

CHAPTER XIII

TO THE SEFID-RUD, THE LARGEST RIVER OF NORTHERN PERSIA

THERE was fine dense rain on December 6; the sky was covered with thick clouds, and a diffused twilight spread over Tabriz when I left M. Mornard's house and drove off followed by two troopers. I had received a *teskereh* or road-pass for the 44 farsakh that the distance to Senjan is reckoned at, and according to the contract the owner of the carriage was bound to take me thither in five days. On the first stage the baggage was to be packed on an araba, but afterwards on horses; and as probably I should lose sight of it on the way, I took out all the articles which might be necessary during the early days in Teheran. It was well this precaution occurred to me, as it turned out, for the baggage arrived two weeks late; it had, it seems, been left lying at some station-house, and no one had taken any trouble about it, for one is not in a hurry in Persia. A stern order from the postal department at length set the wheels in motion among the slowworms, and then the baggage was driven at a desperate pace—so furiously that several of my things arrived in a miserable condition, and two dozen valuable photograph plates were totally destroyed, as by the shaking of the waggons they had been knocked out of their cases and papers.

Meanwhile we drive along in the gloomy weather and the thick fine rain which makes everything wet and clinging. It seems an unpractical arrangement that the main streets go right through the bazaars, where the crush is usually such an impediment. We drive through three