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DENOMINATIONAL REORGANIZATION

LIVE organizations are continually looking for new methods and readjustments which will eliminate friction in operation and waste of time and money, and will increase efficiency and the spirit of cheerful cooperation. Various denominations have reorganized along different lines with these ends in view. The Methodists (North) first united and then divided their home and foreign mission departments. They now have fifteen boards and commissions to do their work and have recently established a General Council of Boards of Benevolence with an executive Committee on Conservation and Advance, with headquarters in Chicago. The Southern Methodists have a Commission to study a plan for the consolidation of their numerous boards. The Northern Baptist Convention has established a General Board of Promotion made up of representatives from the various Boards of the Church. The Congregationalists not long ago readjusted and united some home mission agencies. The Protestant Episcopal Church carries on all work under one general board called "The Presiding Bishop and Council." The United Presbyterians, recently voted on a reorganization of their Boards. The Presbyterian Church (North), which, a few years ago organized a New Era Movement to bind together the promotion work of all its seventeen boards and committees, has now taken a more radical step calling for a reorganization of practically all its philanthropic and missionary agencies. This action was taken with a view to simplifying the work and in the hope of greater unity, economy and efficiency. What the results will actually be can only be conjectured.

According to the new plan the seventeen Presbyterian boards and agencies will be brought under four reorganized boards, namely:

1. The Board of Foreign Missions, which absorbs the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, and allots to women fifteen of the forty members.
2. The Board of National Missions which is "to extend the Gospel of Christ in all its fulness, and the service of Christ in all its implications."

The Poverty of Persia—Its Cause and Cure

This Study of the need and destitution of Persia is the result of a recent three months' visit to that stricken land

BY ROBERT E. SPEER

THERE is nothing more interesting in Persia than the old Shah Abbas caravanserais scattered over the country from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea. Shah Abbas was a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth and lived from 1557 to 1627. He was a statesman and a builder, and founded Bunder Abbas, the port which bears his name, on the Strait of Ormuz as an outlet for the trade of his country with Arabia and India. He also developed the caravan routes across the deserts and the mountains of his far extending kingdom and scattered along them for the comfort and safety of travelers the 999 caravanserais which, in spite of the negligence of his successors and the ravages of time, stand still as his noble memorial. One wonders how in the lonely and desert places where so many of them are found his workmen burned the brick and made the lime and got the labor with which to construct these massive and enduring buildings. His architects were tied to no monotonous model. They built in squares and parallelograms and octagons usually with great open courtyards, single or with two or three adjoining, wide enough to hold caravans of hundreds of camels. Sometimes they built with no open courts at all, but with spacious domed roofs covering recess after recess in which hundreds of travelers with their animals and their goods might find shelter and security. Sometimes they laid their brick in plain courses, and again they laid them in a dozen rich designs in a single caravanserai. Vast domed stables ran around the courtyard, and arched recesses within and without with fireplaces set in the brick walls, furnished lodging places where men might sleep, with their caravans at rest beneath their eyes. The doors in the great gateways which constituted the only entrance were made of heavy planks covered with iron bosses and set in stone.

The national life which produced and sustained caravanserais such as these must have had a solidity and volume which are gone from the life of Persia today. All over the land the fine old caravanserais of Shah Abbas's time are in ruin and decay. Now and then a shambling stable, set up in a corner of the sturdy walls, houses the horses of the modern Persian Government Post, and only the picturesque ruins, a few local traditions, and here and there a marble tablet still remaining over the gateway, preserve the story of the great past from which Persia has come down to the mean little mud caravanserais which are built today and abandoned tomorrow, to



Photograph by Russell Carter

THE CARAVAN WITH WHICH DR. SPEER AND HIS PARTY TRAVELED THROUGH A PART OF PERSIA

the helplessness and negligence of a government which despairs of doing a government's work, even of collecting its taxes, and to the pitiful but appealing destitution of today.

