

CHAPTER IX

BETWEEN ARARAT AND ALAGOZ TO ECHMIADZIN

DURING my short stay in Bayazid news came to the Persian consul that 1500 armed Kurds and Turks at Kasli-göll, a customs station, had made a raid into Persian territory, in order, it was said, to exact punishment for similar liberties taken by the Persians on the Turkish side. The consul begged me to inform the Valiad, the Crown Prince, at Tabriz, of the disturbances on the frontier, and at the same time to remember to give him, the consul, the best recommendations—it is by protection and nepotism that men raise themselves to the pinnacles of power in the land of the lion and the sun. However, I had no particular reason to blunder right into the middle of plundering Kurdish hordes, and did not change my original plan of taking the road, three days shorter, through Julfa to Tabriz.

On November 26, in the company of the customs officer, A. Chr. Kostsinich, who was returning to the Caucasus after a short visit, I left the hospitable consulate, from the roof of which the Russian flag fluttered proudly in the sun. Now we get away downhill, and the bright white peak of Ararat peeps out between two hills. We make northwards over a plain which is little suited for vehicles. In some places there is no road, not even a cart rut, but only a conglomeration of pits, ditches, irrigation canals, ridges remaining from old ploughed fields, small mounds, and ravines with steep sides. With his usual calm assurance, Shakir takes long détours in search of better places, where the drosky's springs are less liable to