

feeling our rivals know well how to take advantage of. In 1878 Persia sent £173,358 worth of goods to Great Britain, and imported £149,191 worth of British produce. But it is almost needless to say only a trifling proportion of the Persian products—chiefly opium—was sent direct to us.

PERSIAN TOWNS.

Some of these have already been described, and, with a few alterations to suit local differences, might fairly stand as the type of the others which have not been noticed. Tabriz, Kasvin, Ispahan, and Shiraz have all at different times had the honour of being the Shah's capital; and at present Teheran, on the broad plain near the south-west base of Mount Damavand, is the seat of government, and the principal place of residence of the Court. Teheran, when first heard of in the twelfth century, was a miserable place. The inhabitants lived in houses underground, and indeed it was not until the fifteenth century that they emerged from their subterranean dwellings. But by 1618 Chardin and other European travellers describe it as a large city. At present it does not impress the visitor, and at a distance is decidedly disappointing. Its black mud walls are exactly of the colour of the ground, so that seen at a distance it looks like a "confused dust-enshrouded mass," and altogether very unlike the Oriental capital of the Eastern tale. Inside, the appearance of things is not much more inviting. The absence of shady trees make the ill-paved narrow streets very hot, and the want of any approach to a decent hotel does not mollify the traveller disappointed with his first view of the chief city of Persia. Ispahan is not much more inviting, though, as we have seen (p. 307), the climate is more agreeable. Shiraz (p. 313) is the "city of colleges"—of which there are about ten—but the education supplied is of a very elementary character. It is now chiefly visited by those who are curious to examine the magnificent ruins of Persepolis—the ancient capital, and at one time "the glory of the East," and the pride of Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes, until it was destroyed by Alexander the Great. Tauris, with its 100,000 people—as many as Teheran; Meshed, "the Holy," with 60,000; Yezd, with 40,000; and Hamadan, Kermanshah, Kerman, Dizful, Kazvin, Resht, Astrabad, Kashan, Burudjird, and Kum—all with between twenty and thirty thousand people—are other towns of importance. It is needless describing them. Filthy thoroughfares, mud walls, sometimes groves of trees, bad water and little of it, bare walls of houses facing the streets; the windows generally without glass, or the balconies looking into the courtyards; and great caravanserais built by speculators or "pious founders" for the accommodation of travellers, are about the most salient features of urban Persia. But over all is written ruin and desolation. New buildings stand tawdry and out of place beside old ones that only echo the past, while the dirt, the disorder, and the discomfort which seem innate to the East prevail everywhere through the land of Iran (pp. 304, 305, 308, 312, 313).

PROGRESS OF PERSIA.

The Persian peasantry are, as a rule, contented and even happy. They are oppressed by their local rulers, but ages of tyranny have accustomed them to regard the