



THE KINGDOM OF IRAN, OR PERSIA—No. II.

LAND-TENURES, ETC.—Property in land is of a four-fold description: 1st. "khalissa" or crown lands, which, since the confiscations of Nadir-Shah, have become very extensive; 2d. Those which belong to private individuals; 3d. Those granted to charitable and religious institutions; and, 4th. Those granted by the king for military service or in payment of salaries and annuities. Persons may become proprietors of land by inheritance, by purchase, by gift from the crown, or by reclaiming it from waste by producing the means of irrigation. In any of these cases, except the third, the proprietor's right (he not being the occupant) amounts to the privilege of exacting from the cultivator a tenth part of the produce. In the third case—that of being an assignee of crown lands—he may exact three-tenths, which include all government dues, and which he can get from the farmers. If the assignment be on the estate of another he can only demand two-tenths of the produce; or if the proprietor be the occupier of his own land, he makes what bargain he pleases with his cultivators. But the regulations for the protection of the husbandman have little or no practical influence. Almost the whole expense of the government, general and provincial, has to be defrayed by taxes on the land, the amount of which is perpetually varying, not only with the necessities of the government, but also with the character and dispositions of the governors of the different provinces. The state of the country, indeed, is such that the cultivator rarely expects to reap the fruits of his labors. His lands and houses are liable to be plundered by the retainers of every petty chief; and he and his family may be in an instant deprived of all their little capital and reduced to beggary and want. Under such circumstances, agriculture must necessarily be in the most depressed possible condition. No improvement is ever dreamed of; only the most easily worked portions of the soil are cultivated and the implements of husbandry are of the rudest and most primitive construction.

AGRICULTURE, LIVE-STOCK, ETC.—In the low lands and the southern plains the sugar-cane and orange come to perfection; the pomegranate grows wild, the cotton-plant and mulberry are extensively cultivated, large tracts are occupied by the vine, and orchards, loaded with exquisite fruits—figs, apricots, peaches, plums, cherries, apples, etc.—occur in every quarter. Even the swampy shores of the Caspian are covered with a tall growth of saline plants and canes available for building, and many other domestic purposes. In these low plains the only grain under extensive and regular culture is rice, and the principal auxiliary crops are cotton, indigo, sugar, madder, and tobacco. Another rice district, of large extent, occurs in Azerbaijan, where large rice-fields, producing rich crops, occupy the greater part of the low flats which surround Lake Ooroomiah. Irrigation is well understood and extensively practiced, and on lands apparently of no great fertility good returns are by this means obtained. In the more pastoral districts, and more especially on the fertile slopes and plains at the foot of the northern side of the Elburz chain, where luxuriant meadows are often seen, considerable attention is paid to the dairy. The stock, however, is generally of an inferior description; though black cattle, of great size and beauty, distinguished by the Indian hump, are not uncommon in Mazanderan. Sheep and goats are much more numerous; the former, chiefly of the large-tailed variety, furnish the far greater part of the animal food which is used, and no inconsiderable portion of the clothing, the wool being not only extensively spun and woven, but often allowed to remain on the skins, which are formed at once into cloaks and jackets. The latter, particularly in the province of Kerman, yield a wool little inferior to that of Cashmere. The other domestic animals are asses, generally of a large and superior description; mules, remarkably strong, hardy, and sure-footed, and used more than any other animal for transport; horses, much improved by crossing with those of Arabia, and famous for strength, speed, and beauty; and camels.

