

"all the Armenians, who went about as if terrified, anticipating some serious hurt and displaying great disgust at it in the presence of the Shah and strong opposition, so that he should not become suspicious, as on a former occasion, and think that this was their doing. "Over this new title" (i.e. 'Visitor of the Armenian Church') "the Shah too began on the one hand to be annoyed, and on the other to mock because he considered the business of the silk and the rest to have been so badly managed. . . . Finally, when he (the Bishop) had arrived at Isfahan, they gave him an honourable reception, the Shah dissimulating and showing him a smiling face and paying him many compliments. But afterwards, when the Bishop presented to the Shah what he was bringing from his Catholic Majesty, the Shah asked 'which was the value of the silk, and which the "saughat"'—a Persian word for 'present' or 'souvenir'—from the king of Spain. The Bishop answered that the "saughat" consisted of some pieces of gold and very curious things with stones of great value: while the value of the silk was represented by all those spices he had brought from India, i.e. a large quantity of pepper and cinnamon, etc.

"The Shah then had calculations made as to how much all those spices would be worth, and they reckoned it at very little, but, even if taken at a wide margin, in Persia they could not be worth 15,000 ducats: and, when the pieces of gold and those spices are added together against the value of the silk, they say it would not reach half the value of the silk; because at a minimum each load of silk delivered from Persia in Aleppo is worth 1,000 ducats, and therefore in Spain would be worth something more. And nobody blamed his Catholic Majesty for sending so small compensation in return for so much silk, seeing that he was sending double and more (the value) of what actually reached his hands. The blame lay with him who had deceived his Catholic Majesty. . . .

" . . . Afterwards, when the Shah saw himself so cheated, he sent to tell the Bishop that "his lordship had to pay for all the silk, as well as the interest" (on its value) "for the past years because that silk belonged to a mosque of his, to which he had assigned this deal in order to bring it in some profit. In defence the Bishop asserted that the silk was nothing but a present. When the Shah learnt this, he took it very ill and compelled the Bishop to write to his Majesty the king of Spain about this, jointly with an Augustinian Father. "When" (in his turn) "the king of Spain had this brought to his notice, he was greatly annoyed with the Bishop, because the latter had not reported to him that the silk was for sale; and he sent out instructions making clear his great displeasure with the Bishop, "but these arrived when the Bishop had already left Persia. . . ."

Incident followed on incident. The Carmelite historian, Fr. Eusebius—on the authority of one of the Fathers in Persia, unnamed by him¹—relates that one day, while the Bishop of Cyrene was out walking with the Carmelites, they happened to pass a building where the Shah was 'inducting' a new head of the 'Sufi' order of darwishes: noticing them, the Shah had them called inside and was especially gracious to the Bishop. The hour being late 'Abbas I ordered the repast to be brought and made the ecclesiastics sit on one side of him, the new superior of the darwish confraternity on the other. Ignorant possibly of the etiquette of the country, Mgr de Gouvea committed indiscretions, firstly, in causing some of his own people to sit at the same 'table'² which the Shah took as a slight, although he said nothing at the time. At the end of the meal gifts to the new superior were made—the Shah the equivalent of 1,000 scudi, the representatives of the city, the grandees proportionately, and last came ten or twelve Armenians of Julfa with a valuable donation in the name of their community, whereupon the Bishop, turning to 'Abbas I, was so tactless as to express his satisfaction at seeing *his* subjects, assigned to him by the Pope, contribute to the satisfaction of his Majesty. In vain an attempt was made to steer the conversation into more prudent channels: feigning to be greatly pleased, 'Abbas I led on Mgr de Gouvea to expatiate on *his* jurisdiction, while

¹ MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, part II, 3rd book, chap. IV.

² This word *tavola* in Italian is hardly likely to have been the wooden object we know by the name, but presumably is used to equal *sufreh*, the Persian cloth spread on the ground.