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miles, on the 25th March, the rivers and irrigation channels of the eastern system, through which we travelled, were all dry—the farmers in many places being still engaged in digging out the subsidiary channels and spreading the soil on their fields and on the roads. The barrage was cut on the 26th of March, and now the streams which encircle the walls of Chentu, each about 50 yards wide, and the small stream which flows through the middle of the city and supplies water-power to the Viceroy's arsenal, are all nearly bank full and flowing with a swift current—the fall in the plain from north to south, which is imperceptible to the eye, being about 500 feet (2400 to 1900 feet above the sea).

The most striking feature of the whole is the great results achieved by simple methods, the cost of removing, replacing, and maintaining these chief barrages being inside £500 per annum.

The map accompanying this paper shows the Chentu plain, with its dense network of irrigation channels, while the chart illustrates the subdivisions of the Min river in the vicinity of the town of Kwan-hien.

LIFE AND TRAVEL IN PERSIA.

By MISS E. SYKES.

I HAVE been asked by your Society to give some account of my travels in Persia, which lasted over two years. I went to Persia because my brother, Major Sykes, was commissioned to found a Consulate at Kerman in the south-east, and asked me to accompany him and keep house for him. It took us nearly three months to reach Kerman from London, and as there are no railways, indeed no roads to speak of in Persia, our journey was made on horseback with a long string of mules to carry our tents, bedding, provisions, and so on.

When we left England we went by steamer to Constantinople, crossing the Black Sea to Batum, the Land of the Golden Fleece, and from here took train through the magnificent scenery of the Caucasus to Baku, famous for its oil-springs. A Russian steamer took us across the Caspian to Enzeli, the port of Persia, which is, however, separated from the mainland proper by a broad lagoon. Across this to the landing-stage of Pir-i-Bazaar we and our boxes were rowed, from which point we commenced our journey to Tehran. Little dilapidated Russian carriages, with most insecurely fastened wheels, were in readiness to convey us to Resht, over a road of such inexpressible badness that one could only imagine it in a nightmare; and as we bumped in and out of holes full of mud, and were almost overturned at intervals, my companion and I clung desperately to one another to keep ourselves from being pitched out. At last we reached the town, looking strangely English in the distance, with red-tiled roofs peeping out of masses of autumnal foliage, but the drive through the bazaars and the discomfort of the so-called hotel soon dissipated this illusion.

Next day we mounted sorry-looking little "chapar" or post-horses,

and started on our seven days' journey to the capital of Persia, and that night I had my first experience of the "chapar-khana" or post-house; these buildings and the infinitely dirtier "caravanserais" being all the accommodation provided for travellers in this primitive land.

The "chapar-khana" is a bare-looking edifice built round a courtyard, most of the ground floor being used for stabling. Over the entrance-gate are two or three rooms reached by steps of abnormal height. Here the traveller is lodged, and as they are usually guiltless of all furniture, his servants sweep them out and make them habitable with his camp equipment. Curtains are nailed in front of the windows, often destitute of glass, iron camp bedsteads are unfolded, leather covers unstrapped from enamel basins containing folding indiarubber baths and washing apparatus, and valises, carrying bedding and a change of clothing, are unrolled. A couple of hours later the servants will have prepared an excellent dinner, probably of woodcocks or pheasants bought at Resht, a Persian "pillau," which consists of a mound of boiled rice mixed with chopped meat and butter, and a compôte of dried peaches or apricots.

As it was the beginning of December, the nights were bitterly cold, and therefore we were not greatly troubled by the small nocturnal visitors which swarm in the unplastered ceilings and rotten matting of all the post-houses, and which made sleep almost an impossibility when I travelled this way some two years later in warm October weather.

