

• PERSIA PAST AND PRESENT

A BOOK OF TRAVEL AND RESEARCH

WITH MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

BY

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that some idea of her religious history must be given in order to make clear many points in the chapters which follow.

Zoroastrianism was the ancient faith of Iran and is important because of the likenesses which it presents to Judaism and Christianity.¹ A phase of this religion known as Mithraism penetrated into the Roman world during the early Christian ages and spread so rapidly in many parts of Europe that altars were set up and cave-temples built to celebrate the mysteries of the Persian divinity Mithra and to glorify this personification of light, the sun, and truth. Furthermore, the system of Manichæism, which sprang up on Persian soil, was powerful enough to compete for a time with Neo-Platonism and Christianity for the religious and intellectual supremacy of the Roman Empire. Mohammedanism is the religion of Persia to-day, as she accepted Islam at the time of the Arab conquest, but Persia belongs to the Shiite sect of the faith and acknowledges Ali, Mohammed's first cousin and son-in-law, as the Prophet's successor in opposition to the Sunnite branch of Islam. She is in fact the chief representative of Shiism and has been largely instrumental in the growth of this factional movement which divides the Mohammedan world with a bloody schism. In Persia, moreover, within the last seventy years a new religious movement, eclectic in its character and known as Babism, has sprung up and assumed such proportions as to menace the universal supremacy of Mohammedanism in Iran and even to attract attention and some followers in the Occident.

In art and architecture Persia is renowned for the grandeur of some of her ancient monuments and for the beauty and decorative design of much of her later work. In both these fields she is believed to have borrowed in early times largely from Assyria and Babylon and slightly from Egypt, and later also from Greece, Rome, and Byzantium, as well as somewhat from China. Nevertheless she has dealt with the importations

¹ See pp. 57-59, below.

armies are as numerous as the stars; whose greatness calls to mind that of Jemshid; whose magnificence equals that of Darius; the Heir of the Crown and Throne of the Kaianians; the Sublime Emperor of all Persia: being equally and sincerely desirous of establishing relations of friendship between the two governments which they wish to strengthen by a treaty of commerce and friendship and useful to the citizens and subjects of the two high contracting parties — have for this purpose named for their plenipotentiaries . . .’

Then the names of the respective appointees are given and these are followed by a series of eight articles regarding the friendly and diplomatic relations of the two countries and treating of matters of trade and commerce, as well as the obligations to be fulfilled by both parties and the privileges to be enjoyed. The various items of the treaty contain the ‘most favored nation clause’ throughout, so that the United States is entitled to the same rights and privileges in commercial matters as any other nation.

Trade between our country and Persia is yet in its infancy, as is shown by the Consular Reports; but there are several points to which attention may be called as significant. Russia has the bulk (about fifty per cent) of Persia’s export and import trade; Great Britain comes next with about twenty-five per cent; the remainder goes to ‘other countries,’ under which general heading the United States is also included. The lately appointed Persian Minister to Washington emphasizes the possibility of an extensive increase in the trade between his country and our own; and Mr. John Tyler, our Vice-Consul-General at Teheran, shows in his recent reports that there is at least a prospective opening for American manufactures, especially for agricultural machinery, and a growing demand for American merchandise.

‘American lamps, clocks, matches, and locks have a steadily increasing sale in the Teheran bazaars, especially locks, which excel in mechanical complexity, combined with lightness and convenience of handling (important considerations), anything hitherto put on sale. American hand pumps and cooking and warming stoves find

appreciative purchasers and should, with proper management and competitive enterprise, soon monopolize the market.'

From experience I can understand how so indispensable an article as the padlock is in Persia might find a ready market. The wholesale introduction of clocks, I believe, is one of the greatest needs in timeless Persia, but I fear that their general use will depend largely upon the introduction of railroads, which would help to spread more widely the idea that time and money are synonyms. I might add that the admiration shown by the natives for the leather articles in my travelling-outfit leads me to think that American straps, clasps, buckles, riding-leggings, and top-boots would find a good sale, for the Persians themselves are capable workers in leather and know how to appreciate a good calfskin product. The time, therefore, may not be distant when we shall see a larger sale both of American merchandise and of 'Yankee notions' in the bazaars of Persia and a complimentary import in return of precious stones, like the topaz, pearls from the Persian Gulf, silks, shawls, and embroideries, besides the well-known consignments of carpets and rugs.

