but little, if at all, inferior to those of Damascus. The steel of the best period of Persian art is possibly a trifle less ductile than that of Damascus, but the Damascening or wavy surface resembling watered silk is similar in each, and was probably reached by the same methods. This effect is still quite successfully imitated at Ispahân; although it is now frequently produced by acids on the surface alone, while the temper of the metal is naturally far inferior. These blades are formed both into scimitars and daggers of many shapes. Some Persian scimitars are still to be found with the thin end of the blade divided into a double point.

The inlaying of helmets, shields, breastplates, and swords with silver and gold used to be carried to great perfection; and it must be admitted that this art is not yet forgotten in Persia. Two processes were and are still followed. One process is called *zerneshân*, and also *telakoob* and *nograkoob*, according as the inlay is of gold or silver. It consists of engraving a design on the steel with a fine graving-tool, slightly under-cutting the surface; a fine gold or silver wire is hammered into the groove, the result being practically imperishable. Another form of *zerneshân* employed is to cut the surface with transverse lines, somewhat like the cross-hatching of wood-engraving; the gold or silver are beaten in, and the surface is smoothened. Superb were the helmets and shields which were decorated in this manner for the warriors who won the victories of the Sefaveans and their mighty successor, Nadir Shah. As they rushed to the charge, the sun (at one time the Persian symbol of the deity, and now represented in the emblazoned arms of the country) shot his radiant gleam on passages of the Koran, or on representations of Jemsheed and Zal and Rustêm inlaid in burnished silver and gold on the bucklers and helms of serried hosts, while in the midst of these resplendent designs the armor of princes flashed back the warlike lustre of the ruby and the

haughty splendor of priceless diamonds. This is no idle imaginary picture; one has but to see the armor of those times which has survived the wrecks of ages, to learn that it is difficult to exaggerate the magnificent appearance of the armies of those days, when led to battle by princes and kings, and attended by the chosen body of Royal Guards called Gholâms, or slaves of the throne. A hundred years have scarcely elapsed since burnished shields and helmets and coats of chain-mail were laid aside in Persia for the less cumbersome, but also far less interesting, military accoutrements of Europe.

The manufacture of gun-barrels was also at one time carried to a high point of excellence at Ispahân. Two makers were especially famous, — Hassân and Hadgi Mehmêt. The work of each bears the name of its maker. Those of Hassân are the more elaborate; but those of Hadgi Mehmêt were superior in texture.

Still another method for combining the precious metals with iron and steel, is by overlaying them in a thin coat scarcely more solid than gold-leaf. The effect is very pleasing; but, as may easily be imagined, it is far less durable than that produced by the telakoob or nograkoob method. While still quite capable of working by *zerneshân*, the metal workers of Persia prefer at the present day to produce the latter sort of work than the far more valuable Damascening process described above, except when working on special commissions; and most of the very beautiful imitations of the ancient work which they now produce at Ispahân for the foreign market are therefore of this inferior sort. The entire surface of the elegant blades, vases, ewers, and helmets or bucklers is covered with a varnish of which two parts are said to be alum and shellac, although the secret of the compound is difficult of discovery. This varnish unites the entire surface like a scumbling, and gives the effect of a high polish; at the same time it

communicates a delicate buff tint to the iron, resembling but not equalling the color of steel. There is no question that some of the works produced by this process are very elegant, and answer thoroughly well the purpose of simple decoration, for which all these modern examples are alone intended. But it would be a mistake to turn these objects into use; for use would soon reveal their specious character, and make them worthless except as old iron: unlike the old metal work of Persia they are intended wholly for ornament. But if one may judge from the number and real costliness and extreme beauty of some of these modern imitations, the demand for them abroad must be steadily on the increase. For those who cannot find or cannot afford antique examples of the fine Persian metal work of former ages, it may be granted that these comparatively inexpensive imitations offer a tolerable substitute.

The Persian artists in metal also acquired great excellence in the handling of articles in brass-work, a pursuit which they have not yet forgotten, although the old Persian work is far superior to what is produced now at Ispahân. This, I am convinced, is due less to lack of ability than to the fact that the demand for the best brass-work has practically ceased in Persia; while a more showy style, or a cheap imitation of the antique, seems to meet a ready demand abroad. So long as such continues to be the case, little improvement can be expected in the quality of the supply. There seems to be slight evidence that the manufacture of articles in bronze ever became popular in Persia; but from early ages brass has been a favorite metal with Persian artists. Although understanding how to fuse metals and cast them (as in the case of cannon), the metal arts of Persia have generally consisted of hammered ware, or of designs chiselled or engraved, alike in iron, brass, silver, and gold. The kaliân has been one of the favorite objects on which these artisans of old were wont to lavish exquisite beauty and

endless variety of design. The variety of the decorations offered by the kaliâns of Persia exceeds belief. Each one has an individuality of its own. A string of verse from Hafiz or Saadee, or apothegms from the Koran, surround the shining metal like a border of pearls, and inclose hunting-scenes, or fantastic groups of dancing-girls, or floral arabesques carved with unerring skill by the graver's tool, and interwoven with a thread of silver or set with turquoise. I have seen a kaliân completely faced with turquoise of uniform tint. Nothing could give a better notion of the excellence of Persian decorative art than a collection of kaliâns. The chief difference between the old and the modern carved work partly consists in the far greater depth and clearness of the lines in the former. The lettering is generally of admirable quality, which is in harmony with the rare ability exhibited by the Persians to the present time in the cutting of seals.

It would be impossible to surpass the extraordinary beauty of some of the carved iron-work formerly produced in Persia; and her workmen of the present day have apparently abandoned the task as hopeless. The best Persian work in iron is therefore costly, and becoming more and more rare. But a good degree of excellence is still exhibited in the manufacture of brass and silver objects, which are extensively produced at Ispahân and Zenjân, and in a less degree at Teherân. The most important articles now made in brass, or cut out of thin plate or rolled brass, consist sometimes of direct imitations of the antique. But generally the work is after designs of comparatively recent date, which bear a resemblance to the antique on account of the dazzling profusion of intricate and ingenious patterns engraved on the surface with more or less skill, and suggesting episodes from the Shah Namêh,—pageants of royalty, or scenes of domestic life. One of the favorite and most successful labors of these artists in brass is open perforated work, or *ajour*.

Carefully examined, the modern articles of brass carvings often indicate rude or careless workmanship, quite inferior to that formerly executed in Persia. But on the other hand it would be useless to deny that some of this work, especially the brass trays inlaid with silver, are often well made; while the designs are generally exceedingly beautiful, and quite meet the decorative purposes for which they were created. And at this point we discover an almost invariable characteristic of the decorative art of our day, and particularly of the United States. Unlike the creation of former Persian art, these brass objects are now made chiefly, if not exclusively, for decoration, the question of utility having little to do with their design. For this reason, also, they appeal largely to the foreign buyer, and are being manufactured more and more for export abroad. For those who desire to adorn their houses with beautiful metal-work at a moderate cost, nothing could be more opportune than the present brass bric-à-brac of Persia. The low cost of labor in that country enables one to buy pleasing ornaments which are cheap and unique, the Persian artisan still preferring to invent than to duplicate. Doubtless, with our convenience of manufacturing by steam machinery, we shall soon have firms in America turning out imitations of Persian patterns by the thousand, all exactly resembling each other of course. But until that time, the American buyer of taste might do worse than to decorate his rooms with the Persian brass ornaments which are now beginning to find their way into the United States. Happy is he who, in buying such articles, stumbles on a bit of genuine old Persian carving in brass. He then, indeed, has the treasure of *æs perennius*, which will increase in value from age to age.

The artisans of Persia have also wrought to excellent effect in copper. This may be due to the fact that this metal has

been employed for culinary purposes, and the native love of beauty did not disdain to decorate even the humble vessels of the kitchen with engraved designs. The facility for making these articles suggested many other objects susceptible of far more beauty of form and decoration; and hence a whole school of art in copper, not only very interesting, but also affording the collector numerous artistic objects, which, while comparatively inexpensive, are often possessed of exquisite beauty. Although many of the finest copper vases, bowls, and salvers are centuries old, this art is by no means abandoned, the Persian artificers still displaying a good degree of skill in decorating copper. It is the usage to whiten all these copper objects, while the engraved design is made prominent on the white silvery ground by being blackened. It is a little singular that so ingenious a people, and one at the same time so familiar with the possibilities of copper designing, should never have discovered copper-plate engraving and etching, especially as they have long had a knowledge of the value of acids for biting metals. Another beautiful object I have seen made of copper has a conical cover, surmounted by a knob shaped like a pineapple. As on many of the best examples of metal-work found here, the name of the artist who executed it is prominently engraved upon it. In many cases the date is also given. Not only the outside but the inside of this bowl is profusely decorated with designs, those on the exterior representing hunting-scenes, and those on the interior giving vivid representations of dancing-girls.

The Persians seem to have been less successful, or at least to have made less effort, in the engraving of the precious metals than of the baser. And yet I say this with some hesitation when I consider some of the bracelets and belt ornaments I have seen, which are certainly exceedingly effective. But it is perhaps their success in brass and iron — metals apparently so

much more difficult to engrave — that makes the results in gold and silver relatively less original and remarkable; certainly the chasing of steel by the artisans of Persia has never been surpassed. The most interesting achievements of the Persians in the precious metals have been in the art of filigree, or filigrane. The art is still pursued with extraordinary results at Zenjân. The fairy-like work executed by the artists of that city has never been exceeded by the best filigree work of Damascus or Florence. Perhaps one reason why the Persians have not developed a great art in the production of other articles of gold has been because they use little or no alloy, professing to despise as base and beneath the name of gold the metal alloyed with silver or copper employed by European and American jewellers, even though it be eighteen carats fine.

