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**IRAN
AND
SURROUNDING COUNTRIES**

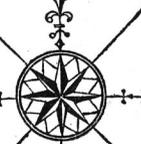
Black Sea

Caspian Sea

TURKEY

U. S. S. R.

W I E



• Tabriz
L. Urumiya

SYRIA

River Euphrates
River Tigris

Oil Fields

TEHRAN

Great Salt Desert

AFGHANISTAN

IRAN

IRAQ

Baghdad

Isfahan
Julfa

• Yezd
Lut Desert

Kerman

Mediterranean Sea
PALESTINE

Jerusalem

TRANS-JORDAN

Basra

Perspolis
Shiraz

Persian Gulf

Quetta

BALUCHISTAN

ARABIA

INDIA
Karachi

Arabian Sea

“DAWDSON” THE DOCTOR

G. E. Dodson of Iran

By
A FRIEND OF IRAN



6, SALISBURY SQUARE
LONDON, E.C.4

1940

*Made and Printed in Great Britain by
The Camelot Press Limited
London and Southampton*

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“I shall fetch Dawson——”

IT was summer time in Iran. A sudden clatter of feet and the sound of shouting broke the stillness of the warm, early morning. Malekeh, who had been sitting in a shady corner of the veranda, sleepily cleaning rice for dinner that night, jumped up and listened. Then she pulled her gaily-printed cotton wrap or *chaddur* around her so that only her eyes were visible, and ran across the courtyard and down the passage that led to the village street. What she saw as she looked up the rough pathway made her turn and shout back to her mother and the servant, who were busy stirring pots in the little smoke-blackened kitchen.

“Mother, Rababeh, come quickly. There’s been an accident.” And then as the little group carrying a small figure came nearer, she shrieked: “It’s Mahmoud! He’s dead. Allah! What shall we do?”

They all ran out crying, their chaddurs flying behind them, and when they reached the party Fatomeh Khanum fell on her knees beside her son, tearing her hair and scratching her cheeks. Malekeh took one look at her brother, saw his eyelids flutter, and shaking her mother by the shoulder said: “Khanum, he’s not dead after all. Don’t make that noise.” At that Mahmoud opened his eyes, gave a feeble grin, said: “What a hubbub, I’m not dead yet,” and fainted off again.

As they carried him in and laid him on a mattress on the floor of the big, cool guest room, the men told them

what had happened. "The usual thing," said one. "Like my boy last year, and Hassan's daughter the year before. He was up in the tree by the well above the village shaking down mulberries. A branch broke and he came down with it. God has been very merciful. Mahmoud has only broken a leg. Don't worry, he will soon be all right."

Mahmoud's father was spending a few days in the city of Kerman four miles away, and, according to custom, Fatomeh Khanum did not send the bad news to her husband. Why worry him? He would find out soon enough. Meanwhile the village bonesetter came and straightened the broken leg, wrapping it up with much yolk of egg and saffron, during which painful business Mahmoud was mercifully still unconscious.

But when Ahmad Agha arrived next evening on his white donkey he was not too pleased. The big pannier loads of goods from the city lay in a corner of the room forgotten, while he sat on the floor by his only son and noted his bright eyes and flushed face. "Why did you not tell me?" he said. "I would have asked Dawdson to come out with me. Mahmoud has fever and I do not feel at rest about him."

"That is only the shock he had," answered his wife. "You know that Meerza Ali always sets bones so well, and he will soon be healed, God willing. Besides, an unclean foreigner would only cut off his leg, and I would rather he died than go into Paradise with one leg."

"What old-fashioned nonsense you women talk of clean and unclean," said Ahmad Agha. "And, of course, he would not cut off his leg. Why one of my

brother's little carpet weavers in the city got a disease in her spine last year, and if you will believe it, Dawson took a piece of bone from her leg, and put it in her spine. It now grows there and she is well. A man like that can do miracles.”

“Have you seen him, *Agha* (father)?” asked Malekeh. “He must be a wonderful person, like a prophet.”

“What do you expect to see, little donkey?” and her father laughed in spite of his worry. “A shining figure in a turban like our blessed Prophet Ali (on whom be peace!) in the picture I brought you last week? No, he looks very much like one of us, for he wears a beard unlike most foreigners. He is dignified as befits a man of his great learning, but he is quiet and humble too. I have often seen him for he is always going about the town visiting sick people. I do not know why a man like that should work here. I suppose he makes a great deal of money, and yet they say he works for the poor as much as for the rich.”

“Oh, all Europeans are rich,” retorted Fatomeh Khanum. “I expect the English Government sends him money.”

“Doubtless, doubtless,” said her husband. “But if Mahmoud is not better in the morning, I shall fetch Dawson.” And the big man got up and went over to his bundle of bedding, announcing that he was going to sleep.

Next morning after a bad and semi-delirious night Mahmoud was breathing quickly and groaning: “My leg, my leg.” It looked swollen above the rags, and when Ahmad Agha saw it he said he was going to Kerman at once.

"But what shall we have to pay?" moaned his wife.

"I don't know, and I don't care. Mahmoud is my only son, and Dawdson is the one man who can cure him," and the head-man shouted to a servant to have his ass saddled. Malekeh clutching her chaddur to her, ran after her father down the passage from the courtyard to the door.

"Bring Dawdson back quickly, Agha," she whispered. "I am frightened for my brother."

He mounted the ass, and looking down at his daughter, whose face, half-hidden, was pale from the night's watching by Mahmoud, said gently: "Do not fear, little daughter." Then looking up at the sky above them he added: "First God; afterward Dawdson." The ass started off at a quick amble down the narrow street, and Malekeh stood watching her father for a moment. He was head-man of the village, and the passers-by saluted him respectfully, calling after him: "Go in peace" when he shouted to them that he was going to Kerman to fetch Dawdson to his son.

The long morning dragged by. Villagers came and went, curious for details, and hoping to see the doctor. One old lady stayed on for most of the day, feeling she was an authority on Dr. Dodson and his hospital.

"You need not fear," she said as Mahmoud's mother rocked herself to and fro. "My husband had a lump as big as his head sticking out of his side, and for a long time he was afraid to go to the hospital. But at last he did, and Dawdson cut him open, took out the lump, and sewed him up again. I saw it"—here she went into many details—"we were there for many weeks, and he was so kind." The old lady raised her hands in the air

and her eyes to heaven. "I cannot tell you how kind. Truly these Christians are merciful, more merciful than we the true Moslems. And he and my husband became friends, great friends. He would sit in the room for a long time when there was not a crowd of sick folk waiting for him, and talk about the crops, and what we sowed in our fields each year. He is a wise man and knows much about our country, not only how to cut people's stomachs open."

She was still talking when Malekeh, who had begun to nod with sleep, suddenly sat up straight. "Khanum, I hear a noise," she said. "It is an automobile coming up the street. It must be Dawdson himself!" She jumped to her feet, and calling to the servant to open the door, ran to re-fill and boil the samovar. Then she and her mother and the garrulous old lady, their faces closely covered, stood at the doorway leading into the room where Mahmoud lay, flushed and moaning, to see what would happen.

The man who came in briskly, her father bowing behind him, was not, she decided, very remarkable to look at. In spite of her father's warnings she was a little disappointed. He was slim and alert, rather pale and dark with a beard and glasses, more like one of themselves, she thought, than like the foreigners she had seen, big and red-faced. She liked his smile though as he turned and spoke reassuringly to her father. They came on and up the few steps from the courtyard into the big room where her brother lay looking rather frightened. As her father came and whispered to them that the *hakeem* (doctor) had had no lunch, for he had been seeing many patients until long after mid-day, and they

must quickly prepare something, Malekeh saw Dr. Dodson go over and kneel down by Mahmoud, take his hand and say something to him. What it was she could not hear, but when the doctor turned to give a few quiet orders to the assistant who had followed him in from the car carrying a bag, she saw that Mahmoud was no longer looking so frightened; he was smiling up at Dawson. Her heart warmed and she began to feel for the first time that day that her brother might get better.

The doctor was a long time bent over the leg: there was so much rag and plastered yolk of egg to get off gently. It must have hurt badly too, but Dawson kept saying things which made Mahmoud smile: that it took longer to get up a mulberry tree than to come down again, and that after this he had better keep to picking melons and cucumbers, it was safer!

At last he stood up and beckoning Ahmad Agha over to where the women were standing, said quietly: "Your son has a bad compound fracture. It should have been treated at once. You must let him come to hospital; I can do nothing here."

Fatomeh Khanum began to roll her head to and fro and to beat her breast. "Khanum," he said, "do not make a noise; you will frighten your son. If you want him to keep his leg you must let him come. See, if you will quickly put his things together I will take him myself in my car, and you can send the rest later on a donkey."

Ahmad Agha bowed low, and with many a rolling phrase expressed his gratitude, then led the doctor into another room where a cloth had been spread

on the ground, and served him with omelette and herbs, curds and cucumbers.

Meanwhile Malekeh and Fatomeh Khanum, helped by the old lady of much hospital experience, got together the necessary things, and in spite of various interruptions, they had the bundles ready by the time Dr. Dodson had finished a hurried lunch. “Now,” he said, “we will carry Mahmoud out and lay him on the back seat. My assistant will sit on the floor beside him to see that he does not roll off, and you, Khanum, will sit by my side. All your bedding can come on a donkey, can it not, and will be there in an hour.”

They got Mahmoud safely into the car; Fatomeh Khanum, in a flutter at the idea of sitting by the side of a strange man, was settled in the front seat with a collection of cucumbers, screws of tea and loaf sugar and other odds and ends done up in a large handkerchief on her lap, and then Dawson took the wheel. As he started the car he looked round and smiled at Malekeh and her father standing in the doorway. “Do not fear,” he said. “Have faith in God, and we will do all we can.”

Ahmad Agha bowed. “Yes, Agha Doctor. First God, afterwards you. Go in peace.”

The car moved off gently down the street, while the villagers looked out of their doorways. The last that Malekeh saw was Mahmoud’s face grey with pain but smiling because it was his first ride in a “ma-sheen”; one horrified eye peeping out from under her mother’s chaddur, and Dawson looking intently ahead as he drove the car carefully over the rough road.

Mahmoud was glad enough to get to the end of his

first car ride, and when he was lifted out hardly noticed the long, low hospital buildings, with their wide verandas along which he was hurried. It was strange to be laid down on a bed so far from the floor, and to lie between white sheets instead of under a quilt, but they felt cool to his hot face and hands, and he went into a sound sleep. When he awoke the setting sun was turning the whitewash of his little room deep red, and the friendly face of the doctor was smiling down at him.

"That's splendid, Mahmoud," he said. "I'm going to give you something to make you sleep all night like that, and then in the morning we will do something about that leg of yours."

Mahmoud managed to produce a rather feeble grin, though feeling a little apprehensive. "You won't—you won't take my leg off, will you, doctor?"

