It is an easy transition from the periods above named to the date of the Argonautic Expedition, 1263 B.C., which, in connection with the Golden Fleece, suggests the desirability of at least recording the preliminaries, without which the finished Persian and Indian carpets, with which this division is mainly concerned, would be devoid of much of the interest associated with every stage of their manufacture.

In *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* the article on "Wool" opens as follows: "The soft, hairy covering of sheep and some other animals (as goats and alpacas), has from the earliest historic times been used in the construction of yarns or threads, which by the process of weaving—interlacing two series of yarns crossing each other at right angles—have been converted into textiles possessing clothing properties. With the progress of civilization and the development of the *beaux-arts*, wool became the staple material of many of the costly and elaborately-ornamented textures produced conjointly by the weaver and the embroiderer for embellishing the temples of the gods and the palaces of royalty." No better introduction could be conceived to the two volumes of about 320 pages each which Mr. Howard Priestman has written on the *Principles of Worsted Spinning* and the *Principles of Woollen Spinning*, from which I will quote as briefly as possible.

In the last-named work, published in 1908, Mr. Priestman says: "Those writers who contend that the spinning of long wool was antecedent to the art of making short wool carded yarn, point also to the fact that all wild sheep are long-woolled or long-haired animals; all of them having a shorter wool or fur growing amongst the roots of the longer fibres. This is still the case in the Vicuna and the Cashmir goat, and it is well known that the fine wools from these animals are the softest and most beautiful wools known to commerce. . . . All sheep whose wool is useful for the textile arts are supposed to be the results of artificial breeding. Whenever flocks are mentioned in ancient history, it is in relation to centres of civilization. In the Bible we have a curious confirmation of the fact that the art of breeding to obtain variations in the fleece was known at a very early date. This occurs in Jacob's dealings with his father-in-law. The passage not only tells us that he altered the colour of the wool of the flock to suit his own ends, but that he refused to impart his knowledge to the man to whom the flock originally belonged. There is another reference in the book of Ezekiel to the 'white wool' which was brought from Damascus and sold in Tyre, previous to being dyed by the Phoenicians, who were the most celebrated dyers of antiquity. Tyrian purple was widely celebrated, and as any

coloured fibres in the wool would greatly detract from the brilliance of the resulting fabric, we may be sure that pure white wool was not only a commodity of great value, but that clever flock-masters were even then well aware how to keep their wool free from the black fibres that occur in the wool of most wild sheep."

This quotation puts succinctly all that is necessary on the subject of wool for my immediate purpose, and will serve to give to those interested in the matter some indication of the thoroughness with which the author approaches the various processes by which the finished spun thread is produced for clothing, and presumably for modern carpet-weaving. Although the question of worsteds and woollens enters more into the next division, in connection with Jacquard Reproductions, it will save any further reference to the subject to say here that the woollen or short-fibred yarns are mostly used in the manufacture of machine-made Axminsters, where the pile is formed without any tension upon the fibres in the cutting process. From the nature of the Jacquard weaving process, each thread of coloured yarn is kept taut by means of an iron weight (formerly a leaden bullet, of the old musket size); in addition to this there is the friction arising from the rise and fall of the gears, and the harness generally, which necessitates a sufficiently long-fibred (or "stapled," as it is technically called) worsted yarn, even for the cheaper grades of Brussels. It will be understood that in withdrawing the long wire with a knife at the end to form the Wilton and Saxony pile, unless the fibres are not only long but also tough, the pile of the carpet will be "ragged," and by reason of torn short fibres "kempy" and unsatisfactory. With the tension above referred to on each one of the 6820 threads of a five-frame 16-4 or twelve-feet-wide carpet, and a wire being withdrawn the whole of the width named, the integrity of the Jacquard carpet is practically ensured, from the impossibility of using any other than a well-spun, long-stapled worsted thread.

Dyeing is an art in itself, and sufficient will be said throughout the volume to give what information is necessary in dealing with a subject in which artistic considerations are the main feature. The ancient method of boiling the yarn in copper pans or kettles, until it has absorbed the requisite amount of colouring matter, is more or less practised to the present day in the carpet centres of all countries. The old process of dyeing by hand, or without the use of any kind of machine-vat, has been practised for considerably over a century in the carpet factory in connection with which the information contained in this volume is derived. The process is simple and interesting. The strongly made wooden vats—made to contain a pack of

Plate XII

Plate XII

ORIENTAL RUNNER

[Section]

Size 15–1 × 3–2

Warp—8 knots to the inch

Weft—9 knots to the inch

72 knots to the square inch

(See Analysis)

yarn (240 lb.), half a pack (120 lb.), and a quarter pack (60 lb.)—being filled with pure water from an artesian well, are brought to boiling point by means of steam ; the dye materials are placed in the vats ; and the skeins of yarn hanging from wooden poles resting on the side edges of the vats are turned over by hand, each of the thirty to thirty-five poles with their weight of yarn being so treated until the dye matter has been sufficiently absorbed, whereupon, and also to enable the head dyer to make his tests, the poles of yarn are raised from the boiling vats, and the liquid is allowed to drip into the vats below, the poles resting upon projecting wooden arms, immediately above the vats.

The hand-dyeing process is costly, long, and laborious ; but the fact of the material being under the eyes of the two men at each vat engaged in handling the yarn, and of the head dyer and his assistants, gives the advantage of constant supervision, and a correspondingly perfect result.

It only remains to say that dark colours are suited to the darker woollen or worsted yarns ; and that for the more delicate shades the finest grades of white wool are required, which has bearing upon Mr. Priestman's remarks as to the avoidance of "black fibres" in the wool if an even and "all-over" shade of colour is to be obtained in the woven fabric, whether loop or cut pile.

The mere question of producing the dyed colour is not the only consideration in the finished process. Before the coloured yarns are ready for the weaving loom, it may be mentioned, the question of *drying* the yarn after dyeing is a matter requiring expert judgment. The wet yarn, having first been rinsed out in a hydro-extractor, revolving at great speed, is finally dried, either by means of exposure to the open air in a drying-loft, in which the atmosphere is tempered by means of venetian shutters enclosing the loft ; or in closed drying-rooms of varying degrees of heat produced by steam coils ; or lastly, and when "time is the essence of the contract," by means of a drying-machine, in which the skeins of yarn pass from one end of the machine to the other, upon flat metal-barred open chains, which are continuous, and revolve round wheels, transferring the coloured yarn from the "feeding" to the "delivery" end, in much the same way as biscuits and other articles of food are baked, as to which my only knowledge is derived from seeing the method employed at the Yerrowda Jail, near Poona, which will be spoken of in the closing chapter.

Coming to the weaving or knotting of carpets, ancient and modern, it may be said that on general lines the main features are

much the same in all cases. Except in the modern demand for large production and speedy delivery, which has taxed the brains of inventors, and largely reduced cost of production, the methods of weaving or knotting are few and simple, for the reason that they do not admit of much variety.

In dealing with wool, the process of weaving was described as "interlacing two series of yarns crossing each other at right angles," which is the simplest and most practical definition that has yet come under my notice. As an uncut pile, and effect of fabric closely allied to plaiting, the Kidderminster or Scotch Carpet can be mentioned, of which *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* says: "This is the oldest kind of machine-made carpet. It has no pile, the yarn of which it is composed lying flat upon the surface like an ordinary worsted cloth. In some respects, although coarser and stronger, it resembles a woollen damask of two colours, and like it is reversible. The pattern is most perfect on the face side, but if in this position it shows a purple flower on a green ground, then on the other side the flower is green on a purple ground." This make of carpet was first introduced into this country in 1735, and the Jacquard method of producing the pattern would be early applied; there are, however, no points of resemblance between the Kidderminster carpet and what is described in this volume as the Jacquard carpet, which latter includes the Brussels loop pile, and the Wilton and Saxony piles, of which some particulars will be given in the next division; in the meantime it may be explained that the Jacquard machine for producing design and colouring is quite distinct from the loom which performs the actual weaving, the one, however, being as indispensable as the other in the finished result.

In the *Percy Anecdotes* we read: "Nothing can be more rude, or, in appearance, less calculated for delicate manufacture, than the loom of the Hindoo weaver, which he sets up in the morning, under a tree, before his door, and takes down again at sunset. It consists merely of two rollers, resting upon four stakes driven into the ground, and two sticks which cross the warp. These are supported at each end, the one by cords tied to the tree under the shade of which the loom is erected; and the other, by two cords fastened to the foot of the weaver; these enable him to separate the threads of the warp, for the purpose of crossing it with the woof. For the greater convenience, he digs a hole in the ground to put his legs in. He uses a piece of wood, or stick, or almost anything that comes to hand, for a shuttle; and yet with such rude instruments as these, the Hindoo weaver produces stuffs so fine, that when spread on the grass, they

intercept none of its colour." The Hindu loom paved the way to the carpet loom which is represented in *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* under the article "Carpets," the illustration being " Fig. 1—Carpet Loom, Cawnpore." The type of loom is sufficiently familiar.

Mr. Howard Priestman, in his *Principles of Worsted Spinning*, writes: "We know, for a fact, that the robes of the ancient Babylonians were the wonder of all who saw them, and recent investigators are inclined to think that the arts of spinning and weaving in Egypt were derived from the earlier civilizations still farther to the East. There is little doubt that in China and India these arts flourished to a similar extent, at least contemporary with those of Egypt, and if we go to India to-day we can see spinning and weaving under the same primitive conditions that existed in bygone centuries."

The above quotation is a sufficient introduction to the Chinese loom, from which, it is said, the English finger-rug loom was derived. An illustration of a "Chinese Silk Loom" is given in Barlow's *History and Principles of Weaving*, of which the author writes: "Compared with the modern hand loom it is singularly compact and adapted for household use. In ancient times weaving was practised in all the great houses, where a room was set apart for the purpose, and this form of loom would be very suitable for similar domestic use." History repeats itself, and it may be mentioned that until the introduction of the power loom, carpet-weaving in this country was carried on in the houses of the weavers, who were probably controlled by a master manufacturer, and the distribution of materials and designs carried out much on the lines of the Lyons silk-weaving, referred to in the next division.

The Chinese loom above referred to is extremely original and attractive in its style and arrangement, and different from the heavy, cumbersome English finger-rug loom, although the method of producing the pile would doubtless be the same. It is my purpose to give some particular account of the English finger-rug loom, as producing the simplest form of Oriental knot (as it might be called), although the term is hardly applicable to any of the so-called carpet knots, the worsted or woollen weft forming the pile being rather twisted or looped round the warp threads, and depending as much upon the beating up of the pile as upon the method of its tying.

The English finger-rug loom was probably introduced into England by William Sheldon, who was under the immediate patronage of King Henry VIII. In *The Connoisseur* of June 1903 there is a fine reproduction of a full-length portrait by Holbein of

the first English royal patron of the art of carpet-making, which represents the monarch with his legs wide apart, standing upon what might with a little stretch of imagination be regarded as a remarkably fine example of the fabric under notice. Finger-rugs, or "town-made" rugs, as they are there called, are still made in London, and it is by no means improbable that the industry has survived in the same way as the Spitalfields silk-weaving, established by the French refugees after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. It may be said that the probabilities of the finger-rug industry having come down from such comparatively distant times are strengthened by the fact of the simple nature of the fabric, and that, being of small size, the cost for even the finest quality produced is little in consideration of almost everlasting wear.

A brief description of this finger-rug loom, as being the legitimate descendant of the earliest form of Oriental loom, may be of interest. The heavy wooden framework is of the simplest description. It is modernized by the use of iron-toothed wheels for the warp chains, and a heavy swinging lathe or "batten" with a metal sley to beat up the work (instead of the Oriental heavy metal comb), and "gears" for dividing the warps; the omission of these features would leave little room for doubt as to the capacity of primitive man eventually to arrive at this form of carpet loom, after repeated failures, which would on each occasion lead to the working out of problems the solution of which in precisely the same way is being repeated every day. The fabric produced by the finger-rug loom is heavy and coarse, but of extreme durability. After starting the work with a comparatively fine webbing, or "drop-lea," in which a thin weft is used in the shuttle, the warp threads supporting the pile tufts are raised, the thick dyed worsted or woollen weft forming the surface or pile is inserted from right to left *under* the warp threads, and lifted up between each two warp threads by the first finger of the left hand, the height of the pile being regulated by the finger, which gives the name to this particular process of weaving. On the completion of each row of pile tufts (or "takes," as the weaving expression is), bind is given by passing a coarse heavy weft between the divisions of the warp threads; and it may be mentioned that this heavy weft with the warp threads forms the back, the coloured surface threads resting upon them, and being completely hidden, which again serves to distinguish the method from the Persian and Indian weaves of carpets and rugs, in which the design and colour of the back correspond exactly with the surface. The examination of a Brussels carpet will show that the loops of coloured

worsted forming the pile run the way of the warp, and wind in and out, serpent fashion, between the linen or cotton weft, which is securely held by the intertwining warp threads. In the finger-rug pile exactly the reverse is the case; the heavy coloured pile weft winding in and out, again serpent fashion, between the *warp* threads, leaving, until cut, a series of loops the *way of the weft.*

When a Jacquard pile carpet is woven, the loops are cut by the knife at the end of the wire supporting the loops being withdrawn, the knife passing from *edge to edge* of the fabric. To form the cut pile of the finger-rug, the keen blade of a hand knife is passed through the pile loops the way of the warp; or, if the rug is longer than it is wide, the loops are cut from end to end of the rug, instead of edge to edge, and this process of forming the pile is done after the fabric is woven, and taken from the loom. It may be said that until the pile loops of the finger-rug are cut the surface presents the appearance of a very coarse Brussels fabric, the only cut threads being in places where for convenience or necessity the heavy surface weft has to be cut to facilitate its insertion between the warp threads, from twenty to thirty being dealt with at a time, or when, the supply of the weft being exhausted, a fresh supply has to be brought into use.

The use made by savages of sharpened flints, and the wonderful carvings produced with these rude implements, suggest the early arrival of a "pile" floor covering; while the advent of metal appliances would at once solve any difficulty standing in the way of the free production of a fabric offering so many attractions.

To give some idea of the style and appearance of the finger-rug weave, it may be mentioned that the pile tufts or "takes" number 28 the way of the warp and weft, or 784 to the *square foot* in the coarser makes, and 40 takes the way of the warp and weft in the finest, or 1600 to the *square foot*, which contrasts markedly with the 380 hand-tied knots to the *square inch* of the Ardebil Carpet. The number of takes the way of the weft varies according to the quality, and the same remark applies to the number of takes the way of the warp, in which latter direction, or in the "beating up" of the pile, variation in the quality is chiefly made, as happens also in the Oriental carpets and rugs, this variation being effected with least disturbance of the fixed arrangements of the loom. The simplicity of the finger-rug weave will be recognized when it is mentioned that the pile when cut is formed by a series of detached loops, the loop itself being supported by the back, and held down by the warp threads passing between each loop, the two ends exposed to the surface forming the pile.

Oriental Carpets

The next form of carpet knot is that used in the manufacture of hand-made Axminster, which was probably derived from the older finger-rug method of weaving; one great difference between the two fabrics, however, is that whereas the back of the finger-rug exposes the coarse weft upon which the pile practically rests, the back of the hand-made Axminster is of wool, and reproduces the colours of the surface pile in much the same way as a Turkey carpet.

The finger-rug knot is merely a loop of a single thick strand of material, as already described. In the hand-made Axminster, the two ends of a strand of coloured wool are passed through the loop previously inserted under the warp thread destined to hold it in position; being drawn tight, the surface ends are cut off with a pair of scissors, in much the same way as may be seen in the Savonnerie carpet weaving at Gobelins. When inspecting this Savonnerie carpet weaving in 1906, I was interested in observing the way in which the depth of the pile was kept at an even height throughout, a flat piece of wood being placed against the pile to be cut, which was then snipped off with scissors, doubtless made with flat edges for the purpose.

It will be seen that the finger-rug loop is only kept in place by the closeness of the weave, and by the coarseness of the weft between each course of takes, and of the similar material pressing closely against the back. In the hand-made Axminster no exercise of force could unloose the knot, until the warp thread holding it broke. The same perhaps may be said of the Oriental knots; but, as far as my knowledge goes, the hand-made Axminster knot is more entitled to the name than any of the Oriental knots, with which I am now about to conclude this description of surface knotting.

