

This article was downloaded by: [Universitaetsbibliothek Giessen]  
On: 10 December 2014, At: 10:33  
Publisher: Routledge  
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number:  
1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street,  
London W1T 3JH, UK



## Scottish Geographical Magazine

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsgj19>

### Baku and the Caspian

Lt.-Col. A. C. Yate F.E.G.S.

Published online: 27 Feb 2008.

To cite this article: Lt.-Col. A. C. Yate F.E.G.S. (1920) Baku and the Caspian, Scottish Geographical Magazine, 36:4, 254-264, DOI: [10.1080/00369222008734331](https://doi.org/10.1080/00369222008734331)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00369222008734331>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access

and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

maritime connection with the far south as early as the stone age. Further observations of that sort would be welcome in order to supplement the glimpses offered by our interpretation of the Scandinavian rock carvings. But the assumption of such early transference of astronomical ideas from the Orient to Scandinavia opens up a perspective of bewildering vastness. The revolution in our traditional ideas about Scandinavian mythology would be too radical, the consequences too difficult to contemplate. We must refrain from entering the labyrinth of such puzzling problems. And so we conclude our sketch in the hope that it may be sufficient to draw the attention of competent scholars to the fascinating enigma of the Scandinavian rock carvings.

## BAKU AND THE CASPIAN.

By Lt.-Col. A. C. YATE, F.R.G.S.

(With Illustrations.)

SINCE the overthrow of the Romanoff dynasty—which, personally, in the lurid light of Bolshevism and apart from the Rasputin infamy, I deplore—the Caucasus and the Caspian have become the centres of such a complex web of war and intrigue that I am tempted to conclude my reminiscences of travel in 1881 from Persia, into Russia, with a *résumé* of my experiences on the three occasions when I crossed or coasted the Caspian, viz. in June 1881, July 1885, and in September-October 1890.

When at mid-day on 26th June 1881 the news suddenly reached us that the steamer for Baku had been sighted and signalled an hour before, and was close in to the anchorage at Enzeli (only boats of very light draught can come close in to shore—larger boats anchor a mile or so out), we snatched a few mouthfuls of breakfast, packed our kit, and went off in a brief space in the boat which was waiting to take us on board. It proved to be the mail-boat bound for Baku and Astrakhan. We got on board at one and sailed at 2.30 P.M., under the densely wooded slopes, relieved by occasional towns, hamlets, houses, and cultivated patches, which border the Caspian from Enzeli to Lenkorán. In the distant background to this wealth of vegetation near the shore stretched north and south, as far as the eye could see, a lofty range of mountains, the snow-streaked summits of which were half shrouded in cloud and haze. At the small port of Astara, about 25 miles south of Lenkorán, a little river, flowing down from the interior, marks the frontier between the Russian Caucasus and the Persian province of Gilán. Russian Astara lies on the north, Persian Astara on the south bank of this river. (In the eighteenth century the Persian frontier was at Derbend, 150 miles north of Baku.) The view of the coast from the steamer was very fine. The thatched and wattled houses and cottages, relieved here and there by some more striking public edifice constructed of brickwork and masonry, lay embedded in a luxuriant mass of verdure. Behind the town rose tier upon tier of

wooded hills, the whole surmounted by the half-wooded, half-barren mountain ridges, on the highest and most distant peaks of which one could detect snow. Some of the slopes of the lower hills were cleared and cultivated. The manufacture and export of salt is largely carried on at many points on the coast, the waters of the Caspian being exceptionally salt.

Of the life we led and the people we met on a Russian steamer of the Caspian in 1881 it boots little to speak to-day. One only, an elderly Georgian in the Russian service, wearing several Russian medals and decorations, and who was said to have done the Russian Government excellent service at various times, seems to merit recall now. He spoke Persian, and in that language we occasionally discussed political questions. One day—after looking round to see that no Russian was within hearing—he suddenly said to me: "What a pity your Lord Beaconsfield is dead!" Surprised, I asked "Why?" He replied, "Every man in Russia feared Beaconsfield, but no one fears Gladstone." Beaconsfield had then been dead two months, and to-day the last two volumes of Monypenny's and Buckle's *Life of Disraeli* have just reminded us of Bismarck's verdict on "the old Jew" at the Berlin Conference. It was that Conference which opened the way for the German "Drang nach Osten," while it, temporarily at least, put the drag on Russia.