"Why no, I think I can promise to send you out with as many legs as you have now, and in a few months you'll be able to climb that mulberry tree again, *insha'allah* (God grant it)."

"Yes, *insha'allah*," echoed Fatomeh Khanum in the background, as Dr. Dodson went on his way to the next patient.

The next day or two went by in a haze of pain and unpleasant sensations for Mahmoud. He was hardly conscious of Malekeh and his mother as they moved about the room. "Have I still got my leg?" was his first intelligent remark when Dr. Dodson called in on his rounds one evening, and he would not be quite convinced until the doctor smilingly pulled back the covers. By half raising his head Mahmoud could see a

long, white object swathed in many bandages stretching side by side with his good leg to the bottom of the bed. He was rather disappointed a few days later when he was told that he would have to stay in hospital with his leg in plaster for several months.

“Better than going home sooner without it,” said the doctor, “though I should have made you a beautiful wooden leg.”

“You mean you yourself would have made it?” asked Mahmoud incredulously, thinking it a very surprising thing that the great doctor should do such menial work.

“Why not? I do quite a lot of carpentering, and used to do a good deal more when I was your age. In the ‘carpenter’s shop’ at school I learnt to make shelves and frames and cupboards and other useful things, and in the holidays I made things at home. It is good for a boy to learn such a trade as a hobby. You had better think of something to do during the next few months.”

“What can I do in bed?” asked Mahmoud.

“Well, you can read, you can draw and paint. We will think of something. I suppose you have been to school?”

“Yes,” answered the boy. “My father sent both me and my sister to school, but only in the village. We can read though.”

“Well,” said Dr. Dodson, “I will bring you some books. Meanwhile here is something to go on with. It is the story of the greatest carpenter who ever lived. You will like it, I think. Tell me about it when I come round to-morrow,” and taking a little green-covered copy of St. Luke’s Gospel out of his pocket, he gave it to Mahmoud, bowed to his mother and went out.

As soon as he had gone, Fatomeh Khanum came over and picking up the little book looked at it curiously. "I wish I could read," she said, holding the book upside down and peering at it. "Jesus Christ is one of our Prophets, and I have heard many stories of Him. But they say this book of the Christians is not the real Book that Jesus brought; that one went back to heaven, and this one was altered by the Christians."

"I shall read it any way," said her son. He was still reading it when his father came in with Malekeh that afternoon. The big, bearded man looked pleased to see his son well enough to read, and when he leant over to look at the book said: "Read it. It won't do you any harm. I read it myself years ago."

"Vai! Vai! We shall all be Christians yet," exclaimed Fatomeh Khanum from her corner, where she was busy with the teapot and samovar.

"No fear of that," laughed Malekeh, who was a staunch little Moslem, and never forgot her prayers or tried to get out of fasting during Ramazan, the fast month. "All the same, Agha, I want to go to the Christians' school. Two of the nurses in the women's hospital are my great friends now, and they went there. Please mayn't I?"

Her father laughed. "Well, let us see Mahmoud get well first, then I will think about it afterwards."

"I should like to go to the boys' school too," said Mahmoud. "Then afterwards I want to be a doctor like Dawdson. Not that I should ever be so clever. He can do anything. Do you know, Agha, he is a carpenter too? And Abul Qassem, the assistant, told me the other day that it was the doctor who collected all the money

for this hospital and planned the building of it, and told them just what to do and worked harder than any of them.”

“Yes,” said Ahmad Agha, waving his hands towards the buildings they could see beyond their veranda, “I remember when all this was being built. It took many years, but I am sure there is not a better one in all Iran, and it is strong enough to stand for ever. He is a great man, is Dawson.”

“I wonder why he chose to come to Kerman?” said Malekeh. “Could he not have made more money elsewhere than in our poor town?”

“Yes, I wonder why?” said her father thoughtfully. “Perhaps if we knew all about him we should understand. . . .”

CHAPTER I

WHY HE CAME

“SHIP ahoy! ahoy!” came a shout out of the dark night. Dodson ran up on deck to see what was afoot, and nearly collided with a man hurrying down in oilskins. “Just looking for you, Doctor,” he said. “One of the fleet has got a man with a broken leg, and they want you aboard.”

Quickly Dodson ran below to get his kit, climbed into the waiting boat, and was soon bobbing over the short, steep waves to where the shape of a fishing trawler loomed up through the driving rain. A rope ladder was let down over the swinging, swaying side, and he managed to scramble up without getting an icy bath. He had been doing much of this kind of thing during the last few weeks since he joined the hospital ship of the North Sea Mission to Fishermen.

“A dirty night,” he said to the captain as he shed his streaming oilskins before going below to set the injured fisherman’s leg.

“Been long on this job, Doctor?” asked the captain when they had got the man shipshape, and were about to lower him into the dinghy. “You don’t seem much of a landlubber.”

“Just about long enough to know aft from forrard,” laughed Dodson, “and in a few weeks I shall be ashore

again. Not for long though. I'm sailing as surgeon in a ship bound for South Africa after that. I have a sister out there, and since this war with the Boers broke out we have had very little news of her. Besides," he went on as he buttoned up his oilskins, "I am going out as a missionary some day, and as Africa is the country where I have always hoped to work, I want to see what it looks like."

As he saw him over the side into the dinghy dancing on the dark waters below, the captain thought to himself that evidently not all missionaries were the starchy folk he had vaguely imagined. "Good-night, Doctor," he shouted as the boat moved away. "And good luck to you, whether it be North Sea or Africa."

This strenuous life in a hospital ship among the deep sea fishermen was a kind of "look-out" experience for Everard Dodson. From it he could see how things that had happened to him when he was a boy, this present hard bit of training, and his hopes for the future were all part of God's big plan for him. He was doing this job on the Dogger Bank to get braced up in health, as well as to gain experience of medical work in hard conditions, for he wanted to be in trim for a great adventure which would need all the strength and skill he could give to it. He was going to be a medical missionary.

"You ought to be a surgeon," his mother had often told him years before as she watched his clever, slim fingers pinning out a butterfly's wings, or dissecting a dead bird he had found. "Dobbin" had been well-known as a keen "beetle hunter" at school, as well as

being one of the chief hopes of his side as a bowler in the First XI at Giggleswick. His love of natural history was responsible for some of his many escapades. When he was roaming over the near-by moors, or watching the birds and learning to imitate their calls, he never could remember the time, and so was often in hot water for unpunctuality. He took punishment like everything else, however, with great good humour, and his sudden hearty laugh always told people when "Dobbin" was about.

When later on he made up his mind that his mother was right—there could be no better life than a doctor's, especially a surgeon's, it was decided that he should go to "Bart's." He went up to the great London hospital soon after his eighteenth birthday. There he joined the Missionary Union. At intervals long letters came from old students who were now working abroad, and Dodson listened enthralled as accounts of their travels and work in far-off places were read out.

Before long he realized that God did not mean him only to be interested in what other people were doing. In the spring of 1892 he took the big step of signing the Student Volunteer Missionary Union's declaration card, promising to offer himself for work abroad.

His home at Thorpe Hamlet near Norwich had never looked lovelier, he thought, when he went home for the vacation that spring. He had great news for the family. "I want to go abroad as a medical missionary," he told them.

His father and two sisters, though sad at the thought of separation one day from the only son and brother, were really proud and thrilled that he had chosen such

a career. As for his mother—it was just what she had always hoped and prayed he would do, and she and his father gladly gave their consent.

But there was much to do and to learn yet before he could sail for the mission field. For when he arrived “out there” he would probably be alone. There would be no other doctors to confer with, no specialists to call in for consultation on some difficult case. He must learn all he could in every possible branch of medicine wherever “out there” was to be—and he hoped it would be Africa.

There was so much to learn that when four years later he became a fully-fledged doctor, he thought: “I have really just begun.” He stayed on another year at Bart’s, studying especially all he could about bone surgery, and even he did not guess how useful that was going to be in years to come. Then followed more hard work and experience at various hospitals—at Bath, at Nottingham Infirmary where he worked under a famous eye specialist, and at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. At this last hospital something unexpected happened. He fell in love with one of the Sisters whom he frequently saw as he worked in the operating theatre—Sister Emmie Wells. Soon they were engaged, for she gladly agreed to go abroad with him when he was ready.

But he had been working very, very hard, and that year he was having trouble with his chest. “You must get plenty of fresh air, and not work so hard,” they told him. “Now how can I do that and at the same time go on building up my experience and knowledge for work in a mission hospital?” he thought. It was then that some one made the suggestion: “Why not go in a

hospital ship among the deep sea fishermen?" The work had not long been started, and the North Sea Mission were wanting doctors. It was just what Grenfell, who had visited the Missionary Union at Bart's and thrilled them all with an account of life in Labrador, had done before going out there. Certainly it would be great experience in doing difficult work in hard conditions. So to the Dogger Bank Dodson went, and, as we have seen, a trip to South Africa was to follow.

He had a glimpse of the great continent where his hero, Alexander Mackay, had worked, and in the spring was back in England again. A little later he married, and the next year with six years of experience behind him since he had qualified, he and his wife offered themselves to the Church Missionary Society.

"The place where you are most needed is Iran," said Dr. Lankester, the medical mission secretary at the Society's head-quarters, when Dodson went up to London to discuss arrangements. "Are you willing to go there? I know you were hoping to do pioneer work in Africa, but Iran needs you more just now."

Dodson thought for a moment, and then said quietly: "We are ready to go wherever we are needed."

"That's splendid," said Dr. Lankester. "And you will find it is a real pioneer job in Kerman, the city in South Iran where we want you to go. There is a huge stretch of country without any hospital. We have one or two doctors working further north, but Kerman has only had a few visits from temporary doctors. It will be your job to build up the work right from the beginning."

The thought of the big task ahead thrilled the

Dodsons, and they soon got over their disappointment about Africa as they prepared and packed for the long journey and the seven years' work before them in a distant, inaccessible country. "We must take everything we need with us," Dodson told his wife. "And it must all be packed in cases that can be roped each side of a mule, for after we reach the Iranian coast by way of Russia and the Caspian Sea, we shall have a six weeks' journey with wagons, mules, horses, and anything else we can find before we reach Kerman down in the south."

At last all was ready and the good-byes said. On a September morning in 1903 the train steamed out of Liverpool Street station taking them on the first stage of their long, two months' journey to Iran.

CHAPTER II

SIZING UP THE TASK

“**O** PEN! Open!” There came a hoarse shouting and a shuffling of many feet in the street beyond the high wall. A white-faced servant carrying a lantern hurried into the room where the newly-arrived travellers were sitting with feet stretched to a welcome fire. The Dodsons were drinking good hot tea while they recounted some of the adventures of their long, two-months’ journey to Dr. Winifred Westlake, who had come to Kerman as a stranger a few months before.

“Oh, sir!” gasped the servant, “Some men who bleed,—how they bleed—want you to cure them.”