The Vienna Oriental Carpet Book, under the heading of "Analysis of Oriental Carpets," gives three very clear examples of the methods of knotting, the diagrams being headed "The three systems of knotting used in Oriental carpets are shown in the following diagrams." I reproduce the wording verbatim, as it means presumably that, according to Dr. Aloïs Riegl, of Vienna, who is responsible for the Analysis, only three systems were recognized. Mr. Henry T. Harris, in his *Monograph on the Carpet Weaving Industry of Southern India* (fully noticed at the close of this division), gives *four* diagrams illustrating "Carpet Knots," three of which are practically identical with the three mentioned by Dr. Riegl; the fourth knot appears to be quite distinct from the others, and is worthy the attention of the Vienna expert.

To those inclined to be dogmatic in their assignment of dates of

origin and locality to the numerous and heterogeneous collection of Oriental carpets, runners, and rugs which yearly filter into the possession of European nations, an article in *The Burlington Magazine* of October 1908 can be strongly recommended. Within the past twenty years cases have come to light in which retailers of long standing sold carpets for 100 guineas, and then, through the exigency of a fire, or other unforeseen event, discovered to their cost that the value of an article in the eyes of the law does not rest upon the price at which it was sold, but on evidence of what it was worth when a legitimate claim arose. Less than three years ago, the head of one of the leading public schools in the country, after using an Oriental carpet (presumably presented by a former scholar with travelling tendencies) as something warm and convenient to stand by the side of his morning tub, or upon which the hard rim of the bath itself actually rested, and finding that many years' accumulation of soap-suds from the evening bath necessitated the carpet being cleaned, sent it away for the purpose ; and a little time after a letter came offering £1000 for what had been so lightly prized. It is quite possible, on the other hand, that a fine old Lahore copy of an original Persian carpet may be sold as a genuine example at ten times its value, or an Armenian "fake" of an old prayer rug sold at an extortionate price ; but such things happen in all artistic dealings, and on the average each side of the bargain is fair. Nothing is heard of the amateur who picks up bargains ; on the other hand, the *bona fide* dealer, with a reputation to lose, is of necessity compelled to see that his customer has at least full value for his money, while any accidental misdescription or guarantee is made good. It is not uncommon to find the papers full of a Picture, a Violin, or an old piece of Furniture "swindle," in which the dealer is often victimized in damages which ought to be sought for elsewhere ; but, curiously enough, it is hard to remember a case where the dealer has occasion to proceed against the amateur for knowingly or unknowingly purchasing any article of the sort at many times below its real value.

The article referred to in *The Burlington Magazine* is entitled "Oriental Carpets," and is by Professor Josef Strzygowski, translated by Mr. L. I. Armstrong ; it is a criticism of a work recently issued by the Imperial Press, Vienna, with subvention from the Swedish Government, the author being Dr. F. R. Martin, who has entitled his work *A History of Oriental Carpets before 1800*. I must confess that, on obtaining a copy with the idea of making use of it for the purpose of throwing light upon some features of design in the examples illustrated in this book, it occurred to me that in many cases the

information as to dates and origin was much too minute to be taken as ascertained facts. Professor Strzygowski appears to be of the same opinion, for he writes as follows: "More than any of his predecessors, Martin shows what enormous experience and erudition are necessary in order to speak on the subject of oriental carpets and similar art questions. No one to-day ought to deceive himself into thinking that either he or the present generation will solve difficult problems of this kind. All the necessary premises are still lacking."

It is not likely that any carpet will ever be discovered to which a date over a thousand years can be assigned. Thus, deductions will have to be drawn from, first, the natural sequence of natural proclivities and personal requirements, of which a desire for human comfort is a strong factor; next, from the exigencies of climate, which present difficulties, as the warm climate creates a relaxation of the body and an enervation which make the reclining posture natural and convenient, while the cold climate asks for protection from damp and cold; and, thirdly and most important, from indications in contemporary arts, which may point to an adaptation of carpet forms throwing light from unexpected quarters. The recent discoveries by Mr. Evans at Knossos and Mr. Davis at Bibân el Molûk, previously referred to, have given promise of more to come of a similar nature, which may upset all preconceived ideas. In the meantime the deduction from a natural evolution may prove to be as near the mark as an elaborate scientific superstructure of theoretic possibilities and probabilities built upon data the overturning of a single one of which will prejudice the whole conclusions arrived at.

As regards fabric, plaiting is likely to have pointed the way to the warp and weft fabric, which remains very much to-day what it was at its first inception, for the sufficient reason that there is no other possible way open to patience, invention, or genius. The tree, tent, or wattle shelter having to give way in winter to the refuge of the cave and the later primitive hut, the solitary entrance throwing the whole of the wear upon whatever was placed at the door in the shape of a mat, would soon convince the mistress of the house that something more lasting would have to be substituted for the early woven fabrics. It is not, I think, drawing too much upon the imagination to suggest that when this became a necessity, the young sons, who would be permitted to watch their father at work, and minister to his needs, would have the same intelligence, and the human desire for pleasing the eye, which causes the small country station-master to spend his time in the elaborate devices in stones which convey the name of the place in the first instance, but in

Plate XIII

Plate XIII

ORIENTAL RUNNER

[Section]

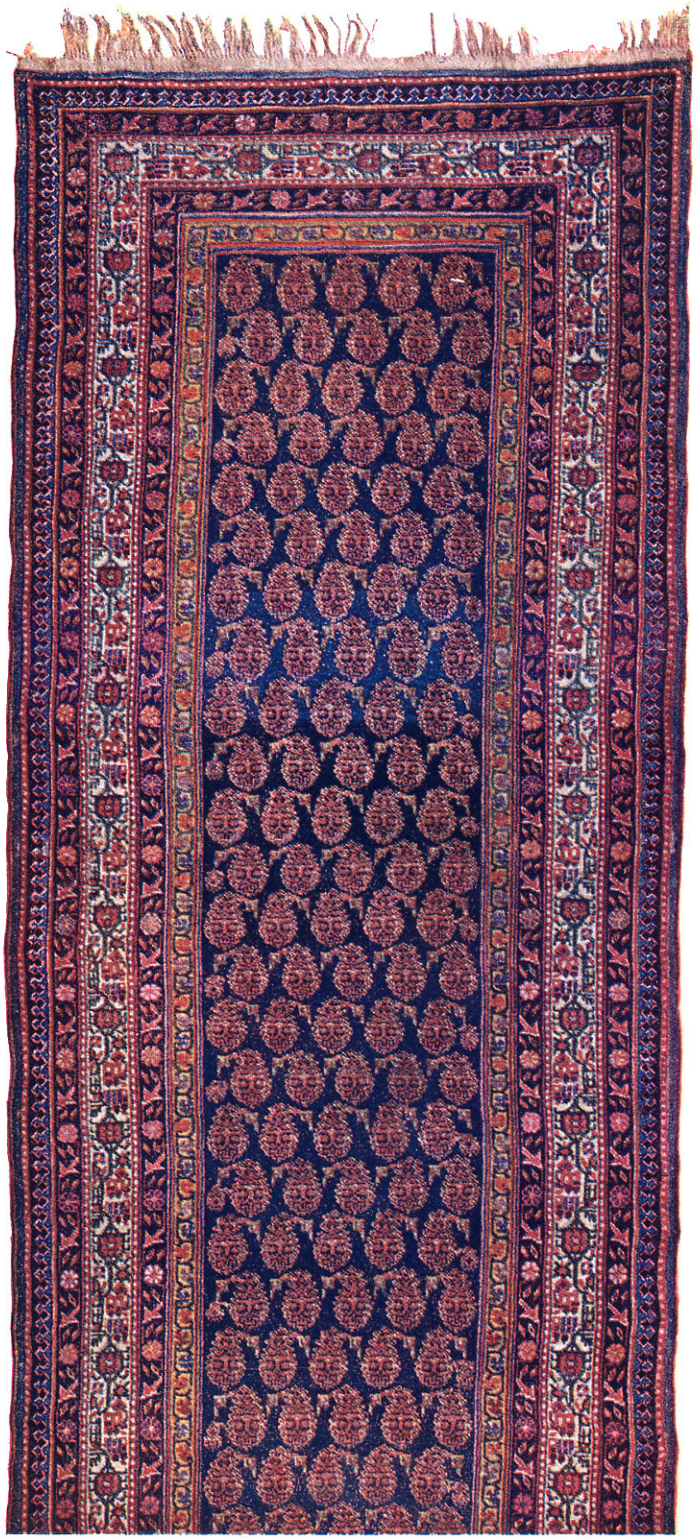
Size 13–1 × 3–3

Warp—9 knots to the inch

Weft—9 knots to the inch

81 knots to the square inch

(See Analysis)



many cases also are really tasteful ornamental devices, which, while without the slightest artistic origin, display a natural human instinct for neatness and tidiness, satisfied with the orderliness which easily leads to the first geometrical formation in the matter of design. A simple arrangement in alternate black and white stones would be the first effort; a little encouragement would lead to the attempt of some arrangement in simple lines, and later still, a primitive key-pattern; ambition to excel, and the desire for applause, which would be as natural in the earliest times as it is now, would sooner or later lead to an earnest effort to rival the father's circumscribed efforts; then might result what could with some show of reason be called the first mosaic, which in the natural order of things would precede painting, although not drawing. With no walls or prepared surfaces or materials, there would be no particular need for painting, whereas, first, the comfort of a floor covering, and next, the saving of continual replacement of fabrics, meaning increased human exertion, provides quite sufficient reason for a primitive attempt at mosaic, which, from the prominent position in which it would be placed, would certainly create a desire to make it not only useful but also ornamental; plenty of spare time, and the passion of imitation which is the first characteristic of the monkey (which some scientists would persuade us we are descended from), did the rest, and it is probably in the permanent mosaic that the early origin of all woven fabrics will be found.

Mr. H. B. Walters, in his *Art of the Greeks*, in dealing with Ionic pottery, writes: "Another characteristic is the general use of small ornaments, such as rosettes and crosses, in great variety of form, to cover the background of the designs, and obviate the necessity of leaving vacant spaces, so abhorrent to the early Greek mind. It is probable that this system of decoration owes much to Assyrian textile fabrics." Only mentioning that the Oriental weaver abhors empty, unmeaning spaces as much as the early Greeks, I will quote another passage from Mr. Walters, dealing with Oriental influences. In this he writes: "The Greeks were largely indebted to Assyria for the subjects of their decorative art, if not for their technical methods. The lions, horses, and fantastic winged monsters of the Assyrian reliefs, and the ornamentation of textile embroideries, provided many models which the Greeks were ready to adopt, and which became popular themes of decoration."

Professor Michaelis, in *A Century of Archaeological Discoveries*, speaking of discoveries in Babylonia, writes: "Our first glimpse into ancient Babylonian decoration and architecture was afforded by a

carpet-like wall decoration at Warka." Earlier in the same volume, in dealing with Dr. Schliemann's discovery of ancient Troy, he says: "The complete clearing of the Treasury of Atreus and the neighbouring sepulchral monuments has revealed more clearly the majestic character of these superb royal tombs, which can be compared with the Roman Pantheon for impressiveness. The dignified façade was decorated in colours, and the interior of the beehive tomb had metal ornaments. The ceiling of the inner chamber was missing, but its character can be inferred from the Minyas Tomb at Orchomenos, an Egyptian design of rosettes and palmettes evidently taken from a woven carpet pattern."

In Mr. Russell Sturgis's *A History of Architecture*, Plate 83—"Part of ceiling slab of flat-roofed chamber of beehive tomb at Orchomenos in Boeotia"—illustrates the ornamental decoration referred to by Professor Michaelis, and it certainly justifies the attribution to a textile design—if we may judge from its difficulty, a design of a sufficiently advanced type to suggest the probability of many early efforts before arriving at such proficiency.

It is useless to multiply examples of a similar kind, which point to the existence of an art to which dates cannot be assigned for the simple reason that no limit can be placed to the period when the human eye was busily at work exercising its critically artistic functions, and that, be it noted, with no reservations as to nationality, for even in the tattooing and incised devices of the most primitive races, as far as such work advances, there is a uniformity and exactness of line which is no mere accident, but amply justifies the writer in *The Edinburgh Review* of October 1906, already referred to in the heading to the previous chapter. In his "Greek Art and Modern Craftsmanship" he writes: "It needs but a brief study of the subject to convince us that the Greeks in their arrangement of form and line were directed by an acute perception of certain likes and dislikes belonging to the eye. . . . They discovered that there are inherent in the sense of sight certain laws which, apart from the volition of the mind, govern and control its least motions. They discovered, further, that these laws, far from being subject to change or variation in different people, are fixed and unalterable, and, accordingly, that so long as eyes are eyes, they must, whether in motion or at rest, obey such laws." The importance of this recognition of the paramount instinct of the eye cannot be exaggerated; it means that before any attempt can be made to determine the origins of Art, the capacity of the eye must first be determined, and even the exact knowledge of the earliest existing human being will leave the

necessity of a close scientific examination of this particular god-like endowment, which will be an everlasting puzzle to the seeker after truth.

Granted that we are derived from some form of superior ape, it has not, I think, yet been suggested that there is any deficiency in the eye of this strange perversion of humanity ; indeed, it might be successfully urged that his close attention to his tail, and the artistic convolutions into which the creature twists it, is the clearest possible evidence of an artistic instinct quite independent of any outside influence, and ruled solely by the judgment of the eye. Does it seem an outrageous insult to human intelligence to suggest that the spiral curve, so common in the earliest forms of Art, is nothing more nor less than the closely-curled tail of the ape ? If so, refer to Alexander Speltz's *Styles of Ornament*, "The Prehistoric Ornament," Plate I, No. 5, "Earthenware Vessel found in Budmir, Bosnia." The continuous spiral curve here illustrated may be a later form of the detached curve of the same form, and the familiar sight of a band of monkeys bridging a stream by means of the support afforded by their tails might well, fantastic as it may seem, have suggested the continuous chain of spiral curves referred to. Plate II of Mr. H. B. Walters's *Art of the Greeks* illustrates the same feature ; in this case the curves radiate from a centre, and the ornament is taken from "Gold Ornaments from Mycenae." In Plate VII of the same work, illustrating "Mycenaean Painted Pottery," three connected spiral curves form the ornament upon a piece of pottery, which occupies the space divided on either side by the handles, the style of the vase and the handles seeming to denote a later period than the prehistoric pottery first mentioned.

To pursue the idea further, look at Plate 140 of Fergusson's *Mediaeval Architecture*, "Ionic Order of Erechtheum at Athens," and note the double curve forming the familiar capital of the pillar of the order ; archaeological discoveries may yet bring to light examples in which the origin of this form will be found to be two monkeys grasping each other, with curved tails extended on either side of the column, which, headed by their bodies, supports the entablature. Is all this any more fanciful than the ornamental form illustrated in Plate XIX of this book, which consists of a conventional pineapple, with the very real representation of a tiger or leopard crouching upon it ? Or is the suggestion that Nature, in the shape of a monkey's curved tail, supplied one of the earliest ornamental forms, any more monstrous than that Man, of whom God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," is a lineal descendant of

the ape, whose name I have taken in vain in this searching after the origins of Art? If we accept the one hypothesis, why not the other?

While we are on the subject of Ornament, it may be desirable to deal more fully with the early simple forms, and in doing so I will, where necessary, follow out later developments arising from the first primitive efforts, so as to keep the question of Design into an easily-referred-to group. It must be remembered that simplicity of form is by no means a safe criterion for adjudging the sequence of production; and here again the expert who professes to assign dates upon the basis of such indications is likely to go astray. The child will attempt to run long before he is able to walk; the weakness of the amateur, who attempts difficulties before he has mastered the rudiments, is a well-known phase in Art as in everything else; and instances are not wanting where business men have shown unwonted boldness in prosecuting enterprises which appeal to their fancy rather than to their judgment. Two interesting instances may be quoted.

The earliest dated example of a picture printed from a wood-block is the "Saint Christopher" of 1423, now in the John Rylands Library at Manchester. No block-book exists with a date earlier than 1470, and it is apparently an open question whether or not the block-book preceded the use of movable types. Experiments of some kind with separate letters were being made at Avignon in 1444; but the first printed documents to which a date and place can be assigned were printed at Mainz in the autumn of 1454. Bear these facts in mind, and look at the 42-line Bible printed at Mainz before August 1456, which can be seen at the British Museum, from the catalogue of which, entitled *A Guide to the Exhibition in the King's Library*, 1901, I have extracted the above particulars. With the printers of this splendid Bible, the choice of such a book for an early effort is understandable, and the matter might be relied upon to make good any defects in the actual design and cut of the type, not to say the general character of the whole production; but I believe it is not too much to say that in its way the book from all points of view has not since been surpassed, and that the great Bible known as the "Mazarin Bible" (from its having first come to prominent notice from its accidental discovery in the Cardinal's Library) stands forth as a great example of the genius of human nature triumphing over unaccustomed difficulties in a way which can only be appreciated by those who have some experience of producing with any degree of sufficiency the simplest specimen of book that can be called to mind; even the daily paper is an example which may be quoted.

