

“May, he left Scutari with his whole camp in admirable order: and this he did to display “to his master, who was standing at the window, his great competence.” (Some days later) “Mustafa Pasha sent for the Agha of the Bombardiers, and handed over to him “all the artillery which he was taking with him, i.e. about 300 small pieces, and bade him “proceed via Angora to Erzerum, and there join him with the whole army. . . .”

When the commander-in-chief via Konieh and Sivas reached Erzerum, where he found the Pashas of Aleppo, Marash, Karkamish, Karamania and other provinces assembled with contingents, he had to halt for about a month to allow caravans of supplies and specie from distant centres to arrive: and, when they had come, he held a review of all the troops and artillery, causing certain Persian prisoners to be placed on the walls, in order that they might be impressed by the size and armament of the Turkish army. One of these prisoners he set free and, after making him a present, dispatched to the Shah with a letter, which according to this Italian version, was worded:

“Most serene king of Persia. I inform you that I, Mustafa Pasha, the vizir, commander-in-chief of the army of my master, Sultan Murad, the Ottoman emperor, have come here “with a countless host of infantry and 300,000 cavalry and 600 pieces of artillery, 6,000 “Janissaries and arquebusers to chastise those who have been responsible for the poisoning “of your brother Isma’il, and also to seize the country of the Georgian Christians. But, if “Your Highness should bar my way and try to defend those people, by the instructions of “my master I shall be obliged to fight you also. There is nothing else to be said save that “if a king of Persia, such as you are, should capture a mere slave of the Grand Signor of “the Turks, it will be no honour to him. But, should the contrary happen, it would be “an honour and infinite glory for me throughout the world that such a man as I had “captured a king like you. You will give me an answer to this, and meanwhile I shall “proceed to Shirwan to chastise those people.”

This was on the last day of July 1578. On the following day the general and whole force set out for the country of the Georgians, and ten days later penetrated into their borders. The narrative goes on to describe how after the Turkish vanguard had taken one fort by assault, and had subsequently settled down for a rest and sleep, they were attacked and badly handled by Muhammad Khan, a Persian commander until, reinforcements sent to their aid having been furnished with the commander-in-chief’s standard, drums and a guard of Janissaries, the Persians were deceived into thinking that the Turkish main body was on them, and withdrew. Large numbers of the heads of Persians killed, and prisoners subsequently decapitated were built up in pillars in order to intimidate the country people. This fight occurred 14.8.1578.

Then the narrative records how Georgian chieftains began to come in and surrender to the Turks and were rewarded, given presents and promised the Sultan’s protection. After posting a holding force in that district Mustafa Pasha with the rest of the army set off for Tiflis, and other submissions by Christian Georgians were made on his line of march; but in many places in the woods the Turks were harassed and attacked, and booty seized from their supply columns: and they found Tiflis evacuated, and a bridge across the river leading to the town and to Shirwan broken down. The Turkish general stopped his soldiers from going across and destroying the town; and, when the bridge was repaired, left a garrison and Janissaries and artillery and marched on into Shirwan. The route taken passed through the domain of a Georgian prince called Alexander, ‘king of the eastern march’, to whom a Turkish envoy was sent and who came in to make his submission. A description of the parade made to impress this princeling is given. A few days later Turkish scouts came up to the Persians, and more skirmishing ensued on the banks of a river, where owing to a bridge breaking the Persians lost many men by drowning, had the worst of it, and fled.

Not long afterwards, instigated by some of the Pashas many Turkish soldiers mutinied,