

“servants of the king, and he assigns posts to them and promotes them. His captain-general and other grandees belong to this corps: they serve mounted and each of them has servants according as he can afford. The third body consists of soldiers whom the great governors of Persia are obliged to maintain and pay the whole year: they will be about 50,000. The captain-general is obliged to keep up and pay 12,000 of them annually: others more or less, and to this end the king grants them, as it pleases him, the territories he captures, and all the revenue these produce: as, for instance, he gave the province of Shiraz to his captain-general and the province of Lar, which will produce many hundreds of thousands of scudi in revenue, of which he does not give a penny to the king. When they (the great governors) accomplish something signal in war, he gives them a governorship which produces greater revenue and sometimes the territory they capture is left to them. All the above-mentioned soldiers, who will total some 100,000, receive pay for the whole year. Then, according to the campaign and enterprise the king wishes to undertake, he enlists others, and, when it be necessary to make a great effort, he has it proclaimed throughout his country that whosoever is his well-wisher should follow him. Then everyone takes up arms.

“The Sultan of Turkey sent two ambassadors to the Shah of Persia to negotiate peace with him, and finally to Tabriz a lady from his (the Sultan's) saraglio for a similar discussion with the queen, aunt of Shah 'Abbas,¹ who, they say, is a woman of great intellect and much respected by the Shah, and who always accompanies him on campaign; but it had no result, although on this occasion he sent ambassadors to Constantinople (but he says that it was in order to influence the minds of some Turkish Pashas and make them his friends).

“The Shah has three sons: the eldest aged 22 years:² he has a wife and children. His mother was a Christian, and he is friendly towards Christians and not so quick-tempered as his father. The second son, 12 years old, has a temperament similar to that of his father. The third is aged 5 or 6. He has several daughters. His predecessors were wont to kill off their daughters because there were no neighbouring monarchs of equal rank to whom to marry them, and they (the former kings) did not like giving them in marriage to nobles of the country, for fear of the latter rebelling. In order to eliminate such cruel procedure this present Shah marries them to men of lowly position, as he did when we were there, giving one daughter to a camp commandant, the other to a captain. The eldest son born to the Shah inherits (the throne) even though he be by a slave woman.³ Regarding the religion of the king I think that no one knows what he believes: he does not observe the Muhammadan law in many things, nor is he a Christian. Six or seven years ago he displayed many signs of not being averse to our Faith: God knows whether they were feigned, or came from his heart. In his saraglio he has many Christian Armenian, Georgian, Circassian women. I think that he lets them live as they wish, because when I enquired what the Shah did with so many (holy) pictures that were presented to him as gifts and some relics of the Saints, for which he asked, the answer was made me that he used to give them to the women in his saraglio. Besides that he is well informed regarding the mysteries of our holy Faith and discourses on the mystery of the most holy Trinity: he knows many examples and allusions which the Saints give in order to prove it, and discourses about the other mysteries—which we know from a man who had the opportunity of hearing him—if he does not about the women in his saraglio or about some demon or other. On account of the many disappointments which he asserts the Christians have caused him all this fervour has cooled. With all that he does not detest them, for he converses and eats with them, he suffers us to say frankly what we believe about our Faith and his own: sometimes he asks us about this. To us he has given a house: he knows that we say Mass publicly, he allows whoever may wish among the

¹ Perhaps the widow of Shah Isma'il?

² i.e. Safi Mirza was born about 1586.

³ Such practice had fallen into desuetude, when Zill-us-Sultan, the eldest son, was not allowed to succeed Nasr-ud-Din Shah in 1896.