but at the instigation of Haji Meerza Aghassi he had been banished from Tehran, after having been beaten and fined. He now made his appearance at one of the gates of the city, and requested the English chargé d'affaires to procure him permission to enter it. The queen-mother was glad to welcome back the banished man, and his reception by the people as he passed through the bazars on his way to the palace,

showed either how popular he was, or how much the Azerbaeejan party, of which he was the opponent, was disliked by the populace.

It was not at Tehran alone that the announcement of the Shah's death had been the signal for disorder. The roads in all directions became infested with robbers, who effectually prevented all communication with the capital. The inhabitants of several towns availed themselves of this favourable opportunity for putting to death their tyrannical governors. Ispahan, in common with Kerman, Sheeraz and other cities, became the scene of lawless outrage. An affray took place between the garrison and some of the citizens, which ended in the murder of one of the principal assistants of the governor of Ispahan. The perpetrators of this act, which was committed in the most public manner in the mosque, and under the eyes of the chief priest, continued at large, in defiance of the civil authorities. The Imam-i-Juma \* made at first no effort to appease the tumult, but when his aid was called in, he lent his assistance to the governor; who, having been reinforced by the arrival of some troops, attacked the rebels, and, after having met with much resistance, drove them from the town.

The city of Yezd was also thrown into a state of rebellion and confusion by the announcement of the death of Mahomed Shah. The governor, who possessed great firmness, but who was very unpopular, found himself besieged by a portion of the inhabitants headed by some notorious disturbers of the peace. After having attempted in vain to defend his place of residence, he was forced to retire to the citadel, where he and his few

\* The chief priest.

attendants found themselves to be almost destitute of provisions. By the aid of four pieces of ordnance, however, they contrived not only to hold out for some days, but also seriously to annoy the townspeople. At length hunger compelled them to negotiate, and it was agreed that they should receive provisions and beasts of burden to enable them to quit the place. But these had no sooner been produced and admitted into the citadel, than the governor closed the gate, and refused to abide by the conditions to which he had agreed. The camels and asses were slaughtered to serve the garrison for food, and the followers of the governor began to congratulate themselves on the superior ability they had shown in outwitting the townsmen. It appeared, however, that both parties were suitably matched in point of bad faith, and the defenders of the citadel found that they were premature in thinking that all the advantage had been theirs in the late transaction; it was ascertained that the bread they had received had been poisoned. They endeavoured to punish this attempt on their lives by renewing the fire upon the town, which the citizens, being without artillery, were unable to return. After these mutual discoveries of each other's treachery, it seems strange that they should have again had recourse to negotiation; but no amount of experience of the bad faith of his countrymen has the effect of inducing a Persian to resolve not to trust to Persians for the future. The explanation of this singular, but incontestable, fact is to be found in the circumstance that vanity is even more strongly developed in the Persian character than is deceitfulness. Each Persian thinks that he of all men is sufficiently clever to be able to

decipher the character, and to divine the secret intentions, of those with whom he has to deal; and accordingly he is ever ready, in spite of his previous experience, to believe in the promises, protestations and oaths of his countrymen. The governor of Yezd renewed his overtures to the townspeople, and as his arguments continued to be seconded by the fire of his artillery, he found a ready disposition on the part of the citizens to yield to his wish of being allowed to retire unmolested. But at this point of the negotiation some troops arrived to his succour, and enabled him to leave the citadel and appear openly in the town. A few of the rebels were then secured, but it was not until after the lapse of some time that their leader was captured and put to death.

The condition of the highways in the province of Yezd was now such as to cause the greatest embarrassment to the trading community. In the space of about two months no less than fifteen hundred beasts of burden, with their loads, were carried off, or detained on their way to or from the provincial capital. It was no wonder that the merchants began to lose courage, and to talk loudly of deserting a country where their property was so slightly protected.

The city of Kasveen had been for fourteen years the prison of Syf-el-Mulk Meerza, a son of that Zil-es-Sultan who had disputed the throne with Mahomed Shah. The Ameerzadeh now suddenly appeared at the distance of thirty-six miles from Tehran, at the head of a body of horsemen. He addressed a circular to the chiefs of the wandering tribes in that vicinity, requesting them to join his standard, and to aid him in preventing the ac-

cession to power of Nasser-ed-deen Shah. But the sole exploit of this paltry pretender to regal power was to rob a courier of the Russian Mission of the sum of three thousand five hundred ducats. His forces were soon afterwards routed, and he himself made prisoner by some horsemen of the Afshar tribe, who brought him, tied with cords, to Tehran.

But the most formidable opponent whom the young Shah had to put down was, as might have been expected, the gallant son of Allah-yar Khan. Some of his followers having taken sanctuary in the great mosque of Meshed, the servants of the governor of Khorassan, actuated by imprudent zeal, desired to drag them out from the holy precincts, or to slay them over the tomb of the saint. Such sacrilegious talking shocked the feelings of the priests and pilgrims, and they called on the people to assist in saving from insult the shrine of the blessed Imam. The appeal was not without effect, and the people of Meshed drove the impious soldiers from the mosque, and were from that hour devoted to the cause of the Salar. On the receipt of the news of the Shah's death, that chief lost no time in taking possession of the city of Meshed, and he forced the governor to take refuge in the citadel.

During the interval which elapsed between the death of Mahomed Shah and his son's arrival at the capital, the city of Tehran was a scene of intrigues and counter-intrigues which were planned in quick succession. No effort was spared by the ambitious and the unworthy to undermine those in whom it seemed likely that the Shah would place confidence. A priest named Nasrallah was now the chief of the Azerbacejan party, and as he also

WATSON

possessed to a certain extent the confidence of the followers of the Asef-ed-Dowleh, it was thought by many that he was the person best fitted to fill the post of premier, or Sedr-Azem. But the Shah had already made choice of a Grand Vizeer. On the 20th of October, 1848, his Majesty made his public entry into his capital, and at midnight of the same day he was crowned King of Persia. Nasser-ed-deen, the eldest son of the late Mahomed Shah, and of Mahd-Aulia, the daughter of Cassim Khan, Kajar, was at this time sixteen years of age. He was not remarkable for any premature development of mental gifts, but he was possessed of sagacity sufficient to enable him to discern in a man who accompanied him from Tabreez, the qualities that were wanted in a Persian Minister.

Meerza Teki Khan, who was at this time appointed to be the Ameer-i-Nizam, or commander-in-chief of the Persian army, owed his elevation entirely to his talents and his services. He was a man altogether of a different nature from that of his countrymen in general. Belisarius did not tower over the degenerate Romans of his day more than did the Ameer-i-Nizam over his contemporaries, the successors of the adversaries of "the last of the Roman generals." The race of modern Persians cannot be said to be altogether effete, since so recently it has been able to produce a man such as was the Ameer-i-Nizam, Feraghan, near Sultanatabad in Irak, had the honour to give birth to him who perhaps alone of all the Oriental statesmen and governors whose names appear in the history of modern Persia, would have satisfied the scrutiny of a Diogenes, and was fully entitled to be considered that "noblest work of God," an honest man. The father of Meerza Teki occupied a humble

station in life, and from the post of cook was promoted to that of steward in the household of the Kaim-Makam, the first minister of Mahomed Shah. The son at an early age entered the service of the Persian commander-in-chief, and accompanied that officer to St. Petersburg with the Mission on which Prince Kosroo was sent after the murder of M. Grebatodoff. On his return to Persia after this his sole visit to Europe, the servant of the commander-in-chief was promoted in the social scale, and from being a menial retainer he became a Meerza, or writer. He was subsequently named to the rank of Khan, and on the death of his patron he became Vizeer of the army of Azerbaeejan. In consequence of the illness of the Musheer-ed-Dowleh, who had been named Persian plenipotentiary at the conferences of Erzeroum for the settlement of the points in dispute between Persia and Turkey, Meerza Teki Khan was sent to represent his government; and we are told that he was beyond all comparison the most interesting personage amongst the commissioners of Turkey, Persia, Russia and Great Britain, who were then assembled at Erzeroum.\* During his residence in that city Meerza Teki Khan had an opportunity of witnessing the results of the introduction of the Tanzimat in the dominions of the Sultan. On his return to Tehran he was directed to accompany the crown-prince to Tabreez when his Royal Highness was named governor-general of Azerbaeejan, and thus a considerable share in the actual government of the chief province of Persia fell into his hands. From Tabreez he proceeded to Tehran in the train of the new Shah, and on the way he was offered by his Majesty the post

\* *Armenia and Erzeroum*, by the Hon. ROBERT CURZON.

of Prime Minister of Persia. It is said—I know not whether correctly or otherwise—that Meerza Teki had from his youthful years confidently asserted that if he should live to middle age, he felt sure he would rise to be the prime minister of his native land; but he was somewhat disturbed by the recollection that each of the two preceding Kajar Shahs had put to death his first chief Vizeer, and, therefore, when the post was offered to him, he sought to reconcile ambition with prudence by declining the title of Sedr-Azem, which is usually conferred on a prime minister, and by taking in its stead the humbler designation of Ameer-i-Nizam.

