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LECTURE.

Friday, March 7, 1879.

Major-General Sir HENRY C. RAWLINSON, K.C.B., F.R.S.,
in the Chair.

PERSIA; AND ITS MILITARY RESOURCES.

By Major-General Sir Frederic J. GOLDSMID, C.B., K.C.S.I.

THE subject on which I have been asked to say a few words to-day, and which I had honestly hoped would have been taken up by a more skilled exponent, carries us back to the remote ages of the world. Even Scriptural history, where it deals with Persian conquerors and their armies, includes periods open to archæological investigation at the present hour. The books of Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel in the Old Testament, and of Esdras and Tobit in the Apocrypha, relate to especially interesting annals of ancient Persia. Allusion to such high authority, where made, will be incidental; but it will not be foreign to our purpose to see what is said by classical writers on the army of Xerxes, moving on westward to Thermopylæ, 480 years before the Christian era.

We get at particulars of military divisions and sub-divisions, however round the numbers, and of dress and equipment, from Herodotus. As to the strength of the whole invading force, the Scriptural expression "he shall stir up *all* against the realm of Græcia,"¹ when applied to Xerxes, supports the truth of the figures commonly given at more than five millions. There can be no doubt that the wealth and resources of so powerful a prince were enormous. He himself is described, when riding forth from Sardis, as having immediately behind him a body of 1,000 spearmen, holding their lances with the point upwards. These were followed by 1,000 picked horsemen. Then came the 10,000 footmen called "immortals," because vacancies were filled up in their ranks so soon as created; of these a tenth part carried spears adorned with golden pomegranates, while the spears of the remaining 9,000 were distinguished by pomegranates of silver. After these

¹ The Hebrew word rendered "all" is said to mean "the whole world." Daniel xi, 2.

came 10,000 cavalry. This computation by thousands is Oriental, and perhaps more especially Persian. So in the book of Esdras, it is shown that Darius sent "1,000 horsemen" to accompany Zorobabel and his companions from Babylon to Jerusalem. The head-dress of the infantry soldier was the *tiara*, which seems to me to correspond with the felt cap much worn by the nomads and lower orders almost throughout Persia. It is called by Herodotus *κυρβάσις* and *τίρα*; but the first word may possibly mean a lighter cap of *kirbas*, a word which, if "linen" in Arabic, should also be "cotton" in the Sanskrit *kirpās*. The thick felt has neither a military or protective look about it, yet it is far superior in the latter respect to the Turkish fez. About their bodies we read that they wore "tunics with sleeves of divers colours having upon them iron scales like those of a fish. Their legs were protected by trousers; and they bore wicker shields for bucklers; their quivers hanging at their backs; and their arms being a short spear, a bow of uncommon size, and arrows of reed. They had likewise daggers suspended from their girdles along their right thighs."¹ The wicker shield, called *κέρρον* by the Greeks, was used at Plataea, not merely for purposes of active defence, but as a rampart behind which the arrow was discharged at the enemy in comparative safety, to the sore distress of the Spartans. The process is illustrated in Professor Rawlinson's Herodotus, a note in which interesting work to the effect that the "plain, round-topped cap, 'projecting at the top a little over the brows,' is recognized in the sculptures at Persepolis, contains the further remark that the weapons here exhibited are the same as indicated by the great Greek historian. The spear is, however, not remarkably short, being little less than the height of the Grecian one, 7 feet; and the bows are only about 3 feet; the quiver is pendent at the back, and the dagger hangs from the girdle at the right side. Trousers are worn, but the figures have no shield like the *κέρρον*; nor are the warriors clothed in coats of scale armour like the Assyrians.

The same work supplies us with the following quotation:—"Of all the troops the Persians were adorned with the greatest magnificence, and they were likewise the most valiant. Besides their arms, &c., &c., they glittered all over with gold, vast quantities of which they wore about their persons. They were followed by litters wherein rode their concubines, and by a numerous train of attendants handsomely dressed. Camels and sumpter beasts carried their provision apart from that of the other soldiers."

It appears that the Persian horsemen in the army of Xerxes were armed much in the same way as the footmen, excepting that some of the former wore on their heads devices fashioned with the hammer in brass or steel. The Sagartians, who dwelt in the tracts about Shahrud and Eastern Mazandaran, had a contingent of 8,000 horse drawn up with the Persian troops. This people—Aryans, and speaking the Persian language, but not themselves Persians—adopted partly the Persian dress, but only carried a dirk and a lasso, made of thongs plaited together. The latter is no doubt identical with the

¹ Professor Rawlinson's Herodotus: VII, 61.

kamand, used by the hero Rustam of the *Shah-námah*, also by the ancient Slavonians and Bulgarians, and was a more effective implement than those unacquainted with its objects might suppose. It captured man and horse, or perplexed, where it did not secure its full end. Down to the era of the Macedonian conquest, or B.C. 334, Persian monarchs always fought from their chariots. The charioteer was then, naturally, the most trustworthy of servants.

At Cunaxa—fought nearly 80 years later than Thermopylæ—where the Persians were stated to be in number 900,000, we are told by Xenophon that the “barbarians” had large corslets and cuirasses, and that all donned helmets except Cyrus, who placed himself, attended by 600 horse, in the centre of the battle, without head-gear of any kind. It was the custom for the Persian princes in those days to go to battle with the *tiara* on the head; and this, if no more than the felt or woollen *tiara*, might well appear as nothing in contrast with the Greek helmets. All the horses in Cyrus’ army had both frontlets and breastplates, and the riders had Greek swords. There were 150 chariots armed with scythes. Five years ago, in this hall, General Vaughan recalled to us, in a very pleasant paper, how the Greek soldiers were armed at Cunaxa; but, as he says, the ranks of the “Ten Thousand” who made that immortal retreat from Lower Mesopotamia to Trebizond were at least partly composed of a superior class of men. It might not be fair to compare them with the *οἱ πολλοὶ* of Xerxes.

Some sixty years later again, in Alexander’s time, the favourite weapon of the Persian was, apparently, the javelin, or *jarid* of modern days. The real meaning of the word is “a branch of palm stripped of its leaves.” There is a province in Algiers which bears the name of *baladu-l-jarid*, from the date-trees with which it abounds, and hence are obtained the long sticks aimed and parried by Oriental horsemen, in accordance with a practice acquired in youth. The game of *jarid-bázi*, or throwing the *jarid*, has from time immemorial been popular in Persia. It is played by horsemen, each armed with a *jarid* some three cubits long. They divide into contending troops, and two or three start off from one side to be pursued by two or three from the other. The pursuer throws the *jarid* at the pursued, who either catches it in his hand, or allows it to fly over him by slipping under his horse’s belly. In either case a good eye, presence of mind, sharpness and agility are required. Supposing the missile to strike the person at whom it is aimed, it may break an arm, if, indeed, it do no further mischief; but it is evident that such a weapon, like a foil, may be made a more or less deadly one if required. Turks and Arabs call an expert player at this rough game a *jindi*.

Morier mentions the *key-kaj* (قیقاج) “an exercise that consists in “turning about on the saddle at full speed, and firing backwards upon “a pursuing enemy. This,” he says, “the Persians learn from their “childhood, and it gives them great confidence on horseback,” and there is evidence that the practice, like throwing the *jarid*, antedates from the classical periods. Virgil, in his *Georgics*, and Horace, in his *Odes*, allude apparently to this very custom among the Parthians. We

must presume that the "firing" in the old days applied to the bow, as it did in later years to the obsolete flint musket and matchlock. The uses of the bow and sword, and horsemanship generally, may be considered indispensable elements of approved Persian education, however much the system of instruction in these accomplishments may have degenerated in modern times. But it would be beyond the limits prescribed for the present paper, were I to dwell further on the classical periods. Neither would it be a very simple, if an interesting study, to follow the changes of dress, weapon, and military organization from century to century, in so little changing a country as Persia. We may not attempt it even by dynasties. And yet some of the Sassanian monarchs, such as the first and second Shahpur, Bahram, and Khosru (better known as Sapor, Varanes, and Chosroes), were engaged in wars with the Romans of sufficient importance to deserve the scrutiny of students. In the seventh century of our era, the Mahomedan religion commenced its work, and soon spread all over Persia. At the dawn of the sixteenth century the Safavian kings began to exercise a sovereign power in these parts which attracted the attention of travellers and the outer world, both to the dynasty itself and the region over which they ruled.

