

“nightfall and delivered the king’s message to the two Fathers (Redempt and Benignus), “these latter at once mounted a horse, which had remained at the house, and set off at a good pace together with these two men to find the Shah.

“The place in question was a long distance from the house of the Carmelites, and so the two Fathers were no little late in arriving; but the Shah waited for them, continuing to sit at the table.¹ When they had at last come, they were courteously received by him and made to sit down at the same table alongside the other two. The Shah was at that time occupied in correcting some things in the letters which he had had written for the Pope and the king of Spain, and to which from time to time he caused new points and expressions to be added, and, according as he recollected them, he would ask the opinion of Fr. John—whether it was all right thus, and he made the latter translate everything into a European tongue for the benefit of the two new Fathers who did not know the Persian language, enquiring of these last two whether he had expressed himself well in these letters, and when they all decorously praised it the Shah displayed particular pleasure.

“Meanwhile from time to time he continued to converse with those two Pashas about the Fathers, asking them—after the last two had arrived, and they were all four sitting together—which did they, the Turks, think was the ‘patriarch’ sent for the Armenians by the Pope, in whose praise and that of the Fathers themselves he went on to utter many compliments: in the intervals he had drink brought to him and, taking some himself at times, invited the Fathers to do the same. After that he said to the Fathers that he wanted to give them the ‘Three Churches’ (Echmiadzin—in the Armenian tongue), the celebrated residence of the patriarch of the Armenians, and he wanted those the Pope had sent him to stay there and that they should use the Latin (‘Frankish’) rite, and rebuild and adapt (the church) as they might see fit: and he added that he hoped to have to do the like one day with Jerusalem which, if he could get it from the Turks, he intended at once to hand over to whomever the Pope might direct. He enquired of the two new Fathers what was their opinion on all that he had been saying, when they indicated that they were infinitely obliged with this favour of his Majesty, and Fr. John answered that they would earnestly pray God to grant many victories to his Majesty, so that he might be able to effect all his promises.

“During this time the king’s attendants had lighted a very great number of candles around a very large fishpond and above an arch and portico standing near by where the Shah was sitting and, as it was night, the reflections in the water made the scene beautiful beyond measure; some musicians of the Shah too from time to time were singing and playing on certain barbaric instruments used in this country, and to the sound of this, seeming as if transported in ecstasy, the Shah with his hand and his head was making movements like those of a man bereft of his natural senses—a thing which, they say, is habitual in this king each time he prays in public, as is frequently the case: and his actions are so strange that it has caused several of the Fathers to suspect that it is mere pretence and artifice and that by this means the Shah wants to gull the simple-minded common people and keep them in the notion they have that he holds converse with high heaven, whence he receives advice as to all that is necessary for the good government of the people.

“It was already near midnight, and so the Shah rose and went aside a short time: then, turning to go, he called for his horse. At this moment Fr. John approached him and asked him what orders he was leaving about the letters. Once more in the ear of the Father the king enquired which” (of the new Fathers from Rome) “was the patriarch sent by the Pope. When the Father answered that he knew nothing yet about that, the king then repeated that, whoever it might be, as being sent by the Sovereign Pontiff he (‘Abbas I) would receive him with consideration and have handed over to him immediately possession of Echmiadzin, and, as to the letters, he said that the Father might be easy in mind; immediately these had been finished he would have them sent by one of his men to the

¹ ‘Tablecloth’ more correctly, for they all sat on the ground, the cloths being spread over the carpets.