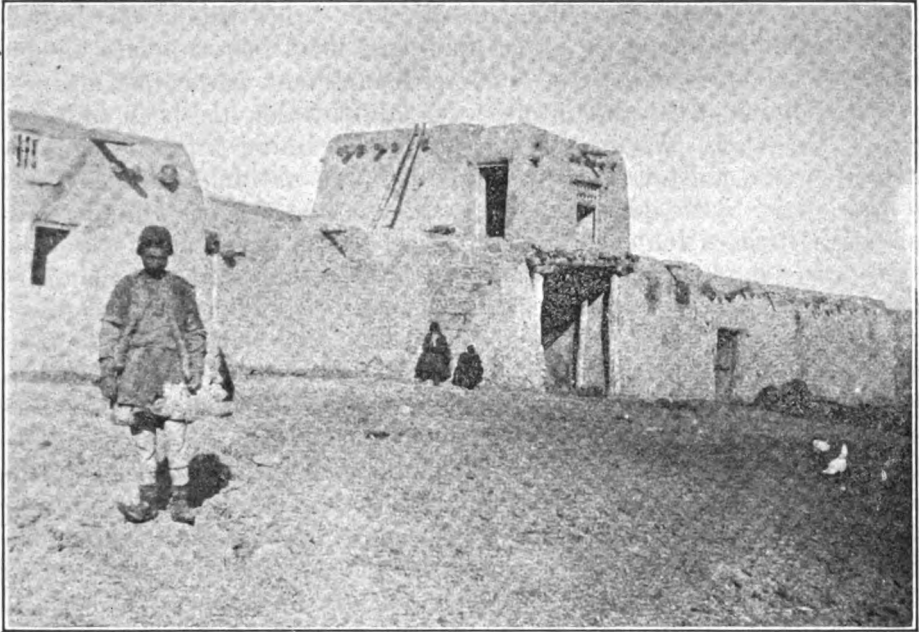
The deterioration of Persia has been a long process but not so long that one cannot see it going on under his eyes. Villages where we lodged twenty-five years ago have now completely disappeared. On every one of the roads over which we passed were villages wholly or partly depopulated because of agricultural and economic misfortunes which energy and forethought might have forestalled but which no one had made the least attempt to prevent. We asked the governor of one of the largest provinces of Persia whether he thought Persia had advanced during the last twenty-five years, and he answered that he thought it had in the matter of political liberty, but commercially and economically it had gone steadily backward. One must allow of course for Persia's share in the trade depression which all over the world has followed the war. Indeed there are few parts of the world where one can see so clearly the merciless consequences of war upon the innocent. One feels this outrage to the very roots of his soul standing on the Parthenon and seeing the wreckage which ancient war made of all that glory. One ought to feel it equally as he looks at the ravages of recent war in Persia where it made a desolation of the fairest section of Azerbaijan and where it has cut almost every strand of Persia's commercial well-being. The destruction of Russia alone has cost Persia more than a half of all its trade prosperity. Its poverty which was deep enough before the war is still deeper now. The cities and villages are full of idle men and the roads of travelers who have left no work and are going to none. Beggars abound on every hand. Again and again on the highway,

toiling through the mud or sitting on the snowy wastes or out in the deserts we would come upon groups of wanderers, sometimes refugees from the disturbed area around Urumia but more often mere vagrants, clad in rags or barely clad at all, and living on nothing but the scraps of bread which they begged from place to place. The begging is worse in some of the cities, and of all the cities which we visited it was worst in Kasvin, worse there even than in Tabriz with its thousands of Assyrian, Armenian, and Mohammedan refugees. In Kasvin small children with bare legs and bare bodies lay by the roadside in the snow and mud and wailed all day long. Blind men and women were led up and down the street by ragged children. It was impossible to stand still anywhere because of the crowd of paupers which at once gathered round importuning and plucking at one's garments. We saw one old beggar lying dead on a snow heap in the principal street of the city. A great deal of this beggary is professional. For years in Hamadan an old, blind, red-headed man has begged all day by the wall near the Ottoman Bank. At home the old man is comfortably off and supports two wives. In Kasvin we heard an old woman beggar berating one of the begging children because she did her work so poorly.

