

“by his name. Adjoining the mosque there is a large hospital, where daily they give food to all those who go there, and many gather in pilgrimages from various parts. For this reason the inhabitants of the town are more fervent in practising their beliefs, and they do not drink wine. Their tongue is Turkish, like that of Shirwan. There were at the time many Armenians, whom the king had sent there, when he captured and burnt a few months ago many villages of Greater Armenia, where they were residing. As soon as we had reached the house they (the Persians) had prepared for us, there came in one of the chief of those they call in their tongue ‘Qizil-bash’: he greeted us in the name of the governor and told us that it was his duty to look after us, and give us whatever we asked for our food. We replied that there was no need of anything, and I instructed the Armenian to go and buy what was needful. They did not allow this but sent an abundant supply of food, more than was needed, so much that we gave it away in alms to many poor Armenians who came.

“Seeing how we disdained the provisions (sent us) and everything else—which had not been done by great ambassadors and others, who had passed by there with letters for their king, wearing richer apparel and having a larger following—they began to conceive a better opinion of us than those on the frontier had done, and they treated us with greater respect, especially as they had learnt from the man of the Khan of Shamakhi how we had declined the presents he gave us. On the following day the governor came to visit us, treated us with much respect and invited us to dinner the day after. We went: the house was furnished with rich carpets: around the room on the ground over the carpets were certain pieces of very fine cloth, folded in four, which in their tongue they call ‘Tishnamak’ [*? sic*] (and would cost 150 to 200 sequins for a good one) on which they sit. Almost at once dinner was brought, and he made us sit at the head with all our company: at the bottom he sat with two or three of the chief Persians of the town, and as a sign of greater respect he did not let any of his own people sit down. The (table) cloths were of a certain rich material from the Mogul’s country.<sup>1</sup> The dinner consisted of an abundance of kinds of rice,<sup>2</sup> fowls, meat, sweets, fruit, etc. It was a vigil,<sup>3</sup> and we ate only fruit and sweets. He asked us various questions about different things in order to entertain us, and displayed discretion in everything. At the end we begged him to have horses found for us at our own expense, so that we might leave: he replied that he would do so at once, and that money was not needed, because it was the custom and order of the Shah to provide ambassadors with everything for which they asked, and that his Majesty would take ill the annoyance we had had on our past journey, but that we should not marvel if the man of the Khan (of Shamakhi who was present) had given bastinadoes to the peasants, since that was the custom of the country and without it nothing was well done. We answered that we could not bear to see it, because our creed bids us to do good to all, that it was contrary to it that for our sakes poor folk in particular should be beaten, people who perhaps did not have anything to eat themselves, and that he should do us the favour of sending no one with us, seeing that the road was safe. He said that in no wise could he do that, because the Shah would punish him, if he did. . . .

“In the evening many Armenians, among them some priests, came to visit us: they invited us to their church for the next day: we promised to go there, it appearing to us that they were Catholics because they spoke well of Your Holiness and of everything that we spoke to them about the Faith. The next morning they came in procession to take us there, some 15 priests vested in the sacred vestments. Their chief carried in his hand the Holy Gospels, others crosses, others pictures of Our Lord: following them were some deacons and sub-deacons, also vested, and a great concourse of the people, both men and women. The chief priest gave us the book of the Holy Gospels to kiss,

<sup>1</sup> This may have been “Kishmir” (Cashmere) shawl, which has always had an extensive vogue in Persia.

<sup>2</sup> Persian cuisine knows how to serve many kinds of *pilau* as well as the plain *chilau*.

<sup>3</sup> Doubtless of All Saints’ Day, November 1st.