

Before, however, I left Baghdad, a report, not very clear at first, of an incident at Tel Afar, which lies about thirty-six miles west of Mosul on the Nisibin road, had arrived, and as it was unquestionably connected with the eventual rising further south, I reserve an account of it for the following chapter.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FIRST EXPLOSION.

ON the 26th May reports were received which definitely established the presence at Fadgehmi on the Khabur river of a so-called Sharifian force. Its strength was estimated by the intelligence staff at Mosul to amount possibly to one thousand men, but the half of that number was regarded as nearer the mark. With this force was an attendant tribal following of slightly greater strength than the higher figure suggested for the Sharifian troops. The plan of the leader of the latter, who was thought to be Jamil Pasha, who had signed propaganda letters to the tribes as "Commander of the Northern Iraq Forces," was believed to be to advance on Mosul in conjunction with a tribal movement from the north and another on Shergat from the Euphrates. By the end of May further reports, but of a more alarmist nature, came from Zakhro, to the effect that Turkish troops were in motion in the Kurdish tribal area north of that place, and about the same time propaganda from Turkish sources became more pronounced. Mosul itself was growing more and more disaffected, and nightly meetings of those who secretly favoured the nationalist movement, but who took care jealously to guard their proceedings, were held.

The country, however, appeared generally to wear its normal aspect, and although the Assistant Political Officer at Tel Afar sent word to the effect that the small local tribes were firmly convinced of the early coming of an Arab Government, the vicinity of that place was particularly peaceful. On the morning of the 4th June information

arrived that the Assistant Political Officer of Tel Afar, who had spent the previous night with a local Arab shaiikh, was a prisoner in the hands of a raiding party of the Shammar, a nomadic tribe, who were accompanied by a Sharifian representative. The same party, so far as has been ascertained, pushed on, and reached Tel Afar early on the same date.

That town of ten thousand inhabitants is picturesquely situated on four knolls, which stand two on each side of a deep gully, whence rises a stream which supplies the inhabitants with water. The houses are solidly built of stone and a kind of cement known as "juss" (juice), and include the bungalow of the Assistant Political Officer, his office, and the barracks of the gendarmerie, which occupy the summit of one of the knolls on the northern side of the gully. The approach to the barracks from the gully traverses a narrow lane between houses, and so steep is the ascent that except for a car in perfect running order it is difficult. It may be said that for a heavy car such as an armoured-car, the town itself constituted a veritable death-trap—a fact which was well known to the commander of the light armoured motor-battery, and which was specially referred to in the orders issued by him on the 3rd June. On that date, telegraphic communication between Tel Afar and Mosul being cut, the only aeroplane serviceable at the latter place was ordered to proceed *via* Tel Afar to the affected area, with instructions to drop a message, containing all information obtained, on the section of armoured-cars which had already proceeded in the same direction. The aeroplane having dropped this message on the cars, which were then six miles east of Tel Afar, flew over the town at 9 A.M., but observed nothing of an unusual nature. The observer next noticed a large party of mounted men approaching the town from the north-west, and about two miles from it. This information was dropped on the section of armoured-cars, which by this time had reached the south-east corner of the town, the spot whence they were subsequently salved, and the aeroplane returned to engage the horsemen. Almost immediately it received a shot

through the petrol-tank, and had to make a forced landing about one mile from the town, narrowly escaping capture. Though the pilot reported that he had seen the crews of the armoured-cars standing in the vicinity of their vehicles, their position from the first raised grave doubts as to their safety.