The Persians have shown the most skill in working the precious metals in combination with enamel, which they call minâr. It is difficult to ascertain when this beautiful art first began to be practised in Persia; but from a comparative examination of many of these enamels, I am inclined to think the art was not introduced into that country before 1560, and possibly at a later date. This may be inferred in part from the fact that it is still one of the principal arts now in vogue at Ispahân. Another curious method of judging of the age of a Persian enamel in the absence of a given date, — as it is also a means of judging of the age of several other Persian arts, — is from the costumes which appear in the designs. When not representing warriors in mailed armor and battle-scenes from the old legends, the Persian artists have found a vent for their fancy in designing scenes from actual life, exactly reproducing the costumes of the period. As the Persians, contrary to the general notion about them, are inclined to variety and change, the numerous details of dress, especially the garb worn at home, have passed through frequent modifications. Hence it is often quite easy for one familiar with

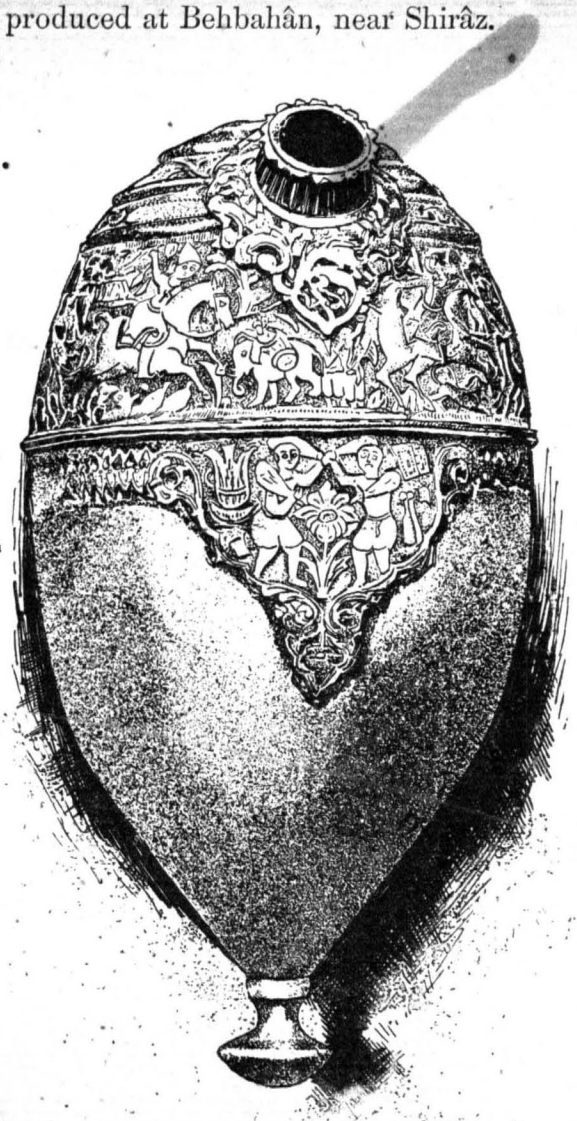
the various costumes of Persia to fix the date of many of her enamels and designs.

Persian enamel has sometimes been made directly on a surface of silver or gold, but more generally on copper. Often the enamel and the gold are blended together in intricate and exquisite designs on the copper, — a common scheme of color being an intense *bleu de roi* of enamel interlaced with wreaths of flowers of gold or silver. One of the most beautiful kaliâns I have seen represents the conventional cypress or palm-leaf design so common in oriental textile fabrics, wrought on a field of blue in minute raised stars of gold resembling a cluster of snow crystals. The accompanying design is taken from a superb kaliân of chiselled brass belonging to the Sefavean period. One of the richest and most characteristic kaliâns I have seen is about one hundred and thirty years old and the size of an ostrich egg. It is made of a shell of sheet copper, over which is a design of wrought silver. The flowers and medallions containing portraits are of enamel of the utmost delicacy of design and richness of color, surrounded by designs carved of silver and gold.

But it would be a mistake to suppose the rich ultramarine blue to be the chief color successfully produced in these Persian enamels, for there seems to be hardly a limit to the chromatic splendor which these enamels exhibit. The most prominent and most common blemish is in the tendency towards too vivid a crimson in rendering the carnation of flesh. This, however, may proceed from imperfect firing. Three of the most noted artists in enamel whom Persia has produced were Agâ Mehmêt Hassân, Agâ Mehmêt Amîn, and Agâ Mehmêt Alee.[1] A tea-service of gold overlaid with enamel, which is in the palace at Teherân, — one of the most brilliant works in this art ever produced, whether in Persia or Europe, — was executed by Agâ

[1] *Agâ* is a title equivalent to the French word "sieur" and our term "Esquire."

Mehmêt Hassân. The finest enamels of Persia have been made and are yet produced at Behbahân, near Shirâz.



OLD KALIÂN OF CHISELLED BRASS.

Of cloisonnée work, strictly speaking, it can hardly be said that any is to be found in Persia of native production; but of silver or gold utensils, sometimes repoussé and sometimes made

after the style called champ levé, there are still some fine old examples, which, however, are becoming rarer every year. In the latter style a pattern of vines and flowers of gold or silver is produced by removing the metal between the parts of the pattern, leaving a raised design. The parts thus left depressed are then filled with light and dark turquoise-blue and chocolate-brown; sometimes, also, other tints are introduced. Another method of arriving at a similar result common with Persian artists in metal and enamel, and still practised at Ispahân, is to make the object in repoussé work and fill the depressions with enamel. I have seen instances in which both repoussé and champ levé are exhibited in the same article. The repoussé is sometimes produced by hammering in the usual manner, and sometimes by beating the rolled silver or gold over a raised pattern of steel.

It is a little singular that while so successful in engraving steel, brass, and the precious metals, the Persians have made so little advance in the sculpture of marble. It is true that Persepolis shows abundant evidence of the great capacity of Persian genius for sculpture in early periods, — a talent revived under the Sassanidæ, as evidenced by the vast and magnificent sculptures of the Rock of Behistoon near Kermanshâh. Rock sculptures of perhaps less merit, but similarly ambitious in design and extent, have also been executed under the orders of Feth Alee Shah and Nasr-ed-Deen Shah in this century, near Teherân and Firoozkooh, while the numerous public works of Shah Abbass the First point in a similar direction. But it must be admitted that since the time of the Mahometan conquest Persian art has been more distinguished for its keramic achievements than for its sculpture.

In wood-carving, on the other hand, the Persians have shown and continue to show great skill and considerable taste. This is the more remarkable on account of their very poor means for

working in wood, and the indifferent results generally reached by Persian carpenters and cabinet-makers. For the same reason, also, one is astonished at the marvellous ingenuity, skill, and taste developed by the art of inlaid work, or mosaic on wood. It would be impossible to exceed the results achieved by the Persian artisans, especially those of Shirâz, in this beautiful and difficult art, which, after what I have seen, I can hardly hesitate to consider as *par excellence* a Persian art. No object seems too singular and difficult in shape to be attempted by these clever artificers; and the amount of surface covered with minute designs in mosaic is equally remarkable. Chairs, tables, sofas, boxes, violins and guitars, canes, picture-frames, — almost every conceivable object, in fact, which is made of wood, — may be found overlaid with an exquisite casing of inlaid work, so minute sometimes that thirty-five to forty pieces may be counted in the space of an eighth of a square inch. Sometimes, especially in the old inlaid work of Persia, the mosaic is even more delicate. I have counted four hundred and twenty-eight distinct pieces in a square inch on a violin which is completely overlaid in this exquisite detail of intricate geometric designs in mosaic. The microscopic bits of polished brass give it a shimmer suggesting the tremulous play of light on the surface of a smooth sea. But what is evident even in the most labored mosaic of Persia, as in all its art industries excepting sometimes in the more recent designs, is the fact that the artistic sense which has an eye to the general effect is never lost; and thus, while the details are often so minute as almost to require a magnifying glass, there is a certain breadth of design preserved which renders the object agreeable and artistically effective viewed at almost any distance.