MANUFACTURES, COMMERCE, ETC.—The manufactures of Persia are more numerous than important, though in a few articles they continue to retain some of the celebrity which they acquired in early times. Among them may be mentioned various kinds of silk goods, as taffetas, velvets, and brocades, made extensively at Ispahan, Kashan, Astrabad, Yazd, and other places, not only for home consumption, but export, particularly to Turkey and Russia; carpets and felts in Khorassan, and many of the central districts of Irak-Ajemi; Arabian-cloaks and woolen stuffs, made in Khuzistan, and in large demand in the country, as well as Arabia; shawls, in imitation of those of Cashmere, made of the fine wool of the goats of Kerman; the fire-arms of Kermanshah; the swords, daggers, and other cutlery of Ispahan, Shiraz, and Meshed; the copperware of Kashan, the gold brocades of Ispahan. Coarse woollens and cottons, once made to a very great extent for the clothing of the poorer classes, have in numerous instances been entirely supplanted by the cheaper and better products of Great Britain and Russia. The internal trade is wholly carried on by caravans. The principal articles imported from the East are muslins, leather, lambs' skins, stuffs of camels' hair, shawls, nankeen, china, glass, hardware, amber, coral, precious stones, saffron, indigo, spices, etc. The exports to the East are velvets, silk and cotton stuffs, etc., from Ispahan and Yazd; articles in gold and silver, bronze lamps, copperware, etc., from Kashan; mats, lacquered ware, ivory ornaments, dates, lemons, and tobacco from Shiraz, and shawls and some other articles from Kerman. The Caspian and the Persian Gulf furnish many important items. The traffic of the former, carried on chiefly at the ports of Enzella, Balfroosh, and Astrabad, is almost entirely monopolized by Russian subjects; that of the latter, formerly carried on chiefly at the port of Gombroon, but now much more at that of Bussorah, employs a considerable number of vessels, owned for the most part by Armenian, Arab, and Indian traders. By this latter channel Great Britain imports, to some extent, broadcloths and other woollens, cotton goods, shawls, jewelry, arms, cutlery, watches, earthen and glass ware, metals, etc.; receiving chiefly in return silk, gall-nuts, madder, and other dyes. Though Persia has a considerable extent of sea-coast, both along the Caspian and the Persian Gulf, it possesses very few vessels of any description, both its coasting trade and its more distant commerce being almost entirely carried on in foreign bottoms and by foreign merchants.

PRINCIPAL TOWNS, ETC.—Teheran, the capital, is situated in lat. 35° 42' north, and long. 51° 21' east, and distant south from the Caspian about 70 miles. It is about five miles in circuit, and inclosed by an earthen wall flanked with towers, a glacis, and dry trench. Externally its appearance is picturesque; its mosques, colleges, and caravansaries in good repair, and it is well furnished with shops and bazaars, and some large palaces of the nobility; but its dwellings are mostly of earth, and the streets mean and wretchedly paved. In summer it is exceedingly unhealthy. The citadel is extensive, and comprises, besides the royal harem, a magnificent, grand saloon, the public offices, numerous baths, gardens, etc. Teheran has manufactures of carpets and hardware. Its vicinity is fertile and covered with valleys, and 20 miles north are extensive ruins. Ispahan, the ancient capital, 200 miles south of Teheran, formerly a very large and splendid city, is now almost in ruins. It stands on a plain 4,140 feet above the sea, on the banks of the Zendarood, and was formerly surrounded by a mud wall 24 miles in circuit. Nothing can exceed the beauty of the surrounding country, and the first view of the city is still imposing. A nearer view, however, dispels the illusion, though much still remains of wealth, if not of

splendor. On the south side of the river are extensive suburbs. Ispahan is at present the chief seat of Persian manufacture; its artisans are esteemed the best in the country, and its manufactures comprise all kinds of woollen fabrics, gold and silver wares, paper, fire-arms, sword-blades, glass, earthenware, etc., which are sent to Bagdad, Herat, India, and most parts of western Asia. Its population, formerly stated at 1,100,000, is now said to be only about 150,000. Tabriz or Tabreez is situated on a fine plain 5,000 feet above the sea, on a river flowing into Lake Ooroomiah, and around an extensive forest country. It is inclosed by a brick wall three and a half miles in circuit and entered by seven gates, outside of which are large suburbs and beautiful gardens. The town is miserably built, and except its citadel and the splendid ruins of a mosque it has no edifice worthy of notice; but its bazaars and caravansaries are extensive, and it is an important entrepôt of the trade between Persia, India, Russia, Constantinople, and the Black Sea. Between \$6,000,000 and \$7,000,000 worth of European goods are annually sold in its bazaars. It is also the seat of some silk manufactures. Ooroomiah, 12 miles west of the lake, is a fortified city of some 20,000 inhabitants, and is reputed to have been the birthplace of Zoroaster, the founder of the ancient Magian religion.