Dodson laughed across the teacups to his wife. “The news soon seems to have got round that we have arrived. Some one please come and interpret for me.” He got up and went out rather stiffly in his mud-spattered riding kit. The last few days of the caravan journey had been heavy going, as the autumn rains had started, and mules and horses had made slow progress in mud up to their fetlocks.

They were a wild-looking bunch of men who crowded round him in the courtyard, and three of them were a horrid sight. They had pulled off the rags from their hands and heads; their clothes and the ground around them were splashed with blood, and Dodson

saw that fingers had gone from their hands and their heads were minus ears.

“What on earth has happened to them?” he shouted through the hubbub of groans and cries for assistance from Allah, the prophets and, of course, from the new doctor, as he hurried them through to the little adjacent courtyard where a tiny makeshift hospital had been fixed up by the temporary doctors during the last two years. He managed to get at some of the story while he and his wife began to dress the wounds. The men were thieves who had been caught and punished in the usual way according to Moslem law, and their friends had brought them along to the new doctor, thinking that under his magic touch ears and fingers would almost grow again.

“I can’t do that, but at least I can stop them from bleeding to death,” he said, as he deftly did his job with the scanty equipment in the little surgery. No trolleys, no rows of shining instruments, hardly a bowl. His mind flew back to the last time he had had to do such work—the great, silent, white operating theatre, the gowned nurses moving swiftly about and ready to hand him any one of a hundred instruments. And above all the light! He laughed as he fumbled with the knot of a bandage hardly seen in the yellow glow of the oil lantern his wife held above.

“Not quite like the Norfolk and Norwich, is it? At any rate we know now, if we didn’t know before, that the stuff we brought out with us is needed. And so are we, if there are many more toughs like these!”

There was certainly no doubt about the need, he thought, a few weeks later. Twenty doctors could

hardly cope with it. Day after day as he rode down to the little hospital through the narrow-walled streets of the town he met with innumerable beggars, with yellow-skinned, wasted opium takers, with tiny deformed cripples from the carpet looms, or children with the smallpox rash actually visible. Truly, he thought, this has been called Iran's poorest city. He remembered how Jenghiz Khan, Tamerlane, Nadir Shah, and many another conqueror had passed that way, ravaging and plundering. No wonder there were so many beggars, for in order to punish the town for giving refuge to the last of the Zand dynasty, the usurping Shah of a hundred years before had almost demolished it, and had demanded 30,000 pairs of eyes as the price of withdrawal of his troops. Kerman had not recovered yet from the poverty caused by having so many disabled people.

Each day more of the townsfolk came to the dispensary. Sometimes as he was operating on a patient stretched on the wooden table made in the bazaar according to his careful instructions, an important visitor would be announced, a khan, one of the tribal chieftains with a following of wild-looking servants. Or it might be a stout, much-beturbaned mullah, a Moslem priest come from one of the many mosques in the town. Visitors in Iran, he had discovered, cannot be asked to wait or to come another time though the heavens fall, but neither can a patient be left with his abdomen cut open. He found a way out which satisfied curiosity, created much confidence, and pleased everybody—he asked the visitors to bring their honourable presences into the "operating theatre." And so into the curtained

passage way, promoted to this use because of its skylight, they would come. They brought in dust and heat, and doubtless many germs as well. They used up much of the small space and asked innumerable questions. "But I must gain their confidence," said Dodson. "I want them to know us well and trust what we do. If they do that they will want to help build the new hospital."

"The new hospital"—that thought began to fill his mind. For how could he ever deal with all these difficult cases, how could the love of Christ be really shown, as he felt it ought to be, through the best possible surgery and careful nursing, when quarters were so cramped and inconvenient and equipment was almost nil? "I must build," he thought, "build something which will really help us to show the love and power of Christ."

But to build a hospital such as he pictured would take a great deal of money, and the little compounds of the three houses rented in the Parsi quarter were crowded out with the poorer people. They were the folk he loved to help, but many were treated free, and the tiny fees of the others would never pay for their medicine, let alone put up a big new building.

With the coming of spring which was followed by the warm days of May, the little wards and courtyards grew stifflingly hot. Each of the wooden beds made by the doctor's orders in the bazaar ("Thank heaven," said Dodson, "I am a carpenter too!") was filled as soon as the last occupant, praising Allah and the English hakeem alternately, had gone home. Soon even the

little waiting room was used as a ward, and the out-patients had to stand or squat round the door of the hakeem's tiny consulting room. Here Dodson would sit and try to think about the symptoms and needs of one patient at a time, while twenty others clamoured and groaned outside.

There were some who came with smallpox, easy enough to diagnose, and quickly isolated. Others came with typhoid, typhus, and many other fevers and ailments not always so easy to recognize. Sometimes the compounds would be full of strange wild folk from the tribes who wandered with their flocks in the mountainous districts around Kerman, and lived in black tents woven from the hair of their goats. They often spoke a dialect which no one understood, and with many gesticulations and a few words of Persian would try to tell Dodson of their diseases, or show him their wounds received in some skirmish with the Government's tax collectors.

At all times of the day or night would come the opium cases—opium eaters who had taken a little too much and who had to be brought back from their heavy, drugged sleep; or babies who had crawled to where the brown stick of opium lay unnoticed on the floor and had liked the sweet taste. Some, in spite of all Dodson's efforts, would sleep their lives away. All had to be treated at once, and soon every one, even the doorkeeper, knew exactly what to do for them if the doctor happened to be out.

Many sick babies were brought to him too, and tiny deformed carpet weavers whose legs had grown crooked through sitting from dawn till sunset at the

looms. Their parents were usually opium takers who sent their little children to work in the dark, stuffy weaving rooms, and used their wages to buy the drug.

Dodson was fonder than ever of children since his own small Robert had been born in the summer, and he longed to straighten out their crooked little limbs. His mind kept going back to all he had studied about bone surgery at Bart's, and he wished with all his heart for the equipment he had used there.

"There are a thousand things we want," he said to his wife. "I am going to write to Bart's to see if the Missionary Union there will send us out an operating table. This month we have enough saved from fees to get the wards properly whitewashed. But that's almost nothing when you think of the job ahead of us and the size of the country we have to serve. Why, the next hospital at Yezd is twelve days' caravan journey from here! On the east of us there is not a single one until you get to Quetta—700 miles away. We simply cannot make our little hospital do for more than another two years, before beginning to build a new one."

"How are we going to set about getting the money?" asked his wife.

"God will show us ways," replied Dodson. "He sent us here, and He knows we cannot do our best work for Him in these cramped quarters. For one thing, I believe that some of our kind and wealthy Iranian friends would support beds if we suggested it to them, and they would probably help us to find land on which to build."

It was a good idea, for he was making many friends in the city. They had found out that whenever any one

was taken ill the Christian doctor could be relied upon to come immediately. Often the call would come at night, and he would set off on his horse, a mounted servant following him with a bag of instruments and medicines, for it was disrespectful to the patient to call alone. Sometimes there would be only the light of the stars shining clear and brilliant from the vast cloudless arch of the sky, against which the bare, rocky hills and mountains surrounding Kerman stood out sharp and black. Then the doctor and his companion would have to go warily, picking their way by the glow of their long, folding lanterns. The narrow, high-walled streets were full of holes and stones, and a shadow might prove to be a pit to trip the horses, or a street dog or jackal who would slink away with a snarl. Sometimes the radiant moon would make everything as light as day, and, if the patient lived outside the city, Dodson would feel he could gallop for miles over the hard, gravelly desert that stretched away to the foot of the hills.

Some of his friends were among the poorest in the town, some of them were men of the merchant and official class. But whichever they were he always made time to sit and sip tea courteously. They liked his quiet and dignified way. He had grown a beard in the Iranian style so as to look less young and inexperienced. They liked too, his ready laugh when one of their witty sayings amused him. After a year or two ‘‘Dawdson’’ had made a name, and especially for hard work. Not one of them had ever worked as hard as he.

‘‘You know, Agha Doctor, you work too hard,’’ said one of his best friends, the chief mullah of the city, whose title was the Imami Jume. Dodson had visited

a sick member of the old mullah's household, and now they were sitting on his veranda with tall glasses of sherbet and a dish piled with apricots before them. "You are getting very thin," he went on, "and if you are not careful you will catch a disease from one of those poor people who come to your dispensary. Besides you will never get much money from them."

Dodson laughed. "No, if it were for money I should certainly never have come to Kerman. But they are just the people I want to help. You are a learned man. You have doubtless read how Jesus Christ, the Saviour, helped and healed the poor and sick, and He has told us, His followers, to do the same."

"Of course, of course," said the old mullah nodding his head with its great white turban. "Jesus the Messiah is a Prophet of ours too. We Moslems cannot say what you say about Him. We believe that Allah is One, and there is none other beside Him. But Jesus, the son of Mary, had great power. He could even raise the dead."

"You will read His blessed Gospel for yourself if I bring a copy and present to your most high and honourable presence, will you not?" Dodson asked quietly. "From its holy words you will understand better what Jesus Christ did and what He was, than from anything I can say. It is because of what I have read there that I am here in Kerman, and wish like Him to help the poor and ill who cannot help themselves."

There was silence for a moment. Then Dodson leant forward and stroked the exquisite carpet on which they were sitting. "Have you been to any of the weaving rooms?" he asked the Imami Jumeah. "Do you know of

the state of the little children who sit for so many hours on those narrow benches weaving these lovely carpets of yours? Their legs are cramped and their lungs get ruined by the fluff and the bad air. What could I not do for them and their poor little crooked legs if only I had the room and the equipment!”

“You have such a small, unworthy house,” replied the mullah. “Why does not your rich Government get you a big one and send you more equipment?”

“Government?” echoed Dodson. “Why we have nothing to do with the Government of Britain. The money that comes to us is simply collected by people who love God and want to do His work. But I don’t want it all to come from Britain. The rich and honourable people of Kerman like yourself should help this work.”

The mullah smiled. “Ah,” he said, “I see where you are getting to now. You think an old priest like myself who has been a judge too will be very rich after all these long years of fleecing the poor, and should now give some of it back to them. Well, it would have much merit; perhaps more than a pilgrimage. What do you want me to do?”

Dodson leaned forward eagerly. “Give money for one bed which shall always be known as yours, and all through the year every patient who lies there will do so because you have paid for all his treatment, his operations, his medicines. Get your friends to do the same. If only these poor patients could be paid for by you rich people, we could save enough to start building before long. I want some land too, a good place outside the city with fresh air from the desert, and then——”

"Wait, wait," chuckled the old man. "By Allah! You must think I am a great sinner if I need to acquire as much merit as that by good deeds! Perhaps there are one or two sins though," he added, stroking his beard. "I will give you enough for a bed—and God is merciful."

Dr. Dodson rode back delighted to tell his friends at the hospital. Others followed the chief mullah's example. The help was erratic and not very big, but it was enough to make Dodson sit down one night with pencil and paper and begin to plan the new hospital, and to calculate how soon he could get sufficient of it built to allow them to move out from the city. In two years' time perhaps they could start. At first they would build just two wards, with the operating theatre and dispensary. And so at every odd minute after the long morning in the noisy, crowded compounds, or in the evening when his round of visits was done, he would get out his plan and add a little bit here and improve another corner there, while the building account at the bank very slowly grew.