"Do you want me to come over and twist your ear?" screamed the old woman from across the street. "Why don't you attend to your business better?"

Islam fosters this mendicancy by making indiscriminate and undirected almsgiving one of the five great religious duties. The poverty of Persia is encouraged by this giving of doles. It can never be eradicated in this way. What is needed is a deeper treatment that will cut at the roots of the very commonest ideas that control conduct in Persia under the sanctions of religion.

One is saddened but not surprised by the poverty of the country, but he is both saddened and surprised by the mass of illiteracy and ignorance. There is so much culture and intelligence and literary taste in Persia that one looks for a good local system of education and for a large percentage of literacy. There are no census returns, but the accepted estimate of illiteracy in the towns and cities is 95 per cent and in the villages 98 per cent. There is no public school system throughout the country. In many communities there are no schools of any kind. In others the mollahs conduct small schools for boys where the Koran is unintelligently memorized. Real progress nevertheless has been made in education during the last twenty years, and so far as the scanty revenues of the country permit, many communities are developing schools which aim at giving a modern education. Not one of all these schools, however, approximates a good American high school. The only schools of this quality are the mission schools in Teheran, Tabriz, Hamadan, and Isfahan.



Photograph by Russell Carter

A MODERN CARAVANSERAI IN PERSIA.

Dr. Speer and his fellow travelers slept in the "Upper Room"

The lack of schools is no evidence of a lack of desire for them. Hundreds of communities want them who have no way of providing them. There are no trained teachers, and there are no funds for their support. The internal poverty of the country and the lack of foreign trade are poor fields from which to reap a revenue. The Belgian head of the Persian customs in Kermanshah, through which the foreign trade by way of Baghdad enters Persia, told us that two-thirds of all Persia's import trade is now coming in by this route, but that it was only a fraction of what ought to enter in times of real prosperity. Persia does not publish any statement of national and provincial receipts and expenditures, and probably no one knows what the revenues of the country are. Taxes that should be sent to Teheran are held for provincial uses, and in many cases the income of the central government from crown lands or foreign loans is expended through the provinces. The national budget submitted to the last Mejlis, or Parliament, contemplated an income of tomans 16,000,000 and an expenditure of tomans 19,000,000 with no provision for the deficit except the hope of a foreign loan. The income of the government is derived from crown land, from import duties, from taxes on opium and liquor, and from taxes, direct and indirect, upon agriculture, and to a very limited degree on trade. City property in a city like Tabriz, for example, unless rented pays no tax. Leading revenue officials said quite plainly that the country was bankrupt,

that it was no longer possible to collect the taxes which were necessary for the maintenance of national and local government. In one of the largest provinces the revenue department was collecting now only two-fifths of the amount assessed, all of which had been collected before the war. What import trade was coming into the country helped in the matter of revenue, but on the national balance sheet it was offset by no corresponding exports, and the inevitable result unless a foreign loan could be contracted, the revenue officials declared, was bankruptcy. "For that matter," they said, "the country is bankrupt now. All the government hospitals in Teheran are closed except one and that is barely maintained. The government schools are closed, and the teachers are unpaid. Without a foreign loan it will not be possible to maintain the army which has been sent to suppress Simko and to restore order and government authority in Urumia." "All this is true," one of the Swedish officers in the gendarmerie said to us. "I have been here ten years and conditions are worse than when I came. I have had no pay for three months. The Swedish head of the gendarmes in Resht has had no pay for five months, and many of the civil officials in Teheran have been unpaid for six months."