Hamadan, the ancient Ecbatana, is a large and celebrated city, but is meanly built, and now partly in ruins. Some carpet and silk weaving are carried on, and the city has a large trade in leather, and is the entrepôt for the commerce between Bagdad and the capital. Kermanshah occupies two or three small hills at the western extremity of a broad plain near the right bank of the Kerah, 280 miles west-south-west of Teheran. It is surrounded by an earth wall three miles in circuit, and entered by five gates. The routes from Bagdad, Shuster in the desert, Ispahan by way of Hamadan and Sulimaneeyeh, all meeting here, make it the entrepôt of a considerable traffic. Shuster, on the Karun, 150 miles from the sea, stands on a small hill crowned by a citadel, and on the land side it is inclosed by a brick wall, outside of which the Ab-i-Gargar canal, constructed by Shahpou I. separates it from its suburb, and establishes a navigable communication with the river about 20 miles distant. To within five miles of the city the Karun itself is well adapted for steam navigation. The city possesses many elegant buildings, and the houses are mostly built of stone. Population about 10,000. In 1832 it was nearly depopulated by the plague, and in 1840 was much damaged by an inundation. Kashan, 92 miles north of Ispahan, on the route to Teheran, is a large and one of the most flourishing towns of the Kingdom. It has extensive manufactures, chiefly of silk stuffs, and an active trade in agricultural produce. Population 30,000 to 40,000 souls. Reshd, between two small rivers 16 miles south-east of its port Enzella, on the Caspian, though occupying a very unhealthy site, is stated to be a well-built and flourishing town. It imports large quantities of Russian goods, and exports silks, fruits, etc. Balfroosh, on the Bahbul, 12 miles from the Caspian, is built in the midst of a forest, large, straggling, and interspersed with gardens. The streets, broad and straight, are unpaved, the houses mostly of brick, bazaars and caravansaries numerous, and there are from 20 to 30 Mohammedan colleges. Balfroosh has a large general trade, and communicates with its port on the Caspian by a good road. Astrabad is situated at the foot of the Elburz range and on a small stream which falls into Astrabad Bay in the south-east part of the Caspian, 20 miles below. A great part of the town is in ruins. None of the buildings are worthy of particular notice. The manufactures are chiefly confined to a few silk and cotton stuffs, and though the site seems well fitted to make it the key of commerce between the East and the Caspian, the trade is not large. The great obstacle to its prosperity, however, is its unhealthy location, which has obtained for it the ominous name of the City of the Plague. Being the cradle of the reigning royal family, it is always governed by a prince of the blood.

Meshed or Mushed, a walled city, of the province Khorassan, stands on a fertile plain in the north-east part of the country, lat. 36° 18' north, and long. 59° 25' east. It contains the superb mausoleum of the Imam Reza, the magnificence of which, with its silver gates, jeweled doors, rails once of solid gold, is scarcely equalled in Persia. Otherwise it is a place noted for its manufactures of velvets, etc., and it maintains an active trade with Bokhara, Candahar, Herat, etc. Population 45,000. Nishapoor, 40 miles west-south-west of Meshed, and in one of the finest valleys of Khorassan, is inclosed by a rampart and trench about two miles in circuit. It is partly in ruins, but is still important, and has a special trade in turquoises obtained from mines about 38 miles to the north-west. Iron and salt are also products of its district. Population about 10,000. Yazd is a large and flourishing city near the east foot of a mountain range in the Persian desert, lat. 32° 10' north, and long. 56° 8' east. Its walls, exclusive of the citadel, are separately fortified, and surrounded by a deep trench. Its bazaars are spacious, and it has flourishing manufactures of velvets and other silk fabrics, cotton and woolen goods, arms, and leaf-sugar. Among the population, numbering in all 30,000, are many Parsees or Ghebers (fire-worshippers), this being nearly the only place in Persia which this relic of an almost extinct sect inhabits. Shiraz, in a valley famous for its gardens and fertility, 4,500 feet above the sea, and 120 miles east-north-east Bushire, is a walled town, and though meanly built has many splendid public edifices. Shiraz has manufactures of silk and woolen stuffs, swords, earthenware, etc., but is best known for a wine having a high reputation throughout Persia. Its commerce is extensive, and salt from adjacent lakes is forwarded on mules to most of the inland cities. Bushire is the principal entrepôt of commerce on the Persian Gulf; lat. 28° 48', and long. 50° 52'. Its population, variously estimated at 15,000 to 20,000, consists chiefly of Persians, Arabs, and Armenians. On the land side it is protected by a wall with round towers, and on the other side inclosed by the sea, which on the north forms a harbor lined by wharves. Being built of white stone, and furnished with hollow turrets for ventilation, it has externally a handsome appearance, but its streets are narrow and unpaved, and good houses few in number. Its public buildings comprise only a few inferior mosques, the palace, a depot of the East India Company, etc. Vessels of 300 tons lie in a roadstead six miles from the city. Bushire, however, has a large trade with British India and the ports of the Persian Gulf, etc. Lar, the capital of Laristan, and formerly of an Arabian kingdom, stands on an extensive plain, 180 miles south-east Shiraz. It is the seat of some considerable manufactures of fire-arms, gunpowder, and cotton fabrics. Population 10,000 to 12,000. Kerman stands in a plain commanded by two hill-forts, and has a citadel and various fine buildings. It was formerly very flourishing, and its inhabitants still manufacture shawls, carpets, matchlocks, etc. Gombroon, a sea-port town of Persia (but latterly forming a part of the Muskat dominions), is situated on the Persian Gulf, near its mouth. It was formerly a place of considerable trade, but this has been transferred to Balfroosh, and the town at present contains scarcely 5,000 inhabitants.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.—Few nations began at an earlier period to appear on the great stage of the world, and few have continued so long to perform a prominent part upon it. According to the description of Persian geographers, when their country was in its greatest glory, its territory comprehended four seas—the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf; and six great rivers—the Euphrates, Tigris,