CHAPTER III

DIGGING FOUNDATIONS

DODSON'S plan for the new hospital was going to take longer to work out than he and his friends could ever have guessed. One day there was excited talk among the crowd gathered to hear the reading of the Book in the shady corner of one of the verandas.

"But they say it was not cholera at all," said one. "What was it then? Nothing else kills so quickly." "Does it not. What then of poison?" "But both of them died. Who should want to kill both bride and bridegroom?"

Dodson put down his book. "What is all this talk?" he asked, seeing it was useless to continue the reading. There was a chorus of replies. It appeared that at a big wedding feast the night before at the house of a wealthy Parsi (a member of the ancient Persian race whose religion was taught them by Zoroaster in the reign of Cyrus) both bride and bridegroom had suddenly been taken ill, and within a few hours were dead. And not only they; now, it seemed, some of the guests were seriously ill, and two had already died.

That afternoon one of the chief Parsis came to see Dodson and Dr. Winifred Westlake. "There is talk of poisoning," he said. "We must try to find out the truth. We all trust you. Are you willing to come with me to the

Tower of Silence?" This was a place enclosed with a high wall, far out in the desert, where the Parsis laid their dead and which no one who did not belong to the Parsi faith had ever entered.

It was not a pleasant task. When they had found no trace of poison, and were coming away from that grim place of vultures, Dodson said: "I believe this is cholera." They were certain of it later when they heard that one of a party of pilgrims just returned from the northern shrine-city of Meshed had died, and that he had been using a stream which flowed through the poor little bride's garden. He must have brought the cholera with him.

Next day and for many months after there was the sound of hurried knocking at the hospital door, and breathless voices imploring the hakeem to come quickly—"The cholera has come to our house." The town began to empty; mullahs, Iranian doctors, wealthy merchants, all who could, fled to villages and garden houses in the mountains, some escaping, some taking the infection with them. Still the two Christian doctors kept on, visiting from morning to night, finding hovels with dead and dying side by side, beseeching and goading others into taking the proper precautions and to burn bedding and infected clothes. Then, to their horror, two patients in hospital showed the dreaded symptoms. They died, and all except the little ward for women had to be closed. It was a bad blow, but at least, thought Dodson, people are learning to come to us, and they may understand that followers of Christ are helped not to be afraid, even of cholera.

But how very weary they were, and how they longed

for just one or two of England's many doctors to help them fight the battle which was now raging right through the city. Then one day Dodson felt not only weary but ill. He struggled on until a rash appeared; it was scarlet fever. For five weeks Dr. Westlake had to tackle the work alone, while Dodson got what nursing he could from half-trained assistants. His wife had to direct them from a distance, for their baby must be kept free from all these diseases if possible.

When he got back to work again the cholera was waning, and people from the hills were cautiously returning to the city. And so although the building plan had stayed in its drawer for many a day, and the bank balance was as before—for no one had time or desire to think of fees during a cholera epidemic—still the doctors had made many friends, and people had come to depend on them and to believe their word. “These Christians are more merciful than we Moslems,” was the generous verdict.

A month or two later an official-looking packet was brought to Dodson. When he opened it he found it was a letter of thanks for what they had done from the Government in Tehran. And the Parsis never forgot. A letter came from them too, signed by the leader of the community and his friends, and enclosing fifty tomans (£10) for the hospital. “We ask Almighty God to help the Missionary Society and all missionaries,” they wrote.

The two years that Dodson had said was the longest time they could stay in the cramped quarters went by. Still at the end of a long day of clamour and of work

in trying conditions, he would go to his desk and take out the beloved plan. But there was hardly enough in hand to do more than dig the wells yet, he would think ruefully—always the first consideration in an almost rainless country.

It was clear that "building" at the moment would have to be of another kind. For one thing he simply must get hold of the language. With the help of Avetic the Armenian, and Yahya the Moslem who had become a Christian, he could manage to make himself understood when talking to his patients about their bodies, but he needed a more fluent tongue to tell them about Jesus Christ for love of Whom he was doing his best to cure their ailments.

So away he went with Yahya his faithful shadow, who was language teacher and hospital assistant in one, to a village a few miles out of the city. The warm spring sun had already brought out the leaves on the mulberries and the lilacs into bloom. Hoopoes, the black and white striped birds who announce the spring, called their soft "Hood, hood, hood," and the snow-capped tops of the distant mountains glinted against a sky of deepest blue. It was very peaceful after the city. He would not hear a word of English for a week or two, and he hoped that when he stood again with the Book in his hand in front of the crowd in the hospital compound, or was led into some deep religious question by his friend the mullah, he would be able to tell them what he longed to, and not merely what he could.

Ten days of hard study went by, broken only by the morning's doctoring of the patients who gathered at his door from the neighbouring villages. Then one

morning a hospital servant rode up to the little house bringing mail and letters from the city.

"Are all well?" asked Dodson.

"*Alhamdu'lillah!* (Praise God!) All are well and send their respectful salaams," answered the servant, not liking to give bad news. Dodson's face grew grave as he read the first letter. They must pack up and return at once. Dr. Westlake was seriously ill with typhoid.

Throughout the summer Dodson was a "lone hand" as his Iranian friends told him. When at last Winifred Westlake had got the better of the illness which very nearly killed her, he was so tired out that they decided to close the hospital for a time, and go away to the hills to find some little green oasis where they might rest and recover.

"I have a house in a little village which is like *Behesht* (Paradise)," said his friend the Imami Jume. "It is yours; you may stay in it as long as you like. You will need, of course, to take your own chairs and beds such as you English like, and it is a poor place, unworthy of you. But there you will not need to do any work."

Dodson thanked the kindly old mullah, and accepted gladly, but laughed when he said: "No work." "You don't imagine, do you, that I can stop them from finding out that a doctor has come to the village? They will gather round like flies at the sweetmaker's shop in the bazaar. No, I must take my case of medicines. And also I wish to take a lantern and show pictures of the stories in the *Taurat* and *Injeel* (Old and New Testaments). Will you graciously grant permission?"

The old mullah was interested to hear of such a

wonderful invention, and said with true Iranian courtesy that such stories could do nothing but good, and, of course, the house was no longer his but Dr. Dodson's and he could do just what he liked there.

How peaceful it was in the little house. The long doors opened out from each room on to a vineyard, hanging with bunches of grapes not yet ripe, and full of the cool sounds of a stream which rushed through it from the mountains above to water the orchards of the village below.

But not for long were they to enjoy it. "A touch of fever, nothing more," Dodson said as he sat one evening with flushed face and throbbing head, watching with the others as the setting sun gilded the tips of the great mass of the Jupa Mountains above them. It proved to be more than that, and for two months he lay fighting the same enemy, typhoid. Once again Dr. Westlake came to the rescue. Later as he watched the grapes in the vineyard ripen, Dodson longed with all his heart to be done with this series of misfortunes. When, oh when, was it going to be possible to build the new hospital? And yet it was not wasted time. There was building of another kind going on in spite of these mishaps, and sometimes because of them.

"There are now many friends of the medical mission in this village," he wrote home at the end of their stay. "Some have been helped to give up taking opium, and one has decided to follow Christ."

The vines were turning crimson and gold with the first sharp breath of autumn when at last Dodson was well enough to go back to the city. All the village turned out to say: "Go in peace!" and "God be your

keeper!" to their friend as the little cavalcade of donkeys and mules passed down the street. As for Dodson, though he was sorry to leave these friendly folk, he was eager to be at work again. Soon he and his wife and Dr. Westlake were back in the throng and noise of the little courtyards, or stumbling along the muddy winter streets as though there had been no interlude.

The years began to go by quickly, and though the sum of money Dodson needed to start building seemed to take so long to save up, and there were so many hitches, yet all kinds of things happened to cheer them on. There were the great days when new stores arrived from England. The narrow roads outside the hospital would be full of the jingle of bells and the stamping of mules or shuffling of camels impatient to be unloaded. "The caravan has arrived!" the word would go round, and Dodson and the others would delightedly unpack the cases, finding in them new instruments, clothing for the patients, bandages and medicines, and even dolls and presents for the Christmas tree.

Dodson had more people now to help him in hospital; a trained nurse came out from England to relieve Mrs. Dodson, and he was training Iranian and Armenian assistants too. Some would leave just as they were beginning to be useful. Others stayed on inspired by Dodson's example. Sometimes he would come home thrilled because he had seen one or other of them showing real keenness. "Meerza Hawshem helped me really well with that appendix this morning," he would say. "He will make a doctor yet. I should like to have many of his kind to train. Perhaps when we have the new

hospital we shall be able to do it. It is our job to think of the future, and to build up a real medical service in this province, manned by Iranians themselves."

The little group that gathered in the hospital waiting room for services on Sundays was growing too. A few, greatly daring, had openly confessed their new faith in Christ and had been baptized. Apart from the Christians, many were the homes, Moslem or Parsi, rich or more often humble and poor, in which Dodson was made welcome. He began to feel stronger attachment to the people of Iran and to love them for their courtesy, warm-heartedness, and hospitality.

"One cannot fail to realize," he wrote home, "that the strongest ties to the work lie, not in bricks and mortar, but in the living friendships made from time to time, some with those of men in high position, and some with the humblest folk one has come across. These and their results do not pass away; they were made with a purpose, the object of building a Kingdom Whose Master will look after it, and Whose subjects no man shall snatch out of His hand."

Still he knew he must not rest content with all this, cheering as it was. He must press on towards building a hospital in which his Kermani friends could get the best possible treatment. By the end of 1907 when a good sum had been saved up, and some more had been given in England for building a women's hospital, he began to look round for suitable land. The time had come to build with bricks and mortar, because the true foundations had been laid in the hearts of the people whose friendship he had won through the uphill years before.

CHAPTER IV

HOLIDAY HIKES

THE little string of donkeys urged on by Dodson and the donkey men, moved warily along the narrow pathway. For hours of darkness they had nosed their way across bare, rocky mountain sides, and stumbled through stony water courses in the steep valleys below. It was a good thing that the animals could be trusted to smell out the road taken by other travellers before them, for the only light was that of the stars and two flickering oil lanterns, and the flare of dry scrub lit at each water course to make sure that none of the donkeys was lying down in the stream with his pack.

Dodson, with his Armenian hospital dispenser, George Elijah, was on his way with chests of medicines and magic lantern to spend a few days in the mountain villages. He had left his wife and Robert camping under a great shady plane tree outside a village where they intended to spend a few of the hot summer weeks. His own idea of a good holiday was the chance to hunt moufflon or gazelle over the high, windy crags of Jupa; to watch and note the habits of birds—partridges, hawks, and eagles; or the great scarlet and gold tarantulas that would jump hissing from behind a stone; the beetles, crimson or purple-winged locusts, and a thousand other generally harmless insects of the

stony, scorched slopes. Then after a few days he would pile a little equipment on donkeys, and move off to a distant village or encampment to visit some friend made in hospital.

