



KIRMAN SHAH, OR ROYAL PERSIAN

This is a valuable antique, but the design is excellently well imitated in some of the better modern rugs. The section shown is a large quarter of the rug.

FINE RUGS

By DINAH STURGIS

THE appreciation of fine rugs has grown in this country from practically nothing to a craze within the past few years. This is also true, only in less degree, of Western Europe; there the appreciation began earlier, but it has not attained the momentum of popularity that rug-collecting has acquired here, where money is more quickly obtained and spent with more freedom.

Since rugs have become so fashionable as a furnishing, one who is not fairly well informed as to their varieties and relative values finds himself at a disadvantage. To be able to say of a rug after glancing at it, "What a handsome Sarak!"—or Khorasan, or whatever it may be,—seems to give the speaker that species of moral

support which Emerson says good clothes supply. At any rate, the possessor of even this comparatively small amount of information is envied by the uninitiated. A good many people, too, are "making money" as amateur rug-collectors, picking up a fine rug here and another there at a bargain, and later on disposing of them singly or together at a profit. It probably is not worth while learning anything for the sake of being able to air that learning in public, and many people are devoid of the trading instinct, but it is well to be able to buy rugs intelligently for one's own use, and the pleasure to be derived from studying rugs for their own sake is compensation for any effort that the study requires. At present it does



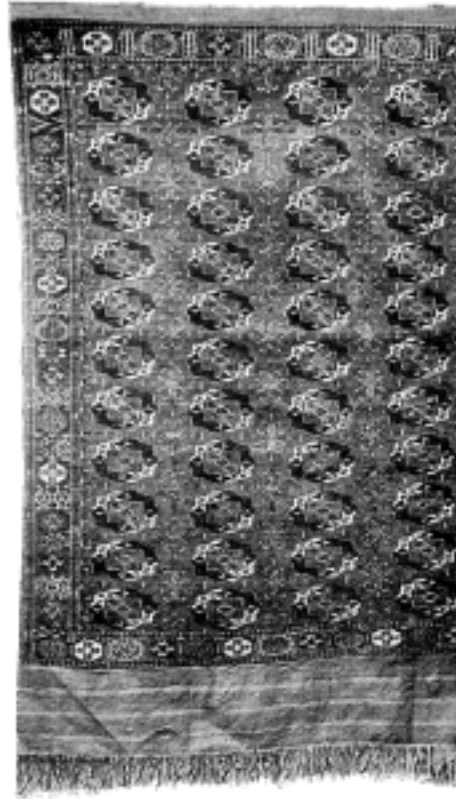
A MODERN SERABEND
In Antique Pattern, the so-called "Palm Leaf."
One quarter of the rug is shown.

require considerable effort, for very little has been written on the subject of rugs, and a good deal of that little is such a mixture of truth, falsehood, and fiction it is misleading. From the history of rugs, much of which has not yet been written, although all of it has been pictured in the rugs themselves, the following notes are sanctioned by rug connoisseurs.

The best rug-makers in the world have always been, and are to-day, the people of the East, and the handsomest and most valuable rugs are the products of the Orient. All Oriental rugs belong to one or the other of two general classes,—antiques or moderns,—those made generations ago for private use, and those made to-day or of late years for the rug market. Oriental rugs come mainly from Persia, Turkey, Central Asia, and India. The rugs in each of these divisions are classified into many subdivisions according to the name of the province or town where the rugs are made, no two places making exactly the same style of rug. Beside the subdivisions just named there are a few distinct types of rugs that are made in

isolated centers. The greater number of Oriental rugs are all wool; some are all silk; some are all cotton; some are mixtures.

Among the best-known Persian rugs are the Kirman Shahs, the Shirvans, Khorasans, Kirmans, Sehnas, Serabends, and Saraks. Leading varieties of Turkish rugs are the Sivas, the Kurdistans, and the modern Ghiordes. The Central Asia rugs oftenest seen are the Daghestans, the Bokharas, and the Khiva Bokharas. Erivans are from Transcaucasus in the Russian Empire. Oushaks, Pergamons, Azars, and numerous other Turkish varieties divide honors with the Kasaks, or Cossacks, the Carabaghs and Kurdish Moussouls of Central Asia, while from India come the soft Cashmere rugs, including the Agras, Kandaharas, Allahabads, Lahores, and others. Rug dealers dis-



MODERN BOKHARA

Note the selva of warr at the bottom. This is duplicated at the opposite end, but is folded out of sight in the photograph. The full length of the rug and two-thirds of the width are shown.