The Turk fell more and more under German influence, until even Lord Salisbury bitterly confessed that we had put our money on the wrong horse. The Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 was a poor and futile response to the Baghdad Railway and German penetration into the Middle East. Afghanistan never even acknowledged and Persia early repudiated it. Russia abused its provisions brutally before the war; while round Britain's neck it was little more than a millstone. The war has completely changed the destinies alike of Railway and Agreement, but into what form the Middle East will settle itself under the pseudo-Peace, time alone can tell.

The six hours which we spent at Lenkorán on the 27th of June, anchored close off the shore, brought us into touch with a scene and incident which then aroused the keenest excitement, but to-day would be dismissed as a mere episode in a reign of Bolshevistic anarchy. We found the beach thronged with a crowd, including many ladies smartly turned out. We learnt that in consequence of the murder of seven individuals—a murder in which as many as forty persons were said to have been implicated—the Governor of Baku, attended by his staff, had visited Lenkorán, and was about to return in our steamer to Baku. His Excellency's departure was at once an official and a social event which appealed alike to the bureaucracy and to fashion. As a matter of fact, in the dull seaside garrison town, the arrival and departure of the mail-boat are "events," and as such not to be neglected. The excellent *chef* of our steamer also rose to the occasion, and surpassed himself. The temperature was high, and the iced soup and boiled sherbet which he served to us showed the instinct of a *connoisseur*. We left Lenkorán at 5 P.M. and reached Baku at 7 A.M. on 28th June.

Many pens—let me specify those of Jonas Hanway in the forties of the

eighteenth century, Sir John Malcolm in the early nineteenth, and Colonel Valentine Baker, Captain Marsh, S. G. W. Benjamin (the first U.S.A. Minister to Persia), the Comte de Cholet, M. Edgar Boulanger, Colonel A. Le Messurier, and the Hon. G. N. Curzon in the seventies and eighties of the same century—have described Baku. It is the home of romantic legend as associated with the Kal'ah-i-Dukhtar, or the Maiden's Tower, and it has been for centuries, I gather, the resort of Zoroastrian and Hindu devotees, who have sought the path of salvation in the maintenance of sacred and undying fires. Jonas Hanway, who visited it about 1745, put on record that it had the best haven on the Caspian, and that it supplied rock-salt, brimstone and naphtha to all surrounding countries. When I first visited Baku in 1881, the exploitation of its naphtha wealth had been well begun, but even fifteen years before that we find Mr. R. J. Watson in his *History of the Kājār Dynasty* (London, 1866) writing: "At the extremity of the peninsula of Absharon, which juts out from the western shore of the Caspian Sea, stands the fortress of Badkooba, or Bakoo, a place celebrated chiefly on account of the ever-burning fires of naphtha in its vicinity, which attracted the adoration of the fire-worshippers of old, and which are to this day constantly tended by a succession of priests from India." Persians always speak of Baku as "Badkubā." In the century which preceded the treaty of Turcomanchai, by which the Russo-Persian frontier west of the Caspian was, in 1828, definitely settled, Trans-Caucasia was a shuttlecock between the battledores of the Czars and the Shahs. It finally remained with the Czars until Czardom fell, seemingly, for ever. With Bolshevism a new era commenced, and it is for the Entente and Bolshevism to settle what the character of that new era is to be. No Russian, be he Bolshevik or Nationalist, could calmly contemplate the loss of Baku, which supplies every steamer and railway from Samarcand to Batoum and from Julfa to the Upper Volga with fuel;<sup>1</sup> whereas on the other hand the Entente, having internationalised the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, thrown the Black Sea open, decided that France in Syria and Cilicia and Britain in Mesopotamia shall support Armenia, Georgia, and the Tartar Republic of Azarbaijan in their independence, and wishing to retain and control Batoum and Trebizond as open ports for trade between Europe and the East, will not readily consent to forgo advantages to attain which it has sacrificed much.