Chardin visited Persia on his way to India in 1664, embarking at Hormuz. He returned the following year, and remained till 1670, when a reference to his biography shows him to have been in Paris. In 1671 he left France for Persia again, which he did not finally quit until the end of 1677. The reigning Shah was, in the first instance, Abbas II, but from 1666, Shah Suliman; they were the fifth and sixth in the list of the better known Safavian kings. Writing of the empire as it was two centuries ago, he found its main strength to be in geographical position. In respect of strongholds Persia was open on all sides. Erivan, the Caspian Gates, Lar, and the fortresses about Media and Bactria, had no real protective value; and Kandahar defended one entrance only. Her natural barriers were her best security, such as the sea, the desert, or a mountain range. Turkey alone, of all her neighbours, was to be feared; but she was too much occupied with the Christian Powers to commit any overt aggression on an Eastern rival. Baghdad was, however, a constant source of discord between the Turks and Persians; and this city had fallen into the hands of the former in 1638.

Chardin esteemed the Persians to be naturally brave and warlike; the flower, in fact, of Asiatic people, and founders of the most ancient and extensive empire in the East. Under Abbas the Great (or from 1585 to 1628) the country had made, single-handed, immense territorial progress; but the peace which had ensued upon his death brought in its train the destructive influences of ease and luxury. Abbas himself had been reared in camps, but he caused his children to be brought up in the *andarun*, or seraglio, and no education could be more enervating. For the future Sovereign it was fatally so. Before his reign, there had been no troops paid from the royal treasury, all were maintained by the provinces, in proportion to the wealth, extent, and population of each. Abbas had raised two special corps of his

own, one consisting of 1,200 infantry, armed with muskets (*tufangchis*)—a great innovation where all had erst been cavalry provided with bows and arrows (*tír-andáz*)—the other, formed of *kúlar*, or slaves—a nominal title given to natives of Circassia, Georgia, and certain slave-supplying lands—mounted, carrying firearms, and kept always completed to 10,000 men. There were, moreover, in Chardin's time, the Safavi body-guard of 200 men, a semi-religious band instituted by the Shaikh Safi, or ancestor of the dynasty, in the days of Taimur; and the 600 *jazáiyaris* of Abbas II. Of these, the first were armed with swords, daggers, and hatchets; while the second had firearms.

The State army was quite a separate organization, and was divided into militia, maintained by the governors of provinces, and the regular troops, known as *kúrchis*. A more familiar name for the latter will be *kizil-bash*, or "red-head," which designation is due to the distinctions originally conferred upon them by the Shaikh aforesaid, in the shape of a red velvet cap. Abbas the Great, jealous of their power and influence, reduced their number, ordered their commander to be decapitated, and scattered them in small bodies about the kingdom. Chardin states that some were horsemen, armed with bow and arrow, sword, dagger, lance, and an axe passed through the saddle-girth; a shield was slung at the back, and the head was protected by a casque, with bands of mail to cover the cheek.¹ He adds that muskets were provided to infantry regiments only, but the musketeers were allowed to ride on the line of march. In his opinion, they were the finest troops in Persia, however diminished and crippled by Abbas. Their pay was commuted, as that of the militia, to land grants, and they received crown lands which passed on from father to son, except where the inheritor declined to perform military service.

Under Abbas I, the Persian artillery consisted of 12,000 men, commanded by a *topchi bashi*; but, after the loss of Baghdad, in the reign of his grandson and successor, it fell to a much smaller number. On the death of the commandant, Husain Kuli Khan, in 1655, no one was appointed to fill his place, and the corps became virtually extinct. If the number was ever as high as stated, I do not for an instant believe that each man was a drilled gunner. The mass must rather have been infantry, a certain number only being competent to do artillery service. How the Persian effective army on the death of Abbas the Great was reckoned at 120,000 men, of whom 50,000 were royal and 70,000 provincial troops, no clear explanation is given: yet Chardin was assured that such was the true figure. It is easier to understand the statement that when the second Abbas inspected the forces at his disposal in 1666, he observed that the same men, horses, and weapons passed in review ten or twelve times before him. Both this prince and his son Suliman made some attempt to restore the strength and efficiency of the army, but little progress was made in the right direction; the service continued to deteriorate, and was a poor one, indeed, under the later Safavian monarchs. In those days a state of

¹ See South Kensington Museum Handbook on "Persian Art," under the head "Arms and Armour," pp. 18 to 21.

peace was especially destructive to the *morale* of a soldier. Neither drill, discipline, garrison, or outpost duty was a serious matter, if at all heeded; the Persian *sarbáz* lived in his own house and had, it might be, no more work to perform for the State than to obey a yearly or half-yearly summons to parade with full equipment, and show his weapons to an inspecting officer. As the latter received occasional *douceurs*, it is presumed that he was possessed of some practical power for good or evil. There was also a provincial parade to be attended once in three years. Children of two years were enrolled in the army registers, and received a salary which, though little more than nominal at first, increased from year to year up to the period of effective enlistment. When Chardin was assisting at a review in 1673, a Persian official of high rank said to him that the troops were very well to look at, but worthless for actual warfare; and, in support of the soundness of this opinion, he himself mentions the circumstance that four years later, when he was leaving Persia, less than 1,200 Cossacks were able to lay waste one section of the Caspian Sea coast, remaining occupied for two or three days in the plunder of noted towns.

From Chardin we will turn to new and less known authorities, who flourished respectively in the reigns of Suliman and Shah Husain, rulers also of the Safavi dynasty.

Monsieur Sanson, a missionary from the French King, Louis XIV, to the Court of Persia, writing before the commencement of the eighteenth century, or in about 1685, estimates the Persian army at 150,000 men, exclusive of the garrisons of cities in the interior. The defensive frontier force is disposed as follows:—

12,000	men in Kandahar, overlooking India.
20,000	„ Khurasan, watching Balkh and the Tartars.
15,000	„ Mazandaran and Ghilan, by the Caspian.
12,000	„ Darband and Shirwán, for the Caucasus.
20,000 ¹	„ Circassia, Georgia, &c.; and the King's Guards.
20,000	„ Media, for Turkmania and Kurdistan.
12,000	„ Erivan, towards the Turkish Empire.
12,000 ²	„ Laristan, for Baghdad.
15,000	„ Susa, for Arabia.
12,000	men for the littoral from the Persian Gulf to the Indus.

Total 150,000

At this time all were provided for out of the demesnes and confiscated estates. Scarcely any, we are told, were foot soldiers, “because they could not support the fatigue of the many deserts and mountains. Artillery was little used for the same reason: Persian

¹ This figure is not given; but “a great number” stated. The total is, however, 150,000.

² Probably Luristan, north of Susa, though it seems unlikely that 27,000 men would be massed so close together. But the same objection applies to the forces in Circassia and the Caucasus, where there would be 32,000, and for the 32,000 also allotted to Media and Erivan.

"towns were neither walled nor fortified; nor could their frontier posts resist a strong enemy. The King's Guards were always mounted."

