

PERSIA

by John Kitto

Kitto's study of Persian history and culture as it relates to the biblical narrative, explaining the principles of Eastern regal government and how the absolute authority of the Persian monarchy illuminates Old Testament references to kingly power and imperial administration.

17 Chapters

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01. The Court of Persia

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02. Principles of Eastern Regal Government

Principles of Eastern Regal Government

Chapter I As the conditions of kingly power and the usages of royal courts in the east are, in all essential respects, the same now as they were in ancient times, it has seemed that the description of an oriental government and court would supply not only an interesting subject of contemplation in itself, but would incidentally furnish much information, illustrating the numerous allusions to regal functions and usages which the sacred Scriptures contain. When the Israelites rebelled against God in becoming weary of the form of government under which they had lived to the time of Samuel, their avowed desire was to have a king to judge them like the nations, 1 Samuel 8:5. The prophet on whom they urged this demand, concerned that they should not be ignorant of this kind of government, explained to them “the manner of the king that should reign over them,” if they had one such as they desired. The picture which he gives is in all respects that of eastern monarchy at the present day, and as it has existed in all ages. And when the Hebrew state actually became a monarchy, we are at no loss to discover that the form of government, and the customs of the court, gradually, but rapidly, acquired that character which the prophet had, by anticipation, assigned to it—a character of as much conformity as the free habits of the people and the restrictions of the law allowed, to the aspects in which sovereign power and royal life appeared in other countries. It had, indeed, more conformity than these limitations suggest; for many of the Hebrew kings gave no great heed to the restrictions which the law of Moses imposed; and that due regard was not always paid to the free habits of a people trained up in the independence of pastoral life, and under the influences of a theocratic commonwealth, may be seen by the public discontents which embittered the last years of Solomon, and which produced a revolution after his death, under whom the Hebrew court was brought into complete approximation to the standard oriental character. But the Scriptural indications of regal customs and ideas are not confined to those which the thrones of Israel and of Judah offer. Many regalities of Syria and Arabia are brought under our notice, and we are introduced to the great courts of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia, many very remarkable customs of which are historically produced. Taking all these portions together, the matters pertaining to kings and courts occupy a considerable part of the sacred volume, which, if from extent alone, is fully entitled to the degree of illustration which may be given to it from a survey of the Court of Persia. The writer has made choice of it for several reasons. The Scripture itself—in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther—furnishes more ample accounts of the customs of that court than of any other not of Israel. It is the only ancient court mentioned in the Bible which subsists to this day. Notwithstanding great changes of dynasty and of religion, it has preserved the substance of all its ancient usages. On these and other grounds it may, therefore, seem better suited than any other to suggest such parallels and analogies as may help to the better understanding of those portions of the sacred books which speak of kings and courts. The more eastern realms might afford many interesting illustrations; but climates and products more different from those of Palestine, acting upon institutions and habits of life, prevent them from supplying the same body of illustration as Persia; and, on the other hand, the Ottoman

Porte has been more exposed to change, and to the operation of external influences, and although it exhibits many analogous customs derived from the common oriental type, there are none of them which the Persian court does not also offer, while the latter has a great number of peculiarly illustrative usages of its own, which are not to be found in the court of the grand seignior. In turning to this subject, it will not be felt necessary to confine our notice to the modern court of Persia. Such of its ancient historical customs as may serve to illustrate any Scriptural intimations will also be produced, and it will be desired to realize the two-fold result of giving a complete picture of an eastern court, and of illustrating many portions of the sacred volume. In Persia, as in all the other great kingdoms of the east, the person of the sovereign, whether contemplated in ancient or modern history, presents itself as the central point around which everything else revolves. This idea is expressed in the epithet of honor which is very commonly used in addressing the Persian king, Kibla-e-Alem, which some render, "center of the universe," and others, "point of the world's adoration." Neither conveys the exact idea of the term, though both sufficiently express it. Kibla is the point to which the Mohammedans turn when they pray,[1] and Alem is "the world." According to the notions of the east, the king is regarded not merely as the ruler of the people, but as the master and proprietor of the land and lives of all.

[1] That is, towards Mecca, or rather the Kaaba, or temple in that place, just as the Jews, in all the countries of their dispersion, turn their faces towards the site of the temple at Jerusalem. On this principle are founded most of those peculiarly Asiatic institutions which, at times, seem all but incomprehensible to Europeans, living in the undisturbed enjoyment of personal freedom and of the rights of property. On the other hand, any different conditions of kingly power are more than equally unintelligible to the Asiatics. Often did the English ambassadors strive to instill into the mind of a late intelligent king of Persia, some notion of the power and action of the limited monarchical institutions under which we ourselves live, and he appears to have studied hard to understand it. At times, he seemed to have a glimpse of the meaning of particular parts, but it does not appear that he was ever able to view it in its breadth, or to grasp its whole scope and significance. So far as he could comprehend it, it seemed to be a kind of utopian theory of government, which might work well somewhere, as he was assured that it did but which was wholly unsuited to the east. On one occasion he said to sir Harford Jones, "I can easily conceive how a country, under such regulations as you state England to be, may do all you say; but I have no idea, if I were to attempt tomorrow to do such things here, how we should all live, or how there would be any government at all. Supposing I were to call a parliament at Tehran, and deliver up to it the whole power of taxation, I should then never get a penny, for no Persian parts with his money unless he is obliged to do it; and more than that, the khans[2] would be for making the buckalls[3] pay all, and the buckalls would be for doing the same by the khans. It must take a long time to make such a government and such a people as yours. Our government is simple, and the people know all about it in a day. Our laws are much simpler than yours, and so far they are better; and I know, by experience, that under these laws, and under this government, Persia has improved very much since I came to the throne."

[2] Nobles.

[3] Burgesses. In this statement there was much truth, and rather less error than might have been expected. The simplicity and intelligible nature of the theory of Asiatic government must be admitted. Nothing can be easier for a man to understand, than that the king is lord of his life and of

all that belongs to him; that whatever he exacts must be yielded; and that his commands are laws which must at all hazards be obeyed. It may be, also, that the king was right in thinking absolute government best suited to oriental countries. The general tendency of all oriental history is to impress that conviction, and to show that the utmost political aspiration of the oriental mind is not to establish certain rights, and to set them by public law above the breath of kings but to have for the time being a good master, vested with absolute powers. Whether this arises from the influence of climate and the religion, or from some peculiarity in the eastern mind, it may be hard to say: but the fact seems indisputable, that the Asiatic likes to have a mighty master, and while that master rules well, no exertion of power seems exorbitant or improper. May it please God, in his good pleasure, to hasten that happy time when the nations of the east, no less than of the west, shall be subject to that great King—a man of sorrows once, too wise to err, too kind to injure—too mighty to be gainsaid—whose rule must hereafter extend “from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth;” and under whose beneficent dominion the free man of the west may find something far better than his liberty, and the bondman of the east something far better than the best despotism he knows! Happy they who labor devoutly in his cause, and who stand listening to catch the first sound of his chariot wheels!

Power of all kinds is too dear to the heart of man not to be highly prized. Even good men seek it for the good it may enable them to effect. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that, in the conversation recorded above, the king of Persia thought his own condition of power better than any other. That he considered it best for him as a king, best for purposes of government, is clear, and it is probable, though not stated, that he thought it best for his people. It is more extraordinary that the people should be of the same opinion. Their idea of a strong government and of a good reign is, that the king should be powerful; and in their histories and songs they bestow their highest praise, not upon kings clement and merciful, but upon those who are severe in judgment, swift in vengeance, and strong to strike the mightiest wrong-doers down. But there is nothing strange that comes to be thoroughly explained and understood. The power of the king, so absolute to smite the highest in the land, and which is seldom felt in its direct operation but by the nobles and others about the court, is a tower of strength to the great body of the people, who find in that their only refuge against the tyrannies and oppression of the governors of provinces and cities, and their subordinate officers. The only check upon them is in the dread that complaints carried to the throne should excite attention, and bring down swift judgment upon them—a powerful eastern king being seldom unwilling to win popularity by an act of summary judgment upon a great officer or provincial governor, especially as, in that case, the royal treasury will be enriched by the confiscation of whatever wealth his rapacious exactions may have accumulated. The people generally, therefore, exult and glory in the absolute power of their king. Under the present system, the weakness and impotence of the sovereign would be the strength of the great lords who rule the provinces, and who, if left unchecked by the superior force of a despotic imperial authority, would, for their private advantage, grind the people to powder by their exactions. It would not, therefore, be satisfactory to any oriental realm that the power of the crown should be in any degree diminished, unless it were cut off from all the numerous governors and exactors who administer the real business of government. It is not enough to say, that all this secondary power is derived from the crown, and would fall if that of the sovereign were diminished. This might, indeed, be true in some countries, as in Turkey, but not in Persia, among whom the chiefs of the tribes, like the princes of the tribes in Israel, exercise an inherent authority, not derived from the crown, and which

would exist were all the powers of the monarch extinct.

It may be well to recommend to consideration, whether the expressions applied to the royal power and the kingly character in the Scriptures are not very much in accordance with these intimations. The expressions are too numerous to quote; but many will occur to the minds of most of our readers, who will seek in vain for any passages of a contrary tenor. The following may be referred to in illustration:—2 Samuel 8:15; Psalms 82:1-4; Psalms 101:4, etc.; Proverbs 16:14-15; Proverbs 19:12; Proverbs 20:2; Proverbs 25:6-7; Proverbs 29:2-4; Proverbs 29:12; Proverbs 29:14; Proverbs 29:26; Ecclesiastes 8:4; Ecclesiastes 10:4; Ecclesiastes 10:20; Isaiah 3:1-3; Isaiah 3:9; Isaiah 3:11; Isaiah 7:2; Jeremiah 22:1-3; Jeremiah 22:15-17; Ezekiel 22:27; Micah 3:1-3; Micah 3:9; Micah 3:11; Micah 7:3; Zechariah 7:9. The condition of the king among the Hebrews was, however, somewhat peculiar, and was more favorable than that of others to the liberties and happiness of the people. The full idea of kingly power was the same as in other Asiatic states; but among them that power was, as it were, divided, and the human monarch was excluded from some of its most important functions. Jehovah himself was the true King of the Hebrew people; and he claimed and exercised—directly or by his ministers—all the functions belonging to that character, some of which are indeed such, as could only be safely exercised by unerring wisdom and, almighty strength. The legislative function He had exercised through Moses, giving to the nation laws which were intended to be in force as long as the nation existed. It was He who was the Supreme Proprietor of the land, and in that character he had ordered its distribution among the families of Israel, from whom it could not be alienated; and a rent was paid, in the shape of tithes and first-fruits, which went for the maintenance of the public worship and of the ministers of religion. Thus, when the Israelites would have a human and visible king, he had been anticipated, as it were, in the legislative function, and found laws which were as binding upon him as upon his people. The land was already appropriated, and he could exercise no rights over that which formed the most substantial property of his subjects. We see how this acted in the case of Ahab, who could not possess himself of the vineyard of Naboth, nor compel that person to sell it, or take an equivalent for it, and obtained it at last only when his infamous wife, Jezebel, had procured the conviction of the owner for blasphemy, whereby his estate became forfeited, it would seem, to the crown. With this fact may be compared the anecdote of the Persian king, Nou Shirwan, surnamed the Just, which shows how the absolute theoretical right of the Persian monarchs over the property of their subjects was limited, practically, by the sense of justice and policy. A Roman ambassador, who had been sent to the court of this king, at Ctesiphon, with rich presents, was admiring the noble prospect from the windows of the royal palace, when he remarked an uneven piece of ground, and asked the reason why it was not rendered uniform. “It is the property of an old man,” said a Persian noble, “who has objections to sell it, though often requested to do so by our king; and he is more willing to have his prospect spoiled than to commit violence.” “That irregular spot,” the Roman replied, “consecrated as it is by justice, now appears to me more beautiful than all the surrounding scene.”

Limited by pre-existing institutions, it is clear that a Hebrew king could only reign rightly as the vicegerent or chief executive officer of the Divine King; and, accordingly, we find, in the history of the realm, that the kings are subject to blame or praise accordingly as they neglected or acted upon the principles of this their subordinate position. Yet the difference in theory, though very great, seems to have been, practically, less considerable than this statement may seem to

intimate. This may best be shown by looking at the kingly power of Persia in its threefold character—as legislative, as judicial, and as executive.

03. Legislative Functions

Legislative Functions

Chapter II The Scripture itself affords some remarkable information respecting the legislative functions of the ancient kings of Persia, and the cases there presented claim our most heedful attention. The first instance that throws light on the subject is, that of the decree which the courtiers extracted from the easy nature of king Darius, in the hope of rendering it instrumental for the destruction of Daniel. When the adversaries of that upright and just man found that no accusation could be established against him in connection with the discharge of his official duties, they concluded that his religion afforded the only way by which he might be brought into disgrace. But the existing law presented no means of assailing him, even on the score of his religion, and it was thought necessary to inveigle the king into the utterance of a new law, which should be as a snare for the illustrious Hebrew, without its object being suspected by the king. They, therefore, appeared before the monarch, and informed him that they—the high officers of the realm—had agreed upon a complimentary decree, that no one should prefer a petition to any god or man for thirty days, save to himself; and that whosoever disobeyed this decree should be cast into the den of lions.

“Now, Oh king,” said they, “establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” The men who made this proposal were evidently not Medes nor Persians, to whose views it was altogether adverse, but Chaldeans, native officers and princes, with whose notions it was in entire accordance. Darius himself, though not a wise man, must have thought the whole matter absurd; but, flattered by the intention to render him honor, and thinking that he might let them do so in their own way, he, in an evil hour, consented. He uttered the decree; and, when written down from his mouth, he signed it—when it became a law which he could not himself rescind or contravene.

Now it had been the custom of Daniel to offer up his prayers and thanksgivings three times a day, upon his knees, with his windows open towards Jerusalem, and his face turned in the direction where the temple of the Lord had stood. Aware of this practice, his enemies watched him closely, and his uncompromising firmness in all that touched his faith was so well known to them, from past experience, that they did him the honor of believing that this, his custom, would not be intermitted, even at the command of the king, to whose service he was bound and whose highest favor he enjoyed. Nor were they mistaken. Some, in Daniel’s case, would have thought that they might have shut their windows, or might have withdrawn to some secret chamber, and there offered up their prayers to Him who seeth and heareth in secret. But Daniel thought not so. He would not, by ceasing to do as he had been wont, indicate a wish to have it supposed that he was acting in obedience to this monstrous decree. He knew that the God he served, and whose favor was more to him than that of kings, was able to deliver him from, or sustain him under, whatever danger or calamity might come upon him in the discharge of his duty. Therefore, he no sooner heard that the king had signed the decree, than, his hour of prayer being come, he withdrew into his house, and

prayed on his knees, with his windows open as heretofore. His enemies now repaired, with glad hearts, to the king, and reminded him of the decree, the particulars of which they recited. Darius admitted that the thing was true, "according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." Then they came upon him with the astounding intimation that, by his foolish acquiescence in a decree adverse even to his own principles, his most favored servant had incurred the doom of the lions' den. The king no sooner heard the consequence of the decree he had so blindly granted, than it had the proper effect upon him: he "was sore displeased with himself," and he manifested such signs of a disposition to deliver Daniel, in despite of the obligations he had placed himself under, that the alarmed courtiers found it necessary to remind him, with considerable solemnity, "that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king established may be changed." He was then obliged to submit, and to sign the order for committing Daniel to the lions' den. But he did so with a trembling hand and an aching heart; and, having retired to the private chamber of the palace, passed the night there in grief. The last meal of the day, when all its business has ended, is that which, then as now, the Orientals most enjoy; but from this the king that night abstained. It was usual for the monarch, after this meal, to listen to skilful music until bed-time; but this night "the instruments of music" were not "brought before him." He retired to rest; but, "sleep went from him." The thought of his own criminal lightness, and the picture of his venerable friend devoured by the lions, suffered him to take no rest. Yet he was not without hope. He remembered what Daniel had often told him of the wonders of deliverance which his God had wrought in times of old, and he ventured to suppose it possible that He who saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, from the burning fiery furnace, might deliver his servant even from the lions. This thought made him restless till the dawn arose; and as soon as it was light, he hastened to the den, which was within the precincts of the palace, and when he came there, he called in with a lamentable voice—"O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" What a question this seems to us! Yet, taken in relation to the position and circumstances of the speaker, it is highly suggestive as to the degree of knowledge respecting the God of Israel which, from the communications of Daniel and other Jews, he had been enabled to acquire. How was his heart gladdened, and his anxiety relieved, by hearing the voice of Daniel rising cheerfully from the den, "O king, live forever! My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." Darius commanded his instant release; and he terribly manifested his resentment against those who had so painfully disturbed his peace, by directing that they should themselves be cast into the lions. And there was no God to deliver them: but "the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den." This is altogether a most striking example of the manner in which the kings of the Medes and Persians might be hampered by their own prerogative, and be compelled to witness, hopelessly, results from their own acts which they abhorred, but felt unable to avert.

It is not difficult to understand the principle of this singular law, by which alone the royal power appears to have been limited, although that power seems, at the first view, to be the more enhanced and aggrandized by it. The rationale of the matter appears to be this. The king's word was law; and as the sovereign was thus the fountain of all authority, and he was looked up to as something more than man, it was natural, on these premises, however revolting to common sense, to decree that his purposes, once declared, should not be altered; because a law ought to

be a determined thing, on the one hand; and, on the other, because to have allowed him to yield to voices of reason and mercy after his purpose had been declared, would have involved the admission that he had been hasty and mistaken; and this could not be tolerated under the intense despotisms of ancient Asia.

It also acted or was calculated to act, as a limitation upon a power far too high for any human being to possess. The consciousness that his word, which formed the law, could not be recalled, and a few such experiences of the operation of the custom as Darius had in the case of Daniel, and as Ahasuerus realized in that of Haman and the Jews—were well calculated to make the king more cautious and guarded as to his decrees, than might be felt needful by a monarch who knew that a word uttered today might amend any evil which the word uttered yesterday had occasioned. It was, doubtless, to prevent this, and give to the law the degree of certainty essential to the public good, and to exalt the sovereign by maintaining the inviolability of his word, which led to this singular usage, which is in many respects so remarkable as to deserve much more ample investigation and illustration than can here be afforded to it.

It claims notice, however, because it appears in the Scripture itself, that the decrees of any one king could not be rescinded even by a subsequent king, but must, of necessity, be enforced by him. This is only remarkable in connection with the autocratic origin of the law from the king's own mouth. For, when a law is enacted by God himself, as was that given by Moses, or when it emanates from high councils, or from deliberative bodies, known to have taken account of all the circumstances which bear upon it, there is no expectation of change so long as the circumstances which called for the law continue to operate. But, when the voice of one man—even though a king—is law, we seem to expect that his decree should be less stringently binding upon his successors than upon himself. Yet we see, in Ezra 5, that after the work of the temple had been greatly interrupted by the enemies of Israel, and had even been countermanded on their misrepresentation by Artaxerxes, the people, eventually, at the instance of Haggai and Zechariah, resumed the work, in reliance upon the protection of God, and upon the justification which the decree of Cyrus afforded. This occasioned a visit from Tatnai, the Persian satrap of Syria, who demanded the authority for their proceedings. They alleged the decree of Cyrus, of which he manifestly knew nothing. But, although that decree had become old, and it was then the third reign since Cyrus died, Tatnai at once felt it was of the most binding obligation and could not be rescinded by subsequent events. Instead, therefore, of troubling himself to inquire about any altered circumstances which might, in the long interval, have arisen, he, like a true Persian, felt that there was nothing to be done but to ascertain whether this decree really existed, and, if so, to act upon it. He wrote to the head government to that effect, not suggesting any matter of deliberation, but that search should be made among the records for this decree of Cyrus. The reigning king, Darius Hystaspes, at once ordered this to be done, and an earnest search was accordingly instituted. As the matter had occurred when Cyrus was at Babylon, and as it belonged to the affairs of that province, it was expected to be found among the archives of that city. But, as it could not be discovered, a fresh search was made among the records of the Median capital, Achmetha, or Ecbatana. A copy or recital of this was sent forthwith to Tatnai, with urgent directions that it should be obeyed to the very letter, and that every means should be taken to forward the work to which it referred. That this was less from any regard to the Jews than from respect to the order of Cyrus, and from imitation of the good feeling he had manifested, is clear from the fact, that

no favor beyond that specified in the decree could be obtained; and that, although the work of the temple was forwarded in accordance therewith, the permission to build walls to the city was constantly refused during the reign of this same Darius, as well as in that of his successor.

We have dwelt the rather on the case in which Daniel was concerned, as it is, in many respects, the most interesting and suggestive. But the additional information which the instance of the decree obtained from king Ahasuerus by Haman, for the destruction of the entire Jewish nation, must not be overlooked. From the case of Darius, it might seem as if the decree to which the force of a law was to be given should be sanctioned or suggested by the king's council. The same conclusion might be derived from Esther 1, where the council is distinctly mentioned, and the names of the members given, while it is clearly stated that it was the king's manner to confer with those who "knew law and judgment" (Esther 1:14-16). In fact, although the matter was one in which the spontaneous action of the king might be more expected than in any other, being as to how he should deal with his refractory wife, the king submits the whole affair to the determination of his council, and it is in accordance with their advice, and upon the grounds which they assign, that the king "sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province, according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house." This, we are told, was, by the same advice, "written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered," showing that, as in the former case, this registration was necessary to give the decree the force of a law.

Yet, in this instance, it is stated that the king adopted the advice of his council, because it pleased him; and it is very certain that he was not bound to have given it the force of a law if he had not liked. The inference deducible from these cases—as to the apparent necessity of obtaining the sanction of the council—is also overturned by another, contained in the same book, which shows that the king was not more bound to consult his council at all than he was to adopt the course it recommended. The famous decree for the extermination of the Jews was obtained from the king by his favorite, Haman, a minister of foreign extraction, without the intervention of any council, and in the indifferent and careless manner which the habitual possession of uncontrolled power is apt to engender. In this instance the king, without troubling himself to inquire into the merits of the case, told the insidious minister to act in the matter as he pleased, and gave him his signet ring, the use of which gave the validity of a regal act to the orders he might issue. Accordingly, the royal scribes were employed diligently in making copies and translations of the decree, which, being sealed with the king's signet, were dispatched in all haste to the provinces. The sacred historian significantly indicates the character of the transaction by adding, "the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed," Esther 3:15. This instance is further remarkable for the light it throws on the means which might be taken to neutralize the effect of a decree which could not be directly recalled. The decree was, that all the Jews, in every province of the empire, should be destroyed in one day. When the eyes of the king were opened, through the intervention of Esther and Mordecai, and he became earnestly desirous to render the previous decree abortive, the only plan, it would seem, that could be devised to that end, was to send forth another decree, permitting the Jews to stand upon their defense upon the day appointed for their destruction. The governors of the provinces had been commanded by the previous decree to destroy them, and they were bound to make some show of obedience; but the moral effect of the second decree, which clearly indicated the change of the royal mind, would tend to make it only a show, and the

resistance authorized by the second decree would not merely give the authorities a decent excuse for not executing the first, but would prevent, what seemed to be much apprehended, the real enemies of the Jews from destroying them with impunity, under cover of obedience to the first decree. We can thus see how the exercise of despotic power must have been limited by the experience of the embarrassment which the inconsiderate exercise of it was apt to occasion. The absolute despotism of the legislative power of the king, in its practical exercise, must also have been considerably limited by the body of written decrees which had been issued by his predecessors or by himself, and which he could not alter or contravene. This must, in all cases of importance, have incurred some deliberation and delay, as it would be necessary that competent persons should previously ascertain the existing state of the law on the subject. This a just king, who wished to enjoy a fair fame in his nation, would desire to consult, although one of a really despotic temper might over-ride all such limitations of his absolute will, and would probably not incur much blame in so doing. This fact is curiously illustrated in the history of Cambyses. When he demanded whether it were lawful for him to marry his sister, the council, knowing it was his fixed purpose to do so, answered, there was indeed no law which permitted it, but there did exist a law which made it allowable for the king of Persia to do what seemed to him good.

It appears, that in ancient times in Persia, at least after the adoption of the Magian religion, there was a law, which, mixed with ancient usages, formed what was called “the law of the Medes and Persians;” and it is clear, from the histories of Darius and Daniel, that the decrees of the kings went to form a kind of appendage to this written code. This there was a judicature to administer; and the existence of such an institution, composed as that was of men eminent for their wisdom and love of justice, and possessing their places for life, must, as regarded the great body of the people, have formed a considerable barrier to the absolute power of the crown. The kings themselves were watchful over the purity of this tribunal; and judges convicted of corruption were punished, not only with strictness, but with a degree of cruelty such as despotism alone can devise or execute. In this manner, Darius Hystaspes caused one of them to be crucified; but, on discovering that he had benefited more than he had injured the royal house, he commanded him to be taken down from the cross. Cambyses commanded another to be flayed alive, and his skin spread over the judgment seat on which his son and successor was to sit. Similarly severe examples of Persian justice occur occasionally at the present day. All this accords with and illustrates the peculiar vehemence of indignation with which the perversion of justice is mentioned in the Old Testament. At the present day, although the king’s will is, in the popular and theoretical sense, law, the nation is, in fact, governed substantially as of old, and as were the Hebrews, by a written code. This is the Koran, which, with the traditions recognized as authentic, forms the only written law of Moslem countries. There can be, indeed, no other than this, to which a Divine authority is ascribed. Thus, therefore, we have a very practical parallel to the government of the Hebrews under the sole written law of Moses; and, by seeing how this acts, and how the exigencies not contemplated by an ancient and unalterable code are provided for, we may collect some ideas respecting that very obscure subject—the practical jurisprudence of the Hebrews. In Persia, then, this written sacred law is administered by the ministers of religion; and, although in that country the ecclesiastical body is shorn of the consequence which it still possesses in Turkey, they, with their code of sacred law, form—as doubtless the priesthood, armed with the law of Moses, did in Israel—a safeguard and a refuge to the great body of the people, against any gross injustice by the crown or its officers. Protected by their sacred character, there are always to be

found among them men ready to raise a voice against any wrong which the crown commits, or which any of the people suffer: like John the Baptist (himself a priest), who feared not to tell one of the most despotic of princes, who had committed a gross wrong, by taking away his brother's wife—"It is not lawful for thee to have her."

But, it is often asked, was the law of Moses the only one among the Hebrews? It is very certain that, in the progress of social institutions, many circumstances must have occurred for which the law of Moses made no provision; and the question is, whether, apart from a direct appeal which was made to God, such cases were adjudicated upon according to the sense of equity in the judge, or were determined by customs and precedents which might, in the course of time, form another and unwritten code, embodying, probably, many ancient customs of patriarchal and tribal life which had not been embodied in the law of Moses. The nature of the case seems to decide for the latter alternative as the more probable, in any instance where the written public law is of ancient date, and incapable of extension by an authority equal to that of its original promulgation. Such, at least, is the fact in Persia; and the practice there, as described in the next chapter, may help to throw some light upon the probabilities of the question, as regards the Israelites.

04. Judicial and Executive Functions

Judicial and Executive Functions

Chapter III

Although, by the theory of a Moslem government, there should be no other courts of justice than those for the administration of the sacred or written law, yet there is in Persia another branch of judicature, which is called Urf—a word meaning known, or customary—and this name refers to the principle by which the secular magistrates who administer it should be guided in their decisions, which is that of custom or precedent. This law, if such it may be termed, out of deference to the sacred code, which is theoretically the sole law of the land, is left unwritten. It is not the same in all parts of the kingdom, because it has reference to local, as well as to common usages. The king, as temporal monarch, is at the head of this customary law, which may, indeed, be regarded through all its branches as an emanation of the royal authority, although it is administered on principles that are grounded on a professed regard for the habits and prejudices of the people. This system is considered to have originated in the desire of the princes, although converts to Mohammedanism, to preserve the laws and traditions they inherited from their fathers, and the temporal power connected with them. Just as among the Hebrews, these, doubtless, continued to be preserved as a body of customary usages, handed over from the period before the law was given by Moses. There is reason to think, that those portions of that law which regulate the relations between man and man, were in part new regulations required by the designed alteration in the condition of the people from the pastoral to the agricultural mode of life, and in part modifications of customs which previously existed; and that a large body of those already in operation, which were approved, and it was, therefore, needless to alter, were purposely unmentioned in the law, but were left to their natural operation in the established usages of the people. Such old customs, and the decisions of judges and kings in particular cases, which, although not binding law, would be considered as furnishing materials for judgment, probably formed a system not unlike the Urf of Persia, and was administered in the same manner. The relative weight of the sacred and the customary law, or rather the preeminence of its practical operation, was, probably, as in Persia, determined very much by the temper and power of the sovereign. In that country, there have been times when the religious zeal of the monarch has caused almost every case to be referred to the ecclesiastical judges, and at others the whole authority has been vested in the secular magistrates. This state of things must necessarily engender strifes of jurisdiction. The administrators of the Shariah, or divine law, as it is called, are disposed to consider that they are entitled to take cognizance of all causes whatever, and regard the jurisdiction of the secular courts as an intolerable usurpation of their rights. The latter, on the other hand, under the encouragement of successive princes, have limited the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts to disputes about religious ceremonies, inheritance, marriage, divorce, contracts, sales, and in general all civil cases, reserving to themselves the decision in all proceedings respecting murder, theft, fraud, and every crime that is capital, or that can be regarded as involving a breach of the public peace. And something like this must be the ultimate

adjustment in most cases, where there are ecclesiastical and secular jurisdictions in conflict with each other. Do we not discover indications of a somewhat similar state of things in the judicial arrangements of the good king Jehoshaphat? 2 Chronicles 19:5. We are told that he established “judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah;” it is not said whether they were of the Levitical body or not, but further on we learn that at Jerusalem, “did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies,” 2 Chronicles 19:8. Now the “chief of the father” were the heads of families and tribes, to whom, under the old patriarchal system, the right of judgment naturally belonged. Here they are named as judges, certainly not of the ecclesiastical matters which belonged to the Levitical body, but, doubtless, of civil and criminal causes. The difference of jurisdiction is, indeed, indicated in the two classes—one “for the judgment of the Lord,” and one “for controversies;” that is, the priests and Levites for the judgment of the Lord, and the fathers of Israel for controversies. The distinction is confirmed further on, where it appears that each branch of judicature had a separate head; for Jehoshaphat, in his impressive charge to the newly appointed judges, says, “Behold, Amariah the chief-priest is over you in all matters of the Lord; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king’s matters,” 2 Chronicles 19:11. This seems to intimate, that other matters than those characterized as “the judgment of the Lord,” were under the special supremacy of the king, like the Urf in Persia. Perhaps the distinction of the two kinds of judicature is further indicated in another clause of the king’s charge, in which, it will be observed, he is addressing the appointed administrators of both—“What cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments,” etc., 2 Chronicles 19:10. Here “the law” seems, by the antithesis, to be distinguished from “the commandment,” and “the statutes” from “the judgments;” and if so, “the law” of the one clause, and “the statutes” of the other, may be supposed to describe the written law—that of Moses—and “the commandments” of the one clause, and “the judgments” of the other, the popular customary law, composed as already described.

It is further to be observed, that each branch of the law or judicature has at its head the proper official chief. Over “the judgment of the Lord” is the high-priest; and over “the king’s matters” is the great hereditary chief, or prince of the tribe of Judah, which tribe, with some adjuncts, composed the kingdom. The latter fact seems clearly to indicate that those called “the king’s matters,” were not merely court matters; in such affairs the monarch himself, in all the courts of the east, personally judges: and if it could be supposed that the king delegated that authority to another, it would be far more likely to some great officer of the court than to the great hereditary chief of the tribe, on whom, on the other hand, the administration of the customary law would naturally devolve, and the weight and authority of whose position would be of much importance in accrediting the decisions of judges acting under his presidency. Indeed, that the high-priest in the one case, and the chief of the tribe in the other, presided over these judicatures, seems to indicate that the position they occupied was recognized and proper, belonging to them of right, and which they had been used to exercise though in a less orderly plan than that which the king organized. In fact, although the king is said to have “set” the judges, it is clear that they were not arbitrarily chosen by him; for those set to administer one branch of the judicature were “the chief of the fathers,” that is, the chiefs of the great family branches of the tribe, over whom Zebadiah, “the ruler of the house of Judah,” was the natural president. Again, it is not said that the chief was “set” over this branch of the judicature, but the judges being “set,” they were, when addressed by the king,

referred to Zebadiah, as their existing and proper president, just as the high-priest is referred to as the existing and proper superior of the Levitical branch of the judicature. The whole of the arrangement indicates that the matters to be judged were matters of common concern to the people in their cities, and not merely causes in which the court was interested, although distinguished as “the king’s matters,” in conformity with the general practice of the east, and even of the west, of regarding the sovereign as the real or nominal head of all secular law.

We have attended to the suggestions to which the state of things in Persia has afforded a clue, because the matter, as it respects the Hebrews, is one of considerable interest and importance, and we know not that the two-fold judicature, which we have shown to be at least probable, has been hitherto pointed out.

Let it not be supposed that in Persia the system of law which has been described forms any obligatory restraint upon the king himself. He is above the law; and it would not be much short of treason to assert that the king was not perfectly free to act at any time as seems best to him, towards any of his subjects, who hold their lives and properties at his disposal. Still, this rude theory of despotism is never carried out to the extent these words imply; and the reason is obvious—the authority is too important to be delegated in its fullness to others, and it is impossible for the sovereign to take all judgment into his hands. The great body of the people are, therefore, governed by the ordinary process of law, and the absolute power of the king is, in the full meaning, only experienced by his conquered enemies, his rebellious subjects, his own family, his ministers, public officers, civil and military, and the long train of his servants and domestics. All these hold their lives and properties at the entire disposal of the sovereign, who may seize their property, subject them to any punishment, or even put them to death, by a word or a sign, without examination or formal procedure of any kind whatever; and this is far from being a barren or nominal power, for scarcely a day passes in which it is not, in some shape or other, exercised.

But, besides this, the relation to the king, which employment under him, or alliance to him of any kind, creates, so far supersedes every other subjection, even to the law, that the king can, if he please, effectually shield an offender of any of these classes from the notice which the law might take of his crimes, if the king choose to leave them unpunished. He is the judge and punisher in all these cases, and no other tribunal is competent to move with reference to them. This absolute power, over the same classes, is common to nearly all eastern kings, and the constant notice of its operation has led many travelers to suppose that the same power existed over all classes without distinction, and they have thence been led to give ideas of more intense despotism than practically ever existed in any country. This error might be the more easily taken up from the fact, that a cursory inquiry into the subject would produce no denial or explanation, as the theory of government for the whole nation corresponds with the practice of government towards this part of it. But, in fact, in all other circumstances but these, the forms of written or customary law are observed in every instance of importance, especially in all capital cases, and the royal authority only interferes to direct the execution of the sentence or to pardon the offender. The king seldom oversteps the limits which usage thus prescribes to his power. He may do so sometimes without much censure, but he cannot habitually exercise the fullness of his despotic authority upon those whom usage has not subjected to it, without danger and discredit. The power of life and death, which the sovereign himself often exercises in a manner frightfully summary, is much more with caution. delegated to others in Persia than in Turkey. In the latter country, it is exercised by every

pasha within his province, but in Persia it is never confided to the provincial governor unless he be a prince of the blood, when he is frequently empowered to pronounce and carry into execution the sentence of death upon convicted criminals—which would otherwise be referred to the crown—as well as to take cognizance of, and punish, those high crimes of murder and robbery which are regarded as being especially under the royal observation. A very considerable degree of despotic authority is exercised by these royal governors in their provincial courts, which are framed, as far as may be, upon the imperial model; but the power of the governors over the public servants does not extend to the arbitrary infliction of death, although even this is sometimes delegated when a country is in a state of rebellion.

These distinctions are in themselves of some interest; and this is increased when we compare this state of things with the customs mentioned in the Bible. It is clear from that source, if we did not know it from history, that the ancient kings of Persia held the same power over the lives and properties of all persons in the public service. This is seen in the orders so promptly given by Darius for the execution of Daniel's accusers, who were officers of the court; and by the equal promptitude of the doom pronounced by Ahasuerus upon Haman and his family. In the latter case, the king also seized the property of the condemned, and divided it between Mordecai and Esther, showing that the possessions as well as the lives of such persons were wholly in the royal power. The mode of disposing of it, by bestowing the property of the condemned on others, is quite in the present style, when the sovereign frequently grants that of a fallen favorite or officer to reward the services of someone about the court. This, indeed, has been often done in our own country.

There is no instance in Scripture of the arbitrary punishment by the Persian kings of any persons not in the public service, which may be taken to imply, at the first view, that the body of the people were, as at present, exempt from the arbitrary infliction of high penalties. It may, indeed, seem that the decree of Ahasuerus, for the extirpation of the Jews, is adverse to this conclusion; but, if we look more closely, it appears that they, as captives, and as charged with rebellious tendencies, formed one of the very classes which would, even at the present day, come under the irresponsible control of the sovereign. In other cases, we know from history that the Persian kings were, in fact, very anxious to secure the credit to be derived from the impartial administration of public justice. The king possessed the same powers in Israel, within the circle of the public service. We see the right over lives and possessions there exercised with a degree of decisiveness and vigor which makes us tremble for the liberties of the nation, and to fancy that it has fallen under a very harsh despotism. We naturally say, "If it be thus with the great ones at court, how is it with the great body of the people?" But all these instances are within the circle of the public service, or family connection, within which, alone, this despotism could operate, and the people no doubt remained subject to the operation of the ordinary law. Bad kings, unquestionably, overstepped the limits; but good kings, even in adhering to it, might, while exercising the privileges which usage everywhere conceded to them, evince much arbitrary power over life and substance within the immediate circle in which they moved. This was the case in the apparently arbitrary executions of Adonijah and Joab by Solomon, in which, however, the additional power over them existed which was derivable from their being members of the royal family. The power over property, even when not forfeited by capital execution, is shown in the way in which David deprived Mephibosheth of his estate, and transferred it to Ziba, and afterwards ordered that they should share it between them. That the kings did not venture to exercise any such power with reference to other properties,

appears in the case of Naboth's vineyard, to which we have already referred; yet it seems that, even in that instance, it was the fact that Naboth was executed for alleged treason, although he was not in public employment, caused the forfeiture of his estate to the crown.

Among the Israelites, also, as in Persia, it would seem that the king could screen from the ordinary operation of the law an offender belonging to the royal family or the court circle, when he did not himself choose to punish. This is obvious in the steps taken upon the daring assassination of Amnon by Absalom, whom the sovereign eventually restored to favor without subjecting him to the operation of the law; and that the inference in this instance is not erroneous, is shown from the pretended case submitted to the king in that very matter by the woman of Tekoa, who claimed for one of her sons, who had slain his brother, protection from the avenger of blood, and to whom the king pledged himself by an oath, "There shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth," 2 Samuel 14:11. This is the more remarkable, as the case was beyond the court circle, and dispensed with the fixed operation of the Mosaic law, which had, in such circumstances, left no doubt of the course to be pursued. This dispensing power was not likely to be much abused by so pious and just a man as David; but it was a dangerous precedent for him to set, and was likely to be, and in all probability was, much abused by ungodly kings.

Besides those cases which the king in Persia disposes of on the summary impulse of his passions or his judgment, in respect of the classes which have been designated, there are others which he feels bound to decide strictly on the evidence. Many important causes may be brought before him by appeal, and he reserves the right of judging in the capital crimes of murder and robbery, except where this part of the royal function has been delegated to any of the provincial governors. Hence, a considerable portion of the king's time is passed in administering justice in the audience chamber of his palace, to which access is not difficult, and the extent of his occupation in this is proportioned in some degree to the reliance which the people have on his wisdom and justice, for there is then a great inclination in suitors to carry their cases, by appeal or consent, to the foot of the throne.

It is said that a Persian king, anxious to occupy his station well, seldom spends less than seven hours a day in public, in the discharge of his political, judicial, and ceremonial duties. This will suggest to the reader the case of David, whose character with his subjects, and his wish to satisfy them, brought so much judicial business to his palace, that, with all his diligence and zeal, it got so much into arrears as to bear the aspect of a neglect of justice, which the wily Absalom failed not to turn to the advantage of his own designs. Probably, David was unwilling, in the circumstances of his reign, to relieve himself by deputing this important regal function to others. Some ages ago, there was a court in the Persian metropolis which discharged most of the judicial functions of royalty; but the head of this court acquired so much influence and power, that the kings became alarmed, and reverted to the ancient practice of dealing with such cases in person.