This time he was on his way to see what sick folk he could help among the tribespeople in tents and mountain villages. On this, the third day of their journey, they had been travelling since two hours before sunset, starting when the first coolness had begun to move gently over the mountain sides. The way was longer than they had thought and incredibly steep, hard even for the tough little donkeys.

Suddenly, within an hour of midnight, a chorus of barks came out of the darkness, and hopeful of finding some human habitation, men and donkeys quickened their step. Round a bend loomed a cluster of dark shapes—the booths and black goats' hair tents of a wandering tribe. Big sheep dogs kept up a tremendous racket round the party, and were driven back with stones, while Dodson went up to the doorway of one of the largest tents and called to waken the sleepers within. At length came the sound of whispering, and then a frightened woman's voice called that they could give them nothing; all the men had gone away with the flocks up the valley the day before, and they must come another time for their taxes. It took Dodson and George Elijah a good half-hour to convince them that they had not come from the Governor of Kerman, neither had they any intention of robbing and oppressing them. Gradually a man or two crawled out from where they had stayed in hiding, the donkeys were given fodder, and the women mixed and rolled flat pancakes of

bread which they roasted on an iron pan over a glowing fire of dung. When the tired travellers had eaten, they rolled themselves in their quilts in the open, and immediately fell fast asleep for the four remaining hours before the camp would be astir at dawn.

When they awoke, stiff from the previous day's hiking and from the cold mountain wind blowing down on them as they lay in the open, the peaks of the Lalezar Mountains above them were already turning pink and gold, the donkeys were braying loudly, and the unveiled, free tribeswomen were moving about their tasks. It was Sunday, and they decided to stay with these wild, mountain folk, who, once they were convinced that the travellers were friendly were eager to show them hospitality in true Iranian style. Bare and empty though the mountains looked, sixty patients turned up that afternoon. They came from the black tents perched here and there wherever there was a stream or hint of water on the mountain sides. They brought with them presents of eggs and curds, for their dealings were all in kind, and it was rarely that they had the feel of coin in their pockets.

"We are going to show you pictures with a lamp to-night," Dodson told them. "Stay if you can." Such a visit was a nine days' wonder, and they nearly all stayed, squatting on the ground, until Dodson and George Elijah had rigged up the sheet between poles in the absence of any walls, and lit the oil lamp. Happily the mountain wind had dropped, and the glowing pictures showed up well, making a little luminous spot in that vast, dark scene. There was no sound except the low murmur from the group hunched

together on the ground, the voice of Dodson telling the story of Love, and the occasional hoot of an owl or cry of a jackal far up on the surrounding slopes.

"I wonder," said Dodson to George Elijah as they jogged along next morning, "I wonder what I should have been had I only once heard of the love of Jesus Christ—and might never hear again." They were on their way now to see the son of Ali Khan, chief of the Bachakchi tribe, a daring brigand. Towards noon they reached his great black tent, pitched in a fold of the mountains. As they approached, the son of the chief came forward and welcomed them with ceremony. He had heard much of the English doctor, for one of the tall, finely-built men who stood round him had spent some time in the hospital that spring, with a bullet wound in his wrist. "An accident, of course," he had carefully explained.

That night the dinner spread on the ground down the centre of the black tent was of buttered rice, piled glistening and snowy white on huge dishes, and of the tenderest meat from lambs of the flocks roasted on skewers over charcoal fires, with bowls of creamy curds from those same flocks, flavoured with herbs gathered on the mountain sides. And when they had finished eating, for conversation and food do not go together in Iran, they were regaled with stories of the famous chief, Ali Khan.

"He is living in Rayen now," said his son. "Perhaps you will see him when we take you there over the mountains to-morrow." Dodson was surprised that such a famous robber should dare to live in the little town.

“You see,” said the brigand’s son, taking a long pull at the hubble-bubble pipe, and handing it graciously to his guest, “although my father has many enemies he has many friends too, and he always has a large armed retinue with him. The officials would not dare to take him openly. Besides there is this”—and he rubbed his fingers and thumb together with the gesture that in Iran always means the passing over of money. Dodson reflected that since the Government of that day was not taking any steps to deal with the tribespeople, the hundreds of robbers all over the country would continue to loot caravans and make travellers go in fear of their lives until there was some one strong enough to put down bribery. Many of the missionaries could tell tales of a hold-up on some lonely pass and the loss of all their goods. But aloud he said: “What was that story I heard about the Governor of S——? Was it a bazaar tale or the real truth?”

A laugh went round the tent where the dark tribesmen sat cross-legged, smoking and drinking glasses of sweet tea. “I will tell you,” said Ali Khan’s son proudly. “My father and his retinue dressed in their handsomest clothes, rode with letters purporting to come from Tehran, the capital, across the great sandy desert, and galloped up to the Governor’s palace at S——. There he arrested the Governor, showing him the letters with great seals all complete, authorizing him to do so. My father’s story was believed, and the Governor found himself locked in a room in his own palace. Several days passed very happily for my father; by day he was Governor, and by night he and his retinue removed from the palace all the treasures they

could find. He was very kind too, for he did not kill his prisoner, but at the end of a week released him and courteously bidding him farewell, galloped back with the booty to these mountains."

Dodson was to see the famous man himself a few days later. He and George Elijah were escorted over the mountains by their former patient, and glad they were to have him as guide, for to lose the track might mean a night in the open, keeping company with wolves and leopards that roamed the heights. A few days passed quickly in attending to patients in the house which had been gladly lent to them, and in giving lantern shows for the crowd that thronged the courtyard at night.

One evening as Dodson was about to throw the first picture on the sheet, there was more noise and jostling than usual. "Ali Khan has come," the word was whispered to Dodson by the people squatting in the front row. He saw a big, dark man with tall, white felt hat and fierce moustaches, followed by a dozen others, all with rifles slung across their shoulders, push their way in and sit down near the front. One of the pictures thrown on the screen that night was of the man going down to Jericho who fell among thieves.

Dodson was glad to meet Ali Khan after the show, and to see the childlike amazement of the big man at the wonderful lamp that could throw pictures. Not many months after, they heard that he had been trapped by his enemies with the help of the mullahs, at one of the Moharram gatherings in memory of the martyrs, Hussein and Hassan. They inveigled him and his followers there unarmed, and shot him in the back as

he sat watching the sacred play. So ended Ali Khan, brigand chief of the Bachakchis.

His strange encounter with the brigand chief, and with the many tribespeople and villagers he met on these trips who had no other medical help except that which he had given them, set Dodson thinking.

"With another man doctor here we could keep in touch with these tribespeople and outlying villages," he said one evening to his friends when they were back in Kerman again, and had met for prayer and reading. "I wonder if people at home would send the C.M.S. the money to pay for another man to come and help us? Much as we need to build a new hospital, I believe we need to build up the staff even more. There is Habeebullah," he went on, "the shopkeeper from the Mirjan district, who has been in hospital a month. He seemed interested though afraid to say too much, so I asked him over to my house the day before he was to go out. There he told me that three years ago he had bought a Bible from a Bible Society colporteur although the village mullah had banned it. He and his wife and daughter and three sons have read it secretly and have all become Christians. Think of it! Right out there all alone among Moslems. I was the first Christian he had spoken to since he bought the Bible. He has asked me to go there; says there are many sick folk, and no doctor, of course. I simply must go this summer, and we will make our holiday camp in that direction."

"It's a long way," said Dr. Westlake. "It must be a hundred miles from Kerman."

"That's true," replied Dodson, "but we can't leave a family like that without help. They are the only Christians I have heard of in any of the hundreds of villages, and who knows what may not grow out of such a beginning?"

It was late next summer when, hot and dusty at the end of five days' travel with horses and donkeys, Dodson and his assistant came from the desert through the few surrounding fields into the main street of a big village in the Mirjan district, and inquired the way to the head-man's house. When the latter heard that it was Dodson of Kerman, and that he had brought medicines and instruments with him, he said he would be delighted and honoured if the doctor would stay in one of his houses. "Your arrival has exalted me, and lightened the eyes of us all, and the house is your own," he said.

So Dodson settled in, and the head-man and his family, with many of his friends and neighbours, crowded round the doorways of the rooms, watching the loads being unpacked, and asking many questions about the lantern that threw pictures, the medicine chests, the doctor's books and clothes. They themselves were all dressed in the usual wide cotton trousers, long smock with wide *kamarband* or sash wound many times round the waist, and round, brimless, black felt hat. The women had long trousers, brightly printed smocks, short much-pleated frills buttoned round the hips, and their closely-drawn white chaddurs hid their faces all but one eye fixed on the English doctor and his exciting foreign possessions.

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Dodson looked up from his unpacking. "I have a friend who lives in one of your villages," he said. "One, Habeebullah, a shopkeeper, who spent a month in our hospital."

No one seemed to know him. "But it is still only mid-day," they said. "He will surely hear before night-fall that your exalted presence is here. Such news travels quickly."

Sure enough as Dodson and George Elijah were sitting down to supper that night, the simple meal on the floor between them embellished by a great dish of glistening rice and strips of fried meat sent from the head-man's house, the beaming, bearded face of Habeebullah appeared at the veranda doorway.

"So you have come," he said, smiling delightedly at the doctor. "I knew a Christian like you would not lie." He sat down to supper with them, but there was no opportunity yet to speak of what they both had so near their hearts. There was too much coming and going; too many curious people standing just outside the circle of lamplight enjoying the *tamasha* (spectacle).

At length Habeebullah leant over and whispered: "We cannot talk or read now. It is too dangerous. Already the head-man of our village has summoned me and forbidden me to be a Christian. He merely wanted a bribe, but he might turn me out. You will come to my house, and then when we are alone we will talk." As he got up to go, saying that he would find a night's lodging with a friend in the village, he added: "Be ready early, Agha doctor. I shall tell them all what you did for me, and you will have many patients to-morrow."

And indeed he had. All day the courtyard was thronged with villagers, and the little room fitted up as a makeshift surgery was never empty. When 250 patients had been dealt with and the daylight had gone, they got out the "picture lamp" and told the story of Him Who had first gone about doing good.

"I must spend to-morrow here too," said Dodson to Habeebullah. "There are many whom I had to turn away because it was getting dark. To-morrow evening, if God wills, I will come to your house." But there were 376 patients next day, and when, the sweltering heat of the day over, the "picture lamp" was again brought out, a large crowd gathered, together with the owner of the house and all the mullahs of the neighbourhood. They had many questions to ask, and sat for long arguing with Dodson about Christian beliefs, until with many bowings and mutual compliments the bearded and beturbaned gentlemen excused themselves. It was ten o'clock.

"But, of course, I will come with you now, Habeebullah," said Dodson. "A few miles by starlight will be good after the hot day."

