Ancient and Fabulous Iran As That Country Is Today

WALTER A. GROVES, '19

To Lafayette Alumni Iran needs no introduction. Lafayette-in-Persia, under the leadership of H. M. Jordan, '95, assisted by a dozen other Lafayette graduates over the years, is a tradition which it hoped might again become a living one. Those who remember Lafayette-in-Persia will be interested in what has been happening in Iran since that week came to an end in 1941.

When war broke out in Europe in 1939, Iranians knew that it was only a question of time till their land should become involved. In the early days of the war, under her dictator king, Reza Shah Pahlavi, she tried to maintain her traditional role of playing Russia against Britain. As long as the Bear was an ally of the Czar there was some hope of success, but when, in 1941, Germany declared war against her bought and paid-for partner (such a policy could no longer be continued), Iran's situation was further complicated by the fact that prior to 1939 and following a great number of German "engineers" had immigrated to Iran. Conservative estimates in June of 1940 placed their number in Teheran, the capital city, at better than three thousand. Such a situation on the borders of Iraq and Russia, particularly in view of the precarious position of the British in Egypt and the Russians at Stalingrad, could not be tolerated so that in the last week of August, 1941, British and Italian troops invaded the country from the west.

1 In the early 90's the Persian Government desired that the country should be known as Iran. Following the return of Reza Pahlavi, the FM. The Foreign Office announced that the name Persia would again be permitted.

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3 The role of the later Shah in the summer of 1939 the Minister of Education was opposed to it and went on strike. All foreign schools were closed down. Negotiations affecting this royal divorce were completed in the summer of 1926. The new curriculum was approved in 1930 by the Iranian government. On the death of Reza Shah, president of Iran, in 1941, the king, 1940-1941, died in jail, summer of 1944.

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The resistance which these troops of Britain and Russia met, could not even be called "tacit resistance." The Iranian army under which the king had spent the greater part of the country's resources for twenty years was so saturated with greed, intrigues, and fear that the troops in the field were entirely without instructions, if they could obtain any, from their headquarters.

This military defense was a sad blow to many, and yet those aware of the real situation could not have been surprised. The entire military structure, for all the expenditures, consisted of little more than window dressing. One illustration will suffice. The writer knows of a regiment that was issued water cisterns which were rusted only on the side that hung away from the body, and which was visible on the parade ground. The side of the canteens that hung next to the body was useless. In such ways did the army contractors and their friends line their pockets. Report such an item, however, would wrack, without foreign help, to enforce the demands that the German "engineers" be removed from his country. Therefore, within three weeks of the invasion the king was forced to leave in favor of his son, Mohammed Reza. This son is remembered as the Crown Prince who married the young Egyptian princess, Fawzia, the sister of the present ruler of Egypt, Ismail-Reza.

The new king took steps at once to make the best of a bad job. The help of the Allies the Germans were soon convinced, either by bribery or force, or placed under arrest. Constitutional government was restored. A new parliament was elected. Freedom of the press was granted, and newspapers of all description sprang up all over the place, almost overnight. The tyrannical political parties representing all manner of political opinion were organized. As the elections real people actually ran their sons, some who had lived in the country for the twenty years prior to 1941, had played a little game for that same purpose. The new parliament, which was elected in 1922 and revised in 1927, was invited back again to elect its successor. With this new parliament there was a marked improvement in government, as Iran had become a constitutional monarchy.
WALTER A. GROVER, '10, PH.D.

In March 1948 Dr. Grover received Iran's highest honorary award, the Scientific Decoration, First Class, for his 25 years of work in education in that country. He received his B.A. degree from Lafayette and B.S. and M.A. degrees from Abilene Christian College. As a boy he served with the 4th Texas Cavalry and was a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy. He was a member of the Lafayette class of 1913. He worked with the Red Cross during World War I, and has been a member of the Lafayette class of 1913.