What occurred in the town will probably never be exactly

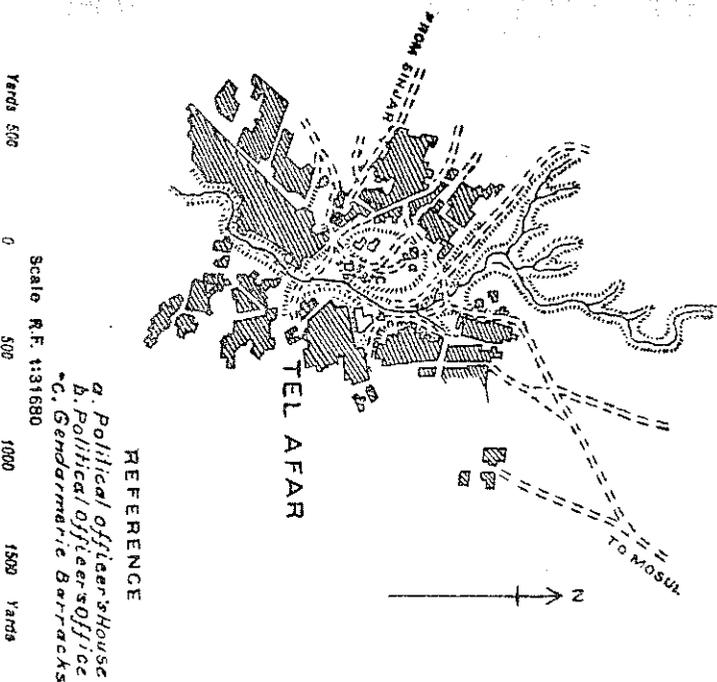


Fig. 1.—Tel Afar, from air photograph.

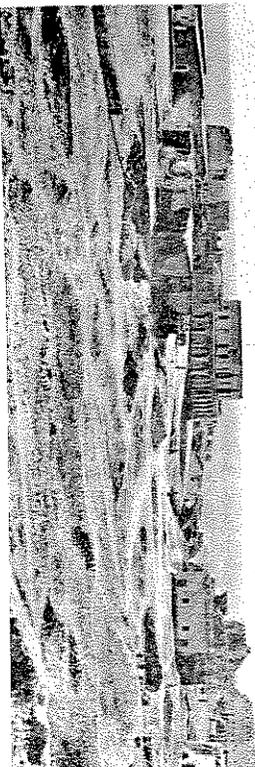
known, as only the native servant of the armoured-car commander escaped alive; but from reports, fragmentary and in many points contradictory, the sequence of events was probably somewhat as follows:—

A meeting of all the local notables had been held in the town on the night of the 2nd/3rd June, which was ad-

dressed by an ex-Turkish army officer, who stated that a large Sharifian concentration was approaching, and invited his auditors to co-operate either by joining the confederation personally, or seizing Tel Afar in the Sharifian interest.

Thereafter all the local aghas or notables left the town with the intention of joining the approaching forces, but changed their minds and returned. Early on the morning of the 4th a party of tribesmen arrived, whereupon the townsmen rose, and the gendarmerie officer, Captain Stuart, was shot by one of his men as he was going his rounds. The gendarmes in the barracks offered no resistance, but Mr Lawlor (late 7th Hussars), Chief Clerk, and Sergeant Walker (13th Hussars) of the gendarmerie, with one machine-gun and a gunner, held out on the roof of the political bungalow until the arrival of the Sharifian officers, when a bomb ended their gallant resistance and their lives. The armoured-car commander, who came on the scene a little later, may possibly have run into the town thinking that the inhabitants were entirely friendly, or he may have determined to make a desperate attempt to reach the civil buildings in the hope of saving any occupants who might happen to be alive. Be that the case or not, the cars were caught in the narrow lane leading to the gully, and being fired into from the house-tops on either side of the defile, all the crews were killed. The Assistant Political Officer, Major J. E. Barlow, who, as mentioned earlier, had been taken prisoner, escaped, and was found dead two miles west of the town, his pursuers having doubtless come up with him. Our total loss amounted to two officers and fourteen other ranks.

The first item on the programme of the conspirators had been enacted, and its success provided a useful advertisement, besides a well-watered well-stocked base for further operations. The rising in the city of Mosul, where for three days there was great excitement, hung fire, however, though a large section of the inhabitants, who looked to some decided move on the part of the Syrian Government, were quite prepared, if opportunity offered, to resort to extreme measures. Subordinate officials of the civil administration,



Tel Afar—Political Office.



Tel Afar—From the east.

in the execution of their duties, were greeted with such boastful taunts as "Wait until after Ramadhan (the great Muhammadan fast) and you will see what will happen." "They (the British garrison at Mosul) will be going in two days; why do they want to register our arms now?"

In pursuance of the plan already outlined, efforts were made by the leaders to rouse the tribes in the vicinity and to the south of Mosul. All arrangements for supplies made by us with local contractors failed, and hired transport carrying requirements for out-stations, such as Dohuk and Zakhō, was looted or disappeared. The necessary steps were taken to prevent the rising in or a raid on the chief city of the vilayat, and to guard the line of communication against marauders.