For the first part of our ride we were still in the rainy zone, a richly wooded belt round the Caspian Sea, and we wound up among hills covered with birch, beech, chestnut, and acacia, all glowing in gold and flame colour. Long grassy rides reminded us of the New Forest, masses of maidenhair and hartstongue clustered about the numberless streams, and the glorious Persian sunshine flooded the whole scene. All this would have been delightful had the road been in keeping; but when it came to climbing up and down veritable precipices of rock and staircases of stone, I had no eyes for scenery, however enchanting. The little Persian horses seemed marvellously sure-footed, and the best plan was to trust implicitly to their guidance, holding on frantically to their manes to prevent the saddles slipping at bad ascents. Of course I should have infinitely preferred to have scrambled along on foot, but that was out of the question, as the whole place was a sea of liquid mud, scores of big holes being so filled in with mire as to look like solid ground. My steed prudently tested all doubtful-looking places with his hoof, and got me safely across various rickety bridges made of half-rotten planks, though I confess that my heart was often in my mouth. It was a horrible road! We came upon dead camels, mules, and donkeys at some of the worst parts, and our horses shivered with fright as we forced them past these pitiable objects. Again and again the track wound down to the Safed river and its tributaries, which we forded no less than five times in one day, a somewhat alarming experience to me, until I got used to the curious dizziness, and assured myself that my horse was really making way, and was not being carried bodily down stream as he appeared to be.

At the end of our second day's march we reached typical Persian scenery, consisting of ranges of completely barren hills, rising up from sandy valleys dotted with scrub, but not a single tree, and behind all rose the grand peaks of the snowy Elburz range, which we had to cross. The heat and glare of the sun, even in December, forced us to wear double Terai hats, blue goggles, and veils, as soon as we had left the shelter of the trees. The road here was at least dry, but the ascents and descents were so precipitous that I should have been in mortal terror if my previous experiences had not rendered me almost callous. At one bad place where we had to crawl or rather *slide* down a rough track cut on the face of the mountain, a rider, meeting us, had a very narrow escape, his horse for some unaccountable reason shying and backing over the precipice. It was a horrible moment, but the man was out of his saddle in a second (everybody sits loosely in this part of the world), and managed to haul his steed up, to my intense relief.

The heavily laden trains of pack-animals were no inconsiderable danger when we met them in narrow parts of the route, which seldom admitted of more than two riding abreast, and of course was without a parapet of any kind.

The last day's ride was across the Kharzan Pass, from the summit of which we had a magnificent panorama, the snowy Elburz peaks rising up on all sides, and reminding us of the Gornegrat. It wore a very different aspect, however, when we crossed it some two years later, when it was covered with deep snow-drifts, and we were forced to walk a great part of the way, sinking into snow above our knees at every step.

We were now on the great Iran Plateau, which stretches south from here for some 700 or 800 miles, and which rises to a height of 4000 to 6000 feet, thus ensuring a wonderfully dry and exhilarating climate. Jolting, springless carriages took us the remaining ninety miles of our journey along a road which reminded us of a newly ploughed field, and we entered Tehran by one of its twelve imposing gateways. It is characteristic of Persia that though ministers of all nationalities have year after year come to the capital along the infamous route that I have described, yet the government has never troubled to improve its communications with the coast. The enterprising Russians have now built a carriage-road from the Caspian to Tehran, and consequently have greatly strengthened their hold on the north of the country, and also on the Shah and his advisers.

Tehran, the present capital of Persia, is only a comparatively modern town, and did not in any way come up to my anticipations of the "gorgeous East." It is always, however, difficult to get much idea of an Oriental city, because one rides and drives between high mud walls, and can only hazard guesses as to what fine mansions or beautiful gardens may lie behind them. The Tehran roads were, as a rule, execrable, passengers having for ever to be on the look-out for holes and broken places. These were partly caused by the curious custom of digging up mud from the public highways to mix with chopped straw for the manufacture of sunburnt bricks.

In spite of its twelve handsome entrances, the Shah's palace, the

great square, the bazaars, and a couple of mosques, the city is a mean-looking place, consisting of thousands of small domed houses built of mud, and with great waste spaces used as receptacles for all kinds of rubbish.

The Persian of the towns is not a picturesque object. Only priests and merchants wear turbans, and the others, masters and servants alike, wear the high astrachan hat or "kolah," and are clad in black or buff frock-coats kilted from the waist, European trousers and shoes. They are a well-made, handsome race, hardly darker than Italians. The women, poor things, look like waddling bundles of clothes as they shuffle about, shrouded in great black "chadars," which cover them entirely, leaving only a strip of lace-work before their eyes.

