

Aveen, Persia
July 5, 1926

Dear Mother:-

I am sending this letter to Ireland and am also sending a copy home so that in case your sailing has been postponed you will get the letter anyhow.

As you can see from the date it is the day after the 4th. and inasmuch as Sunday was the "fourth" we put in a very quiet day. We are already for a trip across to Tadzreash, however, this afternoon to a "Fourth of July" Party at the American Legation. I have been in the American Minister's "up-country" garden once and while it is small it is a very beautiful affair with quite a large lawn and a very nice place for entertaining out-of-doors. I am afraid, however, that when we compare it with the gardens of the other legations that it is rather second-rate though I must confess I like it much more than the elaborate places.

Yesterday we went up our valley for a picnic supper. Mr. Philip, the American Minister and his wife, Mr. Amory, the American Charge d'affaires, Mr. Pierson and Mr. Donnevillie of the American Finance Commission, and Mr. Walters, an Englishman of the Imperial Bank of Persia made up the party. It was really Mrs. Philip's party but inasmuch as she has not been very well, Harriet and Teddy piloted the cats and Hutch piloted the donkeys. We started at about five in the evening and returned at eight. We should have started about an hour earlier for we were not able to make "Haft Hose", our destination in time to eat lunch and return with the result that we had to stop short of the place in order to get back before it was too dark to be comfortable. Mr. Amory is in love with donkeys and insisted on riding one the whole way. He really wanted to buy a donkey for himself and use it for riding but I believe that some of the English people at the Legation persuaded him that the spectacle of him riding on a donkey would not be very proper in his position and inasmuch as he is from the Copley family of Boston he hardly felt like doing anything that was not proper and so he did not buy the donkey but bought a horse instead. However, he rides a donkey whenever he gets the chance. We initiated him into the mysteries of a donkey on one of our Friday picnics several months ago.

This Mr. Amory, in spite of the fact that he comes from a very "swell" Boston family, and in his position at the Legation could be quite snobbish without anyone taking any particular notice is quite a democratic person. Mr. and Mrs. Philip, the American Minister and His wife are also very sociable people and at the same time well able to take care of their own social engagements in their position. I think that we are mighty fortunate in having a group of people of their type in the Legation because things are much more pleasant in every way. The Hutchison's have become very friendly with Mr. and Mrs. Philip.

Of the other men Mr. Pierson is the son of a former American Minister to Persia and at present in charge of the personnel of the American Finance Mission to Persia. He is a young bachelor, like Mr. Amory, and a very fine fellow. He has written several articles in "Asia" and the "Atlantic Monthly" on Persia. Mr. Donnevillie came to Persia about nine months ago and is now inspector of the Finance Departments of the Provinces. He seems like a pretty good sort of a chap, is young and unmarried. We seem to have our share of bachelors in this part of the World and the funny part is that they are all pretty good fellows. I am at a loss to explain how they escaped America in the condition of single blessedness.

I started this letter last Sunday and it is now Tuesday, the first chance that I had to get back to it. Fortunately I still have a list beside me of the things that I wanted to write about when I started this letter and I will go down that list until I have finished the letter or come to the end of the list.

Other meals of importance during the past week beside the picnic luncheon up the Aven Valley on Sunday have been the "Fourth of July" Tea at the American Legation and a meal in Camp with the boys. The four of us were there and they separated us at the tables and my lot fell with a group of small boys who knew very little or no English. It gave me a fine opportunity to practise my Persian. I am a lot more hopeful with regard to the language than I was formerly. I find that I can make myself understood on most ordinary topics of conversation by now, even though I make innumerable mistakes and my vocabulary is terribly limited. But withal I find that I can make many a point clear in Persian which I cannot make clear to the boys, even though they are supposed to know a great deal of English. It tickles me to switch into Persian at times after I have been trying to make myself understood in English and find that I have much better luck with Persian than I had been having with English. I had lots of fun with the boys the other evening.

