

PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSACTIONS.

Novemb. 20. 1676; for the Months of October and November.

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*Observations concerning some of the most considerable parts of
ASIA.*

FOR these Observations, as they are to follow, we are obliged to that great Traveller, Monsieur *Jean Baptiste Tavernier*, who having made six Voyages into *Turky*, *Persia*, and the *East-Indies*, (five of which were by him performed by Land,) hath lately published the same in two Volumes in *quarto* at *Paris*. The first whereof, (to be only taken notice of in this Tract) contains
1. The different Roads passable from *Paris* to *Ispahan*, through the *Northern* Countries of *Turky*: 2. The several Roads from the same City of *Paris* to *Ispahan* through the *Southern* Provinces of *Turky*, and through the *Desert*: 3. The Roads passable into *Turky* and *Persia* through the *Northern* Provinces of *Europe*; where occurs a particular Relation of divers Countries neighbouring to the *Black* and *Caspian* Seas: 4. A Description of *Persia*, its Inhabitants, Productions, Government, Customs, Arts, Manufactures and Commodities.

Some of the Observations themselves:

1. That *Ispahan* is about the bigness of *Paris*, but that *Paris* hath ten times more people than *Ispahan*.

2. That the Air of *Gomron* from the month of *April* to that of *November* is so unhealthy, that it breeds a very malign Fe-

ver, which, if it kill not, is followed with the Jaunders for the remainder of the Patients life: And, that after the end of *March* the wind changeth, blowing for the most part from the West or Southwest, and being sometimes so hot and suffocating, that it takes away respiration: whence the *Arabians* give it the name *El-Samiel*, that is, a *Wind of poyson*. And, which seems very strange, if one take an arm or a leg, or any other part of the body, that hath been newly stifled by that suffocating wind, it remains in the hand like Greale, and as if the body had been dead a month before. The same kind of Air is, according to this Author, about *Mouffet* and *Bagdat*; concerning which he relates, that, travelling once upon the road from *Ispahan* to *Bagdat*, he had been stifled, if he had not been in the company of some *Arabian* Merchants: But these, as soon as they perceived this wind coming, presently made him light from his Beast, and throw himself, together with them, flat upon the ground on their bellies, covering themselves well with their Cloaks. In which condition having remained for half an hour, and on much ado saved themselves from being suffocated, they rose up, finding their Horses muck-wet all over, and so faint, that they were not able to carry their Riders. But, when men are upon some River, though the same wind do blow in the same season, it doth no harm, though people were stark naked. He saith further, that sometimes the blast is so hot, that it burns as if Lightning had passed.

3. That all the precious Oyls, Confits and Unguents, that our Author had been presented with by the Great Duke of *Toscany*, did, when he came into those hot Countries, boyl from the heat reigning there, and even break the bottles that contained them: And particularly, that of 24 boxes of Treacle, that were fast screwed, not one escaped whose bottom was not burst out.

4. That in *Persia* few Children have the small Pox, but, instead thereof, most of them are troubled with the Scurff on the head, till they are 10 or 12 years old.

5. That the *Persians* know nothing of the Gout or Stone; only the *Armenians*, who drink more wine than water, are troubled with the latter of those two diseases.

6. That the *Persians*, especially the better sort of them, are far less Subject to sickness, than the *Europeans*, because they fail not in Spring to take inwardly a decoction of the wood of *Ghina*,
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which is a Root coming out of *China*, and by our Author said to be a kind of Rhubarb, an excellent Preservative of health. This root they let boyl for several days in water, according to the dose prescribed by the Physician. *E.g.* the first day they put one ounce of it in three pints of water, increasing the dose of the Root every day unto the twelfth, and thence to the twentieth day. This drink is said to be very agreeable to the taste, and of the colour of our pale wines. Whilst they are drinking this decoction, they must eat nothing but a little bread, and a roasted Chicken without Salt; and after they have done drinking, they must forbear eating Fruit a whole month. When this Drink is taken, the person that hath taken it must be very well covered to sweat; of which sweat, which is copious, his linnen becomes all yellow, and even all the walls of his Chamber. This Root easily spoils, and whilst 'tis good, the Author saith a pound of it costs an hundred Crowns.

7. That all the Women of the Turkish *Seraglio* are frequently chawing Mastic, as that which takes away the impurity of the Teeth, and keeps them clean and white.

8. That when the *Nogais*, a sort of Tartars, have received any wound, they use no other oyntment but some boiled flesh, applied hot to the wound. And when the wound is deep, they thrust in a piece of fat as hot as the Patient can endure it: And for this purpose they count the flesh and fat of Horses best of all.