The intelligent Polish Jesuit, Krusinski, an emissary from the Pope (Clement XI), was in Ispahan during the siege of that city by the Afghans in 1722. There were then, he says, some 400 pieces of cannon mounted at several places; but so badly served that, although discharged at least 400 times each, and thus 160,000 shot expended, not 400 Afghans could have been killed by them. "One may judge of the skill of the Persian engineers," are his quaint words, "by a question of the *Topchi-bashi*, or great Master of the Ordnance, who, when the rebels arrived at Gulnabad, asked the English at Ispahan 'if there were cannon in Europe that would carry 12 miles; and if they thought that there were any guns among his that would carry as far Gulnabad?' Having myself twice visited this village in passing from Ispahan eastward—remembering it more particularly from its historical interest as the scene of the battle which gave Persia temporarily to the Afghans—I can certify to the distance being about equal to that between the Royal United Service Institution and Harrow-on-the-Hill.

History tells us, that from the ruins of the Safavi dynasty of Persian kings arose a great conqueror, in the person of Nadir Shah. This man, however cruel and vindictive, was a soldier and a commander of soldiers, possessed of marvellous qualifications. To him the exigencies of a military profession, strategy, drill, discipline, and duty were stern realities to be acknowledged and practised. If he punished misconduct severely, he could reward special deserts liberally. Unfortunately, however, the terrible selfishness at the root of all his actions forbids the student of his career to admire passages in it which would call for admiration, had the hero been only cast in a different mould.

Of the feats of the Persian army under such a leader, a word or two may be said, where any practical lesson is to be deduced. In about 1729, the Abdali Afghans, who had possessed the city of Herat, under Shah Sultan Husain of Persia, were preparing with 30,000 horse to move upon Mash-had. Nadir Kuli met them with 12,000 horse at three days' march from Herat. The Afghans commenced the battle with a shout and a rush. Nadir kept his men close together, and posted upon a rising ground, played upon the assailants with some small field pieces, which did great execution. He did not suffer his soldiers to discharge their small arms until the enemy was within 30 or 40 yards, when their full fire drove back their assailants, and gave time to reload. The Persians continued to act on the defensive, till they saw their opportunity, and became themselves the aggressors. Contemporary annals confirm the Persian victory; but whether 5,000 Afghans were taken prisoners, and 15,000 killed and wounded, while their conquerors only lost 1,500 men, is a question which we leave to the statistics of round numbers—a study which might be recommended to chroniclers and compilers of Year Books.

In the memoirs of Nadir Shah we find it recorded, that on arrival in

India, and just prior to the engagement in February, 1739, which placed Delhi and its Emperor at his disposal, not one of his whole army was on foot, and even those who followed the camp and trafficked for necessities to the men, were completely armed and mounted, the number of all amounting to near 160,000. "In the time of action, the master could not be distinguished from the servant, nor the tradesmen and traffickers belonging to the camp from the common soldiers, all in general being bold and resolute, and well qualified to execute the most desperate attempt they could be employed in: there were also about 6,000 or 7,000 women, who had been taken captives from the Turks, and in Kandahar, who on a march could not be distinguished from the soldiers, having a *barâni* over their own clothes, girt round with a girdle, their faces veiled with a fine cloth, a shawl folded round their heads in form of a turban, and booted and armed as the men."¹

According to Hanway, Nadir's standing forces were computed at 200,000 men. He encouraged them to wear costly trappings, because he thought a soldier fought better when he had something to lose. His regard for the national honour was perhaps greater than his practical wisdom in its defence in the instance of the two Imperial standards. These, we are told, were so large that it required twelve men to move them; but Nadir lengthened the staff, and made them still heavier to prevent their being carried off by the enemy. The flight of his own standard-bearers was evidently not a contingency contemplated; yet they might reasonably seek, on an emergency, to convey their charge to a secure place, if susceptible of transport.

I will ask you for a few moments to examine with me the information on the Persian army as it has been supplied by our writers during the first half of the present century: after which, we will glance at its condition as reported at the present day: we shall then be in a better position to consider Persia itself as a military power. The authorities I have chiefly consulted are Malcolm, Morier, Waring, and Sheil, of whom the first three visited the country, and wrote about it under Fath Ali Shah, the grandfather of the now reigning monarch Nasrudin.

Sir John Malcolm divides the Persian army into "a considerable body of irregular horse, furnished by the military tribes of the country, and commanded by their own chiefs; a numerous irregular militia, raised and supported by the provinces and principal cities of the empire, and a corps of infantry and artillery clothed and disciplined in the European manner. The first are stated to be the "same kind of troops which opposed the Romans," retaining the habits and mode of fighting of their forefathers, only armed with carbines instead of with bows and arrows. Robust and brave, with strong and active horses, they formed a cavalry thoroughly suited to predatory warfare. They were the compulsory contributions of chiefs of tribes; and doubtless to a great extent composed of the material used so freely by Nadir when he could command Kurds, Kajars, Bakh-

¹ Fraser's History of Nadir Shah, London, 1742, pp. 151-155.

tiars, or Afghans by the thousand to attend his person, or prepare his way through invaded countries. Like the *Kurchis* of Abbas the Great, their military service was rewarded by grants of land and liberty of pasture; but pay, food, and forage appear to have been further given during particular periods of active employment. It should be added, however, that without the prospect of plunder, or under some special requisition of their own acknowledged chief, they were somewhat reluctant to come to the front in the cause of the State. The royal body-guard (or *Kûlar* horsemen of Abbas) numbering in Fath Ali Shah's time only from 3,000 to 4,000, was formed of Georgian slaves and the sons of the Persian nobility. Well mounted and well armed, they not only received better pay than their fellow-soldiers from the public treasury, but they had a licence to pilfer and peculate, of which they availed themselves to the full.

The militia, of which the number is said to have exceeded 150,000 men, was composed of men of wandering tribes and inhabitants of cities and villages. Maintained by the province or community to which they belonged, they were liable to be called out when required, receiving at such time pay from the State, but providing their own arms—usually a matchlock, sword, and dagger, and clothing. They obeyed their own officers, but none beside.

As regards infantry and artillery, we read that the army of Agha Muhammad Khan, the uncle and immediate predecessor of Fath Ali Shah, "consisted of regular horse and infantry, and a number of "*zamburaks* or camel-swivels;" but that Fath Ali Shah himself, "with a view of opposing the Russians, and of strengthening his "internal government," had formed a body of regular infantry and artillery amounting to 20,000 men. Part of this new body of troops had been trained in some measure by English Officers, and were specially clothed, armed, and paid by government: we shall revert to them directly.

The pay of the irregular horseman when employed was seldom more than five or six *tumans* per annum, made good by an assignment on the revenue, liable to loss on discount, together with two ass-loads of grain. In those days the *tuman* was about one pound in English money. Under the Safavian kings it had been worth two pounds; it has now dwindled to seven or eight shillings. Few officers received more than 15 or 20 *tumans*, and four or five ass-loads of grain, each ass-load being valued at a *tuman*. The royal body-guard received as much as 20 to 30 *tumans* yearly per man.

Mr. Scott Waring, of the Bengal Civil Service, visited Shiraz from India in 1802. His description of the military force in Persia is rather confusing, and hardly in accordance with Malcolm's; but we may well believe he had not the same facilities of obtaining information. We gather, however, the following noteworthy points. In ordinary warfare cavalry predominated. Infantry were only used for moving against forts. Regiments consisted of 1,000 men, each commanded by a *Mimbashi*; the men were paid commonly once a-year, sometimes every three months, but they were supplied with most of the necessities of life, and even lodging, when away from their homes. They

appeared wholly undisciplined, and their drill to be little more than charging, halting, and skirmishing. To gallop at full speed, stop the horse with a sudden jerk, turn round on the saddle and fire at a supposed adversary; was still the great military exercise. In lining out camps, posting sentries and sending out pickets, the Persians imitated the armies of other States; their own camp being always, however, in a circular shape. Of the body-guard of nominal slaves (*ghulām*), Mr. Waring says that they may be in number about 20,000; but that "the flower of this corps is formed into a body of about 4,000, "who are distinguished by the excessive richness of their dress and "the insolence of their behaviour." He notices the surprising length of the Persian marches—40 or 50 miles a-day; on urgent occasions "at the rate of 70 miles for three days together"—without baggage, of course. "The infantry employed at sieges fire off," he tells us, "a piece "of cannon once an hour or so; and as long as they hit the wall, they "are considered to be well qualified for effecting a breach." An instance of their performance at Bushire may be here repeated as illustrative of the period. A salute was to be fired by the Persian infantry there. "As the guns were not shotted, they conceived that "they might discharge them without any danger to the people who "were crowded about them. They fired the guns, and several persons "were killed on the spot."

