

“with scimitars, bows and lances: and many of them now have arquebuses. They are protected by stout helmets and short cuirasses, which stop arrows and arquebuse shots. Many of them drape their horses with very fine, rich trappings, the saddles being set with gold and silver, the bridle and breast-plates of various styles and work. The horses are dexterous and mettlesome, very docile, swift of pace and fierce in battle. . . . For this reason it is no marvel that some of them are sold at 1,000 and 1,300 zecchini, though there are such numbers of them that almost all the army is mounted, and many good ones can be bought cheaply, i.e. at 30, 20 and 15 scudi each, while ordinary animals cost 9, 7 and 6 scudi each. . . .

“The Persians . . . are afraid of artillery, although at times they have not feared to make sudden charges on trenches of the enemy: none the less they have adopted the use of it in their forts. . . .

“The kingdom of Persia, taken alone without its tributary states, is poor in money. . . . The king may have as revenue from the subjugated and tributary kingdoms 10 million pieces of gold—rather more than less—apart from the private revenue of the Crown. As to expenditure which the king incurs over the fortresses, magistrates, workshops, grandees and his family, it is less than one-third of the revenue, the more so because to pay for his cavalry all the towns, villages and forts are assigned, so that every person with a title or of good family holds them with the sole obligation of serving the king in time of war, under penalty of death. . . .”

From the mass of first-hand information then available to him the Carmelite compiler in the early 18th century of the *MSS. Hist. Miss.* summed up¹ the estimates given of strong points and blemishes in 'Abbas I:

“Though he could barely write or read, he was excellently informed of the customs, lives and other facts regarding the sovereigns and men of distinction at all foreign Courts, both by his agents and the gold, which he spent in obtaining news. The lengthy conversations which he had with, and the entertainments he gave to foreigners, especially Europeans, were intended largely to instruct himself in affairs of the world—a real school, wherein he employed himself in drawing out the inmost thoughts of men skilled in various branches of knowledge. He introduced the arts not only from Europe, but from India and farther afield, seeking everywhere for teachers of them, whom he held in esteem. . . . In undertaking the construction of palaces, mosques, shrines, madrases, caravansarais, and aqueducts, and in his liberality to foreigners, he displayed magnificence and taste.”

(Even in the twentieth century the number of “Shah 'Abbasi” buildings throughout Persia, their fine dimensions, solidity and imposing appearance is remarkable.)

“He was moderate in his dress, and”—a curious trait—“would turn the back of his turban to the front.”

“. . . With all this information about foreign affairs he possessed minute information of every small township in his kingdom. . . . By the terrible nature of the executions, which he ordered, he cleansed the country of plotters against his government, of robbers and of courts of injustice. To make himself feared and to win popularity he adopted any method to his hand.”

As to his vices the Carmelites close to the palace had ample occasion to note them, and to some reference has been made: in cruelty they considered he had not his equal:²

“. . . He succeeded his father by having his brothers suppressed: he killed, or mutilated his own three sons. For a mere suspicion, a fit of temper, or a jest he killed notables and subjects: a single shadow across his ambition was a capital crime in itself and he

¹ *MSS. Hist. Miss.*, chap. 27, book 5, part 3.

² In ruthlessness 'Abbas I suggests a comparison with Ivan Grozni, almost his contemporary.