

“all that they had captured from his father, and even extended his possessions to their hurt.  
“He has taken Hurmuz from the Portuguese.

“He enjoys making scimitars, arquebuses, bridles and saddles for horses, weaving cloth, distilling salts, orange-flower water and medicaments, and—in short—with all mechanical crafts, if not perfect, he is at least somewhat conversant. It is not a matter for surprise to learn that the Shah takes pleasure in mechanical arts, because in the Levant and especially Persia a man is considered ignoble and not esteemed, even when of high rank, if he does not know some art or craft: and often the Fathers have been asked in what craft they practised. Therefore unable to remain idle the king is now intent on this craft, now on some other occupation: and from the quickness of his nature he will learn it rapidly and do it particularly well.

“He has a natural eloquence, which he garbs with tricks of speech and sophistries and many sharp points and satirical remarks, and with it he will keep a whole brigade occupied from morn to eve, without once stopping.

“By nature he is cautious, where his own interests are not concerned, and he gives decisions and governs in a straightforward manner and with the utmost dispatch and very few words: and for the most part he is ready to listen and in replying arranges so as not to dwell on every point.

“He does not know how to remain idle and for that reason is so devoted to the chase, even of birds. Whatsoever time there is left over for him from military practices he spends on seeing to his armaments, cleaning weapons—which he does with his own hand: he often visits the stables, in which he has many good horses, which he is wont to distribute among his soldiers according to the needs of each. He has 30,000 horses in various parts of the kingdom, from which there come to him a vast number of colts which he has trained by good horsemasters, whom he keeps for the purpose; and, when he has chosen the best (of the animals) for himself, he gives the others to whomever he may think fit. The Persians as a race are practised horsemen, but more than any of them and the best to be seen in the saddle is the king, who does remarkable feats on horseback: he knows how to shoe horses and to school them better than anyone else and takes care of them. He has many breeds . . . and from various countries of the world: from hand to hand, for many generations, their pedigrees have been and are still being noted with the names of each one, so that the truth may not be lost.

“He has a very large number of slaves and, in order not to have to feed them all himself, he puts them to crafts, so that not only do they earn their victuals by this, but he also makes money out of it. Among the skilled professions he knows and likes to practise with his own hand is to emasculate many of his slaves: and he does it with such care, and better than those skilled in that profession, that they are very few who die under his hands.

“He is superstitious in his actions and guides and regulates his conduct by what his astrologers tell him. He is very free and easy in his movements, going through the city on horseback unaccompanied, save for a single man ahead: he eats when and where it may suit him, without any regularity, and gives audience in all sorts of places and even in his shirt and drawers.

“He is very suspicious for his life, often changing the bed where he is to sleep, saying that the world lies on one side of a pair of scales, he on the other, wishing by that to express that he and his life are worth as much as the whole world. In fine, he exhibits himself as being a fine trooper who does not know how either to read or to write, and yet rules with such prudence and skill that he keeps the world upside down and causes himself to be obeyed with so much awe. He is absolute master in his dominions, which he has administered by renegades” (i.e. of Christian race) “whom he has enslaved, and by Khans and Sultans and Wazirs, who at his slightest sign are ready to go off to fight.

“Without exaggeration, the king can put in the field 80,000 horsemen, apart from adventurers and infantry, of whom he does not take much account. This force is armed