Not far from the bazaars is a large public square to which a particular interest attaches, not because of the armory and the gunsmiths' shops, the arsenal, prison, royal stables, and buildings belonging to the Crown Prince, but because it was the scene of the execution of the Bab, a Persian reformer, on July 9, 1850. This religious enthusiast and moral teacher, whose real name was Mirza Ali Mohammed, was born in Shiraz about the year 1820. He was trained at first to commercial life, but a pilgrimage to Kerbela and Najaf, and afterward to Mecca, awakened in his heart the religious enthusiasm which made him devote his life henceforth to developing the tenets which he held. Upon his return to his native city, about 1844, he assumed the title of *Báb*, or 'Gate' leading to the spiritual life. His religious views were somewhat eclectic; his doctrines leaned toward a mystic pantheism, with elements

of gnosticism, and were of a highly moral order, and so liberal as to include steps toward the emancipation of woman.

In the eyes of the strict Mohammedan, however, the tenets upheld by the Bab were rank heresy. Nevertheless, they spread rapidly and awakened such intense sympathy among those who were dissatisfied with the régime maintained by the Persian mullahs, on the one hand, and raised such bitter opposition, on the other, among those who were pronouncedly conservative, that they led finally to bloody conflicts which resulted in the imprisonment of the Bab. He was ultimately taken to Tabriz and there condemned to be shot. The place of execution was this very square of the arsenal and gunsmiths which I am describing. Cords were passed under his arms, and he was suspended from the wall above a small shop which was pointed out to me. By his side was suspended also a devoted disciple, a young merchant of Tabriz, and orders were given to the soldiers to fire their volley. When the smoke cleared away, the body of the young follower of the Bab was discovered, riddled with bullets ; but by some strange hap the Bab had escaped. The shots had simply cut the cords that held him, so that he fell to the ground unhurt and took refuge in the shop below. He was probably dazed ; for had he retained his presence of mind, he might at once have turned the incident into a miracle before the astonished multitude. He was seized, however, dragged forth from the shop and again suspended, and shot to death by a different company of soldiers, since the first absolutely refused to fire another volley. The bodies of the two religious martyrs were then cruelly dragged through the streets and thrown to the dogs and birds, but they were afterward taken up and buried by sympathetic Babis, as the movement had gained a large number of adherents. It still has many followers, despite the persecution to which the sect has been subjected.¹

¹ See Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, pp. 58-64, and especially the same author's translation of the *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd, or New History of*

Babism, in fact, is not confined to Persia, but has adherents in Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, India, and even in America, where some of its believers have tried to disseminate their doctrines.¹

On the opposite side of the same public square, in the prison, another religious martyr was executed some years ago. This was a Mohammedan priest who had abjured Islam and adopted Christianity. He was cast into prison, confined in an upper room which looks out upon the square, and, after being nearly starved to death, was finally strangled by a bowstring, refusing to the last to renounce his belief in Christ.

One afternoon of my stay in Tabriz was devoted to a visit to the gardens and summer palace of the Vali Ahd, or Crown Prince, who makes this city his chosen place of residence, as his predecessors have done for the past hundred years. This summer abode, with its fine garden, lies on the southern side of the city, although it is called 'Northern Garden' (*Bāgh-i Shamāl*), having taken that name from an older residence on the north side which it replaced. The snow lay so deep when I saw it that I could gain no real impression of what the park might be in spring and summer, but the driveways and avenues of trees were attractively laid out, the arched gateway of brick was effective as an entrance, and the palace itself more worthy of the name than some of the so-called palaces in Persia, which are not always kept up well.

In paying visits in the city I learned something of the native etiquette, which has a great deal of charm as well as formality. The Persians are distinctly a social people and their manners in company are extremely polite. Their vo-

Mirzā 'Alī Muḥammad the Bāb, by *Mirzā Huseyn of Hamadān*, pp. 299-312, especially pp. 303-306, Cambridge, 1893; compare also Browne, *The Episode of the Bāb*, 2. 43-45, 182, 190, 321-322, Cambridge, 1891.

