

“witness an entertainment he had prepared for us in the main square—bull-fights and ram-fights after their (Persian) style. After having kissed his hand and looked at the spectacle for a time I asked permission of him to speak. He granted it. I expounded the *first* point of the mission, i.e. the great regard Your Holiness had for him, and that You desired to know what was his attitude towards Yourself and the Christian princes: *Secondly*, the great desire Your Holiness had of making war on the Turks, and how You were endeavouring to unite the Christian princes against the latter on the sea. When I touched on this point he was pleased and paid no more attention to the sports. Without allowing me to finish he replied that the kings of Persia, his predecessors, had always had friendly relations with the Roman Pontiffs and with the kings of Christendom, just as he had equally friendly ones and would continue always to maintain them: that he was very pleased that Your Holiness wanted to make war on the Turks, and on his part he would not fail: that winter he would be going against Baghdad, and thence towards Constantinople, for which he was making preparations. He wanted Your Holiness to send him a Latin bishop for the ‘Three Churches’—that is how they call a church much reputed for sanctity in Greater Armenia at the foot of the mountain of Noah (‘s ark), where the Armenian patriarch resides,<sup>1</sup> as there was none for the time being, as the Shah had deposed him: and, because a number of persons came to him (‘Abbas I) with letters (forged) in the name of Your Holiness and of the Christian princes, so that they might not be deceived, he said he would give me for His Holiness and the Christian princes (an impression of) “his private seal on paper, to check the letters he would be writing, and that I should leave him mine as a countersign that would be on those Your Holiness and the Christian princes would write him: that he wished me to leave as soon as possible, and that I should return by way of Aleppo in the garb of an Armenian monk, so that I should quickly make a report to Your Holiness, and that he would give me guides to conduct me safely.

“I answered that I would do what his Majesty might bid me. I had been advised to be careful should he speak about the Armenians, because he might perhaps do so in order to discover from me whether we had come for that: so I did not make any reply to him on the point of the Latin bishop whom he desired for the ‘Three Churches’. On that about leaving him my seal I said that His Holiness and the Christian princes would send him their secret countersigns.<sup>2</sup>

“I was wanting to continue on the other points, which, later, another day, I gave him in writing; but it was already night. So he told me that that was not a convenient time, that we should return another time and be alone in a room where we could speak about everything, that within another two days he was leaving for Mazandaran, one of his states 25 days’ distant from Isfahan. We kissed his hands and left.

“The Fr. Prior of the Augustinians, who had come with us, said to the Shah that he wanted to send one of his Fathers to India: would his Majesty be pleased to reply to the letter which a few days previously he had given him from the king of Spain. He” (‘Abbas I) “answered him curtly that he had got ready an ambassador. The Shah called the Mihmandar and bade him see whether we wanted a horse, or silk, or brocade, or money, because he wished to make us a present, and tell the Prior of the Augustinians that he should decide that night whether he (the Prior) wished to agree to the messenger (ambassador) whom he had got ready to go to Spain with him” (the Prior), “otherwise he (the Shah) would not reply to the letter from his” (the Prior’s) “sovereign. The Mihmandar that evening delivered his message. We answered in the presence of the Augustinian Fathers (in whose house I was still lodging) that we thanked his Majesty for his courtesy; that our poor habit and our Rule did not permit of our receiving brocade,

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Echmiadzin, near the base of Mt. Ararat.

<sup>2</sup> Till recent years in this century, at any rate, Persians have been very suspicious both of their correspondence being intercepted and of forgery in the signatures of those writing to them (bogus letters) or, rather, of the seals (frequently fabricated): and they therefore used *nishan* and *‘ashareh* (= sign and allusion) in the body of the letter—references to something both the writer and recipient knew—to reassure the latter of the genuineness of the letter.