

almost destitute of rain, and the soil is full of salt, so that it is quite barren. But there are many rich valleys, watered by streams that flow from the mountains.

The fruitful districts produce grain, silk, grapes, peaches, and melons. There are also many beautiful flowers—hyacinths, tulips, crocuses, and primroses. The Persians cultivate immense quantities of roses, from which they extract a costly perfume. The pretty blue gem called *turquoise* is found in Persia.

686. The Persians make beautiful carpets and shawls. They are said to be very polite, and to use rather extravagant language: thus one would tell you that he was your slave, and that everything he had was at your service, when he would be astonished if you took him at his word.

687. There are no roads in Persia, and wheeled carriages cannot be used. Travellers sometimes ride in a curious conveyance formed of a box or covered seat, placed on poles which project so as to make shafts in front and behind. Mules are harnessed into these shafts, the one in the rear facing the seat. Sometimes a double seat, like a panner, is slung across the back of a mule, and a traveller rides on each side.

688. **Teheran** is the capital of Persia; **Ispahan** is the largest city; and **Bushire** is an important sea-port.

The towns of Persia have no fine buildings. The houses are mostly of one story, and are built of mud mixed with straw and dried in the sun. There is little to be seen in the narrow streets but mud walls, with iron doors a few feet apart. These doors open into the courtyards, on which the dwellings face. The rooms have no chairs nor tables; but they have rich carpets, on which the occupants sit with their legs drawn in under them.

689. The *Shah*, or sovereign, is a despotic tyrant, treating his people as if they existed only to minister to his pleasure. When he wants money he demands it from his officers, who extort it from the people.

AFGHANISTAN AND BELOOCHISTAN.

690. These countries, situated on the east of Persia, are high and mountainous, varied with fertile valleys and dry desert plains. The valleys yield grain, cotton, grapes, and peaches. Fruit is extensively cultivated in the neighbourhood of the

towns. The date-palm flourishes on the borders of the desert in the south of Beloochistan.

691. A high mountain wall, separating British India from Afghanistan and Beloochistan, is cleft by deep gorges, called *passes*, which are used as roads by merchant caravans. In some places along the narrow passes, high rocky cliffs hang over, approaching so near each other at the top as to make the way dark and gloomy.

692. The **inhabitants** are a fierce, warlike people, and depend chiefly on their flocks of sheep and goats for their subsistence.

693. **Cabool**, the capital and largest city of Afghanistan, has an elevated position near a mountain pass. **Herat** and **Candahar** are on the route of trade between Persia and India.

Kelat, the chief town in Beloochistan, is strongly fortified.

BRITISH INDIA.

694. This large country, situated on the south of the Himalaya Mountains, forms part of the British Empire. The Himalayas, on the northern borders, are the highest mountains in the world. The lowlands are intensely hot; but unlike many of the countries of Asia, they have abundance of rain, and are very productive.

695. India has long been famed for the rich products of its fields, its forests, and its mines; and also for the skill of its inhabitants in the manufacture of costly silks and shawls.

696. Some of the most important products are rice, sugar, cotton, silk, opium, cinnamon, nutmegs, cloves, and other spices.

Cinnamon is the inner bark of the cinnamon tree; cloves are the dried flower-buds of the clove tree; opium is a gum obtained from a kind of poppy.

697. The forests are dense with shrubbery, and the sun's rays are shut out by broad leaves; so that the hot, damp air, mingled with poisonous gases from decaying plants, causes fevers and other diseases.

698. The diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls of India, are sought after by the wealthy in all countries. Some of the diamonds are very costly, and adorn the crowns of the kings and queens of Europe.

699. India has about four times as many inhab-