tinguish between the Oriental carpet, which is a large rug, and the rug proper, which we call the medium or small rug. There are not only a great many distinct varieties of rugs, but to add to the confusion one rug often has different commercial names. Thus Daghestans are sometimes called Turkish rugs and sometimes Persian, but they are neither. Daghestan is a province of the Russian Empire, but the rugs made there are sometimes carried across the Black Sea, and upon reaching Turkish ports are called Turkish rugs, and sometimes they are exported via Persia, and take the name of that country. By one dealer a rug is sometimes called a Herat, and by another the same rug is called a Feraghan. Herat is the gate to Feraghan, a province bordering on Afghanistan, but its own particular rugs excel the rest of the Feraghan group and should not be confounded with them. It is mystifying to the amateur rug-collector to hear one dealer claim that all Ghiordes rugs are antiques and another that all Ghiordes rugs are modern, until one learns that once upon a time rugs of exceptional beauty were produced at Ghiordes, that the place was destroyed by fire nearly a century ago, and that now a new rug-making center in Turkey turns out all the modern rugs known as Ghiordes or Yeordes. An antique Ghiordes is always a rug, and a valuable acquisition. The modern Ghiordes is a carpet, with a cotton warp, short, heavy pile, distinct figures, striking coloring, and especially suited to libraries or dining-rooms where the furniture is massive.

It is not easy even for dealers always to distinguish between different classes of rugs. The modern rug-makers copy each other's designs so often that the design itself is not always a criterion. All dealers, too, are not scrupulously honest, and modern rugs in imitation of antiques are frequently bleached to soften the coloring and hoodwink the unwary into thinking they have an original old rug of exclusive design when it is only a modern rug of



KASAK

The oldest rugs belong to this variety. The photograph shows something over a quarter of the rug in width, but omits a round cornered diamond figure in the exact center, and just above the figures at the top of the illustration.

moderate instead of great value. The coloring of an antique rug softened by generations of time is of permanent beauty; a chemically produced softness is not only an imitation but unreliable. The "washed" rugs are not handled by first-class dealers, however, it is a comfort to know; or if they are, are honestly thus labeled.

The value of a rug is not determined by its place of manufacture, although certain districts are notable for the value of their rug products. It is the warp and woof and knotting of a rug that tell the chief outlines of its story; then the design and coloring are of moment. Oriental rugs are all made by hand. A frame is made of four poles lashed together. Upon this the warp and then the woof are strung, and then the design is produced bit by bit by tying in short lengths of wool or silk. The finer the rug the more knots there are to the square inch. Some rugs show 11,250 knottings per "pick"—a rug measurement that is a square of twenty-seven inches on each side. Daghestan, Herat, and Bokhara rugs show from 144 to 300 knots to the square inch, while some Kir-



SHIRVAN

The photograph shows three of the four figures in the center, and the full width of the center but for a row of small figures between the center medallions and the border, such as are shown on the left.

mans have as many as 600. Persia and Turkey produce many sheep and goats, and it is the wool of these animals, together with silk, that goes into the rugs of these countries. India is not a wool-producing land, and its rugs are mostly of cotton. Silk-knotting is sometimes found with wool warp and wool, but some very valuable rugs with silk warp and silk wool have wool-knotting,—in this case a marvelously fine wool.

It is difficult to fix the value of Oriental rugs offhand. A real antique of beautiful design and coloring is worth practically just what any one who wants it is willing to pay for it. Oriental rugs that are on sale in open market in this country range

in price from five dollars for a small modern Daghestan of indifferent pattern and crude colors to \$13,000 for a Kirman Shah carpet. The prices paid for antiques so worn that they are a mass of darns often exceed those asked for the finest new rugs; the latter are designed for modern usage, while the coveted ancient rug is fitted only for the cabinet of treasures.

Some antique rugs were a hundred years in making, being handed down as work for leisure time from father to son or wife to daughter. The secrets of many of the marvelously beautiful and seemingly everlasting dyes used by the early rug-makers passed away with the weavers' families, while the vast labor that went into famous old rugs was possible only when human labor had no commercial value.

Originally rugs were made not only for floor coverings, but to hang over window-openings and before doorways when glass and doors were unknown, for cushion-coverings, to spread before the fire for honored guests, for prayer-rugs, and for sleeping-mats. The long narrow rugs which we buy for halls and stairs were designed to cover the divans which surround Oriental apartments, and, before divans were raised, for the borders on the floors to the hollow squares about which the Orientals sat to eat. None of the real antiques were made to sell, but always to serve a special purpose in the family or tribe of the weaver. Antique rugs were treasured as heirlooms and formerly were parted with only through necessity. Today a crafty Oriental bridegroom is not above swapping off a fine rug from his wife's dowry for an ugly machine-made floor-covering whose impossible bouquets appeal to his untrained eyes, or for money to buy some of the other Western-World novelties in Eastern-World shops.