It had been arranged at Mosul, as at several other stations in Mesopotamia, that mobile columns were to be ready to take immediate action when the circumstances demanding it arose; and as Tel Afar provided a definite objective, not always easy to find in the country of the two rivers, one of the columns, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel G. B. M. Sarel, 11th (K.E.O.) Lancers, consisting of one hundred and fifty sabres, five hundred rifles, a section of 18-pr. guns, with the necessary subsidiary services, moved out and reached a point on the Tigris ten miles above Mosul on the evening of the 5th June. The appearance of this column came as a complete surprise to the insurgents, and it will suffice to say that it engaged in a skirmish with some twelve hundred horsemen, who fled before the fire of the guns and the bullets showered upon them from aeroplanes. On the 9th June it reached Tel Afar.

The arrival of troops at that place, where punitive measures were promptly taken, had an immediate effect in cooling the ardour of the disaffected inhabitants of Mosul. On the line of communication several convoys had been attacked, some with considerable determination, and a raid on Baiji had been driven off. These minor movements, intended no doubt to synchronise with disturbances of a more general nature, were countered everywhere, and the result had a further pacifying effect. On

one occasion at this time a squadron of fifty sabres of the 11th Lancers, under Brevet-Lieut.-Colonel D. E. Robertson, when on patrol near Quiyarah, discovered three hundred mounted Arabs hiding in a dry river-bed, who no doubt intended to ambush the daily convoy which would pass near by their lair. He at once attacked, but the enveloping tactics of the insurgents, who outnumbered him by six to one, compelled a gradual retirement towards Quiyarah. When near the cart-track leading to that place a havildar (sergeant), with twenty men of the 1/39th Garhwal Rifles, who had just arrived as part of a draft from India, and who were marching with the daily convoy, hearing the firing, promptly moved towards it. The squadron now counter-attacked, assisted by the skilfully-led small party under the havildar, and driving off the Arabs inflicted on them casualties exceeding forty killed, themselves losing two Indian officers and nine Indian other ranks killed, and three Indian other ranks wounded. I mention this affair as the small party of horse and foot engaged belonged to two units whose gallantry in action repeatedly came to my notice, and who on several occasions, during the insurrection and before it when they were engaged, distinguished themselves. There are strong grounds, too, for thinking that the Arabs were led by Nijris al Q'and, himself one of our most elusive and troublesome opponents on the Upper Euphrates.

During the remainder of June, though minor disturbances took place on the line of communication south of Mosul, no serious outbreak occurred, proof that the prompt action which had been taken to suppress the first signs of insurrection had discouraged those who, better advised, would have waited and struck simultaneously with the tribesmen further south.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BAGHDAD TO TEHERAN.

SOON after my arrival in Mesopotamia I had planned to visit Persia, as, in the opinion of those I consulted at the War Office before leaving home, it seemed to be the region where active operations were more likely to occur than anywhere else in my command. Apart from my desire to see a country which was new to me, several considerations made me anxious to go there as soon as possible. Among these were the importance of studying the ground, with a view to ascertaining where and for how long a hostile advance, should it take place, could be delayed. Distances in Persia, a country in which there are as yet no railways, are great. From Qumaitu, at the head of the railway from Baghdad, to Enzeli is five hundred and fourteen miles, and the route crosses two passes, both not less than 7500 feet high, so that the transfer there of troops from Mesopotamia is, as explained before, a matter of several weeks' duration. The winter, which would not be upon us for several months, is usually severe, and troops, once over the passes and at Kasvin and beyond, could neither be reinforced nor withdrawn till well on in spring. Another consideration, which was even more important than that of reconnaissance, was how far I ought to meet the calls for reinforcements, which I had received from the Brigadier-General Commanding the North Persian Force, and which were strongly backed by Sir Percy Cox, the British Minister at Teheran. I had already, as mentioned, on the 24th May, under orders from home, despatched two battalions of British troops, by motor-lorry from Karind in Persia, where I had sent them for

the summer months, to Kasvin, where their transport would arrive by march-route a month later. Like other British units, these two were weak and full of young soldiers, and together could only put six hundred rifles in the field. The effect, however, of the arrival of British troops would undoubtedly be exaggerated, and they would probably be followed shortly by two Indian units and some guns.

I have already given my reasons for regarding my visit to Teheran as of importance, and to my regret I had been obliged several times to defer it: once for over a month owing to a visit of officers from Egypt in connection with the proposed garrisoning of Mesopotamia by the Royal Air Force; and again by the arrival of the Shah from Europe on his way back to his own country. And now, just as all preparations had been made along the whole route to Teheran, came the incident at Tel Afar. Pressure from the civil side was strong against my leaving Mesopotamia at such a time, and the news that had so far arrived was of the vaguest. As, however, there were ample troops in and near Mosul to deal with a rising of the tribes of an even more extensive nature than in the present instance seemed probable, and as I had full confidence in the commander on the spot, I telegraphed my approval of the action which he proposed to take, and started for the Persian border.

