



# P L Ü N N E C K E

AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY TO AFGHANISTAN

All the capitals of Europe had been honored by a visit from King Aman Ullah. Everywhere the event was regarded as a state affair. It was a state affair for me too, for a few days later I received a contract to travel to Afghanistan and its capital, Cabul. Before I had fully realized what was happening to me, the express, noisily living up to its time-table obligations, roared into Genoa Harbor station. A Babylonian confusion of voices smote upon my ear and a porter seized my luggage without waiting for ordres. In ordre to make quite sure that the steamer should not depart without me I exchanged my hotel room for a ship's cabin and experienced very distinctly the extraordinary feeling which overtakes everyone who boards a real ocean liner for the first time in preparation for a long journey. I quickly recalled all the good advice with which friends and acquaintances had provided me. Unfortunately I was already aware that I should have no use for it, so I dropped it overboard without more ado. The liner flew the Italian flag. Her name was "Aquileia" and in reality she was none other than the former Austrian liner "Innsbruck". On board was a Catholic church dignitary of high rank as well as a large society of budding missionaries who were bent for the very north of India in the Himalayas to complete their training and gain practical experience. Whole swarms of monastery pupils were on hand to bid them a hearty and tearful farewell as the steamer left the harbor at ten o'clock the next morning.

The usual route is familiar enough—next stopping-point Naples (smoking Vesuvius), Port Said (open your eyes and button up your pockets!) then the Suez Canal with a great parade of searchlights and a side-glance at Mount Sinai where according to good authority Moses is supposed to have fetched the Tables of the Law direct from heaven. One of the voyagers glided gracefully to the bar to substantiate this fact with a whisky and soda. Then the Gulf of Suez, the Red Sea with its swift transition from day to night, then the traditional fancydress ball on board and finally a short trip on shore at Aden, a town which made an impression upon me as of a gently simmering witches' cauldron.

I dreamed of my great and grateful task, the founding of an academy of art in European style in Cabul, the capital of Afghanistan. At last, on Christmas Eve, we reached the harbor of Bombay. There were the examining physician, the harbor police, the pass officials, and besides all this the interesting piece of news that the frontier of Afghanistan was closed because war was waging there. At last the customs were passed and one was relieved of money and of care.

India is no longer an unknown land. The continent itself is familiar to us from our school geography and history classes. Afterwards we read Bonsel's "Indienfahrt" and Colin

