

Nader Shah

Historical novel



Yunus Oghuz

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Nader Shah. Historical novel

«Издательские решения»

Oghuz Y.

Nader Shah. Historical novel / Y. Oghuz — «Издательские решения»,

ISBN 978-5-44-964998-0

“Nader shah” is a voluminous novel. Nader shah was a historical person. He created a great Empire that encompassed Iran, southern Caucasus, northern India, and parts of Central Asia. He won battles against the Afghans, Ottomans, and Mughals. Nader Shah’s victories made him briefly the Middle East’s most powerful sovereign, but his empire quickly disintegrated after he was assassinated in 1747. Nader Shah was the last great Asia warlord.

ISBN 978-5-44-964998-0

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Yunus Oghuz

Translator Sevil Gulten

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ISBN 978-5-4496-4998-0

Created with Ridero smart publishing system

It was the beginning of March; kichik chille¹ was past. The Sun was warming the ground little by little, nature was awakening, flowers and grass were peeping from the soil. The breath of spring was clearly felt. Light steam was rising from the soil, as if after the severe cold of the winter the soil was warming in order to come to life.

...It was one of the days of early spring. A nine year old little boy was going towards the slope of the mountain and was leading about a hundred sheep. The stick with a round top in his hand was bigger than him. It could be felt that he was accustomed to that job in spite of being little. He knew well that though the he-goat at the head didn't lead the flock of sheep, it would lead the sheep directly to the green grass-plot. When the sheep parted from the flock, the dogs named Aghbileng and Qarabileng* would return them again. It was as if those giant dogs drew border lines for the flock of sheep. And the flock of sheep didn't have to go out of that border. Aghbileng and Qarabileng returned either the sheep that was behind the flock or the sheep going right or left. The little boy felt himself more courageous near the giant dogs. It wasn't in vain. Someone who saw those dogs would get frightened.

...At last, the flock of sheep reached the slope of the mountain, and began to graze more eagerly. It was the first time that year the mouths of the sheep touched the green grass; after the dry grass and straw of the winter, green grass would be for the sheep and lambs like a holiday gift.

The little boy sat in the sunny place of the rock, the height of which was about seven or eight meters. He leaned his stick against the rock, and put the saddlebag on his back, on the ground. In the morning, his mother had put into the saddlebag a piece of bread and a bit of cheese. It was his lunch. His cap on his head and the sheepskin coat on his shoulder were threadbare. The torn shoe he wore showed his poverty.

The little boy took a pipe out of his saddlebag. The boy took the pipe so respectfully that it showed he liked it very much. The pipe was made of cane. The boy cleared his throat and then brought the pipe nearer to his lips. Mournful music spread all around.

Aghbileng came and lay at the feet of the boy as if it had finished its task. But the dog didn't take its eyes off the sheep and lambs. Qarabileng was lying at the other side of the flock and looking at him.

It was as if the voice of the pipe touched the top of the mountain and then returned back. As though the birds were delighted hearing the voice of the pipe and began warbling.

Suddenly Aghbileng heard voices of fluttering and picked up its ears and looked up. Firstly, the dog saw nothing. Then its eyes noticed the falcon flying in the sky screaming, but the dog didn't

¹ The period of twenty days of winter

change its way of sitting. The falcon flew into the expanse of the sky, looked over the ground from above and began to look for its prey. While the bird was in the sky, its rapid eyes saw on the ground rodents basking in the sun, which were known among the people as “Arabdovshany”.

The rodent, which was standing on its legs and turning its head to the right and the left enjoying the sun’s beams, was unaware of rapacious glances staring at it.

Aghbileng noticed it rapidly; it raised its head up and squatted, and pursued the distance between the falcon and the rodent... Everything happened within a moment. No sooner had the rodent noticed the danger than the falcon appeared unexpectedly at its head. The falcon stuck its sharp talons like iron into the rodent’s back and raised its sacrifice up the sky. In the sky the falcon pecked hard on the head of the rodent. Then the twittering of the rodent stopped. The falcon flew towards the top of the sky and disappeared. But the voice of the pipe didn’t stop, as if it was flowing like water.

Aghbileng again lay at the feet of the boy. But it didn’t last long. The dog felt something and squatted again and barked. As if somehow Aghbileng wanted to make Qarabileng aware of danger. The danger was felt among the scent of thousands of flowers. Qarabileng felt the danger and began to gather the sheep towards the bottom of the rock. At that moment Aghbileng didn’t move away from its master. The master saw that the dogs behaved anxiously and that was why he stopped playing his pipe and put it into his saddlebag. He took his stick and stood up. Just at that moment from the other side of the hill, there was seen a group of wolves. The hungry wolves came to look for food to catch after the severe winter. Aghbileng looked towards the wolves with indifference and it barked. As if it was certain of its strength. The wolves also saw the dogs, but they didn’t attack the sheep directly. Between them there stood Aghbileng and the little boy. It didn’t seem that the wolves were frightened by the hugeness or a dread of the dogs; whatever happened the wolves had the intention of catching some sheep. Aghbileng began to bark dreadfully as if it was sensing the intention of the wolves and ran towards them.

The little boy fastened the cord of his trousers. Sensing beforehand that something would happen, he took his stick in his hand hard and prepared to fight.

Five of the wolves encircled Aghbileng, they clenched their teeth; and turning round the dog began to look for a chance to attack. Two of the dogs flew out towards the little boy. The boy wasn’t frightened; he waved his stick towards the wolves and cried:

– Hi, diseased ones, if only you try to come nearer to me!

Aghbileng attacked firstly. The dog seized the throat of one of the wolves and threw it aside. The wolf whined with pain while falling on the ground after flying out in the air, but it didn’t run and rushed at Aghbileng again. When Aghbileng tried to seize the throat of another wolf, the wolves standing behind, caught his back legs. While the dog was whining with pain, it missed the mark, and at that moment the third wolf seized its throat. The other two wolves wanted to catch its throat too. The dog turned over the wolves courageously, shook them right and left, but the wolves didn’t free the dog. Little by little the dog weakened, its eyes went dark and it began to lose its strength.

At that moment the little boy roared like adults. He raised his stick above his head and turned his stick over. The stick hit the wolf which wanted to rush him and fell on the ground together with the wolf. Seeing that his stick fell on the ground, the boy faltered and moved away a step. The attack was weak, which was why the wolf stood up immediately. The wolf curled up in order to attack its mark, clenching its teeth furiously. The little boy stepped back towards the rock. Suddenly the wolf rushed at the boy. But it was as if it was frozen in the air. Qarabileng snatched it and stopped the jumping of the wolf right in the air. The sudden attack of Qarabileng confused the wolf. While the wolf was coming to itself, the dog again snatched and pushed it under its feet.

The case of Aghbileng was gradually becoming worse; the dog weakened and it fell on its knees. As if the beasts of prey felt the problems of Aghbileng. One of the wolves saw the weakening of Aghbileng and left it, and rushed at Qarabileng. Qarabileng had already throttled and killed the wolf that it snatched. One of the wolves jumped towards the dog, the other one went towards the

little boy. He thought about the coming of death and he was a bit frightened. He stepped back a little and leaned against the rock. The wolf stood on its front legs and began to spring out towards the boy. The boy bent down, he took a stone in his palm and threw the stone towards the wolf. Though the stone fell near the wolf, it didn't stop it. Then the boy leaned against the rock and closed his eyes as if he reconciled to his death. One thought was in his mind: "Now the wolf will tear me into pieces" Aghbileng and Qarabileng were continuing grappling with the wolves. Just at that moment from the upper part of the rocks there was heard howling of a wolf: "Au- u- u- u....Au-u-u..." It was a grey wolf and as if it wanted to say something to its friends. The grey wolf howled once more: "Au- u-u-u."

It was as if the wolves were waiting for the second howling of the grey wolf. Hearing its second howling, firstly, the wolf at the boy moved off. The other wolves which had seized the throat and the legs of Aghbileng freed the dog and moved off. The dog had no strength. Though Aghbileng wanted to stand up it couldn't. The wolves had badly wounded the dog. The wolf which was grappling with Qarabileng also stopped. As if the dogs also were enchanted by the voice of the howling wolf. The dogs neither barked nor attacked the wolves that had stopped "the fight". The wolves withdrew silently, after a moment they were not seen behind the other side of the hill.

But the grey wolf standing at the rock, didn't want to go. The wolf howled once more: "Au-u-u.Au-u-u..."

The little boy couldn't come to himself remembering all what had happened a moment before. Though the danger was past, his body was trembling. But his trembling wasn't because of fear.

The boy squatted at the bottom of the rock. He grew dumb, his body sweated because of excitement. That time the last howling of the grey wolf made him come to himself: «Au-u-u... Au-u-u..

The voice of the grey wolf was heard from the top of the hill. After some time it wasn't seen behind the hill.

Just then the boy remembered the story of "a grey wolf" which his grandmother used to tell him in childhood.

The boy took his stick in a cowardly way and stood up. With one end of the stick he wanted to set in motion the wolf lying near him motionless. But the wolf had already died. Qarabileng was licking the bleeding wounds of Aghbileng.

...That little boy was the great warlord of Azerbaijan, the conqueror who would shake the world, and an eminent ruler before whom all would bow saying "my Shah". The little boy was the future Nader Shah..

CHAPTER I

...In Daragoz there began a clamor, the people were yelling at the top of their voices, because there were no armed men to fight against the Uzbeks of Khorasan who had all of a sudden attacked because there remained only old people, women and children in the winter quarters. Usually when the brave men of the Qirkhli branch of the stock of Avshar were in winter quarters, they would either go to battles following the order of the Shah of Qizilbash or would guard the eastern borders of the Empire of the Safavids. The Uzbeks of Khorasan knew it very well, by attacking the Qirkhli of Avshars they wanted both to get plunder to increase their wealth and to force the women and children they captured to work like slaves.

The Uzbeks of Khorasan knew exactly the time when to attack.

In the streets of Daragoz one could hear nothing because of the noise of crying, screaming, and shouting, wailing and neighing of horses. The Uzbeks of Khorasan killed the old people and captured the boys, beautiful girls and women and filled the prisoners into the cart which they had brought with them.

The mother embraced fourteen year old Nader and ten year old Ibrahim and sat close to the corner of the shack built from earth-bricks. In the shack there was nothing except kitchen utensils and threadbare bedding put on the old chest. Nader considered himself to be the head of the family and wanted to show his manly features to his mother and little brother. That was why he had taken the only knife and was ready to attack:

– When they enter inside, if I don't cut them I am not the son of my father, – he said and drew back into the arms of her mother.

His mother embraced him:

– Nader, I beseech you, hide that knife! The brave men of Qirkhli are not here, the Uzbeks consider themselves stronger. Calm your mind! Let us be out of danger... As soon as our brave men come they will take vengeance on them.

But Nader had no patience:

– Mother, what are you saying? If they harm you or my brother, I shall never absolve myself!

Just at that moment somebody kicked the door of the shack. Because of kicking, the frame of the door broke into pieces and fell on the floor. It raised clouds of dust. The Uzbek of Khorasan who rushed into the shack had a Damask sword in his hand, on his shoulder hung a bow and an arrow. He had worn boots made of skin. Firstly, he could see nothing. He waited for the dust to settle. After some time he saw one woman and two boys squatting in the corner sitting close to one another. In that poor shack there was nobody except them. The Uzbek screwed up his courage seeing the shack without a man:

– Hi, woman, where is your jewelry? – The Uzbek of Khorasan shouted.

– What? What jewelry? Don't you see our poor shack? We have no jewelry, – mother said.

The Uzbek of Khorasan cried:

– Don't speak stupidly! I know that even a poor Avshar has jewelry. You can't deceive me, – he said and approached the woman. – Let me see your neck!

The Uzbek had a sword in his right hand; he wanted to take the kerchief off the woman with his left hand. Just at that moment Nader stood between his mother and the Uzbek.

– Don't touch my mother or I shall kill you! – Nader shouted and got ready to fight.

The Uzbek of Khorasan, who didn't expect such kind of courage from a teenager, remembered the Damask sword in his hand and came to himself. "Shall I kill children of the Avshars?" – he thought for a while and calmed himself. Firstly, he decided to punish and frighten the child. He smacked the face of Nader by the back of his left hand:

– Don't interfere, whelp! Or I shall kill both your bitch

mother and you!

Nader staggered because of the blow, and he leaned his hand against the wall for support and could stand with difficulty.

The Uzbek of Khorasan again wanted to take the kerchief of the woman and touch her breast.

– Hi, you bitch, show me whatever you have! If I wrangle with everybody so much I shall return to Qayin without plunder. Be quick!

At that moment he felt pain on one side. Firstly, he supposed that the pain was the ache of hurt from wresling. It gave Nader a chance to thrust the knife three times into his side. It was too late when the Uzbek of Khorasan understood what had happened. He was losing his strength, Nader said scornfully:

– But I had told you not to touch my mother or I should kill you!

The Uzbek of Khorasan crashed onto the floor. Mother, who stiffened in astonishment seeing the scene before her eyes, began to tear her hair:

– What did you do, my child? Now they will come and kill all of us!

Nader didn't change his posture:

– Let them come, I shall kill them too!

Mother said anxiously:

– You get into trouble not only me but yourself and your brother. What must I do now? My God, help me!

Nader took the knife which was covered with the blood of the Uzbek and hid it under his shirt without wiping the blood. Then he raised the Damask sword:

– What had to happen has already happened, mother! Now I shall defend you better!

Mother cried anxiously:

– What are you saying, my son, throw away that sword, don't seek death for yourself!

Nader didn't want to throw away the sword. Mother came nearer to him, pulled the sword and threw it to the corner of the shack:

– Didn't I ask you to throw away the sword? Now, we need not to fight but leave immediately. There are a lot Uzbeks in the mountains and valleys! My God, help me, if one of them comes here he will kill us! She raised her hands up and prayed the God. My God, help my poor children!

The woman passed through the broken door and looked outside. The Uzbeks were busy with plundering. It was good that the horse of the dead Uzbek was tied to the neighbor's gate, or after finding the dead body it wouldn't be difficult for them to find out his murderer. Suddenly it thundered. As if the black clouds in the sky couldn't bare the screaming, shouting, wailing and wanted to become free of pain. It began to rain hard, as if it would wash away all the pain. Rain helped the mother and her two children to run. The Uzbeks of Khorasan who wanted to escape from the rain, stopped plundering and looked for a place to hide themselves.

Mother turned towards her children and said:

– Be quick! Hurry up!

The children looked round the street; there was nobody there. The rain was not going to stop. They ran along the street about fifty meters and then they turned to the left. After fifty meters there was empty land, thorns-and-shrubs. If only they reached there, they could be able to reach the mountains and hide themselves. But they didn't have any luck. From behind, somebody was shouting at them: "Stop!"

Mother wanted to look behind and to see who was shouting. But she lost her balance in the slippery and muddy place and fell. She wanted to stand up, but she couldn't. Apparently, her foot was sprained. The running boys looked behind and didn't see their mother following and they stopped.

– Nader, I beg you, don't stop, run!

Mother couldn't finish her words. The Uzbek of Khorasan appeared unexpectedly above her head and kicked her:

– Where are you running? You won't be able to save yourselves.

The woman lost consciousness because of the blow. Nader looked at his brother and said:

– Let's return! Our mother is in trouble and that scoundrel will kill her with his kicking.

When the children came nearer to their mother the Uzbek said to them furiously:

– Come, bitch ones, where were you running? – He shouted.

The children kept silence.

– Is she your mother?

The children nodded their heads affirming.

The Uzbek of Khorasan faced Nader:

– You seem older than your brother. Take this woman and drag her towards the cart. If you think about running once more I shall kill both of you. You are my slaves from this day.

Nader lifted his mother who had lost her consciousness and whose face and clothes were covered with mud. Then he took her on his shoulder and told his brother: “Follow me!”

The Uzbek left them behind. Though it was difficult to go in the mud and rain, Nader wasn't tired carrying his mother. When they reached the carts in the outskirts of the hamlet the Uzbek turned to Nader and asked him:

– Aren't you tired?

– The son who carries the load of the mother can never be tired.

Nader's answer surprised the Uzbek:

– You look like a bright fellow by your clever answer. Whose son are you in Qirkhli?

The sudden question of the Uzbek was heavier than the load on his shoulder. Nader didn't want to show his feelings: -Now it makes no difference, our father died long ago. The Uzbek of Khorasan shouted with laughter:

– Well, very well! It is better if my slaves are without a father.

Nader preferred to keep silence because they had reached the carts. He placed his mother in one corner of a cart. He tied the muddy kerchief round her head. The rain was soon going to be over.

...On a rough road the carts were going towards the city of Qayin in the province of Khorasan. The fighting Uzbeks had already galloped their horses and were not seen. There were nine or ten fighters in the carts. They were laughing and didn't pay attention to the moaning of the captive people they had taken like plunder. They knew that no one could be able to run, because except Nader's mother they had tied the hands and feet of all the captivated women. They didn't need to tie the hands of Nader's mother because of her losing consciousness.

Mother awoke when the cart fell on the next pot-holes. She groaned, and when she came to herself her first word was: “Where are we?”

Nader bent to the head of his mother:

– I understood from their talking that they are taking us to Qayin, mother!

– Where is Ibrahim?

– He is also here.

– Did they beat you?

– No, mother!

The woman mourned noisily when the cart fell into the pot-hole again:

– It feels as if the bitch Uzbek has broken my bones with his kicking. Nader, my son, raise me up and give your ear to me!

Nader raised his mother and bent his ear close to her.

– My son, don't they know anything about your killing the Uzbek? – She asked.

– No, they don't know...

– As soon as they reach Qayin, they will know without fail, -the woman moaned again. At that time no one will be able to save you from their revenge. You must run together with your brother before reaching Qayin. Then it will be too late.

– I can't leave you here, mother! – He whispered in the ears of his mother.

– It is the end of my life, my son! I can't run even I want to. My foot has been sprained; one of my bones has apparently been broken.

– We shall be together, mother!

Mother got angry:

– Don't argue with me, my son! Listen to my words! It is getting dark. Qayin is far from here. They will without fail spend the night somewhere. Darkness won't let them come after you. Darkness loses the traces quickly. While you are running go on the right side of the road. That road will lead you to Kalat. The Shah of Avshars, Baba-ali khan lives in Kalat. Go to his palace and speak about what had happened. Baba-ali khan has always been the rescuer of us, the Avshars. If it is fated we shall meet again, if it is not fated to meet, you may revenge me with on our enemies. I am proud of you, my son!

– Mother, but...

Nader couldn't finish his words.

– It is enough! Hide yourselves in the corner of the cart; show yourselves as if you are sleeping. If they feel you are awake, they will tie your hands and feet.

Nader couldn't say a word because the woman had already closed her eyes because of the pains...

...After some time they stopped near the city. They encircled the carts in order that they would not be attacked while sleeping, and they made a fire...

...It was the middle of the night. The Uzbeks ate the jerked meat they brought with them and drank a wineskin of wine after eating. They were drunk. The squint-eyed one who seemed to be the head of the group couldn't stand on his feet. Without doubt he was sexually excited. In the cart he was looking for the most beautiful of the captured women. They didn't think about giving food to the prisoners. At last, the head of the group shouted: "Won't they dance for us?" Another Uzbek fighter could say stammering: "It is a good idea" and stood up with difficulty and approached one of the carts. Though he was drunk, he could untie the cord of the hands and feet of a fifteen-sixteen years old girl and helped her to get off the cart. He pulled her arms and brought near the fire. The girl was so weak that she couldn't put up any resistance; her body had grown numb because of remaining tied for a long time, which was why she couldn't move.

The head of the group approached the girl stammering:

– Now we shall sing a song and you will dance for us.

The girl said nothing. The strange singing of the fighters didn't make her move. The head of the group stopped his singing and approached the girl taking out his poniard:

– Dance or I shall kill you. All of you are my slaves.

The fighters again began to sing strange songs. The girl raised her hands being helpless... That merriment continued till the morning. The tired fighters fell asleep by the fire...

...Nader was watching all what was happening. When all around was silent mother said to her children: "Stand up, it is time!" Mother and children embraced one another in tears. Mother was feeling that it was the time of parting and she wouldn't see her children any more. Nader and Ibrahim got off the cart quietly. They couldn't walk without their mother. But the woman hastened them:

– Be quick, the lights of my eyes! Hurry!

Nader and Ibrahim left the cart in a hurry.

The Uzbek fighter who had broken the bones of Nader's mother by kicking, was in Nader's opinion on someone to be dealt with...

The fire couldn't be seen. Nader stopped and whispered to his brother:

– Wait for me here! I shall return after a little time.

He returned the same way as silently as he had come. He took the knife that he had hidden under his shirt with which he had killed the Uzbek of Khorasan. He readied it in his hand and approached the

fire. He cast a furtive glance at the place where the Uzbek who had kicked his mother was sleeping. Nader approached him carefully. The noise of the snoring of the drunken fighters mixed with the noise of the dragonflies. Nader closed the mouth of the fighter with his left hand and began to thrust the knife into the Uzbek's throat with his right hand:

– Didn't I tell you beforehand that I shall kill anyone who touched my mother? – He whispered in a low voice that couldn't be heard. The fighter struggled a little and then he died. Then Nader disappeared in the darkness of the night. The darkness swallowed and made him unseen.

Their mother was watching that scene in tears and was saying in her heart: "Well done, my son!"

After some time the beams of the Sun began to be seen through the skyline. It was the first night that the teenage Nader spent without his mother.

Kalat, 1722

From Nader:

“...It seemed that somebody was calling my name. I opened my eyes. Sona Beyim was calling me. She was the daughter of Baba-ali khan, the head of the stock of Avshar. My son Rzaqulu was standing near her and was catching the hem of her dress. I was so busy with fulfilling the tasks of Baba-ali-khan, which was why just then I noticed that my son had already been brought up.

– What do you want? – I asked her angrily. – Don’t you know that I came just towards morning?

Sona Beyim:

– I know, but my grandfather is calling you. – Sona Beyim called her father as grandfather. – He sent my brother to call you.

– Where is he?

– In his own room.

– Has anything happened?

– I don’t know, my brother said nothing.

I raised myself up in the bedding; I called Rzaqulu. The child jumped towards my arms as if he was waiting for my words. I sleeked his hair and kissed his red cheeks. Then I turned towards Sona :

– Ask the servant to bring water! I want to wash myself. Tell your brother that I am coming after a little time.

– All right, my bey! – Sona Beyim said and went out.

The voice of Sona Beyim was heard in the yard.

Sona Beyim was the elder daughter of Baba-ali khan. She was very beautiful. She could rule the home very well. But she often fell ill because her health wasn’t good. She had suffered much while giving a birth to Rzaqulu.

I kissed my son once more and stood up. The boy went out of the room running.

I wore my chukha² and my cap, fastened my sword to my waist and went into the yard. Rzaqulu came to me. Immediately the servants brought the washbasin and a can. I took my cap and put it on Rzaqulu’s head. He looked funny. Sona Beyim wanted to serve me herself. She took the water can and poured water into my palm. I asked while washing my hands, face and throat:

– How is the khan?

– He looks a bit tired.

– He had to marry after your mother’s death.

– My God! Enough! Did our father want to marry and we didn’t agree?

– Yes, I know, he might marry. The khan himself didn’t want to marry; he loved your mother too much

When I finished my washing, Sona Beyim gave me the towel. The wife of the khan died while giving birth for the last time. The doctors tried hard but they couldn’t save her. After the death of his wife the khan grieved. The hale and hearty man began to melt like a candle before our eyes.

...When we escaped from the danger of the Uzbeks of Khorasan, I and my brother Ibrahim came to the city of Kalat, to Baba-ali khan’s palace. He greeted us kindly. Though our family was poor, he knew my father very well. Baba-ali khan spoke some sweet words about my father. I told him all that had happened; I informed him that my mother and other Avshar women and children were captured. Baba-ali khan was listening to me attentively and he couldn’t take his eyes off me. I lost the power of speech under his looks. But also I was afraid of not being able to speak. I finished my words and kept silent. He turned passionately towards my brother and asked:

² A Caucasian coat

– My son, did you see how Nader killed the armed Uzbek?

