

WINE AMONG THE ANCIENT PERSIANS.¹

Now, when the Abkari system of the Government of India is a topic of much discussion here and in England, the subject of this paper will, I hope, be interesting to many, especially to my Parsee readers. The subject of temperance and total abstinence has drawn the attention of many well-wishers of our British Army, and among them of no less a personage that General Sir Frederick Roberts, our distinguished Commander-in-Chief, who, on account of his very celebrated march in the land of our fore-fathers,—from the Kaboulistan and Zabolistan of old to the town of Kandahar—and, on account of his equally celebrated victory at the latter place, which reminded us of the ancient Roman hero, saying, on a similar occasion, “ I came, I saw, and I conquered,” was very aptly compared with the national hero of Irân, the Jehân Pehelvân Rûstam, who had, as described by the great epic poet, Firdousi, performed the celebrated marches of the Haftakhâns, or Seven Stages. The object of this paper is to trace a short history of the use of wine among the ancient Persians, from remote historic times up to the time of our emigration to India—an emigration that has, after several great and important political changes, placed us under the fostering care of the benign British rule, whose kind shelter reminds us of the auspicious shadow of the fabulous Persian bird, Homâe, whose splendour reminds us of our Cyrus the Great, and whose justice reminds us of our Noshirvân the Just.

In all nations, and at all times, we find eminent men, either singing the praise of wine, or magnifying its evil. If we have the excellent Korân preaching against wine, we have the Divân of one of its disciples, Hafiz, praising its virtue. If we have a Sir Walter Raleigh, or a great divine, to run down the use of wine, we have a Martin Luther to extol it. For example, the following two short lines of Martin Luther sum up, as it were, a few of the *gazals* of Hafiz :—

“ Wer nicht liebt Wein, Weib und Gesang
Der bleibt ein Narr sein Lebenlang.” (*i.e.*

He who does not like wine, song, and wife,
Remains a fool for the whole of his life.

Compare with this the following lines of Hafiz :—

¹ This Paper was at first, read before the Zarthoshti Din ni kbôl Karnari Mandli on 15th February 1888. It was then delivered as a Lecture, on 2nd June 1888 before the Self Improvement Association. It is given here, as written at the time, with some slight alterations and with appendix.

“ Ishkbâzi, wa jawâni, wa sharb-i-l'al fâm
 Majlis-i-uns, wa harif-i-hamdâm, wa sharb-i-modâm
 Har ke in majlis bejuyad khush deli bar wai halâl
 Wa ân ke in ashrat ne khâhad zindagi bar wai harâm.”

(i.e.) Love, youth, and ruby-coloured wine,

A friendly meeting, a congenial companion and constant drinking ;

He who is desirous of this number of pleasures is deserving of cheerfulness ;

He who does not like these pleasures, may curse be on his life.

On the other hand, this short definition of wine, that “ Wine is a turn-coat, first a friend, and then an enemy ” finds itself amplified in the following denunciation of Sir Walter Raleigh, which says that, “ Take especial care that thou delight not in wine ; for there never was any man that came to honour or preferment that loved it ; for it transformeth a man into a beast, decayeth health, poisoneth the breath, destroyeth natural heat, brings a man's stomach to an artificial heat, deformeth the face, rotteth the teeth, and, to conclude, maketh a man contemptible, soon old, and despised of all wise and worthy men ; hated in thy servants, in thyself and companions, for it is a bewitching and infectious vice.”

Now, then, if we are asked—What does the ancient Iranian literature teach ? Does it run down its use or sing its praise ? We would say that it does neither the one nor the other. The Iranian literature preaches temperance in the strictest sense of the word, but not in the sense of “ total abstinence,” in which it is generally understood by the Temperance societies. It does not totally prohibit the use of wine. The wine used by the Persians of very early times was generally the innocent juice of grapes. It was very sweet and nourishing. The fermented juice of grapes was used very rarely, and that as a medicine.

King Jamshed (the Yima Khshaêta of the Avesta, and Yama of the Vedas), the fourth monarch of the Pêshdâdyan Dynasty of Persia, was the first monarch in whose reign wine was discovered and used as a medicine. Many incidents of the life of King Jamshed are similar to those of Noah as described in Genesis (VI.—VIII.)

(a) Jamshed lived for 1,000 years ; Noah for 950.

(b) Both cultivated land.

