

## PREFACE

THE very name of India is alone sufficient to fire the imagination of the reader. He fancies he hears the murmur of warm winds among the palms and mango trees, and thinks of the teeming life and the continual struggle for existence in tropical jungles. He seems to see the brilliant trains of Indian princes, swarming crowds of dusky Hindus, grand troops of elephants, tigers trying to escape from the bloodthirsty hunters, gilded pagodas, and marble temples white as the Himalayan snows.

Of all this busy life, with its gorgeous colouring, there is not the slightest mention in my new book. It deals only with the way to the land of a thousand legends; and my route ran through the ancient, desolate, and effete Persia. Well, but Persia is the land of roses and poetry. There Sadi and Hafiz sang their lovely verses; there still remain ruins of the stately palaces of the Achæmenids. Yes, that is true, but this time my route did not touch one of the famous centres of Iran. They have been repeatedly described by writers from Herodotus, the Bible, and the cuneiform inscriptions in Bisutun, down to the immortal Marco Polo, the chivalrous Chardin, the far-travelled Houtum-Schindler, the intrepid Vambéry, and the learned Lord Curzon. I diligently avoid routes trod by the feet of others; and at the present time this is not easy, for Persia has been traversed by Europeans in all directions. As regards the way from Trebizond to Teheran, it is quite