While I was at the capital I was invited to a party given by the Shah's favourite wife at her palace, and thus saw how the ladies looked in their unbecoming indoor costume. The late Shah, during his visits to Europe, was so fascinated by the dress of the ballet-girls that, on his return, short, stiffened-out skirts which don't reach to the knee, were adopted by royal command in his "anderoon," and of course the fashion soon spread throughout the entire kingdom. It is about as ungraceful a costume as the stout, regular-featured, almond-eyed ladies could possibly wear. As a matter of fact, the victims do not much care to be seen in this dress by Europeans, so when strangers are present they drape themselves in sheets of silk, satin, or brocade, which have a decidedly comic effect worn over the kind of short crinoline underneath.

All the female aristocracy that Tehran could boast, both European and Oriental, was present at this party. The many wives of the Shah (he was said to possess forty) were attired in every colour of the rainbow, and most of them were hung all over with jewels. I will not say they *sparkled*; for the *uncut* rubies and emeralds, often as large as pigeons' eggs, might as well have been glass for all the brilliancy they gave. We sat on gilded chairs, drank tea thick with sugar, and ate sweetmeats. By and by there was a great stir and bustle, and His Majesty the late Shah, the Prop of the Universe and the Asylum of the World, as his loyal subjects called him, entered. He did not deign to notice the Persian houris who crowded round him, but requested that the European ladies should be presented to him, and did his best to converse in halting French with them. His Majesty was an imposing-looking figure in his handsomely braided uniform, with three rows of big square-cut diamonds and rubies across his chest, and the well-known diamond aigrette sparkling on the front of his astrachan hat. He did not stay very long, and his departure was the signal for dancing and music to commence, which to the uninitiated eye and ear were hardly agreeable performances. The dancers shuffled and postured in a way far from graceful, their great achievement being to bend right *backwards* until their heads touched the ground; and as for the music, it seemed a series of thuds on a "tomtom," a harsh scraping of "sitarrah" strings, and a succession of deafening yells and screams from the singers, who sat on their heels.

It was just before Christmas, but we were able to adjourn to the garden for the last part of the entertainment, sitting in the brilliant

sunshine, and watching the ladies smoke their Kalians or water-pipes. Persia has indeed a superb winter climate! The sharp frosty air is delightfully exhilarating, and during the winter the sun is so hot that I was always glad of a parasol, even when snow lay on the ground, and the great lake in the Shah's summer-garden was frozen hard enough to skate upon. And evening after evening we had the beautiful sight of the snowclad Elburz range, flushed rosy red with the setting sun, and we used to watch the long grey shadows steal up over the mountains, until only the majestic volcano Demavend was left with a pink crown, which in its turn would vanish, and we would huddle on extra wraps, and hurry home in an atmosphere some degrees below freezing-point.

When we left Tehran at the beginning of February, the country was still covered with snow, and the nights were bitterly cold until we reached Koom, ninety miles south, one of the holy cities of Persia, famous for the gold-domed mosque in which many Persian monarchs are interred. The rest-houses on our road were built on principles which made them the draughtiest habitations conceivable, and I shall never forget one particular night, when we could not manage with all our efforts and the aid of a blazing wood-fire to get the temperature above 34°.

It was not an agreeable experience to get up on these bitterly cold mornings. While we ate some breakfast in haste, our servants would rush into our rooms to pack up our camp furniture, leaving us in an absolutely bare room with nowhere to sit, save on a dirty mud floor. If the wind were not too bitter, we would tear ourselves away from the embers of the fire and go outside to see our caravan start off before we mounted ourselves. This consisted of about fifty fine mules, hung with bells, and carrying our servants and luggage on their high pack-saddles. *Fifty* sounds a formidable number, but you must remember that we were travelling through an uncivilised country, almost a desert at this time of year, and had to carry forage for our horses and everything save meat for our servants and selves. Moreover, the mules had to be lightly loaded, as otherwise they could not have done their 20-25 miles a day without breaking down.