In spite of these gloomy views the country is not bankrupt. The deficit of tomans 3,000,000, on a proposed expenditure of 19,000,000 and income of 16,000,000, gives a ratio of revenue to expenditure of 81 per cent as compared with the corresponding ratio of 50 per cent in the French budget for 1920, 34 per cent in the Italian budget, 64 per cent in the budget of Switzerland, 85 per cent in the budget of Holland, 36 per cent in the budget of Germany, 34 per cent in the budget of Greece. Persia moreover has no such foreign debt as these other nations are attempting to bear. By her treaty with Soviet Russia her indebtedness to Russia was obliterated. All that remains is the debt of £2,710,482 and tomans 9,350,000 to Great Britain. Against this indebtedness and her adverse trade balances, Persia has her almost entirely undeveloped natural resources. Of these she has alienated as yet by trade concessions only the rich oil rights in south-western Persia which have proved immensely lucrative to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

The Persian currency also has been saved from debasement. One shudders to think what would have happened to Persia if she had been cursed with a paper currency. All of Persia's money, however, is silver, and when we have been disposed to complain at the enormous weight of two kran pieces (sixteen cents at present exchange) which we have had to carry, we have consoled ourselves with the thought of the suffering and ruin which Persia has been spared by the solidity of her national currency. The contrast with the currency conditions in the Caucasus is tragic. One hardly dare have gold or silver money in his possession in the Caucasus. The best paper

money there is the rouble of the Georgian Republic which exchanged in April at the rate of one American dollar for roubles 250,000. We paid for our railroad tickets in a box freight car from the Persian border at Julfa to Erivan, the capital of the Armenian Republic, with the money of the Azerbaijan Republic whose capital is at Baku. It is a hundred and twenty miles from Julfa to Erivan, and we paid for each ticket 2,700,000 Azerbaijan roubles, worth fifty cents a million. We rented a samovar for breakfast tea for 500,000 roubles. Persia has been spared all this, and the government deserves credit for its refusal to take the paper money pathway to apparent prosperity and certain ruin.

Furthermore even though her foreign trade has suffered severely Persia has escaped the ruinous exchange depreciation of the continental countries. During the war the toman, which had in normal times been at par or a little under par with the dollar, rose to two dollars. Even as late as the summer of 1920 the toman was worth a dollar and sixty cents. In August, 1921, it fell as low as sixty-two cents, but had risen again during the first quarter of 1922 to eighty cents.

One evening when we stopped for the night in an unusually prosperous village on the road between Teheran and Tabriz, we were hardly settled in our *menzil* before the governor of the district called. He had had a son in one of the mission schools, and as emerged at the close of the call he was desirous of consulting Dr. Packard professionally. He began with pleasant and friendly words of appreciation and of understanding. He knew the ideas that were in our mind and the purposes which had brought us to Persia, and he approved of these. I asked if he felt hopeful about his country.

"I have no hope at all," said he, "unless some civilized nation will put Persia upon its feet."

"Which one of the nations might be expected to do this?" we asked.

"There is only one," said he, "and that is America. It is the richest and the most civilized of the nations, and it has no axe to grind. Its purposes are unselfish. Our hope is in America."

I said that it was a doubtful hope, that politically our country would not intervene; that commercially if American trade came, it would come, to be sure, for the mutual profit of the two countries, and if the best American spirit controlled it, it would not seek to exploit Persia or to take advantage of her, but would develop an honorable interchange which would help both countries, and there was an ever increasing number of men in America who realized that trade did not mean defrauding one country for the benefit of another but mutual benefit to both; nevertheless there were many who were still ungoverned by this spirit, and it was not unlikely that some might come who would seek only to gain and not to give; there were

not many enterprises like the Mission enterprise whose only motive was to serve and which sought only to give and not to gain. He understood this, and said that he and the missionaries were of one mind. He believed that America was unselfish and he knew that it was wealthy, and it was best for a poor man and a rich man to walk together. America wanted no Persian territory, and Persia needed American help.

I asked if the country had gone backward or forward within his memory. In its military organization, the gendarmerie and the army, it had gone forward, but not in its revenue and its commerce. It was difficult to collect the old taxes of wheat and barley and money levied on each village. The new taxes on rented properties in cities, on opium and liquor, and on each load of merchandise or grain entering a city were more readily collectible but they were insufficient for the necessities of government.