It may be inquired what has Persia accomplished in what are strictly called the arts of design, including the employment of color, whether in the so-called industrial arts or in works exe-

cuted for their own sake, such as portrait-painting, landscape or figure compositions, which form by far the most important and original department of European art dating from the opening of the Renaissance? To this it may be replied that a vast field opens up before us when we enter on this branch of Persian art, but that it dates its origin about the beginning of the Sefavean dynasty. One who really desires to consider every form of a nation's art-expression and thought in an inquiring and respectful spirit must divest himself of all his prejudices in favor of European pictorial art, before approaching the subject of the arts of design in Persia. Vast studios invested with vague depths of picturesque gloom, decorated with sumptuous and costly draperies and bric-à-brac for which every clime and every age has been ransacked, and where the artist in the æsthetic garb he has evolved for himself in harmony with his surroundings is himself a wonderful creation of art; life schools, where the palpitating curves of the human form divine are studied by eager crowds of art enthusiasts; colossal canvases on which historic and allegorical compositions on a grandiose scale startle the eye and bid loudly for the popular applause; imposing galleries hung with paintings by the thousand, smitten by the glare of chandeliers, and gazed at by the beauty and intellect of lordly capitals, — none of these things let the art student associate with the pursuit of the arts of design in Persia. Let him rather picture to himself humble artists clad in white or green turbans and flowing tunics, seated on their heels upon a rug in an open booth by the bustling wayside, or under a spreading chenâr in the market-place. If such an artist is prosperous and honored with the favor of the Great, which in Persia is equivalent to the smile of God, then he is content, for he can go on through life laboring cheerfully at his chosen pursuit. Around him on their knees are seated his *chagirds*, or assistants, who aid him in his labors, and also incidentally learn to start in turn as independent

artists. He makes his own colors after receipts learned from his father or his master, and devises varnishes of his own, which add a deliciously mellow effect to the delicate designs over which he devotes such patient and loving toil. He does not live in dread of art-critics who for private gain will hold him writhing on their quills before the public in the daily prints, and make sport of the truest emotions of his nature as if he were a condemned criminal. His customers are his only critics. When they approach his booth, he courteously invites them to examine his productions with a "bismillah" and the offer of a pipe and a cup of tea; or, with his works carefully wrapped up and borne by a chagird, he goes forth, and exhibits them at the house of purchasers who send for him. His ambition is gratified when he can stroll at eventide with dignified mien to the tea-house or the public gardens, counting his beads, repeating verses from the Koran or Hafiz, and in restful mood devising new designs for the morrow. Whether he sells his paintings or finds them a drug on his hands he is resigned, for it is the will of Allah, "to whom be praise."

Such is the life and career of the artist of Persia. It is not that of a Rubens or a Millais; his honors are more tranquilly bestowed, and enjoyed with less of the fever of life, than in the western world; but he has that chiefest of this world's successes, — the privilege of spending his years in the untrammelled pursuit for which he is by nature best fitted. One day an artist of Teherân came to do a little task of gilding for me. He was a tall, portly, handsome man, with a raven-colored beard. His black eyes were thoughtful and pleasant, with a far-away look, as if he were living in a world of dreams. He said he was a pupil of Agâ, or A' Najeff, a famous artist who lived during the two previous reigns. I remarked to him that he was giving more attention to his work than had been stipulated for the money agreed upon. He grandly replied, "I

do not work for money alone; I work because I love my profession." Such an admission from a Persian, I must confess, was so extraordinary that it gave me a new respect for the pursuit of art. On being further questioned, he frankly and modestly stated that while he loved his art he was unable to equal the genius of his master A' Najeff, for whom he expressed great respect, while going on to say that he in turn was inferior to his master A' Zadêk; while in some points they were all unable to rival the great artists who induced a revival of Persian art in the first reigns of the Sefavean dynasty.

At another time one of the best illuminators in Teherân sent word that he should be pleased to show me some of his works, if I would name the day. He was a gray-bearded man in flowing tunic and white turban. Asked to be seated, he and his chagird subsided on their knees and proceeded to untie cloths in which he had brought his wares. They included boxes, fans, book-covers, and illuminated pages or manuscripts; the designs were of the most exquisite character, and so varied as to indicate apparently an inexhaustible fancy. The general idea of each was breadth in style, with the effect centralized instead of scattered; and yet the details were to the last degree minute, and wrought with the utmost conscientiousness. The feature which would perhaps most impress one with his work was the harmonious blending of colors, which were often so brilliant that the slightest lack of tone or fault of unity would have jarred like a discord in a sonata, and shown on what a dangerous scale of color this daring artist ventured to touch. Impressed as I was by the beauty of his work, I was yet more impressed by the quiet dignity of his bearing, which seemed to announce the high esteem in which he held his calling. He told me that he ground and mixed his own colors, and made his varnishes himself. His chagirds put on the priming, and some-

times laid in the pattern after his suggestion; but he always gave the finishing touches. Except in illuminating, he employed oil colors, even in designs so minute as scarcely to be appreciated without the magnifying glass. Notwithstanding the careful detail involved in all the designs of Mirza Mohamet Taghé, he is a rapid worker, and executes a prodigious amount of nearly uniform merit.

As before observed, the graphic or pictorial arts of Persia seem to be of comparatively recent date. Few if any signs exist of pictorial art in that country before the time of Shah Abbass the Great. If these arts were practised before that period, no record or well authenticated examples of the fact have survived to our day. The evidence that pictorial art had made progress in India before the time of Shah Abbass is, however, strong presumptive evidence that those arts were not then altogether unknown also in Persia.

Portrait-painting as a special branch of art has never acquired prominence in Persia; but it would be a mistake to deny that for two hundred years considerable talent has been displayed by numerous painters in Persia in an art which is so highly esteemed elsewhere, and which would seem to be almost the first that would demand attention among a civilized community inspired by taste and sentiment. One of the first impulses of the human heart, one of the last to warm the expiring soul, is a desire to be remembered after death; next to that is a yearning for something to remind us of those we love or esteem. So long as these sentiments exist, one would suppose that portrait-painting would be an art to receive a warm welcome and meet abundant patronage in every civilized community. But it does not seem to have been much practised in ancient Greece and Rome; and it is therefore not singular that portrait-painting has also failed to acquire a prominent position in the arts of Asiatic nations, where the seclusion

of women and the privacy of domestic life are actually opposed to the representation, in this manner, of the fairest half of the human race. In India as well as in Persia it has been common to portray scenes in which women play an important part, but in each case where there is evidence that the artist had drawn his studies from actual life he has been obliged to depend upon women of loose character for his subjects; and thus what por-

BRONZE CAST OF OLD PERSIAN TILE, REPRESENTING RUSTÉM AND THE DEEVES.

traits exist in Persia, and generally also in India, are confined entirely to the masculine sex. The comeliness of Persian youth is so feminine, that some of these portraits of princes might easily be mistaken for likenesses of women, especially as the costume is jewelled and embroidered to a degree that we are accustomed to associate with female attire. Some of the old Persian portraits which have come down to us from the time of the Sefaveans, and for a century later, are very

interesting as preserving the costumes of those times; frequently also they give evidence of being striking likenesses. But it is rarely that they show much attempt at composition. The utmost conscientiousness is displayed in the reproduction of the details of costume, the massive and elaborate jewelry and embroidery being rendered with marvellous fidelity; but the figure, especially the hands, are painted without a full appreciation of the character possessed by the human form divine, and the general effect is lacking in force: in this respect they are decidedly inferior to the richly suggestive and mellow portraits of such artists as Rembrandt or Velasquez. But I have seen the portrait of a young prince painted on glass, two thirds life-size, that was superb in color and full of poetic expression. The color was laid on with impressionist daring, and seemed altogether crude as viewed on the reverse surface of the glass; but when the painting was observed from the other side of the glass it was delicious in tone, harmonious in color, and broad in style, while yet the details of the jewelled tiara were represented with sufficient minuteness, and with the touch of a master. It is not a little singular that the names of most of the artists who have done so much to illustrate the artistic genius of Persia are quite forgotten; their works are also treated with surprising neglect. Now and then one comes across a canvas containing the portrait of some prince long dead; it is brought for sale by a dellâl, or travelling merchant, and most probably is in a deplorable condition, the canvas torn, and the paint breaking off in flakes.

The art of portrait-painting in Persia seemed to take a fresh start in the reign of the good Kerîm Khan of blessed memory. Agâ Sadek, one of the most noted artists of modern Persia, lived in that and the subsequent reign; and from some of his studies which are still extant he appears to have devoted some attention to painting from the life. His pupil Mehmet Hassân Khan

executed the very interesting series of life-size portraits in the palace of Negaristân, representing Feth Alee Shah and his numerous sons, together with the foreign envoys and prominent courtiers at the court of that distinguished monarch. These portraits were made by a man of undoubted genius, who wanted but little to be one of the great portrait-painters of his time. As it is, the absence of a true feeling for perspective, which most Persian artists share with Asiatic painters in general, and but a slight perception of the value of chiaro-oscuro, necessarily relegates this valuable series of portraits to a secondary rank. Abool Hassân Khan, the son of the above painter, now resides at Teherân, where he occupies an honorary position at the court, with the title of Sanié ul Mulk. He has inherited his father's talents, and has recently produced several excellent portraits of distinguished Persian gentlemen. He shows more grasp than the former in representing character, — a portrait of the venerable Sedr Azêm, or Premier of the Kingdom, being in this respect quite remarkable. His management of colors is also harmonious and correct. Wherein he fails is in a somewhat timid handling of pigments, the result being a certain dryness that leaves the impression of labor, and as it were "smells of the lamp." There are several portrait-painters now at Teherân of respectable natural talents. With a proper course of instruction and reasonable opportunities for competition and encouragement, such as are obtained in Europe, it would not be difficult to develop in that city a school of portrait-painters rivalling those of London and Paris. As it is, the prospect of such a result in the immediate future is not very encouraging, although a rather perfunctory school of art is maintained at the National University under Government auspices.