¹There is a society of Babists in Chicago who call themselves Behaists, after Beha Ullah, who claimed to be the successor of the Bab and a manifestation of the glory of God. See *Open Court*, 18. 355 seq., 398 seq., Chicago, 1904.

cabulary of etiquette is rich in courteous phrases and complimentary terms, and the *salāms*, or benedictions of peace, which form part of the greeting to the visitor, serve as a charming introduction to conversation.

When a visit is to be paid to a person of rank, it is customary for the visitor to send word in advance to inquire of the dignitary what hour would be convenient for receiving the call. The response comes back couched in some courteous phrase and names the time, 'two hours before sunset,' or perhaps earlier, as the case may be. On being ushered into the reception chamber, we find ourselves in a large room, richly carpeted with soft rugs and lined with divans, but otherwise little furnished except with a few chairs for Europeans when they are received. The host enters a moment later and comes forward to greet his guest. As an Oriental he appears in his stocking feet, for shoes are forbidden indoors, and wears his black lambskin cap (*kulāh*), as it would be bad form to have the head uncovered. His polite *salām aleikum*, 'Peace be unto you,' is responded to in kind, with a mutual inquiry about the 'august health' of each, after which the talk proceeds easily and unaffectedly.

In a few minutes one of the troop of servants enters, bringing the *ḡaliān*, or water-pipe, as an added mark of hospitable attention. This pipe stands about two feet high and is somewhat elaborate in its structure. The base is a large glass vessel of a graceful shape, holding a quart of water. From this vase there rises the tube of the pipe, which is about fifteen inches long, made of dark wood, sometimes elaborately carved, and capped by a China bowl, which is usually decorated with a picture of the Shah and a fringe of silver chains hanging from its rim. The tobacco is placed in this bowl, after the leaves have been moistened and squeezed out, and a square piece of charcoal is used to light it and left burning on the top while the pipe is in use. The stem itself is about eighteen inches long, and is inserted into the water-vase at a convenient angle. It is made of the same dark wood as the tube and is capped

with a mouthpiece of silver. In using the pipe the smoke is not drawn by whiffs into the cheeks, as in the case of a cigar, but is inhaled in long draughts directly into the lungs, the strength of the nicotine being diminished somewhat in passing through the water, which is occasionally also scented. After three or four long puffs it is *en règle* to pass the pipe to the next person at the right and so on throughout the company. A tray of sweetmeats and some tea served in tiny glasses form an additional course and complete the hospitality, and then the guest asks permission to 'remove the cause of trouble to the host,' and take his leave, which is finally granted after a variety of protests. Formality is resumed at the final leave-taking, and many compliments are passed in saying good-by.

The Persians at their banquets, I am told, show the same grace in entertaining, and the conversation is easy, bright, and witty. There is a great variety of courses, if we count the sweets, dried fruit, and other delicacies, which are partaken during the evening before the solid dishes are served. This takes place before the company is to break up, so that the latter are hardly more than a supplement to the lighter delicacies which precede them. The custom with the ancient Persians was the same. Herodotus says that 'the Persians indulge in very few solid dishes, but they eat many desserts, which are not served up on the table all together at the same time.' He adds, 'the Persians are very much addicted to wine.'¹ Since the time of Mohammed this abuse has been forbidden, but the injunctions of the Koran in this respect are not so strictly complied with as they might be. I was informed also that an occasional feature of lavish entertainments is an exhibition of dancing boys, somewhat similar to the nautch girls of India. These boys are said to be handsome youths, but spoiled and effeminate, like those at Bokhara and Samarkand, and it may have been

¹ Herodotus, *History*, 1. 133, cf. *Persians*, pp. 108-111; Wilson, *Persian Life*, p. 243 seq.
See also Browne, *A Year Amongst the*

against such minions as these that some of the shafts of Zoroaster's invective in the Avesta were launched.¹