In order to understand the military situation in Persia when I visited it, it is necessary to refer briefly to what had occurred there some three weeks earlier. The troops at that time consisted of the 36th Indian Mixed Brigade of four battalions, the greater part of the Guides Cavalry, "A" Battery Royal Horse Artillery, and a pack battery, the whole under the command of Brigadier-General H. F. Bateman-Champain; besides three battalions under the command of Colonel J. H. F. Lakin, who was in charge of the long line of communication. Both these officers had engineers and other services attached to their forces. The headquarters of the brigade were at Kasvin, where the reserve was, and the remainder of the force was dis-

posed between that town and Enzeli, which was also occupied.

As will be seen by what follows, the situation at this time would appear to have been governed more by political than military considerations. The War Office instructions as to the policy to be followed were clear and sufficiently comprehensive. They laid down that the rôle of our troops was to be that of an outpost which, if attacked in position, would fall back to the main line of resistance. In doing so every means at disposal would of course be utilised to delay a Bolshevik advance; and it was suggested that full use should be made of the favourable ground at the Manjil Pass. One of the first things which I did on reaching Baghdad in March 1920 was to study these instructions, and direct the General Officer Commanding the troops in North Persia to work out in detail the arrangements for a withdrawal should that course become necessary. On the other hand, as it was desirable, if possible, to avoid embroiling Persia in hostilities, it had been settled between His Britannic Majesty's Minister at Teheran and the General Officer Commanding that, in the event of an attack, the latter would, before joining issue, endeavour to parley with the Bolshevik commander. As to the actual occurrences, they may be compressed into a small space.

At 5.15 A.M. on the 18th May the garrison at Enzeli awoke to the sound of bursting shells, and though at first the noise was attributed to another cause, it was soon realised that the Bolsheviks were firing from their ships. An hour and a half later the bombardment, if it deserves that name, slackened, and shortly afterwards a report came that a landing east of the town had taken place. Next it was heard that a force of some size had moved across our line of communication to Resht. Meantime an effort had been made by Brigadier-General Bateman-Champain, who chanced to be at Enzeli, to get in touch with the Bolshevik commander, which, being effected, an armistice was eventually arranged, and the terms offered by him were accepted. These consisted in the handing over to the Bolsheviks of the Volunteer Fleet and munitions,

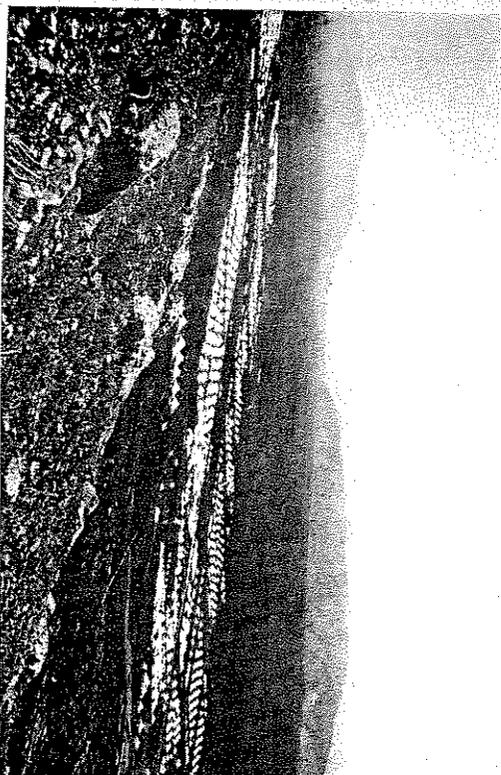
as well as other Russian property at Enzeli, in consideration for which the garrison would be at liberty to withdraw unmolested—a movement which was effected by midday on the 19th, with the loss of a quantity of stores and the personal effects of officers. It may be mentioned that the Bolshevik commander, with typical disingenuity, expressly stated that his sole object was to appropriate the fleet, and that once this was accomplished he would sail for Baku, as he wished no harm to the Persians. Nevertheless, at the time that I was on my way to Teheran the Bolsheviks were still in occupation of the neutral port of Enzeli, had pushed south of Resht, and were a few miles only from the Manjil Pass, which was held by our outposts.