But the pictorial art of Persia, like its other arts, found expression in the form of an industrial art. In this direction it has assumed importance. We read in Scripture of ink-horns as far

back as the time of Ezekiel. The familiar way in which mention is made of these objects indicates that at least three thousand years ago the ink-horn was already as indispensable an article of civilization as the scribe who carried it in his belt. Four articles of stationery were essential at that time in oriental countries, as they continue to be required in the East at the present day. The Greeks and the Romans wrote on tablets with the stylus, — hence the word "style." But Asiatics either engraved on stone, or employed parchment and a pen made of a special kind of reed, the size of a pencil, resembling in color and polish malacca stick. This sort of pen suggested a black, glossy ink, thickened with a bunch of linen thread in order to prevent too rapid flow; this ink is in use in Persia at the present time. It is more easily effaced than European ink; hence the facility of making palimpsests out of oriental manuscripts. The ink was carried in a small, oblong metallic case, closed with a minute lid, which in turn was enclosed in a long case containing the pens. This case was called an ink-horn. To these were invariably added a seal, on which was engraved the name of the scribe or of the person for whom the document was written. The seal had a little ink rubbed on the surface with the finger, and was then applied to the paper or parchment on a spot that had first been slightly moistened. This apparatus continues with scarcely a change, at the present time, from the Mediterranean to the Indies. The cutting of seals is therefore one of the most important of the minor arts of the East, and especially of Persia. It may be doubted whether in all Europe a lapidary can be found equal, in this exquisite art, to the Nagôsh Bashee, or chief of engravers of Teherân. The graceful Arabic character lends itself to the production of the most beautiful work of this sort, being frequently interwoven with delicate floral tracery. It is still very common to find seals cut in the Cufic character, or containing emblematic devices. The skill developed in the art of seal-cutting in Persia

has led to the engraving of passages from the Koran or apothegms from the poets on the face of agates and turquoises. Mounted in silver or gold, they are worn by the women on their arms both for decoration and as charms. Every one in Persia, from the humblest mule driver to the Shah himself, is provided with his signet ring or seal, without the impression of which no document can be accepted as authentic.

It may be readily perceived that the ink-horn is an important, in fact an indispensable, article in Persia. Every great man is attended by a secretary, who carries in his belt an ink-horn. Being ordered to write something, he drops on his knees and takes out a roll of paper and the inevitable ink-horn. He has no other desk than his left hand, which holds the paper. He writes from right to left diagonally across the page, leaving a wide margin. If the document is not completed when the bottom of the page is reached, the writing is continued in the margin in short lines at right angles, running around the page like a border. Even the most important official documents and books of price are written in this manner, which allows of considerable beauty if the scribe is an adept, and if he varies the style of handwriting as he follows the margin round.

In Turkey and Persia the ink-horn is called *kalemdân*, or reed-holder. In the former country it is invariably made of brass, being a flat, oblong box, not unlike a spectacle-case, and like that opening at the top; but the Persian kalemdâns are different in shape and altogether unlike in material. They are always made in the form of an even-sided oblong box with slightly convex top, from eight to twelve inches in length and about two inches, more or less, in width. One end pulls open and discloses a drawer extending the entire length, which contains the brass ink-holder and pens. The material is papier-maché, sometimes, although rarely, lined with leather.

In the kalemdân the best pictorial artists of Persia have

found a worthy medium for expressing the love of the beautiful which is innate in every oriental nature. To the Persian artisan one may indeed apply the well-known sentence in the epitaph of Oliver Goldsmith, "nil tetigit quid non ornavit." To study a collection of Persian kalemdâns is like reading the odes of Horace or Hafiz. Here we generally find the lighter side of life and nature depicted in color and designs corresponding to the gaillard strains of the poet's lyre, — not the reckless and despairing music of Omâr Khayâm, which leads the soul to lose itself in the vague and hopeless mazes of the problems of destiny, but rather the blithesome chords which draw the heart to the observation of sunny skies and green fields and nibbling flocks, or the pursuit of the antelope over grassy plains, or the delights of love in gay pavilions by running streams, on a sod cushioned with flowers, where the ghittern and the nightingale blend their tender melodies with the lover's song. One enters here on the Arcady of Sidney, or rambles through the Forest of Ardennes with Jacques and Rosalind.

Why does one, in enjoying these lovely productions of the old artists of Persia who thus delineated life in her palmy days, stop to grumble that the drawing is sometimes rude and the perspective askew, and that the trees are of the sort which made Ruskin hurl his ink-pot in whimsical wrath at the luckless landscape artists of the Renaissance? It is not criticism that is required here, but appreciation. Did not Shakspeare make Bohemia a sea-board country? Did not all our old dramatists disregard, not once but scores of times, the unities and the laws of versification? Has "Venice Preserved" less power to bring tears because filled with affectations or lines too long for blank verse? There are cases in which criticism becomes hyper-criticism, and when censure but reveals the narrowness of the critic's intellectual scope.

These kalemdâns of Persia, and the mirrors and boxes painted in the same style, transport the fancy back to the splendor and the delights of a great empire in a happy period. If we study that age in the true spirit, we are transported back to it once more, and gain another and an earnest glance at the better thoughts and the real character of a remarkable epoch in the history of civilization. But if we are still inclined to consider these kalemdâns and mirrors by the strict canons of art, even then we are forced to admit that in spite of their undoubted defects they possess certain great qualities, which raise the artists who painted them to a high rank among those who have achieved success as colorists and have aided to develop the humanitarian side of art. We owe to them a collection of types of life and character not less interesting as such than the genre paintings of the Dutch school. By them we are often admitted to a glimpse of the interior of the oriental domestic life, which is so inaccessible to the foreigner; and we find withal that these pictures, so interesting to the student of the various phases of humanity, are also glowing with sunny colors, harmoniously blended in effects which charm every eye that is susceptible to the subtile music of chromatic tones.

It would indeed be impossible to surpass the tone that pervades these delightful bits of life concentrated in the space of a few square inches. I am willing to grant that to those who are accustomed to admire only immense canvases and pigments loaded an inch thick, the pictorial art of these Persian mirrors and kalemdâns are mere "trifles light as air." But they who can see beauty in the delicate touches of the finest miniature-painting, or concede merit to a Malbone or a Meissonier, may find a rational satisfaction in some of the exquisite work that has been lovingly lavished upon this great school of Persian miniature-painting. As observed above, I concede

without argument that the perspective and anatomical drawing and the scenery of this school are not strong points; but on the other hand it must be allowed that these are by no means all the requisite qualities essential to a meritorious school of art, and that a number of great European artists may be mentioned who have been lamentably deficient in these respects.

The effect of these compositions is broad, and yet the workmanship is sometimes so minute that a magnifying-glass is necessary fully to appreciate the patient and loving toil which the master has bestowed upon it. What in a large canvas might seem to resemble the vapid minuteness of Denner ceases to appear such in a surface ten inches by two, on which sometimes fifty to one hundred figures are grouped. I have seen a kalemdân on which were three hundred figures. I have before me another kalemdân ten inches long and one and three fourths wide, representing a battle-scene between Persians and Turks, mounted and in the armor of two centuries ago. It includes fifty-six distinct figures, of which eighteen are in the foreground. The beauty of this extraordinary composition would make it creditable to any living artist. The vivacity of the scene, the infinite variety of action displayed, the rush, the terror, the pomp, and the circumstance of war are all there. Lost in admiration at the versatile fancy of the artist, it is not until one has several times examined this kalemdân that he appreciates the excessive minuteness of the work and recognizes the toil it must have cost. This painting is by Mirza Achmêt, now honorary head of the artists who are under the patronage of the Prince Zil-î-Sultan, Governor of Ispahân.

I have seen an older painting on a mirror-case about nine inches long and six wide, representing the great Nadir Shah in battle, in the early part of the last century. Time has mellowed its colors and given them the rich tone to which we are accustomed in the works of Wouvermans. In the central

foreground, on a proud white horse, we see the great conqueror in the military splendor of an oriental soldier and king. Behind him are grouped his princes and generals; the ground is heaped with the corpses of the slain and the carcasses of horses, depicted with terrible realism; in the middle distance a squadron of cavalry is beating down the enemy, and in the background is a park of artillery, at that time comparatively a new thing in Persia. But after the majestic figure of the Shah and his noble charger, the most remarkable object in this composition is a group of three prisoners, bound and kneeling before the sovereign beseeching for their lives. The varied expression of their faces and the pathos of their condition are admirably rendered. Behind them stands the mailed executioner with drawn sword and stolid countenance, holding them with a rope to which their pinioned arms are attached. The history of oriental warfare inclines one to fear that they sued in vain for their lives from a conqueror who slew one hundred thousand people in Delhi between sunrise and sunset. Bating certain peculiarly oriental inaccuracies of drawing, this painting is so realistic and vivid that one cannot avoid the conclusion that it represents a scene from actual life, in which the artist himself had been a participant. But who painted this picture can only be conjectured, as unlike many of these artists of mirrors and kalemdâns he neglected to add his signature; it is surmised however by connoisseurs to have been A' Zadek. The most celebrated battle-painter of Persia was Alee Koolé Beg, who lived in the time of the first Shah Abbass.