Oriental rug designs are generally geometric, arabesque, or floral, but there are exceptions. One of them is the famous "Hunting Carpet," now owned by the Emperor of Austria. This shows a hunting-scene, Persian hunters (in ancient Persian dress) on horseback, riding full tilt after small animals common to Persian hunting-grounds. This rug, which is of carpet size, is of silk warp, silk wool,

and silk knotting, with embroidery of gold and silver thread.

A study of the evolution of designs in Oriental antique rugs discloses the story of migrations of tribes, and in the meeting and mixing of rug patterns once widely separated the tracks of pilgrimages and the paths of raids and wars are revealed.

The ordinary Persian designs in modern rugs are simple, limited principally to one design often repeated. The enormous present demand of European and American markets for Oriental rugs has had an unfavorable effect upon their production, leading in all but the highest grades to poor qualities and slighted preparation of the materials, crude coloring, ugly designs, and hurried workmanship.

There are both nomad and sedentary weavers. Among the latter in modern rug-making centers it is a common sight to see as many as six weavers, sometimes men and sometimes women, perched in crouching posture upon an elevated platform and working upon the same rug under the direction of a supervisor who calls monotonously, "One red, three blue, two white," or similar directions to the knotters.

The most familiar Oriental rug in American markets is doubtless the Bokhara. From its highest Oriental expression to its machine-made imitation in this country, its deep, rich, red ground with the oval arabesque figures, white on one side, and showing a selvage of warp across the ends, is easily recognizable. A modern Bokhara from the Orient in small carpet size may be had at a bargain now and then as low as fifty dollars. The variety of Bokhara known as Khiva Bokhara, when genuine, is an antique; it is finer, softer, more lustrous, and is characterized by a network of blue-black crosses. The Khivas are the work of the Turkoman Christians, who introduced the symbol of their faith into their designs.

The Kirman Shah (sometimes written now Kirmansha), or royal Persian rug, was designed for the use of royalty. It is made in three sections as to design, the middle of one end having a medallion figure upon which the host sat; to the right a raised cushion is indicated for the royal guest; to the left there are places for guests of lower rank. The royal Per-



A CASHMERE RUG OF INDIA MANUFACTURE
WITHOUT NAP

It has long, loose threads upon the under side. Two-thirds the width and a little more than one-half the length are shown.

sian rug always bears inscriptions from the Koran, if made since the Koran came into existence, and usually has balanced crowns in the corners and center of the rug. Kirmans also are of elaborate design, frequently depicting the tree of life, showing that the Darwinian theory was held in Persia before Darwin was born into his English incarnation. This tree spreads above a base guarded by dragons or lions. In the upper corners appear figures of the tempters of souls. Clinging to the branches of the tree are forms representing man in various stages of development, the lower faces usually being those of apes, while the higher ones show higher intellectual development. Other Kirman rugs show the all-over, so called, "palm-leaf" design. Those among rug-

dealers who are really artists in point of study and comprehension, and collectors who are authorities, say that this is not actually a palm-leaf token, but the weaver's use of the almond-leaf which he sees growing luxuriantly on all hands.

Sehna rugs have a small design, often incorrectly called the palm-leaf pattern,



KIRMAN OF GREAT BEAUTY
Three-quarters of the rug show in the photograph.

