



PERSIAN WOMAN IN HOUSE-DRESS.

dyed by native dyes to the most vivid crimson, green, or blue. I visited one such village last autumn. It was off the regular caravan route, and had neither post-house nor caravanserai (inn) where I could spend the night. On making enquiries I was told of one person who, they said, had an empty room, which he would let me have as soon as he returned from working in his garden. In the meantime his women-kind asked me to come and wait in their part of the house. I gladly consented, as with only a brief stop for luncheon, I had been on horseback for nine hours. Entering the small courtyard, with doors opening from it on all sides, was like entering a rabbit-warren. At first there was a general scuttle of women and children into their respective quarters; then a gradual return, as curiosity overcame fear. After that, the questions with which every Persian visit begins—"How old are you?" "Have you a husband?" "Why not?" "Your father and mother, are they alive?" "Are not your ears cold without a covering?" "Why have you come to this country?"

This last question served me as an opportunity for explaining something of our motives for coming to Persia. I took my Testament from my saddle-bag, and asked if they would like to hear some of the teaching I had come so far to give.

By this time about thirty women had collected, and listened more or less attentively as I read the Parable of the Sower, trusting that the seed of the Word might fall on some prepared heart. In the conversation which followed, I found that about seven years be-

fore, Dr. Bruce and his daughter had spent one night at this same house, and the people still remembered the reading and teaching of that evening.

In the morning they again gathered and asked that "the Book" might be read to them. I left them, wondering if another seven years would pass before the Good Tidings is again spoken to them, and raising my heart in prayer to the Lord of the harvest that so many laborers might be thrust forth into this part of His vineyard, that an organized system of visits to these villages might be possible.

But I must come to my second type of village. This is among the hills—where even after the long, hot summer, touches of snow still linger in the crevices of the rocks. At first sight it looks most desolate. There are no gardens, no trees, one would almost say no vegetation near it—until looking closer one sees among the rocks the deeply indented leaves of the wild fig, and on the ground the green, grey tinge of the camel thorn.

You begin to wonder how people live in such a desolate spot, when looking across the grey plains, or among the barren rocks which surround the village, you see here and there brown patches, black patches, light-colored patches. If the time is near evening, and the setting sun is lending a flush of rosy coloring to what before seemed cold and lifeless, bringing out deep purple shadows among the hills, and glistening on the tiled dome of the village mosque, you see the various colored patches begin to move, all converging towards the village. Before long it is evident that they are formed by immense flocks of sheep and goats, each flock being the property of a part of the village. These flocks are sent out every morning under the care of a couple of boys and one or more handsome, fierce-looking dogs. As they reach the gates the flocks seem to melt away. Groups of five or six sheep or goats make their own way to the house of their special owner to be milked. These flocks compose the wealth of the inhabitants. Their milk under various forms, cheese, butter, curds, and other compounds which have no English name, form the chief food of the people; while the wool and goat's hair supply the materials for the winter industry of the village, the weaving of carpets.

The greater number of these villages belong to the Baktiary tribes. Many of them only come inside the walls for the winter months. During the rest of the year they move about, living in black skin tents, driving their flocks from one watering-place to another, and cultivating ground, perhaps fifty miles distant from their village. They plough, or rather scratch, the ground, sow the wheat, and go away until the time for harvest shall have come.