

“riches. . . . This change, then, and regard to the fact that the whole Court was in perturbation and greatly preoccupied over the affairs of the whole country, chiefly in changing the governors and other officials who were either relatives or partisans of 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh, have kept me back from going to Court, and on the advice of some missionaries well acquainted with our business . . . it has been thought well to send once more to the Court and present a new petition to the new 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh, as the Jesuit Father in question has already done. . . . The Father, therefore, from Tihnan, where the king is, has written to me that he has already presented the petition to the 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh . . . the greatest difficulty is to find money again.”

Mgr Fedeli ended this letter by alluding to the Shah's health as not being yet completely restored.

Perhaps Bishop Fedeli, O.P., had himself been to the Court, for he wrote again, 24.5.1721:<sup>1</sup>

“Five months ago I handed to the Polish Jesuit Father, whose name is Thaddeus Krusinski, the replies of the Shah, which I received in *Qazwin*;<sup>2</sup> but, as this Father has been twice to the Court, in accordance with what I wrote your Eminence, to ask for the issue of those other letters, he lost much time in going and returning. . . .”

Then some time in May or June 1721, after having made in dudgeon or displeasure or apprehension a protracted stay away from Isfahan, Shah Sultan Husain returned to the capital: and Bishop Barnabas gives a description<sup>3</sup> of the reception at the palace when he presented other letters which had arrived from Europe—how pompous in comparison with the entertainments Shah 'Abbas I gave to Europeans will be appreciated by readers:

“At last—after so many hazards—I have presented the two letters, which were received by the king with similar compliments to the first. After the Shah had returned (to Isfahan)—welcomed with exceeding great applause and extraordinary demonstrations of rejoicing by all the nation—he gave a sumptuous banquet to all the notables, and I was summoned on that occasion to present the letters, which I did according to the ceremonial already explained on other occasions. After I had presented the letters two stools<sup>4</sup> in European style were brought, one for myself, the other for my companion, for us to sit: for the other guests were sitting on the ground on carpets in accordance with the custom of the country. My stool was placed as it were opposite the king, but at a distance of twelve or fourteen paces, for between the Shah and myself there was a beautiful fountain. The stool of my companion was placed eight or ten paces behind me (and at a different elevation from that where were all the principal fellow-guests), being three or four steps lower.

“The place, where the king held his reception is not a room or covered hall, but a very large open porch, handsomer and more majestic than that of S. Peter's, though not so big. It is completely full of large and small mirrors, marvellously interlaced, and some pictures with fine frames. There are in it 24 columns, the shafts of which must be of wood, but externally are altogether covered with small pieces of looking-glass like the whole porch, which is full of very rich couches, some of them of gold. In the middle of the porch, inside, as it might be the great door of S. Peter's, there is a large niche where is the king, sitting on a great cushion of brocade with another behind his shoulders.

<sup>1</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 634, p. 335.

<sup>2</sup> It was presumably to these replies from the Shah, to which Fr. Faustin referred in a letter from Isfahan, 26.5.1721:

“The Bishop has been urging me to write and take advantage of this opportunity of his sending to His Holiness and to the Venetian Republic the replies from the king of Persia which have been lying in his hands for more than a year. The Carmelite Lay Brother Valentine, who carried them, died of heat in the deserts of Arabia, but the letters were recovered and reached Rome safely.”

<sup>3</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 634, p. 365.

<sup>4</sup> The use of seats and chairs was evidently a novelty in Persia about 1720: the diary of the East India Company's Agents at Gāmburūn, dated 15.12.1728, mentions: “this morning we paid a visit to 'Abdullah Khan” (i.e. the Afghan representative) “who gave us chairs after the *Spahan* fashion”. Even in James Morier's *Journey through Persia*, 1812, there is an illustration showing the English mission of Sir Harford Jones (in cocked hats, tight clothes, etc.) sitting cross-legged on the floor along the wall of the audience hall of the prince governor-general of Fars.