

passenger-train under way at half-past four P. M., — the very earliest hour we dared to start, owing to the intensity of the heat before sunset; but we had many hours of the hardest mountain travel in Persia before us, and were anxious to reach our cots before one A. M. When one considers that in our party were included an invalid and two infants with their nurses, two small boys under five, and a half-dozen spinsters ranging from six to fifteen years, and some twenty-five animals loaded with passengers of various ages, the arduousness of the undertaking can be better appreciated, especially if to this be added the fact



OLD BRIDGE AT GELANDEVÊK.

that we were to wind along the edge of tremendous precipices over a pass thirteen thousand feet above the sea. I should add, that the nurses and babies were carried in *kajevêhs*, which are basket-like frames slung on either side of a mule, and sheltered by a curtain. The peculiar advantage of the *kajevêh* on a narrow cliff-road lies in the probability that if it hits the side of a rock, the mule will be thrown off his balance and land with his load at the bottom of a ravine.

Our road lay for a couple of miles over the plain of Hassârdaré, crossing several streams that were nearly dry. One of them was spanned by a picturesque but dilapidated bridge with a single arch. I subjoin a sketch of it, as it is a characteristic example of the Persian mode of bridge-building. Some of the timbers employed for a staging during its construction are still to be seen there. It is a curious habit of the Persians to leave

parts of the scaffold timbers obtruding, even in elaborate structures; for what reason it is difficult to tell.

Gradually ascending, we entered and passed through the village of Kardân, and came to a waterfall at the left of two bridges. The old one was a narrow and ticklish structure, without a parapet and wide enough for only one horse. Happily our train was not obliged to risk this perilous passage, for a handsome new bridge of hewn stone, broad and parapeted, had recently been constructed by the side of the old one.

From this place the road rapidly ascended, passing along the edge of a ridge and looking on either hand over a landscape of the most magnificent description. On the lovely slopes and glens below, half veiled in the creeping shadows of the late afternoon or smitten by the long shafts of the setting sun, tilled fields, gardens, and picturesque villages were clustered in agreeable variety. Ever and anon, too, between the foliage, one caught the magical gleam of a mountain stream dashing down over crags and precipices. Above, and on either hand, sublime peaks lifted their pinnacles golden in the radiance of a cloudless sunset. Those travellers who speak in light terms of the scenery of Persia are either unobservant of what they might see or wedded to a special type of landscape; what is more likely, they have never been over the Aftcha Pass.

The road here was excellent, and showed real engineering skill. Two hours' ride brought us to the village of Aftcha, which, like many villages of Persia, is an appanage of one of the men in power. His country residence may be seen prominently situated on one side of the ravine, at the bottom of which rests the village in a picturesque confusion of peasants' houses grouped amid the foliage in a most irregular but attractive manner. The steep, narrow entrance to the village was blocked by a drove of loaded donkeys as we approached. It was a characteristic incident of Persian travel when our giliodâr dashed headlong

into this clumsy throng, thrashing heartily from side to side, hitting both men and animals with no trifling blows of his whip, and driving them back in a side lane to make room for our train. As we clattered noisily through the tortuous streets of the village, every one came forth to gaze on such an unwonted scene. It was no small matter to force the *tachtravân* through the narrow lanes, around abrupt corners. The difficulty experienced here was a foretaste of the obstacles that we were to encounter higher up the mountain.

The village of Aftcha may be considered typical. Persian villages are divisible into two classes, — those of the plains, treeless and surrounded by a high quadrangular wall of sun-dried bricks to protect them against the inroads of *Turkomâns* and *Kurds*; and those distinguished for their watercourses and trees in ravines or lofty mountains, where springs and torrents encourage the growth of plane, mulberry, and poplar trees and orchards, and allow irrigating channels for the nourishment of vegetable plantations. Nothing can exceed the aridity of the vast plains of this ancient land; while on the other hand nothing can surpass the rank luxuriance of the verdure of its mountain villages, through which the roaring torrents dash all the year round.

Aftcha is one of these. As we emerged from its lanes and opened the upper side of the hamlet, we heard the roaring of a cataract tumbling over a precipice, and endowing the village to which it gave a name with rural comfort and beauty. In a small field on the right reapers were cutting the wheat with sickles, or gathering fruits in baskets and mantles. After crossing the torrent over an arched, parapeted bridge of colored bricks, we began to climb the mountain in earnest. We could see the road above us very distinctly, — a serpentine line following the zigzag crest of an ascending spur, which led to the entrance of the pass. The sun was now below the mountains, but

the twilight lingered for some time, and we made good headway before it was actually too dark to proceed with safety. On returning over the same road in broad daylight, I confess there were parts where the precipices on either hand gave one a giddy suggestion of danger, especially with a skittish horse or a tachtravân.

Fortunately, when the darkness fairly set in, rendered doubly intense by the lofty mountain walls on either hand, we came to a small level nook, where it was deemed best to cry a halt and wait for the rising of the moon. Every one dismounted, and the animals were detailed in groups to several of the attendants. Several large bowlders were scattered over this mimic plateau, and in a few moments our party had found a shelter from the night-wind under these rocks. Lanterns and the fitful gleam of a fire soon shed a flickering radiance over the moving figures, while at the same time they added extraordinary mystery to the opaque background of mountains that seemed to spring up abruptly only a few yards from us. In the mean time the ever-present samovâr was busy heating water, and we found a capital cup of Russian tea refreshing indeed. To this we added cold boiled eggs and some sandjiâk, or unleavened bread. Two of the horses now took it into their heads to kick up their heels and make a bold strike for liberty, dashing away towards Aftcha. This might have proved a serious incident, for they were both spirited animals, and it is no easy matter the catching of runaway horses in such a place and at such an hour. Spectre-like they flew down the road, one white as snow, the other black as night, but both a shadowy gray in the gloom. A dozen men at once started in pursuit, while my hostler, springing on a quick horse, spurred after the fugitives. The flying bridles probably impeded their steps, for in a few minutes they were caught and brought back. But on remounting my black Afghan, I found his ambition for a night adventure was not quite over.

After resting an hour, we began to see the light of the moon touching the peaks on the left side of the gorge and gradually creeping down the mountain-side, which changed from a black form to the appearance of a white mist. Then, with lanterns carried by the outriders both in front and rear of the procession in order to indicate the road and prevent straggling, we recommenced our journey. The giliodâr received strict orders to keep a careful lookout; on the appearance of a sign that any one was falling behind, the head of the column was to be stopped and a messenger sent to ascertain the difficulty and dress up the line again. Of course we travelled single file, and this made it important that we should keep together; for the climb before us was full of danger, and if any accident should happen to some one in the rear of the column it might be some time before he would be missed, unless we exercised unusual vigilance.

Next to the giliodâr followed the tachtravân, with a footman on each side to steady it in rough places. Immediately behind rode two gentlemen, ready to spring off their horses any instant the tachtravân should be in danger of slipping over a precipice. After them followed a miscellaneous train of horses and donkeys, with kajevehs and ladies and children; lastly, came several attendants and the escort of soldiers.

The moon long delayed bestowing the advantage of her rays on our devious path. The farther we entered into the heart of the mountains, the darker it became; for the mountain between us and the moon, although the sky above it was glowing as with a white fire, arose as we approached it and tantalized us with the constant hope of seeing the moon, while it persistently screened it from our view, and thereby increased the gloom which enveloped the hazardous cliff-road up which we were slowly climbing. Every one was carefully watching his own animal, lest a false step in the dark should hurl him into the gorge below, when a sharp cry rang from the rear of the

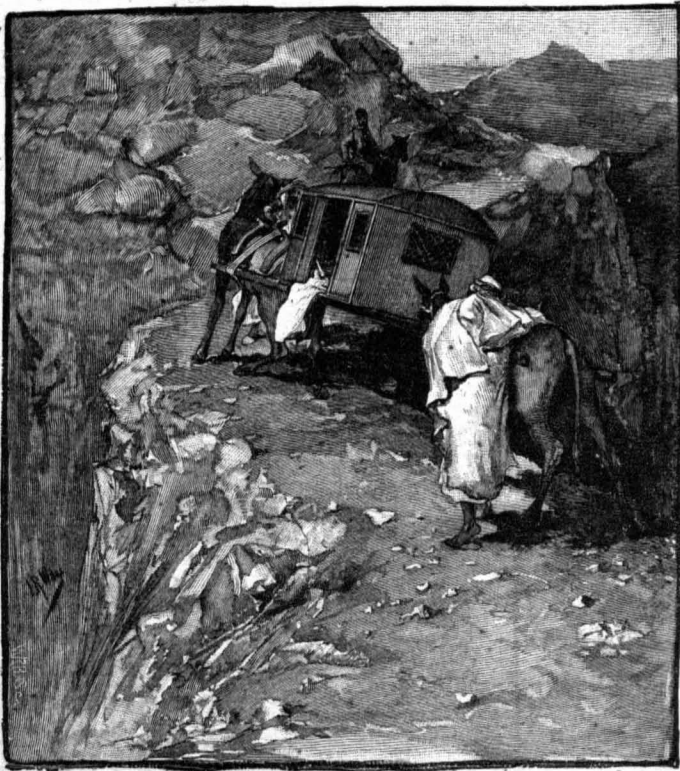
train, which was still on the zigzag below. At once a halt was called, and a messenger was sent to find out the cause of the outcry. It was discovered that a loaded mule with a servant on his back had fallen over the edge of the road and rolled down. The man fortunately saved himself as the animal went over, but the mule was recovered somewhat the worse for wear, although able to continue the climb. Mules, like cats, are hard to kill.

Again the long procession began to wend its slow way upward over a terrific piece of road, which often consisted of smooth rocks confusedly thrown together. On looking at that part of the road afterwards by daylight, I was astonished that we escaped without serious accident. Many of the party now found it preferable to dismount and climb on foot, until the moon finally burst over the ridge with a light scarcely dimmer than that of day. But once again came the cry of distress from the hollow below. This time another mule had fallen over, with damage to its load; but it had caught on a ledge and escaped with only some severe bruises.

But if the moonlight enabled us to see our way better, it also revealed to us more clearly the depths of the yawning gulf on our right, enveloped in mysterious gloom. The road, although a very good one in the main for a Persian mountain-road, was of the most desperate character in places, while the short zigzags and sharp angles of a path along one side of a steep gorge made it excessively difficult to carry the tachtravân and kajevehs without accident. Many a time those riding near to the former leaped off their horses and rushed to the rescue, when those who were steadying the tachtravân found their strength insufficient to prevent the mules from slipping over the cliff or capsizing the heavy and cumbrous vehicle. For the mules the labor was terrible, and I expected momentarily to see one of them give out. At one point of imminent peril there were eight men tugging at

the mules and the tachtravân to force them safely around a sharp angle in the road.

