

sheiks to keep order, and above all—what they consider the final purpose of order—to levy their poll-taxes in peace. In India the yellowish-hued pearls are most sought after: in the Bagdad market the white ones are most valued, and this variety is also best appreciated in Europe; but Persia absorbs a great number of seed pearls for purposes of embroidery and for medicine, the pearl being throughout the East celebrated as a tonic. Altogether Mr. Geary, from whom we have obtained the foregoing particulars, calculates the Gulf pearl fisheries may be worth £200,000 per annum, more or less; but there is no means of arriving at anything save an approximate estimate.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE POPULATION.*

To return to Persia proper. The snows which cover the Persian plateau atone in most degree for the absence of the monsoon. The winds blowing over in the winter months revive the dried-up denizens of the Gulf towns, and at times make even Europeans shiver. Persia and the Gulf have this advantage over India, that instead of only two seasons, they have four, and are situated "within the zone of winter rains, which extends as far as Central Europe."

Politically, Persia is divided into four great provinces, each province in its turn being subdivided into six sections.† The four great political divisions are: Khorassan, or the east region; Azerbaijan, the western, or, to use the poetical Persian imagery, "the province of the rising and the setting sun;" Irak, the central region lying between these two; and Fars, the most southern part of the country. The low-lying country between the edge of the Persian plateau and the Gulf, though under the rule of the Shah, is in the East scarcely considered a part of Persia. It is to the Orientals simply "Arabistan," or the country of the Arabs. But even without it the Shah rules over 600,000 square miles, or a sixth more than the Sultan of Turkey does in Asia. The population of the country is not known with anything like accuracy, for it is not to the interest of the provincial officials to send up returns which might inconveniently act as a check upon their peculations. A large population would inevitably result in the Teheran officials insisting on a large revenue. Accordingly, while the governors take care that every one is taxed to the uttermost farthing, they report only a moderate population as taxable, and pocket the difference. Hence Major St. John considers that instead of the population of Persia being only 4,000,000, it is nearer 10,000,000. The governors are permitted to retain their posts longer if found capable men—that is, men who send up a good revenue to the treasury, and from whose provinces no rumours of revolts or of flagrant abuses reach the capital. Members of the royal family

* See also "Races of Mankind," Vol. III., p. 221.

† In this statement I have followed the best authorities. In some works, however, there are thirteen provinces mentioned; in others twenty; in a third estimate twenty-four. The discrepancies arise owing to the interpretation into English of the Persian word signifying "Province," and the estimation of the size of a tract of country entitled to that designation. In taking the view I have done, my opinion is strengthened by the authority of a distinguished European officer in the service of the Shah, who has been good enough to supply me with much information, and to read over part of these notes, compiled from various official and other documents.