

Land of Omar Khyyam, Persia, Startling Beauty

It Is Still the True Fairyland of the East — The Storied Cities of Damascus.

The ancient land of Irak where once and Darius and Xerxes held magnificent sway, is still the true fairyland of the East. There are majestically beautiful mountains, and plains adorned with groves of poplars and cypresses, and everywhere there are brooks and little rivers plunging down from the peaks.

After the deserts of Asia Minor, where the storied cities of Damascus and Bagdad lie baking upon the sands, to cross the border into Persia is like entering the Paradise promised by the prophet.

From Bagdad a single-line railroad runs northward to the town of Khanaquin, fifteen miles from the border that separates the new Kingdom of Irak from Persia. A tiny locomotive pulls the coaches, painted in glaring white, across the desert from Bagdad to Khanaquin, but from there to the border one must travel by motor or camel.

A long, rambling shed of baked brick blocks the trail just over the line in Persia. And about it, in one of the most desolate landscapes on earth, are stationed hundreds of soldiers. Apparently the Shah of Persia, is taking no chances with his neighbor, the King of Irak.

Land of Startling Beauty

Once across the border, however, the desolation gives way with startling suddenness to scenes of indescribable beauty. The trail toward central Persia leads almost immediately into the mountains, where jagged peaks shoot upward higher than the Swiss Alps. Cool breezes drift down from the crags and green valleys spread between them. Thousands and thousands of little streams flow down the mountain sides and the sound of water is always in the traveller's ears.

Despite the beauty of the landscape the country is very sparsely settled. Only occasional shepherds are to be seen, wandering through the valleys a widely used one is to throw a live with their sheep. For the most part these peasants are tall, fine-looking men main until the spot under it is definitely they wear the long, baggy trousers, the loose shirts and the high, round Persian cap, with its incongruously short visor.

The first city on the route — a

day's journey from the Irak border is Kermanshah, world-famous for its rugs. It lies in a valley, with glorious mountain peaks lifting their heads all about it. It is a beautiful, but a treacherous place. The nearby swamps breed mosquitoes and the visitor is warned of the danger of ugly diseases like yellow fever, typhoid and malaria. Kermanshah, to an even greater degree than other residents of the East, have the ability to ignore the value of time. That, perhaps is why their rugs are sought by connoisseurs the world over. It means nothing for the weavers to spend a month on a square foot of weaving. They work from no printed patterns. All of the traditional designs—many of them extremely complicated are carried in the memories of the weavers and handed by example from generation to generation.

To Test Your Persian Rug

The weaving of a Kermanshah rug does not finish it, however. The value and beauty increases only after the rug has been given strenuous use. It must be trod upon by thousands of feet.

Therefore Kermanshah merchants spread their costly rugs on the footway in front of their shops for passers by to walk on. Mud and dust also play apart in the seasoning. After the rug is sufficiently soiled it is cleaned and offered for sale.

Of course cheap rugs are put on sale as soon as they are woven, but a wise buyer seeking a really fine Kermanshah will make sure that his purchase has been exposed to sun and rain and the feet of thousands.

Such apparent misuse brings the warm and beautiful colors of the rugs to their best. One of the interesting sights of the Kermanshah bazaars is the testing of fine rugs. There are many ways of telling the quality, but seen, wandering through the valleys a widely used one is to throw a live with their sheep. For the most part these peasants are tall, fine-looking men main until the spot under it is definitely they wear the long, baggy trousers, the loose shirts and the high, round Persian cap, with its incongruously short visor.

The road from Kermanshah south-

ward to Hamadan and Isfahan, ancient capital of the Persian Empire, leads through the Piatak Pass onto the great central plateau extending through the country. It leaps upward more than 7,000 feet in a few miles, through scenery of the utmost grandeur. Every few yards it is cut by fountains, or rushing rivulets flowing from hundreds of springs.

On this route are to be seen some of the most impressive evidences of Persia's ancient power. Near Hamadan, chiseled on the face of a 1,700-foot cliff, are the famous Behistun carvings, depicting the Emperor Darius in all his glory. The potentate is shown, attended by nobles, placing his foot on the prostrate body of an enemy. A long line of other enemies, in chains, stretches behind him. Twenty miles out of Isfahan are the magnificent Bisotum carvings of scenes from ancient Persian life.

One of the most enchanting features of travel in Persia is the Tchah Khana, or tea house. All Persians drink great quantities of tea, and every trail through the country is dotted with Tchah Khanas. They are open all day and all night, and for approximately the twentieth of a cent will serve a guest a tremendous glass of delicious brew.

