

"Patriarch of the Armenians together with some bishops and other seculars of theirs begged me to draw the attention of His Holiness to the fact that the consul for the Venetians in Aleppo did not allow them to proceed to Rome, and that the Portuguese in Hurmuz did them (the Armenians) much injury and hurt: that the Patriarch and the bishops commended themselves to His Holiness, and expressed their respect: that the Patriarch desired to come to Rome in order to kiss the feet of His Holiness, but was unable to do so, or even to write on account of the disturbances and of the irritation of the king with him, which was still fresh. His Holiness told me that your most reverend Lordship would write to the Superior of our Fathers in Persia, Fr. John (Thaddeus) of S. Elisaeus, to comfort them and encourage them to persevere in their obedience to His Holiness, to show them favour, etc. I beg you to send me by the bearer the Briefs for Persia, should you have received them, and that writing in Persian on which is the private seal of the king there, so that I may show it in Spain, seeing that it is to be the countersign on the letters which the Shah" (of Persia) "will write. . . ."

Here it is necessary to turn for a moment to the Carmelite Fathers left in Isfahan, and to note that the Grand Wazir, or else the Daruga duly fulfilled the Shah's orders in finding them a residence—a commodious building belonging to the royal domain, and sent them a "farman" granting them its tenancy. One room was adapted as a chapel, dedicated to the Names of Jesus and Mary in memory of the churches of the Congregation in Rome and Genoa: on the Feast of the Purification, 2.2.1608, Mass was celebrated there for the first time. Other important rites and ceremonies on that day concerned Robert Sherley, of whom the following description is given:¹

". . . Don Robert is a man of medium height, fair and beardless, aged about 30 years: he wears in one ear a small ring, with a tiny diamond: he is a man of sagacity, but a boaster, pretender and conceited. In Persia he has lived in public as a Catholic, has been to confession and to Communion once a year, attended the churches and performed all other pious acts of a good Christian. He purchased a slave from Circassia, a province situated between Muscovy and Persia, who belonged to the *Muhammadan* faith, kept her as his wife, and because it was made a point of religious scruple and duty he had her baptized by Fr. Paul Simon, the Discalced Carmelite, and married her—secretly, it is said—in order to celebrate the nuptials later in Italy in public and with pomp. He afterwards left this lady in a convent in Cracow together with another Christian slave of his, Armenian by nationality.

"In public the king ('Abbas I) used to pay him respect, but he has never made use of him in anything, and was keeping him as it were a hostage, while waiting for the return of Don Anthony his brother from the mission entrusted to him because he was so little pleased with the ill report made about him by the ambassador his companion,² and because of the suspicion that he had sold the presents sent for the Christian kings.

"Don Robert has stayed in Persia 10 years, with an allowance of 2,000 scudi³ made to

¹ Fondo Borghese, Ser. IV, 52, p. 346.

² i.e. Husain Quli Baig—the wording is not clear whether it was Anthony Sherley or Husain Quli Baig so suspected.

³ Fondo Borghese II, n. 20, p. 181, contains observations from an (unsigned) different source, presumably Augustinian or Spanish.

". . . From Moscow Don Anthony did not remit any money for his brother who had remained behind in Persia, at which the king ('Abbas) marvelled greatly. . . . The king gave Don Robert, who remained with him as a hostage, 2,000 piastres p.a., and it is almost 10 years past that he has been at the Persian Court without having received a farthing from his home. Persuaded by the *Augustinian Fathers* he became a Catholic, made his confession and Communion: he *did the same* when the Discalced (Carmelite) Fathers arrived in Persia, and has since lived as a Catholic from what I have seen and heard, although he ate meat on Saturday, but I believe it was because of bodily debility, as he said to the Superior of the Discalced. In Persia he had gained the goodwill of the king and of the nobles, by whom he is liked because he renders service to all and sundry, and gives trouble to nobody: besides which he conformed to their habits and customs in things that were not contrary to (our) religion, even though far from edifying. For the rest he did not set much of a good example, because he got drunk . . . and favoured the heretics, who went