Morier's two large volumes on Persia, one published in 1812 and the other in 1818, are excellent works of reference, but contain little information on the Persian army in detail. We gather from the pages of the later publication that the members of the British Embassy, on arriving at a station between Tabriz and Tehran in the summer of 1812, were much struck at the sight of a troop of Persian horse artillery "dressed like Europeans, with shaven chins, with English "arms and accoutrements, booted and spurred, riding with long "stirrups, who, headed by an English Officer, had come to salute the "Ambassador as he alighted at the tent door." The fact is that Abbas Mirza, the heir apparent to the throne, in his anxiety to present something like a creditable front to an antagonist from the north, had resolved to introduce among his soldiers European drill and discipline. Knowing that it would be vain to inculcate the necessity of this measure by mere word of mouth and edict, he resolved to illustrate its practicability, and, as far as possible, its advantages by personal example. The Prince himself, according to his own account, adopted a soldier's dress, and was instructed by a Russian in the military exercise, commencing with squads of 20 or 30 men paraded in a back court to avoid general observation. In course of time he made many nobles follow suit, and eventually, having taught themselves, there were some of the number capable of teaching others. But they had not advanced much further than line and file marching, counter-marching, wheeling, and the manual and platoon, when a French Embassy from Bonaparte appeared on the scene, and, like the good genius of the fairy tale, provided them with Officers competent to deal with large bodies. An English mission succeeded the French, which offered like means of efficient instruction, and after a period, through

the exertions of Lieutenant Lindsay, of the Madras Army, the Prince found himself possessed of a corps of disciplined artillery in addition to other troops. The story goes that, notwithstanding the large authority vested in the English Commandant by royal mandate, this Officer never could get over the national antipathy to shaving the chin exhibited by all ranks of his men. One day, however, the chance explosion of a powder-horn in the hands of a gunner carried off the better part of the holder's beard, and Lindsay availed himself of the circumstance to gain his end. Thenceforward the shaved chin became an established rule for artillerymen, and it need hardly be stated that at the present day the practice is sufficiently common to be unrestricted to any particular class of Persians. Especially remarkable for the rejection of hirsute adornments other than the moustache, is the specimen of "*la jeune Perse*," daily to be met with in European cities where the Shah has established a Legation; nor is this modern fashion unbecoming, however opposed to conventional ideas.

Major Christie, of the Bombay army, was the highly distinguished officer who commanded Abbas Mirza's infantry. At this time they were formed into two great divisions, the "*Sarbáz*," or those who played with their heads, and the "*Jánbáz*," or those who played with their lives. The first, according to Malcolm, consisted of twelve corps, each 1,000 strong and representing some particular tribe or locality. Thus there were two regiments of Afshars, one of Erivánis, one of Tabrizis, and so forth; all, however, were natives of the Prince's own province of Azarbaijan. The "*Jánbáz*" were not so well clothed, paid, or disciplined as the "*Sarbáz*;" their strength was computed at from eight to nine thousand men; they were composed of distinct tribes, and they were immediately attached to the King. Prince Abbas Mirza had, moreover, raised from the military tribes a brigade of cavalry numbering 1,200 men, and a corps of horse artillery strong enough to man 20 field pieces.

Colonel Sheil was our Minister at Tehran from 1842 to 1847 and from 1849 to 1853, and had otherwise acquired great knowledge and experience of the Shah's country and people. He had originally come there as second in command of a detachment sent from India to drill and discipline the Azarbaijan. His note on the local army attached to Lady Sheil's interesting record of her life in Persia, published in 1856, is full of information. He confirms the account given by Malcolm and Morier of the good work done for the Persian Prince Royal by his English officers, and adds the following:—
 "Major Christie was a man of considerable military endowments; he was killed at the battle of Aslanduz in 1812. His able successor was Major Hart, of the Royal Army. Under the auspices and indefatigable co-operation of Abbas Mirza, by whom absolute authority was confided to him, he brought the infantry of Azarbaijan to a wonderful state of perfection. The artillery was placed under Lieutenant Lindsay, afterwards Major-General Sir H. Lindsay. This Officer acquired extraordinary influence in the army, and in particular among the artillery. He brought this branch of the forces in Azarbaijan to such a pitch of real working perfection, and

"introduced so complete a system of *esprit de corps*, that to this day "his name is venerated, and traces of his instruction still survive in "the artillery of that province, which even now preserves some "degree of efficiency."

We are now approaching a period to elucidate which no books of reference could assist us better than the personal acquaintance with the subject possessed by our chairman of to-day. The temptation is great to linger over Sir Justin Sheil's note, above mentioned, as well as another by the same hand on the "Kurds and Kurdistan," but all that I can do is to summarise these data in the briefest possible form. Those who wish to learn more fully the late Envoy's experiences should procure the volume entitled "Life and Manners in Persia," the perusal of which, with its appendices, can hardly disappoint the most fastidious inquirer.

Abbas Mirza died in the lifetime of his father; Fath Ali Shah did not long survive him; Muhammad Shah succeeded to the Persian throne; Sir H. Lindsay, afterwards known as Sir Henry Bethune, died; jealousy and mistrust crept into Anglo-Persian relations; French officers replaced the English; Italians and Germans replaced, though not effectually banishing, the French; at the present hour Austrians have, practically, the field in possession, but a Cossack officer has just appeared, and will, probably, introduce the Russian element. Colonel Sheil designates the Azarbaijan half of the 6,000 artillery as "incomparably the best corps in the service;" they were "soldierly, active, "workmanlike fellows, who take their guns anywhere." He also praises highly the Tabriz foundry, established with the aid of English artificers, and notices a powder mill in the neighbourhood of the same town, since transferred to Tehran. He rates a nominal 100,000 of regular infantry at no more than 70,000, "armed with flint muskets "and bayonets, chiefly English," of which the greater part were inefficient. "The men," he says, "are clothed in blue linen jackets, "supplied by the State, under which, in cold weather, their own "clothes are crammed; large white cotton trousers and *lapcheens*, a "sort of soft leather buskin, which laces halfway up the leg, and is "admirably adapted for marching in dry weather, complete their "dress. The Turk soldier wears on his head the ordinary lambskin "cap; the Leks wear brown *nemed* or felt caps. Knapsacks are not "carried in the Persian army; 30 asses per company are the substitutes for that article. Tents are allowed to the regiments." The regular cavalry, consisting of 500 hussars, he considers "an absurd "useless body;" but the Shah's body-guard of 2,500 irregulars are "well mounted and armed and excellent horsemen." No number is given of the whole irregular cavalry, but it is stated that they are raised almost entirely among the tribes, and that Azarbaijan supplies 6,000.

