

A PILGRIM IN PERSIA.

Mr. Landor's Story of a Long Journey.

ACROSS COVETED LANDS OF A JOURNEY FROM FLUSHING (HOLLAND) TO CALCUTTA OVERLAND. By A. Henry Savage Landor.

The word of warning which Mr. Landor sounds in this account of his journey through Persia and Beluchistan, is clear, and he reiterates it again and again. Russian influence, already established in Northern Persia, is rapidly extending to the south, where England's opportunity should lie; and the government is advised to rouse itself to an active sense of the transitional condition of the country, and to take prompt steps to prevent the collapse of British trade.

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A JUVENILE CATALOGUE. Illustrated and giving descriptions of books suitable for a library for boys and girls will be sent free upon application to the publishers Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 4 Park St., Boston.

THACKERAY. THE NOVELIST REMEMBERED BY ELWIN—HE HAD EXHAUSTED HIS TYPES," HE SAID. In a recently published sketch of the Rev. Whitwell Elwin, for some time Editor of "The Quarterly Review," we find various interesting anecdotes of Thackeray, who was Elwin's devoted friend.

"This is for You" is an anthology of love poems, interesting not so much because it compiles some of the old favorites as because the editor has made some good selections from poets not generally known.

Mr. Knowler's "Treasury of Humorous Poetry" is a workmanlike anthology, showing wide reading and discriminating taste. It is incomplete, of course; every anthology is incomplete. But this editor seems to us to have done his work with uncommon industry and tact.

He has made, moreover, a dignified little book, with

where the air was either full of fine dust or the ground boggy with mud was the inevitable use of the frock coat and the tall hat among such people as had any standing whatever.

Fashion plays other tricks, indeed, for tradition has it that the ungainly abbreviated skirt of the women of Western Persia became prevalent after the visit of Nasr-ed-din Shah to England, where he took great delight in the Empire and Alhambra music hall ballets.

In traveling, of course, the great difficulty is in the scarcity of drinkable water. Mr. Landor thinks brackish water a good preventive of fever, though he admits that he does not hanker after it. An illustration of how normal a thing bad water is he gives in this story:

There was a certain humor in the remark made by a Beluch at Issa Tahir to Captain Webb-Wase when he saw the captain's servant, with an efficient filter, reduce the filthy, slimy water of the only local pool into water as clear as crystal.

He rushed to the captain in a state of great concern and anxiety. "Sahib," he said, "do you know what your servant is doing? He is taking all the color, the strength, and all the smell out of the water that you are going to drink!"

No reader will be inclined to neglect the description of the ride over Kuh-i-buhian Pass, where the traveller was escorted by a band of brigands who found he was not to be robbed without a vigorous use of his superior firearms.

Nor will he pass without a feeling of graver interest over the account of the ruined city of Zaidan, stretching for eighty-six miles in a region that is now a salt and sandy desert.

Talmur Lang is still a word of terror there, and one tradition assigns the destruction of the place to Tamerlane. There is the deserted City of Roars of Laughter also. The book is full of the quaint and curious, and at times becomes a succession of temptations to lead the reviewer into making too many quotations. It is not only interesting as a narrative of personal experience, but should be of solid service in increasing public knowledge of some important corners of the globe.

Mr. Landor travels with his eyes open, and whether he is riding heavily wrapped in blankets to protect him from the prostrating furnace heat of the desert, or wandering about a curious diminutive city, outdating the marches of Alexander, little escapes his observation, which in his record is always subject to the corrective of an easy play of humor.

He is by no means, however, an airy stalker of unusual experiences. What he sees with alert and inclusive vision he ponders over till he comes to some settled, sharp conclusion. Besides an eye to his own country's interests, he can read a lesson to the land he visits. We cannot forbear to quote this statement of opinion:

After my visit to the Minister of Foreign Affairs I had the pleasure of meeting the Prime Minister, the Minister of War and the Minister of Public Works. I found them all extremely interesting and courteous and well up in their work. But although talent is not lacking in Persia among statesmen, the country itself, as it is to-day, does not give these men an opportunity of shining as brightly as they might.

The whole country is in such a decayed condition that it needs a thorough overhauling. Then only it might be converted into quite a formidable country. It possesses all the necessary requirements to be a first class nation. Talent in abundance, physical strength, a convenient geographical position, a good climate, considerable mineral and some agricultural resources are all to be found in Persia. All that is wanted at present is the development of the country on a solid, reliable basis, instead of the insecure, unsteady intrigues upon which business, whether political or commercial, is unfortunately carried on in the present state of affairs.

No one realizes this better than the well to do Persian, and nothing would be more welcome to him than radical reform on the part of the Shah and the establishment of the land of Iran on an unshakable foundation. With a national debt so ridiculously small as Persia has at present, there is no reason why, with her industries pushed, with her army reorganized, and placed on a service footing, she should not rank as one of the most powerful among Asiatic independent nations.

With reference to this army the author had an illuminating conversation with a high military officer at Teheran. He had asked when he might see the troops drill. "We do not drill in summer," was the reply. "It is too hot." "Do you drill in winter?" "No, it is too cold." "Are the troops then only drilled in the autumn and spring?" "Sometimes. They are principally drilled a few days before the Shah's birthday, so that they may look well on the parade before his majesty."

But the Persian character is shown in more impressive aspects. The Boston tea party and the general abstention from tea drinking in the revolting colonies did not show more resolution and independence than the manner in which a tobacco monopoly, granted an English company in 1890, was abolished. After the Shah and other cities had been placarded with revolutionary appeals, the mullahs turned to the Koran, found the prohibition against using articles not fairly dealt in and forbade the use of tobacco. In this smoking nation no one but the Shah smoked for weeks. Even his wives and concubines smashed their kalinas before his eyes. Finally he was forced to decree the abolition of the monopoly, paying the corporation \$500,000 compensation and taking over its assets, rated at \$140,000.

The Shah rides about in an automobile, and includes in the treasures of his palace a soda water fountain and a printing press. An amusing institution in Teheran is the gas supply. One man is employed after dark to go the length of the two streets, lighting the lamps. As soon as he has finished he turns back and methodically puts them out, so that by 10 o'clock the city is plunged in gloom. A fashion which struck the author as rather preposterous in a country

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"I cannot give you the pen with which I wrote it," said Thackeray, "for I let it fall at Naples and broke it, but I will give you the pencil case." Thereupon he took a silver pencil case with a gold pen from his pocket and put it into Elwin's hands. It was the pencil case which the novelist had used for years, and it was the pen with which he had written many of his works.

two or three schemes. One was to lay the scene in the time of Dr. Johnson. "Don't do that!" exclaimed Elwin, and went on to urge him to "describe a domestic family, enjoying the genuine blessings of calm, domestic felicity, put in contrast with the vexations and hollowness of fashionable life." "Dr. Primrose" was the familiar name which Thackeray bestowed upon Elwin, with whom he corresponded in the most affectionate style. "All people don't like me as you do," he said. "I think sometimes I am deservedly unpopular, and in some cases I rather like it. Why should I want to be liked by Jack and Tom?" It is interesting to learn that Thackeray had meant to introduce Goldsmith in "The Virginians," with Garrick and the rest, "representing him as he really was, a little, shabby, mean, shuffling Irishman." He subsequently said that he had tried, but found that he could not do it. Did his kind heart smite him at the thought of so treating the creator of "Dr. Primrose?" Elwin once told Thackeray that his best poem was that on his pen: "I've helped him to pen many a line for bread; To joke, with sorrow aching in his head; And make your laughter when his own heart bled."