

valley it was constructed in the ordinary way, and when the valley was filled by a great flood after continuous rain five miles of road were washed away. It was repaired and made firm with cement. The intention was that this road, available for motors, should form a continuation of the railway from Tiflis to Julfa, which is now finished as far as Nakichevan. A bridge eighty-eight yards long was to be built over the Araxes a mile and a third below the present Julfa, a double town which, therefore, will in the near future change its position, and probably at some time become of great importance, not least from a strategic point of view. Twenty motors had already been ordered from Russia, both for passengers and baggage, and when all is ready it will be possible to travel from Julfa to Tabriz in five hours instead of two days as at present.

It was quite evident that in this undertaking Russia had plans for a railway in prospect; for all the blastings, cuttings, embankments, and gradients were planned for a railway line, and little more was needed than to lay the rails upon the track. This railway will give the death-blow to the old caravan route from Trebizond, and, thanks to the prohibitive tariff at Batum, Russia will then render impossible any attempt at competition, and will control all the North Persian trade.

The Persian Julfa is an insignificant and bare town of a few houses, among which the Perso-Belgian customs-house, with its two storeys, balcony, and pillars, rises like a palace among wretched cabins. Still it has a *hakim* or governor, a post office, and an English telegraph office managed by a German, and lastly a motor garage. The waggon with my luggage was betimes on the way, but it was past eight o'clock when I commenced my first drive on Persian soil in a small light carriage, drawn by four horses and driven by a Tatar coachman. At first the country is level as a floor of parquet, for the soil consists of close alluvial mud from the floods of the Araxes, and is so hard that the wheels make no impression on it. Persian carriage roads are distinguishable only by ruts, but the Russian road we soon cross has an imposing appearance, with its deep channels at the sides.