Colonel Sheil considers the Persian soldier to be "active, energetic, "and robust," with "immense power of enduring fatigue, privation, "and exposure." He recognizes in him much intelligence and a natural aptitude for a military life; contrasts his lively smartness with the sombre apathy of the Turk, and speaks with admiration of his

long marches of 24 or even 40 miles a day, in spite of being half clothed, half fed, and not even half paid. That the failure to pay the *sarbâz* is as well known to the Shah as to the *sarhang*, or lieutenant-colonel, is illustrated by an anecdote of Fath Ali Shah. His Majesty was talking to a foreign minister about the men of some regiments which had elicited the approval of the latter. "Yes, they are excellent," exclaimed the King, laughing; "and better still, though they have been three years without a fraction of pay, they never ask me for arrears." Internal discipline did not exist. On parade it was limited to an effort of some kind, not always successful, to understand and carry out the words of command spoken. The cavalry had lost its ancient repute, since the creation of a *nizam*, or disciplined army, to the prejudice of the tribe system; but, in Colonel Shoil's estimation, it was a match for both Turk and Cossack. There is no doubt that with the chiefs of tribes rested, to a great extent, the supply of good horses, and that the rejection of their services by the Crown would lead the more important Khans to keep their studs at home, or to seek other means of turning to account the possession of high-bred animals. Let us now contemplate the state of the Persian Army at the present day.

Mr. Robert Grant Watson, for some time attached to Her Majesty's Legation at Tehran, and now Secretary of Legation in Sweden, himself once an Officer in Her Majesty's 105th Foot, published in 1866 a history of Persia from the beginning of the 19th century to 1858, which is very valuable as a work of reference. We may accept the following extract as applicable in 1879:—"The military force of the country consists, in theory, of 100,000 men, infantry, cavalry, and artillery; the greater proportions of this number being regular infantry. The cavalry is nearly all irregular, and is in general only called on for local service under the chief of the particular district where it is raised. The Shah's body-guard consists of two regiments of regular cavalry, of about 800 men each, more or less. There has been lately raised another small troop of body-guards known by their accoutrements of silver. The irregular cavalry are variously habited, according to the custom of the country whence they are drawn. One small company in Kurdistan is clad in mail and complete armour. There are about 5,000 artillerymen in the Persian army, and this branch of the service is by no means badly organized. It is their artillery that gives to the Persians the advantage in their contests with the Turkman tribes."

Mr. Watson's opinion of the material of the troops is most favourable; but he condemns the prevalent system under which they work. He thinks the men hardy, patient, enduring, frugal, and sufficiently brave. His testimony to their treatment is that of all who have spoken on the subject from personal knowledge. Pay is always kept in arrears, generally for two or three years; and when issued, it is reduced from its legitimate amount by the enactions of distributing officers, from the *sarhang*, or lieutenant-colonel, downwards. The native officers are, as a rule, incapable, and ignorant of military affairs; and the European drill-instructors, whatever their local rank,

have no actual command in the native army. The service is not a popular one, and could not be provided for at all but by compulsory enrolment.

I observe that in the last number of the *Stateman's Year Book* for 1879, the Persian army, according to the official returns of the Minister of War, is composed of 105,500 men, of whom 5,000 form the artillery, 70,000 the infantry, and 30,500 the cavalry, regular and irregular. Of the total of these troops, one-third only is employed on active service. The standing army, on peace footing, is thus reckoned:—

Artillery	..	..	..	1,500	(five batteries).
Infantry	..	..	..	18,000	
Irregular cavalry	..	..	..	10,000	
Regular	„	..	..	500	
Total				30,000	

If this statement be correct, the reserve would amount to 75,000 men, who remain scattered about in their villages or districts, engaged in agricultural and other pursuits, until required by the State.

Justice is hardly done to Persia by the *Year Book* in its short notice of that country; but no wonder that the theme is less genial than that of European States. In 1875, it tells us, the Shah decreed that the army should in future be levied by conscription instead of by irregular levies, and that a term of service of twelve years should be substituted for the old system of enlistment for life. As before, the organization is by provinces, tribes, and districts, the province furnishing several regiments, the tribe one or two, and the district one battalion only, the chief of the tribe or district from which the men are drawn being selected to command them. Christians, Jews, and “Gabars,” or Fire-worshippers, are exempt from military service.

My own experience of Persia has been derived in five successive visits, *i.e.*, from England *viâ* Russia and the Caspian in 1865; from England *viâ* Constantinople, the Black Sea, and Tiflis, in 1867; from England *viâ* Russia again in 1870; from India, passing up to the capital from Bushahr in 1871; from India, landing at Bandar Abbas, and moving thence to Sistan and Mash-had in 1872. Altogether I have been nearly two years within the limits of Persian dominion, a sufficient time to form a tolerably correct estimate of its government and government employés, its priesthood and learned men, its wandering tribes, indigenous peasantry, and soldiery. Of the last mentioned I have perhaps seen as much as of any class. During my stay at the capital the troops were constantly out at drill. I knew and was well known by the Minister of War, commander-in-chief, Italian drill instructors, and others connected with the local army, and during the fifteen months or so that I was posting, marching, or sojourning in the heart of the country or outlying provinces, I was frequently honoured with an escort, sometimes accompanied by a captain or a major, and more than once had my tent pitched or quarters assigned in the neighbourhood of drums, bugle, and fife.

Of the common *sarbâz*, or Persian infantry soldier, I have a high

opinion, and subscribe fully to what has been said of him by Sir Justin Sheil. At the same time it cannot be denied that in the performances of his long marches he has very often a companion, who relieves him during many a weary mile, independently of carrying some baggage and superfluous accoutrements. This companion, wanting in martial exterior, possesses, in the East especially, a patient energy which accomplishes great physical feats. It is at the risk of a smile at the bathos that I name the too-little-valued donkey, without which adjunct no picture of a Persian infantry soldier would be complete. Setting such aid aside, the marching and endurance of the *sarbáz* are wonderful, and though better food might in some respects improve his *physique*, his frugality is such as to account in some measure for his bodily strength. With good Officers and good training he might be made very efficient. If wanting in the discipline we consider in this country essential to the well-being of the service, the fault is that of his superiors, by whom he is ill-commanded, ill-taught, and ever accursed with an evil example. In fact, the moral value of the soldier deteriorates as the social grade improves. I have found it much the same in Turkey; the state of things is perhaps Oriental rather than national. The post of "wakil," or non-commissioned officer, becomes thus the first step to demoralization. Above this person is the "naib," or lieutenant, corresponding with the Turkish "mulázim;" then comes the "sultán," or captain, the Turkish "yazbashi;" "yáwar," or major, the Turkish "binbashi;" "sarhang," or lieutenant-colonel, the Turkish "káim-makám;" and the "sartip," or colonel, the Turkish "mir alai;" such are roughly the respective grades which represent our commissioned ranks. I say "roughly" because there are distinctive sub-divisions to some of these, as, for example, first and second "wakil," first and second "naib," first and second "yáwar," and first, second, and third "sartip" (the two higher corresponding with general of division and general of brigade respectively). I should explain that any wholesale condemnation which I may have seemed to bestow on Persian commissioned officers, applies to their relations with the men. In other respects my experience has not always shown them in so unfavourable a light. About thirteen years ago the present Governor of Kirman, when a *Sarhang* commanding his regiment on the Baluch frontier, received me in the capacity of a travelling British Officer in the most kind and cordial manner. He would take no present on parting but something quite trivial in point of value, and he impressed me strongly as an illustration of good material warped and stunted by miserable custom. On the other hand the social status of the Officers is not, as a rule, on an exalted level, nor are their scruples great in turning an occasional penny. I have known one, whom we should call a field officer in a scientific corps, accept as a gratuity for civilities and small services rendered, a sum which, in civilized Europe, would be offered to menials only. He was not individually to blame; the money was honestly earned, and he was obeying the dictates of precedent, and probably the demands of an empty purse and a hungry family.

In January, 1866, I visited the large town of Bam, on the south-eastern frontier of Persia Proper, between Sistan and Bandar Abbas.