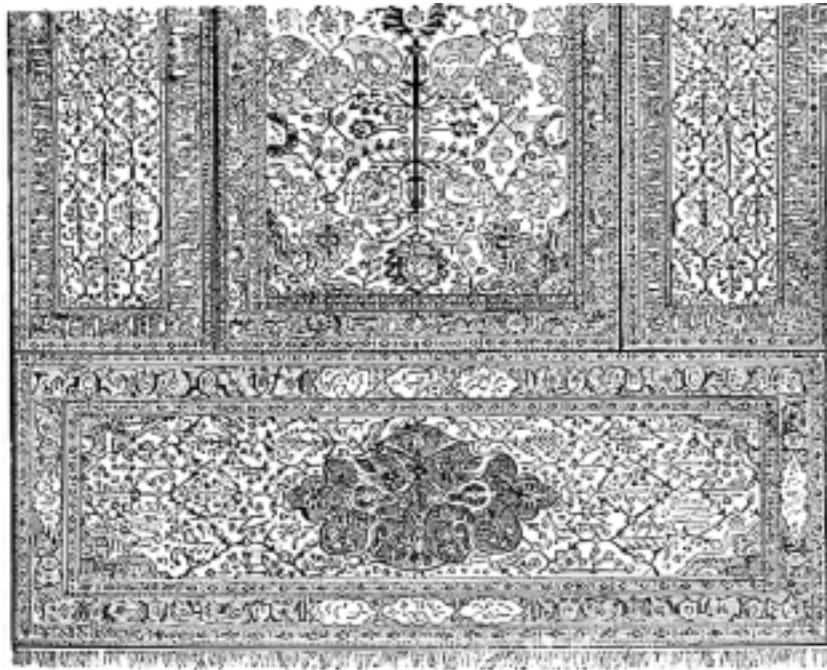
which is not even the almond design, but represents the clustered jewels in the Persian crown. Serabends have a pear-shaped figure with yet another meaning; this is the river-loop pattern, and pictures rugwise the winding sacred river beneath

the holy city of Mecca, in the loop of which grow the luxuriant palms reproduced in the center of the Serabend rug of this pattern. All Serabends have an especially short, close pile. The Sariks, or Saraks, are beautiful carpets. The Khorasans, or Khorassans,—there are many spellings for all Oriental rugs,—are found usually in a low scale of color and design with a thickish pile. The Daghestan, a common, popular modern rug, never comes in carpet sizes; its typical design is three large geometrical figures in the body of the rug, surrounded by a border, and having generally striking outlines and coloring.

The modern Oushak rugs keep to the old Turkish designs, are large and heavy in drawing, have a deep pile, and there are only a few rugs of the same character. Both the Koulas and modern Ghiordez follow the old Persian patterns as closely as possible.

The prayer-rug is a small mat, without some copy of which the devout Mohammedan is never seen; upon it he kneels to invoke the blessings of Allah upon the faithful. The prayer-rug proper always shows a design representing the entrance to the temple, with straight sides and pointed top, while between the parallel columns depends a lamp. When in use the point of the design is always turned toward Mecca to assist the worshiper to concentrate his thoughts. Prayer-rugs never show animals in the designs; but it is erroneous to say, as common report often does, that the Persians never represent animals on their rugs. The Persian hunting-carpet is but one refutation of this popular fallacy.

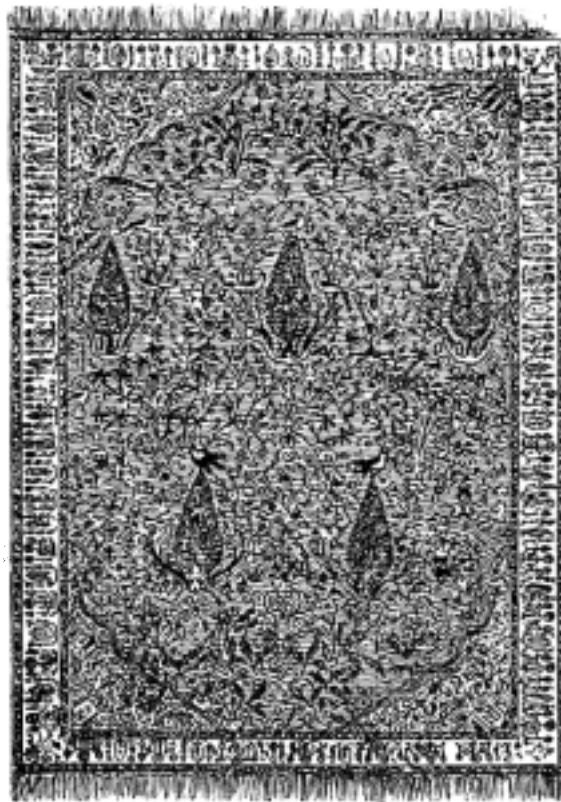
So keen has become the quest for ownership of valuable rugs, that it is constantly becoming more difficult to secure prizes. Private collectors place standing orders with dealers to notify them of any rare specimen that is likely to change hands when collections are broken up, or when some long-lost treasure is brought to light, while museums are



ANTIQUE PERSIAN SILK RUG

ving with each other in seeking to add to their collections of valuable specimens of rugs. Rug-lovers who have not seen the marvelous specimens of rugs in the Austrian Commercial Museum may still have a treat by looking through the two huge volumes published by the Museum, entitled "Oriental Carpets." The books, which are principally illustrations, many of them in the colors of the originals, and all of them marvels of printing, are so expensive and limited in number that it is usually necessary to consult them in large libraries, and by special permission in the private rooms set apart for rare and valuable prints.

