

“were Christians and to what nation they belonged. Fr. John returned that they were heretics, very bitter enemies of all good Christians, hated by the Pontiff and the other Christian princes, and rebels against the king of Spain, their natural lord, against whom they were at war, and to finance themselves for the war they went off to sea, playing the part of corsairs, looting and plundering at sea and having no regard for friend or foe.

“The Shah then remarked that, should these Dutch not be making war against the king of Spain, the latter surely would have gone to war with the Sultan of Turkey. Fr. John answered that the power of the king of Spain was such and his cause so just that he (Fr. John) trusted that he would soon destroy that wicked race, and then subsequently wage war on the Turks. The Shah, repeating many times: ‘Insh’allah’ (If God wills), bade him farewell and departed.

“Things being then in that position, and the Shah not having given a definite permission” (i.e. for Fr. Vincent to leave) “the Fathers were in much doubt as to what to do; because it appeared necessary to suit the Shah’s (wishes), and it was most expedient to obtain for the Pope a reply to the Brief, while on the other hand the Shah had not given a decision and for that reason they were apprehensive lest his Majesty should not be pleased for the Father to go, and they were afraid that, were they to mention the matter afresh to the king and he to say definitely and outright that Fr. Vincent was not to go, the latter would be obliged to abandon his departure: and so, commending the matter to the Lord, they decided that in any case there ought to be a fresh conversation with the king, for which the reply to the letter from the Pope offered a patent ground.

“So Fr. John and Fr. Benignus went once more to speak to him (‘Abbas I) and, despite all their diligence to that end, for several days this was not possible because, as this Shah is very alert and brisk by nature and for that cause is constantly on the move and, as his palace has various gates, from which he will sally forth, now from this one, now from another for different places, and usually he halts for a very short time, the Fathers were unable, when they went there, to catch him: it was not possible to speak to him inside his residence, as there was no precedent of this king having ever received in it an ambassador. . . .

“One Friday, therefore, the 17th July, while they were in the Maidan near the palace of the king (as they had had news that he was about to come there) to see whether they could speak to him by any sort of means, and waiting about 22 o’clock,¹ the king appeared, having come out by a secret gate and a way different from that by which he was awaited by his attendants. Accompanied by very few people, he came riding a very fine sorrel mare, and having caused the horse to do a jump near where our Religious were waiting in turning he caught sight of the Fathers, and immediately halted. He made a sign that they should approach, and, after giving them his hand, with much courtesy and a very jovial face he asked what they wanted: to this Fr. John answered that, as the time approached for the departure of the Father, whom he had determined to dispatch to the Pope, as he had already told his Majesty on another occasion, he came to remind his Majesty to give instructions for the letter to the Pontiff to be written in reply to the Brief lately brought by the Fathers to his Majesty, as this time the letter would certainly in all safety reach destination.

“The Shah promptly answered that he wished by all means that this should be done, that this was a matter of particular interest to himself and his duty, and that he would not overlook it: in fact he wanted the letter to be written that same night: glancing round to see whether there were anyone to whom he could commit this business, the king with continued affability told the Fathers to wait there a little, so that, should anyone appear, there and then in the presence of Fr. John he would charge the person with this business: and so, continuing to urge on his horse and make it vault many times, and having gone off to some distance from the Fathers he returned after a short interval and told them to wait a little longer, as he was just sending to summon someone, who, he thought, would

¹ Probably *dasteh* time, and about 5 p.m.