

“that the Emperor was as powerful as before and had not lost his throne,¹ nor made peace with the Turks, and that his Majesty ('Abbas I) should not credit all they said, because Your Holiness had also heard that he ('Abbas I) had too made peace with the Turks, but had not believed it. Monsignor the Cardinal of S. George had written to me that they were saying this in Rome. As regards the Christian princes not having made war on the Turk, the cause of that had been the deaths of Clement VIII and Leo XI. In the third place I handed him one letter from the king of Poland (when the Shah observed to me that the Tatars had taken the kingdom away from him), one from the Cardinal of S. George, another from the Marquis de Villena. Then I told him that we had secret business to discuss with him in the name of Your Holiness, that such was not for that place, and asked that he would be pleased to give instructions as to when we should go to him, because His Holiness had instructed me to return at once with the reply, as I desired to do, and that the Fathers, my companions (unless his Majesty gave other instructions) would remain at his Court until Your Holiness dispatched an ambassador to him, in order to inform Your Holiness of the progress he might make in the war, and whatever might occur to his Majesty, or else they would return, because His Holiness desired solely what was his ('Abbas I's) pleasure.

“The king answered that he was content that I should go back and that he would find me a short and sure road, and that as to the secret business we brought and anything else whatsoever his palace would always be open to us. We then handed him some presents that we brought him, which were valued at more 2,000 scudi and pleased him, especially a cross in Bohemian crystal ornamented with gold, and the Christ on it of the same (metal) and with some emeralds and other good stones. The king held it for a while in his hand and said, 'it is very beautiful'. The prince his son too said the same.² Twice then he asked me whether it was Your Holiness who was sending those presents for him. I replied 'no', that as the journey was so full of difficulties, as he knew, Your Holiness was not sending him either an envoy or presents, for neither we nor the others sent in the time of Clement VIII were ambassadors: (I said) that Your Holiness had (at disposal) distinguished men and would send him ambassadors at the first convenient opportunity and presents worthy of Yourself and of his Majesty, who would receive them. In oriental countries it is discourteous to pay a visit to anyone, particularly if it be a prince or king, without making him the first time a present of something, however small, according to the degree of the person making the gift. He then made us sit down at his side and cover our heads, and kept us for two hours, while he was inspecting horses which he was selecting for the war, and spoke to us from time to time. He asked us whether we had brought some fine arquebuse or other: our interpreter answered 'no'. He showed us many signs of kindness and said that we should excuse him for not inviting us to dinner, because it was then their 'fast' in which they are not accustomed to give banquets, nor do they eat in the daytime. We kissed his hand and went away: he turned to say to me that he would send me off at once.

“Two days later we went to have the secret audience. At 21 o'clock³ he came out to

¹ Actually it was six months later, 25.6.1608, when the Emperor Rudolf was obliged to transfer to his more compliant brother, Matthias, the government of Hungary, Austria and Moravia, while retaining his rights as King of Bohemia.

² Another account—in *A Persia*, cited, p. 117, has the additional detail:

“The king opened the book of the Old Testament by chance at the page where the combat between the good angels and the bad angels is related. When he saw the dragon vanquished and prostrate at the feet of S. Michael, who was brandishing his sword, threatening the Devil, the king inquired: 'Who is that vanquished at the feet of the angel?' Fr. Paul replied: 'This is the fallen angel, whom we call the Devil.' 'No,' said the Shah, laughing much, 'this is the Turk' (i.e. the Sultan). As he said it, he continued to laugh, glancing over his shoulder at the Turkish Pashas . . . for he lost no opportunity to mock at them. He charged a Mulla to write on each page of this book of miniatures in the Persian language what they represented: and, so that he might do it the more correctly, to refer to the Carmelites. Lastly, we gave him a small barrel of vodka from Muscovy, which they' (in Persia) 'esteem highly, notwithstanding the prohibition against such liquors in the Quran, and which the Shah valued the more because of the scant observance with which he kept Ramazan. His Majesty could not find words to thank them for so acceptable a present. . . . During the whole audience the Shah addressed not once a word to the Augustinian Fathers. . . .”

³ This must be what the Persians call *dasteh* time, taken and reckoned from sunset the evening before.