Early on the morning of the 6th June the train by which we travelled reached Quraitu, which is a few miles across the Persian border, whence I, Brigadier-General Stewart, my Chief Staff Officer, and Lieutenant Grehan, my aide-de-camp, after a short halt, proceeded by car to Karind. There we lunched, and then resumed the journey to Kermanshah. As the car ran over the one hundred and six miles which we covered from the railhead, I noticed three strong rearguard positions, besides many other places, where the advance of an enemy could be delayed. At two points on this route—the steep and rugged Tak-i-Girrah Pass and the defile east of it to Sar-i-Mil—the scene was singularly picturesque compared with the deadly monotony of the Iraqi plain; but the absence of trees, except in the neighbourhood of towns such as Kermanshah and Hamadan, and the generally arid nature of the country, seemed to falsify the tales and poems which one had heard and read of Persia. The season of wild flowers was practically over, and those that still could bear the growing fierceness of the sun's rays were limited to hollyhocks and a few other plants of a less ostentatious nature.

The condition of our cars, after our previous day's climb to Kermanshah, which lies 3520 feet above Quraitu, compelled a halt of one day, but I grudging this short delay the less as numerous matters required to be discussed with



Tak-i-Girrah Pass.



Karind camp.

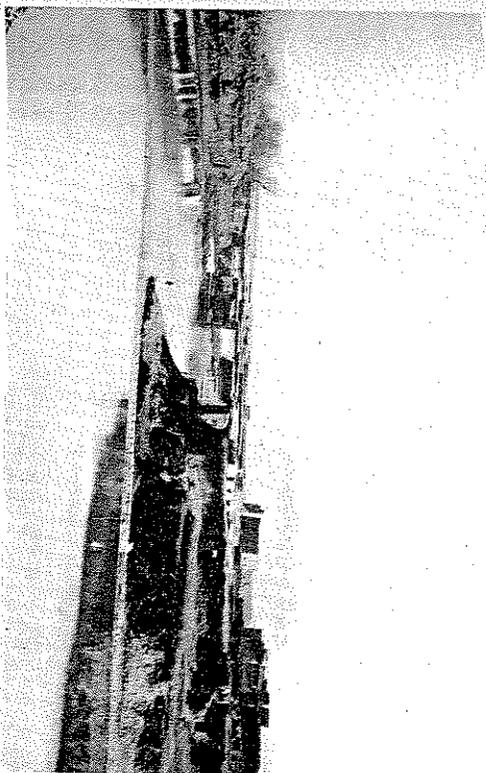
Colonel Lakin, with whom and his wife we stayed. Moreover, there are some noted rock carvings at Taq-i-Bustan, dating back to the sixth century, and these we visited on the afternoon of the day following our arrival. While there a Persian hillman performed the feat of climbing up the almost precipitous face of a cliff, which, beyond a crack here and there, showed no indication of anything that would support even a bird. Sometimes he would feign to miss his foothold and then recover it, and the whole performance, besides making one feel hot all over, roused the thought that the expected largesse which was handed to him when his feat was safely accomplished would only encourage him one day to break his neck.

On the 8th we pushed on to Hamadan, one hundred and three miles further into Persia, passing the famous rock tablets at Bisitun with their trilingual inscriptions. Some distance further on we turned sharply to the left of the road, and escorted by a wild-looking crowd of armed and mounted retainers, made our way to the house of Prince Muhammad Vali Mirza, brother of Prince Firuz Mirza, the late Persian Foreign Minister and cousin of the Shah, who had kindly invited us to lunch with him. Here we met the rather notorious Prince Sarim ud Daulah, who was on his way to Kermanshah to take up the Governor-Generalship of that place and province, and who, through a change of Prime Ministers, found himself a year later languishing in prison. Most Persians of the upper classes talk French, and as both of these had been educated abroad one had not to go through the meal in silence or communicate through the awkward medium of an interpreter. I may here mention that about a year later our host appeared in Baghdad, having fled from Persia on horseback, fearing the imprisonment which a few months before had befallen both his father and brother as the result of the same change of Prime Ministers to which I have just referred.

On reaching Hamadan we were most kindly entertained by Mr Wright, the manager of the branch of the Imperial Bank of Persia there, and his wife; and the following day we resumed our travels.