In the mean time the hours were slipping by, and the time set for arriving at our camp had passed; but it was, notwithstanding, painfully evident that scarce half our arduous task was yet accomplished.



THE TACHTRAVÂN IN THE AFTCHA PASS.

Finally, at two in the morning, we scaled the Aftcha Pass and stood on the summit of the ridge, thirteen thousand feet above the level of the sea. We had safely accomplished a feat never before undertaken on that road. For the first time a tachtravân had scaled this Pass, and an American lady was the first woman who had ventured on the undertaking.

From the sharp ridge on which we halted a few moments we looked down into the great volcanic valley of the Lar, twenty-five hundred feet below, and discerned at the farther side the shadowy form of the stupendous cone of Demavênd. Although yet thirty miles from us, it soared far above our position, and its snows gleamed in the light of the moon like a mighty phantom hovering in the heavens.

As it was two hours yet before dawn, and all were weary and hungry, it seemed proper that we should now dismount and find the rest we so much needed. But this was a pleasure to be deferred for several weary hours, for we had still to pick our way down the other side of the ridge, and travel miles and miles across the plain to the spot where our servants had been directed to pitch the tents. The descending road, although following a zig-zag course, was on the whole less difficult than the one we had just ascended; and by four in the morning the entire party were fairly on the plain and passing the camps of nomads, whose fierce watch-dogs gave us a boisterous greeting. I may say here, that one of the greatest obstacles encountered in climbing the Aftcha Pass were the large trains of mules and donkeys carrying rice and coal to Teherân and the south of Persia. These stubborn animals are no respecters of persons; nor can more be said of their uncouth drivers. Whenever one of these trains came in sight, our giliôdâr and attendants had their hands full forcing the unruly animals to keep on the outside of the road.

At last dawn began to break on the heights of Demavênd, which now towered above us mightier than ever. "Where can the tents be?" "I wonder if we shall ever get there!" were the exclamations constantly uttered by the ladies and children, who were half dead from exhaustion. Around us on every side were the rock-turreted walls of the great mountains inclosing the winding plain. But as dawn deepened into daylight we looked in

vain for a glimpse of the longed-for camp. We were fording a rapid stream when a horseman appeared over a knoll galloping towards us at full speed. It proved to be one of my servants, coming to guide us. Here at last was a ray of hope; every heart brightened, and all were cheered by the good news that the camp was only "half a *farsâkh*," or two miles, distant. The snow on the top of Demavênd blushed into a warm roseate hue as the sunlight burst into the broad effulgence of day. Yet on and on we journeyed without rest, stared at here and there by the flocks of mares and their foals pasturing in the meadows, or by the tawny, unkempt nomad children who romped quite naked before the black tents. The two miles had been more than accomplished over the devious road which led us across one of the most desolate and extraordinary landscapes on the globe, before it dawned on us that the "half a *farsâkh*" was a mere vague statement of the distance to the camp. No tents were in sight, although we now entered on a portion of the valley enlarging into a plain three or four miles wide. The horses and mules began to show signs of exhaustion; one of the mules carrying *kajevêhs* came down on his knees on level ground and threw a child out on the turf, face foremost. But now another messenger, who had been sent ahead to reconnoitre, returned to assure us that he had found the camp just around the foot of a high mountain directly before us, which concealed Demavênd. Fording the rapid current of the Lar River and skirting this mountain, we at last came to a turn where the camp appeared, yet a mile away, and the tremendous dome of Demavênd springing ten thousand feet abruptly above the plain, apparently close at hand, but actually nearly fifteen miles distant.

It was well past eight o'clock when we at last reached our tents in the valley of the Lar, and dismounted, sixteen hours after we had started from Gelandevêk.

The first word that ran unanimously through the camp was,

"Tea!" Fortified by several draughts of the best refreshment for the weary yet discovered since the time of Adam, we resolved ourselves into a committee of the whole, to visit the land of Nod. "Blessings on him who invented sleep!" ejaculated Sancho Panza, and the sentiment found hearty response in every bosom that memorable morning when we reached the valley of the Lar.

On returning to ourselves again, after a nap of long duration, we all once more with one accord cried, "Breakfast!" The universal longing found expression by a vigorous clapping of hands. This is a novel way, you may say, to express a sentiment of hunger. I should explain that this is a method of summoning servants in the East. When the servants raised the door of the tent they knew what we wanted, and said, *Bally, bally, hazûr est*, — which is to say, "Yes, it is ready." Having satisfied the wants of "our lower nature," as pietists and philosophers would say (rather hastily, as it would seem, considering how dependent the brain is on the stomach), we were in a proper condition to take a survey of the situation. The camp, we found, was planted about the centre of a rolling plain several miles long and about two miles wide, completely hemmed in by rocky mountains, absolutely bare, but lovely in their very savageness, painted as they were by the various gray or ruddy hues peculiar to volcanic formations. About a thousand feet above the plain was a large patch of snow. At the southwestern end the mountains separated, making a passage for the river. At the opposite end, also, the plain widened and gave into it a larger valley meeting it at right angles. But across the entrance stood a mighty eminence crowned by Nature with rocks resembling a feudal castle; and beyond and far above soared the great mountain of Persia, — Demavênd, the majestic and sublime, the peer of the noblest kings of the mountain world. The plain we were on was ten thousand nine hun-

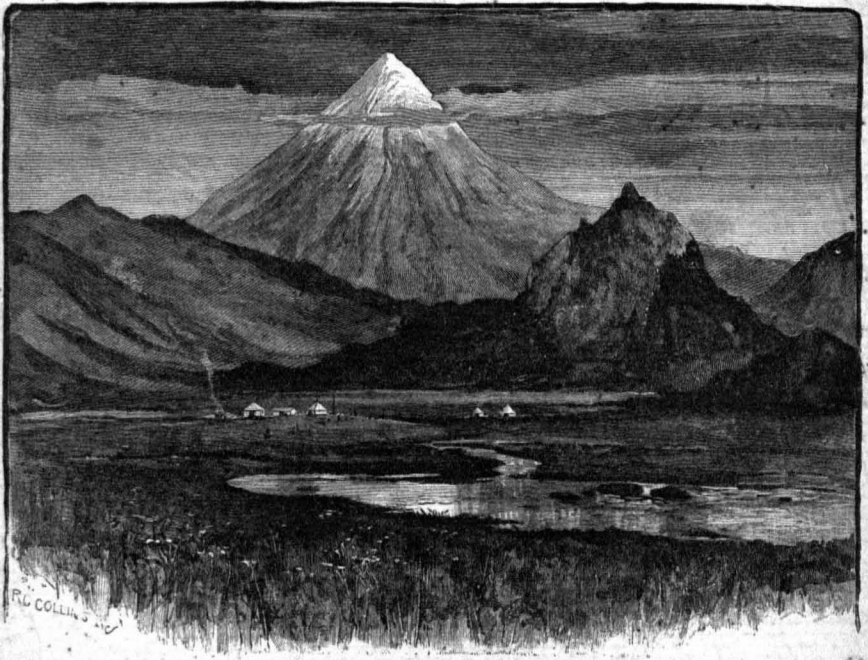
dred feet above the sea, and Demavênd rose ten thousand feet higher. No vegetation was visible on the deeply seamed slopes of its cone; but the summit was crowned with eternal snow, which extended down several thousand feet, mostly in the clefts of the deep ravines and precipices. I found by measurement that the slope of the cone has an average inclination of thirty-six degrees; — which is remarkable when one considers the extent of the slope, or compares it with some of the steepest of the world's volcanic peaks.

The valley of the Lar, although destitute of any sign of shrub or tree, is yet full of interest to the lover of Nature. The river Lar winds along the centre of the valley. This is a stream fifty to one hundred yards wide; the current is somewhat turbid, and rushes with great rapidity. The low banks rise gradually on either hand towards the mountains. These undulating slopes were dotted with black goat's-hair tents of the nomads, or with moving patches, which as they approached were resolved into large flocks of goats. Herds of mares were also frequently seen, accompanied by their colts, browsing on the short herbage, and wandering at will over this fenceless valley of desolation. These mares belonged to the Shah, and I was told that fully two thousand are annually kept at the Lar, breeding horses for the cavalry of Persia.

The Lar Valley is in reality the bed of an enormous crater. At some remote period volcanic peaks have been upheaved above its crust, which have divided its surface into the chain of narrow and winding valleys that form the present great valley of the Lar. Demavênd, the monarch of this elevated solitude, is of course a volcano, although it has been quiet for many ages. But the sulphur constantly forming at the top, together with the vapor and the extreme heat just below the surface, indicate that although there is no record of any eruption of Demavênd, it is still by no means dormant. The

presence of this great scene of volcanic action on the borders of the Caspian Sea appears to be consistent with the now well-known law that volcanoes are usually found near the sea.

For the members of Alpine clubs Demavênd offers attractions well worth considering. Here is a peak a mile higher than Mont Blanc, which can be ascended with comparative ease by



MOUNT DEMAVÊND FROM THE CAMP IN THE LAR VALLEY.

any one of strong legs and sound lungs and heart. The time is coming when Mount Demavênd will be far more widely known and appreciated than it is now. In Persia, of course, this grand old peak has been a wonder sung in the legends and poetry of the country from the earliest ages. It was the haunt of the Deev Sefeed, or White Demon, vanquished by Rustêm. Among its tremendous cliffs was perched the vast eyrie of the Simurgh, the magic bird which nourished Zal, the son of Salm, when

exposed to destruction by his father on account of his light hair; blue eyes and light hair not being considered of good omen in Persia. These and numerous other legends associated with Mount Demavênd are doubtless based on historic events shrouded in the dawn of history.

Our camp was pitched on the brow of a low plateau overlooking the river Lar. The party divided itself into three sections. My own camp included seven tents, with those for the servants. Our sleeping-tent was pitched on the edge of one of the numerous musical brooks that contribute to feed the deep flood of the Lar. A curious feature attending the supply of water in the valley are numerous boiling springs. The bubbling action to which they are subject is intermittent, occurring every few minutes. Where our camp lay, forty of these springs were clustered within the space of a third of a mile; whence the spot is called *Shehel Chesmé*, or "Forty Springs." Besides this group of forty springs, I may mention, among other interesting objects in the Lar Valley, the Whitewater River, which enters the Lar a milk-white stream tinged with a faint suggestion of green. Near its source is found the Devil's Mill. It is externally represented by a large ferruginous rock, with two apertures a few feet apart. On standing near the rock one hears a deep, perpetual, and mysterious roar far down in the bowels of the earth, as if demons were engaged in forging weapons for another war against the race of man. Naturally no one has ever ventured down to see the mighty works going on below, nor ever will in all probability; for a mephitic gas of deadly potency exhales from the openings in the rock, that causes instant death to every living thing that breathes it. Around the rock there is ever a score or two of birds which have fallen dead on inhaling the air, and when I was there a bear was lying at the entrance stark and stiff.