On assuming charge of the administration of the government of Persia, the new minister found every department in the utmost confusion. But he was not a man to be daunted by difficulties, and he courageously set himself to reform every branch of the public service, and to abolish many abuses, such as the putting up of governments for sale. He took measures for at once improving the condition of the army; for relieving the peasantry from the oppressions under which they laboured; and for changing the whole financial system of the country. It was remarked at the commencement of the Ameer's ministry that too much reliance was not to be placed on his promises, since, after all, he was a Persian. But the Vizeer in every thing acted up to his expressed intentions, and if all his measures were not followed by success, their failure must be attributed to the little assistance and coöperation he received from others, rather than to any want of sagacity or energy on the part of the minister. His word was not readily pledged, but when it had once been given, implicit reliance might

be placed upon it. It was no easy task that now lay before the Ameer. The province of Khorassan was in arms against the Shah, and had the measures adopted by the new government been unsuccessful, anarchy and confusion would have followed. It was openly predicted at this time that the days of the Kajar dynasty would very soon be over, and that Persia would be broken up into a number of petty states. Fortunately these sinister anticipations were not fulfilled; men's minds were greatly calmed by the removal to Kerbela of Haji Meerza Aghassi, owing to whose avarice, nepotism and misgovernment, it was alleged, the general disorder had arisen.

The insurrection in Khorassan was not easily put down. Prince Hamza, having with him in the citadel only three thousand infantry of Azerbaeejan, could not take any active measures against the Salar, who was at the head of fifteen thousand men, and whose force was daily increased by the arrival of detachments from all parts of Khorassan. All the chiefs of that province, with one or two exceptions, espoused the cause of the insurgents, and the feeling of the people towards the brave and courteous Salar is described as having amounted almost to worship. On the other hand, Yar Mahomed Khan of Herat came at this time to Meshed to the relief of the prince-governor, with two thousand Affghan horsemen and a large supply of provisions. The motive—if any motive need be ascribed to him save the innate Oriental desire to take part in a disturbance—the alleged motive for this movement on the part of the ruler of Herat, was the promise held out to him by the governor of Khorassan of twenty pieces of artillery and a



large number of muskets, which were to be given to him, together with two places on the frontier of Khorassan, on the condition that he should afford assistance towards putting down the insurrection at Meshed. After some fighting, the joint forces of Herat and of Prince Hamza found that they were able to make but little progress, and negotiations were therefore set on foot with a view to the cessation of hostilities. Jafer Kuli Khan of Boojnoord, who till now had been detained in custody by the ruler of Herat, was sent to the Salar on the part of the leaders opposed to him. But that chief was the worst envoy that could have been selected, for he was now burning to avenge, on the person and troops of Yar Mahomed Khan, the long imprisonment to which he had so inhospitably been subjected, and having joined his friend the Salar, he refused to return to the hostile camp. The attention of the Affghan chief was now directed to the movements of a cavalry force which was sent to devastate the border of the territory of Herat. The prince-governor of Khorassan was then obliged to evacuate the citadel of Meshed, and to retire towards the Affghan frontier.

The Ameer-i-Nizam had in the meantime sent a body of about six thousand infantry from Tehran to the assistance of the governor of Khorassan. Prince Sultan Murad, who was in command of this force, laid siege to the town of Sebzewar, which place was defended by the youthful son of the Salar; but Sebzewar held out, and the siege was soon raised. Prince Sultan Murad, careless of leaving a fortified place behind him, then went on towards Kuchan, plundering by the way several villages, in which he found an ample supply of provisions for his troops. Some chiefs of consideration joined his standard,

and through their friends he endeavoured to enter into an arrangement with the people of Meshed. His brother, Prince Hamza, was in the meantime encamped within twenty-four miles of Herat. The Salar's party had lost the assistance of some allies whose aid might have turned the scale of victory. The chiefs of Mazenderan had been driven into opposition, and almost into rebellion, against the Shah's government by the vexatious policy of Haji Meerza Aghassi; but on the guarantee of the English representative at the Persian court that their personal safety should be granted to them, at their own request and by the desire of the Shah, they at once repaired to court, where they received a flattering welcome.

While Khorassan still continued in rebellion, the process of amelioration in other parts of Persia was found to be attended at every stage by difficulties that were almost insurmountable. The Ameer-i-Nizam was so thoroughly aware of the duplicity and venality of almost all the Persian courtiers, that he for a time could not fix upon a man who might with safety be employed in the task of coöperating with him in remedying abuses, and establishing a system of equitable government. But the Ameer himself was as laborious as he was conscientious: he worked day after day and week after week, late and early, at the noblest task that can fall to the lot of man; nor was he discouraged or disheartened by the difficulties which he had to surmount, and the intrigues he had to thwart. He enjoyed the unbounded confidence of the Shah, without which he could not have effected anything; but he had not been fortunate enough to be able to secure

the coöperation of the person who, next to himself, possessed the greatest influence over the mind of the youthful king. In a country where every one, from the Shah downwards, looks on his neighbour with suspicion, there is but one person in whom the sovereign feels that he is sure, under all circumstances, to find a true adviser and a sincere friend. The position and influence of the Queen-mother so entirely depend on the life and prosperity of the Shah, that her counsels are ever listened to by him without suspicion or impatience. One can only speculate as to the motives which induced the Queen-mother to withhold her confidence from the Ameer-i-Nizam. She may have dreaded the effect upon the selfish chiefs of Persia of the measures of reform which the Minister had made up his mind to introduce. She may have been brought to believe that the hereditary nobles of the land would never be induced to receive the law from a man of humble extraction, and that her son's throne would in consequence be endangered. Or, her Highness's conduct may have originated in some less worthy motive: such as jealousy of the influence which had been acquired by the Ameer over the mind of the king. But for whatever reason, the Queen-mother threw the weight of her influence into the scale of the opposition, and afforded her countenance to the host of influential and discontented persons whose unlawful gains were curtailed in consequence of the measures of the new Minister. At first, however, these intrigues produced no impression upon the mind of the Shah; and had his Majesty been allowed to follow the dictates of his own will, the Ameer would probably ere now have, for a time, converted Persia from the condition

in which Hercules found the Augean stables into that in which he left them.

But it is not to be supposed that the Ameer alone could have permanently changed the characteristics of a whole nation, or could have overcome the combined influences of climate, of custom, and of religion. He might have effected much during his own lifetime; but it is highly improbable that another man could have been found to carry on the Shah's government on the enlightened principles adopted by the Ameer; and, therefore, Persia would in any case have sunk into the apathetic condition of all the surviving Mahomedan States which are not influenced from without.

The Ameer's system of government was that which experience has proved to be the most beneficial for an Oriental nation—an enlightened despotism. He made no pretence of wishing to educate the people, or of consulting their inclinations. He professed to endeavour to secure their material well-being, and to restrain their evil propensities. But the Minister aimed at far more than this; and had his measures been permanently effected, their adoption would have indicated nothing less than a radical change in Persian morality and Persian manners. The first idea which the word Persia suggests in the mind of a scholar is the flowery and overloaded style which for two thousand years has characterized the compositions of the poets and historians of the land of the fire-worshippers. The Ameer-i-Nizam resolved to suppress the meaningless and disgusting phraseology which is suited only to slaves and parasites, and he published a decree forbidding the use in petitions and official documents addressed to himself of more than

one specified title—that of “Jenab” or “Excellency.” A person of less rank was in like manner to be addressed by one lesser title. People were astonished to hear of a Vizeer who rejected the incense of flattery; but they obeyed his commands, and probably few regretted the high-sounding but meaningless expressions to which their ears had been so long accustomed.

Persian immorality and dishonesty are unhappily proverbial, and the Ameer-i-Nizam did not hesitate to grapple with these most deeply-ingrained vices of his fellow-countrymen. The public baths of Tehran had been allowed to become the scenes of open debauchery; and the Minister lost no time in punishing those who made their profit by these practices, which he now put down.

(Of all the traits which go to make up the Persian character, that which, next to excessive vanity, is most strongly developed, is a constant desire to acquire unlawful gains. The word “mudahil,” for which there is no exact English term, has, for Persian ears, a charm which few Europeans can comprehend. “Mudahil” signifies all that one can acquire by receiving bribes, by swindling and extortion, and by all other irregular means. It is “mudahil” and not salary which every Persian official is anxious to secure. A salary regularly paid affords no scope for the display of the talents in which Persians most excel—for dissimulating and overreaching, oppressing and cringing—and, therefore, a post which has only a good salary attached to it, and which affords no good opportunities of making “mudahil,” is looked upon by Persians as being but a poor possession. The Ameer-i-Nizam, himself altogether above being bribed, resolved to suppress the wide-spread system of whole-

sale bribery which he saw around him. By degrees he effected much in the way of putting a stop to corruption; but his next task proved to be too much even for his energy and unlimited power. The sectarian spirit in Persia is kept alive mainly by the annual exhibition on the stage of the sufferings and the martyrdom of the Imam Hussein; and during the month of Moherrem the whole populations of the cities of Northern Persia are worked up into a state bordering upon frenzy; notwithstanding that the chief Moslem authorities hold that these exhibitions are contrary to the duty of the followers of Mahomed. The Ameer-i-Nizam endeavoured to take advantage of the weight of religious authority to do away with a custom so productive of fanaticism as is the Persian Tazeeah. The Sheeahs of Irak and Azerbaeejan were, however, too much attached to the yearly-recurring exhibition to submit to its suppression, and the Ameer was forced unwillingly to permit its continuance.