After we left Koom it became warm enough to take to tent-life. Much as I enjoyed an open-air existence, I must confess that tents have their drawbacks. For example, sandstorms are of frequent occurrence, and it is disagreeable to have everything, food included, covered with grit, and you overlook the fact that the sand has filled up your ink-pot and spoilt your pen, because your eyes are so sore and smarting that you can hardly see. In heavy rain a tent is a damp and cheerless apartment, and it will take me long to forget a certain night when I was aroused by the sides of my tent flapping round me, a hurricane having torn up the pegs and whirled all my belongings out into the darkness.

However, in spite of occasional drawbacks such as these, there is a charm about travel in Persia to which I succumbed from the first. Perhaps it is partly due to the glorious sun which shines straight down from a cloudless turquoise sky, and a climate so exhilarating that the traveller is always at his best, and sees everything through rose-

coloured spectacles. The fascination cannot lie in the scenery, which is practically a succession of vast plains, barren of any save the scantiest vegetation, and divided from one another by equally barren ranges—scenery which does not appeal to every one, and would be the despair of an artist. The cities, dirty and ruinous, recall but little of the glorious past of Persia, and as no Christian may enter the mosques, their treasures of old tile-work and carpets cannot be inspected.

Be that as it may, the charm is there in spite of everything, and the traveller in Persia reverts in a way to nomad life, slipping off the shackles of civilisation. There are no trains or steamers to be caught, no crowded hotels, and he starts on the day's march when he pleases, halts when he likes, and, far from society, seems to get closer to nature. He may travel for days without coming across a village or even a human being, and thus thrown back upon himself, he enters with zest into the camp-life, usually making such pets of his horses that they will follow him like dogs.

On our way south we halted at Yezd, where I met the last English lady whom I was to see for over a year; and when we reached Kerman, our destination, we were two hundred miles from the nearest Europeans, I being the first Englishwoman to visit the province. This city, like all in Persia, is in a semi-ruinous condition, a high mud wall surrounding the domed houses of the town proper, outside which lie the ruins of old Kerman, which was some four times as large as the modern city. Beggars abound, and the place is not particularly thriving, though it is the centre of the famous carpet and shawl industry. In the Middle Ages Kerman was only second in importance to Isfahan, the ancient capital of Persia, and the trade of Europe flowed through it on its way to India by the Persian Gulf. Herodotus mentions the province, Alexander the Great marched through it, in the Middle Ages there was a flourishing Nestorian Church, whose bishop had his see at Kerman, and Marco Polo, who went everywhere, visited the city twice.

But the palmy days of Kerman were of short duration. The city passed through many vicissitudes, the worst and last being in 1794 when the ferocious Agha Muhammed Shah, the founder of the present Kajar dynasty, sacked the town, and, it is stated, demanded 20,000 pairs of human eyes from its luckless inhabitants. The story goes that the conqueror counted this terrible ransom himself, and remarked to his general, "If I had not found the full number, your own eyes would have supplied the lack."

Both at Yezd and Kerman the Parsees or fire-worshippers, the old inhabitants of the land, still survive. They are, however, despised by the Persians, who force them to wear a peculiar dress, and impose other restrictions upon them. The costume of the women is gay and picturesque, and they do not veil their faces. The Parsees expose their dead in towers of silence to be eaten by the vultures and crows, the idea being that they must not pollute earth, air, fire, or water. My little Parsee maid used, for example, to extinguish my candles with her fingers, fearing to defile the flame with her-breath. However, when she observed that no evil overtook me when I boldly blew

out the light, she summoned up courage to do likewise after a time. The Parsees do not consider the dog an unclean animal as do the Persians, and a dog is often called in to decide whether a fire-worshipper be dead or not. On these occasions a piece of bread is laid on the breast of the supposed corpse, and if the canine arbitrator devours this, it is a sure sign that life is extinct.

As the "servant question" is as acute in Persia as in Great Britain, I must now say a few words about my housekeeping experiences. Unaccustomed as I was to the East, it took me some time to realise that I had to deal with a race inured to lie and thieve, and lazier than the European imagination can easily grasp. As the Persian women are kept in seclusion, the whole work of a European household is performed by men, who enter the service of a foreigner to get as much as possible out of him. At Tehran they will often steal the little trifles embellishing his rooms, and sell them in the bazaars; they will wear articles of his clothing, take as much of his food as they can manage to abstract, and, perhaps worse than anything else, they will surreptitiously use his hair-brushes!