At Hamadan I found a telegram from Colonel A. T. Wilson, informing me that an attack in force by Turks on Zakhō, one of our outposts seventy miles north of Mosul, was expected—but which did not take place—and urging me to withdraw the troops there. At the same time the probability of an early rising among the Arabs was indicated. After reflecting upon the situation I decided to order the two additional battalions, which had been warned to be ready to reinforce the troops in Persia, to stand fast, and to keep two batteries at Karind, where they had already arrived with a similar object. At that place they were well situated to move wherever required, and had the advantage of a cooler climate than that of Mesopotamia. I directed the General Officer Commanding the 15th Division to make the necessary preparations for withdrawing from Zakhō, in case orders to that effect should be sent; but on hearing from him that more harm would result by leaving than by remaining, withheld the order for the movement. The Acting Civil Commissioner evidently thought the situation was serious, for he pressed me to send all married people, civil and other, to India. To have done so would have involved a most trying journey by rail and river, followed by a voyage through the Persian Gulf, during perhaps the worst month of the summer, to be followed by a train journey in India. Such a proceeding, which must have led to mortality among the children, who were numerous, was out of the question, and not for a moment to be considered. It was also suggested to me that unless Tel Afar were razed to the ground and Dair-al-Zaur bombed, Mosul might have to be given up. As regards Tel Afar, I knew that punishment was being meted out to its inhabitants, and a little later a detachment was posted there, which kept the town in order; while, desirable as it might be to bomb Dair-al-Zaur, that place was beyond our borders.

On the 10th, after a drive of sixty miles that soon grew wearisome through the continual changes of speed and the bumping when crossing ruts in the most indifferent road, we reached Teheran. There I stayed with the new British Minister, Mr H. Norman, a friend of many years' standing.



Zakhō village.



Zakhō camp.

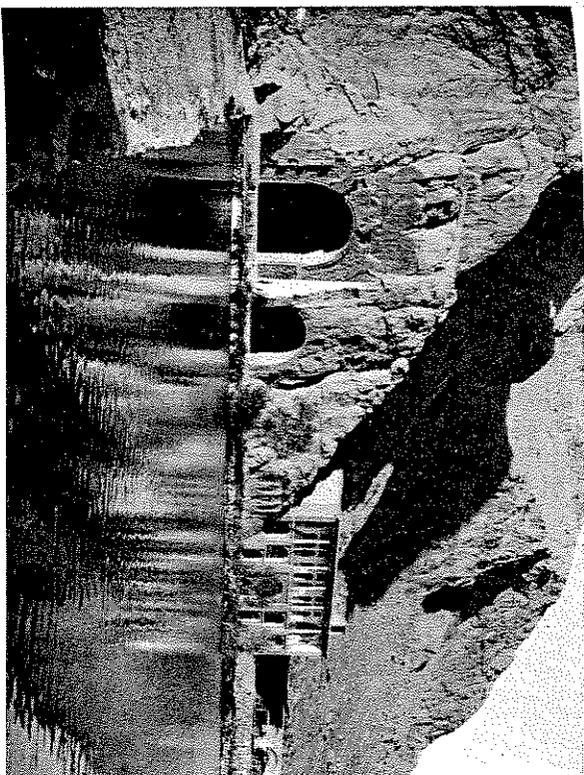
Soon after my arrival Sir Percy Cox showed me a copy of what seemed to me to be a telegram of an alarmist nature regarding the situation in Mesopotamia, which had been sent to London by the Acting Civil Commissioner. As the situation showed no signs of marked change since my departure from Baghdad, and as I had no reason, judging from the affair at Tel Afar and the operations on the Upper Euphrates, to suppose that a combination of tribes was to be feared, I telegraphed to the War Office that I was satisfied with the number of troops which I had at my disposal, and that so far as I could judge no cause existed for uneasiness.

Of Teheran itself I saw little, being occupied with other matters than sight-seeing; but the following afternoon Lady Cox drove me to Gulahak, the summer residence of the diplomats, which is five miles from the capital. Although only six hundred feet higher, its climate is quite different, being fresh and many degrees cooler, probably because it is nearer to the Elburz Mountains, of which the pyramid-shaped Demavand, the highest point, 18,600 feet above sea-level, is visible on clear days. I had intended to leave Teheran on the 11th, but was constrained to stop for a largely-attended dinner party which the Persian Prime Minister, His Highness Vosug ud Daulah, was to give on the evening of that date. The following day we returned to Kasvin, where we had stayed with General Bateman-Champain and his wife on our way through on the 9th.

