

“about the instructions given, and further that the Shah had told him (the old man) to write it that same night: and the old man added that the letter would be a very nice one. The Father then begged him as a favour to finish it as quickly as possible, to which he answered that it was the king’s command and without anyone else telling him to do so he would execute it promptly, and with the most precise diligence: and so quitting him the Fathers returned to the house, considerably relieved in mind.

“The slowness with which all Muslims and those in Persia more particularly move in the resolute dispatch of business is so great that, if they be not reminded and pressed solicitously and with exceptional importunity, one will have the greatest difficulty in obtaining the completion of anything: and thereupon Fr. John judged it necessary to bring himself once more to the notice of his Majesty, so that the latter might recall the business and be induced to press it forward: this, so it seemed to the Father, was the more necessary, inasmuch as from day to day the Shah was on the point of leaving and it would be difficult to follow him afterwards. For that reason, having been informed on the Saturday that the Shah had come out of the Palace, with Fr. Benignus he mounted and rode off to do as they had resolved, i.e. to call the attention of the king to themselves.

“His Majesty was about three miles outside Isfahan, at that place where the two Fathers who had recently arrived from Rome had first had audience: wending their way thither they found the Shah on horseback in a long lane busy distributing horses and camels to soldiers, and till nightfall he continued to be engaged in this, the while the Fathers remained at a distance awaiting him, for they had decided not to speak to him unless His Majesty called for them, because the mere sight of them would suffice for him to understand what they wanted: and, when at last the king set out to return to Isfahan and he caught sight of the Fathers, he at once turned his horse toward, and drew up alongside them. So they dismounted immediately, and, when he had given them his hand according to custom, the Shah asked whether they had anything fresh to say. Fr. John answered that nothing fresh had happened to them, apart from what they had said to his Majesty days before, that they had come to remind his Majesty and also to have a sight of his Majesty, whom he highly esteemed. At those words the Shah smiled and, bending to the ear of the Father, said to him that the letters for the Pontiff were already finished and he had written to His Holiness that he should inform the princes and sovereigns of Christendom in his ('Abbas I's) name that this Muhammadan king of Persia was saying that the true spirit of God was Jesus Christ, that the legitimate vicar of Christ was the Pope, and that whosoever did not obey the latter could not be considered by any person as a real and good Christian: that, just as he, the Shah, for the sake of his religion for so many years past had waged and was continuing to wage war with the Turks, so also they should do the same for the religion and Faith of Christ, of which the Turks were such enemies, and in that matter like good Christians they should obey the Sovereign Pontiff, who so insistently urged them to do so: should they not do this, they were not Christians, but heretics and infidels: and, just as he, in order to gratify the Pope, his friend, had given to the Fathers sent by the latter both a site and church, in which he allowed them freely to pray and say their Office and as he treated with such courtesy all the Franks who came to his country, so too they ought to go to war, if for no other reason to please the Pope, their father, and recover those places of which to their so great shame they had allowed themselves to be robbed: saying that that would be sufficient to prove to him that they were in fact real and good Christians: should they not do so, he should consider them bastard and illegitimate children. When he had thus spoken, the king asked Fr. John whether in his opinion the letter in such terms would do all right: and, when the Father assented and applauded it, he added that it would be a good thing if with this opportunity his Majesty also were to write to the king of Spain. This reminder was very welcome to the Shah, who said that by all means he wished to do so and to write this too in like tenor, and further that he was thinking of writing to the Venetian Consul in Aleppo