

above desolate, ruddy mountains before the long way was traversed. But now at least I had Asia Minor and Caucasia behind me, and here, at Julfa, I commenced the interminably long journey through the midst of ancient Iran, the illustrious kingdom of classic times, where at the present day not the slightest gleam lingers of the proud age of the Achæmenides.

The deputy customs officer and some other odd men took me and my luggage to the customs pavilion. My passport was examined, but no box had to be opened, for I was only on a through journey in the outermost skirts of Caucasia.

“Have you any firearms with you?” asked the man.

“Yes, a Swedish officer’s revolver, with ammunition.”

“I am sorry that my instructions oblige me to confiscate it; it is strictly forbidden to carry firearms out of Russia.”

“As you let my luggage pass intact through Russian territory, the revolver can go with it; you can understand that I need it for my journey to Teheran.”

“It cannot be helped. The only advice I can give you is to telegraph to the Finance Minister, for no one else can grant permission in this case. The telegraph is not, indeed, working now, but if you will write out the telegram, and pay for it, I will send it as soon as the line is open. Then the revolver shall be sent after you to Teheran.”

“But it is on the journey I want it; if I do not take it with me, I can do without it altogether.”

While we were discussing this most important matter the customs inspector entered just in time to tell me that I might take my revolver with me, and that the punt was waiting to take me over the Araxes. Now the rain streamed down, everything was wet and spongy, dense darkness lay all around, but the path, where there was danger of slipping into the mud, was lighted by two men with lanterns, and so we splashed down to the shore, and the luggage was carried by a party of Tatar *hammals*. After everything had been put on board, the punt was hauled with a rope across the river to a small island, which