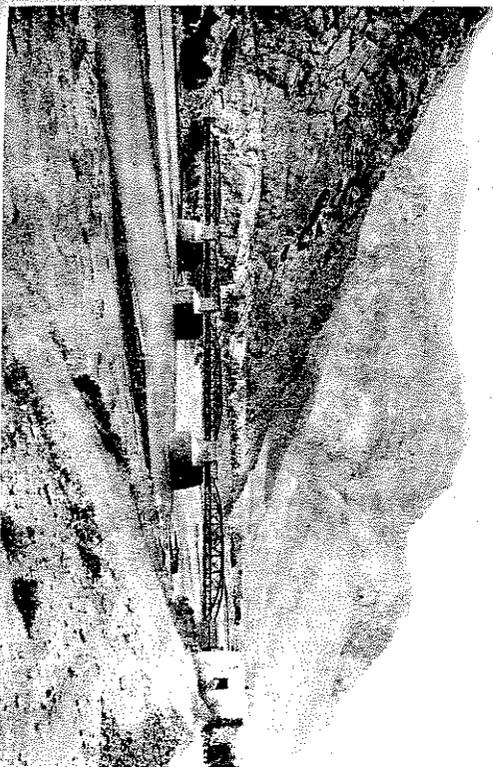
Next morning at 5 o'clock, in company with Brigadier-General Stewart and Majors I. Burn-Murdoch and F. P. Macintyre, the last two being officers on the staff of Brigadier-General Bateman-Champain, we left Kasvin, and proceeded to the outposts in the Manjil Pass. The road after leaving Kasvin runs due north-west for about twenty-four miles over a fairly level plain, and then drops steeply, winding down till it meets the Yazbashi Chai, which it crosses. The route now follows the left bank of that stream until it joins the Shah Rud, which it likewise crosses, and which, near Manjil, swells to a river of respectable dimensions, known as the Safed Rud. On reaching Manjil,

which is some three thousand feet lower than Kasvin, we proceeded first to the camp of the 2nd (K.E.O.) Gurkha Rifles, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel E. H. Sweet. After breakfasting and seeing the British and Gurkha officers, of whom some of the latter had served with me in the Tirah Campaign in 1897, we went up a low gravelly hill which dominates the camp. From this point a good view is obtained of the entrance to the narrower portion of the pass, which is completely overlooked by the much higher features on both sides. A little north of this hill an iron bridge carries the road over the Safed Pond, which joins the Caspian between sixty and seventy miles further on. We were fortunate in the weather, for it is said that only about once a month does Manjil escape the annoyance of a powerful wind, which whistles through the gorge from dawn till dusk, and covers everything and every one with dust. After taking a good look round we walked down to the bridge, which was prepared for demolition, and crossing it proceeded for a short way by car till we came up with a portion of a sapper and miner company. The men were busily engaged in preparing the road for destruction at several points where it overhangs the river, so that, if blown away, much rock-cutting would have been necessary in order to allow of the passage of troops and transport. The car was steered past the obstacle with very few inches to spare, and we ran down a gentle declivity till the village of Rudbar, eight miles beyond Manjil, the extreme point held by a patrol of the Guides Cavalry, was reached.

Looking north along the gorge-like valley, which is shut in on either side by rugged hills which rise to over three thousand feet above the road, I was vividly reminded of the Chitral valley between Kila Drosch and Gumbaz, and the Kunar river, which runs between these places. Although the scene before me was of a less impressive nature, it seemed that at Rudbar we had reached the point where the character of the ground would shortly change, the bare and rugged rocks gradually giving place to woods, and the country transforming itself, as one who knows it well has



Tak-i-Bosran.



Manjil Pass—Southern entrance.

said, to something resembling parts of Devonshire. Except, however, when viewed from an aeroplane, the ground two miles north of the village was then a closed book to the British, and after asking the vedette whether he had seen anything and receiving a reply in the negative, the motor was turned round, and we ran back to Manjil.

The undoubted strength of this cleft in the Elburz Mountains, along the greater portion of which we had travelled, struck me forcibly. According to Napoleon, mountains rank second among the obstacles most difficult to be overcome by armies in their march; and here in the Elburz, faced by troops few in numbers and scarcely worthy of that name, we had at hand what would suffice to delay for weeks, if not for months, a hostile advance on Kasvin. Moreover, on the spot was a well-known Gurkha battalion with great traditions dating from pre-Mutiny days, the very troops to carry out the idea in my mind. I therefore instructed the commanding officer to arrange to begin his defence as far northward as possible, preferably advancing, so as to deceive the enemy, rather than retiring; to explore every track on the steep mountain-sides, and note the spots whence the valley and the road were commanded; besides many other points too numerous to mention.