As throughout the East it is impossible for the upper classes, be they western or eastern, to do their own shopping, the servants make all the purchases, taking so much percentage on commissions, ten per cent. being the recognised amount. It can easily be understood that this may become a fruitful source of friction between a mistress and her *Nasir* or steward; and my cook and I had many painful scenes over his accounts, as his ideas of percentage were never lower than fifty! However, living was by no means ruinous at Kerman, as meat and bread were under a penny a pound, eggs ten a penny, chickens twopence, and a minute lamb fourpence halfpenny. Our bill of fare was limited, and I had to study my cookery-book diligently in order to ring the changes on the "eternal mutton and everlasting fowl." Fish there was none, and beef not to be had, all Persians considering it beneath contempt as food. Our fruit and vegetables were also a difficulty, as everything came with a rush in the early summer, and the fierce sun left us at the end of May with only rice and onions, and not even a potato, until the marrows and autumn fruits were ripe.

I found at Kerman that I had to carry on a constant crusade against dirt in my efforts to keep the Consulate up to even a low standard of European comfort. In the kitchen the pots and pans required daily examination, as my cook frequently left the remains of former meals in them; and I had to be on the alert, as he was in the habit of boiling a mass of vegetables to last for days, in order to save himself the trouble of preparing a fresh supply. The other servants were all on the same pattern as the cook. Nothing was ever done to-day that they could put off to the next day, and "Furdà inshallah!" (to-morrow, please Allah!) was their constant cry. They would tell me lie after lie with such admirable self-possession, looking me straight in the face with such guileless eyes, that I was often fairly staggered. However, as their perversions of the truth were seldom consistent, they usually betrayed themselves, but when found out would say without a

trace of shame, and often with a laugh, "Yes, Khanum (mistress), it was a lie."

When I accused my butler, Hashim, of stealing our tea, sugar, etc., he was deeply hurt at the objectionable word "steal" being applied to his action, which, by the way, he did not deny. He explained to me at great length that taking *food* was not a form of theft, as it was done for the laudable purpose of making him stronger to work in my service!

The whole race, however, has a profound belief in the word and also in the healing powers of any European, and I regretted frequently that I had no knowledge of medicine, so many were the cases for which I was urged to prescribe, and so few did I dare to try and cure.

I am thankful to say that the Church Missionary Society has now intrenched itself in Kerman, and has opened a hospital there. The importance of medical missionaries will be appreciated when it is understood that the practice of medicine in Persia is mainly a question of charms. A *hot* disease requires a *cold* remedy and *vice versa*, cold water, for example, being flung over a patient suffering from fever or pneumonia.

I have a brass bowl, once the principal stock-in-trade of a Persian doctor. The signs of the Zodiac and texts of the Koran are engraved outside, and inside is incised a mass of short prayers, one for each disease. To each prayer belongs a small key with the name of the disease. The method of procedure is simple in the extreme. The doctor fills the bowl with water, makes a feint of unlocking with one of the keys the prayer alluding to his patient's disease, and if the latter swallows the water in a believing spirit a cure is sure to follow. If a patient is at the point of death, a pearl ground up is a powerful restorative, and powdered rubies and emeralds are given as tonics; and to sew a patient up in a raw hide is another remedy. One burnt child had its wounds rubbed with soot from the bottom of the cooking vessels, and when my Parsee maid was burnt she drank pomegranate water as a cure. A child suffering from water on the brain was brought to a Persian doctor, who assured the parents that it was possessed by a demon. He advised them to lay it in a newly dug grave during the night, saying that in the morning it would either be cured or the demon would have made away with it. The parents followed the prescription, but they found the child the next morning neither better nor worse.

We were singularly fortunate in having some civilised Persian society when we were at Kerman. His Highness, the Farman Farmâ, brother-in-law and son-in-law of the present Shah, was Governor-General of the province, and as he and my brother were friends of some two years' standing, we saw a great deal of him and his suite.