In recent times, this same illustration of the way all experience can be put out of joint by the genius of man, urged on by personal predilections, is to be noted in the case of Mr. William Morris and his Kelmscott Press. One might have imagined that some very simple example for a first endeavour would have been selected, but not so : Caxton's *Golden Legend* engaged his fancy : so *The Golden Legend* and no other work was designed to open the operations of the Press, since become so famous. Mr. Mackail, in his *Life of William Morris*, records that the first eleven punches of the type to be afterwards known as the "Golden Type" were cut by the middle of August 1890, when Mr. Morris was fifty-seven years of age, a fact worth noting by those who agree with Professor Osler that human genius after forty years of age can be reckoned at a discount. It is true that a small work, *The Glittering Plain*, was the first work issued from the Kelmscott Press, in 1891 ; but this was on account of the magnitude of the task which Mr. Morris first set himself, a task which will be realized when it is considered that *The Golden Legend* consists of three large volumes in quarto size, and that it contained illustrations by Sir Edward Burne-Jones. This book was issued in 1892, and is number 7 in the list of 53 works issued by the Press, and the edition consisted of 500 copies. Morris not being content with the one fount of type, the largest type used by the Press, the "Troy," was designed in 1891, and in 1892 the *Recueill of the Histories of Troye*, by Le Fevre, was before the public. Whatever has been said or may be said of the magnificent edition of Chaucer issued in folio in 1896, with 87 illustrations by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, and with a splendid title-page and numerous ornamental borders to the wood-block pictures, and large initial letters designed by William Morris himself, the book will probably hand down Mr. Morris's name to posterity, and justly entitle him to permanent fame, when many of his more attractive efforts will be completely forgotten. The edition of the Kelmscott Chaucer (in "Chaucer" type) consisted of 425 copies on paper and 13 on vellum, which, the 40th volume from the Press, compares appropriately with the modest 200 copies on paper and 6 on fine Roman vellum of which the first book consisted.

This is a long digression ; but in my judgment an explanation is required of the somewhat primitive attempt to suggest the rudiments of Design which may have been followed out in the early textile weavings.

I do not regard the following order as arbitrary ; it is merely suggestive, and is put forward upon the lines that in the absence of

definite proof one opinion is better than another only in the sense that a greater natural probability may be claimed for it.

Some Early Carpet Forms

1. Two-colour Diaper, or Chequer. There is obviously only room here for variation in the size of the pattern, which in simple plaiting or weaving would depend entirely upon the fineness or coarseness of the fabric.
2. Spot Pattern, Geometrically arranged. There was practically no limit to the varieties possible here, in the size of the spot and the distances at which it could be placed apart. It is well to note that no difficulty would be offered in making the spot as large as might be required, which depended only upon the use of two or more threads of the warp and weft. Equal thicknesses of warp and weft would produce a square spot if the fabric was evenly divided ; while increased thickness of either warp or weft, in which the one exceeded the other, would result in either a vertical or horizontal oblong.
3. Plain Lines Horizontally and Vertically arranged. Here again the possible variations in the thickness of the lines, and in the distances they were placed apart, were unlimited. It is easy to see that ordinary intelligence would suggest possibilities of design, in (say) combining two or more lines of warp or weft, or both, at even distances, which would soon result in something corresponding with the Scotch tartan, which doubtless is of the greatest antiquity.
4. Plain Lines arranged Diagonally. To those familiar with the real difficulties attached to designing on square ruled paper it may seem early to suggest an operation which without any guide might be supposed to puzzle the first weaver, whose operations I am endeavouring to follow out. It appears to me that before any effort in the direction of detached figures such as follow (which mean a calculation and judgment as to form, as well as spaces), the following of a continuous line, even at the difficult diagonal, is likely to have come first, and I so place it. Once overcome, the placing of the diagonal line affords the same variations as the horizontal and vertical.
5. Two Lines at Right Angles forming a Cross. The same combinations offered here as in the plain spot referred to above.
6. The Addition of Diagonal Lines to No. 5, forming a Star. The same remark as to variety applies here, and it is worth while to note that at this stage even, with a command of lines at right angles forming squares, and lines placed diagonally forming lozenges, which can stand for the first suggestions of the grille and trellis, so freely used in decorative ornament of all kinds, the addition of the spot, the cross, and the star forms practically offer unlimited variety.

7. Squares and Oblongs. The cross and star forms obviously mean detachment upon a plain ground, and the same remark applies to these forms. In my judgment the natural placing of these forms in continuous order (for the weaver would find it convenient to do so at equal distances) eventually led to the key form, as follows.

8. Key Form in Castellated Arrangement. I use the expression "key" form in the most primitive style of that useful article—that is to say, at the time when the blade of the key was quite plain, and before the complicated wards (more often than not purely ornamental) were cut into the fanciful patterns, of which some very rich specimens exist. In case the expression "castellated" may be vague, I refer to the simplest form of battlement, in which the embrasures are of equal height and depth, and at right angles.

9. Squares within Squares, and Oblongs within Oblongs. In the search after variety, these forms would soon follow what had already been done, and readily lead to the more advanced key forms.

10. Key Forms. These are of infinite variety, and their mere mention is sufficient, attention being called to the variety in which a double running key, cutting at right angles, leaves (when so arranged) an open space in which a square or an oblong can be inserted, which in its turn can enclose any of the simple detached figures already mentioned, and (later) more ornamental ones still.

11. Svastika. This is one of the earliest religious symbols, and may be familiar to American readers of Mr. Kipling's Outward Bound Edition, from having been used, in conjunction with the lotus and the elephant-headed Ganesha (the god of auspicious beginnings), upon the title of the edition in question, and also impressed in the form of a seal upon the backs of the volumes. I can best describe the form as a cross of equal-lengthed lines, each line having a foot of half its length turned in opposite directions; the result has a primitive suggestion of the sun, for which it was intended, being invariably associated with the worship of the Aryan sun-gods, Apollo and Odin.

    This form is represented in the *Catalogue d'Étoffes Anciennes et Modernes*, issued with the authority of the Musées Royaux des Arts Décoratifs, Brussels, and illustrating the collection of fabrics in the Museum of that city. The figure in question is No. 10 in the catalogue, and is described as Egyptian work of the first period; is dated as from the first century before to the first century after the birth of Christ. From the illustration, the figure seems to have been worked in coarse wool upon a linen fabric, the design in a purple violet standing out clear upon a white ground.

    I have referred to this figure with some detail, as it represents the first attempt at design, properly named, and because some authorities hold that it is the origin of all key formations.

12. Circle and Oval Forms. The way now seems cleared towards these important forms, which in my opinion offer less difficulty than

anything in the shape of ornamental detached figures, geometrically arranged, owing to the fact that the eye would instantly correct any break in the continuous line, or deviation from a symmetrical form, whereas in the simplest detached figures, to secure any uniformity, the distances have to be exact and the forms also.

13. Circles within Circles, and Ovals within Ovals. It will be readily understood that a weaver capable of forming the single circle would have little difficulty in enclosing another within it, and the same with the oval ; but it is necessary to suggest that when this stage was reached, the fabric would be sufficiently fine in texture to admit of such a complication, which coarse material would almost preclude.

14. Spiral Key Pattern. The substitution of circular and oval forms for the lines at right angles forming the conventional key pattern will perhaps sufficiently describe the form, which (I have ventured to suggest) was derived from the twisted curves of a monkey's tail. As already mentioned, this form is found upon the earliest examples of pottery and other objects in prehistoric times, and must be sufficiently familiar to make any further reference to it superfluous.

It may be presumed that, long before the period of Design now arrived at, experiments would be made by a tracing on the ground, or scratching on some smooth surface (perhaps the trunk of a tree), the particular form in the mind of the weaver. It is quite likely that, with the eager haste of the amateur engrossed in his handiwork, an attempt would be made to work out some of the simple forms first enumerated, without wasting the time required to put the idea into practical working shape ; this is the great stumbling-block in the way of all untrained efforts. The experienced designer knows full well the difference between a design clearly shaped in the mind (conveyed there by the quickly receptive eye) and its translation. It is astonishing what technical difficulties present themselves when it comes to bringing the imagination down from the heaven of ideal perfection to the earth of tangible facts. With very little imagination one can picture primitive man with wrinkled brow in the throes of complicated and perplexed thought, wrestling with the difficulty of reproducing his roughly traced forms into the fabric in which he was bound by the conventions of warp and weft, and in which, unlike his easily restored sand surface, or unlimited material for his scratched drawings, the only remedy for a defect was to unpick his work, which would naturally go against the grain, in spite of ample time at his disposal, for so are we all built from the beginning.

With the confidence of the inexperienced, and the want of appreciation of the fact that inspiration, without the knowledge to bring it

to account, leads to more despairing disappointment than anything else artistic life can offer, the mate of primitive man, attracted by the beauty of the flowers around her, and cognizant of their decorative effect in her hair or upon her dress, had probably made ineffectual attempts to reproduce them in her plaiting, sewing, or even crude attempts at what may be called weaving. The time seems to have come when, having produced the early forms already tabulated, man would, in his turn, attempt something more advanced. The following continuation of my list of forms appears to suggest the natural progress of design, which required something more than a mechanical judgment of the eye, and the accidental following of forms resulting from the superimposing of one line upon another at different angles, and the filling in of spaces caused by continuous circles and ovals touching one another, which, it will be found, creates a natural space, which ordinary instinct would suggest filling with some simple form. In fact, the time had come for the exercise of mental powers and full artistic instinct in Designing, which, as we know, requires the adaptation of means towards a definite end.

Continuing from No. 14—"Spiral Key Pattern"—we come to the first Floral form, which I imagine to have been the Daisy, for reasons which I shall give under its number and heading.

Some Advanced Carpet Forms

15. Daisy and Similar Forms. From its frequency of display in the very earliest Egyptian decoration, it has, I believe, been pretty generally assumed that the Lotus was one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of flower forms adapted to decorative purposes; but the flower as it actually is in nature, and the flower as simplified with rare art to the exigencies of the material in which it has been so largely used in architecture, are two very different things, and it seems to me that in simplicity of design and ease of execution the flower forms with prominent and clearly-defined centres, and equally simple radiating petals, offer more likely subjects for first attempts in the direction of floral decoration.

There is no reason to think that the Daisy, the Wild Rose, the Wood Anemone, and the Marigold were not as plentiful in the earliest days as they are now. I have selected the Daisy to illustrate my theory, as, although more complicated in its petals than the other flowers mentioned, it is likely to have been more common, and with its bold gold centre and pink-tipped outer petals it offers both design and colour in a fashion likely to have attracted attention. A daisy also, when folded up for the night's repose, has a distinct resemblance to the Lotus bud, much used in Egyptian ornament.

A large dot for the centre, with smaller dots at equal distances

around it, would give a very reasonable effect of the flower; and later the connection of these dots with the main centre would pave the way to the honeysuckle, common to Greek ornament.

16. The Lotus. An inverted triangle, with a plain straight line connected from its depending apex, gives the simplest form of the Lotus, and a series of these, forming a kind of dado or frieze, would be a quite passable decoration for lovers of simplicity at the present day. The dividing of this first simple form into the spear-head petals familiar in Egyptian architectural decoration, and the more natural presentation of the flower with its bud, would quickly follow, and when this was done, most of the flower forms suitable for textile reproduction would be naturally and easily produced. It is well to mention here that the Lotus form in architecture is said to have been suggested by the Egyptian Water Lily.

17. Flower-Petal and Leaf Forms. It has been suggested that after having divided the Lotus in its plain block form into the natural divisions, other flower forms would readily follow; but it is necessary to say that at the stage in which this detail became possible, some considerable proficiency had been arrived at on the part of the weaver, and also a fineness of texture very different from what sufficed for the early forms. Without any attempt to assign a date, it must be assumed now that the Carpet was worthy of the name, and that colour had for some time supplemented and added to the effects possible. It is well to add that, far from being the additional complication that might be supposed, the addition of colour would enable the weaver to single out and distinguish features of his design which otherwise would have been blurred into an incoherent mass.

As to whether or not the simple pointed leaf form or blade of grass preceded the rounded petal, or the petal with a piece "bitten out"—that is a matter of pure conjecture; the pointed leaf might be the easiest, but, on the other hand, the desire to give more natural form to a favourite flower would be quite sufficient to ensure the weaver's absorption in the object of his choice, until the difficulty was successfully overcome.

18. Rosette Forms. Having mastered the petal and leaf, the use of any number of similar forms combined in geometrical shapes would follow in natural course, and require no further explanation.

19. The Honeysuckle. The seeming irregularity in outline of this flower might be supposed to offer difficulties; but as represented upon Greek vases and in architectural reliefs, it can be conventionalized into apparent simplicity, while remaining very effective.

20. Palmette Forms. Palmette is defined by Webster as "a kind of conventional floral ornament," and little more needs to be said. In later periods, when the carpet approached perfection, each division of the serrated leaf would be elaborately worked up, and the centre made to enclose an important floral figure, really complete in itself,

but giving to the whole an effect diversified as much in colour as in design.

21. Acanthus Forms. These are familiar in architecture in connection with Corinthian and highly elaborated Composite capitals.

In effect, the Acanthus is nothing more nor less than an elaboration of the Palmette form, and lacks the advantage of the latter's simplicity.

22. Pine Forms. The Pineapple does not seem to be a promising subject for design; yet it has probably furnished more material for charming carpets than any other form. The flattened egg-shaped form with its tuft of leaves is familiar to all; but its real simplicity is perhaps not so commonly realized. Fill the body of the pine with diagonal crossed lines, and attach on the top a bunch of leaves of any form, and a very fair representation of a pine results. The evolution of the pine as generally displayed in carpet form requires some explanation as to its arrival at the stage in which it is represented with a single arm hanging down first on one side and then on the other, with little appearance of the fruiterer's pine for the table.

In Ceylon there is a variety of the pine with the usual crocodile-skinned body, but with three tufts of leaves instead of the common single bunch. Presuming this pine to have engaged the attention of the weaver, the first attempt to introduce a succeeding row of them, filling the body of the carpet from edge to edge of the enclosing border, and placed in added rows one on the top of the other, until the length of the carpet was reached, would result in a meandering rivulet of emptiness on both sides of the figures, which would outrage the sensitive eye of the weaver. Experiment would result in lopping off the two superfluous tufts, leaving only the one hanging over (say) the left side, by way of example. This would not be amiss on the one side; but the emptiness on the bare side in an arrangement similar to that first named would be more marked than ever.

The remedy would be found in time, and this consists of alternate rows of left-handed tuft and right-handed tuft pines, the alternate overhanging arms effectually filling the empty spaces, and producing the "level effect" so dear to the Oriental weaver. True that, looked at sideways, there is an objectionable line which in any great length would be *very* objectionable; but it must be remembered that pine designs are usually in small sizes, where the eye-harrowing effect is hardly noticed.

This process of experiment should be borne in mind, as it is at the root of the perfected "all over" effects of Design and Colouring which characterize the finest productions of the Oriental carpet looms.

23. Cloud Forms. I venture to assign a romantic reason for these forms, which has some connection with the origin of the rainbow. There is nothing strange in the suggestion that as the roundness of the

sun at all times, the roundness of the moon at its full, and it may be added the star, all suggested the forms belonging to them, so the curious shapes clouds take seems to be the natural origin of forms which are too readily taken to denote the authenticity of carpets claiming to be of the finest period of Persian carpet-weaving, from the fact that the form, in connection with the horse-shoe, is seldom absent from the actual period of Shah Abbas.

24. The Horseshoe. This form hardly seems to require more than bare mention, being the symbol of the noblest of animals, and an emblem of "luck" which few ignore, however much they may profess to be above superstition. The sight of the cast horse-shoe nailed above the stable door of the London mews is as familiar as it is over the country stable door, let alone the farrier's and the village smithy. Readers of Dean Swift do not need to be reminded of the scorn with which the Horse was given precedence over mankind; and Mr. Kipling's early journalistic description of his visit to the City of the Houyhnhnms, or the stables of the Maharaja of Jodhpur, will vividly show the estimation in which the horse is held in India, as indeed it is wherever its fine shape and intelligence and sporting instincts are understood and appreciated.