"Unfortunately a neighbour of mine has prepared a dinner for you," replied Habeebullah. "He is an important man, and will be much offended if you do not go to his house."

"Is he reading the Holy Book too?" inquired Dodson.

"No, no. Quite otherwise. He is very opposed to Christianity and when we leave his house I must take you out into the fields, and so back by another way to my house."

It was well for Dodson that he had never worried

about the time, but always finished carefully and completely any job on hand, without any reference to the hour of day. For it was half-past two in the morning when after endless delays the elaborate meal was at length served in the garden where they were sitting for coolness, and the dawn was not far off as, by a roundabout way, they reached Habeebullah's house. The little room with closed doors; the circle of secret disciples sitting on the floor with the Holy Book before them; the eager faces shining in the light of the unshaded lamp; the rapt attention; the burning words of Scripture—Dodson never forgot the experience.

When he left just before sunrise it was with happiness in his heart, for even if he was not often able to visit them, Habeebullah had promised to journey regularly to Kerman in order to read and learn of Christ.

CHAPTER V

ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

DODSON held the horse's bridle with one hand and with the other shook the figure rolled up in a quilt. "Wake up, gatekeeper! and hurry. There is a man who will die if I do not get out quickly."

"Who are you and what is the password?" asked a sleepy voice from inside the bundle lying on a shelf by one of the big gates in the wall of the city. It was a cold November night, and besides times were troublous. It was better not to open the gate without a very good reason.

"I am the Hakeem Dodson of the hospital, and the password is the sword of Ali," came the reply. At this the gatekeeper brought out the two-foot long key from under his pillow, and shivering with cold and sleep pulled back the clumsy bolts and locks. "Go in peace," he said.

As they hurried on their way outside the high mud walls, Dodson turned to the men who had come to fetch him and were trotting beside him on donkeys. "How did you get in on the way to me?" he asked. They grinned. "The gatekeeper would not open for us as we did not know the password," replied one of them. "So we had to find one of the holes made by smugglers and push our donkeys through. But it took a long time. God grant our friend has not died."

In spite of all the delays Dodson found his patient still alive, and was able to fix him up comfortably for the night. He told his relatives to bring him to hospital first thing in the morning.

It was no use trying to persuade people to come by night, even if the need was urgent, during that troublous year of 1908. No one would be out after dark if he could help it. The whole of Iran was disturbed, and bands of robbers roamed the countryside looting caravans and murdering travellers. In the cities thieves lurked in the narrow lanes ready to stab a chance wayfarer. Two years before, the Shah had been forced by his people to give them a parliament, but the Government was weak. Most of the country was ruled as it had been for centuries by local princes and khans or chiefs, helped by government officials who made a rich living out of bribes and taxes. If the local governor happened to be weak, there was no redress or justice to be had without a large bribe, and not always then. So no one felt safe. Trade was at a standstill. Wild rumours spread from booth to booth in the dim arcades of the bazaars.

With such a state of affairs Dodson knew that it was out of the question to think of building the new hospital just yet. Those who were ill in the neighbouring villages preferred to lie at home and get well as best they could, rather than come into Kerman and risk being robbed or murdered on the way. People in the city knew that "Dawdson" could be depended upon to come to them by day or night whatever the danger. Besides, who would dare to touch him? So the hospital beds were soon practically empty and Dodson sadly decided to

shut down all but two of the little wards. It would save expense and he did not want to touch the precious building account.

That winter the town became more and more unruly, until one day the unrest came to a head. A procession of one of the religious sects, demonstrating in the big square, was joined by all the roughs of the town in the hope of loot. Some one let off a gun; the Governor excitedly ordered the soldiers on the walls to fire, and when the crowd ran yelling to shelter they left a score of dead and wounded on the ground. The wounded were brought to Dodson to patch up; the Governor on seeing the place in an uproar fled to Tehran, and the commander of the troops to a near-by town. There followed six months of disturbances when Dodson and his friends grew accustomed to the sound of bursts of firing at night, and of hammering at the hospital door to admit a patient bleeding to death from gunshot wounds.

On a dark, cold February evening Dodson was just leaving hospital, having seen his few patients settled for the night, when he was met at the door by an excited group of his Parsi friends. They told him that Farrukh, one of the chief merchants of the town, when on his way to Yezd had been attacked at Bahramabad, thirty-five miles out of Kerman. His caravan had been looted and he was shot in many places. They had not dared to move him, but one of his companions had galloped back for help. If Dodson would go they would send him in the best carriage they could find, complete with outrider.

It was ten at night with a strong, cold wind blowing

as the carriage left the town and started to bump along the desert road, which was merely a track made by the continual passing of caravans. The oil lamps repeatedly blew out, leaving them in total darkness; the bitter wind drove grit and sand into their faces and nearly blinded them. At last, realizing that they had quite lost their way, Dodson decided that they had better spend the rest of the night in the lee of any shelter that offered. They left again at dawn, found the road from which they had wandered, and after a long day of pushing their way, mostly at walking pace, against a hurricane, they reached Bahramabad late at night. There they found the Parsi merchant stretched on rugs in a shed, a crowd of Moslems and Parsis round him. The many wounds below both ears, in his mouth and neck and on his chest, were black and scorched, full of shot, and had been covered with dirty cotton wool. A quick look decided Dodson that he could do nothing by the light of lanterns. They must wait for daylight.

After four days' care Farrukh the merchant miraculously began to get better, and the slow journey to hospital began. On the way they passed a caravanserai which had been plundered only the day before by a band of sixty-two thieves who had left wrack and ruin behind them.

Thankful to have got safely through all the dangers of the way, with his patient on the mend, and to find his wife and baby safe, Dodson settled into the routine of hospital again. Farrukh had to spend many months in hospital, and they proved the turning point in his life. He, the Parsi, who worshipped Ahura-Mazda, the god of light, came to believe that

Jesus Christ was the light of the world. In the autumn he left Kerman for Yezd cured. For twenty years he wrote regularly to Dodson who had saved his life, and who had shown him the way to the true Light.

Among all the alarms and troubles in this year 1908, Dodson had much reason to be thankful for these friendships he had made. To think them over, to treasure them, gave him courage, for it was a black year in other ways. A few weeks after the excursion to Bahramabad, news came from England that his mother had died. A little later he was told from home that there was no hope of sending out a young man doctor to help him with the village work. Travelling was so unsafe that year in Iran that even the missionaries due to return after furlough were being kept at home for a time.

Worse was to come. One of the many who were brought to the doctor half dead, and on whom he operated in the faint hope of saving life, did not recover. Dodson's work was not quite without the enemies that all great work creates. They started a rumour that operations were being done at the hospital that no one should attempt. A few days later, one of the many street skirmishes of that dark year happened near the hospital, and an Armenian assistant was nearly killed. "Ah!" said the bazaar scandalmongers, "that proves that they are doing wrong things in the Christian hospital. Probably one of the patients' relatives was avenging her death."

A fellow-countryman of Dodson's, a man of high position in Kerman, believed these wild tales, and sent a vindictive report to England. One dark morning in

the autumn Dodson received a telegram from the Church Missionary Society. It said that in view of the present difficulties it would be wiser to close the hospital.

Dodson did not lose faith. "All this will blow over," he thought. "God cannot want all the foundations we have laid to go for nothing. He will yet raise a living temple in this place through the hospital." Down the margin of the few sheets on which he scribbled a list of events leading up to this terrible day, he wrote in large letters: "HAVE FAITH IN GOD."

He and Dr. Westlake decided to look after the patients then in the hospital till they recovered, and to continue visiting in the town for a few months. By then perhaps they would see what God's plan was to be. But as the news of the closing of the hospital spread through Kerman, the townsfolk came to Dodson, indignant and unbelieving. "You do not like us then that you want to leave us?" they said. By the autumn their agitation at the thought of losing their only expert medical help grew to such a pitch that the mullahs and chief men called a meeting, and a letter was written and signed by all the *mujtaheds* or leading mullahs, with 700 seals of merchants and townsfolk affixed. This was sent to Tehran and thence to London. Then since several weeks passed and still no news came, it was followed by a wire "from the poor of Kerman." Two days later came the Society's reply: "*Retain Kerman Medical Mission.*" "Have faith in God," said Dodson as he read the telegram, and joyfully he set to work to re-open the hospital to all in need.

The dark clouds were passing; Dodson and his

friends were weathering the storm and hope was in their hearts. In the summer there was one more reason for rejoicing. As Dodson met his Iranian friends they bowed deeply and told him that his eyes were enlightened. "Indeed all our eyes are enlightened," they said, for a little daughter, Eleanor, had been born.

But, as after all storms, there were still a few rough places ahead. Robert sickened with typhoid, and there were many anxious weeks before he recovered. The old chief mullah of the town, the Imami Jumeah, asked permission to pray over the little lad. "They are not your children alone, they are ours," he said. He came, bringing some holy earth, and laying his frail old hand on the head of the wasted little man under the mosquito curtains, prayed earnestly that God would spare his life.

The country, too, was still unsettled, and there was an attempt on the Shah's life in Tehran. Although a new Governor was sent to Kerman, and under his strong rule the town became more orderly, food was very scarce. Around every baker's shop in the bazaar crowds gathered from early morning, each and all hoping to get bread before the store ran out. During this shortage a heavily laden mule arrived one morning at the hospital door. "From the Imami Jumeah," said the servant who led it, and he handed Dodson a letter. "No doubt a stranger will find it even more difficult than others to get good flour, and your unworthy servant begs the honourable doctor to accept this poor offering," read Dodson. He gratefully accepted it, and decided on the strength of this generous gift of flour to bake bread in the hospital, and thus to make sure that his patients had enough to eat.

The number of his friends was growing. In spite of all the difficulties, Dodson felt sure that God’s plan for His Kingdom in Kerman was working out. The hospital was full again: he had more Iranian assistants whom he was training to be the doctors of the future, to work among their own people; he circulated an account of the hospital and its work among his Kermani friends, and as a result more people volunteered to support beds. New friendships, new workers, new supporters—Dodson took stock of these cheering signs of progress. By the grace of God they had weathered the storm which had threatened to destroy the work of the uphill years.

He began again to search for suitable land for the new hospital building, and found it at last. It was outside the town—an open space among the fields beyond which the stony desert stretched uninterrupted to the foot of the distant rocky hills. He was given a half promise of part of it as a gift; the rest he now had funds enough to buy.

But he was desperately tired. Nearly eight strenuous years had gone by since that winter night when he first arrived and thought the little hospital so small and cramped that they could not possibly make it serve for more than two years. Reluctant as he was to leave for furlough he knew the best way to help forward the building of the hospital was by going home and telling people of the need. He would stir up their interest, collect funds, talk over his plans with the Society, and then come back, full of new health and vigour—to build!

