

“distributed to the people, what was worth ‘1’ being reckoned at ‘10’. No one, however, “must show himself unwilling to take such clothing, but rather exhibit great gratitude for “being allowed to have it.

“The same was done in the district of Alingia . . . although they use only the Turkish, “Persian and Armenian languages, these places are called by the Persians ‘Frankish’; the “archbishop is designated ‘Archbishop of Nakhchiwan’, who twice has come to this city” (i.e. Venice), “as can be seen from the passports issued to him, one under his Highness “Girolamo Priuli, in the year 1561, on the 13th June by secretary Vico, the other under “his Highness Loredano in 1569 on the 26th April by secretary Garzoni: I have seen and “read them, since for 48 days I was at that place where I had taken refuge to escape being “pursued by the *chaoushes* sent after me by the Pasha of Erzerum.

“The king often sells jewels and deals in other merchandise, buying and bartering with “that subtlety which a passable trader might use. It is true that six years ago he did a “deed, which was meritorious rather than otherwise, since he took off every sort of Customs “existing in his kingdom, which were perhaps heavier than in any other part of the world, “because he was taking one-seventh part of all merchandise besides what the officials “were appropriating.¹ It is, however, affirmed that he had that done because of some “visions which he had in a dream, as he said that the angels had seized him by the neck, “and demanded of him whether it were fitting for a king, who was reputed just and who “came from the lineage of ‘Ali, to ruin so many poor people by levying such cruel imposts “and that they bade him free the people from these. The king had awoken full of fright, “and commanded that in all parts of his kingdom the taxes should be abolished. As can “clearly be perceived from day to day in his acts, he has come to regret that action of his, “for in order to accumulate money he is doing thousands and thousands of deeds unworthy “of a man, not to speak of a king, which I shall not relate in detail to Your Highness, in “order not to weary you with the length of their recital, knowing that the matters pre- “viously narrated will suffice to make his character known: and I shall pass on to speak “of his Court, which is divided under two headings—the household of the king, and the “council of state.

“The king’s household is really composed of three classes of persons—women: children “of officers and nobles: and slaves bought by the king or received in gift by persons in “the Haram (for that is how with them the saraglio is called, where are the women, and “where he is waited on by them when he sleeps inside it)—they are all Circassian and “Georgian slaves. When he sleeps outside he is waited on, for his menial needs such as “being dressed, by male slaves, of whom he has some forty or fifty. They also have charge “of the drapery and cloth, and the buttery. The third class of people who wait on him “are noble youths, sons of officers and magnates, and they do not remain in the royal “palace, but come on duty there every morning and afternoon from their houses, sometimes “more in number, at others less, but usually about twenty. By turn the king is served by “them with water, when washing his hands, when his shoes are brought for him to put on, “and when they follow behind him in his walks in the gardens.

“The reward which the king gives to the male slaves, who serve him from the age of “15 to that of 25 or 30 years, always, however, with their beards shaved, is that, according “as they have served him well, the king lends one 20, another 30, another 60,000 ducats “at 20 per cent, sometimes for ten, at others for twenty years, he receiving the interest “from it from year to year, while they afterwards lend the money out at 50, 70 and 80 “per cent to gentlemen of the Court (who are after some offices or governorships from the “king) against good guarantees and pledges of property such as goods and houses. In “the case of those who have borrowed the money, if they do not settle with him who has “advanced the money either by returning the capital sum or paying the interest on it,

¹ This would appear to be not Customs only, but a general excise tax on all merchandise of over 14 per cent—worth note for going as far back as the 1560’s in Persia. As to the dream and the remission, even later than 1910 in parts of Persia tax-money levied by the civil authority was regarded as unclean, and unlawful in the religious sense.