

“districts, particularly the town of Van, then a principal fortress of Persia six days’ journey distant from Tabriz. For that reason the said king (Tahmasp) had him slain, as also Sām Mirza his second brother, suspecting that he too might revolt, while the third brother had previously died a natural death of whom there remains a son who has his governorship in India¹ and to whom the king desired to give in marriage one of his daughters and summoned to that end, but the people” (of that province?) “would never agree to his going to Qazwin, doubting whether the king might not do him some harm.”

“The children of this king (Tahmasp I) are eleven males and three females, born of various wives. The eldest is named Khudabandeh Mirza, aged about 43² years—a man of a quiet nature, who cares not much about worldly affairs, contenting himself with a small government given him by his father in the province of Khurasan, which is called ‘Cheri’ [? *sic* perhaps Harat], and he has three sons, the eldest at the Court and aged 14 years,³ of most handsome looks, and high spirits, dearly loved by the king both for his qualities as also for the reason that, except for these, he (the king) has no other grandsons by his sons. Isma’il, the second son (i.e. of Shah Tahmasp I) is aged 41⁴ and is naturally robust and of very great courage, and a valiant heart, and eager for fighting, having on many occasions displayed his valour against the Ottomans, in particular against the Pasha of Erzerum, whose very numerous force he routed with a small number of cavalry. If the Pasha had not retired, he (Isma’il) could have made himself master of the town. For that reason Maqsum Baig, the chief councillor of the king and a great enemy of Isma’il, took the opportunity to tell the king that he knew there were too lofty ideas in the mind of that young man, since without his father’s permission he had collected an army and invaded the country of the Ottomans in time of peace. This seemed to him (Maqsum Baig) signs of scant obedience; and he showed the king some letters sent to the captains in the provinces calling on them to rise and fight against the Turks. Therefore, by the persuasion of Maqsum Baig, the king determined to put him (Isma’il) in a fortress under the guard of captains and many soldiers. So for 17 years past⁵ he has been kept in captivity, and, although this year the guards have been taken off him, still he has not been set free. Many times, to please him, the king has sent him beautiful women to keep, but he has never consented” (i.e. to have anything to do with them) “saying that he himself was patiently bearing to be the prisoner of his father, but that it would have been too great a strain on him to see sons of his prisoners too, and also that women were not suitable for a captive.

“Isma’il is beyond measure beloved by his father, but there is a great fear because, though the whole people most ardently desire to have him as their lord, the nobles⁶ show that they are much afraid of him on account of his cruel nature. For that reason it is considered that, when he succeeds to the throne, a large part of the chief officers in the army will be dismissed by him, and a number of his brothers, who have had charge of a considerable portion of the kingdom, will be put out of the way.

“Sultan Haidar Mirza, the third son and lieutenant of his father, is aged 18 years,⁷ small in frame but of very handsome features, and most graceful both in speaking and in his dress, and a consummate horseman. He is exceedingly beloved by his father, and delights in listening to stories of war, although on account of his very delicate and almost feminine frame and build, he does not show himself very suited for such occupation. He makes attempts to kill animals with his own hands, and often is unable to thrust them through the skins, even when the swords are excellently tempered. I have myself seen him make such like attempts, and afterwards remain full of confusion and blush, making

¹ Perhaps Kandahar.

² Shah Muhammad Khudabandeh was thus born in or about 1531.

³ Presumably Hamzeh Mirza, eldest brother of the future Shah ‘Abbas I, and thus born about 1560.

⁴ Shah Isma’il II therefore born in or about 1533.

⁵ And his imprisonment began in 1557 and may, therefore, coming so soon after the peace signed with Sultan Sulaiman (as related above), have been a measure to prevent his bellicosity from bringing on a fresh war with Turkey.

⁶ *Sic*, for “Sultani” in original Italian.

⁷ From the context 18 years reads admissibly, though the gap from the ages of the two elder brothers is strange.