Sir Henry Pottinger has described the place in his travels in 1860, and, although nearly four score years have passed since the date of that description, it is pretty well known that changes in Persian towns are not effected on the same scale as similar changes in our own country. Perhaps no Oriental scholar could find a fitting word for "fashion" in the Persian language, except in the bare sense of manner, habit, and custom. There is no such power acknowledged by them as that which in Western Europe effects a more or less annual modification in dress and society, and influences governments as well as individuals to build or to throw down, to annex or to abandon, to spend money, or to seal up the cash chest. Having already described the condition of Bam, on the occasion of my two visits there, in a paper read at this Institution in 1874, I will not now again go over the same ground; but I may allude to the impression, which I find recorded in a diary of the period, that I had never before seen in any other town of Persia so large a body of comparatively respectable native soldiers. The subject may be followed up by the statement that the most business-like cavalry I can recall in the Shah's dominions were the stray horsemen whom I met with in the Kirman province. Their dress, brown from top to toe, with the *κρυβασία* of Herodotus and carbine slung over the back, appeared to me simple and soldierlike. It was pleasant to see how the skill and boldness of the rider gave, as it were, new evidence to the exactitude of the Greek historian who, 2,300 years ago, affirmed that riding was one of the three accomplishments taught to the Persians. Nothing but hereditary aptitude could make the horseman so fitted to the horse. Both in 1866 and 1871, but especially in the latter year, I noticed that the Governor of Bampur, in Baluchistan, had good stuff to discipline into irregular cavalry in his mounted Baluchis as well as Persians; and the same remark applies to the Persian Governor of Sistan in 1872. The *istikbal*, or motley troop of cavaliers sent out to meet me by either chief, presented a singular specimen of rough but sufficiently formidable-looking satellites—men who had, clearly, fighting propensities, and might mould, without much effort, into very serviceable soldiers.

Colonel MacGregor, an Officer well known to India for worthy service in the Quartermaster-General's Department, and now prominently engaged in the Afghan expedition, a good soldier, bold traveller, and practical geographer, has just published a narrative of his journey through the north-east of Persia in the year 1875. He found the few irregular cavalry, incidentally brought under his observation in Khurasan, very fairly mounted in a working sense; and the light head-stall, snaffle-bridle, knotted rein, and hair picketing rope with iron chain and peg, used by the men, appeared to him of serviceable kind. He describes precisely the "sort of uncomfortable imitation of a hussar saddle," with its thick felt pad and felt saddle-cloth, which they affect; and he illustrates, by enumeration of articles, the remark that "over the saddle and behind it they seem to carry all that belongs to them." The *khurzins*, or saddle-bags, "in which they put all things," he considers excellent; an opinion endorsed by

many other Oriental travellers. To give reality to the description, he supplies his readers with a faithful drawing of his horseman and horse—the former attired in black lamb's wool cap, long gown and riding boots, whip in hand, and armed with firelock slung across the shoulder—the latter fully equipped, even to silver chains and carpeting, down to its knees and hocks. With less than two pounds a-year in pay, over and above a grain allowance, Colonel MacGregor says truly of these cavaliers, that “if not the best light horsemen in the world, “they are the very cheapest.” Nor is it surprising that he does not think them equal to thoroughly trained Indian irregulars. But I am glad to learn that, notwithstanding all shortcomings, he does not write them down “bad fellows;” and, allowing that they “ride very “fairly” and “keep their horses in good working condition,” he does not doubt that, if properly treated, they “would prove useful “auxiliaries to our regular cavalry.”

His experience of another body belonging to the same service, at an out-of-the-way place between Mash-had and Sarakhs, also merits our notice. Here he tells us that the men were dressed in all sorts of colours, that their horses, of all sizes, were picketed in utter disorder, that they had no orderly lines of regulation tents, and that they were deficient in regimental “necessaries;” but that there was far more uniformity about them than apparent at first sight. “They had all “good serviceable sheepskin busbies, some black, some brown, white “and grey, and nearly all had the sensible movable peak called the “*astáb gardán* . . . moved round in any direction, so as to afford “shade where the sun beats fiercest.” Colonel MacGregor considers the long Persian frock coat to be “one of the most serviceable and “gentlemanly coats” he had seen in any land. Referring to the skill of these Persian irregulars in using matchlocks at full gallop, he cannot regard in a serious light this application of old Parthian tactics to contend with disciplined cavalry,

At Mash-had he saw several Persian regiments encamped outside the city. They were composed of men generally of fine physique, hardy and muscular; but their small pay of seven *tumáns*, not £2 16s. per annum, was seldom realized up to half the amount, and they had to subsist chiefly on their rations. Their uniform consisted of a black lamb's wool busby, with a lion and sun in brass on the front, a dark blue tunic, on the European model, with white bands across the breast, blue trousers with red stripe, and shoes (if they like to wear them). They had “clumsy percussion, smooth-bore muskets and bayonets, “with locks of French manufacture;” but they did not clean them, and it was probable that more than half were unfit for actual use. In default of accurate statistics, Colonel MacGregor cannot estimate the strength of the Persian army; though he believes the country could afford to keep up 120,000, and that if this number “were commanded “by European officers, they would be quite a match for the troops of the only power likely to attack them.”¹ The artillery, he states to

¹ Narrative of a Journey through the Province of Khorassan and on the N.W., Frontier of Afghanistan, in 1875, by Colonel C. M. MacGregor, C.S.I., C.I.E Bengal Staff Corps, vol. i, p. 298.

be probably the most efficient branch of the service, not smart, but rough and ready. Those whom he noticed on the march to Sarakhs pleased him much by the way in which they handled their guns.

The soldiers whom I saw at Tehran off parade did not favourably impress me; but they acquire a certain steadiness of movement in large bodies and when under instruction which is, at least, creditable to them and to their teachers. In respect of dress, an inspecting officer accustomed to pause before an unsatisfactory button or ill-disposed accoutrements would be sorely perplexed in getting over one section, or even one file of a section—much more a company or regiment of Persian infantry, in which uniformity is apparently impracticable. But this question of costume does not come within the cognizance of the drill-instructors, and, being left to the discretion of the native commanders, naturally finds solution in unchecked laxity. Although there were no English Officers employed in training the Persian troops during any of my visits to Tehran, there were, and may be now, two Englishmen connected with the Arsenal to whom the local government is indebted for useful service. The chief control of the Arsenal, however, and, indeed, the direction of the whole Persian artillery, was in the hands of an Armenian; the two principal drill instructors were Italians, a Florentine and a Neapolitan; while that vital part of the Public Works Department, comprising roads and bridges, was under an Austrian officer holding the rank of General. There were, besides, two or three other Europeans of whom I knew less, holding quasi-military posts, but I need not speak of them particularly.

Discipline, as understood in the Persian Army, has not the meaning which we are here accustomed to attach to the word. It is simply the something which impels a soldier to do a certain amount—not actually his fair amount—of duty, and is produced as much by persuasion akin to bribery as by word of command. Mutiny is not uncommon in hard times, when pay has been too continuously withheld and want has overcome patience; but it is not necessarily treated with severity. The men are talked over; and conciliation and concession win the day when an attempt at violent suppression would fail in its object. How discipline acts with regard to duty among Persian soldiers may be illustrated by a circumstance which came under my own observation. Such of my hearers as may know the story will, I trust, pardon its repetition:—

One night I had crept out of a small bell-tent, pitched in a desolate tract at the foot of the mountain range traversing the Kirman province from east to west, and I was returning thither to sleep, preparatory to an early morning march. A Persian sentry stood just outside the tent with sword ported, and carefully watched my movement. Not caring for such immediate surveillance, and seeing no necessity for keeping the man through the night at his uncomfortable post, I told him he was not wanted. He replied that he dared not go, for he was under orders. Further inquiry elicited the nature of the orders received. They were to the effect that he should remain watching over my personal safety—not all night—but until he had ascertained that I was fairly

asleep. Then he might proceed to his quarters. Trivial as this incident may appear, it is a fair instance of the kind of duty which the Persian soldier is disciplined to fulfil by his own officer. It is eye-service and no more that is required. What wonder that he should be half-hearted in the hour of need, and look to a compromise when required to repel the foe with all his might?