Soon after the arrival of the Shah at his capital, a royal commission was appointed to examine into the state of the finances of the kingdom, and to draw up for the king's information a statement of the revenues and of the expenditure of the country. At this time the latter far exceeded the former. It appears that one mode of courting popularity practised by the minister Haji Meerza Aghassi had been, seldom or never directly to refuse compliance with a petition for the grant of a donation or a pension. He had not made direct payments, excepting to his own tribesmen, as a general rule; but he had been in the habit of issuing government orders on the different provincial authorities.

It is said that he had never meant that these orders should be attended to, and that he had given the provincial governors to understand so. The result was that they seldom or never had been attended to; but the odium of the non-payment had fallen on the governors, while the credit of liberality had remained with the Haji. The consequence of this truly Oriental system of canvassing for popularity was, that the Ameer-i-Nizam now found upon his hands an enormous amount of government liabilities. He had the alternative of meeting them or of damaging the credit of the Shah by rejecting bonds issued by a minister of state. Most Persians would have attempted to evade choosing between these alternatives by having recourse to some ingenious subterfuge; and it is to the credit of the Ameer that he preferred boldly to face the difficulty. (Probably no financier ever found himself to be placed in a more embarrassed position than that of Meerza Teki Khan in the beginning of the year 1849. Since the accession of the Shah no money had been paid into the royal treasury, and on the other hand the expenditure was necessarily heavy. The army in the field in Khorassan depended for its existence entirely upon the central government, and that government was in the unfortunate position of lacking the credit which could only result from confidence in its stability. But in addition to the financial difficulties to be overcome, there was the embarrassment to be dreaded from affronting and impoverishing so many powerful and unprincipled men. Colonels there were who had been drawing pay and receiving clothing for regiments which actually did not exist. The royal body-guard, during the reign of Fetteh Ali Shah, had consisted of an efficient

regiment of six hundred horsemen. During the reign of that monarch's grandson it had been increased, upon paper, to four thousand men, but reduced, at muster, to three hundred. Nor was the state of things in the civil department at all out of keeping with that of the military department. Many persons were in the receipt of large pensions which had been granted by Haji Meerza Aghassi without the slightest reference to any service rendered by them; and as many of these stipendiaries were priests and men of influence, the task of compelling them to relinquish their prey was all the more difficult of accomplishment. Nevertheless, the Ameer had the firmness to cut down the expenditure of the government, and to reduce or discontinue the pensions that had been granted to so many idle princes and priests. The most extraordinary, and even unaccountable, part of his conduct in the eyes of the Persians, was that he was utterly inaccessible to bribery. This being the case, the money which he refused to accept was employed for the purpose of upsetting him. The Shah had shown himself to be possessed of sufficient firmness to resist the attempts that had been made to induce him to dismiss from office the Ameer-i-Nizam; and his Majesty had even insisted on giving to his Minister, in opposition to the wishes of his mother and all his relations, the hand of his only sister. The discontented noblemen, therefore, despairing of being able to move the Shah, resorted to other means for obtaining the dismissal of the Ameer.

There were at that time in the citadel of Tehran about two thousand five hundred soldiers of regiments belonging to Azerbaejan, and these men were bribed to mutiny, and to demand the life of the prime minister.

On the 11th of March, 1849, the regiments of the garrison of the citadel of Tehran refused to listen to the commands of their officers, and proceeded to the house of the Ameer-i-Nizam, in front of which they began to vociferate loudly, and to demand their arrears of pay. They were, however, persuaded to return to their quarters, on the promise that their alleged grievances would be inquired into on the following morning, and redressed if proved to be real. On the next day the troops again made their appearance unarmed; but they were confronted by the personal attendants of the Minister, who fired upon the clamorous mob. Upon this the exasperated troops returned to their barracks for their arms, and again came forth in a body, vowing vengeance against the Ameer. The Persian Minister had now recourse to the friendly interference of the English *chargé d'affaires* at Tehran. That officer had formerly been employed in the command of Persian troops, and he was listened to by the mutineers; but his efforts were insufficient to quell the tumult. The furious soldiers were unanimous in their demand that the Ameer should be dismissed or put to death; and not a word was now said as to their arrears of pay. The Shah had not the means of putting down this mutiny, at the outset, by force, and it seemed likely that he would be compelled to submit to the dangerous course of allowing himself to be dictated to by an armed throng. The Minister in this dilemma volunteered to retire from office; he left the citadel forthwith, and took up his abode in the house of Meerza Agha Khan, whose services to the government on this occasion won for him the entire confidence of the Shah and of the Ameer-i-Nizam.

The countenance of one of the principal hereditary noblemen of Persia was, at this conjuncture, of the greatest value to the plebeian brother-in-law of the Shah; but the government was laid under still greater obligations to the Imam-i-Juma, the high priest of Tehran. That functionary possessed the greatest influence over the citizens, who, at his command, shut the shops in the bazaars, closed the caravanserais, and armed themselves for the purpose of resisting the mutinous soldiery. The excited townsmen, backed as they were by the approval of the Shah and his Minister, by the exhortations and blessings of the Imam-i-Juma, and by the full moral support of the foreign legations, were more than a match for the tumultuous crowd of soldiers without their officers. The victory was rendered no longer doubtful by the return of one of the regiments to its duty; an appeal having been made to the men not to disgrace the English officers by whom they had been drilled. The danger to the government thus passed over, and the Ameer-i-Nizam quietly returned to the discharge of the duties of his office.

About this time the cause of the rebels in Khorassan received a severe blow by the desertion of Jafer Kuli Khan, the lord of Boojnoord. That chief quarrelled with the Salar, and he thereupon took advantage of the offer of the Shah's pardon, which had been guaranteed to him by the Ameer on the condition that he should return to his duty. On his arrival at Tehran his reception was in accordance with the assurances which had been held out to him.

The fort of Sebzewar was now surrendered to the troops of the Shah, but the atrocities which they com-

mitted in that town went far towards checking any inclination which the people of Meshed may have entertained to imitate the example of those of Sebzewar.

It was at this time that the Turkish government took advantage of the confusion that reigned throughout Persia to seize the frontier district of Kotoor, in direct contravention of the engagements which had been concluded between Persia and the Sublime Porte at Erzeroum. In spite of all remonstrances, Turkey has persisted in retaining Kotoor.

While the fate of Khorassan was still doubtful, neither the authority of the Shah nor the position of his Minister could be said to be secure. It was long before the governor of Ispahan could put down the insurrection that had been raised in that city; and at the same time the chief of Bunpoor, in Beloochistan, took advantage of the opportunity of revolting. A military force was assembled at Roodbar for the purpose of being sent against him; but it was determined to try, in the first instance, the effect of negotiation with the insurgent chief. This mode of settling the difference having failed, the troops took possession of Bunpoor. The town of Bunpoor is distant from Roodbar about two hundred and forty miles, nearly two-thirds of the road between them being an uninhabited tract of desert. It was at this time proposed to the Shah's government, by the Prince of Kerman, to invade the province of Seistan, on the plea of putting a stop to the raids of the Belooches within the territory of Yezd and Kerman. Some of the chiefs of Seistan had lately sent to ask the assistance of the prince in support of their claims to supremacy in their native province. The Belooches in Seistan were gradually acquiring the ascen-

dancy over the races who had been longer settled in that country, and who were much divided amongst themselves. The Kayanian tribe of Seistanis, who boasted of being descended from the oldest dynasty of Persian kings, was long the ruling race in that province; but this tribe was driven from Jelalabad by some others who united themselves together against it. The chief of one of these tribes (not a Belooch one), called Sirbendi, now exercised most influence in Seistan; but on his death his son was unable to preserve his high position, and, in order to be able to put down his uncles, he reluctantly had recourse to asking the aid of the Persian governor of Kerman. One of his uncles also applied to the same person for aid; and the Prince of Kerman thought that the conjuncture was a favourable one for practically asserting the vague claims of his master to the possession of the province of Seistan. The route by which a Persian army from Kerman could reach Seistan would be that by Tehrood, Bem, Koorook and Terij, and thence by places not marked in the maps of that region, along a distance of about four hundred and fifty miles in all; the greater part of which is a desert tract having wells at intervals. A march over such a region, and in the face of active Belooches who would seize the passes, would not be likely to be attended with success, while it would certainly entail unusual hardships and difficulties. It may have been the dread of these, or it may have been the fact that the Ameer-i-Nizam had already more than sufficient to occupy the resources of the government, that induced the Shah's Ministers to reject the proposal of the Prince of Kerman to invade the province of Seistan.

