

“house of the Fathers, without the latter having to give themselves the least trouble about anything. With this he mounted his horse and, returning to Isfahan later the same night, departed from the city, as has already been stated.

“The Shah, whose temperament was very well known to the Fathers, having thus gone away, they regarded it as certain that, if they did not use fresh endeavours, they would not obtain the letters and resolved that, before he went farther off—they were informed that he was at three days’ distance,—Fr. Vincent should himself go and request their dispatch.

“Accordingly on Thursday, which was the 23rd of the month in question, Fr. Vincent left Isfahan for the camp, where on his arrival he was very cheerily welcomed by the Shah, from whom during the days of his stay there he received both in private and public endless marks of esteem: for on various occasions he discussed with Father Vincent both his journey and other matters regarding Rome. Finally he had given to him the letters which were remarkable, not only by reason of the titles and flights of fancy and honorifics used in them, but also in the cover and seal, which was encased in a little box of gold, and the cover made of most beautiful brocade, a thing which this Shah had hitherto not been accustomed to do in his correspondence with sovereigns. Since in those letters the Shah assures the Pope that he has given the Fathers both a house and a church, where they can pray after their ritual, it appears that the king is pledged and bound to allow the Fathers peacefully to remain in the house granted them. After having received the letters, when taking his leave Fr. Vincent asked the king whether he had any message for the Pope in his name, to which the king replied that he (Fr. Vincent) should tell him that he (‘Abbas I) was then going to march against the Turks, whom, if he were opposed by a small force, he would immediately cut to pieces, but that, if the Turks should come against him with a large army, he would immediately make all his people retreat and himself lay waste the countryside, allowing the enemy to penetrate many days’ march into the interior until he had led them into a position where he could destroy them at his ease, as he intended to do without any doubt. Fr. Vincent having added that, as he was going to Rome, his Majesty might send two of the Fathers, his companions, who were in Isfahan, to stay at Echmiadzin, so that he (Fr. Vincent) might carry such good news to the Pope, the Shah answered ‘No’: he wanted those who were to go to Echmiadzin to be appointed by the Pope and the latter himself to send a patriarch, because he (‘Abbas I) desired that it should remain on record in history that in the time of such-and-such a king and by such-and-such a Pope there was dispatched from Europe a patriarch to reside at Echmiadzin. Perceiving that this was the firm determination of the Shah, and therefore judging it unseasonable to return to the matter any further, after taking his leave, bowing and kissing the Shah’s hand, he (Fr. Vincent) left to return to Isfahan, where he arrived on Monday the 3rd August: he had been away for eleven days, counting the time taken in travelling and his stay with the Shah. After his arrival the Fathers derived considerable satisfaction from the result of his negotiations, and they had the letters obtained at once translated and copied, so that Fr. Vincent might take these with him, for they had learnt that there was a large caravan, with which were many persons acquainted with the Father and knew that he was leaving: they suspected that there might easily be some spies among them, who would reveal Fr. Vincent’s identity either in Baghdad or elsewhere in the land of the Turks: and therefore they judged it expedient for the Father to depart as soon as possible, before that caravan, which would be marching slowly, entered Turkish territory. So they set to work to give him quick dispatch . . . and on Monday, the day of glorious S. Laurence” (i.e. August 10th), “having got everything ready they handed it over to Fr. Vincent.”¹

Then the narrative by Frs. Benignus and Redempt goes on:

¹ From Baghdad Fr. Vincent made his way to Tripoli in Syria and met the Maronite community in the Libanan; he reached Rome early in 1610.