The Caspian Sea is known to Islam as Bahr-i-Khizr—i.e. the Sea of Elias—and Jonas Hanway, after describing a steep hill crowned by a fort close to Baku which he and his companions visited, says: "This romantic scene the Persians and Tartars believe to be the residence of the prophet Elias when he fled from Arabia." Subject to Persia as this country was in the eighteenth century, the population round Baku was largely Tatar, and, as we know, has to-day asserted itself as the independent Republic of Azarbaijan, with its capital at Baku. Of that capital, more or less as it

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. Nos. 18 and 27 of *The New Russia* contain articles by M. V. Minorsky which make it quite clear the Russian Liberation Committee has every intention, when it gets the power, of reimposing the old Russian hold in Trans-Caucasia and Persia, if it can.

is to-day, the most complete description with which I am acquainted is to be found in M. Edgar Boulangier's *Voyage à Merv* (Paris 1888), Chapter X., and the most up-to-date is that of Mr. Ernest Betts in *The Near East* of August 5, 1920.

My first impression of the place, as I sighted it from the steamer on the morning of the 28th June 1881, was of a "barren waste of undulating hills, relieved by a town, a harbour, oil-pits and factories, barracks, cemeteries, and a naval dockyard." To this let me add "the tall massive tower, now used as a lighthouse, known as Kal'ah-i-Dukhtar, or Maiden's Tower,<sup>1</sup> three half-ruined pillars, the old Fort on the hill in the heart of the town (its stone walls and moat are still visible, and in it are barracks, magazines, the garrison library and other military institutions), and the old Palace situated close to it. Boulangier, who visited Baku in 1886, speaks of all then as "monuments remarquables de la vieille cité en train de disparaître." We have yet to learn whether General Dunsterville or the English Mission, which has been recently released from a Bolshevik prison at Baku, found and left them standing. My impression is that the solidity of the masonry would for a long time resist any sort of high explosive.

The harbour is spacious and sheltered from the prevalent northerly winds and storms by a promontory (Apsheiron) and several islands. It is, in fact, open only to the SE. Sailing craft and steamers thronged it, among them being the small steam-yacht which the Shah, by the Czar's courtesy, was allowed to maintain on the Caspian.<sup>2</sup> It was a poor little boat at best. I am open to correction, but I do not recollect that history associates naval supremacy with the name of Persia, famous though it has been in the past for soldierly and military prestige on *terra firma*. The great Admirals of Islam must be sought among the races that dwelt along the shores of the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf. It is from the Arab that the greatest naval power that the world has yet seen borrowed, doubtless through the Spaniards, that title of "Admiral" (Amir-al-bahr), which it crowned with fame in the days of sailing ships and which it has maintained at the same high level in the ironclad era. In the dockyard at Baku lay half-a-dozen dismantled gunboats. The distance from the oil-factories on the NE. of the town to the dockyard on the south was, I estimated, from 2 to 2½ miles. The town of Baku is built partly on the level strip near the shore, and partly on the slope of the hill behind it. The entire seaport of the town is one long street or quay, with a high parapet on the sea side, and shops and business premises on the other. It is the Thames embankment or the quays of the Seine on a small scale. We saw naphtha exuding from the soil almost everywhere. Baku in a strong north wind is what the visitor will not forget. We faced it on June 28, 1881, when we walked back from the dockyard to

<sup>1</sup> A Khan of Baku confined there his daughter, when she refused to accept the husband whom he had chosen for her. Rather than yield, she sought death finally, by throwing herself from the parapet of the tower.

<sup>2</sup> The sovereignty of this Persian Sea was ceded to Russia by the treaty of Gulistan in 1813.—General Sir T. E. Gordon, *Persia Revisited*, p. 43.

