

“As to the gifts which I made to the Shah, I was asked whether I was presenting them in the name of the Pope, and of the other princes, or in my own name. I replied that the papal gifts had remained behind in Aleppo, whence, if his Majesty so desired, he might be so kind as to cause them to be brought, but that these I had I was offering in my own name. I presented him with two fine pieces of gold Venetian brocade, valued at 250 ‘ungari’: one large clock striking the hours and with an alarm, valued at 140 ‘ungari’: another smaller specimen, also striking, with a gilt case and enamelled, valued at 210 ‘ungari’: one gold filigree work-box with enamelled pictures, costing 150 ‘ungari’: one clock, with a gilt case encrusted with diamonds given me by the Princess of Valdimono, of the value of 100 ‘ungari’: an instrument to lift weights, which I had made anew and which was well liked, estimated at 50 ‘ungari’: some pictures finely painted: two fine mirrors with filigree frames: a microscope and a magnifying glass. All the above were valued by the royal officials, well versed in such matters, at about 800 ‘ungari’. The custom of the Court is to give back the double of what is presented, but to me they gave only half, and that partly in money, partly in products of the country of little value. The organs,<sup>1</sup> spectacles, instruments for lifting weights, and other curiosities, made in Rome with the 900 scudi given me by the Sac. Congregation, remained in Aleppo. The king, or rather his officials, let me know that there was no need for me to wait for these, nor that I should give them to the king: whereat I was obliged to have them brought at my own expense from Aleppo to Erivan, where the Khan, understanding that they were presents for the king, sent them on at the royal expense as far as Isfahan, with the result that all the articles fell into the hands of the royal officials, who had all the boxes opened, took out one organ, and I know not if it was the same with the two spinets . . . and the other things, without giving a word of thanks and not even sending me the rest to this port at their own expense. This should be made known to His Holiness and the Sac. Congregation, so that, if on some occasion the Pope has to write to the king, he may complain of it and also, if they send ambassadors to Rome, these should be treated as the Persians treat others. In Shamakha I had already heard of the loss of many clocks and other fine presents extracted by the governor of that place. Further, there was the loss of the 1,000 ‘ungari’ given me by the Emperor, which were forwarded to the brother of a rich Catholic merchant of Astrakhan to be paid to me at Shamakha, where I found him bankrupt. At this port” (i.e. Bandar ‘Abbas) “I have been obliged to remain three months and more because there was no opportunity of sailing and for that reason I had to incur considerable expenses without recovering a single stiver of the allowance ordered by the king to be paid. It should be added that I shall have to sail in a Persian native vessel” (dhow), “no ship at all of the Franks having come this year. The passage money, at however much it be agreed, cannot be less than 350 ‘ungari’. Such great losses have upset the accounts as estimated in advance, the scene being thus suddenly changed from grandeur to poverty. . . .”

“So have mercy on me, at all events, my friends. Have pity on my miseries, for I find myself at present 700 ‘ungari’ and more in debt, but now gayer of heart than ever, and with greater hope of the Divine protection. Do not forget us, however, your lordships, so that in a year of public jubilee the Sacred Congregation and His Holiness may dispense to us liberal alms. . . . On the journey and when staying in houses the customary exercises, Mass, prayer, catechism, short exhortations, are never omitted. Solemn days are observed with all pomp, no less than in Europe. It makes me glad to see the liberty which I have had everywhere for public worship, and with all the majesty and devoutness of our ecclesiastical rites. . . .”

Though nowhere specifically mentioned in the scattered records examined for this work it would appear that this distinguished Carmelite was empowered to treat in Persia on at least

<sup>1</sup> In his letter of 1.4.1700 (*S.R.*, vol. 541, p. 17) he specified that “the organs intended by His Holiness as presents for the king of Persia and the Great Mogul have remained for about two years in the customs-house at Aleppo, there being no one there to pay the duties, and still less the cost of transporting these things by land to Isfahan and to India. . . .”