In buying such rugs as come in one's way or can be sought out, it is safest to patronize only reputable dealers, unless one is sure that his own taste and judgment can be relied upon. If one is depending upon himself to know a fine rug when he sees one, he should beware of artificially



KHORASAN

toned-down rugs, of those that have colors that do not blend pleasingly, and of those that show a large expanse of a solid color. Good yellows in rugs are scarce and much prized when found.

All rugs are not from Eastern lands.

in more or less close imitation of the designs and coloring of Oriental rugs and carpets. But while the good Oriental rug grows more beautiful with age, its colors becoming ever softer and lovelier, and the texture seems to be practically imperish-

able, American dyes in rugs soon fade and look shabby, and the material of which the American rug is made succumbs quickly to wear. In better taste than "Smyrnas," because not an imitation of anything, are the American Wilton rugs in carpet sizes. These are made with seams from carpeting, and have but one wearing surface, whereas the Smyrna is alike on both sides; but they look better from an artistic point of view while they last, and wear very well.

No fine Oriental rug was ever intended for such wear and tear as we sentence it to. In the East a beautiful rug is almost revered. I have seen, even in America, a rug-repairer, an Oriental by birth, kneel down and kiss a handsome antique rug given to him to mend. In the home of rugs, foot-coverings are left at the door. There are no chair-legs to crush and chafe the pile, and in a century of wear in the East a rug receives less hard usage than it has in Ameri-



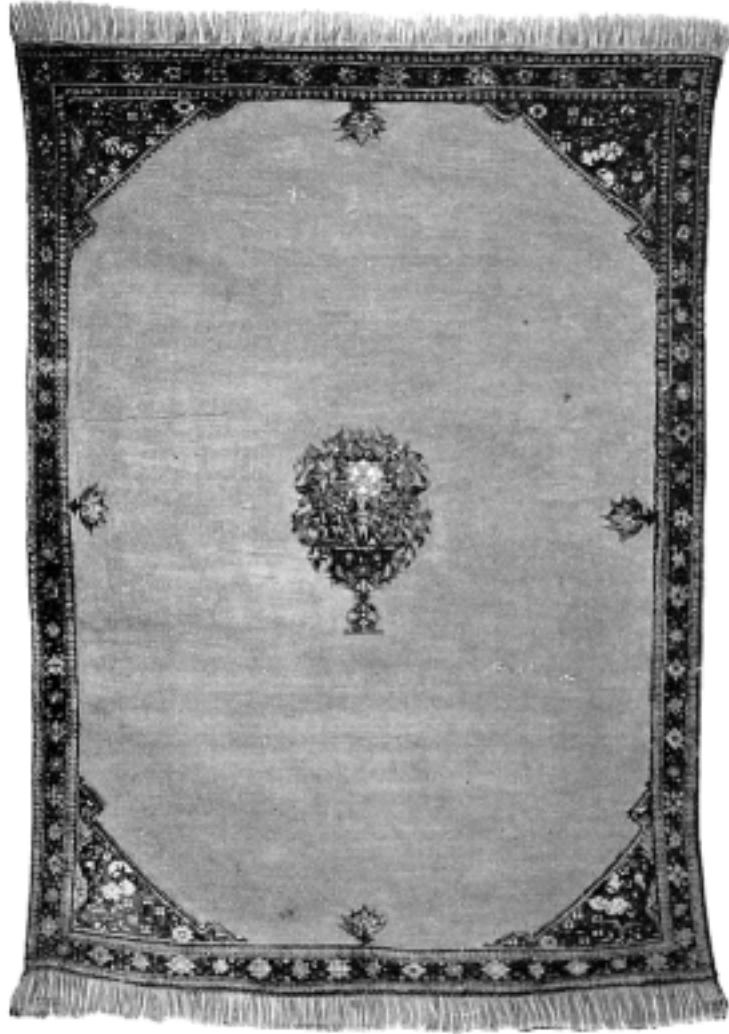
ANTIQUE KIRMAN

One of several hunting designs.

America has a large and increasing rug industry of her own. All so-called Smyrnas are made in this country by machinery

can houses in a week. For this reason the coarser modern Oriental rug is better adapted to the floors of American resi-

dences than are the delicate antiques, among which the more valuable should receive the same treatment that is given to a fine picture or piece of bric-a-brac.



SINNEH

Despite the plain center, a beautiful rug.