How ancient the practice is there, is shown by the statement of the Greek historians, who inform us, that the Persian kings sat in judgment in many criminal and civil cases of importance, with the utmost anxiety to give a right decision. They heard the evidence with attention, and took some days to consider their judgment, during which the advice of those who were deemed learned in the law was taken. When the matter was one of life and death, the offence with which the delinquent was charged was not considered apart, but in connection with the whole course of his life, and he

was cleared or condemned according to the preponderance of his merits or his crimes. This may remind us, from analogy, of a gross common error respecting the administration of the Divine judgment in the great day of decision, which those will have had occasion to learn, who go much among the people. This notion assumes, that we are then to be judged by the preponderance of merit or demerit during life; in heathenish ignorance of the fact, that we have no merits in which to appear before God, and that the soul is utterly undone which hopes for favorable judgment at his tribunal on any other ground than that abundant satisfaction for sin which was offered by his beloved Son, when he bowed his dying head upon the cross, and cried, "It is finished!" "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

05. State Punishments and Rewards

State Punishments and Rewards

Chapter IV

Execution

Whatever sentence is pronounced by the king of Persia, whether of the bastinado, of mutilation, or of death, is inflicted on the spot in his presence. This is a shocking practice, revolting to our ideas and habits, but perfectly in accordance with ancient and modern oriental nations; and, doubtless, it forms part of that education which soon renders the best of eastern kings revoltingly indifferent to human life and suffering. Futteh Ali Shah, who was naturally a very humane man, when he first came to the throne found himself obliged to turn his head aside when an execution took place. But this is regarded by the Persians, not only as unkingly, but as unmanly, and the king, by use, soon learned to look calmly on.

Sir Harford Jones reports a remark which was made to him on this subject by Meerza Bozurg, a Persian high in office. He said, "Our kings, speaking generally, are more careless about shedding blood than they otherwise would be, perhaps from the circumstance of the frequent executions that take place before them; for, depend upon it, the first sight of human blood strikes all of us with more or less horror and remorse, but the oftener we see it shed, the lighter we esteem its value." A similar course to the one just described seems to have been that of Israel in the marked instances of Adonijah and Joab, who were condemned in their absence; the executioner was, indeed, sent to destroy them, but those who are condemned when present are slain on the spot. Thus Zebah and Zalmunna were slain, not only in the presence of Gideon, but by his own hand, when his eldest son hesitated to execute the doom, Judges 8:21. Ahimelech and the priests of Nob were slain in the presence of Saul by Doeg, 1 Samuel 22:17-18; and Agag was hewn in pieces in the presence of Samuel and Saul, 1 Samuel 15:33.

Solomon, in describing the king's wrath as "messengers of death," Proverbs 16:14, is thought to allude to such executions of the sentence of death as his own reign afforded signal examples of in the case of Adonijah and Joab—a message prompt and irresistible, and to which the condemned himself usually submits as they did. Such a messenger of death was sent by king Jehoram to take the head of Elisha; and it has been well remarked, that the fact of the king sending a single messenger to execute his sentence upon a person so eminent and honored as that prophet, and surrounded as he was likely to be, and actually was, with many friends and scholars, indicates that such mandates were but too common among the Jews, and were generally submitted to without resistance. In this case, the king followed his own messenger in swift haste, probably to countermand the order he had given; and it was, doubtless, the knowledge of this which induced Elisha to go so far in resistance as to direct his friends to detain the messenger at the door, and not allow him to enter his presence till the king himself arrived. It is very possible that they would not have ventured upon this step, but for the implied assurance that they were executing the later

purpose of the king, by staying his messenger. The existing practice in Persia in this matter may also show why the messenger was detained at the door, and not admitted to the presence of his intended victim. In such instances in Persia some formalities are necessary, that those whom it may concern may be satisfied that the messenger of death is really commissioned by the king. Everything depends on that; for if the messenger could not produce an unimpeachable warrant, obedience to it might be evaded on the ground of a real or pretended doubt; and private vengeance might be wreaked under the cover of a commission from the king, if care were not taken that it were properly authenticated. The seal of the king is, therefore, attached to the warrant, to which that of his prime-minister is added, and it is then given to one of the royal body-guard, who instantly sets out, and travels post without intermission till he reaches his destination. In like manner, the fatal letters respecting the Jews, which, under the authority of the ancient Persian king, were sent into the provinces of the empire, "were sealed with the king's ring," Esther 3:12-14, and sent by messengers traveling post, and, it is added, "the posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment;" and also, in like manner, the message sent by Jezebel to compass the death of Naboth was authenticated by the king's signet, and addressed to the elders and nobles of the city in which that person lived, 1 Kings 21:8. The messenger charged to execute the royal order, having arrived at the place where his victim lives, proceeds at once either to the king's lieutenant, the secretary, or the chief magistrate, as he judges best. To this person he discloses his commission, shows him his warrant, and permits him to satisfy himself of its correctness. He then requires this functionary to go with him, and sanction the execution by his presence; and this he cannot refuse to do, even though the condemned man may be the friend of his right hand. On reaching the place, the messenger dismounts and enters the house, booted and travel-stained, which would be grossly indecorous in ordinary circumstances. He goes direct to the room where the condemned man is to be found, and, as he enters, takes his commission from his bosom, and deposits it in the hands of the officer he has brought with him. He then draws his saber, and with the terrible words "in the king's name," he throws himself upon his victim, and speedily departs with his head, leaving the lifeless trunk on the divan. The privacy of the harem is, on such critical occasions, respected. Even the messenger of death, armed with the king's commission, presumes not to penetrate there. If the condemned man has retired to that part of the house, word is sent that a messenger has arrived from court, and he is then bound to come forth, and always does so, and is treated as already described. There is no possibility of escape when the messenger has once arrived, and made his commission known. Any resistance or attempt at evasion would be as futile, and would excite as much amazement, as if a grandee in Europe, condemned to the block, should attempt to defend himself upon the scaffold. The soul of the offender is paralyzed by the suddenness with which his fate comes upon him, and if in the brief interval, the moment between doom and death, he is collected enough to cast a glance towards the friends who may be sitting with him, and who certainly might, if they dared, effectually protect him, he sees no hope in their eyes. The wrath of the king is so terrible, that the man subject to it is at once divested of his merits, his influence, and his honor. His best friends, even those of his household, are either awed into insensibility by the event, or look on with eyes suddenly become cold and cruel towards a man whom a king's anger has blasted and rendered worthless. There is not one of them who would not be far more likely, if called upon, to aid than to resist the execution of the royal mandate. His only chance is, that some friend at court may have contrived to apprise him of his danger; and, in that case, if he choose to risk the consequences in order to gain time, he

places people in ambush to arrest and detain the courier, or to render him powerless by taking his commission from him. But, from the secrecy and expedition with which the orders of death are given and executed, it seldom happens that friends learn anything of them in time to convey an intimation to him; moreover, if the man is known to have reason to suspect that he has incurred the royal displeasure, great pains are taken and much contrivance exerted to lull his mind into security and take him off his guard. It is no uncommon thing, for the present of a royal robe to be sent him some eight days before that intended for his doom, which in his own eyes, and in that of all others, is the highest mark of favorable regard which the king himself can bestow.

Most of our readers will remember the conclusion which Haman formed, "that there was evil determined against him by the king," Esther 7:7, when the monarch rose hastily from the banquet of wine, and went out into the garden. At the present time, when the sovereign, in connection with the affairs of any great person, rises angrily and withdraws into the harem, it is a sure indication of determined evil, even if no sentence has been passed; and if sentence has been pronounced, it is a sign that there is no hope of moving the royal hand to mercy. Chardin relates, that when the shah Sefi felt offended at some unbecoming sarcasm which one of his favorites ventured to utter in his presence, he immediately rose and retired. Upon this, the courtier, seeing that he was a doomed man, went home in confusion, and, in a few hours afterwards, the king sent a "messenger of death" for his head.

Beheading

It may be remarked, that the king of Persia, as well as most other eastern monarchs, requires the head of a person who has been executed upon his sentence, out of his presence, to be brought to him, which, probably, originated in the determination to prevent any imposition, by enabling him actually to see that the doomed person, and no other instead of him, had been really put to death. Thus, as Herodias desired not merely that John the Baptist should be slain, but that his head should be brought to her; so Jehu had the heads of the members of Ahab's family brought to him in baskets from Samaria, and piled up in heaps at the palace gate in Jezreel. David, also, takes off the head of the slain champion of the Philistines, and carries it in his hand to king Saul; and, in the Apocryphal story of Judith, which may be cited in illustration of usages, Judith, after having slain Holofernes, takes off his head, and carries it away in her bag, that her countrymen may, by that unmistakable evidence, be satisfied that their redoubted enemy is, indeed, no more, Jdt 13:10. These circumstances show that the prevalent eastern usages respecting decapitation were familiar also in Biblical times, although the peculiar ideas which the Jews owed to the law of Moses, respecting the ceremonial pollution contracted by contact with the dead, and the regulation that no human remains should be publicly exposed after sundown, must have prevented among them those ghastly displays of festering heads, which disgust and horrify a traveler in the east, and which, it must be confessed, have only in recent times ceased in our own country. In the case of a distant execution, such as we have lately described, the necessity of taking the head back with him, to show that he has executed his commission, might be supposed to occasion some trouble to the messenger of death. But it is not so. The head is carefully pickled, and being neatly done up in a small bundle, the man carries it behind him on his saddle during his rapid journey home. In Persia it is not unusual, in time of war, for the king or prince in command to offer a reward, sometimes as high as five pounds, for every head of the enemy brought to him, and instances are on record of kings sitting in state to receive the heads, piled around in heaps by thousands, and

supervise the distribution of the reward. Under such a system, the soldiers will take care not to encumber themselves with prisoners, unless a higher prize is offered for a live enemy than for the head of a dead one. The heads thus accumulated are disposed in symmetrical heaps, as were those, doubtless, at the palace gate of Jezreel. It has been known that rebellious cities or provinces have been decimated by the exaction, after defeat or submission, of a pyramid of heads of given dimensions; and the dreadful indifference to human feelings which one has always to witness in despotic countries, is savagely manifested by the care of the executioners to reserve the most remarkable or picturesque head to crown the barbarous monument.

Eyes Removed

Under the same circumstances, instead of a pyramid of heads, a certain measure of eyes is exacted from a rebellious town, and the savage ferocity with which the royal officers scooped out the eyes of all they could lay hold of till they had the quantity required, and the grim satisfaction with which the monarch received the monstrous tax, are still remembered with horror in Persia; for such things have happened within the memory of living men. To this extent, such atrocities are not likely to be witnessed again, as the more humane character of the last two kings, and comparatively peaceful times, have rendered them of less frequent occurrence than they for many ages have been in Persia. Putting out the eyes has, however, until lately, been very common in individual cases. It is a belief in the east, that blindness incapacitates for the throne, and therefore, in Persia, it has, until the present century, been usual for the kings not, as in Turkey, to slay, but to blind those whose claims to the throne might possibly trouble the existing possessor. Hence, it was the rule for a king, on coming to the throne, to deprive all his brothers of sight, to incapacitate them from giving him any disturbance. A touching story is told of an English lady, who, in visiting the royal harem, encountered there a fine boy groping about with a handkerchief over his eyes; and, when asked his object, he said, "that he knew he should be deprived of sight when his father died, so he was just trying how he should like it." Truly, "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." This custom of blinding the eyes, in order to incapacitate for reigning, or to punish rebellion, is noticed in Scripture, and that too with reference to the Babylonians, whose regal customs seem to have had much resemblance to those of their neighbors, the Persians. It was thus that, when Zedekiah was taken as a prisoner to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, that conqueror who had made him king, and against whom he had revolted, punished him by slaying his children before his face, and directing his eyes to be darkened for ever—a barbarous conception, by which that heart-rending sight, the slaughter of his own sons, was rendered the last of his existence. The punishment of blinding has also been much resorted to in Persia, as well as the cutting out of the tongue, when the king has desired to inflict a punishment short of death, upon nobles and others who have excited his displeasure. Its most usual infliction is upon the chief partisans of a defeated competitor for the throne, but often for much lighter, and even for trivial offences. We will give one anecdote in illustration of this. Sir Harford Jones, who was envoy in Persia early in the present century, mentions that, on his arrival at Khesdt, he met again an old Persian friend, Zal Khan, who, since he saw him last, had been "deprived of two most precious organs, his eyes and his tongue." This person had been high in the favor and confidence of the king, Lutf Ali Khan, and when he was dispossessed of his throne, and slain by Aga Mohammed Khan, the founder of the present dynasty, this person fell into the hands of the conqueror. It is said that Aga Mohammed had at first no intention of injuring him; but, when Zal Khan stood in the

presence of the remorseless destroyer of his beloved master, he could not contain himself, and was so extremely unguarded in what he said, that the king, in a rage, ordered him to be thrown down and deprived of sight. This was done instantly; but, so far from being subdued, when the khan rose in his agony, with the blood streaming from his eyeless sockets, his language became more vehemently reproachful. The king then ordered his tongue to be cut out, saying, "We shall see whether this will not stop the fellow's abuse." It had that effect; for the operation was so performed, that is, by destroying half only of the tongue, that he was deprived of all utterance which could be understood. As soon, however, as he was released, and reached home, he had the resolution and fortitude to order the remaining part of his tongue to be extracted; and the result was, that he was then enabled not only to speak, but to articulate even better than he did before this infliction. So says Sir Harford Jones; but Sir John Malcolm, who also relates this incident, says, with more probability, that his utterance, although intelligible, was less distinct than it had been when he possessed his tongue. This, however extraordinary, is a physiological fact well known in Persia, and Zal Khan is far from being the only one who has availed himself of this expedient. Indeed, the previous knowledge of this startling result is shown in the resort which was, in this case, designedly made to the further operation.

Beard Removed

Among other punishments, not directed by any law, but inflicted arbitrarily by the royal order, is the loss of the beard, which, to a Persian, is as grievous and disgraceful as it could have been to the Israelitish ambassadors, who, after their beards had been shamefully taken from them by the Ammonitish king, could not make their appearance in the metropolis, but obtained permission to tarry at Jericho until their beards were grown. To a Persian, the beard appears the peculiar and proper ensign of dignity and manhood. The face of an adult male, without this natural appendage, seems to him shorn of its grace and honor, and is in his eyes unbecoming, effeminate, and ridiculous. He, therefore, loves and cherishes his beard; he treats it himself with respect, and resents the slightest indignity inflicted upon it by another. His wives, his children, and his friends, kiss it in testimony of respect. He swears by his beard, his friend's beard, and the beard of his king; and these are not regarded as among the least solemn of his oaths. He carefully gathers up the hairs which come from it in dressing, and counts them among his sacred treasures, to be placed with him in the tomb. To say of another, "I spit on his beard," is the greatest verbal insult one can inflict, and to do so, the greatest actual one. Some have been known to prefer death, and many would prefer blinding or mutilation, to the loss of it—so intolerable is the disgrace, so intense the shame. This is a state of feeling which fully illustrates the Scriptural allusions to the subject. It shows how it was that the king of Gath was perfectly convinced of David's madness, when he saw him let his spittle fall down upon his beard, 1 Samuel 21:13; it explains the friendship and respect which Joab intended to be understood as showing to Amasa, when, to put him off his guard, "he took him by the beard to kiss it," 2 Samuel 20:9; and it enables as clearly to understand how the king of the Ammonites was aware that his insult of the ambassadors was one which David could not possibly overlook, and which rendered war inevitable.

Mouth

Another disgraceful infliction—for it is not in the strict sense a punishment—is for the king to order anyone who speaks his mind too unreservedly, or to utter anything in his own defense, to be

smitten violently on the mouth. This is usually done with the thick iron-bound heel of the peculiar kind of shoe, or slipper, worn in Persia, and this increases the disgrace, as the shoe is considered mean and unworthy. It is so common, that "to eat shoe" has become a phrase to express it; and to tell another that he has eaten, or shall eat, or deserves to eat shoe, is a common and disgraceful insult. This may remind us of Paul's being smitten on the mouth, Acts 23:2-3, by command of the high-priest, when he spoke in his own defense, and may account for the peculiar warmth of indignation which the apostle manifested on that occasion. On the other hand, the king expresses his satisfaction, particularly at any gratifying poem, recitation, or utterance, by commanding the person's mouth to be filled with choice sweet meats, of which, by the bye, the Persians are inordinately fond. Whether there was any analogous custom among the Hebrews we cannot with certainty say; but there are expressions which, with the knowledge of the existence of the custom, may seem to refer to it, such as those in which it is a matter of favor and promise that the opened mouth shall be filled "with good things." But such expressions are, perhaps, too general to bear so special an application.

Confiscation

Every disgrace of a man in Persia fails not to carry with it the confiscation of wealth, and thus often produces a most terrible and prodigious reverse of fortune; for a man may, in one moment, be so utterly dispossessed of all he owned as to have absolutely nothing left. His very slaves are taken from him, and sometimes even his wives and his children. Everything is in a moment placed under sequestration in one part of his palace, and he is shut up in another utterly alone, like one in whom the plague-spot is seen, without a change of raiment, and, very possibly, without food or drink. All nature, so to speak, has risen against him, and he is often refused a cup of cold water, or a pipe of tobacco, under the pretext that it is not yet known whether the king will permit him to live. The doom, thus purposely made terrible at the moment of infliction, is commonly softened as time passes. The king deigns to make known that he may live; and, having asserted his power over the whole of his property, may graciously condescend to return some small portion to him. His family, some of his slaves, and part of his goods, are usually also, in the long run, restored to him, for which he is expected to be, and commonly is, very grateful. Enough is generally left him to live upon; and it not unfrequently happens that, after a time, he again wins favor at court, and is restored to the public employment. But when this is not done, and life is all that is granted him, it is usually, after some weeks of distress and doubt, intimated to his parents and friends that they are at liberty to afford him assistance without exciting the king's displeasure. An anecdote of the late king is related by Sir William Ouseley, which illustrates both the absolute power of the king in this respect, and the submission of the subject. We rather relate it as it has no unpleasant termination. The ameen-ed-doulah, or lord treasurer, had lately been honored with the highest mark of the royal favor, a dress of honor, when, one day, the king suddenly required from him an exact account of all his property—a question which was regarded by the courtiers as a certain prelude to his destruction. He answered, however, with a firm tone, that he could immediately furnish his majesty with 300,000 tomans (\$30,000 US dollars). and might be able, in the course of a few months, to add several thousands more. "But," said the king, "by selling all your horses, slaves, and other things, how much could you contrive to raise at once?" "Sire," said the ameen-ed-doulah, "if you indulge me with a little time, I shall deposit in the royal treasury a thousand tomans(\$80,000 US Dollars) for every day during a year." The king still seemed anxious

for instant payment, and the minister resigned himself to the fate which he saw impending, bowed to the ground, and declared that all his wealth and his head were at the disposal of his sovereign. "Now," said Futteh Ali Shah, "I have tried you, but without the least intention of taking from you the wealth you have so honorably acquired. Call here that descendant of the prophet Meerza Bozurg, (whom the king knew to be one of the ameen-ed-doulah's worst enemies), and let him witness my solemn words." He then imprecated a most dreadful curse on whatsoever person, whether himself or any of his family, who should attempt to deprive this minister of even one toman.

Philosophy of Life

It appears to us that a somewhat similar state of things must have grown up in Israel under the kings, and that this gives point and force to the frequent allusions in the Psalms and other books to the transitory and uncertain tenure of the most splendid earthly lot; for although this may be, and is, truly applicable to any state of society, it is in such a condition as this most vividly and constantly present to the mind. We, with our very different institutions, can hardly realize an idea of the habitual state of feeling in the man who knows, from day to day, that all his possessions, the comforts of all who are dear to him, his very life, depend upon the nod of one whose word, at any time of the night, drunk or sober, mad or sane, may decide his doom. In mixing ourselves, with persons thus circumstanced, we often tried to realize this feeling to our own mind; but beyond a certain point we could not go, it was too painful to look at steadily. Yet it troubles them little; they are used to such ideas from childhood, and the possibility of losing their property, their eyes, or their life, is looked upon as among the natural and necessary contingencies of their condition. It has much to do in the formation of the national character. It makes the great men live too much for the present, and renders them too regardless of the future. It makes them grasping on the one hand, and extravagant on the other—grasping to have the means of enjoyment and display, and extravagant to realize the present enjoyment, on the principle that this is all of which they are secure; and to increase the means of enjoyment, if hoarded, may be taken from them forever, without the gratification having been secured. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," is the motto of this kind of life.

If anyone doubt whether the same state of things did not, in some extent, exist under the Hebrew monarchy, he will do well to read the warning description which Samuel gives to the Israelites, of the nature of that kingly rule to which they desired subjection, 1 Samuel 8:11-18.

Gift of Clothing The bestowal of a *khelat*, or dress of honor, has been mentioned in the preceding pages, as the chief of the rewards and distinctions which a Persian king bestows. This matter is of sufficient Scriptural interest to claim particular notice. Its antiquity in Persia itself is there indicated. In Esther 6:7-9, we read: "For the man whom the king delighteth to honor, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor." This was designed to confer the highest possible distinction, and a station next to the king, the eminence of the honor being constituted by the fact that the articles were those of royal use. Of a similar nature were the distinctions conferred, at a more ancient date, upon Joseph in Egypt, who was arrayed in a dress of honor, in

which he was paraded in much state through the metropolis. Dresses were also bestowed by Joseph himself, as the ruler of Egypt, upon his brethren, a dress for each, except the favored Benjamin, on whom five were conferred, Genesis 45:22-23. Jonathan also, the king's son, is represented as divesting himself of his robe and his upper garment, even to his sword, his bow, and his girdle, principally, doubtless, in evidence of his affection, but partly to confer upon him the greater honor, as being apparel worn by himself. The New Testament also affords the instance of the wedding garment, or dress of the harem, which the king provided for his guests, and in which they could not neglect to appear without affronting him, Matthew 22:11. All these instances, particularly that in Esther, receive much illustration from present usages in Persia, and are conformable to the existing general rule, which is, that dresses are always presented by superiors to inferiors, and never by inferiors to superiors, who, however, receive from those below them almost every other kind of offering. The king, as already intimated, bestows dresses of honor not only upon those who are at court, but persons at a distance, and he does so annually, at the festival of the Nurooz, to the governors of provinces, in testimony of his approbation of their conduct; this being, in fact, the highest honor he can confer, and one which grants a degree of nobility to such as did not previously possess it. Mr. Morier describes the ceremony with which such a dress from the king was received by the prince of Shiraz. The prince went in his greatest state to Khelat^[7]Poushan, there to meet and to be invested with the dress of honor, which was sent to him by the king at the festival of Nurooz. All the circumstances attendant upon the reception of the khelat being the greatest criterions by which the public may judge of the degree of influence which the receiver has at court, every intrigue is exerted during the preparation of the royal khelat, that it may be as indicative of the royal favor as possible. The person who is the bearer of it,^[8] the expressions used in the firman^[9] announcing its having been conferred, and the nature of the khelat itself, are all circumstances which are discussed as matters of the most momentous importance and interest by the Persian public. The khelat usually consists of a kaba, or close coat, a bala push, or outer garment, a fine shawl for the head, and another for the girdle. If the khelat is designed to be splendid, the bala push is of gold brocade, and lined with fur, and the shawls are costly Indian ones; and when it is intended to be in all respects complete, and of the highest distinction, the articles composing it are exactly the same as those which the ancient Persian monarchs are described by the Greek historians as bestowing on those they designed to honor; namely, in addition to the dress, a horse with a golden bridle, a chain of gold, and a sword in a golden sheath. If any of these articles have been used by the king himself, the honor is the greater.

[7] At some distance from every great town, the capital of a province, is a village bearing this name or prefix, from its being the place to which the governor repairs to receive his khelat, or dress of honor.

[8] So the khelat of the man Ahasuerus purposed to honor was to be delivered "by one of the king's most noble princes."

[9] Edict of the King

Such, or nearly such, was the khelat which the prince of Shiraz received on the occasion described, and to the reception of which he therefore gave all the publicity he could devise. The prince himself was conspicuous by a parasol being borne over his head, which to this day is a

privilege allowed only to royalty, and is exemplified in the ancient sculpture at Persepolis, where the principal personage is frequently distinguished by a parasol carried over him. The road, about three miles, was strewn with roses, and watered; both of which are modes of doing honor to persons of distinction; and at very frequent intervals glass vases, filled with sugar, were broken under the horses' feet. The treading upon sugar is symbolical, in their estimation, of prosperity; the scattering of flowers was a ceremony performed in honor of Alexander on his entry into Babylon, and has, perhaps, some affinity to the custom of cutting down branches off the trees, and strewing them in the way, which was practiced upon our Savior's entry into Jerusalem.[10]Mark 11:8.

[10] So Morier, who does not seem to have been aware that this is the resource of those who have not had time to gather flowers, as for a prepared occasion. On emergencies of doing honor to an unexpected stranger, we have known occasions on which branches of trees have still been thus employed. Of the value attached to any article of dress or ornament which the sovereign has worn, some curious instances might be produced. Mr. Morier relates, that the Persian plenipotentiary employed to negotiate a treaty with Russia, was at first at a loss how to make himself equal in personal distinctions and numerous titles to the Russian negotiator; but recollecting that, previous to his departure, his sovereign had honored him by a present of one of his swords, and of a dagger set with precious stones, to wear which is a peculiar distinction in Persia, and, besides, had clothed him with one of his own shawl robes, a distinction of still greater value, he, therefore, designated himself in the preamble of his treaty as endowed with the special gifts of the monarch, lord of the dagger set with jewels, of the sword adorned with gems, and of the shawl coat already named. A curious passage in Sir Harford Jones' (Brydges) "Account of the Transactions of his Majesty's Mission to Persia, in the year 1807-1811," may be quoted as bearing upon this subject. The circumstance occurred just before Sir Harford quitted Persia. "The next day, one of the king's favorite Georgians brought me a piece of jewelry which the shah had once worn in his cap, with a patent authorizing me to wear it in Persia in my hat. This sort of agraffe[11] makes a considerable show, and may be worth from £200 to £300.[12] I now ventured to make a request to the shah, which was, that he would so far honor me as to give me one of the chook-e-bauroonee's[13] which he had worn, and particularly desired that it might be one without the gold agraffe. In the evening, Meerza Bozurg informed me, that the shah had determined to send me the next morning one of his cashmere shawl cloaks, with a diamond loop. I besought the Meerza to prevent this, as all I wished was something of but little value in itself, but would be of the highest value to me, as having been once on his majesty's person. On the day after this, to the surprise and astonishment of everybody, the shah appeared at the morning court in a common chook-e-bauroonee, and after sitting in it some time, he took it from his shoulders, and calling for Meerza Bozurg, said, "Take this as a mark of my highest favor to your friend the English minister."

[11] Clasp [12] \$27,377.50 to \$41,066.20 in U.S. Dollars [13] Literally, cloaks again rain

06. A Royal Day

A Royal Day

Chapter V An account of the manner in which the king of Persia spends his time—the history of his daily life, so far as it can be ascertained—will be interesting, not only as giving a view of the duties of an eastern sovereign, which are far heavier than is usually conceived, but because there is reason to suppose, indeed to know, that the manner of royal life was the same in ancient times, certainly with the Persian kings mentioned in Scripture, and substantially with the kings of Israel. This we gather from the frequency with which these customs of regal daily life remind us of incidents in the sacred book. And, further, the occurrence of so many analogies in what we do know of the life and occupations of the Hebrew kings, will suggest that similar resemblances probably existed in what we do not know; and hence that a view of the daily engagements of the Persian sovereign may assist us to a notion, which cannot be far wrong, of the daily history of the Hebrew kings. This is desirable, as, without some such parallel case, to serve as a framework for the dispersed Scriptural intimations, it is difficult to obtain a connected view of the information they are calculated to afford. The king of Persia, according to eastern custom, rises very early in the morning, 2 Samuel 15:2. Habit makes him wake at the usual hour; but if not, he is gently aroused, probably by music, that he may have time to take the bath, and to dress, before the hour of early morning prayer. As he sleeps in the interior apartments, or harem, to which no male approaches, his attendants are either females or eunuchs. After he has dressed, with their aid, and the customary prayer has been said, the king proceeds to the hall of the harem, where he holds a levée[14] for his domestic establishment. It is conducted nearly in the same manner as the outer public levées later in the day. The crowd of wives and slaves are arranged by female officers, according to the order of their precedency, all standing, except one or two of the most favored and highest born of his legitimate wives. This, and what then takes place, may help us to form some idea of the management of Solomon, and such other of the Hebrew kings as maintained establishments similar to those of the kings of Persia. All being duly arranged, the king receives the reports of those entrusted with the government of the harem, which is conducted by female officers, whose functions and titles answer to those of the public officers of state. The king seldom determines any matter of general concernment without taking counsel with his principal wives. The very young children are also present on this occasion. Sir Harford Jones says, that his information, from a person of good authority, led him to conclude that this interior levee is anything but an agreeable pastime for the king. “He has then so many jealousies to settle, so many pretensions to princely and other favors put forth to him, that perhaps, when the shah said to me one day, ‘Your Fringees (Europeans) ought to bless God that your law allows you but one wife,’ he spoke feelingly.”

[14] A formal reception held by the king at the beginning of the day. The king’s naushtcht, or breakfast, is now served, and if the ladies have not been too troublesome, in the same apartment where he has received them. If otherwise, he comes into a small room, between the private and public apartment of the palace, the same in which he gives private audience to his ministers before

the public court is held. The king's breakfast, like that of the Persians generally, is extremely light; nor does it consist of other things (though, perhaps, of a more choice quality) than that of a Persian gentleman in easy circumstances, except from being served in richer and more beautiful utensils, and with peculiar ceremony. Like other of the royal meals, it is prepared under the immediate superintendence of the Nauzir, or chief steward of the household. The viands are put into dishes of fine china, with silver covers, and placed in a close tray, which is locked and sealed by the steward. The tray, after being covered with a rich shawl, is taken to the king, in whose presence the steward breaks his own seal, and sets the dishes before him. These precautions are of ancient date, and existed at the time when it was the duty of Nehemiah to present the wine cup to the king. They originated, doubtless, in the suspicions which haunt the mind of the possessors of despotic power. Some of the infant princes are usually present at this meal, and are indulged with a participation of the repast.

After breakfast, the king gives private audience, about eight o'clock in summer, and nine in winter, to his ministers. There everything is settled that is to pass or to be performed at the approaching court; the king receives a report of what has occurred in the city, or of the intelligence that has arrived during the preceding night, and it is at this time that the ministers speak in behalf of any individual whose interest they have taken under their protection.

About eleven o'clock, generally, the king proceeds to the divan khoneh, which is a very large hall or room, open in front, elevated about four feet from the pavement, and enclosed by the walls of an oblong square court. This, no doubt, answers to the great ante-court in which was the hall or "porch," where Solomon's throne was set, and where he held his court, and administered justice, 1 Kings 7:7-9. For any lady, however exalted, to appear in this court of audience from the interior of the palace, would, at the present time, be as perilous as it was when Esther ventured thither with her maidens, and trembled for her life, till the king held forth to her his golden scepter, Esther 5:1-2. The king, if he be not on the throne, sits in the upper corner of the room, just at the edge of its elevation, so that the ministers, who stand on the pavement of the court below, may be at a convenient distance to hear him and to reply. The prime-minister stands separate from the rest, and nearest to the king. The persons expected to attend this court are the minister of state, the superior officers of the army and the court, and such governors and high officers of the provinces as happen to be in the metropolis. To these, on Friday (which is the Moslem sabbath), may be added the chief ecclesiastics, who may be sent for on other days, if wanted. If any of the king's sons or brothers be present, as some of them usually are, they all stand near the throne. No one sits—not even the heir-apparent—in the royal presence; all stand in a reverent posture. The only exception is made in favor of the two chief ecclesiastics, who, on the Friday attendance, are allowed to sit in the same room with the king, but only at a great distance from him. This reverent and orderly standing about the throne, and in presence of the king, affords a good idea of the Scriptural allusions to the subject. The reader will remember the particularity with which it is mentioned, that when Solomon's mother made her appearance before him, to prefer a request in behalf of Adonijah, he "sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother," 1 Kings 2:19; showing how unusual it was for any to sit in the king's presence.

It was thought a great concession to the age and infirmities of a famous prime-minister, in the early part of the present century, that he was allowed to use a staff to support him in his long standing at these levées. Yet Sir Harford Jones says, that he had seen him come home so weak and worn out

as to be obliged to be helped off his mule, and his kaimakan's (lieutenant's) legs so swollen, that when his boots were taken off they were disagreeable to look at, and were for some time afterwards very troublesome to him. The posture of respect is to stand motionless, with depressed eyelids, and hands laid over one another upon the breast, the right hand uppermost. At the court thus constituted, all presentations take place, all promotions are declared, all public honors are conferred, all public disgrace and punishment are inflicted, and the king expresses aloud those sentiments of approbation or displeasure which he desires to be promulgated. We have already sufficiently considered this last matter; but, in again alluding to it, we cannot but point out the erroneous impression the practice has made upon travelers as to the character of particular kings, and the barbarity of the people. But the practice of the king himself ordering all executions, and the court of audience being thus often rendered the scene of bloodshed, is deemed by the Persians themselves essential to the maintenance of the royal authority. It adds, they apprehend, in a very great degree, to the impression of terror which they think it necessary should be made upon the turbulent and refractory classes of the community. This court seldom continues longer than till half-past twelve o'clock; but, after it is over, the ministers and personal favorites of the kings attend him in the council chamber, where some time is spent, usually from one to two hours, in receiving the private orders of the king, and in considering such matters of state as may have grown out of the preceding public levée. When this is over, the king withdraws to the inner apartment already mentioned, where he is served with what used to be called a dinner, but with what, with reference to our own corresponding late hours of dining, may now be called a lunch. It is served with the same care as the breakfast; and, at this meal, such of the elder princes above ten years of age as are summoned by name appear. They do not partake of the meal, but attend standing, while their royal father eats and converses with them.

After this refreshment, the king withdraws to that short repose, or siesta, which the habit of early rising and the heat of the afternoon render necessary. This, also, is an old custom which we recognize in the Bible, which mentions the fact that Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, was privily slain during his afternoon repose, 2 Samuel 4:5, and which records that king David first beheld Bathsheba as he walked on the house-top, after rising from this short rest, 2 Samuel 11:2. From the siesta, the king rises in time for the evening prayer. Soon after this, he again appears in the public apartments, where the ministers, who may be designated as constituting his cabinet, again appear. This is considered as a *divan-e-khass*, or "particular court," to distinguish it from the *divan-e-aum*, or general court of the morning. This evening court is sometimes held in the balcony overlooking the great square of the palace, particularly when the household troops are reviewed, as is done when political business does not press.

It may be well to mention, that a Persian review was conducted on a plan entirely different from our own, until the comparatively recent introduction of European discipline, nor is the old plan yet altogether discarded in reviewing cavalry. The troops are assembled at one end of the square, the king's balcony being in the middle, in which, besides the king's ministers, are, on such occasions, the commanding officers of the troops to be reviewed. The commander holds in his hand a roll, containing a list of his men, and calls them, in a loud voice, consecutively, one by one. The man who hears himself summoned instantly starts his horse at full gallop, and brings him up suddenly upon his haunches immediately underneath the king, who examines the horse and rider with attention, and sometimes even speaks to the man. At a private signal from the king, if the man,

horse, and arms are approved, the commander calls out "Pass on," and the man slowly walks his horse to the other end of the square, where there is a gateway, at which he passes out. If disapproved, the officer calls out "Remain," and such persons retire to a distance opposite to the king; and, when all the rest have passed before him, they are re-examined. The ancient reviews of the east were of this character. Reviewing troops in line was unknown; and, in Scripture, when anything that can be supposed analogous to a military review is met with, the soldiers are said to "pass before" the king. Sometimes, instead of this review, the monarch takes a ride out, but this is seldom; the kings more generally prefer going occasionally to spend a day in the gardens, or in hunting or hawking.

After the evening court, the king again retires; but, when the time for the prayers at the close of the evening has passed, he appears again in public by candle-light. This is generally called the meglis-e-shah, or the king's assembly, at which none appear but the great ministers and privileged persons. Among the latter, the king's poet, and the court historian, seldom fail of being present. The former, who holds a high rank at court, composes odes in praise of the king, and celebrates, with grateful ardor, the munificence of his royal patron. The employment of "the historiographer" is to write the annals of the king's reign. The existence of such an officer among the ancient Persians is attested by the book of Esther, which states that the king Ahasuerus, during a sleepless night, commanded the annals of his reign to be read to him, and found there recorded a great service formerly rendered by Mordecai, the Jew. It seems to have been the same office which is mentioned with distinction in the reigns of David, Solomon, and other kings, as that of the "recorder," of the authorized translation. This evening assembly or court usually finishes about eight or nine o'clock, and the king is then served with what used to be called by European writers "supper," but which our own late habit of dining now induces us to call "dinner." It is served in the same manner as the breakfast, but is of different and more various materials. "We have here the advantage of a description of this meal which was given to Mr. Fraser by one of the Persian princes who were some years since in London. It is an account which only a person in his high station could supply, and has every mark of accuracy. We quote it, with some abridgment, as given in Mr. Fraser's book:—

"At another time, he would describe to me the habits and customs of the shah with his family, when they were assembled around him; and from the great number of his children and grandchildren, it was seldom that he had not such a family party. 'There is always,' said he, 'a large ante-room beyond that in which the shah sits, when he comes out from the harem. It is called the tumbel khaneh, or lounging room, because all those who waited here lounged and lolled at their ease; and there was a certain lady, one of his majesty's wives, named Sumbool Khânum, who had charge of it, and was therefore called Malikeh-e-tumbel-khaneh, or mistress of the lounging room. Here all the princes used to assemble till the king made his appearance in the chamber of reception and of eating.

"The king, when he issued forth, used to utter a loud yah ullah! which was well known to us all; and his majesty was always preceded by six peishkhidmuts, carrying silver candlesticks, and attended by a crowd of menials of all sorts. His majesty then walked gravely to the high corner, or place of state, where it was his wont to sit; took his place with becoming gravity, repeatedly stroking his fine long black beard, while muttering his religious sentences, and perhaps taking a single long whiff of his kaleon. After a while, the cloth was laid upon the carpet, and the trays of

silver and gold, covered with shawls and gold brocade, filled with all sorts of pillows and other dishes—which first had, according to custom, been paraded in the tumbel khaneh—were borne in by the peishkhidmuts in due order, and arranged in seemly fashion, under the directions of the same lady of the tumbel khaneh. This duty of the peishkhidmuts is by no means so simple or easy as you might think, for there is a prescribed mode of presenting the dishes and trays to great men, which must not be deviated from; and a peishkhidmut is considered to be a master of his business exactly in so far as he executes these duties of etiquette in a perfect or imperfect manner. He must hold the douree, or tray, straight out in his arms; and, kneeling down, must put it on the sofras (cloth) exactly in the prescribed position, without permitting it to decline at all from the horizontal, so that nothing may be spilled; and as these trays are often very heavy, you may imagine that it is not everyone who can perform this duty with grace and with correctness.

“When the dinner is all duly set forth, the shah, after washing his hand in a golden basin, with water poured from a jeweled ewer, and wiping them with a gold-embroidered handkerchief, would utter a loud Bismillah,[15] and begin to dip his fingers first into this dish, and then into that; and after making trial, as it were, to ascertain what was best, he would ask, “Where are the princes? Let them come in.” In a moment, all the princes would start up at this, and repair with their utmost speed to their proper places at the cloth. These were all known. Abbas Meerza, when present, as first in rank, would sit next his majesty, but yet with a space between; and the rest in succession, according to age and rank, to the amount often of a hundred or more. When all were standing, duly and respectfully in their places, another signal from his majesty would make them sit down, which was always done with the greatest ceremony and decorum, each keeping his eye reverently turned upon “the center of the universe.” During this time, his majesty would still continue picking a bit, till, all being in order, he would look up and give a nod, on which, in a moment, every man’s hand was in the dish next him, with which he was forced to content himself, for there was no stretching or scrambling before the king.

[15] In the name of God! used as a grace.

“In the mean time, a number of the shah’s women used to enter, each making a salaam, and arranging themselves like statues in mute and moveless silence around the hall, every eye turned to the lord of all this state.

