

“Given at S. Mark’s, Rome, under the Fisherman’s seal, the 9th Kalends of August 1610, “and the sixth year of Our Pontificate.” (24.7.1610.)

Notwithstanding the evident wish of the Sovereign Pontiff, as expressed in that Brief, it would appear that Robert Sherley did proceed to England, for Sir W. Foster’s *English Factory Records* (of the East India Company) contain the statement:

“On 1.10.1611 Mr. R. Sherley presented to king James I his credentials as an ambassador “from the king of Persia, on whose account he offered to the English the free and absolute “use of two ports in his dominions.”

As already noted, by one of the English ships fitted out for a voyage to Surat Robert and Teresa Sherley and their servants sailed back to the East; and here—since this narrative only incidentally comes across Sherley in connection with the Carmelites and with Papal negotiations over the Turkish menace—it is convenient for a time to leave following their tracks, as they reconnoitred by sea along the coast of Makran, and returned to Sind and Tatta, and thence went inland to the Court of the Great Mogul.

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Before the situation, incidents and difficulties confronting the Carmelites at Isfahan during the years 1608 to 1611 are set out in proper sequence, the observations of Fr. Paul Simon, the first Superior, during his six months’ stay and travel in the country on the customs of the people, the personality of ‘Abbas I, and the means at his disposal may first be recorded.

As to the country and its capital at this period the reader desirous of detail may turn to the books of the lay Spanish ambassador of 1618–9, Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa, who in his *Comentarios* of his ‘Embajada que de parte del Rey de España don Felipe III hizo al Rey Xa Abas de Persia’, published by the ‘Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles’, in vol. II, pp. 18–36, has left a pleasing and lengthy description of the city of Isfahan itself, with its gardens, extensive roofed bazar, Great Square “more than 600 paces in length by 300 in breadth,” at the head of one of the shorter sides of which was then in 1618 rising, not yet finished, the Masjid-i-Shah, famous already in those days for its tiles and marble slabs of various colours, which the masons were still cutting and polishing, with, too, on the longer side of the square, to the left coming from the mosque, the palace, and its reception hall surmounted by a five-storied tower-like erection, with verandas and painted and gilded rooms, from the topmost of which all the town and gardens were visible: he may consult, too, the detailed description of certain Persian provinces and cities, the result of the observations of the Spanish Carmelite, Fr. Philip of the Most Holy Trinity in his *Voyages d’Orient*, published in French, Latin and Italian, whose sojourn and journeys date to 1629, 1630, 1640.

In his report,¹ written after his return to Rome in 1608, Fr. Paul Simon stated, then:

“ . . . The country which I saw is sparsely inhabited, for the most part all flat, with “little water and much uncultivated land; while that which is cultivated has a great “abundance of all sorts of produce, such as we have in Italy, and cheap. For less than “a real seven pounds of white bread could be had in Isfahan, and at the time there was “a scarcity. . . . There is an abundance of wine, rice, grapes, melons and other fruit— “all the year round fresh can be seen—of meat and oxen sufficiently so. The Persians “do not eat the flesh of cows and calves, but mutton to a vast extent and horseflesh, which “is the most esteemed and by the nobles. The climate is very temperate: last winter there “was little cold. In Isfahan, where I was, no snow fell, except for a little at the end of

¹ O.C.D. 234 b.