

insistence that he, the Shah, was above all laws, Sultan Husain was unable to withstand her, drank a large cupful and took such a fancy to it that he abandoned himself completely to indulgence in it, so that—in the words of the *Memoirs* cited—"it was rare to find him sober".

Two other factors in the young Shah's temperament call for comment before this narrative of his reign is illustrated in detail from the experiences of the European Religious—his absorption in the effeminate life of the 'Haram' or 'Andarun', and his reckless extravagance. Fr. du Cerceau's book observes:

"It was a great burthen to the State to maintain the 'Haram' in the degree to which it had risen under this prince, who had trebled the expense of it to what it was in the time of his predecessors: none of them came near what we have seen of this kind in his reign, either for the vast number of women, with whom he had filled his 'Haram', or for the extraordinary luxury and splendour in which he maintained them. His first care in the beginning of his reign was to cause a general search to be made for all the handsome women in Persia and to order them to be brought to his 'Haram'.¹ . . . he boasted publicly that he would spare no cost to outstrip the most voluptuous kings that ever were in the world. . . . Each of these women had her particular eunuch and chambermaid and, as to the expense of the toilet and provisions, it had no bounds. . . . Besides what he laid out upon them in the 'Haram', he gave them a considerable portion when they went forth to be married . . . the Shah bestowed women not only on his courtiers, but also on the inferior officers of his palace and his very cooks. . . . From the great number of women we may infer what an attendance there must be of eunuchs for their service or their guard . . . never king of Persia had so many, for they almost equalled the number of his own guards."

Moreover, the 'council of eunuchs', which Shah Sultan Husain allowed to form, was of black and white eunuchs, mutually jealous: and this brought that spirit of faction into the palace rule, which the Safawi Shahs from 'Abbas I had encouraged among the inhabitants of the towns and which in Isfahan in Muharram 1714 led to so fierce a fight that, before the two factions were separated, the royal guards are stated to have been obliged to put some 300 to the sword:² in every town one faction would refrain from marriage contracts, from eating even with the other, so great an animosity had been fostered.

Yet Shah Sultan Husain was still more lavish on building, in which he buried immense sums, and even exhausted much of the royal treasure accumulated before his time. Though their ancient palace (at Isfahan) was so sumptuous and magnificent, he pulled it down and built a new one with an expense that showed he did not value what it cost. This building was scarce completed but he undertook a new one, yet more considerable, at Farrahabad, one of his pleasure-houses, about one league from Isfahan. The buildings, which he raised there, were so vast and magnificent that he was tempted more than once to remove his 'Haram' thither, and to make it his usual residence.

Another trait that sheds light on the sudden collapse of his empire and the craven submissiveness of the huge population of the capital to a small force of invaders, and in which Shah Sultan Husain was marked out apart from all his race, was his aversion to the shedding of blood—the 'pacifism' of a whole generation: the *Memoirs* of Fr. Krusinski assert that: "for twenty years or more that his reign lasted he never passed one sentence of death", and relate that once, firing a pistol over the heads of a number of ducks swimming on a pond in the palace gardens in order to frighten, but not hurt them, this Shah was so unlucky as to wound some of the ducks: he was as terrified as if he had really committed murder, calling out: "I am polluted with blood" and that moment causing 200 Tumans to be given to the poor in atonement of such a sin!

¹ Writing in his *Secondo Viaggio* Fr. Leander of S. Cecilia, who was in Persia 35 years later, stated: "That time is still remembered in Persia: it is enough to say *Kizlarun Ili*, i.e. 'the year of the girls' = 1700."

² The accuracy of that statement from Fr. Krusinski will not be challenged by anyone who, as late as 1906, lived in touch with the faction warfare in small provincial centres in the south—in Jahrum, or Bihbihan-Qanawat, for instance.