Ibrahim answered simply:

– Yes, I saw only one of them, but not the other one. When he ran towards the camp of the Uzbeks I was in the forest.

Baba-ali khan stood up:

– Bravo! Bully for you! – He said. Do you want to work in my palace?

We answered his question by nodding our heads. We had nowhere to go. Thus, we began to serve to Baba-ali khan.

Afterwards I learned that Baba-ali khan had sent a messenger to the ruler of Khorasan and asked him to give back the women and the children of the stock of Avshar. The Uzbeks of Khorasan promised to return the captured people in return for some sum money in order not to be cross with the Avshars.

I couldn't see my mother among the returned prisoners. In this way, the languor of my mother remained in my heart for ever.

I was promoted to the post of a military leader in the palace. The quickest, the most famous regiment among the Avshars was mine. One day Baba-ali khan called me. I supposed that he was going to send me to fight. But I was mistaken. That time he had another thought. Baba-ali khan began talking in a roundabout way. It was his habit, when he wanted to solve a serious problem he used to begin his talk in a roundabout way. He spoke about the summer pasture, winter hut of the Avshars, about the forest, river and frontier fights. At last he began to state his purpose:

– My son, Nader, you are more than twenty five years old. Don't you want to marry?

I dropped my eyes shyly:

– I follow you advise, my khan!

Baba-ali khan:

– My son, don't be ashamed! Consider me to be close to you. There is a saying if water is in the can it is drinkable. If you love somebody, tell me. I shall be your match-maker.

– I love nobody, my khan!

From the author:

Nader had a vigorous constitution; he was tall, large-eyed, with long eyelashes and black brows. The scar which was the keepsake of the fight made him look much braver. The colors of his eyes were yellow and that color suited him very well. He had a severe character. When he was betrayed he used to suffer from nerves and became much crueler. In spite of everything he was very joyful.

In life he loved much firstly his mother, and in his old age his grandson Shahruh. Nader and the people around him liked to speak the Turkish language. He didn't know the Arabian language. He used the Persian language only if necessary. Till the end of his life Nader didn't learn to read and write.

“...I went upstairs quickly and stood at the room of the khan. The servant standing at the door said to me: “The khan is waiting for you”. I entered the room and greeted the khan. The khan was leaning against a cushion and was staring at an unknown point; he was looking somewhere as if he didn't notice me entering. Though the mushtuq³ of his pipe was in his mouth, neither the smoke rose nor was the water of the pipe boiling. He was too thoughtful. I didn't want to disturb him and decided to wait on foot just at the door. After some time he stirred a little. I greeted him once more. He shook his head without turning towards me and showed me a place to sit. I bent my knees and sat on the

³ A part of a pipe

carpet of Shirvan⁴. I put my hands on my shins and began to wait. I was feeling that he had called me to tell something serious. I wasn't mistaken. ...He began to speak after some time:

– Nader, my son, I have lived most of my life, there remains only a little. There is a proverb; he who is born will pass away once. I think my deceased wife is waiting for me. And I miss her so much...

I wanted to cheer up the khan:

– Don't be upset, my khan! You will dance in the wedding of your grandson Rzaqulu too.

The khan answered like a moaning person:

– Don't interrupt me!

I kept silent. That time he also began to speak in a roundabout way;

– We always served our grandfather Shah and his successors devotedly.

– Whom do you mean while saying “our grandfather Shah”, my khan?

– I mean the founder of the state of the Safavids, Shah Ismayil. He did salavat⁵. – He united all the Oghuz stocks in Azerbaijan. Then he consolidated the territories of the stocks with his territories, the stocks which were not Turkish.

– Well, my khan, why didn't you tell me all about it?

– Because the time wasn't right. Now it is the time. Listen to me attentively! The foundation of the state of the Safavids was laid by the six Turkish stocks together with the Avshars. Those stocks are of Sham, Rum, Takla, Ustaja, Zulqadar and Qajar. The power of our grand father Shah was in those Turkish stocks. Those stocks were like backbones of the state. Our grandfather Shah behaved kindly to them and considered them to be close to himself. Because of it our grand father Shah not only united the Azerbaijani lands but also consolidated the lands of Iraq, Bahrain, and Turkistan with the territory of our state.

I was thinking why Baba-ali khan was telling me all he did. But I said nothing. I felt that he had a purpose in his story.

Somebody knocked at the door. The servant entered the room. There was tea and dry fruits on the tray he brought. He put the tea-kettle on the table-cloth, and put one of the bowls in front of me and another bowl in front of the khan. Then he poured the Chinese tea and left quietly. The khan took the bowl and drank a sip of tea.

– Now only little remains from the unity and the realm raised by the Shah. The Ottomans occupied Baghdad... Well, our grand father Shah always wanted to be friends with the Ottomans, because they are also the Turks of Oghuz. The late Shah used to write his letters to the Sultan in the Turkish language. I don't know all the reasons well...The result is that the dynasty of Safavids has been destroyed now.

I couldn't help myself from asking a question:

– What do you mean by saying “has been destroyed”, my Khan?

– After the death of Shah Abbas II, his children were clumsy. They were ruled either by their wives or by the eunuchs in the palace. The successors to the throne had a good time all day long. See, the Qizilbashs had become so weak that the realm turned to a toy in the hands of eunuchs. The successors to the throne spent most of their time with women. The treasury became empty, the taxes increased. The seven stocks which were the backbones of the state began to wrangle and fight with one another. Because of that reason in Herat, Ghilzais revolted under the leadership of Mir Vays. Shah Sultan Husain sent Qurqun khan to Mir Vays. Mir Vays destroyed the troops of Qurqun khan and in addition he occupied Qandahar.

– Do you know why the troops of the Shah were destroyed?

– Maybe they didn't train well for the fight.

⁴ A region in Azerbaijan

⁵ The term in Islam

– No, my son! Sultan Husain had sent the Persian and Georgian regiments headed by the clumsy warlords to fight against them... That was the reason.

– But whom did he have to send?

– The Turkish troops always tamed the Ghilzais. They are not afraid of the Persian and Georgian troops.

The khan drank a sip of tea and continued:

– During the period of Shah Abbas II, gift of money used to be sent to the Lezgis of Dagestan for them not to leave the mountains and to obey the rules. After Shah Abbas II the Viziers of Sultan Husain appropriated the annual money gifts and the Lezgis of Dagestan, seeing that the money gift had stopped, destroyed Shirvan and Georgia. As if that was not enough, the mullabashi⁶ got the permission of the Shah and began to kill the Sunnite people, and burnt the Sunnite mosques. The people of Darband called the Russian Shah for help...

I didn't know that the khan had such comprehensive information. I directed all my attention to his words so as not to forget any small detail.

The khan was continuing his conversation in a low voice:

– The Ottomans wanted to requite for the loss in Balkans. Istanbul, which had finished the war with Russia, turned towards the East. Duru Efandi was sent to Tehran and demanded Azerbaijan and Georgia including Tabriz and Shirvan.

I had no patience:

– My khan, how do you know all this information?

– If I didn't know all this information I wouldn't be able to be the khan of about twenty thousand families of the Avshars. – The khan continued his conversation. – In the east, the Baluchs attacked Kirman and Lor. They destroyed the city of Bender Abbas at the Kanger gulf. Anxious news was heard from Kurdistan and Luristan. The ruler of Turan, Shah Melik Mahmud had renounced his power. He had sent into retirement his only talented warlord Lutfali khan.

– Why?

Because the Shah was not able to rule the country. See, as a result of the policy of Shiite and Sunnite (adherents of the Mos- em sects) pursued by the Shah, Shirvan revolted and appealed to the Ottomans. Istanbul appointed the head of the Shirvan rebels, Haji Davud to be the khan of that province. Using the absence of Lutfali khan, Mahmud khan of Qandahar attacked Shiraz and Isfahan. Shah Sultan Husain ran to Julfa and not being able to stay there he returned back to Isfahan. After all that had happened the wives and eunuchs decided that the Shah had to give up the throne. The Shah gave up the throne in favor of his elder son Sultan Mahmud. But the young Shahzade, because of all ways remaining alone, ran to the harem and gave the crown to his middle brother Safi Mirza. Safi Mirza also immediately refused the power. Then they announced the third son Tahmasb Mirza to be the successor to the throne. The other sons were younger still. Mahmud khan of Qandahar, who had encircled Isfahan, didn't think about moving of Sultan Husain, who had no way out, decided to give himself up. He put the crown on the head of Mahmud who was waiting for him at the door of Isfahan. Mahmud entered the city ceremonially and declared himself the Shah.

– But where was the successor to the throne at that moment?

– Three months before that event, the successor Tahmasb Mirza ran to Qazvin from Isfahan together with two hundred people of Tabriz. It was the only safe place in that situation.

The khan stopped for a while. I felt that he would tell the main purpose for his talk.

After a short time Baba-ali khan broke the silence himself:

– I told you at the beginning of my talk. The stocks of the Avshar always served the realm of the Safavids. Now they have the same opinion.

– How? – I asked.

⁶ The head of the mullahs

– You must help the successor Tahmasb Mirza. I decided that the Avshars must support the lawful successor to the throne. It is true, the lying Shah had sent his representative to me, but I didn't receive him.

I lived well in the palace of Baba-ali khan. It is true; at times I used to rob. I attacked the Afghan and Uzbek villages and plundered there. During all my life I robbed only twice. Then Baba-ali khan forbade me plundering and I gave up robbing. But then the khan wanted me to be much closer to the Shah.

As if he knew what I was thinking about:

– It isn't the end of my talking!

After two days, Baba-ali khan whom I respected as my father and who had defined my future life, died. Let him sleep in peace! After one month Sona Beyim died ill-fatedly because of her illness. I consulted the respected adults of Avshar and it was decided that there was no need to bring a new mother for my son Rzaqulu. The second daughter of the khan – Govhar Shad could be a real mother to my son... I married her.”

CHAPTER II

Isfahan, June, 1722

...*The* barber was sharpening the razor in his hand. He did so willingly as if he was going to cut someone's head. Then he put the razor on the stool. He poured the hot water into the faience bowl which also was on the stool. He sliced the pieces of the soap into the water. The soap was brought from Europe. He took the brush made of the tails of a horse and began to mix up the soapy water. After some time white suds were seen in the water. The barber mixed up the water a bit and said to the man who was sitting on the other stool:

– It is ready, Your Majesty! May I begin?

The man who was comfortably sitting on the stool answered:

– Yes, you may begin.

The barber took the sheet and tied it round the neck of the man. Now there was seen nothing except the head of that man who had little hair. The sheet was covering the man to his feet. The barber took the faience bowl and once more mixed the soapy suds and began to soap the head of the man sitting on the stool. Then he began to cut his head with the razor.

...That place was the Shah's palace in Isfahan. Though the palace didn't maintain its magnificence during the time Shah Abbas II, it looked splendid outwardly. Once the officials and rulers came to that palace to solve problems, those who were gathering tax used to render an account, those who were appointed to a new post left the palace in delight, but those who were freed from posts left sorrowfully. In that palace all was directed towards the ruling of the state. Somebody was sentenced to death there, somebody was forgiven. In the palace a number of messengers were received, a lot of treaties were signed or war was declared on another country. Yes, that palace was like a beating heart of the state during the period of Shah Abbas II. But now it looked like a mill the water of which was over. Because of the cunning of the women, perfidy of the eunuchs even the stones had ear to hear the talking. Thus, everybody wanted to be aware of what was spoken in the palace. Those who came for some work wanted to leave the palace as quickly as they could, because the last decision was given not by the Shah but either by the women or by the eunuchs. If they whispered into the ear of the Shah, the request was either adopted or refused. The rulers of the province and the heads of the stocks wanted to lose the power of the Shah. Seeing that situation they wanted to become independent. As a result, in each place of the country objections and revolts began.

Even the representatives of foreign countries brought precious gifts to the women of harem or to the eunuchs in order to solve a problem positively. Shah Sultan Husain didn't go out of the harem for days and he had a good time all day long. The sons of the Shah were brought up in a closed, confined way. The Shahzades met with no one except the women and eunuchs. After Shahzade Tahmasb Mirza was announced the successor to the throne, the head of the stock of the Qajar, Fatali khan, had found a way to see him with the help of eunuchs and was able to take him once to Tabriz. Fatali khan tried to make Tahmasb Mirza leave the palace. He felt that the time had come and he prepared the successor for it. Fatali khan was feeling that the dynasty of the Safavids, which had lasted more than 200 years was going to fall. It was necessary to save the dynasty...

The man whose head the barber was cutting was Tahmasb Mirza whose moustache was newly growing.

...In the middle of the cell covered with the carpet of Tabriz there was placed a splendid bed. On the wall hung a carpet and there was hung a loaded rifle and the sword which was said to belong to Shah Abbas I. In the corner of the cell there were wall-cupboards and a mirror.

The barber Yusif was serving the Shahzade since his childhood years. They could find much to talk about. Last time, the barber felt some change in the Shahzade. He was always thoughtful. The barber thought it might be the Shahzade was thinking about the future of the state after being announced the Shah.

The Shahzade himself broke the silence.

– What news, barber Yusif?

The barber Yusif didn't stop:

– I wish you long life and health! I beseech you!

The barber used to say him “I beseech you” in his own dialect and Tahmasb Mirza very much liked his way of speaking. Though his head was under the razor, he couldn't help laughing. When he shouted with laughter, the barber raised his head up:

– Your Majesty! Don't laugh; I may notch your skin.

– Well, well, my barber, don't stop! What about the people? What about are they gossiping in the streets and bath-houses?

– What do you mean? (The barber said in dialect)

That time the Shahzade couldn't help laughing:

– About the last events....That is to say about the successors to the throne, about Mahmud khan of Qandahar... I wonder will the people defend Isfahan or not?

– Don't you know the common people? They talk about what they hear. Everybody speaks his own opinion. If they leave the common people self-willed the country can be destroyed, I beseech you!

The Shahzade again began to laugh. The barber stopped again. The Shahzade said laughing:

– Continue, barber, and don't stop! Continue both your conversation and your work. I shall not laugh.

The barber Yusif began to cut:

– I say, Your Majesty, if even a dead body is self-willed he can rise from the grave.

– What do you want to say, barber Yusif?

The barber Yusif was a bit frightened:

– Nothing, Your Majesty! It is only a saying. I repeated.

No, barber Yusif! I understood the meaning of your words. You wanted to say that the people should not be left without control. It is necessary to bring the people together and to be their head, isn't it?

– To tell the truth, the people of Isfahan began to be frightened from Mahmud khan of Qandahar. Because the Afghans occupied the beloved residence of our Shah Sultan Husain, that is to say Farhadabad. The people wonder who will defend them. They say that after Farhadabad that bloodsucker is planning to come to Isfahan.

– What other words do the people say?

– They also tell that as soon as Mahmud approaches Isfahan the Shahzades will run.

The Shahzade looked as though he didn't hear the last words of the barber:

– The Shahzades have nothing to do with this problem. It isn't their responsibility. Our Shah is here.

The barber was going to finish his work.

– I don't say these words, Your Majesty! The people gos- sip thus.

Then the Shahzade said nothing. He took the sides of the mirror which were dyed in water of silver and looked at his bald head. As before the barber had done his work skill – fully. When the servants saw that barber had finished his work they brought wash-basin and a towel. The Shahzade bent his head on the wash-basin and one of the servants poured water and began to wash his head. Though the water was finished from the can the Shahzade didn't raise his head and another servant dried his head with the towel.

The Shahzade took the mirror again and looked at his reflection in the mirror. Then he sleeked his bald head with his left hand. When the servants left the cell, the Shahzade turned to the barber Yusif and said: “You may go now”. Then he wore his Qizilbash turban. Just at that moment one of the man-servants entered and informed him about the coming of Fatali khan. It was as if the Shahzade was waiting for him. He said: “Let him come in”.

Fatali khan came in and looked at the handsome Shahzade and bowed to him.

Tahmasb Mirza was really a handsome young boy. The turban of Qizilbash suited him very well. His broad shoulder matched his tall figure. His brows and face were as if they were the same as those of Shah Abbas II. What a pity, he wasn't born to rule the state! Fatali khan thought all about this in his mind but he said anything. Fatali khan had his own purpose. He thought that all this lack of control wouldn't last much longer. He believed that soon all would be in order. At that time Fatali khan would turn to one of the close friends of the future Shah so as not to leave him in his troubled days.

The Shahzade broke the silence:

– What news, Fatali khan?

Fatali khan whispered in a low voice:

– All is ready, Your Majesty! Two hundred beys of Qajar have come from Tabriz and are waiting at the walls of fortress for your order.

At this it seemed the Shahzade was a little frightened:

– To my mind the number of the beys is more. Isn't it, Fatali khan? We need to feed them, to place them some t where.

– What? But I think, the number of the beys is fewer. Two hundred beys are fewer for the successor to the throne. Let those who meet you see that how many followers there are around you.

The Shahzade thought for a while and said:

– Let it be how you advise.

– Your Majesty, you mustn't worry! I have prepared all that is necessary.

– Where are we going?

– To Qazvin, Your Majesty!

– When are we leaving?

– At midnight we shall go to the outskirts of the city by a secret way, Your Majesty!

The Shahzade raised his brows:

– Shall we go this way? Is that way too fearful? I never went on that way.

Fatali khan smiled:

– Your Majesty, I shall be near your!

– Well, at midnight!

– Yes, Your Majesty! Now allow me to go and prepare. I shall come to take you at midnight.

Suddenly the Shahzade remembered to ask something:

– But does the ruler of Qazvin know about our coming?

– Yes, Your Majesty! He has been informed beforehand. He can be regarded as our distant relative.

– If it is thus, meet you at midnight!

Fatali khan bowed and went out of the cell.

...In fact, running away was planned by Fatali khan himself. In this way he wanted always to be near the Shahzade and to be much closer to him, to be aware of his thoughts and to test the influence of his power. At the last moment, Fatali khan spoke about his plan to Shah Sultan Husain too. He told him because he was not afraid of him. Fatali khan was frightened of the revenge of the women and eunuchs. He knew very well that those persons were able to persuade the Shah and he could even be sentenced to the death by the Shah. Firstly, the Shah didn't want to allow the Shahzade to leave for Qazvin, he wanted him to be near him. But as soon as Mahmud occupied the Shah's beloved residence, Farhadabad, and directed his troops towards Isfahan, he remembered the plan

of Fatali khan and allowed the Shahzade to leave Isfahan. He allowed this under one condition; that was the Shah was unaware of the Shahzade's leaving. After the permission of the Shah, Fatali khan asked to bring two hundred horsemen from Tabriz and placed them in the outskirts of the walls of the fortress.

At midnight Shahzade Tahmasb Mirza, Fatali khan and their followers left for Qazvin.

...The successor to the throne was never a traveler and couldn't ride well, that was why he wasn't accustomed to ride much. It was felt that he was too tired. He often got angry and because of that reason, after four or five hours they had to stop riding and were obliged to rest a bit. One of the stops was near a lake the surroundings which were very splendid; the trees around the lake, the murmuring of the water flowing into the lake cooled everything around.

Fatali khan allowed everybody to rest except those who were guarding the Shahzade. The brave boys knew where to go to get cool because of the hot weather. They moved off about hundred and hundred fifty meters and plunged into the water. Soon the noise of those who were swimming in the lake was heard around. Fatali khan knew that Qazvin wasn't far from there. In that place they could feel themselves safe and sound. That was why he allowed the sons of famous beys of the Qajar swim and make a noise. They were distinguished boys who had willingly come from Tabriz to guard the Shah. Each of them was able to overcome three or four fighters. When the khan sent news to Tabriz he had told the herald that all the boys had to wear a white shirt and a red Caucasian coat and had to wear a turban like the symbol of the Qizilbashs. The Shahzade didn't pay attention to their clothes because of leaving the city in darkness. But in the morning he saw that the boys who were guarding him were distinguished boys. He asked Fatali khan jokingly: "Where did you bring those boys up?" and Fatali khan answered him jokingly that all the children of the Qajars were like them. He said that if the Shahzade wished he could organize moving all people of Tabriz to Isfahan.

Fatali khan had trained the fighters so that, none of them said a word to the Shahzade. Only when the Shahzade needed water or something, one of the companion followers served him and whatever they brought they gave the Shahzade saying: "Please, my agha! The Shahzade himself also didn't want to talk with them too. One of the reasons was that he was tired by the journey; the other was that the Shahzade's was an unsociable person.

The Shahzade approached the water running into the lake. He took off his turban and put it on the green grass. His bald head cut yesterday was shining under the sun. He rolled up his sleeves and bent to the water. Firstly, he said "bismillah"⁷ and then he washed his arms, then his face and throat. It was seen that he enjoyed the cool water of the lake. Then he sleeked his head with his wet hands, as if his head also breathed. He stood up. The fighter standing behind him gave him a towel. The Shahzade wiped himself and then returned the towel. He looked at the boys who were cooling in the refreshing water of the lake and sighed. He thought that they were happy; as if they cared for nothing. But the Shahzade couldn't swim. He took his turban and wore it. Fatali khan's clearing his throat lightly dispersed his thoughts. When he turned back he saw that Fatali khan was standing at five or six steps' distance:

– Is Qazvin far from here? – The Shahzade asked him.

– No, Your Majesty. It is near. Now the city of Rey is behind. But there is a problem, Your Majesty!

– What problem?

– See, we didn't enter the city of Rey; on our way we didn't visit the city of Qum. We kept apart from those cities. At the least we should have met the rulers of those cities, and you would give them your tasks like a successor to the throne.

– If we have a Shah, why must I have to set task? Won't the Shah object?

⁷ An exclamation used at the beginning of any action by Muslim

– Your Majesty! You know that Mahmud khan of Qandahar is moving forward Isfahan after occupying Farhadabad. In the troubled days of our Shah, it would be better if the rulers of those cities helped the Shah and sent troops to Isfahan.

The Shahzade objected firmly:

– No, I can't agree with you without the permission of the Shah. If the power is in the hands of the Shah, how can I think about using it? As you know, we go to Qazvin secretly. Maybe our Shah has sent a herald to Qum and Rey in order to be aware of whether we are there or not. Maybe he has sent a herald to Qazvin too.

Fatali khan calmed the Shahzade:

– You must be fully confident with the ruler of Qazvin, but as soon as we reach Qazvin we must declare mobilization.

Fatali khan didn't want to say that the Shah himself was aware of their running.

– There mustn't be any word about declaring mobilization. We go to Qazvin to take refuge, not to declare mobilization.

Fatali khan wanted to object:

– Your Majesty, we lose time! Suddenly we shall see that Mahmud has sent his troops to Qazvin too.

– Fatali khan, whatever happens I can't agree with you without the permission of our Shah!

– Let it be how you advise, Your Majesty! But allow me to send a herald to Qazvin, let the ruler of Qazvin meet you, meet the successor to the throne ceremonially.

– I don't object...

Fatali khan respected the Shahzade on purpose; though he was not the Shah yet he called him Your Majesty. Though the Shahzade showed devotion to his father he didn't object to such an appeal. That is to say, his wish to be in a position of power was strong. All these people would be useful to him.

The boys who were swimming in the lake had already dried themselves and dressed. After the order of Fatali khan one of them began to ride towards Qazvin quickly.

When the group reached the city, the ruler of Qazvin met the successor to the throne with his followers.

After the official greeting, they went to the palace. The Shahzade had an excellent time all day long there too...

...For about three months Isfahan was encircled by the head of the Afghans, Mahmud khan of Qandahar. After the occupation of Farhadabad, Mahmud planned to occupy Isfahan. Because of a lack of cannons they had decided to keep Isfahan in a blockade; not to let anybody enter the city and to kill those who wanted to leave the city. Mahmud couldn't attack the city, because the walls of the fortress were too strong. That was why he had the idea of keeping the people hungry without attacking the city; to break down the resistance of the people and make the city to surrender.

During the first month of the blockade the people were not hard up for food. The sudden blockade and no real beginning of a fight aroused the thought that the city would be under a blockade for a long time. During the next months the food was over and hunger began to show itself. Robbery, stealing, plundering began. Everybody thought only his own future. Isfahan was in disorder...

Each family has its own distress. However, all had also the same sorrow; lack of food.

– My husband, your children are dying of famine. Find a way-out for my poor children!

