

lazaret, and after making the round went into the yard where some hundred Cossacks and twenty officers were assembled—among the latter were two Russian captains of Caucasian origin.

The officers had picked out from the Cossacks twenty men, for whose excellent qualities they could vouch. To these the colonel made a speech, setting forth the nature of the enterprise, that it was a journey through desert regions where perhaps we should be short of water, but that those who were eventually selected would receive a higher recompense than in ordinary circumstances. And, in conclusion, he ordered those of the twenty who were willing to go to take two steps forward. All but one stepped forward, and this one was believed to have a sweetheart in Teheran whom he did not wish to leave. The Colonel now suggested that I should point out the men whom I judged, from their outward appearance, to be most suitable and worthy of confidence,—they were five. Among these the Russians especially recommended one, and when I had decided to take him, he chose his comrade himself, whereby I obtained two men who knew each other well and would hold together.

To these two the Colonel made a special speech and gave them some details. Their pay of 3 tuman (a tuman = 3s. 7d.) a month they would receive in full, while I had to pay them in addition 3 kran a day or 9 tuman a month. They would, therefore, receive four times their usual pay, and their service would be very light as long as they were attached to me. All the outfit necessary—warm clothes, cloaks, boots, bashliks, felt rugs, rifles with fifty cartridges—they would receive from the Colonel, but were not to take horses with them, for the intention was to visit desert regions where only camels and dromedaries can survive. They would receive free rations in the caravan, and would house in a tent given them by the Colonel. Nothing was settled about their journey home except that we were to come to an agreement about it in Seistan.

The Colonel, who was a sincere and generous Mecænas, added to his kindness by asking me to accept a brand-new