

"But what above all has pleased, and pleases him at present are women and money. "Women have taken such possession of the mind of this king that many, not knowing what else to say, affirm that they have bewitched him, so that he remains most of the time talking with them and sometimes consulting them about affairs of state, casting figures of geomancy in mundane business, writing down also his dreams, and those which are fulfilled at some date the women recall to him, saying that he is a prophet of Allah, at which flattery he feels the greatest satisfaction: and, although by nature this king is not liberal, with those women it may rather be said that he is a spendthrift, giving them jewels and money in profusion. These women are sometimes wont to come out of the saraglio with the king's permission, those that is who have sons, on the pretext of going to see them when sick: and I myself saw the mother of Sultan Mustafa Mirza, who was a little indisposed, go out shortly after midday with her face covered with a black cloth hood, riding like the men do, accompanied by four slaves and six men on foot. . . .

"He is wont too to give his officers ('Sultani') slave-girls, so as not to spend money on them, but, when he orders them to be brought to him, they adorn them with jewels and other rich trappings. Now, although the avaricious mind of this king can clearly be perceived from what has already been said, still some particulars remain to be given to Your Highness, and they will afford you the greater certainty of this.

"The king sends to Hurmuz for turbans and cotton tissues, and to Khurasan for velvets, satins and other silk cloths, and to Aleppo for woollens, and from those goods he has drapery made, which he gives as pay to the soldiers, placing to their account '10' for what was worth '1'. He accepts every sort of present, however small it may be, nor does he trouble to give away anything in return. I myself saw a Turkish subject, who had come from Aleppo with the intention of making himself Persian, kiss the feet of the king and offer him a mule and 12 gold ducats. The king took the ducats and said to him that he gave him back the mule, taking note of his name, as is usually done with those who come from the country of the Ottomans, indicating that an account of them was being kept. Moreover, during the war-time a soldier captured the son of a Uzbek lord, one of the greatest enemies of the king, with such a following on the borders of Khurasan that the king is forced to give him 400 tumans annually, which in our money make 8,000 scudi, so that he should not molest the caravans which come from India:¹ and when, having bestowed on the soldier in question a village and 1,000 scudi in exchange for such a noble captive, a governor (official) thinking to receive an even greater reward wanted to make the prisoner a present to the king, the latter gave nothing more than one horse. He shows very great liberality in providing for many persons, but by assigning payment in places where they are never paid, except in cases of great favours and gifts. Every day, 'for the sake of his soul', many kinds of tribute and imposts are removed and people made free of them; but for the most part such measures are not put into execution, because, when two or three years have passed, he wants the whole sum at once, as he did at the time when I was with the Court in the district of Julfa,² inhabited entirely by Armenians, who had been exempted for 8 years from paying tribute, when all at once he determined to demand it for the whole time past, to the loss and ruin of those poor Christians, besides Turkhal Baig, major-domo of Sultan Haidar Mirza the lieutenant of the king, being sent with 15 loads of clothes and shoes to 'discount' the money in question. For this king is accustomed daily to change 50 times or more his clothing, which is

"their families in marriage alliances, it appears that they have been brought to be more tranquil, and that the revolts which used to happen no longer occur, for, when the king sent some 'sultan' to govern some town . . . , he would keep it as if it were his own, putting himself in opposition to the king. This was a cause for the treasures of Shah Tahmasp being increased because he had several of them put to death. This country has never made an alliance with anyone, because it trusts no one. But should it have to ask for assistance and place trust in anyone, it would do so through the governor of Hurmuz, since he has the facility of vessels sailing to Basra and thence to Baghdad, placing such confidence in him that nothing he asked would ever be refused. . . ."

¹ History repeats itself: exactly similar conditions prevailed over the southern roads of Persia, before the World War of 1914, in the case of the Qashqai chieftains, for instance.

² Spelt "Ghilfa" in the manuscript, i.e. the town on the Araxes, on the road to Tabriz.