

Europeans were then seldom seen, though it was known that Nasr-ed-din Shah did all he could to imitate Europe and open every door for foreign contamination which, far from improving the condition of the country, would lower its self-confidence, increase its dependence, and prepare its fall. But now the last gleam of the genuine old days has vanished. Now there are European hotels, and gentlemen and ladies of Christian blood drive in droskies, and Teheran, like many other Levantine towns farther to the west, threatens to become more and more a cesspool of adventurers, fortune-hunters, and quacksalvers.

However, I had not come hither to lose myself in urban studies of doubtful interest, but solely to equip a caravan for a long journey through the deserts of Eastern Persia. As all other things in the sleepy and benumbed countries of the East, typified by Endymion, this took time, and I armed myself with patience, taking advantage of the delay to make the acquaintance of several Europeans in the Shah's capital. The interests of Great Britain—and these are matters of no small consequence—are looked after by Mr. E. Grant Duff, as *chargé d'affaires*, and his amiable wife does the honours in his hospitable house with not less conscientiousness. I had a real home with them for nearly three weeks, surrounded by all the comforts that life can offer. I had met my host in Stockholm, when he was on duty there, and found him an unusually well-educated and talented man, who knew Persia thoroughly—and all the history of the rest of the world—an enthusiastic collector of Sassanid coins, an eminent archæologist, musician, sportsman, and diplomatist, a man who inspired Persian gentlemen with the greatest respect.

Of old friends whom I had met in Persia on my first journey but few were left: my countryman, Hybennet Khan, who with his attractive young wife soon after left the country where he had lived thirty-four years, and in whose house I often, as before, enjoyed much hospitality; Wedel, who had aged since I last saw him and soon after passed away; the wife of General Andreini and her charming daughter, named Bibila, who, though she was born in Teheran and had spent all her life in Persia, still longed