

“money or anything else, when we possessed the needful, as then; that Your Holiness had provided us with it when we left Rome: that the greatest gift he could bestow on us and that we should most esteem would be his favour. The Augustinian Prior replied that he did not want an ambassador sent, so that he would leave for India without a reply to the letter from the king of Spain. The Mihmandar (I think by direction of the Shah) inquired whether one of my companions was willing to go to Spain with the Persian envoy in question. We made apology for their not undertaking the mission by saying that Your Holiness had directed that they should remain in Persia in the service of the king, and that they could not depart unless Your Holiness or his Majesty gave orders to the contrary.

“On the following day we went to visit the Grand Wazir (to whom previously we had sent a present): he paid us many compliments. We begged him to help in obtaining sanction from the Shah for the Englishman (who was present) to be allowed to return to his country, which we asked of his Majesty in the name of His Holiness. The Wazir executed the commission with the Shah and obtained the permission and, I think, also requested that the Shah would dispatch him (R. Sherley) as his ambassador to Your Holiness and to the Christian princes in response to our mission, because in the reply which the Shah gave me in writing to the points, which I discussed with him in the name of Your Holiness, sealed with his private seal, he says: ‘I wanted to send one of my own people with Fr. Paul Simon, but, since you have requested me to send Don Robert Sherley, I am dispatching him’.

“It appeared to us that it was expedient to dissemble for the time being until the Englishman had quitted Persia, in order not to spoil the business: because otherwise he would not go away and, if he were to remain, he would be against His Holiness and ourselves.¹ I left instructions with the two Fathers, my companions, to tell the Shah, when he returned from Mazandaran, that in the name of His Holiness we had only asked him to grant permission to the Englishman to return to his own land, and nothing else, which was apparent from the ‘Note’ I had handed him (the Shah) in the Persian language signed by own hand, a copy of which remained with his Majesty: and that” (they should tell the Shah) “I would ask (unless he should give instructions to the contrary) His Holiness in his name for the bishop for the Armenians, as he bade me, with regard to which owing to his sudden departure I had not had time to learn more distinctly what was his (the Shah’s) wish in that and other respects, but that they (the Fathers) would take my place and inform me.

“The Mihmandar reported to the Shah that we would not accept anything: they told me that he displayed displeasure: however, he gave orders that we should be given 100 tumans, i.e. 1,500 scudi.

“On the following day, as I felt somewhat indisposed, I sent my companions (one of whom knew the Persian language well) together with our interpreters to ascertain when we should return to” (audience with) “the king. He (‘Abbas I) immediately summoned me, having to leave the same day on account of some news concerning the war which he had received. I went to him at once.

“The Shah was sitting at the gate of his saraglio on a plinth² made for the purpose, and was giving public audience. I kissed his hand, and he made me sit on another raised platform opposite him. The Wazir and two of his councillors were standing near the Shah, the rest at a distance. He dispatched” (the business of) “Don Robert the Englishman by giving orders to the Wazir as to the letters he was to write to Your Holiness

¹ The impression derived from all points of this account is that Robert Sherley did not go in 1608 to Europe as a valued plenipotentiary: that he himself was disheartened, much out of favour, and wanted an opportunity to get back to Europe (being still more or less a hostage for his brother): that ‘Abbas I had no use for him in Persia, or as his agent in Europe, and by preference would have let one of the Carmelites act as companion, interpreter and foil to his Persian emissary: Sherley was only sent because the Carmelites asked that he should be the companion, etc.: while the Carmelites, at first suspicious of his being a Protestant antagonist, thought thus to get him out of the way.

² “Poggio”: this was perhaps a *takcheh*, a small portion of plinth between two columns where Khans were wont till recently to sit at their gates transacting affairs, dispensing justice.