Gulbike tired her husband with such words all day long. Salman was a wood-cutter. He earned his livings by selling wood. The man was saddened seeing his hungry children, but he didn't show his suffering. The last pieces of bread at home were eaten; the sacks in the storehouse were empty. Their only hope was the donkey in the yard.

– What can I do, my wife? There is nothing to eat. I don't know from where to get bread for my poor children. They don't let us go out of the city. Now nobody is in need of wood. The people

are in need of only food. The flour is over in the city, we have no stock of grain. I hoped for help only from the baker Hasan. He cut his horse last evening to give something to his children. ...But I haven't the heart to cut our donkey...

Gulbike got angry:

– What? What do you mean by saying “I haven't the heart?” The children are dying of famine. And you haven't

the heart up to cut the donkey.

– My wife, but how shall I earn my living after cutting the only donkey? You know, I can do nothing except carrying wood from the forest.

Gulbike let her tongue run away with her:

– Hi, what are you saying so foolishly? Your lambkin donkey will perish after a few days. How do you think, isn't a donkey living? Don't you need to feed the donkey too? Where is your food? You don't find food for yourself, how will you feed your donkey?

The words of Gulbike awoke Salman. Really, from where would he find feed for his donkey? Soon the donkey will also perish with hunger. He thought for a while and said in a low voice:

– Well, my wife, bring the knife to me!

Gulbike was still wandering in her talk, she didn't want to stop:

– Are you aware that some days ago your children climbed on the walls of the fortress?

– Why? -Salman asked in surprise.

– Don't you know the reason? The Afghans cut sheep in the other side of the walls every day and cook kabab.⁸ The smelling of the meat spread all around. The children climb to the walls to be full even just with smelling kabab. The poor children covert meat.

Gulbike began to weep. Then Salman got angry:

– Stop weeping! Didn't I ask you to bring me the knife? The God is merciful...The troubled days won't last long.

Gulbike stopped her weeping seeing that her husband had got angry. She stood up quickly and brought the knife and gave it to Salman. Salman looked at his wife sourly and wanted to say something. Just at that moment four boys entered the shack one by one:

– What for do you need the knife, father? – The little boy asked.

Gulbike answered instead of Salman:

– Today your father will give you meat to eat.

The elder one said firstly:

– Is father going to cut the donkey?

Salman affirmed the words of his elder son:

– Yes, you are right, my son! Hunger can break stones!

Salman's little son shook himself on the floor and said crying:

– Father, I beseech you, I beg you, don't cut my donkey! – The child began to beg his father.

Gulbike spoke before Salman:

– Keep silence or your father will change his mind!

But Salman wasn't going to change his mind. He stood up, turned towards his wife and said:

– Make a fire. -Then he went outside.

Gulbike turned towards his elder son:

– Be quick! Bring brushwood, let's make a fire!

The elder son didn't pay attention to weeping of his younger brother; he went out to bring brushwood...

In the yard the last bray of the donkey was heard. After some time Salman brought the carcass into the shack. The donkey was cut into pieces:

⁸ A national meal: meat is cooked on a fire

– Hi, wife, it is hot, the meat can be tainted.

But Gulbike said ironically:

– If there remains a piece of meat it will be tainted. The children are so hungry that they will eat all the meat. Salman didn't change his position:

– Take this piece of meat and send it to the neighbor's children. Till the time you cook meat I shall visit the palace to be aware of what the people are speaking.

Gulbike wanted to say something to Salman, but she didn't. She felt that if she said something her husband would get angry and would requite her for his donkey. That was why she preferred to keep silence. Salman said: "Allah, Muhammad, ya Ali!" and went out.

...It was crowded at the gate of the Shah's palace. Since the city had been encircled the population of the city used to gather at the gate of the palace because of hunger or having no work to do. In the palace, Shah Sultan Husain held discussions together with his Viziers and advocates. All were losing their hopes. Now the eunuchs and harem didn't have any authority as before. In such troubled days they couldn't give good advice. The chief Vizier approached slowly to the Shah who was sitting on the throne:

– Your Majesty! Mahmud has sent his messenger for the fourth time; he wants us to surrender...

The Shah wanted to prolong the time for surrender:

– Vizier, how many days can we bear?

– Your Majesty! In the city there remained no living beings except humans. Dog, cat, horse, donkey, – the people have cut all the animals and eaten; none of your horses has even remained.

– You want to say that we have no way-out, do you?

– Your Majesty! After some days the people will begin to eat the flesh of one another. If illness spreads among the people nobody will remain safe and sound.

Shah Sultan Husain understood very well what sign the chief Vizier gave. That was to say that the Shah had to surrender the city or together with the people he also would die. The Shah thought and asked:

– Does anybody want to advise?

Nobody answered. The Shah knew well that all the people wanted him to surrender the city. Even inside of the walls of the palace there was a feeling of capitulation and weakness. They needed to discuss with the messenger how to surrender. The Shah turned towards the chief Vizier:

– Call Mahmud's messenger!

A tall person in the form of a fighter came in. He had no gun. It seemed that his gun had been taken in the reception room. He bowed to the Shah.

– What are your conditions? What does Mahmud khan want?

It was the first time that the Shah added the name of "khan" after Mahmud's name. The pain of that obligatory appeal was seen in the Shah's sorrowful looks. The messenger bowed once more:

– Mahmud khan wants you to surrender the city.

– Then?

– Then you must put your crown on his head with your hand at the gate of the city.

– But for all this, what is he going to promise us?

– Your Majesty! All the population of the city including you and your followers will be given quarter. Isfahan will not be plundered.

The Shah was lost in thoughts and then:

– Yes, I agree with your conditions, -he said -Tell Mahmud khan to wait for us at the gate of the city. But ask Mahmud khan to fulfill my only request.

– Please, Your Majesty!

– The people of Isfahan have cut all the animals to eat. I ask Mahmud khan to send us some horses tomorrow.

All right, Your Majesty! I think it is not difficult to fulfill this request. Just today, they can send you some horses. Now allow me to go away!

The Shah hinted, “go away” with the sign of his hand. The messenger bowed once more and went away.

....At a distance of one thousand and five hundred meters from the entry gate of Isfahan a splendid white tent was made for Mahmud khan. The khan was extremely excited. His followers had never seen him so excited. It was not accidental. In history, it was the first time that the khan of Afghan would be honored with the title of Shah. Till that time none of the khans of Afghan had received that name.

Mahmud khan was walking up and down impatiently at the white tent. At times he whispered to himself: “Maybe the Shah has changed his opinion.” The khan had got ready especially for the crowning ceremony. Starting from the doors of the fortress till the white tent on both sides of the road there were placed two rows of infantry fighters. Behind them on both sides of the road there were standing troopers. The musicians of the army were waiting for the order at the left side of the tent. During the crowning ceremony they had to play thunderously; all had to know that the ruling of the Safavids was over. On the carpet spread near the white tent, the wrestlers were showing their skills. One of them rotated a cudgel on his throat. One of them threw a mace into the air and then with his breast kept its speed until the moment it fell to the ground. One of them showed tricks blowing fire out of his mouth. On the right side of the tent the rope-dancers ran to the right and the left on cord which was four meters’ height from the ground. They jumped and fell on the cord. All was ready for the ceremony. If only Shah Sultan Husain came early... The feast part of the ceremony Mahmud khan had decided to hold in the palace of the Shah. Before the feast he planned to give food to the population of Isfahan. For the people who were in blockade for more than three months and were dying from starving it would be the best gift.

...The gates of the city were opened slowly. Shah Sultan Husain, Viziers, advocates, the courtiers, all the famous people of the city went towards the white tent passing through the fighters whom Mahmud khan had placed. Only Shah Husain was mounted, the rest of the people were going after him on feet. The lower lids of the Shah’s eyes had turned black. It was felt that he hadn’t slept the night before. How could he sleep? Since 1501, that is to say, when his forefathers possessed the throne of Safavids had passed 221 years. It was the end of the empire of the Safavids which they had founded with their blood, sacrificing their lives. It was too hard for Husain Shah to think about it. Where had they made mistakes? Because of the mistakes in the country uncontrolled behavior, revolts, disturbances had begun. The Shah saw the reason of all this neither in himself nor in the followers surrounding him. He thought that the reason of all this misfortune was destiny and in the changing of the times. That was why the Shah and his followers had changed their clothes. The Shah and his followers, who were always well-dressed, were in black. The crown decorated with precious stones, was an inheritance from his grandfather Shah Abbas I.

The horse of the Shah stood at a distance of fifteen meters from the white tent. The man servant of the Shah ran and pulled the horse of the Shah by the bridle. The Shah got off the horse slowly and came forward to Mahmud khan. Mahmud khan came towards the Shah seriously. When they reached to the middle of the carpet, both of them stood. Mahmud khan didn’t know how to begin to the talk; he wanted the Shah to speak. After some time Shah Sultan Husain broke the silence:

– You beat me, Mahmud khan, I was defeated!

– In all battles one side is a winner, the other side is a defeater. But I defeated not only you but also the Safavids.

The Shah said smiling ironically:

– The Safavids have a number of Turkish stocks. It is difficult to win a victory over them. You defeated only me. That is why I am here in front of you.

But Mahmud khan understood nothing from the secret smiling of the Shah:

– Well, then we may begin our ceremony. – He said.

The Shah said in a low voice:

– Me- Shah Sultan Husain, the son of the Shah Abbas II, declare before my Viziers, advocates and the population of the city that I pass the throne willingly to Mahmud khan of Qandahar.

Then the Shah took the crown from his head and put the crown on the head of Mahmud khan. Just at that moment the drums thundered, the noise of the zurna⁹ rose to the heavens. The soldiers whom Mahmud khan had placed specially shot their loaded guns.

In just a few minutes, Mahmud was a khan. Now he had the luck to become the Shah. The new Shah raised his hand, greeted the troops and the population of the city who were watching that ceremony behind the walls of the fortress.

Under the thundering music Sultan Husain gave an order in the words he had said some minutes ago and gave the approval to Mahmud Shah. Everything was repeated again. – The thundering of music, the shooting of guns... Mahmud Shah who was pleased with himself looked at the followers of Sultan Husain and said:

– Won't the mullabashi give his blessings to me?

The mullabashi came forward and approached the new Shah slowly. Firstly, he looked at Sultan Husain. Sultan Husain nodded his head as a sign of agreement. The mullabashi said whispering: “Bismillahir, rehmanir-rehim” and wished long life to the new Shah, wished him fame like the supporter of shariat¹⁰. It was obvious that the mullabashi was saying all the words unwillingly.

After the blessings, the mullabashi returned to his place and was unseen among the courtiers. Mahmud Shah, who was pleased with the ceremony, wanted to cheer up Sultan Husain who seemed offended and upset:

– I must inform you that your army was fighting very well in Farhadabad. But the great God was my supporter.

– Just now, the God is your supporter too!

Mahmud Shah was pleased with Sultan Husain's words. Suddenly he remembered something. With his eyes he looked for somebody among the followers of Sultan Husain. He looked for somebody for some time; when he didn't find him, he asked:

– I don't see the successor to the throne. I speak about Tahmasb Mirza. Where is he?

– When you occupied Farhadabad he left Isfahan and went to Qazvin.

Mahmud Shah goggled at him:

– What? Did he go to Qazvin? With whom?

– He went there with Fatali khan.

Mahmud Shah was out of humor. There remained no signs of his recent delight. For him the difficult problem wasn't Sultan Husain but Tahmasb Mirza. Because the entire world would be aware that if Mahmud declared himself the Shah while the successor lived that meant that it was by force. Mahmud Shah understood that Tahmasb would lay obstacles for him. Though it was not too late he had to send a troop to Qazvin and had to find Tahmasb and bring him to Isfahan. Mahmud Shah didn't wait long. He called one of the warlords and ordered him to go immediately to Qazvin with a troop. He entered Isfahan proudly under the thundering of music...

⁹ A sort of flute

¹⁰ Principles of Moslem religion

Qazvin, 24th November, 1722

At the home of the ruler of Qazvin, Tahmasb Mirza wasn't engaged in any of state affairs. He had a good time all day long as before. Those who wanted to see him were received by Fatali khan and were seen off with sweet words or were given different promises. Even Fatali khan himself didn't know what the end would be. Because the Shahzade changed his mind at any moment and refused the greetings and ceremonies. Such kind of uncertainty didn't last too long. The news that he received from Isfahan made him hasten. The herald who came from Isfahan told him all that had happened making him so anxious that he couldn't sleep till morning. At daybreak he got up and entered the cell where the Shahzade was sleeping. As before, the Shahzade was sleeping with one of the concubines. Fatali khan coughed gently for some time, but the successor to the throne didn't wake up. At that moment, Fatali khan approached to his bed and shook him. The Shahzade opened his eyes with difficulty:

– What has happened? – He grumbled in a displeased way.

Fatali khan didn't pay attention to the naked concubine who was sleeping in his bed.

– There is bad news from Isfahan, Your Majesty! We must take measures immediately.

The Shahzade said sleepily:

– Couldn't you tell me that news afterwards? The dawn has not broken yet.

– No, Your Majesty! The news is about your father, about our Shah!

It was as if the successor awoke from a deep dream:

– What has happened to him?

– I can't speak here about what had happened, Your Majesty! He showed with his hand the naked concubine. Get up and dress and see off this woman, I shall return after ten minutes.

After saying those words Fatali khan left the cell. When he returned the Shahzade had already dressed and the concubine wasn't seen. The Shahzade looked at Fatali khan's worried face and he also became excited:

– What has happened to our Shah, Fatali khan?

– Our Shah Sultan Husain has already abdicated from the throne.

For a moment Shahzade Tahmasb Mirza faltered, and then he asked in a low voice:

– In favor of whom?

– In favor of Mahmud khan of Qandahar.

The Shahzade couldn't believe his ears:

– Repeat once more! Whom? Whom? In favor of whom?

– Now Mahmud khan is the Padishah of the dynasty. Your father has put his crown on Mahmud khan's head and has given the stamp of the dynasty to that scoundrel with his own hands. Mahmud Shah has sent a troop to take you and bring you urgently to Isfahan.

The Shahzade became more excited:

– What must we do, Fatali khan?

– Your Majesty! When we were coming to Qazvin I asked you to gather our supporters in Qum, Rey and Qazvin, to be ready for any situation, but we wasted the chance.

– What had to be done has happened, Fatali khan! What must we do now?

– To tell the truth, I don't know what to do, because we have neither troops nor soldiers. We have only one way -out which is superior.

– What is that?

– You are the successor to the throne! If your father abdicated the title of Shah you may declare yourself Shah as the successor to the throne.

– Does it mean that if I declare myself Shah the number of my supporters will be more?

– Yes, Your Majesty! If you declare yourself Shah none of the Turki sh stocks will be in Mahmud's side, because they always served our ancesiors. As well as them, the stocks of the Kurd also will be on our side. They never find common language with the Afghans.

– It appears that we are able to reinstate our dynasty....The eyes of the successor shone and he sighed deeply.

– You are right, Your Majesty!

– The great God is witness that I don't want to be Shah. It was fated thus! I am obliged to declare myself Shah... Well, Fatali khan, let it be how you advise... When may I declare my self Shah?

– Just today, in the evening!

Tahmasb Mirza wanted to think, he hesitated:

– Why so early? Can't we wait some days more?

In fact, he was worried at the responsibility of the title of Shah and he could feel his weakness.

– No, my Shah, no! – It was the first time that Fatali khan called the Shahzade "my Shah!" – Firstly, we have no time. The troops of Mahmud are coming from Isfahan towards Qazvin. Secondly, we must send messengers to Delhi, Istanbul and Russia to inform them that after your father you are the heir. Thirdly, as soon as you declare yourself Shah we shall immediately leave for Tabriz. We must visit all the cities to find supporters.

– From where shall we find a stamp in order to set a stamp on the orders that we are going to send to foreign countries?

– Don't be worried about the stamp, my Shah! I know one stamp-maker in Qazvin. I have already given him the task. As soon as I heard about the events in Isfahan I called the ruler of Qazvin, I made him understand the situation and asked him to get ready ceremonially. To my mind, all preparations will be over by the afternoon ritual worship, my Shah!

Tahmasb was pleased when he was called "my Shah". In fact, they did everything for him instead. It remained only to declare himself Shah.

The same day, in the evening, Tahmasb Mirza declared himself Shah as the lawful heir of Sultan Husain. He sent messengers to Delhi, Istanbul and Saint Petersburg. At midnight of that day Shah Tahmasb left Qazvin for Tabriz together with two thousand horsemen...

CHAPTER III

The girls going towards the spring dressed well. That was why the young boys couldn't take their eyes off them and wouldn't move off the spring. Was there anywhere except weddings that the girls could show themselves? But they were going to carry water as if they were preparing for a wedding. They went down on the path slowly, put their guyum¹¹ under the flowing water in turn; then they began gossiping together, saying funny words to one another.

...Qelemnaz swept the yard, then she came into the home. She looked at herself in the mirror, tied her silk kerchief round her head, and took the guyum which was in the corner. She told her mother: "I am going to bring water" and left the yard in a hurry. The lines of her face, brows, and eyes were as if drawn by a pen like in a picture. Under her silk kerchief her hair was seen, which was divided into forty plaits, which could reach even to her ankle. It was the habit of the stock of Qajar: If a girl wasn't married she divided her hair into forty parts; after marriage she would go to her husband's house with forty plaits. If they were "appearing" after the wedding, then she used to divide her hair into two parts. In itself it was like a sign or a riddle. If she had two plaits it meant that she was married and it was forbidden to look at her with love or strange looks. Till the time that they were married the girls never plucked their eyebrows. If she had forty plaits and her eyebrows had not been plucked it meant that she was not married or she was betrothed. The stocks of Qajar were a group of related people. Like other Turkish stocks the girls and women didn't use a yashmak very much. Those who lived in the big cities used to tie yashmaks round their heads while going outside. The women of the hami ets tied different silk kerchief in summer, but in winter they used a woolen shawl.

Qelemnaz stood at the gate of the neighboring yard and called her friend Susen:

– Hi, Susen, where are you? Why don't you come?

Immediately Susen's voice was heard:

– Wait for me! I am coming!

No sooner had a moment passed than Susen was seen at the gate:

– What has happened, my dear? Maybe you have again turned on your pillow in a dream, you hasten to spring?

The two girls who were coming down from the upper part of the hamlet heard the words of Susen:

– No, she didn't turn on her pillow last night but she dreamed her sweetheart. That is why she is in a hurry to spring.

The ringing laughter of the girls spread all around.

Susen:

– Qelemnaz, please, answer, did you dream him? What were you doing in your dream? – She asked pretentiously.

Qelemnaz blushed with shame. – Aren't you ashamed? What are you speaking shamelessly?

The other girl said:

– Well, hi, Qelemnaz, maybe the lovers do nothing? Do they stand quietly and look at the faces of each other with great surprise?

– No, girls, Susen and her darling even don't look at the faces of each other, – Susen hinted to the other girls.

Qelemnaz again blushed with shame:

– If only you lost your mind and married soon, the people of our hamlet would be pleased, or you speak whatever you think.

¹¹ A long jar with a narrow long neck for to bring water.

In this way, laughing and hinting at one another the girls reached the spring. After filling their guyums with water, each of them sat on one stone. It appeared that all the jokes were aimed at Qelemnaz. Suddenly from the upper side of the spring a song was heard. The boy singing a song was Murad. He had so mournful voice that those who heard his song were saddened. The girls stopped their jokes and began to listen to him. Murad was singing a song like gerayli¹²:

Even the flowers settled down
Seeing my darling coming to spring.

The darkness of regret is left behind
Seeing my darling come to spring.

She has black eyebrows, her cheeks are red
A shawl looks better on her yellow hair.
The birthmark shows coyness on her face
Seeing my darling come to spring.
Spring will pass, summer will come,
Count the days and the months.
Murad shouts loudly
Seeing his darling come to spring.

When the song was over, Murad kept silent. The girls didn't let Qelemnaz remain silent. Susen again made a joke:

– A lover must be like him! He loves and sets all the bells a ringing. I wonder why he is worried. His lover is here. The girls again laughed. Susen said:

– Hi, Qelemnaz, what are you waiting for, go nearer towards him. But don't be late...

As if Qelemnaz was waiting for those words, she took her silk kerchief and began to go near Murad.

Though Murad was young he was stronger than most of the boys in hamlet. No one among the young boys could beat him in riding a horse, fencing, or wrestling. He was both a brave boy and a man of his word. If he promised, he would keep his promise without fail. He loved Qelemnaz very much. Qelemnaz also loved him. All the people in the hamlet knew that this young boy and girl loved each other. Qelemnaz's father Jafar kishi was against their love on various pretexts; he said that Murad was poor, he could hardly earn living for himself and his mother. How would he keep his wife?

Once the respected adults of the hamlet went like watch-makers to Jafar kishi's home, but they came back in distress. Jafar kishi persisted in his words and said only "no" to any who asked him to let her daughter marry Murad. Murad didn't know any way out how to join his sweetheart. He couldn't sleep at night. He could neither sleep nor eat anything. Murad was thinking all day long and was looking for a way out. Won't there be any way out of his sorrow? Still his thoughts were as if on path but not on the right way. At times he wanted to run and to go to Tabriz and to join the fighting beys of Qajar, but when thinking about his mother and Qelemnaz he gave up his purpose. He began to tell his grief to saz.¹³ Murad devoted all the words of the song and the melody to Qelemnaz. All the people in the hamlet were aware of that. The news about their love was spread not only to other hamlets even to Tabriz. Those who went to neighboring hamlets or to the city to buy something would be asked about their love. The answer was still the same, it didn't change. Though all the people waited for the wedding of Murad and Qelemnaz, Jafar kishi didn't relent. Qelemnaz had three elder

¹² A kind of a poem.

¹³ An Azerbaijani folk musical instrument

brothers. Jafar kishi wanted to put an end to all the gossiping with the help of his sons. So, he sent his sons to have a talk with Murad, to make him give up that love. At first, their discussion was good, but when Murad told them that he loved Qelemnaz and couldn't live without her, the brothers became stubborn. They intended to beat Murad. But before the eyes of other people Murad disfigured them. The adults who became aware of their fighting could hardly make them stop fighting. After the fighting of his sons with Murad, Jafar kishi became even more stubborn. He used to say: "I want to see even my enemy, but not only Murad". He didn't let Qelemnaz go out of the home for about one month. Only Susen visited her. She told Murad's words to her and her words to Murad. After a month Qelemnaz was so thin and so weak that those who saw her didn't recognize her. She even wanted to hang herself in a stable, but her mother had suddenly entered the stable and rescued her daughter. Only after that accident Jafar kishi let his daughter go outside, visit relatives or neighbors. Jafar kishi was in distress because of his daughter's love which was spoken all around. If it was anyone except Murad, and someone sent a watch-maker he would agree. If only the talking and gossiping were over and the reproach of the people was finished. Who could dare to send a watch-maker for Qelemnaz? No one wanted to part those lovers. All were afraid of God's curse except Jafar kishi. At last, Jafar kishi had luck; he had one chance, but...

Qelemnaz stopped when she came nearer the place where Murad was standing. The boy sitting under the tree stood up as soon as he saw the girl. When they didn't see each other they wanted to say a lot of words to each other; when they saw each other as if all the words flew to the air. For some time mute silence stood between them like a wall. At last, Qelemnaz took herself in hand:

– Why don't you greet me? When did you write that gerayli? I liked it very much.

Murad cleared his throat:

– Really?

Qelemnaz answered coyly:

– Of course! I wonder to which beautiful girl you have composed that song.

It was as if Murad caught alight:

– Is there anybody in my heart except you, my cruel darling? – He asked – I love only you. It is as if from the wall of my soul a stone has fallen. Your father won't let me put that stone back on its place.

Qelemnaz blushed hearing such sweet words. Because of being ashamed she took one of her palms to her palm and began to pull it:

– It appears that I am a stone in your heart. I wonder have I been hung there or I have fallen down?

Murad didn't lose his chance and said:

– What are you saying, Qelemnaz? You are like a knife that I carry in my heart. You cut me when you are near me or you are not near me.

Qelemnaz once more wanted to test his love:

– Murad, do you love me much?

