

a great quantity of sand and mud, and which forms the country that now divides them. There are some small islands in the Caspian, and its waters are much less saline than those of the ocean; storms are here very dangerous, and large vessels are not used in it for navigation, because it has many sand banks, shoals and rocks scattered under the surface of the water. Pietro della Valle says, "The largest vessels employed on the Caspian Sea, along the coasts of Mazanda in Persia, where the town of Ferhabad stands, although they are called ships, appear smaller than our Tartanes. Their sides are high, and they draw but little water, having a flat bottom. They give this form to their vessels, not only because this sea is shallow, but because it is filled with shoals and sand banks; so that if the vessels were not fabricated in this manner they could not be used with safety. Indeed, I was astonished, why at Ferhabad they fish only for salmon, which are found at the mouth of the river, some poor sturgeons, and other sort of fresh water fish, of little value: I attributed the cause of it to their ignorance of the arts of fishing and navigation until the Cham of Esterabad, whose residence is at a sea port, informed me that the waters are so shallow 20  
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