“The princes all this time would sit in perfect silence, not daring to utter a word to one another; the shah would occasionally speak to the eldest prince at his side, but that was all. After a certain time, which custom had fixed, the eldest prince, whoever he might be, would give a sort of signal to those near him, who always rose at once, whether they had finished eating or not, and none could continue sitting after this; up they must get, were their hands in the choicest dish, or their fingers on the sweetest morsel, leave it they must; and all, bowing profoundly, must leave the presence, holding as best they might their greasy unwashed hands, for there is no washing before the king, but in the ante-chamber there are always a number of the king’s women, with basins and ewers, for the purposes of ablution after meals.

“The king would often continue picking and eating for half an hour after the princes went, for he was a great feeder; and dinner being concluded, he would smoke a kaleon, and rising with another great yah ullah! retire as he came to his ante-room, where, with the women about him, he would remain for some time. Frequently, he used to send for some of the princes again, who in that case

sat down with him, and spoke when they were spoken to, while the favorite ladies still continued to be present. Then it was often to engage with them at some game of skill or chance, at which it was the custom that he should always win. The records of travelers, and of the Persian historians themselves, show that many kings of a former day scrupled not to indulge in wine freely, even to excess, and without any attempt at concealment, notwithstanding that the drinking of wine is forbidden by the Mohammedan law. But none of the reigning family have as yet outraged the feelings of their subjects by so flagrant a transgression of one of the most stringent enactments of that code. Bowls, filled with sherbet, made of every kind of fruit, furnish the beverage for the royal meals; and as there are few nations, and certainly 110 eastern nations, in which more pains are bestowed than in Persia to gratify the palate with the most delicious viands, we have no reason to doubt that the royal fare is of a very satisfactory description. The king finally retires, for the night, into the interior of the harem. How he employs what remains of the evening is not, with certainty, known; but it was understood that Futteh Ali Shah—whose long reign makes him, though dead, the representative of royal habits to this age—was fond of being read to, and, probably, not seldom had read to him, like his ancient predecessor in Esther, the annals of his reign. It appears that he was also partial to vocal and instrumental music, like Solomon, Ecclesiastes 2:8; that he took pleasure in the conversation and society of such of the ladies of the harem as had agreeable voices, and could amuse with stories and tales; and that he was particularly gratified in hearing such of them as were adepts deliver the heroic, the lyrical, or the amatory poetry of Persia in recitative. As in general the Persians, like most other Orientals, retire to rest at what we should call an early hour, it is not likely that the king sits up late. It is seldom, however, that the Persians pass the whole night, as we do, in bed. They generally rise during the night, take coffee, or some refreshment, and then lie down again. They sometimes find it difficult to sleep after this, and we may remember that it was in the latter part of the night, or towards morning, that the sleeplessness of king Ahasuerus caused him to order that the records of his kingdom should be read to him, Esther 6:1. The Persians, generally, are fond of flowers and gardens, which are commonly plantations of shady trees and flowering shrubs, particularly roses, to which they are remarkably partial. These gardens are refreshed by streams and fountains, and furnished with elegant garden houses. Such gardens are sometimes very extensive, and the taste for the enjoyments which they offer is ancient in Persia. It was shared by Solomon, who, in the book of Ecclesiastes, says: "I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees," Ecclesiastes 2:5-6. Indeed, the pools ascribed to Solomon, in the neighborhood of Bethlehem, have much analogy to the pools which Persians provide for their gardens, and the site would have been a good one for a Persian "paradise," as their gardens were anciently called. In fact, the account which Josephus gives of Solomon's riding out to his gardens at Etham (probably those just mentioned) of a morning, in the midst of his richly appareled guards, affords a striking analogy to the visits of the Persian king to his suburban gardens. The delight which the ancient Persian princes took in their paradises is manifested in the pride with which the younger Cyrus led the Athenian ambassador over his plantations, and pointed out some trees, which he said he had planted with his own hands. The ambassador, on this, glanced somewhat incredulously at the luxurious attire and splendid ornaments of the prince; on which the latter, catching his meaning, swore by Mithras that there was not a day in which he tasted food until he had labored to fatigue in his garden.

Let us add, that in the ancient capitals of Persia, immense gardens are attached to the palaces themselves; but the present capital is a modern town, not affording the same extent of accommodation for gardens, whence the king has a country house and large gardens in the suburbs. There are, however, considerable gardens connected with the palace of Tehran, and in separate buildings in them, rather than in the house, the king frequently, in springtime and in summer, holds his evening court. The description with which the book of Esther opens, of an entertainment given by the king in the extensive garden court of his palace, clearly indicates that the alleys had a rich tessellated pavement, and that there were pillars of marble to support the rich awning which excluded the sun's rays. In that garden, the king gave a feast, for seven days, "unto all the people that were in Shushan, the palace;" and, during its continuance, the guests drank "royal wine" at pleasure, from "vessels" of gold. It is added, that "the drinking was according to the law; none did compel." No very recent example of royal garden entertainments, on this scale, is present to our recollection, probably from the habits of the existing race of kings being averse to this kind of expense and splendor. We find instances of it in the reign of the magnificent Shah Abbas, who was contemporary with our Elizabeth; and one of them is related by the chivalrous Sir Anthony Shirley. "Then he (the king) told me that I must recover my selfe, strengthen my minde, and come abroad, that he might feast me before my departure. For thirtie dayes continually the king made that feast in a great garden, of more than two miles compasse, under tents pitched by certaine small courses of running water, like divers rivers, where every man that would come was placed according to his degree, eyther under one or other tent, provided for abundantly with meat, fruit, and wine, drinking as they would, some moderately, some largely, without compulsion. A royaltie and splendour which I have not seene, nor shall see againe, but by the same king—ever to be praised for the constant antiquitie, if not for the reason of the expence;" by which remark, it appears that the ancient instances of the same practice were present to Sir Anthony's mind, and among them, doubtless, that recorded in the book of Esther. Indeed, "the constant antiquitie" of a large proportion of the Persian regal customs cannot fail to make a strong impression upon any well-read observer.

07. State Ceremonials

State Ceremonials

Chapter VI In the description which has been given of the Persian king's daily life, his appearance and ordinary attendance at his court have been represented. But, in order that the reader may have a complete idea of oriental state splendor and ceremony, it is necessary to describe the court as it is seen on some great occasion. The greatest and most magnificent solemnity, in which the king forms the principal figure, is the festival of Nurooz, celebrated at the vernal equinox. It is one of the most ancient institutions of Persia, and the sculptured procession on the great staircase of the ancient ruined palace of Persepolis is supposed to embody a representation of one of the most interesting circumstances of the solemnity—the presentation of the tributes and presents of the various provinces of the empire. The festival was anciently held to commemorate the commencement of the natural new year, by the entrance of the sun into the sign Aries; and so noted did it become in the ideas of the people and the habits of royalty, that the conversion of the nation to Mohammedanism, and the alteration of the commencement of the year by the adoption of the lunar calendar, were not sufficient to insure its abrogation, or even to diminish much of its splendor. Rather than give it up, the Persians have been content to endure from other Moslems the reproach of impiety, in the maintenance of a festival which originated with the fire-worshippers of old. They have, however, changed its ostensible object to a celebration of the election of Ali to the caliphate. It has, however, sustained some abridgment. It formerly lasted six days, but is now limited to three. The solemnities of the first day are the most important and magnificent, and the lively description of its circumstances, which Sir Robert Ker Porter has given, is that which, with some curtailment, we shall adopt.

“It was a fine morning, and at eight o'clock we mounted our horses, proceeding through narrow streets, and a part of the bazaar, which terminated at the outer gate of the ark.[16] After passing over an open space, we crossed the bridge of the citadel, and thence were conducted into a very large square. A dome-shaped building of wood, open to the eye, appeared in the middle of the place, and under its roof stood the enormous brass cannon which Chardin mentions having seen in the Maidan-ahab,[17] at Ispahan. It was brought from that capital several years ago, and stationed here, on three huge and apparently immovable carriage. Old guns, of various calibre, all equally awkward and unmanageable, and mingled with a few of modern fabric, stand round the sides of this central structure. Not far distant, about two hundred swivels lay in rows on the ground. They belonged to the camel corps, who were on duty to salute the king on his entrance into the great assembly of his people. And, indeed, it might well have that title, for persons of all ranks were thronged together within the walls of the outer court. Persians of the lowest orders, some decently attired, others in the rags of mendicants, khans in khelats (the robe of honor), covered with gold and brocade, servants in gorgeous coats, and soldiers in their military garbs—all pressed on each other in one equalizing mob. It was not practicable to get our horses through such a mass of human beings, so we dismounted at the entrance of the square, and following the necessity of shouldering our way to the opposite egress, tried, by that wedge-like motion, to make a passage to

the royal portal. Awe of the chief headsman did not widen the path an inch, neither did the hard-plied kicks of the chargé d'affaires' domestics in front effect the slightest breach; they might as well have battered a wall. However, we got through at last, with no small impression made upon our court-apparel, and the shawls of our waists rent into as many strips as we had tugs in our passage. Leaving the throng behind, we turned under a narrow and dark archway to a low and very small door, and entered through it at once upon the quarter of the palace. It showed a spacious area, shaded with trees, and intersected by water. In the center stood the splendid edifice, where his majesty was to sit to receive the homage of his subjects. We were led towards the southern aspect of this place the grand saloon fronting that way, where the ceremony of royal presentation was to be performed, and were carefully stationed at the point deemed best for seeing and hearing the great king. Before his majesty appeared, I had time to observe the disposition of the scene in which this illustrious personage was to act so conspicuous a part.

[16] Citadel, or palace.

[17] Royal square.

“Rows of high poplars, and of other trees, divide this immense court, or rather garden, into several avenues. That which runs along the midst of the garden is the widest, inclosing a narrow piece of still water, stretching from end to end, and animated here and there with a few little jets d’eau, the margins of which were spread with oranges, pears, apples, grapes, and dried fruit, all heaped on plates, set close together like a chain. Another slip of water faced diagonally the front of the palace, and its fountains being more direct in the view of the monarch, were of a greater magnificence and power, shooting up to a height of three or four feet—a sublimity of hydraulic art, which the Persians suppose cannot be equaled in any other country. Along the marble edges of the canal and fountains were also placed fruits of every description, in pyramids; and between each elevated range of plates with these their glowing contents, stood vases filled with flowers, of a beautiful fabric, in wax, that seemed to want nothing of nature but its perfume. In line, beyond these, was set a regular row of the finest china bowls, filled with sherbet. In the parallel files, down the sides of the wide central avenue, stood the khans and other Persians of rank, arrayed in their most costly attire, of gold and silver brocade, some of them wearing in addition the royal khelat, which usually consists of a pelisse lined with fine furs, and covered with the richest embroidery, their heads bound with cashmere shawls of every color and value.

“The royal procession made its appearance. First, the elder sons of the king entered, at the side on which we stood, Abbas Meerza taking the left of the whole, which brought him to the right of the throne. His brothers followed, till they nearly closed upon us. Directly opposite to this elder rank of princes, all grown to manhood, their younger brothers arranged themselves on the other side of the transverse water. They were all superbly habited, in the richest brocade vests and shawl-girdles, from the folds of which glittered the jeweled hilts of their daggers. Each wore a robe of gold stuff, lined and deeply collared with the most delicate sables, falling a little below the shoulder, and reaching to the calf of their leg. Around their black caps they also had wound the finest shawls. Every one of them, from the eldest to the youngest, wore bracelets of the most brilliant rubies and emeralds, just above the bend of the elbow.

“At some distance, near the front of the palace, appeared another range of highly revered personages—mullahs, astrologers, and other sages of this land of the east, clothed in their more

somber garments of religion and philosophy. There was no noise, no bustle of any kind; every person standing quietly in his place, awaiting the arrival of the monarch. At last, the sudden discharge of the swivels from the camel corps without, with the clang of trumpets, and I know not what congregation of uproarious sounds besides, announced that his majesty had entered the gate of the citadel. But the most extraordinary part of the clamor was the appalling roar of two huge elephants, trained to the express purpose of giving this note of the especial movements of the great king.

“He entered the saloon from the left, and advanced to the front of it, with an air and step which belonged entirely to a sovereign. I never before had beheld anything like such perfect majesty; and he seated himself on his throne with the same indescribable, unaffected dignity. Had there been any assumption in his manner, I could not have been so impressed. I should then have seen a man, though a king, theatrically acting his state: here I beheld a great sovereign, feeling himself as such, and he looked the majesty he felt.

“He was one blaze of jewels, which literally dazzled the sight on first looking at him; but the details of his dress were these:—A lofty tiara of three elevations was on his head, which shape appears to have been long peculiar to the crown of the great king. It was entirely composed of thickly set diamonds; pearls, rubies, and emeralds, so exquisitely disposed as to form a mixture of the most beautiful colors in the brilliant light reflected from its surface. Several black feathers, like the heron plume, were intermixed with the resplendent aigrettes of this truly imperial diadem, whose bending points were finished with pear-formed pearls of an immense size. The vesture was of gold tissue, nearly covered with a similar disposition of jewelry; and crossing the shoulders were two strings of pearls, probably the largest in the world. I call his dress a vesture, because it sat close to his person, from the neck to the bottom of the waist, showing a shape as noble as his air. At that point, it devolved downwards in loose drapery, like the usual Persian garment, and was of the same costly materials with the vest. But for splendor, nothing could exceed the broad bracelet round his arms, and the belt which encircled his waist; they actually blazed like fire, when the rays of the sun met them; and when we know the names derived from such excessive luster, we cannot be surprised at seeing such an effect. The jeweled band on the right arm was called ‘the mountain of light,’ and that on the left, ‘the sea of light.’

“The throne was of pure white marble, raised a few steps from the ground, and carpeted with shawls and cloth of gold, on which the king sat in the fashion of his country, his back supported by a large cushion, encased in a network of pearls. The spacious apartment in which this was erected is open in front, and supported by two twisted columns of white marble, fluted with gold. The interior was profusely decorated with carving, gilding, arabesque painting, and looking-glass, which latter material was interwoven with all other ornaments, gleaming and glittering in every part from the vaulted roof to the floor. Vases of water flowers, and others containing rose water, were arranged about the apartment.

“While the great king was approaching his throne, the whole assembly continued bowing their heads to the ground, till he had taken his place. A dead silence then ensued, the whole presenting a most magnificent and, indeed, awful appearance; the stillness being so profound among so vast a concourse, that the slightest rustling of the trees was heard, and the softest trickling of the water from the fountains into the canals.

“In the midst of this solemn stillness, while all eyes were fixed on the bright object before them; which sat, indeed as radiant and immovable as the image of Mithras itself, a sort of volley of words, bursting at one impulse from the mouths of the mullahs and astrologers, made me start, and interrupted my gaze. This strange oratory was a kind of heraldic enumeration of the great king’s titles, dominions, and glorious acts, with an appropriate panegyric on his courage, liberality, and extended power. When this was ended, all heads still bowing to the ground, and the air had ceased to vibrate with the sounds, there was a pause for about half a minute, and then his majesty spoke. The effect was even more startling than the sudden bursting forth of the mullahs; for this was like a voice from the tombs—so deep, so hollow, and at the same time so penetratingly loud. Having thus addressed his people, he looked towards the British chargé d’ affaires, with whom I stood, and then we moved forward to the front of the throne. The same awful voice, though in a lowered tone, spoke to him, and honored me with a gracious welcome to his dominions. After his majesty had put a few questions to me and received my answers, we fell back in our places, and were instantly served with bowls of a most delicious sherbet, which very grateful refreshment was followed by an attendant presenting to us a large silver tray, on which lay a heap of small coin, called a shy, of the same metal, mixed with a few pieces of gold. I imitated my friend in all these ceremonies, and held out both my hands to be filled with the royal largess, which, with no little difficulty, we passed through our festal trappings into our pockets.

“When the rest of the gratulatory compliments of the day had been tittered between the monarch and his assembled nobles, the chief executioner, our former herald, gave us the signal that all was over for that morning. We then retired, as we came, under his auspices, but, if possible, with still more pressure and heat, than we had battled through on our approach.”

We have not broken the continuity of this striking description by any remarks of our own, but a few may now be offered. The dazzling effect of the jeweled dress worn by the king on state occasions has been noticed by many travelers, aided, as that effect is, by the mass of jewelry presented by the cushion against which he leans. It reminds one of what Josephus states respecting that Herod (Agrippa) whose frightful death is recorded in Acts 12:21-23, where it is said that, “upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.” So Josephus adds to this information, that the blasphemous shout of the people, ascribing divine honors to the king, was extracted at the moment when his “royal apparel,” which is also specially noticed by the sacred writer, caught the sun’s rays, and shone with such dazzling radiance that the people broke forth into a shout of flattering adoration.

It is true that Josephus does not say that the effect was produced by jewels, but by a curiously wrought tissue of silver, doubtless like the silver brocade which Persian kings and princes still wear, but there is little reason to doubt that jewels contributed to the effect which was thus occasioned. The shout which the people then raised may very well bear comparison with “the strange outcry” raised when the Persian king, in all the dazzling glory of his attire, presented himself to his people; and the analogy extends somewhat further, as “the enumeration of the king’s titles, dominions, and glorious acts, and the panegyrics on his courage, liberality, and extended power,” contain very much which can be true of God only, and which, to our judgment, savors much of blasphemy and man-worship.

Here the thought occurs, that if frail human glory—the glory of a man that shall die—arrayed in vestures wrought by man's toil, can thus strike and overpower the sense, what must it be to witness “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ?” (Titus 2:13). It was, doubtless, the consciousness of the strong impression which even human glory may make, which caused the ancient belief that no man could look upon the Divine glory, and yet live. So when, in the year that king Uzziah died, the prophet “saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up” (Isaiah 6:1) and heard the hovering seraphims cry one unto another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isaiah 6:3) he at once cried out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). But when a seraph had touched his lips with a living coal from the altar, and said, “Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged” (Isaiah 6:7) he beheld that glorious vision undisturbed. So shall all who believe the gospel, redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb of God, and sanctified by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, behold, with undazzled and admiring eye, that unutterable glory in which our Lord abides, and in which he shall reappear—that glory, a mere glimpse of which struck the persecuting Saul, on his way to Damascus, blinded to the ground. In 2 Samuel 1:10, we read of “the bracelet” that was upon the arm of Saul, as being equally with his crown an ensign of his royalty. This shows the antiquity of this mark of royal dignity, of which the armlets of the Persian kings afford at this time the most conspicuous example. We also see them in the portraits of all the successive Mogul emperors. In fact, the very armlets worn by the king once belonged to them, being part of the spoil which was brought by Nadir Shah from Delhi.

It seems that even the “crown royal,” mentioned in the book of Esther, resembled in its materials and general appearance that now in use, as eastern fashions change little in this respect, and it answers to the general type of an ancient eastern crown which sculptures and coins afford. Probably, the crowns of the Hebrew kings themselves were not materially different. Sir Harford Jones, who was a good judge of jewelry, and had an opportunity of examining the Persian regalia at leisure, says, that it is excessively heavy; and in the account which he gives of his audience with the king, he relates, that after leaving the audience chamber, he happened to look back, and saw the king lifting the crown from his head, as if anxious to relieve himself of its great weight. This may remind us of the controversy respecting 1 Chronicles 20:2, where we are told that when David defeated the Ammonites, he took the crown of their king from off his head, and found it to weigh “a talent of gold,” and there were precious stones in it, and it was set upon David's head. This weight seems too great to be possible, and some have suggested that the value was that of a talent of gold, forgetting that gold did not till very long after that time become a standard of value.

Others suppose that the crown was not worn, but only held or suspended over the head of the king on great occasions. This is possible, we know from ancient authors that some such a custom did exist; but from the present instance we see that crowns of great weight are even now worn by eastern kings for a short time, on occasions of high ceremony. Sir Harford Jones attributes much of the weight of this particular crown to the massive character of the workmanship, and thinks it might be greatly diminished were the jewels that composed part of it reset by European workmen. He informs us that many of the stones are of very large size, but states that these, generally speaking, are more or less affected by imperfections, either in the water, color, or by flaws. But, he adds, “there are quantities, that is from twenty to forty carats, which are, perhaps, the finest

specimens in the world. The pearls employed round the edge of the crown, if their number be considered, are quite wonderful, and may certainly be pronounced unmatchable. The shield, the dagger, the sword, and the mace, correspond in value, beauty, and richness of display with the crown. On state occasions, such as the audience of ambassadors, here the shield, the mace, and the sword, are borne beside the takht or throne, on which the shah sits, by three of the handsomest Georgian gholams, whose dresses on this occasion glitter with gold and precious stones.”

After speaking of the armlets, which we have sufficiently noticed, he says, “Among the others, I was particularly struck with what I know not how to give the reader an idea of but by calling it the king’s tippet, as it is a covering for part of his back, his shoulders, and his arms, which is only used on the very highest occasions. It is a piece of pearl work, of the most beautiful pattern; the pearls are worked on velvet, but they stand so close together that little, if any, of the velvet is visible. It took me an hour to examine this single article, which I have no fear in saying cannot be matched in the world. The tassel, which, on such occasions, is appended to the state dagger, is formed of pearls of the most uncommon size and beauty; and the emerald, which forms the top of the tassel, is, perhaps, the largest perfect one in the world.” There is no doubt that so costly a collection of jewels does not exist elsewhere.

Sir Harford says, that for some days after having examined them, he attempted to make an estimate of their value, but he got so much confused in the recollection of their weight, and the allowances to be made in some of them for the imperfection of water and color, that he gave it up as impossible. He thinks, however, that he should not much mislead, if on a moderate, perhaps a low calculation, their value cannot be less than fifteen millions of our money! Startling as this statement of the value of “the peculiar treasure of kings” may be to the reader, he must be told that the crown jewels of Persia are in general estimated at a much higher rate. In reference to the statement, that when the king made his appearance, the whole assembly bowed their heads till he had taken his place on the throne, Mr. Morier is, we think, probably right in supposing that the manner in which the Persians bow to their king is the same as that in which David bowed to Saul, when he “stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself,” 1 Samuel 24:8; that is, not touching the earth with the face, but bowing with the body at right angles, the hands placed on the knees, and the legs somewhat asunder. It is only on remarkable occasions that the prostration of the Rouee Zemeen (the face to the earth) is made, which must be the falling “on the face to the earth,” and worshiping, as Joshua did, Joshua 5:14. The first day’s ceremony of the Nurooz has afforded occasion for these remarks; for the description of the ceremonies of another great day of that festival we must be indebted to Mr. Morier. The particulars well deserve attention, from the obvious antiquity of the usages which they embody, as represented not only in the sculptures of Persepolis, but in the tombs and temples of Egypt. The following are the words of Mr. Morier:—“The first ceremony was the introduction of the presents from the different provinces. That from Prince Hossein Ali Meerza, governor of Shiraz, came first. The master of the ceremonies walked up, having with him the conductor of the present, and an attendant, who, when the name and titles of the donor had been proclaimed, read aloud from a paper a list of the articles. The present from prince Hossein Ali consisted of a very long train of large trays, placed on men’s heads, on which were shawls, stuffs, pearls, etc.; then many trays, filled with sugar and sweetmeats; after that, many mules, laden with fruit. The next present was from Mohammed Ali

Khan, prince of Hamadan. He was the eldest born of the king's sons, but he had been deprived by his father of the succession, because his mother, a Georgian slave, was of an extraction less noble than that of the mothers of the younger princes. This present accorded with the character which is assigned to him; it consisted of pistols and spears, a string of one hundred camels, and as many mules. After this, came the present from the prince of Yezd, another of the king's sons, which consisted of shawls and the silken stuffs, the manufacture of his own town. Then followed that of the prince of Meshed. The last and most valuable was that from the Hajee Mohammed Hossein Khan, Ameen-ed-doulah. It consisted of fifty mules, each covered with a fine cashmere shawl, and each carrying a load of a thousand tomans. The other offerings had been lodged in the Sandeck Khoneh. This was conveyed in a different direction to the treasury. Each present, like the first, contained a portion of sugar and sweetmeats." This display, striking as it is, must be inconsiderable, compared with that which was made by the presentation of the products of "an hundred and seven-and-twenty provinces, from India even unto Ethiopia," Esther 1:1, over which the ancient kings ruled, brought by men in the various costumes and complexions which these different regions offered. It is the habit of the Orientals, on many occasions, to make the greatest possible display of such offerings, by distributing them among a large number of bearers. We see this here; for the last-mentioned present, we observe fifty mules employed conveying a quantity of gold coin which a quarter of the number might have carried without inconvenience. This consideration may enable us to assign a not too inordinate proportion to the "forty camels' burden" of presents which the sick king of Damascus sent to the prophet Elisha, 2 Kings 8:9. So important to the dignity of the crown is the extent and magnificence of this display considered, that it used to be hinted, as we remember in Persia, that when the governors of provinces did not send a sufficiently large amount of costly offerings, the king was in the habit of swelling the display from his own stores and treasures. In fact, in this very case, Sir Harford Jones declares a strong suspicion that the king lent out for the occasion most of the gold which formed the magnificent offering of Hajee Mohammed Hossein Khan. The whole matter is replete with Scriptural suggestions. It reminds us of the "present" which the Israelites sent by Ehud, at the head of many bearers, to their corpulent master, "Eglon, king of Moab," Judges 3:17-18. It suggests the kind of state with which Solomon received the same sort of "presents" from the neighboring tributary kings, who "brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year," 2 Chronicles 9:24; and it would seem that the prophetic imagery, which describes the kings and peoples of the earth as bringing their offerings and tributes to the foot of the Messiah's throne, is drawn from this characteristic of imperial power in the east.

"Thy rams are there, Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there; The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind, And Saba's spicy groves, pay tribute there." As far as possible, it is endeavored and expected that the presents should consist of the choicest products or manufactures of the province from which they come. Hence, the variety of the offerings, which renders them the more acceptable. Much pains has been bestowed in deciphering the nature of the gifts which the Persepolitan sculptures represent. It is seen that they may be ranged under certain general classes, consisting either of vessels of various forms and kinds, such as are now generally used in the east, and were, probably, carried full of spices and other precious commodities; or different articles of dress, such as shawls, robes, or furs; or ornaments, for instance, armlets (for such appear to be the little snakes carried by some of the figures), and necklaces, or various

implements, with the exception of weapons.

Others again carry esteemed fruits, of different kinds, especially in the shape of conserves, as appear by the form of the vessel, to resemble those in which such things are still usually kept in the east. Some men are seen leading up different animals—horses, camels, oxen, mules, sheep, and even wild asses, tamed, and led by an halter. The horse is sometimes figured single, sometimes yoked with another in a car. Each animal is evidently meant to denote a number of the same kind. Niebuhr asserts, that the remains of the uppermost row of figures contain that of a lioness, which, as well as the rest, is perfectly consistent with the manners and usages of the Orientals, and especially of the Persians, among whom wild animals, no less than tame, were customary presents to their kings. The former were kept in their parks for the chase, or even as curiosities; the latter were used to breed from, as well as for show. In some of the ancient satrapies, as that of Cilicia, a certain number of horses made part of the yearly tribute; and that the other articles described are still presented as offerings, is shown by the passage which has been quoted from Morier, with reference to the offerings of the Nurooz. The celebrations of that festival, besides those which have been described and illustrated, consist of various sports and races, the description of which would be of no interest to our readers.

Another occasion on which the king of Persia appears in much state, is on giving audience to foreign ambassadors. We possess descriptions of the first audience of most of our own ambassadors to the court of Persia. For some time, the ceremonial of these interviews has been settled by the precedent of the former examples. But these earlier occasions were signalized by much previous negotiation and discussion—the object on the Persian side being to induce the ambassador to be content with the least possible measure of respectful observance, and thereby to exalt the glory of the great king. It was much the same as in China, where so much pains was taken to make our ambassadors appear as tribute-bearers, and to extort from them some ceremonial acknowledgment of that character; while, on the English side, every pretension of the kind was strictly resisted, and the utmost consideration, consistent with respect for a sovereign presence, exacted. It is but just to the Persians to say, that they never expected any personal humiliation, as the Chinese demanded, and were, in the end, content that our envoys should appear before the shah with the same marks of respect as they would show to their own sovereign.

It is amusing to persons at home to read of the profound gravity and earnestness with which our envoys contended for the most trifling points of etiquette. But they were men who knew the Persian character well, and they were sensible that it was not for them to make light of matters to which the Persians themselves attached the most solemn importance, and that the slightest abatement of their claims to ceremonial consideration would have been regarded as a political triumph, and would have materially impaired their official respectability and influence. Therefore, how near the envoy should approach the royal presence—what should be the rank of his introducer—in, what kind of dress he should appear—and other points of the like nature, were debated between the king's ministers and the ambassador as matters of the gravest importance, and were not settled without protracted negotiation and controversy.

Sir Harford Jones had to resist a pretension to invest him with a Persian robe of honor, in which to appear before the king, which may suggest a thought of “the wedding garment,” in the parable of

the marriage of the king's son. An attempt was made to persuade Sir John Malcolm to appear in the dress worn by Englishmen during the reign of Elizabeth. A picture, supposed to be of Sir Anthony Shirley, in the full dress of that period, was produced; and this, from the immutability of their own customs, they innocently supposed to be still the dress in which a European should appear before a king. When the prime-minister was set right on this point, and was made acquainted with the great changes which our customs of dress were continually undergoing, he said, "Well, well; our manners and habits are so different from yours on this point, that the mistake is not surprising; and though I do not altogether like a usage that makes children laugh at the garments of their grandfathers, every country has a right to its own customs, and to these its representatives should adhere."

One ceremonial is so important as a mark of even common respect in the eyes of the Persians, though adverse to our own customs, that it could not be dispensed with, and our own ambassadors have generally had the good sense to submit to it. The Persians, when they enter any room, cast off their shoes or slippers, and leave them at the entrance, and remain in the woolen socks which they habitually wear, but, at royal audiences, in unsoled boots of red cloth, which are not used on any other occasion. This is first a matter of cleanliness; for, as they sit upon the floor, and eat from it, to tread with soiled shoes upon their carpets makes the same impression upon the Persians which we should experience were a visitor of our own to insist in treading upon our chairs and dining-tables. It is also considered a mark of civility and respect, to which they attach the same meaning as we do to the removal of our hats. In ordinary cases, it is sufficient to remove the slippers on entering a room; but, in reference to the king, whose person is regarded as giving a kind of sanctity to the place, and into the same room with whom hardly any one is admitted, it is expected that they should be cast off before reaching the spot where the king first becomes visible. Moses at the burning bush, and Joshua in the presence of "the captain of the Lord's host," were commanded to remove the shoes from their feet, because they stood on "holy ground." This intimates that among the Hebrews, also, the removal of the shoes was a mark of reverence and respect; but the instances show that it was a peculiar token of respect for the Divine presence. There are other allusions, however, which show that the usage was common; such as those in which John the Baptist declares himself unworthy to "stoop down and unloose," or "to bear," the shoes of Jesus, which expressions are derived from the acts of a servant in assisting his master to remove his shoes, and in taking charge of them when they are removed, on the occasions to which we have adverted. With these explanations, we may proceed to give an account of the first audience of an ambassador. It is to be noted, that the king and his ministers are anxious that the procession to the palace on such occasions should be as imposing and stately as possible, as the sovereign is considered to be honored in the eyes of his people by the magnificence which his visitors display. The best account of an approach to the audience is that given by Sir John Malcolm of his own embassy. It may afford some idea of the kind of sights with which the people of Jerusalem were often entertained during the reign of Solomon, when the princes and ambassadors of many lands came to render their tributes to that illustrious king, or to cultivate his friendship. And that Solomon's own court assumed on such occasions a state of the same kind as that of the Persian kings, is clear from the admiration with which the queen of Sheba regarded "the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel," 1 Kings 10:5.

“Everything being arranged, we proceeded towards the ‘threshold of the world’s glory,’ on the morning of the sixteenth of November, 1800. We were all dressed in our best attire. A crowd had assembled near the house of Hajee Ibrahim, and the streets were filled with gazers at the strangers; the infantry part of the escort, with their drums and fifes, and all the Hindostanee public servants, in scarlet and gold, preceded the elchee (ambassador), who rode a beautiful Arabian horse, richly caparisoned, but entirely in the English style; he was followed by the gentlemen of his suite, and his escort of cavalry.

“When we came within half a mile of the palace, all was silence and order. It was the state of Asia with the discipline of Europe. We passed through rows of men and horses, and even the latter appeared as if afraid to shake their heads. Many persons whom we saw in the first square of the citadel, before we entered the palace, were richly dressed, and some of the horses were decked out with bridles, saddles, and trappings of great value; but it was not until we had passed the last gate of the palace, and came into the garden in front of the king’s hall of audience—a highly ornamented and, spacious building—that we could form any idea of the splendor of the Persian Court. A canal flowed in the center of the garden, which supplied a number of fountains, to the right and left of which were broad paved walks, and beyond these were rows of trees. Between the trees and the high walls encircling the palace files of matchlock men were drawn up, and within the avenues, from the gate to the hall of audience, all the princes, nobles, courtiers, and officers of state, were marshaled in separate lines, according to their rank, from the lowest officer of the king’s guard, who occupied the place nearest the entrance, to the heir-apparent, Abbas Meerza, who stood on the right of his brothers, and within a few paces of the throne.

“There was not one person in all this array who had not a gold-hilted sword, a cashmere shawl around his cap, and another around his waist. Many of the princes and nobles were magnificently dressed, but all was forgotten as soon as the eye rested on the king. He appeared to be above the middle size, his age little more than thirty, his complexion rather fair; his features were regular and fine, with an expression denoting quickness and intelligence. His beard attracted much of our attention; it was full, black, and glossy, and flowed to his middle. His dress baffled all description. The ground of his robes was white; but he was so covered with jewels of an extraordinary size, and their splendor, from his being seated where the rays of the sun played upon them, was so dazzling, that it was impossible to distinguish the minute parts which combined to give such amazing brilliancy to his whole figure.” The ceremonies of an audience itself are, however, better indicated in the account which Sir William Ouseley gives of his brother, Sir Gore Ouseley’s, reception, and to that we recur. From this account, it seems that the ambassador and his suite, previously to being ushered into the presence, were detained in a small room, where they met some great men of the Persian court, were served with coffee and kaleons[18] and waited till it was announced that the king was on the throne, and ready to receive them. “We then passed through two or three courts, and some long passages, containing soldiers and attendants, dressed in an extraordinary manner, their clothes being spotted over with gold pieces of money, sequins and ducats, and many wore helmets of uncommon appearance. We at last entered the building in which was the hall of audience; and, having shaken off our slippers, went in about twenty yards, making profound obeisances, as instructed by our conductors, at certain intervals from the spot where first it was possible that the king should discern us; then, forming a line near the hawz, or reservoir, in front of the presence-chamber, we perceived his majesty seated on the takht-i-taous,

or 'peacock throne;' and when the master of the ceremonies announced the English embassy, we distinctly heard the usual 'khushamedid,' or 'welcome,' from the royal lips.

[18] A pipe, in which the tobacco-smoke is cooled by passing through water before it reaches the mouth.

"Having entered the hall of audience, the ambassador took his seat on a chair, placed at the distance of about two yards from the door, and five or six from the throne, in a direction almost diagonal, but rose after two or three minutes, and severally presented us; an office which, as we understood, the viziers (ministers) had hitherto insisted on performing. As each gentleman was introduced by name, the monarch said something highly flattering and gracious, with a courtly and dignified air. We then arranged ourselves in a row behind the chair, immediately near which the ambassador continued to stand during the remainder of the interview.

"Next the throne, which occupied a corner—not the center—of the room, were two little princes, five, or perhaps six years old, who stood immovable as statues the whole time of audience, displaying a gravity of demeanor and solemnity of countenance which would have become the most aged and venerable of their father's ministers. More remote from the throne, but in the same line, were five other princes, the eldest and tallest being next, at an interval of ten yards, to the little boys above mentioned, to whom succeeded the others, according to age and size, the royal rank of princes ending in one about eight or nine years of age.

"On the same side, but in a recess formed by large windows, appeared three mostowfies, or secretaries; these were on our left as we stood behind the ambassador's chair, while on our right, near the door, were four of the principal ministers. Beyond them, and extending towards the left side of the room, was a row of five or six officers, among whom one held a most beautiful crown, or taje, apparently not inferior in the luster of its jewels to that with which the monarch's head was so magnificently decorated; another of these officers bore in his hands the scimitar of state; a third held the royal bow in its case; and one a golden tray, or dish, filled with diamonds and different precious stones, of wonderful size and dazzling brilliancy. Of the king's dress, I could perceive that the color was scarlet, but to ascertain exactly the materials would have been difficult, from the profusion of large pearls that covered it in various places, and the multiplicity of jewels that sparkled all around, for the golden throne seemed studded at the sides with precious stones of every possible tint, and the back resembled a sun of glory, of which the radiation was imitated by diamonds, garnets, emeralds, and rubies. Of such, also, was chiefly composed the monarch's ample and most splendid crown, and the two figures of birds that ornamented the throne, one perched on each of its beautifully enameled shoulders.

"We remained in the royal presence about twenty minutes, during which Futteh Ali Shah conversed most graciously with the ambassador; and having received from a kneeling servant the state kaleon, rich in the luster of jewels, he inhaled its smoke but a moment, and gave back this precious instrument of Asiatic luxury. The room in which he sat was spacious and handsome, disfigured, however, by glaring oil paintings, of considerable size and very mean execution: two large English mirrors contributed much to its embellishment. We retired, bowing at certain intervals towards the throne, on our return through the garden, while there remained a possibility of our being seen by the king; then resuming our high-heeled slippers, we walked along courts and passages, and under narrow door-ways, crowded with servants, guards, and officers of the

palace, and great khans, or lords. Some men, whose office I neglected to inquire, held each in his hand a scepter, or slender wand, nearly four feet long, and apparently of gold enameled green, with the figure of a bird at top, as large as a real sparrow, and made of emeralds, rubies, and other jewels." The "peacock throne," mentioned in this extract, is different from that noticed in the account of the Nurooz. In fact, the Persian king has an assortment of thrones, each with a distinguishing name. But of these the peacock throne is the most splendid; and there is, probably, not in the world any other throne so costly and magnificent. Like the armlets and much of the other splendid articles of the Persian regalia, it is of the spoils brought from India by Nadir Shah. The figures of peacocks, in application to a throne, may bring to mind Solomon's similar use of lions, which, again, are actually figured in some representations of Egyptian thrones. Mr. Morier discovers other analogies, not, indeed, as to the peacock throne, but another much like it, but without the birds, and with less gorgeous jewelry, which the king often uses. He says, "The throne upon which the king sat was ascended by steps, upon which were painted dragons. It is surrounded with a balustrade, and the whole of it, which is overlaid with fine gold, beautifully enameled, we are told cost one hundred thousand tomans. The throne of Solomon was ascended by steps; there were stags on each side the sitting-place, and, what is its principal feature of resemblance, it was overlaid with pure gold," 2 Chronicles 9:17-18. The practice of providing a chair for European ambassadors has led to some alteration as to the manner in which the king presents himself to their notice. It seemed to infringe upon the king's dignity that his seat should be lower than theirs; and, therefore, the late king used a chair of state on such occasions. This is a sacrifice of comfort to dignity; for our posture of sitting in a chair, which throws the weight of the body upon the hams, is almost as distressing to a Persian, as the Persian mode of kneeling, and then sitting back upon the heels, is to a European. Nevertheless, although this seems an innovation, it is, in fact, a revival of an ancient Persian practice; for in the ancient sculptures, representing kings of Scriptural times, seated upon their thrones, the throne is a straight-backed and high arm-chair, not unlike those which were, at the beginning of the last century, used in England, and which are here again coming into use. The remarks of Sir William Ouseley on the staid demeanor of the little princes deserve attention. The truth is, that these young members of the royal family, and even the sons of nobles, are trained almost from the cradle into the proper observances of public life; and a mere child will, on public occasions, act with gravity, dignity, and manliness, most surprising to those to whom this experience is new. We have been struck with admiration in witnessing the inimitable propriety and fitness with which a mere boy has received visitors of distinction in the absence of his father, acting in all respects as his father would have done, and using the same delicately-shaded phrases of welcome and inquiry which he would have used. And this is no light matter, as the Persian language of ceremony abounds in phrases, particular words of which must have varied synonyms according to the rank of the person addressed. It made us cease to wonder at the dignified and becoming manner in which such a child as Joash seems to have gone through the trying ceremonies of an unusually stately coronation, at the early age of seven years, 2 Kings 11. The high-priest, when he saw that the fit time was come, appears to have had no misgivings as to the child's ability to observe the responsible solemnities of that great day.