The siege of Meshed continued, during a period of

eighteen months, to keep alive in the minds of the people of Persia a feeling of disquietude or of hope, according as they were well or ill-disposed towards the government established at Tehran. There were at this time absent from the kingdom, in banishment, two men who had been the most powerful, as well as perhaps the ablest, statesmen of Persia. One of the two was the Shah's uncle, Bahman Meerza, who had been implicated in the proceedings of the Asef-ed-Dowleh at Meshed. It was believed that the latter had offered to him the crown of Persia, and the discovery of this conspiracy had led to Prince Bahman being deprived of his government of Azerbaeejan, and to his being forced to retire to Georgia, where he remained under Russian protection. The other exiled Persian statesman was the Asef-ed-Dowleh, the uncle of the late Mahomed Shah. The Ameer-i-Nizam was urged to recall both of these illustrious exiles; but with regard to the case of Bahman Meerza, he observed that, should the prince be permitted to return to his country, his wealth, influence and popularity would quickly secure for him his former government of Azerbaeejan, which he would be likely to constitute an independent province. With regard to the case of the Asef-ed-Dowleh, the Minister observed that to grant permission for his return to Persia whilst his son continued in open rebellion, would be to make it appear that the Shah was unable to put down insurrection by force of arms, and that he was constrained to make terms with the insurgents. Prince Sultan Murad was instructed to strain every nerve, in order to bring to a conclusion the siege of Meshed. A messenger sent by the Ameer to that city with conciliatory letters and messages to the chief men

of the place, totally failed in securing the object of his mission. The propositions which he had been instructed to name were at once rejected, and the priests of Meshed even urged the advisability of putting him to death. The Salar, however, not only protected him from violence, but treated him in the kindest manner, and sent him back to Tehran as the bearer of a proposal that a son of Fetteh Ali Shah should be named governor of Khorassan, and that the Salar should be his vizeer; the Azerbaeejan troops being withdrawn. These terms were rejected by the Ameer-i-Nizam.

Before this period it had been customary in Persia to concede an unusual degree of deference to the opinions and wishes of the foreign representatives accredited to the Persian court; the influence of either the English or the Russian Mission being in the ascendant for the time, according as the inclinations of the Shah or of his minister of the day leaned towards England or towards Russia. To such an extent was this interference in the internal affairs of Persia allowed to be carried, that foreign representatives were sometimes requested to take under their protection individual subjects of the Shah. Thus at the time of the departure of the young king from Tabreez for Tehran, the English consul was asked to protect the Armenians resident in that place. The Ameer-i-Nizam did not fail to perceive that it was unbecoming that a government should not regulate the affairs of its own subjects, and he accordingly determined for the future to set himself against foreign interference in matters that only concerned Persia. Every impartial person must admit that the right of granting protection to subjects of the Shah, which was assumed by foreign ministers,

though it had been sanctioned to a certain extent by the consent of the Persian government, was contrary to the principles of international law.\* But when the Ameer-i-Nizam showed symptoms of an intention to put a stop to the abuse which had arisen in this respect, the foreign ministers at the Persian court would by no means consent to relinquish a custom, the observance of which gave them so much influence over the Vizeers and subjects of the Shah. The foreign ministers then resident at Tehran were too intent on establishing the influence of their respective governments in Persia, to be able to sympathize fully with the Ameer-i-Nizam in his endeavours to erect his country into a powerful and firmly-established monarchy upon the basis of law and justice. It was proposed to employ the good offices of the Russian and English representatives at Tehran for the purpose of bringing about a satisfactory compromise between the government and the rebels of Khorassan. But the

\* "The house of an ambassador ought to be safe from all outrage, being under the particular protection of the law of nations. . . . But the immunity and freedom of the ambassador's house is established only in favour of the minister and his household, as is evident from the very reasons upon which it is grounded. Can he take advantage of the privilege in order to convert his house into an asylum to afford shelter and protection to the enemies of the prince? . . . Such proceedings would be contrary to all the duties of an ambassador, to the spirit by which he ought to be animated, and to the lawful purposes for which he has been admitted into the country. This is what nobody will presume to deny. But I will proceed farther, and lay it down as a certain truth, that a sovereign is not obliged to tolerate an abuse so pernicious to his state and so detrimental to society. . . . Thus, it belongs to the sovereign to decide, on occasion, how far the right of asylum, which an ambassador claims as belonging to his house, is to be respected; and if the question relates to an offender whose arrest or punishment is of great importance to the State, the prince is not to be withheld by the consideration of a privilege which was never granted for the detriment or ruin of States.—*The Law of Nations*, by M. de Vattel. Edition of 1834, pp. 491-5.

Ameer, whilst acknowledging how much the Shah had owed to foreign assistance, was of opinion that foreign intervention in the affairs of Persia had been stretched to the utmost limits which were compatible with the dignity of the government, and he therefore would not avail himself of this mode of bringing the rebellion to an end. He is even reported to have said that it would be better for Persia that the inhabitants of Meshed should be brought back to their duty through the loss of twenty thousand men, than that that city should be won for the Shah through foreign interference.

The siege of Meshed went on with variable fortune: at one time the army met with a severe check in attempting to carry one of the gates of the place; at another time the besiegers had the advantage in a combat with the troops of the besieged, whose sortie they repulsed. In the meantime the Turkomans, being left unopposed, gathered a rich harvest of spoil throughout Khorassan; not a caravan could pass to or from Herat in safety, and the Khorassan villages far and near were plundered by these ruthless marauders. At the close of the year 1849 a fresh detachment of troops from Tehran arrived before Meshed; but its commander, instead of joining the force of Prince Sultan Murad, thought proper to pitch his tents at a distance from those of the rest of the besieging army. This mistake was at once perceived and taken advantage of by the Salar, who sallied in force from the city and inflicted great loss on the newly-arrived detachment; and then returned to within the walls. In consequence of the retreat of the Salar, the leader of the detachment, with the vanity never absent from a Persian, claimed to have gained a victory. Up to this time the



city had not been completely invested, one gate having remained open through which provisions were introduced under the safe conduct of the Turkomans. The besieged further derived some encouragement from the arrival of a brother of the Salar, who passed along the whole length of Persia in the disguise of a pilgrim, carrying with him a considerable sum of money. But at length the Shah's troops obtained possession of some redoubts, which gave them so commanding a position, that the citizens of Meshed, fearing the result of a general assault for which the preparations were in progress, entered into negotiations with Prince Sultan Murad. These negotiations terminated in the surrender, first of the citadel, and later of the entire city. The Salar took refuge in the mosque of Imam Reza; from which, however, he was forcibly expelled. He was then seized by the soldiers of the Shekaki regiment, and the inhabitants of Meshed were permitted to ransom their city from plunder by the promise to pay a fine of one hundred thousand tomans. The forbearance and discipline displayed on this occasion by the Persian troops reflect the highest credit on their commander, Prince Sultan Murad; but the glory he acquired by the capture of Meshed is somewhat stained by the suspicion which attaches to him of having put the Salar to torture, for the purpose of compelling that chief to reveal the amount and the locality of his treasure. The Salar was then justly condemned to expiate the crime of having rebelled against his sovereign by being deprived of life; the instrument by which death was inflicted upon him being the bowstring of Eastern story, and a similar sentence was pronounced upon one of his brothers, who had been his companion in arms.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Rising of the Followers of the Bab—Mode of carrying out Capital Punishments in Persia—Seizure of Zinjan—The Bab put to Death—Tenets of his Followers—Hopeless Contest at Zinjan—Reckless Bravery of the Babis—Courage of the Women—Terrible Cruelties—Exhibition of Fanaticism at Tabreez—Results of Administration of the Ameer-i-Nizam—Occupation of Ashoradeh by Russia—The Caspian Provinces—Fall of the Ameer-i-Nizam—Interference on his Behalf—Meerza Agha Khan, Sedr-Azem—Influences brought to bear on the Shah against the Ameer-i-Nizam—Conduct of the Wife of the ex-Minister—The Ameer's Death—Remembrance of his Administration.

It was hoped that the capture of Meshed would usher in a period of calmness and security, during which the Ameer-i-Nizam might have leisure to perfect the system of general reform which he had introduced into Persia. But no sooner had order been established in one direction than revolt and disorder appeared in another quarter. At Yezd, the followers of the Bāb assembled in such numbers in the spring of the year 1850, as to compel the governor of that city to take refuge in the citadel; to which they then laid siege. But the priests of Yezd, conscious that the spread of Bābism would be the signal for the downfall of their own power, lent to the governor all the weight of their influence. In the name of Mahomed, the messenger of God, they summoned the townspeople to attack the infidels, and they collected a force by which the Bābis were overthrown.

The zealots of the new religion then betook themselves to the adjoining province of Kerman.