It was as if somebody poured boiling water on Murad:

– Do I love you? I am going mad because of your love and you ask me if I love you or not...

– If you love me, why don't you abduct me?

– Where can I take you?

– I don't know wherever you want. Let's go hand in hand and leave this place. I know that if even the heavens came down to the ground my father wouldn't agree to our marriage.

Murad wished to bring Qelemnaz to his home after their marriage according to the old customs. But Jafar kishi laid obstacles in their way. Qelemnaz was right. Murad had only one way-out: – to abduct Qelemnaz.

Qelemnaz saw that Murad was lost in thought and she nudged his sleeve:

– Hi, my dear, what happened? Maybe you are afraid of abducting me?

– To abduct a girl isn't fearful.

- If it isn't fearful why don't you abduct me?
- Give me time to think about. I must think.
- Think... think... But time never waits for us...

Susen's voice was heard at the spring:

- Hi, Qelemnaz, where are you? Why don't you return? I think the kissing of a lover is too sweet.

The words of Susen mixed with the laughter of other girls. Qelemnaz turned red in the face. –

“Let me go” – She said and ran away...

.. It is true; time doesn't want to wait...

The Qajars had one unchanging custom: every year all the beys of Qajar gathered together and organized a horse competition, the wrestlers wrestled, they shot arrows on horseback. The head of the stock of Qajar and beys of Qajar used to come to such kind of competitions. If they liked any wrestlers, fighters, or brave boys they would take them either to the Shah's troops or to their own groups.

That year's competition would be in their hamlet. The news was spread that together with Fatali khan Tahmasb Shah also would come to watch the competition. In order to watch the competition which was going to last about two days Tahmasb Shah would spend the night in the hamlet. In order to meet Tahmasb Shah, Fatali khan had sent white tents to the hamlet from Tabriz, and he had prepared two days' food and brought cooks. Fatali khan had three purposes in taking Tahmasb to see that competition. Firstly, for Tahmasb Shah the hamlets were safe and sound places, Mahmud Shah couldn't be aware of it. Secondly, he wanted to show to Tahmasb Shah how the people of Qajar respected him. Thirdly, he wanted the adults of Qajar make the Shah feel sure that the stock was a supporter. For that purpose he had asked the adults to come to the competition also.

There was going to be a big gathering held in the hamlet.

The stocks who came to the competition built their tents near the Shah's tent, and they were proud that even the Shah had come to watch the competition. The players wanted to get gifts or presents from the hand of the Shah.

On the day of the start of the competition, early in the morning Tahmasb Shah came to the hamlet with Fatali khan to watch the competition. They were accompanied by a large group. About a hundred horsemen who trained beforehand rode towards the Shah and greeted him. All the guests began shouting, repeating the word of “Allah... Allah”. The noise of the applause even reached to heavens. The people cried: “Long live our Shah!” The Shah was very proud of declaring himself Shah in time.

After some time the horse race began. After the command all the horsemen moved. More than three hundred horsemen had to ride to the bottom of the mountain and return back. Murad couldn't take part in the first competition. He would take part in the second race. In the first race Jeyran¹⁴ was a winner. The owner of that horse, Otkem was so glad and he embraced the head of his horse.

When the first circling was over, there was silence. Fatali khan was looking around with interest and he noticed the beautiful girls and women who were standing at the tents and watching the figures of the brave boys but not the race. All of a sudden as if he was struck with amazement. He saw a beautiful girl with white silk kerchief on her head, reddened cheeks and shining eyes made her look even more beautiful. The first thought that came to his mind was that it was a shame if such kind of beautiful girl, who was worthy to the Shahs or the Khans, lived in a hamlet. Just at that moment he called one of the respected adults of the hamlet and asked him about that girl, whose daughter she was. The respected adult said: “She is Jafar kishi's daughter, Qelemnaz”. Fatali khan asked the respected adult to ask Jafar kishi to come to his place in the afternoon.

Murad put his feet on the stirrup and pressed his ankles to the sides of the horse. The legs, tail and breast of the horse were white but the rest was black. The second horse race began. No sooner had

¹⁴ The name of the horse.

the horsemen started the race when Qirghi¹⁵ rushed forward. When the group of horsemen reached the slope of the mountain Qirghi was returning. Murad was switching the horse and saying to the horse: "I beseech you, be quicker!" "As if the bay horse was flying.

Murad reached the finishing line first and he won the first place. It meant that Murad was the winner of the competition. Qelemnaz was very happy.

In arrow-shooting Murad also won the first place.

In wrestling Murad was considered the second. The last wrestler was very heavy. Though Murad tried hard to heave him, he couldn't. Their wrestling lasted more than an hour. The heavy wrestler tired Murad. At last, he could embrace Murad and it was as if Murad's body was between the tongs. The heavy wrestler pressed him as hard as he could.

At last, Murad couldn't bear his heaviness and raised his hand as a sign of yielding to him. Qelemnaz wasn't downcast. The main point was that the heavy wrestler didn't hurt Murad.

...Fatali khan had asked to call Jafar kishi, but he didn't know how to begin his conversation. According to the Qajar's traditions they abduct a girl by informing nobody, then they are reconciled with her parents; or they send a watch-maker like others, get the permission, then hold a wedding. It would be better to send a watch-maker for that beautiful girl and get the permission of her father to marry her. Fatali khan didn't like to abduct the girl: he was proud. It wasn't worthy of him because he was the head of the stock of Qajar. Whatever happened he wanted to take the girl to Tabriz with him and to marry her there, to register the marriage. The match-maker of the khan had to be the Shahs. At that time, it would be considered more worthy. At the present moment it wasn't suitable. Because Tahmasb Shah had other interests, he thought that Fatali khan also had the same interests.

The khan wanted to be a watch-maker himself. That was why he began his talk in a roundabout way.

– Jafar kishi, what news in the hamlet?

Jafar kishi had felt that in order to begin his talk the khan asked about the news in the hamlet.

– All are safe and sound, my khan, all is okay with the help of you and God's help. Then Fatali khan told straight away the essence of his purpose:

– I want you to solve my problem, Jafar kishi!

– Please, I beseech you! Whatever you ask I can fulfill your task.

Fatali khan heartened:

– I want to be your relative.

Jafar kishi was beside himself with joy. He said to himself in his heart: "Whatever I wish it is going to be true". But he didn't show his delight.

– How do you want to be my relative, khan?

Fatali khan massaged his fingers:

– I fell in love with your daughter as soon as I saw her for the first time, and I decided to be a watch-maker myself.

Jafar kishi faltered a bit, he didn't know what to say at that moment. His words were so unexpected that even Jafar kishi wanted to make certain what he had heard. He wasn't mistaken; the khan was himself a watchmaker for his daughter. If from one side to be a relative with the khan was proud, from the other side Jafar kishi would get rid of Murad and gossiping of the people.

– Well, your words have confused me and I don't know what to say. I have also other relatives. I must consult with them. Why must we hasten? Let me call my relatives, discuss your request, and then I may answer.

¹⁵ The name of the horse.

– There isn't time for discussion, Jafar kishi! We must gather troops with the Shah to free his father from Mahmud khan's hands. – Fatali khan wanted to entice Jafar kishi with richness. – Don't worry; I shall give you how much you want for bashliq¹⁶.

Jafar kishi didn't want to show his agreement:

– The problem isn't only the money, khan! Both my sons and daughters are your slaves. To solve the problem in a hurry makes me worry.

Fatali khan didn't want to yield to him. He wanted to make Jafar kishi believe:

– Don't worry, Jafar kishi! I shall organize the wedding in Tabriz. I shall invite all the people of the hamlet to the wedding. I shall give jobs to your sons too. I shall give them the titles of bey.

Jafar kishi couldn't look for any excuse:

– Well, I agree. God bless you! Be happy! I have one condition.

Fatali khan couldn't believe his ears; he didn't expect that Jafar kishi would agree so soon. That was why he said joyfully:

– Please, Jafar kishi, tell me your conditions, I am ready to fulfill them.

– I want you to register the marriage here; either today or tomorrow.

Fatali khan was confused because the proposal was unexpected.

– Today or tomorrow?

Jafar kishi said:

– Fatali khan, try to understand me! I am her father! I must be sure whether my daughter is married or not.

Fatali khan answered after thinking a while:

– Yes, I agree with you. Tonight I shall send a mullah to your home.

Whatever Jafar kishi had wished became true.

– God bless you!

Fatali khan reached his hand out:

– I give a hundred sheep for the bashliq, and also I give twenty sacks of gold.

Fatali khan took a sack of gold and gave it to him:

– This is the bashliq for your daughter. I shall send the sheep as soon as I reach to Tabriz. ...

But... No one must know what we talked about; only you and me.

– My khan I wonder, is it a secret to marry?

– No, it isn't a secret. But I don't want the Shah to be aware that in his troubled days I think about marriage. When we leave the hamlet, you may tell everybody that Fatali khan married your daughter.

Jafar kishi couldn't say a word against the logic of the khan:

– I don't object; let it be however you wish!

Fatali khan came to Tahmasb Shah after parting with Jafar kishi.

In the Shah's tent, which was covered with carpets, there were a lot of people. At the upper part of the tent there was his throne. The newly appointed butler called the names of the winners, one by one they came forward, got their gifts on behalf of the Shah, and said the words "We serve the Shah, let our Shah's life be long!" and then returned to their places.

It was the turn of Murad. In the middle of the tent, Murad fell on his knees:

– My Shah, I beseech you, I have a request to you.

Tahmasb Shah liked Murad. He looked like a quick-witted boy. To his mind, the brave boy falling on his knees at him was also a decent person.

– State your request!

Murad said without standing up:

– My Shah, I want nothing, I want no gifts. I want a way-out of my sorrow. Only you are able to find a way-out of my sorrow.

¹⁶ Money which is given to the parents of the girl.

– Maybe you don't like our gifts?

– No, my Shah, who am I not to like your gifts? But no expensive gift can assuage my grief.

Tahmasb Shah looked with interest at the young boy who grieved and asked for his assistance.

In his troubled days it was very important to carry out the boy's wish.

– To my mind, your name is Murad

– Yes, my Shah!

– You are from this hamlet, aren't you?

– You are right, my Shah!

– What is your sorrow, what troubles you?

– Mine is a problem of heart, my Shah; the problem of love.

Tahmasb Shah never fell in love with any girl, but he had to solve the love difficulty of others.

He didn't lose himself:

– Tell me the sorrow of your heart, Murad!

– My Shah, I beseech you! I can't speak myself, it would be better if the respected adults told you about my sorrow.

Tahmasb Shah liked the behavior of such a brave boy.

– Is there any respected adult of your hamlet here?

Among the people in the tent one of the respected old men came forward:

– I am here, my Shah!

– Please, come and speak about the heart sorrow of this young boy!

– All right, my Shah!

The old man began to speak about the love of a boy and a girl without mentioning their names.

He spoke about the love spoken by all the people like a legend. He noted how fragile was the love of the boy and the girl, who loved each other so much.

The eyes of the Shah filled with tears. What kind of love it was; he couldn't understand. How could a boy and a girl love each other like the old man spoke. The Shah had heard about the love of Leyli and Mejnun, Asli and Karam who turned into legends. He couldn't think that at present someone could love each other like them. It was as if it was the first time during his life that the Shah was fragile. The Shah decided to help the boy who fell on his knees in front of him:

– But who puts an obstacle in the way of joining the two young boy and girl? – The Shah asked.

The respected adult answered immediately:

– The girl's father, Jafar kishi!

– Why doesn't Jafar kishi agree with their marriage?

– Poverty is guilty, my Shah! The boy is poor, that is why the girl's father doesn't agree; he thinks that it will wound his pride.

The Shah turned towards the guardsman:

– Go and bring here Jafar kishi! But don't hurt him!

Soon the guardsman came back. Jafar kishi was near them. Jafar kishi came forward and bowed to the Shah. While bowing he saw Murad who was falling on his knees at the Shah and Jafar kishi was uncertain about the situation. As soon as Fatali khan saw Jafar kishi, his face turned white. He thought that Jafar kishi might make known their conversation.

Tahmasb Shah pointed to Murad and said:

– Are you the man laying an obstacle in the way of the joining two young boy and girl each other?

Jafar kishi was afraid. The Shah could punish him. He looked at Fatali khan imploringly, asking assistance from him with his looks.

The Shah got angry seeing Jafar kishi's keeping silence:

– They told me that you don't agree because of Murad being poor. Is it right?

Jafar kishi could hardly swallow his word about Fatali khan's request:

– Whatever the people tell it is right... Right... My Shah!

– How do you think, can the man who serves the Shah be poor? I will give Murad a job near me. What is your opinion, Jafar kishi? May we say “Be happy!” to the two young boy and girl who love each other?

Jafar kishi was confused hearing his words. He wanted to speak because he had promised her to a much richer person. – He had promised her to Fatali khan.

– My Shah, my daughter has been betrothed since childhood years. How can I deny my promise?

Fatali khan understood that those words concerned him. He thought that if the Shah asked about the betrothal all would be clear. The Shah also would ask him that when they met and when they were promised to each other. Fatali khan had to urgently solve that problem. Though he was only about thirty five or forty years old he had good experience of life and he was aware of what was better. At that moment he could give up the girl, but he couldn't give the Shah up. That was why he came forward:

– Your Majesty, if you allow me I can also say a word because I am the head of this stock.

– I allow you, tell your opinion.

Fatali khan turned towards Jafar kishi:

– Jafar kishi, if our Shah wants to join this young boy and girl, the word of our Majesty is like a law. Here all the people confess that these two young boy and girl love each other. If your daughter once had a betrothed we can make him change his mind and we may find him another girl.

Jafar kishi realized that Fatali khan had changed his mind from his earlier wish and that was why he understood that there was no need to persist. He felt sorry in his heart for the situation. He said:

– Fatali khan, I agree with the Shah's request. – If our Shah wishes, that is to say, it will be how he wishes.

In the tent the applause of the people was heard.

– Long live our Shah!

Tahmasb Shah stood up and came nearer to Murad:

– Stand up, brave boy!

Murad stood up quickly. The Shah put his hands on his shoulders and said: “Be happy!” He took the gift from the butler and gave it to Murad:

– Prepare for your wedding from the day after tomorrow. All the expense of the wedding will be paid by the treasury. After one month I shall wait for you in the Shah's palace.

Murad kissed the Shah's hands.

– All right, my Shah! I am thankful to you. Long live my Shah!

The Shah turned towards Jafar kishi:

– Don't you object, Jafar kishi?

– My Shah, who am I to object to your decision? God bless them!

The people in the tent once more shouted: “Long live our Shah!”.

....Susen ran to Qelemnaz's home running. Her eyes were smiling; she couldn't say a word because of her anxiety. Qelemnaz was telling her mother about the results of that day's competition. When she saw Susen running hurriedly, she understood that something had happened.

Susen said smiling:

– My brother has just returned from the Shah's tent, – she said. He said that there was a real performance.

– What performance, girl? Be quick, tell me about.

– Qelemnaz, by God, you are happy!

– Do you also consider me to be lucky?

Well, well... Whom else must I consider happy? Qelemnaz, it was fated thus that the Shah himself was a watch-maker for you.

Hearing her words Qelemnaz faltered and then she was struck dumb, and she fell on her back to the floor. She fainted. Qelemnaz's mother began to tear her face:

– Alas, alas... My daughter is dying...

Susen brought water in a little bowl and filled her mouth with water and then blew the water on her face. Qelemnaz came to herself with difficulty and said furiously:

– I don't want to marry to the Shah or a bey! – She groaned. – I shall kill myself!

Susen was surprised:

– Which Shah, girl?

– Didn't you tell me that the Shah himself was a watch-maker for me?

Susen realized that Qelemnaz misunderstood her words and she began to laugh. Qelemnaz got angry. Susen went on her laughing:

– It is true; the Shah was a watch-maker for you, but not for himself, for Murad!!! He was a watchmaker and made your father agree!

Qelemnaz again faltered and was struck dumb, then she fainted. She came to herself later and began to groan in tears. At last she looked at Susen sorrowfully:

– Take an oath! – She said.

– I take an oath on the God, on the Earth, on the Heavens! The Shah asked you only for Murad.

Qelemnaz raised her hands and began to pray to God, shed ding tears:

– Thank God! Thank goodness! You heard my prayi ng. My God, you didn't want me to be hopeless. You didn't hurt my heart. My God, thank God!

– Qelemnaz, I haven't finished talking yet... Our Shah gave a job to Murad in his palace. The expanse of the wedding will be paid by the treasury!

Qelemnaz couldn't believe her ears. In a day there couldn't be so much happiness!

– But what did my father say?

– Nothing, he was standing by the Shah, his face was as white as cotton.

Qelemnaz embraced Susen and began to cry bitierly. Both her mother and Susen also were crying with her. Then Susen calmed Qelemnaz and began to speak about everything in detail.

On the next day the beys, respected adults and brave boys of the stock of Qajar were gathered in the Shah's white tent. They took an oath to be devoted to him. Tahmasb Shah, who was pleased with the stock of Qajar, left for Tabriz.

CHAPTER IV

Qazvin, 1723

The troops of Mahmud Shah had first enclosed Qazvin, then they sent a messenger to the ruler of the city and demanded them to give Tahmasb Mirza to the Afghans. The ruler of the city told the messenger that Tahmasb Mirza wasn't in Qazvin and if he was in the city he would never give him to the Afghans. Only after the ruler's words, the Afghans attacked the city with about troop of ten thousand fighters. The fortress walls of the city were not firm, which was why in the third day of the blockade it was broken and the city yielded to the Afghans after intensive battles. The real tragedies began after the blockade. The Afghans hung the ruler of Qazvin at the gate of the city. In the city robbery, killing, destroying and firing began.

The population of the city had never seen such a situation. The people of the city were losing their patience.

...The mullabashi of Qazvin had also never seen such kind of cruelty. That was why he was thinking about a way out. He secretly informed the beys of Qazvin to be ready; in due time he would pronounce Fetwa¹⁷ to clear off the city from the Afghans. The beys, rich people and simple devout persons tried to hide themselves and were defending their families.

That night the mullabashi was waiting for the beylerbeyi¹⁸ of Qazvin. The beylerbeyi Husam was a brave person at the age of thirty. When he heard about the arrogance of the Afghans he couldn't bear it. He flew into a rage. When he sent news to the mullabashi that he wanted to say something to him Husam was pleased with the answer he received. The mullabashi promised to give him any assistance he needed. The Afghans were becoming ungovernable day after day.

At midnight the door of the home of mullabashi was knocked quietly. Though mullabashi knew who was behind the door he said:

– My children, go to the door, somebody is knocking at the door.

The man who knocked at the door was Husam. He entered the room and said: "Good evening!"

The mullabashi stood up, put his hands on his chest and answered him: "Good evening, bey!" He showed him a cushion and asked him to sit.

There were a lot of bookshelves in the room. The mullabashi had read a great deal; he was an educated person. He approached any problem correctly, according to the rules allowed by "Qur'ani-Kerim". That was why he was respected by all the people in Qazvin. Most people appealed him in those troubled days knowing about his respect.

The mullabashi arranged himself comfortably on the cushion and asked the beylerbeyi:

– What news in the city, Husam bey?

The beylerbeyi answered, smoothing his moustaches:

– The news is that there is grief, misfortune and meanness in the city! – Our honor has been hurt and disgraced. After some days we must tie a kerchief round our heads.

The mullabashi didn't consider getting angry was acceptable:

– Have patience, Husam bey! Your flying into a rage may harm us. If we start fighting before its time the people can be killed.

– Mullah, the people are being killed. Listen to me, what those cruel Afghans have done. Two drunk Afghans stopped a widow who has four children, in the street and asked about the place where she lived. That poor woman said that she didn't live far from there. The drunken Afghans began going

¹⁷ Judgement of a Muslim jurist.

¹⁸ The head of the beys.

after her. As soon as the woman entered her home, the Afghans also rushed in after her. The hopeless woman took a frying pan and struck the head of one of them. Her children ran outside and began to shout... Those cruel Afghans firstly raped the woman, then choked her. When the neighbors came and saw that they had killed the woman, the neighbors also killed two Afghans, and hid their dead bodies. Now Afghans are looking for everywhere to find them. After that accident they have a good opportunity to meddle everywhere.

The mullabashi said in a miserable, mournful voice:

– I know all you told, Husam bey! – I even know worse than you told! Religion and faith are hurt.

– What are we waiting for?

– The time.

– When will the time come?

– If they behave like thus and make all the people fly into a rage the time will come soon, Husam! Tell me how is the preparation of fighting of the beys?

– I also want to speak about preparation, mullah! My brave boys are ready. They are waiting for the day when all the people will begin fighting. We have gathered two thousand brave boys having swords and all are ready to fight. When will the time you speak about come?

The mullabashi sighed deeply:

– In fact, the day that we are waiting for has come today. But we wasted a chance, what a pity!

– What does it mean “we wasted the chance?”

– Pay attention to my words, Husam! If we don't make all the people begin fighting, if the people stay in their homes, the struggle will be strangled in the sea of blood! Today we could use the tragedy of that woman. We had to gather the people, firstly, we had to rouse them, so we can begin to revolt. Revolt for honor, manliness, self-respect... But the neighbors were frightened, they hid the dead bodies of two Afghans because of being frightened. They showed themselves as though they knew nothing about the accident. The unhappy woman was buried secretly.

The beylerbeyi thought for a while and said pitifully:

– You are right, mullah! We missed a good chance, which we could use. Nobody thought about it.

– Nobody thought, but you must think about it now, Husam bey! If such a kind of tragedy happens once more, you must act immediately. Also ask your brave boys to get in the way and not to let the Afghans help each another.

– All right, mullah!

– If it is thus, be ready, Husam bey! I hope that the time of this revolt won't be late.

The beylerbeyi thought that the mullabashi was going to finish talking and he stood up:

– Well, allow me to go away, I must meet with the beys tomorrow, I must tell them about our conversation.

The mullabashi also stood up. He shook hands with the beylerbeyi and said to him: “Good night!” When Husam bey left mullabashi took the Qur'an, opened it, put his hand on any sentence and read the sentence after intending to follow it in his heart. He thought a bit about the sentence that he read in the Arabian language and smiled with pleasure. Then he blew out the lamp on the niche.

... It was winter, the morning came late. At seven o'clock in the morning, the door of the home of mullabashi was knocked noisily. The mullabashi had just finished his morning ritual worship, he was awake, and closing the Qur'an he was reading went out to the yard:

– I am coming, who are you?

Behind the door, there were heard rude words:

– Open the door, be quick, hurry!

The mullabashi opened the door. There were three Afghan fighters at the gate. The mullabashi asked:

– What for have you come? What do you want?

One of the fighters said:

– It is the order of the vice-regent. He ordered us to look into each home as two of our fighters disappeared.

The mullabashi said severely:

– This is the home of the mullabashi in Qazvin. If you lost your fighters go and look for them in other places. Maybe they drank too much and are sleeping in one of the cellars.

– We don't know anything. We have been ordered to search for them everywhere. We must look for them!

The fighters said thus and wanted to squeeze themselves into the room.

“Maybe the time to fight has come” – The mullabashi thought. It was necessary to draw these fighters to enable the fighting to begin. It was possible to win over the enemy even with one's death like Imam Husain. Imam had left such a kind of sign in Karbala so that thanks to him the religion of Islam was supported. Couldn't he save his city and his people by continuing his tradition? The mullabashi came to a final decision and blocked the fighters with his tall body:

– My home is the place where the terms of shariat are kept! I won't allow you who do slovenly work to enter my cell and disgrace my self-esteem:

– Renegades! Leave my home!

The Afghan fighters began to suspect him. One of them pushed the mullabashi on his breast.

– Don't stand in our way, old witch!

Though the mullabashi didn't fall he staggered. Then he said loudly “Bismillahir-rehmanir-rehim” and rushed to – wards them. He caught the collar of the fighter before him, attack-ng his face with his head. The attack covered the fighter's face in blood and the mullabashi fell on the floor.

...The children were running in the streets and shouting: “They killed mollabashi! The Afghans killed the mollabashi!”