08. A Coronation

A Coronation

Chapter VII A coronation scarcely possesses in the east the importance which has been attached to it in Europe. In this respect, the ideas of the ancient and the modern east are coincident; and so far as appears in Scripture, the coronation of the founder of a dynasty transmitted whatever rights it conferred, and whatever recognitions it involved, to his lineal descendants. It is seen that the unction, which was the special sign of investiture with royal authority among the Hebrews, was conferred only upon the first two kings, Saul and David; and subsequently upon Solomon and Joash, who ascended the throne under such circumstances that there was danger of their succession to the throne being forcibly disputed.

It may be well to point out the particulars which can be collected respecting the inauguration of the Hebrew kings in the first instance, that the reader may be able to discern at one glance the analogies and differences which the following account presents. The king, surrounded by his guards and officers of state, was conducted to some public place (in the later ages into the temple), and was there anointed by the high-priest with the sacred oil. It seems that he was then girded with a sword. This is not indeed explicitly mentioned, but is supposed to be alluded to in Psalms 45. That a scepter was presented to the new monarch, and a diadem placed upon his head, appears from 2 Samuel 1:10; Psalms 45:6; and Ezekiel 21:26. The covenant, which defined and fixed the principles on which the government was to be conducted, together with the book of the law, were then presented to him, and he took a solemn oath to rule in conformity therewith, 1 Samuel 10:25; 2 Samuel 5:3; 1 Chronicles 11:3; 2 Kings 11:12; 2 Chronicles 23:11; compare Deuteronomy 17:18. The principal men in the kingdom, the princes, elders, etc., then promised obedience on their part; and as a pledge of their determination to perform their engagement, they kissed, it appears, either the feet or the knees of the person inaugurated. After these ceremonies were completed, the new monarch was conducted into the city with great pomp, amid the acclamations of the people, and shouts of "Long live the king!" accompanied by music and songs of joy. Sacrifices were then offered, and were intended, probably, as a confirmation of the oath that had been taken.

It will be seen in the following account, that the coronation of a Persian king is a less public matter; and that it of necessity lacks those features which the law of Moses, and the freer constitution of the Hebrew state produced; but, apart from this, much may be found that is analogous or suggestive of analogy to the Hebrew coronations, and much also that bears upon those circumstances of ancient Persian regal state which the book of Esther indicates.

It is seemingly for the same reason that there are hardly any accounts, even among the native writers, much less among European historians and travelers, of a Persian king's coronation. Happily, however, one curious description has been left us by Chardin, in his large account (in French) of the coronation of the Sultan Sulieman, from which we abstract such details as may possibly be of interest to the reader. The description of the remarkable hall or chamber, in the

palace of Isfahan, in which the Persian ceremonial took place, is in itself interesting, from the scriptural correspondence which may be found in it; and with this, therefore, we begin.

Hard by the palace walls, opposite to one of the gates which lead to the grand entrance, is a detached apartment, in the form of a square, each side of which is eighty feet long. From the gate to this structure is a shady alley, formed by tolerably high plane-trees. Along this avenue, arranged at distances of ten or twelve feet, are stone mangers, to which, on high days of state ceremonial, are attached the choice horses of the royal stables, to the number of ten, twelve, or even more. These horses are then most gorgeously caparisoned. All their harness is covered with precious stones, and all the metal in it is of the finest gold; of which precious metal are also all the requisites of the stable, the chains, hooks, hammers, buckets, and curry-combs. To the right and left of the apartment are beds of flowers and trees, planted in the Persian taste, without any order or view to symmetrical effect. In the front, and on the south side, the garden is more extended both in length and breadth, and is divided into parterres and square spaces, separated from each other by trees, and gown with the various beautiful flowers cultivated in Persia. The apartment itself is almost entirely of joiners' work; its platform is raised about three feet above the level of the ground; its covering is flat, supported by many pillars of wood, twenty-eight or thirty feet high, and overlaid with thick gold; the ceiling is of wood, with pieces of inlaid work, forming compartments, enriched with gold.

It will be seen that this apartment is open on all sides, except when the curtains attached to the top of the column, even with the ceiling on the outside, are let down. But, when that is the case, they are not suffered to drop to the base of the columns, so as to enclose the apartments, but are attached, by cords, to the nearest trees in the garden, so that they are, at the extremities, ten feet from the ground, thus forming a grand awning around the apartment, which intercepts the rays of the sun, but allows free access of air, and leaves the view open to those who sit within, or who assemble there. The curtains are of red cloth, lined with fine India chintz, patterned in gay colors. The bands with which the curtains are strengthened, as well as the cords, are of rich silk. The body of the apartment is divided into three parts, by means of a breast-high balustrade of fine joinery, richly gilt. In other terms, the width of sixteen feet on each side the room is thus fenced off, forming two open chambers or enclosures, where the officers and courtiers stand during the state ceremonies, leaving free a wider central chamber for the royal and other illustrious personages, whose rank or office more immediately connects them with such solemnities. The central part is a kind of stage, elevated four feet above the side enclosures. In the midst of this is a fountain of white marble, supplied with clear water. All around the place is entirely gilt; and the gold is so thick, that although it had been laid on above a hundred years in the time of Chardin, it was not in the least degree tarnished or scaled in any part. The similar manner in which the solid parts of their sacred structures (the tabernacle and temple) were overlaid with gold by the Hebrews, renders these facts interesting. In modern use, there is precisely the same employment of the precious metal, and we witness the effect. In preparation for the coronation, the wide chambers were laid with silken carpets; but the central one had cloth of gold and silver, except along the sides, which were laid with a kind of velvet (the manufacture of which is peculiar to Persia), inwrought with silken flowers and foliage.

“On the spot which the monarch was to occupy was laid a mattress of silver brocade, upon which was placed an Indian coverlet, quilted with cloth of gold. “This overhangs the mattress, and is kept

in its place, at the two front corners, by two large apples of massive gold, set with precious stones. On this, at the upper part, was laid a cushion of cloth of gold, but so covered with jewels on the upper surface that their brilliancy concealed the material. The place was lighted up by fourteen golden lamps, not suspended or placed on tables as with us, but set upon stands as candelabra, ranged along the floor.”

Chardin gives a minute description of the magnificent ornaments employed in the coronation—the crown, the sword, and the dagger of state; but as these, if not the same, are similar to those which have been already noticed, in describing the appearance of the king on great occasions, it is not necessary to follow his account of them. He says nothing of the armlets which are now among the most distinguishing insignia of Persian royalty. He describes the throne, or chair of state, and gives a figure of it. It is different to those we have already noticed, and is so unsuited to the Persian habit of sitting, as to show that it would only be used for this special occasion. It is a somewhat rudely shaped stool, about three feet high, the legs and cross pieces of which are covered with gold, and thickly set with jewels. From its peculiar shape and rude construction, this seat is perhaps esteemed as having been from remote times used for coronation—like St. Edward’s chair, in which our own sovereigns are crowned. In fact, Chardin states that, when not required for this ceremony, it is kept with great care in the royal treasury, in the tower of the fortress of Isfahan. It is so heavy, that two men cannot carry it without difficulty.

Most ceremonies of state take place by day among the Persians; but the coronation of Shah Suffee was held between ten and eleven o’clock at night, as the chief astrologer had declared that to be the auspicious hour. Before ten, the king appeared in the hall of state in his customary attire, and proceeded to take his place on the seat prepared for him. The great officers of state, and the princes of the empire, also took their stations in the center chamber, while the side chambers were filled with officers standing, some to give the sanction of their presence to the coronation, and others to execute the orders of the high personages who took part in the ceremony.

Among them, the chief astrologer held no mean place. He appeared about ten o’clock, and announced that in twenty minutes the propitious moment would arrive. When all but a few minutes of that time had expired, the commander of the forces (answering to the captain of the host of the Hebrews), who took a leading part in the ceremony, stood up, and such of the great lords as had been seated arose at the same moment. The general cast himself on the ground at the king’s feet, upon his knees; and leaning his head towards the ground, drew from his bosom a small bag, containing a letter which the nobles of the realm had agreed to send to their monarch. The general opened the bag, took the letter out, and after respectfully kissing it and pressing it to his forehead, presented it to the king. He received it, but returned it immediately to the bearer, directing him to open and read it. This he did, in a loud and distinct voice, so that everyone present might hear what it contained, and learn from it that the grandees of the empire had, with one consent, chosen the prince then present to be king of Persia, that they acknowledged him as such, and would attest that acknowledgment whenever required. This form of nomination, in such a government as that of Persia, is, under all the circumstances, very remarkable. But something similar seems to exist under all monarchical governments, and may be traced even in the Hebrew monarchies. When the general had finished reading the letter, the king commanded him to call in the sheikh-el-islam, or chief of the law. This venerable functionary then came forward, and after having prostrated himself before the monarch, with the customary salutation, he arose, and the letter was placed in his

hands, that he might give the authority of his sanction and recognition. He read it with attention, carefully examined all the seals, and then placed it before the king; signifying by an inclination of his head and subsequent prostration, that he approved of the letter, and that it was a correctly legal document. The general then addressed the king, and asked him whether it would please him to be crowned by the name he had hitherto borne, or by any other. The king answered, that in changing his station, he had no desire to alter his name, and that he would retain that which had been given him in his infancy. The question seems to recognize the fact, of which there are intimations in Scripture, that it was not unusual for a prince to take a new name on ascending the throne. In fact, this very king, sometime after, having taken up the notion that his name of Suffee was unfortunate, caused himself to be re-crowned under the name of Sulieman.

Having received an answer, the sheikh-el-islam and the general conducted the king to the golden stool already described, which was placed in the center of the chamber. On this, the young prince seated himself, with his face turned towards Mecca. The sheikh-el-islam then seated himself reverently upon his heels, a few steps from the king, and with the royal ornaments displayed before him, began to pray, invoking a blessing upon the ceremonial and upon these insignia of royal power. He then arose, and approaching the king, girded to his left side the sword of state, and placed the poniard in his girdle. He then motioned the grand-chamberlain to remove the king's cap, and set upon his head the crown, repeating, as he did so, some verses of the Koran, appropriate to the occasion. The sheikh-el-islam then gave place to a great and learned doctor, called Meerza Refia, who had been appointed to deliver the kothbeh, a word applied to a prayer merging into an harangue. By immemorial custom, these exercises are to consist of four parts, each part always comprising the same substantial matter, varied only in the style and the turn of the thoughts. The first portion is distinguished by a word signifying, Praise to God (hnamd-khoda), and it is to express nothing else but thanks for all his benefits, "seeing that there is not a moment in which we do not receive from His goodness some new and special mercy—His bounties being as the sources of great rivers, which flow continually and know no exhaustion; and seeing that all His dealings with man in past and present times—all that has ever proceeded from Him, have exhibited the impress of his love." The second part is devoted to the laudation of Mohammed and his twelve descendants, whom the Persians greatly venerate. The third part is in praise of royalty, and in this the high notions which the Persians entertain of sovereign power are strongly set forth. Royalty is treated as a Divine institution, and kings are God's lieutenants and representatives in the government of the world. The king is "the shadow of God" (zil ullah), to obey him is to obey God; and to oppose him is to resist the ordinance which has placed the sword of power in his hands. The fourth and last part was a prayer for the king. This contained supplications for the long life, health, and prosperity of the monarch then present, that, "since this sacred scion of the Imaamic race is, according to the true law, the only lieutenant of the monarch of all the earth and true lord of the world, his dominion may extend from pole to pole; that his majesty may always shine forth unclouded and glorious as the sun; that his enemies may be as the dust beneath his feet; that all his wishes may take effect; and that all this may be accomplished more gloriously than in any former time, in favor of Shah Suffee!" The climax was uttered in a very loud voice, that all might hear the words distinctly. Till then, the name of the king had not been pronounced throughout the ceremony. The instant that name was heard, the whole assembly broke forth in loud acclaiming responses of "So be it!"—"May God grant it!" which every one repeated five or six times. This being over, the sheikh-el-islam went and presented himself on his knees before the

king, and bowing his face three times to the ground, pronounced a solemn benediction, concluded with ardent wishes for the prosperity of the sovereign, that his reign might render all his subjects happy, and widely extend the boundaries of the empire.

After this, all the lords and great officers then present came forward, in due order, and paid their respects to their sovereign, by the usual profound obeisances before him. When this was ended, the king arose from the golden stool, and resumed his former place upon the mattress. All the grandees then also returned to their seats; for all but the king had remained standing during this august and imposing ceremonial. The mention of the important part taken by the chief astrologer on the occasion of this coronation, reminds us that we may not have sufficiently indicated the degree in which the Persian court and people are, beyond any other, even in the east, inclined to place their faith upon the vain science of the stars. The head astrologer is, as we have just seen, a great man at court—one of the few who enjoy the privilege of being seated in the presence of the sovereign; and all the royal movements of the slightest consequence are regulated in conformity with his indications. The “star-gazers” and “monthly prognosticators,” as the prophet derisively calls this sort of people, hold the whole nation under a yoke often harder than that of its kings, but to which superstition insures a ready and cheerful obedience. A very slight knowledge of astronomy is sufficient to enable a Persian student to set up for an astrologer and an interpreter of the destinies imagined to be revealed in the stars. If a person can take an altitude with an astrolabe, knows the names of the planets and their different “mansions,” is master of a few technical phrases, and can understand the astrological almanacs that are published every year, he deems himself entitled to offer his services to all who wish to consult him, and that includes everyone in Persia who has the means to reward his skill. This is very sad, and yet somewhat amusing; but, before we laugh too loudly at this folly of the Persians, let us remember that we also have astrological almanacs published every year, and that, in the metropolis of our own empire, there are several booksellers who deal exclusively in astrological works, and who thrive by their trade. In Persia, nothing is done by a man of any consequence or property without reference to the stars. If any measure is to be adopted, if a voyage or journey is to be commenced, if a new dress is to be put on, the “lucky or unlucky moment” must be discovered, and the almanac and astrologer are consulted. A person wishing to commence a journey will not allow a fortunate day to escape, even though he is not ready to set out. He leaves his own house at the moment considered propitious, and remains till he can actually proceed in some incommodious lodging in the vicinity, satisfied that he has, by quitting his house, secured all the benefit which the influence of good stars can afford him.

Some years ago, when a Persian ambassador was about to proceed to India, he was informed by his astrologer of a most fortunate conjunction of the stars, which, if missed, was not likely to occur again for some months. He instantly determined that, although he could not embark, as the ship was not ready, he would proceed from his house, in the town of Bushire, to his tents, which were pitched at a village five miles off to receive him. It was, however, discovered by the astrologer that he could neither go out at the door of his own dwelling, nor at the gate of the fort, as an invisible but baneful constellation was exactly opposite, and shed a dangerous influence in that direction. To remedy this, a large aperture was made in the wall of his house, but that only opened into his neighbor's, and four or five more walls had to be cut through before the ambassador and his friends (who included the principal men that were to accompany him) could reach the street. They

then went to the beach, where it was intended to take a boat and proceed two miles out to sea, in order that their backs might be turned upon the dreaded constellation; but the sea was rough, and the party hesitated to encounter a real danger in order to avoid an imaginary one. In this dilemma, the governor was solicited to allow a portion of the wall of the town to be thrown down, that a mission on which so much depended might not be exposed to misfortune. This request, extraordinary as it may appear, was complied with, and the cavalcade marched over the beach to their tents. The astrologer rode near the ambassador, that he might continually remind him of the great importance of keeping his head in one position; and by this aid he was enabled to reach his tents without any occurrence that could disturb the good fortune which was augured to result from his having departed from home at the propitious moment. The ambassador's conduct in this instance, while it satisfied his own mind, met, no doubt, with the approbation of his court, gave confidence to his attendants, and, absurd as it seems to us, was regarded generally as a measure of much sagacity and prudence; for, as has been stated, the natives of Persia, from the highest to the lowest, have the most implicit faith in this delusive science. It is, however, to be remembered, that many of those whose occupation it is to observe the aspect of the stars, and to calculate nativities, are not the dupes of their own knowledge. Their object is gain, and they make their art subservient to that object. They flatter the ruling passion of those who consult them; and, if apparently compelled to forebode misfortune, it is often with no other view than to point out how it may be averted.

Malcolm, to whom we owe most of these particulars respecting Persian astrology, says, "When I visited Teheran, in 1800, I found that almost all the Persians in my camp were satisfied that the success or failure of my mission would depend, in no slight degree, upon my entering the capital at a fortunate moment. One of my Persian secretaries, who had consulted an astrologer, rode near me, as I approached the gateway, with a watch in his hand; and, as I did not refuse to gratify him by moving in a slight degree quicker or slower as he wished, my horse stepped over the threshold of the gateway at the very instant desired. This circumstance gave great joy to all the Persians who were friendly to the mission, as they anticipated more success from my attention to this trifle than from all the other efforts I could make."

It may, nevertheless, be regretted that any professedly Christian ambassador should give even this sort of sanction to so gross and dangerous a superstition. We should have liked to have seen whether even this deluded people would not have been quite as favorable, and perhaps more favorably impressed, by hearing a British ambassador declare that he cared for none of these things, but looked for prosperity through God's blessing upon negotiations which had for their object the welfare of two powerful nations. That would have been a testimony. The reader will have perceived throughout the preceding pages, the profound veneration, the almost idolatrous homage, which is in Persia paid to the person of the sovereign, and to whatever has any direct connection with him. We see this in all the eastern despotisms, but in scarcely any, not perhaps even in China, is this more distinctly marked than in Persia. It is thought that the nature of absolute power requires that it should be supported by a continual revival of the impression of its high and almost sacred character; and hence, many of the Persian usages are framed to produce this effect. Everything connected with the royal name or authority is treated with a respect which is increased by the form which attends it. If, as we have seen, the king sends an honorary dress, the person for whom it is intended must proceed several miles to meet it, and clothe himself in his

robes of favor with every mark of gratitude and submission. If a firman, or mandate, is written by the monarch to one of the officers of his government, it is also to be met at a distance by the person to whom it is addressed, who, after raising it to his head, gives it to his secretary to read, and all stand in respectful silence till the perusal is finished. If a minister has occasion to mention the king, it is not unusual, after inserting all his titles, to leave a blank, and to write the royal name at the top of the letter, lest it should be degraded by having even a word above it. A curious illustration of this principle is given by Malcolm, respecting a picture of the king (Futteh Ali Shah), which was sent to the ruler of Scind. "It was enclosed in a case, and nailed down on a litter carried by two mules; but, though not visible, it was deemed entitled to the respectful homage of his subjects in those countries through which it passed. On the approach of the picture to Abushehr (Bushire), the governor of that part, with all his troops and attendants, went a stage to pay his obeisance! When it came near, they dismounted from their horses, and walked forward to meet it on foot; the governor kissed the conveyance, in token of his devotion to that which it contained, and accompanied it to Abushehr, where it was welcomed with salutes, and the inhabitants of the town were commanded to show every demonstration of joy upon this happy occasion. We observe with pleasure, that it is stated in a note that a British officer, who was at that time residing at Bushire, in a high public station, declined to take part in the ceremonies—doubtless from a natural repugnance to this kind of man-worship. Yet, a few years after, the Persians saw a British ambassador landing at the same place, and directing that the same kind of homage should be paid to the letter of his own sovereign, with which he was entrusted. The alleged object was "to raise the character of the mission in the eyes of the Persians;" and we are informed that it had that result; but it may be wished that some less illusory means of producing that effect had been discovered. It was, however, in entire and studied conformity with the Persian ideas of the reverence due to whatever emanates from the sovereign.

09. The Royal Household

The Royal Household

Chapter VIII

Having said so much of what is done in the royal residence, some notice of that building may not be unacceptable. In the general disposition of parts, it is like all other palaces of Persia, but is much inferior to those of Isfahan and Shiraz; and, as the ruins of Persepolis attest, immeasurably so to the abodes of the ancient kings, being altogether wanting in that substantiality of structure and costliness of material which are usually associated with the idea of a royal residence; and the impression made by these circumstances is strengthened by the miserably tawdry style of the internal decorations. This Sir William Ouseley very properly characterizes in his notice of the audience chamber; and Mr. Frazer still more distinctly and perfectly in accordance with our own impression. "The splendor of Persian palaces consists in quantities of tawdry gilding, painting, and enamel, with an infinite multitude of little mirrors, inlaid work of glass, painted glass windows, and a whole crystal shop of lustres, lamps, vases, and fancy ornaments of cut glass. Nothing more frippery can be imagined; and, although the first effect be rich and glittering, it will not bear inspection." The general plan of this, as of all other oriental palaces, and, doubtless, of those of the ancient Persian and even of the Hebrew kings, is that of a succession of courts, separated from each other by high walls or ranges of building. The courts themselves are adorned with reservoirs or rectangular tanks of water, paved walks, bordered with plane-trees, and having flower-beds between.

There are three halls of reception, the largest of which is thirty-five feet by twenty-five. It stands on a range between two courts, and on the sides looking out upon them is entirely open from the ceiling to the floor, the roof being supported on these sides by tall wooden columns, and the room protected by ample curtains hanging from the roof, and capable of being raised or lowered at pleasure. The two extremities of this room consist of deep recesses, covered with small mirrors, placed at a very great number of angles, and presenting to the beholder a thousand images of himself at once.

Another of these rooms has its walls on three sides covered with mirrors, and is open on the fourth. The third room has a beautiful window of stained glass on one side, and a large fountain, entirely of glass, in the center. The principal hall of reception, where the shah appears on great public occasions, opens on another court, and is the best arranged room in the building; it usually contains the marble throne already mentioned, which is supported by human figures of the same material; and the open front of the room itself, looking upon the court, is adorned with five marble columns. This sufficiently describes the part of the palace which may be examined by strangers in the absence of the court; but there is a large portion which no man is ever permitted to enter, forming the harem, inhabited by the female part of the royal establishment, of which no description can be given. It may, however, be collected from comparison with other palaces, and from the reports of ladies who have been admitted to visit the inmates, that the apartments are arranged on

the same plan as in the more public part, but with, generally, smaller rooms, and less of what is considered splendor of decoration. The building, taken on the whole, conveys no very exalted idea of Persian magnificence. The exterior is altogether destitute of any pretensions to architectural beauty. But the extent of ground covered by them is very great, comprising, as the structure does, not only the royal residence, but quarters for the guards, and many extensive ranges of apartments. Among these are the record chamber, which was also in ancient times contained in the palace, Ezra 6:2; the treasure chamber, Ezra 6:1; the “palace of the sun,” where the king sometimes receives ambassadors; also private chambers, one of which bears the remarkable name of “the palace of the cypress grove,” which is a remarkable analogy to Solomon’s “house of the forest of Lebanon;” and another bears the name of the Gulistan, or “bed of roses.” There are also ten baths, and two or three gardens; and when, to all this, we add the buildings necessary for the accommodation of the numerous females (at one time from eight hundred to one thousand) who, under Futteh Ali’s reign, constituted the royal harem, we may form some idea, not only of the extent of the building, but of the vast supplies of provisions required daily for the support of the royal establishment. On this last point, the analogy to Solomon’s establishment is, no doubt, very perfect. According to 1 Kings 4:22-23, the provision which that great monarch’s household required for one day was, “thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl.”

We are not able to supply a corresponding account of the consumption of the modern Persian palace; but, which is perhaps better, we can give one of the consumption of an ancient Persian establishment, even that of Cyrus. Polysenus relates, “In the palace of the Persian monarch, Alexander read a bill of fare for the king’s dinner and supper, that was engraved on a column of brass, on which were also other regulations which Cyrus had directed. It ran thus:

‘Of fine wheat flour, four hundred artabae (a medium artaba is an Attic medimnus[Equal to about 11¾ gallons].);

of second flour, three hundred artabae;

and of third flour, the same—in the whole, one thousand artabae of wheat flour for supper.

Of the finest barley flour, two hundred artabae;

of the second, four hundred;

and four hundred of the third—in all, one thousand artabae of barley flour.

Of oatmeal, two hundred artabae.

Of paste, mixed for pastry of different kinds, ten artabae.

Of cresses, chopped small and sifted, and formed into a kind of ptisan, ten artabae.

Of mustard-seed, the third of an artaba.

Male sheep, four hundred.

Oxen, a hundred.

Horses, thirty.

Fat geese, four hundred.

Doves, three hundred.

Small birds of different kinds, six hundred.

Lambs, three hundred.

Goslings, a hundred.

Thirty head of deer.

Of new milk, ten marises (a maris contains ten Attic choes [Therefore now equal to 7½ gallons]).

Of milk whey, sweetened, ten marises.

Of garlic, a talent's worth.

Of strong onions, half a talent's worth.

Of knot grass, an artaba.

Of the juice of benzoin, two minae.

Of cumin, an artaba.

Of benzoin a talent's worth.

Of rich cider, the fourth of an artaba.

Of compound juices, one artaba.

Of cumin paste, the fourth of an artaba.

Of millet-seed, three talent's worth.

Of anise flowers, three minae.[A mina is about 15 1/6oz. avoirdupois.]

Of coriander-seed, the third of an artaba.

Of melon-seed, two capises (a capise is an Attic choenix [Nearly a quart.]).

Of parsnips, ten artabae.

Of sweet wine, five marises.

Of salted gongylis, five marises.

Of pickled capers, five marises.

Of salt, ten artabse.

Of Ethiopian cumin, six capises.

Of dried anise, thirty minse.

Of parsley-seed, four capises.

Oil of sisamin, ten marises.

Cream, five marises.

Oil of cinnamon, five marises.

Oil of acanthus, five marises.

Oil of sweet almonds, three marises.

Of dried sweet almonds, three artabae.

Of wine, five hundred marises (and if he supped at Babylon or Susa, one half was palm wine, and the other half wine expressed from grapes).

Two hundred loads of dry wood,
and one hundred loads of green.

Of fluid honey, a hundred square plathae(containing the weight of about ten minae).

When he was in Media, there was to be added, of bastard saffron-seed, three artabae. Of saffron, two micas.

This was the appointment for dinner and supper. He also expended in largesses, of fine barley, a thousand artabae;

and of other kind of flour, a thousand artabae.

Of rice, five hundred artabae.

Of corn, five hundred marises.

Of corn for the horses, twenty thousand artabae.

Of straw, three thousand loads.[Chopped straw, for the food of the horses; doubtless "the load" throughout must be understood as a mule or horse-load, not a cart-load, as the term may suggest to the English reader.]

Of vetches, five thousand loads.

Of oil of sisamin, two hundred marises.

Of vinegar, a hundred marises.

Of cresses, chopped small, thirty artabae.

All that is here enumerated was distributed among the forces that attended him. In dinner, in supper, and in largesses, the above was the king's daily expenditure." This document is curious and interesting, for the information which it affords respecting the kinds of provisions supplied to these ancient courts, and the vast extent of the regal establishments. Its authenticity receives corroboration from the fact that most of the articles enumerated in the record are such as the ancient dominions of Persia supplied, and such as essentially agree with the dietary still in use in

the same countries. Some of the items are curious, such as thirty horses, and would afford occasion for much remark, from which the necessary limits of this small volume warn us to abstain.

It is added: "While the Macedonians read this appointment of the Persian monarch's table with admiration of the happiness of a prince who displayed such affluence, Alexander himself ridiculed him as an unfortunate man, who could wantonly involve himself in so many cares.[24] And he ordered the pillar on which these items were engraved to be demolished, observing to his friends, that it was no advantage to a king to live in so luxurious a manner, for cowardice and dastardly were the certain consequences of luxury and dissipation."

[24] A curious instance of seeing the mote in a brother's eye while a beam is in one's own. What greater need had Alexander to involve himself still more wantonly, and at the cost of life and happiness to thousands, in the many cares which the conquest of the world entailed!

Persia will probably never again see such a domestic establishment as that which Futteh Ali Shah possessed. He had perhaps the largest family of children that was ever born to man. The number of his wives is a point on which curiosity can never now be satisfied; for not only were they subject to death, in which case vacancies were speedily filled up, but many were sent out of the harem to be married to the great officers of state to whom the king wished to evince distinguished favors. Those ladies who had borne him sons were, however, never lost sight of nor abandoned by the king. As soon as it was known that a man-child had been born, the mother had a superior establishment immediately allotted to her, and she at once rose to the possession of a degree of weight and influence which was denied to those who gave birth only to a girl. As in the case of Solomon, the wives were of two classes; of the first, called Ahdee, all Mohammedans are limited to four, and kings cannot exceed that number. Solomon had three hundred; but some of these must have been more privileged than the others, as Pharaoh's daughter evidently was. Of the secondary class of wives, who are unprotected by law, and whose condition is more within the king's arbitrary power, though not so much so as that of purchased slaves, there is no limit but the royal will. The present Persian kings claim the absolute power of calling to their harem the daughters or sisters of any of their subjects, from the highest to the lowest; and, however really distasteful this may be to the parties concerned, resistance, evasion, or even hesitation, is never thought of for a moment. Old custom has taught them to regard this as an undoubted privilege of royalty, to which it would not only be disloyal, but absurd, to oppose more than a regret. The Scripture itself affords one of the most signal instances of the exercise of this right, in the appointment of officers in all the provinces of the realm, by king Ahasuerus, to "gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women (the harem), unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women," Esther 2:3. And that this was quite in accordance with the generally acknowledged rights of the sovereign is shown by the fact, that this order was given not upon the willful and arbitrary impulse of the royal caprice, but by the advice of the councilors of state. It was under this order that Esther was introduced into the royal harem; and from this explanation it will be seen that neither she nor Mordecai could do anything to avert this lot, whatever regret it may have occasioned.

After a woman has once been taken into the harem, her male relations can see her no more; but some intercourse can be maintained with her, either through her female relations, or the eunuchs

of the palace. Esther had no female relations; and, therefore, when Mordecai wished to communicate with her, their correspondence was entirely carried on through Hegai, the eunuch in immediate attendance upon her. All the messages of Mordecai, and the replies of Esther, were conveyed orally by this channel. So much jealousy with respect to the inmates of the royal harem was manifested, as excited the astonishment of the ancient Greeks. It was death to touch any of the king's women, to speak to them, or even to come near them, or their litters, when they travelled. Hence, the indignation of the king at the seeming presumption to which the agony of his despair had driven the convicted Haman in his appeal to the queen, Esther 7:7-8. According to the existing custom, if any of the king's wives are to go out to the gardens, or for any other purpose, notice of this is given the day before, and no one dares appear on the road at the time indicated. Anyone who is then inadvertently upon the road has to flee on the first intimation he obtains that the cavalcade is approaching; or, if this is out of his power, he must turn his back as it passes, and till it has reached a considerable distance. If any of these precautions be neglected, a man may expect to be roughly handled, if not slain.

It was understood, that of wives of both the classes indicated, Futeh Ali Shah usually maintained from eight hundred to a thousand. This was about the number of Solomon's wives and concubines. But this Persian king had a far more numerous progeny than Solomon. There were born to him, from first to last, one hundred and twenty to one hundred and thirty sons, and about a hundred and fifty daughters; and, through these, his descendants increased so rapidly, that, at the time of his majesty's death, had his descendants been all gathered together, he would have seen, it is said, a tribe of full five thousand souls, men, women, and children, clustering around his throne.

It will appear from what has been stated, that the Persian court has no lady answering to the queen-consort of European courts, although one of the wives of the king may, from circumstances, or from the king's mere favor, be invested with some distinction over the others. So when queen Charlotte addressed a letter and sent presents to "the queen of Persia," it is understood that some difficulty was felt in determining to which of them that character should, for the occasion, be understood to apply—who should receive the presents—in whose name the letter should be answered. The matter must, in fact, have occasioned much discussion and difficulty in the harem; though, no doubt, it was determined in favor of the one who at that time happened to be in possession of its chief place; some who might, from their standing, have been better entitled to it, being away, presiding over the establishments of the princes, their sons, in the provinces. In fact, lady Gore Ouseley, at Shiraz, visited the mother of the prince-governor as "the queen;" and at the capital, she visited one of the inmates of the harem, also as "the queen." The short account sir William Ouseley gives of these visits affords a glimpse of the interior of the royal harem, which may be acceptable to the reader.

"The lady proceeded to the interview in a palanquin,[25] followed by a kadjavah, containing her two English maid-servants, and escorted by some gentlemen of the embassy on horseback. The latter were not admitted beyond the outer court, but the lady and her attendants were conducted by the chief of the black eunuchs to the interior. After traversing various apartments, lady Ouseley was at length introduced to 'the queen,' who received her most graciously. A chair had been provided for the lady, but the queen, supported by cushions, sat in the usual manner on a carpet of soft felt spread on the floor. Her ample trousers, or drawers, were so stiffened with jewels and

embroidery, that she could scarcely move her legs; her feet were just visible, and her slippers appeared to be encrusted over with pearls. The daughter, a princess of sixteen or seventeen years, was also sitting; but ten or twelve young women, supposed to be the wives of the prince, her son, stood during the interview in silent and respectful attendance. Meanwhile, the English maids were entertained in a separate apartment, and, it appears, were a little offended at the manner in which some of the queen's ladies endeavored to gratify their curiosity respecting the different articles of European dress. The visit lasted about half an hour; and the queen found means of expressing her regret at that mutual ignorance of each other's language, which prevented her from expressing the offers of kind services to the English lady which she desired to render."

[25] A pair of covered panniers, borne by a mule or horse. The visit to "the queen" at the metropolis is more circumstantially related:—

"It had been settled that on the eighth of December, lady Ouseley should pay her respects to the principal or favorite queen—her, at least, whom the king had appointed to receive the presents brought from England—a preference most flattering where rivals were so numerous. At eleven o'clock, lady Ouseley proceeded to the dreg, or palace, being conveyed in her palanquin by several Persian ferashes. She was accompanied, as on a former occasion, by her daughter; and one of her English maids followed her in a kadjavah. Many inquiries had previously been made concerning the refreshments most pleasing to lady Ouseley. It was asked whether she usually smoked the kaleon (as all Persian ladies do), or preferred tea to coffee; at the same time, the king graciously intimated that a chair should be provided for her accommodation, although the queen would sit, according to custom, on a carpet. At her return, lady Ouseley told us she had been conducted, with much ceremony, into a large room, of which the floor was covered with cloth of gold. She found there the royal favorite, who was a very handsome woman, an infant prince, her son, and thirty or forty female attendants, all profusely decorated with jewels. Soon after her introduction coffee and sweetmeats were presented to her on trays of solid gold. The queen smoked, but a kaleon was not offered to her visitor, who had declared herself incapable of enjoying the intended honor. Lady Ouseley delivered a miniature picture of Queen Charlotte, and her letter to the Persian queen, who received them with much grace. The picture was set in diamonds, computed to be worth several thousand pounds; the latter was splendidly illuminated, and a translation had been annexed by the ambassador. The zan-i-shah, or 'king's wife,' (like the one already mentioned), seemed much encumbered by the drawers or pantaloons which she wore; their stiff embroidery of jewels almost crippling her legs." This interview, like the former, lasted about half an hour. In Persia it was the former, but not the ancient custom of the court, for the princes of the blood to be immured in the harem, where their education was entrusted to women and eunuchs; and, until the death of the king, his destined successor was unknown. It was then also considered that the son of the humblest purchased slave in the harem was as eligible to succeed as the offspring of the proudest princes. The present dynasty has changed these customs, and, in doing so, has produced a greater conformity to ancient usages. The young princes are no longer shut up in the harem till one of them is called "out of prison" to reign, Ecclesiastes 4:14, but are allowed to quit it as soon as they are past the age to require maternal care and female attendance. The king's power over them is, however, of the most absolute character. There is no fixed rule for their treatment, and they are regarded as being, much more

than the courtiers or any other subjects of the crown, entirely subject to his authority and control. They have no legal rights of any kind, nor does any power exist which can interfere between them and their sovereign. This clearly arises from the combination, in the same person, with respect to them, of the authority of the king and the parent, which are the two most absolute powers known in the east. Their condition is entirely dependent upon the feelings and policy of the royal father, as it seems to have been in the case of the Hebrew kings. He can appoint any one of them to succeed to the throne whom he pleases. This power used to be often exercised in preferring one of the youngest, or the least nobly born by the mother's side; but Futteh Ali Shah exercised it by giving effect to the notions he had inherited as the chief of a tribe, by passing over his eldest born, who was the son of a purchased slave, and assigning the succession to his second son, whose mother was of noble birth. No one questioned his right to do this; and when the son whom he had preferred died before him, he transferred the nomination to his son, the father of the present king. The feeling which induced this preference we recognize in Scripture, in the advancement to the heritage of Abraham of the younger, but wellborn, Isaac, to the elder, but slave-born, Ishmael; and the right, in the Hebrew kingdom, of the king to nominate the son who should succeed him, is prominently set forth in the circumstances attending the nomination of Solomon over his elder brothers—first, the royally-born Absalom, and then Adonijah—for, although his election was directed by God, it was his own public declaration which gave it validity in the state. Hence the anxiety which was felt by Nathan and the other friends of Solomon to obtain from him a distinct declaration of his intention as to the succession, and the prompt action upon that declaration when obtained. In connection with this subject, the whole of 1 Kings 1 may be studied with much interest. In the Hebrew monarch it seems to have been the general rule for the eldest son to succeed to the throne, although the reigning king did possess the abstract right, and sometimes exercised it, of naming another of his sons. The spirit of change seems to be now penetrating even to the east, which has so long rested in its ancient habits and institutions. How long, therefore, the usages we have described may continue to exist is uncertain, and we have on this account felt the more satisfaction in bringing together such of them as might be rendered interesting to the student of the Bible by scriptural remembrances. A greater change still—a change of much greater interest—impends, as we hopefully expect, over the anciently great, and still interesting people, whose regal customs this book describes. In that change, which the Spirit of God alone can produce, they will be enabled to embrace and worship a Redeemer in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom they are now content to respect as a teacher and a prophet, and to behold Him as the real “King of kings,” the true “Center of the universe.”

10. The People of Persia

The People of Persia BY JOHN KITTO, D.D, F.S.A LONDON:

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11. Persia

Persia

Chapter I

Considerable information concerning Persia and its inhabitants has been transmitted to modern times by the ancient classical historians, and by some of the sacred writers. "We are thus enabled to perceive that the modern Persians retain the characteristics of their ancestors, to an extent unequalled probably by any other Asiatic nation that has remained in the same land in which their progenitors lived, and come down unbroken from so early a period. This is not the case, however, with the territorial limits of the country. These have varied with the ebbing and flowing tide of every dynasty, and almost of every reign.

"The limits of this kingdom in its most prosperous period," says sir John Malcolm, "may, however, be easily described; the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean to the south; the Indus and the Oxus to the east and north-east; the Caspian Sea and Mount Caucasus to the north; and the river Euphrates to the west. Vast territories on either side must now, however, be struck off from this large outline, in looking for the present and actual boundaries of Persia. It does, indeed, still reach to the Caspian Sea on the north, and to the Persian Gulf on the south. But the wild regions of Baluchistan shut it far off from the Indian Ocean and the lower part of the Indus; Afghanistan places it at a still further remove from the higher portions of that river; the domains of the Usbeks and Turcomans interpose a broad and formidable barrier between the Persians and the Oxus; Russia has pressed them down from the Caucasus, and from Georgia and Armenia, as far as the river Aras, and even below that river many leagues before it reaches the Caspian Sea; and, on the west, so far from compassing Mesopotamia to the river Euphrates, Persia is restricted by its Turkish neighbors to a natural mountain boundary, far east of the Tigris and its tributaries, till we approach the Persian Gulf."

Thus circumscribed, modern Persia is still, however, a very extensive kingdom, from about eight hundred to one thousand miles square—though its proper shape is rhomboidal rather than square, being at least a third larger from north-west to south-east than in the transverse direction. Geographically, it lies between 26° and 40° north latitude, and between 44° and 59° east longitude. The present population, although no accurate census is ever taken, may be roughly estimated at ten million—a small number for so old and large a kingdom; but in these regions, wars, misgovernment, pestilence, polygamy, and, perhaps more than all together, the smallpox, prevent that rapid increase of population which we witness in our own and other countries. The provinces of Persia are Fars, Iraq, Laristân, Khuzestan, a portion of Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, Ghilân, Mazanderân, and the western sections of Khorassân and Kermân. The present capital is Teheran, in the province of Iraq, situated towards the northern part of the kingdom, but nearly central from east to west.