Although situated in a region which was historically connected with Zoroaster's name, Tabriz yielded little for my researches in that respect: first, because Mohammedanism has obliterated the traces of Zoroastrianism; second, because the winter season prevented my making investigations in the mountains, which possibly might have yielded some results. I was particularly anxious, for example, to ascend Mount Sahand, the mountain which possibly may be identical with Asnavand of the Avesta, but the heavy snows cut off all approach. Still more inaccessible at this time of year was Mount Savalan, near Ardabil, three or four days' journey distant from Tabriz. This is the mountain which I think is to be identified with the 'Mount of the two Holy Communicants' in the Avesta, where Zoroaster communed with Ormazd. A number of the Oriental writers, such as Ibn Haukal (tenth century), Kazvini (1263), Mirkhond (1474), and others, expressly record the tradition that Zoroaster received a revelation from Ormazd on the heights of the Iranian Sinai and that he wrote the Avesta there.² Among these authorities is the author of the *Suvar Aklāim Sab'ah*, or 'Outline of Countries,' who, writing in Persian, about A.D. 1400, attributes the tremendous snows around Ardabil, near which Mount Savalan rises, to a curse uttered against the people by Zoroaster because they rejected his faith. The fulfilment of this anathema seemed to me a veritable fact, for I had to abandon all hope of reaching Savalan, owing to the snow-bound roads, and to content myself with a distant view of this sacred mountain from the Caspian Sea when I returned to Baku in June. One of the

¹ Avesta, Ys. 51. 12; Vd. 8. 26, 27, 32, etc.; see also Herodotus, *History*, 1. 185.

² See my *Zoroaster*, pp. 34, 195; consult also Stackelberg, *Persische Sagen Geschichte*, in *Wiener Zeitschrift*

für Kunde des Morgenlandes, 12. 230-234, Wien, 1898, and Brunnhofer, *Vom Pontus bis zum Indus*, p. 182, Leipzig, 1893; see also Ibn Haukal, tr. Ouseley, p. 173.

native lords of the district about Tabriz, Anton Khan, an Armenian, gave me some description of the crater of Mount Savalan and of the hot springs which Kazvini mentions, but he said there is no tradition that he knew of, regarding the Fire-Worshippers in this region.¹ Another lord, Sadir Khan, a Persian, informed me about an ash-hillock of a fire-temple at Marand which I had missed on my way to Tabriz.

My inquiries regarding inscriptions or sculptures in the vicinity of Tabriz did not result in eliciting any information,² but I found that coins and gems are occasionally unearthed in the neighborhood. I purchased several specimens of coins dating from the Parthian and Sasanian periods, and a seal which is of considerable interest because of its age, as it is certainly to be attributed to the Achæmenian era. The seal is oval in shape, flat on the carved face and rounded at the back, and it measures one inch by three fourths of an inch (twenty-five centimeters by twenty centimeters). The stone is a blue chalcedony or sapphirine, which came into use during the early Persian period. It is carved with the figure of a king or warrior, slaying a monster with his dagger, somewhat after the manner of the sculptures at Persepolis. The working out of the design, in my judgment, shows too much originality to be a mere later imitation of this motive, and there is no evidence to show that the seal is a forgery. I am supported in my view that it belongs to Achæmenian times by other scholars who have seen it, among them Dr. William Hayes Ward, of New York, an authority on seals and cylinders.

The last day of my stay at Tabriz, which I should gladly have prolonged in order to enjoy the hospitality extended from many sides, was spent in making visits among friends in the

¹ It was still famed as a seat of Magism in the tenth century of our era, according to Ibn Haukal, tr. Ouseley, p. 173.

² I saw at the French Consulate at

Tabriz a fragment of an Ancient Persian cuneiform inscription, but it had been brought from Susa by M. de Morgan and, I believe, already published.

of the sons of Imam Musa, a champion of Islam.¹ Yet in architectural merit neither this nor any of the other religious edifices, madrasahs, mausoleums, or baths can rival those of several other cities in Persia. The grand bazaar, *Bāzār-i Vakil*, 'Regent's Bazaar,' is a fine structure, due again to the munificence of Karim Khan, and it carries on a fairly flourishing trade; but the caravansarais are not particularly spacious, nor are the streets of the city beautiful; the Ark, or Citadel, on the other hand, is rather imposing. The best-constructed of the modern buildings in the town is that occupied by the offices of the Indo-European Telegraph Company. It was formerly a palace and has a fine courtyard of stone, while its hallways and roomy chambers seemed to me Western in their style of architecture rather than Eastern.² This touch of the West brought me in another way also nearer home, for I found an opportunity to send a cablegram to America—a welcome experience after having been cut off from direct communication with home since I left Urumiah.