We inquired if he did not think that perhaps some of the taxes restrained prosperity. In America cities sought to attract trade, and instead of raising barriers against it or imposing a fine upon its entrance, encouraged it in every way. Yes, he said, there were educated men in Persia who like himself understood enough of economics to realize that there were better ways, but they could not change things now.

I said that my impression was that in twenty-five years poverty and tolerance had both greatly increased in Persia. This was his judgment also. What then were the causes of this poverty and why had the caravanserais of Shah Abbas fallen into decay? What explained the difference between those noble old buildings and the cheap mud caravanserais of today?

"I think of three reasons," he replied. "In the first place the population has increased. Persia then had an even larger area than now with greater agricultural wealth and with a much smaller number of people so that there was more general prosperity. In the second place the cost of government is now much greater than it was then. There was more centralized authority and control and the Shah had money for the building and the upkeep of the caravan-serais which he scattered all over the land. In the third place there was less rebellion and political unsettlement and provincial independence then than now. There were poorer firearms, and people like the Shahsavans and Shekoik Kurds could not harass trade and keep the country in turmoil as they do today. But we are hoping for better days now with our new army."

We asked about this new army, knowing that a good part of it had passed through his village on its way westward. We had seen the closed tea houses and the abandoned villages through which it had passed. He admitted that there was still a great deal to be done. The army had no adequate commissary. Some officer came on one

day ahead of his regiment and had to gather food for it. In the case of one regiment there had been payment. Another had come from Resht and had brought its own rice. A third had come with no advance commissary preparations at all, and living off the country it came through. What else indeed could the soldiers do?

Government in Persia has been both arbitrary and liberal. In the old days the Shah had absolute power, and the political system consisted in the sale of this power from the top all the way down to the village *khoda*. Each purchaser recouped himself for his expenditure as quickly as possible by the exercise of his authority, not knowing when he might be bought out of his place by his successor. The system made no provision for schools, communications, public improvements, or any of the functions of a progressive modern government. Apart from its financial exactions, however, it did allow a great measure of freedom, and both from Turkey and from Afghanistan those who desired some measure of liberty were sure to find it by crossing the border.

The old absolutism of the Shah is gone and with it the diffusion of his autocracy among lower officials is going. There seems to be less of the old system of bribery and recovery of the bribe by financial extortion. The establishment of the constitution in 1906 and the meetings of the Mejlis, or parliament, even though there have been but four of these in sixteen years, have in part expressed and in part engendered a new spirit of popular freedom and political responsibility. The whole system of government is still very loose-jointed and irregular in comparison with the old system of regularized corruption, but great progress has been made, and there is intelligence enough, if character also can be found, to assure the future progress of the country in orderly and constitutional self-government. It has before it the problem of every weak government dealing with large territories with inadequate means of communication. A man like Mohammed Taghi in Meshed, or Ismael Agha in Urumia—very different men at the two extremes of the country—defends his revolt against the central government in Teheran with obvious arguments. The first answer to these arguments must be an honest and capable central government. The second answer is the assertion of the central authority in the effective military control of disorder. The third is the improvement of communications. A fourth, which ought not to be last in time, is the adequate support of education.

Almost every Persian official with whom we spoke cited the development of the Persian army. This has been something that the Persians could see. It has been associated with the rise of Reza Khan, the present Minister of War, who is said to be unable to read and write but who is a man of great force and power. He has risen from the common ranks to be the outstanding personality in Persia at the present time. It is to be hoped that he will not use his power

in any foolish or harmful way. His one purpose thus far appears to be to repress disorder and maintain the proper authority of the government. I saw the Persian army in the old unkempt drill square in Teheran twenty-five years ago and I saw it again on this visit, a new army very creditable to those who have developed it and quite adequate now, one would hope, after order is established in Urumia, and without further expansion, to furnish the police force needed to repress brigandage and to maintain peace throughout the country. The gendarmerie is a police force begun by Mr. Shuster to aid in the revenue department. It has been officered and taught by a Swedish personnel who are now being released, and the body which they built up has been incorporated with the army. Just prior to the incorporation and a few weeks before we reached Tabriz local anti-government leaders made use of the gendarmes in a political coup which was only frustrated by the recall of troops which were in the field against Ismael Agha.