A crowd was going towards the home of the mollabashi. The popul ation of the city came running and after some time not only in the yard but also in the streets there were a lot of people. Husam bey also had come. He was looking at the faces, the eyes of the people. There was hatred, fury against the Afghans. “It was the proper time. That is to say the mullabashi sacri ficed himself for the freedom of the city. Husam bey thought thus and clenched his fist. Then he whispered into the ears of the beys standing near him, setting tasks. The beys went away somewhere in a hurry.

The mullahs were speaking to one another in a low voice. They pursued different thoughts about the death of the mollabashi. Husam bey looked at them and shook his head ironically. The mullabashi wouldn't be buried under the black soil like the inhabitant of the defeated city! They didn't have to miss this chance. He put a stump under his feet, stood on it and spoke loudly:

– People! Our wise respected elder, the mullabashi of the people, sacrificed himself on the route to the freedom of our city! We must not agree to bury him when the enemies are in Qazvin, like a minister of religion of a defeated city! – He raised his voice. – If our city hasn't been freed the mullabashi can't be buried with respect! His spirit won't forgive us!

The crowd shouted: “It is right”, “Death to the Afghans”, “It is the time to begin to Jihad!¹⁹”.

The beylerbeyi understood that the time to fight had come. He unsheathed his sword and raised his sword above his head and said furiously:

– Kill the sons of bitches!

It was as if the crowd was waiting for his shouting and their glittered swords and poniards were raised above their heads. The sound of roaring grew greatly and the people raged and moved along the street...

...After some time swords, spears, axes and pitch-forks began to collide with one another. The arrows began flying, guns began shooting, and the stone-hearted Afghans were covered in their own

¹⁹ A sacred war

blood. The voices of “Allahu -Akber” of the powers which started the attack spontaneously shuddered the city. Then the fights became more regulated and became even more aggravated.

Qazvin was divided into parts. The group of Husam bey was the main fighting part. Wherever they saw a fighting Afghan they fought against him. All the people were fighting against the Afghans. Streets, walls and doors were covered in blood. The fighting Afghans removed themselves towards the gate of the city. By the ritual worship of the afternoon the larger part of the Afghan fighters were killed. The people of the city were inspired and they thought that no one could defeat them. At last they drove out the last Afghan fighter too and began to shout “Allahu -Akber!”, “Ya Husain”. The people wanted their victorious exclamations even reach to the heavens.

In the streets were hung the dead bodies of eight thousand Afghan fighters. Only about two thousand fighters escaped from the revolt of Qazvin and with difficulty ran away to Isfahan. When they spoke to Mahmud khan about the incident, he couldn't believe his ears. Then he got so angry that he sentenced to death about five hundred Safavids who were captives. He didn't sentence to death only Sultan Husain and his two sons.

...The loss of Qazvin had shaken Mahmud Shah's nerves. After some time his nerves were strongly shocked. He behaved as though mad. At last the Afghans were sick of his madness and illness, they began thinking about what measures to take. They offered the throne to Mahmud khan's nephew, Ashraf bey. Ashraf bey accepted that proposal and he killed his uncle and declared himself Shah.

Saint-Petersburg, the palace of Peter the Great, 1724

Peter the Great, who seemed hale and hearty in spite of being old, was looking at the map of the empire. The map was on a big table. He was thinking with his arms crossed on his chest. He had occupied Darband and Baku using the opportunity of weakness of the dynasty of the Safavid. That day two ambassadors would come to his reception. One of them was Alexander Vasilyevich Nepluyev whom Peter the Great had appointed ambassador to Istanbul; the other was Ismayil bey who was sent by the ruler of the Safavid, by Tahmasb Shah for talks. Peter the Great had decided to receive firstly Nepluyev, to clear up with him the problem of the attitude of the Ottomans to Azerbaijan; then to receive the messenger of Shah Tahmasb. Ismayil bey was in Saint-Petersburg for about one week. But Peter the Great didn't hurry to meet with him.

Just at that moment the doors, the height of which was about four or five meters, opened; the master of ceremonies entered the room and hit the golden stick on the floor and said loudly:

– Your Highness, Emperor! Your chief ambassador in Istanbul, Alexander Vasilyevich Nepluyev!

The emperor hinted “come” with a sign of his hand. A man of medium height came in. He was the ambassador of Russia in Istanbul. He bent his head and bowed. Peter the Great said in a lively manner:

– Well, Alexander Vasilyevich, tell me how it is to live in Istanbul? Don't you miss your home?

– No, Your Highness! I don't miss, but it is very difficult for a Christian to live among the Moslems, especially among the Turkish people. It is right, there are Christian churches too, but to live there isn't too easy....Not easy.

The moustaches of Peter the Great trembled with rage. He brought himself together and clapped his hands on the shoulder of the ambassador:

– Never mind, Alexander Vasilyevich, have patience, the time will come, we shall drive out all the Turks, these Moslems, from Istanbul. Remember well, he who will occupy Istanbul will be the ruler of the world.

– Let it be as you say, Your Highness!

Peter the Great put a question to the ambassador in a lively voice:

– Now, tell me how the situation is with the Ottomans? -I mean those whose trousers are loose...

– Your Highness, after the occupation of Darband and Baku by the Russian troops, the Ottomans began to act. One part of the Ottomans went forward from Baghdad till Hamadan under the leadership of Ahmad pasha; the other part of them occupied Tiflis and is going to conquer the north part of Azerbaijan including Shirvan...

Peter the Great interrupted his words:

– Alexander Vasilyevich, don't continue! Show me on the map what you said to me.

– All right, Your Highness!

They came nearer to the map. Nepluyev took the thin switch for the map and put it on the state of Safavids.

– Your Highness, here is Azerbaijan. I have heard that the troops of Ahmad pasha will go till Qazvin, then passing through Irevan they will join with the army going in the direction of Shirvan and his troops will fight against our garrison to free Darband and Baku. The chief Vizier called me to Topqapi many times and wanted to present me with a note about the war.

Peter the Great said in surprise:

– Why didn't he present the note?

– By the efforts of Markiz de Bonak, the ambassador of France in Istanbul.

– Hmm... What is the interest of France.?

– As I know, the king of France doesn't want war between the Ottomans and Russia.

– Is it useful for France or for the Ottomans?
– Of course, for France, Your Highness! France doesn't want the two big states fighting against each other. In fact, France wants to make the Turks fight against Austria.

Peter the Great laughed loudly:

– Oh ...I didn't know about it. It appears that France wants to place Austria under its command...

– It appears like this, Your Highness!

Peter the Great asked one more question:

– Has Markiz de Bonak firm standing in the palace of the Sultan?

– Yes, Your Highness! He has a firm standing with the Sultan and the Viziers. The Ottomans try to strengthen economical, political and military relations with France.

– Well, it is clear. It appears that a war against the Ottomans is not expected soon. How is the situation in the Safavids?

– Your Highness, you know that there is chaos, anarchy and no control in the state of the Safavid. Now there are revolts in each of the cities.

Peter the Great didn't let Nepluyev finish his words:

– I know all about it, I know what happens there. Speak to me about Istanbul. What did Tahmasb's messenger promise to the Sultan? What will the Sultan give instead? Speak me about all these!

Nepluyev said, being confused:

– Your Highness! The Sultan wants from Tahmasb one part of Azerbaijan including Qazvin, Tabriz, Irevan, Tiflis, Hamadan, Rey, Khoy, and Shirvan...

What is he going to give in return?

– In return the Sultan is going to give troops to Tahmasb, to help him in suppressing revolts, and recognize him as the Shah.

– Hmm... The Sultan wants from Tahmasb half of Azerbaijan. Is it shamelessness or the demonstration of power? Well, it is interesting, what happened then?

– Then the problem remained just the same, Your Highness!

– What does it mean "remained just the same?"

– The messenger answered the Sultan that he hadn't the authority to answer. So, he returned from Istanbul to Tahmasb's place.

Peter the Great walked up and down on the marble floor of the palace making a noise with his boot and thought a little. Then he returned and put his hands on the messenger's shoulder:

– It is very good, Alexander Vasilyevich, very good! You must insist, thoughtfully, on the problem of Azerbaijan. Interfere in the signing of a peace treaty between the Ottomans and the Safavids. If it needs don't spare any gold, money or other things. Do you hear? Don't even miss the chance of using the French Markiz de Bonak! Do you hear?

– I hear, Your Highness!

– So it is from one side; from the second side try to achieve an agreement between the Ottomans and Russia in building a demarcation line passing through the territory of Azerbaijan. – He showed the seashore of the Caspian Sea on the map. – Because the troops of Russia could move forward to Mazandaran. Do you understand, Alexander Vasilyevich?

– I understand, Your Highness!

– Very well, if it is thus you may go...

Nepluyev went out of the room. Peter the Great took the bell and rang it for some time, and the master of ceremonies entered the room:

– Your Highness!

– Call the messenger of the Safavids!

– All right, Your Highness!

Peter the Great sat on his throne and continued thinking. After some time the high doors were opened again. The master of ceremonies hit the golden stick on the floor:

– The messenger of the empire of the Safavid, Ismayil bey!

A man at the age of about thirty, handsome, black-eyed, having black eyelashes, whose appearance showed he came from the East, an interpreter and a servant with a covered tray in his hand entered the salon. The man who entered first was Ismayil bey. Ismayil bey came forward and bowed to Peter the Great:

– I have brought you the regards of our Shah, Tahmasb Mirza! I wish you long life! – The interpreter began to translate the words of Ismayil bey. Peter the Great nodded his head as a sign of thanks. – Our Shah wants you to take this gift on behalf of his name, like the gift showing the symbol of friendship of a neighboring state.

Ismayil bey took the covering off the tray that the servant was holding. A sword was on the tray, decorated with precious stones and an atlas dressing-gown sewn with golden threads. Ismayil bey gave the tray to the servant who was standing near the emperor. The other servants went out.

– Our Shah ordered me to tell you that the Safavids always lived with the Russians in peace and friendship. Starting from now he wants to live in the same way.

Peter the Great looked firmly into the eyes of Ismayil bey and forthrightly spoke about the main purpose:

– What does your Shah want?

– Our Shah wants you, being a great emperor, to recognize him as the Shah; to assist our Shah in the troubled days of our state.

– Well, suppose we recognized Tahmasb Mirza as the Shah. What does Russia gain out of it?

– You may know this, Your Highness!

Peter the Great thought screwing up his eyes and then said:

– We shall agree with you under the following conditions:

– Darband, Baku, and their suburbs remain in the structure of Russia.

– The seashore provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran and Astarabad pass to Russia's control.

– The state, which is our friend, becomes your friend; the state which is our enemy becomes your enemy too.

– Russian merchants can trade in your territory without paying tax and they can go to Delhi and other countries without paying tax.

With all these conditions the Russian Empire undertakes the followings:

– Recognizes Tahmasb as the Shah of the state of Safavids;

The Russian state will assist in suppressing any revolts which happen inside the state of the Safavids.

The interpreter was translating slowly, without any pause, translating the words which the emperor said to Ismayil bey. When he finished translating the silence was broken by Peter the Great:

– Did the Shah of Safavid give you responsibility to discuss all these problems and sign the documents?

Ismayil bey answered:

– Yes, Your Highness!

– In this case it would be interesting to know your attitude to these conditions.

For Peter the Great the third paragraph was important, because that paragraph didn't allow the uniting of the Ottomans with the Safavids. If they signed a peace treaty, without fail the opinion of Russia was to be taken into consideration. Practically, Peter the Great made the Safavids fall into a political trap. Peter the Great supposed that the messenger would think a lot but would understand nothing. But Ismayil bey dispersed this supposition of the emperor:

– Your Highness, I agree with your conditions, but it is necessary to add one word to the responsibility from your side.

– Which word?

– In the second paragraph instead of the word of “military” there must be written “military and financial”.

Peter the Great had already gained a diplomatic victory over the Ottomans by means of the Safavids. Now whatever the messenger of Safavids wanted he would give. That was why he said with indifference:

– Let it be how you want, messenger of Safavids! – Tonight we are going to sign a treaty about “friendship and brotherhood”. After the official signing, tomorrow you may take the first financial assistance- ten thousand pieces of Russian gold.

To get the unexpected assistance and by means of it to strengthen the army of the Shah made Ismayil bey rejoice:

– All right, Your Highness!

Peter the Great had achieved his main purpose. His main purpose was to turn the Caspian Sea into a Russian basin and not to let the Ottomans to the west of the Caspian Sea. That was why he became cheerful. In order to test the mind of Ismayil bey, he wanted to make him speak once again:

– Both the Safavids and the Ottomans are from the same stock. Why don't you find a common language? Half of the world is under your control. You fight against yourselves. What can't you share?

Ismayil bey answered without thinking:

– For faith and lands, Your Highness!

– I understood the meaning of faith, but why for “lands”?

– Both the Ottomans and the Safavids are the Oghuz Turks. Azerbaijan and Anatolia are the motherland of both of them. They say that Azerbaijan and Anatolia are their motherland, but we say that Azerbaijan and Anatolia are ours and we have been living here for thousand years. They don't want to agree with us...

Peter the Great smiled at the naive words of Ismayil bey and said nothing.

Addition:

On June 24 in 1724 as a result of the efforts of the ambassador of Russia in Istanbul, Nepluyev and the ambassador of France, Markiz de Bonak, a treaty was signed between the Ottomans and Russia about the division of the north and west parts of the state of Safavids. According to that treaty a straight line from the place where Kur and Araz joined till Hamadan, from the south part of Dagestan including the east part of Shamakhy were considered the borders of Russia and the Ottomans. According to the document, the Ottoman and Russia empires would recognize Tahmasb Mirza as the Shah. If the Shah recognized that treaty, they would assist him in restoring orders in the state of the Safavids.

But Tahmasb Shah didn't accept such a shameful treaty and the conditions shown there. That was why under the leadership of Ahmad pasha, the Ottomans firstly occupied Khoy, then Hamadan, then Nakhchivan and Irevan. The Ottomans who were not able to conquer Tabriz entered Ganja. Tahmasib Shah returned to Ardabil when the second attack on Tabriz was successful.

“...I knew that the situation was worse. My beautiful Azerbaijan was conquered by the Russians and the Ottomans; there began a revolt in the empire which had been left to us like a heritage. Now the ruler of each city behaved like the Shah. Before my eyes I was losing my country. “What must be done?” – That question always made me think. It was necessary to put an end to this lack of overall control. In order to join Azerbaijan and other lands in unity Tahmasb Shah made more efforts, but there was no result.

I made up my mind that it was necessary to create a strong army. Firstly, in Kalat I gathered one group of troopers about two thousand, consisting of the Avshars. I began to teach them the

tactics of fighting, the ways to go forward, to retreat. To my mind, I achieved my purpose. Within a short time, I was able to create a group of regulated troopers. It stimulated me to other great fights. Kalat was between the trenches like hills and valleys. It was my first fortress. It was necessary to test the fighting ability of the group by leaving Kalat. We attacked Khorasan. The fighters exactly fulfilled all my orders. We plundered Khorasan and returned Kalat with much plunder. At that time, Melik Mahmud Sistani didn't miss the chance because of lack of control in the country. He occupied Meshed and declared himself an independent ruler.

Tahmasb Shah couldn't get back Isfahan from Ashraf Khan. Though he attacked the city with Fatali Khan, Ashraf Khan made them retreat.

One day a man by the name of Nasir Agha came to me. He was originally Kurd. After greeting me he explained the purpose of his coming:

– Nader Khan, I have come to you like a representative.

– Please, I am listening!

– It is necessary the Kurds and the Avshars are combined and become one troop or if they remain separate Melik Mahmud will make us surrender...

He was speaking wisely. I didn't hide my thoughts and said:

– Nasir Agha, I also think like you... – If there is no uniting they will kill not only us but also they will destroy our motherland...

He was glad to hear my words as if he didn't expect me answering thus.

– It is right, Nader Khan! In such troubled days we must unite. We discussed this and then decided that you must be the warlord of our fighters.

I thought for a while.

– Aren't you mistaken in choosing me? – I asked in order to make sure.

– I think that we are not mistaken. Firstly, within a short time you will be able to introduce proper order between the fighters. Secondly, your name, bravery and courage are spoken by all the people.

I didn't want to arrive at a decision in a hurry:

– Nasir Agha, I may accept your proposal. In that case your group must obey my orders without reserve and must fulfill my orders unconditionally.

He didn't think long:

– It will be how you said, if God pleases!

I agreed with Nasir Agha, but I felt that he wanted to say something more. After some hesitation, he said:

– In order to do away with Melik Mahmud we have one measure.

– Please, Nasir Agha, what did you decide?

Nasir Agha made me take an oath on Imam Rza not to speak to anybody about his words.

– You know that the Kurds also serve to Melik Mahmud in his palace. We are obliged to be near him. After a week a traditional horse-race will begin in Meshed. In this horse-race both Melik Mahmud and you also will take part as before. If in that race you pull the horse of Melik Mahmud by the bridle, it will be a sign to us and we shall attack and kill him...

It wasn't a bad idea. I agreed with Nasir Agha about it. But I didn't trust him much. In such kind of days any betrayal could be expected from men. In an underhand way, I learned that during the execution of Melik Mahmud they wouldn't miss the chance to hurt me and to do away with me. I didn't refuse taking part in the horse-race. But I behaved as though I couldn't pull the bridle. So, the horse-race finished, Melik Mahmud didn't doubt. Then I knew that Melik Mahmud was aware of that plan and together with two courtiers they had a plan of their own. I took those courtiers to hunting and asked them to tell me all what they knew.

One of the courtiers said to me that the idea had been decided by Melik Mahmud himself as he wanted to do away with me in that way.

– Why? – My relations with Melik Mahmud aren't bad.

– Melik Mahmud isn't afraid of Tahmasb Shah but you. By removing you he will get rid of his most dangerous enemy.

– Was Nasir agha aware of what you told me about?

– No, we showed ourselves to Nasir agha as though we were dissatisfied with Melik Mahmud and we would be able to make him believe us.

I killed the courtiers of Melik Mahmud and sent their heads to him...

...In 1725 near Khabushan the troops of Melik Mahmud and my troops came face to face. By fighting, I made him to retreat to Meshed. It was impossible to continue that fight till the end, because we needed cannons to encircle the city. I didn't have cannons at that time. I made up my mind that instead of blockading Meshed it was better to take control of the stocks in the province of Daragoz who were enemies to me. I did what I thought. In that way the number of my fighters reached six thousand.

Tahmasb Shah sent his warlord Rzaqulu khan to Meshed to Melik Mahmud. There I was ready to combine with the troops of the Shah. The ill-wishers near Rzaqulu khan whispered in his ears that: "If the victory is gained, it will be the victory of Nader" – and in that way they laid obstacles in the way of combining the troops.

One day a group of horsemen under the headship of the Shah's Vizier Hasanali bey came to meet me. Though I didn't know Hasanali bey very well, his herald who had come before Hasanali bey had informed me about him. I welcomed him at the gates built near Khabushan and told him: "You are welcome!" As soon as he got off the horse he said in a lively voice:

– It is better to hear about a brave man than to see him.

I said modestly:

– I shall be a brave man when together with the Shah I shall bring into unity the lands left us from our forefathers like a heritage. Now I am busy only with small tasks.

– What are you saying? Your fame is spread from Azerbaijan to Baghdad.

– I wish you also to be famous, Hasanali bey!

– Thanks! If you were not famous the Shah wouldn't send

me to you to appoint you the ruler. It appears that you won the confidence of the Shah.

– I wish our Shah long life! It is our duty to serve to the Shah! The Avshars always devotedly served the Qizilbashs.

When Hasanali bey returned to the Shah he explained my idea to him. According to my idea, both my troops and the Shah's troops had to attack to Khorasan and to get the city back. Hasanali bey returned to me again and informed me that the Shah wanted to meet with me.

It became clear that during the period when I wasn't there the troops of Melik Mahmud wanted to fight against the Shah's troops. When I heard that news I left Marv and turned my face to Khabushan. When Melik Mahmud heard that I had left Marv he returned to Meshed. In Khabushan I was waiting for the Shah and Fatali khan.

I was thirty eight years old, but till that time I had never seen the Shah. I met Tahmasb Shah at the entry of Khabushan. He was about twenty two or twenty three years old. It seemed that he was tired. The Shah was accompanied by a number of Viziers and advocates. It was felt that he was like a toy in their hands. I understood it from often changing his mind. I waited for the Shah to get off the horse. Hasanali bey came nearer to him:

– Your Majesty, Nader is here.

Tahmasb Shah asked:

– Where is he?

I went forward and bowed him, wishing him long life. To my mind, the Shah was pleased. Then in the home of the ruler of the city, he had a talk with me in private.

– How can we get Meshed? – He asked me directly.

- By attacking, Your Majesty! – I answered without thinking.
- Has our army power to attack?
- To occupy Meshed the army has the power, but for to restore the dynasty it has not.
- Why?

– Because our army isn't regulated and isn't trained specially. In private, everybody wants to behave like a hero. It is necessary for the army to show courage together, to learn the tactics of fighting and fulfill the orders unconditionally.

Tahmasb Shah thought and then said:

– You are right, it is necessary to set an army fighting regularly. Well, if I appoint you a warlord to the army to occupy Meshed, will you be able to do it?

– I shall occupy, Your Majesty! If the army will be of one mind, I shall be able to achieve my purpose, my Shah!

– If it is thus, I appoint you the warlord of the army!

When the order of the Shah was declared the Viziers, advocates, especially Fatali khan, began to play tricks in order to sully my good name. I didn't have time to pay attention to them.

...I began marching. Meshed had already been encircled. Just at that time I learned that Fatali khan had a talk with Melik Mahmud so as not to let me occupy Meshed. Fatali khan would be able to make Melik Mahmud believe this. He made him believe that if his troops attacked me the stocks of Qajar wouldn't fight against any sides. Melik Mahmud believed Fatali khan and attacked us. After the bloody battles he was obliged to retreat. In that battle, the Qajars didn't take part. Without them the troops of Melik Mahmud could not stand before us. I captured one of the warlords of Melik Mahmud, Mir Muhammad. When I met with Mir Muhammad he said to me that he wanted to tell me a secret, but in return he wanted only his life. I agreed with him. Mir Muhammad spoke to me that Melik Mahmud and Fatali khan wanted to do away with the Shah. I went to the tent of the Shah and told him what Mir Muhammad had told me.

The Shah called Fatali khan in my presence and asked him:

– Why didn't the Qajars take part in that battle?

Fatali khan didn't know anything yet.

– Your Majesty, the Qajars had been kept like a spare power. If we retreated they had to come to help. You agreed to keep them like a spare power.

– Yes, I agreed, but the warlord of the army had to agree not me.

Then all of a sudden the Shah stood up. He approached Fatali khan, looked into his eyes and asked suddenly:

– What did you talk about with Melik Mahmud?

When Fatali khan heard the name of Melik Mahmud his face turned white, but he didn't lose his composure:

– My Shah, it is a lie, it is a slander... It is only a cunning lie in order to cast aspirations on me.

No sooner had Fatali khan finished his words than two executioners stood above his head.

Tahmasb Shah said:

– Tell me, Fatali khan, tell me, how did you want to attempt my life?

Fatali khan fell on his knees:

– It is a lie... It is a slander, my Shah!

– Do you say that it is a slander?

He clapped his hands. They brought the warlord of Melik Mahmud, Mir Muhammad, into the tent; his hands were tied.

– Do you know him? – The Shah asked Fatali khan:

– I don't know him, my Shah!

– If you don't know him let him speak to you himself.

Mir Muhammad told that Fatali khan had sent a representative to Meshed many times, he also told who had talks with Melik Mahmud. When Fatali khan saw that all their plans were known to the Shah he was hung under the feet of the Shah:

– My Shah, give me a quarter!! Don't kill me!

Tahmasb Shah flied into a rage:

– Fatali khan, do you know what the punishment for betrayal is?

– My Shah, I know! There isn't any chief without mercy or any slave without a mistake!

I turned towards the Shah:

– My Shah, forgive Fatali khan! He was mistaken... We must not oblige the stock of Qajar be against us...

Tahmasb Shah looked at me attentively and thought for a while and then he shook his head; he agreed with me.

Then I learned that after the instigation and cunning of the Viziers the Shah had chopped off Fatali khan's head. I had gained my wishes firstly.