In the time of Nadir Shah flourished Abah Ger and Agâ Mehmêt Housseïn, both justly noted for their flower-paintings. They have had many imitators, but none have proved to be their equals. Their works are generally found on the lids and backs of the cases containing hand-mirrors, and are often very cleverly executed and highly attractive. They show conclusively that in

this branch of art, at least, the Persian artists drew and painted from Nature; in other still-life paintings they have shown less aptitude. The exquisite arrangements of roses and lilies are generally on a gold ground, which gives them exceeding brilliancy. Combined with them one commonly finds the nightingale, painted with the utmost delicacy. It will be remembered that the oriental poets have found some subtile harmony in the association of nightingales and roses. Doubtless it was suggested by the fact that this melodious bird builds its nest in the rose-bush. An unpoetical Persian assured me, however, that the association is due to the thorny character of the rose, which prevents the serpent from climbing the stem and devouring the eggs of the nightingale. I am unable to decide so nice a question, but having related the poetry and the prose of the matter, leave it to the reader to settle according to his own taste.

OLD PERSIAN MIRROR-CASE — EXTERIOR.

One of the most remarkable and unaccountable features of Persian mirror-painting is the school of sacred subjects which found scope in the decoration of hand-mirrors. It was in its prime in the time of Agâ Najeff, who flourished as a miniature-painter in the reign of Kerîm Khan and the early reigns of the present dynasty. The whole art of figure-painting being proscribed by the inculcations of the Prophet himself, one can hardly

imagine that it would be possible for paintings to be produced by a Mahometan people that would actually give representations of the Prophet himself and of distinguished Mahometan martyrs and saints. It is true that only within a recent period was so daring an innovation attempted, and the origin of these sacred compositions is probably traceable to a still more remarkable fact. I say traceable, for it is hard to realize with what difficulty one obtains precise information in Persia. Not only are attempts at historic records comparatively rare, but those which do exist are vague, imaginative, florid in style, and perplexing. In collecting many of the facts in these pages I have been obliged to depend upon oral information, often more or less traditionary, which has been accepted or rejected only after reference to numerous individuals.

COVER OF PERSIAN MIRROR-CASE — INTERIOR.

Under the circumstances, it is almost inconceivable that paintings representing sacred scenes from Christian hagiology should also find acceptance with Mahometan amateurs. But as we have only to turn to Christian nations at this very day to find inconsistencies as glaring and absurd, we can set this down as only one more evidence that man is a medley of contradictions, and often unreasoning as the beasts of the field. Here is a people who consider all Christians so vile that few of them will smoke the same pipe or drink from the

same cup, or (in the case of the more fanatical) even shake hands with them lest they be defiled; and all this because they are Christians! And yet they will paint you scenes from the life of Christ, lavishing on them all their talent; and Persians themselves purchase and admire these works! I can only account for this anomaly on the ground that with many Persians, as with not a few Christians, religion has produced no response in their natures, but is outwardly accepted with a vague idea of ultimate advantage, and a belief that to reject it in this life is likely to result in inconvenience and perhaps serious damage. Some persons, furthermore, concern themselves but little with the ethics of art, but are ready to accept any expression of the beautiful, whether sacred or profane. Did not Titian paint the "Immaculate Conception," as well as a "Venus" of exceptional impurity? There is among all cultivated races a large class with whom sentiment is more potent than principle, — a class which not rarely deludes itself into believing that sentiment and religion are convertible terms.

But whatever be the reason, the origin and existence of such pictures in Persia is doubtless the source of the paintings on sacred Mahometan subjects. It is to representations of Christ with the golden nimbus around his head that we owe the familiar painting of Mahomet, which is now quite common in Persia, — represented with a conventional type of feature and expression, as has also been the case with the accepted portraits of the face of Christ, all following a type having no authentic source. It is a curious circumstance that the different methods of propaganda adopted by the "Cross" and "Crescent" are suggested by the scimitar which the Prophet is always represented as holding in his hands. A Mahometan, however, might with plausibility retort that Christ himself said, "I come not to bring peace, but a sword."

The origin of the Persian pictures of the "Holy Family" is a little obscure. It is generally agreed that Shah Abbass sent a number of artists to Europe to study the arts. There they were so impressed by the paintings of the Renaissance School, then at its height, that they became converts at once to the grandeur of the sacred subjects it selected and the noble scheme of color it formulated for draperies. Perhaps, too, these artists brought back to Persia a number of European paintings which served as models to subsequent generations of artists, the Persians being admirable imitators. At all events, a distinct system of compositions representing the Holy Family, with attendant saints and angels, arose about that time in Persia, which reached its perfection with Agâ Najeff. These paintings are from eight to twelve inches long and five to six wide; they are generally painted on the lids and backs of hand-mirrors, one side of the lid representing perhaps a group of flowers, and the other the Holy Family. Sometimes one side gives a Christian subject, and the other a legend from Mahometan martyrology. More oddly still, it is not uncommon to find a sacred subject on the outside, and on opening it, to be surprised by a painting of fair women, — which is so evidently borrowed in style from Europe that one puzzles his brain to remember whether he is looking at a copy from Boucher, Reynolds, or Gainsborough of the last century.

These miniature compositions are invariably executed on papier-maché, and are glazed and scumbled into harmony as well as protected by a rich varnish; the older pictures show evidence of having been repeatedly cleaned and varnished. The greatest known masters of this branch of Persian art are A' Zadek, A' Zemân, and A'[1] Najeff, the last of whom died about forty years ago. The name of the artist and the date are often found at the top of these paintings. Like all Persian work of

[1] *A'* stands here as a familiar abbreviation of Agâ.

this sort, these miniatures show breadth of effect combined with the utmost minuteness and careful rendering of detail, together with a warm, delicious tone that recalls the works of Correggio. The drawing is sometimes defective; but this objection is less noticeable in these works than in many other Persian designs. These painted mirrors are not only greatly prized by Persian amateurs, but they are now finding abundant appreciation in Europe. There is an odd characteristic of all Persian pictures of the Holy Family quite worth the mention. Almost without exception, they have imitated the Venetian or Veronese type of female beauty; in other words, their women and children are all blondes of the most pronounced sort, with light, golden tresses, which is altogether different from the brunette type of Persian beauty that appears in other Persian paintings. The blond type naturally includes blue eyes, black eyes being the exception. But in Persia blue eyes are considered unlucky, partly perhaps because they are rarely seen in that country. The painters of these sacred scenes have therefore uniformly and carefully avoided admitting blue eyes in any of their pictures of blond women and angels.

We might go on to speak of some of the clever minute drawings in black and white executed by Persian artists, and of the designs in relief produced by the pressure of the thumb-nail on paper, a very curious and ingenious Persian art; but we have not yet touched on the arts of embroidery, carpets, and other textile fabrics, for which Persia has justly been famous for ages. We know from early sculptures that embroidery was practised in Persia thousands of years ago, aside from traditions to that effect. Although these are the best known arts of that country so far as concerns the United States, I am convinced that precise information on the subject is so scarce that a few observations thereon may prove not untimely. It is greatly to be regretted that some of the most elaborate and beautiful forms

of Persian needle-work are either no longer produced or are gradually going out of use, the lack of demand naturally lessening the production. The Persians are a versatile and fickle people, unlike other Orientals, and readily turn to new fashions. It is to this that is due the large variety of objects created by the industrial arts of Persia, and at the same time the rapid extinction of many of these in favor of new articles of personal and domestic use. This circumstance, it should be added incidentally, is a source of encouragement to American exporters who have the daring and sagacity to send their wares to Persia. The Persians are rapidly learning to abandon their own beautiful wares for those of Europe, and the first comers in the field are now about to reap substantial reward for their enterprise.

One of the arts of Persia, now no longer practised, is the embroidering of — what shall we call them? — well, ladies' pantalettes, called by Persians *nacsh*. The house-costume of Persian women having undergone a great change in this century, being considerably abbreviated, the embroidered articles called *nacsh* have been discarded. These nacsh are about two feet long and sixteen inches wide, more or less. They consist of some superb pattern embroidered entirely in silk, so firmly and solidly that they are like carpets in miniature. Their value, of course, depends on the texture and beauty of the pattern. Their durability is simply phenomenal. Some of the old patterns still preserved in ancient families and dating back for centuries have acquired a soft gray tone, in which the intricate medley of brilliant colors melt and harmonize, as the splendor of autumnal foliage loses itself in the quivering haze of an October sunset. Every year the nacsh embroideries are becoming more rare, really good ones being now excessively scarce. There is reason to believe that some of the more recent embroideries of this sort, coarser in texture and less delicious in tone, were wrought especially to meet

the foreign demand for Persian goods. In selecting pieces of nacsh the purchaser needs to exercise some prudence, for the dealers have a habit of retouching an old faded piece with new colors which to many makes them not only fresher in appearance but more attractive. The cheat can be discovered only by touching a cloth slightly moistened to the part suspected; if the color comes off, the fraud is detected at once. For coverings to cushions or ottomans, and for the seats and backs of chairs, no material could be found more sumptuous and beautiful than these nacsh embroideries, on which the women of Persia have in past ages lavished such taste and loving patience during their lives of enforced retirement in the anderoon.

OLD SILVER PITCHER, WITH ENAMEL IN THREE COLORS, VERY RARE. (ONE HALF HEIGHT OF ORIGINAL.)

Still another form of embroidery which is now nearly extinct in Persia (the more 's the pity!) is due to female handiwork, and is directly owing to the peculiar Persian custom of female seclusion. This is the embroidery on linen of prayer carpets and of veils for street wear. The design is produced by working a pattern with white silk and drawing the threads, the result

being a raised pattern in silk lightened by open lattice-like spaces. Masculine appreciation of such work as this must after all be cold and perfunctory; and yet I venture to hazard the assertion that this embroidery does not yield in workmanship and beauty to the finest needlework of Mechlin or Valenciennes, or to the point-lace covering the robes of European queens.