Not many months ago there appeared in the *Journal de St. Pétersbourg* an announcement, from its Tehran correspondent, that the Shah had commenced the "regeneration" of his country. Some people would think that an improvement in the *morale* of government must be an essential part of so vast an undertaking, and that the education, safety, comfort, and well-being of the poorer population must in some measure be provided for in any such contemplated scheme of sweeping reform. But regeneration was in this instance to resolve itself into two great practical results; one the concession to a company of the right to construct a railway from Enzeli to Tehran; the other, the amelioration of the army. How this last result was to be achieved may be partly gathered from the following extract, for which we are indebted to the *Globe*:—

"Austria is sending us a military mission composed of 1 general, 1 major, 4 captains, and 6 lieutenants and sub-lieutenants. These officers are on their way to Tehran, and will arrive here in a few days' time. Orders have just been given for the formation of seven battalions of Irak, each composed of 800 men, which will give 5,600 men. As soon as the Austrians arrive they will be sent to Irak, so carry out the occupation, and to drill the seven battalions, for which latter purpose they will remain a twelvemonth at Sultan-Abbad. At the end of the year they will return to Tehran, to present the troops to the Shah. It would be a difficult undertaking to organize 5,600 European troops in a year, but it will be more so with the undisciplined inhabitants of Irak. To prevent their acquiring those airs of independence which Persian soldiers gain so soon in towns, the recruits will be confined a year in camp. This will be very disagreeable for the officers, who will encounter no Europeans during that period."

We are further told that the rifles and cannon purchased by the Shah in Austria will be distributed to the troops on arrival. With the exception of a sensible project of constructing a good road from the Arras to Tabriz, and thence through Zenjan and Kazvin to the capital, there is no minor project of importance to be noted. The introduction of gas and "establishment of other useful public works," are but "talked of;" and how far the alleged study by the Shah of "a plan of financial reform and improving the collection of taxes," is likely to aid in the regeneration of his Empire, it is difficult for outsiders to decide. Let us, however, now glance at the measures reported to have been inaugurated for the amelioration of the Persian Army.

It is undoubtedly a fact that thirteen Austrian officers arrived in Tehran on the 5th January last. Their coming thither had long been expected, and there is every reason to believe that they are engaged under a three years' contract to the Persian Government, receiving

double their Austrian pay. They will be considered as immediately under the Shah's orders, and employed with special troops, who are to be armed, clothed, fed, paid, and quartered in full accordance with their own ideas. A Russian colonel of Cossacks arrived about the same time, and it is reported that other officers, his compatriots, are likely to follow. What are the respective ranks of the Austrian officers I am unable to say, but as the correspondent of the *Journal* is right in his number given, so may he be in this point also. In any case they have a work of much difficulty before them, and will need the constant support of their Minister to carry it to completion. By those Englishmen who have been in Persia, or have studied the subject of its Army, or have heard or read the views and opinions of the drill instructors at Tehran in late years, the general condition of the Persian military service is easily appreciated. The material is good, especially in Azarbaijan and on the West, whether the recruit be *Türk* or *Kúrd*; but it needs true discipline, and fair treatment. Two pounds sixteen shillings per annum for an infantry soldier, and four pounds sixteen shillings for an artilleryman, is the *maximum* of pay, and the daily ration of bread to each is less than three and a half pounds. As bread and fruit are said to be the soldier's ordinary food, we may conclude that more substantial fare is exceptional. In the matter of dress and equipment great reform is needed; and as to drill, having been taught more or less under English, French, Russian, Turkish, and Italian rules, the men require a single and a simple book of instruction. The instruction of officers must be specially provided for. There is some sort of military college in Persia for cadets, but this is wholly insufficient. Appointments to, and promotions in the commissioned ranks will have to be regulated otherwise than at present, where all goes by favour or barter; and the relative positions of officer and soldier will have to be defined in the sense that both are servants of the State, and no private arrangement can be recognized to the prejudice of that connection. To all intents and purposes there is no organized cavalry; bodies of irregulars can be got together by tribes or from provinces; but it might be well to drill and discipline a nucleus of horse for eventual expansion and increase. As to the infantry, attention must be given to a scheme of permanent organization. Divisions and brigades appear now to exist for the purpose of maintaining officers of high rank in sinecures, and many colonels and majors would be puzzled to account for the regiments they are supposed to command. The actual number of each grade borne on the Register is a problem which few could solve; the number of private soldiers is of itself not always, perhaps not often, ascertained. The great question of arms, both for infantry and artillery, has to be thoroughly examined and appreciated. Spasmodic and partial issues of new weapons do not meet the continuous exigencies of a standing army. Last, but not least in importance, the Reserve to which I have alluded in quoting the *Statesman's Year Book* is, perhaps, rather nominal than real; and there is no corps of Engineers, though there are stray officers called *Muhandis* who seem to belong to one; for I can certify to a pleasant

acquaintance in Baluchistan, so described, on the staff of the Kirman governor.

This is but a very imperfect sketch of a state of affairs to remedy which the Austrian officers will probably be called on to advise and lend their aid. England being, so to speak, out of the coach in this particular matter, has only to look on and observe the progress made by the agents of a friendly Power. A very few words will serve, in conclusion, to wind up the subject which has, I fear, been too discursively (and it may be, too tediously) put before you. These may be found more provocative of discussion than the details which precede them.

Persia is so far important as a military Power and military ally that she has, with all her mis-government and shortcomings, great resources for a powerful army. Let us suppose that the figures put before you in illustration of the nominal strength of her armies during various periods of her history are in many instances exaggerations. We know from the evidence of contemporary annals in the past, and from the statements of our own travellers and writers of the present century or generation, something very near akin to the truth; and that knowledge enables us to form opinions and arrive at conclusions in 1879, on the military value of the country which we have been considering. But any full narrative of the relation between the European Powers and Persia will supply not simply a fair notion of the benefits contemplated in an alliance with the Shah, notably under certain contingencies. It will also demonstrate that England has occupied a very prominent place in courting such alliance, and has lavished so much gold in the prosecution of her aim, that reaction in this respect has seriously affected our interests. I may perhaps venture to affirm that not even in the days of the First Napoleon was Persia more essentially a part of the geographical side of the Eastern Question than she is now, and we need no ghost to tell us that her geography is a matter of political as well as scientific interest to ourselves. As an ally she has the elements of material usefulness, and among her people there is a strange spirit of independence, both in thought and word, which to many minds carries with it proof of power, undeveloped, but no less existent. Were it, however, otherwise, it surely comes within the province of Englishmen to impart to so old a kingdom, and one so replete with classical interest, some of the better things of modern civilization. If not now engaged in training her armies, we may do something to improve her general resources, and strive, though indirectly, to obtain for her masses those advantages which are not withheld from the people in European States. When we did teach her troops their drill, the fate of more than one gallant officer, who died in the performance of his duty, and the substantial service rendered generally by the officers so employed, will testify that Englishmen were loyal to their engagements, and that every profession made on their behalf by our statesmen or diplomatists was fulfilled to the letter.