9. Those that are troubled with the Colick, are order'd to eat Horse-flesh; which they say cures many.

10. That 'tis very true, that near the Isle of *Baharen* they fetch sweet water from the bottom of the Sea; and that about Cape *Comorin* and along the coast of *Coromandel* and *Malabar*, where no sweet water is, the people come with their vessels at the time of Low-water as near to the Sea as they can, digging about two foot in the Sand, where they meet with sweet water good to drink.

11. That Camels bear their young ones Eleven months, and can be without drink many days, even to nine, and that the bigger sort of them are able to carry a 1000, yea 1500 pound weight. That their Milk is a soveraign remedy against the Dropsie.

12. That the Cows about *Balsara*, having no grafs to feed on,
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are fed with the heads of Fishes and Dates boiled together.

13. That the Palm-trees in the Country of *Balsara* are thus propagated. They dig a hole in the earth, in which they range 250 or 300 Date-kernels, one a top of another pyramid-wise, with the point upwards, so as that the pyramid ends in one kernel: Which being covered with earth, the Tree grows up.

14. That *Craw-fishes* do creep up on high of the white Mulberry-trees about Sun-set, eating the fruit; and at break of day come down again into the Rivers, near which those Trees grow.

15. That Porcupins kill Lions, by darting into their body their quills.

16. That all along the Gulph of *Persia* there are vast numbers of a kind of Locusts, which are edible, and of which our Traveller affirms that he opened one that was six inches long, and found 17 little ones in its belly, all of them stirring.

17. That there is a *Talc* in *Persia*, which being beaten into pieces as small as Lentils, and tinged with what colour they please, they mix it with Chalk well fleaked, and rubbing their walls with it, make them shine Jaspis-like, which is very agreeable to the eye.

18. That on the west of the *Caspian* Sea, a little above *Chimaki*, there is a Rock advancing out upon the Shoar, whence drops an Oyl, of which the *Persians* make a Vernis, by infusing in it some drops of Mastic. This oyl whilst issuing out of the rock is as clear as water; but afterwards thickens by little and little.

19. That the best Glue in the world is made of *Sturgeon*, it being so strong, that you shall sooner tear the matter thus glued any where else than in the place where 'tis glued. The manner of the Turks in preparing it is this: When they have taken out the garbage of the fish, they meet with a certain skin that covers the flesh; and this they pull away from about the head to the end of the belly: This skin is very glutinous, and of the thickness of two paper leaves: This they roll up to the thickness of a mans arm, and so put it to dry in the Sun: And when they will use it, they beat it with an hammer, and being well beaten they break it into little bits, which they put and keep in water for about half an hour in a little pot, and so set it over a gentle fire, stirring it continually till it become liquid, and taking heed of keeping it from boyling, which would utterly spoil it.

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20. That the *Persians* are exquisitely skilful in damasking with Vitriol ; but that the nature of the Steel by them used contributes very much to the good workmanship, they not being able to do so well with their own or our Steel. This Steel they fetch from *Golconda*, which is the only kind known that can be well damaskined. And 'tis very differing from ours : For, when 'tis put to the fire to temper it, they very carefully give it only a little redness like that of a cherry-colour, and instead of quenching it in water, as we do, they only wrap it in a wet piece of Linnen cloth ; for, if they should give it the same degree of heat that we do to ours, it would grow as brittle as glass.

21. That the *Persian* Countrymen about *Ispahan*, coming every morning to fetch away all manner of the ordures of the Town to dung their land withal, take up much rather the excrements of the *Armenians*, *Jews* and *Franks*, because they drink wine, than those of the *Persians*, that generally drink none.

22. That in *Persia* they make the running of Foot-men a Trade, by breeding them up to it, and with solemnity receiving him for Master of the Trade who performs the Master-piece of running 36 common Leagues in a day, from Sun-rising to Sun-setting.

So far the Observations of the first Volume; those of the second we shall reserve for the next opportunity.

A Description of Mr. John Coniers, Apothecary and Citizen, his Hygroscope, in two several Contrivances ; together with some Observations made thereon : Communicated in a Letter to the Publisher, Octob. 23. 1676.

S I R,

I Thought it necessary to acquaint you, that in my diversions, among many (at least 40) several Trials, made by me for the readiest and best discovery of the Change or Temperature of the Air and Weather, I have found out, that by applying a Hand and a Circular Index or a Quarter-circle to a Pannel made of duly seasoned Deal-wood, and that divided or slit in two parts playing loose in a groove, and only fastned to the frame at each end (as you may see by the figures, accompanying these lines,) you have one of the best, if not the very best contrivance for that purpose. I have made two several Contrivances of it; the one I invented and contrived about five or six years since; here explained in the first Figure, together with some Observa-

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