

CHAPTER XII

MARAND—TABRIZ—AN IMPERIAL PRINCE

THE house, where I was kindly shown to a room with mats, table, chairs, lamp, and a balcony, belonged to the *hakim*, or governor, and was reserved partly for his private parties, partly for more distinguished travellers who passed the night at Marand on their way to or from Tabriz. The master himself was out, but was represented by his interpreter, a Nestorian Christian from Urmia, who spoke Russian. At his orders I was immediately regaled with dinner—a hen boiled whole, eggs, bread, tea, and fruit; and later in the evening the governor himself, Sujai-i-Nizam, appeared—a tall big Tatar, with powerful energetic features and a friendly benevolent smile.

I am forthwith initiated into his habits. In the daytime he transacts his business in the district; but every evening when the sun sinks he opens his house to guests, and the proceedings are lively. This evening the governors of Maku and Arekan, together with three Persian gentlemen living in Marand, are to help Sujai-i-Nizam to make short work of the well-filled dishes, empty bottles of spirits, and celebrate another night in Ramazan with trumpet and kettledrum. I accept with pleasure an invitation to the feast, and when I enter the matted saloon in stockinged feet, the gentlemen rise politely and give me a seat on a cushion. From an adjoining room are heard the plaintive tones of a cithern (*seh-tar*, three strings), and the owner of the fingers which draw forth its sound enters the room and takes up his position opposite us. Beside him sits a singer, who with his right hand beats a loud drum in the