(c) As Noah was asked to build an Arc to save himself from the Deluge, so was Jamshed asked to build a Vara (enclosure).

(d) Both took therein the choicest specimens of plants and animals.

(e) As Noah built an altar unto the Lord as a mark of thanksgiving for his safety, so Jamshed established a sacred fire, named Atar Farobâ.

(f) Lastly, as Noah was the first man to plant vineyards and to drink wine; so was Jamshed first to discover wine.

Prince Jalâl-ud-din Mirzâ Kâjar thus describes the incident of the discovery of wine in his History of Persia:—"King Jamshed was very fond of grapes which grew only in summer. He once ordered a large quantity to be deposited in a jar for his use in winter when they were very rare. On sending for the jar after some time, he found the juice of grapes fermenting. Thinking that it was turning into a poisonous liquid he got the flask marked 'poison,' and ordered it to be placed in an out-of-the-way corner of the royal store-room, so as to be beyond the reach of anybody. A maid-servant, of the royal household, happened to know this. As she was suffering from a very bad headache, she thought of committing suicide in order to get rid of the pain. She stealthily went into the royal store-room, and took a dose out of that flask of wine, and, to her surprise, found that the drink, instead of killing her, lulled her to sleep and restored her to health. She then communicated the matter to King Jamshed, who was greatly pleased with the discovery. The king and his courtiers began to use it on occasions of joy and merriment. The wine was known as the 'shâh daroo,' *i.e.*, the royal wine, from the fact of its being discovered by the shâh, *i.e.*, the king." It is said that in Persia even now wine is sometimes called the "zeher-i-khoosh," *i.e.*, pleasant poison, from the fact of its first being considered a poison by King Jamshed.

Coming to the time of the Avesta, we find that the wine then used was the innocent juice of the grapes. That it was a sweet, nourishing, and health-giving drink appears from several facts:—(1) The very Avestaic word for wine shows that it was a drink as sweet as honey. This Avestaic word is *madhó*, which corresponds to the Sanscrit *madhú*, Latin *mel*, and French *miel*. (2) The root of the word shows its medicinal virtue. It comes from an old Aryan root, *mad* or *madh*, Latin *mederi*, meaning, to make a remedy, from which comes our English word medicine. "Dâru," the later Persian word for wine, which is now commonly used in Gujarati, also has the etymological meaning

¹ This is a story of the cure of *head-ache*. An inscription on the tomb of Ahmad Shah Bahamani, the founder of modern Bedar, gives the following words about the *heart-cure* said to have been brought about by wine: "Should any heart ache my remedy is this: A cup of wine I sip of bliss" (Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India of 1914-15, p. 132.)

of medicine. Davâ-dâru is a colloquial phrase for medical treatment. It comes from an old Aryan root, "dru," Sanskrit "dhru," meaning to be strong, to be healthy. (3) It was prescribed as nourishment to ladies in their accouchement. (Vend. V. 52.) (4) Being a nourishing and innocent drink, its use was permitted even among the priesthood (Vend. XIV. 17.) (5) In one of the later scriptures, the Afrin-i-Gâhambâr, where they speak about the six Gâhambârs, which are the season festivals and thanksgiving occasions, corresponding to the six days of the Creation in the Christian Scriptures, it is said, that the merit of celebrating the last season-festival of the year, the Hamaspathmaedem Gâhambâr, in honour of the Creation of Man, is just the same as that of feeding the poor and the pious. In the food referred to here, wine is spoken of as a part of the diet. This accounts for why wine is used together with milk and water in some of the Parsee religious ceremonies. At one time, it was thought very meritorious to taste a little of the wine used in the religious ceremonies of the Gâhambâr festival. (6) An allusion to wine in the recital of blessings at the marriage ceremony, known as the Ashirvâd ceremony, shows, that the wine spoken of in the old Parsee books was not the wine that intoxicated. The officiating priests in the recital of a long list of blessings that are invoked upon the marrying couple wish the bride and the bridegroom to be as sparkling and cheerful as wine.