Elam is the ancient Scriptural name of Persia, from Elam the son of Shem, whose descendants are supposed to have been the first inhabitants of at least the western provinces, one of which took from them the name of Elymais. Irane is the term applied by the present inhabitants to their country; and Irene, or Iranloo (as the appellation takes the Persian or the Turkish form), to its people. Fars, or Pars, in Hebrew, פָּרְס, from which Europeans derive the name of Persia, and apply it to the whole country, as it was also used by the Greeks and Romans, and by some of the sacred writers, is only the southern portion of the empire, as the name is now employed by the natives, and as a designation for their whole country it is utterly unknown to them.

Ajem (which means a clown, or rude person, equivalent to the barbarian, βάρβαρος, of the Greeks), and Ajemistan (clown-land), are names which the self-conceited Osmanlees have given to what they regard as their less polished neighbors, and their home, back in the interior. No names were ever less justly applied, where the relative condition of those who give the name, and of those to whom it is given, are taken into account. The Persians, however, regardless of the origin of the names and of the indignity implied in them, have also adopted them. Kuzzil-bash, red-head, is another name which they gave to the Sunnis, and which they have taken to themselves. It originated in the time of the Shah Ismail. The tribes which were attached to his family, and which became the most devoted promoters of the Shia faith, were distinguished by their redcaps; the term Kuzzil-bash was thence attached to the Shias in general, and has thus extended to all the Persians—although, in its literal signification of “red-head,” it is now more applicable to the Turks themselves than to the Persians. A sketch of the physical characteristics of Persia may be given in a few words from Malcolm’s history of that country. “The most striking features of this extensive country are deserts and mountains, amid which are interspersed beautiful valleys and rich pastures.... The valleys in the central provinces of Persia abound with the richest and most valuable vegetable productions, and may be cultivated to any extent. Trees are seldom found, except near the towns and villages; but the luxuriance with which they grow, wherever planted, shows that the climate is congenial to them. The orchards of Persia produce all the fruits of the temperate zone; and its wilds abound with flowers that can only be reared in the gardens of Europe by care and cultivation. The climate is very various. It is not more affected by the difference of latitude than by the remarkable inequalities of surface in almost all the provinces. The greater part of the country is a succession of plains, at the base of these ridges of hills by which it is intersected, and of table-lands nearly on a level with their tops. To pass from the lower valleys to the higher is to change the temperature of summer for that of winter. But the climate, though various, is healthy; and few countries can boast a more robust, active, and well-formed race of men. Its animals (particularly the horses and dogs) are of uncommon size, strength, and beauty. In the mountains, most valuable minerals are found, but none in abundance; and Persia has consequently always been indebted to foreign countries for lead, iron, silver, and gold.”

Since this was written, rich mines of copper and iron have been opened in Azerbaijan. Coal has also been found, to a limited extent, in that province, and in the neighborhood of Teheran: and it doubtless only needs that science and enterprise, which, along with the blessings of the gospel, that land must yet receive, to relieve Persia from her present dependence upon her neighbors for the most useful minerals, and enable her to develop large resources of future industry and peaceful wealth. It may also be remarked, that the statement as to the lack of trees, although correct as to the central, does not apply to the Caspian provinces of Mazanderân and Ghilân,

which are clothed with vast and beautiful forests.

12. Dwellings and Domestic Habits

Dwellings and Domestic Habits

Chapter II Towns and Villages The general aspect of the towns and villages in Persia is very somber and uninviting, and contrast disadvantageously with those of Turkey, or indeed with almost every other Asiatic region, except, perhaps, the subterraneous villages of Armenia. The streets are crooked, narrow, irregular, and but partially if at all paved. They are inconvenient from dust in summer, and in winter are almost impassable on foot from mud. There is nothing in them to interest the eye or to engage the attention, as they rarely present anything to the street but dreary mud walls, from eight to fifteen feet high, with here and there low doors, at irregular intervals, and sometimes over them one small latticed window, being the only indication of human habitation. The doors or gates have a significance with respect to the standing or the prudence of the inhabitants; the high, large gate is a token of wealth, which provokes the envy of equals, who will not be slow to find accusations; or excites the cupidity of superiors, who can readily discover pretexts sufficient to relieve the ostentatious owner of his surplus revenue, if not to strip him of something more. This was also anciently true in Israel; for among the sayings of Solomon is this—"He that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction," Proverbs 17:19. The doors by which the mud walls are thus pierced, lead by a narrow, blind passage, to open courts or squares, on the further side of which, and sometimes on all sides, is the dwelling. If the buildings occupy but part of the square, the remaining portions are enclosed by high mud walls, forming a kind of fort, for Security against robbers and the intrusion of curiosity. In many towns, the entrance passage slopes downward, and the court to which it leads is several feet below the level of the street, the earth on the spot having been used to construct the edifices and the walls which enclose them; for, as the Persians have no wheeled vehicles, the transport of building-materials, on the backs of horses or mules, would be expensive and inconvenient.

Houses The houses in Persia are of three general orders, corresponding in appearance and expense to the higher, middle, and lower classes of the people. The two former are built of sun-dried bricks. The palaces of princes and of rich nobles are sometimes built of burned brick and lime; but these are of rare occurrence. The houses are low, making up for the lack of height by the extent of the ground they cover. "We scarcely know whether to describe them as of two stories or of one. They are both, or neither; or rather, partly one, and partly the other. A house consists of a range of rooms, with alternately high and low ceilings; and over the lower ones, which are usually the halls through which the others are entered, low upper rooms are built, whose roofs rise but little, if at all, above those of the high ones of the lower story. The windows completely fill the whole front of the rooms, except the spaces occupied by two pillars in large rooms; and they open from a few inches above the floor, to a height of five or six feet. A room thus thrown open is delightfully cool in summer, especially when shaded by the extensive canvass awnings used in Persia. The windows are constructed of polygonal spaces, in appearance like the compartments of a honeycomb, one, two, or three inches in diameter. Those in which the interstices are of the smallest pattern are left open—that is, without the spaces being filled up—so that the air is

admitted freely, while a person can look through without being observed from without. The window toward the street is usually of this kind; and such was doubtless the kind of "lattice" through which the mother of Sisera, with her ladies (Judges 5:28) looked forth for her expected son. These sashes, when of wider texture, are usually filled with small diamond-shaped pieces of glass, which are translucent, but not transparent, corresponding in size to the interstices, and of various bright glaring colors, which give to the whole, as viewed from within, a brilliant and somewhat imposing appearance. A single window of a Persian parlor, thus glazed, will cost twenty or thirty pounds,[1] or even much more, according to the delicacy of the wood-work, for in all kinds of joining the Persians are great amateurs, and are really very skilful. It is related by Mr. Fraser, that the Persian princes, who were some years ago in London, seemed to bestow more genuine admiration on nothing than on the various curious specimens of joinery and wood-carving which came incidentally under their notice. The middle classes cover their sashes with oiled paper; and another circumstance in which their houses differ from those of the higher class is, that the latter are mounted in front with a projection, from two to five feet wide, which consist of jutting rafters, inclining a little upward, on which jointed planks are fitted, and the whole is often tastefully painted and curiously carved. This projection adds much to the beauty of the edifice, as well as protects its walls and windows from the weather.

[1] In U.S. dollars this would equate to being between \$3,100 to \$4,600

If the houses in Palestine, as is not unlikely, were of similar arrangements, our Lord probably stood in the gallery formed by this projection, when the friends of the paralytic man vainly sought access to him through the crowd which filled the court, and therefore went up to the roof, and, removing some of the boards which covered this part, were enabled to let their helpless friend down to the place where Jesus stood. Our acquaintance with various oriental houses, has presented difficulties to every other explanation, and has shown this to be the most natural and intelligible of any. To remove any part of the substantial flat roof for such a purpose, would be very difficult, and would overwhelm the interior with the dust and rubbish of which such roofs are composed. The outsides of the houses in Persia are plastered with a mixture of mud and cut straw, of which also, as in ancient Egypt (Exodus 5:7), the sun-dried bricks are composed. This is not unpleasant to the European eye (probably from its having some rough resemblance to what we call Roman cement), especially when, as is often the case, the margins of the doors and windows are dressed with white plaster, which, alternating with the spaces of brown mud, impart a kind of liveliness to the front. But when we enter the interior of a good Persian house, we forget the narrow approach, and that the walls and exterior surface are of mud. The rooms are beautifully plastered with an admirable white gypsum, much firmer, harder, and more dazzlingly white, than anything of the same kind we possess, and the floors are covered with the richest carpets the east can furnish. The floors are first plastered with a mixture of lime and earth, and are thus rendered hard and level; they are then covered with the reed mats, over which the carpets are laid. It is probably known to most of our readers that these carpets, which are so much prized by us, under the name of "Turkey carpets," are really the manufacture of Persia. The walls in the interior of the rooms are not dead surfaces, but are relieved by a row of recesses, about a yard square, the same height from the floor, and a few inches deep, at intervals of a foot or more from each other. High rooms have two rows of such recesses, with a ledge projecting two or three inches, to separate them. These recesses are intended for effect rather than use, but some of them are occasionally used to

contain curious ornamental articles. Plastering is also often wrought into various diamonds, and curious geometrical figures, and into arabesques, flowers, and cornices of considerable elegance. The walls are not unusually painted, sometimes painted and gilded; and, at others—but rarely, unless in royal palaces—they are almost wholly lined with mirrors. Results which are tawdry, rather than splendid, when supplying the substantial magnificence which we expect to find in royal palaces, are agreeable and elegant in private houses; and, upon the whole, the Persians may be praised for the interior decorations of their rooms by the arts of the joiner and the plasterer. The ceilings are often wholly of un-painted wood, forming a large and admirable piece of joinery, like an immense sash, with innumerable blind panes or compartments, of the same wood as the framework. These ceilings are made on the floor, and raised whole to their place, by very simple though ingenious mechanical contrivances. They are seen only in good houses, and are highly and justly prized by the Persians. The courts which form the areas of their dwellings are, in the higher class of houses, neatly paved, in the borders and through the centers, with smooth stones or tiles, and the intervening spaces are decorated with flowerbeds, rose-bushes, and other shrubs, and often bubbling fountains. “As I have beheld princes and nobles,” says the Rev. Judkin Perkins,[2] “in their mansions, reclining and lolling on their soft carpets, under the shade of the broad canvass awning stretched above the windows, on a hot summer’s day, supported by soft cushions and pillows under their arm-pits, gurgling the kaleon,[3] or sipping the acid sherbet,[4] regaled by the fragrance of the flower-garden, and the chirping and cooing of birds in their cages, suspended from the shrubbery, or skipping free in its branches, my early conceptions of an eastern paradise have seemed to be realized. When, however, we remember the corroding apprehensions that incessantly prey upon their minds, in the uncertain tenure of their wealth, and the peril of their lives in that land of despotism,[5] the burning passions that war in their bosoms, and the poignant stings of a buffeting conscience for their ill-gotten gains, if for no worse crime, which embitter the sweetest, cups of their luxury, and implant thorns on their pillows of down, there is little in such a paradise to covet or envy.”

[2] In a work entitled *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia*, published at Andover, in the United States, in 1843. It is chiefly occupied with the Nestorians, but it contains many interesting observations respecting Persia, which have usefully assisted our own observations in the preparation of this work, particularly in the present portion of it.

[3] A pipe, by which the smoking tobacco is drawn through an attached vase containing water, by which it is cooled before reaching the mouth [4] Drinks, made like lemonade, of the juices of fruits, mixed with water and sugar.

[5] Of this the reader may obtain information from the volume on *The Court of Persia*, pages 104, 114, and 119. This is true. The constant feeling of insecurity of property and life in the east, and particularly in Persia, is, except to very reckless tempers, a terrible drawback to all enjoyment of, and comfort in, the happiest external circumstances, although it might be a useful discipline to those who know how to lay up treasure in heaven, and to have their hearts, along with their treasures, there. It tends to generate that living for the hour, which is the characteristic of the Persians, beyond all the nations of the earth, and which is well expressed in the sentiment, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,” Isaiah 22:13 and 1 Corinthians 15:32.

Middle Class Housing

What may be called the middle class of houses in Persia, are often plastered with a simple mixture of mud and chopped straw, the same as is used on the outside; and the floors are, of course, spread with carpets of an inferior quality. The pavements of the courts are also rude, or of the naked earth, and a small open rill, taken from the larger canals, supplies the place of fountains. The roofs of the houses in Persia are flat, and terraced over with earth. Stout timbers are first laid across the walls, about two feet apart. These are covered over with split sticks of wood, at intervals of perhaps three inches, on which are spread rush mats; then succeeds a thick layer of a rank, thorny weed, which grows abundantly on the mountains, in a bushy globular form, about a foot or two in diameter. This weed is so resinous as not soon to decay, is an excellent article of light fuel, and is much used for burning brick, heating ovens, etc. It may be "the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven," as mentioned by our Savior, Matthew 6:30 and Luke 12:28. Upon the thick layer of this mud is spread a coat of clay-mortar, which is trodden down; and next, a stratum of dry earth, six or eight inches deep, over which is plastered a layer of the same mixed straw and mud which is so much used in facing the walls. An occasional depression on the back edge of the roof, furnished with a spout, a few feet long, conducts off the water. The soil is so tenacious in all parts of Persia, that there is little danger that a roof thus constructed will be pervious to the rain, if kept in a state of good repair. It is annually plastered over with the straw and mud, except in the driest parts of the country; and, in the northern parts, the roofs are rolled over after heavy rains, and snow is thrown off with a shovel as soon as it falls. These flat roofs are pleasant resorts to the inhabitants of the houses during the cool of the evening. The people sleep on them during the heat of summer, on account of the cool air and the freedom from vermin. The excessive dryness of the atmosphere prevents any danger from this practice, and it is said to be harmless even where the dews are heavy, as upon the shores of the Persian Gulf. The roofs are secured by "a battlement," not only to prevent accidents, as enjoined by the law of Moses, but that one family may not gaze upon another's premises; for which reason the "battlement," or top wall, is generally higher than a man on the side towards neighboring houses. This is important, because Persian custom sanctions the shooting or stoning, without trial or mercy, of any indiscreet gazer into the neighboring premises; and we may say that we have lived for years in oriental houses, repairing daily to the housetop, without once daring to raise our head above the parapet, lest a bullet should be sent through it. The reader will recollect the conformity of these facts with usages of the roof mentioned in Scripture; and he will call to mind the sad sin and calamities into which David fell, in consequence of indulging in an idle curiosity, while walking upon the housetop, 2 Samuel 11:2-5.

It remains to notice the third or lowest class of dwellings, inhabited by the peasantry. The wall of these are built not even of unburned bricks, but of layers of mud, like the "cob-walls" of Devonshire cottages. They are of but one story, and that is commonly low. The soil is so strong in most parts of Persia, that water has only to be conducted upon almost any spot to form tenacious mortar, which is dug up by the spade, and slightly worked by the feet of men, and then laid into a wall, piece being laid upon piece by hand, four feet thick, and three feet high. This is allowed to harden and dry a few days, when another layer, of similar dimensions, but a little thinner, is laid upon it, and the same process is repeated till the wall is carried up to the desired elevation. These walls, when thoroughly dried, are very hard, and, if kept perfectly dry, by being plastered over with the universal plaster of mud and chopped straw, may last for generations. Such, without doubt, are "the houses of clay" of which Job makes mention. The walls that enclose the courts of the houses,

and the walls of the towns in Persia, are of the same construction, the thickness of those at the bottom being commenced in proportion to the intended height. The roofs of the peasants' houses have no projections; nor have they any windows; a hole in the roof is an outlet for the smoke, and admits a few rays of light.

Each house of the peasants in Persia has its open courts enclosed by walls; and the stables, barns, and out-houses, are entered by different doors from those which conduct to the apartments of the family. The premises in the villages are contiguous to each other for the sake of security; and it is possible to walk over the roofs through the whole length of a village without descending into the streets. As this implies, the roofs are not usually, as in towns, guarded by top-walls, though the inmates sleep on these in summer, the manners of the villagers being more simple, if not their morals more pure than those of the towns' people. The courts of these dwellings are usually, in some sort, farm-yards; but such is the fondness of all kinds of Persians for flowers, that a small patch, even in the humblest court, is usually kept as a flower-garden. Another circumstance which agreeably distinguishes the villages of Persia from those of Turkey, is the presence of clumps of trees, in or near them; so that a traveler is enabled to distinguish his destined resting-place in the distance long before he reaches it.

Ovens The oven used in the villages is primitive and curious, and deserves description. It consists of a circular hole in the earth, in the middle of the chief room, about three feet deep, and perhaps two in width at the top and three at the bottom, with a flue entering it there, to convey air to the fire. This hole is internally coated with clay, which soon hardens into tile. The bread is drawn out in thin cakes, from two to three feet long, eight or ten inches wide, and scarcely the thickness of a common dinner-plate. It assumes this shape almost in a moment by the wonderful tact of the maker, who simply tosses a piece of dough rapidly from hand to hand. Thus drawn out like a membrane, it is laid upon a sort of cushion, and stuck on to the side of the oven, where it attaches and crisps in a few seconds, and another, as quickly made ready, succeeds to the same place. Bread in the cities differs from this only in being made of flour more finely sifted, and in thicker cakes, which are baked at the bottom of large ovens paved with pebbles. The thin bread soon dries, and may long be preserved. Except on a journey, however, it is usually baked every day, and eaten fresh: and as every family bakes its own bread daily, there is none to sell any that may be accidentally required; whence the arrival of strangers soon occasions the master to give the same order "to bake cakes upon the hearth," which the arrival of the three seeming wayfarers induced Abraham to give to Sarah, Genesis 18:6. We were always much interested with this and other Biblical recollections, in observing the regularity with which our arrival at any village habitation was followed by this operation of baking bread, which there were thus frequent opportunities of observing. But the baking of bread is not the only use of the tanour, or oven of the peasants. It serves also the important purpose of warming the room in winter most effectually, at a wonderfully small expenditure of fuel; which, indeed, in most parts of Persia, is very scarce. That it may serve this purpose the more completely, it is converted into a tandoor, by laying a flat stone, or a large earthen covering, made for the purpose, over the top, and placing over this a frame resembling a low table, four or six feet square, and perhaps a foot high, and covering the whole with a large thick quilt, which extends to the ground on all sides. The oven is heated only once a day for baking and cooking. But the hole in the roof over it, being closed after the smoke has passed out, and the warmth retained in the oven in the manner described, a single fire is made to

suffice for the whole twenty-four hours. The whole family encompass the tandoor, sitting on the ground, with their feet under the quilt, to keep themselves warm, which by this process is perfectly accomplished even in the coldest weather. At night, they spread their couches around it, and form a circle by placing their feet near the fire, while their heads radiate from it, and thus they socially sleep. Barbarous as this invention may seem, and unwholesome as it certainly is, it is by no means confined to the peasantry, but is found in the noblest mansions of the cities, only burning more agreeable fuel than the villagers can command.

Lighting The Persians have no candles for lighting their houses. They have brass cups, fixed upon rods or stands of the same metal, which they fill with pure white tallow, having a cotton wick in the middle. Sometimes, however, they burn scented tapers, the wax of which has been mixed up with oil of cinnamon, or cloves, or some other scented substances, and which therefore emit a fragrance in burning.

Furniture The furniture of a Persian house is exceedingly simple when compared with ours, as indeed is the case in all eastern countries, except in China, where the movables are in number and variety scarcely inferior to our own. "We find in the best Persian dwellings, neither beds sumptuously decorated, nor tables and chairs of costly wood, nor chandeliers and lustres, nor those numberless articles of various forms and materials with which Europeans decorate their apartments. The furniture consists of a thick coarse felt, which covers the floor, over which is spread a rich Persian carpet; people in middling circumstances content themselves with the felt alone. Instead of chairs, small mattresses, about a yard wide, are placed on the floor around the room, and covered with chintz, silk, or cloth of gold. Cushions set on end against the wall serve for leaning against. When the time of rest arrives, a mattress is spread upon the carpet, with a kind of counterpane, and two pillows of down. This is all the bed used by the Persians, among whom the employment of sheets and blankets is not known, and who rest without undressing. The mattress is of velvet, and the counterpane of silk brocade, or cloth of gold or silver. Articles of this kind are valuable, and are not changed perhaps for a century; for the velvets and brocades are of the most lasting texture, and seem indeed scarcely ever to wear out, owing, perhaps, in part to the extreme dryness of the atmosphere. In Persia, a native never enters a room in boots or slippers; and a transgression of this usage by foreigners is looked upon as the height of ill-breeding, if not a premeditated insult. As the people use their carpets not only for domestic purposes, but to kneel down on when they say their prayers, they are considered in some measure sacred, and hence arises the custom of a visitor leaving his slippers at a room door. The term "door" here means whatever denotes the way of ingress to the apartment; for although in general there is a double door of carved or painted wood, which may be closed at pleasure, yet it is so seldom shut in the day that, in summer, we usually find a silk or chintz curtain filling the vacant space of the entrance, its light drapery being not only a cooler, but a more elegant appendage; besides that a person can slip in and out without that distraction and noise caused by the frequent opening and shutting of a wooden door; for which reason, probably, the practice has been adopted in our courts of law at Westminster Hall. An attending servant raises the curtain at the approach of a visitor, and drops it when he has entered.

13. Habits of Life

Habits of Life

Chapter III The daily routine of Persian existence will help to furnish a good notion of the condition and habits of the people. Persians of all ranks rise as soon as it is light, and perform their morning devotions. Then comes the *nachtah* or breakfast, which consists of grapes and other kinds of fruits that are in season, cheese and goats' milk, and finishes—as everything is finished in Persia—with a cup of strong coffee. The artisan then proceeds to his work, the tradesman to the bazaar, and the gentleman repairs to the *divan khaneh*, or the public room in which he receives company, and where he expects his visitors and dependants. He is probably engaged with them till nine o'clock, listening to the reports of the morning, settling disputes, and arranging domestic concerns. It is the time for him to visit the court of the prince or governor, where he pays his obeisance, and takes care to remain sufficiently long in the presence of the person he visits to attract his observation. His *kaleon* always accompanies him, in charge of the servant, whose sole duty it is to attend to this important instrument of Persian existence; and when he thinks he can retire unnoticed, he regales himself with smoking. About noon, the governor probably retires, which is a signal for all those who are in attendance to take their departure. On his return home, his dinner, or more properly lunch (*tchacht*), is brought, consisting generally of bread, cheese, butter, and different sorts of fruits. After this meal, as before, according to the time, he says his noontide prayers, and then withdraws into the harem to his family, and to enjoy his customary repose. About three o'clock, he may then again have to attend the public audience, especially if he has any official employment. If not, he rides out, or pays visits; or, if his rank should be too exalted, he stays at home to receive them. At four, he repeats the afternoon prayers. When night comes on, the carpets are spread in the open air, and with either friends or dependents he prepares to pass the evening. They converse on the events of the day, or the news of the court; they relate extraordinary adventures, and recite passages of their favorite poets. The *kaleon* supplies the intervals of silence. The hour for the fourth daily prayer arrives, but without causing any interruption to the flow of conversation or amusement. Each rises in turn, goes to a corner of the room, places himself on a small carpet with his face turned towards Mecca, and performs his religious service with so much greater dispatch than devotion, as significantly proclaims, "What a weariness it is," in his estimation, and as mere formal worship always must become.

About ten o'clock, a servant announces that supper (*shamee*) is ready. At the same time, he brings with him an ewer and basin, and in the fashion so often indicated in Scripture, he "pours water upon the hands" of each of the guests. The person holds out his hands, one under the other, and the servant pours water upon them from the long spout of his ewer, while the basin held underneath receives the water that falls from them. They then draw themselves around the tray on which the dishes are placed, and apply themselves to the food before them with much earnestness. About eleven, the party breaks up, and the occupations of the day are ended. There remains, indeed, a prayer to be said in the middle of the night, but there is reason to believe that it is usually forgotten, for only three of the five daily prayers are deemed indispensable. The

Persians are too much taken up with etiquette and ceremony not to be fond of visiting. The dependent would not on any account allow a day to pass without paying his respects to his patron, the courtier without presenting himself before the prince, and friends without mutually visiting one another. The ceremonies and compliments differ with the rank of the visitor. Everyone who visits is sensitively alive to the degree of attention to which he thinks himself entitled; and every one who is visited is careful to render neither less nor more consideration than the position of his visitor claims. If the visitor is a person greatly superior, the master meets him at the entrance to the court of the house; if considerably superior, at the entrance of the room; if an equal, he rises as he enters; but if an inferior, he merely makes the motion of rising.

If an inferior is honored with a visit from a superior, he does not sit down till the latter is seated, nor rise till he has risen. This, it will be seen, does not materially differ from our own customs—the natural dictates of politeness being much the same in all but the most barbarous nations. The master of the house usually occupies the upper end of the side carpet, near or at the right hand corner of the room—the corner being the seat of honor among all western Asiatic nations, as it was among the ancient Israelites, 1 Samuel 20:25; Amos 5:12; but if he wishes to do especial honor to his guest, he gives up his place to him, or desires him to take his place by his side. Ordinarily, when a Persian comes into an assembly, and has saluted the master and received his recognition, he marks with his eye the place in the line of guests to which he holds himself entitled, and proceeding straight to it, sits down and wedges his way in there, without offering the slightest apology for the general disturbance of the whole line which he produces.

It does not generally, but does sometimes, happen that a person takes a higher place than that to which he has any just claim. The Persian scribes are remarkable for their arrogance in this respect, in which, as in many other respects, they bear no small resemblance to the Jews of the same profession in the time of our Lord. The master of the house has, however, the right of placing any one as high in the rank of the assembly as he may choose, and Mr. Morier mentions a remarkable instance of this at a public entertainment to which he was invited. When the assembly was nearly full, the governor of Kashan, a man of humble mien, although of considerable rank, came in and seated himself at the lowest place; when the master of the house, after numerous expressions of welcome, pointed with his hand to an upper seat in the assembly, to which he desired him to move, and which he accordingly did. These circumstances strikingly illustrate the parable which our Lord uttered, when, at a public entertainment, he noticed how carefully those that were bidden chose out the highest places for themselves, Luke 14:8-11. The style of the complimentary phrases used on such occasions, and which are seldom varied, may be seen from the account which the Rev. Judkin Perkins gives of his interview with the governor of Oroomiah. “We found the governor occupying a splendid mansion, and surrounded by numerous attendants. He received us with much civility and apparent kindness. As we entered the great hall, he beckoned us to the upper end, to sit by his side, and ran through a long string of inquiries after our health, in the usual Persian manner—Kaef-üz y■khshée d■r? (Is your health good?) Dâmâghún châkh d■r? (Your palate—appetite—lusty?) Kaef-üz koek d■r? (Are you in hale—fat—keeping?) etc.; and withal so rapidly that we found no room for some time to interpose a reply, and could merely nod our assent till he had finished. We then inquired after his health, to which, with a solemn stroke of the beard, he answered, Alhémdooleelah (Thanks be to God). Sizín devletavüzdan (By your auspices). Sizín Ahvâlüz y■khshée ólsûn, v’ menimke y■khshée d■r

(Only let your condition be prosperous, and I am of course very well). He then reiterated his expressions of welcome: Hosh geldüz (Your coming is delectable). Sefa geldüz (Your arrival is gladsome). Güzüm ûstâ geldüz (Upon my eyes, you have come), etc. To divert the luscious tide, it was remarked that I came from the new world; but to this he replied, 'Everything must be superlative that comes from the new world,' and proceeded to lavish upon me and my country a copious shower of fine sayings of the like description." The manner in which the Persians take their meals is very different from ours. They are strangers to the use of tables, knives, and forks; and such is the power of habit, that articles which we cannot dispense with are to them the most troublesome and inconvenient. Dinner in Persia (or supper as some call it), though the chief meal of the day, and of course, as in all countries, a matter of some consideration, is an affair of far less importance or duration than with us. Even when a prince gives a feast to his friends, the time of eating scarcely occupies half an hour. The guests sit on the felt carpet along one side, or at the top of the room, with their backs leaning against the wall; a long narrow strip of chintz, or colored cotton, called sofra (or, as we should say, table-cloth), is spread before the whole party by two servants. The basins and ewers containing cold water are then produced to wash the hands, in the manner already described. Trays of tinned copper, termed mujmuahs, are brought in, each containing in general a dish of beautiful plain boiled rice, with another of some sort of pillow—that is, with butter and meat, or vegetables, or both; one or two smaller dishes containing exquisite stews, to season the rice; some pickles, sweet-meats, cut pieces of radish or turnip; a sort of omelets; a partridge or fowl stewed to pieces in some sweet or sour sauce; and one or two bowls of different sherbet; each having a long-handled carved pear-wood spoon floating upon it. One of these mujmuahs, thus laden, is placed usually for every two guests; and when all are thus served, the master of the feast, uttering the word Bismillah!—"In the name of God!" by way of grace, leans forward, and the meal begins. The manner in which the trays are placed, one to every two guests, throws some light upon the circumstances of the dinner which Joseph's brethren ate with him and the Egyptians. "They set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves," Genesis 43:32, which, according to this method, might be done without too obviously invidious or offensive distinctions, seeing that the customary order of a feast required a tray to be set before two or three persons separately. This is no conjecture; for the paintings in the Egyptian tombs show that the custom of eating from separate trays, brought in full charged with the dishes, and set down, one before two guests, was also the Egyptian custom; and that the Egyptians sat upon the floor, and led themselves with their hands in the same manner as do the modern Persians.

It would seem, however, that the Egyptian fare was less than the Persian composed of stews and made dishes, and more of substantial joints, and of large birds dressed whole. This, perhaps, facilitated the operation mentioned in Genesis 43:34, "He took and sent messes unto them from before him;" which was a great honor according to the notions of a Persian, who cannot show to a guest a higher distinction than to order a particular dish to be taken from his own tray to that of the person he wishes to honor—or by giving a choice morsel with his own hands from a dish before him to anyone who is near enough to receive it. So sir James Sutherland, in his description of a dinner given to Sir Harford Jones, writes: "It is considered at a Persian entertainment a compliment for a person to offer you a piece out of a dish that stands before him, which he does with his hands; and this you are expected to receive and devour with peculiar satisfaction—to do otherwise would be considered the greatest piece of incivility and rudeness, if not insult. Nasr Oollah Khan

avored the ambassador with this unenviable mark of his respect; and the latter, with a coolness that surprised us all, set about eating it immediately.” The custom was also the same among the Jews; and the reader will thus see the significance of the act of our Savior in giving the sop to Judas when he had dipped it, John 13:26. It is clear, indeed, that at the last supper Judas was seated in an honorable place, whence he fed out of the same dish with his Master—for our Lord said, “He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me,” Matthew 26:23, which is perfectly intelligible according to Persian mode of feeding, where the two or three before whom each tray or set of dishes is placed, are constantly plunging their hands into the same dishes.

During the half-hour, or thereabout, which the meal occupies, the fingers of everyone are busily employed in forming the lugmehs, or handfuls of rice mixed with other things, and which are conveyed towards the mouth, and jerked in, without spilling a grain of rice, or a drop of sauce, in a manner which a European cannot learn without much inconvenient practice. This labor is performed with diligent application and close attention, only interrupted by occasionally taking a spoonful or two of sherbet. By-and-by, one or two arise from their stooping posture, or keep only trifling with their fingers, till the host erects himself, with an audible Alhumdulillah! “Thanks be to God!” which is echoed by the company; for the Muslims invariably observe before and after meats, that decent acknowledgment to God, which too many who call themselves Christians altogether neglect.

14. Persian Character

Persian Character

Chapter IV Of the Persians, generally, it may be said that they are pre-eminent among the nations of the east for their intellectual qualities, while their moral character exhibits a compound of the most odious defects. It would be hard to deny them a sound understanding; and their possession of a quick imagination, a ready memory, and a happy capacity for the sciences, and the liberal and mechanic arts, has been universally acknowledged. Under the appearance of a proud indifference, they derive much information from the society of foreigners, and profit by their knowledge; they receive them kindly, patronize them, tolerate their religion, and seem generally to regard them with pity rather than with contempt. In illness and affliction they even solicit the prayers of Christians, whom they regard as infidels—which may, however, more probably be ascribed to their superstition than to their toleration.

Elegant language is much affected by the Persians in conversation; and they are very proud of introducing quotations from the works of their most distinguished poets, so that their best talk is a kind of mosaic of poetical quotations. Nor is this confined to persons of rank and education; it is common to them and the dregs of the people, because those who have had no education, and cannot even read and write, take advantage of the readiness and retentiveness of their memories to learn by heart a great number of striking passages, which they omit no opportunity of producing in conversation, not always, it must be admitted, with the happiest effect. They are also very clever at irony and punning.

Endowed with a supple and intriguing disposition, they have agreeable manners, and extreme politeness; but this politeness is little better than a jargon of high-flown compliments and hyperbolic expressions, without sense or feeling. “Your presence has made all Persia a garden”—“Persia is unworthy of your acceptance,” and such like expressions are specimens of this tendency to hyperbole and exaggeration; and however impertinent it may seem to Europeans, the neglect of such kind of compliments would seem to the Persians an omission of the common forms of politeness. What Major Scott Waring says of the people of Shiraz, is applicable in a considerable degree to the whole of the Persians—although it may be admitted that the people of the Shiraz districts afford full-blown examples of the common Persian characteristics. He says, “The people appear to me mean and obsequious to their superiors, and to their equals if they have a prospect of advantage, but invariably arrogant and brutal in their conduct towards their inferiors; always boasting of some actions they never performed, and delighted with flattery, although they are aware of the imposition. I have repeatedly heard them compliment a person, either in his hearing or in the presence of someone who would convey the adulation to his ears; and the instant that he has departed, their praises have turned into abuse, and they have with malicious pleasure exposed the character they have a moment before praised with fervent servility. Indeed, so loath are the Persians to admire anything from which they can derive no advantage, as to confine themselves in their expressions of admiration to *Bad neest*, ‘It is not bad;’ but if the property be

their own, no words or description can do justice to its excellencies.” This spirit of exaggeration and insincerity is not confined to their personal intercourse with one another; it insinuates itself into public affairs, as well as into the humbler relations between man and man. Not long after the arrival of the English embassy under sir Gore Ouseley, at Teheran, the confidential secretary of the grand vizier, accompanied by Meerza Abul Hassan Khan, who had been ambassador from Persia to the British camp, came one morning in great agitation to announce a victory gained by the prince royal over the Russians. Their account was, that the Persians had killed two thousand men, and taken five thousand prisoners, with twelve guns. The real truth was soon learned, which reduced their advantage to three hundred killed, two guns taken, and five hundred prisoners. On being questioned why they exaggerated so much, when they must be certain that the real facts must speedily transpire, the ready answer was: “If we did not know that your stubborn veracity would have come in the way, we should have said ten times as much. This is the first time our troops have made any stand at all against the Russians; and you would not, surely, restrict so glorious an event in our history to a few dry facts.” A poet of Crete, quoted with approval by the apostle Paul, has left upon his people this character of infamy—“The Cretans are always liars.” It would seem incredible that this character, in all the emphasis of the expression, should be truly applicable to any people, had we not the Persians of this day to evince the possibility of this depth of degradation. To them it is applicable in the utmost force of its meaning. Philosophers have held it for a maxim, that the most notorious liars utter a hundred truths for every lie they tell. But this is not the case in Persia; the people are unacquainted with the beauty of truth, and only think of it when it is likely to advance their interests. The father of history reports of the ancient Persians, that from their fifth to their twentieth year, the children are instructed in the use of the bow, horsemanship, and a strict regard to truth. The last item of this statement has been quoted as a striking illustration of the difference between ancient and modern customs; although it maybe questioned whether the speaking of truth being so much a matter of formal instruction and acquirement, along with archery and horsemanship, does not in fact recognize the ancient existence of the national tendency to untruthfulness. Be that as it may, the Persians are not now even taught to speak truth. “There does not, I am ready to believe,” says a recent missionary, “exist a country where society approaches more nearly to that (which moralists have sometimes imagined) of a community where truth is unknown, than in Persia; and the only reason why there does not exist a corresponding want of confidence, is, in good part, the inherent vanity of the Persians, which “makes them willing to be deceived. I learned for myself, long before leaving the country, that my only security was, to act upon the supposition that every man was unworthy of trust.” This, as he justly observes, is not merely the impression to which passing travelers reach, but is the settled conviction of old residents in the country, who have had much opportunity of knowing people in all conditions of life. The same opinion he quotes as that of “a pious and intelligent gentleman, who had resided twelve successive years in the country, who had travelled in every part of it, and had been conversant with all classes.”—“I have never seen a Persian whom I found, on good acquaintance, that I could safely trust.” “It is wonderful,” proceeds Mr. Southgate, “with what facility most Persians utter a falsehood. It has often seemed to me like an instinct to them. They are fully conscious of the vice, and acknowledge that it prevails everywhere among them. They perpetrate it with the utmost indifference; and, on being detected, seem to have no shame, nor any sense of having done wrong. They practice it with the most astonishing hardihood. I have heard a Persian lie, and persist in it, even against the immediate evidence of my senses.

They often do it even to their benefactors.” After giving several examples of this, which any traveler in the country would extend without limit, this traveler adds: “The cause of this pernicious habit it is not difficult to trace. Some have attempted to explain it as a natural consequence of civil oppression. But this is not enough; for the same effect does not, in the same notable degree, flow from the same cause in Turkey. Its chief source is to be sought for in the native character of the Persians. Their imaginativeness of mind, and their love of the marvelous, may partly account for it in the instances of their wonderful relations. Their extreme affability and politeness, strange as it may seem, help to the same effect; for they will sometimes deceive for the mere sake of pleasing. Their vanity, also, and their love of self, are powerful auxiliaries; and their inordinate fondness for favor, gain, and emolument, leads them to make many false pretensions, and to resort to every species of trickery and fraud to serve the most trivial advantage. But that which lies below all these, and which is the root of all, is their want of conscientiousness”—a fearful indication of the depravity of the people. As might be expected in this state of things, the Persians seek to gain credence by abundant oaths and affirmations, which, at last, from frequent use, have become little more than colloquial forms of expression, which serve chiefly to garnish speech. “What we should call common swearing, is not considered a vice in Persia, nor indeed in any other eastern country; and, considering the class of men by whom such expressions are employed, it would almost seem that a man was considered the more religious according to the number of oaths he uttered. Certain it is, that one who has been in the habit of living among people where every third sentence is an oath of affirmation, dwells with peculiar refreshment of spirit upon our Lord’s injunction, “Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil,” Matthew 5:37. Yet, let it be said, that the oaths of these poor people, upon whom the light of the gospel has not shined, although more frequent, and heard in all classes of society, are not of that frightful character which disgrace the streets of a country calling itself Christian; and a Persian, or any other Muslim, would shrink with horror from that frequent invocation of eternal perdition upon themselves and others, with which our own people are so prone to pollute their lips and to dishonor God. From the chapter of Matthew, just referred to, it appears that the Jews were in, the habit of swearing by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by their head. The oaths of the Persians, if not exactly the same, are of the same complexion. They swear less by Allah (that is, by God himself) than other Muslims, or even—it is grievous to say—than Christians; but substitute very much the name of Ali. “By the king’s life,” is a very solemn oath, as among the ancient Egyptians, Genesis 42:15; “By the king’s beard,” was a very emphatic oath under the last king but one, whose beard reached to his girdle, and was held in great reverence by all his subjects; “By your head,” is also one of the commonest, as is also such as, “By your happiness.” The speaker also changes the person at his pleasure, affirming by the king’s life, by yours, by his son’s, as by that of your son, or his own son—and so of the rest, according to his pleasure. They also compliment a person by affirming by that which he is supposed to prize most highly. We remember the case of an English gentleman highly respected by the Persians, whose only child was a little daughter, and to whom persons of high consideration were in the habit of swearing, “By the blood of your daughter,” and intended it, if not as a compliment, at least as a very high and strong affirmation. From the Rev. Judkin Perkins’s Residence in Persia, we derive an extract, illustrative of the hollow complimentary habits of the Persians. The Scripture illustration with which it closes had been given some years before in a well-known English commentary, and will be nothing the worse for the corroboration of an independent authority. “In our flippant host we had a very fair specimen of

Persian politeness in general. As he introduced us to our lodgings, he repeatedly declared that the whole house was no longer his but our own, and himself and all his family were our humble servants. Whenever we had occasion to ask for anything, he would respond, with a most submissive bow, and both hands covering his face, Cheshmeh (My eyes for it[6]); or, in Turkish, when he found we did not comprehend his Persian, Bâsh-ûstâ (Upon my head); Corban olam (May I be your sacrifice). If he did not understand us in any case, he would intimate it by a rising inflection of voice and obsequiousness of tone, peculiar to a despotic land, as though begging leave to be, Bóoyoor, janum? (Command me, my soul; that is, dear to me as my soul (life), condescend to repeat your orders). In attempting to make purchases of the Persians, as we had repeated occasion to make, on the road as also at other times, the article desired is always at the outset, peishkush, a present to you; and its owner your servant and your sacrifice. And if you request his terms, he reiterates the same assurance, until you strongly insist on his naming the price, when he at length tells you, that since you will not take the article without paying him for it, you may set your own price, for he can sell nothing to you. Name a reasonable sum, and he will flatly reply that you shall not have it for that; and by this time his interest has got so much the better alike of his modesty and generosity, that he will demand twice or thrice its known value, which you must pay or take the trouble of bating him down. This is done by simply leaving him, as he will quickly call after you to take the article at the price you have offered. I know not how often I have in imagination stood by the side of Abraham, negotiating with the sons of Heth for a place to bury his dead, when I have been purchasing the most trifling article in Persia.