If the Persian army is not needed to repress disorder there is certainly no better use to which it could be put than building roads. Persia has no roads except those which Russia and Great Britain built for her before and during the war from Enzeli to Kasvin, from Teheran to Hamadan and Tairuq, from Julfa to Tabriz and from Seistan to Meshed. Three exceptions should be made to this statement, namely, the wide straight road from Teheran to Kasvin, the road which the strong old governor of Meshed, Neir-i-Dowleh, built from Meshed to Sharifabad and the stone road over the Kaffan Kuh Pass. With these exceptions there are no made roads in northern Persia at least. The want of good roads makes both travel and the transport of goods difficult and expensive. It took us a fortnight in the month of March, traveling steadily in all kinds of weather to cover the three hundred miles between Kasvin and Tabriz. This was as fast as ordinary caravans would have traveled in the best weather. It was over the only road between the two chief cities of Persia. Even when roads and bridges have been once built, they have not been kept in order. There is a magnificent old arched brick bridge over the Karangu river just east of Mianeh. The approaches are fast falling into ruin, and not a hand is lifted to maintain the beautiful old structure which is necessary to travel and commerce. Many streams are wholly unbridged. Gullies are allowed to deepen until the road is entirely destroyed and a circuitous route has to be found. Bogs that could easily have been crossed by causeways are allowed to grow into hopeless morasses. Nothing but the patience and sense of helplessness bred into camels and donkeys and horses and men by centuries of suffering and endurance could keep Persia's trade moving at all over its execrable highways.

"I know that our country is backward," said one Paris educated governor, "and it is chiefly because of our roads." A thoughtful

Persian will defend his country from the disgrace of its roads by pointing out that the people have never used wheeled vehicles, that all travel and traffic has been by caravan, that the feet of the animals preferred soft desert trails to metaled roads, and that the population is sparse and unable to build or maintain the necessary highways. On the other hand the climate is not unfavorable to the preservation of good roads; road material is always near at hand for building and repairs; the Mohammedan religion requires pilgrimages and ought to have been the great road building faith; and the terrible roads which the country has endured for unnumbered centuries have cost far more in the lives of animals and of men and in the price of merchandise than it would have cost to build and maintain the few good highways which the country needs.

But the lack of roads in its relation to national prosperity and character is not so much a cause as an effect. One must look deeper than this for the reasons for Persia's decline, for her loss like Spain's and Portugal's of the great place which she once filled. Some attribute it to the breaking down of the nation's physical health. What forces could have done this? We asked the doctors whether the indolence and anemia of so much of the population could be due to hook worm to which similar conditions are traced in many other lands. No, the doctors said, hook worm was practically unknown. For some years the doctors, both Persian and foreign, had been seeking for the germ and only one had encountered it. Malaria, they said, has been the great curse of Persia, malaria and unnamable diseases, which have always flourished in Mohammedan lands. The pilgrimages also as in Arabia had been a great source of moral and physical contagion. Meshed as the greatest, has been the worst of the shrine cities in Persia in this regard, maintaining a host of mosque women for temporary marriage to pilgrims.

As much guilt probably must be laid to opium as to malaria. The doctors differ as to the extent of its use, which no doubt varies greatly in different sections of the country. In some sections it is almost universal but it is used much less in western Persia. In one hospital 95 per cent of the children who were brought in had been given opium at home. Oftentimes a traveler discovers that what he took for incompetence or stupidity was nothing but the torpor of opium. But opium also is a symptom rather than a cause of national degeneracy. There are moral reasons, found in the ignorance of the people, especially of the women, in bad government, in falsehood and dishonesty, in religious tyranny and corruption.