the town, the wind and whirls of dust and fine grit taking us full in the teeth. However, we were out to see Baku that day, and wind and dust had just to be taken as part of the day's work.<sup>1</sup> Eastern habits of early rising must prevail at Baku, for I find that, as soon as we landed, we went to a bank or exchange agent and changed Persian silver and a circular note or two into Russian paper, and, having done that, we took a cab to the railway terminus, and left by the 8.30 train for the oil-fields at Balakhana, distance 10 miles. Surkhana, where Guebres and Hindus maintain or used to maintain sacred and everlasting fires, is reached by a branch or continuation of the Balakhana line. We had no time to go there. Those who are curious about these things should read the 57th chapter of Jonas Hanway's first volume (A.D. 1743), and p. 386 of Boulangier's *Voyage à Merv* (1886). My impression in 1881 is thus given: "A more dreary repulsive place than these oil-pits I never saw; the stench of naphtha pervaded everything; every hollow in the ground was a naphtha reservoir. Hundreds of engines were pumping up a seemingly inexhaustible stream of oil. The force with which this liquid, when first broached, is expelled from the soil is well known. After roaming about such a scene for a good hour we were glad to return to the station, and take the train back to Baku. We arrived there at 1 P.M. The heat was intense. I had not at that time made my acquaintance with the heat of Upper Sind, with which in subsequent years I became very familiar, but I found that, be it Baku, or be it Sibi, or Jacobabad, they shared alike the conviction that the legendary "hell" of a future existence was a superfluity, as long as the record for heat was held by them.

The public gardens which existed at Baku in 1881 had been artificially created by removing the native soil and replacing it by good soil, brought at considerable expense from Lenkorán. In that imported soil, trees, shrubs and flowers had been induced to grow. It is to these gardens that Baku society flocked in the evening. After dinner on the 28th June we took a stroll along the quay, and then up along the south side of the town, through the public garden and under the old walls, and close by the handsome sculptured gateways of the old Palace.<sup>2</sup> We then returned to the gardens, and found the band playing and society gathered together. The Summer Club was situated in the garden, a fine building consisting of reading, dining, card and billiard rooms, also a buffet. We were introduced by a member, and on payment of a small fee became honorary members for the evening. I was disappointed to find, besides Russian journals which I could not read, only one German paper. However, we found excellent cigars, and about midnight enjoyed an excellent supper of cold sterlet and horse-radish sauce and new potatoes, washed down with iced Russian

<sup>1</sup> His Excellency the first U.S.A. Minister of the Court of the Shah writes feelingly of "the fine dust blown from the hills in the terrible wind-storms," and adds, "During our stay it blew for two days from the north, like the Mistral. Men walked the streets with mouth, ears, and nostrils muffled."

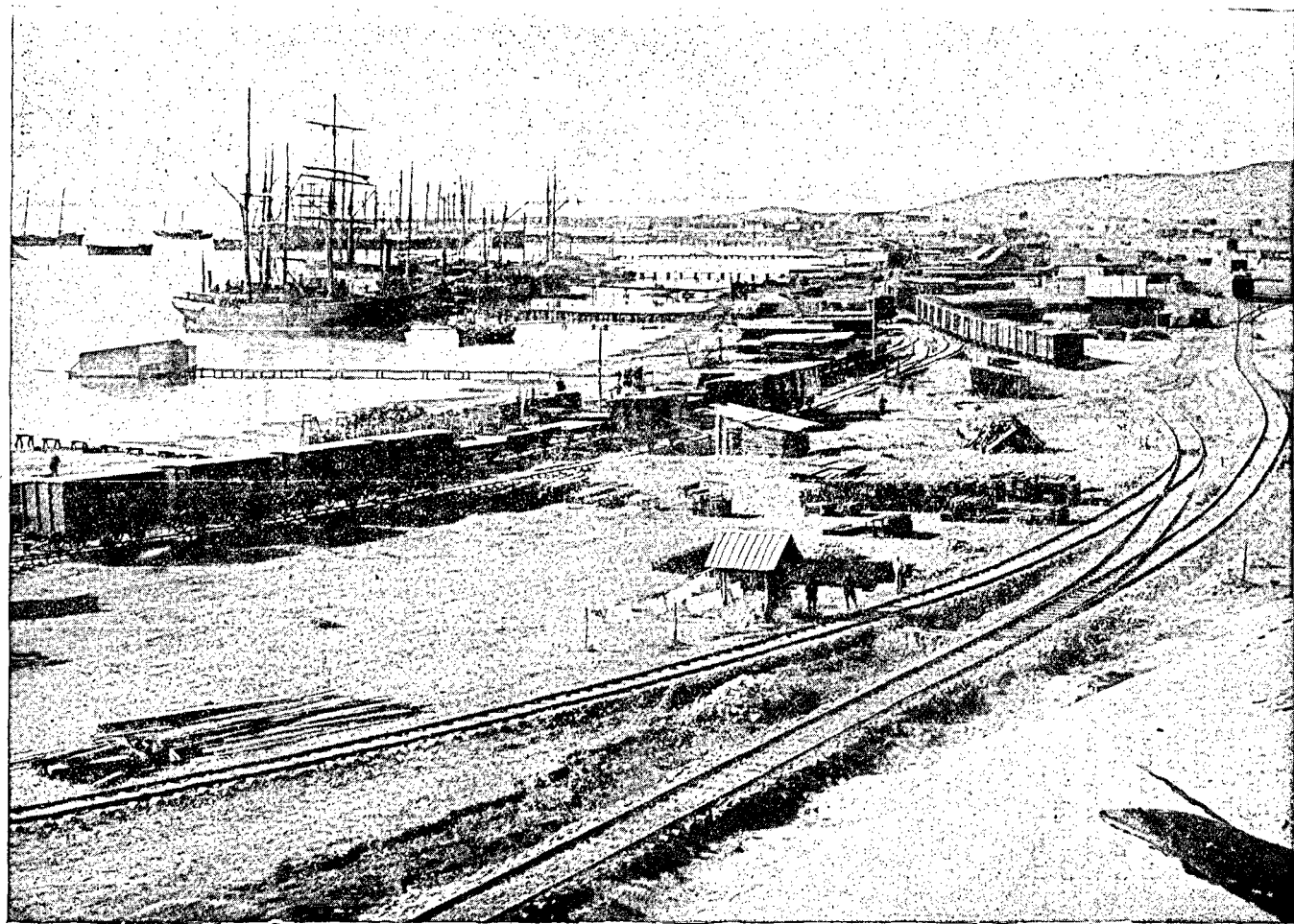
<sup>2</sup> See Boulangier, *Voyage à Merv*, p. 340, for an illustration of "Porte des Khans au Vieux Bakou," and Benjamin's *Persia*, p. 17

