

monument, be led to honor, love and serve the God and Saviour of this devoted missionary."

AMONG THE VILLAGERS OF PERSIA.

BY MRS. ANNIE RHEA WILSON, OF TABRIZ.

Imagine a river-valley, with green hills on either side; beyond, rugged mountains, bleak and bare, just tinged with faint green in this spring season, while far in the distance, rising still higher, are snow-covered peaks, lifting their heads among the clouds. Here and there a little village dots the green valley, with the more tender green of its willow and poplar trees peeping over the grey walls, the only trees to be seen on hill or plain. Wheat fields cover the hill-sides without break of fence or wall, and even higher up where winter has left his last snowy foot-prints there are bright spots of verdant grain and patches of tender grass, where flocks are grazing under the shepherd's care.

In this little valley of the Ujan River we have just made a tour of ten days during our Easter vacation, finding a new and unbroken field for sowing Gospel seed. It is a Persian Arcadia, where the village people live in patriarchal simplicity on the fruit of their fields and flocks. The fields give them bread, and the flocks both meat and milk; and even their shaggy coats only change backs, or become great round hats, or are turned into thread and woven into cloth and carpets.

In this freedom from artificial wants and independence of foreign resources there is a contentment quite refreshing to see. The houses are rude hovels with mud walls and smoky rafters, through which we see the matting on which the flat mud roof rests; the windows are only holes in the roof, and there is no chimney for the deep oven sunk in the floor. A pile of quilts in the corner is the bedding which is spread on the floor at night. Some carpets and earthenware bowls and jars and spoons complete the house-furnishing. Here, in one room, the whole family of father and mother, sons and daughters, brides and grandchildren, live together in such harmony as may be where there are rival wives and different sets of children. A swinging hammock holds the youngest baby, and the other children, half-naked, filthy, and often sore-eyed, seem to receive

little care, though mother-love is strong and tender here as everywhere. The clothing of men and women is the common blue cotton cloth of the country, made up with little difference in style, except that the woman's costume reaches only to the knees, leaving limbs and feet bare. But the head-dress is distinctive; only men wear hats, while women have headkerchiefs of red, the favourite colour, and in the street they are enveloped in the chud-dar of checked white and blue cotton. They also make an attempt at ornament with necklaces and bracelets of beads. My costume in every particular was a wonder to them. They asked me to take off my shoes and "be comfortable" (?), to wear my hair in tiny braids down my back as they do, and especially to take off my hat and cover my face like a woman. In answer I told them: "We are not ashamed to uncover our faces, but to expose our bodies," and they looked down at their open breasts and uncovered limbs as if they had received a new idea of modesty. An all-sufficient explanation of my appearance was simply to say: "It is our custom."

One morning I saw a family at breakfast. A great pot of soup made of soured milk and herbs was lifted out of the deep oven and poured into bowls, which the men shared together, two at a bowl, dipping in their bread and big wooden spoons. When they had finished, the women used the same bowls and spoons, and ate the rest. The soup seemed savoury as Jacob's, and good appetites are born of constant work and fresh mountain air.

After breakfast the women do the daily baking. The leavened bread is rolled into balls on a sheep skin, then rolled and tossed deftly till it becomes a long thin sheet, spread on a cushion and slapped on the sides of the oven till baked, and is crisp and good when fresh. Thirty or more of these sheets are baked every day, and it is no easy task bending over the hot furnace. Next, the house is swept, and dishes washed, not wiped. Perhaps there is a special job on hand of salt-grinding, and two women sit at the mill turning the heavy stones, each taking hold of the wooden stick which serves as a handle. There is always knitting or carpet-weaving for regular occupation. Over a huge wooden frame are stretched rough, brown threads to serve as a warp, while on a bench in front the weaver sits deftly put-