Buildings of brick, mortar, and stone are not the glory of Shiraz; it owes its renown rather to the causes which I shall now enumerate. In the first place the natural beauty of its environs is greatly enhanced by cultivation and by art. The entire plain surrounding the city is well cultivated, and owing to its tropical situation (for Shiraz is nearer to the equator than is the northern part of India) it yields abundantly to tillage and irrigation. The vineyards around the city produce the best wine in Persia, a product for which Shiraz has ever been famous. There are two varieties of this wine, a red and a white; the taste of the white wine reminded me somewhat of a Marsala.

The gardens and rose-bowers of Shiraz are still more famous. Within the city and on its outskirts there are dozens of these

¹ On the latter point compare also Curzon, *Persia*, 2. 102.

this building, see Weeks, *From the Black Sea*, p. 116.

² For some of the artistic points of

pleasure-grounds, some of which still retain their beauty despite the neglect into which they have fallen. The Persian garden in general is somewhat different from its counterpart in other lands and is more like an orchard, a horticultural enclosure, than a garden in the narrower landscape sense; in fact the ordinary Persian word for 'garden,' *bāgh*, may sometimes best be rendered by our word 'orchard,' with little of the connotation of 'flower-garden.' Instead of being winding paths, the walks are usually laid out in straight lines, with brick and tile borders, while terraces also are constructed whenever possible, as in our own gardens, and finished with stonework and masonry. A reservoir of water, even if its basin be only a small tank, necessarily graces the area, and luxury may add a fountain and cascades falling over stone slabs, but water is a precious article, and lavishness in this regard is equivalent to extravagance, even if nature responds liberally to the smallest drop of the precious liquid. Shade trees like the poplar (*ḵalam*), willow (*bīd*), cypress (*sarv*), plane tree or sycamore (*chinār*), line the walks or mark off the grass-plots, while the shrubbery varies considerably according to the latitude.¹

The main road into Shiraz from the Allahu Akbar Gate, is lined on either side with gardens, two of which on the east, the *Chahal Tan*, 'Forty Bodies,' and the *Haft Tan*, 'Seven Bodies,' are rather large pleasure-groves and a resort for dervishes, and may be seen in the photographic reproduction, with the Tomb of Hafiz in the background.² On the western side there are corresponding enclosures, and one of the most characteristic of these is the *Bāgh-i Takht*, 'Garden of the Throne,' to which I paid a special visit. It stands on rising ground overlooking the city from the northwest, and was laid out by the victorious Kajar ruler Agha Mohammed

¹ For illustrations of Persian gardens, see Mumford, *Glimpses of Modern Persia*, in *House, and Garden*, 2. 175-191, 360-373, Philadelphia, 1902.

² See also the comments of E. G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 278.

Khan, who constructed it on the site of an older garden admirably adapted for the purpose by its location. Terrace rises above terrace, and fountain, channel, and stream pour their waters in cascades over slabs of marble into reservoirs faced with stone. The watercourses are edged with masonry, and the walks bordered with cypress and orange trees. At the time of my visit the large reservoir in the centre was full, though the cascades no longer flowed, and I understand that in the drought of summer everything dries up and dust prevails everywhere. The walls around the enclosure and leading up the terraces were not kept up and were consequently beginning to crumble, while the pavilion which once graced the upper terrace was deserted and in ruins. Yet there remained enough of by-gone luxury to tell how beautiful this little Luxembourg must have been formerly, and it still offers to the Shirazi an attractive place to visit in the cool of the evening.¹

The true renown of Shiraz, as I have implied, rests not upon the beauties of nature, which I have been describing, but upon the fame of her poets and the distinguished men she has given to Iran. Not the least known among the latter class is one of recent memory, the Bab, whose religious reform in the past century I have mentioned in an earlier chapter.² The list of notable Shirazis was already a long one when Yakut wrote, seven hundred years ago (c. A.D. 1220), yet even he had not lived to be aware of the future greatness of his younger contemporary, Saadi, or to know that one of the world's greatest lyrists, Hafiz, would be born in Shiraz.