beer of excellent flavour. The Marine band played till 11 P.M., and played well. Russians of all classes seemed to be there, strolling through the gardens and seated near the bandstand. The card and billiard rooms were much frequented, and play, I heard, was high. After the band, all turned to supper, tables being laid out under the trees. There is one thing that I noticed about Baku, in all my three visits, that, be it hotel or club, and be the sanitation the *ne plus ultra* of negation, the food and drink were good. In the hot weather the upper classes of society at Baku, especially the ladies and children, migrated to Lenkorán, where the climate is much more temperate.

In 1881 the Caspian was quite unconnected by rail with Central Russia, and with Central Asia only by a crudely laid line from Krasnovodsk Bay to Kizil Arvat.<sup>1</sup> Batoum and Poti, on the Black Sea, were connected through Tiflis with Baku by a railway completed in 1883. It was at Tsaritsin, on the Volga, 300 miles above Astrakhan, that in 1881 we boarded the Russian railway to Moscow. Before the nineteenth century ended, Vladikavkas and Baku, *via* Petrofsk, were linked by rail with Rostof and Tsaritsin, and Tashkent was linked with Moscow through Orenburg. There is certainly food for reflection on the vagaries of fortune in the march of events around the Caspian from 1880 to 1920. Till the eve of the war in 1914 all seemed to progress to Russia's satisfaction. The Persian was consistently and pitilessly bullied, and the development of the great Trans-Caspian Province, stretching away to the confines of China, went on apace. Bolshevik Khanates and Trans-Caucasian Republics were not dreamed of. The Colossus of the North had got its elephantine foot on the necks of them all. War and Revolution ended all this; and a few weeks ago, when the Bolshevik wave threatened to burst the barriers between itself and conservative Europe, the *débâcle* set in. Poland, guided by the counsels of Marshal Weygand, was saved alike from the Teuton on the West and the Bolshevik on the East, and Wrangel and the Cossacks emancipated the Don basin and all to the south of it from Soviet tyranny. At the same time the Cossack Corps of the Persian Army drove the Bolsheviks out of Resht, and defeated sundry Bolshevik attempts to land on the south shore of the Caspian. The wheels within wheels that find their motive power amid the forces which racial, political, financial and commercial aspirations generate in the Caucasus and Trans-Caucasus may be imagined by those who know something of the country and its peoples and of their history. But there are wider ambitions than these. What does the world's commerce gain by an open Dardanelles, Bosphorus, and Black Sea, and by free ports at Batoum and Trebizond, if the independence of Trans-Caucasia is a dead letter? The Entente, as I understand, aims at keeping those routes open, as the Suez Canal and the Baghdad Railway will be open to the traffic of the world. It is to be borne in mind that the continuation of these routes eastward will