I presume that, without encroaching too closely upon the domain of politics, I may revert to the presence in Tehran of an officer of

another nationality than Austria, as one of the latest moves of Russia in a favourite quarter. There is no doubt that proximity—or I may say contiguity—has much direct influence upon the Persian mind. A strong, immediate neighbour is dangerous as an enemy; but he may be useful as a friend, especially one who may be grasped by the hand at any time. British India has not the advantage of this position with respect to Persia. If she had, it is probable that the friendship of England would be more practically exercised, and therefore become more intelligible in this part of the East. Mountains and vast tracts now separate the two countries by land. Even the sea route scarcely renders the passage into the interior of Persia an easier matter. From Bandar-Abbas or Bushahr, the road is over high and difficult ranges. There is one spot which, if circumstances ever place it permanently in our possession, would enable us almost to shake hands with our neighbours in Kirman and west of the Helmand. It is the old watch tower of Persia itself towards India; and to which we have already referred in describing the limits of the former country in the 18th century. Situated beyond the lines of lofty and rugged hills, which run more or less parallel to the sea coast from the Indus to the Tigris, it signifies to us a position strategically, politically, and geographically desirable. But I am not here as an advocate, however humble, of annexation. I am merely looking at circumstances which warrant a hypothesis.¹ Recollection of the able lecture² so recently given in this theatre on a possible Indo-Afghan frontier will enable you readily to understand that allusion is now made to *Kandahar*.

Colonel PASKE: The Governor of a Persian province is said to have remarked to an English Officer—"There are only two Powers in Asia; Persia, Khiva, Bokhara, Afghanistan, must in the course of time fall into a state of bondage to one or other of those Powers." If the march of events has tended to point to the truth of this observation, it seems very desirable that we should acquire all knowledge that is to be possessed of Persia, her resources, and internal affairs. I think then, sir, that Sir Frederic Goldsmid has been very happy in the choice of the subject of his very interesting and instructive lecture. I had myself prepared a few brief notes to read on this occasion, taken mainly from Watson's History of Persia; but as my remarks would be only a repetition of what has been put forward in better form, I will not trespass upon the time of the meeting. Permit me to say briefly that, if the subject of politics were not debarred from discussion in this Institution, a very instructive parallelism might be drawn between the situations of England and Russia with regard to Persia. Certain it seems to be that whichever of the two Powers most speedily acquires a full knowledge of the resources of Persia, and exercises the most beneficial influence upon the government and people of that country, that Power will be paramount in Persia.

¹ I have said nothing on the feeling with which the Anglo-Afghan War is regarded by Persia; but our whole line of action and successes hitherto have had their effect, and there is no doubt that our prestige and influence *may* rise immensely, if the final result be satisfactory to ourselves. The employment of Austrian officers is rather, perhaps, an accidental consequence of the Shah's late visit to Vienna, than a serious move on the political board; and their task, if ever accomplished, will be beset with more obstacles than those fairly belonging to the mere drill-instructor, however dull his recruits.

² "On the Strategical Conditions of our Indian North-West Frontier." By Major-General E. B. Hamley, C.B. *Vide Journal*, No. 48, page 1027 *et seq.*

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, as no gentleman who has served in Persia, or who has studied the subject of the military resources of that country, wishes to address the meeting, I take the liberty of rising to say a very few words on the subject. Sir Frederic Goldsmid has alluded to my personal acquaintance with Persia, and I am free to admit that at one time I had a considerable acquaintance with the subject, but that is a long time ago. It is now forty-five years since I first went to Persia, where I served for five years in the Shah's army, and of course acquired a good practical acquaintance with the country, and especially with its military resources, which is the subject of this afternoon's lecture. The particular occasion which gave me such a good opportunity of testing the value of the military resources of Persia, was my being deputed to one of the frontier provinces for the purpose of raising three or four infantry regiments from amongst the tribes of the neighbourhood. I had to work *ab initio*; from the first enlisting of the men to forming them into squads, companies, and regiments, and ultimately bringing the brigade up to headquarters to join the army of the Shah. Going through all this practical detail, of course gave me the best opportunity of testing the qualities of the men, and their capacity for military discipline. I cannot speak of their steadiness in the field because we had no severe work to try them; but with regard to their general military adaptability I can say that the impression which I obtained from that frontier service, and from two years of general service with the army, was that there were no people in the world who afforded better rough material for military purposes than the Persians. The physique of the men is admirable, and their power of endurance is great; the absence again of all habits of intemperance is very important, while the general intelligence and personal courage of the men is beyond all praise. It must be remembered that they have never had a fair chance of gaining a military reputation either in former times or in the present day. They have indeed always been at the caprice of interested governors and officers, who looked merely to filling their own pockets, and cared little or nothing for the efficiency of the military force at their command, nor even for the national interest. The army consequently being thus the sport of interested motives, has never emerged, except for a very short time during the employment of Christie and Lindsay, from military mediocrity. But there may perhaps be a future for Persia. If the Persian material, for instance, were placed at the disposal of a European Power who would encourage and take care of the men, and develop their military instincts, a fine working army, very superior, in my opinion, to anything that Turkey could produce, might be obtained in a very short period of time. The tribes indeed on the Western frontier, those inhabiting the range which runs from Ararat to Shiraz, are the very *beau ideal* of military material, the men being athletic, strong, hardy, and active. And with regard to their powers of endurance, a subject to which General Goldsmid has alluded, I may mention that I took the trouble on one occasion to calculate the marches of a Persian army from the road-book of Sergeant Gibbons, one of our non-commissioned officers, who accompanied the force of the Prince Royal, under the command of Captain Shce, of the Madras army, and I found the aggregate of ninety-five marches to give an average of twenty-one miles for the daily march, including the ordinary halts; but excluding the halts at the different large towns where the authorities remained—sometimes for a week or ten days—to arrange government business. This rate of twenty-one miles a-day for ninety-five marches is, I believe, a higher rate of progress than is on record in the history of any European army either of former or present times.

I could go further into details with regard to the organization and discipline of the Persian army, but the subject has been amply treated by the authorities whom General Goldsmid has quoted; and although it may be of interest to military men in certain points of view, it does not at present particularly affect our interests as a nation. I have had occasion more than once in this room to draw attention to the rules excluding all political questions from discussion at the United Service Institution, still we must remember that there are many military subjects which it is almost impossible to examine satisfactorily except in connection with political considerations. In the present instance, for example, the mere abstract question of the military resources of Persia, or the adaptability of the Persian soldier for military purposes, can only be of a very moderate and limited degree of interest; but when we discuss

the question in connection with other political considerations, we then find it to be one which concerns us very nearly. General Goldsmid has already said very truly that from the geographical position of Persia, placed as she is midway between Russian territory on one side and India on the other, it is a necessity that she should become a most important factor in the future political history of the East. It is indeed quite impossible that Persia can remain quiescent, surrounded as she is by nations undergoing the most important political changes. The events which pass in the territories which surround her must necessarily influence Persia herself, and as that influence acts upon the feelings of the country and the Government, so it will re-act upon our interests in India. If, for instance, the military resources of Persia, such as they have been described by Sir Frederic Goldsmid, were placed at the disposal of a Power hostile to England, the country would constitute a most formidable menace to British India; whereas, on the other hand, if Persia were leagued in an honest and cordial alliance with England, and her military resources were strengthened by the material assistance of British money and arms and scientific instruction, then Persia might become an impregnable barrier to India. I will not further pursue the political aspect of the question, but I submit it is in this particular point of view that General Goldsmid's observations to-day have been of so much value. I trust that they have already led in this meeting, and that they will generally lead out of doors to a better appreciation of the value of a Persian alliance, a subject which is at present very little understood, but which is, as I have always fully believed myself, of real importance to the national interests. And I will only add, in conclusion, that, as a well-wisher of Persia, a country with which I have been associated for forty-five years, and the interests of which I have ever had at heart—as a well-wisher of Persia, I say, and more especially as a patriotic Englishman, I do most sincerely trust that the period of suspicion and neglect which has so long prevailed in our relations with Persia, will now be exchanged for one of confidence and active interest. Under such circumstances I believe that a real honest and cordial alliance might be formed between England and Persia, the result of which would be that we should march forward in a common path of peace and progress, of successful commerce, of social improvement, and of advancing civilisation. I beg to be allowed to present the thanks of this meeting to General Goldsmid for his valuable and interesting address.