

“have many other vices, for which reason the Shah does not esteem them, nor does any person of quality, but only the common people. The Persians have one wife, and pay no attention to first and second degrees of relationship in matrimony: they have as many concubines as they can afford: and so they have special places for their wives which they call ‘saraglios’, into which they allow no man to enter, not even their own sons. The walls of the saraglios are very high; they have no windows looking on the streets, and those women are more closely cloistered than our nuns. They hardly ever go out, not even to the mosques, nor are they allowed to see anyone except the relatives: so that few respectable women are to be found in the streets. When women travel they do so on the backs of camels in certain great baskets covered with cloth or silk,<sup>1</sup> according to their standing, while the men ride on horseback: there are no vehicles. The nobles in their saraglios have many women, some 200, some 300 or more, whom they take with them when on campaign with the army or wherever they go, and I think that to have so many may be more out of pomp and show than for any other reason, because men of 70 and 80 years old have them and take them about with them, and, when they want to extol a rich man, they say ‘he has a large saraglio, or that he takes about with him so many ‘camel-loads of women’. Almost all the women who are to be seen in the squares, both in the clothes they wear and in other matters, comport themselves with much modesty; besides the long dresses they wear a kerchief of white linen which covers them completely and they never let their faces or their hands be seen. For the rest they go about and ride through the city.

“The Persians were formerly very superstitious and abhorred Christians, as if these latter were a foul race: thus they would not eat with them, nor from the vessels from which a Christian had eaten,<sup>2</sup> nor did they allow them to tread on their carpets, nor to touch them: if a Christian were to touch the garment of one, the man would take it off and have it washed. Nowadays, because the Shah shows great regard for Christians, passes his time with them and sets them at his table, they have abandoned all this and act towards them as they do towards their own people: only in some distant districts and among the common folk is it still kept up.

“Besides the Persians the king of Persia has many lands, where the Armenians are his vassals: they must be more than 400,000 households according to what they themselves have told me, 10,000 of these observing the Latin rite in everything. Formerly the Armenians were rich, especially those of Julfa; but now with these wars they have lost everything, and the king has transported them to Isfahan and other towns in the interior of Persia, being distrustful of their being on the frontiers. They have churches, a patriarch, archbishops, bishops (who are all Basilian monks), and many priests who marry (but not the Religious). The king allows them to follow their own rites, to have a church, where they celebrate in public. They are most hostile to the Greek (orthodox) and say that they would rather allow any dog to enter their churches than a Greek. They are friendly towards the Latins and confess that they received their Faith from Rome and that S. Gregory, whom they venerate as their patriarch, made his obedience to the Pontiff. I did not discover any errors in their creed, for they have accepted and endorsed the profession of Faith which was printed in Rome in the Armenian tongue: if there be some error, it is all from ignorance. The only doubt there be is whether they yield obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff; as I have said above, the patriarch and ecclesiastics paid us great respect and told us that they recognize the Sovereign Pontiff as their head, and they swore to it when the Augustinian Fathers discussed the matter of union with them. Only the Julfa folk, nearly all merchants and rich and heads of the rest, put difficulties in the way, and I think they must be schismatics: the rest are very ignorant, as also are the priests and bishops who hardly know how to read (from which arise the

<sup>1</sup> These are the *kajāweh*, already mentioned in a footnote.

<sup>2</sup> Even up till the Great War of 1914 in tribal country bordering the Persian Gulf the cups and glasses from which European guests had been entertained with refreshments were carefully set apart and specially cleansed by the domestics.