After the evidences of the Avesta, which refer to the later time of the Kyânian dynasty, we come to the Classical Greek and Roman historians, who speak of the Achæmenian and Sâssânian dynasties. According to Herodotus, the father of History, in the time of Cyrus, who is spoken of in the Bible, as "the Anointed of the Lord" (Isaiah, XLV), the Persians did not make a general use of the nourishing wine. Sandanis, a wise man of Lydia, dissuades his Lydian King Cræsus from going to war with a nation that did not drink wine, but simply lived on water. He says, "Thou art about, oh king! to make war against men who wear leathern trousers, and have all their other garments of leather; who feed not on what they like, but on what they can get from a soil that is sterile and unkindly; who do not indulge in wine, but drink water; who possess no figs nor anything else that is good to eat. If, then, thou conquerest them, what canst thou get from them, seeing that they have nothing at all? But if they conquer thee, consider how much that is precious thou wilt lose; if they once get a taste of our pleasant things, they will keep such hold of them that we shall never be able to make them loose their grasp." (Herod. I. 71.)

Again, Cyrus, in order to persuade his Persians to go to fight against the Medians under his maternal grandfather Astyages, gives them a Median feast and, therein, wine also—a luxury with which they were not familiar. According to Herodotus (I. 126): “He (Cyrus) collected together all his father’s flocks, both sheep and goats, and all his oxen, and slaughtered them, and made ready to give an entertainment to the entire Persian army. Wine, too, and bread of the choicest kinds were prepared for the occasion. When the morrow came and the Persians appeared, he bade them recline upon the grass and enjoy themselves. After the feast was over, he requested them to tell him ‘which they liked best, to-day’s work or yesterday’s?’ They answered that ‘the contrast was, indeed strong; yesterday brought them nothing but what was bad, to-day everything that was good.’ Cyrus instantly seized on their reply and laid bare his purpose in these words: “Ye men of Persia! thus do matters stand with you. If you choose to hearken to my words, you may enjoy these and ten thousand similar delights, and never condescend to any slavish toil; but if you will not hearken, prepare yourselves for unnumbered toils as hard as yesterday’s.”” These evidences from Herodotus show that wine was not so generally used by the Persians of the time of Cyrus. It was after the conquests of Lydia and Media that the Persians began to possess the luxury of wine. Herodotus says on this point that “before the conquest of Lydia the Persians possessed none of the luxuries or delights of life.” (I. 75.) According to Xenophon, who also speaks of the time of Cyrus, the Persian kings of that time were somewhat familiar with wine, but they made a very moderate use of it. This appears from the following conversation which young Cyrus had with his Median grandfather, Astyages (*Cyropædia*, I. Ch. 3 s. 21). Cyrus says to Astyages: “When you feasted your friends on your birthday, I plainly found that he (the cupbearer) had poured you all poison.” “And how child,” said Astyages, “did you know this.” “Truly,” said he, “because I saw you all disordered in body and mind; for, first, what you do not allow us boys to do, that you did yourselves; for you all bawled together and could learn nothing of each other; then you fell to singing very ridiculously: and without attending to the singer, you swore he sung admirably; then every one told stories of his own strength; you rose up and fell to dancing, but without all rule or measure, for you could not so much as keep yourselves upright; then you all entirely forgot yourselves; you, that you were king, and they, that you were their governor; and then for the first time I discovered that you were celebrating a festival, where all were

allowed to talk with equal liberty, for you never ceased talking." Astyages then said: "Does your father, child, never drink till he gets drunk?" "No, truly," said he. "What does he then?" "Why, he quenches his thirst and gets no further harm."

When we come to the reign of Cambyses, the successor of Cyrus, we find from Herodotus that the Persians made a more general use of wine. The wine which they used was very nourishing and health-giving. This appears very clearly from the following episode:—When Cambyses sent to the King of Ethiopia a flask of wine as a present, the latter was greatly delighted with its taste and its excellent nourishing quality, and said that the longest life of eighty years which the Persians lived must be solely due to that nourishing wine, more especially so, as the wheat they used was of a very inferior quality. I will quote Herodotus; "Last of all he came to [the wine, and having learnt their way of making it, he drank a draught, which greatly delighted him; whereupon he asked what the Persian king was wont to eat, and to what age the longest lived of the Persians had been known to attain. They told him that the king ate bread, and described the nature of wheat, adding that eighty years was the longest term of man's life among the Persians. Hereat, he remarked: It did not surprise him if they fed on dirt that they died so soon; indeed, he was sure they never would have lived so long as eighty years, except for the refreshment they got from that drink (meaning the wine), wherein he confessed the Persians surpassed the Ethiopians." (Herod. III. 22.)