The followers of the Bāb looked upon the Ameer-i-Nizam, by whose orders their chief was kept in prison, as an enemy to the faith, whom it was lawful, and even proper, to slay. A conspiracy was accordingly organized for the purpose of taking the life of the Minister; but the plot was discovered ere it was ripe for execution, and the conspirators were seized. Seven of them were condemned to suffer death, and the occasion of their execution was taken advantage of for introducing the custom of conducting capital punishments openly at Tehran. Previously to this time it had been usual to cause condemned criminals to be strangled before the Shah. On one occasion, when the representative of Russia at the Persian court was waiting to be summoned to the presence of the king, he was alarmed by hearing loud cries in his immediate neighbourhood in the palace garden, and as he was proceeding to the audience chamber, he encountered a number of executioners dragging along the still-palpitating bodies of some men who had been strangled. The prince was shocked beyond measure, and he was, with reason, offended at the indignity which had been offered to him in his being summoned to the royal presence at such a moment; he, therefore, expressed in strong terms to the Shah and to his Minister, his opinion as to the barbarousness of the usage by which executions were conducted before the eyes of the sovereign. The Ameer-i-Nizam fully concurred in the opinion of the Russian Minister on this subject, and he accordingly at once determined to put a stop to the practice complained of. It was feared, how-

ever, that a commotion might be excited by the unusual spectacle of men being publicly executed at Tehran; but on the occasion of putting the Bābi conspirators to death, no such commotion took place. Some doubts existed in the minds of the people as to whether the alleged intentions of the conspirators had been fully proved against them, or whether it was right to punish for a mere intention as if for a crime that had actually been committed; but it could not be denied that the sentence of death upon these Bābi backsliders from the Moslem faith was in accordance with Mahomedan law. Each of them was offered his life upon the simple condition of reciting the formula of the Moslem creed, but none of them consented to purchase pardon on such terms.

Another example was now added to those with which the history of the world abounds, of the utter inefficacy of persecution for the suppression of religious doctrines. The chief priest of Zinjan had embraced the tenets of the Bāb, and under his guidance the Bābis of that place took possession of a portion of the town. On the news of this revolt reaching Tehran, measures were at once adopted by the government for suppressing the insurrection; and it is illustrative of the success which was already beginning to attend the Ameer's system for the amelioration of the army, that within five hours from the receipt at the capital of intelligence of the revolt, troops were already marching from Tehran upon Zinjan. The Persian soldiers, much, no doubt, to their own surprise, saw themselves for the first time properly clothed and cared for, and received with regularity their pay and their rations. Persian soldiers are beyond comparison the most hardy, enduring and patient troops in the world,

and had the administration of the Amcer-i-Nizam been prolonged, the King of Persia would have been the master of an army of one hundred thousand men, regularly drilled and accoutred. The Minister had announced his intention of maintaining such a force; and he was not likely to change his mind, or to neglect any precaution to ensure the efficiency of the army upon which depended the stability of the Kajar throne.

The insurrection at Zinjan took place in the month of May, 1850, and the Bābis long continued to defend themselves in that city against the troops of the king, with all the fiery zeal which is characteristic of the proselytes to a new religion. Zinjan is the capital of the district of Khamseh, and it lies on the direct road from Tabreez to Tehran. Whilst the siege was in progress, the founder of the new creed was taken from his prison in Azerbaeejan, and, after having been examined as to his religious belief, was condemned to death by the authorities of Tabreez for having renounced the faith of Islam. A circumstance that arose out of this sentence had nearly been the cause of setting the Bāb high above the temporal powers of Iran. A company of soldiers was drawn up in the great square of Tabreez, and before it was a hapless man whose arms were tied together: that man was the Bāb, and he was to be shot to death. On their captain giving the word to fire, the soldiers discharged a volley, the smoke from which threw a veil over the scene. When the smoke had been dispelled, great was the astonishment of the soldiers and of the lookers-on to find that the person of the Bāb had altogether disappeared. There could now be no doubt, they thought, of his having ascended to the heaven,

which, when he was on earth, he had said was his home.

Nothing was wanted but this apparent miracle to establish Bābism on a sure foundation. But it happened, most unfortunately for the prospects of the creed of the Bāb, that its originator (who had been unscathed by the bullets which had cut the ropes around him) had taken the wrong direction while endeavouring to effect his escape when concealed by the smoke of the volley of musketry. Had he gained the bazar he would have been safe; but he chanced to rush into the guard-room, from which place he was taken back to the square and shot. His death did not diminish the faith of his followers in his mission; for, according to the doctrines which they had learned from him, he could not really die: the form which his spirit animated might be altered, but his soul must still exist. It was, as he taught, undoubtedly true that his mortal body could not be annihilated but must be resolved into other forms of life; yet not the less were his followers shocked to see that body thrown into the ditch of Tabreez, by the orders of the brutal governor, to be a prey to the dogs and the jackals.

The main tenet of Bābism is utter indifference to, and disbelief in the existence of, good and evil. But nothing could be less in accordance with this theory than was the practice of the followers of the Bāb. Far from looking on the course of events, and the changes and chances of this mortal life, with the calm eyes of unconcerned spectators, they attempted to impose their opinions upon others by force. The earth, they said, had been given to them for a possession, and it was, therefore, lawful for them to appropriate to themselves the goods

of unbelievers. They asserted that the time had come when Mahomedanism must fall, and that to them had been assigned the task of bringing about the decree of fate. In their opinion the restrictions imposed upon men by the Koran were too heavy to be borne. According to their creed all men were alike; none were impure, since all human beings, with all other created objects, whether animate or inanimate, formed so many portions of one all-pervading and everlasting God. It was probably when in possession of this idea, that the Bāb had startled his disciples by the sudden announcement that he was God. The followers of the Bāb were to have all their possessions, including their women, in common: marriage being one of the puerile observances of the Mahomedan code which it was now time to abolish. The Bābis admitted of no hereditary claims to high rank; nor did they see the necessity of any formal election of rulers or teachers: they admitted only such superiority as was conferred by the force of intellect, and that force, they held, would make itself felt without the adventitious aid of human laws. Hell was no longer a source of terror to men who had been enlightened by the teaching of the Bāb. Their master had explained to them that there was to be no hereafter beyond this enduring world; he had laughed to scorn alike the Moslem prophet's description of the terror-striking bridge of Al-Sirath and of the black-eyed virgins who repose on green cushions and beautiful carpets, hidden from public view in the pavilions of paradise. This terrestrial globe was to be everlasting, and men need not fear what people falsely term death, since in truth they could not die.

These opinions explain the reckless bravery with

which the Bābis of Zinjan continued to maintain a hopeless contest against the troops of the Shah. They were driven into the south-eastern corner of the town, where they erected barricades, loop-holed the walls, and defended themselves with much skill. Their numbers were by degrees reduced by casualties, but their spirit could not be quenched: their women are as deserving of being praised for their bravery as are the maids of Saragossa. To the existence of heroines at Zinjan, at least, no doubt attaches: at Zinjan the maidens shed no "ill-timed tears" for the fall of their lovers, but they took their share in the fearful task of defending their desperate position, and they were not backward in hurling the missile which was to be their love's avenger. Three hundred fanatics continued to defy the artillery and the troops of the Shah. By night and day the loop-holes were watched by sharpshooters, who hastened on every occasion to take advantage of the slightest indiscretion on the part of the besiegers. Two guns were constructed from bars of iron to reply to the fire of those without, and the fact that these were damaged by every discharge in no way damped the energy of the defenders. The invitations to surrender which were held out by the Persian commander were treated by the Bābis with derision, and they put to death on the spot a well-meaning but rash individual who proposed to act as mediator between the contending adversaries. Terrible was the lot of the Persians who fell into the hands of the Bābis: we are told that they were shod as horses, suspended from beams by one arm, or burnt to death. The priest who headed the defence seemed to expect a successful termination to the conflict, since he assigned to one of

his people, as a reward for bravery, no less a prize than the government of the land of Egypt, and to others the possession of such and such villages and towns. The siege continued to be prosecuted throughout the summer of the year 1850. The scene of operations was visited in the month of October by Sir Henry Bethune, who had come to die in the country where he had acquired his glory, and he expressed his opinion that the reduction of the defended portion of Zinjan ought not to occupy ordinary troops for a longer period than three hours. But it was not until the last days of the year that the siege was brought to a conclusion. Moollah Mahomed Ali, the leader of the defenders, received a wound from the effects of which he died, and this event so dispirited the survivors that they had no longer any care to resist the attacks of the assailants. The position occupied by the Bābis was at length carried, and all who survived of the defenders—men, women, and children—were ruthlessly butchered by the Persian troops, who now displayed as much ferocity as they had shown pusillanimity during the siege.