The want of activity and of enterprise is due in part to the want of probity and confidence. Of course Persian society could not hold together at all without certain forms of trust, but it cannot progress without far more trust and trustworthiness than are found in Persia today. We were welcomed when we entered Tabriz by the head of

the municipality, surrounded by the leading merchants and bankers of the city in a beautiful garden. As we left Tabriz a fortnight later our host was in prison under accusation of having "eaten" some sixty thousand dollars of wheat revenue. This sort of thing in Persia is not exceptional but is representative.

Islam also has unquestionably worked as an influence of disintegration and corruption in Persian character. There is a great deal that is noble in Mohammedanism and in the Koran, and one is glad to recognize all the elements of nobility and power; but on the other hand both the teachings and the teachers of Islam have wrought evil in Persian life. Emerson could never have likened the Days that looked scornfully on the loss of opportunity to Dervishes if he had

known Persia. "It is the mollahs and the mujtahids who have been the great enemies of education, at least of modern education and the education of women," one of the most intelligent of the men we met declared. For a generation now, however, the Mohammedan ecclesiastical power has been breaking down. For a long time the rift has been opening between the *urf* or civil law and the *shar* or ecclesiastical law. There was a brief revival of ecclesiastical prestige when the mollahs led the popular opposition to the proposed Tobacco



Photograph by Russell Carter

A SUFFERER IN PERSIA

Regie monopoly supported by the government a generation ago, but this prestige soon waned, and although mollahs and mujtahids exercise a large public influence and fill a disproportionate place in the Mejlis, nevertheless it is upon a democratic basis that they now have to maintain their influence, and what they will have to reckon upon increasingly will be popular prejudice and not privilege or prestige.

We could not but feel sorry as we traveled over the country to see the disrespect in which the Shah is held. Poor and weak as his government has been, one would still like to find that he had held in some way the good will of his people. We met one old farmer who spoke of him with real regard and who pointed out the energy with which he had developed an army and was trying to put down disorder. He did not know that the Shah was far away from his country and bearing no share in meeting its great difficulties. Several times I spoke to groups of young men with regard to Persia and always referred to the Shah in a respectful way but in each case the young men listened without response and afterwards expressed amazement that any one should speak in such a tone with regard to



Photograph by Russell Carter

PERSIANS RESCUED BY NEAR EAST RELIEF IN TABRIZ

the Shah. In this and in a score of other ways Persia is very different from Siam. The two countries are very much alike in area and population; they have had similar external political problems to face; each bears the burden of an anesthetizing and sterilizing religion; each copes with the problem of national illiteracy and ignorance, of lack of communications, and of the consequences of generations of autocracy. In meeting all these problems Persia has distinct advantages over Siam in climate, in proximity to markets, in the character of the national stock, in energy and industry, in a larger class of alert and intelligent men of modern outlook and experience, and in the stimulus of constitutional government and parliamentary institutions. And yet in efficiency and achievement the Siamese government has completely outdistanced the Persian; it has developed efficient and honest administration; it has solved its external political problems; it is seeking to abolish the opium traffic and to cancel the opium excise in the government revenues; it has begun the establishment of a real school system; it has a small army not less efficiently equipped and organized than Persia's and with a flying corps which Persia lacks. Persia has no railroads except the line between Julfa and Tabriz which Russia built and operates, while Siam now has an excellent and well maintained railway system from its southern boundary in the Malay Peninsula to Bangkok and

from Bangkok north through the heart of the country to Chieng Mai. The contrast is vivid between the rulers of the two lands—the uneducated Shah, and the king who was trained at Oxford; the Shah with his harem, and the bachelor King who has said that he did not intend to be married until he could abjure the polygamous precedents of his fathers, and whose good name in Siam is free from scandal; the Shah who has but little to do with his own government and who is now far away from its problems in Paris, and the King who is the actual administrative force in Siam devoting himself unremittingly to the interests of his country.