I followed the course of the Lar River to where it rushes

roaring out of a Tartarean gorge at Peloure, and is joined by several other streams. After the junction the Lar is called the Harhaz, and becomes one of the most important streams in Persia. I have seen no river scenery elsewhere much grander than is the gorge of the Harhaz. The river rushes deep and strong at the bottom of a narrow abyss which it has cloven for itself in the long course of ages. Hundreds, and in some places thousands, of feet above rise the wall-like precipices. Here and there far up on the green shelves are clumps of dense verdure and picturesque hamlets reached by winding and dizzy paths.

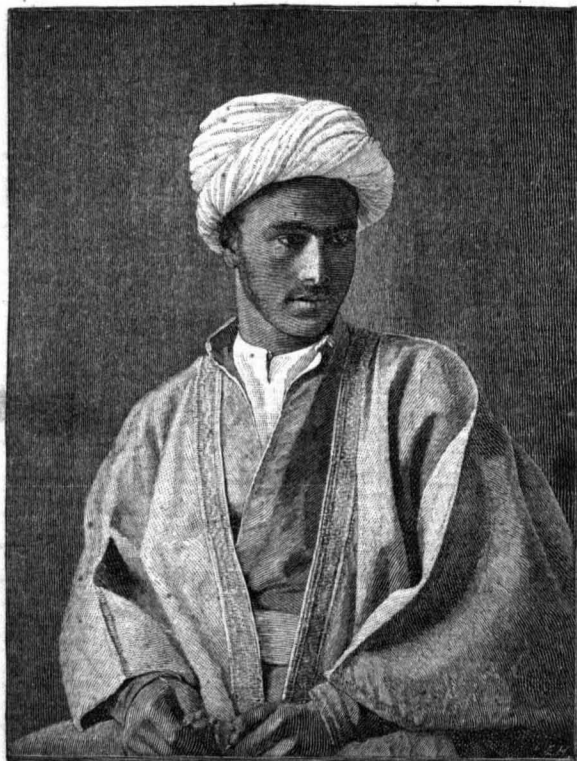
An interesting feature of the Lar Valley is also found in the *Iliots* who resort thither in summer with their flocks. *Iliot*, or more properly, *Iliyât*, is the name applied to the numerous nomadic tribes of Persia, who to the number of nearly a million, under different names and in distinct clans, roam over the wilds with numerous flocks and herds. The *Iliyâts* of the Lar informed me that wandering as they may appear, they are yet guided by invariable laws and habits. When the Lar Valley is covered to the depth of many feet with a dense mass of snow, these shepherds resort to the fertile district of Veramîn, southeast of Teherân. When summer comes once more, they scale the wild passes that surround Demavênd, and deploy their flocks over the volcanic valley to nibble the scanty herbage. But there is nothing random in this movement. By a sort of unwritten law each family and sept recognizes the rights of the others; and thus from year to year, each without interference pitches its black goat's-hair tent in the same place. Every night the flocks are counted, and each month the tax-collector comes round and gathers in the monthly levy of four shahis (or three cents) on every sheep.

It may seem strange that in such a lonely spot, where notwithstanding the presence of herdsmen and herds one was almost

oppressed by the savage sublimity of the landscape which inclosed us from the world and forced us to study the stars, and in a spot so elevated and so difficult of access, one should come to fish for trout, and, what is more, find them in abundance. But such indeed is the case. The river Lar is famed for its speckled trout; and we encamped on its banks well provided with the best rods and flies the English market could afford. We found the trout fickle enough, as elsewhere, and could never tell when or where to find them, — some days “coy and hard to please,” and other days so abundant that magnificent strings of fish, averaging upwards of half a pound each, adorned the tent-poles, or graced the board around which we were gathered with appetites whetted by the keen mountain air. We soon discovered that a trait peculiar to these Persian trout was an indifference amounting to contempt for the daintiest flies we coaxingly threw in their way. I concluded the cause of this phenomenon lay partly in the scarcity of flying insects in that altitude. But when we baited our hooks with young grasshoppers or frogs, we discovered the gastronomic weakness of these epicures of the Lar.

After all, however, trouting at the Lar appeared secondary to the magnificent aspects of Nature which constantly arrested the attention wherever one might be. The form of the great mountain pyramid was ever present, varying in appearance with every change of the atmosphere, and yet dominating over all other objects and haunting the imagination like the presence of a spirit. Sometimes, flooded with the glory of morning and dimmed by the haze of golden light, it retired to a vast distance. Then it would advance until it appeared to be but three or four miles away, disclosing a clear, sharp outline and the various ruddy tints of the manifold rocks and abysses that seamed its tremendous slopes. Or, anon, the storm-clouds tossed across its bosom like ocean surges, and the crest alone was visible, as if suspended from the zehith.

But the hour above all others to realize the impressive grandeur of this awful peak was towards evening, seated in the tent-door when the flocks were wending homeward to their fold among the rocks, where the black-eyed daughter of a race of nomads was waiting for their return. When the valley of



A YOUNG MOLLÂH.

the Lar and the mountains which inclosed it were gray in the creeping gloom of twilight, the summit of Demavênd was lit by the roseate reflection of the vanished sun, and glowed like a star in the firmament. At night, when all was dark and no sound broke the silence of the sleeping world except the low sound of the brook, no effect of Nature ever impressed me more deeply than the presence of the great mountain, like a vast shadow thrown up against the stars.

One fact at the Lar reminded us vividly of America. This was the weather. One may well say that in the greater part of Persia there is very little weather. For nine months of the year the skies are serene,—a cloudless azure by day, and at night a purple veil spangled with countless gems. Towards noon a breeze from the plains sways the tree-tops, and at night the cool zephyrs from snow-capped mountains flutter the tops of the slumbering groves. When at last the leaves fall in November, and a spasmodic attempt at winter comes, the bright gleams of sunshine often intervening seem like a protest against such an intrusion upon a settled order of things, and the early spring restores the equilibrium of an atmosphere which has been only temporarily disturbed.

It was therefore with surprise that after enjoying for some months an almost entire absence of weather, we found in the valley of the Lar an abundance of this material. The altitude of the valley, its peculiar form, and the near presence of a lofty peak were sufficient conditions to produce a state of things that went even beyond the preparations we had made to meet it. After we had been there several days the sky began to be obscured with clouds. At once the air became chilly; then the rain began falling, and every afternoon thereafter a heavy thunder-storm came up, grandly rolling through the gorges, but seriously interfering with trout-fishing, and, what was worse, soaking the tents and making them too damp to occupy with safety. On Demavënd the rain changed to snow, and the slopes of the peak were each evening whiter, although the heat of midday carried away much of the snow of the preceding day. Several times the mercury fell from eighty-six degrees at noon to forty-five degrees at night. One after another of our party was attacked with chills, and the horses, accustomed to life on the warmer plains, showed indications of exhaustion.

We decided to return without delay. The tents were struck after breakfast, and the sumpter-mules sent in advance. At that time the heat was intense, and some of our number suffered, with only the shelter of an umbrella to protect them from the sun-rays pouring into the valley, untempered by a breeze. But when at noon the rest of us mounted, we had to do so hurriedly, for a storm was thundering in the gorges, which overtook us before we were fairly out of the valley. Our camp that night was pitched on a green shelf hidden in the heart of the mountain that we had to climb to reach the Aftcha Pass. We arrived there at twilight. The horses were tethered by the side of a brook at the bottom of the ravine. The new moon hung over the dark edge of the mountain, and the fires before the tents added a superb effect to one of those hours that live long in the memory. But after despatching a warm meal we were obliged to seek our cots, for word had been given for the tents to be struck at three.

Defiling slowly up the zigzag road, we reached the summit of the range an hour after sunrise. There we rested, and turned back to take a farewell look at Demavênd from that magnificent point of vantage. A universal acclaim of enthusiasm burst from the lips of all. Vertically below us lay the winding valley of the Lar, like the bed of a mighty river; beyond it the ridges rolled away in endless succession, like waves of the sea. A bank of cloud closed in the receding horizon, and lo! far above it, and far above where we stood, rose the summit of Demavênd, majestic and alone. We were satisfied; that view compensated for all the toils and fatigues we had endured. "Let us go!" said one with a sigh; the exquisite sense of pleasure is sometimes allied to pain.

The descent from the Aftcha Pass was much more rapid than the night ascent had been; but although we now had daylight in our favor, the difficulties scarcely seemed less, for the weary



PEOPLE OF AFTCHA.

animals often slipped or stumbled, and to be hurled over the precipices was not a pleasing prospect. Indeed, in some rugged places we were fain to dismount and trust to our feet. For the tachtravân the descent was attended with enormous difficulty, as the weight constantly tended to impel the poor patient mules over the edge of the road; and several narrow escapes did not add to our sense of security. But finally, after several hours of this sort of work, we came to a more level spot. The tall Arab charvadâr here began to pick up small stones and toss them back towards the other muleteers. "Why do you do that?" I inquired. "Because, praise be to God the Preserver! we have at last got over the worst of the road, and now it will be easy going."

Happily his statement proved true, and before long we were again meandering through the winding, leafy lanes of Aftcha. A halt was cried at the shops of the village. These shops were open to the road and facing the orchards along the stream that dashed musically through the place. What attracted us was the fruit, which for the first time in the season we found both good and abundant. In a few moments every one of our party was busily occupied in discussing the delicious grapes and melo^{an} And which were liberally handed around. It was a curious ^{mystical} ^{the north of} tacie, — this little group of Americans on horseback or in litters and kajevehs, huddled together in a narrow lane of a hamlet in the heart of this distant land, eating fruit with keen zest; while the neighboring roofs, walls, and doorways were thronged with a picturesque assemblage of peasants, — men, women, and children, — gazing with eager eyes at so unexpected a sight. But although the curiosity of these simple people was so great that many a pretty young girl occasionally lowered her veil an instant to get a better view of the strangers, and the bare-legged urchins crept fearlessly among the horses to obtain more certain information concerning these queer foreigners, and the black-

smith forgot to raise his hammer, and the baker, lost in mute surprise, neglected the dough ready to be thrust in the heated oven, politeness reigned over the scene, and not a word was said to disturb our content. On the contrary, several individuals offered to bring us water, or volunteered information about the attractions of this lovely hamlet nestling in a hollow of the mountains and garmented in almost perennial verdure. It is on such occasions that one realizes how very handsome is the race which inhabits Persia. Nowhere are children to be found whose cheeks are more rich in bloom, or whose eyes are kindled with a brighter glow. Large-eyed they are, well formed, in their type of beauty akin to the Greeks and the Spaniards. Nor does squalor or poverty rob the Persians of their native grace.

