

CHAPTER XV

IN THE CAPITAL OF THE KAJARS

WE leave the town of Kerve next morning in beautiful weather, and drive still through the flat, broad, longitudinal valley, catching only a glimpse of the southern mountains, owing to their distance. Another dark promontory crops up in front of us, and a small isolated knoll rises like an island in the midst of the open valley. In Jarandeh I am told that an unusually elegant caravanserai is *mal-i-Nizam-ul-Saltaneh*, that is, the property of the Governor-General of Azerbaijan. On the right appears a new mountain range which makes a fine show with its snowfields. The steppe, begrown with scanty withered grass, is yellow and affords food to one or two flocks of sheep. The road is now excellent, quite a highway.

We pass the small isolated elevation and the village Karabaghi with its serais; to the east there is no visible limit to the country, but in front of us, to the north-east, the snow-crowned crests of Elburz rise proudly and grandly. The ground falls imperceptibly towards Kazvin, which cannot yet be seen, unless a dark strip on the yellowish ground is it. We rest two hours in Siadehan, a town on the way to Hamadan where Russians are engaged in laying out a new road, for the same horses are to draw us all the way to Kazvin.

With the Russian road on our right we drive on towards Elburz. A little white house is evidently Russian, inhabited by some engineer or foreman. Here a black and white boom is placed across the way, and a payment of a tuman is demanded for passage, certainly a rather high