

arms, I was conducted through two anterooms—where the courtiers stood stiff and upright—to the audience chamber, where His Imperial Highness was just conversing with the richest man in Tabriz, a scoundrel who, in conjunction with the Valiad, carries on the most scandalous speculations in grain, and raises the price of bread to double the normal, so that the poor people perish of hunger. But that did not concern me. I made my reverence, which Ali Muhamed responded to by rising from his seat, after which we sat down and commenced an unusually intelligent conversation.

He is small and rotund, has a double chin, and small, sharp, near-sighted eyes, which cannot dispense with spectacles; but instead of troubling myself to give a description of the Prince's outer man, I will call attention to the portrait he gave me with his own hand, and inscribed with his autograph, characteristically enough, in Russian letters. However I might try, I could not detect any trace of the energetic Kajarian features of his renowned ancestor, Nasr-ed-din Shah; and the malice of the Persians whispered one or two reports of his origin, and he was called in private *ferrash-bashi*, or the police inspector. But this, too, was none of my business; for, at any rate, I found myself face to face with the man chosen by fate to be the successor of Xerxes and Darius, to wave his sceptre over the remains of the kingdom of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid kings, the dominion of the Arab Khalifs and of the Mongolian Jenghis dynasty, and in the fulness of time to take his seat on the throne of the great Shah Abbas and the victorious Nadir Shah. It was, then, a kingdom with an ancient and brilliant history which was soon to be his. Herodotus and the Bible record its earlier fortunes, and only 170 years ago the Great Mogul trembled before its ruler. The Prince did not by any means give me the impression of being worthy of such high ancestry and such brilliant traditions; he would never be able to steer with discretion and a hand of iron the Persian ship of State a stage farther on its course among the sunken rocks of time.

The throne of the Shahs was ascended in 1794 by the