The Shah appointed me to the post of the artillery commander. After that appointment, I had great power. The artillery was under my control as a commander. The Shah also awarded me with the title of "The slave of Tahmasb". I asked the Shah to give a post to my brother-in-law (my wife's brother) Kalbali bey in order to be an Avshar near the Shah. The Shah appointed him as an eunuch.

At last, in the December of 1726 we could occupy Meshed. Melik Mahmud yielded to us; he took an oath and promised not to be against us. Then he went to the tomb of Imam Rza and began to live there. I took into consideration the authority of mullahs and mujtehidis among the people and ordered to restore the tomb of Imam Rza and to build there the second minaret.

Though I knew that the Shah respected me much, I knew that it wouldn't last long, because the Viziers and advocates didn't want me being respected in the palace. When the Shah went to Khabushan the plot against me by the Viziers and advocates increased. They spoke to the Shah as if I had talked with the Kurds against him. After the threat and pressure Tahmasb Shah sent orders to Mazandaran, Astarabad and other provinces which were under his control, named me as "betrayer" and demanded them to assist him "in the struggle against the betrayer". Then my situation depended on the steps I was going to take, because I was declared "an undesirable person" by the Shah. Immediately I called my brother Ibrahim khan and consulted with him.

– Ibrahim, our situation is very bad. The Shah declared me "an undesirable person" and "a betrayer". Now our lives depend on the steps that we are going to take.

– What do you suggest, Nader khan? We have a lot of enemies...

– The Shah is like a toy in the hands of courtiers of the palace. The Shah can change his opinion even a hundred times in a day. If he doesn't see power before him we shall also receive the fate of Fatali khan.

– Do you offer to attack Khabushan?

– We have no other way-out. In order to overcome our other enemies we must reconcile with the Shah without fail; but after demonstrating our power. If we don't do it like this the Shah will make Melik Mahmud be on his side too.

– If our way out is this, I agree with you!

After some days, I encircled Khabushan and made the troops of the Shah retreat. When the troops of the Shah were defeated, I was able to make him believe that I wasn't against him. I told him that my only wish was to reinstate our state as previously; to unite it. The Shah agreed with my thoughts, because then he was in my hand. If I didn't kill him, it meant that the courtiers had told him a lie. We returned to Meshed in order to celebrate Novruz holiday together. After that time, in two years I suppressed a number of revolts in the east, south and in the centre of the country and tamed the rulers who didn't obey. It appeared that I spent the two years on horseback. I didn't think about sleeping or resting. Wherever they revolted, I was there. Whenever they didn't obey the Shah or me

I used to reach there in time. I even forgot my family. During that time, my children who were given birth by my second wife were being brought up. They were still living in Kalat. The name of one of my sons was Nasrullah, the name of other one was Imamqulu...

From the author:

Though Nader khan was illiterate, he was born for war and he was a genius of military affairs. Many modern historians liken him to the great Alexander, at times to Napoleon, at times to Emir Timur and they are not mistaken. Within some years he freed the occupied territories and he united the new lands into the state. It testified that he was a great military strategist. His ability was inborn. He was resolutely sure that in order to set up a mobilized army the fighters had to be trained seriously with military instructions, and he always toiled in that direction. Like a strategist Nader Shah was superior to all the warlords who were against him. Before the battle he always attended to all the small details and niceties and only then carried out the battles.

One of his successful tactics was carefully attacking the enemy with troopers from the unexpected place. His infantry fighters were very disciplined and they were not weaker than the janissaries of the Ottomans.

During the battles, if the enemy made his groups retreat a little Nader khan then used to enter that group, kill the sotnick, military leader personally and appoint another one to the post. That was why his fighters never retreated if they weren't ordered.

Nader khan skillfully used the spare troops too. The main point was that he could easily sense the weak point of the enemy, and if it needed, he could send spare troops there.

The name of Nader khan is also connected with the development of heavy artillery.

His military qualities increased after he became the Shah.

He was also born as a nice organizer and an instructor. After his personal efforts, he who wasn't a fighter could be turned into a skilful fighter. One of his superior qualities was that he paid attention to stiffening the spirit among the fighters.

To control the army spread all over the country, and to make them obey his orders show his ability to organize.

Nader Shah had a wonderful memory. In a big troop he knew the officers name by name. Also he remembered exactly when and to which private fighter he had awarded a medal or had them punished.

He could turn the mass of disorderly and uncontrollable fighters into a great and mighty army in Asia.

CHAPTER V

After Mahmud's declaring himself Shah in Isfahan, Sultan Husain's sister Fatime Sultan Beyim, his daughter Rize Beyim couldn't leave the palace. In the harem chaos reigned. The sister and daughter of the Shah knew well that if Mahmud learned that some relatives of the Shah were in the harem, he would deal with them. In the worst case Mahmud Shah could give those women into the hands of his soldiers. It was tantamount to death. To protect the honor and dignity of the women, daughters and close women relatives of the rulers of Safavid was considered as the main duty. It was impossible in some cases. During the wars and captivity, there were some enemies who didn't consider the sacred laws. Safavids' girls and women were aware that their lives did not belong to them. They were like hostages kept in the palace to be relatives with emirs, khans, Sultans, Shahs or to get their confidence and loyalty. In fact, they were pleased with such a kind of life in the palace. At times one of those girls loved somebody or fell in love with somebody. In that case, if the young man was from the upper class, a ceremony of engagement would be held there at that time. If the young boy was from the lower class they used to execute him by throttling, or they forced the girl either to poison herself or to hang herself in order that the other girls might learn a lesson.

In the palace, everything had to be for the state.

... The destinies of Fatime Sultan Beyim and Rize Beyim were as though they lived in darkness. There was no other way. They had to obey the unwritten laws of the palacesuicide! It was necessary without fail. The family of Safavid could not be humiliated!

After Sultan Husain put the Shah's crown on Mahmud's head, the girls were trying to ignore that disgrace. In fact, Sultan Husain had to care about the women and girls in the palace. Before Isfahan was encircled he could have sent them to somewhere out of danger. But he did nothing. After some time Mahmud Shah came to the palace and lived there. The girls went to their cells. The nurse whom they used to call "aunt" was near them. The aunt thought about a way to save the girls but she had been able to do nothing. The glasses of poison on the niche were before their eyes. Though the girls were young, they were ready to drink poison. They knew what invading and plundering of the city meant.

Rize Beyim said to the nurse-maid in tears:

– My aunt, prepare the poison, we have to be ready for it in time. Our Shah had to take care of it beforehand.

Fatime Sultan Beyim raised her hands:

– My God, isn't there any way-out for us? Why are we suffering in distress?

Though the heart of the aunt was bleeding, she showed herself reserved in order to quieten the girls:

– Don't shed tears, girls! I beseech you! It was fated thus! What can we do?

Rize Beyim who had already accepted the miserable situation said, sobbing:

– My aunt, how is death? After drinking that poison will death come early, will we suffer from pains?

The aunt could no longer restrain the tears. Instead of answering Rize Beyim's questions she cried bitterly. The girls also joined her and began to shed tears. The aunt tried to pull herself together:

– I beseech you, the death isn't painful. Death is more durable than the real life.

Fatime Sultan Beyim:

– My aunt, shall we live there like in this life?

– No, I beseech you! There, for God all people are equal. There isn't poor or rich.

Rize Beyim:

– My aunt, shall we see there one another?

The aunt wiped the tears of her eyes:

– If God wishes, we shall see one another, my dears!

Fatime Sultan Beyim:

– My aunt, shall we be in paradise or in hell?

The aunt understood that the girls were ready to commit sui cide:

– Why to hell, my dears! You are as sini ess as ba t bies. You are sinless at the God. He who made you suffer from distress will have to answer to the unseen God. The God will punish him.

The aunt wanted to speak much about the great God, about the divine myst erious stories in order to calm the girls. Suddenly she remembered something. She kept silent a little while and then she turned towards the girls:

– My dears, I have thought of how to save you.

Both of the girls:

– What have you thought, aunt? -They shouted together.

The aunt thought for a while:

– In order to escape you must refuse to be the daughter of Shah, – she said.

Fatime Sultan Beyim couldn't be patient:

– My aunt, speak frankly, what must we do?

– You must be forbearing.

The girls shouted together:

– We can be forbearing, aunt!

– Are you ready to be house-maids in the palace? You must be servants during the time Mahmud is the Shah.

Rize Beyim fussed a bit and became downcast:

– My aunt, we can't work like house-maids. How shall we be house-maids?

The aunt began to speak more passionately in order to enthuse the girls and make them stop committing suicide.

– You can learn, girls, I shall be near you too. I may tell them that you have come new to the palace and you are learning what to do. The day will come; somebody will help us escape us from Mahmud's hands. We must bear while we must endure.

Fatime Sultan Beyim:

– Don't they know that there is no house-maid dressed like us?

– They know, I be s eech you, they know! Be fore they come we may change our clothes and sit in one of the cells for servants.

Rize Beyim was frightened a bit:

– My aunt, I am frightened...

– Don't be afraid, I beseech you, don't fear! I shall always be near you!

The sisters began to think and then they began to stare at the carpets of Tabriz spread on the floor:

– What can we do if we haven't any way-out? It is better to be a servant than to be disgraced!

After half an hour, the aunt changed their clothes so that nobody could think that they were the daughters of the Shah; even if their mother saw them she also wouldn't know them. The aunt gathered all the servants who couldn't escape and gave them strict tasks:

– Girls, you must endure! Mahmud has conquered only Tabriz. Shahzade Tahmasb will return back after gathering troops and will take Isfahan back. If they don't give us the sack we shall have to work here. These girls are the new servants. The name of one of them is Jamile; the other girl's name is Chichek.

Thus, Fatime Sultan Beyim was known as Jamile and Rize Beyim was known as Chichek.

When Mahmud entered the palace as the Shah he didn't change the servants of Safavid on purpose. He would be pleased if the servants who served the Shahs of Safavid served him. He ordered that the servants, house-maids and man servants of Sultan Husain remain his servants, house-maids and man servants and nobody must hurt, damage or be unfair to them. How could the miserable girls

know that they would serve for about seven years, firstly to Mahmud Shah, then Ashraf Shah? Their secrets would be let out only after Nader khan's occupation of Isfahan.

Afterwards I learned that Ashraf had conflicts with the ruler of Baghdad, Ahmet pasha, and he made the Afghans withdraw troops. Ahmet pasha who was inspired from the victory (maybe he did it willingly) wrote a letter to Ashraf and informed him that the Afghans didn't realize what the actual state affairs were, because they were considered "wild stock". For that reason, he explained in his letter that he would come to Isfahan and would reinstate the power of Sultan Husain. Ashraf Shah immediately wrote a letter and sent to Isfahan to chop off Sultan Husain's head and send it to Ahmet pasha. The order was carried out at once.

I had already a regular army of twenty five thousand. Wherever I stretched out my finger, the troop occupied that place. Instead of heavy cannons, I constructed small whirling cannons on the camels in order to be quick. In one word, all was ready to occupy the capital. Before all of the preparation it was essential to infuse courage and experience in the army. I could achieve it within a short period. I sent persons to the cities which were conquered by the Afghans and spread a rumor that Tahmasb Shah and Nader khan were coming to those cities. Ashraf who heard that news in Isfahan sent groups to those cities in order to strengthen them. In this way, by sitting in Meshed we weakened the main forces in Isfahan. Before moving towards Isfahan I had a talk with Tahmasb Shah in Meshed. I felt sure about our victory which was why I asked the Shah with what prize he would reward me.

Firstly, Tahmasb Shah thanked me:

– Nader khan, -he said. We have achieved much success after combining our forces. Our force has been increased; some of the cities are under my control. Before us there is a problem of honor, that is to say, to occupy the capital of Safavids. Will we be able to occupy Isfahan?

I said with assurance:

– Yes, Your Majesty! Isfahan will be occupied in no less than one year.

When the Shah heard my words his eyes shone:

– If it is thus, what do you want?

I didn't hesitate:

– Your Majesty, for my service I want you to give Khorasan, Kirman and Mazandaran to my ascendancy and property.

The Shah thought a little and then asked surprisingly:

– Isn't it a lot, Nader khan?

– It isn't enough yet, Your Majesty!

– Isn't enough?!

– Yes, Your Majesty!

Tahmasb Shah said in surprise:

– Make yourself clear, Nader khan!

– Your Majesty, are you pleased with the present army that I have set up?

– I am pleased, it is a disciplined army, they fulfill their orders without question, and they are ready to sacrifice themselves...

– Do you want the troop twice more than that army?

– Who wouldn't wish to have such kind of disciplined troops, Nader khan?

I felt that I was able to make the Shah believe me.

– For that reason I want Mazandaran, Khorasan and Kirman. In those cities, I shall also set up spare military units, because in any battle, somebody dies or is wounded. I need spare forces in order to replace the dead or wounded ones. Then...

Tahmasb Shah interrupted:

– What then?

In fact, I didn't want to tell him that secret, but I told him:

– Then. Your Majesty, in order to prepare the spare army money won't be spent from the Shah's treasury. All the expenses will be paid on account of the provinces that you gave me. To my mind, the Shah didn't realize the main essence of my words, but knowing that there won't be the expenses he said:

– You made me believe, Nader khan!

– Your Majesty, it isn't all!

Tahmasb Shah asked anxiously:

– Which other provinces do you want?

– I don't want any provinces, Your Majesty!

– But what do you want?

– Your Majesty, I want to say that after suppressing the disturbance within the country we have important affairs before us.

– What affairs are left?

Your Majesty, half of Azerbaijan has been invaded by the Ottomans and the Russians. Apart from those invading groups they have also a regular army. Starting from today we must prepare to free those places.

The Shah stood at the window Crossing his arms on his chest and thought for a while:

– You are right, Nader khan! – At last he said. – You made me believe and I agree to those three provinces being under your ascendancy.

Just there the Shah signed an order about it and gave it to me. In my turn, I wrote letters to those provinces and sent them with my companions in order to inform them

what to do.

Before us was the task of occupying Isfahan.

On 12th September 1729 Tahmasb Shah, the mullabashi and I went out of the city and directed them from Nishapur towards Sebzever. We had an idea to free Samvan which was encircled by Ashraf. Ashraf himself had started to move towards us. Ashraf's warlord Muhammad khan Seid's efforts to get my cannons resulted in failure. In spite of it in Damghan the main armies of Muhammad khan Seid and Ashraf khan combined and they were preparing for a decisive fight. I went a little forward and placed my army in the place called the river of Mihmandust.

In the morning of 29th September the fight began. I lined up my fighters and placed the cannons around them. I had resolutely ordered all the fighters not to move during the attack of the enemies and not to shoot without my order. The Afghans attacked first with twenty thousand soldiers, at the centre, then they tried to get superiority in the flanks. I had ordered my troops to shoot at them with rifles so that the bullets would reach the enemy and render them harmless. As usual, my groups of troopers were on the other bank of the river and were waiting for the agreed sign...”.

...The two soldiers who were standing in the centre and had newly returned from training looked worried. It was the first time that they had taken part in such a kind of big battle. The Afghans were at the fifty steps' from the Qizilbashs. They were not ordered to begin fighting yet.

The first soldier said anxiously:

– Look here, these Afghans have come much nearer. We must fight.

The second soldier:

– Hi, don't make noise, have patience!

– How long can I have patience? I am terribly frightened, as if my heart will stop beating! Must we wait for the enemy come and kill us?

– Hi, didn't you hear the words of our military leader?

– What did he say?

– He said that Nader khan had ordered thus. If somebody leaves the row without order or leaps into the fight he will be personally executed by Nader khan himself.

The Afghans reached within fifty steps of the Qizilbashs. They were kicking up a roar. Their noises could be heard all around the river of Mihmandust. The Qizilbash did not speak or even stir.

Again the first soldier:

– Look here, why aren't we ordered to begin fighting?! Honorable death is better than being executed.

The second soldier:

– Hi, keep silence, now the fight will begin.

When the Afghans were at thirty steps, the drum sounded; fire was shot from the rifles and all around us it was impossible to see because of the smoke. Most of the Afghans who were coming in the first row were lying on the ground. Some of them were groaning, the others were between life and death....In spite of all that had happened they continued fighting. At that time of the drum sounding fire was shot from the small cannons too...

“I felt that the fight was going to finish in our favor. I ordered our long-range guns to ruin the enemy's cannons. Our artillery men showed their abilities and within a short time all of their light cannons were destroyed. I called one of the skillful artillery men, Shamsaddin bey:

– Can you shoot at the Afghan soldier who is carrying the banner?

He put his hands on his brows and measured the distance by his eyes:

– I can, my khan! I can even make his mother shed tears on his dead body!

– Look here, now it depends only on you to set up confusion among the Afghans.

The artillery man Shamsaddin bey;

– If it depends on me, just a moment, my khan! -He said and ran towards his cannon.

The soldier who was carrying the banner was guarded by some Afghan fighters. According to the fighting rules of that time if the banner fell on the ground that meant it was the beginning of a defeat. Willingly or unwillingly the fighters begin to get confused and started to retreat. That was why Ashraf Shah had ordered the soldiers to guard the soldier carrying the banner, so as not to let the banner fall on the ground...”

Just at that moment, the Qizilbashs were ordered to begin the fight. One part of the Qizilbashs broke the rows of the enemy and tried to approach the soldier who was carrying the banner. The fight became more ruthless. The Afghan soldiers were fighting more bravely despite the fact that their rows had become thin. They were also guarding the soldier who was carrying the banner and they laid obstacles in the way of the Qizilbashs who moved towards him. The soldier who was carrying the banner was waving the banner in order to stir up the anger of the enemy. At times he shouted, as though he was abusing the enemy or teasing them. Suddenly the attack threw the soldier back who was carrying the banner. He looked at his belly with the banner still in his hand. A small cannonball had torn his belly. After a moment he could feel nothing. One of the Afghan soldiers was able to catch the banner while it was falling on the ground. The second cannonball broke the wooden holder and material of the banner. The Qizilbashs had already reached the banner. The Afghans who saw that their banner wasn't waving any more began to withdraw their troops.

“...I won that fight. The Afghans withdrew their troops. My brother Ibrahim khan asked me to permit him to follow the running Afghans, but I didn't let him, because we were not wholly ready for it. In that fight, the Afghans lost twelve thousand fighters but we lost about four thousand soldiers.

At that moment Ashraf's fighters who were retreating left Tehran and came for to help him. My scouts brought the news that Ashraf had laid an ambush for me in Khar, in one narrow passage. I sent to Khar only the groups which were armed with rifles. They laid an ambush for Ashraf and conquered all his cannons and loads. Then Ashraf ran to Isfahan and requited the population of Isfahan for the defeat. He executed about three thousand people consisting of scientists, courtiers and mullahs.

I was informed that Tehran was freed wholly from the Afghans. That was why I delivered the news to the Shah and advised him to go to Tehran. The Shah and his courtiers met my offer with surprise in spite of being so near to the victory. The Shah had doubts and informed me about them:

– Do you advise me to go to Tehran?! Why?

I was bored with the blockheaded Shah's Viziers, advocates and courtiers. Tahmasb Shah and his courtiers always prevented me from fighting; they didn't let me achieve much success. I couldn't tell the Shah what I was thinking about.

– Your Majesty, you must rule the important state affairs, you must give orders, taxes must be collected, – I said. Thanks to the God, we have united one part of the state. Now the officials must work, the Viziers, courtiers must toil a lot... To my mind, both the population inside the country and the neighboring countries must know that the central government is in power.

The Shah thought for a while:

– Tehran isn't the capital of our country.

Of course, Tehran isn't a capital, – I said. Tehran is the temporary centre of our government. As soon as we occupy Isfahan you will move from Tehran to Isfahan.

Tahmasb Shah:

– When will Isfahan be occupied?

– Your Majesty, as we agreed, this year I shall give Isfahan to you. You will celebrate your crowning in Isfahan. Because you haven't celebrated the official crowning.

When Tahmasb Shah heard about crowning his eyes shone; for a moment he was lost in thought, then his eyes languished. Then he agreed with me:

– Let it be how you advise, Nader khan! – He said. – Tomorrow we may leave for Tehran. I think we shall remain there temporarily.

– Of course, my Shah, soon I shall tell you good news about the occupation of Isfahan.

The Shah was fully confident of me, and the next day he left for Tehran with all of his courtiers. Now there were no longer those who were in conflict with me in the palace, I could start to broaden my activity. Firstly, I had to get Isfahan, because I had promised this to the Shah...

I wanted to trap Ashraf by going to Isfahan, passing through Natanz, because I knew that the Afghans were waiting for us there. The main problem was to make them leave their trenches and to organize their attacking us. We showed ourselves as though we were not going to remain there and the main forces were going to Isfahan. It was interesting to me that Ashraf was using the fighting tactics against me which I had used against them in Mihmandust. I wasn't surprised much: that is to say, we were much cleverer and foresighted than them. Ashraf placed the cannons in flanks; he gathered his fighters in the centre and attacked. My troopers would be able to pass behind them with difficulty. It was my last attack to Ardabil. Though Ashraf was able to run to Isfahan, I could get both his fighters and military supplies. The most interesting point was that among those who were captured there were the Ottomans. I freed all of them and advised them to return to their motherland.

Ashraf gathered all the cargo animals in Isfahan, on the 13th November left Isfahan and ran to Shiraz together with his wives, relatives and property. I sent five hundred Avshar troopers to follow him, so as not to let him have peace anywhere. At last, I heard that his own Vizier Muhammad khan had executed him.

On the 16th November I arrived in Isfahan ceremonially. Before arriving in Isfahan I sent a herald to Tehran and invited the Shah.

In Isfahan the people were in the streets greeting me merrily and welcoming me with heartfelt words. There was both excitement and pride on the faces of the people. My horse was going slowly towards the Shah's palace and my warlords were following me. I had placed the main part of the troops outside the city. The drummers were going before me. Suddenly among the people who were lining in both sides of the street and welcoming us, somebody cried:

– Nader khan, I want to make a request!

I pulled my horse by its bridle and turned towards the side that I had heard the voice:

– Who wanted to make a request?

A voice was again heard among the people:

– It is me, your humble creature!

Come forward, humble creature! – I said.

A man came forward out of the mass:

– I have a request for you, Nader khan!

– Who are you? – I wanted to make fun with that person.

– Me...Me... I am unhappy Salman who had cut his only donkey seven years ago in order not to let his children die of starvation.

– Well, what do you want, unhappy Salman, who tasted the meat of his donkey?

Salman who was standing in front of me bowed, then he said:

– Today is a holiday, khan! At last our city which was enslaved is freed from the enemies.

But I...

– Don't be ashamed, tell what you want.

– Nader khan, my request will sound a bit strange...

– Be quick, tell what you want! – I said.

All the people were listening to us with interest. There was a strange silence; all were waiting to hear what that strange request would be. If he wanted any post in that moment, I would give it to him. The people, to my mind, expected him to be greedy and request five or six sacks of gold.

At last, Salman swallowed a bit and said:

– Nader khan, I can't live without a donkey... I request you to give me a donkey! I want only a donkey! A donkey... I can't live without a donkey!

Suddenly the people roared with laughter. It was as if all the people would faint because of laughing so much. The eyes of the people were wet because of laughing. Salman kishi didn't know what to do having not expected such kind of response. It was easy to understand the people, because for the last few years they were in sorrow. The people of Isfahan were famous for dropping a hint, being amusing and cheating. Somebody called among the people:

– Nader khan, send him to Hamadan to bring a donkey! The donkeys of Hamadan are more beautiful...

The people roared with laughter again.

I wiped my eyes which were wet because of laughing and asked him:

– Well, Salman, tell me, why do you want a donkey?

– Nader khan, really I can't remain without a donkey!

I said laughingly:

– Well, tell me, why can't you remain without a donkey? -Because I earn my living only with a donkey. I carry

wood on the donkey and earn money to live. I told you; seven years ago I cut my only donkey for my children not to die of starvation. Now in order to earn money I carry wood myself instead of the donkey. That was why I requested you to give me a donkey.

I sleeked my beard and thought a little. It was important to fulfill his request, I also wanted to amuse the people. Salman seemed to be a good person. There was devotion and poverty on his face. Such kind of people would never betray.

– Salman kishi, it would be better if I appointed you to a new post... I want your children to become happier, – I said.