It was with a considerable sense of relief that we at last arrived at Gelandevêk and found the tents ready for us, by the side of the old plane-tree. There we remained for several days, enjoying the grateful shelter afforded by this venerable tree, under which it is quite possible Marco Polo encamped when passing through Persia eight hundred years ago. Among other facts which he records of this country, is the statement that Persia was in his time celebrated as the land of plane-trees. It was the country called by Polo the "Arbor Sec," referring to the plane-tree, which was considered by the early church to be the tree that became dry at the bidding of our Lord.¹

The tent we occupied was worthy of notice. It formerly belonged to a Persian general, who used it when accompany-

¹ So generally was this the case a thousand years ago that Persia was often spoken of simply as the "Arbre Sec" or the "Arbre Sol." Marco Polo says: "To the Arbre Sec, I mean the land so called." Again he says, "Cassius being so far away as the Arbre Sec." And he speaks of Persia, or the eastern part called Khorassân, as the Arbre Sol. Arbre Sec and Arbre Sol, it is now well known, were names given at an early period to the plane-tree, on account of the legends and superstitions which clustered around this solitary and majestic denizen of the arid wastes of eastern Persia. Christians, Magians, and Mahometans alike agreed in giving a legendary importance to the plane-tree. The Christians called it Arbre Sec because the dry tree of the New Testament cursed by the

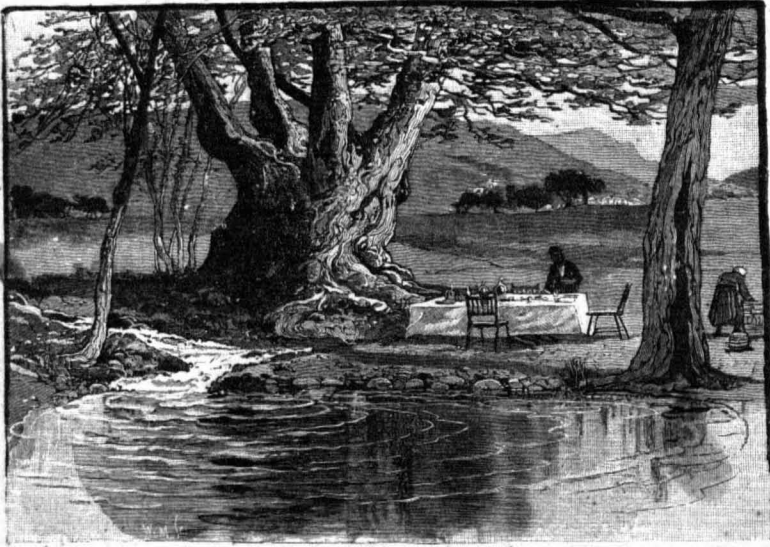
ing the Shah or the army in the field. It was of a pattern peculiar to Persia, where it has been the custom for the Court to spend the summer in tents. Consequently, the making of tents has been carried to great perfection in Persia, and has given good scope to the decorative talents of the native artists. My tent was of the sort called *kalemkâr*, the designs of the interior and the colors being applied or stamped by hand. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the intricate designs which completely covered the interior of this tent. Each panel had in the centre an agreeable representation of the conventional figure of a cypress, or tree of life, which we are in the habit of calling the palm-leaf pattern when we see it on Cashmere shawls. But this is an error; it is the cypress that is intended in this design. Around this figure were wreaths of flowers, interwoven with birds-of-paradise, and at the base of the picture were grotesque elephants pursued by hunters brandishing scimitars. Over the junction of the panels was a pair

Saviour was a sycamore yielding no fruit, like all of the genus. The Magians, or Guebres, esteemed the *chenâr* one of the chief trees of Paradise. The Mahometans call it to this day *dirâcht-i-fazl*, "the tree of excellence."

There seems to have been a *chenâr* of extraordinary antiquity at Damghân; Persian history locates the decisive battle between Alexander and Darius near that tree. And the Shah Namêh, or Book of Kings, the great epic poem of Persia, gives a mystical account of an interview held by Alexander the Great with the *Arbre Sec* in the north of Persia. This particular tree represented, it seems, two individuals, — a male and a female. The former from its upper branches gave forth a voice during the day, and the latter by night. From this remarkable source Alexander learned of the approaching termination of his career. Herodotus, in turn, speaks of a venerable *chenâr* in the centre of Asia Minor which was decorated by Xerxes with precious ornaments of gold, when he was on his march to Greece.

It is evident that the character of the *chenâr* tree made a great impression on the Oriental mind at an early age. Its enormous size, the smooth, gray, columnar branches springing from the vast rugged trunk, the gratefulness of its shade in a dry and thirsty land, and the enormous age to which it attains, undoubtedly contributed to make the plane-tree, after the cypress, the most remarkable growth of Asiatic vegetation out of India. But the feature of the *chenâr* that probably produced the most vivid impression is the fact that it seems to grow in the midst of arid solitudes destitute of water, rain, or dew, as if it drew its sustenance from the sun alone. It is true that it often reaches a great size by the side of pleasing watercourses, but does not seem to be dependent on humidity for the attainment of its magnificent verdure and enormous dimensions.

of exquisitely comical lions of the most ferocious aspect, bearing naked swords in their right paws.. This is but a feeble description of the graceful and fertile fancy displayed in this intricate and lovely system of decoration. As in all oriental decoration, the individuality of the artist was apparent in a score of repeti-



OLD PLANE-TREE AT GELANDEVÊK.

tions; for while repeating the same general plan in each panel, the artist allowed himself to vary the arrangement of color in several places.

Another charm of our life at Gelandevêk was the arrival of our mails twice a week, brought by courier from Teherân. The capital seemed far away, and yet a swift rider from it could reach our camp in six or seven hours. Letters from our distant home in America had a peculiar charm when read in that quiet scene of rural seclusion, thirty-five to forty days after they had received the stamp of the United States at New York.

CHAPTER XI.

A GLANCE AT THE ARTS OF PERSIA.

EVERY school-boy has heard of Persepolis. Few of the great works of the ages have been more copiously described and illustrated than the famous *Chehel Minâr*, or "Forty Pillars," as the Persians call Persepolis; or more often *Tacht-i-Djemsheed*, that is, the "Palace of Djemsheed." It is therefore the more extraordinary that so little is known outside a small circle of specialists concerning the numerous and widely diverse examples of the general love for the beautiful which is demonstrated by the history of the progress of the arts in Persia. The present is perhaps a favorable time to glance at Persian art as it is in a transition state, passing, as it has often done already, from one form of expression to another.

One of the most peculiar features of contemporary Persian art is the evidence it affords that it is coming under European influences. This is not the first time that foreign, and especially occidental, art has directed the development of Persian art; but it is interesting to be able to note from a contemporary point of view the agencies at work in producing such results. There are two methods open for treating such a subject. One is simply to give a running statement of actual facts, as in a catalogue, leaving the reader to form his own conclusions. The other — and to the writer, at least, by far the more fascinating method — is to seek, in however an imperfect way, to trace the various influences to which a national art owes its existence, and to note the keys of national sentiment as they are touched by the hand

of Time, evoking lovely and varied harmonies of expression. As regards Persian art, it is especially true that while endeavoring to follow its present direction, one is so constantly reminded of its past achievements that he cannot well comprehend the present without having also some intelligent perception of its growth in preceding ages. Although it is likewise true, as Mrs. Browning has beautifully observed, that —

“Every age,
Through being beheld too close, is ill discerned
By those who have not lived past it;”

yet it may be equally the case in art as well as in poesy, as she further observes, that —

“Poets should
Exert a double vision; should have eyes
To see near things as comprehensively
As if afar they took their point of sight,
And distant things as intimately deep
As if they touched them. Let us strive for this.”

A characteristic which until recently has been universal to the art of Persia, is its essentially decorative and therefore practical tendency; hence, also, its spontaneity and its thorough harmony with the acknowledged canons of æsthetic development. Persian art has been essentially industrial art. The Persian artist has displayed his genius and taste in adapting his practice to the materials at hand, and to the influences of his age and clime combined with utility, — much if not all the arts of that historic race being eminently constructive, as may be said when both builder and architect act in concert in designing a handsome building. By ever adhering to the practice of rendering his work subordinate to this principle, the Persian artist has been not only true to his instincts, but has given a vitality and endurance to his work which make it indeed national, and therefore immortal.

They who are wedded to the theory that easel paintings and sculptures, independent of decorative aim, are necessarily the highest form and end of æsthetic expression, would probably relegate the greater part of the art of Persia to an inferior position: None the less the fact remains, that no people was ever more permeated by the true art spirit than the Persians. Grant, if you please, that it is not of the highest order, — as I am inclined to admit, — and yet one may conscientiously ascribe to Persia a very high position among the races that have contributed most to the progress of the arts. The long-continued existence of Persia as an integral people, exhibiting for twenty-five hundred years an almost unbroken career of national and intellectual activity, is almost without a parallel in the history of the arts. The arts of Egypt, Assyria, and Greece culminated long ages ago; so also have those of the Saracen and of many another nation since. But the artistic life of Persia is still active; and it would be a mistake to assume that the present decline of some of the most important branches of Persian art indicates anything more than that it is passing through one of the numerous periods of transition, in which her artists and artisans have seemed to rest while gathering inspiration for a new departure after the pursuit of the ideal.

Consider, for example, the far from dormant genius still displayed at this very time in the practice of architecture in Persia. It was in architecture that she acquired her first triumphs, and her hand has not yet lost its cunning. An interesting and important feature of Persian architecture has always been and still continues to be, with some recent exceptions, its entire adaptability to existing conditions. In the south, where good stone and marble are easily procurable, they entered largely into construction. In the Caspian provinces, where wood is abundant, it is the chief building material, — the roofs being made of wood covered with tiles, and the house decorated

with wooden piazzas such as one might look for in vain elsewhere in Persia. The beams, lintels, and eaves are quaintly, sometimes elegantly, carved and tinted with brilliant hues. The climate also suggests windows of such form, that on being thrown open they leave almost the entire side of an apartment clear to the unobstructed passage of the breeze. This naturally affords a rare opportunity for artistic effects, which has been successfully seized by the Persian architects. It may be affirmed that nowhere have the artistic possibilities offered by the decoration of mullions and casements been more admirably availed of than in Persia. Everywhere one finds himself amazed at the beauty of the designs represented in the windows of Persian houses, facing fountains and gay parterres. Often the effect from within is heightened by the addition of stained glass, rivaling in result the splendor of rose-windows in Gothic cathedrals. It is quite common to see humble dwellings in an obscure hamlet possessing as their sole merit a broad window, with a casement of form and decoration to fill an artist with delight.