These little inns invariably are situated on the banks of one of the thousands of lovely streams. In front of each of them is a pole about fifty feet high. From the top of it hangs a lighted lantern, as soon as night settles down, placed there to guide travellers from afar.

Most of the inns are in groves of trees. Lanterns are hung from the branches of these, and small tables are placed beneath them. Guests sit in the open, under the stars, sipping water and watching the fantastically beautiful effect of moonlight on mountain peaks.

Water-Pipes and Pleasing Music

The Arabian Nights atmosphere is made complete by circles of long-robed Persians, sitting in circles, chatting and smoking water pipes.

From somewhere about the inn, usually from the flat roof, music floats more often than not. Persian music is more pleasing to Western ears than that of most other Oriental countries. It is just sufficiently exotic to point the atmosphere of romantic fantasy engendered by the Tchah Khanas.

As one approaches any town or village the roads become more frequented. Cherry, sun-browned peasants, riding or leading tiny donkeys, make their way to and from the food bazaars. Fruits, and melons are plentiful

and there is a variety of garden produce.

There are beggars of course, as there are everywhere in the East, but in Persia they are not as numerous as elsewhere, probably because the new Shah has issued edicts against soliciting alms. The Shah's police are everywhere, patrolling even the unfrequented highways. Their European uniforms seem strangely incongruous among a people and in a landscape that has changed so little since Omar the Tentmaker wrote his verses.

No reader of the Rubaiyat can forget Omar in his native land. Time and time again, the traveller, seeing groups of bearded, white-bearded Persians resting in one of the many groves, is compelled to recall the famous quatrain beginning "A book of verses underneath the bough, a jug of wine, a loaf of bread—"

Lives of a Bengal Lancer

"Lives of a Bengal Lancer." This has been the gag flicker of Hollywood ever since it was listed for production, and the first shots for it were taken about four years ago. Now it is not only completed but turns out to be a great picture. One of the best melodramas fashioned in the movie town. The yarn about the story of the making of this picture is almost as interesting as the flicker.

Ernest Schoedsack, who did such pictures as "Chang," went to India with a camera and a crew and started to film atmosphere and background scenes. The Schoedsack expedition cost about \$200,000. In the "Bengal Lancer" you're now seeing on the screen only 100 feet of film of the many reels Schoedsack shot is used.

Only two of the cast first announced for this picture now play in it. The two are Gary Cooper and Sir Guy Standing. They were in such a hurry for Standing to come to Hollywood and start work in this flicker that he had to fly here.

The role now played by Franchot Tone was to be portrayed by Frederic March, and the part played by Richard Cromwell was to be played by Richard Arlen. Every writer working at Paramount had a chance on the script and the screen isn't big enough to list the names of every writer who contributed dialogue. Recently all the Paramount writers gathered at the Cendome at a dinner in honor of one of their chiefs. At this dinner Writer Grover Jones stood up and said "Will any writer who didn't work on 'Lives of a Bengal Lancer' leave the room please." No one got up.

An amazing thing about the picture is that outside of the reel shot by Schoedsack and the transparency shot, every scene in the flicker is genuine and was made on location. The lone transparency scene is used only because Henry Willcox, after a few days' shooting, was replaced by Franchot Tone. In order not to remake all of the railroad station sequence, with Tone, a portion of it was matched. For example, when Gary Cooper sees Tone at the station, makes a remark about how fussy Tone is about his bags, there is a long shot of Tone with his back to the camera; that is, you believe it is Tone, but it is really Willcox.

All the big battle and outdoor sequences are genuine. The first big battle scene was made on location at Lone Pine, which is about 200 miles from Hollywood and whose main inhabitants are Indians. The company stayed there ten days.

The pig-sticking episode was filmed on the Paramount ranch. The parade ground sequences were filmed about 60 miles from Hollywood at a place known as Buffalo Flats, one of the few places in the United States where a buffalo still can be found.

There were many accidents while working on these locations. During the parade ground sequence, Cooper was thrown from his horse and production was delayed. When Cooper rushed out with his machine gun, he let it fall on Franchot Tone, who received a sprained back—production again delayed. Then after these two players returned, Director Henry Hathaway got the grip and production was again called off for a week.

The picture itself, not counting the four years in preparation, took 58 shooting days. An average picture takes about 25 days, and there are some quickie companies which turn out a flicker in eight days. The "Lives of a Bengal Lancer" cost about \$1,300,000—this includes every-

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