It is possible that few, however, are aware of the position the horse held, and probably still holds, in Persia, to illustrate which I will quote from Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia*. "There is no part of the establishment of a monarch of Persia to which more attention is paid than his horses." "It has been before mentioned that the stable of the king is deemed one of the most sacred of all sanctuaries." The reference is to the murder of Suffee Meerza, the eldest son of Shah Abbas the Great, who, being led to believe that Suffee had a design against his life, not only sanctioned the murder, but refrained from the execution of the assassin, who had taken refuge in the royal stables, respecting the usage which regarded them as the most sacred of asylums. Surely nothing could go beyond this in demonstrating the esteem in which the horse was held in Persia; and the almost invariable use of the horseshoe in combination with cloud forms, attached to each end of the curved arms, conveys as clearly as hieroglyphics can a desire for divine protection, and a corresponding faith in the "luck" which, if the truth were told, formed an indispensable adjunct.

25. Animal Forms. It is hard to say when these were first used; it is quite possible that, struck with the strangeness of the creatures around them, early weavers made attempts to reproduce their forms, and prehistoric bone-carvings seem almost to justify a suggestion that animal forms even preceded some of those already named. Some of the finest examples of carpets, dating from the sixteenth century, make free use of animal forms, and frequently

Plate XIV

PLATE XIV

ORIENTAL RUNNER

[SECTION]

Size 16–5 × 3–1

WARP—10 knots to the inch

WEFT—9 knots to the inch

90 KNOTS TO THE SQUARE INCH

(See Analysis)

of the graceful attitudes which harmonize well with the elaborate scroll and ornamental forms with which they are associated.

26. HUMAN FORMS. It may be suggested that the first employment of the human form might have been in the light of a joke, which, in view of the irresistible tendency to caricature, even in the sacred precincts of His Majesty's Court of the King's Bench, will not seem improbable to some readers. Generally speaking, the portrayal of the human form, in any aspect approaching the natural, is of some rarity in finished examples, while in the primitive "child's" outlining it can frequently be seen in quite common fabrics.

27. BIRD FORMS. In naturalistic representation, these also are of some rarity, and simply require mentioning because they have been used, and probably still are, sometimes with special purpose, at others without rhyme or reason.

28. FISH FORMS. Except with special symbolical suggestion, there seems little reason for using such forms; but in a coloured plate issued in 1895 by Dr. Aloïs Riegl, I recall an ancient carpet of great artistic merit, with fish forms, swimming, if my memory serves, in a meandering band of colour suggestive of a stream.

It is clear that, even with the number of forms already referred to, the number of combinations possible is practically unlimited, and any endeavour to exhaust the subject would be wearisome, and still leave the subject of Oriental Design practically untouched. It is not too much to say that no two Oriental carpets are made precisely alike, and any classification must of necessity be on the broadest lines. In dealing with the subject of design so far, I have referred only to the most obvious forms; no mention has been made of the trellis formations, which, whether of a plain stem form or a leaf form—whether of diamond shape, of honeycombed, six-sided shape, formed of straight lines or curved lines—provide an unlimited variety, to be determined at the will of the weaver by breaking the touching points of the contiguous trellises with rosettes or other ornamental forms, and further diversified by the introduction of detached figures or a series of smaller figures, or with a pattern distinct in itself, while still being part and parcel of the whole design, for the particular art of the Oriental weaver and artist is to unite infinite variety in the same carpet while avoiding any sense of incongruity. The following examples of designs in a more advanced stage than those already tabulated under their individual forms is merely intended to show a few well-known styles, which will further illustrate the resources provided by Nature and Art, enabling carpet-weavers from time immemorial to continue production without arriving at the stage where monotony begins.

Oriental Carpets

Some Developed Carpet Designs

29. The Detached Panel. This commonly consists of a diamond-shaped or combined plain line and curved forms, lying within the square space enclosed by the borders of a carpet. The corners of the square referred to are broken either by corner pieces joining on to the borders, and repeated uniformly at each corner of the square, or by detached ornamental forms serving the same purpose.

    The panel referred to generally has the upper and lower terminals softened off by a chain of medium-sized figures, either detached or connected with small rosette forms; the whole figure remaining unconnected with the borders, thus leaving the panel effectively forming the main feature of the carpet.

    It will be readily recognized that many variations are possible in this formation. For instance, the plain space surrounding the detached panel figure can be filled in with a damask of small figures; with arabesque work; or with elaborate scroll work, with animal figures introduced, as may be seen in fine examples; indeed, this style of pattern, which in a sense is geometrical in its main formation, is a favourite with the Orientals, as being effective, and easy to handle, and there are probably more specimens of this formation than any other.

30. Connected Panels. Generally consist of a series of small panels touching one another, and, as a rule, uniform in design, but frequently enclosing diversified figures. When the panels are not of the same form, irregular spaces are left, which give opportunity for further variety in the style of figures with which the design as a whole is relieved from the sameness of repetition.

31. Band or Strap Pattern. The field or body of the pattern is sometimes made up of a series of geometrically arranged band or strap forms, which are broken at frequent points with small ornamental figures and leaf forms. The bands or straps referred to interlace and form a kind of arabesque.

32. Persian Herati Formation. Very characteristic of the best class of formal Persian design, and found in various styles and sizes. It generally consists of a central rosette figure, enclosed within a diamond-shaped stem panel, at the upper and lower ends of which a palmette form is connected, naturally pointing from the rosette centre. These palmette figures are enclosed within prominent leaf forms which lie upon either a single or a double flower form. The figure is completed by similar palmette figures either pointing outwards on either side of the central rosette, connected by the stem work referred to, or pointing inwards, in which case the stem work forms a portion of a figure similar to that included in this description, which obviously can be repeated over and over again in geometrical formation, to fill the whole of the field of the carpet. This design has the effectiveness of formality, while being relieved of any stiffness by all spaces left by the main figures being filled in

with small leaf, bud, and rosette forms, the whole having a peculiarly rich and pleasing effect.

33. Indian Fishbone Pattern. So called because the closeness of the design, which in its arrangement resembles the Herati design, is supposed to suggest the skeleton of a fish, to which indeed it bears a likeness sufficient to justify the description.

34. Detached Ornamental Forms. These are either rosette, palmette, or pine forms, or other purely conventional ornamental figures, lying either upon a plain or a figured ground. A common form of pattern in this class consists of a series of conventional plant and flower forms, with their connecting stems and leaf and bud forms springing naturally from the stem. In some cases a group of purely ornamental figures, connected with stem work, are arranged to form one complete figure, and with similar figures, but of different ornamental forms placed close together, the spaces left on either side automatically form a plain trellis, from the contrast between the rich figures and the intervening ground shade, of a single tone.

35. Free Floral Scrolls. Perhaps the severest test of the designer and weaver. The geometrical formation, which, in one way or another, has characterized all the designs hitherto mentioned, as a rule necessitates only the designing of a quarter of the pattern, which turns over on all sides, thus forming a completed figure of regular or irregular shape, according to the nature of the forms used in the original section. It is very different in the "all over" scroll formation, every portion of which has to be separately and distinctly drawn in. The curves of the stems forming the scroll have to spring from one another in graceful and natural lines, and the terminal figures, and small intervening conventional flower and bud forms, with stem and leaf work, have to fit in with the general effect of the design as a whole, without conveying any sense of uncouthness, and without any feature of the design attracting the eye with offensive prominence, or with any suggestion of over-strength or weakness.

In fact, this form of design is only met with in perfection in the highest flights of carpet designing, and it is impossible to imagine the most expert weaver producing such a carpet without a guide before him, in the shape of at least a sufficient indication of the main formation of the scroll work, and of the position of the principal figures.

Many fine examples of this class of design are very elaborately worked up, and are rich in examples of the palmette, rosette, and leaf forms, the main stem work, forming the scroll, throwing off smaller stems, with their leaf and bud forms, the whole having an air of "gaiety," it might be said, which is very pleasing and attractive. The use of lion, leopard, tiger, stag, and other animal forms is comparatively common, and their easy, graceful movements, following the lines of the scroll formation, carry the whole scheme out without any sense of conventionality.

Oriental Carpets

The "Tree of Life" is frequently mentioned in connection with Persian and Indian carpets of the finest class, and is met with under all styles—in small groups closely arranged together; enclosed within a conventional many-sided stem trellis, with the various stems forming the trellis set at angles; and in a peculiarly beautiful large open trellis of oval shape gracefully closing in a rounded curve, top and bottom, the open spaces where intersection is not quite effected being occupied by palmette or rosette figures. A variation of the same order consists of a double trellis, which, intersecting in regular formation, leaves spaces of even dimensions, filled in with various plant forms, which, conventionally designed, present features inviting application of the term "tree of life," in most cases a misnomer. The "Tree of Life" or Cypress is of sufficient importance in Oriental design to permit of some explanation of its significance, which is more subtle than might be imagined. Webster defines the word as follows: "A coniferous tree (genus *Cypressus*), most species of which are evergreens, and have very durable wood." A note to this definition reads as follows: "As having been anciently used at funerals, and to adorn tombs, the Oriental species is an emblem of mourning and sadness." In speaking of the garden surrounding the Taj Mahal, Mr. Latif writes: "A long and wide pathway, paved with square stones, and dividing the whole of the garden into two equal parts, now lies before you. It is shaded by a delightful avenue of tall dark cypress trees, all in exquisite harmony with the solemnity of the scene." With a little poetical imagination, can it not be said that, while being an emblem of mourning, the cypress, in its perennial freshness and the extraordinary durability of its wood, is also a very practical symbol of the life to come? The following description from *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* is fertile of suggestion: "The Greeks and Romans put its twigs in the coffins of the dead, they used it to indicate the house of mourning, and planted it about burial-grounds, as is still the custom in the East. The wood of the cypress is yellow or reddish, and has a pleasant smell. It is very hard, compact, and durable; the ancients reckoned it indestructible; and the resin which it contains gives it the property of resisting for a long time the action of water. It is not liable to the attacks of insects, and being also of beautiful colour and easy polish, was formerly much esteemed for the finest kinds of work in wood, even Cupid's arrows being traditionally made of cypress-wood. Some believe that the cypress is the true cedar-wood of Scripture, and it has also been identified by commentators as the *gopher wood* of Noah's Ark. In any case, cypress and cedar have been prized for

shipbuilding in the East from the earliest times. The doors of St. Peter's at Rome, made of cypress, lasted from the time of Constantine the Great to that of Pope Eugene IV., above 1100 years, and were perfectly sound when at last removed, that brazen ones might be substituted. Medicinal virtues were formerly ascribed both to the wood and seeds of the cypress, and Oriental physicians have long been wont to send patients suffering from chest-diseases to breathe the air of cypress-woods, thus curiously anticipating the Western practitioner. The resin has also had medicinal repute from classic times, while the Turks still use also the fruit and bark. The ethereal oil of cypress-wood was also used by the ancients for embalming, and the coffins of mummies were made of the wood."

It will be seen from this extremely interesting account of the "Tree of Life" that its claim to the title is not founded on one count only. Its enduring qualities; its symbol as the touchstone of Love; its life-saving properties (as signified in its being used in the construction of Noah's Ark and in its direct medicinal value)—these attributes, with the employment of the wood for the entrance gates to the great church of St. Peter's, Rome, all afford justification for enlightenment upon a form of carpet design which is glibly used upon any occasion of doubt in describing Oriental carpets and rugs, without the slightest idea of what symbolism can be attached to its employment.

It would be wearisome to attempt to exhaust the features of carpet design, which would be possible by describing in detail the innumerable specimens existing in some form or other of reproduction, all having some special feature of design or colouring, or both. I think it preferable to select a few carpets of the highest class, with distinct characteristics, and, by briefly referring to them, supplement the descriptions already given of more general examples.

Before doing this, I had better here explain that Oriental Carpets mean to me the finer grades of Persian and Indian weavings. It is not my intention to speak of any other of the varieties of carpets to be seen (for instance) in the National Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum; neither shall I deal with the well-known Turkey varieties, nor the Chinese, nor yet the Aubusson, Savonnerie, and other weaves, which, if dealt with according to their merits, would each require a separate volume. I will reserve mention of some features of Persian and Indian carpets which I wish to refer to until the subject of Design has been further treated.

Oriental Carpets

Some Perfected Carpet Designs

36. The Ardebil Carpet. In addition to its superlative merits of design, colouring, and texture, this carpet is of the first importance amongst its compeers, owing to the presence of a date giving it a certificate of birth that cannot be disputed, while the place of its origin and manufacture provides a pedigree entitling it to rank high as a "Holy Carpet," and to hold its place securely with the aristocrats of the carpet world.

A note attached to Chardin's mention of the city of Ardebil speaks of its origin being lost in the night of time, and refers to it as being of renown and importance throughout Persia, on account of its containing the tomb of Sheikh Sefi, whose piety and religious faith secured for him the respect and consideration of the Tartar conqueror, Tamerlane. So high is the sanctity of the tomb, it is an assured asylum for the greatest criminals. Sheikh Sefi died on Tuesday, September 12, 1384, and was buried at Ardebil.

Shah Ismail I., the founder of the Sophi dynasty, who died on Monday, May 9, 1524, also was buried at Ardebil, within the "holy and spirit-illumined mausoleum of the Sophis," as the chronological notice attached to Chardin's *Works* declares.

The date of Shah Ismail's death, 1524, throws light upon the circumstances attending the manufacture of the Ardebil Carpet. It is within the bounds of reason that Shah Ismail, intending to make the mausoleum at Ardebil his final resting-place, soon after vanquishing his opponents and becoming sovereign of the kingdom of Persia, turned his attention to the tomb of Sheikh Sefi, the holy founder of the family, as Shah Ismail himself was the founder of the dynasty. Sir John Malcolm attaches this interesting note to the account of the ceremony attending Aga Mahomed Khan's girding on of the royal sabre. "The tomb is at Ardebil, where the monarch must go to put on the sacred sword. The weapon is left one night on the tomb; and during that time the saint is invoked to be propitious to the sovereign who is to wear it. Next day, when it is girded on, the nobles are feasted and large sums distributed in charity to the poor."—Persian MS.

With his new and hardly-acquired power, it is very probable that Shah Ismail would at the earliest take measures to associate himself with the founder of the family, whose fame must have survived the period since his death in 1384; perhaps in some measure owing to the custom above referred to, which would keep his memory green. It is, however, probable that repairs would be necessary, and the personal interest which is likely to have been taken in these matters, amid the special circumstances, would soon suggest a new carpet to screen the interior arch of the mausoleum, leading to the tomb of Sheikh Sefi.

It requires little stretch of imagination to think that the most

capable and promising young weaver in the royal carpet-factories would be placed at the permanent service of the priests or guardians of the Holy Mosque, and that Maksoud of Kashan, at the age of (say) twenty to twenty-five years, and some time after 1502, when Shah Ismail attained his position at the early age of fourteen, began labours which at the present day have made his name more prominent and noticeable in certain directions than even that of the sovereign whose slave he was.

It must not be supposed, from the humble style of the inscription upon the Ardebil Carpet, that Maksoud, at the time of the finishing of the carpet, was the insignificant person he suggested in his choice of terms. Grandiloquence and Humility, from the pure point of language, are very misleading in the East, and it may be assumed that towards (say) 1537 or 1538, when Maksoud would probably have been engaged continuously in weaving the carpet for at least thirty years, he had acquired a considerable degree of sanctity in his employment within the precincts of the famous Mosque, and that, as a man of mature age, he almost ranked with the leading attendants, if not guardians.

It is not credible that any ordinary person, let alone a slave in the full sense of the word, would have been allowed to weave, in a carpet of such importance, an inscription which would be in full view of the congregation of the faithful, and on special occasions that of the monarch. Maksoud, after his years of devoted labour, and doubtless exemplary conduct, would be entitled to the fullest consideration ; and the permission (or even the suggestion on the part of some dignitary, perhaps of the sovereign) to insert the inscription would be a reward corresponding to enrolment on the Legion of Honour, and, as the event has proved, of equal if not greater historical importance.

Thamasp I., the eldest son of Shah Ismail, succeeded to the throne in 1524, at the age of eleven years, and died in 1576. It is very suggestive to read that it was in the reign of this monarch that Mr. Anthony Jenkinson, an English merchant who was visiting the Court of Persia, was the bearer of a letter from Queen Elizabeth, dated April 25, 1561, recommending his commercial objects to the notice of the Shah. A pair of the King's slippers, it is said, were sent to the envoy, lest his Christian feet should pollute the sacred carpet of the holy monarch—a piece of polite attention which Mr. Jenkinson seemed neither to understand nor to appreciate, judging from a footnote which Sir John Malcolm has placed to his chronicle of the circumstance. This note, one of the few distinct references to carpets throughout the author's two large volumes, is well worthy of reproduction. " It is the usage of Persia at this day, and always has been, to eat and sleep on the same carpet on which they sit ; they are, therefore, kept perfectly clean ; and it is usual for every person to leave their shoes, slippers, or boots at the threshold, and

put on a pair of cloth slippers, which were probably what was sent to Mr. Jenkinson, whose religious feelings might have led him to mistake attention for insult."