This luxury which the Persians began to possess after the conquest of Lydia seemed to be on an increase in the reigns of the successors of Cambyses. In the reign of Darius, we find a few Persians of high rank playing an indecent mischief, under the influence of wine, in the royal court of the Macedonian Amyntas, the great grandfather of Alexander the Great, (the cursed Alexander of the Pahlavi works). According to Herodotus, Megabazus the Persian General of Darius, sent an embassy to Macedonia to demand from its king, Amyntas, "water and earth" as symbols of submission. Amyntas did not only give these, but called them to a dinner in his palace. After dinner, some of the Persians, under the influence of drink, behaved themselves disgracefully and insulted the Macedonian ladies, who were specially sent for at their request. The drunken frolic ended in the massacre of the whole of the Persian embassy. The son of Amyntas, who was a youth of fiery spirit, determined to avenge this insult to the fair sex of his country. The next day, he again

called to dinner the members of the embassy. They were made to sit each by the side of a handsome Macedonian youth, dressed as a young lady. The Persians, on their again attempting to repeat their drunken frolic of the previous day were pierced with daggers which the Macedonian youths carried beneath their dress. (Herodotus V. 17-23.)

After Darius, when we come to later times, we find Herodotus speaking of the Persians of his own time that "they are fond of wine and drink it in large quantities." (Herodotus I. 133). This increasing propensity to drink they further imitated from the Greeks. "There is no nation," says Herodotus, "which so readily adopts foreign customs as the Persians. . . . As soon as they hear of any luxury they instantly make it their own." (Herodotus I. 135).

Xenophon, praising the moderation of the Persians at the time of their first institution under Cyrus, says of the Persians of his own time that "beginning their meal very early they continue eating and drinking till the latest sitters-up go to bed. It was likewise an institution among them not to bring large bottles to their banquets; evidently thinking that, by not drinking to excess, they should neither weaken their bodies nor impair their understanding. And that custom, too, continues of not bringing such bottles; but they drink to such excess, that instead of bringing in they are carried out themselves, not being able to walk without help." (Cyrop. VIII. chap. 8-9-10).

Plato, on the other hand, writing of the same time as Xenophon, represents the Persians as taking moderate potations. In his discourse on Temperance (Laws I. 636), the Athenian stranger, speaking on the subject of drink, says to Megillus, the Lacedæmonian, that "the Persians, again, are much given to other practices of luxury which you reject, but they have more moderation in them than the Thracians and Scythians."

After Herodotus, Xenophon, and Plato, the next Greek historian of importance is Strabo, who flourished in the beginning of the Christian Era. Saying that the Persians as a nation are moderate, he attributes whatever there be of immoderation to the kings. He says, "Their habits are in general temperate, but their kings, from the great wealth which they possessed, degenerated into a luxurious way of life." (XV. C III. 22.)

The unlicensed luxury and licentiousness of some of the Persian kings of the Achæmenian dynasty have brought an unjust odium upon the whole Persian nation. The hard drinking of the kings and their grandees is one instance of this kind. Instances of unlicensed luxury and licentiousness were confined to the class of kings and their grandees, but were not common in the

whole nation. As Herodotus himself says, the ancient Persian laws did in no way sanction such acts; but the kings of the Achæmenian dynasty thought themselves to be "above the law," and indulging in them brought an odium upon the whole nation.

The next Greek historian of importance, who speaks on this subject, is Duris, of Samos, who flourished in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. His statement that once a year at the feast of Mithras, the King of Persia was bound to be drunk has driven two learned scholars of Europe to two opposite conclusions. Professor George Rawlinson of England infers from this that the Persians at the time were addicted to drinking. Professor Rapp of Germany, on the other hand, says that drunkenness, as a rule, was avoided. The fact, that the king intoxicated himself only once during a year, showed that, as a rule, there was no drunkenness. We are inclined to side with Professor Rapp when we refer to Firdousi for an account of this Mithraic festival. His account refers to the practice of drinking on this gala day, but does not speak of any immoderate use of wine, either by the king or by the populace. This feast of Mithras is known among the Parsees of India and their co-religionists of Persia by the name of Jashan-i-Mehergân. It occurs on the 16th day (Meher) of the 7th month (Meher) of a Parsee year. Firdousi says that it occurred on the first of the seventh month. Irrespective of the historic event with which it was associated, this day was a great festival day like the other twelve festival days of a Parsee year which occur on the day which bears the name of a Parsee month. Again; it occurred about the time of the autumnal equinox, which was observed as a season festival. Lastly, that which gave a great importance to this day was an historical event. It celebrated the anniversary of the accession of King Faridûn on the throne of Persia. The great novelist, Sir Walter Scott, has familiarized to us, in his "Talisman," the well-known episode of Faridûn and Zohâk. King Jamshed was overthrown and killed by one Zohâk (the Azidahâka of the Avesta), who was an usurper and a tyrant. The whole of Persia groaned under the foreign sway of this great tyrant, who came from Syria. King Faridûn, having freed his country from the yoke of this tyrant, ascended the throne of Persia on the auspicious day of the abovenamed Mithraic feast, when his accession was hailed with delight and joy by the whole of Persia. King Faridûn celebrated the day as a great holiday, and feasted the grandees. Ever since that time the anniversary of that day was celebrated as a great festival in Persia under the name of Jashan-i-Mehergân. Firdousi,