CHAPTER VI

BUILDING AT LAST

IT was a bitterly cold day at the end of January, 1914. The wind of the high plateau swept down the narrow valleys between the mountains, now covered with snow almost to the foot. Although the sun was only occasionally obscured by high feathery clouds, it had little warmth, and most people hurried through the streets of Kerman bundled up in cloaks and chaddurs. They were glad to get home to the welcome glow of the pan of charcoal under the little low table, and pull the warm covering quilt up to their waists.

Dodson, leading his horse, walked round an irregular patch of desert just outside the town. It measured about eight acres altogether, and workmen were busy marking it out with lime. He hardly noticed the cold. The land was theirs at last; he was walking over the place where one day a great and beautiful hospital would stand, where the best work could be done for the people of Kerman and the glory of God. In a few days, he thought, when the likelihood of heavy snow was over, the twelve foot wall which would give him undisputed ownership should be erected. Things had certainly moved fast since his return from England with his family a few months before. He had come back armed with full permission to build, and with a grant from home to add to the money he had saved up in Kerman.

Friends in New Zealand were also making a generous gift of £250 towards a "New Zealand Ward" in the hospital. A meeting of his friends, including the "dear old Imami Jume'h," had followed at his house, and deeds had been drawn up. Each of them had given a piece of ground and he had bought the rest. Later, a great prince of Iran, the son of a former Shah, who had been one of Kerman's many governors and was ever a kindly helper of hospitals up to his death in 1938, wired the gift of a piece of his property which adjoined the site.

As the spring and summer wore on, Dodson and his friends could at last see those walls and rooms taking shape which for so many years had been planned and re-planned on paper. Nothing was wasted. As the foundations were dug, the earth was taken and mixed with lime and straw and made into mud with water drawn from the eight wells which they had sunk before doing anything else. From this bricks were moulded, some of which were laid out to bake in the sun, while others for the outer covering of walls and columns were baked in kilns. First thing in the morning Dodson would hastily swallow a cup of tea and be over there among the foundations counting the bricks before the sun was gilding the minarets of the city. His horse soon came to know every stone and rut in the rough, two-mile track to the new hospital. Then back at a fast trot, the upland air keen and exhilarating at that hour of the morning, to breakfast and the morning's work in dispensary or operating theatre. During those exciting and hard-working days lunch was eaten at all hours of the afternoon, for as soon as the last patient had been

attended to Dodson was on his horse again, eager to see how the brickmakers and builders had got on since morning.

"Besides," he would tell his wife apologetically when he came in for lunch at three o'clock in the afternoon, "I have to watch over every detail. Half the bricks would disappear if I did not count them myself." One day he was later even than usual. "I had to go down a well," he explained, laughing. "Something went wrong at the bottom while they were digging it, and nothing happened except a lot of noise and gesticulation at the top. So of course the only thing was to go down and see. We got it right in the end." And so gradually a little cluster of buildings arose out of the desert, and even, here and there, a few patches of welcome green where Dodson had put in shrubs and flowers along the sides of the irrigation channels.

But something was to happen that year which upset the plans of a good many mice and men besides Dodson. As the hot days of July wore on, the news in the bulletins always sent round from the English Telegraph Company's offices in the town, spoke of trouble in Europe. Then suddenly the incredible news came. Europe was at war! After months of uncertainty, of rumours about plots and invasions, of the sudden appearance in the town of bands of rough soldiery, there came the dreaded message from the British Government. It was feared that the little party of English people might be cut off; they must leave for India within two days. Hurriedly they paid off all the workers, got all the patients safely home, and packed

up the stores and equipment as safely as possible. As they handed over the keys to the Iranian authorities they wondered sadly if they would ever see their friends in Kerman again, and if the building outside the town must stay half finished until it crumbled into a ruin.

In India Dodson put in some hard work as Captain in the R.A.M.C. at a military hospital in Bombay. As the long months went by he was cheered to get news of Kerman now and then. He heard that a few months after they had left, a British military force under General Sykes had landed in Iran from India. The idea was that they should gradually become organized with Iranians in the ranks into the South Persia Rifles, and drive out the German, Austrian, and Turkish soldiers scattered throughout the country. With over a thousand camels they came up the rocky road from the coast, took Kerman, and established order there. One of the first things they did was to look over the mission property, and later on Dodson received a letter from the army doctor. He wrote: "We found the hospital in not too bad a condition. Very little was missing." A few weeks after came some more news: "We are running a dispensary for the townfolk in your hospital, and have been glad to take on as assistant doctors one or two of the men you and Mrs. Dodson have trained."

Soon the South Persia Rifles moved on, leaving the hospital sealed up and two old caretakers in charge. The following year to their great joy the Dodsons were allowed to go back to Kerman. A thrilling journey it was too, for Captain Dodson was in charge of the health of an enormous caravan of several hundred men

and all their animals during the three weeks' journey from the Iranian coast. At every one of the great camps pitched daily among the mountains he had to make his round, examining and doctoring men and beasts, and he succeeded in getting them all to Kerman without mishap or illness.

It was the most joyous time of all in Iran—the No Rooz, or New Year, which falls at the end of March. This was the time of springing green corn, of warm sunshine and clear, bright air, the season when every one has holidays, even the little carpet weavers, and donning their new clothes visit their friends and drink tea and eat sweets all day long. No one felt gayer in all Kerman than Dodson when at this No Rooz, just two years after their sad little party had left for India, he once more threw open the doors of the hospital and welcomed all who would come. "May it be blessed," said his Iranian friends as they crossed the threshold. "How empty your place has been all this time; but it has always been green."

Best of all, he found that the new hospital buildings had not suffered too much, though shrubs and flowers were long since dead. The building account in England had grown too in spite of the war. Derby and its surrounding parishes had launched a great appeal, and during the next few years collected £2000. Soon the bricklayers could be heard singing at their work again. "Give me a brick, oh my beloved!" "Pass me a brick, my uncle!" they chanted to their little assistants who cleverly threw up the bricks from the pile below. The buildings began to grow once more.

Dr. Dodson found that the war had brought many changes to Kerman. The coming and going of troops had made foreigners a familiar sight. New roads had been built. Iran was fast being opened up. Sometimes even a motor car would bump and lurch over one of the desert roads into Kerman, bringing a traveller in three days the wearisome journey that used to take him as many weeks. "When the roads get a little better still I must try to collect funds for a car," thought Dodson. "I could get round twice the villages in half the time. But we must finish the building first."

There was not so much danger now of being held up by robbers on the roads, for there was beginning to be a strong government in the land. The country had a great new leader, called Reza, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Prime Minister in one. There was much talk of him whenever Dodson visited the government officials. He was going to put down bribery, they said, to open up new roads, and to make ancient Iran into a modern country with the help of all the money coming in from the newly-discovered oil wells in the south.

But many bad things had come from the war, and worst of all was the famine. In its wake there came the terrible influenza, and the old enemy, cholera. During those months little could be done in the hospital for one after another the assistants were ill with influenza. But one thing cheered Dodson. As he rode round on his visits he found that his steady teaching had begun to sink in, and many even of the poor people were burning infected clothing and taking other precautions.

The people who were suffering most from famine and

illness were the little carpet weavers. Dodson's heart ached for them as night and day he moved about the poor quarters of the city. So many were ill and dying. "It is no use just doctoring them," he thought. "What we need is to change the conditions in which they work."

It happened that a short time before this the Governor of the city had become dangerously ill, and Dodson had saved his life by performing a difficult operation even though he himself was sickening with influenza and pneumonia. They had become great friends, and now something useful was to come of this friendship.

"I, too, am not happy about the state of the carpet weavers in this city," said the Governor one day. They were sitting over glasses of tea in the palace garden, and the conversation had come round, not quite by accident, to carpets and the child weavers. "You do much to help them in your hospital," he went on, "but that is not enough. We must try to change their conditions."

"Well, I can't do much," replied Dodson. "I try to straighten their legs, and to cure them of tuberculosis and other diseases which they get from the long hours of work in those tiny, dark, stuffy rooms, but it's really pretty hopeless. Many of them, although grown up, are no taller than my little ten year old daughter."

The Governor thought for a moment. Then he said: "I have been to many of the work rooms. There are, I think, about 2000 weavers in this city. Many of them are diseased. Many start work when they are five because their parents want their wages for buying opium to smoke. Most of the finest carpets are sent to England

and America. Would your people buy them if they knew?"

Dodson smiled. "All over the world there are people who have no regard for the sufferings of others. And we cannot judge you. It is not many years since we also had many children working in our factories. We know now that it is wrong."

"Well," said the Governor, "our Government is changing. We have a fine man at the head now. If you will make a list of suggestions, for you know better than any one what should be done, I will try to get them put before Parliament. We will see if new laws can be made."

Dodson was thrilled about this, and when he got home he sat down and made a list. Children should not work under the age of ten; their rooms must be of a certain size, and warmed and ventilated. They must not go on working from dawn till sunset all through the week. These were some of the many things he longed to see done for his little friends the carpet weavers.

And so gradually much, though not all that he and the Governor wished for, was changed, and the beautiful designs of birds and flowers woven into soft carpets, did not mean the ruining of children's lives.

Many things were to be pulled down and built up in Iran during the next few years under the strong rule of Reza Pahlevi, the man who from soldier became Dictator and then Shah. Motor roads bearing 'buses and lorries wound over the mountains and deserts where formerly mule caravans had toiled painfully along. Schools for girls as well as boys were built in towns and villages. A government hospital was opened

in Kerman; new Iranian doctors arrived in the city. There was room for them all. With these and with the men whom he had trained and who were now working on their own, Dodson was the best of friends. "They are good colleagues and a pleasure to work with," he said.

During all this time of building in so many ways, the building with bricks and mortar had been going on steadily. At last the great day came when the old hospital could be given up and patients, equipment, and stores moved over into the new, airy buildings.

It was operation day at the new hospital. Now and then a white-capped and gowned assistant would come out through the big white door of the theatre and say a few words to waiting relatives outside, or another patient would be carried in on a stretcher. At last, well on in the afternoon, the door opened and Dr. Dodson, pulling on his coat, appeared with a tired but cheerful smile on his face.

"A good morning's work that!" he said to the English woman doctor who had been assisting him. "And what a treat to do it at last in a really up-to-date operating theatre!"

They turned to walk together along the wide, columned veranda, where here and there the "up-and-about" were sunning themselves. Through the archways glowed brilliant beds of flowers, and above the high walls round the spacious gardens showed the summits of mountain ranges. Dodson took a deep breath of the clean desert wind, and went on: "It's not far off twenty years since we started to plan it, and it

seemed sometimes as if it would never be built, but here we are at last."

"Yes, Doctor," chimed in one of the Iranian assistants, "your building is finished at last!"

"Finished? Why, we have only just begun!" Dodson answered. "We want a new electric plant and X-ray equipment with a place to house it. We need a car for visiting. Besides," he went on as he turned to the young Iranian, "there is another sort of building to be done, and it is for you younger ones who are training to carry it on when we older doctors go. Yes, we've really only just begun."

