

dition, as described by Vambéry in the early sixties, was most pitiable. Even as late as 1880, when conditions had much improved, owing to the proximity of Russia, O'Donovan relates that murderous affrays were frequent even in the vicinity of Astrabad. Yet in almost the same paragraph the author enlarges on the density of the population, Persian villages of from twenty to thirty houses being scattered every five or six hundred yards. The fertility of the region is so great that people persisted in coming into it, in spite of the fact that their numbers were frequently decimated by the Turkomans.

Azerbaijan, the northwestern province of Persia, furnishes a more striking example of the same sort. This, according to Curzon, the best authority on Persia, "is the province which, excepting only Khorasan, has more often been violated by foreign invasion than any other part of Persia. . . . Its fertility of resources entitles it to be called the granary of northern Iran." Tabriz, the capital, "has fallen the first victim to invading armies, and has been successively held by Arabs, Seljuks, Ottomans, Persians, and Russians. What the rage of conquest has spared, nature has interfered to destroy. The city has been desolated by frequent and calamitous earthquakes. Twice we hear of its being leveled to the ground before, in 1392, it was sacked by Timur, whose path was strewn with ruins that vied with the convulsions of nature. Five times during the last two centuries has it again been laid low. A reliable historian tells us that 80,000 persons perished in the earthquake of 1721, and we hear from another source that half that number were claimed for the death-roll by its successor in 1780." Yet in spite of