Although coming into prominence only since the beginning of this century, Teherân is not a new city, and possesses some old dwellings which offer bits of great beauty to the connoisseur. Owing to the scarcity and expense of wood at the capital, the building materials used in that city and environs are with scarcely an exception sun-burned bricks and *cargêl*, or mud, toughened with straw. The better class of buildings are reinforced at the angles with kiln-burned bricks. One would hardly imagine that out of such prosaic materials the artist could evolve forms of beauty; but the fact that he has done so is a strong additional proof of the innate and universal taste existing in Persia for artistic decoration. By the aid of *gatch*, or plaster-of-Paris, the artisan of Teherân often transforms these mud structures into dreams of loveliness. In the Babylonian provinces of Persia during the Sassanid period, the

same materials were employed. Nor let it be hastily assumed that the skill exhibited in planning or decorating a Teherân house is confined to a few privileged architects, and displayed only on the houses of the wealthy. The arrangement and decoration of the humblest dwellings reveal the skill and refined taste of the simple mechanics employed in its construction. The open porches are supported by slender pillars; these are made of crooked, roughly-trimmed branches of trees. But the plasterer comes and overlays these rude posts with gatch; and measuring with his eye alone, he shapes the gatch into a light and graceful spiral or fluted shaft, crowned by a harmonious capital. It is an interesting fact that the flat-sided, inverted capital most common now in Persia, although variously modified and elaborated, is in its general outline similar to the capitals of the Achæmenid period, although very few Persian architects of our time are probably aware how closely they are following in the footsteps of their ancestors.

The skill of the Persian architect is once more apparent in the method taken to avoid the appearance of weakness or disproportion suggested by roofs of enormous weight supported by slender shafts. Massive piers are therefore alternated with the pillars, or placed at the corners of the colonnades. The result is a singularly effective combination of lightness and strength, grace and repose. Sometimes the effect is increased by the continuation of the capitals into delicate arches, that relieve the otherwise heavy horizontal sky-line of the roof. The consummate skill of the Persian architect is also exemplified in the involved arrangement of arches, by which he obtains great strength with exquisite optical effects.

What a wealth of decoration is sometimes lavished on the elegant dwellings of Teherân may be gathered from the view of a portico of the superb country-seat called the Bagh Ferdôse, or Garden of Paradise given on a previous page. It belongs to

the Moayer-ul-Mamolêk, and during his exile has unfortunately been left in an incomplete condition. The entire interior of this stately establishment is consistently carried out on this sumptuous scale, completely bewildering the eye with the opulent fancy and marvellous handiwork displayed. It will be perceived that the scheme of decoration at the Bagh Ferdôse is semi-European, or classic, a sort of bastard Renaissance, — as if an architect of old had for once cut loose from the severe canons of his art, and given the reins to a fancy intoxicated by the freedom it had usurped. This indicates the transition through which Persian art is passing. At the same time it must be admitted that this luxuriant system of decoration is allied to the marvellous beauty of the façade of Machita, constructed during the Sassanid period.

The residence of the Moayer-ul-Mamolêk in the capital is still more foreign in its character, — the façade, although always of gatch, being altogether of a florid Renaissance type. There is a tendency now becoming apparent among the better class of new buildings rising at Teherân to imitate European ideas; but the imitation is generally far from slavish, being rather an adaptation or assimilation. So long as the tendency proceeds no further than this, no harm can come of it. But it would be a great mistake here, as it is elsewhere, to make absolute imitations of foreign styles; for by so doing the first principle of architecture — adaptation to climate and social conditions — would be ignored. The inclination to borrow art-ideas from abroad has been a characteristic of Persian artists in all ages and in almost every form of the national art, as will appear in the sequel, but never to such a degree as to overcome the contrary tendency to stamp whatever they do with an individuality of their own.

One of the most remarkable features of the Bagh Ferdôse is the wonderful grotto-like hall on the first floor. The apartment

is about sixty feet long by forty feet wide, and carpeted by a single piece of felt made especially for it at Yezd. I may add, that it is common for wealthy Persians to order carpets made in one piece to fit even their largest apartments. I have seen a *namâd*, or felt carpet, eighty feet long and fifty feet wide, without a seam. The name of the maker is woven into it, — as the painter puts his name on his painting. The great weight and bulk of these felt carpets forbid their exportation. Indeed, the chief item of expense connected with them is the cost of trans-



OLD NASCH WRITING. (REDUCED ONE-HALF.)

portation from Yezd and Ispahân, where they are made, to the residence of the purchaser. But nothing in the way of a carpet can be so luxurious and suggestive of comfort as a Persian *namâd* an inch thick.

In entire contrast to the general Renaissance-like scheme of decoration exhibited in the Bagh Ferdôse, may properly be considered the hall of which we have just spoken. Ordinary Persian gatch-decoration is called *gatch pourree*; but that presented in the ceiling of this apartment is designated as *mokarness*. Those familiar with architecture will recognize this honeycomb-like pattern for filling arches as especially Saracenic. Brilliantly colored and gilded, it forms one of the

most striking attractions of the Alhambra and other celebrated oriental monuments. Few are aware that this beautiful style owes its origin to the Persians, from whom it was borrowed, like several other important features appropriated by artistic nations. The principle of the arch, so thoroughly understood in Persia at this time, was apprehended and practised in Iran before the Parthenon and the Colosseum challenged the admiration of the world.

Of the taste and skill displayed by the artisans who can devise and construct such a building there can be no question. But one is still more astonished when he learns that these patient idealists are aided by little or no scientific study, but are guided entirely by natural instincts supplemented by practice. One may see a workman carefully moulding an intricate design out of a mass of plaster without any pattern to guide him, often with neither rule nor compass, and using only a slight shaping-tool of wood; and if he be questioned as to who were his instructors, and what principles he follows in reaching such exquisite results, he will reply that he had no systematic instruction, and gives himself little trouble about art principles: he grew up to the business, and produces such designs because he feels inspired to create them. It is true that Shah Abbass¹ established art institutions under Government patronage, to which artisans were only admitted after satisfactory proof of ability. His immediate successors continued to foster the culture of the arts in like manner. It is reasonable to believe that Darius and Anurshirwan, the greatest monarchs of the Achæmenid and Sassanid dynasties, also encouraged the arts of Persia by a patronage as liberal if not exactly identical in method. Manee, the founder of the Manichæan sect, brought home hints of Chinese art when he returned to Persia from his exile; and there are traditions as well as internal evidence that

¹ This name is pronounced as if spelled *Abbauss*.

Anurshirwân and Chosroes Parveez invited Byzantine sculptors to Persia, and it is well known that the revival of a high order of decorated pottery in Persia, under the name of *Kashee*, owes its existence to the skilled Chinese artisans brought to Ispahân and Kashan by Shah Abbass I. Hulagu is also said to have brought artisans from China three centuries earlier. The Persians recast the art ideas they borrowed, and stamped them with the mark of their own native genius.

Doubtless each of these periods of artistic renaissance has had its influence in perpetuating the art-instinct in a race naturally imbued with æsthetic feeling; but it is quite certain that several centuries have now elapsed without any public and systematic methods of art instruction being applied in Persia. Notwithstanding this, the national love of the beautiful as displayed by the practice of the arts seems no less pronounced in that country than formerly, although in some directions showing either signs of decline or of transition to new forms of expression. A few names of living architects seem, however, to be prominent above the average, — such as Ustâd (or Master) Housseïn, the designer of Bagh Ferdôse; and Ustâd Alec, the architect of the Ark, or royal palace.

One of the most beautiful arts of Persia, of comparatively recent origin it is true, is the form of *gatch pourree* called *ainak karree*. The *gatch* ceiling and wall are moulded into the most intricate forms with daring confidence. While the plaster is yet soft, the surfaces, or facets, are inlaid with an incrustation of minute mirrors of every form and often of very small size. The amount of toil, patience, and skill requisite to inlaid a large apartment in this magnificent style is almost incalculable. It is needless to add that the effect is one of bewildering splendor, as if the light were flashed from the polished facets of millions of gems. Although the materials employed are comparatively inexpensive, the immense labor required to complete such an

apartment naturally renders this a costly style of decoration. The Persian Department at the last Paris Exposition was embellished with a room ornamented with this sort of mirror-work. Several apartments of the palace and many of the mansions of the wealthy at Teherân are thus decorated. Among the finest examples I have seen of it are the parlor in the summer-house of the Shah at Doshân Tepê, and a superb *salon* of the residence now occupied by the Minister of Justice; it was erected by the celebrated Super Salâr, or Premier, who died in 1882. Although of moderate dimensions, about sixty feet by fifty feet, the apartment is so well proportioned that it easily appears much larger. One side of the room is devoted to an immense double window, with casements carved with intricate geometric patterns, partly filled with stained glass. The vaulted ceilings are incrustated with mosaic of *ainâh karree*. But one of the most thoroughly characteristic rooms of this sort is in the fine old house erected over a hundred years ago, belonging to the family of the late Sedr Azem, and built by his ancestors. It is surprising that while searching the past and present, and almost the future, for designs rare and dazzling enough to whet the pampered appetite of New York millionnaires, our architects have not yet borrowed from Persia a style of decoration whose splendor eclipses all their previous efforts.

Tiles! methinks I hear the tile devotee say, "But what about tiles? Are there any tiles in Persia?" Well, then, to speak frankly, it must be stated that what the Persian artist does not know, or did not know in former times, about tiles is scarcely worth the mention. The tiles now made in Persia are of a far more common order than were those of former ages. This fact however does not obscure the great interest attaching to the present use of decorative tiles in Persian art. The absence of good marble in the vicinity of Teherân, or the cost of working it, causes a great demand for the incrustation of

floors and walls with elegant colored patterns, composed of glazed tiles of various degrees of excellence and of endless variety of design.

The interior of the baths is often covered with tiles; the effect of glistening walls and roofs in the demi-twilight of these vaulted rooms is artistic and beautiful. The exteriors of the domes of the mosques and minarets and city gates are also overlaid with glazed tiles, producing at the proper distance fine chromatic effects, which tell in a magical way against the intense azure of the cloudless skies of this semi-tropical clime. When smitten by the full rays of the setting sun they flash like gold. In this connection one naturally calls to mind the face-bricks glazed like tiles, which form one of the most common means of decoration in Persia, and especially at Teherân. In skilful hands they adapt themselves readily to many forms of constructional decoration, and might with great propriety be introduced into the facing of gate-ways or even entire façades in the United States, where it is becoming the fashion to employ a variety of colors in architectural decoration. Unlike the American decorator, however, the Persian artist generally understands the importance of combining these bricks in such a manner as to produce broad designs effective at a proper distance, instead of suffering them to be dwarfed and practically made useless by scrupulosity in the rendering of minute details that are lost at a distance.

every

In considering the old tile-work of Persia, and indeed the greater part of its art development during the last dozen centuries, one cannot avoid observing three or four prime influences, which, although apparently having little relation with the pursuit of the fine arts, have nevertheless exerted a powerful influence in directing the art progress of Persia since the fall of the Sassanides. These influences are the conversion of the country to the doctrines of Mahomet; the consolidation of the legends of Persia into a popular form by Firdoûsee in his great national epic of the *Shah Namêh*, thus reviving the interest in subjects which formerly attracted general attention, and stimulating the fancy of the people at a time when the arts were entering on a new phase of expression; the induction into power of the Sefavean dynasty; and the importation of Chinese and Indian artisans into Persia. Numerous minor influences may also be traced, giving direction to the former artistic instincts of the people, but these seem to be the most important.