– I beseech you, what can I do except carry wood from the forest?

I said jokingly:

– Why not, you can take care of donkeys, can't you?

Yes, I can.. Even I know the language of donkeys. The people laughed again.

Once more, I said jokingly:

– If you do, I appoint you to the post of the head of the donkeys...

The people fainted because of laughing.

Salman kishi was confused:

– I understand nothing, I beseech you. The head of the donkeys.

I said again laughingly:

– I want to say that you will lead all of the donkeys in my army. You will carry food, water for my troops from the rear. You asked me to give you one donkey, but I give you a thousand donkeys. What do you say, do you agree with me? – I asked him.

Salman answered, hesitating:

– What can I say?

There were heard voices among the people:

– Agree with him, kishi, you would never dream of such kind of a post. In former times you carried wood on your back, but now you will lead all the donkeys carrying loads.

The people laughed again.

Salman looked at me:

– What about my children?

– They will be assured of everything.

– If it is thus, I agree with you! I wish you long life, Nader khan! It is as if you helped me escape from the words of my shrewish wife.

I gave instructions one of my followers to arrange what I promised Salman. I began to go forward the Shah's palace..."

...The girls ran and came into the cell of the aunt. The aunt had never seen them so merry during the last seven years. During those seven years, Fatime Sultan Beyim and Rize Beyim had suffered much. Now they could wash clothes, make beds, sweep yards, cook meals, make tea, comb hair, plait, – in a word, they could manage everything. During these last years the girls had grown; and had even reached their marriageable age. Now they were about twenty one or twenty two years old.

– I haven't seen you so merry before, I beseech you! What has happened?

Fatime Sultan Beyim:

– My aunt, thanks to God, all our sufferings are left behind. During the seven years we had patience, we stood on our dignity and honor, and we didn't lose our pride. – She said and embraced the woman and began to cry:

The aunt:

– I beseech you, tell me what has happened?

Rize Beyim:

– My aunt, good news, good news! Nader khan has arrived in the city, after some time he will be in the palace...

Fatime Sultan Beyim broke the news of Rize Beyim's words:

– After some days my brother Tahmasb Shah will come to Isfahan.

The aunt raised her hands and faced the sky:

– Thanks to God! My God, you are always merciful! We have escaped suffering. If I die now I won't feel sorry. If only I surrender you to the Shah, then I shan't remain in the palace, I shall go to my own city to Shamakhy.

Her words shook Fatime Sultan Beyim:

– No, you must not go anywhere, my aunt! – She raised her voice. – We suffered together during seven years, till we die we must be together!

– My aunt, shall we greet our Shah dressed like servants?

– Oh... I have forgotten! We haven't even got any good dresses.

– I beseech you; I shall think and find a way out!

The girls had missed behaving like ladies and they wished to return to their previous life.

– My aunt, after some time Nader khan will come to the palace, why not tell him something?

The aunt embraced Sultan Beyim:

– Hi, my clever lady! Of course, whom else must we tell except him? Because he is like the right hand of Tahmasb Shah!

I arrived at the palace and began to set to work preparing for the Shah's arrival in Isfahan. At that time my brother Ibrahim khan came up to me:

– One of the servants wants to see you, – he said.

I said in a tentative:

– Why do I have to talk with a servant?

Ibrahim khan wanted to make me realize something:

– Nader khan, the problem is that the servant was a nurse of the sister of our Shah and the daughter of Sultan Husain.

I didn't change my position:

– Well, what can I do for her? Maybe she wants to make a request... Let her either go or ask her to wait for the Shah.

Ibrahim khan insisted:

– Nader khan, you don't understand me very well! The nurse says that during the last seven years, the Shahzade ladies were servants in the palace, but nobody knew that they were the daughters of the Shah.

I thought for a while:

– What? The daughters of the Shah worked in the palace like servants for seven years and nobody was aware of it. How can it be?

– The servant told me about it.

– Call here that servant; let me know what she is saying.

Ibrahim khan called a woman who was standing in a distance. The woman began to come towards me.

– Woman, are the words of Ibrahim khan true?

– They are true, I beseech you.

I asked her name. "Here all call me as "aunt", – she answered.

– Well, aunt, tell me about what has happened, – I said.

When the aunt told me the whole story I thought about the miserable life they had during those seven years, and I was proud of them and wanted to see them and tell them "Let all your sufferings remain in the past".

I gave out orders to give the aunt whatever she demanded and to move the girls to one of the cells for the ladies. I asked the aunt to inform me after the girls changed their clothes, and I promised her to visit the girls.

After some hours the news came that the ladies were ready to receive me. I entered the cell separated for them. For a long time I had not seen such kind of beautiful girls. I could tell them only a few words; "Let your sufferings remain in the past". It was impossible to look at the girls attentively because they were too beautiful..."

...Tahmasb Shah was elbowing on the cushion in the resting cell of the palace and was staring at the ceiling. After coming to Tehran there was one question in his mind. 'I wonder will Nader khan send a herald to me?! 'He didn't doubt about his occupying Isfahan. After dethroning Ashraf it wasn't difficult for Nader to declare himself Shah, because the army was in his side. Even if Nader wanted, he could give an order to put him to death. At that time a problem of running from the country arose. Where would he run? Wherever he would run, Nader would be able to pursue him. Now he was nobody without Nader. Tahmasb could realize all of the difficulty and was waiting for the herald of Nader. He had lost interest in everything. Was he right in executing Fatali khan and preter Nader khan? He didn't know. He had sent away his Viziers and advocates too. He didn't want to receive anybody. At times he entertained himself with a concubine but it didn't help him to clear his thoughts.

As if a heavy stone was hung in his heart. His mind was in a haze. Tahmasb Shah wanted to dispel the haze of his mind by drinking wine. Though it was against Muslim rule he could drink both wine and smoke opium because of not being a subject. He clapped his hands to each other and ordered the servant to bring wine. No sooner had the servant brought the wine than the head of guardsmen entered:

– Your Majesty, Nader khan has sent a herald, he wants to see you, – he said.

Tahmasb Shah didn't know whether to be glad or to cry at that moment. For a while, he thought and his face quivered:

– What was on his face, delight or sorrow?

– There was delight on his face, Your Majesty, his eyes were smiling.

Tahmasb Shah stood up and turned to the head of the guardsmen:

– Bring him to the reception room! – He assertively set him tasks.

The head of the guardsmen crossed his hands on his chest:

– All right, Your Majesty!

Tahmasb Shah went out of the cell and went to the reception room of the palace. He looked at the ugly bedding put there instead of the throne, but he didn't want to sit on it. He decided to welcome the herald standing.

The head of the guardsmen entered and informed about the coming of the herald. When the herald came in the room he lay on the floor and kissed the feet of the Shah. Without standing up he said: “Good news, my Shah, give me gifts, my Shah!”

– I shall give you gifts, herald! Tell me about your news! Stand up!

The herald stood up and stood near the Shah:

– I have brought good news, my Shah! At last, Isfahan has been cleaned of enemies. Now in the city there are no Afghans.

Tahmasb Shah said anxiously:

– Then... herald, what happens now?

– What must happen now, Your Majesty?! Nader khan prepares the population of the city to welcome you and ask humbly you to come to Isfahan soon.

– But why so soon?

– Why not soon, Your Majesty! Nader khan sent information that it would be useful for our Shah if the crowning was held sooner.

After hearing his words, Tahmasb Shah felt a bit better, as if the stone hung in his heart fell. He felt a sense of relief. He clapped his hands and called the head of the guardsmen and asked him to give the herald a sack of gold.

Then he turned to the herald:

– Bring to Nader khan's notice that tomorrow early in the morning I am leaving for Isfahan.

– All right, Your Majesty! Allow me to return to Isfahan today, and bring this news to Nader khan's notice.

Tahmasb Shah:

– Go, – he said. -When the herald went out of the room he clapped his hands and didn't wait for the coming in of the head of the guardsmen before setting his task: We shall entertain tonight and early in the morning we are leaving for Isfahan...

“...I welcomed Tahmasb Shah at the doors of the city enthusiastically. In spite of the destruction of the city during the seven years, the Shah was very glad, his delight was endless. He was glad because he was entering the city like the Shah, the city which he was obliged to run from. The Qizilbashs were glad about the coming of the Shah most of all. The people were also welcoming the Shah. Occupation of Isfahan stiffened the courage of the Qizilbashs. Now at any corner of the city that excitement could be felt. I was accompanying the Shah when he entered the palace. At times, he touched his hands to the walls and doors of the palace. I spoke to him about Fatime Sultan Beyim

and Rize Beyim. His eyes goggled because of not believing his ears. In the palace, the Shah firstly entered the harem. I preferred to wait outside. Firstly, there was heard the sobbing of the women, then the sobbing of the Shah. I understood that the Shah was weeping seeing Fatime Sultan Beyim and Rize Beyim safe and sound.

Now the main problem was to spread that enthusiasm all over the country. Also it was important to test how much the Shah needed me though he was afraid of me. For that purpose, one day I visited the Shah. He greeted me in a friendly manner. I told him:

– Your Majesty, if you allow me, I should go to Khorasan after your crowning, because I want to introduce proper order there.

Tahmasb Shah was embarrassed a bit; even I felt his grieving. He understood that if I went to Khorasan together with my troops he would be deprived of the forces. That was why he asked me:

– Is your leaving for Khorasan important?

– Yes, my Shah! Remember, you have given me the ascendancy over three provinces. After your order, I haven't found time to visit those provinces.

– No, I don't want you to go to Khorasan. I insist on your remaining in Isfahan.

I could understand why the Shah was worried. I insisted on leaving for Khorasan:

– Your Majesty, if you remember, I had promised you that I should set up spare forces in those three provinces.

Tahmasb Shah said:

– I remember.

– My Shah! I have already begun to set up spare forces. That is why I insist on going there to be aware how the process is going..

– I know that your companions are able to cope with that task. Otherwise, they know what their future will be. That is why you may go to Khorasan at another suitable time.

I didn't want to enlarge the problem:

– Your Majesty, let it be how you advise!

My words made him glad. I had to carry out my main idea:

– Your Majesty, do you want our union strengthened and for me to serve you always, as now?

The Shah screwed up his eyes, not expecting such kind of a question:

– Of course, I want it! What do you offer?

– Your Majesty, I want to be a close relative to you. Let's be relatives and let all doubts be removed.

Such kind of offer was useful for the Shah. He asked me:

– It would be better to be relatives to remove all doubts. How shall we be relatives?

– Let my son Rzaqulu marry your aunt Fatime Sultan Beyim and me marry the daughter of Sultan Husain, your sister Rize Beyim.

Tahmasb Mirza was so glad that he said without thinking:

– I agree with you! God bless you!

I said:

– God bless us!

By such kind of relationship, the Shah gained a strong ally like me, and I would be far from the conflicts of the palace thanks to the Shah. We decided to hold an engagement after the crowning ceremony.

We organized the crowning ceremony of Tahmasb Shah enthusiastically.

The next days after the crowning ceremony, I gained time to rest. But I never liked to be out of work. In my free hours, I held gatherings with the European messengers and companies and wanted to learn some points from them, because a severe war against the Ottomans would come in future. Nevertheless, I didn't want that war. What could we do, they had invaded our lands..."

CHAPTER VI

After the finish of the horse-race of the stock of Qajars some secret events happened. Of course, it happened before Fatali khan was punished. After the horse-race Fatali khan, who returned to Tabriz with Tahmasb Shah, was very worried: "How can it be? Not the head of the stock of Qajars but a bondman approaches the Shah and makes a request..." He was tired of thinking. After that horse-race Fatali khan couldn't forgive himself for three problems. Firstly, as if it would spoil his name, the Shah could send him away. It would be the best case. In the worst case, the Shah could give an order to chop off his head. The Shah could give any order. After gaining might he could do anything in order to show his power. He could fall a prey to him. His teacher always used to say to him that in politics there are not eternal friends but eternal interests. The deceased teacher was right. Thanks to God, he had done nothing that the Shah didn't like. The second problem didn't arouse on him pleasant feelings; he was grieving when thinking about it. Because he had missed getting the girl who was worthy to Shahs; she fell to the lot of "a bondman" named Murad. The face, looks, figure of Qelemnaz were still before his eyes. When he remembered about her he grieved: "How did it happen that I could miss such a beautiful girl?"

The third problem arousing nervousness was connected with Murad. Until him everything was okay. He had made the girl's father agree with him. From one side he had missed the girl, from other side he almost fell as a prey. Murad was at the bottom of all his problems. Murad was his subject, and without his permission he had made a request to the Shah. Such kind of behavior by Murad seemed to the khan a bit strange. Fatali khan thought that either his power in the stock of Qajars had been weakened, that was to say he couldn't rule the stock like before, or the brave boys of the stock had become so self-satisfied that they dared to make a request to the Shah without consulting with the head of the stock. Because of the above mentioned reasons Fatali khan was nervous and worried, and he wanted to punish Murad. Fatali khan came to conclusion that Jafar kishi would tell Murad their talk without fail. At that time, Murad's attitude towards him would also change. In this way, Murad who was going to come to the palace would tell the Shah the problem and try to dishonor him. At that time Fatali khan would be seen as an undesirable person by the Shah. That was why he wanted to punish Murad and to lay obstacles in the way of his coming to the palace. Fatali khan who was floundering in anxiety was walking up and down in the room. He had sent for his nephew Jalal bey who was the beylerbeyi in Tabriz. Fatali khan was waiting for his nephew. Fatali khan had to take great care with anybody, because except Jalal bey nobody was closer to him.

Fatali khan was losing his patience. He was walking up and down in the main room of the palace on the floor spread with the carpets of Tabriz or sitting on his throne he was sleeking his moustaches or mixing his beard. At that time, the voice of the man servant was heard:

– My agha, Jalal bey has come.

Fatali khan hinted, "let him come" with the sign of his head. The man servant said to Jalal bey who was waiting behind the door: "Please, come in".

A man of fine constitution, tall, with strict looks, twisted moustaches, Jalal bey entered the room. He was known by all the people in Tabriz. Firstly, he kissed his uncle's hands. Then he stood aside and waited for him to speak. It was a tradition of the stock of Qajar; the young would wait for those who were older or in a higher post to speak first. If the older people didn't reach out to shake hands it was forbidden for the young people to reach out their hands. If in the street young people saw an old man, noble man or an official bearer they would stop and put their right hands on their heart and nod their heads. In this way they could show their respect to them. That tradition had been continuing for a hundred years. Now Jalal bey was waiting his uncle, the head of the stock of Qajars, Fatali khan.

Fatali khan showed Jalal bey a place to sit, and also sat down himself. Jalal bey sat on the carpet with his legs folded.

– What news, my nephew? – At last, Fatali khan began his talk.

– Thanks to you, we are safe and sound, my uncle!

– What do the people speak about? What do they gossip? How is the people's attitude to the last events? I speak about the respect of our Shah to me. You also saw that our Shah arrived at the hamlet. Till that time none of the Shahs came to watch the horse-races of the stock, but I could persuade the Shah to come to the hamlet. I could make the Shah believe that his participant in the race was too important, and so he came. He trusts me!

Jalal bey understood what his uncle wanted and in order to show himself he said:

– It is thus, my uncle! Now they gossip in the city that the stock of Qajars is in the first rank who gained the respect of the Shah. They say that if Fatali khan didn't help him he would also be a prisoner. Fatali khan was able to make him leave Isfahan in time and come to Qazvin. All speak about your clever ideas.

Fatali khan smiled, being self-satisfied:

– Do you see, after your uncle's taking such clever measures the Shah respects the stock of Qajars too much! – Then he said, whispering in a low voice: – I want the Shah to trust us, that is to say, the Qajars to rule the whole country. That is why I want only the Qajars to be around the Shah. They are the persons whom I want!

– It is a good idea, my uncle! -Jalal's eyes were shining.

Fatali khan once more said in a low voice:

– This talk must remain secret between us or if the Shah senses something we may be in trouble; we may spoil all our plans.

– Be sure, my uncle! It isn't the first time we discussed such kind of problems. You may be fully confident.

Fatali khan said with affection:

– Who knows what will happen in future? Maybe you also will be appointed to a good post in the Shah's palace...My nephew, it is possible.

Jalal bey stood up and bowed to his uncle and said:

– If God pleases! God willing! Only thanks to you! – If you take a high post I shall also be under your care.

Fatali khan liked his nephew's praising words:

– I want you also to take a high post. I toil for you, for my relatives.

– It is thus, my uncle! Let's always be under your care!

Fatali khan understood that it was just the right time for to speak about his main purpose:

– ... But. But there are some people in our stock that may make us remain in the background.

– Jalal bey was surprised:

– My uncle, I can't believe that there can be found anybody who can dare to be against you? I can't believe, my uncle!

Fatali khan twisted the end of his beard; he wanted to show himself indifferently:

– No, for the present, there isn't such a kind of person, but in the future there can be! Life must not be trusted! That is why we must take every measure beforehand. The snake must be killed when it is little so as not to sting you after growing big!

Jalal bey wanted to understand something.

– My uncle, speak a bit clearer! Who's head must be struck off, tell me his name!

Fatali khan understood that it was just the right time for going into details of his purpose:

– Do you remember the horse-race of the Qajars in the hamlet?

– Yes, I remember well. The Shah was pleased with that race!

– The problem is that the Shah was pleased with others not us. Can we make a way for it to happen? Do you remember Murad who gained the respect of our Shah?

– Which Murad? Do you speak about the boy who was twofold winner in the race?

– Yes, I speak just about him! He was the winner both in the horse-race and shooting!

– Murad is a brave boy! If I am not mistaken, our Shah was a watch -maker for him!

The cheeks of Fatali khan blushed, his eyes were shining furiously. He didn't want his nephew to feel his anxiety that was why he turned to the other side and said nervously:

– Yes, I speak about that Murad! – Just about that Murad!

Jalal bey curled his lips and wanted to understand something, he blinked his eyelashes:

– I understand nothing! Well, what fault has that Murad? Why do you become nervous while speaking about him, my uncle?

Fatali khan pulled himself together a little and tried to show restraint:

– The problem is that he has one fault and in future he may sin once more.

– My uncle, speak openly! What fault has that humble Murad? I wonder how he can damage you.

Fatali khan showed himself to be offended:

– First of all, he made a request to the Shah without my permission. Well, that time he requested a girl, but in future, if the other boys dare to follow him, what will we do then? If they dare to complain about us as soon as seeing the Shah, what will happen? Won't we fall into disgrace or be disrespectful? Won't the Shah think that we are good -for nothing or we are clumsy? My nephew, we must think beforehand! The Shah may think that we can't rule the Qajars anymore!

Jalal bey tried to think through his uncle's words, and then he nodded his head to show his agreement:

– It is right, my uncle, you are right! The Shah may think that there is high-handedness among the Qajars! We must not make a way for this happen!

– Thank you, my nephew, at last you understood me!

– Well, my uncle, that Murad about whom we are speaking, perhaps he may sin in the future.

– In fact, he may sin worse in future.

– How?

Fatali khan cleared his throat:

– Tell me, what did our Shah promise him?

– He promised to make the girl's father agree...

– Then?

– I can't remember, my uncle!

– See, the problem is that even you don't remember. Our Shah employed him in the palace and charged him to come to Tabriz one month after his wedding to begin his work. Even the Shah didn't consult me, that's all!

Jalal bey took a serious turn. Then he remembered something, looked right and left stealthily, and said in a low voice:

My uncle, how can we be against our Shah?

Fatali khan didn't like the words of his nephew, he pulled his face:

– We can't be against our Shah, but we can be against Murad. Do you understand?

Jalal bey tried to understand his words:

– My uncle, what does it mean "to be against Murad"? How can Murad damage us if he is in the palace?

– He can damage us very much, my nephew! Don't be a milksop, my nephew! You said that he was a brave boy! Didn't you say that?

– I did!

– He will ingratiate himself with the Shah; he will consider his service to the Shah to be the main part of his life. Then gradually he will be promoted to higher posts. One day you will see that he has soiled our name and he is in our post. Do you understand? How do you think, won't it be like this?

– It will be!

Fatali khan raised his voice:

– Do you want me to tell what will be then? For example, when he is in the palace he may bring complainers to the reception of the Shah without informing us. He may creep into the Shah's favor and request the Shah to listen to their problems, to find a way-out. Won't it be like this, my nephew?

That time Jalal bey nodded his head decidedly:

– It will be, my uncle, it will be! I am astonished at your wisdom! You have thought all about it in detail!

Fatali khan boasted and raised his finger to his head:

In order to think one needs a head, my nephew! It is necessary to be watchful! Pay attention to everything!

Jalal bey became worried:

– What can we do, my uncle? I think you have already found a way-out!

Fatali khan said majestically:

– Of course, I have already thought! Firstly, we must lay obstacles in Murad's way of coming to the palace! Murad mustn't come to the palace!

– How? How can we lay obstacles?

– In order to prevent him, you will need about thirty or forty brave boys able to keep a secret. You mustn't tell them about Murad, who or what he is, or why he has been punished. Simply, you will tell them that the khan knows about his faults; the khan wants to see this man before him with bound hands, that's all!

– Must we go to the hamlet and bring him here, my uncle?

Fatali khan felt nervous:

– What are you saying? You have become awkward! Your master taught you nothing! Well, then we may speak about this problem. Now, listen to me attentively! Don't you understand that at that time all the people will know that I have punished him and thrown him into prison? Do you understand the essence of it? It means that the news will reach the Shah's ears. What may happen then?

– Yes... Yes... it is true! What must we do?

– Listen to me, my nephew, all the people in the hamlet must know that Murad has gone to work in the palace. After leaving the hamlet Murad will come to Kaleybar. While coming from Kaleybar to Tabriz your brave boys will catch him and bring to me. That is why you must also be in Kaleybar together with those boys to follow and to catch him. Only you can know him, you have seen him before. In Kaleybar you must be watchful not to let him to enter Tabriz alone. Do you understand?

Jalal bey's eyes goggled and he tried to understand what he had heard, so he would be able to realize the plan:

– Yes, there is no other way -out!

– I am fully confident of you, my nephew!

– You must trust me, my uncle! But... but... I am thinking about one problem. If suddenly the Shah remembered Murad and asked why he didn't come to the palace. What can we do then?

Fatali khan said waveringly:

– I don't think that the Shah will remember Murad if he doesn't come. -If he asks about Murad we may tell him that: "He hasn't come yet, maybe something has happened".

Jalal bey thought for a while and then shook his head:

– It is clear, my uncle, when must I leave for Kaleybar?

– If God pleases, you must be in Kaleybar after three more weeks. Remember well, no one must know about it. Till you bring him to my prison no one must know that I am aware about his punishment. Is everything clear, my nephew?

– It is clear, my uncle, let me go to make some preparation. I want to go Kaleybar to learn about the local situation...

...On the Shah's account Murad held a good wedding. In the hamlet there hadn't been held such a kind of wedding. At last, the third day of the wedding they brought Qelemnaz to Murad's home like a bride. The young boy and girl who have been longing for each other for years remained in gerdek²⁰ for three days. Murad couldn't believe his happiness; he sleeked Qelemnaz's hair, took her hair, and enjoyed seeing her in his home. At the end of the third day there was the "appearing" of the bride. For the "appearing" of Qelemnaz, Murad's mother took her silver waistband from the chest, fastened it round her waist and said: "Be happy! I wish you only happiness! Don't let me long for a grand i child!"

Though both of them didn't know how long their happiness would last, they felt themselves happiest of all. Though Murad didn't want to part with Qelemnaz he was eager to go to the palace. Now all his future wishes and cares were connected with his job in the palace. As soon as he would be placed in the palace and knew about his new job, he would return and take Qelemnaz to Tabriz. He thought that his children would study in madrasa, (religious school of Moslems) and would learn science. Qelemnaz, who had become more beautiful after the wedding knew that she would miss a lot in the hamlet without Murad, but she kept silent because of having no other route; because the Shah who had helped them to join together had also called him to go to the palace to work there. She consoled herself that Murad had promised to return and to take her to Tabriz after having settled in his job in the palace. Before Murad left she was waiting for his returning. All her wishes were connected with Murad. Qelemnaz was so happy.