On my return to Kasvin I reiterated my orders to the brigade commander, who, like the commander of the Gurkhas, seemed rather less enthusiastic than I was as regards what I had seen.

I began the next day by inspecting the Guides Cavalry, which was commanded by an old friend, Colonel A. C. Stewart; and "A" Battery R.H.A., smart as ever, under Major Van Straubenzee, who did good work in the field a few months later. Then came the turn of the infantry—the 1st Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment, the 2nd Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment, and the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers—all glad to be away from the heat of Mesopotamia. The last of these units I had known at Ladysmith in 1899, and it had been one of the four battalions under my command in the 10th Infantry Brigade in 1914; but only two of the officers—the Adjutant, Captain

M. J. W. O'Donovan, and the Quartermaster, Major T. E. Brunting—and a few N.C.O.'s and men remained who had served with me. Later in the day the brigade commander took me to tea with the Governor of Kasvin on the upper verandah of his well-built house, which is surrounded by a charming garden. Here I met Sirdar Intizar, Commander-in-Chief of the troops in Azerbaijan, who surprised me by his force of character, which is unusual in his race.

Shortly before dinner Commodore D. Norris, R.N., arrived from England on his way to Teheran. He had been given the now somewhat fantastical task of reorganising a non-existent Persian Navy, for the operations of which the requisite sea was equally nebulous. Some months later he passed a week with me at Baghdad on his way back to England, to take up, I hope, some more tangible naval work, for he struck me as a forceful, well-read, and broad-minded officer.

Before leaving Kasvin I arranged that the artillery which I had ordered up should not go beyond Karind, and that, to help in dealing with the raids in the Mosul vilayat, two squadrons of the 35th Scinde Horse should proceed from Baghdad to Shergat as soon as they were replaced by the remainder of the regiment from Diwaniyah. The place of the latter would in turn be taken by two squadrons of the 37th Lancers from Ahwaz, a town at the south-east corner of Mesopotamia, which the Shaikh of Muhammarah, during a visit I paid him, had agreed to take charge of, provided I got him some mountain guns and rifles.

The telegrams from Baghdad had, during the last two days, shown that affairs in Mesopotamia were normal, or at any rate that there was no immediate cause for alarm. I was anxious therefore to proceed to Zinjan, a hundred miles north-west of Kasvin, where I had a battalion and some other troops, and towards which two platoons of the 1/67th Punjabis, who had been withdrawn from their isolated position in Tabriz, were marching. Zinjan was important as being on the route by which the Bolsheviks might try to turn the Marjil Pass. Between it and Kasvin was a track by means of which Hamadan could be

reached and the troops in Kasvin, should they hold on too long, be cut off. But as a cable had been sent from Baghdad to the India Office by the Acting Civil Commissioner, which led to the War Office asking me to explain my absence from my headquarters, I decided to forgo my trip, which would have required two days, and on the 14th June began the journey back to Mesopotamia.

On the way, a few miles out from Kasvin, we breakfasted at the aerodrome with Flight-Lieutenant F. L. Robinson, a pilot of great skill and resolution, who had been missing at the time I arrived at Brigadier-General Bateman-Champain's headquarters on my journey to Teheran. He gave me an account of the adventures which he and Major Burn-Murdoch, one of my companions during our visit to Marjil, had shared. They had left the aerodrome on the 7th June on a R.E. 8 machine, with the object of reconnoitring the country in the Zinjan area, as a report had been received of an intended Bolshevik advance on that place. All went well until, when flying at an altitude of nine thousand feet, the engine began to splutter, and the machine lost height rapidly. The possibility of making a safe landing was most unpromising, as below was a stream in flood, and on either side were precipitous mountains rising to nine thousand feet. Indeed, Major Burn-Murdoch had already told me when I met him on the 13th that to land without a serious crash seemed to him impossible. But Robinson is a man of strong nerve and great skill in the air, and he succeeded in bringing the machine to the ground, or rather to the water, for it landed in the middle of the stream. The officers knew that they were in a country of doubtful friendliness and one hundred and four miles from home; but a few days later, after some unpleasant experiences with the inhabitants, they reached Kasvin, having burned the machine, which it was obviously impossible to salvage.

After passing another night at Hamadan with the Wrights, who, it grieves me to say, have since lost there one of their small twin boys, we continued our journey to Keremanshah. There I was interested to meet Major T. E. Hammond, who