Whilst the disciples and followers of the Bāb were endeavouring to undermine the faith of Islam, the priests of that religion were not blind to the expediency of doing something towards maintaining their hold over the minds of the Persian people. But the Ameer-i-Nizam was equally averse to tolerating the spread of Bābism and to encourage the Mahomedan priests in their ambitious views. He was the more anxious to weaken the influence of the Moslem doctors, inasmuch as he saw that no thorough reform could be carried out in Persia so long as the people retained their superstitious dread of incurring the displeasure of a band of selfish and

narrow-minded moollahs. He found much difficulty in bending to his will the privileged and rapacious Mahomedan doctors; but he did not recoil from the labour of subduing them. The priests of Tabreez, about this time, resolved to show the world who believed in miracles that such manifestations of a direct interference with the ordinary course of nature were not exhibited solely through the medium of the person of the Bāb. They determined to try the effect of one in connection with a Moslem place of worship. A cow on the way to the slaughter-house twice took sanctuary in a mosque and was twice expelled; a third attempt to deprive the animal of the privilege of taking sanctuary was punished by the patron saint of the mosque, for the driver of the cow fell down dead. Such was the story that was noised abroad, and as it was received with credit, other miracles were attributed to the influence of the spirit who guarded the same holy place; blind men were said to have had their sight restored, and sick men to have been healed of their maladies. Much religious enthusiasm was accordingly excited, and, in honour of the distinction which had thus been conferred upon Tabreez, the city was illuminated. The mosque where the cow-herd had fallen dead was pronounced to be a sanctuary, which must thenceforward be on no account violated, and it was publicly announced that it was lawful to slay any persons who might be discovered gambling or intoxicated in its neighbourhood. But the priests of Tabreez found that, although the people of that city were as credulous and fanatical as could be wished, there was a ruler in Persia who was possessed both of common sense and of firmness, and who would not permit the establishment of

priestly domination over the populace of the most considerable city in the kingdom. The Ameer-i-Nizam sent to that city an Affshar chief, who had the courage and the adroitness to seize and carry off the Sheikh-el-Islam.

This blow at priestly influence having been delivered, the Minister next abolished the privilege which had up to this time been accorded to the Imam-i-Juma of Tehran, of affording sanctuary in his mosque to all who sought it. It was the consistent policy of the Ameer-i-Nizam to uphold the supreme authority of the Shah, and to check all encroachments upon it, from what quarter soever they might be directed. From his endeavour to carry out this policy he never swerved, notwithstanding all the ill-will which, by so doing, he excited against himself. The measures of the enlightened Minister were now beginning to be followed by some satisfactory and visible results. The system of taxation throughout the country was remodelled on a more equitable basis than had formerly existed. The various provincial treasuries were pronounced to be at length in a satisfactory condition. Trade between the different chief cities and provinces of the kingdom, as well as between Persia and her Russian, Turkish, Arab, Afghan, Indian, Oozbeg, and Turkoman neighbours, was being carried on with confidence, under the protection of a just and energetic government; and the Ameer-i-Nizam gratified the inhabitants of Tehran, and more especially the mercantile classes at the capital, by erecting a handsomer range of bazars than any other city in the world can boast of possessing. The caravanserai which bears his name vies in beauty and in commodiousness with the finest structures of Asia, and it was the intention of the Minister to

undertake several other works for the embellishment and convenience of the city and neighbourhood of Tehran.

It is illustrative of the soundness of the Ameer's judgment that, although no man could have been more anxious than he was to maintain the dignity and independence of his master, he preferred to give way, even when he felt that he was in the right, rather than risk the effects of a quarrel with his powerful northern neighbour. By the treaty of Gulistan, Persia had renounced the right of maintaining ships of war on the Caspian; and about the year 1836 the Shah's government had applied to the Czar for naval assistance against the refractory Turkomans who infest the south-eastern shores of that sea. Following this application there had been made, when too late, a request that the Russian naval commander might be placed under the orders of the governor of Astrabad, or that, failing this, the naval aid might be withheld. The Shah had subsequently intimated to the Russian envoy that as he had without assistance been enabled to capture the island of Cherken, the presence of the Russian vessels was no longer necessary. But the idea of the advantage of maintaining the police of the sea on the southern and eastern shores of the Caspian had not been relinquished at St. Petersburg, and in 1842 a Russian squadron appeared off Astrabad, and commenced the salutary operation of putting a stop to the predatory expeditions of the Turkoman pirates. To the eastward of a tongue of land which juts out from the Persian coast of the bay of Astrabad there is a small island called Ashoradeh, and of this island the Russian officer had taken possession, for the purpose of making

it a naval station. This measure had alarmed the Persian Government, who anticipated greater danger from the establishment of the Russians on an island so near to the Persian mainland, than they did from any amount of Turkoman depredation. Every species of remonstrance had been had recourse to in order to induce the self-invited and unwelcome guests of Persia to take their departure; but these protests and remonstrances had not been followed by any indication on the part of the Russian authorities to comply with the demand now made of them. The Persian ministers had at one time been told in reply that the occupation of the island had been a necessary consequence of the Shah's request for Russian naval aid; at another time, they had been reproached with ingratitude and folly in not appreciating the value of the assistance gratuitously given by Russia in putting a stop to Turkoman piracy and devastation. That the presence of Russian ships in the southern waters of the Caspian sea is highly beneficial to the interests of humanity, cannot be questioned; but, on the other hand, the tenure by which Russia holds the island of Ashoradeh is as illegal as are the proceedings of the pirates which she came there to check. Regardless of public opinion, and of Persian appeals to right and to international law, the Russians now look upon Ashoradeh as being as much a portion of the Czar's dominions as Bakoo or Derbend, and on this island all the buildings which are necessary for the permanent accommodation of a considerable force have been erected. The possession of Ashoradeh is most beneficial to Russian interests, for other reasons than that it affords a suitable station for the ships employed in maintaining the police of the sea. From

Ashoradeh steam-vessels ply along the Persian coast, conveying the produce of the three fertile provinces of Astrabad, Mazenderan, and Gilan, to the markets of Georgia, and in return bringing Russian wares to supply the requirements of the merchants of Persia. The fact, too, of a Russian force being always present at the south-eastern corner of the Caspian sea, gives to that power great political influence throughout the neighbouring provinces of the states of Central Asia.

In the year 1851 the island of Ashoradeh was protected by five Russian vessels of war, each carrying from four to eight guns; but notwithstanding the presence of this force, the island was surprised by the Turkomans, who killed or carried off all the Russians they found upon it. The officers in the ships escaped the fate that overtook the men on shore, but it is said that one or two ladies were carried off to the desert of the Attreck. The time that had been chosen for delivering this humiliating blow was Easter-eve, when the Turkomans believed they should find the Russian sailors in a state of intoxication. It was thought necessary for the re-establishment of Russian prestige on the shores of the Caspian, to give out that the Turkomans alone had not been able to over-run Ashoradeh, but that they had been abetted by the Persians; and on this account the Russian representative at Tehran demanded the dismissal from office of the Shah's brother, the governor of Mazenderan. The Ameer-i-Nizam at first refused to agree to the disgrace of a man whom he knew to have had nothing whatever to do with the affair at Ashoradeh; but rather than risk the consequences of a rupture of peaceful relations with Russia, he bowed his pride, and yielded to the demand.

It was in consequence\* of his having had to make a concession to one foreign mission, that the Ameer-i-Nizam now thought proper to make another concession, which up to this time he had refused to grant, to the request of another mission. An engagement was entered into, by which the right of searching for slaves in native vessels in the Persian Gulf was granted to British vessels of war, and the permission was accorded of removing any slaves who might be so found, to the British ships. This blow to the slave-traffic was one of the last notable measures of the Ameer's administration.

The enemies of the Ameer had never abandoned their efforts to shake the Shah's confidence in his Minister, and it is matter of surprise that a boy should have for so long a time been able to resist the oft-repeated solicitations of his mother and others for the dismissal of a plebeian Vizeer. Warnings against the clever and ambitious Minister were constantly poured into the royal ear; the Ameer's virtues and successes were represented as crimes, and it was insinuated that it was the Minister's intention to grasp the sceptre. The Ameer-i-Nizam had greatly improved the condition of the Persian army, and the Shah was told that the soldiers were so devoted to their commander, that they would readily second him in carrying out the ambitious designs imputed to him. The king's fears were at length aroused, and as there were no means of checking the Ameer's power save by dismissing him from office, his dismissal was determined on. So persuaded had the Shah become of the evil intentions of the Minister, that he did not venture to

\* *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia*, by Lady SHEL.

depose him until he found himself in a position to defend his person against any treasonable attack. On the night of the 13th of November, 1851, the king summoned four hundred of the royal body-guard to the palace, and thus fortified, he sent to inform the Ameer that he was to be no longer prime minister of Persia, and that his functions were thenceforward to be limited to the command of the army. But no accusation could have less foundation in truth than that which imputed disloyalty to the Ameer-i-Nizam; he bowed in silence to the decree of his sovereign, and awaited in his palace the coming of the events which time would bring forth.