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter xv. of Marvin's *Reconnoitring Central Asia*. General Annenkoff and Prince Khilkoff, respectively designer and constructor of the Trans-Caspian Railway, were still on the Oxus in September 1890, when I visited Tashkent *via* the Caucasus and Samarcand.





The Harbour of Uzun-ada, which in 1890 was the terminus, on the east shore of the Caspian, of the Trans-Caspian Railway. 1890.

become ultimately the great Trans-Continental links across Asia between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Railways must converge on India; and to do so they, as far as we can judge, must traverse Persia and Afghanistan. Through India lies one Trans-Continental line; the other must pass to the north of it, being a continuation of the Orenburg-Tashkent and Trans-Caspian railways, which again, sooner or later, will be connected by a transverse line with Omsk, on the Trans-Siberian. The oil of Baku has since 1880 been an invaluable aid to rail and steamboat communication over a wide area, and in the future, as long as it lasts, it will feed one still wider. If the oil of Baku and the trade-routes of Batoum and Trebizond are to be, as the Entente evidently intends, open for the world's use, the maintenance of the independence of Armenia, Georgia, and the Azarbaijan Republic must be maintained.

It was at an early hour on the 29th June 1881 that we left the Summer Club of Baku and returned to our steamer. What with heat and flies, sleep would not be wooed, so at dawn we were up, and went for a walk to the naval dockyard. As we returned we got the north wind and its dust full in our faces, a presage of what we might expect when we rounded Cape Apsheron, which we did about 5 P.M.

It will be remembered by some that in June 1881 a very notable comet was visible. We saw it every night that we spent on the Caspian about 9 or 10 P.M. The two towns of importance on the west shore of the Caspian between Baku and the Volga mouths are Derbent and Petrofsk. The former was for wellnigh a century a bone of contention between Russia and Persia, and the great fort and walls, the siege and capture (twice) of which by the Russians in the eighteenth century are described in Malcolm's *History of Persia*, vol. ii. pp. 5 and 295, were well seen from the Derbent harbour when we stopped there. What still lurk in a nook of my memory are the magnificent black and white heart cherries which were brought on board at Derbent. Thence we passed on to Petrofsk, which a few years later became joined by a railway with the Tikhorietskaya junction of the lines from Rostof and Tsaritsin. Petrofsk then became a harbour of some importance on a line of communication with Krasnovodsk and the Trans-Caspian Provinces.

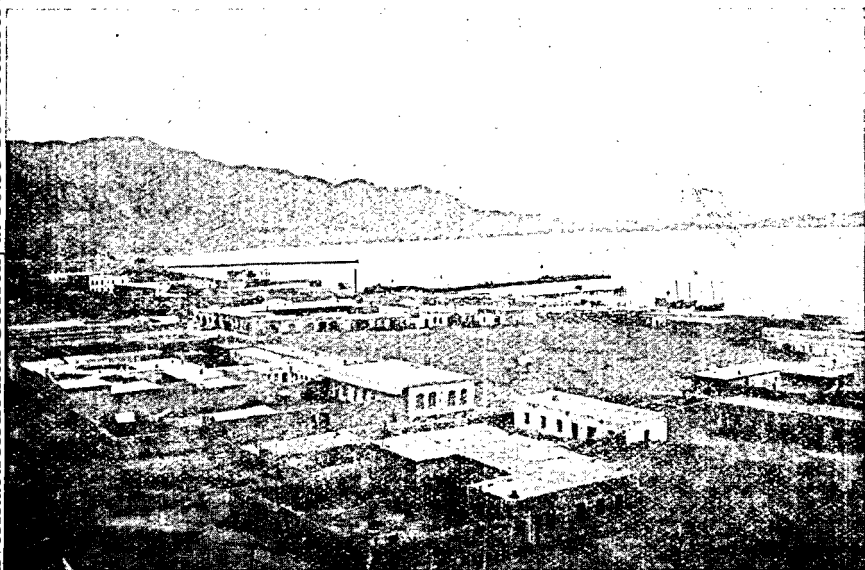
Our journey from Baku to Astrakhan, with the hours spent off Derbent and Petrofsk, lasted from mid-day on 29th June to 9 A.M. on 2nd July. The huge volume of mud-laden water brought down by the Volga tinges the Caspian Sea for many miles from the river's mouth. We found the Volga steamer waiting for us. We were at once transferred to it, got settled in our new cabin, breakfasted, and at mid-day set off to explore the town. We walked all round the obsolete old walls of the Kremlin, a distance of less than a mile, and then entered through a gateway under a tall belfry tower, from which later we took a bird's-eye view of the town. The Cathedral, which is inside the Kremlin, is externally unattractive, but the decorations of the interior reward a visit. In the evening we were admitted as temporary members of the Astrakhan Summer Club with the same courtesy which was extended to us at Baku, and enjoyed the privilege of listening to the music and watching the dancing. We got back to our steamer at 10 P.M., and