Is it not probable that Shah Thamasp, who, on the occasion of his girding on the sacred sword in the Mosque at Ardebil in 1524, would be acquainted with the progress of Maksoud's work, would have before him the original complete design, and also see sufficient of the portion then woven to be impressed by the beauty and importance of the work ; and that on its completion, the part he would naturally take in some form of dedication to the service of the Mosque would leave an impression on his mind which might account for even more stringent measures than usual for the preservation of his royal carpets ?

The coincidence is curious, and I think it may be safely assumed that the inscription woven by Maksoud of Kashan can be attributed to the direct suggestion, or at least permission, of Shah Thamasp. Presuming that the date is at almost the lowest point of the cartouche bearing the inscription, and would be sure to be the current date, it is quite probable that the carpet was not completed until some three or four years after the date generally assigned. Making a rough calculation, I should suppose that what with the necessity of closely following an intricate design, probably on a small scale, the delays for the raw material, the constant re-dyeings, and with allowance for other natural delays, Maksoud would not weave more than a foot of the full width of the carpet, or 1 foot in length by 17 feet 6 inches in width, per annum ; this means *at least* thirty-four years for the finished carpet, which, by the way, has to include the very probable negotiations, implying a full inquiry as to the character of Maksoud, preceding permission to add the inscription, which certainly would not enter into the original design.

The length from the beginning of the inscription, which, it has been remarked, would be close upon the date recorded, to the finish of the carpet is almost exactly an eighth. Allowing for the fact that constant working on the design, and consequent familiarity, would enable Maksoud to make good progress in weaving, in spite of his increased age, four years may be allotted for the finishing touches, which brings the date of completion to the year 1543, assuming that the woven date of the inscription can be relied upon as being 1539, which is generally accepted. Upon the basis of this calculation, the Persian monarch Thamasp I. would be twenty-six years of age when he sanctioned the inscription, and thirty when the completed carpet was placed in position in the Mausoleum of the Sophis at Ardebil ; and it is certain that on that occasion Maksoud of Kashan was honoured with the congratulations of his sovereign, and perhaps with something more tangible, while in the eyes of the priests and attendants of the Mosque he would be a man to claim the brotherhood of office. We

Plate XV

PLATE XV

JACQUARD RUNNER

[SECTION]

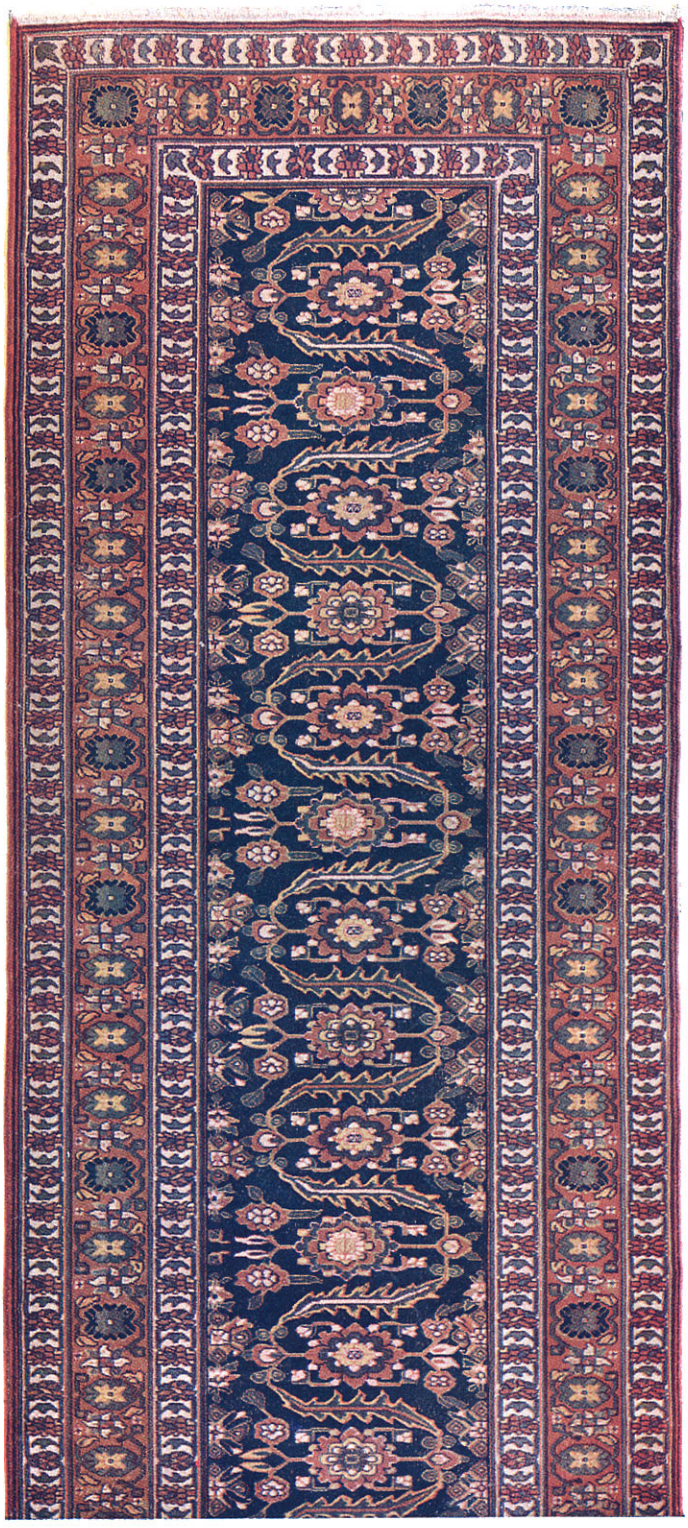
Size 26–8 × 3–9

WARP—11 cords to the inch

WEFT—10 cords to the inch

110 CORDS TO THE SQUARE INCH

(See Analysis)



may be sure that, with a conscious pride in his achievement, and in spite of the inscription staring him in the face, Maksoud would with some title hold himself as the hero of the occasion and a great man, and who shall grudge him his glory ?

I think without doubt that the design for the great carpet was entrusted to the court painter of the day, and that naturally he would take his motive from some page of an illuminated Koran, especially in view of its sacred character. Imagine this superb carpet in its pristine freshness and brilliancy ; for there can be no doubt that originally the colours were strong, if not crude, but it is always to be remembered that the cool dim light of the Mosque would tone this down to a proper balance of effect.

The educational effect, from both a religious and an artistic point of view, of this superb carpet, with its suggestion of the sacred writings, and placed within a shrine second to none in the great Persian empire, in full view of the notabilities assembled on the most solemn occasions—this cannot now be estimated ; but it is worth considering. Shah Abbas came to the throne in 1585, only some nine years after the death of Thamasp I., and it is not improbable that he would carry on the traditions of a predecessor who honoured the weaver Maksoud, and, later, risked offending our great Queen Elizabeth, by taking measures to preserve his carpets from the contaminating touch of her accredited representative, Mr. Anthony Jenkinson, whose infidel footsteps were sprinkled with sand as he left the Hall of Audience.

To account for the gradual decay of the once famous city of Ardebil, it may be mentioned that, towards the close of Thamasp's long reign, it was afflicted by a plague which is supposed to have carried off 30,000 of the inhabitants. In addition to this blow, Shah Abbas I., in making Ispahan his capital in 1590, is sure to have gradually transferred his interest from Ardebil to the great city with which he doubtless intended his reign to be associated, and the glories of the new city would soon have their inevitable effect in eclipsing the old, the result of which may be realized in the fact of the great carpet of the Holy Mosque of Ardebil now reposing sideways behind glass in new and handsome quarters in the Victoria and Albert Museum, instead of occupying its ancient place extended at full length between the pillars of the arch leading to the recess containing the sacred tomb of Sheikh Sefi. In this, its probable position, the inscription bearing the name of Maksoud would be near the apex of the arch, and, while being noticeable, would not be calculated to divert attention from the carpet itself.

To speak for a moment of the actual design of the Ardebil Carpet. It has all the qualities of the detached panel formation, and of the geometrical arrangement which gives the smooth level effect which is the most charming feature of Oriental design. Although the carpet consists of only the one section—or of the whole carpet

divided equally, vertically and horizontally, and turned over from the centre to form its right-angled shape—the design is varied, in small points of detail, and the colouring also changes, with the result that any sense of repetition is removed, and except on examination, it does not occur to one that there is anything conventional in the treatment.

The sections of the centre panel, placed in the four corners of the field of the carpet, very happily soften off the squareness of the general lines; while the free scroll and stem treatment, with bud and flower forms, hold the whole design together, leaving no space in which too much plain colour would have created a "vacuum," which the Oriental artist abhors before everything.

A very marked feature in the carpet as a whole, and one which will only perhaps strike the observer in the original carpet, or a large reproduction, is the frequent use of the horseshoe and cloud forms, in combination and separately. In the centre medallion, the large closed curve of the horseshoe is turned north, south, east, and west, and if the trailing ends were connected, a very pretty cross would result. The arms of the shoe in these four forms meet together before the cloud forms spread out in usual shape, and at first I was puzzled with the twisted figure which seems intended to hold the arms together. The thought occurred to me that it might be meant for something in connection with a horse, which naturally suggested a curb or snaffle. On referring to M. Horace Hayes's *Riding and Hunting*, I found in Figure 43 a "Double-mouthed Snaffle," which has sufficient resemblance to the carpet form to be at least interesting, while the connection between a horseshoe and the snaffle suggests probability.

Facing inwards, and almost touching the small centre of the medallion, are four full-spread horseshoe forms, while eight serpent-like smaller forms, half cloud, half horseshoe, geometrically arranged, are included in the general design of this particular character, which is held together by formally arranged stem and flower forms, which lie under the horseshoe and cloud forms, and an open arabesque pattern of flat coloured treatment.

The large, almost "lamp-like" pendants, attached to each of the sixteen points of the centre medallion, are alternately filled with closed and open horseshoe and cloud forms, and the same design and arrangement is observed in the corner sections already referred to.

This special feature of the carpet is, so to say, the leitmotiv of the design, and must have some special significance, which I hint at towards the end of this description. However fanciful the idea may seem, it is the study of these apparently small points which may in the future throw light upon periods of design which will make final classification easier and more trustworthy, while it may be remarked that the Eastern temperament is such that the freaks of any particular

monarch, artist, or weaver can hardly be taken as a safe guide on general lines ; in fact, the whole subject is full of pitfalls for the most wary. It may be remarked here that Alexander the Great idolized his horse Bucephalus, and when it died buried it with almost royal honours, founding the city Bucephalia in remembrance. In connection with the conquest of Persia and India, this fact is not likely to have been forgotten.

It remains to mention the border, which, with exquisite appropriateness, takes up the formality of the design as a whole, while affording the perfect contrast of effect so essential to a picture, of whatever subject it may be. The alternate panels and roundels forming the main band of the border are filled, as regards the long panels, with the characteristic horseshoe and cloud forms, each of which long panels contains four of these features, turned over geometrically, and held together with conventional stem and floral work. The roundels are filled with a geometrically arranged star trellis, again affording sufficient and pleasing divisions to the more important panels. The outer band of the border, of medium width, consists of a continuous arabesque of interlaced stems, flatly treated as regards both design and colour, but bearing within them delicately-drawn stem, leaf, and flower forms, in contrasting colours.

A medium-width band of red, filled with a free conventional floral scroll, divides the border from the field or body of the carpet, while next to this, and (although of greater width) corresponding with the outer band, comes a broad band of cream, these two bands enclosing the main band with its panel formation. This broad cream band consists of horseshoe and cloud forms, arranged serpent fashion, right round the carpet, the round curve of the shoe alternately pointing inwards and outwards. Within each horseshoe is a conventional flower rosette, in delicate pink and yellow, while a continuous floral and stem effect is a star-shaped figure in dark blue, outlined with yellow ; these dark figures alternate with the pink figures above referred to, and rest between the curling ends of the cloud forms attached to each arm of the horseshoes.

The hanging lamps are such prominent features in the carpet that special reference seems necessary. They, of course, respectively symbolize the two saints reposing in the tombs within the Mosque. It will be noticed that the one lamp is larger than the other, and moreover occupies the upper portion of the carpet, the end pointing towards the inscription. One would naturally suppose that the lamp first woven in the carpet would stand for Sheikh Sefi, while the larger and more important one would represent the majesty of the founder of the Sophi dynasty, Shah Ismail I. Is it not, however, also possible that Maksoud, as a delicate compliment to the powers that be, purposely made this lamp of a superior form, lavishing his best work upon it, perhaps even at that time with some foreknowledge of the honour which was eventually done him ?

Oriental Carpets

In an interesting account of the great Mosque of the sacred city of Kum, and in describing particularly the shrine of Fatimeh, contained within the octagonal chapel over which rises the great dome, bearing the golden crescent, raised aloft upon a series of golden balls, large at the point of contact with the dome itself and gradually diminishing in size, Chardin refers to the lamps suspended over the tomb, which, of vase-shaped form, are not of practical utility as are the church lamps, but being evidently pierced, and of open filigree construction, do not contain oil, and consequently are purely ornamental. In the Ardebil design it seems incongruous to include lamps, which from their nature are quite out of place upside down; but this explanation puts the whole matter upon a different footing, and makes the forms entirely emblematical of the personages for whom they stand.

The very lavish use of the horseshoe and cloud forms, I think, clearly points to the carpet having been made by special command of Shah Ismail I., and completed at his death by Shah Thamasp I., who would naturally appreciate the insignia of royalty which such forms might be said to have. The weaver, Maksoud of Kashan, as the only man capable of bringing the carpet to a uniform completion, would naturally be an important person, in the eyes even of the monarch of all Persia, and it is, I hold, well within the bounds of credibility that his great services were rewarded in a fashion unique in the annals of carpet-weaving, and that by grace of Shah Thamasp, sovereign of all Persia, the following inscription is to-day a conspicuous feature of the Holy Carpet of Ardebil, which formerly screened the tombs of the saint and ascetic Sheikh Sefi, and the great ruler and founder of the Sophi dynasty, Shah Ismail I. Translated, it reads:

I HAVE NO REFUGE IN THE WORLD OTHER THAN THY THRESHOLD,
MY HEAD HAS NO PROTECTION OTHER THAN THIS PORCHWAY,
THE WORK OF THE SLAVE OF THIS HOLY PLACE,
MAKSOUD OF KASHAN,
IN THE YEAR 942.

The year 942 of the Hegira corresponds with 1535 of our era, and the two dates first given to the world on April 29, 1892, were confirmed in Mr. Stebbing's brief Preface dated March 12, 1893, in which year he issued the truly Royal Monograph to which more particular reference has already been made.

It might be supposed that this plausible English translation would be above suspicion, but that such is not the case appears from the English edition of the great Vienna Carpet Book, *Oriental Carpets*, published in ten parts by the Imperial Royal Austrian Commercial Museum, Vienna, 1892-1896, Part X., containing two splendid coloured reproductions of the Ardebil Carpet (Plates XCI, XCII, Nos. 115, 116), having the following interesting particulars, which I reproduce with due acknowledgment to the learned Viennese

editors, and to Dr. Aloïs Riegl, who was responsible for the Descriptions and Analyses accompanying the Plates :—

"At the inner edge of the middle of the border stripe at the upper end of Plate XCII, (a quarter section of the carpet, including the inscription and the lamp pointing towards it) a small cartouche with yellow ground is given which contains the following inscription according to F. Bayer and in agreement with the translation given by Professor Rosenzweig :—

OUTSIDE THIS THY THRESHOLD AM I,
OF EVERY OTHER REFUGE ROBBED,
NOR BEYOND THIS PORTAL FIND I,
WHERE TO REST MY (WEARY) HEAD.
A WORK OF THE SERVANT AT THE HOLY SHRINE OF KASHAN IN THE YEAR 946 (1539, A.D.).

The two verses in the inscription form the beginning of a poem in the Divan of the celebrated Persian lyric poet Hafiz († 1389, A.D.)."

The fact of the verses not having been actually composed by or for Maksoud gives an entirely different suggestion to the tone of excessive humility attaching to the original English translation, and, I hold, justifies my contention that at the close of his labours Maksoud had become a man of some importance, perhaps even distinction, in the Mosque in which he had laboured for so many years.