Meerza Agha Khan,\* the Itimad-ed-Dowleh, who has been before mentioned in these pages, was now raised to the dignity of Sedr-Azem, or prime minister. The idea, not unnaturally, occurred to him that he could never be secure in that post so long as his predecessor should be alive; as, sooner or later, the Shah and all his subjects would see the immense difference between the Ameer and his rival. Indeed the king was already aware that the commander of his troops was his loyal subject, since he had not attempted to avail himself of the affliction of the soldiers for his person, for the purpose of creating any disturbance of the new administration. The new minister was in close league with her Highness the Queen-mother, and it was determined by them that the Ameer-i-Nizam should forthwith be removed from the capital; for so long as he should remain there, there was no chance of the king being persuaded to consent to the

\* Agha Khan was not originally this minister's name, but was rather the appellation by which he was known, first in his family circle, and afterwards by the public.



death of a man who had so faithfully served him, and to whom he was so much attached. At this time the king addressed two letters to the Ameer, in one of which he stated that although it had been thought advisable to dismiss him from office, yet he might be sure that the royal heart bled for him. But it was hoped by the Sedr-Azem that separation might have the effect of cooling the Shah's affection for his brother-in-law; accordingly the Ameer was offered the choice of the government of Fars, of that of Ispahan, or that of Koom. It is to be regretted that he did not accept the offer now made to him. Had he retired for a short time from the capital, he might have lived to return to it as minister; but he knew too well the character of his fellow-countrymen not to fear that his life would be in danger so soon as he should be separated from the Shah. Under the working of this apprehension, the Ameer declined the offers made to him; but, through the influence of the British Minister, it was at length arranged that he should be appointed governor of Kashan.

Such was the condition of affairs when the unfortunate interference of Prince Dolgorouky produced a sudden change in the temper of the Shah. That Minister, although he had found the Ameer to be the uncompromising opponent of Russian aggressive movements, had yet found him ever truthful, just and reasonable. He was therefore sorry to see him replaced by Meerza Agha Khan, who had enjoyed English protection; and who, it was to be presumed, would favour English rather than Russian influence at the Persian court. The prince feared lest the life of the Ameer should be taken, and he knew that if his life were spared,

he would, sooner or later, be replaced in office. The surest way of securing that object appeared to be to take the Ameer under Russian protection. Had the Ameer sought the privilege of asylum in the house of the Russian Legation, the Shah would have been justified, according to international law, in taking him forcibly thence; much more was he justified in altogether disavowing the ill-judged act of Prince Dolgorouky in sending the members of his mission, and his Cossack guard, to the Ameer's house, and declaring that the Ameer was under the protection of Russia. No monarch could be expected to submit to so insulting a proceeding; and the Shah was told by his new Minister, that unless he should assert his royal right to authority over his subject, the people of Persia would no longer look upon him as being an independent king, but as being the obedient vassal of Russia. This taunt stung the Shah to the quick, and he requested Prince Dolgorouky to withdraw the members of his mission forthwith from the house which sheltered his mother and sister. At the same time he declared his intention of sending the servants of the royal household to seize the person of the Ameer, in case the prince should refuse. The members of the Russian Legation were accordingly withdrawn, and as the British Minister also withdrew from all interference in the affair, the Ameer was left to be dealt with as the offended Shah might think proper. The king's feelings of anger were skilfully fanned by the enemies of the fallen Vizeer, and under their influence the Shah degraded him from the post of Ameer-i-Nizam, and ordered him to retire in disgrace to Kashan, under the surveillance of an escort of troops; the officer in

command of which was to be responsible for his safe-keeping. But even this downfall did not satisfy the wishes of the vindictive enemies of Meerza Teki Khan. The Shah was reminded that no other government could be secure in Persia, so long as the fallen minister should live, and he was told that if he valued the security of his throne, he must consent to give the order for the death of the ex-Ameer. Still, the Shah could not be brought to consent to the capital punishment of an innocent man, and the fallen Vizeer was permitted to live for two months in retirement with his wife, amidst the cypresses and fountains that surround the splendid palace of Feen.

It was the fate of Prince Dolgorouky to be the instrument of further misfortune to the man whom he so sincerely wished to befriend. He was deeply chagrined at the results which had followed his attempt to take the ex-minister under Russian protection, and when the time approached for the arrival of a reply to the reports regarding the occurrence which he had addressed to St. Petersburg, he openly boasted that in the course of a few days he should receive instructions which would put an end to all uncertainty as to the fate of Meerza Teki Khan. All uncertainty as to his fate was, indeed, put an end to, even before the period assigned by the prince. The Ameer's enemies did not fail to report the rash boast to the Shah, and his Majesty, in order to avoid the consequences of a refusal to the demand which he anticipated from Russia, of giving a guarantee for the Ameer's life, determined to anticipate the arrival of the expected courier, and at once to cause the Ameer to be put to death. But even this measure could not be executed by Persians without recourse being had to dissimulation.

The Shah's only sister, the wife of Meerza Teki Khan, was devotedly attached to her husband, and no one had the heart to tear him from her arms. No princess educated in a Christian court and accustomed to the contemplation of the brightest example of conjugal virtues that the history of the world has recorded, could have shown more tenderness and devotion than did the sister of the Shah of Persia towards her unfortunate husband. Every day his guards took the precaution of summoning him from his room, in order that they might make sure that he had not escaped; and when he went outside to show himself, his wife was, at first, in the habit of accompanying him. Seeing, however, that this ceremony was a mere matter of form, she ceased to go forth with him, and contented herself with the precaution of tasting of every dish that was set before him. But a man was found who volunteered to put the Ameer to death without the princess being made aware of what was going to take place. One Haji Ali Khan, a clever and worthless adventurer, had been admitted into the Shah's service by the Ameer, and had been made chief of his ferashes; a post of some importance. In order to show his zeal in the service of his new master, the Ferash-Bashi now volunteered to be the executioner of his benefactor. When he appeared at Kashan, the retainers of the ex-minister were filled with joy; for they believed that one who had owed his advancement in life to their lord had been chosen to be the bearer of good news. They were doomed to a cruel disappointment. { On the 9th of January, 1852, the ex-minister was called forth, as usual, by his guards, and on his appearing alone was seized, gagged, and dragged to an adjoining house, where he was

cast on the floor, stripped and tied. The veins in both his arms and his legs were then opened, and he was allowed to linger for several hours in mortal agony. He bore his cruel fate with a resignation which was in keeping with the consistent greatness of his life. The youthful princess, his wife, being alarmed at the absence of her husband, was told by Haji Ali Khan that he had gone to the bath, in order to be prepared to put on a robe of honour which the Shah had sent to him by his hands. When she awoke from her delusion, the heart of her husband had for ever ceased to beat.

Thus perished, by the hands of Persians, the man who had done so much to regenerate Persia: the only man who possessed at the same time the ability, the patriotism, the energy and the integrity required to enable a Persian Minister to conduct the vessel of State in safety past the shoals and rocks which lay in her course. Those who, with a living imperial author, see in every remarkable man, such as Cæsar, Charlemagne, or Napoleon, a special instrument in the hands of Providence for tracing out to peoples the path they ought to follow, must be at a loss to account for the design of Providence in raising up Meerza Teki Khan, and permitting his fall, ere he had accomplished in a few years the labour of centuries and stamped with the seal of his genius a new era for his country. Had he lived to accomplish what it was his intention to do, he would no doubt have been ranked with the men who are held by some people to have been specially raised up by God for a particular mission. But his premature death, before he had lived long enough permanently to benefit his fellow-men, must prevent us from having recourse to

this theory for accounting for the appearance, in these latter years in Persia, of a man so remarkable as Meerza Teki Khan. His career seems rather to be illustrative of the truth of the proposition so much insisted on by the author of the *History of Civilization in England*:\* namely, that a people makes its own government, and that no government can force progress if the people be unsound. The Ameer's measures were distasteful to so many persons, that the Shah was compelled to listen to the cry of discontent; consequently, the upright ruler fell, and a Vizeer was named in his place whose character was more in accordance with that of the persons he had to govern, and who permitted those he employed to imitate his own example of extorting bribes. What the Ameer had with so much difficulty effected was now at once undone. The soldiers were no longer paid, until after years of entreaty; peculation became once more rampant in every department of the administration; priestly influence again acquired undue ascendancy; and Persian titles were heaped upon the great with even more prodigality than ever.

The shocking fate of Meerza Teki Khan excited, however, the greatest horror throughout Europe, and the Shah and his new Minister had to listen to the indignant protests and remonstrances called forth from foreign governments by the sentence which had been executed at Kashan. Then followed the hour of remorse. When too late the Persian king, as well as many of his subjects, became sensible of the irreparable loss their country had sustained. It is said that the king, in his grief, re-

\* See Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*, pp. 115 and 146-150, vol. ii., 1861.

solved to observe each anniversary of the Ameer's death as a day of fasting and humiliation; and the two infant daughters of the great Minister were betrothed to two sons of the Shah.

Each year that has elapsed since the death of Meerza Teki Khan has gradually added to his fame, by showing how vain is the expectation of finding another Vizeer capable of completing the work of reformation in Persia which was begun by him. The short period of his administration is now looked back upon as having been the golden era of modern Persia; and the traveller from the west, as he pursues his tedious way across the plains of Irak, or through the lonely passes of the Elburz, if he converse with his muleteers as to the condition of the country, is sure to be told that everything now goes badly, but that things were otherwise in the time of the Ameer-i-Nizam.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

Conspiracy against Life of the Shah—His Escape—Punishment of Conspirators—Ministers of State act as Executioners—Firmness of followers of the Báb—Jealousy of European interference at Persian Court—Alliance of the Shah sought by Russia in 1853—Tempting offer made to Persian Government—Alternative placed before the Shah—His Alliance declined by the Western Powers—Neutrality distasteful to Persian Government—Angry Discussions between Sedr-Azem and the British Minister—Meerza Hashem—Arrest of his Wife—Conduct of the Sedr-Azem—Diplomatic Relations suspended between England and Persia—Mr. Murray quits Tehran—Persian Expedition against Herat—War against Persia declared at Calcutta.