The acceptance of the faith of the Prophet brought with it the Arabic language, which has since that time entered largely into the literature and language of the cultivated classes of Persia, exactly as Latin has modified the Anglo-Saxon. Indeed, one might venture to assert that the change in the former case has been even greater than in the latter, for the Latin-English of the Johnsonian period has given English forms to Latin, whereas a multitude of Arabic words have entered the Persian language.

the followers of Mahomet. History affords no parallel to the career of the Saracens; they not only overthrew empires hoary with age, but they actually changed the institutions, the beliefs, the very character of the people to such a degree that when the Saracenic yoke was thrown off, the people still remained Saracens at heart. The history of religious enthusiasm may be searched in vain for any events equal to this.

With the acceptance of Islamism, the Persian artist renounced for a time the delineation of the human figure; but with the acceptance of the Arabic character, he found new scope for his exuberant fancy. The Saracens also introduced into Persia and the regions beyond a turn for mathematics, which it may be justly inferred was one cause of the origin of the intricate geometric designs in which Mahometan art has been so successful that the word *Arabesque* has become one of the most prominent terms in the nomenclature of decorative art. We may add here, that the astronomical triumphs achieved by Omar Khayyâm and his colleagues under Alp Arslân, indicate incidentally the manner in which the astronomer and the artist of those days learned to associate their separate pursuits. Lying before me as I write is a brass astrolabe nearly one thousand years old. It is an exquisite piece of work; not content with carefully designating the scientific lines, the maker of this wonderful instrument has so shaped and decorated it with loving interest in his work as to make of it a complete triumph of art. In a similar spirit the florid fancy of the Hindu formulated arithmetic problems in poetic verse.

The religious fervor of the people made it a natural task to erect numerous tombs and shrines of prayer over the length and breadth of the land. To make of these mere receptacles for people living or dead, without comeliness or attraction, — after the fashion of our good old ancestors, who perched cheap, square meeting-houses on the bleak hills of New England, —

was altogether foreign to the genius of the Persians. Like most imaginative races, their religious fervor demanded outward and ocular demonstration in agreeable art-forms. The result was a school of architecture and decoration Saracenic in some of its features, but unmistakably native in its general direction. The lofty conical dome of Persian architecture is Indian in shape, or more properly Aryan. It would be a mistake to attribute all the resemblances which Persian art bears to that of the East Indies to bald imitation, although doubtless this explanation



OLD KASHEE WARE.

might apply in some cases. The Aryan stock of each race, closely allied as they are ethnically and geographically, is sufficient to account for a frequent resemblance in thought and expression. The Persian artist found a congenial source of decorative inspiration in the pithy precepts of the Koran and

the singularly suggestive and pictorial forms of the Arabic letters. His quick fancy discerned the opportunities they suggested; his new interest in mathematical pursuits and his native love for flowers, aided by a feeling for color, added to his decorative resources, while the scarcity of wood and the abundance of various clays suggested the employment of the kiln as the means for giving the final strokes to the results of his artistic aims. Hence a school of ceramic decoration was very naturally evolved, which, it is no rash assertion to say, has never been surpassed nor even equalled, at least in the direction of glazed tiles. A multitude of shrines and tombs still exist to testify to the splendor of this phase of Persian art; but, alas! how many

of them have been spoiled, not only by the ravages of war and of time, but also of avarice, which has stealthily stripped many of them of some of their noblest decorations, to enrich the museums and private collections of Europe! One of the finest interiors of this sort was the celebrated mosque at Sultaniêh, of which only a mere crumbling shell remains. Of course the superb facing of tiles which it contained long since disappeared. The greed which has stimulated this spoliation of some of the grandest monuments of Persia may be appreciated from the fact that death would attend detection. But the enormous prices paid by collectors for these prizes has often stimulated the thief to dare the vigilance of the authorities.

The celebrated tomb of the Imâm Rezâh, at Meshed, is another remarkable example of the success achieved by the Persians in keramic art. Of course no Christian has seen anything but the exterior of this shrine, and that from a distance, except one or two who have entered in disguise at imminent risk of their lives. The effect is said to be one of matchless chromatic splendor,—a combination of gold and iridescent hues playing around the azure letters, which in high relief reproduce the entire Koran. There is also in this place an enormous reflêt tile, described by those who have seen it as quite the finest relic of old art now existing in Persia, as well as the largest tile known in that country. It is represented as being over six feet long and four feet broad. When one considers that five hundred dollars is not an uncommon price to be paid for some of the Persian reflêts, he can imagine what must be the antiquarian and pecuniary value of this unique example. Of the many varieties of tiles which were produced at the two best periods of the art, the most interesting are those called *reflêts*, because of their iridescent glaze.

A playful fancy has interwoven vines and flowers among the lovely combinations of the calligraphic art, which in the best examples are also in relief. The graceful letters spreading across the entire width of the tile are generally of a magnificent ultramarine blue, on a delicate cream or buff ground, while the vines and flowers are of variegated but harmonious tints interlaced with gold. The entire surface gleams with a massive polish or glaze, which in a broad front light gives the effect of polished marble; while a glancing side-light reveals the mysterious opalescent flame of the many-colored tints, flashing out as from the depths of the sea, and flickering with a weird and fascinating splendor. The secret of compounding those intense blues and this iridescent glaze has become one of the lost arts, buried with the millions whose genius has illustrated the historic pages of Persia; there seems to be a tradition, however, that gold entered into the composition of these glazes. Perhaps if the Persians of to-day knew the secret they might yet not know how to make it of avail, for it takes genius to use the weapons of genius. David with a sling may accomplish more than Saul with weapons of steel inlaid with marquetry of gold. The finest art of Persia — between the battle of Nehavend and the rise of the Sefaveans — was exhibited in these tiles, of which the distinguishing features were the iridescent glaze and the arabesque designs. Noble as are the forms of many of the buildings of that period, they yet owed their chief beauty to the ceramic decorations which veneered their walls of mud and brick. Besides the iridescent tiles there were many other varieties employed, — too many, in fact, to describe in a cursory survey like this. It should be carefully noted that the relative antiquity of these tiles is indicated by the form of the characters; those with Cufic letters invariably take precedence for age in Persian ceramics of the Mahometan era. Fragments discovered on the site of Rheï, or Rhages, suggest that the art of making this iridescent

glaze dates back in all likelihood to the Sassanid dynasty, or to very soon after that period.

The reflêt tiles in which a copper tint is prominent may be considered as generally coming from Nathenz ; also those with a rich raised figure, or design, suggesting the conventional fleur-de-lis pattern. These tiles have dashes of pale green, and also letters in blue for the most part ; but all of them are distinguished by a splendor of iridescence never surpassed in the history of ceramic art. The tiles, which are star-shaped, with a flat surface very nobly and variously decorated, and with a border of black Arabic lettering on a whitish ground, are from the old mosque at Veramîn, which is supposed by some to be the



REFLET TILE, OVER 450 YEARS OLD.

ancient Arcesia. The octagonal tiles having in the centre a deep star-intaglio are also from Veramîn. The tiles of which a superb, non-iridescent, lapis-lazuli blue is a marked feature are chiefly from the old palaces of Ispahân. It is a singular and important fact, that almost every city or building where the magnificent tiles of Persia abounded are each of different character. This fact is very interesting, because it proves that the artists of Persia were no slavish imitators ; and it also suggests the wealth of artistic invention which formerly characterized the progress of the ceramic arts of that country.

The peculiar character which the Persians adopted from the Arabs led also to the development of calligraphy to a point where it actually became one of the fine arts. Combined with the art of illumination, which is still practised with extraordinary ability and artistic feeling at this very time in Teherân, results were reached that arouse the enthusiasm of the Persians even at this day, when the printing-press is invading the province of the scribe and rapidly relegating illuminated manuscripts to the past,—an art nevermore to be revived, probably, while the art of printing exists. It must be confessed that only one who is an adept in the Arabic character can fully appreciate the skill and feeling displayed in the masterpieces of Persian calligraphic art; but he must be dull indeed who does not see in some of these examples the expression of a fine artistic sense.

It is a significant fact, that, while the names of many of the leading artists of Persia are forgotten, the fame of a Mir or of a Dervîsh, or of other celebrated calligraphists, is cherished like that of a Veronese or a Rembrandt. The specimens of their work still extant are very highly prized, and he who is so happy as to possess such autographs causes them to be carefully mounted on illuminated pages and elegantly bound in such manner as to escape destruction. Notwithstanding that numerous printing-presses now exist in Persia for printing books and periodicals by lithographic processes, the art of calligraphy is still cultivated, as I have already observed, and its followers are held in much esteem. The most celebrated living calligraphist of Persia is Mirza Gholâm Rezâh, who lives at Teherân. His is a refined and thoughtful character; for he is not only a calligraphist, but likewise a poet and philosopher of wide-repute. He has many disciples of what, to apply an old term in a new form, may be truly called a “gentle craft,” especially among persons of taste in the cultivated circles of Persian society. The magnificent terrestrial globe in the royal treasury,

composed entirely of gold, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and turquoise, was executed under the direction of Mirza Gholâm Rezâh.

In this connection it is not inappropriate to specify the five chief forms of calligraphy practised in Persia since the Saracenic conquest, given in the order of their introduction. First is the Cufee, or Cufic character, angular, and representing straight rather than curved lines. It holds the same relation to the contemporary character that the old English lettering does to the modern English characters. Next comes the Nasch (the final *h* being guttural); this is curved, but with a tendency to perpendicular rather than horizontal lines. These two characters are the most common on old Persian tiles, and the latter is the character chiefly used at present in manuscripts and printing. The Nas-talîgh is likewise used in manuscripts, and also the Reihanee. The Shekestêh, the most recent character used in Persia, is more horizontal or running in form, and is ordinarily used for letters and accounts.

It is worthy of note that the absence of designs representing the human form, either in the flat or the round, is a marked characteristic of the ante-Sefavean period just described.