Araxes, Phasis, Oxus, and Indus. Passing over a series of fabulous dynasties, we arrive at that of the Achemenides or Kainians, which commenced about 720 B. C., and furnishes the first records which can be considered authentic. Shortly after this period Persia appears to have been merely a province of the Assyrian Empire, on the disruption of which it fell under the power of the Medes, B. C. 709. Dejoce, the founder of the Median monarchy, was followed at some distance by Cyaxares, whose successor was Astyages. With his dethronement, in B. C. 560, the Median dynasty terminated, and the true founder of the Persian monarchy, one of the most distinguished characters of ancient times, appears upon the stage. Cyrus the Great having established his ascendancy over the Medes, carried his victorious arms into the West, overthrew Croesus, king of Lydia, and, fulfilling a series of Scripture prophecies, by the conquest of Babylon and its dependencies, extended his empire to the shores of the Mediterranean. An expedition against the Scythians proved fatal to him, B. C. 529, and he was succeeded by his son Cambyses, the most important event of whose reign was his conquest of Egypt. On his death, an impostor, pretending to be his brother Smerdis, mounted the throne; but shortly after, on the discovery of the fraud, was slain by the nobles, who then gave the crown to one of their own number called Darius Hystaspes, who pushed his conquests into the East as far as the Indus. In the West the lands of Asia proved too narrow for his ambition, and he passed over into Europe. Here, after making various conquests, he encountered the Greeks, by whom he was defeated on the field of Marathon. His successor, Xerxes, having marched toward Greece at the head of the most gigantic armament which the world has yet beheld, first at Salamis, and then at Platea, met with even greater disasters than those which had befallen his predecessors, and with difficulty saved his life by almost solitary flight across the Hellespont. Greece now assumed the offensive, and after many years of struggle, almost always disastrous to Persia, a new conqueror appeared in Alexander the Great, and completed her downfall. The Macedonian Empire was soon broken up by the death of its founder, and Persia, become only one of its fragments, was long passed from hand to hand among contending competitors. About B. C. 174 it fell into the hands of the Parthians, and was ruled by Mithridates I., under whom the Parthian power extended from the Indus to the Euphrates. Rome was now in her full career of conquest, and Parthia was well fitted both to tempt her ambition and try her prowess. The first direct intercourse between them took place B. C. 93, when Mithridates II. sent an embassy to Sylla. In less than 40 years after war between them had commenced, and though by no means always to the advantage of the mistress of the world, the greater part of Persia was ultimately held as a fief of the Roman Empire. Struggles for independence, however, continued to be almost incessantly made in the times both of the Greek and Roman emperors, and Persia produced several native princes whose fame as warriors or improvers of their country is still held in lively remembrance. They belong to what is called the Sassanian dynasty, which commenced as early as A. D. 226, and continued, though under circumstances of greater or less depression, till 531, when it succeeded in surmounting all obstacles, and attained its highest prosperity under the celebrated Khosru-Nushervan, who swayed the sceptre over realms scarcely less extensive than those which Persia possessed in the time of Xerxes. At a later period (A. D. 590-628) another Khosru, distinguished by the name of Khosru-Perwiz, after commencing his reign by a series of brilliant and extensive conquests, sustained a number of most disastrous reverses, and at last perished by the hand of his own son. The paricide was not long permitted to benefit by his crime; death overtook him six months after, and during the