THE disciples of the Báb had been little heard of during the eighteen months that followed the conclusion of the siege of Zinjan. It was in the summer of the year 1852 that they next forced themselves upon public notice. A conspiracy against the life of the Shah was hatched at Tehran, under the auspices of two priests of distinction, and of Suleiman Khan, whose father had been master of the horse to Abbass Meerza. Men holding the Báb doctrines were in the habit of congregating, to the number of about forty, in the house of the above-named Khan, where their plans were concerted and where arms of every description were collected. On the 15th of August, the Shah, who was then residing in the neighbourhood of Tehran, at the Niaveran Palace, had mounted his horse, and was proceeding towards the Elburz on a hunting excursion, when four men pre-

sented themselves on his path. It is the custom for the Persian king to ride alone, all the attendants being some distance in front of, or behind, his Majesty; and it is a common thing for the Shah to be addressed by those of his subjects who have a grievance to be righted, and who are allowed by custom to approach the sovereign and hand to him written papers containing their petitions. Consequently it was not thought strange when one of the four men who appeared on this day on the king's path, approached the horse on which his Majesty was riding, as if for the purpose of handing a paper to the Shah. The Bābi, as he drew near the royal person, attempted to grasp the king's girdle, and when he found himself repulsed, he drew a pistol from within his dress and fired it at the Shah. His Majesty, however, had the presence of mind to throw himself to the opposite side of his horse, and the contents of the pistol inflicted no other injury beyond a slight wound in the thigh. So intent was the assassin on effecting his object, that, regardless of the presence of the Shah's followers, who now came up to the rescue, he drew from its sheath a formidable dagger, with which he assailed the Shah and those who defended him; nor did he cease his efforts until he was himself slain. Two of his confederates were captured, one of them having been severely wounded; the fourth Bābi contrived to effect his escape by jumping down a well. This occurrence was at once made known to the dwellers in Shimran, and the report got abroad that the king had been killed. Without waiting to hear this news confirmed, the people in the royal camp began to disperse, and there was a general rush towards Tehran. The shops of the city were immediately shut, and every one

strove to lay in a supply of bread, as a provision against the stormy future. On the following day, however, men's minds were reassured by the discharge of a salute of one hundred and ten guns, to announce the safety of the king. The priests and the persons of influence amongst the people were invited to proceed to the royal camp; and Tehran was illuminated during several nights.

The Bābi conspiracy having been discovered, ten of the conspirators were at the first put to death; some of them under circumstances of the greatest cruelty. Lighted candles were inserted into the bodies of two or three of these men, and the victims, after having been allowed to linger for some time, were hewn in two by a hatchet. The requirements of the *lex talionis* were satisfied by the steward of the Shah, acting as his representative, blowing out the brains of one of the conspirators. Amongst those who suffered death was a young woman, the daughter of a celebrated teacher of the law, and who was considered by the Bābis to be a prophetess; on this account she had been for years detained a prisoner at Tehran. But ten victims were not enough to calm the fears of the advisers of the Shah, and a short reign of terror followed; no one being secure against suspicion, or being denounced as a follower of the Bāb. If any one at this time imagined that the Shah's Ministers had any considerable amount of regard for their own dignity in the eyes of the world, the scene which now presented itself was well calculated to dispel the illusion. The prime minister, far from imitating the example set by Cicero in his orations against Catiline in taking to himself all the glory of having suppressed a dangerous conspiracy, was fearful

of drawing down upon himself and his family the vengeance of the followers of the Bāb; and, in order that others might be implicated in these executions, he hit upon the device of assigning a criminal to each department of the State; the several ministers of the Shah being thus compelled to act as executioners. The minister for foreign affairs, the minister of finance, the son of the prime minister, the adjutant-general of the army, and the master of the mint, each fired the first shot, or made the first cut with a sabre, at the culprits assigned to their several departments, respectively. The artillery, the infantry, the camel-artillery, and the cavalry each had a victim assigned to them.\* But the result of all this slaughter was, as might have been expected, to create a feeling of sympathy for the Bābis; whose crime was lost sight of in the punishment which had overtaken them. They met their fate with the utmost firmness, and none of them cared to accept the life which was offered to them on the simple condition of reciting the Moslem creed. While the lighted candles were burning the flesh of one follower of the Bāb, he was urged by the chief magistrate of Tehran to curse the Bāb and live. He would not renounce the Bāb; but he cursed the magistrate who tempted him to do so, he cursed the Shah, and even cursed the prophet Mahomed, his spirit rising superior to the agony of his torture . . . . .

\* "Even the Shah's admirable French physician, the late lamented Dr. Cloquet, was invited to show his loyalty by following the example of the rest of the court. He excused himself, and pleasantly said that he killed too many men professionally to permit him to increase their number by any voluntary homicide on his part."—*Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia*. By Lady SHEIL, p. 277.

It is now time to refer to an important and interesting epoch in the history of modern Persia, and to show the position which she occupied with reference to the great European Powers immediately before the war between the nations of the West and Russia. It will enable the reader to understand more easily the motives in which originated the policy pursued by the Shah, if I show what was at this time the actual position in which the Persian prime minister found himself placed. He had on two occasions in former years been indebted for safety or protection to the good offices of the British Legation: he had, in fact, been at one time looked upon as being a British protégé. At that period the influence of the foreign missions, and their interference in the internal affairs of Persia, had not been regarded by the Shah's government with much alarm; but a rapid change had taken place in Persian opinion in this respect, and there was nothing now so unfashionable at the court as to be connected in any way with a foreign representative. The claims of gratitude have not much weight with Persians, and, even if the Sedr-Azem had been well disposed towards those to whose influence he had owed so much, he could not but see that if he would retain his post, he must at any rate make the Shah and the courtiers understand that he had given up all intimacy with the English Minister. In order the more effectually to avert the damaging supposition that he favoured British influence at the Persian court, he took care to speak slightly of the English government and its representative at Tehran; and was always ready to raise difficulties and objections in the way of anything proposed by the latter. But notwithstanding his clever-

ness and his powers of intriguing and dissimulating, the Persian Minister did not find himself placed on a bed of roses. At one time he even spoke of resigning the high office which he held; but if he ever seriously entertained the intention of doing so, he probably feared that it was not open to him to resign office only, but that he must make up his mind to part at the same time with office and with life. Under these circumstances his tortuous mind suggested to him the singular idea of doing something which would induce either the Russian or the English Minister to demand his dismissal from office; hoping that thus he might be allowed to retire into private life without being exposed to any further danger. But the possession of office, if he ever was seriously indifferent to it, reacquired in his eyes a charm which he could not resolve to dispel, and he accordingly talked no more of resigning his post. That post now derived additional importance, from the fact that the alliance of Persia was courted by one of the powers whose quarrel engrossed the attention of the civilized world.

Late in the autumn of the year 1853, General Bebitoff arrived at Nakhtchivan to take command of the Russian army destined to act against the Turkish forces in the Pashalic of Erzeroum; and a messenger was despatched by him to Tehran, who was to communicate, through the Russian Minister, certain propositions from the Russian government to the Shah. A private interview with his Majesty was demanded by Prince Dolgorouky on the occasion of the arrival of the messenger at Tehran. To this interview none of the Shah's subjects were admitted, lest the purport of the propositions should transpire: no Vizeer was there to echo the statements

of the king, and no eaves-dropping page listened behind the cashmere curtains of the throne-room whilst the Russian Minister, through his dragoman, made known the wishes of his imperial master. So far the secret was kept secure, and not even to his Grand Vizeer did the Shah at first communicate what had transpired. But to the eye of jealous suspicion there are facts which explain themselves, and which do not need to be expressed in words. The Turkish ambassador was too well informed of the state of affairs at the court to which he was accredited, not to be able to draw his own conclusions from the arrival of a special Russian officer, and from the precautions which had been taken to exclude the Persian Minister from the audience given by the Shah to the stranger. His Excellency, therefore, resolved to assume a threatening demeanour, and he made known at once to the Shah his determination to quit Tehran forthwith, unless he should receive satisfactory assurances regarding the course which the Persian government intended to pursue in the conjuncture which had come about. In consequence of this sudden resolve on the part of the Turkish ambassador, the king was constrained to send for his prime minister, and to reveal to him the nature of the proposals that had been made by the representative of the Czar.

These proposals were that Persia should cooperate with Russia in the war to be waged against Turkey. A strong military demonstration must be made on the frontier of Azerbaejan, to threaten Byazeed and Erzeroum; and another on the frontier of Kermanshah, to threaten Baghdad and the holy cities. In the event of its being necessary that Persia should declare war