[6] Rather, "Upon my eyes!"

"As illustrating eastern manners, and these in turn throwing light upon Scripture, I may quote a part of the passage which records that celebrated transaction: 'And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead. And Ephron, the Hittite, answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead. And Abraham bowed himself before the people of the land. And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it me, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. And Ephron said unto Abraham, My lord, hearken unto me, the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. And Abraham hearkened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver current money with the merchant.' This contract exhibits less formality than business transactions commonly possess in Persia at the present time. The bereaved patriarch was little disposed to be particular, in relation to the price he should pay for a place to bury his deceased Sarah; and his neighbors would not probably be apt, in these mournful circumstances, to do what was common in trade, or fully to develop their avaricious propensities. The general resemblance to Persian transactions, however, is very striking." In fact, the Persians, in their conversation, use such extravagant and hyperbolic

compliments on the most trifling occasions, that it would at first lead a stranger to suppose that every inhabitant of the place is willing to lay down his life, shed his blood, or spend his money in his service; and this mode of address, which in fact has no more real meaning than “your obedient humble servant” at the end of a letter, is observed not only by persons of the higher rank, but even among the humblest artificers, the lowest of which will make no scruple, on your arrival, of offering you the city of Shiraz, with all its appurtenances, as a peishkushor present. “On our journey, as well as at home,” says Mr. Perkins, whose information on this point we can fully corroborate, “we frequently received presents, for which an extravagant sum is always expected in return. When the bearer approaches you, he will almost deluge you with a flood of fulsome compliments and expressions of devoted attachment, as a token of which he brings you the present, though he had never seen you before; and if you meet his wishes from your purse, he will leave you with the mellifluous stream still flowing, though a little checked, because, as he tells you, you have so mortified him by paying him anything that he can no longer look you in the face, and can scarcely utter a word; whereas, if you tender him only a fair price for the article, he will manifest the deepest displeasure, reject with disdain the proffered remuneration, and carry away his present, loading you with a copious measure of at least secret maledictions.”

It often happens, however, that if the stranger be a person of wealth or influence, the man is really anxious to force upon his acceptance an article which he happens to admire or expresses a wish to purchase. But if he should be inconsiderate enough to accept it, he will not be long in discovering that by so doing he has given the person a claim either upon his good offices or favor, or for a present of more than equal value in return.

Some travelers draw a distinction in this respect between the inhabitants of towns and villages, much to the advantage of the latter. Of this we hear, indeed, in all countries; but so far as our experience goes in different countries (including our own), this superiority of village character is not easily substantiated. It must be admitted, however, that in Persia the villagers are exempt from many of the influences which tend to produce much of the peculiar evils which have been noticed in the character of the townspeople, as well as from other influences which tend to call forth the brilliant qualities by which the latter are distinguished. On this point it would be unjust to withhold the testimony of Sir Harford Jones, whose opportunities of forming a correct judgment are undeniable. After an interval of many years, he passed, in high state as ambassador from the British crown, through a part of the country in which he had previously been known as an invalid in pursuit of health, as a merchant seeking to mix profit with pleasure, or as a fugitive from Shiraz: his impressions on the way are thus recorded:—“There was scarcely one of these places at which I had not formerly made acquaintance with some of its inhabitants in the humbler walks of life; many of them had already gone to ‘that borne from whence no traveler returns;’ but such of them as were still alive, invariably found some opportunity or other of visiting me in private; some of them attended by their children—all of them greeting me with the kindest expressions of regard and friendship, and uniformly bringing with them some little present. Some, for instance, brought a favorite kid; others, fresh butter made by their wives; others, cream cheese, or coagulated milk, of which the Persians make great use, under the name of liban.”

After observing that a friend, who kept a journal at the time, notes all these visits, as proceeding from motives of interest, and not of friendship, and ascribing this to a want of a more intimate knowledge of the Persian peasantry, Sir Harford says:—“Now I am bound to declare that there

was not one of this class of visitors on whom I could prevail to accept a pecuniary return for the present he made. The general request was, for something to keep in remembrance of me—a knife, a penknife, or a pair of scissors. I hope the reader need not be told that I never accepted their favorite kid. I advert to these and such like trifling circumstances, in the hope that the disclosure of them may soften the injurious opinion formed by some persons of the Persian character, from the perusal of books, written by such as had only the opportunity of viewing them superficially, or of books written with the avowed design of amusing the idle, by the recital of absurd tales or extravagant caricature.... He who attempts to make us believe that the inhabitants of cities in Persia, and the Persian peasantry, are in moral character the same, knows little or nothing of what he is talking about; and he who imagines that the Persian peasants of Fars, Iraq, Azerbaijan, or any other province, all possess the same moral qualities, is equally ignorant. Even in this country, it is easy to perceive a distinctive difference in the manners, in the habits, and consequently in the character, of the peasants of different countries.” The Persian people generally, as regards their personal appearance, he described as a fine race of men. They are not tall, but it is rare to see any of them diminutive or deformed, and they are in general strong and active. Their complexions vary from a dark olive to a fairness which approaches that of a northern European, and if they have not all the bloom of the latter, their florid, and healthy look often gives them no inconsiderable share of beauty. As a nation they may be termed brave; though the valor they have displayed, like that of every other people in a similar state of society, has in a great degree depended upon the character of their leaders, and the nature of the objects for which they fought. Their vices are still more prominent than their virtues. Induced, by the nature of their government, to resort on every occasion to art and violence, they are alternately submissive and tyrannical. Many of the other various defects of their character may doubtless be accounted for in the same way; although we are not disposed to agree with those of their apologists, who account for all that is wrong in them from such causes. We find a deeper source in our fallen nature, which in the Persians affords that class of external manifestations which temperament, habit of mind, climate, a false religion, and, among other circumstances but not solely, a bad system of government, may excite and impose. The fallen character of our race assumes in Persia merely one of those diversified aspects in which it is manifested in various countries—the same though different; and we must not be too ready in allowing travelers and historians to deprive us of the universal evidence of man’s corruption, by referring every local or national manifestation of the universal disease to special causes and influences. But it is certain, that if we wanted to point out the one country in which more than in another, the grossest and least disguised evidence of man’s fallen estate might be found, Persia is the country we should be disposed to indicate, and the Persians the people to whom we should be inclined to refer. And yet there is much in the natural qualities and endowments of this people to justify the expectation, that in the coming time, for which we all sigh, when the abundant outpouring of the influences of the Holy Spirit shall have changed even this moral and social wilderness into a garden of God, the diadem of Persia will not be the least illustrious of the Redeemer’s many crowns. It is certainly not the least of the advantages which we may derive from the contemplation of the painful subjects which this little book presents to the reader’s notice, that it may give a fresh impulse to the earnestness of our desires after, and the heartiness of our prayers for that day in which great voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.”

15. Religion

Religion

Chapter V

It is well known that the ancient Persians were not, like most other nations, worshippers of images, which indeed they abominated as much as, under another religion, they now do, and as much perhaps as the Israelites themselves did. Their idols were the natural elements, and in particular the fire, as the purest and most characteristic symbol or representative of the God they worshipped. Hence their religion was free from many of the grosser absurdities, and, it may be added, from most of the viler atrocities, of which the apostle has left a most awful and striking picture in Romans 1. But it was not the less an idolatry. For, although some of the most instructed men might regard the fire only as a symbol of the Divinity, as they understood His character and attributes, it is certain that the great body of worshippers suffered their admiration to rest upon the altar fires, which they deemed sacred, without caring to penetrate the hidden meanings which the learned assigned to that worship. This superstition is not extinct. It is still cherished by those descendants of the ancient Persians who retained the old religion, and of whom almost two thousand families still linger in the country, under the name of Guebres, but who are found in greater numbers in India, to which their ancestors retired, and chiefly about Bombay, under the name of Parsees. The two centuries of subjection to the Arabian caliphs, which followed the famous battle of Nahavund, in a.d. 641, more than sufficed to establish the Mohammedan religion in Persia; and the religion which was thus established, and which prevailed for more than seven centuries in Persia, differed in no respect from that which was professed in all Muslim countries, the system by which they are at present so much distinguished from all the other adherents of the false prophet being the adoption of a later age.

Sunnis

It must be understood that the law and doctrine of those who may be called the orthodox Muslims—as the Arabians, Turks, and others—are derived, first, from the Koran of Mohammed, and next, from his traditional sayings, which, as reported by his wives and companions, and as eventually expounded and reduced into a system by the four great doctors of the law, Haneefa, Malik, Shaffei, and Hanbal, became consolidated into one belief, which is called Sunni; or, in other words, the belief of those who assent to the Sunna, or oral traditions, and who consequently acknowledge the first four caliphs, Abubekr, Omar, and Othman, from whom most of these traditions were derived, as the chosen companions and legitimate successors of Mohammed. These four saints or doctors above-mentioned, to whom the organization of the system of law and doctrine is owing, were, during their lifetime, regarded as holy and learned men, and, after their death, were, in a certain sense, canonized as the four Imams, spiritual heads, or high-priests of the established faith. The four sects or schools founded by them, have been denominated the four pillars of the Sunni faith, and each of them has a separate oratory in the temple of Mecca; but this, and other formal distinctions, which they have preserved as separate sects, have not disturbed

their union, which has been cemented by the common alarm at the progress of schisms, that threatened by their prevalence, not only to alter the faith, but to overthrow the whole system of their jurisprudence, which was established upon authorities, the purity and legality of which the schismatics openly denied.

Shiites

Among the chief of these schisms was that of the Shias, which has for three centuries and a half been the established religion of Persia. This name of Shia means heretic, and was applied, in the first instance, by the orthodox believers to the separatists. The great and essential difference between the Sunnis and the Shias is not, after all, in any matter of doctrine or ceremonial. It lies in the opinion which the Shias have inherited from the immediate partisans of Ali, that the celebrated man of that name had a Divine and indefeasible right to have succeeded to the caliphate on the death of Mohammed, which right descended to his heirs.

Muslim History As the peculiarities of the religion of the Persians are based very much upon historical events, it will be necessary, briefly, to state these circumstances, in order to render the details embraced in this volume more intelligible. For reasons which cannot now be ascertained, Mohammed abstained from giving any instructions respecting his successor. The legends which exist among the Persians, tending to show that he did nominate Ali, are entitled to no credit, as is admitted by many of the learned among themselves, who, however, urge that this proves that he considered the claims of Ali too manifest to be called in question. Indeed, Ali himself acknowledged before his death, that "the prophet" did not appoint any successor. On the other hand, the traditions adduced by the Sunni, to show that Mohammed indicated Abubekr as his successor, by requesting him to conduct public prayers during his last illness, is as little entitled to credit; for it is inconceivable that if Mohammed had in any way indicated his wishes on the subject, they would not have prevented the unseemly contentions which arose on the very day of his death. This contest at length became so violent as to threaten a violent rupture in the ranks of the Muslims. It was finally appeased by the prudence and moderation of Omar himself, one of the most prominent candidates. While the strife was still warm, he advanced to Abubekr,[7] took his hand, and declared his allegiance to him, as the caliph or successor of Mohammed. This pacificatory act was followed by the others who were present, and Abubekr was chosen to the office by the united voice of the company. Ali was not there on this occasion, nor does it appear that his interests as a candidate were represented or supported by any one. But, when the result was announced to him, he made no attempt to conceal his dissatisfaction that his own claims had been overlooked. These claims consisted in his being by birth a cousin of Mohammed, and his son-in-law by the marriage of his only surviving daughter Fatimah. He was also the first, beyond the immediate circle of Mohammed's own household, who embraced the religion which he taught. These claims at the outset appeared so strong, that a considerable party adhered to him, and, even at this early period, the principles which have ever since been the essential grounds of difference between the Sunnis and the Shias, were distinctly marked out. The party of Ali contended that the office of religious leader (including the temporal rule) was hereditary, and that their chief was entitled to it in right of his twofold affinity to the prophet. Their opponents, who constituted the great body of the Muslims, held, on the contrary, the opinion, that the succession must be determined by the voices of the whole company of the faithful. It may have been the same conviction, which seems in accordance with the equalizing principles of his religion, that induced

Mohammed to remain silent with respect to the succession. Not long after the appointment of Abubekr, Ali was, however, induced to declare his allegiance to the caliph, but it is generally supposed that neither he nor his followers were sincere in this transaction. When about to die, the caliph assumed the power of nominating his successor, and the person named by him was not Ali, but Omar, and the choice was confirmed after his decease, without opposition, the personal and public claims of Omar being, in fact, of the highest character.

Omar's Reign

Omar reigned about ten years, and then received a mortal wound from the hand of an assassin. In his last moments, he refused to name any successor. Some mentioned his son, but he said that the responsibilities of the office were too great to be borne by more than one member of the same family; and, as to Ali, he said that he was not a sufficiently serious character to undertake so weighty a charge. All he could be prevailed upon to do, was to name a committee of six of the chief men among the Arabians, to whom the settlement of the matter should be referred after his decease. Ali was one of the six, and in the committee he did not hesitate to press his own claims. It is highly probable that the choice would have fallen on him, had he been willing to accede to the conditions proposed. These were, that he should govern in accordance with "the book of God," as they called the Koran, the traditions of the prophet, and the determinations of the two seniors. To the first two conditions Ali assented; but to the last he demurred. The "two seniors" probably denote Abubekr and Omar, who had preceded in the caliphate; and, as they had been the source of numerous traditions respecting the dicta of Mohammed, as well as of many interpretations of the Koran, and of decisions founded upon it, the electors would naturally desire to secure from Ali a recognition of their authority; and his refusal, doubtless, laid the foundation for the principal heresy which the Sunnis charge upon the Shias, namely, the rejection of the traditions which rest upon the authority of the first caliphs.

Othman's Reign On this determination of Ali, which was found to be unshaken, Othman, another of the six, was chosen caliph. He reigned nearly twelve years, and, at his death, the dispute about the succession was renewed with much increased violence. In the years that had passed, the cause of Ali had gained much strength. The Muslims began to see in his sons, now grown to manhood, the sole heirs and descendants of "the prophet;" and the great body of the Arabian people seems to have been at this time very much in his favor. His most inveterate adversary was Aayeshah, the before-mentioned wife of Mohammed, and daughter of Abubekr, who had all along taken a prominent part in public affairs, and was honored with the title of "the mother of the faithful." She had from the first opposed, with the utmost virulence, the claims of Ali, partly, in the first instance, from the desire to see the office conferred upon her own father, and still more from her jealousy of Ali's wife, Fatimah, who was daughter of Mohammed by his first and most beloved spouse, Kadijah. Her hostility continued to the end of her life; and, although it did not prevent him from at length attaining the caliphate after the death of Othman, it gave him much trouble in the possession of it.

Ali's Reign By the time that Othman died, and the cause of Ali had become strong, that valiant and generous hero, then advanced in years, had lost all desire for the dangerous eminence to which he had once aspired, and would fain have declined it; yet it was literally forced upon him by the impatient zeal of his partisans, as well as from the cool judgment of many others, who hoped that

this step would heal the divisions in which they saw much danger to the interests of Islam. But from the hour that he took up the staff of empire he knew not peace. The whole course of his reign was a storm and a conflict; and at length, like his two immediate predecessors, he fell by the blow of an assassin, while engaged in his devotions at the mosque. Ali was distinguished for his bravery; and the appellation of "Lion of God," which is still often connected with his name by the Persians, was conferred upon him for his many daring exploits, long before he attained the caliphate. He was, as compared with his contemporaries, noble and elevated in his views, and if he was not qualified to gain and secure favor, the deficiency arose chiefly from his superiority to the low acts by which power is too often won and sustained. He was a poet, and was accounted the most eloquent man of his time. Some of his writings are still extant, among which his Moral Lectures are the most distinguished:

It is not necessary to relate in detail the troubles of Ali's reign, which was incessantly disturbed by the rebellious movements of his domestic foes. His chief enemy was Moawiyah, of the family of Ommiyah, of the great tribe of Koreish, who held Syria under Othman, as his lieutenant, and who retained the rule in that quarter after the accession of Ali, and in despite of his power. Ali had fixed the seat of his government at Kufah, on the Euphrates, which thus became the center of those who were true to his interests. Hence it arose that while the western provinces fell away from him, those of the east remained faithful to him.

Hassan and Husayn

After the assassination of Ali (May 6th, A.D. 661), he was succeeded by his eldest son, Hassan, a man whose quiet and retiring spirit ill fitted him for the boisterous times in which he lived, and the bitter strife in which he was involved. He held the reins of government not more than six months, and then resigned them to Moawiyah, who by that act became caliph, and founder of the dynasty of the Ammiades. Hassan perished ere long by poison; and his death is usually, but perhaps erroneously, ascribed to Moawiyah. His pretensions were inherited by his brother Husayn, whose character was very different from Hassan's, and had more resemblance to that of their father. When Moawiyah died in a.d. 680, his son and successor Tezid regarded his claims with jealousy and apprehension; and his letter from Damascus to the governor of Medina, announcing his accession, instructed him to seize the son of Ali, if he refused to acknowledge his right to the caliphate. The governor thereupon sent for Husayn to his house, informed him of Moawiyah's death, and invited him to declare his allegiance to his son Yezid. This Husayn evaded for the time, and managed to retire to his own house, whence he escaped with his family to Mecca, which was faithful to him. He there received an invitation from the people of Kufah, the metropolis of Ali, with a promise of support in his claim upon the caliphate.

Relying on that promise, Husayn, despite the dissuasions of his wisest friends, set out for that place with his family and a small body of attached followers. But, before his arrival in that quarter, his principal friends at Kufah had been seized, and the manifestations in his favor put down with a strong hand by the emir Obeidallah, the caliph's governor in the Arabian Iraq, who took the most careful measures for the defense of the country. When the news of Husayn's approach arrived at Kufah, an officer name Harro was sent out with a thousand horses to meet him. He had orders to conduct him and his party to Kufah, but not otherwise to permit his advance. When Husayn heard these orders, he declined either to desist from his purpose or to submit, and commanded his men

to continue their march. This was opposed by Harro, which provoked Husayn to answer him in the following terms, very much in use among the Arabs, "May your mother be childless of you!"[8] Harro fired at this, as the Orientals always do at anything like disrespectful mention of their mothers; but remembering who Husayn's mother was, he restrained himself from the usual recrimination, and said—"If any one else had treated me as you have done, I should not fail to recriminate—but there is no tongue that can speak of your mother without the highest respect." After this, he moved off his force, saying that he had no orders to fight with him, but only to conduct him to Kufah, and if he would go in any other direction he would meet with no opposition from him.

[8] Compare 1 Samuel 20:30; 1 Samuel 15:33.

Husayn was resolved to push on to Kadeseh, a place lying nearer to Kufah, but not on the direct route. On the way, he learned the real state of affairs at Kufah, which might have taught him that his cause was hopeless. But he still went on; and by the time the governor was able to move out his forces against him, had reached Kerbelah, attended still by Harro watching his movements. The force destined to act against him, under Amer Ebn Saad, amounted to four thousand men, besides the one thousand already out under Harro—whereas Husayn's fighting men scarcely amounted to a hundred and thirty-two horses and forty on foot. Before hostilities commenced, several messages passed between the parties—and Husayn being now well aware that the Kufans had deserted him, offered to abandon his enterprise and return home; but this, or any other condition, was now refused, unless he would first acknowledge Yezid to be the true and only caliph of the Muslims.

Amer then proceeded to cut off the communications between Husayn's camp and the Euphrates, or rather with those branches of it called "the rivers of Kerbelah," whereby, as intended, his people were in that burning climate reduced to the most dreadful extremities from thirst, with refreshing streams before their eyes. This led to a conference between Husayn and Amer, attended by twenty men each, in the space between the two camps. But nothing came of it, as the governor of Kufah would not authorize Amer to accept any other terms than unconditional submission, or the decision of the sword; and at the same time he dispatched a reinforcement of five thousand men under Shamer. The governor also sent the offer of his protection to four sons of Ali in Husayn's camp, if they chose to separate their cause from their brother's; but they refused it, saying that "the protection of God was better than that of the son of Somyah."

Amer being thus reinforced, and having received a reprimand for his dilatoriness, drew up his ten thousand men in order of battle, and advanced towards the camp of Husayn, which lay there before this great army like a small fold of sheep in the wilderness. It was then past the hour of evening prayer, and Husayn, who was in the tent with his brother Abbas, asked and obtained a truce till the following day. The night was spent in prayers and supplications, broken by the waitings of women—Husayn's sister and daughters—over the approaching doom of their brother and father, which their fears foresaw. At the break of day, both sides made the usual movements before a battle. Amer arranged his troops in battle array, and advanced to the camp to begin the attack. Upon this Husayn mounted his horse, and laying before him the Koran, which he vainly revered as the book of God, he conjured his soldiers, by all they held dear in this life and in the life to come, to attend him in the path of duty. This drew floods of tears from Husayn's sister and

daughters, who rent the air with their lamentations, upon which he sent his son Ali and his brother Abbas to pacify them, declaring that he would rather die on the field of battle than renounce his rights in the servile manner required. At this moving scene Harro, who has already been mentioned as one of Yezid's commanders, was so overcome, that he declared aloud his grief at having intercepted Husayn, and rode over to his side, followed by thirty of his men, declaring his determination to die with the grandson of "the prophet." A final effort was then made to mollify Amer; but he alleged that the orders he had received precluded all pacific measures—on which Harro upbraided him and all the Kufans with having imposed upon Husayn to his ruin, and reproached him with having deprived the heir of the prophet of the water of the Euphrates, which Christians, Jews, and Sabians were allowed to drink, and in which even swine and dogs might disport their unclean carcasses. Then, as usual in eastern battles, the fight began in single combats, see 2 Samuel 2:13-17; 1 Samuel 17:23, in which the champions of Husayn performed such exploits, that Amer hastened to secure the advantage of his numbers in a general action. In this, also, the force of Husayn performed prodigies of valor. But what could even the valor of despair avail against such fearful odds? At midday, although the battle had then become hot in all parts, Husayn performed his noontide devotions with great fervency, in the midst of the shattered remains of his little army—adding the prayer of Fear, which is never used but in the last emergencies of adverse fortune. The fight had already, in fact, been almost fatal to Husayn, who had lost his best men, and the greater number of his troops. The renewed attack made frightful havoc of the small remainder, and before evening scarcely any remained but Husayn himself, his little son Abdallah, and his nephew, also a child. The last had his hand struck off in the act of embracing his uncle, and was forthwith slain; and the little Abdallah was struck dead by an arrow while in his father's lap. All was then nearly over. Husayn received first a wound in the head, which filled his helmet with blood, and was afterwards shot in the mouth with an arrow while quenching his burning thirst. But he still continued to defend himself like a man impelled by despair—insomuch that no one of his enemies ventured for a time to give to the smitten lion at bay the last mortal blow. At length his sister Zeinab made a desperate effort to save him, by asking Amer how he could have the heart to see Husayn slain. Upon this appeal, large tears were seen to run down his beard, and he turned his face away from her. But the other commander, who was of a more fierce temper, cursed and upbraided his men for not approaching Husayn; whereupon one advanced, and wounded him in the hand, another smote him in the neck, a third thrust him through with his spear, and he sank to the ground after having received thirty-three wounds, and thirty-four contusions. After he fell, his head was struck off, and the conquering soldiers rode over his body so often that it was trodden into the very ground. The head was the next day presented to Obeidallah the governor of Kufah, who struck it over the mouth with his staff, and treated it with much contempt. The enmity with which this person had acted was, however, not approved by his master Yezid; who, upon the arrival of the express sent from Kufah to apprise him of what had happened, and to congratulate him on the success of his arms, is reported to have shed tears, and said, "May God refuse his blessing to the son of Somyah for this! I should have been well pleased without the death of Husayn. Had he been with me I would have pardoned him. God loved Husayn, but did not suffer him to reach the dignity to which he aspired." So also, when the head of Husayn was brought to him, his compassion was much excited, and he cried out, "O Husayn, had it been in my power to save thee, thy life had not been lost!" We have no right to distrust the sincerity of the feeling thus expressed on the part of Yezid, to whom the Persians will not yield the

credit of any capacity for generous emotions or compassionate sentiments. We rather believe him sincere, from the fact that Husayn was a man whose high and noble qualities won the respect and esteem of many whose interests were adverse to his own. Innumerable anecdotes are current respecting him, in illustration of his character, and of his views and sentiments. Of these, we have room for only one, related by Yezdi in his treatise on Divine Love. Husayn one day asked his father, Ali, if he loved him: and when Ali answered that he loved him most tenderly, his son again demanded, if he loved God: and on his reply in the affirmative, Husayn said to him, "Surely two loves can never meet in the same breast;" Ali was so much moved at this, that he could not forbear shedding tears; when Husayn, touched by the impression his words had made, hastened to comfort him. He asked, "O my father, which would in my eyes be the sorest evil, my death, or the sin of infidelity?" And when Ali unhesitatingly replied, "Much as I love thee, my son, I would sooner yield thee up to death than abandon my faith in God;" Husayn promptly rejoined, "By this sign, then, it is clear that the love you bear to me is only a natural tenderness, but that your true love is given to God." This brief historical statement will explain the ground which the Persians take in their distinctive system of faith. They are the successors of that party by which, ever after the abdication of Hassan, and the martyrdom (as they regard it) of Husayn, the claims of Ali to have succeeded Mohammed in the caliphate, and to have transmitted that honor through his children, the sole descendants of "the prophet," were constantly upheld. Believing this, they execrate the memory of the caliphs who preceded Ali, whom other Muslims regard with the highest respect; and they consequently refuse any credit to the traditions that come through him.

Ali's claims, they assert, rested on his nearness of kindred to Mohammed, of whom he was the cousin, and on his having married Fatimah, the only offspring of "the prophet." They also affirm that he was expressly nominated by Mohammed as his successor, and that those by whose intrigues he was deprived of his inheritance, acted in direct contradiction to the will of God, as signified through his servant; and that hence the three caliphs who preceded Ali, instead of being worthy of the honor in which they are held by the orthodox, could only be regarded with abhorrence and indignation, and the traditions coming through sources so polluted could not be received as of any authority or value. As this invalidates a great portion of the expository law which the orthodox held in equal regard with the Koran itself, a very serious and radical ground of separation arises out of what appears to be, at the first glance, no insuperable matter. The difference is something, in this respect, like that between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, though there are no such doctrinal differences as subsisted between these two sects; and the Shias do not, like the Sadducees, reject all traditions, but only such as come through what they regard as a corrupt source. Traditions which can be traced to Ali and his friends they receive.

Twelve Imams

We have related in some detail the circumstances of Husayn's death, on account of the great prominence which, second only to that of Ali, the Shias assign to him among their twelve imams. This is difficult to account for, unless, as Mr. Southgate remarks, "it has arisen from the tragic representation of his death, which itself may have been contrived in the first place merely for a temporary purpose, and to have gradually extended to an annual and universal observance. The effect of this frequent and touching commemoration (which we shall have occasion to describe), would naturally be to excite a spirit of enthusiastic reverence for the martyr who died by the hands of his enemies. And so it is. His sepulcher at Kerbelah is the principal object of religious

pilgrimage. His name is heard as often from the lips of a Persian as that of Ali. There is no excellence which he is not supposed to have possessed—no virtue which he did not exemplify. This enthusiasm, if it does not arise from, is preserved and quickened by, the yearly celebration of his martyrdom, in like manner as the simple act of commemorating our Savior's death is the most efficient means of strengthening the fidelity and love of his disciples." At the first view it might seem that the succession of Ali to the caliphate would have satisfied the expectations of his adherents, and would have extinguished the feelings which had been generated by his undeserved exclusion. But this was not the case. It was considered that the children of Ali were the sole descendants of Mohammed, and his adherents contended that the same high temporal and spiritual power which should immediately have descended to Ali, ought to have been the heritage of those who sprang from him. His death, and the tragic end of his sons, with the misfortunes of descendants (who, although admitted to the rank of imam, or chief priest, were excluded from all temporal power), led many to cherish in secret the principles of this sect, and to mourn over the hard lot of those whom, as the direct descendants of Mohammed, they regarded as the first of men. Of these imams there have been twelve, of whom Ali himself is counted the first, and Mehdi the last. To all of them qualities and powers corresponding to the nobleness of their origin are ascribed. Supernatural knowledge, perfect holiness, and the power of working miracles, are amongst the attributes which are ascribed to them. Mehdi, the twelfth and last imam, was but five years old when he succeeded to the imamate, and he disappeared at the age of twelve years. The Sunnis and the Shias somewhat differ in their views concerning him. The former consider that his is destined to appear again towards the end of time, to summon all the nations of the earth to the knowledge of Islam. It is added that three hundred and sixty heavenly spirits will assist him in this mission, and that he will act as the vicar of Jesus Christ in the imamate. The Shias, on the other hand, entertain the opinion, that the "imam Mehdi still dwells in the world, living unknown of men in some sequestered cave. His return is the object of their wishes and expectations; for they hold that he is to recover the rights of his house, to establish a universal caliphate over the whole earth, and to bring all men to the true faith—as is indicated by the name of Mehdi, or Director, which he bears. Who does not see in these notions respecting the reappearance of the imam Mehdi, a blasphemous misappropriation of the expectation of the Christian church respecting the establishment of our Lord's kingdom over the whole earth, and of his reappearance hereafter, "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," 2 Thessalonians 1:10. Indeed, if we were to discriminate nicely, it might seem as if the Sunni notions were more founded on this expectation; and the Shia notions more upon the expectation which the Jews entertained, and do still entertain, respecting the Messiah's coming.

Shia Established

Now, it was through the accession to the throne of Persia of a descendant of one of these twelve imams—the seventh, named Moossah Kazim—that the Shia system became the established creed of Persia. This descendant was Shah Ismail, all whose ancestors up to the imam had been regarded as holy men, and some of them as saints. They had long been settled at Ardebil, where they lived as retired devotees, that they might attract disciples, and acquire that fame which they pretended to despise. The first of the family who attained to any signal reputation was Sheik Suffee-u-deen, from whom the dynasty took the name of Suffavean. He was succeeded by his son Sudder-u-deen, whose reputation for sanctity was so high, that contemporary kings visited his cell.

Among them was the great conqueror Timur Beg, better known in Europe as Tamerlane, who demanded to know what favor he could bestow upon him—"Release those prisoners you have brought from Turkey," was the noble request of the recluse. The conqueror consented; and the grateful tribes which thus recovered their liberty, declared themselves the devoted disciples of the man to whom they were indebted for it. Their children preserved as sacred the obligation of their fathers; and the descendants of the captives of Timor became the chief supporters of the family of Suffee, and eventually enabled the son of a devotee to ascend what was then one of the most splendid thrones in the world. "History," says Malcolm, "does not furnish us with a better motive for obedience, or a nobler origin of power."

Ismail When Ismail ascended the Persian throne in 1492, the seven Turkish tribes with other adherents, by whose aid he had risen to this eminence, formed a considerable body professing the Shia faith, which was soon adopted by the whole nation, and became the established religion of the country; and the Persians speedily learned to regard with hatred the opinions which they had themselves formerly held. This was the source of the animosity which sprang up between the Turks and the Persians, and which has been the cause of many bloody wars between them. The abhorrence with which the Shias regarded those who upheld the claims of the men who persecuted the sacred family of Ali, is well repaid by that with which the Sunnis regard those who defame the great names they are accustomed to mention with reverence—and, being aggravated by mutual charges of unsound and infamous tenets, at length reached such a pitch, that these kindred religionists learned to look on each other with far greater dislike than men of an entirely different religion. Reciprocally, the Sunnis and Shias have shown that they regarded their opponents as entitled to less consideration than even Jews and Christians, and have even questioned whether the very idolaters were not better than they.

Ali's Romantic Influence The hold which the romantic history of Ali and his sons took upon the imaginations of the Persians; the seductive influence of that man-worship, of which Ali became, in some sort, the object; and the force of that vigorous hate with which they had so long been accustomed to regard the Sunnis, in the course of time settled into fixed habits and conclusions, the force of which was little understood by Nadir Shah, when, for the advancement of his political objects, he strove to bring about a uniformity of faith. When that remarkable man had contrived that the crown should be offered to him, he accepted it only on the condition that the Shias should in future abstain from publicly anathematizing the first three caliphs, and that they should discontinue the festivals they had been in the habit of celebrating in honor of Ali and his unhappy sons. It may be easily conceived that it was not philanthropy or humanity which made this ferocious conqueror a preacher of moderation, and which at one time induced him to argue the matters of difference in full conclave with the doctors of the law. His object was, to conciliate the Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmens, who composed the greater part of his army, and to pare the way to the more easy conquest of Turkey, by removing the causes of religious animosity. He, however, thwarted his own object, by pressing it too sharply, and by making the great mistake of supposing that new points of faith might be settled by coercion, and that it was not more difficult to rule consciences than to govern men by force of arms. In the end, he incurred the hatred of his subjects, shook the foundations of his own power, and at length perished, without having realized the least success in this design. When we reflect upon the facility with which the Persians adopt foreign customs, even from those they have overcome; and when, in particular, we consider the

ease with which they received the Muslim religion from the Saracens, and, in a later age, the Shia system of belief from Shah Ismail, we may be the more impressed by the tenacity with which they held to their faith on this occasion. We know not what further change there shall be among this people, until that day—oh, that it were come!—in which they are folded with Christ's sheep, and live upon his pastures. A glance thrown forward, in faith, to that time—which is surely coming, though they dream not of it—often cheered our own hearts, in witnessing much that we now describe; and seemed to create a kind of brotherly interest in a people who present many fine qualities, overshadowed by much evil.

It is not our object to describe the Mohammedan religion, which is professed by many other nations besides the Persians. We must rather confine our notice to what is peculiar to them, and serves to distinguish them from others who hold the Muslim unbelief. But these peculiarities are almost entirely such as grow out of their appreciation of the high claims of the family of Ali; for, in doctrine and in ceremony, there is little to distinguish them from other Muslims. A slight variation in the mode of holding their hands, and of prostrating themselves in prayer, is the chief visible distinction; and, as a distinction, is somewhat analogous to the different modes of making the sign of the cross in the Soman Catholic and the Greek churches. But it is Ali who is the central point of the Shia religion—the person who, by the orthodox Muslims, is treated with decent respect, is, in the Persian system, exalted unto heaven. It is an article of their faith, that Ali was the lieutenant of God. In an axiom which is very common among them, they demonstrate the respect in which they hold him—"Mohammed is a city of knowledge, and Ali is the gate thereof." It is under the impression conveyed by this metaphor, that they ascribe to him and his descendants a vast superiority to the rest of mankind in virtue and in knowledge. A learned Shia doctor said, in an answer addressed to Henry Martyn, that the number of expressions in the Koran which could be understood perfectly was extremely small, and that the greater part of the things contained in that book were comprehensible only by the prophet himself and his descendants. One half of this—the part which characterizes the Koran—is certainly true. The more educated class of Shias allow a great difference between Mohammed and his son-in-law; and, although they regard Ali as the legitimate successor of their prophet, they are far from looking upon him as his equal. But, in popular opinion, no bound is set to the veneration and fanaticism of which Ali is the object. He is exalted above human nature, to him miracles are ascribed, and almost Divine honors are rendered to him. How they also venerate the chief line of his descendants, the Imams, has been already shown: Fatimah, the sole child of Mohammed, and wife of Ali, they venerate as a saint; and through this appreciation of her, a woman figures in the Shia system with honors otherwise unknown to Islamism.

Muslims and Christianity

Like other Mohammedans, the Persians hold the unity of God in such a sense as precludes them from acknowledging a plurality of persona in the Godhead; and the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ (whom they otherwise respect) they reject with abhorrence, and regard Christians as idolaters and polytheists for holding it, and for making Him an object of worship. In fact, the Mohammedan declaration of faith, "There is no God but God, who neither begetteth, nor is begotten," is, and was designed to be, a standing protest of Islam against this most essential doctrine of the Christian faith, without which that of man's redemption were a shadow and a dream. The fact that Mohammedanism publicly, three times a day, raises its voice against this doctrine, places that

system of religion in a truly peculiar and awful condition. Muslims are not like the heathen, who are ignorant of the doctrine of Christ; they are acquainted with it, and knowingly and nationally, from day to day, they protest against its most essential principles, and reject them as abominable. This, as we are assured from experience, forms a great discouragement to missionary exertions among Mohammedans, whether they are Persians, Turks, or Arabians.

Ceremonial Purification The Persians make quite as much account of ceremonial purification by washing as do other Muslims, and as did the Pharisees of old. The principle of such purification is thus laid down: "The body appears before God as well as the soul; it must, therefore, be cleansed from all stain previous to the performance of any religious act." There seems nothing to object to in this—and a similar practice or cleansing the body from impurity before taking part in Divine worship, was sanctioned by the law of Moses, from which indeed the Muslim practice seems to have been borrowed. But the tendency of the mind to rest upon external observances has here, as among the Jews, been manifested in the multiplication of objects which render a person unclean, and in the carrying the scruples respecting legal purity to such lengths, that a strict and scrupulous man might occupy a third of his time in acts of purification. This religion lies so much more than even that of the Jews in "meats and drinks, and divers washings," Hebrews 9:10, as to become quite as burdensome as the Jews had rendered the ceremonial law of Moses in the time of Christ. So very oppressive indeed is it, that the courage and patience of self-righteousness—its strong shoulders and iron sinews—could alone be sufficient to sustain them; and it is, perhaps, necessary to witness these things to realize the full sense of the liberty with which Christ has made us free. Every other religious system, however cunningly devised, is a slavery and a burden—nor is there any other in which a shadow of freedom for the soul can be found. Among the Persians, men whose conduct in life affords no evidence of any kind of religious or moral principle, are often found to be the most scrupulous in their ceremonial purifications; and it is scarcely possible to live a day among this people without having occasion to realize a most vivid recollection of our Lord's denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees—"Woe unto you, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess," Matthew 23:25. The Muslims like the Jews, Leviticus 15:13, prefer performing their ablutions at running waters, and when this is inconvenient or impracticable, care is taken that the water used shall so far run in the application that the same water shall not be twice applied to their persons. In the absence of running water, still water may be used; in the absence of clean water, foul water; and in the absence of any water, dust, sand, ashes, and even dried dung, may be rubbed over the party requiring ablution. It may, therefore, be easily conceived that these ablutions do not in all cases contribute to personal cleanliness.