Sultân Alee, of Meshed, was a calligraphist of renown who lived in the fifteenth century. His greatest pupil was Mir Amâr, called the great Mir, who is considered to have been the most remarkable calligraphist of Persia. He was a native of the province of Ghilân. Shah Abbass the First heard of the fame of this wielder of the pen, and the royal patron of arts and letters was moved by the desire to add one more to the cluster of brilliant lights which adorned his court. Messengers were sent to invite Mir to Ispahân. An invitation by Shah Abbass was equivalent to a command. With reluctance the great calligraphist abandoned his luxurious seclusion on the shores of the Caspian. A litter and cortége of servants had been sent to escort him with

honor to the royal presence. On his arrival at the capital he was graciously received; a residence, a revenue, and a corps of servants were assigned to him, and the Shah commanded him to prepare a copy of the Shah Namêh. The calligraphist accepted the task, but probably with secret reluctance, for he doubtless considered that it involved the devotion of many years of his life to what seemed a long drudgery. It may not



EXAMPLE OF WRITING BY
A'MIR. (REDUCED ONE-
HALF.)

be generally known that few of the large oriental manuscripts are the work of the most celebrated scribes; they are for the most part from the pens of pupils or disciples of those masters. The masters themselves, with true artistic feeling, preferred to give vent to the calligraphic inspiration by the inscription of short poems or extracts from the holy books, according as the spirit moved them. This practice was also the one best suited to the spread of their fame. The preparation of a great volume might consume years, and when completed would be visible only to a few; while during the same period the calli-

graphic artist could execute many shorter examples of his art which would be eagerly seized by many, and thus carry prized examples of his genius to all parts of the country.

Mir set about his task probably with a definite purpose to accomplish it. But it proved uncongenial, as might have been expected of one of his type of mind. Surrounded by a court of admirers of his own, the artist, when the writing mood was on him, turned off short screeds which three centuries after his death are set in gold and sold for great prices. From time to time, Shah Abbass inquired of Mir concerning the progress he was making in the manuscript of the great poem of the chronicle

of the kings of Persia; to all which inquiries the calligraphist gave evasive replies.

Several years having at last elapsed, without any satisfactory evidence that the artist who was enjoying the royal bounty was accomplishing the task assigned, the sovereign peremptorily ordered Mir to produce whatever part of the Shah Namêh he had actually written. The calligraphist, unable any longer to avoid discovery, complied. But when Shah Abbass saw that only a few sheets had been written after so many years of waiting, he tore them in fragments with his own royal hands; then, nervously plucking the long mustaches for which he was famous, the justly indignant sovereign ordered the executioners to do their work, and in a moment the great Mir was no more. Although the penalty for the indolent procrastination of this child of genius was somewhat rude, and in a later age would have resulted in a simple deprivation of office and emoluments, yet it must be admitted that Shah Abbass was justified in his wrath. Few had thus dared to brave the authority of a monarch who was at once a patron of intellectual culture and a cruel tyrant.

These facts in the life of Mir were related to me by Mirza Gholâm Rezâh, who vouched for their correctness.

The art of making book-covers is one that may be appropriately mentioned in connection with the description of the calligraphic art. Like all the æsthetic industries of Persia, the first charm of this art lies in its individuality. One who is the happy possessor of such a cover may rest quietly on his pillow and dream pleasant fancies, assured that he has a unique example of one of the most beautiful of all the decorative arts of the East, while the enormous labor involved in many of these covers makes it unlikely that any attempt will be made to reproduce them. These old covers are of two kinds. The first and rarest are those in which the design is entirely of leather. The leather formerly produced in Persia has never been surpassed in

gloss and texture. It may not be generally known that what is called Russia leather was first manufactured in Persia, whence the fabric was carried to Russia. The preparation of this leather was formerly carried to such perfection in Persia that various legends are attached to the subject, — of which one is to the effect that the tanners achieved their success by taking the hides to the summit of Mount Elvend, where the lightnings of heaven imparted a special virtue to the texture.

The general character of book-covers made from this leather consists sometimes in overlaying the most delicate and intricate designs made of split leather, one over the other, each being distinguished either by retaining the natural color, or in being gilded or stained of different vivid tints. Often, also, the design of the cover is stamped and beautified with various shades of gold. The stamping was sometimes done with engraved plates of metal; but, singular as it may seem, it was usually produced by designs actually cut into sole leather of very fine quality, and attached to a block of wood. The leather to be stamped was thoroughly moistened, and the stamp was pressed down by heavy weights and left in position for days, until the under leather had, as it were, grown to the desired design. No patterns more elaborate or beautiful than those of Persia have ever been seen in the art of book-covers.

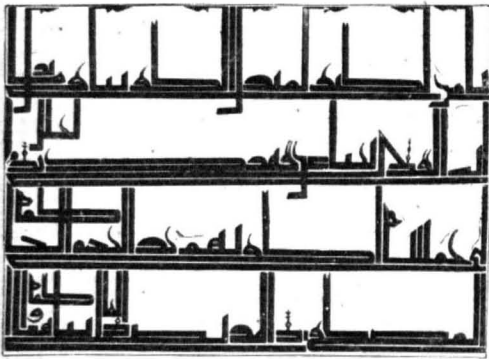
The other style of Persian book-covers was made of papier-maché, in which the design, usually a hunting-scene, is often partially in relief, but always superbly colored, — occasionally in such manner that the design retires or reappears according to the light in which it is held. Very fine covers of this sort have been made quite recently. The flat illuminated cover is also made now.

But while the faithful disciples of the Prophet, following as they supposed the precepts of the Koran in abstaining from such art, were finding a vent for their æsthetic aspirations in

ingenious and beautiful arabesques, a new intellectual influence was looming up, which was destined eventually to prove a powerful agency in the shaping of the Persian art of subsequent ages. I refer to Firdôusee, the great epic poet of Persia. Under the patronage of Mahmood of Ghizné, who however treated the poet very shabbily at the end, Firdôusee gathered together the historic legends of Persia in a national epic called the *Shah Namêh*, or "Book of Kings." This magnificent poem cannot, of course, be accepted as more than partially historical, the poet having in the details indulged in the usual license allowed to his craft. But it gives beautiful, and often pathetic and sublime, versions of the legends into which the imaginative Persians had crystallized the prominent events of their history until the Sassanid epoch; and thus the *Shah Namêh* became for Persia what the *Iliad* was to Greece. It is due to this epic that the name of Rustêm, the national hero, is still a household word in Persia. The figure of Rustêm in battle is over the city gates of Teherân, and it reappears in myriad fantastic designs in the metal and plastic work of that country. Every child in Persia knows the story of Zal, of Isfendiar, and of Kei Khôsrû. Such is the vivifying power of genius!

But fully to bring the poetry of Firdôusee into harmonious association with the arts of Persia, it was necessary that his counterpart should appear, who would give a fresh impulse to the artistic instincts and yearnings of the great people of Irân. He seemed long in coming; but he came at last, with the intellectual grasp and the administrative power requisite to give rise to a great revival of the arts. It was the renowned Shah Abbass the Great, of whom we have just spoken in connection with the great Mir. Never has a monarch done more to beautify his capital, to foster the arts, and to develop the taste of his people. Those who have studied the plates in the magnificent work of Ohardin, who visited Persia in the reign succeeding

that of Shah Abbass, may form some notion of the opulence and magnificence which made Ispahân more than the rival of Bagdad, and rendered its name proverbial for splendor. Notwithstanding the siege and sack of Ispahân by the terrible invader Mahmood the Afghan, in the early part of the last century, it still retains enough of beauty to dazzle the visitor, and to fill him with regret that the demon of destruction should have power to work such ruthless and apparently wanton ravages.



OLD CUFIC WRITING., (REDUCED TWO-THIRDS.)

Never was patron of the arts more welcome than Shah Abbass. The people of Persia, especially they of the central province of Irân, are of a gay, fickle, mercurial, and imaginative character, loving change, moved by a sensuous love of the beautiful, and impatient of aught that tends to curb their

gaillard temperament. Many of them rebel against the severe inculcations of the Koran which forbid wine and spirits, and are said to indulge secretly in the use of intoxicating liquors. In like manner, to such a people the time came when license had to be allowed for a wider range of artistic expression. The rise of the Sefavean dynasty offered the long-expected occasion for such a vent to the national sentiment. This is not the place to enter into a discussion of sectarian beliefs, which is referred to another chapter; suffice it to say, that up to this period the Persians had generally been Sunnees; but Shah Ismaël, the founder of the new dynasty, was a Sufee, a descendant of Aleë, the son-in-law of Mahomet, and a devoted Sheäh. His accession to the throne resulted in the

rapid conversion of all Persia to Sheäh doctrines. With these doctrines came greater rigidity of belief in certain directions, but also greater liberality in others, which permitted a larger scope to the artist's abilities. The result was almost immediately apparent, in the most important revival of art which Persia had seen since the dazzling splendor of the reign of Khosrû (or Chosroes) Parveez.

Both of these monarchs distinguished themselves in war, and achieved great military renown; but each will be longest remembered for his administration of civil affairs and the encouragement he extended to the arts of peace. Fortunately for the reign of Shah Abbass and his immediate successors, the period of their glory was comparatively so recent that numerous examples of the art of their time have come down to our day. The character and number of the artistic treasures of that palmy period are sufficiently numerous and various to be classified with a system that gives a clear idea of the subject. While Ispahân was the centre of the art activity of Persia in Shah Abbass' reign, it would be a mistake to overlook the fact that the general thrift and prosperity of the Empire naturally caused the practice of the industrial arts to be wide-spread, and many places became prominent at that period for the production of special objects displaying a high order of skill and æsthetic talent. Shirâz, Kermân, Koom, Meshed, Yezd, Zenjân, and Kermanshah were among the capitals of prosperous districts that then acquired a repute, which they retain to this day, for the production of articles of great artistic merit. As one considers the immense variety of objects beautified by the cunning artificers or poetic artists of that period, he is amazed at the opulence of the fancy which then found expression. It seems as if, instead of a people of vast antiquity pursuing its ordinary course, a nation overflowing with the ardency and irrepressible energy of youth entered the arena

at that period, yearning to find a vent for its superabundant spirits.

One is at loss to know where to begin in describing the results of this Periclean age of Persian art, or to mark what were the most characteristic of the numerous forms of expression it sought. The ceramic art of that time is of decided importance, and undoubtedly received a great impulse from the Chinese artisans then invited to Persia. The secret of making *reflêt* pottery, if it had been forgotten, was then rediscovered, and continued in full efflorescence until the disastrous invasion of Mahmood the Afghan, when the secret was lost, perhaps forever. But in addition to the *reflêt* tiles, a new ware was produced by the Chinese artisans, which was excellently imitated by their Persian pupils. This ware was called *Kashee*, because the potteries were established at Kashan. Admirable fayence of prevailing black or blue-black tints was produced by these Chinese artisans, who at the outset represented on many of these *Kashee* dishes the lightness of touch and the few suggestive strokes characteristic of blue China-ware, interwoven with quaint bits of landscape and inimitable floral patterns in a conventional but thoroughly decorative style. A Chinese monogram was on the reverse side of these wares. But soon the Persian genius for ceramic art awoke once more under these new influences, and the designs of the Chinese artisan were modified by Persian ideas, the joint result being a ware entirely distinct and sufficiently native and national. What could be more original or fancifully fantastic than a *kaliân*, representing long-winged, swan-necked birds, diving in graceful confusion amid the tangled meshes of interlacing boughs, waving hither and thither like the plume-like algæ slumberously swaying with the flow and reflux of a summer-going tide? What could be more singular and mysterious than a group of dragons, sweeping their lithe scaly forms in

marvellous azure convolutions over the broad surface of a plaque?

