

“tomorrow the Shah is having Monseigneur invited to another reception at night, when all the palace is to be illuminated with artificial lights—an honour never paid save to guests who are kings or of royal blood. And so *gloria vitantem sequitur*. . . .”

As appears to have been frequently the case at this period, the Holy See had not, when accrediting its envoy to Persia, sufficiently provided for his expenses with the result that the effectiveness of the mission was hampered, the results spoilt largely: what could be more disconcerting and derogatory, in fact, than for a special envoy to be in debt during his mission? So in a half-humorous lament, on his departure from Bandar 'Abbas, 4.4.1700,¹ the nephew of Pope Innocent XII wrote his experiences of the working of the system which the ingenuity of Persian courtiers had contrived to entertain distinguished foreign visitors at the public charge (in more senses than one) and simultaneously fill their own pockets. No wonder foreign envoys were welcome in Persia, however many!

“. . . From the time I entered Persia there were assigned to me 60 'abbasi per diem for my expenses and those of my 'family' ” (i.e. suite—missioners and servants), “the king continuing the same bounty up to the day that I quit his dominions for India. In addition, I have been provided on my journeys with as many horses and camels as I needed, and have always been accompanied by a royal official” (i.e. the Mihmandar) “and many soldiers, who had to see to my lodging and whatever might be necessary. My effects and my companions have enjoyed a free pass everywhere, and every respect and comfort. . . . But, I ought to have received, according to the daily allowance, 3,840 'ungari'.²

“The liberality of the king and magnificence of this Court is perhaps singular, because they do the same to every ambassador, even to everyone bringing letters from European princes to the king, making no distinction between mere bearers of letters or couriers and an ambassador, except in the manner in which they are treated: and they take the measure of the allowance to be assigned from the person concerned himself. Had I been informed at the beginning of the style used, I could have entered Persia with a larger number of servants and greater pomp. But, because I caused it to be said that I was only bringing 20 persons with me, that I should need only 20 camels, they assigned me only 60 'abbasi; whereas, had I had 200 or 400, as had the Turkish ambassador, I should have received 200 or 300 'ungari' daily, besides horses and camels on which much gain can however be made, because sometimes a lesser number is actually taken and the difference is gain which goes into one's own pocket.

“But the crafty officials of the Court, with a nicety of cunning, would never settle up the accounts: they would go on refunding me from time to time some sum or other; until, when I had been given my *cong e* by the king and was on the point of departure” (from Isfahan) “and it was no longer permissible for me to appeal to the king, who all the more unfortunately was at that time far away from the capital, they cut me off more than half” (i.e. the balance due). “It was left for me to recoup myself on the journey from Isfahan to this port and I was not mistaken, for the Mihmandar carried a large sum with him. But here they have cheated me worse than in Isfahan, carrying me on with fine hopes till the last day, and then have given me nothing. Therefore it is that I am in such straits. . . . There should have been much profit from the horses and camels, but all went to the Mihmandar who accompanied me. He was even too unabashed in his robbing, coming to an agreement with the other attendants and had himself allotted 9 shahi for every horse and 11 for every camel, for which he paid only 3 or 4 shahi: they divided the balance between them daily. In addition, the extortions they commit in every place they pass are barbarous, and the officials gain more from them than is ever given to the ambassador. For this reason I think these gentry like envoys to come frequently, so as to be able to rob the more.

¹ *S.R.*, vol. 541, p. 20.

² Florins, from their name originally coined in Hungary, later imitated in several cities of Italy.