

lies between Russia and Persia, and belongs to no one. There we were met by Persian porters and an interpreter, who spoke French, and the baggage was transferred to something which was neither boat nor punt—as far as I could make out in the darkness,—which carried us over to the point of a slippery clay bank on the Persian shore. A *hammal* slipped and dropped one of my boxes into the river, so that it had to be opened afterwards and all the contents dried at the fire.

The Persian Julfa is as miserable as the Russian, but it was an important town when Shah Abbas conquered Armenia in 1603. With or against their will, he transferred some capable Armenian artisans with their families to Ispahan, where they built a suburb on some unenclosed ground, which is to this day inhabited by their descendants, and also bears the name of Julfa. Though it was in 1886 that I visited New Julfa, I still remember, as though it were yesterday, its streets and mean houses, where Armenians sat making door frames.

At the time of my visit to the old Julfa, on the bank of the Araxes, a young Dutchman, Dhoedt, was in charge of the customs station, and he had the kindness to meet me on the bank with an umbrella, which was quite useless, as I could not be wetter than I was. We were escorted through the slush to Herr Dhoedt's house, and I need hardly say that there was no talk of a customs examination.

The whole Persian customs department is managed by a number of customs experts imported from Belgium with Herr Naus at their head, who, singularly enough, has a seat in the Persian ministry. I had met him at dinner at the house of Mirza Riza Khan in Constantinople, and he had kindly furnished me with all the permits and papers I might require to secure exemption from customs dues.

When I had been installed in a room quite European Herr Dhoedt sent for the contractor who holds the monopoly for all transport in Azerbeijan, and it was agreed that he should send me on to Tabriz with a carriage and a waggon at the price of sixty roubles for the two days. He pays £4800 a year to the State for the monopoly, and