

VILLAGE OBEYS. BLACK
SEAL OF PERSIAN PRINCE

As we came close to a mud village, Prince Rahim, Khan of the Bakhtiari, who was guiding us to the camp of his people in the Persian mountains, said: "We stop here for lunch. You like?" We liked.

Dismounting before a high arch, we entered the village guest house. A high-roofed room, built purposely without inner wall, faced out over a half mile of jungle green growth. Seeing the apparent poverty of the village, I was surprised at the elaborate rugs and cushions that covered the floor.

"I sent word to the villagers to prepare for us," said Rahim, noticing our astonishment. "It is one of the duties of our people to feed without cost the guests of him who bears the seal." He dived into a pocket and showed a little black seal fastened to a chain. "Each member of our family carries one," he said. "All who see it must obey."

At a little side door appeared a villager bearing a huge platter of food on his head. He shuffled off his slippers and entered barefoot—a sign of respect. Another followed, with an equally big platter, and another and another, a half dozen in all. They stood thus, their great platters on their heads, while three of Rahim's servants spread a white cloth on a rug. And then they began placing on it dishes and dishes and dishes.

There was enough food for twenty ravenous men: Whole boiled chickens, bowls of cool lime 'sharbats, nuts floating in the luscious juice of dates and perfumed with attar of roses, enormous toasted slabs of

thin native bread spread with fresh greens like the leaves of onions, great bowls of rice pilau seasoned with fragrant mint, tender bits of chicken swimming in a soup of lemon juice and beans, crushed walnuts and raisins, dishes heaped with choice morsels of roasted mutton, curds, buttermilk, soft candies filled with nuts. There were other things, too, but I have not the gourmand's brain to remember them. I felt a breeze. I glanced up. Over us three servants were slowly swinging back and forth big fans.

We finished. The dishes flew out, and so did the attendants. Then we talked and smoked. After a while Rahim drew his aba over his head and took his siesta. Then I saw the reason every Persian gentleman wears that delicate cloak of gauze. It makes a perfect, portable, everready mosquito and fly net. Rahim, thus covered, slept; we beat at myriad flies through the sultry afternoon.—[Merian C. Cooper in Asia Magazine.