The concluding paragraph of the Analysis now being quoted from clearly shows that the changed dates above recorded were made with a full knowledge of the earlier work :—

"This carpet was first published in 1893 by M. Edward Stebbing of London in a highly interesting ornamental edition under the title : *The Holy Carpet of the Mosque at Ardebil.* The title corresponds with the inscription at the foot of the plate given by Stebbing, the carpet was intended originally for the grave mosque of the Shah Ismail, the founder of the Sefidoe dynasty."

To pursue the inquiry, and to justify my adoption of the date 1539, which, it will be seen, is that of the standard authority on the subject, in the March number of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1896, a review entitled "Tapis d'Orient," initialed A. R., says : "On ne connaissait qu'un tapis portant la mention rigoureuse de son âge, au South Kensington (1539)." In the Supplement to the original Vienna Book, *Ancient Oriental Carpets* (Leipzig, 1908), Professor Dr. Friedrich Sarre, in his explanatory text to the plates, refers to the Ardebil Carpet under date 1539, speaking of it as "the only important dated specimen of that century." Professor Josef Strzygowski, in an article in the October 1908 number of *The Burlington Magazine*, entitled "Oriental Carpets" (translated by L. I. Armstrong), referring to Dr. Aloïs Riegl's Armenian carpet, mistakenly dated 1202, and to other claims for antiquity, writes : "Since then romancing has been given up, and more caution is

shown in trying to discover pieces older than the oldest carpet, dating from the year 1539, in the Victoria and Albert Museum."

The latest English authority, *Guide to the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington*, with a Preface by Sir Cecil H. Smith, dated June 1909, came into my hands October 16, 1909.

On page 21 is the following interesting entry, which it will be seen challenges both the accepted spelling "Ardebil," and the date :—

> The best **carpets** in the Museum collection are exhibited in the WEST CENTRAL COURT (42). That on the North wall is the famous carpet from the mosque at Ardabil in Persia. It bears an inscription stating that it was made by Maksoud of Kashan in the year of the Hejira 946 (A.D. 1540).

In Mr. W. L. Courtney's preluding notes to "Ecclesiastes or Koheleth" in *The Literary Man's Bible*, in summing up Solomon's later-life philosophy he uses the phrase, "NATURE DOES NOT PROGRESS, IT MERELY RECURS." Taking this as the text, is it not possible that the archetype Achilles, perhaps a spirit-whisper from a real personality of a greater age, brought to life again by the magic of Homer's verse, recurred under Nature's wand, in the persons of Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, and Napoleon? Raphael may also be said to be the reincarnation of the probably much greater Apelles. In the same way Maksoud of Kashan may have harked back to untold ages of Carpet-weavers, and in building up the Ardebil Carpet, knot by knot and colour by colour, been merely reproducing some long forgotten masterpiece, and in so doing, introduced the weaker elements of a lesser age, which expressed itself in an over-delicacy and intricate refinement of design and colouring, which are the only flaws possible to suggest, if they can be so regarded. It would be futile to believe that such consummate mastery of the technique of the fabric, and instinctive control of all the elaborations of form, and of the perpetually recurring colour problems, were the mere accident of Time, Place, and the Man. The world has not for nothing accepted Maksoud's work as the basis upon which to gauge the possibilities of the past, and the starting-point from which is likely to be derived precise information as to the progress of the art since he completed his labours.

This CROWNING GLORY OF PERSIAN TEXTILE ART has apparently attained a last resting-place within buildings affording in their Great Names interesting association with its original home. Until an International Commission has finally solved the problem of the respective dates, the following inscription records the achievement of the Artist Weaver :—

THE HOLY CARPET OF THE MOSQUE AT ARDEBIL
MEASURING 34 FEET 6 INCHES BY 17 FEET 6 INCHES
CONTAINING 33,037,200 HAND-TIED KNOTS
WOVEN 380 KNOTS TO THE SQUARE INCH
MAKSOUD OF KASHAN'S LIFE-MASTERWORK
ANNO HEGIRA 946 = 1539 ANNO DOMINI

37. Royal Carpet. Manufactured in the royal palaces, and probably in many cases under the eye of the sovereign, it is known that carpets of a superior class were sent as presents from Persia to all parts of the world, where personal friendship or political exigency made the gift appropriate or politic. A very fine example of this class of carpet is illustrated in colour and described in the fine Subscribers' Edition of the Henry G. Marquand Catalogue, No. 1305, and has already been referred to as having been sold for the enormous sum of £7200. The carpet was a gift from the Shah of Persia to the Sultan of Turkey, and its history is well authenticated.

The prime features of the carpet are the centre medallion on a red ground, and spade-like figures top and bottom, elaborately damasked and arabesqued; these three figures, connected together by a conventional ornamental floral figure, lie upon a dark green ground, which is covered with a closely-worked leaf and flower design, upon which numerous and varied animal figures disport.

The border of this long and narrow carpet has two upper and lower panels, and four of a similar design on each side, or twelve in all, with inscriptions in silver upon a red ground, which ground, like the main centre panel, appears to be damasked with a lighter tone of the same colour. These panels are divided from one another by medallion forms, which are in connection, each corner of the carpet being occupied by one of them. This band of panel and medallion forms lies upon a rich yellow ground, divided from the field of the carpet by a narrow crimson band, which is of the same colour and character as a broader band forming the outer edge of the carpet.

The carpet is described as of the fifteenth or earlier sixteenth century, and, as compared with the Ardebil Carpet, this dating seems in accordance with the more primitive nature of the design. Both carpets are of the finest make of woollen, and as "Mosque" and "Royal" carpets are thoroughly typical of their respective classes.

38. Palace Carpet. The famous "Hunting Carpet," which was the *pièce de résistance* of the Vienna Carpet Exhibition of 1891, is described as a Palace Carpet, both on account of its having probably been manufactured upon one of the large looms within the palace precincts, and also because, from its very special character, it was intended either for the adornment of one of the Persian palaces or perhaps as a present to some friendly sovereign.

No less than five monochrome plates and one full-plate coloured section, and a half-plate, also coloured, are devoted to this carpet in *Oriental Carpets*, issued from the Imperial Press, Vienna, in ten parts, from 1892 to 1896. Dr. Aloïs Riegl has fully described this carpet in his Analysis to the work above mentioned, and the carpet is of such an elaborate nature in all its details, that any one interested or curious in the matter must not only carefully

read his description, but also carefully study the plates, no one of which gives the carpet as a whole, although its size, 22-3¾ × 10-6, does not approach that of the Ardebil Carpet.

A rich medallion occupies the centre of the carpet, softened off towards the top and bottom by first an oblong broken panel, and then by an upright spade figure, connected with the main medallion; the carpet being narrow, only the small spade figure projects from the left and right hand points of the medallion, the said spade figures acting as a kind of division between the upper and lower halves of the full field of the carpet. Sections of the centre medallion occupy each corner of the field of the carpet.

Dragon and griffin figures fill the sections of the medallion in the corners, and the whole of the field of the carpet outside these corners, and the centre medallion itself is a perfect "riot" of Persian princes apparently, hunting deer, their horses fully caparisoned, and they themselves provided with swords, spears, and bows and arrows. The life and movement throughout the carpet is wonderful, when the nature of the fabric is considered; and in addition to the numerous human and animal figures displayed, a rich running stem, leaf, and floral effect binds the whole design together, and gives sufficient relief to the figures of the huntsmen and their horses, which are clearly defined in flat colour treatment.

A broad cream band of colour divides the border from the field of the carpet, and the conventionally arranged figures occupying this band illustrate the boldness with which the Oriental varies his forms without conveying any sense of the ludicrous. Every alternate figure in this band has within the centre of the floral rosette a "cat" or tiger's head, quite natural in appearance, even in the monochrome reproduction.

The broad main band of the border, of a rich red ground, evidently represents an Oriental Royal Feast, the principal personages being seated and other figures of importance being apparently in attendance; both classes of figures are provided with wings, and alternate one with another throughout the design; a seated figure occupies each corner of this main border band, and appropriately gives this finish to the general effect. A continuous stem and leaf scroll design gives a rich groundwork to the plan, and the frequent insertion of conventional floral and geometrical figures give sufficient importance to this feature of the design; cockatoos and birds of paradise are freely inserted, and cloud forms of curious and fantastic shape seem to fill in all the spare spaces.

The outer band of the border, which is a little wider than the band next to the field of the carpet, is upon a bronze green ground, as far as can be judged from the coloured reproduction; the design consists of an outline in silver of spade shape, which encloses a flatly-coloured leaf form of simple design; this form is placed at

Plate XVI

Plate XVI

ORIENTAL RUNNER

[Section]

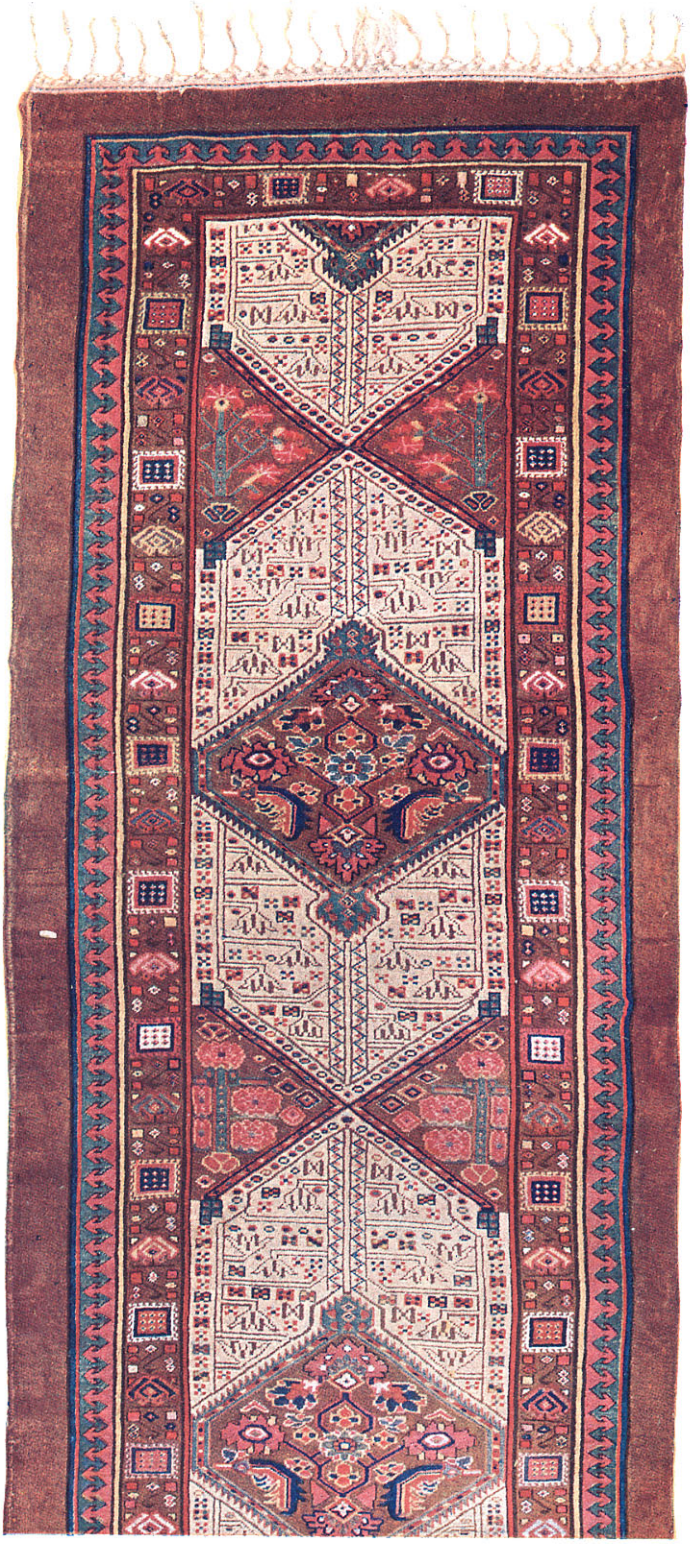
Size 23–8 × 3–9

Warp—10 knots to the inch

Weft—7 knots to the inch

70 knots to the square inch

(See Analysis)



regular intervals, with about its width apart, the space so left being occupied by a floral figure, with this time a human head in the centre. A formally arranged leaf, stem, and ornamental trellis fills this portion of the border, occupying the spaces between the main figures just mentioned.

Dr. Aloïs Riegl speaks of this carpet as a splendid example of Persian courtly art of the sixteenth century. The Hunting Scene portrayed probably represents one of the magnificent entertainments given to court visitors of the highest rank, and it is not improbable that the carpet was designed as a present to the most important prince or potentate in whose honour the sport was arranged. It is further extremely probable that some attempt at least would be made to distinguish the leading figures, and any written description made at the time might well lead to identifications which would be of the greatest interest historically, and as regards the carpet itself and carpet-weaving generally.

It remains to say that the carpet is of silk, with gold and silver thread sparsely used; and that its safety and preservation is fortunately in the hands of the Emperor of Austria, under whose auspices it formed a prominent feature of the splendid exhibition of carpets held in his capital in the year 1891.

39. Sixteenth-Century Carpet. As a typical example of this period, before the full influence of Shah Abbas could be exercised, or even before he came to the throne, I have selected an example from the Marquand Collection, which, measuring 16-2 × 7-1, and with 195 hand-tied knots to the square inch, was number 1310 in the New York Sale of January 1903, and realized the large sum of £3000. The general character and formation of the design is sufficiently near to the example illustrated in this book to make a detailed description unnecessary; but it may be specially noted that, whereas the latter is without any suggestion of the well-known horseshoe and cloud forms, the Marquand example has two of these forms complete, the rounded head of the horseshoes pointing towards the top and bottom of the carpet. The whole design of this Marquand carpet is more advanced in style than the carpet to which it is compared; but, as far as can be judged from the coloured plate, the former has the rich grass-green ground in the border, and the blood-red of the field, touched with magenta, which was a feature in the original sixteenth-century example from which the Jacquard reproduction in this volume was faithfully copied.

A passage in Chardin's *Persia*, describing an execution in the reign of Shah Abbas II., after mentioning that the sovereign went to his Hall of Audience clad entirely in scarlet, as customary when a notability was to die, proceeds as follows: "Addressing himself to Janikan, His Majesty said to him, *Traitor, rebel, by what authority did you slay my Vizier?* He wished to reply, but the king did not give him the opportunity. Rising, and saying

in a loud voice Strike! he retired into a room which was only separated from the main chamber by a glass screen. The guards, posted close by, immediately threw themselves upon the victim and his companions, and with their axes hewed them to pieces upon the beautiful carpets of silk and gold thread with which the hall was covered; this was done before the eyes of the king and all his court."

These executions were by no means of infrequent occurrence, and it came to my mind that the sight of the green grass, spattered with blood, might in earlier times have suggested an effect of colour which is undoubtedly as good as the combination of the two perhaps most striking colours in Nature might be expected to be. A further thought, even more hideous in its suggestion to Western minds, is that with these scenes of blood, which the perusal of Chardin's volumes almost makes one at last regard as a commonplace, the blood-red colour of the main portion of the carpets would, after such events as that recorded, be less repugnant, until they could be removed and cleaned, than if the colours were of a character to betray results which the guilty consciences of some of the beholders might regard as too significant to make them quite comfortable, while the rigid Eastern etiquette demanded their continued attendance upon the person of the monarch whom they served.

Fantastic as this suggestion of the origin and continued use of green border and red centre may be, the combination of colours is striking in the extreme, and probably readers in future will realize, when admiring the effect, that the most innocent examples of Oriental Art may have a symbolism which would never enter the mind unless put there by those more closely in touch with the curious mental perversions which draw a distinct line between the East and the West.

40. SHAH ABBAS CARPET. The very superb carpet illustrated in full page in the Vienna *Oriental Carpets*, Plate XLI, first in monochrome and then in full colour effect, with the gold and silver threads in their natural effect, must of a surety be one of the examples of the golden period of Shah Abbas, which, to use Mr. Morris's words, "fairly threw me on my back." The main band of the border is of the richest tint of green, and the centre of the typical sixteenth-century red, but apparently of a deeper tint than is generally associated with the average examples of the class. The design of both the field of the carpet and the border is rich and varied in the extreme; it would not be possible to have greater variety of form and treatment without overcrowding; at the same time, the most critical eye would find it difficult or impossible to say what could be omitted with advantage. This is the test of perfection: what could be added to perfect, what could be taken away to improve; if the answer is Nothing! one of the wonders of the world has been created by

human hands, and this can be said of the Shah Abbas carpet under consideration.