found the saloon thronged with a great assemblage of both sexes, eating and drinking. We were thankful when the second shrill discordant blast of the steam-whistle stampeded the throng, and we could settle down in comparative peace and comfort to smoke and read. Our thirty-hours' run to Tsaritsin was as pleasant and comfortable as we could desire. A railway now connects Tsaritsin with the Don, but would any one know how journeying between the Volga and the Don was done in the middle of the last century, Laurence Oliphant in *Russian Shores of the Black Sea* is the authority to consult.

When next I approached the shores of the Caspian, just four years had passed by. When the Afghan Boundary Commission went to Herat in September 1884 the Government of India gave me a year's leave to accompany that Commission as Special Correspondent of the *Pioneer*. It was in some respect the year of my life, which I owe to the fact that, when my eldest brother (now Col. E. C. Yate, M.P. for Melton) told me at Kandahar early in 1881 that he meant to go home on furlough across Persia, I decided to apply for ninety days' privilege leave and go with him. On my return in August 1881 I found at Hyderabad, in Sind, where my regiment, the 1st (127th) Baluch Light Infantry, was stationed, an Ispahani Persian, with whom, for two years, I spent three or four hours a day reading and talking Persian. I then went up for the High Proficiency Test in Persian, and, having passed that, started to read in Bombay for the Degree of Honour. For that purpose I was given six months' leave, only to find at the end of it that the competent examiners were all away, and I had to rejoin my regiment at Jacobabad, *re infecta*. That Gold Medal, which seemed within my reach, never became mine. I must regard that year (1884-5) spent with the Afghan Boundary Commission as its substitute, though with luck and a little less red tape I might have had both. When it was known that Britain and Russia had decided to demarcate once for all the Russo-Afghan frontier from the eastern border of Persia to the Oxus, the *Pioneer* looked around for a "special correspondent." Some kind friend of mine at Simla, mindful of my journey across Persia in 1881, mentioned me as a possible choice; and in due course I was chosen. The authorities at Poona, who had so grievously disappointed me about the Degree of Honour in Persian, promptly granted me a year's furlough. The account of my experiences during that year was published in 1886 by Messrs. Wm. Blackwood and Sons, concluding with a very incomplete narrative of my journey in the summer of 1885 from Herat to the Caspian port of Bandar-i-Gaz. I wrote at the time a number of articles for the *Daily Telegraph*, describing especially my three days' stay in the Persian national fortress of Kalát-i-Nadiri and my experiences in travelling along the Russo-Persian frontier. The distance from Kuchán to the Caspian, about 370 miles, I covered in eleven days, and that, considering that it meant an average of 33 miles a day for the mules and muleteers, was a good performance. At Bandar-i-Gaz the agent of the Mercury and Caucasus Steamship Company and his wife entertained me kindly and hospitably. The boat was behind time, so I spent the night of 30th July 1885 with them. From Bandar-i-Gaz we coasted up the

eastern shore of the Caspian, passing the Russian naval station of Ashurada, the roadstead of Chikishlar, whence started one, if not more, of the earlier Russian expeditions against the Turcomans, Mikhailovsk and Krasnovodsk. I will quote what I wrote at the time of these several places in *England and Russia Face to Face in Asia*, p. 438-9.