Every member of the Prince's suite spoke French more or less fluently, a great thing for me, as my Persian was hardly above the level of the kitchen, there being practically two languages spoken in the country, one full of compliment and courtly phrase for the educated, and another, simple and quite different, for the lower classes. To give one example of what I mean, the phrase "telegram sent" was delivered

to our Minister at Tehran as follows: "The message of the most exalted threshold has become a place of pilgrimage."

I must confess, however, that the society of these gentlemen became very wearisome after a time. The great subjects of conversation were sport and horses, and I could not talk on these themes for ever, nor was it etiquette to question them about their women, in whom I was greatly interested. Their own idea of light conversation was to put you through a searching catechism as to what you had paid for each horse and each belonging, such as carpets and furniture, and they never hesitated to ask such home questions as to what might be your age or income.

Although proud of using knives and forks when with Europeans, yet some of their manners at table were curious. They would devour half a sweetmeat or biscuit, and, if not to their taste, would replace the mutilated fragment on the dish, while if a cut-up cake were offered them, they would break off a bit here and a bit there until the whole confection was unfit for any one else to eat. As a rule they refrained from putting the spoon or fork they were using into the dish, but to drink from the lip of a water-jug or the spout of a teapot was an irresistible temptation.

Persian gentlemen are curiously dependent on their servants, looking to them for counsel on all occasions, and expecting to be provided by them with gossip gleaned from the bazaars. It is amusing when receiving a Persian of position to notice how his servants, and your own for the matter of that, will burst into the conversation at intervals, especially if it appears to be flagging. And a gentleman intimate with another will invariably inquire after his friend's chief servant, and address some of his conversation to him, it being a mark of special friendliness to give orders to another man's retainers. The Prince, who often dined with us, used to send our servants (who were waiting at table) for this or that, and I confess that I thought his manners strange until it was pointed out to me that he was paying us a particular compliment.

I do not believe that there is such a thing as patriotism in the country. My Persian friends used to ask me mysteriously on what day the British army was expected to land from the Persian Gulf and proceed to take the country. They assured me that they were looking forward to this foreign occupation, imagining that it would mean wealth and security to all who welcomed it. When, however, we consider the Persian system of government, this attitude will not surprise us. The Shah "farms out" his kingdom at each Noruz (the Persian New Year) to those governors who bid highest for the various appointments. As the term of office lasts for only one year, it will easily be understood that the new governor's object is to recoup himself handsomely for his outlay. This he does by heavily taxing the luckless peasantry, and also by demanding large "gifts" from every one in his province who has the doubtful privilege of being accounted rich. The Persian proverb, "If you have a fine horse it becomes a gift," alludes to the way in which those in authority despoil their subordinates. It can be understood that no governor would lay out a penny on roads, bridges, public buildings, and so on, and as the central government does practically

nothing in that way, it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that no work of public utility has been undertaken since the days of Shah Abbas, contemporary of our Queen Elizabeth.

Bravery is as much at a discount as is patriotism; and I was astonished at the naïve way in which my friends would inform me that they were afraid to ride certain horses in case they bolted, and would never dare to venture alone into graveyards or ruined buildings, as such places are haunted by "ghouls," "jinns," "afreets," and other unpleasant supernatural visitants. In fact, rich men frequently hire a priest to sleep with them at night in order to keep these "bogies" at bay.

On one occasion two officers whom I knew were discussing an expedition that they had undertaken against a turbulent nomad chieftain. A cloud of dust was seen in the distance, and one of my acquaintances, believing that the enemy was approaching in force, turned to fly, with all his soldiers following closely in his wake. This incident was being related by his brother officer, who, however, was not in the least abashed when his colleague turned the tables on him with, "Yes, that was the time when you were so frightened that you crept into one of the saddlebags on a riding camel!" The point of the story was that the cloud of dust had been caused by a stampede of mares, and after the foregoing conversation I was not surprised to hear that the nomad chieftain was still at large.

