

THE SHAH OF PERSIA.

In an interesting letter to the *New York Times*, Dr. William H. Russell (the historian of Bell Run) gives some personal information about the Shah of Persia which will not tend to raise that potentate in the opinion of cultured society. It seems that the distinguished oriental monarch is not only proud, but impunctual, ill-mannered, and rather immoral. As a matter of choice, he prefers to eat with his fingers, and cannot be persuaded that anybody in the world is the equal of His Sublime Highness. Yet rumour has not been up to the mark in describing the incredible richness of his jewels. Mr. Russell says: "No one was prepared to see, *moratibus oculis*, a diamond nearly twice the size of the Koh-i-noor, or 'Mountain of Light,' (now in the possession of the Queen of England, once Runjeet Sing, the Lion of Lahore's greatest glory), stuck in front of a man's sword-belt, and five diamonds, each larger than that jewel of jewels, *en echelon* upon his coat, from waist to shoulder. These stones are scarcely cut, and do not show as they ought, but they are of surpassing purity. The Shah's sword-belt is a treasure-house in itself. The sheath is studded with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds, which shame their setting of purest gold. The front of his coat is garnished with rows of brilliants instead of lace. The collar and sleeves are crusted with them, and his orders are of the most precious jewels. His spurs flash like sunbeams. All this on the person of a man who has nothing noble in mien or face, although he is above the average height of the Indian Mussulman noblesse."

As to the personal appearance of the monarch, we are afraid that his picture has flattered him. For the keen-sighted journalist says: "He is not much at his ease with European barbarians, and it is ludicrous to see him standing alone in a crowd with a clear space round him and no one to talk to, for he balances first on one leg and then on another, like a hen on a hot griddle, and does not know what to do with them or his hands. When he turns his back and the spectator calmly surveys his exterior, freed from the distracting influences of his diamonds, the Shah does not

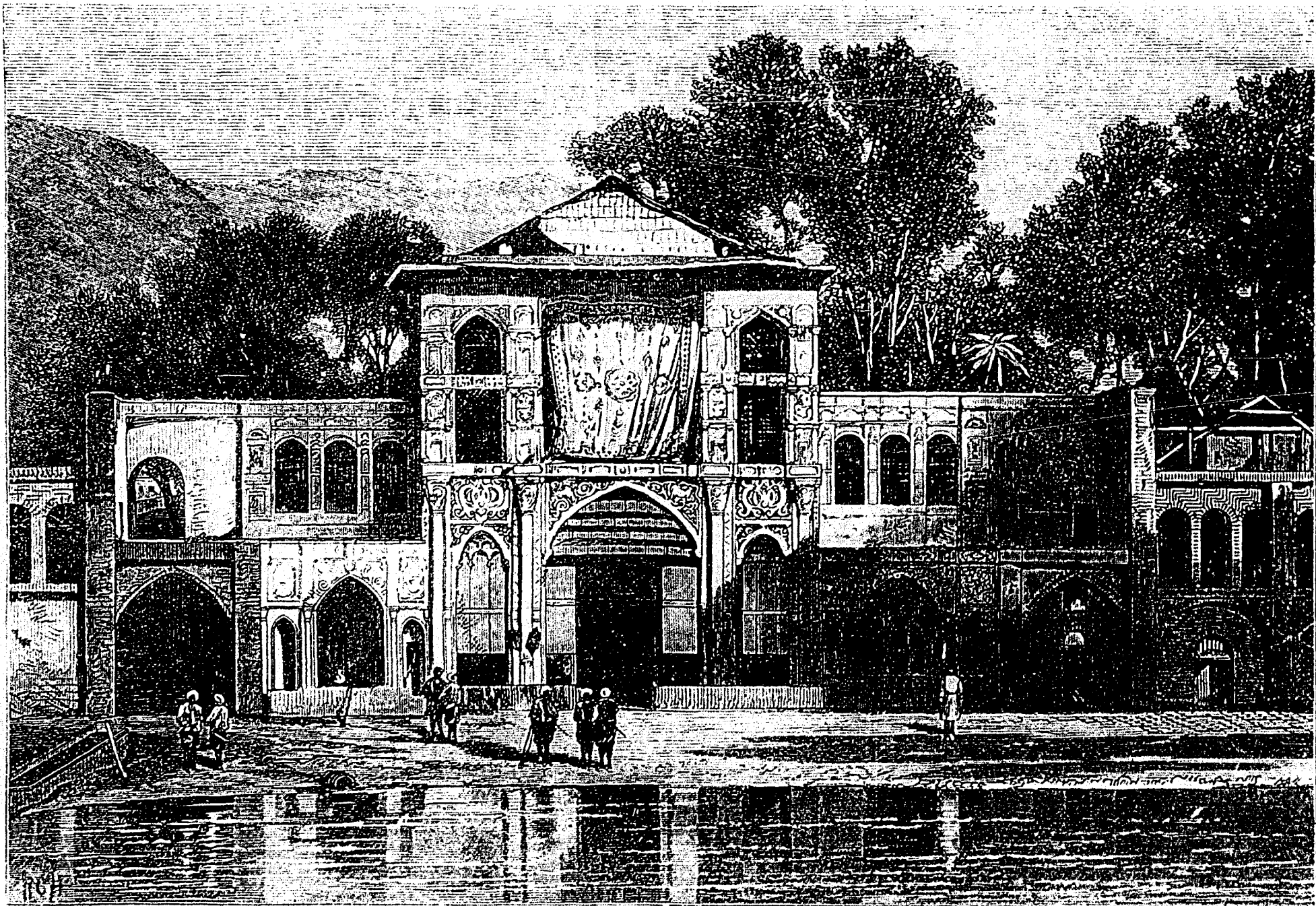


HIS MAJESTY NASR-OD-DEEN, SHAH OF PERSIA.

present an imposing appearance. I admit that the backs of most people fail to impress one, but his Majesty's tailor has rendered his *trousers* quite abnormally ridiculous by making his frock-coat with a multitude of fine plaits like those of a Highlander's kilt or of a lady of Queen Bess's time over the hips, and so all round. His face is seldom animated, and there is something incongruous in the position of his respectable gold spectacles, *a la Chiers*, on his aquiline nose, under a Persian cap, and, over all these, diamonds."

His personal habits would not render him an acceptable visitor in cultivated circles, whatever "shoddy" might think of him. At least so the writer seems to suggest in the following paragraph: "In spite of his jewels and external splendour, the Shah-in-Shah is, according to European notions, a savage in many respects—proud, wilful, sensual, and arbitrary. If punctuality be the politeness of princes, as it is said to be, the Shah would, in consequence of his utter indifference to engagements, be one of the most ill-mannered men in the world. He kept the parade at Potsdam, ordered by the Kaiser, waiting a couple of hours. He kept the Queen for half an hour at the railway station waiting for him. He would not go to breakfast when it was announced, at the time of invitation, but walked about in the garden, and then, seeing an arbour which pleased him, desired to have his breakfast brought there. When he sat at dinner yesterday he put his fingers in his plate and ate with them, and if he came on a piece of some dish which he did not like, he took it out of his mouth and threw it down—not on the ground, but on the Queen's (Empress's) dress."

As to the morality of the royal visitor from Ispahan, our readers will regret to learn that "there has been some trouble in teaching the Shah and his followers that women are to be treated with respect, even though they combat with their faces uncovered, and one of the most useful lessons they will carry back from Europe is that which will teach them to consider their wives their equals, and not their slaves—if they learn it. There is a great 'if,' for they do not at all approve of all they see here."



SOUTH FRONT OF THE SHAH'S PALACE AT TEHERAN.