Among the forms of Persian embroideries which happily are not yet extinct are the shawls and portières of Kermân. He or she is to be congratulated who obtains a good example of this art before an invasion of Persia by aniline dyes, and European manufactured stuffs relegates it to the limbo of dead arts. In general scope the needlework of the province of Kermân is allied to that of Cashmere. It differs from that in being of coarser texture, although often wrought on very fine stuffs similar to those made of cashmere wool. The design is also ordinarily in wool, but sometimes it is of silk thread on fine cashmere, or on the fine wool-stuffs of Kermân which resemble cashmere. The shawls of Cashmere are intended for a different purpose, and are generally made by another process. The work of Kermân is very beautiful, although the design commonly consists of variations of what we call the palm-leaf pattern, — which orientals affirm is properly intended as a conventional rendering of the cypress, the tree of immortality. It is worked with an exquisite union of rich, soft colors, associated with effective borders of flowers. The ground is generally scarlet or pure white.

Numerous other varieties of embroidery have been and are still made in Persia, but none presenting perhaps the same delicacy of artistic feeling, although sometimes exhibiting an amount of work almost beyond belief, and certainly surpassing (as is the case with most of the needlework of Persia) all similar work produced in the United States. The most important of these elaborate schools of art embroidery are probably those of

Shirâz and Rescht, and in lesser degree those of Karadâgh. They resemble one another in general character; the main features are massive and intricate designs wrought with silk in chain-stitch, with a wonderful massing of brilliant colors on broad-cloth, which is generally scarlet or gray, though sometimes black. The richer specimens are distinguished by having the design partly made of small bits of cloth of other colors, sewed into apertures cut into the groundwork. In the Shirâz embroideries, the inserted pieces are generally of velvet. Sometimes entire carpets are made on this elaborate scale, which are necessarily expensive, and scarcely fitted for any but oriental countries, where people leave their shoes at the door. The old designs of Rescht are more delicate and artistic than those of the present time. This, we regret to say, is due not only to a decline in taste, but also to an intolerable invention of modern chemists, who might have been better employed than in discovering aniline dyes. It is true, strict orders have been issued against the importation of these dyes into Persia, the Government being well aware of the irreparable injury they are capable of bringing on some of the most important industries of Persia. But Rescht being near the frontier, it is difficult altogether to exclude the aniline colors from that place, or at least to prevent smuggling and using them to an extent that is likely to ruin the reputation of all the embroideries of Rescht.

In this connection it would be unjust to omit all allusion to the superb embroideries with gold and silver thread, which at one time rivalled the very best work of that sort made in Europe in the Middle Ages. These embroideries were made on crimson and black velvet, or on blue and crimson silk. They often contain quotations from the Koran or the poets, interwoven with magnificent designs of flowers and vines. It would be impossible to exceed the splendor of some of these old Persian stuffs of gold and silver thread. Those made for

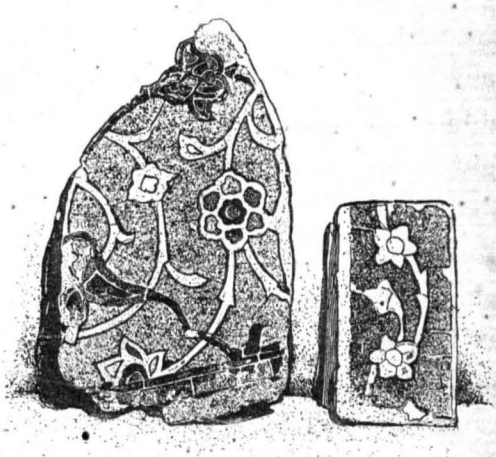
the royal family are sometimes embossed with diamonds and pearls. Fine examples of this sort of work are now becoming scarce, and collectors should not hesitate to seize upon them whenever they appear. There are as yet no imitations of this art in the market, as there are of some of the other Persian arts; now and then an enterprising travelling merchant succeeds in discovering choice bits hid away in the chests of some of the old Persian families, who are glad to sell them and buy cheap European wares in return. So vast have been the quantities of Persian embroidery and bric-à-brac already exported that one is amazed, considering also the wars which have ravaged that old country, that any fine examples of the noble decorative arts of Persia yet remain. Those who buy now may yet succeed in securing great bargains; but the chances grow less every day.

A glance at the manufacture of Persian rugs would seem to come naturally within this account of the arts of Persia, their artistic merits are so decided. But for certain good reasons the subject has been deferred to a subsequent chapter.

Music and the drama are also undoubtedly included in a general survey of the arts of a people. But the latter is elsewhere treated in the chapter on the Taziêh; and of the former I speak with diffidence, as the characteristic traits of Persian music can be intelligently described only by a practical musician. I may venture to say, however, that the music of the Persians is so entirely different from that of modern Europe as to make it impossible to institute a comparison; and yet no greater mistake could be made than to consider it unsystematic and barbarian. It is based on certain philosophic laws; treatises on music centuries old exist in the Persian language, and the people show great appreciation of the plaintive chords of their native instruments and songs. I think that those who have given attention to the music of ancient Greece might

gain a clearer perception of that subject by investigating the native music of Persia. Indeed, it would not be surprising if it should be found that the Dorians borrowed from the Greek colonies of Asia Minor, who in turn borrowed their music from the Persians. Both were of Aryan stock. We know that neither the Persian nor the Greek of antiquity disdained to borrow customs and ideas from each other. Why then should the Greek not have borrowed music from the Persians? Venus as a goddess had charms for both; why not Melpomene and Terpsichore?

In summing up the present aspects of Persian art, I think it reasonable to conclude that they do not so much indicate that it is moribund as that it is in a transition state. There is less breadth and force now apparent in the designs of Persian artists, less firmness, less originality, less humanity, less vitality; but the national love for the beautiful is still active, and shows its yearnings by reaching forth to Europe for new ideas and forms of expression. Before an entirely new system of art-expression worthy of note and perpetuation arrives, we may look for every sort of artistic solecism and absurdity, relieved by occasional gleams of the new light that shall again dawn over Persia from the realms of the ideal.



EXAMPLE OF OLD PERSIAN KERAMIC MOSAIC.

CHAPTER XII.

RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL SECTS OF PERSIA.

THERE are some facts apparently simple enough in themselves, which yet fail sometimes of being fully appreciated until one comes into actual contact with them through the force of exceptional circumstances. Such are race-characteristics and differences in religious belief. Although a resident in the East for several years, and aware that the Mahometan world, like the Christian, is divided into sects and schisms, yet until I went to Persia I had taken little interest in these questions, and therefore had but faint conception of the reality of the differences existing in the bosom of the Mahometan fold, or of the strong antagonisms resulting from these differences. Those who are interested in religious and philosophical problems may not be disinclined to attend to a sketch of the numerous sects of Islamism in Persia, and especially since the rise and progress of the Mahdêe[1] of the Soudan aroused such a profound interest in the political world.

Setting aside, for the present, a consideration of minor subdivisions or sects, the followers of the Prophet are, first of all, divided into two great bodies, — the Sunnees, and the Sheäihs. The Turks and Afghans, the Arabs and most of the Moguls of northern India, are Sunnees; they consider that the caliphate descended from the Prophet through Omâr, Abû Bekr, Osmân, and the house of Moaviyêh. The Sunnees are so well

[1] Spelled as pronounced; the *h* is a guttural, and the last syllable is strongly accented.

known it is not essential to particularize here the details of their sectarian faith. But the Persians are Sheähs; they abhor the Sunnees; and Persia owes some of her most distinguished conquests and splendors, as well as some of her bitterest humiliations, to the religious wars which she has waged with the Turks in the west and the Afghans in the east.

The Sheähs consider that the heritage of the caliphate vested in Alee,[1] the son-in-law of Mahomet, and in Hassân and Hosseïn his two sons (who were slain by orders of Yezeed, son of Moaviyêh, near Kerbellâh), and their posterity. The sacred line of uncrowned caliphs of the Sheäh faith consists of the Twelve Holy Imâms, all of whom, except the last, were martyred by the so-called sectaries of the Sunnee faith. The law of both these sects is based on the precepts of the Koran; but the Sheähs accept it with the addition of numerous annotations, or decisions, given by the Holy Imâms. The twelfth Holy Imâm has yet to come; he is called the Mahdêe. Both sects look forward to a final successor of the Prophet and a reformer of the Faïth, called by both the Mahdêe, who shall unite all the believers in one orthodox creed. Hence the intense and profound anxiety that was exhibited by the entire Mahometan world in the late so-called Mahdêe. If he had succeeded in conquering Egypt, all the sects and races of Islâm would have rallied to his support, and thus proved their faith that he was indeed the Mahdêe that is to come. One hundred and thirty millions of enthusiasts were watching the situation with ardor and hope. Now that he is dead, Mahometans will continue to look into the future for the coming of the true Mahdêe.