There is no people who carry the pharisaical washing of "cups and pots," Mark 7:4, to the same extent as the Persians. Even as a strict Jew could not enter the house of a heathen, or partake of his food, without pollution—so neither does any Persian, who has regard for his religious character, partake of the food, the cup, or the pipe of a Christian or of any one of those he regards as an infidel—that is, of any who are not of his own faith. This, however, does not so much, so far as we were ever able to learn, arise from any conception that your religion in itself renders you unclean, as from the belief that your habitual use of food and drink which his law teaches him to regard as unclean and defiling, has imparted to you, as it would to himself, a personal uncleanness, which is transmitted to all you touch, so far as to render it unfit for their food. The

Turks, though a much less tolerant people, lay comparatively little stress upon these matters, which engage the chief solicitude of the Persians. A Turk will not refuse to partake of a Christian's food, while he has reason to know or believe that it contains nothing unclean; nor will he hesitate to drink from the same cup that a Christian's lips have touched, or even to drink the remainder of what he may at table have left in his glass. We remember to have been so often annoyed upon journeys in Persia, in seeing persons breaking the earthen vessels from which we had drunk, or in vigorously scouring those of metal or of wood which had been defiled by contact with our impure lips, that we provided ourselves with a cup of tinned copper, in which to receive from their vessels the draught of water we had sometimes occasion to solicit. So also, when a Persian has received a Christian into his house, there will follow a general purification of all the metal vessels, and a breaking of all those of earthenware which he may have used in drinking or in the preparation of food. The following remarks of Mr. Southgate, on this subject, we can corroborate from our own observation: "It is in this particular of the ceremonial uncleanness of a man of another religion that the Persians differ most widely from the Turks—most widely, I mean, so far as regards those things which meet most frequently the observation of the traveler. On this point, the Persians generally receive opinions and practice from education. Their religious directions are most minute concerning it even to indecency. There are many, especially among men in public stations, who are entirely neglectful of such precepts, and they are strictly followed only by the religious orders and the common people. Among the former they are doubtless mingled with bigoted feelings, and regarded in a very serious light. Among the latter it was a mere matter of unthinking imitation. They are strict in some points, and neglectful in others. They are careful to avoid the most prominent and notorious uncleannesses, while they are continually polluting themselves with those which, though of less importance, are equally forbidden. A servant sometimes will not eat of a dish of which his Christian master has partaken, and yet he will suffer himself to be rendered religiously impure in a thousand other ways. These notions, therefore, should not be considered as indicative always of bigotry, or even of sincere attachment to Islamism. There are many who rigidly practice this who can boast no other religion, besides those who never perform the stated prayers, or observe any other precept of their faith."

Religious Tolerance

It might be supposed that this keen sense of the uncleanness of those who are not of their own religion, would have the effect of making them less tolerant of their presence. But this is not the case. There is no Muslim power in Asia which allows so much freedom of hand and tongue to others as do the Persians. In Turkey, and especially in Roumelia, a Christian subject would be punished with death who should dare to lift his hand against a Muslim. But in Persia, the Christian enjoys almost as much freedom as the lower class of Muslims themselves. He may complain if insulted, and may defend himself if smitten, and sometimes does both with much effect.

We may cite an anecdote or two in illustration of this important difference between the Persians and all other Muslims. From this it will appear that the naturally tolerant temper of the Persians receives all encouragement from the government, and that less from political motives than from a principle of justice. The first is a circumstance that happened in the early part of this century in the province of Azerbaijan, then under the government of Abbas Meerza, heir apparent of the king who at that time reigned, and father of the monarch now upon the throne. One day, in the month of January, 1807, a Persian belonging to the household of the prince, thought fit to insult publicly an

Armenian merchant in the city of Tabreez, and to grossly revile him, for no other reason than the difference of their religions, the Armenian being a Christian. Not content with personally affronting the Christian merchant in the most outrageous manner, the man launched out into the most atrocious abuse of Christ himself, his gospel and his cross.

These blasphemies so aroused the indignation of the Armenian, that he could contain himself no longer, but laid violent hands upon the aggressor, mauled him severely, and left him extended upon the ground. The man, covered with dirt and blood, presently got up, and went to the palace of the prince his master, to prefer a complaint against the Armenian merchant by whom he had been so roughly handled. He took good care, however, to suppress the real cause of the quarrel, and interlarded his story with many false allegations against the merchant. The prince had too much penetration, and understood his countrymen too well not to discover, in the circumstantial details which the man gave, grounds for suspecting the truth of his statement. He therefore determined to hear the matter in full divan. The Armenian was summoned to allege what he had to say in his own defense, and those who had witnessed the fray were called to give their testimony. After hearing the declaration and the evidence, the divan was convinced that the Persian had, without provocation, attacked the Armenian, by his blasphemies against Christ, and that the other had for this cause only, inflicted chastisement upon him. With a view to prevent similar offences in future, and to satisfy the minds of the Christians resident in the country, the prince determined that the decision in this case should be given under the sanction and authority of his recognized guardians of the Mohammedan law. He therefore convened a divan, composed of the sheikh-ul-islam and the principal ulemas of his city, and proposed the following questions, which he required them to answer:—

1. "Was the Lord Jesus (Hazreti Issa) a real prophet of God?"

Ans. "Yes."

2. "Are the laws contained in his noble gospel (Indjilisherif) just or not?"

Ans. "They are just."

3. "Is it permitted by our laws to blaspheme the Lord Jesus and his noble gospel?"

Ans. "No: it is not permitted."

Upon these unanimous decisions of the ulemas, the prince ordered the merchant to be set free, and his own servant to be punished with a hundred strokes of the bastinado,[9]and he further dismissed him from his service. This was intended as a warning to those who should be disposed to insult the professors of the Christian faith; it made at the time a strong impression, and had a most salutary effect. But one cannot reflect upon it without lamenting that those who were thus prepared to treat Jesus with respect, could not see in him not only "a prophet," but a Redeemer, and in his "noble gospel," not only "a just law," but a message of salvation and eternal life to a ruined world, to be received by faith.

[9] A piece of wood or a whip used to perform a "foot whipping". The other anecdote is this: In April, 1815, the neighborhood of Teheran, the metropolis, was visited by a most extraordinary drought. The sheikh-ul-islam of that city conceived that he was performing an action well pleasing to God and the king, in leading the populace to believe that the drought, and the consequent

dearth of the productions of the soil, formed a punishment inflicted upon them for permitting the city to be polluted by the presence of the wine stores kept by the Armenian Christians. The people were at length so excited that they proceeded in a large body to the quarter inhabited by the Armenians, and, in the presence of the sheikh, pulled down one of the churches, and demolished the houses of several dealers in wine. Considering that the use of wine is strictly forbidden by the Muslim law, there was certainly some just cause of displeasure that the permitted use of it to the Christians afforded facilities by which Muslims were seduced into transgressions of their law. But we quote the anecdote for the sake of the lesson of toleration which grew out of it—and certainly nothing could justify the riotous course taken on this occasion, by those whose craving for the forbidden drink created the supply of and trade in the liquor, which the Christians would otherwise have kept only for their own use. The king heard of it, and was much incensed. He sent for the sheikh-ul-islam, and the chief of those who had acted upon his instigations. “Audacious wretches!” he said, “who commanded you to do this deed? What law authorizes such proceedings? Is the sheikh-ul-islam your sovereign, and the ruler of this country? You have violated the laws of my dominions, and by them I condemn you! Depart from my presence.” The legal penalties were immediately enforced; and the culprits were obliged to pay the Armenians a penalty of a thousand tomans (five hundred pounds[10]). The king then sent for the principal persons among the Armenians: “It is my wish,” he said to them, “that all my subjects, of what religion soever they be, should enjoy a just liberty and live unmolested under the protection of my royal authority.” He then promised to inflict condign punishment upon the sheikh-ul-islam, and exhorted them to pray to God for the preservation of his life. At the same time, he ordered his treasurer to pay to these persons the sum of three thousand tomans (£1,500[11]), as some compensation for the injury the Christians had sustained. He moreover commanded that the church which had been demolished should be rebuilt at the expense of government, and that restitution, should be made for such furniture or effects as had been damaged or destroyed.

[10] In United States dollars this would equate to around \$78,000.

[11] In United States dollars this would be around \$234,000. In general, a Turk or an Arab will not willingly enter into a discussion on the doctrines of his own religion with a Christian, nor will he allow a word against them, or in disparagement of them, to be uttered. But it is not so with the Persians. They not only tolerate, but enjoy, discussions on their own tenets, and on the relative merits of Islam and Christianity; and they will say themselves, and allow those whom they regard as infidels to say, whatever they please on the points of their belief, or the persons whom they venerate. Many stories are current of the latitude which they allow themselves on such matters. The following is not a bad specimen: A mullah, preaching one day in a mosque, dwelt strongly upon the examination which the deceased have to undergo from the angels Nekyr and Monkyr, as soon as they are deposited in the tomb. “Don’t believe a word of it!” cried one of the congregation, “for one of my slaves died a few days since; I filled his mouth with rice, and, on digging him up again today, the rice was just as I left it. Now, it is morally impossible for a man to give answers, even to angels, with his mouth full.”

Missionary Work

It is a great matter to one who feels impelled to declare the gospel of Christ, to find a Muslim people willing to hear him, and to argue the matter with him. This is considered a great

encouragement, and will be apt to awaken expectations which, if seldom other than disappointed, have at least the satisfaction that the word of God has been proclaimed. No immediate results may be seen, yet that word will not return unto Him void, but will assuredly prosper in the thing whereto he sends it—although that thing may not be the one we had immediately in view, and the frustration of which may make us too readily conclude that we have labored in vain, and spent our strength for naught. There are several causes which excite this readiness to hear, or rather to discuss, on the part of the Persians—such as a love of disputation, and the desire of triumph in argument, which everyone expects when he begins a controversy—a curiosity to know the peculiarities of other religions, and to know what those who profess them can allege in their defense—a laxity of mind, bordering often on freethinking, which makes them not unwilling to hear what can be alleged against their own religion, though from habit they adhere to it, or cannot find sufficient inducement to abandon it publicly for another—and, lastly, a wish to make themselves agreeable, especially when they have some object to gain. With reference to the love of disputation, it must be understood that the educated Persians are very subtle reasoners; and as the preaching of the gospel to the poor and uneducated would be certain to bring about, ere long, a controversial interview with the learned doctors of the Shia faith, a very peculiar class of qualifications would be required of the missionary in that country. He would, in fact, need a special training in all the intricacies of Persian dialectics, to preserve himself from being surprised in argument, and brought to a point which will insure his defeat in the eyes of those whose opinions he controverts, and thereby subject himself to the mortification and the terror of feeling that he has exposed to apparent damage, through unskillful defense, the cause he has labored to support, and which he knows to be true. There are but two courses—either to enter the field well furnished with the peculiar weapons of this warfare, or to avoid all these discussions, declaring simply the truth of Christ, and meeting all cavil and objection with the authoritative, “Thus saith the Lord.” This course has often been blessed of God, when the results of the most subtle controversies have proved abortive. The openness which results from the desire of information, we have not seen more strikingly illustrated than in the interesting life of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin, a very learned Persian, who died, at an advanced age, in 1779. He relates that, during the studies which engaged his mind in early life, he became anxious to inform himself on the questions and truths or different religions, and concerning the followers of the various sects. “I became intimate with the doctors of the order of Christians, and their padres, who were a numerous body at Isfahan, and tried and measured the quantity of knowledge in each of them. One held pre-eminence among them, and they called him the caliph Avanus.[12] He knew Arabic and Persian well, and was versed in logic, astronomy, and geometry. Some Mohammedan books had undergone his perusal, and he had a great wish to investigate several of their questions and propositions; but from fear, and through the utter disrespect of the Muslim doctors for his order, he had been unable to attain his object. He esteemed my society a great acquisition, and when, after a while, he had become acquainted with my character and just discretion, he showed me very great sincerity and friendship. From him I learned the gospel, and, obtaining access to their commentaries upon it, I thoroughly investigated their articles of faith and the principles of their religion, and read a great number of their books. He also, sometimes, asked information from me, and I repeatedly, by various arguments, proved to him the truth of the Mohammedan faith. Not having a word to say in reply, he stood convinced of the error of his way, but he died without having openly received the grace of being directed in the straight road of salvation.” This was his inference, the fact being, probably, that the poor man was

no match for this accomplished Muslim in the arts of logic and disputation, who was thus left in the conviction that he had silenced, if not convinced, one who, so far as appeared to him, was the ablest champion of the Christian doctrine.

[12] It is the Armenians who are thus numerous at Isfahan, and this caliph Avanus was, probably, one of their principal teachers. The Sheikh then proceeds to afford us further information respecting his researches in the religion of the Jews, as well as of the Muslim sects. He says: "Among the Jewish inhabitants of Isfahan, who, as they believe, have, since the time of Moses, been dwellers in that town, there was one named Shoaib, the most learned of his brethren. I gained his confidence, and took him to my house. I learned from him the Bible, had the interpretation of it written for me, and informed myself of the truth of all that they maintain, But I found that order of men totally destitute of knowledge and learning, and entire strangers to thought and discernment. Their stupidity and obduracy in ignorance are without end or measure.

"I acted in the same way with regard to the varieties of the Mohammedan faith. I read the books of every sect, and considered what each had to say, discreetly and anxiously remarking on their arguments. Wherever I found a person belonging to any sect who was knowingly attached to his own religious opinions, I frequented his society, and made myself acquainted with his views and discourses. In this way I had much conversation with the followers of different opinions."

Royal Persian Bible Translation The Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin was not singular in his wish to acquaint himself with the doctrines of the Christians and the Jews. A few years after this time, the king himself, Nadir Shah, on his return from the conquest of India, conceived a desire to obtain a translation of the books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Gospels. He accordingly sent a mullah, or doctor of the law, to Julfa (the Christian suburb of Isfahan), with the charge to assemble the Jews, the Armenians, and the Franks,[13] and arrange with them the measures necessary for this work. The mullah confided the translation of the books of the Old Testament to the Jews, and those of the New Testament to the Armenians and the European (Roman Catholic) missionaries. The translation was commenced in the month of May, 1740. The mullah seems to have rendered much assistance in the task. With him cooperated two of the missionaries, two Catholic Armenians, and two monks and two priests of the "schismatic Armenians," as the Roman Catholics call all those who have not conformed to the principles of the Roman Church. We are told that every word was carefully examined, and the true sense was sought with solicitude, as well as the terms by which it might be best expressed in the Persian language. The diversity of sentiments among the translator's often gave birth to different interpretations, between which it was left for the Mohammedan Mullah to arbitrate.

[13] Members of the Jesuit mission to Persia—from a letter of one of whom, in the *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses*; these particulars are taken. The Roman Catholic reporter of this interesting transaction says: "The passage in which Jesus Christ gives the pre-eminence to Peter was very warmly discussed. The Armenians alleged that the words, 'Thou art Peter,' etc., signified that whoever confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, were entitled to participate in the high privileges which this glorious confession obtained for Peter." This just view of the Armenians, badly reported by the Romanist opponents, was contested by the missionaries, who, as might be expected, describe the mullah as astonished at this interpretation, and pointedly demanding of "brother Dunan," whether the Franks held the same view of this passage. But it did not consist with

the views of this person to inform the Muslim doctor that there were many Franks who did hold a view of the passage not materially different from that which the Armenians had advanced. He proceeded to expound the Romanist interpretation, which, says the reporter, "he found to be so natural and obvious, that he imposed silence upon the schismatics." He adds: "We had the consolation of seeing that in all these contestations the Mohammedan, guided by the light of reason alone, decided in favor of the Catholic explications, which to him appeared perfectly conformable to the natural sense of the text." But assuming the fact to be true that the Muslim doctor did in all cases decide in their favor, that he was guided by the light of reason alone is a very gratuitous assertion. The Muslim doctors have many other lights than the light of reason in judging of the sense of the book which is accounted sacred among themselves; and the rules which guide them in that judgment, and not "the light of reason only," is that which would influence their decision in a case like this. As we have had no opportunity of becoming acquainted with the translation in question, we can pronounce no judgment on the alleged fact of the mullah's preference; but this we can say, that in any case within our knowledge, in which the Romanist and Protestant interpretation of a particular text of Scripture has been presented to the consideration of a learned Muslim, he has in every case seen the Protestant view to be the right one, even when ignorant to which party belonged the view in favor of which he pronounced. This labor occupied six months. When it was concluded, the king, who was then sixty leagues distant from Isfahan, directed that the translation should be brought to him. On the part of the Romanists, the bishop and two missionaries, and on the part of the Armenians, four bishops, proceeded to court under the conduct of the mullah. The king received them well, assigned them lodgings, and reimbursed the expenses of the journey. But his interest in the matter seems to have considerably evaporated in the interval spent in giving effect to his wishes. When the translation was, with some ceremony, presented to him, he said that he had not time to examine it then; and, besides, as there was only one God, there could be only one prophet of God. This, if correctly reported, was said in gross ignorance of his own faith, which allows that God has had many prophets. But these words sufficed to damp the hopes which the translators had conceived that some advantage to the Christian cause might result from their labor. The account of this transaction, from one of the parties engaged in it, has appeared to us of sufficient interest to be thus produced; the rather as it seems to have hitherto escaped the notice even of those who have made the history of Biblical translations their peculiar study. The fact that Nadir Shah had commanded a translation of the Gospels, was known from the account given by the worthy Jonas Hanway, who, however, appears to have been ignorant that the Pentateuch and Psalms had also been translated. This account is to be found in pp. 217, 218, of the fourth volume of Hanway's Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea, with the Revolutions of Persia and, as the book is somewhat scarce, we shall extract the passage:—

"Towards the close of this year (1740), he caused a translation of the four Evangelists to be made into Persian. It seemed, however, from the manner in which he conducted this business, to be more the effect of caprice, than of any steady and consistent plan. The affair was put under the direction of Meerza Mehtie, a man of some learning, who, being vested with a proper authority for the purpose, summoned several Armenian bishops and priests, together with divers missionaries of the Romish Church, and Persian mullahs, to meet him at Isfahan. As to the latter, they could not be gainers, since the change, if any took place, was to be in prejudice of Mohammedanism. Besides, Nadir's conduct towards them had been severe to an extreme and unprecedented; many

of them, therefore, gave Meerza Mehtie large bribes to excuse their appearance.

“Among the Christians summoned on this occasion, only one Romish priest, born in Persia, was a sufficient master of the language to enter upon a work of so critical a nature. As to the Armenians, though they are born subjects to Persia, and intermixed with the inhabitants, yet there are few of them who understand the language fundamentally. It was natural to expect that Meerza Mehtie and the Persian mullahs would be more solicitous how to please Nadir, and to support the credit of Mohammedanism, than to direct themselves of prejudices, and become masters of so important a subject. This translation was dressed up with all the glosses which the fables and perplexities of the Koran could warrant; their chief guide was an ancient Arabic and Persian translation. Father des Vignes, a French missionary, was also employed in the work, in which he made use of the Vulgate edition. They were but six months in completing this translation, and in transcribing several fair copies of it.

“In the May following, Meerza Mehtie, with the Persian mullahs, and some of the Christian priests, set out from Isfahan, for the Persian court, which was then held in the encampment near Tsehiran.[14] Nadir received them with some marks of civility, and had a cursory view of the performance. Some part of it was read to him, on which occasion he made several ludicrous remarks on the mysterious parts of the Christian religion; at the same time, he laughed at the Jews, and turned Mohammed and Ali equally into ridicule. Under such circumstances, it was impossible that this performance should produce any good effect. He observed, that the evangelists did not agree in their accounts, any more than did the Mohammedan and Christian priests; therefore he must remain under the same difficulty that he was in before—that out of both, if it pleased God to give him health, he would engage to make a religion, much better than any which had been yet practiced by mankind, with several other vague reflections of the like nature. He then dismissed these churchmen and translators with several small presents, not equal in value to the expense of their journey.”

[14] Teheran, which afterwards became, and still remains, the seat of government. To this account, Hanway appends the sensible and pious remark—“It seems as if Nadir had still his religion to seek; but this project (of making a new religion), under the present state of affairs, and considering the passion he had for military achievements, was very ridiculous, and by no means agreeable to that seriousness with which oriental princes are generally inclined to treat this important subject. What exalted notions ought not the contemplation of the Christian religion to inspire in us, when we observe the cruelty and extravagant principles of government which prevail at the courts of Mohammedan princes! In how shining a light do those appear, whose hearts are warmed with a generous desire of acting up to the dignity peculiar to the Christian religion! Nor ought it to be objected, that avarice and ambition have often involved the Christian world in distress, when we have such irresistible proof of such proceeding being diametrically opposed to the principles of Christianity.”

Persian Bible Translation

Having noticed this attempt to obtain a translation of a portion of the sacred Scriptures, we are induced to trace the steps which have since been taken towards the great object of enabling the Persian people to read in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. In doing this, the writer is much assisted by information collected from the records of the British and Foreign Bible Society,

for which he is obliged to the kindness of the Rev. A. Brandram, one of the secretaries of that noble institution. In 1806, the Baptist missionaries at Serampore commenced, at the expense of the society, a translation of the Scriptures into the Persian language, of which, however, only the Book of Psalms was ever published. In 1808-9, the Rev. Henry Martyn, then of Dinapore, undertook, with the approval of the Calcutta Auxiliary Bible Society, and in conjunction with the too celebrated Sabat, a version of the New Testament in Persian, of which only two Gospels were printed at Calcutta. This work, as appears from the Rev. J. Sargent's very interesting memoir of Henry Martyn, was substantially the work of Sabat, working under Martyn's superintendence. The latter says, in one of his published letters, "Sabat is prodigiously proud of it. I wish some mistakes may not be found in it to put him to shame." Mistakes were found in it. After two of the Gospels had been printed, it was considered, on further inspection and more mature consideration, to require too many amendments to admit of its immediate publication. It was, therefore, returned to the translator, who, under the superintendence of Mr. Martyn, bestowed so much pains and attention upon it as to render it a new, and it was hoped, a sound and accurate work. By those, however, who were considered good judges at Calcutta, it was still deemed unfit for general circulation, inasmuch as it was thought to abound with Arabic idioms (the translator being an Arabian), and to be written in a style pleasing only to the learned, but not sufficiently level to the capacities of the mass of common readers.

It was this decision which induced Henry Martyn to proceed to Persia, with the view of collecting the opinions of learned natives as to this translation. He reached Shiraz in June, 1811, and having at that celebrated seat of Persian literature speedily ascertained the general correctness of the opinions delivered at Calcutta, respecting the translation of the New Testament by Sabat, he forthwith resolved then and there to commence another and entirely new version of the New Testament in the Persian language. In this task he had the assistance of a learned Persian, Meerza Seid Ali Khan; and on the 24th of February, 1812, the work was completed. "I have many mercies," says the author of this great work, "in bringing it to a termination, for which to thank the Lord, and this is not the least. Now may the Spirit who gave the word, and called me, I trust, to be the interpreter of it, graciously and powerfully apply it to the hearts of sinners, even to the gathering of an elect people from the long-estranged Persians!" Mr. Martyn had also felt encouraged to undertake a version of the Psalms in the same language. He found this, he says, "a sweet employment, which caused six weary moons that waxed and waned since its commencement to pass unnoticed." It was finished by the middle of March in the same year. These works, the result of ten months' unremitting application of one "whose praise is in all the churches," were published at Calcutta in 1816. In 1821, Meerza Jaffier, a native Persian, then residing at St. Petersburg, was engaged by the British and Foreign Bible Society to undertake a Persian translation of the Pentateuch, and on receipt of the manuscript of the Book of Genesis, 1,000 copies were printed in London under the editorship of Meerza Ibrahim, a learned Persian, attached to Haileybury College. Meerza Jaffier having completed the Persian translation of the Pentateuch, was authorized to proceed with the historical books, of which he subsequently furnished the translations of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and part of Samuel. In 1822, the venerable archdeacon Robinson, then Chaplain of the Honorable East India Company, at Poona, undertook, in connection with the Calcutta Auxiliary Bible Society, and at the expense of the British and Foreign Bible Society, to prepare a version of the Old Testament into Persian. This translation was duly carried forward, and separate portions were from time to time printed, until at length, in 1837,

the whole work was announced as being published at Calcutta. In 1825, The Rev. Dr. Glen, at that time one of the Scottish missionaries at Astrakhan, and favorably known by his translation of the book of Psalms into Persian (of which an edition was printed in this country by the Bible Society), was engaged at the expense of the British and Foreign Bible Society to translate the poetical and prophetic books of the Old Testament into Persian, which, in the course of several years, with the aid of a Persian moonshee, he completed. It was, in 1829, the privilege of the present writer to witness something of the progress of this great work. He was then one of a large party which found themselves for several days the inmates of Dr. Glen's primitive missionary establishment at Astrachan; and beheld with admiration the quiet way in which this good man, absorbed in his task, pursued his wonted course, undiverted for one hour by the engagements or excitement which the arrival of so large a body of Christian friends from home might have been expected to create. At his appointed hour he withdrew, and was to be seen no more until the labor of his day had ended. Yet this was made consistent with the most cordial hospitality, and the utmost attention to, and consideration for, his visitors. We were reminded, by application, of the words of Nehemiah, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" Nehemiah 6:3. In 1832, Meerza Ibrahim, of Haileybury College, having made a translation of the Book of Isaiah into Persian, which was highly spoken of by competent judges, the British and Foreign Bible Society purchased the manuscript, and printed 2,000 copies of it. In 1842, the translation of the whole of the Old Testament having been completed by the Rev. Dr. Glen, it was printed under the editorship of the translator at Edinburgh, the British and Foreign Bible Society contributing £500^[15] towards the expense. It is a great satisfaction to see from this account, that by the labors of several learned men, and devoted servants of God, and through the liberality of different societies—chiefly of the British and Foreign Bible Society—the whole of the sacred Scriptures exists in the Persian tongue, and very many copies of them have been circulated. Thus the people have an opportunity of reading in their own tongue the true account—and not the false one, in which they trust—of God's wonderful work in the salvation of man by the blood shed upon the cross. May He, of his great mercy, grant that this knowledge may be in them a savor of life unto life, and not of death unto death!

[15] In United States dollars it would be around \$74,000.

Indifference to Truth

We have hinted that the readiness of the Persians to hear and apprehend, is often the result of indifference, of complaisance, and of interested motives. As we know of no writer who has touched on this point more sagaciously than Mr. Southgate, we shall quote his words: "It has often been supposed that the liberality of sentiment which is so strongly characteristic of the Persians, is a highly favorable indication with regard to efforts for their improvement. In one respect this is true, for it creates that accessibleness of which I have before spoken, as a high and peculiar encouragement. But, on the other hand, it is to be remembered that their liberality is not an independent love of the truth, but a general laxness of sentiment, which renders them indifferent alike to truth and error. It is a spirit of free-thinking, which casts them loose from Mohammedanism, without bringing them nearer to Christianity. It arises from their vanity, their imaginativeness, and above all, from their want of principle, both in morals and in philosophy. This, I believe, is the greatest defect, as it is the most strongly marked trait of the Persian character. By principle here, I refer not only to the everlasting foundations of moral rectitude, but to those great

laws of reason, which are either innate, or, at least, readily and universally understood. A Persian, although quick to apprehend, is slow to yield to conviction; and this not from sobriety and caution, but from volatility and flightiness. His mind slips from beneath the hold of an argument, and starts off in another direction, without having received any impression. It is this which renders controversy with him useless, and demands an immediate appeal to the conscience and the heart." This traveler adds: "Meerza Seid Ali, the coadjutor of Martyn, in the work of translating the New Testament, is still living at Shiraz, an old and respected man, although in worldly circumstances considerably reduced. Nearly thirty years (more now) have now passed away since that which he spent in the society of Martyn. He is still, as he was then, a professed inquirer for the truth, dissatisfied with his own religion, and unprepared to embrace Christianity; and yet he is doubtless more sincere in his desire for a settled faith than the thousands of his countrymen, who are drifting idly about upon the fathomless and shoreless sea of a vainglorious skepticism." Of the lower influences, of even the duplicity from interested motives, which some Persians have been found to manifest, our own observation and experience would supply some painful examples. We prefer, however, to produce one which this traveler supplies. "Soon after my arrival at Tabriz, a young Persian called upon me, and expressed a strong desire to study English. Knowing I was a clergyman, he expressed his great motive to be, that he might be able to learn something of the Christian religion. To use his own words, which I recorded soon after the interview, 'Man,' he said, 'must die. I also am human, and cannot live forever. I wish to learn something of religion; to compare what the Messiah has written, with what Mohammed has written. My prophet, I am convinced, has written many things that are false. He declared himself at liberty to have more wives than any other man, whereas, being a prophet, he ought not to have been attached to the things of this world. This is only one instance. Now, I wish to learn the truth, and to this end am desirous of studying English, that may read and understand the truth.' Unfortunately for this specious profession, I ascertained soon after that the Meerza cared nothing for religion, and was far from being a serious man; and at length I obtained from himself the confession, that his sole motive was worldly ambition. He had hoped that his knowledge of English would recommend him to the notice of the Shah, and gain for him riches and honor."

16. Festivals and Observances

Festivals and Observances

Chapter VI

Daily Prayers By the Mohammedan law, the times of daily prayer are five; but from some obscurity in the precept, the number has been practically reduced to three, corresponding to the “three times a day,” or “the morning, noon, and night,” of Jewish devotion. The prayers, and the usages connected with them, are much the same as among other Muslims. Having performed the requisite ablutions, the worshipper goes through certain postures and prostrations, to each of which there is an appropriate prayer or declaration. The principal difference is in one of the postures—where the Sunni spreads forth his hands, but where the Shia folds his. The Sunni also places before him, as he kneels, a small pad or bag, containing a portion of the sacred soil of the Kaaba at Mecca, so that his forehead may rest thereon, when, in his prostrations, he brings it to the soil—giving the idea of worship upon holy ground. But for this the Shia is generally content to substitute a portion of the molding from the tombs of his martyrs, Hassan and Husayn, at Kerbelah. This practice has suggested to some an idea of the possible use to which Naaman, the Syrian, designed to apply “the two mules’ burden of earth,”[16] he desired to take with him to Damascus; namely, that he might worship the God of Israel upon a portion of the soil honored with His immediate presence. And this appears to us not unlikely, when we consider the ideas of the local presence of God, which were then usually entertained by the heathen, and which this man strongly indicated in his declaration—“Behold now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel,” 2 Kings 5:15-17.

[16] The terms would, however, seem rather to imply that the erection of an altar with this earth was intended; but we appear to be compelled to regard the other interpretation as more probable, from the difficulty of understanding that Elisha could have heard this intention to do a thing absolutely forbidden by the law, without protesting against it. The other idea is counter to no law. The prayers used on such occasions, and the portions of the Koran recited, are in Arabic, and learned by rote for the purpose. The language is known only to the learned, so that the petitions they use from day to day are, like the Latin prayers of the Romanists, scarcely intelligible to the great body of those who use them, although, from analogy of language, and from information gathered in the course of time, their general purport may be understood. It is equally lamentable and surprising to see how this system of unspiritual, mechanical worship, of praying in an unknown tongue, has been thrown up by Satan in many lands, and under many systems of error, as an effectual barrier to that free intercourse between the soul and God, through which alone it can receive nourishment. The Hebrew prayers of the uneducated Jew, the Latin prayers of the uneducated Romanist, the Arabic prayers of the uneducated Muslim, and the written prayers which the Calmuc turns in his mill—appear to be all but varied aspects of the same darkening practice. It seems to us sufficiently to explain the indifferent and heartless manner in which these forms of worship are usually gone through. A Persian, who, like other Muslims, will apply himself to

his prayers anywhere, when the appointed time arrives, seldom fails to indicate by the movement of his eye and head that he is discharging a merely mechanical duty, and that his attention is fully awake to the circumstances passing, or the business in progress around him; and it is not unusual for him to give directions to his servant, or to throw out conversational or business remarks, in the midst of his devotions. This is so common that it does not attract attention. Something of the same kind has been noticed in the synagogues of the Jews, and is indeed inseparable from such unspiritual worship. The divided attention which we have seen a Calmuc give, on the one hand, to the revolutions of his prayer-wheel, and the other to the pot over the fire, did not seem to us more flagrant than the indecencies which we have also witnessed in the unprofitable “bodily service” of Romanists, Jews, Persians, Arabs, and Turks. As in all Muslim countries, the sound of bells, as marking the time, and issuing the call for prayers, is in Persia counted abominable, and is not allowed even to the Christian inhabitants. The intelligent human voice is held to be the most proper instrument for this summons; and, accordingly, at the appointed times, a strong and clear-voiced man ascends to the roof of the mosque, and sends forth his voice, which, in the open air, and amid the stillness of eastern cities, is heard at a distance, and with a distinctness which seems astonishing to us; and those who are too far off to distinguish the words of the crier, know, from custom, what the sound denotes. The words form the Muslim profession of faith:—“There is no Deity but God; and Mohammed is the prophet of God;” but the Shia makes the addition, “and Ali is the vicar of God,” which words seem to a Turk, who first hears them on entering the Persian territory, as a frightful blasphemy, which fills him with a painful sensation of disgust and horror. The same addition occurs in all the frequent repetitions of this profession of faith which the Muslim religion exacts. With other Muslims, the Shias turn their faces in the direction of Mecca, or rather of its temple, in the act of prayer. This is the kebla, or point of adoration, and is analogous to the ancient and still subsisting practice among the Jews, of worshipping with the face set towards Jerusalem—in Jerusalem, towards the temple—and in the temple, towards the holy of holies, Daniel 6:10.

Almsgiving

Almsgiving is very strongly enjoined upon all Mohammedans, who are taught to regard it as one of the principal means of working out their own salvation. And, as man is always eager to take upon himself the mighty task which needed the blood of God’s own Son, the precept is not badly fulfilled. The Muslims are very charitable; and, besides rendering to the poor the proportion of their increase which the law demands, they give and bequeath large sums upon charitable and pious foundations. It is not necessary to constitute the merit in almsgiving that the object should be directly religious, or that the recipients should be, in the Muslim sense, pious persons. The merit lies in the intention of the giver. There is not a moralist, a tale-teller, or a poet among the Persians, who does not extol lavish charity beyond all other virtues. One poet (Jamee) beautifully says, “Be ye like unto trees, laden with fruit, and planted by the roadside, which give shade and fruit to all, even to those who pelt them with stones;” which brings to mind the incomparable words of our Savior—“That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,” Matthew 5:45. The ostentation which our Lord so severely reprimanded in the Pharisees of his day, is, however, more frequently than piety, the motive to the great acts of charity which the Orientals frequently perform. The good name which is accorded to munificent charities, is nowhere more highly valued

than in Persia; and the people of that country think that their souls will, in the life to come, be materially benefited by the blessings of those who enjoy the advantage of their establishment. From a combination of such motives arises the important fact that most of the noble caravansaries in Persia, which afford to the traveler and his beast lodging and water without cost, as well as of the bridges, mosques, colleges, and baths, are of such charitable foundation.

Ramadan The ninth month of the year, called Ramadan, is a month of fasting to the Persians, as to other Muslims. This fasting does not, like that of the Romanists, consist in abstinence merely from one kind of food, but in abstinence from all food, from sunrise to sunset. As the months are lunar, the Ramadan runs through the different seasons, and falls in summer as well as in winter. It is then very hard upon the laboring classes, not only from the length of the day, but from the heat, as they cannot, like the rich, evade the real force of the obligation, by sitting up all the night, and sleeping the greater part of the day. Even the national luxury of smoking, is counted a breach of the fast; and this privation is, from the force of acquired habits above natural appetites, more sensibly felt by rich and poor than any other which the fast involves. It is with smoke that nearly all of them break their fast after this long abstinence. The pipes are filled and prepared, the fire is ready to be applied, and the moment after the sun has sunk below the horizon, a universal sigh of deep satisfaction arises throughout the land, as the first long draught of smoke is inhaled. From what has been said respecting the lax religious views of the Persians, it may be supposed that the fast is rather laxly observed. But it is not so. The eagerness with which men perversely seize all opportunities of presenting themselves before God in the filthy rags of their own righteousness, causes such institutions to be very strictly regarded, even by those who are careless of the high duties of judgment, mercy, and truth, and who, not the less, even during the Ramadan, “smite with the fist of wickedness,” Isaiah 58:4.

Kaaba Pilgrimage The only pilgrimage enjoined by the Mohammedan religion is to the Kaaba, or temple at Mecca, which is the central object of veneration to all the Muslim world. The Persians, however, are far from strict in the observance of precept. The great distance and many dangers of the journey, the fact that most of it lies through the country under the dominion of the Turks, whom they hate, and that the sacred place itself is in the hands of Sunnis, who regard them as heretics, and will not admit them to the sacred places without outward conformity to the prevailing system—altogether operate in preventing this duty from being discharged, except by a few persons of strong zeal, and whose means and health enable them to undertake the pilgrimage, without material damage to their families. Still, the great pilgrim caravan seldom leaves Damascus for Mecca, without a considerable number of Persians in it, distinguishable by their black lambskin caps and close-fitting dress. On their return, they usually pass through Hebron and Jerusalem, the former of which the Muslim holds sacred on account of his veneration for Abraham and the latter from the desire to visit the very sacred mosque built there by Omar, on the site of Solomon’s temple. Before reaching home, the pilgrim also, if possible, traverses the Arabian Iraq (Babylonia), and visits the sacred tombs of Ali and his son Husayn, at Kerbelah, near Baghdad. He who has performed his pilgrimage to Mecca, bears the honorable title of Hadjee, or “pilgrim,” for the rest of his life, a distinction highly esteemed by the Muslim world in general, though the Persians themselves have a saying, which implies that those who have this title are oftener the worst than the best of men.

Some perform this pilgrimage by deputy. There are to be found in Persia numbers of Arabs, who have already been to Mecca, or are ready to go there, and who are willing to transfer the distinction and advantage they derive from the pilgrimage to any one who will pay them well for it. In such cases, to prevent fraud, the employers require them to bring back or to produce the certificate granted to pilgrims by the sheriff of Mecca, the possession of which transfers to himself all the benefits of the particular pilgrimage to which it appertains.

Kufa Pilgrimage But the great body of the Persians satisfy their consciences with the personal performance of a less onerous pilgrimage than that to Mecca. The country of which Baghdad is the chief living, and Babylon the chief dead city, is the holy land of the sectaries of Ali. It was at Kufa, in this region, upon the Euphrates, some thirty miles south of the ruins of Babylon, that Ali established the seat of his government; it was in this region that he lost his life by the hand of an assassin; and it was here that the great struggle between the contending factions continued to rage long after his death. Here many illustrious members of Ali's house fell victims to the dire contention; and this is the soil which drank their blood, and which covers their remains. Hence this locality is regarded by the Persians with a veneration almost equal to that with which the sacred soil of Mecca is contemplated. Hither they come on pilgrimages from all parts, to the tombs of their martyrs; and such as can afford to do so, bring with them their confined dead, to lay them in the earth which covers the bones of those whose memory they cherish with such deep and superstitious veneration. The places of resort to the pilgrims in this region are four. The principal and most frequented is Kerbelah, or Meshid Husayn, where it is presumed that Husayn, the second son of Ali, is buried. This is a few miles to the northwest of the ruins of Babylon. About thirty miles south of this, and a few miles west of Kufa, is Nejiff or Meshid Ali, which is affirmed to be the resting-place of the caliph from whom the sect derives its name. Next is Kathem, distant about three miles from Baghdad, where is the mausoleum of the seventh imam, Mousa-el-Kathem, or the Patient, who was put to death by one of the caliphs, on suspicion of being engaged in a conspiracy against his throne. A splendid mosque has been raised at this spot, and others, hardly less magnificent, at Kerbelah and Meshid Ali. The fourth place in this quarter which the pilgrims visit is a cavern, not far from Baghdad, where the twelfth imam is believed, as before related (page 91), to have mysteriously disappeared. The mosques at Kerbelah, Meshid Ali, and Kathem, have been enriched to a wonderful degree by the gifts of pilgrims, and by costly presents from Persia and India. That at Kerbelah was, however, stripped of all its treasures, in 1801, by the Wahabees; while that of Meshid Ali was emptied of all its riches by the pasha of Baghdad, ostensibly to save it from the same fate; but this mattered little to the Shias, as the pasha neglected to return the treasures when the danger had passed away—so that all the difference lay in being plundered by the pasha instead of by the Arabs. The zeal of the worshippers is, however, likely ere long to repair these losses, and to restore the mosques to their original splendor. Mr. Southgate mentions, that while he was at Baghdad in 1839, the offering of an Indian prince for the shrine at Kerbelah arrived at that city. It was a kind of pavilion, intended to cover the tomb of Husayn. It consisted of a canopy of cloth, richly adorned with emeralds, and sustained by four pillars of solid gold, set with diamonds, and between which hung festoons of the finest pearls. Its value was estimated at £21,500.[17] [17] The U.S. dollar value of this would be around \$3,000,000. That this sacred territory is in the possession of the Turks is a matter of much grief and annoyance to the Persians. But, notwithstanding the oppressions and insults to which they are subject, the numbers are vast which perform this pilgrimage year by year—and the

traveler who passes to or from Baghdad by way of Kermanshah and Hamadan, is sure to encounter at all seasons, except the depth of winter, large parties of pilgrims. There is usually a great proportion of women and children—for it is not necessary that the pilgrimage should be a voluntary act, and one who has been taken to the shrine in his infancy enjoys, ever after, all the honors of a pilgrim. “We have sometimes tarried with such parties in the same caravansary, and have been startled at the great number of corpses, in rude oblong packing-cases, which were on such occasions seen strewed about the open yard, the odor from which was often overpowering to the unpracticed organs of Europeans, though it seemed to be altogether unheeded by the pilgrims, who upon the road also appeared to see and feel the coffins knocking about among them with perfect unconcern. The coffins are carried, two balancing each other upon the opposite sides of a horse or mule. The bodies are being taken to Kerbelah for interment in ground reputed holy—another of the miserable shifts, in seeking increase of safety in the world to come for those they love, to which those are driven who have not the happiness of knowing that comfortable rest, in the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement, which those enjoy to whom the riches and fullness of his grace have been revealed.