who lived about 1,000 years ago, said that it was celebrated even at his time. Some of the Parsees of Bombay, though they have forgotten its historic origin, celebrate it on a small scale, and it is said that their few co-religionists in Iran still celebrate it with its historic associations. Firdousi thus describes this festival in his *Shah-nameh*, and refers to the practice of drinking wine on that gala day: "Faridûn, when he found himself to be the fortunate master of the world, and when he knew no other ruler but himself, prepared the throne and the crown in the imperial palace according to the usage of the kings. On an auspicious day, which was the beginning of the month of Meher, he placed over his head the royal diadem. The world was relieved of the fear of evil; everybody followed the way of God. They put off quarrels from their hearts and solemnly celebrated a festival. The grandees sat with a joyous heart, each holding a ruby-coloured cup of wine in his hand. The wine and the face of the new monarch shone brilliantly. The world was full of justice, and it was a new month's day. He ordered a fire to be kindled and to burn amber and saffron over it. It is he who has instituted the feast of Mehergân. The custom of taking rest on, and enjoying, that day comes from him. The month of Meher still bears his memory. Try and be jolly." Thus it is that Firdousi describes this great festival which, as he says, was observed even at his time, and which he in his last line advises all to observe. Now it is natural that the Persian monarchs celebrated with great *eclat* and joy this celebrated festival which was not only a religious and season festival, but withal a historic festival, and drank to their hearts' content or even more; but this does not betray a propensity of very hard drinking among the nation. This custom of the Persian kings drinking too much on the Mithraic festival reminds us of the practice which is said to prevail among the illiterate class of Jews, who think it a pious duty to be drunk on the day of their feast of Purim, which falls on the 14th and 15th of their 12th month Adar, and which celebrates the massacre of the Persians by the Jews (Old Testament Book of Esther IX, 17). It also reminds us of a similar practice which is said to prevail among the lower classes of the Irish people, who think it a pious duty to be drunk on St. Patrick's Day.

Among the Roman writers who have spoken about this subject, we find Ammian who had accompanied Emperor Julian in his campaign against the Persians, under Shapur in A.D. 363. He says of the Persians of his time from his own experience that they avoided drinking as one would avoid the pest. Wealth and conquests had made the Persians of the Achæmenian times luxurious and slothful. They had lost the moderation of the

early times and of the time of Cyrus. But after the fall of the Achæmenian power reaction set in again, and they began to learn moderation once more. As Professor George Rawlinson says, "Their fall from power, their loss of wealth and of dominion did indeed advantage them in one way; it put an end to that continually advancing sloth and luxury which had sapped the virtue of the nation, depriving it of energy, endurance and almost every manly excellence. It dashed the Persians back upon the ground whence they had sprung, and whence, Antæus-like, they proceeded to derive fresh vigour and vital force. In their 'scant and rugged' fatherland, the people of Cyrus once more recovered to a great extent their ancient prowess and hardihood—their habits became simplified, their old patriotism revived, their self-respect grew greater." (VII. *Orien. Mon.* p. 25). Thus it is that we see them avoiding drunkenness, as Ammian says, "like the pest."