Hafiz, whose birth occurred some time in the first half of the fourteenth century, is known almost as well, by name at least, in the West as he is in the East, where every Persian is familiar with his odes, which have made Shiraz a synonym for poetic inspiration. The beauty of his language, the charm of his

¹ For descriptions of the gardens, see also Weeks, *From the Black Sea*, p. 116; Browne, *A Year Amongst*

the Persians, p. 279; Curzon, *Persia*, 2. 104.

² See pp. 48-50, above.

and another Gabar, who was mistaken for him, was killed by the enraged Musulmans.¹

As regards their dress, moreover, the Zoroastrians have always been obliged to adopt a style that would distinguish them from the Mohammedans, and it is only within the last ten years that they could wear any color except yellow, gray, or brown, and the wearing of white stockings was long interdicted. The use of spectacles and eye-glasses, and the privilege of carrying an umbrella, have been allowed only within the same decade, and even now the Gabars are not permitted to ride in the streets or to make use of the public baths (*hamām*); but the latter prohibition, as they told me, is no longer a hardship, because they have built a bathing-establishment for their own use. A score of petty annoyances that they have to undergo might be cited in addition to the more serious disqualifications; but enough have been given to show the disadvantages under which they labor and the persecutions to which they are exposed.

In 1898 the present Shah, Muzaffar ad-Din, sought to relieve their condition further by issuing a firman revoking the formal disabilities from which they suffered. While imperfectly observed, this decree has contributed, in spirit at least, to bettering their position. The spread of Babist doctrines, which favor religious liberty and toleration, has possibly contributed also by lessening intolerance on the part of the Mohammedans. The presence of Europeans has likewise had a salutary effect and aided considerably in the general advance. But the most has been done by the Bombay Society for the Amelioration of the Zoroastrians in Persia, whose funds have helped the Gabars and whose reform measures have tended to their general good, so that their numbers have increased considerably within the

¹ For this point and the next, see Malcolm, *Five Years in a Persian Town*, pp. 46, 49, London and New York, 1905. This interesting book on life at Yezd appeared after the present chapter was written, but I have been

able to incorporate one or two references, and I would recommend to the reader's attention Mr. Malcolm's remarks on the restrictions in general upon the Gabars (pp. 44-53).

last fifty years.¹ Nevertheless, they still do not feel themselves free from oppression, and they constantly have to avoid trouble and persecution by yielding to Moslem prejudice. In fact, their lives are in danger whenever the fanatical spirit of Islam breaks out, as was the case about a month after I was in Yezd. A general Musulman rising then took place against the Babis, a large number of whom belonging to the Behai branch are found at Yezd. These Babis were massacred by scores, and even hundreds, or were subjected to shocking outrages and cruel indignities. The Zoroastrians feared that they would suffer the same fate, and I was informed on the authority of one who had witnessed the horrors that such might have been the case if the fanatical wave had not been broken in its course by the prompt and energetic intervention of the Europeans in telegraphic communication with the authorities in power at Teheran.

The organization of the Zoroastrian community at Yezd has already been indicated in a general way. The spiritual guidance is in the hands of the priesthood (dasturs, mobeds, and herbeds), but the authority which they exercise is greatly limited by the fact that those who do not wish for any reason to accept it can simply throw it off and act in accordance with the rule of the Moslems around them.² In civic matters the community is under the leadership of a synod, the *Anjuman* (Av. *hanjamana*, 'assembly, convention'), headed by a *kalāntar*, or mayor, the present incumbent of that office being Kalantar Dinyar Bahram, whose hospitality I have described, and whose

¹In 1854 the number of Zoroastrians in the vicinity of Yezd was given at 6658 souls (Karaka, *History of the Parsis*, 1. 55); in 1882 as about 6483 (Houtum-Schindler, *Die Parsen in Persien*, in *ZDMG.* 26. 54); in 1903 as between 8000 and 8500, including the environs of Yezd (these last figures being given to me in Teheran by Mr.

Ardeshir Reporter, Secretary of the Society for the Amelioration of the Zoroastrians).

²For the relations between the spiritual and temporal powers in ancient times, see Wilhelm, *Kingship and Priesthood in Ancient Eran*, pp. 1-21, Bombay, 1892 (translated from his German treatise in *ZDMG.* 40. 102-110).

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