But the great weight which holds all Moslem peoples down beyond all hope and from which they must free themselves if they are to rise and go forward is the subordination of woman. "The great intolerance of Mohammedanism," says Professor Flinders Petrie, "and the lower position accorded in law and practice to women will always prevent its surpassing in civilization the races of other creeds."

Both in Persia and in Turkey the women are beginning to cast off the old shackles. As we came out of the mosque of St. Sophia in Constantinople, we met a company of seventy or eighty Moslem school girls coming in. They wore their black *tcharscheffs* but not over their faces. As they went by with their laughing eyes and ruddy cheeks unconcealed, they vividly illustrated the change that is taking place. The old ideas still hold with such a tenacious grip, however, that many Moslem women have no hope. One of the ablest apologists for the old order in Tabriz is a Mohammedan woman who was educated in Europe and who returned with bold ideas which she has come to despair of realizing, and who is now preaching the doctrine of resignation to the inevitable. The subjugation of women to the ownership of man is not inevitable, however. It is inevitable that human society will ultimately rebel against any estimate of woman which prevents her rendering her full service towards social progress. It is a tribute to the durability of the fine elements in womanhood that they have not been crushed out under the influences of Islam, and no small part of Persia's hope is to be found in the undestroyed capacities of Persian women.

It is a grave mistake to take a discouraged view of Persia or of the Persian people. One of the ablest and most detached students of Persia told me that he attributed the long decline of Persian civilization to desiccation. The country and the race has dried out. It was clear, he said, that in old days Persia had been a much better forested land, that the disappearance of the forests had robbed the soil of necessary nourishment and had been accompanied by a change of climate which had diminished the rainfall and dried up the water fountains and desiccated the character of the people. There were many title deeds, he said, which forbade the planting of forests because of the shelter which they gave to outlaws. Perhaps his judg-

ment is sound, but one would like to see the test made as to whether the moral and physical and economic forces which are within man's control could not be used in Persia to restore the prosperity of the nation and to recover its character.

If it is true that the country has lost ground in the last quarter of a century, it is equally true that it has gained ground. It is more intelligent and free spirited. It has entered into the inspiration of a new sense of political rights and duties. It knows what modern education is and it wants it both for intelligence and for character. It has grown in tolerance and freedom. Compared with its neighbors it has held its own in troublous times not without skill and success, and it is looking onward and not backward. It is true that Shah Abbas's caravanserais are in ruins, but so also are the abbeys of England and Scotland and the works of Queen Elizabeth's time, who built when Abbas built. If old castles and villages are gone in Persia, what has become of the manor houses and the villages and the people who once filled the parish churches and whose children cannot fill their porches in England? No doubt a great deal of Persian stock both in city and village is debilitated beyond recovery, but a great deal of it is as sturdy and vital as any stock to be found anywhere, full of cheerfulness, long suffering, patience and good will.

Persia needs a friend, and no country is asking more earnestly than Persia is asking for the friendship of America. One old farmer whom we met had gained the idea that America had fully resolved to do for Persia whatever was necessary and that as soon as Ismael Agha was disposed of, then America was coming to build roads and to bring prosperity. The practical hope of intelligent persons was that the Standard Oil Company would accept the concession which the Mejlis had voted to give it for the development of the oil resources of the five provinces of Azerbaijan, Ghilan, Mazandaran, Astrabad, and Khorasan. There was not one dissenting voice among all those with whom we talked from Meshed to Tabriz. All wanted America's help. If America would not help them then they had no hope for the future of their country. America ought to help them and can very well do so in ways which will be to Persia's advantage and to her own.

But Persia needs a greater friend than the Standard Oil Company or the United States of America and One who can do more for her than build roads or develop oil or promote trade. She does need prosperity instead of poverty, but that will not be a mere economic change. She needs the enlightenment, the freedom, the purity, the righteousness, the Truth, and the Life which are also the Way. She has had enough of Mohammed. *She needs Christ* whom Mohammedanism has praised, it is true, but Whom Mohammed has also effaced—long enough.