Coming to the time of the Pahlavi literature of the Parsees, which flourished during the period of the Pahlavi Writers. Sâssânian dynasty, we find Pahlavi writers permitting the use of wine and preaching moderation. Adarbâd Mârespand, in his *Pandnameh*, or *Book of Advice*, thus admonishes his son: "Make a moderate use of wine, because he who makes an immoderate use, committeth various sinful acts." *Dâdistân-i-dini* (ch. L., LI.) allows the use of wine and admonishes every man to exert control over himself. To the robust and intelligent who can do without wine it recommends abstinence. To others it recommends moderation. A person who gives another a drink is deemed as guilty as the drinker, if the latter does any mischief either to himself or to others through the influence of that drink. Only that man is justified to take wine, who can thereby do some good to himself, or, at least, can do no harm to himself. If his *humata*, *hukhta* and *hvarshta*, i.e., his good thoughts, good words, and good deeds are in the least perverted by drink, he must abstain from it. The book advises a man to determine for himself once for all what moderate quantity he can digest without doing any harm. Having once determined that quantity, he is never to exceed it. The most that a man should take is three glasses of diluted wine. If he exceeds that quantity there is likelihood of his good thoughts, words, and deeds being perverted. This reminds us of a Parsee Gujarati saying:—

ને એક પીએ તો દારૂ,
બીજું પીએ તો વારૂ;
ત્રીજું પીએ તો શરાબ,
ચોથું પીએ તો ખાનું ખરાબ.

- (i. e.,) The first cup is a medicinal drink,
 The second an allowable thing ;
 The third is a luxury,
 The fourth brings on misery.

On the subject of the trade of wine-sellers, the Dâdistâu-i-dini says that not only is a man who makes an improper and immoderate use of wine guilty, but also a wine-seller who knowingly sells wine to those who make an improper use of it. It was deemed improper and unlawful for a wine-seller to continue to sell wine, for the sake of his pocket, to a customer who was the worse for liquor. He is to make it a point to sell wine to those only who can do some good to themselves by that drink, or at least no harm either to themselves or to others.

The Pahlavi Minokherad (Chap. XVI, 25-63) speaks of the advantages of moderate drinking and disadvantages of immoderate drinking.

We find from Mahomedan writers that after the downfall of the Persian monarchy, the Zoroastrian Persians were the only persons who carried on the business of wine-sellers. The "Pîr-i-Moghân," often alluded to by the celebrated Persian poet, Hafiz, in this well known Divan, is the Parsee wine-seller. Wine being altogether prohibited in the Mahomedan scriptures, no Mahomedan could carry on this business. So, it fell to a Parsee's lot to do so. In India also, and especially in Guzerat, a Parsee liquor-seller was for the same reason, up to recently, a well-known figure in the villages.

We will now speak of some of the usages and customs observed by the Persians when drinking wine. It was generally their custom to drink wine after dinner. The cup bearer went round in the assembly when it met in the hall after dinner.

This appears from Herodotus and from Firdousi. The latter in his episode (dâstân) of Bejan and Manijeh thus speaks of the party that had assembled in the royal palace of Kaikhusro to participate in the rejoicings for the release of Bejan from the captivity of Afrâsiâb. "Khusro ordered a table to be spread and invited high-minded noblemen to dinner. When they got up from the royal table, they prepared a sitting-place for drinking wine." It was at one of such assemblies that Afrâsiâb, the Turânian enemy of Persia, thought of making, through the instrumentality of one Susan Râmashgar, an excellent songstress, the different brigadiers-general of the Persian army of Kaikhosru prisoners. An intoxicating powder was stealthily put in in the wineglasses of these generals which immediately lulled them to sleep.

In these after-dinner assemblies the old Persians deliberated on affairs of importance under the influence of drink. "It is also their general practice," says Herodotus, "to deliberate upon affairs of weight when they are drunk; and then on the morrow, when they are sober, the decision to which they came the night before is put before them by the master of the house in which it was made; and if it is then approved of they act on it; if not they set it aside. Sometimes, however, they are sober at their first deliberation, but in this case they always reconsider the matter under the influence of wine." (I. 134.) Strabo, who wrote about five centuries after Herodotus, says on the same subject: "Their consultations on the most important affairs are carried on while they are drinking, and they consider the resolutions made at that time more to be depended upon than those made when sober (XV, ch. 3). According to Prof. George Rawlinson, Tacitus refers to a similar custom among the ancient Germans, who deliberated upon questions of peace and war in their banquets and reconsidered them the next day. "They deliberated," says Tacitus, "on peace and war generally during the banquets, as if at no other time was their mind able to conceive higher ideas. People who are not cunning and too sharp always open the secrets of their heart in free jokes. Thus the opened and revealed thoughts of all are again considered the next day. They take into consideration the affair of both times. They deliberate when they are not able to deceive. They resolve when they are not able to err." The reason for this practice, as given by Tacitus, is this, that in banquets, under a partial influence of wine, all the members of the assembly feel themselves to be on an equal footing, and so, without any fear or favour, give out their own independent opinions, which enable the mover of the question to come to a proper conclusion. We learn the same thing from the Shah-nameh of Firdousi, who represents Persian kings and heroes deliberating carefully on question of war and peace in their after-dinner gatherings, when the cup-bearer (Sâki) was circulating the wine. This custom of the old Persians reminds us of the after-dinner speeches of modern times, wherein Cabinet Ministers and Councillors, while proposing toasts of one kind or another, discuss political questions of great importance to the State. These after-dinner Persian assemblies are the "banquets of wine" spoken about in the Old Testament (Esther, v. 6). It was at such a banquet that the Persian King Ahasuerus, whose identity with any particular Persian monarch is not