When the resemblance between Chinese and Kashee work is such that it is difficult to decide between them, the test is found in the greater lightness of the latter and the softer quality of the material employed in the Persian ware. The Kashee can be cut or scraped by sharp steel, while the Chinese blue-ware is hard as flint. Good examples of Kashee fayence are becoming rare, and should not be confounded with the cheaper Persian blue-ware made in recent years.

Another ware of great value, and exceedingly rare and precious, is the white porcelain made at an earlier period than that of Shah Abbass by Persian artisans. It is a translucent milk-white, and is invariably ribbed, or fluted, with delicate mouldings. The translucent effect was reached partly by shaping the inner and outer shells over a mould of wax, which on melting left a hollow space between. The glaze is hard and pearl-like. Most of the examples of this ware have been picked up by collectors, and can hardly be considered longer as objects of general sale, so rare have they become. At long intervals a choice bit is brought around by a *dellâl*, or itinerant merchant, as if it were a diamond of price.

The Sefavean monarchs found it entirely in accord with the new creed they induced their people to accept, to redecorate the sacred tombs after a style in harmony with the *Sheäh* interpretations of the Koran, and hence a species of *reflêt* was introduced resembling the iridescent tiles of earlier times, but generally of more fanciful shapes and with a greater variety of tints. Some antiquarians have been inclined to think that the iridescence of this glaze is the result of chemical changes produced by time, as probably was the case with the glass lachrymatories found in ancient Greek tombs. But there is no question that it would be a mistake to assume the same fact regarding the *reflêt*

glass of Persia. The Persian traditions on this subject are too strongly in favor of the theory that this iridescence was intentionally produced by skilful artisans, imbued with a high sense of the beautiful and endowed with ample skill to carry out their elegant conceptions. It is further recorded by both Persian history and tradition that among those who were massacred by Mahmood the Afghan, at Ispahân, were the designers of reflêt tiles and other keramic wares, because they had created works offensive to the Sunnee sect of which he was a fanatical devotee. Hence, the secret of making reflêt glazes and certain brilliant colors on pottery was lost at that time. Whether this is the true reason or not, the fact remains that the secret of producing the highest types of Persian keramic art died out over one hundred and fifty years ago. Another argument in favor of this theory concerning the iridescent glazes exists in the circumstance that many of these reflêts have been so situated that the conditions which may have caused the chemical changes in the glass of Cyprus and Phœnicia fail in the present case.

But however produced, the reflêts of the time of Shah Abbass the First are exquisitely beautiful. Tiles painted with blue and green designs on an umber or dark-purple ground assume, when turned to the light, the most superb rose, purple, and golden hues, flashing forth with a splendor never surpassed by the chromatic blazonry of the finest mediæval stained glass of Europe, and having a depth of effect that gives the impression that the entire tile is iridescent throughout. These tiles are often of the geometric six-pointed star-shape, with a white border running around the outer margin. On this white ground are inscribed pious phrases from the Koran. It is well to observe here that the character of the lettering on Persian tiles or other works invariably settles its approximate age, unless, indeed, certain unmistakable signs show it to be merely a modern imitation of the antique. Tiles bearing inscriptions in the Cufic character

antedate the Sefavean age, and are generally far earlier; while no works having the later Arabic character are of earlier origin than the twelfth century, A. D., and are generally of or later than the Sefavean age. Attempts have recently been made to imitate the tiles of the best periods of Persian art; but a test of the age of Persian tiles is found in their relative hardness. The ancient tiles were either baked much harder than the ceramic ware now made in Persia, or they have been hardened by time; at any rate, the back of an old Persian tile does not yield to the pressure of the finger-nail, while the recent tiles can be easily scratched.

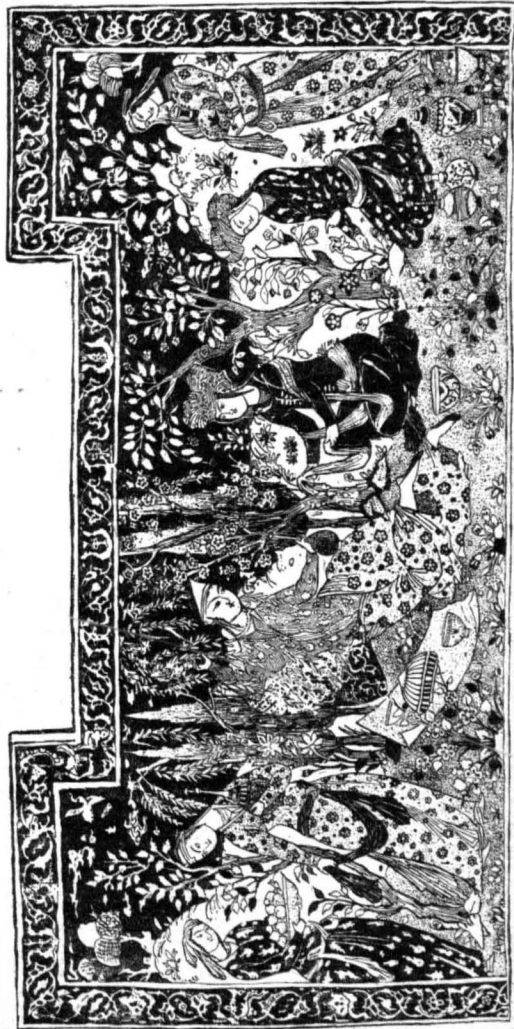
It is to the magnificent patronage of the Sefavean dynasty that Persia is also indebted for the pictured tiles that encrusted the walls of the enchanting palaces and pavilions of Ispahân, and which yet, after the repeated ravages of ruthless invaders, preserve to that storied capital traces of their former glory. These tiles were divided into two classes. The first belongs rather to the order of mosaic. Aside from the intrinsic and effective beauty of the designs, this mosaic is remarkable for two special features. I refer to the imperishable loveliness and vividness of the colors, especially the deep lapis-lazuli blue, which it is universally agreed it is impossible to produce to-day in Persia. The other feature of these mosaics is the fact that they are composed of thin pieces of glazed brick or tile made specially for each part of a design, and afterwards fitted together on the bed of plaster, instead of being composed of bits of tinted stone or marble or glass, like Greek, Roman, and Italian mosaic. Considering the extraordinary beauty of these mosaics of Ispahân and the material of which they are composed, it is remarkable that so little attention has been called to them. This style of mosaic has proved to be very durable, and might well be imitated by some of the clever American artisans who are doing so much at present to decorate American domestic and civic

architecture, even though they might fail absolutely to reproduce the wonderful blue of the Persian mosaics.

The other class of pictorial keramic designs referred to above was more distinctively tile-decoration; and here the imagination of the Persian artist found ample scope. His love of color led to the employment of hues of a quality never since used in Persia. Not only the blues, but several tints of red and brown, are peculiar to the Abbassid period. I have seen some of these tile-paintings done in seven colors, of which four at least are compounded after receipts that have been lost for over a century. Often these designs are not confined to one tile, but are so extended that they spread over twenty to forty square tiles surrounded by an elegant border, suggesting a running tracery of vines and flowers. In two or three instances, as in the accompanying cut taken from one brought by the writer to America, they represent garden scenes and groups of gracefully-designed maidens plucking fruit or playing on the lute. These scenes sometimes bear unmistakable evidence of Chinese inspiration, especially in the types of feminine beauty. This is attributable to Man-oo-Har, the chief artist brought from China by Shah Abbass, or to his disciples. In other cases these and other designs of the period suggest the refined, delicately drawn and carefully detailed style of India; and it may be safely assumed that they owe their origin to the instructions of Hassan-i-Dekkân, the celebrated artist invited by Shah Abbass to transfer his talents from the East Indies to the new capital of the rising Sefavean dynasty.

At other times the Persian artists gave free rein to a fancy inspired by the magnificent strophes of Firdoûsee and imbued with a natural pride in the exploits of the early heroes, who had elevated Irân to such a pinnacle of renown and power. The tiles were then emblazoned with fanciful, grotesque designs in relief and highly colored, representing Rustêm overcoming his

enemies in battle. A favorite design, which frequently reappears with variations, is Rustêm engaged in deadly combat with the Div Sefeed, or the White Demon of Mount Demavênd. The Div Sefeed, as represented in these alto-relievos and tile-paintings by the fertile fancy of the Persian artist, exhibits many of the traditional traits of demons elsewhere; and it is a comfort to know that such a horned and outlandish monster finally succumbed to the terrible blade of Rustêm, when, mounted on his famous steed Ruksh, he charged on this northern enemy of Irân. Rustêm and the Div Sefeed play a part in the legends of Persia similar to that ascribed to Saint George and the Dragon in the history of England. But it must not be forgotten that the re-



OLD MURAL PAINTING OF TILES FROM PALACE OF SHAH ABBAS.

vival of this and numerous other legends in the decorative art of Persia is directly due to the profound impression made on the national character by the Shah Namêh of Firdôusee. It is a singular fact, however, — a fact which has scarcely attracted the

attention of foreign students of Persian literature and history, — that there is actually a tribe existing to this day among the Elburz Mountains, or the fastnesses of ancient Hyrcania, which still bears the name of Div Sefeed. Intelligent Persians consider these Div Sefeeds to be the remnants of a redoubtable race of barbarians who were overcome by Rustêm; and that the name was given them owing to their ferocious and indomitable character. It is not often that a national legend dating back thirty or forty centuries can be so satisfactorily traced to actual occurrences.

The art in metals had been carried to a high degree of excellence in the ages preceding the Sefavean period. If no other cause for this had existed than the general pursuit of arms, the manufacture of weapons of war would alone have naturally suggested to an ingenious, refined, and warlike race the production of finely tempered and elegantly decorated weapons. The ewers and basins and other articles of domestic use, as well as the ornaments worn by the women, would also suggest a large variety of objects on which the cunning artificer could display the resources of his fancy and skill. Relics of the handiwork of the early and middle period of the Mahometan era are not wanting which show the correctness of these surmises, as also manuscripts and earthenware, both more perishable than the metal work. But these examples are now unfortunately rare, and it is to the Sefavean age that the collector must turn for the most abundant and magnificent evidences of the success reached by Persia in the metallic arts. The metals selected for developing the native talent were iron, steel, gold, silver, copper, and brass.

Ispahân was the centre of this pursuit, as it continues to be to the present day, although several cities entered into close competition in the working of special metals. The cities of the province of Khorassân — such as Meshed, Astrabâd, and Damghân — vied with the capital in the production of steel blades