I enjoyed entertaining the Persian ladies far more than the men, despite the unconscionable time that my fair guests were wont to stay. Before their arrival the courtyard had to be cleared of all our men-servants, and my visitors, shrouded from head to foot in black silk "chadars," would stumble up the steep steps to my drawing-room. Here I would await them clad in my gayest garments, a European tea, with cakes, biscuits, chocolate, and so on, spread out in imposing fashion. With many a "Khosh amadid" of welcome I would accept with effusion the wizened little apple or orange presented to me by the chief lady, and beg my friends to be seated on chairs. When the servants in attendance, and perhaps a few children, had squatted down on their heels on the floor, the ladies, after many a nervous glance at the open windows, though my drawing-room was upstairs, would cautiously divest themselves of their "chadars" and face veils, and display gorgeous loose-sleeved jackets and much jewellery. If by chance a man crossed the courtyard or appeared in the garden, my affrighted guests would huddle themselves up in their dusky shrouds with every appearance of terror.

Probably at first they were shocked to observe how heedlessly I exposed *my* face, but I soon found that the poor things envied me my free existence, and used to advise me earnestly not to marry a Persian on *any* account.

They were always interested in my illustrated papers, and were particularly eager to see portraits of the Farman Farmà and his suite; but when I asked leave to photograph them, they would only consent on condition that I gave a solemn promise never to show the result to any man, and, as this was impossible, I did not take any of them.

When my conversational powers were quite exhausted, I would wind up various mechanical toys for their benefit, though I fancy from their whispered remarks that they sometimes thought that these objects were possessed by devils.

On one occasion, when I thought they would *never* go, my little Parsee maid announced with a smile that my brother was just coming. The effect was magical. In the twinkling of an eye every "chadar" was huddled on, and with very hurried "Khoda hafiz-i-shumas" (good-byes), ladies and attendants rushed off in a regular stampede. My butler then came in to clear away, and I inquired of him where my brother was. Hashim looked confused for a moment, and then explained with a broad smile that he thought my guests had stayed quite long enough, so he had hit on this expedient to hasten their departure!

We used occasionally to ride some twenty miles out from Kerman and camp near the Prince's beautiful garden at a place called Mahun, and would accompany him on his big partridge-shoots. On these occasions the Prince and his guests, with some hundreds of retainers, clad in all kinds of long-skirted coats, would gallop across a stony plain and make their way towards the neighbouring hills. Once when we had only just started, the Prince's favourite servant rode up calling out "shikar," i.e. game. We all stopped. His Highness dismounted and began cautiously to stalk something, which was evidently in a little bush hard by. I could not imagine what the "game" could be, and when our host fired and a magpie flew off unharmed, I had hard work to preserve a grave countenance.

After this small episode we made our way along the stony bed of a dried-up watercourse, and the sport began. Men galloped up the hills, riding along the ridges at the top, and yelling loudly to frighten the partridges down into the valley, which was crowded with excited sportsmen. Mongrel pointers "flushed" the poor birds, and the falconers were in readiness to loose their hawks at any that escaped the somewhat erratic aim of the shooters, who shouted, plunged wildly about, and fired seemingly in such reckless fashion that it was astonishing that no casualties occurred.

After this veritable pandemonium we had lunch in a garden of peach-trees, and the "bag" was brought in on a huge brass tray to be inspected. It amused me to notice how every one vied in assuring the Prince (who by the way was a most indifferent shot) that at least three-quarters of the birds had fallen to his gun.

After we had been nearly a year at Kerman, the Government of India arranged a Boundary Commission to delimitate a stretch of frontier between British and Persian Baluchistan, and my brother was appointed assistant-commissioner to Colonel (now Sir Thomas) Hungerford Holdich.

When I explain that we expected to spend some months in a country where such things as bread, butter, eggs, milk, tea, sugar, fruit, and vegetables were practically unobtainable, it will be understood that a considerable amount of forethought was required before we could set off

with our string of camels. However, as my brother had hoped to be sent on this expedition, I had made extensive commissariat arrangements some weeks beforehand, and when the order arrived from Tehran we managed to start off in two days' time. Any one who has travelled in the East will allow that this is something of a feat, when it is considered that camels had to be hired, the establishment of a year broken up, our scanty furniture stored, parting gifts distributed, and a last inspection to be taken of every detail of camp equipment, not omitting the provisions carried by the servants for their own use.

It was quite a wrench to leave Kerman, which I had looked upon as a real home, but the nomad instinct inherent in most of us soon awoke, and we felt proud of accomplishing our 600 mile journey to join the Commission in forty days, very good marching for the slowly moving camels.