yet determined,¹ sent for his queen Vashti (which seems to be the Avestaic word, *vahishti*, i.e., the best), in order "to shew the people and the princes her beauty, for she was fair to look on," and divorced her for not having obeyed the royal mandate. It was at such a "banquet of wine" that later on Esther, the Jewish queen of the same Persian King, won the royal favour and secured permission to put to death all those Persians who hated the Jews (Esther, ix. 5).

Firdousi speaks of another custom. When toasts were proposed and drunk in honour of great persons like the King, the assembly prostrated themselves on the ground after drinking wine and kissed the earth. Speaking of such an assembly, at which Rustam presided, Firdousi says, "They first remembered the name of their king (Kâus), then drank wine, and then prostrating themselves on the ground kissed it." Just as modern nations show their respect to their ruling sovereigns by drinking to their health while standing, so, the ancients paid their homage by prostrating themselves and kissing the ground. Prostrating oneself upon the ground was, according to Herodotus, the usual way of paying respect to the great. "When they met each other in the streets," says Herodotus (I, 134), "you may know if the persons meeting are of equal rank by the following token: if they are, instead of speaking, they kiss each other on the lips; in the case where one is a little inferior to the other, the kiss is given on the cheek; where the difference of rank is great, the inferior prostrates himself upon the ground."

Old wine was held in very high esteem in Ancient Persia. Adarbâd, speaking of friendship, compares an old friend to old wine. He says, "An old friend is like old wine. The more it grows old, the more it is fit for kings." It was believed that wine improved by time. We read the same thing in the Bible, "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better" (Luke, v. 39).

It seems that latterly, two sorts of wine were common in Persia. In the remote Avestic times, it was only made from grapes. But latterly, it was also made from dates, the fruit of palm-trees.

Xenophon, in his account of the expedition of Cyrus, wherein he played a very prominent part as the leader of "The Retreat of the Ten Thousand," thus speaks from his own experience:—"At last coming to the villages where the

¹ He is identified by some with Xerxes. In Daniel IX, 1. Ahasuerus is said to be the father of Darius, "of the seed of the Medes." If we take this Darius to be Darius II, then this Ahasuerus the father of Darius, is Artaxerxes, the father of Darius II.

guides told them they might supply themselves with provisions, they found plenty of corn, and wine made of the fruit of the palm-tree, and also vinegar drawn by boiling from the same fruit. These dates such as we have in Greece, they give to their domestics; but those which are reserved for the masters are chosen fruit and worthy of admiration, both for their beauty and size, having in all respects the appearance of amber, and so delicious that they are frequently dried for sweetmeats. The wine that was made of it was sweet to the taste but apt to give the headache. (11. 3).

A P P E N D I X .

According to Thalibi, King Kaikobad had prohibited the use of wine in Persia in his reign, but one day, he saw, that an ordinary man becoming somewhat brave after the drink of a little wine, had the courage of riding a lion under its influence. He then permitted a moderate use of it.

We learn from Firdousi, that similarly, King Behramgore, who had once prohibited its use, later on, permitted it. The story says that at first wine was permitted in Persia and Behramgore himself drank it. At one time, he was the guest of a great villager (dehkân) Meher Bidâd by name. A guest in the camp, Kiru by name, at one time got so much drunk, that he could not take care of himself, and he got so much unconscious that crows attacked him and blinded him. The king, seeing this the abuse of wine, ceased drinking wine and prohibited its use in his country. The Royal proclamation said:—

“Harâm ast maê bar Jehân sar ba sar.

