

“very good fellows. Usually they will not eat with any Christian, nor do they allow them into their baths, nor do they have any other dealings such as the Turks have with Christians: on the contrary, should any Christian touch the dress of a Persian, the latter considers himself polluted and so goes off to the baths in order to cleanse himself of this, just as they go to purify themselves of their sins. They pay particular attention to the attitude of their king towards foreigners and others, so that whomever he may regard with a malevolent eye they all ill-treat, and whomever with approval they all honour and respect.

“(b) The Turkish language is usually spoken and understood, and the Shah and chief men and soldiers generally speak in it. The common people speak in Persian, and all documents and communications are in that language.

“(c) If it were possible to translate the Missal into the Turkish or Persian language, and to have a licence to celebrate (Mass) in those tongues, we think it would produce some results, as all would understand it, and some out of curiosity would wish to hear it (and it could be said without the elements).

“(d) All Persians, where we have been, follow the religion of Muhammad, although each man understands it after his own fashion; yet up till now we have met no person learned in it, or in philosophy and in natural sciences: and in good reason, if such were as numerous as they think in Europe, there ought to be found some of them in the Capital where the king is living.

“(e) Christian Arabs, traders from Aleppo, and various places over there resort here. *Of Italians we have not seen one because the king of Spain does not permit them to enter India to trade.*

“(f) These Persian people dislike equally Italians, Spaniards, Germans, calling them all ‘Franks’.¹ But those with experience have the greatest dislike for the Portuguese, on account of the bad treatment the captains and governors in Hurmuz use towards them.

“(g) With regard to food—the bread is very badly baked, as there is so little wood.

“(h) The sort of men this Shah would be glad to have sent to him are: clockmakers, musicians, painters, those who would be talented enough to construct fountains and such like things; but it is essential they should have a firm belief in the Faith, because otherwise there is a great risk in these countries, from the great freedom there is, and even danger coming from the king himself and the people, that they might be persuaded by acts and words to abandon it. . . .

“. . . As to sending reports frequently to Your Reverence about affairs here, there is the very greatest difficulty: and, though we have written many letters to Your Reverence, we have no hope that one out of ten² will have arrived there in Rome, because by Aleppo, which is the surest and shortest route, only Armenians go, and they on finding themselves in the slightest peril do not hesitate to throw away the letters. To dispatch a special man to the consul in Aleppo at least 60 scudi would have to be paid, and we have not that money.

“. . . Till now there has been small success” (in conversions), “for the Muslims are as already described, and the Armenians (so the Augustinian Fathers say) take no account of the Pope unless it be to get some alms or temporal benefit. . . . It appears to us that great results could be gained in this country if there were a college for Armenian, Georgian, Circassian and Persian boys, who might be purchased out of the many offered for sale and if we were to bring them up among us and teach them our habits and standard of conduct, in order to send them to Italy when bigger and they would serve as interpreters: and the king of Persia would not interfere with such work. We do not doubt that, because it is the habit here that the slave must take the religion of his master, many souls would be released from the bonds of Satan, since many of them would become our brethren and others would follow them.

¹ Farangi in Persia, often written Feringhee in India.

² In fact this letter seems to be the earliest in date preserved in the Carmelite archives, and therefore all preceding letters may have been lost or thrown away *en route*.