There was one who wasn't happy, and was sad after the meeting with the Shah. Jafar kishi was upset and downcast. He wasn't sad for his girl's marrying with Murad. On the contrary, after that event all the people showed respect to Murad, because he was the only man in the hamlet who would work in the palace side by side with the Shah. He considered it an honor. His daughter's husband would work in the palace. Jafar kishi was proud of his daughter's husband. He was thinking about another problem; about the talk with Fatali khan which couldn't come true. The khan could damage his daughter's husband. Even when Jafar kishi went to return twenty pieces of gold which the khan had given him for the bashliq, the khan didn't take the gold and said to him smiling bitterly: "Let it be my wedding gift to the newly married persons!" Then he had said to Jafar kishi: "Look here, Jafar kishi; it is very bad when the happiness of the wedding is spoilt". Jafar kishi was thinking about the words of the khan. He knew well that if the khan had any chance he would punish him for being upset. By those words, the khan wanted to tell him that once he had spoilt his happiness and then he wouldn't let his daughter be happy. That was why Jafar kishi was worried. He had lived his life. He was afraid that the khan could damage Murad and his only daughter would be unhappy. If Murad remained in the hamlet, Jafar kishi would console himself somehow. If Murad would work in the palace, he would often meet the khan. Fatali khan would fly into a rage seeing Murad.

Because of that reason, Jafar kishi wanted to speak to Murad about what had happened with Fatali khan. He didn't know how to begin his talk. At last, he decided that if he told Murad all about it, at that time Murad would either give up going to work in the palace or he would be careful and to keep aloof from Fatali khan. He came to the yard of Murad and called him:

– Murad, Murad!

Murad heard his voice and went out the yard, seeing his father-in law he pulled himself:

– Why don't you come, Jafar dayi? Come in! Qelemnaz has made a good tea with thyme.

²⁰ Curtain used before the bed of the newly married persons.

Jafar kishi liked thyme tea very much. If bit of hips of dog-rose are added into the tea it is more flavored. To drink such tea with dry yellow mulberry is very good. But Jafar kishi was thinking of only one problem. That was why Murad's offer didn't interest him.

– No, thanks, I have something to tell you! Put on your boots, let's go towards the spring!

Murad said to him “just a moment” and entered the room. He put on his chust²¹ and then went out. They began to go towards the spring. Jafar kishi thought over and over, and at last he said:

– When are you going to the palace?

Jafar kishi knew well when he was going to the palace, but he needed to begin his talk. Murad felt that his father-in-law had some-thing to say. He showed himself as though he didn't have any feelings:

– After a week... Why do you ask?

– I only asked by the way. What about Qelemnaz? Where will she remain? – Jafar kishi asked.

– I understand your anxiety! As soon as I put all my plans in order, I shall come and take Qelemnaz too.

Jafar kishi decided to speak about his purpose:

– My son, I don't worry about Qelemnaz, but about you.

Murad looked at his father-in-law with interest:

– Why do you worry for me?

Jafar kishi hesitated a little:

– Tell me, will you often see Fatali khan in the palace?

Murad understood that his father-in-law had some thing serious to say. He was also worried:

– I don't know, Jafar dayi! I have never been in the palace yet. How can I know?

– My son, I have a special purpose in asking about it.

– I listen to you, Jafar dayi! What do you want to say to me?

– My son, it happened when I didn't agree for you to marry my daughter...

Jafar kishi told him all about his talk with Fatali khan from the beginning till the end. At last, he said:

– My son, now you may understand why I am worried. – I am afraid that Fatali khan may hurt you.

At first, Murad was disappointed, he didn't know what to say; and then he wanted to calm Jafar kishi:

– Nothing will happen, Jafar dayi! – What is done had to be done.

His heart was bleeding at that moment. – Maybe it was best not to go? – He thought. It would be better. They would think that he was afraid of them, that was the reason why he didn't go. Even the Shah would get angry...

– If the Shah invited me, I must go, Jafar dayi!

– I don't want to prevent you; do what you wish, but be careful!

– Be fully confident, Jafar dayi! ...But I want to make a request...

– Please, my son!

– Don't tell Qelemnaz about our conversation...

Jafar kishi stopped, he gave a puzzled look, and then he said:

– Let it be how you want... I shan't tell her anything...

...After just one week Murad left the hamlet for Kaleybar. When there was only a small distance left to Kaleybar, he pulled his horse by the bridle. Qirghi neighed and stopped. Murad took his carpet-bag which he had spread on the horse, got off the horse, and went to rest a bit under alone tree. There he loosened the bridle of the horse and let the horse graze. Then he looked at the river twenty meters' distance away there. The river was murmuring. He left his carpet-bag under the tree,

²¹ A kind of boot made of skin.

rolled up his sleeves and went towards the river. He washed his hands and face, his throat, opened the cloth which he had twined like a waist-band belt, dried his hands and face with it; then he twined it again his waist, and returned under the tree. He took off the pack which he had taken for the journey. He spread the cloth on the grass. He divided the boiled chicken into two parts, and began to eat. Qelemnaz can cook very well, the best of all. Murad cut a slice of bread and ate. He wanted both to believe and not to believe Jafar kishi's words. Murad thought that might be that Jafar kishi had told this because of not wanting him going to the palace. "No, it can't be." -Murad thought." I could feel how he was worried". Murad wanted to drink water. He looked for his wineskin in the carpet-bag but he couldn't find it. He remembered that it was left on the horse. He looked around, but he didn't see Qirghi. Murad whistled. The grazing horse raised its head and neighed towards Murad, then began to run. When the horse was near Murad it stopped, and neighed again. Murad stood up, and took the wineskin, wanting to drink water. "Let it be a funeral repast for Imam Husain". He sat on the green grass.

Just at that moment it was as if the soil was cleaved and in the middle of the ground an old man appeared. White hair and bread made the man look much wiser and nobler. Murad was surprised. He didn't notice when the old man appeared. Even the horse didn't sniff. The old man ap – proached Murad and said:

– "Salam-eleykum, my son!"

Murad stood up quickly:

– Eleykumesalam, grandfa-her! Come and sit near me and have lunch!

– Thanks, my son! Give me water, that's all! I am very thirsty.

Murad brought the wineskin and gave him water. The old man drank water, thanked Murad, and then he sat near Murad.

– Where are you coming from? Where are you going, my son?

Murad didn't want to tell his real purpose. Why did he have to tell his secret to any passer-by?

– I am going to Kaleybar from a hamlet; I have something to do...

The old man smiled pithily. Then he said suddenly:

– If you really want to go to Kaleybar, don't enter the city from the north door of the city but from the south door.

Murad asked anxiously and nervously:

– Why, grandfather? What will happen if I enter from the north door?

The old man looked into Murad's eyes. At that time, Murad felt that as if somebody had wormed himself into his confidence. He became more anxious. The old man said to him looking into his eyes:

– On your way there is danger. If you wish to escape from the danger you will be famous in future, but you also have an other way.

Murad asked worriedly:

– Which way, grandfather?

– To return back. If you return none of the above mentioned will happen...

– To return? But. But. It is impossible! But also. grandfather, who are you, as if you look at my face and can feel what is hidden in the bottom of my heart?

The old man sighed deeply:

– I have been an astrologer for about ninety years, my son!

– What does the word "astrologer" mean, grandfather?

– How can I explain to you? I look at the stars and say the future fate of humans.

Murad was astonished. He thought how old that old man was if he was an astrologer for ninety years. As if the old man felt what Murad was thinking about:

– I am one hundred and five years old, my son! – I began to work in this profession when I was fifteen years old.

– Well, my grandfather, what are you looking for in the mountain?

– Once I told the truth, then Viziers and advocates became furious, and the Shah drove me out of the palace. Now I have changed my clothes and roam from place to place.

Murad asked in surprise:

– I wonder why they drove you out if you told the truth. What kind of truth made it a reason to drive you out, my grandfather?

The old man sighed:

– I told the Shah the truth. He wanted to know the truth; I told him the truth. I told him that within the next few days the country would be divided, there would be high-handedness, our Shah would be dethroned, some people would declare themselves Shah, and enemies would divide Azerbaijan into parts. Then one person who wasn't from the stock of the Shah would combine the country and would declare himself the Shah of the united country. I told them what I knew about the fate of the country. They called me a liar and drove me out of the palace. How kind of fate I didn't tell them about the future of the Shah or they would have chopped off my head.

Murad thought a lot about the words of the old man. If they punished the old man for knowing the truth and telling about it that meant everything wasn't in order in the palace. It was as if Murad had become lucky, because if he hadn't seen the old man he wouldn't be aware of the truth. He decided not to go to Kaleybar and go straight to Ahar. In any case even he didn't enter Kaleybar his way would pass near that city.

When Jalal bey parted with his uncle Fatali khan, he began to think what he was going to do. It was better to be clever like his uncle. He began to think beforehand, and then he decided what to do. As soon as he came to Kaleybar, he asked his companions to watch both the north and south doors of the city. He wanted to fulfill the task of his uncle very attentively and to be trustful through his eyes. Jalal bey himself watched the north door of the city from the tower and wanted to find who he was looking for.

One day towards evening he saw that one horseman turned towards Ahar without entering the city. He knew the horse immediately. The horse, the legs, tail, and breast of which were white, and other places were black. It was the horse of Murad, Qirghi. Murad rode that horse in the race. Jalal bey liked that horse when he was in the hamlet, when the horse came first he wished to be the owner of such a horse. Jalal bey would know that horse among a thousand. Qirghi was riding towards Ahar at a trot as if it enjoyed its beauty and valour. "If Murad's horse is here, it means that he is on the horse" - Jalal bey thought. "Such kind of a horse mustn't be presented even to the Shah" – He said to himself that if he caught Murad and brought him to Tabriz he would ask his uncle to present Murad's horse to him. As soon as he saw the horse he sent one of his followers to the man who was watching at the north door of the city. He had to tell the man watching at the door to follow the horse going towards Ahar, and act as they had planned.

...Murad knew well that he could do nothing with his dagger against an armed person. In the worst case, they could shoot him either with an arrow or a rifle from a distance. That was why after his talk with the old man he had asked him to help him. The old man dressed Murad's chukha and cap, and began to go towards Ahar. When Murad reached Kaleybar and entered the city on foot, the old man directed him towards Ahar on his horse without entering the city.

...The followers of Jalal bey followed Qirghi for some time, came nearer to the horse, pulled the horse by the bridle and not looking at the man on the horse brought him back to Kaleybar.

Jalal bey was waiting for his followers at the south door of the city. It was already getting dark. At that moment, he heard the neighs of the horses. The beylerbeyi understood that his companions were returning. Jalal bey knew Qirghi from a distance; he was very glad. When the horsemen approached him he called them:

– My friends, is the owner of the horse near you?

One of the horsemen answered:

– Yes, my agha, he is also here.

When the horsemen came nearer to Jalal bey, he took a torch and threw light on the face of the man who was on the horse. Jalal bey shuddered with horror. On the horse there was sitting a noble, old man. It seemed that Jalal bey went mad. What does it mean? It appeared that Murad had deceived them. He didn't know what to do.

– Old man, who are you? – He shouted furiously.

– I am a gentle creature.

– Where is the owner of that horse?

– I am the owner.

For a moment, Jalal bey wanted to console himself; he couldn't bring himself to strike an old man. He could learn everything by enticing the old man. Suddenly he remembered the furious face of his uncle. As if Fatali khan was calling him "clumsy". Jalal bey came nearer to the old man, seized his arm, pulled and kicked him:

– Where is the owner of the horse? – He shouted. – If you don't tell the truth I shall kill you; you will perish like a dog.

After some more strikes the old man was weak; he was lying on the ground. He neither stirred nor was his voice heard. Jalal bey was striking and abusing him angrily. Suddenly Jalal bey remembered something. He turned towards his followers and said:

– Murad is in the city! -Search for him everywhere! Search for him in the inns, streets, in the bottom of the bath-houses, in the hotels of bazaars, everywhere! If you see any stranger bring him to me, here! Be quick! Hurry!

His followers went to search for Murad with the night-watchmen, taking torches in their hands. Near Jalal bey there only remained the man who had come from Tabriz. He was still striking the half-dead old man. He stooped and caught the collar of the old man and raised him on feet:

– Old man, I ask you for the last time, where is Murad? Tell me where he is and I shall free you...

The old man smiled ironically:

– Whom will you free? Me? My half-dead body?.It is the end of my life...

They were the last words of the old man who fell on the ground not able to bear these tortures...

The astrologer had upset all the plans of Jalal bey. His dying without telling any secret made the impatient heart of the beylerbeyi bleed:

– Since this morning I have been unlucky...

Just at that moment Jalal bey heard crashing; the man near him fell on the ground silently. No sooner had he realized what had happened he felt the end of the cold dagger in his throat. It appeared that dagger had pierced his skin. Jalal bey was deprived of speech. He couldn't imagine that in Kaleybar there would be a brave boy who dared to pierce a dagger into the throat of the beylerbeyi. Just at that moment whispering, but imperious voice of the man standing behind him, piercing the dagger in his throat was, heard:

– It is me, Murad! – Why are you looking for me? Tell me or I shall kill you!

Murad twirled the end of the dagger so Jalal bey felt pain.

Jalal bey was groaning in horror. His uncle was right considering him clumsy! He had to catch Murad, but Murad had led him into a trap so easily.

Murad said in the same tone:

– Speak, I ask you to tell me why you were looking for me? What is your reason looking for me? During my whole life I only came to the city for a short time, I damaged nobody... Speak, tell me the truth..!

Jalal bey wanted to escape from death:

– By God, I don't know... We were asked to seize you and bring to Tabriz. We had to fulfill the task...

Murad wanted to force out the words from his rival to learn something about who was his enemy. He was losing time. The followers of Jalal bey could come at any moment. He had to hasten...

– Swear on God, who has given you a task? I shan't repeat my question anymore!

Jalal bey stammered:

...F ...F Fatali khan... Murad's guess came true; He

didn't guess in vain. It appeared that Fatali khan had given them this task..

– It is clear. If it is thus, can you deliver my two things for safekeeping to Fatali khan?

Jalal bey thought that he would escape, that was why he said hurriedly:

– Of course, I can deliver.

Murad said: "Wait a moment" and pierced the dagger into his throat to the end. Jalal bey wheezed without being able to say a word. Murad said: "This is the first safekeeping", – and pulling out the dagger, thrust it into his heart and said: "This is the second safekeeping".

...The old astrologer had told Murad about Nader khan. Murad trusted him and told the old man about Tahmasb Shah, about his help. While speaking about the Shah he had explained some words about the love of Fatali khan for Qelemnaz. The old man said to Murad that Fatali khan would take vengeance on him. "If you pass through Kaleybar safe and sound don't ride your horse towards Ahar but towards Ardabil. From there go to Qazvin on the seashore of the Caspian Sea, ride from Qazvin to Kalat, find Nader khan and tell him about your problems. Only he can help you". The old man had advised him to do as he asked.

Murad pulled out the dagger from the heart of Jalal bey and sheathed the dagger without wiping its blood; took his sword and fastened it on his waist. Noise was heard from the city. He had to hurry. However, he didn't want to leave the dead body of the old astrologer on the ground. He had helped him to escape. Murad didn't have other way -out. For a moment Murad thought about burying that kind man according to the traditions, in accordance to the customs of shariat. But time doesn't wait. He came nearer the dead body of the old man, closed his eyes and said: "Sleep in peace." Then he rode his horse and began to go towards the east.

After some days, Murad reached Kalat. There, Murad first wanted to see Nader khan. When he was face to face with Nader khan there was no need to hide anything; he told everything to him. Nader khan admired his courage and bravery. Then Nader khan employed Murad. Firstly, Murad became a foreman, then centurion and finally he became a military leader. One day he got permission from Nader khan and sent a man to the hamlet to bring Qelemnaz to Kalat.

CHAPTER VII

“In December 1729, after freeing Shiraz from the Afghans I went there with Tahmasb Shah. The Afghans had devastated the city. The Shah Chiraq Mosque was in ruins, and so we decided to make a donation to rebuild the Mosque. The Shah gave two thousand tumen; I gave one thousand five hundred tumen. The other courtiers also took an active part in making a donation. In all, ten thousand tumen were collected, and rebuilding began. I took permission from the Shah to appoint Muhammad Alikhan ibn Aslan khan as ruler of the province of Fars. Within a short time he began to rebuild the city; ten thousand trees were planted in Shiraz.

I had tasted the real sweetness of victory in Isfahan. The fighters were afire with inspiration. They were professional, observed the rules and, most importantly, they were eager for war. In order to prevent the internal conflict, it was always necessary to look for the enemy abroad. The forces under your control can turn against you. That was why we needed to do all in our power to continue the war, to keep the army’s loyalty. In order to establish a basis for future war it was necessary to strengthen our diplomatic position and not let anyone to behave us as he wished. It is better diplomacy to achieve your desire with a show of power. I had to indulge in a little policy if I was to get down to work and convince Tahmasb Shah of my position on certain problems. I did as I thought best. I went to the Shah, to the home of the ruler of Shiraz, in the afternoon. Because the Shah drank heavily in the evenings and spent the nights with concubines, he was tired and used to sleep in the mornings. It seemed that the Shah was still sleepy after the euphoria of the victory of Isfahan. If the poor people knew about the drinking of the great grandchildren of the Safavid sheiks they would turn away from them. The Shah received me and greeted me sumptuously:

- Nader khan, how good that you came. There are some problems we need to discuss.
- I know it, that is why I came to speak to you, Your Majesty!

The Shah snapped his fingers:

– In that case, let’s begin our discussions; but let our talk not last long. I have a headache after yesterday’s wine.

– All right, Your Majesty! – I said and sat on a cushion on the Shah’s left side. I pulled over the another cushion to lean on my right arm.

– Nader, what must we do with the Afghans? – The Shah took an apple from the fruit bowl. He cut the apple in two with his dagger; putting one piece back in the bowl. – We can’t kill all of them. According to the information I have, the Afghans have already passed the Mughul borders. Let them cross the borders. It will be good to get the Afghans out of this country. They made our people suffer so much.

I understood that somebody had drummed the Afghan problem into his head, but I kept this thought to myself:

- My Shah, by no means must we allow the Afghans to reach the land of the Mughuls.
- Why? – Tahmasb Shah asked surprisingly:
- Your Majesty, you affirm that the Afghans are fighting in spite of being uncouth and rough.
- Yes, I affirm so.
- If they are fighting how we may let them enter the lands of Mughul? Won’t the Shah of Mughul, Muhammad, use the chance to fight them against us? Imagine, my Shah, the Sultan supports them, I feel it. Didn’t you see that how fighting with them was difficult? If the Afghans entered the Mughul lands and the empire of Mughul supported them, what will be our position, my Shah?

After my words the Shah seemed lost in thought, he didn’t even chew the apple he had bitten some minutes before: –Nader khan, what do you suggest?

I had already realized that Tahmasb Shah wasn't foresighted and experienced in state affairs, especially in the foreign policy of the state. I wondered what his governess, and master taught him! The Shah always hurried, said immediately what he thought, adopted hasty decisions; then he was obliged to change his decisions. That was why it wasn't difficult to make him believe:

– My Shah, in the problem of the Afghans we may win twofold. Firstly, we must send a letter to Muhammad Shah and demand him to close the borders immediately and not to let refugees of the Afghans into the lands of Mughul. – What? We must demand? – The Shah asked in surprise – Yes, my Shah, we must demand, because if we demand beforehand then we might offer excuses, we might tell them that we demanded it of them, and they didn't agree. Such a kind of demand, my Shah, opens a way for your glorious troops to enter the lands of Mughul. Our haughty demand will demonstrate that we are not afraid of them; it will show our bravery and courage.

– What will we gain? What will be our favor?

I understood that the Shah wasn't able to think about his future steps. It was natural; at that time it was impossible to rule the state.

– My Shah, if we tamed the Afghans and combined them with our fighting army, it will be our second favor. – I said. If we defeated the Afghans, how can the Shah of the Mughuls make them fight against us?

– Well, I agree with you in this problem. Whom do you want to send to the Shah Muhammad to have a talk with him?

I thought over and over why he had asked that question. I thought that as he didn't have any other person in mind, I said the name of the real messenger.

– We may send Ali Mardan khan of Sham, Your Majesty!

Ali Mardan khan of Sham was one of my devoted followers and warlord but I didn't tell it to the Shah.

The Shah agreed with me in the problem of the Afghans;

– Nader khan, I think in the problem of the Afghans you were able to make me understand. Send a letter to Muhammad Shah by the messenger of Qizilbashs- Ali Mardan khan of Sham; let's wait what will happen then.

– All right, Your Majesty!

– What other problem remains, Nader khan? – The Shah asked me.

– My Shah, it is the time to free the north and west of our motherland Azerbaijan from the Ottomans, including Tabriz and Baghdad which for a hundred years were the capital cities of our forefathers.

The Shah twisted his mouth:

– Why not send them letters and demand them to free our invaded lands? We have the same roots with them; they are also the stocks of Oghuz. See, you are also from a branch of stocks of Oghuz, from the branch of Avshar. Even our languages don't differ from each other; we speak in the same language. We are enemies because of the faith.

...I should think about the Shah's words afterwards, and in future I should correct his words. But it would be in the future. Now the main problem was to free Azerbaijan.

– Your Majesty, we shall send the letter to Istanbul without fail. If you don't object, let's send Rzaqulu khan of Sham there as a messenger and note in the letter that if the Ottomans don't free the invaded lands, war would begin..

– No, I don't object! – The Shah answered while eating a fruit. – Send the letter!

I considered the time suitable and said:

– My Shah, there is also one other problem.

– What problem?

– Recently the messenger whom Ashraf had sent to Istanbul as a messenger had come to me... I speak about Muhammad khan Baluch.

The Shah raised himself a little:

– To my mind it is interesting. What did he say?

– You are right, my Shah, it is interesting. So, Muhammad khan Baluch who knew that Ashraf was defeated gave me the Sultan's letter written to Ashraf.

I took the letter from the pocket of my jubba²² and gave it to him:

– It appears that the Sultan is ready to help the Afghans to fight against us. I think this letter is neither the first nor the last one.

The Shah took the letter, looked at the sign, and then returned it to me:

– What do you suggest, Nader khan?

– My Shah, the matter is that Muhammad khan Baluch told me something interesting. In Topqapi, all know that the Qizilbashs will demand the invaded lands. The Ottomans won't object to it, even they will want to return Baghdad too... But... But only in word...

– What does it mean, "only in word"? – The Shah was naively surprised:

– Yes, my Shah, they will demand such kind of indemnity. In order to pay so much indemnity we shall have to work for years. It is like a defeat.

Tahmasb Shah said thoughtfully:

– I suggest immediately begin to free our lands. We- the Qizilbashs have never been so mighty. At the same time, we must send Rzaqulu khan of Sham to Istanbul in order to distract them from the preparation of war. That is to say, war against the Ottomans!

– Yes, my Shah, war, which will end with victory.

– Will you occupy Tabriz?

For a moment, I forgot myself and said courageously:

– I shall occupy Tabriz without reserve. In Tabriz there is preparation for fighting. The people are ready to welcome us.

The Shah didn't sense any boasting in my courageous words. He thought for a while again and said:

– Nader khan, I believe you! – You are a man of your word! If you promise you will return the capital of our forefathers. I believe that you will occupy Tabriz. I don't doubt it. What must we do with the Russians? Shall we always wage war against them?

– No, my Shah, not now, – I said. – We must be friends with them. They will help us.

– Let it be how you said, – The Shah said and stood up. I also stood up. The Shah was upset. It appeared that he repented for deciding to begin a big war. I should wage the war, he would be the victor. He who wished for victory must not be so cowardly. Maybe I had to consider his being cowardly and weak-willed.

On 8th of March 1730 I went from Shiraz to Nahvend with a troop of sixty thousand fighters. Before then I had already married Rize Beyim. In Meshed my son was engaged with Fatime Sultan Beyim, but still their wedding hadn't taken place. I thought of holding their wedding at a more suitable time, because it would be the wedding of my first son. I decided to keep my brother Ibrahim khan and my son Rzaqulu in Meshed with a large troop, because I couldn't make the Afghans completely under my control. We had to be careful.

²² A kind of coat.

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