

who tried to extract as large a profit for themselves as they could. There was no order and control at all according to European ideas, acts of the greatest injustice were committed, and those in power were amenable to bribes from wealthy merchants. Under these circumstances the European commercial houses had great difficulties to contend with, and but for the help of their consuls would have been quite at sea. After the Belgians had introduced order and method into the general confusion, the revenue of the Crown was increased at the cost of individual blood-suckers, and it can therefore be easily understood that the Belgians met with enmity and opposition in all directions. To them were also entrusted the postal system and certain financial business of the kingdom; for instance, the payment of salaries and pensions, which to a large extent were swallowed up by useless parasites. Among these are included the officials of Shah Nasr-ed-din's court; and this is not an end of the matter, for pensions are heritable by child and grandchild, so that the State has no prospect of relief from its burden. In Persia taxes are not payable *per capita*, but by villages; and every village is owned by some high lord, who pays a certain assessment for the whole village, and to collect this and have a considerable surplus for his own pocket he squeezes his dependants.

The taxation returns, therefore, afford no basis for a calculation of the number of the population, which, however, is supposed to amount to 9,000,000. As Persia's national revenues are levied, the country will, before long, be brought face to face with a fatal crisis, and then will be unavoidably thrown open to European speculation and exploitation.

There is little or nothing to be seen in Tabriz but the bazaars and Gök-meshid, or the Blue Mosque, with its stately façade of blue faience, with texts from the Koran in white. Two gates in the town are memorials from 1882, when the Kurds, under Sheik Obeid Ullah, attacked Tabriz and conquered Urmia. The Governor then in command applied for 50,000 tuman to meet the necessities of the case, but kept four-fifths of the sum for his own use,