Another experience with Persian came at the Legation party. The President of the last Parliament was there and his son is in our Camp. That gave me an opportunity to introduce myself and discourse in my fluent(?) Persian. At least I was able to talk with him for ten or fifteen minutes and Harriet said afterwards that I seemed to be talking so fluently and easily that she thought the man knew English and that I was carrying on in English. However, she was too far away at the time to be able to overhear my stumblings and distance always lends enchantment.

The last night on our way back from Adreesh on donkey back I kept up a continual line with our donkey driver and learned a few new Persian jokes and expressions. One was a good commentary on things Persian. We passed the Camp of the Military School of Teheran and I asked the boy when they had arrived and how long they would stay. He said that they had come two days before and would stay until the three kharvars of wheat which they had with them were all eaten. As a measure of time I thought that was pretty safe. A kharvar is about 650 lbs. Things Persian always make a good show and last just as long as the pocketbook holds out, after that they are finished. The donkey boy was joking. Nevertheless he had been in the employ of the government at various times as I learned afterwards and his joke was a good commentary on the way of doing things. Another expression I learned concerns the proverbial fat man. We are accustomed to saying that a fat man is never excitable, but the Persian says "Can a potatoe have nerves?" Try that on some of your fat friends and see how they like it.

Before I go on any further I might as well get off my chest the recent political events. Last Thursday the passengers of the automobiles that were carrying people from Adreesh to Teheran, about six miles, were rudely interrupted ~~in their~~ by the traffic policemen and other soldiers who ordered them out of their cars and advised them to find other means for continuing their journey onwards. The cars once empty were immediately commandeered, sometimes chauffeur and all, and the owner was informed with little ceremony that the army had need of his auto for transporting soldiers all over the country. Rumours flew thick and fast and even yet we are not past that stage. The government and a few other people have the facts, possibly, though I doubt it, but little by little the atmosphere is clearing and we are learning the nature of the troubles.

It seems that there have been three mutinies in the armies, all of them occurring simultaneously at three points which extend from east to

along the northern frontier. The points affected are Tabriz, Resht and Meshed. It is possible that the uprisings at the first two western points, Tabriz and Resht, are more or less local and of no political importance outside of Persia. The Shah has obtained his position on the throne by means of a strong army as I have already explained and now he is a bit afraid that the tail which has been wagging the dog will continue to do so even after he has become shah. Formerly he was interested in the tail only, namely the army, but now he has become the head of the dog and he wants to diminish the size of the tail. The first steps have been to cut down the appropriations of the ministry of war and to fire a number of important officers as well as reduce the pay of all others. These men have the upper hand, however, and one in particular seems to be in a position to make trouble if he so desires. He is the General of the Eastern Division which is located with headquarters at Meshed in the province of Khorassan on the Afghan frontier.

Numerous stories are told of his cruelty and power and many of them are without a doubt true. For example about six days ago I was riding back from Adjresshe with a donkey and the donkey-driver had just returned from Meshed where he had been in the Army or working with the army. He said that when the bread was short about six months ago, this general heard of some bakers who were charging high prices and giving short measure in their bread. He went to the shop of one of them and he, himself, pushed the owner and three of his assistants in his hot oven. Two of them died right away, one died a little later and the third fourth recovered. About 15 months ago he was fighting the Turkomans and they were using air-planes against these wild hillsmen, though the planes were driven by Germans. This general went up in one plane and forced the pilot to fly low enough so that the machine shaved the heads of these people, and meanwhile the general operated the machine-gun, literally piling the bullets into these tribesmen. On still another occasion when he was not satisfied with the way his officers were drilling his soldiers, he went out on the drill ground and personally beat up several officers in front of the soldiers as an example of what would happen to any soldier or officer under him who did not do his duty. He has collected thousands of dollars from the people which he has never turned over to the government. Certain officials, some of them the representatives of another government have reported that he has collected 350,000.00 tomans that they know of within the past few months and there is a good bit more that they do not know about. As a matter of fact at the present time the War department of this country is getting half of the government revenue and is not accounting for a cent of it, and it is estimated by reliable people that the army officers extort at least twice as much again as they receive in appropriations from the people in the districts in which they are located. For example a man who is wealthy is arrested on some trumped up charge, and it is not hard to find a charge against many of Persia's wealthy men, and they are imprisoned until they pay a heavy fine. They are then released upon payment until they have had time to recuperate their losses when they are arrested again and the performance is repeated until the money is squeezed right out of them. At times they do not even go through the formality of an arrest; the person is simply made to understand that the army or some official with power wants a certain amount of cash and that it will be a lot safer for him if he comes across without any noise. In polite society it is called a "hold-up" but the ordinary hold-up man in America would quit after he had made just one haul similar to that which these army officers make.