The whole style and character of this example shows an enormous advance over the Marquand carpet; but in the same way as this latter carpet is on general lines inspired by the earlier example reproduced in this volume, so the carpet owned by Count Arthur Enzenberg has a suggestion of the same formation. Still, while the two former examples turn over both ways from the centre, and have thus some of the formality of the geometrical formation, the Enzenberg carpet very cleverly avoids this precision of effect, by placing the centre of this repeating formation lower down, and so deceives the eye into accepting the design as "all over," although, being turned over right and left from a line drawn through the centre of the carpet, lengthways, a very pleasing uniformity of arrangement is observable, which is one of the imposing and effective features of the whole design, and departure from which in any respect would be fatal to the *tout ensemble*.

The horseshoe and cloud forms, and the detached cloud forms, are a marked feature in this carpet, and in this respect again probably show the personal predilection of the warrior statesman, Shah Abbas. The palmette forms, not too pointed, be it observed, are a prominent feature in both the field of the carpet and the border; in the former they are lavishly worked in gold and silver thread, in some cases a very rich effect being obtained by a coloured centre floral rosette lying upon a plain light-red ground, being surrounded first by a broad row of connected leaves in silver thread and an outer row of smaller leaves worked in gold thread. In some of these rich palmette figures the foliated leaf form next to the stem supporting it is in silver thread, while the palmette itself is in a full coloured effect; or this arrangement is varied by the outer leaves being in gold.

A continuous scroll stem-work, with small floral rosette forms in colour and silver thread, and similar forms in colour only, fill up the whole field of the carpet in symmetrically arranged convolutions; and at set intervals, and in more or less geometrical form, are to be seen the long-tailed wild pheasants, sometimes with silver bodies and gay-coloured plumage, or richly coloured without the metal thread.

The border is more conventional in style than the field; and palmette forms, with the foliated leaf next the supporting stem, and gold-worked outer leaves, pointing alternately inwards and outwards, are divided from one another by smaller floral rosettes, with a coloured centre, and silver outer leaves, lightly outlined with red.

Small bird figures are placed at regular intervals, and the whole design is held together by a formal stem, flower, and leaf scroll-work. The outer narrow border forming the edge of the carpet is upon a red ground, lightly damasked with a free flower and stem treatment; the narrow inner border, dividing the field from the

main border, is very happily formal in style, consisting of an elongated panel, rounded at the ends, and coloured upon a red ground, divided by a roundel form, in apparently the same shade of green as the main border band.

All this detail of design and colour is within a space measuring 11-4½ × 5-11¾—truly a miracle of artistic inventiveness and a triumph of dexterous weaving. Dr. Aloïs Riegl, in his Analysis, speaks of this carpet as being made of worsted yarn, with gold and silver thread wound upon silk, and as belonging "to the valuable group of the older Persian carpets, whose most splendid example is to be found in the hunting carpet in the possession of the Emperor of Austria." He adds, "Unfortunately, the brilliancy of the metal thread is here somewhat tarnished, the natural consequence of having served for centuries as a floor covering."

This description of a carpet which assuredly must have been manufactured in the reign of Shah Abbas the Great will serve as an introduction to a slight sketch of his reign and personality, which will fittingly accompany the portrait which I am fortunate enough to add as a frontispiece to this division. I have already referred to the circumstances under which the life of the infant Shah Abbas was preserved, which, in the following account of the infant Cyrus, irresistibly suggests reference to the old adage, "History repeats itself." Herodotus records that, alarmed by dreams, Astyages, instead of marrying his daughter Mandane to a Mede of his own nation, selected for her husband Cambyses, a Persian of good family and of a peaceful disposition. Within a year Astyages, disturbed by another dream of even greater significance, sent for his daughter, and to prevent the possibility of her expected son becoming the conqueror of all Asia, and consequently of his own dominions, gave instructions to Harpagus, his kinsman, to destroy the boy immediately upon birth. Harpagus, both on account of his relationship to the infant Cyrus and also from personal motives, inspired by the fact of the age of Astyages, and his having no male offspring, in which case upon his death his daughter Mandane would bring him to account for the deed, refused to commit the murder himself, and summoned for the purpose Mitradates, a herdsman, who was in the service of Astyages; the latter would in this way be held responsible for the crime. Mitradates related the commission to his wife Cyno, and showed her the boy, who was large and of a beautiful form. She besought him not to carry out the orders of Harpagus, and expose him upon the bleakest part of the mountains, which it was hoped would speedily put an end to life. The rest of the story is well known. As a boy of ten his birth and breeding made him a

king amongst his playfellows ; which being accepted by the Magi or interpreter of dreams as fulfilling the condition feared for Astyages, Harpagus was summoned, and after being punished in a manner too atrocious to be related, was forgiven. Cyrus was sent for, treated kindly, returned safely to his overjoyed parents, and lived to become the founder of the Persian Empire. This picturesque account has been refuted by evidence derived from actual inscriptions ; but it will probably remain to the end of time, in the same way as many other fables.

Chardin has nothing to say as to the similar fate which nearly overtook the young Shah Abbas, and I also fail to find any reference of the kind in Lord Curzon's *Persia* ; but the account given by Sir John Malcolm in his *History of Persia* is so circumstantial that I relate it as it stands, with the hope that, even if placed in the same category as the story related of Cyrus the Great, it may serve to give that halo of romance to the career of Shah Abbas the Great which will keep him in remembrance when the bare historical records are buried under the dust of ages, as happened in the case of Cyrus.

Mahomed Meerza, surnamed Khodâh-bundâh, or "the Slave of God," was the eldest son of Thamasp. To illustrate the difficulty of preserving uniformity in the treatment of Persian names, I may mention that the name is here given as spelt by Malcolm ; Chardin gives it as Mohhammed Khodâ-Bendéh ; and Curzon as Khodabundeh, which latter spelling I have in the previous division adopted as the simplest and most practical way of dealing with a difference of opinion which makes any desire for accuracy an almost insupportable burden to one without the slightest acquaintance with the language. The account which follows is given verbatim from the pages of Sir John Malcolm. Before transcribing it, I confess that, when in any doubt as to the spelling of any foreign names and places throughout this volume, I have decided, between varying authorities, entirely upon the basis of the eye and euphony in the natural English pronunciation.

After explaining that Abbas, then an infant at the breast, had, presumably in the year he was born, 1557, been placed under the tutelage of Aly Kooli Khan, a nobleman of high rank, Sir John Malcolm proceeds : "Ismail (III.) did not think himself secure upon the throne to which he had been raised, till he had slain Mahomed Meerza, and all his family. Orders to that effect were sent on the twelfth of Ramazan to Shiraz ; and Aly Kooli was, at the same time, directed to put to death the young Abbas : and we are informed, that a second order, of the most peremptory nature, was sent to command

the instant execution of this infant : but the powerful chief to whom it was addressed, was led, by a superstitious motive, to defer obedience to the cruel mandate till the sacred month of Ramazan had passed. This short respite preserved the life of a prince destined to become the glory of Persia ; for a breathless messenger from Kazveen reached Herat on the last day of that month, and announced to Aly Kooli the death of Ismail, who had expired on the thirteenth, the day after the order for the murder of Abbas was despatched. Another express, with intelligence of that event, had been sent to Shiraz, and arrived within an hour of the period appointed for the execution of Mahomed Meerza and his other children."

In chronological order, some reference has to be made to Chardin's account of Shah Abbas ; but, truth to tell, his references, scattered throughout the ten volumes of the edition I have made use of, are of much the same character as the brief accounts of carpets and carpet-manufacture ; that is to say, just enough to want a good deal more of a detailed character. Shah Abbas is spoken of as a great soldier, a great conqueror, a great statesman, the creator of the magnificence of which Ispahan to this day has sufficient evidence, and as having by his encouragement of foreign commerce made Persia " the most flourishing empire in the world " during his reign, and of having so left it at his death.

In dealing with the kingdom of Persia, Chardin speaks of it with the same enthusiasm one might expect if he had been describing his own native land. This betokens either a genuine love of a foreign country beyond the usual experience of a Frenchman (who in this respect has only one love) ; a sense of favours already conferred ; or a shrewd appreciation of favours to come. This may seem a superfluous suggestion ; but it is justified by the fact that his compatriot and editor, M. Langlès, finds it necessary to append to Chardin's eulogy of Shah Abbas a footnote to the effect that it could not be fully endorsed. Chardin's account, with the reservation hinted at, is, however, so interesting that I give it in full ; indirectly it has some bearing upon the decadence which set in when the man of genius was removed from the control of the multitudinous conglomeration of conflicting nationalities which go to make up an empire in these respects only to be compared with India.

Chardin writes in his third chapter, under the heading " Du Terroir " : " One must say of the land of Persia, what has already been said of the climate. The kingdom from its magnitude being a little world in itself, one part burnt up by the rays of the sun and the other frozen by the intense cold, it is not surprising

that both extremes are to be found in the same country. Persia is a barren land, only a tenth part being cultivated. It has already been remarked that Persia is the most mountainous country in the world, and not only so, but the mountains themselves are the wildest and most sterile, being little more than bare rocks, without either trees or herbage. But in the valleys between the mountains, and in the enclosed plains, the soil is more or less fertile and agreeable, according to the situation and the climate. The ground is sandy and stony in places; and elsewhere clayey and heavy, or as hard as stone. But whether it is the one or the other, it is so dry, that if not irrigated, it produces nothing, not even grass. It is not that rain is wanting, but there is not enough of it. It rains almost continuously in summer, and in the winter the sun is so strong and so scorching, for the five or six hours while it is highest on the horizon, that it is necessary to keep the earth continually watered; while one can say that if this is done, it is abundantly productive. Thus it is the scarcity of water which makes the land so unfruitful, while it is only fair to say that it is also on account of the smallness of the population, for the country only has the twentieth part of what it could readily support. Surprise is felt in remembering the impressions given of Persia by the ancient authors, especially Arrian and Quintus-Curtius, to read whom, one might imagine from their accounts of the luxury, the sensuousness, and the wealth of Persia, that the country was made of gold, and the commodities of life to be found in abundance, and at the lowest possible price; but the reverse is the case. However, Persia must at one time have been as rich and prosperous as the ancient authors have reported, as even the Holy Scriptures confirm the fact. How are these contradictory assertions to be reconciled? I think I can do so without difficulty, in relating the two causes which I discovered for so strange a change. The first arises from the differences in religion; and the second from the same cause affecting the government. The religion of the ancient Persians, who were fire-worshippers, required them to cultivate the soil; for, according to their precepts, it was a pious and meritorious action to plant a tree, to clear the land, and to make something grow where it never grew before. On the other hand, Mahometan philosophy taught those who practised it to enjoy the good things of this world while it was possible, without any regard to the broad road over which all would one day pass. The government of the ancient Persians also was more just and equitable. The rights of property and other possessions were regarded as sacred; but at the present day the government is despotic and arbitrary.

"What, however, convinces me that what I have read of the Persia of ancient times is true, and that it was then incomparably more populous and prosperous than it is at present, is what we have seen to happen during the six-and-twenty years commencing from the close of the reign of Shah Abbas the Great.

"Shah Abbas was a just king, whose efforts tended solely towards making his kingdom flourishing and his people happy. He found his empire devastated and in the hands of usurpers; and for the most part poverty-stricken and in confusion; but it would hardly be believed what his good government effected on all sides. For proof of what I say, he brought into his capital a colony of Armenians, an energetic and industrious people, who had nothing in the world when they arrived, but who, after thirty years, became so rich and powerful that there were more than sixty merchants who averaged each from a hundred thousand to two millions of écus in merchandise and money. As soon as this great and good king ceased to live, Persia ceased to prosper.

"During the two following reigns (Sefi I. and Abbas II.) the people began to pass into India; and in the reign of Soliman II., who succeeded to the throne in 1666, the richness and prosperity of the country diminished to a great degree. I first came to Persia in 1665, in the time of Abbas II., and I visited it for the last time in 1677, when his son Soliman II. reigned. The wealth of the country appeared to me to have been reduced by half during these twelve years. Even the coinage was affected. Money was scarce, and silver hardly to be seen. The beggars importuned those better off on all sides, in order to make a living. The inhabitants, to secure themselves from the oppression of the grandees, became excessively tricky and deceitful, and sharp practices in business were universally practised.

"There are only too many examples all over the world of the fact that the prosperity of a country, and the fertility of the soil, depend upon a good and just government, and a strict observance of the laws. If Persia were inhabited by the Turks, who are even more indolent and careless about the demands of life than the Persians, and very rigorous in their government, the country would be worse off still. On the other hand, if Persia were in the hands of the Armenians, or even of the so-called 'fire-worshippers,' one would soon see again the return of her ancient splendour."

The "Notice Chronologique de la Perse" appended to Chardin's work by the editor M. Langlès, while doing justice to his great qualities, paints Shah Abbas as a bloodthirsty tyrant, which his

Plate XVII

PLATE XVII

ORIENTAL RUG

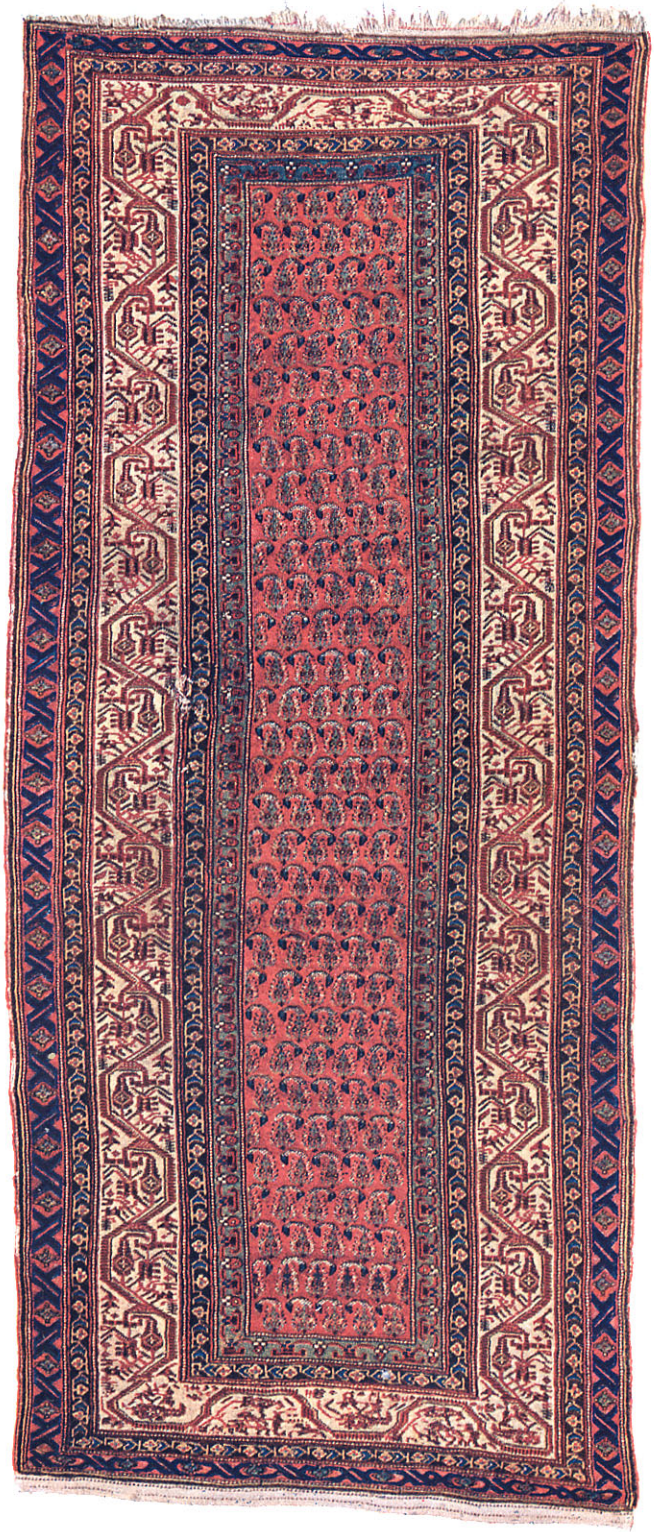
Size 7–10 × 3–3

WARP—16 knots to the inch

WEFT—12 knots to the inch

192 KNOTS TO THE SQUARE INCH

(See Analysis)



conduct towards his three sons, two of whom he blinded, while the other he allowed to be killed under circumstances already related, certainly in a measure justifies. We must remember, when considering acts which in European countries damn the finest career (witness the execution of the Duc d'Enghien by Napoleon's orders, or sanction), the dangers attendant in Eastern countries upon conflicting factions, to whom a scion of a ruling line is always a potent puppet, and the suspicion with which even a father will view the too great popularity of his son. These incentives to rigour, and the imperative incitement to self-preservation, rule to a much greater degree in Oriental nations than in Western, although our own records are not quite free from blots of the same kind. M. Langlès concludes his sketch of Shah Abbas by recording his remorse, and his desire to make what amends he could to the son of the murdered prince; but death refused him this satisfaction.