confusion which ensued, a new party, destined to change the face of Persia and greater part of the East, appeared. The Arabs had now commenced their career of Mohammedan conquests, and by the decisive battles of Cadesia, A. D. 636, and Nehavend, A. D. 641, extinguished the Sassanian dynasty, and substituted that of the Caliphs, during whose ascendancy, for the two subsequent centuries, the history of Persia becoming blended with that of Arabia and the other realms subject to these potentates, ceases to be national. This long period, however, did not pass away without vast changes, among which the most astonishing is the extirpation of the ancient religion and the general adoption of Mohammedanism. About the middle of the ninth century the spirit of independence revived, and a new dynasty arose in the person of Yakub Ibn Laïs, who threw off allegiance to the Caliphs, and reigned sovereign at Shiraz over territories nearly identical with modern Persia. It is impossible here to follow in detail the numerous changes which have subsequently taken place. In the beginning of the eleventh century the Seljookian Turks made their descent from central Asia, and succeeded in placing their sultan, Togral-Beg, on the Persian throne. His successors retained possession till the last of the line was slain in 1194 by the Shah of Khariam, who had scarcely established a Khariamian dynasty, when the famous Genghis Khan made his appearance at the head of 700,000 Moguls, and crushing all opposition, ruled Persia with a rod of iron. The Mogul ascendancy was maintained after his death in 1258, first by his immediate descendants, and afterward by the hereditary nobles, who, throwing off allegiance to a common head, divided the country into a number of separate and hostile independencies. This state of matters was suddenly terminated in 1381 by the invasion of Tamerlane and his Tartars, who spread devastation wherever they appeared. All Persia was completely at his feet, when he was carried off by death in 1404. The anarchy of petty independencies again returned, but was finally suppressed in 1502 by Ismail Shah, who, partly by valor, and partly by the reputed sanctity of his race as descended from Mohammed, worked his way to the Persian throne, and founded the Seff or Soofee dynasty, which reached its greatest prosperity during the reign of Abbas the Great (A. D. 1586-1627). This prosperity faded away during the feeble reigns which succeeded, and in 1723 a successful revolt of the Affghans, followed by a series of victories, enabled them to place the Persian crown on the head of their chief, Meer-Mohammed. The Affghan ascendancy soon yielded to the prowess of the celebrated general Nadir-Koeli, who, after fighting professedly in defense of the Soofeean dynasty, declared it at an end, and formally assuming the sovereignty which he had long virtually possessed, began to reign in 1736 under the title of Nadir-Shah. His extraordinary talents raised Persia to a remarkable degree of power and influence. One of his most memorable exploits was the invasion of India in 1739, when he took Delhi and obtained booty which has been valued at £30,000,000. His greater qualities were counterbalanced by cruelty and avarice, and he was assassinated in 1747. A period of confusion succeeded, and was not terminated till 1795, when Aga-Mohammed-Khan-Kajar, of Turcoman origin, ascended the throne and became the founder of the Kajar dynasty. The very common fate of Persian sovereigns awaited him, and in 1797, before he had reigned two years, he was murdered by his attendants. His nephew, Rabak-Khan, succeeded him under the name of Feth-Ali-Shah. The most remarkable events of his reign were two disastrous wars with Russia, the one ending in 1813, with the loss of extensive territories along the Caspian; and the other in 1828, with the loss of Erivan and all the country north of the Araxes. In 1833 he was succeeded by his grandson, Mohammed Mirza. The present year (1855) has witnessed the prowess of the Persians in the capture of Herat.