

“on their shoulders: it was finely worked and very beautiful. Then a small chest, heavily gilt, in which his Majesty sent him a complete table service for the road in silver, containing even candlesticks, etc. Each man carried two articles in his hand from the gilt chest in which the service was kept. Next, another small coffer with articles made of iron and steel such as knives, pincers, small hammers, files, etc., of all sorts: and, as the Shah is always busy making bows for warfare, some plaster rings to be worn on the thumb of the left hand when drawing the bow: as it is here found all ready-made, it is much prized.

“Then behind this there came a great glass coffer, richly worked, with golden pillars between each sheet of glass: this the king of Persia had sent to Italy to a private subject of his (to have made), and it had been so badly made that, after it was finished, it was mortgaged in Milan for 5,000 or 6,000 ducats and so remained for several years. Our lord king, Philip III, learning of this, ordered it to be got out of pawn and sent as a present to the Shah of Persia. The latter was highly grateful for this compliment from the king of Spain and took great pleasure in this coffer as being so costly and unique an object. It was carried by eight men.

“Last of all, after that, there were brought many pieces of crimson cloth and velvets, steel helmets, very fine arquebuses, richly tooled and gilded, and some lances: and behind them a great mastiff, which the ambassador gave the Shah, who thought much of it: and besides there were 30 camels laden with pepper and spices which his Catholic Majesty had ordered to be taken from India and which would be worth a large sum of money to the Persian monarch.

“So the procession passed through the middle of the town and the square, with the ambassador and his servants richly attired in front, as far as the king’s palace: then, passing by a large courtyard with a very fine gate they entered a garden, on one side of which there were some verandas in which were the Shah and his nobles, and on the other side there was a tower, all lattices, in which were the Shah’s women. When the ambassador arrived he was invited to sit down, while the presents were carried on in front of the Shah, and then passed on into some inner corridors and rooms, where they were kept.¹

“Together with the other persons the Shah paid great attention to everything: it seemed as if his eyes were starting from his head; and, when the crystal coffer arrived in front of him, he gave a sigh and looked up to heaven, as if thanking God at seeing that article he had so much desired. Then, when the arquebuses and muskets arrived, he called for one to inspect it (the one which he noticed to be the largest) and showed signs of great satisfaction at seeing it.

“It was half-past eleven o’clock by the time this was finished, and the Shah ordered lunch to be brought and invited the ambassador to it, summoning also a Discalced Carmelite Father, named Fr. John Thaddeus of S. Elisaeus, of the convent they have in Isfahan, saying that he was to bring a book of the Psalms in the Persian tongue. When the Father in question had come in front of the ambassador he presented the book, which the Shah kissed and held over his head, saying that he greatly prized it, and that whoever did not believe what was written therein was an infidel and insulted God. On this day the Father in question served as interpreter and ate with the king and the ambassador: and the Shah displayed much piety, saying so many things and with such emotion about the immortality of the soul and death that at times they saw him shed tears—which caused much consternation to the ambassador and the Father in question, who said various suitable things much to the point in answer. Afterwards I heard the ambassador and the Father remark that a Christian, very well instructed, could not say the things he (the Shah) then said in favour of our Faith, and that either he (‘Abbas I) was the

¹ The total value of these presents was estimated at 100,000 ducats at the time (*vide* Don Luis Cabrera de Cordoba): one wonders what became of these *objets de vertu* in the course of the next three centuries—were all looted by the Afghans, or are some in the palace museum formed by the Qajar dynasty?