

“made themselves masters of the very city of Rome. He concluded by saying that, if for the Christian Armenians who were his slaves he had given sites and churches in so many places at their desire, far more would he have done for the ‘Frankish’ Christians, if the sovereigns of the Franks had told the truth: and he added that, were the Pontiff to make war on the Turks, he (’Abbas) would not be backward in demonstrating to us his affection and regard.

“To that Fr. John answered that such demonstrations as his Majesty might then make in our favour would be universally considered as purely interested and inspired by policy, not as done out of regard and goodwill towards our Order and religion. The Shah repeated—what he had so many times said—that we should have patience for the next four months, as he also would have: when those months were at an end, if war had not been made, everyone would have his deserts.

“When therefore Fr. John and we perceived that it was inexpedient to continue in such ill fashion the discussion with the king, who was speaking with such scant respect both of the Pope and of the Christian Princes notwithstanding our numerous explanations and replies, having consulted with us regarding the decision to be taken on the matter and moved by the Holy Spirit (as will clearly be seen from the result), he said frankly to the Shah that, since from his words he had understood that his Majesty did not like Christians, he should give us leave to depart, and then we should immediately quit his country. At those words the king stopped short for a little, and changing entirely his manner of speech and considerably pacified, he said that we were his guests and therefore we should remain calm, and see to it that we passed these next four months eating and drinking in all good cheer, and, if during that interval the Christians had taken the slightest step against the Turks, his Majesty would do for us all we could desire.

“To this Fr. John made answer that we had not come to his Majesty’s dominions in order to eat and drink; at so great a risk of life and with such hardships we had come to serve him; but, as we now saw that this service of ours was little to his liking, we begged him to give us permission to go away elsewhere, where, if nothing else, we should at least have a place where we could live according to our Rule, because that we were occupying here was not at all to our purpose.

“The king answered that he wished us in any case to remain: in no wise were we to depart. Thereupon he called for the Mihmandar and bade him have a place and house to our taste given us at once, and to that end to conduct us over all Isfahan to inspect all the houses, and that one of his which most pleased us was to be handed over to us conditionally forthwith: he added that he would later give us his very own for a church if the Christians made war in earnest. After that, turning courteously to us he said that he knew very well that blame for the past was not attributable to us, and therefore we should pardon him and be indulgent to him for having spoken so resentfully and strongly; because the Christian kings had hoodwinked him for so many years with their promises, he was obliged sometimes to give vent somewhere or other to his annoyance.

“Fr. John said in reply that we were poor Religious, who had left our parents, relatives and other worldly comforts wholly in order to serve God with greater freedom; to discuss affairs of monarchs was not our profession, but that, bidden by obedience, we had come to serve his Majesty for which reason we were on any occasion ready to give our lives, as he might know from what Fr. Paul (Simon) had done, and we who had recently arrived for that object neither claimed nor desired anything of his Majesty, or of anyone else in the world: and, having said that and presented to him those trifles which we had brought, as mentioned, and twice kissed his Majesty’s hand once more, we departed.” . . .

“This discussion had lasted more than a full hour, with the Shah standing the whole time and under a very fierce sun, so that his face was bathed in perspiration, which from time to time he wiped off with his hand. Afterwards, going to mount his horse, of a sudden he changed his mind and, going aside with that agent of the Grand Duke and dismissing