They who consider Islamism an effete religion are mistaken. It is not less active now than in former ages; the warlike spirit is perhaps less apparent, or rather less formidable, but

[1] Spelled as pronounced.

only because during the last four centuries, since the discovery of America and the invention of printing, Christendom has made greater proportionate progress than the Mahometan nations, aided as it has been by advantages of climate. There is no question that climatic and geographical conditions have much to do with the present state of civilization. This explains in part why the Turk, or Mahometan, in Europe seems an exotic; but he does not give that impression in Asia or in Africa, where the sultry, unchanging temperature, the vast spaces fading away endlessly as eternity, the arid plains broken at long intervals by oases of verdure, suggest a dreamy, contemplative life and religion, relieved at intervals by spasmodic outbursts of tremendous passion and energy. It is because Mahometanism is a natural growth, or evolution, out of certain physical conditions, rather than a grafting, that it has such a vitality in Asia, and may continue for ages to maintain its sway. It is said that its laws were simply borrowed by Mahomet from the Levitical code. He may have taken the hint from thence, and undoubtedly did appropriate certain laws; but the new plant was essentially original, and unless it had been in congenial soil it never would have attained such deep and permanent growth. The principles and decrees of the Mahometan code, while ostensibly religious, are actually in harmony with the tribal and patriarchal laws which have never ceased to obtain in every form of oriental government; and many of the innumerable regulations for the conduct of the true believer in the ordinary avocations of life are actually based on the necessities of the climate, and may really be considered somewhat in the light of sanitary laws tending to preserve the health of nations in ages and countries ill-supplied with boards of health and scientific hygiene. Unless these observances had been made obligatory as religious rites, they never would have obtained the force they now receive. Of

course, as with all elaborate formulas and burdensome ceremonials, after a time the tendency was to wink at a more or less habitual disregard of many of the details of these quasi-religious and sumptuary attempts to control the habits of the individual, and to insist instead upon an external fanaticism for the Faith in its entirety. This by some is called Pharisaism, which, however, is hardly a sufficient explanation of such a result. The inclination of man to assert his independence is such that sooner or later there arises a disposition towards greater freedom of action, while the judgment still concedes that the accepted code of religious and economical principles is right, necessary, and expedient in theory, if not always so in detail and practice. We are speaking here, of course, regarding those forms of religion in which much is made of great elaboration of rites and ceremonies, or of codes interfering with the non-essential minutiæ of human liberty of action.

It is not a little curious that the Sheähs also differ from the Sunnees in many of the minor details of law and ceremony, besides mooting the great question of the succession of the caliphate. The Sunnees abhor delineations of the human figure, and the Prophet seems to have also proscribed works of art in general. But the Sheähs are mostly Persians; and the Persians being an imaginative and æsthetic people, have found ways of explaining away the Prophet's teachings on this point. Many of their laws and penalties may indeed be set down as inoperative by reason of contrary customs, or because hedged in by such limitations as to ocular testimony that it is difficult to secure a sufficient number of legal witnesses. The Persians being also a social and convivial race, have found means to evade the penalties for bibulous excesses. It is curious to see, however, with this tendency to weaken the force of a theocratic code, the continued existence of laws like that of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" or of what is called paying

"blood-money" to ransom the forfeited life of the murderer; or of the usage of escaping justice by seeking places of refuge.

The law of Persia, as already stated, is based on the Koran, and is called the *Shâhr*. But there is also the civil law, called the *Urf*, which is likewise termed the "law of custom." Like the common law of England, it is the result of gradual growth from current necessities, — a code of precedents. But the Urf can never go against the Shâhr; and in case of appeal the final decision rests with the Shâhr, its canons in difficult questions being expounded by the written opinions of the Head of the Priesthood, called in Persia the Chief Mushtahêd; in Turkey this dignitary is termed the Sheik ul Islâm. The Chief Mushtahêd of Persia is only second to the Great Mushtahêd of Kerbellâh near Bagdad, where Alee is buried; of all the sacred places of the Sheähs that is the most venerated. The present Chief Mushtahêd is Hadgi Mollâh Alee. Among the Sheähs it may be questioned whether Alee does not rank with Mahomet himself. Of course, if asked, they would deny this; but the fact remains that the prominence given to the claims of Alee by many of the Sheähs has almost deified him in their practice. A sick man by the roadside is heard crying to Alee for help; workmen hoisting a weight call to Alee to give strength. The greatest event, or anniversary, in the Sheäh year is the celebration in dramatic form of the death of the sons of Alee in a play called the Tazièh, — a description of which is given in another chapter.

It is an inexplicable fact that while the genuine Sheäh is more liberal in his practices than the Turk, and except on special occasions more lax in religious observances, he is on the other hand far more fanatical outwardly, and holds foreigners in greater abhorrence. There are many mosques and sacred spots which a Christian may enter in Turkey, but great danger would attend any attempt of a foreigner or unclean Christian to approach the precincts of Persian shrines. It has been accom-

plished only twice or thrice, and then under a thorough disguise. This is the more to be regretted because some of the Persian mosques and tombs are well known to be marvellously beautiful. This seems an absurd contradiction, because in some matters wherein it would be least expected the Persians are exceedingly liberal. Freedom of speech is indulged in in Persia to a degree not exceeded in any European country. It is the most common thing there to hear men of all classes speaking with disrespect of the mollâhs, or Mahometan clergy, or criticising the government. Both the civil and religious authorities exhibit rare wisdom in permitting this liberty; for a vent is thus gained for the discontent which might, if repressed, seek expression by overt deeds. Discontent is universal in this age; but while the tongue wags, the arm is less likely to be uplifted.

The intolerance of the Persians is doubtless a trait of their race. The Sassanid monarchs and the Magians were terrible persecutors of all who were opposed to Zoroastrianism. But when we consider that only a few generations have elapsed since every land in Europe was darkened by the smoke of the fires that consumed martyrs by myriads, and when we see what intolerance still rages in many parts of Christendom that are called civilized, it ill becomes us to be severe in criticising the intolerance and fanaticism of the Persians. All have an equal right to be intolerant within their own borders, and only they who in this matter are wholly without blame, have authority to throw the first stone.

Another singular trait of Mahometanism in Persia is the fact, that while it is in its outward manifestations so fanatical that one would imagine that it must in every respect be free from intermixture with other cults, it still retains many customs inherited from the faith of the Fire-worshippers, or followers of Zoroaster, who preceded the Islamic conquest. Of course, such an origin for these customs is denied by true believers, but none

the less the fact remains. The Mahometan year begins with the month of Moharrêm, which of course varies from year to year, because the oriental year is arranged according to lunar months. But the Persians pay far less attention to the Mussulman New Year than to the beginning of the year accepted by their Parsee ancestors. The latter comes on the 20th of March, when the sun crosses the line, and is called, as we have already explained, the No Rooz, or New Day. It would be idle to deny that the celebration of the No Rooz, with all its attendant ceremonies, is inherited from the ancient worshippers whose teacher was the mysterious, little-known, but immortal Zoroaster, or Zerdûsht.

An observation occurs to me here which I am well aware will not meet with universal assent; but having become tolerably familiar with both sides of the subject, it appears to me only the merest justice to call attention to it. In Mahometan countries all law and authority are deduced from the Koran; in other words, the government is theocratic. Until another code is introduced and accepted by the administrators of the law, it is only natural that they should regard any attempts to undermine the existing code not only with jealousy but with dread; for the Oriental is only held in order by a wholesome fear of those who interpret and execute the laws. Take that away, and anarchy ensues. In Constantinople circumstances have gradually forced a half-attempt to introduce a modified form of the *Code Napoleon*. But Persia is scarcely yet ripe for even such a half-way measure; any such change must come very gradually, and be approached with caution. Without entertaining or expressing any opinion contrary to enterprises aiming at a complete religious and probably a consequent civil transformation in the East, I desire to say that it is hardly fair to ascribe resistance to such measures altogether to intolerance. Prominent men in the Orient who are privately in favor of progress, and who

perhaps are entirely sceptical regarding the faith in which they were born, are still conservative in public, and apparently intolerant or apathetic towards any religious change, because they see that when a Mahometan becomes a Christian he must necessarily deny at once, *pari passu*, the authority on which the present civil laws are based. These intelligent men perceive what the masses only apprehend by the twilight of unreasoning intuition, — that such a tremendous upheaval as must be involved by a national movement towards Christianity should come very gradually, and be preceded by a modification of the laws or constitution on which national stability is based; and it does not necessarily indicate exceptional depravity on their part that they shrink from such a revolution, unable to foresee the ultimate result. Many of those in the ranks of Islamism who oppose the introduction of Christianity would seem to be, therefore, deserving of Christian charity rather than of aversion and sweeping condemnation. It is one thing to Christianize a wretchedly organized and savage society like that of the Sandwich Islands, barbarous in every respect, and quite another to change the institutions of a people who have been organized on a civilized basis for ages. The rapid transformation through which Japan is now passing, instead of furnishing a favorable example to the contrary, is qualified rather to incline thoughtful observers to regard the movement with suspicion as indicating national instability, and at least to suggest reserve in expressing an opinion concerning the ultimate result.

