

vine, as we call it, often bears bunches of grapes of two cubits in size, the seeds being very numerous and very large; probably the plant grows in its native soil with great luxuriance." The kings of Persia were not content, however, with wines of native growth; but when Syria was united with their empire, the Chalybonian wine of Syria became their privileged beverage.¹ This wine, according to Posidonius, was made in Damascus, Syria, from vines planted there by the Persians.²

Herodotus³ informs us that the Persians are very fond of wine and consume it in large quantities. It is also their custom to discuss important affairs in a state of intoxication; and on the following morning their decisions are put before them by the master of the house where the deliberations have been held. If they approve of the decision in the state of sobriety, they act accordingly; if not, they set it aside. When sober at their first deliberation, they always reconsider the matter under the influence of wine. In a similar manner, Strabo⁴ says that their consultations on the most important affairs are carried on while drinking, and that they consider the resolutions made at that time more to be depended upon than those made when sober. In the Šāhnāmeḥ, the Persian epic, deliberations are held during drinking-bouts, but decision is postponed till the following day.⁵ Cambyses was ill reputed for his propensity for wine.⁶ Deploring the degeneracy of the Persians, Xenophon⁷ remarks, "They continue eating and drinking till those who sit up latest go to retire. It was a rule among them not to bring large cups to their banquets, evidently thinking that abstinence from drinking to excess would less impair their bodies and minds. The custom of not bringing such vessels still continues; but they drink so excessively that instead of bringing in, they are themselves carried out, as they are no longer able to walk upright." Procopius, the great Byzantine historian of the sixth century,⁸ says that of all men the Massagetæ (an Iranian tribe) are the most intemperate drinkers. So

¹ Strabo, XV. III, 22.

² Athenæus, I.

³ I, 133.

⁴ XV. III, 20.

⁵ F. SPIEGEL, *Eranische Altertumskunde*, Vol. III, p. 672. Cf. what JOHN FRYER (*New Account of East India and Persia being Nine Years' Travels 1672-81*, Vol. II, p. 210, ed. of Hakluyt Society) says of the modern Persians: "It is incredible to see what quantities they drink at a merry-meeting, and how unconcerned the next day they appear, and brisk about their business, and will quaff you thus a whole week together."

⁶ Herodotus, III, 34.

⁷ *Cyropædia*, VIII. VIII, 9-10.

⁸ *Historikon*, III. XII, 8.