Feast of Bayram The Persians, like other Muslims, observe the feast of Bayram, for six days after the fast of Ramadan. This is the great religious festival of the Mohammedans, and is celebrated with the more ardor, from its coming immediately after so long and trying a fast. Every Muslim nation adopts its own mode of testifying joy. But there is one common observance among all such as can afford it, of appearing in new clothes upon the first day of the feast. Mr. Morier thus describes the festivities, as he witnessed them at Bushire, on the Persian Gulf: “The Ramadan was now over. The moon which marks its termination was seen on the preceding evening just at sunset, when the ships at anchor fired their guns on the occasion; and on the morning of our visit the Bayram was announced by the discharge of cannon. A large concourse of people, headed by the Peish-namuz, went down to the seaside to pray; and when they had finished their prayers, more cannon were discharged. Just before we passed through the gates of the town, in returning from our visit, we rode through a crowd of men, women, and children, all in their best clothes, who, by merry-making of every kind, were celebrating the feast. Among their sports I discovered something like the roundabout of an English fair, except that it appeared of much ruder construction. It consisted of two rope seats, suspended in the form of a pair of scales, from a large stake fixed in the ground. In these were crowded full-grown men, who, like boys, enjoyed the continual twirl, in which the conductor of the sport, a poor Arab, was laboring with all his strength to keep the machine.”

Eyd e Qorban Festival The Eyd-e-Qorban, or festival of the sacrifice, is another celebration in honor of Abraham, who, out of the fullness of his obedience to the Almighty, would have offered in sacrifice his son Ishmael, whom the Arabs regard as their progenitor, and to whom the Koran transfers many of the circumstances which really belong to the history of Isaac.

“The day before the feast,” says the pious anonymous writer of an unpublished—though printed—Tour in Persia, “about four hundred camels are collected from the neighboring country; and the first that rises after resting is chosen as the victim, shot, and then speared. Mohammed Ali Khan was giving me this description before Seid Ali (Henry Martyn’s coadjutor in translating the New Testament), who rejoined to the latter sentence, expressive of putting the animal to death, ‘That is like your Great Sacrifice.’” “It is,” adds this writer, “a common practice with the people in

Persia, to lead a sheep or goat round their bed, cut its throat, and give the meat to the poor. They think one life saves another. This is no doubt a remnant of some of the Jewish customs, of which traces are still to be seen in this country." We now proceed to describe some striking annual celebrations which are peculiar to the Persians and the sectaries of Ali.

Honors to Ali and Husayn A solemn festival in honor of Ali is held on the 21st of the fast month, Ramadan. For this purpose a covered gallery is erected somewhere outside the town, where the chief men of the place take their station. In front of this gallery is a kind of pulpit, eight feet high, covered with cloth. Here the person appointed to pronounce the eulogium upon Ali reads for an hour or more from a book, called the *Moctel Nameh*, or *Book of the Murder*, containing a history of the death of Ali, chanting without intermission, in a loud and doleful voice. There are certain passages of which he pronounces only the first word, leaving the congregation to finish. At the end of each passage they repeat this imprecation—"May the curse of God be upon the murderer of Ali!" and all the people respond, "Rather more than less!" After the sermon, the people return in procession to the town, three camels bearing representations of the tombs of Ali and his two sons, Hassan and Husayn. These are followed by three chests, covered with blue cloth, containing the spiritual treatises which they are said to have written; horses carrying bows, turbans, and flags; and men bearing on their heads little boxes, covered with feathers and flowers, containing the Koran. The procession is closed by musicians and young men, performing a variety of dances—for the religious dances, even on sober occasions, to which there are some allusions in Scripture, are not yet extinct in the east.

More striking still are the solemnities of the first days of the month Muharram, which are devoted to a solemn mourning in memory of the death of Husayn, the son of Ali. During this period the Persians appear as mourners, put on all the outward appearances of grief, abstain from shaving their heads, from bathing, and even from changing their clothes. On the eve of the first of Muharram the mosques are hung with black. The next day, the pulpits are dressed in the same manner, the Akhond and Peish-namuz (inferior ministers of religion) ascend them, and narrate the particulars of the murder of Husayn, with all the inflexions of voice that are calculated to render them more pathetic. The congregation are soon worked up to a high pitch of emotion, waving their bodies to and fro, and smiting their breasts, ejaculating, "O Husayn!" "Alas, Husayn!" Parts of the history thus recited are in verse, and are chanted to a most doleful tune. Various episodes of the history are daily represented by itinerant minstrels (just as the circumstances of our Lord's passion are represented in Roman Catholic countries), and banners, to which are fastened pictures relating to it, are carried about the streets, followed by crowds of men and boys, some representing the soldiers of Husayn, and some his enemies. The two parties sometimes come to blows, and these sham fights not seldom terminate in the death or serious injury of some of the combatants. It is difficult to find persons willing to personate the enemies of Husayn; and prisoners of war, slaves, and criminals, are therefore often compelled to take this part. The solemnities of this occasion in fact compose a kind of drama of two acts, occupying as many days, and representing the successive scenes of the catastrophe, commencing with the flight of Husayn from Medina, and terminating with his death on the plains of Kerbelah; and each daily representation is preceded by the reading, in the manner described, of a portion of the history, with an appropriate sermon or exhortation. The last part, which is reserved for the tenth day, called the *Roos Katl* (the day of murder), or *Roos Husayn*, comprises the events of the day on which he met his death, and

is acted with great pomp before the king in the great square of the city. The enthusiasm with which the Persians dwell upon the character of Husayn, and every incident of the closing scenes of his life, is undiminished by lapse of time. Their strongest religious and national feelings are on this occasion brought into play. They execrate Yazid the usurper, and even Omar (whom other Muslims venerate), that it is necessary, as Mr. Morier has remarked, to have witnessed the scenes that are exhibited in their cities to judge of the degree of fanaticism which at this time possesses them.

"I have seen," says this traveler, "some of the most violent of them, as they vociferated 'Ya Husayn!' walk about the streets almost naked, with only their loins covered, and their bodies streaming with blood from the cuts which they have voluntarily given to themselves, either of acts of love, anguish, or mortification," such as, he rightly thinks, must have been the cuttings which were forbidden to the Israelites by Moses, Leviticus 19:28; Deuteronomy 14:1. And their extravagancies probably bear much resemblance to the practices of the priests of Baal, who "cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them," 1 Kings 18:28. It even appears from Jeremiah 16:6-7, that these practices were retained as testimonials of grief by the Israelites, though forbidden by the law of Moses.

Some further idea of the manner in which this highly imaginative people are acted upon on such occasions, may be formed from the description which Mr. Morier gives of what he witnessed during the eighth night of the Moharram, in presence of the highest people of the land. "On entering the room, we found a large assembly of Persians, clad in dark-colored clothes, which, accompanied with their black caps, black beards, and their dismal faces, looked really as if they were 'afflicting their souls.' We observed that 'no man did put on him his ornaments,' Exodus 33:4. They wore neither their daggers nor any other part of their dress which they regard as ornamental. A mullah of high consideration sat next to the grand vizier, and kept him in serious conversation, while the remaining part of the company communicated with each other in whispers. After we had been seated some time, the windows of the room in which we were seated were thrown open, and we then discovered a priest, placed on a high chair, under the covering of a tent, surrounded by a crowd of the populace, the whole place being lighted up with candles. He commenced with an exordium, in which he reminded them of the great value of each tear shed for the sake of the Imam Husayn, which would be an atonement for a past life of wickedness; and also informed them, with much solemnity, that 'whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among the people,' Leviticus 23:29. He then began to read from a book, with a sort of nasal chant, that part of the tragic history of Husayn appointed for the day, which soon produced its effect upon his audience, for he had scarcely turned over three leaves, before the grand vizier began shaking his head to and fro, and to utter in a most piteous voice, the usual Persian exclamation of grief, 'Wahi!wahi!wahi!' both of which acts were followed, in a more or less violent manner, by the rest of the audience.

"The chanting of the priest lasted nearly an hour, and some parts of the story were indeed pathetic, and well calculated to rouse the feelings of a superstitious and lively people. In one part of it all the people stood up; and I observed that the grand vizier turned himself towards the wall, with his hand extended before him, and prayed. After the priest had finished, a company of actors appeared, some dressed as women, who chanted forth their parts from slips of paper, in a sort of recitative, that was not displeasing even to our ears. In the very tragic parts most of the audience

appeared to weep very unaffectedly; and as I sat near the grand vizier and his neighbor the priest, I was witness to many real tears that fell from them. In some of these mournful assemblies, it is the custom for a priest to go about to each person, in the height of his grief, with a piece of cotton, in his hand, with which he carefully collects the falling tears, and then squeezes it into a bottle, preserving them with the greatest caution. This practice illustrates that passage in Psalms 56:8, 'Put thou my tears into thy bottle.' Some Persians believe that in the agony of death, when all medicines have failed, a drop of the tears so collected, put into the mouth of a dying man, has been known to revive him. It is for this use they are collected."

There is much matter for thought in this account. But to our mind there is one consideration that absorbs all others. Is not the deep emotion of these people in the sufferings and death of Husayn, a strong reproof to us for the comparative indifference with which we contemplate and speak of the sufferings and death of our Divine Lord? What is Husayn to them?—a man who was smitten down in the course of worldly adventure, as others have been smitten, and who strove all he could to avert and resist the doom which fell upon him; and whose death brought no gain, no ransom, no hope to any. And what is our Redeemer?—who freely laid aside a glory greater than that which kings and conquerors have died to win; who, from pure love to a fallen race, became "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" and who, for our good, in delivering us from the wrath to come, endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, shrank not from shame and spitting, and bowed his head in death upon the cross. Here is a theme most worthy of our liveliest emotions—our sorrow, our sympathy, our gratitude; and yet how little do we habitually feel our obligations! Shall not the men of Persia, who mourn so intensely for Husayn, rise against us in the day of judgment, and condemn us—for lo, a greater than Husayn is here—has lived, has died for us, and we set not our hearts upon him? How would these poor benighted Shias feel, if they knew of Christ all we know of him! God, of his great mercy, grant that they may know Him soon; and that they may centre on him all those keen susceptibilities which now run to waste and evil among them!

Among the incidents of the Moharram celebration, is the representation of the marriage of the young Kassem, the son of Hassan, with the daughter of his uncle Husayn. A young man acts the part of the bride, attired in a rich wedding-dress, and accompanied by her relatives, who sing a mournful elegy upon the death of the bridegroom, who was slain before the marriage was fully completed. At parting from his bride to go to the fight, Kassem takes a most affecting farewell of her; and with a presentiment of his fate, he gives her, in token of his love, a mourning robe which she puts on. At this moment, the people, transported with rage, rush upon the effigy representing the caliph Yazid, the destroyer of Ali's family, and tear it in pieces. An incident which procures much good feeling towards the English at the feast of Moharram, is the represented intercession of a European ambassador with Yazid in behalf of Husayn. This ambassador they suppose to have been English! merely because the English are the Europeans from distant parts (the Russians being their neighbors) with whom they are best acquainted; but if the incident really occurred, the ambassador was probably from the Greek emperor. The man representing him invests himself as nearly as he can with the costume in which Englishmen appear at the present day in Persia—including that singular badge of European civilization, the hat; and he counts himself perfect in his part if he can pick up a few English or even French words, of any or no meaning, for the occasion. A missionary relates that he was once applied to by a young man who usually

performed this part, and who had thought himself highly accomplished for it by the possession of a few words which an Englishman had taught him, and which he had been in the habit of pronouncing with a force and emphasis which his hearers much admired. But he had discovered lately that these words were mere unmeaning slang, and desired something better and more appropriate. To meet this want he was taught to pronounce the Lord's Prayer in English—the propriety of which may be very much questioned, considering the purpose for which it was to be used, and the person to whom it was to be addressed. “We should not be surprised to learn that eventually, as taught by this man to others, the Lord's Prayer in something like English, becomes the usual address of the mock ambassador on this great occasion. The Persians have also a very peculiar festival, of a vindictive nature, in commemoration of the death of the caliph Omar—being, as far as we know, the only anniversary of the world held in dishonor of the dead. A large platform is erected, on which is fixed an image, as much as possible disfigured and deformed, intended to represent the caliph. Addressing themselves to this image, the assembled people shower all manner of reviling upon it for having supplanted Ali, the lawful successor of the prophet. At length, having exhausted their powers of abuse, they attack the image with sticks and stones, till they have shattered it into pieces. The inside is hollow, and full of sweetmeats, which thus become dispersed, and are greedily devoured by the assembled mob.

Friday Sabbath

Friday, as is well known, is the Sabbath-day of the Muslim world. The reason which induced Mohammed to fix upon this day is not distinctly stated in the Koran. The most probable explanation is, that he borrowed the idea of a Sabbath, as he did of many other of his institutions, from the Jews and Christians, and fixed on Friday, that the day might distinguish his followers from them, and that the appearance of imitation might be avoided. The reason is, however, of little importance. The pretended apostle did actually give to that day by positive injunction, the same degree of religious observance which the Christians of that time, as known to him, were wont to practice upon the Lord's-day. “O true believers,” he says, “when ye are called to prayer on the day of the assembly, hasten to the commemoration of God, and leave merchandizing. This will be better for you, if ye knew it. And when prayer is ended, then disperse yourselves through the land as ye list, and seek gain of the liberality of God.” In conformity with this injunction, the day is not regarded as one in which entire abstinence from work and ordinary business is required. It is commonly made a day of repose and of recreation. It is, however, by Muslims generally regarded as obligatory to listen to the call to prayer as Mohammed commanded, and to be present in the mosque at the noontide service. There is, therefore, no occasion—except at the great feasts and the fast—on which the mosques (though open and frequented every day) are generally so well attended as on Friday noon. The day itself is called by a name signifying the day of assembly. There is nothing peculiar in the devotions of the day, except that, in the great mosques, the Khouteb is repeated in conjunction with the usual prayers at noon. This consists of ascriptions of praise to the Almighty, and in supplications for Mohammed, the first four caliphs (but in Persia for Ali and his house), the reigning family, and the nation. A discourse in the high mosques usually follows, which in Persia is frequently tainted with the strong philosophical and poetical mysticism of the Sooffees, but in general dwells on points of moral and ceremonial duty. The observances of the day are in fact founded chiefly upon, not only the injunctions but the known practice of Mohammed, who was wont to conduct the public prayers on that occasion, and afterwards to

address the people. The same custom was observed by the caliphs, and has descended to the present day: the duty now devolves upon the sultan of Turkey, in the regard of that great majority of the Muslim world who recognize in him the lawful successor of Mohammed in the caliphate. He does it, however, only by proxy, by vicars acting under the authority of his seal, though it is the custom for the sultan himself to be present, and it very rarely happens that he does not repair in state to the mosque on Friday at noon. The obligation is not, however, regarded in the same light by the Persians as by the Turks. The rightful successor of their "prophet," having according to their belief disappeared, they have no caliph to direct the worship of Friday, and do not, therefore, regard themselves as bound to be present in the mosques on that day. They have, indeed, an Imam-i-Jumah, or Imam of the Assembly, who performs the service of Friday noon, but they consider his office as provisory merely, till the true Imam shall appear. Still, out of respect to the day, and the ancient usage of their religion, their attendance at the noon prayers of Friday is more full than on any other day of the week.

Something of this difference of view as to the service of the mosque may help to account for a remarkable difference in the practice as regards the admission of strangers to the mosques themselves. It has been seen that the Persians generally regard unbelievers of Islam so unclean that their contact pollutes that which they touch, and carry this notion to an extent unknown to the Turks. Yet the Turks will not admit Christians to their mosques; and the presence of one within their precincts (without a special order from the sultan), would certainly lead to a popular commotion, and very probably to his death. In fact, their feeling on this matter is analogous to that of the Jews with respect to their temple, into the sacred courts of which no Gentile might enter on pain of death. The reader will remember the commotion raised against Paul in the temple, under the notion that he had "brought Greeks into the temple," and so "polluted the holy place," Acts 21:28-29. It is very different with the Persians, who admit Europeans (but not native Christians) into their mosques without scruple—except perhaps a few to which a peculiar sanctity is ascribed on account of the tomb of some great saint or imam being enclosed within its walls. But it is rather as shrines than as mosques that they are accounted so sacred, and that access to them is difficult. We have known that in villages which afforded no other accommodation for travelers, the humble barn-like mosque has been devoted to the reception of parties of Europeans; and it has even happened that while under this arrangement we have been refreshing or reposing ourselves within the mosque, the villagers have assembled for morning and evening worship upon its flat roof. The mosques themselves of this country differ very materially from those of Turkey. The manner in which a Turkish town is aggrandized in the external view by the beautiful round towers, or minars, which shoot up in all directions, is almost entirely wanting in Persian cities, which, unless built on the side of a hill, exhibit a dull and level uniformity, broken only by the trees which rise with the city, unless by a dome here and there, rising to some extent above the dead uniformity, and unless a close inspection enables the eye to trace the long line of low domes which mark the situation of the covered bazaar. The Turks, as a people, may claim little merit in this elegant distinction of their cities, as they seem merely to have imitated and perpetuated the form of the Christian churches which they found in the fair lands which the providence of God has for a season subjected to their rule. All their principal mosques are on the model of that of St. Sophia, at Constantinople, and many of the old ones in Asia Minor, which are of the same form as those now built, bear manifest signs of having been once Christian churches. Thus in the Turkish mosque we may consider that we have the form of the churches which arose in the lands which first received the gospel of

Christ; and that in fact the tidings of salvation to a ruined world, through a crucified Redeemer, were once set forth in many of the buildings which now witness the prostrations of a Christ-refusing people. In some of the principal cities, the domes of the principal mosques and mausoleums are of sufficient size to attract attention in a general view; but the effect is as nothing compared with the Turkish minars, of which there are often more than one to a single mosque, rising from a square base in one white cylindrical shaft into the sky, and the uniformity of their surface broken only by the small galleries from which the criers send forth the call to prayer. Of this appendage the Persian mosques are almost entirely destitute, in the shape described; but in some cases in great cities, round towers rise to no great height from the roof of the mosque, and are formed of bricks, the outer surfaces of which are glazed in variegated colors. They are designed only for ornamental effect, and are never applied to the same purpose as in Turkey, having indeed no galleries for the purpose, and the call to prayers being given from the roof. In other respects the Persian mosques are, in their exterior, altogether unlike those of Turkey. Instead of being the most conspicuous objects in a city, the traveler may often pass them without observing them, or hear the call to prayer close by without being able to discover the place from which it proceeds. The mosques sometimes open immediately upon the streets, and present the same low, bare, mud wall with the other buildings. The interior in these cases is corresponding; a low though spacious apartment, with a level ceiling, supported on plain pillars, and the whole without ornament or pretensions of any kind. The interior of a Turkish mosque, though generally plain enough according to European notions, is rich compared with those of Persia. There is no pulpit or furniture of any kind, excepting a straw mat, and a small seat for the preacher. There are no decorations, often not an inscription on the walls, a stone on which simply indicates the direction towards which the worshipper must turn in prayer.

17. Sooffeeism--Arts and Sciences

Sooffeeism--Arts and Sciences

Chapter VII

It is impossible to write of Persia with the view of affording some notion of the religious, as well as social condition of the people, without noticing, however slightly, the principles of what is called Sooffeeism, which has taken a strange hold of the national mind. The term Sooffee, which means "wise," or "pious," and is metaphysically used to denote a religious man, is supposed to be derived from the term saaf, "pure," or "clear;" or, from suffa, which signifies purity. Some have traced it to soof, "wool," or "wool-bearing," in allusion to the coarse woollen garments usually worn by its teachers. It is worthy of remark, that these terms are all from the Arabic; and that the accounts we have of the Sooffees are comparatively of a modern date, being all subsequent to the conquest of Persia by the caliph Omar. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the name may have been originally adopted from the Greek term Σοφοί, sophoi, "wise men." The general ideas of the Sooffees concerning God, are not unlike those of the ancient Pythagoreans. The radical principle of their system is, the doctrine of the Infinite in the Finite; and the differences which are observable among the Sooffee teachers consist chiefly in their explanations of the mode of this manifestation. Thus, according to the theory of one of these teachers, the Infinite is expressed in the Finite, as a reflection from a mirror, or it is diffused through it as a higher life, or it is transferred to it, as when each individual is supposed to be a particle of the Divine essence. In all these, the generic idea is still retained. Deity it in some way manifested in humanity, and the principal question is, as to the mode of this manifestation.

It is currently described as a common of the Sooffee, that every man is an incarnation of Deity, or that, at least, all are partakers of the Divine principle. This generic idea may be traced in all the writings of the Sooffees, which in prose and verse form a very large proportion of the whole literature of Persia. This idea may be regarded as the source of all that is good and evil in the system. It tends to produce that liberality which we have had occasion to indicate as a characteristic of the Persian mind, for a Sooffee regards every human being as in some sort a representative of the Deity. "I hold," said one of them, when rebuked for his intimacy with Christians, "I hold that all men are of God, and are therefore pure: I regard none as unclean." Another of its tendencies is to a laxity of morals; for it is generally understood—and it is admitted by many of themselves—that the principles of Sooffeeism will, and do very often, cover the grossest delinquencies of conduct. By holding all things to be from God, they break up the very foundations of morality and religion, and declare good and evil, virtue and vice, to be alike of Divine origin. In others, the very same belief assumes an entirely different aspect. Regarding themselves as the offspring of God, they insist upon both the possibility and the duty of reuniting ourselves to the Divine essence from which we have sprung. The great means to this end is, to abstract the soul from worldly things, and to absorb it in Divine contemplation. This, in their view, takes the place of external worship, which they contemn as subjecting the soul to the bondage of

arbitrary forms. They discourse largely and eloquently upon the love of God, the dignity of virtue, and the holy joys of a union with the Deity. The Musnavi, their principal book, is full of the most impassioned sentiments of this kind, as is also their most admired poetry, as the Persians themselves understood it, although to the uninitiated it seems to bear a very different aspect. But they insist that all the odes of their Celebrated poets are mystical; and that the poets, being generally Sooffees, “profess eager desires without carnal affections, and circulate the cup, but no material goblet, since all things are spiritual in their sect, all mystery within mystery.” In fact, they regard this poetry as of the same nature as Solomon’s Song; and, indeed, the fact that so large a proportion of the poetry of Western Asia, that is, of Arabia and Persia, is employed in the expression of religious emotions mystically, under the same images that we find there, is a very strong argument for the general opinion, that the Canticles form a mystical or allegorical religious poem, the details of which, although they seem to us “hard to be understood,” are perfectly intelligible in a sacred sense to the Persian and Arabian of the present day, as they were to the ancient Hebrew. The principle of this poetical mysticism is clearly announced by the poet Jamee, who tells us that he addresses the Almighty by no particular name, for that everything in the universe declares his presence and existence.

“Sometimes the wine, sometimes the cup I call thee; sometimes the lure, sometimes the net I call thee.

Excepting thy name, there is not another letter in the tablet of the universe.

Say by what appellation shall I call thee?”

Another passage, avowedly of this mystical character, we copy from Sheikh Mohammed Ali Hazin, as the most characteristic specimen of this kind of verse on which we can lay our hands:—

“Cup-bearer of orthodox wine[18] from among us— Which carries away the darkness of idolatry;

Which, to our gloomy hearts, is like a flame of fire, Or the midnight illumination at Mount Sinai—

Give us goblets, that we may move aside from ourselves, And, out of ourselves, in ecstasy, take our way towards the Incomparable.

Musician, put thy heart-attracting breath to the reed, And shorten this dark night of separation.

Raise the curtain from the morning of conjunction;

Convert into the dawn of day the eve of our painful banishment That I may be freed at length from this disunion, And may gain the presence of the object of my love.[19]

Cup-bearer, a cup of Magian wine, Fresh drawn from the jar of the wine-house, Pour into the palate of the dry-lipped Hazin, As a libation to his fiery heat.

Musician, thy breath gives brightness to the soul; For the dead of heart it is the inspiration of the Messiah.

We are shrunk, as stagnant blood in the darkened cuticle: A lancet is good for a congealed vein. For the dead heart, the cold body is a grave: The sound of thy reed is the voice of the last trumpet.”

[18] Literally, wine of the acknowledgment of the Divine unity, opposed to the dry dullness and gloomy distraction of polytheism.

[19] This may be the more intelligible, when it is understood that the Sooffees suppose the cause of love to be an anxious desire of the soul for union. Thus, they compare the soul to a bird confined in a cage, panting for liberty, and pining at its separation from the Divine essence. The disregard of outward worship among the Sooffees makes them, more than anything else, obnoxious to the rigid Muslims, and more especially to the mullahs, who have not failed to perceive that their own influence with the people is compromised by the growth of this doctrine. They accuse its followers of atheism, and sometimes endeavor to draw them into the admission of consequences which would render them liable to punishment under the Muslim law. But these attempts are seldom successful. One obstacle to their accomplishment is that a large proportion of the Sooffees are sincere Mohammedans, notwithstanding the palpable inconsistency of the two forms of anti-Christian belief. Mr. Elphinstone says: "I have heard a man expatiate with rapture on the beauty of the Sooffee system, and on the enlarged and liberal views of human actions to which it leads, who has soon after stickled, in the same company for every tenet of Islam, and rejected with horror the idea of doubting the eternity of hell-fire. When the difficulty of reconciling this doctrine with the belief that nothing existed but God was pointed out, he said, that the system of the Sooffees was certainly true, but that the eternity of hell was proved by the word of God (meaning the Koran) itself." The principles of Sooffeeism are undoubtedly on the increase in Persia, and are, indeed, diffused to a much greater extent than might at first sight appear. To regard the Sooffees as a sect merely, would be to convey an inadequate idea of the subject; for every Persian is so far a Sooffee, in that the religious vagaries which characterize that system are the most natural modes of thought to the Persian mind. It can only be described as a sect with regard to those who hold the principles of Sooffeeism as classified into a system; but, in fact, the Persians generally have the elements of this philosophy floating in their minds, as the natural product of their singularly imaginative temperament, their love of the ideal, and their want of fixed principles, either in religion or in philosophy. It is impossible, therefore, to state the number or proportion of those who cherish the principles of Sooffeeism. For the most part they do not appear as open sectaries, although they are to be found in every part of the empire, have their acknowledged head at Shiraz, and their chief men in all the principal cities. The late shah was supposed to belong to their party, although he was at the same time very rigid in the performance of his religious duties as a Muslim. In what degree the prevalence of these principles may be regarded as an obstacle or an aid to the ultimate diffusion of the doctrine of Christ in this interesting country is a difficult question, which the result alone can satisfactorily solve. Our own impression is, that the religion of Mohammed, by formally and deliberately shutting out the essential belief in Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer, is an error so appallingly inveterate, that whatever tends to sap and weaken its foundation is to be regarded as an advantage—as an unbolting the iron doors of the prison-house. It becomes us to speak reverently of the hidden purposes of God; but it may be that it is his design that the system of the false prophet should be thus weakened from within previously to its final overthrow. It is certain that the Sooffee sees nothing abhorrent to his principles in those great doctrines of Christian truth which orthodox Muslims regard with hatred and scorn. This seems a suitable place for introducing the texts of Scripture which are commonly produced by Mohammedans in support of their own religion. We are indebted for the statement to Mr. Southgate:—

“And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation,” Genesis 17:20. The Arabs, as is well known, claim Ishmael as their great progenitor. The Shias suppose the twelve princes here indicated to be the twelve Imams of the family of Ali, whom they affirm to be the only lawful successors of Mohammed.

“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him,” Deuteronomy 18:18. The Muslims pretend that no prophet like unto Moses has appeared, except Mohammed.

“And Moses said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them,” Deuteronomy 33:2. Here, say the Muslims, are foretold the three dispensations; that of Moses from Mount Sinai; that of Jesus from (as they affirm) Mount Seir; and that of Mohammed from Paran, by which, they suppose, are intended the mountains near Mecca.

“For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, and let him declare what he seeth. And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels,” Isaiah 21:6-7. This, according to the Muslim doctors, typifies the gospel and Islamism, and the two horsemen represent Jesus and Mohammed. The former having entered Jerusalem upon an ass, and the camel being the principal animal in the country of the latter, they are considered as forming appropriate types of the two religions. The forty-second chapter of Isaiah is supposed to be throughout a prophecy of Mohammed, on account, as it would seem, of the allusions to the destruction of idolatry, in Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 42:16, and to the Arabian tribe of Kedar in Isaiah 42:11. The first six verses of the sixty-third chapter are also claimed by the Muslim controversialists as prophetic of Mohammed, because they speak of war and blood, with which the religion of the Koran is acknowledged to be more familiar than the pacific dispensation of Christ. The passages in St. John 15-16, which speak of the Comforter, are interpreted by the Muslims to allude to Mohammed. Here, they say, is one instance of the corruption of the Christian copies of the gospel. The original word παρακλητος, parakletos, they affirm should be περικλητος, periklutos, a word which, like Mohammed in Arabic, signifies illustrious, or noble. These texts will suffice at least to show that Muslim scholars have exercised no little research and ingenuity in drawing arguments for their religion from the sacred Scriptures. With a few words on the arts and sciences of the people, we may now conclude this volume.

Farming The means employed by them in tilling the ground appear to be just the same as those used by their ancestors in the most remote ages, and seem to be quite similar to those alluded to in the Scriptures. The plowing is performed by means of a share drawn by two oxen, harnessed not to the horns but to a yoke that passes over the chest. This share is very short, and the coulter only slightly cuts the ground. As the furrows are made, the clods are broken with large wooden beaters (Isaiah 28:24), and the surface is smoothed with the spade, and with a harrow that has very small teeth. The sickles used in Persia are not like ours, being scarcely bent in the blade. Threshing is performed either by the one scriptural mode of treading out the corn, or by the other scriptural mode of the “threshing instrument having teeth,” mentioned in Isaiah 41:15, and elsewhere. This is a square wooden frame, containing two cylinders, placed parallel to each other, and having a rotary motion. They are stuck full of spikes, with sharp square points, but not all of a

length. Thus the rollers have much resemblance to the barrel of an organ, and their projections, when brought in contact with the corn, break the stalk and disengage the ear. The machine is put in motion by two oxen yoked to the frame, and guided by a man, who sits on a plank that covers the frame containing the cylinders. He drives this equipage in a circle around a heap of corn, keeping at a certain distance from its verge, close to which stands a second peasant, holding a long-handled fork, pronged like the spread-out sticks of a fan, with which he throws the unbound sheaves forward to meet the rotary motion of the machine. He is also provided with a shovel, wherewith to remove to a place aside, the corn that has already passed under the machine. At that place, other men are stationed with the like implement, with which they cast the corn aloft into the air, when the wind blows among the chaff, and the grain falls to the ground. This process is repeated till the corn is completely winnowed; it is then gathered up, and is generally deposited for use in large earthen jars. But the chief attention of the Persians has been devoted to their gardens, and their success has been proportioned to their labors. Their vegetables and fruits, of which the variety is great, are excellent. The latter may be said to form, during the season, no inconsiderable part of the daily food of the lowest classes of the inhabitants of this kingdom. The melons are peculiarly fine and abundant, and are held in high estimation. In the neighborhood of Isfahan, extensive fields are appropriated to its culture; and the country around that city is decorated with large and handsome pigeon-houses or towers, which are kept up at a considerable expense, solely to obtain, what is esteemed the best manure for this favorite fruit—for the bird itself is not eaten by the Persians. The great value here attached to this manure has been thought by some to throw light upon that passage of Scripture which relates, that, during the famine in Samaria, “the fourth part of a cab of dove’s dung” was sold “for five pieces of silver,” 2 Kings 6:25. This supposes that the “dove’s dung” was required for some similar purpose. We must confess that we are not of that opinion. It appears little likely that persons under the present extremities of famine should so strongly covet, and prize so highly, the manure for a future vegetable, even supposing that vegetables were cultivable within a walled town. It is known, that the name of “dove’s dung” has been in the East applied to different vegetable substances; and it was probably to something of the sort, some bean, or berry, or root, that the statement in the sacred text applies. It claims to be added, that the employment of pigeon’s dung, in the culture of melons and cucumbers, is the only use of manure known in Persian agriculture. The dung of animals is indeed very carefully collected; it is not, however, applied to this purpose, but used for winter fuel. All substances of this nature are formed into cakes, and, being dried in the sun, are stored up for this service. There is an allusion to this use of dung in Ezekiel 4:15.

Manufacturing

Many of the manufactures of Persia are beautiful, particularly their gold and silver brocades, their silks, and their imitations of Cashmere shawls, which are made of the wool of Kerman. They also make a variety of cotton cloths, but not of so fine a texture as those of India. They have also several manufactories of glass, and some of a coarse ware resembling china, but they have not succeeded in bringing these wares to any perfection. In mechanical arts the Persians are not inferior to any other nations of the east. They work well in steel; and their swords, although brittle, are of excellent temper and edge. In the arts of carving and gilding, few nations are more skilful. They also enamel upon gold and silver in a very beautiful manner, and their ornaments made of these metals and precious stones often display admirable workmanship.

Chemistry

Chemistry, as now understood in Europe, is unknown in Persia; but the occult science of alchemy continues to be the favorite pursuit of some of the most learned in that country. After giving an account of the strange effects produced among a party of Persians by the view and operation of an electrical machine, the Rev. Justin Perkins says: "The Persians, much as they were nonplussed by the electrical machine, are not wanting in 'science, falsely so called.' They are naturally acute metaphysicians; but, unguided by 'Divine philosophy,' their speculations amount to little more than the entities and quiddities of the schoolmen and dreams of the old Greek writers. Alchemy is still laboring in the brains of multitudes in Persia, with all the magic interest and ponderous importance that it possessed in Europe in bygone centuries. I have been repeatedly asked whether the electrical machine had no connection with the science of converting the baser metals into gold—a theory very grateful to an Asiatic mind; and I have found it very difficult to persuade those who made the inquiry that such was not the case. One of my companions entertained Mar Yohannan,[20] in America, with experiments in gilding by the new electro-magnetic process. He introduced a silver watch, presented to the bishop by friends in this country, into an opaque liquid mixture; and after some time, on taking out the watch, lo, it was gold! The bishop stared a few moments, delighted and amazed, without saying a word; at length he thus gave utterance to his emotions?—"You make chémie," (the term by which the Persians denote alchemy); "the people in our country say the English can make chémie; before I did not believe; but it is true; you do make chémie." He soon understood it, however, as a superinducing rather than a transmuting process."

[20] A Nestorian bishop, who went to America with the missionaries.

Medicine In medicine, the system of practice is derived from the Greeks, and has descended to the Persians with very little alteration, as explained and enlarged upon in the writings of Avicenna, and others of their most learned doctors. Galen and Hippocrates, whom they call Galenous and Bocrat, are still their masters. They are wholly unacquainted with anatomy and the circulation of the blood. The Mohammedan religion will not allow of dissection, so that they are deprived of the means of acquiring knowledge through the discoveries of anatomy; and their skill in surgery is, consequently, as rude as their knowledge of medicine. They class both their diseases and remedies under four heads—hot, cold, moist, or dry; each may contain one or more of these qualities; and the great principle maintained is, that the disease must be cured by remedies of an opposite quality. If, for instance, an illness has arisen from moisture, dry remedies must be given; and hot diseases are alone to be cured by cooling medicines. Many instances of the application of this theory may be found in books of travels. In one case, mentioned by Mr. Scott Waring, a poor man was violently affected with heart-burn; and instead of prescribing an internal medicine, the doctors heaped upon his breast a large quantity of ice and snow, which they said was an effectual cure. Kotzebue relates a similar instance in the treatment of one of the musicians belonging to the Russian embassy. This man being a Mohammedan, had not sufficient confidence in the physician of the embassy, and desired that a Persian doctor might be called in. His disorder was an inflammatory fever. The Persian doctor appeared, and prescribed for the patient a large quantity of ice, which the poor fellow swallowed with ecstasy, and died the third day.

Artwork The representation of animate objects, and particularly of the human figure, is regarded by rigid Muslims as being forbidden by Mohammed, and in this they are no doubt correct. The Persians do not, however, so understand the prohibition, or, understanding, do not heed it. Paintings of human and animal figures abound in their houses and palaces, and are seen upon their ornamental walls. The colors of the Persian painters are very brilliant; and, when they draw portraits, they usually succeed in taking likenesses. Some of their lesser drawings, which are highly glazed and painted on wood, display much industry and care; but they are as yet unacquainted with the rules of perspective, and with those principles of just proportion which are essential to form a good painting. It is no uncommon thing in a Persian painting to see a man nearly as tall as a mountain; or, in the representations of battles, a line of guns, on which is formed a line of infantry, over whom is another of cavalry. One may also see a picture representing in one part the commencement of an action, and in another the defeat of the enemy.

Anyone who has examined the representations of ancient Persian sculptures, will have seen the kings and other great personages represented in colossal proportions as compared with those around them. So with their descendants, in whose paintings strangers, whether friends or enemies are usually represented in much smaller dimensions than the Persians. Thus, Sir John Malcolm was an especial favorite with the last generation of Persians; yet, in the palace of Shiraz, where the hall of audience is adorned with representations of his reception as ambassador, they have not spared even him. The Persians are shown as tall and towering beings; while Sir John stands straddling in his regimentals, a diminutive and dwarfish creature, as also all his staff.

General Sciences In the higher branches of science the Persians can scarcely be said to know more than their ancestors. They have a limited knowledge of mathematics; and they study astronomy chiefly for the purpose of becoming adepts in judicial astrology, a so-called science, in which the whole nation, from the monarch to the peasant, has the most implicit faith. The system of Ptolemy, both with respect to the forms and motions of the heavenly bodies, and the shape and surface of the earth, is that in which they believe. An abstract of the Copernican system has indeed been translated, through which, aided by the instruction of Europeans connected with the embassies, some individuals have acquired a better knowledge of the subject; but it is not to be expected that long-cherished belief in such matters of a prejudiced and superstitious nation will very soon or very easily be shaken. The same, very nearly, may be said of geography. By means of European maps and instructions, some few—a very few, in the higher and most learned classes, have acquired tolerably correct notions of the relative positions and magnitudes of different countries. But of the great body even of the educated classes it may be said that, independent of their erroneous notions of the form of the earth, their knowledge of its surface is limited to a very imperfect acquaintance with the territories of those kingdoms in their immediate vicinity; nor do they understand the art of surveying in a degree which would enable them to lay down with any exactness whatever, that portion of the globe which they themselves inhabit. "The New World" of America is the great geographical mystery to them. A missionary of that country (the Rev. Justin Perkins), voyaging from Constantinople to Trebizond in a vessel, had occasion to ascertain their notions on this point. "Takvoor told the Turks that I was from the New World, the appellation by which America is known to them. They stared at me with amazement, and said it was a day favored beyond any they had ever anticipated that they were permitted to behold an inhabitant of the New World. I inquired of them where they supposed the New World to be

situated, and they pointed upwards! The captain informed me, that his Persian passengers on the previous voyage to Constantinople developed a regular theory on this subject. They told him that their countrymen who know of the New World suppose it to be located in the skies, and hold that the English discovered it by means of a very large telescope!" On board was a Hajji, who was very curious respecting the position of the New World. "According to our ideas," he said, "there is only one world; and the New World must be some part of that; yet, if it be a part, how can it be so far distant?" The captain endeavored to explain to him that a great ocean must be crossed to reach the New World. "But there is no sea larger than Akh Dengis, the Mediterranean Sea," he replied; and so difficult was it to convince him of the existence of a larger body of water than the Mediterranean, that the attempt to satisfy him was abandoned as hopeless.

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