"We called in at Chikishlar, which is nothing but a shelterless road, and Krasnovodsk, a well-sheltered and commodious harbour, where steamers can be moored alongside the pier quite close to the shore, so deep is the water. But in the approaches to Mikhailovsk, on the other hand, so shallow is the water that no steamers of any draught can navigate them. The cargo has to be transferred to flats, and so



The Harbour of Krasnovodsk, which at the end of 1890 became, and still is, the terminus on the Caspian Sea of the Trans-Caspian Railway. Taken in 1890.

transported up the shallow channels that lead to the site of the railway terminus. This is a very serious drawback, and several plans for rectifying it have been proposed, one being the wholesale transfer of the railway terminus to Krasnovodsk, which, however, would be a very expensive undertaking, owing to engineering difficulties; and the other the deepening of the approaches to Mikhailovsk. But this latter proposal is hardly likely to be a success, because the approaches would again very soon be choked by the sand-drift from the desert. At any rate, incessant dredging would be obligatory. There is, however, a third project, and one that promises more satisfactory results than either of the two first named. When in the Caucasus in August (1885), I was informed that an eligible harbour of sufficient depth to admit almost any of the Caspian steamers had been discovered on the south shore of the Balkan Bay, *vis-*

*à-vis* to Krasnovodsk, and within twenty or thirty miles of Mikhailovsk. It is said that the railway terminus can easily be removed from Mikhailovsk to the site of this newly discovered harbour."

In September 1890, when I went to the Tashkent Exhibition, I made acquaintance with this newly discovered harbour and terminus. It was Uzun-ada, and may be seen in the maps that illustrate Mr. George Dobson's *Russia's Railway Advance into Central Asia*, or in Lord Curzon's *Russia in Central Asia*. Baku in 1885 and 1890 I found even less attractive than in 1881. Words cannot describe the squalor of the hotels in Baku. The one thing that was good was the cooking, and no one who can get a good wine of Kakhetie is to be pitied. For the rest, my pen in 1885 records it as "a barren, scorched, treeless amphitheatre of hills, a soil in which nothing can grow, streets thronged with a motley and unwashed crowd of Russians, Persians, Armenians, Georgians, etc., a wind that whirls dust and grit in eddies down every street, into every corner and into every eye, a pitiless heat and glare; such is Baku." Such was Baku in 1881, 1885, and 1890 as I saw it.

Baku during this war has witnessed scenes of which the history has not yet been written—scenes in which Turk, Tatar, Bolshevik, and Armenian have played their lurid parts, and which will, perhaps, defy history to reproduce them.

---

**Erratum.**—In the Obituary notice of the Hon. Lord Guthrie, which appeared on p. 185 of our last issue, the name of the author, Mr. Ralph Richardson, was inadvertently omitted at the end of the notice.

---

## GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

### EUROPE.

**Proposed Glasgow Number.**—Arrangements are in progress for publishing, as the January quarterly issue of the *Magazine*, a number devoted to Glasgow, illustrated by old maps and views showing the development of the city. A number of prominent Glasgow gentlemen are interesting themselves in the project, and the General Finance Committee of Glasgow Corporation has generously agreed to make a grant of £200 from the funds of the Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art, and Industry towards the cost of production, and their recommendation was duly approved by the Corporation. Among those who have promised articles or other forms of co-operation are Dr. W. G. Black; T. C. F. Brochie, Esq.; J. A. Brown, Esq.; Prof. T. H. Bryce, M.A., M.D.; Prof. J. W. Gregory, D.Sc., F.R.S.; H. Lumsden, Esq.; Principal Sir Donald Macalister, K.C.B., M.A., M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., D.Sc.; T. R. Mackenzie, Esq., and others; and it is hoped to make the issue one worthy of the commercial capital of Scotland.

**A Study of Ben Nevis.**—We have received from the Scottish Mountaineering Club, 12 Castle Street, Edinburgh, a copy of the Section