To reach Baluchistan we had to cross part of the great Persian desert, and therefore were obliged to carry water with us for six marches. The necessity for this came home to us at one of our halts, where our servants discovered the corpse of a poor peasant, who had probably perished of thirst in this inhospitable region, strewn with black volcanic *débris*.

Baluchistan, as a whole, is a most uninviting country. Countless ranges of mean-looking hills strew the valleys and plains so thickly with *débris* that it is seldom possible to ride at more than a foot's-pace. Roads there are none, and the traveller follows the track, often faint, made by previous caravans.

Even in February and March it was unpleasantly hot, and we were obliged to start before daybreak in order to reach our extra tents, sent on the night before, not later than 8 A.M. The intense heat and the hosts of flies prevented us from making up for our short night's rest during the day, and usually about four o'clock we were visited by a dust storm: the tent-ropes would be torn up in a trice, and the tent collapse in a heap unless we held on to the pole until the storm passed as suddenly as it had come. After a time we circumvented these "devils," as the servants called them, by piling boxes on to the tent-ropes, for we could not follow the example of the Governor of Baluchistan, who forced his soldiers to hold on to the tent-ropes while he took his siesta.

The water was also a trial, as it was often non-existent, and when there was any, it would be brackish or foul, unless we had the luck to camp in a grove of palms. The stately trees and the rippling stream which gave them birth were in delightful contrast to the dreary desert which had never a tree, scarcely a plant, and where snakes and lizards seemed the only signs of life.

The Baluchis are quite a different race from the fair-skinned Persians, being slight and dark, with traces of Arab and Negro ancestry. They wear full white trousers and shirts, and their masses of greasy black hair seem never to have been combed, save in the case of the young dandies, who train curls to hang over their ears and down their chests. Taking them all round, they appear to be quite ignorant of the uses

of soap and water, and a dirtier set of people, including their starved-looking women, I never came across.

Baluchistan was conquered by Persia some forty years ago, and the relations between the conquerors and the conquered are, to say the least of it, strained. During the delimitation operations our Commissioner was sometimes implored by the villagers not to give them to the Persians, and this feeling was shown very plainly when, at the close of the Commission, a sort of international gymkhana was got up, the Indian sepoy, Persians, and Baluchis entering into competition. The camel and horse races went off in perfect harmony, but when a wrestling match between the Persian "pahlavan," a great champion, and one of the sepoy took place, the bystanders became excited, and assisted proceedings by beating the wrestler with whom they were not in sympathy. Upon this a free fight began, and stones flew through the air, no joke on a plain strewn thickly with boulders, and the international gymkhana might have ended in disaster had it not been for the promptitude of the English officers.

The Persian governor rode back to his camp surrounded by his own soldiers, who beat him soundly, presumably to pay off old scores, and the Baluchis rushed in a body to the English camp, begging for arms, and to be led against the hated Persians, whom they imagined we were as eager to slay as they were.

When matters were quiet again, the Persian governor announced that he would have his unruly soldiers bastinadoed, but, to our amusement, his entire army retired to a palm grove, which my brother used as our stable, the warriors declaring that they were taking "bast" or sanctuary with the consul. It must have been humiliating for the governor of the province to be deprived of all his forces in this way, and he was obliged to come to our stable early the next morning and promise his soldiers that by-gones should be by-gones before they would consent to return to their duty.

AN OLD STORY OF ARCTIC EXPLORATION.

In these days when so much attention is directed, and rightly directed, to exploration in Arctic and Antarctic regions, it may not be without interest to our readers if we invite their attention to an old story of the sixteenth century, viz., the voyage of exploration in the fringe of the Arctic Ocean by Arthur Pet and Charles Jackman, who in a humble way may not unfairly claim to be among the predecessors of Nansen and Peary. In the sixteenth century the merchants of England were quite determined on one thing, viz., that by fair means or foul they must acquire for England a share of the commerce of the East, or, as they used to call it, the Empire of Cathay. The Portuguese and the Spaniards were already reaping a golden harvest, and adventurers, or, as we ought more accurately to call them, buccaneers, like Drake and Frobisher, by their captures of galleons laden with spices and gold, had