

Teheran, Persia
April 27, 1926.

Dear Fellows:-

The recent "Lafayettes" that have been reaching us out here have been filled with "Persia" and "The American College of Teheran". When we see how much use is made of the little bit that we can send back in the way of news it encourages us to a little more effort in writing. That we are gratified by your efforts in the "Persia Campaign" goes without saying. I had a vivid picture of what was going on around the campus in the way of work, from my own experience with such campaigns, and also from my knowledge, personally, of most the fellows that were on the committee that bore the brunt of the work. The efforts and interest in such a campaign are worth a lot in the way of encouragement in the work out here, in addition to the financial assistance that you are rendering.

We are almost at the end of a week's celebration and ceremony upon the occasion of the crowning of the new Shah. On Sunday, April 25th, Reza Khan Pahlevi was crowned the first Shah of the Pahlevi Dynasty replacing Ahmad Shah of the Ghajar Dynasty, who is at present making the best of the life of an ex-Shah in Paris where the atmosphere is a lot healthier and more exhilarating. Of course Reza Shah has been in office for six months now, ever since the coup-d-etat of last Fall but at that time we only had a two day holiday when he took the oath of office which took three minutes by the clock from the time he entered the Parliament room until he left again. Naturally a new dynasty could hardly be ushered in with such little ceremony as that and so the real show is being put on now. The official holiday lasted three days, but the frills have been spread over a week. The whole thing has been just about as elaborate as the Persians could make it. The government voted an outlay of 100,000 tomans for the ceremonies at the same time that they voted 90,000 tomans for education for the next year. You can understand something of the proportions. The toman is worth about 1.10 dollars.

It is reported that the committee in charge had ordered 50,000 tomans worth of electrical display materials which were delayed in shipment. When it became evident that they would not arrive in time for the celebration the committee asked the Shah to postpone the affair for a week or two, whereupon he replied that he would rather be crowned by candle-light than not at all!

Streets, Trams and Shops have been decorated for three days. The Persian scheme of decorations consists of covering every square inch of space with costly rugs and hangings, and then sprinkling lights of all kinds everywhere. A shop-keeper has not completed his decorations until he has placed a table out front upon which is crowded as many lamps as possible. Houses and bazaars are ransacked of everything that can be used for decorations so that the decorations are worth seeing just to get a glimpse of some of the costly Persian rugs that are on display. It would be difficult to estimate the value of the carpets and rugs that have been hanging in the streets of Teheran for the past three days and nights.

This custom of decorating with costly rugs brings out the contrasts in honesty. The Persian, along with the rest of the people of the East, is accused of being lax in the matter of honesty and undoubtedly many practises do exist, both in politics and business that would hardly pass in America. On the other hand I have seen a shopkeeper leave his shop for hours with nothing but a piece of canvass drawn across the front to indicate that the place was closed temporarily. I wonder if there is a city in America of 250,000 where

one could leave a 100,000 dollars worth of rugs hanging on the main St. for three days and nights without having any of them stolen. The other day we sent out to buy some sugar and on that afternoon the servant passed that same shop on his way home. The shopkeeper called him in to ask if he had weighed the sugar bought in the morning, and when the cook told him he had not the shopkeeper asked him to weigh it because he thought that it was short. That evening the cook weighed it, found it short and received from the shopkeeper the amount in which it was short. The story might well be attributed to Abraham Lincoln when he was a store clerk, but this Persian grocer will go down to his grave unsung, and if any attention is given him it will be only to be numbered among the dishonest shopkeepers of the East by the Westerner.

The celebrations have been marked by frequent processions and banquets. Most worthwhile of the processions was the military review on Mon. afternoon in the huge drill square in the centre of the city. One thing that this Shah has done for Persia is to organize a strong army. It has been essential for the welfare of the country in order to bring the border tribesmen under government subjection and also to clear the roads of marauding highwaymen. I have no way of telling just how many troops were in the review, though I imagine that more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of the army was there which would mean more than 20,000.

The various tribal chiefs were all invited and given grandstand seats that they might see the pretty little army and picture what will happen to them if they try to stir up trouble for the country. The Shah himself inspected the whole outfit before the review began. He was in the ordinary field uniform of an officer and had less decorations about him than some of his officers. The drill square is a huge place, I believe one of the largest drill grounds in the world, and it took a little time for him to ride around it. Infantry, artillery, cavalry, tank corps, engineers, and transport sections, were all in line. The whole affair made a very commendable showing for a country the size of Persia. In horses and horsemanship the Persians show up well, for they pride themselves on their horses, and the country is the land of the horse.

In case the various sheiks were not sufficiently impressed with this show they will be given an opportunity to see the aviation corps in action on Sat. The deserts and the mts. are no longer safe hiding places for a marauding tribe. A few machines can locate them very quickly and even aid in the attack. Down in Irak several mths. ago it took the British just about two days to locate and capture the leaders of a pillaging tribe of Arabs who thought to escape with some loot into the desert. The aeroplanes located them and a couple of armoured cars with the help of a Camel Corps did the rest. Reza Shah is building up a small air unit. At present they have about 11 planes, among them 3 Haviland bombers with Liberty motors, and 3 passenger machines capable of carrying 8 men each. Five officers have completed their training and are in charge, while 25 others have just about finished their course of study in France and 25 more are ready to leave for that country as soon as this first 25 return.

The army and its development represents the best that the new Shah has done for the country. Some tribes have been brought into subjection that have not been under control for 25 yrs. The method is a simple one. It consists of a raid resulting in the capture of the chief, his family, or both. These are brought to Teh. as hostages and their bodily welfare is then dependent on the good conduct of their tribe. It seems to work. We have 2 or 3 such ambassadors in town at present.

All of this represents the good side of the Shah. At another time I might have written a letter on some of the incidents of high-handed autocracy which exists in the country, but the letter is finished now, and as the Persians say, "Bassad", (Let it be!).

Yours very sincerely, Walter A. Groves.