CHAPTER VII

THE BUILDER HANDS OVER HIS TOOLS

SPRING had come again to the uplands of Iran bringing blossom to the fruit trees, the soft call of the hoopoe, and sudden thunder showers which made the vivid green wheat spring up almost overnight.

Once more Malekeh was awaiting the coming of Dr. Dodson. Ten years had gone by since that anxious morning when she had first met the famous doctor, and now she was married to one of his old students who had a post as government doctor in Hassanabad, a town sixty miles from Kerman. Dr. Dodson with his indispensable helper, Nurse Petley, was coming to pay a long-promised visit, and Malekeh moved about the guest room giving a last look at her preparations. The shining samovar bubbled cheerfully; the little trays and sugar bowls glistened with polish, there were plates of sweets and biscuits, and dishes piled with the dates and oranges for which their low-lying town was famous. All had long been ready.

"They should have arrived by this time," she said at last to her husband.

A capable-looking young man, who was busy writing reports at his desk in the corner, looked up. "Yes," he said, "I hoped the Doctor would have come before this. I wanted to take him this evening to see a puzzling case at the other end of the village."

"He will be tired after his journey and want to rest," said Malekeh, going over to one of the french windows opening on to the veranda. "Save up your patients for to-morrow. You and his other old students never have any mercy on him when he manages to visit you."

Dr. Murteza laughed. "Have you ever known him too tired to see a patient?" he asked. "He might put off his dinner a couple of hours, but never a patient. Meanwhile I can get this writing done and be free when he does come."

Malekeh stood leaning against the doorway thinking of all the things that had happened since as a girl she had first stood listening for the sound of Dr. Dodson's car. The English hospital and the doctor who built it were now famous in tribe encampments and villages throughout South Iran. Several of his old students had set up on their own account in the city or surrounding villages, and like Malekeh's husband sent their most difficult cases to Dr. Dodson for X-ray or operation.

"What a lot of changes there have been," thought Malekeh. "Iran is no longer the same place, and we women are free at last, thanks to His Majesty the Shah." She, like many others in the new Iran, had got her Class XI Diploma before leaving school, and now by the Shah's command the hampering veil was abolished and all might show their faces unashamed. When Malekeh went to Kerman to see her friends, wearing the new hat her brother had sent her from Tehran, balanced at an angle on her short, wavy hair, no one would have recognized the village girl who, ten years before, rode into Kerman atop her bedding on a donkey.

As she stood now thinking over those years, she could see too how Dr. Dodson's friendship had influenced and changed all their lives ever since that morning long ago when he had come to their help. Her brother now training at the new Medical School at the University in Tehran; she herself educated and married to a Christian doctor who owed everything to the Doctor; best of all, knowing Jesus Christ as their Friend and Master. She looked at the sky, its thunder clouds now reddened by the sunset. "Thank God for Dr. Dodson," she said softly.

Just then her husband put his papers together and joined her on the veranda. "I don't like the look of the weather," Malekeh told him. "They probably had heavy rain in the mountains and got stuck in the mud somewhere."

"Then let's hope the Doctor will find an old patient to help him out like the American carpet dealer I heard about the other day," said Dr. Murteza.

"What happened to him?" asked Malekeh.

"His car got stuck in the mud up to the axles a few miles out of Kerman when he was on his way to Yezd. The chauffeur could do nothing alone, so he started off through the mud and rain in search of help. The American had not been long alone when suddenly a villager with a long-handled spade appeared over a bank, and offered to dig him out."

"Well, our villagers are always friendly folk," put in Malekeh.

"That's true," agreed Dr. Murteza, "but wait. He dug for a long time until the wheels were free, and he was drenched to the skin. When the chauffeur returned

with two more men they soon pushed the car out on to a firm place, and the American decided to return to Kerman and wait for better weather. Before going he thanked the villager and offered him some money. To his surprise it was refused.

"Why, that's certainly queer!" exclaimed the American. "Why did you work so hard for me, a foreigner, and now refuse to accept anything?"

"I always help foreigners whenever I meet them," answered the man. "Many years ago Dawdson at the English hospital saved my life. I should now have only one leg but for him. And then, when with great skill he had cured me he hired a donkey to bring me home as I had no money left to hire one myself. May God bless and reward him. I vowed then that in memory of his great kindness I would always help foreigners to the end of my life."

The sound of a car siren trying to clear the narrow village street of donkeys, children, and hens cut short Dr. Murteza's story. "There he is!" he said and, jumping down from the veranda, ran to open the heavy door from the courtyard into the street.

The man whom he brought in looked a good deal older than when Malekeh had first seen him, and very tired and thin, but his laugh rang out as suddenly and cheerfully as ever while he described to them how the car had bumped and skidded and finally almost stuck in a bad patch on the last pass.

"Good thing it's a colonial car built for this sort of work, or Miss Petley and I might have had to foot it the rest of the way," he finished.

Dr. Murteza made his wife sit down with Dr. Dodson

and the nurse while he, in the new fashion, handed round the tea.

"With a husband to wait on me and a hat instead of a chaddur, I am almost a European," laughed Malekeh.

The Doctor smiled. He knew what a strong little patriot she was, and this was an old joke between them, for nothing really annoyed her more than to be taunted by non-Christians with being an "imitator of Europeans" just because she had become a Christian.

"You and I both love Iran and like to see her learn the good things from the West," he said.

"Well, His Majesty the Shah certainly did a good thing when he made us get rid of our horrible veils," said Malekeh.

"The change in Iran was vividly brought home to me the other day," Dr. Dodson said, turning to his old pupil. "One of my patients actually left hospital by aeroplane!"

Murteza laughed. "A little speedier than the old moke!" he said. "Who was the patient?"

"A general," replied the Doctor. "I was just about to start on a long list of operations one morning when a couple of officers arrived at the hospital in a great stew. They said that a general travelling through the mountains in a lorry with a few other officers had been shot at by a band of tribesmen. He was very badly wounded in the chest. Would I go to him? He was right down at Mirjan, but they would take me in a fast army car, for he would certainly die otherwise."

"That sort of attack is very unusual since His Majesty Pahlevi made the country safe," interrupted Murteza.

"Yes, it's rare enough now though it used to be a daily affair. Well, I found none of the operations happened to be urgent, so I agreed to go. We tore down to Mirjan in a few hours, and I fixed him up well enough to bring him slowly back again. He got pneumonia and was desperately ill, but, thank God, we managed to pull him through. Three weeks later I got a message from the commanding officer in Kerman saying that a 'plane was coming down from Tehran to fetch my general. Next day we heard a roar, and there it was circling over the town. It came down in the desert not far from the hospital. I motored him out and off he went."

"I suppose it would only take him about five hours to get there," said Murteza.

"Not more," replied Dodson, "and it took me five weeks to cover the distance on horseback when I first came to Iran."

Just then Malekeh took Miss Petley into the next room to see her little son, Abdul Masih, who was asleep in his cradle, and the two doctors settled down for a talk about old times.

"Talking of Mirjan," said Murteza, "have you seen anything of our old friend Habeebullah lately?"

"Why yes, and splendid news I have of him which will thrill you fellow-Christians," and Dodson's tired face lit up. "The general was too ill to give me time to look up the old fellow on that journey, but I managed to come round by way of Mirjan on a return journey from the coast last year. He had a great surprise for me. After dinner a party of ten men filed into the room. 'These are all Christians,' he said,

introducing them. 'This is the Church in Mirjan.' We had a wonderful evening—as wonderful as that first evening I spent there so long ago."

"Praise God!" exclaimed Dr. Murteza. "Do they keep it secret? Village people are strict Moslems and might persecute them."

"No, every one in their village seemed to know about it," answered Dodson. "In these days there is not the danger there was twenty years ago."

"Thank God we have a Shah who is progressive and wants every man to be guided by his own conscience about his religion," said Dr. Murteza.

Dodson looked at the young doctor rather keenly. "Do the people in the village here know you are Christians?" he asked him.

"Why yes—that is—I suppose they do," he stammered, flushing a little. "It's difficult in my position. I work for the Government and can't shout it in the streets," he added a little defiantly.

"That is true," Dr. Dodson said gently, "but a doctor's job is full of chances to witness. You know what your own poet Sa'adi has said: 'To worship rightly is to serve your fellow-men.' Let your patients know that it is Jesus Christ Who helps you to serve them faithfully and well."

He went on to hearten Murteza by telling him more of Habeebullah and his courage, and of other Christian friends and old fellow-students at the hospital, till at last Murteza said: "You have cheered me, Doctor, as you always do. I will try my best to witness. It is being alone in this village that makes me keep quiet."

"Not alone surely," said Dr. Dodson, smiling. "You

are one of the fortunate people who have married happily, and have a Christian wife. With your little Abdul Masih there are already three members of the Hassanabad Church. Who knows how many there may be in a few years' time?"

Two days later the young couple stood at their gateway waving good-bye to their guests as the big car lurched up the street. The famous "Dawdson" had given help and advice about many patients, and there were people standing by all the doorways calling down blessings on him as he passed. "God reward thee!" they cried. "Go in peace and come back again soon!"

But they were not, after all, to see him again. There were so many epidemics in Kerman during that spring of 1937, and Dr. Dodson was working in the Jewish and other quarters day and night—cheering the ill and lonely; giving comfort to the dying with the words of Jesus; doing kindly things such as sending a builder at his own expense to repair a wall brought down by the rain in one of the poorest Jewish houses.

One evening towards the end of April he was talking over the typhoid epidemic with Dr. Henriques, who had lately come to the Women's Hospital. "You know," he said, "I believe some of these cases are not typhoid at all; they are typhus though not typical."

"Take care then, Doctor," said Dr. Henriques. "Don't get bitten by a louse. We don't want you to go down with typhus."

Dodson gave his sudden laugh, and to her horror said calmly: "I have been bitten already. I hunt for the wretch every night and can't find him."

A few days later he had just finished one of the jobs he loved best, having put into plaster a little girl with a diseased and deformed body, so that she might grow straight and healthy. "I don't feel too well," he said as he wearily pulled off his hospital coat. "Think I'll get to bed." Soon the news was passed from one to the other in home and bazaar: "Dawdson is ill. *Dawdson has typhus.*"

His body was too tired and worn out in the service of others to put up much of a fight, and before long his friends realized that the builder was getting ready to lay down his tools. "How is Dawdson?" was on every one's lips, and when they heard of his passing the cry went up: "What shall we do? He was our father and friend as well as our doctor!"

The Governor of the town, all the officials, and fifteen thousand people lined the narrow streets and went to the bare graveyard in the desert outside the town to do honour to the man who had served them for thirty-four years. But as the little group of his Christian friends and fellow-workers came back to the hospital he had built, they knew it was only his worn-out body they had laid there.

They knew that the best way to do him honour was to carry on where he had left off. So they tied on their aprons, rolled up their sleeves, and started on the day's work for others. They picked up the tools he had laid down, and went on with the building of the Kingdom of Christ in Iran.