

CHAPTER I.

STAY AT SHIRAZ, AND VISIT TO THE PRINCIPAL PLACES OF THAT CITY.

OCT. 25th.—At an early hour this morning, I received a visit at the caravansera from the Prince Jaffier Ali Khan, who invited us to take up our quarters at his house, in one of the best parts of Shiraz. This being accepted, I repaired with him to the Hamame-Vakeel, which was the finest bath I had yet seen in Persia. It resembled generally that at Kermanshah, but was much larger, and more ornamented. During our conversation here, I heard a Mohammedan describing to his friend, that Friday was set aside as a day of public prayer by Mohammed, because Christ, the Roah Ullah, or Soul of God, was crucified on that day; and this, it appears, is the tradi-

tion received by many. The same individual also said that the Persians stained their beards, as a peculiar mark of their being Sheeahs ; for though Imam Ali did not stain his, yet one of his immediate descendants did,—and this, he thought, was a sufficient precedent for the use of this as a distinguishing mark from the Soonnees, who do not generally follow this practice.

After the bath, we were conducted to the house of Jaffier Ali Khan, by a train of servants who had been sent to attend us ; and on our arrival there a separate portion of his residence was appropriated to our own use, with accommodation for our horses, and a small private garden for retirement and repose. We all breakfasted together after the manner of the country, and passed the whole of the day in agreeable conversation on subjects connected with Persia. In the evening we were visited by three of Jaffier's particular friends, who, he said, were among the few of the old and respectable members of the community that remained in Shiraz, where, as throughout all Persia, the general corruption of the government has led to the elevation of the lowest characters to the high-

est offices of the state, and the consequent oppression and persecution of the heads of all the older and more respectable families.

After supper, chess followed, at which the greater number of the party played skilfully; and during the game, the conversation turned on a late affair which had excited considerable attention at Shiraz. A captain in the English navy, and a Civilian of the East India Company's service, who had come up from Bushire on a visit to Shiraz, were lodged in one of the villas and gardens of the Governor during their stay here; when, one evening, some young persons of distinction belonging to the Persian court, having drunk deeply, went there at a late hour to ask for more wine. The request was refused, and very warm language passed on both sides. On the following morning, however, the Persians, sensible of their fault, went in a body to ask pardon of the English gentlemen. A reconciliation was soon brought about; and the principal offender advanced to embrace the young civilian, and kiss his forehead, after the Persian fashion. The Englishman being ignorant, however, of this custom of the country, took this familiarity for an intended vio-

lation of his person, and became more angry than before. It was therefore represented to the Prince, who was then the Governor of Shiraz, that these young Persian courtiers had a second time come in a body to insult the English guests. The Prince, without farther enquiry, and upon this mere representation, gave up the offenders, though all of them were young men high in his service, to be punished with death, or such other tortures as the English gentlemen might at their discretion command. They were even brought into the public place of execution, in pursuance of this sentence,—were there stripped, tied up, and rods prepared for flogging them; when, at the moment of the punishment being about to commence, they were released by order of the naval captain and his young friend, who expressed themselves perfectly satisfied with this measure of justice, without proceeding further. The Persians, however, knowing that the whole affair originated in a misconception, from ignorance of their manners, were very indignant at the punishment having proceeded so far.

Oct. 26th.—Being attended by a servant of Jaffier Ali as a guide, we went out to-day

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to see some of the principal places in the town, and paid our first visit to the Musjid-No, an old mosque, now so much ruined, as to be scarcely more than a spacious square-court, with fountains, benches for praying on, &c. We next went to the Musjid Jumah, the most ancient perfect mosque in the city, being upwards of eight hundred years old.* There was, however, a square building in the court before it, fast going to ruins: the columns had diamond-cut pedestals in the Indian fashion, fluted shafts, and Arabic capitals; the whole of these were of marble, and of better proportions than usual, approaching nearly to the Doric in the relation between the diameter and height. A pedestal of an inverted lotus flower, fully opened, was shown us here, standing by itself, and exactly like the pedestals of the columns at Persepolis, from which it was no doubt brought; as the ruins of that city or temple are said to have been employed in the structure of Shiraz, which was founded in the seventy-sixth year of the Hejira under

* The memory of Atta Beg Saad is to this day held in great respect at Shiraz. He surrounded that city by a wall, and built the Musjid Jumah, or chief mosque, which still remains.—*Hist. of Persia*, vol. i. p. 388.

the Omniades. In the mosque itself is a fine old niche for prayer, with a rich pointed arch over it, and the words ‘Bismillah-el-Rakman-el-Rakheem,’ &c. written around it in Cufic characters, in high relief. The decorations of this arch are exuberant, but they are all well-disposed: the ground-work is formed of clusters of grapes and vine leaves, —a very singular combination for a Mohammedan sanctuary; and over the concave part of the roof is a large stem disposed into three branches, with a full-blown lily at the end of the central one, and a half blown one at the end of the other two. A wooden flight of steps leads to a pulpit near, which is equally old; and over it, among the full-carved work of the back part, is the confession of faith, ‘La Illah ul Ullah, oua Mohammed el Roo-sool Ullah.’ The conquest of Persia by Tamerlane was celebrated in this mosque; and though at present in a very ruined and imperfect state, it was long the first in Shiraz. The whole wears an appearance of much greater antiquity than the Mohammedan era.

