

“months, there was never a case of homicide. He is very speedy in dispatching business: when he gives audience, which he does at the gate of his palace, in the Maidan, he finishes off all the cases that are brought to him. The parties stand present before him, the officers of justice and his own council, with whom he consults when it pleases him. The sentence which he gives is final and is immediately executed. If the guilty party deserve death, they kill him at once: to this end, when he gives audience, twelve dogs and twelve men [? sic], who devour men alive, are kept ready: he keeps them in order to use the greater severity. Apart from the officials, once the sentence is given, it is not permitted to anyone to make any reply: for the person is at once driven off with blows of the sticks of some 30 to 40 royal farrashes, who stand ready to do this. When he wants to stop giving audience, he causes it to be proclaimed that no one, on pain of death, may bring him petitions, and, when he wants to go out of doors unaccompanied, that no one should follow him.

“The like speed in dispatching business is practised by his officials: and his Wazir, or chancellor, who has charge of all the royal revenues, the dispatch of ambassadors, and all other affairs, and who is the first person after the Shah, used to dispatch 200 petitions in a morning and after having sat and given a hearing for six or seven hours would go out as serene, as if he were coming from taking his horse for a walk.

“There are four councillors of the king—Allah Viridi Khan, his general: 'Ata Baig his Wazir: the Qurchi Bashi: and one who was his 'governor' and preceptor. The three last are always with the Shah, and when he gives audience are standing next to him. He has to be obeyed absolutely: anyone failing in the slightest will pay for it with his head. And so he has had most of the old nobles of Persia killed off and put in their stead low-bred persons whom he has aggrandized. In the whole of Persia there are only two of the old-time governors. To one of them, while with the army in the field, the Shah said that he was to post a battalion¹ so many paces distant from a river (for he—'Abbas—gives all orders of importance). Afterwards he (the Shah) summoned him, and the grandee declared that he had the battalion in such and such a position. Others present said that he had not: the Shah ordered that, if it (the battalion) were not found there, the grandee's head should be brought back to him. The messenger went and found him in the position assigned him by the king; because, although on the previous night, when they told him in the Shah's name to put his battalion there, he had said that it would be better in another position, he had not however dared to go against the king's order. Because of the great obedience they pay him, when he wills to have one of the nobles killed, he dispatches one of his men to fetch the noble's head: the man goes off to the grandee, and says to him: 'The Shah wants your head.' The noble replies: 'Very well,' and lets himself be decapitated—otherwise he would lose it and, with it, all his race would become extinct. But, when they" (i.e. the grandees) "allow themselves to be decapitated, he aggrandizes the children.

“The Shah of Persia is very rich, because, besides having the treasure of his predecessors, he has seized those of the princes of Lar and of Gilan, who were powerful and rich princes, and others. He has many sources of income and is master over the property of his subjects. When he knows a man to be rich, he uses blandishments and calls him his 'father'—which is a sign that he (the Shah) wants to become his heir: so there are many who are accumulating money for the Shah and live miserably in order to give him pleasure. There will be a man having more than 200,000 scudi of income and not spend 2,000 of it in a year. The king assigns these men many posts and revenues, because he knows that they are hoarding for him, that on their deaths they will leave him as their heir, while he allots something to their children. These men are private citizens or gentlemen, for the grandees live at the Court. Annually on the 21st March, which is the commencement of the New Year with them, everyone makes gifts to the Shah, however poor he may be—everyone according to his ability. The king's Wazir last year gave him 50,000 Tumans: others 40,000, others less. (The Tuman=10 sequins: 50,000 Tumans

¹ The word *battaglione* is used in the Italian in 1608.