

tax-gatherer's exaction as a something to which all mankind are subject, and knowing nothing better they are not miserable at the thought of what they must bear. They are even sometimes convinced that after all "Iran" is the favoured of heaven. In illustration of this Sir John Malcolm tells an anecdote of an Arab-Persian woman who had accompanied an English family to Britain, and was being questioned by her relatives in Mekran as to the country and people she had visited. Were they happy? Were they rich? Was the country a good one? The country, the "ayuh" replied, was a good one. It was like a garden; the people, she had heard, were happy; she knew they were wise, and they seemed to be rich. At this her friends looked sad. Their country was not like a garden, the inhabitants were not wise, and they felt that they might be richer without being any less happy, and they were turning away, for the first time in their lives, really discontented with their condition, when the woman remarked that in "Feringhistan" there was one thing the people wanted. They had no date trees; she had not seen one in the whole country, and for more than a year she had looked for nothing else. Then the Arabs were happy once more, for they were certain that a country without dates must be miserable indeed.

Again, the Persians, when they leave home, either on business or pleasure—pleasure being the rarest of the motives which induce them to leave their own country—take care, when they return, to run down the good points of the kingdoms they have visited, so as to flatter the national vanity, and at the same time preserve their own reputation for truthfulness. They are, moreover, so prejudiced—and this criticism applies to Orientals generally—that they fail to see merit in anything which is different from what they have been accustomed to, and hence generally spend their time abroad in picking out the bad and not the good points of the nations they visit. Finally, the Persians, when they see their country visited by travellers, and foreigners readily residing in it either for purposes of trade or for the sake of official employment, naturally come to the conclusion that if the homes of these people were all they declare them to be, they would scarcely be so anxious to leave them. In Sir John Malcolm's day, few Persians, even of the highest rank, understood any language save their own and Arabic, and though all classes read, the books to which they had access contained little information about any part of the world save Asia. Even then, the knowledge imparted was vague, erroneous, or generally unsatisfactory. Europe they only knew by name, and by confused accounts of its nations and comparative greatness. At a much later date, Jehangir Mirza, a grandson of Fetteh Ali Shah, thought the English, French, and Russian were all under one king, and was astonished to find that Great Britain was governed by a female sovereign. Even yet, it is difficult to make them understand many of the European inventions which have of late years been introduced into their country. In particular the telegraph, of which there are nearly 3,000 miles in operation, is as puzzling to them as it has ever been to the unscientific in Europe. At first they considered that the wires were hollow, and that the messages were blown through them. "Imagine a dog whose tail is here in Teheran, and his muzzle in London; tread on his tail here, and he will bark there." Even after this explanation by the telegraph officer, the local governor, to whom it was vouchsafed, had some difficulty in understanding the *rationale* of the