We have observed that the Sheähs of Persia offer some curious contradictions in fanaticism and liberality. A feature more remarkable than any I have previously noted is the number of forms of belief actually existing within the fold of the Sheäh sect itself. The Persians, unlike the Moors of Barbary or Turks of unmixed descent, are a highly intellectual race, imaginative, acute, given to speculation, and impatient of aught that enchains

the individual opinion. Assenting outwardly to laws which are sometimes arbitrary or opposed to their convictions, they retain the right of private belief; and granted the one, large toleration is allowed for the other. I speak now of the Irânee, or genuine Persian, descended from the men of old who founded the great empire overthrown by Alexander and rebuilt in turn by the Sassanians and Sefavees, as distinguished from the numerous tribes or tributary races within the borders of Persia, but of Turanian stock. The Persian, pure and simple, is of Sanscrit or Indian origin; or rather it is still a question which is derived from the other, or whether both came from a common source in Central Asia. The Pehlevee, or old Persian language, is a Sanscrit dialect, and many words now used in Persia indicate relationship with the Aryan tongues of the West. The Persian speech of to-day is largely composed of Arabic, and in the northern provinces of Turkish as well. But as the English language has borrowed from all nations and yet retains its dominance over all it has borrowed, so the old Pehlevee of Persia, borrowing and adapting the wealth of other tongues, and yet maintaining a grand controlling individuality of its own, is still the ruling tongue of Irân, modified only by the inevitable changes produced by time. The Arabian or Mahometan conquest hastened, it is true, an exchange of the Pehlevee characters for the Cufic, which were then coming into use, and eventually also for the Arabic letters. But in this case the change was highly advantageous; for with a people endowed with an unsurpassed genius for decorative art the adoption of the Arabic characters, with their graceful curves and involutions, opened a magnificent field for the lively fancy of the Persian artists.

The student of the early Christian Church may be surprised to learn, in this connection, of a curious fact, already alluded to in these pages, which seems to bring one important phase of church history into near relation with the development of

A PERSIAN VILLAGE MOSQUE.

Persian art. In the pictorial and keramic art of Persia there is unmistakable evidence of the influence of Chinese art. The further one proceeds to trace this evidence toward the early stages of Persian art, the more prominent does this feature appear. This influence, after being felt for ages, revived and culminated in the sixteenth century. Now, the Persians have a tradition that the Chinese ideas which first permeated their art resulted from the journey eastward of a certain Persian artist, who was also the founder of a religious sect. He was named Manee. Persecuted for his doctrines, he fled toward China, and after a prolonged absence returned to Persia, bringing with him a taste for Chinese art, which bore fruit in a Chino-Persian art that only after ages so identified itself with the country of its adoption as to lose the distinctive traces of its origin.

There is no question that sometime in the remote past a certain Manee did exercise in some such way a decided influence upon the æsthetic expression of the facile and impressible mind of the Persian race. But exactly when it happened it might be impossible to discover, such matters as precise historical data being difficult to obtain from the Persian writers, except regarding recent history. Were it not for the classic and Byzantine writers, we should be quite in the dark concerning Persian history previous to the Sefavean dynasty. What a blank is the record of the great Greco-Parthian dynasty, which lasted over four centuries, but which is heard of or remembered only as it came into direct conflict with the Romans, or through the numerous coins which the rude peasant now turns up with his ploughshare in the spring-time! I say that it might be impossible to decide the epoch when the traditionary artist Manee thus became a potential factor in Persian art, were it not that we learn through the more precise records of church history that the great Manichæan sect was founded in Persia by a certain

Manee, who was born in 231 A. D., and was forced on account of his peculiar doctrines to fly eastward to China; but who eventually returned to his native country with his *Ertang*, or Gospel, illustrated by paintings done by his own hand, and was at last put to death by Varahran, — or, as the Persians pronounce the name, Bachrâm I. It certainly seems as if the relation between the two accounts were far more than a coincidence, tending rather to prove that the founder of the Manichæan sect was a man of such extraordinary ability that he not only founded a sect of wide-spread and tenacious character, — one of the most widely felt of the early church divisions, — but also exercised a controlling influence over Persian art for ages.

But before Manee attempted to establish a religion that should combine or harmonize the teachings of Christ, of Sakya Mûni, and of Zoroaster, the Persian mind had already shown, on repeated occasions, a tendency to pursue independent lines of religious speculation, inclining toward philosophical explanations of the problems of destiny, but more especially toward various forms of mysticism. The all but universal acceptance of Islamism by the Persians does not appear to have checked, but rather to have stimulated, this trait of the Persian character. And thus it happens to-day, that while we find an entire people pronouncing themselves outwardly the most fanatical of Mahometans, we see them at the same time divided into numerous sects, of which several are anything but Mahometan in theory, while their followers are practically Mahometans only in name.

This feature of Persian Islamism developed itself at an early period. Those who have grown familiar with Omâr Khayâm's quatrains through Fitzgerald's masterly paraphrase, or have been led to a knowledge of the poet of Nishapoor by Mr. Vedder's grotesquely imaginative, and characteristically original but altogether non-oriental illustrations, are aware that the

poetic tent-maker was, eight centuries ago, an agnostic of the most pronounced type and an irredeemable pessimist. A true believer, a genuine Mussulman, can be neither; and yet Omâr Khayâm was outwardly a Mahometan, accepted as such notwithstanding his exulting negations. But he was a Mahometan of the Hakemêe sect. He did not blaspheme the name of the Prophet; and while he cried for roses and wine, and defied all the spiritual verities, he outwardly bowed the knee and muttered his prayers and counted his beads with the faithful. Omâr Khayâm is commonly supposed by European scholars to have been a Sufee, — the Sufees, who in Turkey are called Bachtashee, being mystics, whose chief characteristic seems to be pantheism, borrowed in all likelihood from India. Essentially their belief appears to lie in the endeavor to spiritualize everything, and to consider all material objects as simply symbols of the ideal or spiritual, which is the only reality, — the individual being actually part of the universal, spiritual entity, and immortality, or the life after this, an absorption into the omnipresent Unity. In some respects Sufeeism, in its acceptance of the Koran as pure symbolism, suggests the Swedenborgian interpretation of our sacred Scriptures. Sufeeism appears to have existed in Persia, under one form or another, for nearly two thousand years. There are thousands of Sufees in that Kingdom at the present time, even among the mollâhs, or priesthood.

But Omâr Khayâm was not so much a Sufee as a Hakemêe, according to the traditions of the Persians themselves. The Sufees are sufficiently numerous still, but the Hakemêes are probably a larger body; it seems to be attended with success, if one may judge from its increasing numbers and the high social and official position of many of the followers of its mystical philosophy. It must be admitted that the mysticism of both the Sufees and the Hakemêes makes it easy to confound one with the other if one does not carefully analyze their respective beliefs.

That the distinction between these two philosophical Mahometan sects is sometimes confounded by the Persians themselves, seems evident from the fact that Hafiz and other poets have been alternately claimed by both sects. The Hakemêe doctrines appear to be best defined by saying that they include an absolute denial of the miracles of Mahomet's career; an acceptance of the Prophet as an exponent of spiritual truths conveyed in symbolical language; a rejection of a material devil, but a spiritual dualism of the principles of good and evil; unbelief in a future existence of physical pain for the wicked, but an absorption by the good after death into the Good, and of the evil into the emanation of Evil, the personality of the individual being annihilated at death by merging into an immortality of absorption with an all-pervading principle. Have we not here another form of Manichæism, an attempt to harmonize several creeds, — Buddhism, Pantheism, Dualism, and Islamism? One of the most celebrated and revered leaders of the Hakemêes was Seyed Abûl Hassân Djelvêh.

There is another Mahometan sect of Persia, which, while especially Sheäh in its character, is also deeply tinged with that mysticism peculiar to orientalism, particularly in Persia. The sect has not so much a name as its followers, who are called Noseïree, but more often Alee-olla-hee, or believers in the divinity of Alee. Their creed is to the effect that on the death of Mahomet it was necessary for his disciples to have a continued emanation from the deity to preserve the Faith; and so the divine element entered into Alee, who thenceforth partaking of the divine essence logically became divine and more worthy of direct worship than Mahomet himself. This extraordinary belief may have been borrowed from the Christian acceptation of the man Christ as at once human and divine. Without some such borrowed ideas it seems difficult to understand why any Mahometans should find it necessary to substitute one higher

than the Prophet. The Alee-olla-hee are confined chiefly to certain semi-nomadic tribes in western and northern Persia; but a number are also found at Teherân, where they are subject to annoyances from the orthodox Mussulmans.

Another class of Persian sectarians who outwardly accept the Prophet and Alee are the Dahree, who are essentially pantheists, and believe in a community of women; the latter belief, however, they do not practise to any extent. Among the villages near Kermanshâh exists also the sect called Mosdakee; their tenets are obscure, but the most important seem to be a disbelief in individual immortality, a belief in the absorption of the soul into the universal presence after death, and in this life a community of women. They are not numerous. We have again the sect of the Moshirêk, who while outwardly monotheists and Mahometans are practically polytheists, — something like the ancient Greeks, who symbolized objects in Nature as types of the Deity, and thus inclined to a Nature-worship.

But the most remarkable sect now in Persia is probably that of the Bâbees, or followers of the Bâb. Their importance is not so much due to their numbers or political influence, as to the fact that the sect is of recent origin, full of proselyting zeal, and gaining converts every day in all parts of Persia, and latterly also in Turkey. The Bâbees present one of the most important religious phenomena of the age. It must be admitted, however, that they very strongly resemble in their communistic views the doctrines enounced by the famous Mazdâk, who was executed by Chosroes I. after bringing the empire to the verge of destruction by the spread of his anarchical tenets.

In 1810 was born Seyed Alee Mohammed, at Shirâz. The name "Seyed" indicated that he was one of the numerous descendants of the Prophet. Like all the founders of oriental religions, he began his career with a period of seclusion and meditation. He accepted Mahomet and Alee in the creed