I might add to the stories about this man in Meshed but it would not clear matters for you. Suffice it to say that there is trouble

in Meshed and it "doth not yet appear" how serious it is. There are several possible explanations. First the soldiers may be in mutiny against this unusually harsh general and are led by some of their officers. This mutiny may be encouraged by the Russians who are anxious to cause trouble in Persia and overthrow the government which seems to be so pro-English. Secondly this mutiny may be the work of the General himself who is feeling his power and thinks that he strong enough to oppose the central government and set himself up as Shah. It is rather easy to imagine for we are not a whole lot different in the political situation of this country from that of Mexico in the past forty years. But whatever the situation the Turkomans who have been chased across into Russia are evidently taking advantage of the mix-up to invade Khorassan again. They too may be encouraged by the Russians for political reasons. At any rate the government is still rushing soldiers to Meshed as fast as they can send them, and they evidently have a double job on hand, first a mutiny within the army and an uprising on the part of the Turkomans who have never been completely subjugated. I think that I described some of these Turkomans with their huge fur head-dresses and flaming red robes as they appeared in Teheran several months ago at the coronation of the Shah.

I am finishing this letter about a week after I started it and still the news is uncertain concerning the trouble in Meshed. The government is censoring everything that is coming from that direction and the newspapers have to keep absolutely quiet on the subject. Meantime we have to content ourselves with rumours while the sixth Persian Parliament was opened to-day. It was another party for the Shah. The elections have been progressing for months with a minimum amount of honesty and a maximum of scandal. In any district whenever the wrong man was elected some charge of irregularity was trumped up, the election was called off and the right man was elected. The elections have been pretty much a farce, what with trumped up elections, the wholesale use of money to buy votes, and elections lasting over three and four weeks with the returns reported each day, and everyone privileged to go out and scare up as many votes on the next day as he thought necessary to keep him in the race. Goodness knows we have enough trouble with elections in America but think what would happen in an antiquated system where the voting lasted for three weeks and the returns were given out each evening with Mr. Vare about to rush out each morning and get all the votes that he needed. Talk about one person voting twice; what with the confusion of names and no accurate census anywhere that I know of, I can see absolutely no way of preventing the same person from voting an indefinite number of times in this land, and I have no doubt that it is done with the greatest regularity and care. I think that even Mr. Vare would tremble in absolute horror could he inspect an election in Teheran. He at least would learn a few wrinkles that would insure his position in politics for the remainder of his life.

Well to show that this "Madjless" is another party for the Shah he rode in State to the Parliament building and one of these processions which we have already witnessed twice this year, was staged with His Majesty as the central figure. Not only is the parliament at present under his control but it is apparently a back number on its opening day.

However, we cannot complain of Persia; this is the day of dictators throughout the World, and Europe in particular. With all the corruption at elections and mutinies in the army and illegal collection of taxes and money this Shah can still make a great improvement over anything that Persia has known in the past. Possibly there is not the least doubt in his own mind that he must use these means to get the power into his hands and if he does not some one less scrupulous than himself will get hold of things. Must close rather abruptly, now or never.