

"Isfahan: the merchants in England choose him to receive the money, which they remit  
 "him in order to purchase the silk, which each year may attain a total quantity of 600,000  
 "ducats,<sup>1</sup> which is shipped and exported from Jashk, a port on the Persian Gulf, in English  
 "ships which come out each year. This English Agent is treated by the Shah like an  
 "ambassador.

"At the season when the Fr. Visitor General arrived in the city of Isfahan, the English  
 "had some articles, which had reached them by the ships that year, and they had asked  
 "an audience of the king in order to offer them as gifts, and so his Highness sent for them  
 "on that day and also summoned our Fr. Vincent, whom together with his companion<sup>2</sup>  
 "the king of Persia received inside the Haram or Saraglio, where no one may enter without  
 "special permission from his Majesty.

"With his back to the wall of the farther side of the room, his Highness was sitting, as  
 "was his wont, on the floor, which was covered with rich carpets: he was eating alone  
 "from off a silken tablecloth. He had in front of him a single, but very large silver dish,  
 "on which there was a variety of foods made from rice of various hues,<sup>3</sup> all cooked dif-  
 "ferently and each arranged in its compartment, in the separate compartments of rice  
 "there being buried partridges, pigeons, quails, and all sorts of boiled and roasted meats.  
 "He had also in front of him some Chinese porcelain bowls of rather small size, filled with  
 "the juice of lemons and oranges sweetened with sugar and flavoured with spices, from  
 "which to take a spoonful or two from time to time while he ate.<sup>4</sup> For it is the Persian  
 "custom, while they are eating, not to drink water or wine, and in order to be able to  
 "digest the food . . . they use these juices while feeding: when they have finished, after  
 "a short time they begin to drink. . . .

"Round the same apartment were also seated and eating off tablecloths of silk some  
 "of the principal among the king's subjects and two envoys from the king of Tatar,  
 "who had come from Caffa" (Crimean peninsula) "and also the English Agent mentioned  
 "above together with his Lutheran chaplain attired in a flowing gown of black damask,  
 "having wide and long sleeves . . . as well as their interpreter with four other English  
 "heretics.

"The Fr. Visitor entered and made the proper obeisance to the Shah, who bade him  
 "sit down, together with his companion, at the same tablecloth and dish, from which he  
 "himself was eating. He (the Shah) said that he was welcome and that he remembered  
 "seeing him in Persia on two previous occasions, and knew him very well: then he enquired  
 "about the Visitor's health and the date of his arrival in Isfahan. Next, Fr. Vincent  
 "presented the letters he had brought: two Briefs<sup>5</sup> from His Holiness (one in reply to a  
 "letter, in which the Shah had written to the Pope) another letter from the Grand Master  
 "of Malta, who had handed it to the Fr. Visitor General on his passage by Malta. The  
 "Shah replied graciously and, taking the letters, gave them to Mir Abul Ma'ali, his chief  
 "secretary of state, to have translated.

"Two days previously the English had been with the king and discoursed at great length  
 "on the matter of religion and spoken ill of the Catholics saying that they were idolaters,  
 "who adored pictures and images, and made the sign of the cross, etc. The Shah had  
 "said that he would bring the Fathers together with them, so that they might hold a  
 "disputation on these matters.

"This was the motive why the king of Persia asked the Fathers about the difference  
 "there is between Catholics and English.

"The Fr. Visitor answered that the English are heretics and false Christians, and that

<sup>1</sup> This was a remarkable burst of trade in a matter of some five years since the English Company first visited Persia.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Fr. John Thaddeus.

<sup>3</sup> The *pilau's* of the Persian cuisine are numerous and treated in many ways—with saffron, turmeric, cochineal, and fruit-juices, sauces and vegetables, game, poultry, meat.

<sup>4</sup> The viands and lay-out of a Persian meal as described here are equally true of the dishes, fruit-juices, etc., used in 1925.

<sup>5</sup> The text of one, dated 16.7.1620, is given with other Latin Briefs in the appendix to this work: it is merely a letter of recommendation.