Sir John Malcolm, while palliating as far as possible the crimes with which Shah Abbas stained his career, urges that "the perpetration of such crimes as he committed is too often the dreadful obligation of that absolute power to which he was born; and it is, therefore, the character of the government, more than that of the despot, which merits our abhorrence." Directly after this sentence an eulogium follows which, considering the times in which he lived, should avail much with those inclined to pass an adverse verdict, and even have weight with the recording angel: "There have been few sovereigns in the universe who have done more substantial good to their country than Abbas the Great. He established an internal tranquillity throughout Persia, that had been unknown for centuries. He put an end to the annual ravages of the Usbegs, and confined these plunderers to their own dominions. He completely expelled the Turks from his native territories, of which they held some of the finest provinces when he ascended the throne. Justice was in general administered according to the laws of religion; and the King seldom interfered, except to support the law, or to punish those who thought themselves above it. Though possessed of great means and distinguished as a military leader, he deemed the improvement of his own wide possessions a nobler object than the pursuit of conquest: he attended to the cultivation and commerce of Persia beyond all former monarchs, and his plans for effecting his objects were almost all of a nature that showed the greatness of his mind. The bridges, caravanseries, and other useful public buildings, that he erected, were without number. The impression which his noble munificence made upon the minds of his subjects has descended

to their children. The modern traveller, who inquires the name of the founder of any ancient building in Persia, receives the ready answer, 'Shah Abbas the Great'; which is given not from an exact knowledge that he was the founder, but from the habit of considering him as the author of all improvement." Sir John Malcolm concludes his summary of the character and achievements of this great prince with words which would form an epitaph which any sovereign might well wish to have. He writes of Shah Abbas as "a monarch who restored Persia to a condition of greatness beyond what that country had known for ages; who was brave, generous, and wise; and who, during a reign protracted to near half a century, seemed to have no object but that of rendering his kingdom flourishing and his subjects happy."

Lord Curzon in the "Introductory" to his great work, *Persia and the Persian Question*, after recording Persia's claims to literary renown, and enumerating the names (amongst others) of Firdausi, Omar Khayyám, and Hafiz, writes of the name of Shah Abbas the Great as "to this hour associated with anything that is durable or grandiose during the last three centuries of Persian history." In his second volume he places Shah Abbas, very happily, as "the contemporary of Elizabeth in England, of Henry IV. in France, of Gustavus Adolphus in Sweden, and of Akbar in India"; an association which will be of the greatest service in doing justice to a monarch whose life in all its varied aspects, and from my point of view, particularly in its artistic aspect, deserves more specialized consideration than it has yet received.

I hesitate to make further use of Lord Curzon's fascinating pages; but, having failed to find any other sufficiently detailed record of the death of Shah Abbas, I venture once more to quote from him: "Twenty-six miles from Ashraf on the north-west, at a distance of about three miles from the Caspian and on the banks of the Tejen river, are situated the ruins of another city and palace of Abbas, known as Ferahabad. In this palace died Shah Abbas in January 1628, in the forty-third year of his reign and the seventy-first of his age."

Enough has been quoted from historians to show that Shah Abbas the Great was no ordinary monarch, but fully entitled to rule over the kingdom which a little more than a thousand years earlier, in the year 546 B.C., Cyrus the Great had made his own. An interesting article on Cyrus the Great in *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* concludes as follows:—"Cyrus takes a high rank among Asiatic conquerors; he was a wise and considerate ruler, whose aim was to

soften by his clemency the despotism which he was continually extending by the sword. But he did little to consolidate the empire which he founded, contenting himself with a declaration of allegiance, and leaving the government nearly everywhere in the hands of native rulers." The same words might have been used with regard to Alexander the Great, and, as has been seen, have been applied to Shah Abbas by Chardin, although his editor, M. Langlès, by no means endorses all he says.

A king is known by his character and actions; and his title to rank with the Great by the extent to which his influence and personality were impressed upon his inherited and conquered dominions, and by the degree to which the course of the world's history was affected thereby; this can be left to those who have made a study of the subject, and can write with weight and impartiality. Sufficient has been said of the part played by Shah Abbas during his long reign to invest his mere physical appearance with the interest attaching particularly to those who have proved themselves to be nearer to the gods than average humanity. The portrait already referred to is included with others in Sir John Malcolm's fine volumes. Having appropriated the likeness, I cannot do better than add the description.

"Shah Abbas had a fine face, of which the most remarkable features were a high nose and a keen and piercing eye. He wore no beard, but had large mustachios, or whiskers. In his stature he was rather low, but must have been uncommonly robust and active, as he was throughout life celebrated for the power of bearing fatigue, and to the last indulged in his favourite amusement of hunting."

This last item recalls the love of horses common to the Persian monarchs, to which Chardin and Malcolm make repeated reference. As a reintroduction to the subject of Carpets, I will quote a description by Chardin of the audience given on September 16, 1671, to the Envoy of the French East India Company. The magnificent equipment of the horses which figured prominently on this occasion enables us to understand the richness of design and colouring which characterizes the finest examples of both Persian and Indian sumptuary carpets; in my judgment the prominence given to the horse quite accounts for the frequency of the horseshoe forms, which, connected with the cloud forms, seems to betoken an estimation which fell little short of idolatry.

"On the 16th (September 1671), at eight o'clock in the morning, the royal square was being watered from end to end, and set off as follows. By the side of the main entrance of the royal

palace, at twenty paces' distance, there were twelve picked horses from the King's stables, six on each side, equipped with the most superb and magnificent harness the world has ever seen. Four sets were studded with emeralds; two with rubies; two with coloured stones mingled with diamonds; two others with enamelled gold; and two of burnished gold. Supplementing this, the saddles, before and behind the pommels and the stirrups, were thickly set with stones matching the harness. These horses had rich saddle-cloths, hanging very low down, some embroidered with gold and pearls, and others of gold brocade, very thick and costly, trimmed with tassels and knots of gold, sprinkled with pearls. The horses were picketed by means of thick plaited ropes of silk and gold, attached to the head and heels, and fastened to the ground with pegs of solid gold. These pegs were about 15 inches long, and proportionately thick, and had large rings at the top, through which the hobbles were passed. Nothing could be imagined more splendid and regal than this equipment, to which must be added twelve horse-cloths, made of velvet edged with gold, which completely covered the horses while being paraded before the balustrade which ranged along the front of the royal palace. No finer spectacle could have been witnessed, whether as regards the richness of the materials or the beauty of the workmanship."

It must be remembered that this display of horses formed only a small, and indeed almost insignificant, feature of the audience, which was barbaric in its arrogant ostentation. It is conceded that after the death of Shah Abbas the Great the style of design and colouring of the finer grades of Persian carpets began to show an over-elaboration and "flamboyancy" of effect which clearly mark the line between the period when the man of genius probably for a time at least exercised personal control and supervision, and the time when, the artists and weavers being left more to themselves, the Oriental love of fantastic splendour crept in, until the exquisite refinement and balance of effect of the older examples ceased to have any influence and the art went from bad to worse. Much the same thing was seen with the Gobelins tapestries, which under Le Brun, Coypel, De Troy, Van Loo, and other classical painters, and also from the models of the Italian masters, preserved a high level of merit; but when, under the influence of Oudry and Boucher, attempts were made to rival the minute variations of shade possible in a painting, but mere *tours de force* in any textiles of the nature of tapestry or carpets, technique took the place of taste, with an inevitable loss of repose and dignity of effect.

It will be remembered that Chardin speaks of the decadence which followed the death of Shah Abbas the Great. The same effect is noticeable wherever a man of pre-eminent ability ceases to exercise personal influence, which, even if not directly turned to any particular sphere of effort, is nevertheless sympathetically felt, and exercises a magnetism which draws the best out of those immediately surrounding him, and even affects those farthest removed.

It would be interesting to know what Chardin would have had to say to the wonderful success attending the rule of Nadir Shah in Persia and of Napoleon in his own country. Of the former Malcolm writes: "Nâdir Kooli (Kooli means 'slave'; Nâdir, 'wonderful'; and the latter term is used as an epithet to describe the Almighty. His name, therefore, signified 'the slave of the wonderful, or of God') himself never boasted of a proud genealogy; and even his flattering historian (Meerza Mehdy), though he informs us that the father of his hero was a man of some consequence in his tribe, reveals the truth by a metaphorical apology for low birth, in which he states that the diamond has its value from its own lustre, not from that of the rock where it grew." Napoleon's career is comparatively recent; but I may be permitted to quote from *The English Historical Review* of July 7, 1887, Lord Acton's sentences concluding reviews of *A Short History of Napoleon the First* (Seeley) and *The First Napoleon: a Sketch, Political and Military* (Ropes): "There is that which bars the vindication of his career. It is condemned by the best authority, by the final judgment of Napoleon himself. And this is not the only lesson to be learnt from the later, unofficial, intimate and even trivial records which the two biographers incline to disregard. They might have enabled one of the two to admire without defending, and the other to censure without disparaging, and would have supplied both with a thousand telling speeches and a thousand striking traits for a closer and more impressive likeness of the most splendid genius that has appeared on earth." This suggests the enormous influence in all directions that such a man can exercise. It is curious that, as Shah Abbas undoubtedly inspired the artistic talent and skill which raised the carpet during his reign to heights which can only be appreciated by those who have seen them, so in his turn Napoleon, by his encouragement of Jacquard, secured for his country the earliest advantages arising from the use of a machine which was capable of artistically producing thousands where the old hand-process of some three centuries earlier could produce only hundreds of carpets. This example well illustrates the difference between the two periods, both admirable, if not inimitable, in their ways.

Oriental Carpets

It may not be unprofitable, before leaving the finest period of the carpet, and approaching that closing about the year 1800, when the really fine Persian work ended, to review the position in which the carpet stood in the remote past and within more recent times. Professor Mahaffy, in his *Greek Life and Thought*, mentions that Alexander the Great was struck with astonishment at the appointments of Darius's tents, which he captured after the battle of Issus, and writes: "When he went into the bath prepared for his opponent, and found all the vessels of pure gold, and smelt the whole chamber full of frankincense and myrrh, and then passed out into a lofty dining tent with splendid hangings, and with the appointments of an oriental feast, he exclaimed to his staff: 'Well, this *is* something like royalty.' Accordingly, there was no part of Persian dignity which he did not adopt."

Now it may be said that there is nothing in the above passage to suggest that Carpets formed a portion of the gorgeous effect which astonished Alexander, who was accustomed to the luxury of the court of his father, King Philip of Macedon; and whose tutor Aristotle is sure to have made him familiar with all that Athens had to offer in the way of art of the highest type. Is it, however, reasonable to suppose that Persian art, which could fashion vessels of solid gold and *splendid hangings*, would stop short at a textile which there are many reasons for supposing preceded that of any other art? Is it also likely that, with such lavishness in hangings and other appointments of his tents, King Darius would not have, on the other hand, paid particular attention to the floor, which would, above all, require that luxurious tread which alone would place the body in unison with the spirit? The probability is that the sun-dried ground was richly carpeted, and that even the splendid hangings were nothing more nor less than carpets.

This suggestion may have the appearance of being very "special pleading"; but there is some justification in the following excerpt from the *Diary* of Samuel Pepys, under date 1660: "So to Mr. Crew's, where I blotted a new carpet that was hired, but got it out again with fair water." A footnote to this passage states: "*It was customary to use carpets as table-cloths.*" The italics are my own.

I have myself seen a fine sixteenth-century Persian carpet used as a covering for a billiard-table, and the fineness of the texture, and the natural folds in which it lay, testified to the character of the fabric; while the position of the carpet, amidst the magnificent surroundings of choice sculpture, in a splendidly-proportioned hall, was appropriate not only on account of the handsomeness of its appearance, and the

fine contrast its colour afforded to the objects around it, but also because, while fully displaying its best qualities, the fabric was removed from the wear of boots, which, it will be remembered, the Persians would not, even for considerations of policy, tolerate.

There is a curious absence of reference to carpets in the works I have had occasion to consult, and as a rule they are of the briefest and most unsatisfactory description. The 133-page Index to Chardin's ten volumes on Persia contains no reference whatever to carpets, although throughout the volumes there are remarks as to the floors being covered with rich carpets of silk and gold, and other small details which I shall have occasion to refer to in this division. Malcolm, in the 76-page Index to his 1282 pages on Persia, not only does not include "Carpets," but under the heading "Manufactures" does not even mention the carpet. Curzon in his Index has the entry, "Carpets, Persian, i. 167, 558 ; ii. 523-4." In the first-named page, in speaking of Meshed, he writes: "Good carpets are procurable, particularly those of genuinely Oriental pattern, close texture, and imperishable vegetable dyes, that hail from Kain and Birjand. The Kurdish carpets are also original, but less artistic." The second reference is as follows: "The Kurdish carpets, which figure so largely in the bazaars of Constantinople and other Oriental cities, come largely from this neighbourhood"—that is, the province of Kermanshah. Lord Curzon's remarks upon carpets in his second volume are so important that all interested in the industry should read them in full ; I have ventured to extract the only reference as to design and colouring, to form a heading to this division, to which I refer readers. Even here, however, in 1273 pages, Lord Curzon makes no detailed reference whatever to the surpassing merits of design and colouring in the ancient Persian carpets, which he shows himself so well qualified to expatiate upon, as he probably would have done if the mere export of £150,000 per annum had been of an amount sufficiently large to make carpets a vital source of revenue to Persia, and consequently of some political importance.

In many writings upon Eastern history there may be interesting references to carpets ; but the descriptions in some cases are so loose and vague as to prevent their having any value. Sir Richard Burton, in the "Tale of Prince Ahmad and the Fairy Peri-Banu," relating Prince Husayn's visit to the land of Bishangarh and the bazaar of the city of the same name, speaks of the "stores wherein tapestries and thousands of foot-carpets lay for sale." On the next page he tells of the broker offering Prince Husayn "a carpet some four yards square, and crying, 'This be for sale ; who giveth me its

worth ; to wit, thirty thousand gold pieces ? ' " The Prince, recognizing in this wonderful carpet his title to the hand of the Princess Nur al-Nihár (Light of the Day), said to himself, " Naught so wonder-rare as this rug can I carry back to the Sultan my sire to my gift, or any that afford him higher satisfaction and delight." The tale proceeds : " Wherefore the Prince, with intent to buy the Flying Carpet," turned to the broker and questioned him as to its properties, to which the broker answered, " Sit now upon this square of tapestry, and at thy mere wish and will it shall transport us to the caravanserai wherein thou abidest." " Accordingly, the man spread out the carpet upon the ground behind his shop and seated the Prince thereupon, he sitting by his side."

It will be seen from these extracts that Sir Richard Burton, in the space of four pages, speaks of " foot-carpets," " carpet," " rug," and " square of tapestry " ; the three latter all meaning one and the same thing. The " foot-carpets " probably meant the small mats for doorways and odd places ; but it will readily be seen how confusing are these several descriptions, all of which under ordinary circumstances would be indexed under their respective headings.

A leading article in *The Daily Telegraph*, August 1893, referring to the Ardebil Carpet, throws such interesting light upon the introduction of carpet-making into this country, and the Oriental custom of using carpets for hangings, that I will make an excerpt of the concluding portion. " It is curious to learn that, at the very period when MAKSOUD of Kashan, the slave of the ' Holy Place,' was completing the Ardabil carpet the manufacture of these commodities was first introduced into England by one WILLIAM SHELDON, under the direct patronage of Henry VIII. The manufacture, nevertheless, was for many years exclusively confined to its use as tapestry or arras for the decoration of walls. The apartments of the palaces of Queen ELIZABETH were hung with the costliest products of the Flemish looms, but her Majesty had certainly no carpets on the floors of her presence chambers or her banqueting halls. The floors were simply laid with rushes, which from time to time were renewed, but careless servants very often forgot to remove the undermost layer of rushes. At dinner-time the guests frequently threw bones of meat and poultry on the floor to regale the dogs therewith, and the natural and disgusting consequence was that these rush-laid floors became eventually heaps of filth and breeders of disease. The English, it must be sorrowfully confessed, were, until the coming in of Dutch WILLIAM III., and that notable housekeeper Queen MARY II., an extremely dirty people in their domestic arrangements ; and it is