From hence we went to the Musjid Waqueel, which is the most modern, and reckoned to be the best mosque in Shiraz. It was

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begun by Kerim Khan, but was never completely finished, and it still remains in an incomplete state. Its entrance faces a broad way, which connects it with the great square, leading to the Ark, or Citadel, and the Prince's residence; so that its situation is imposing. Within the gate of entrance is a large square court, with piazzas around it, and a long reservoir of water in the centre. It was now filled with soldiers preparing to appear before the Prince, and with men in every stage of decrepitude, halt, blind, and lame, preparing to ask alms. The mosque within is one large hall, unusually low, and its roof formed of a succession of vaulted coves. The points of these are supported by marble columns, of which there are four rows of twelve each. These are without pedestals, and the shaft and capital of each is one piece of white marble. The shafts are spirally fluted, though beginning and ending in a straight line: the capital swells upward like an inverted bell; and between two astragals, at the top and bottom of the capital, are arranged perpendicular leaves, like those of a spreading palm, sculptured in relief. There is here a flight of steps going up to the

oratory of the priests; the whole flight being formed of one entire block of Tabreez marble, finely wrought and beautifully polished. Some parts of the roof or ceiling, and the wall about the niche of prayer, have been tiled, but the rest remains bare; and while the sculptured marble slabs of the surbasement of the outer court appear as fresh as if finished yesterday, the coloured tiling of the arches above is already falling to decay, and no repairs are even spoken of as intended. Though this is considered to be the most beautiful mosque at Shiraz, it is not to be compared with either of the principal ones at Ispahan.

After quitting this, we went to the Shah Cheragh, the tomb of one of the sons of Imam Moosa,—Shah being a name given to Fakeers and Dervishes, or holy persons distinguished for their piety or their wisdom, as well as to kings. In the centre of this place is a large and lofty edifice covered by a dome, a fine tomb of wrought silver in open work, like the tomb in Henry the Seventh's Chapel at Westminster Abbey, with folding-doors; the bars of silver used in this grating work being an inch in circumference. Around the

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tomb are tablets covered with fine Arabic writing; and on the tomb itself are offerings of silver vessels, with a highly embellished copy of the Koran. We each kissed the corners of this with great devotion; the omission of which mark of respect would have been dangerous. The carpets around this tomb were painted; and rich gilding was used on the ceiling of the roofs and the walls. This place received a constant succession of visitors, each of whom generally left a small sum with the Moollah at the door, who was employed, when we passed him, in writing Arabic sentences on handkerchiefs of white cotton for sale. As I wore the Arab dress, I was saluted as a Hadjee, or Pilgrim, and paid much greater respect than I expected, considering the hatred which the Persians generally bear to the sect of the Soonnees and all its adherents.

The Bazaar-el-Wakeel was the part of Shiraz that we next visited. This is long, large, and lofty, in the style of the best bazaars at Ispahan, and is quite equal to any of them. It was now filled with shops, all excellently furnished. Some of the smaller bazaars have a raised causeway or pavement

of flag-stones on each side, and in the centre a deep space for camels or beasts of burthen. The dealers expose their wares on high benches, where also sit the Serafs, or money-changers, with their strong chests of silver and copper coins for changing on commission.

The Bazaar-No, or New Bazaar, is not yet completed. It is inferior only to the Bazaar-el-Wakeel, and is distinguished by the most fantastic paintings of battles, &c. All the monsters of the fabulous ages are here realized, and draw crowds of gazers. Nadir Shah, Shah Abbas, and Futteh Ali Shah, have their portraits among them—either engaged in war, or beholding barbarous executions. The loves of Shirine and Ferhad are depicted in other compartments, and the variety is without end. This is not yet complete.

The Kaisereah-Koneh-Khan, which was once one of the largest and oldest caravan-seras in Shiraz, is now entirely in ruins, exhibiting only a large octagonal frame-work to show what the edifice once was, the inner space being now built upon by smaller houses. When perfect, however, it must have been a very fine edifice.