Agar pehlwan ast yâ pisheh var”¹ *i.e.*, Wine is altogether unlawful in the world, whether (the drinker) is a hero or a tradesman. After a year, a lion got loose from the royal stable. The son of a cobbler, who was at first impotent but had regained his potency by the use of wine given to him by his mother, ran after the lion and holding him by his ears got over it and bravely rode on it. The king, learning this piece of bravery as the result of a drink of wine, withdrew his order of prohibition. The Royal proclamation said:—

“Kharushi bar âmad hamân gâh ze dar.

Ke aé pehlwânân-i-zarîn kamar.

Bar andâzeh bar har kasi maê khurid.

Ze aghâz farjâm khûd be negarid.

¹ Mecaun's Calcutta Edition, Vol. III, p. 1499. Kutar Brother's Ed., Vol. VIII, p. 52. Mohl's small edition, Vol. V, p. 463.

² *Vide* for the text Mecaun's Calcutta Edition, Vol. III, p. 1501. Kutar Brothers' text, Vol. VIII, p. 54. Mohl's small edition, Vol. V, pp. 465-66.

"*i.e.*, A voice proclaimed from the (royal) court at the time that "O Ye warriors with golden belts! any one of you may drink wine as it suits you. One must from the beginning determine the result (*i.e.*, everybody is to determine for himself what quantity is good for him and not be immoderate).¹

A king of a part of India, holding the title of Zambil (زنبیل) up to the Hijri year 332, had invaded Sijastan (سیجستان) or Seistan, with a view to march from there to Syria. He conquered Syria after a war lasting for one year and killed its ruling monarch. But soon after, he was defeated by a king of the Arabs, who, seizing Irâq, re-established the empire of the Syrians. Thereupon the Syrians placed upon the throne, Tastar (تستار)², the son of the previous king who was killed by the Indian king. Tastar was, after a reign of eight years, succeeded by Ahrimûn (اھریمنون)³, who, again, was, after a reign of 12 years, succeeded by his son Houria (ھوریا), who patronized agriculture. Houria was, after a reign of 22 years, succeeded by Mâroub (ماروب)⁴ who, after a reign of twelve or fifteen years was succeeded by two brother princes Azour and Khalenjas (آزور, خلدنجاس). One of these two princes, one day, saw, on the top of his palace, a bird which had built a nest there. The flapping of the wings and the cry of the bird drew the attention of the prince, who saw, that a serpent was climbing up the nest to devour the young ones of the bird. The prince, thereupon killed the serpent with his bow and arrow and saved the young ones. A short time after, the parent bird, returning with one berry in its beak and two more in its claws, came in the front of the prince and dropped the berries before him. The prince thought to himself that there was some purpose in this and that the bird had in view some recompense for the act of saving its little ones. The king picked up the berries and on the advice of a learned man in his court entrusted them to some cultivators to sow them and take care of them. The cultivators did so and there grew from these seeds plants which produced raisins. No body dared to eat them lest the fruit may be poisonous. The king ordered juice to be squeezed from the raisins and to be collected in vases. Some of the grapes

1 Macoudi traduit pas B, de Meynard II., pp. 89-91 Chap. XVIII.

2 According to Babier de Meynard, other texts give the name as بشرا or بسرا or بشیر (Ibid. p. 445).

3 According to B. de Meynard, one text gives the name اھریموت and another as اھریموت (Ibid.)

4 One text gives the name as Marut (ماروت).

were ordered to be kept in their natural state. The King, then, in order to test the quality of the juice, sent for an old man who was wrecked in health and gave him some juice to drink. He had hardly finished one-third of the quantity given him, when he began to jump, to loosen his dress, to clap his hands, to jolt his head, to leap over his two feet, to look gay and to sing. The king thus saw that the juice was not a poison and that it rejuvenated the old man. Then he gave some more juice to him. The old man thereupon went to sleep. On awaking, he looked well, all his illness having left him. The King saw that the drink had given to the old man joy of heart, gaiety, good digestion, calmness, sleep and good spirits. He therefore asked more vines to be planted. At first, he prohibited the general use of wine saying that it was only a royal homage. Later on, all began to drink wine.

Maçoudi, at the end of the above story, adds that some attribute to Noah the first cultivation of vine.