

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S TRADE WITH PERSIA

A LECTURE DELIVERED BY
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AT 74, GROSVENOR STREET, W. 1
ON MARCH 24, 1926

THE PERSIA SOCIETY
74, GROSVENOR STREET, W. 1
1926

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My story has a prologue, to which I must make at least a brief allusion. The actual commencement of English trade with Persia dates back to the early years of Queen Elizabeth, when the servants of the Muscovy Company made a series of attempts to establish commerce with that country through Russia. These ventures resulted in failure, and the reason is not far to seek. Russia had then no port on the Baltic, and so the English commodities which it was hoped to sell in Persia had to be carried first by sea to Archangel, thence transported overland to Moscow, thence across Russia to the mouth of the Volga, thence across the Caspian to northern Persia. These long and dangerous journeys proved terribly expensive, and it was found that the goods, when they reached their destination, could not compete in price with those carried by the Levant Company's ships to Scanderoon and thence via Aleppo overland to Ispahan. So the enterprise was abandoned, and no further attempt was made until the establishment of English trade with India by way of the Cape excited hopes of starting a profitable commerce with Persia by an all-sea route.

The new venture, however, was not prompted from home, for it was only by degrees that the East India Company was brought to sanction a push in this direction. The initiation of the trade was due to its servants at Surat, and was largely the result of the endeavours of the latter to find a market for goods that would not sell in India itself. When a factory was established at Surat towards the close of 1612, both Captain Best, who was responsible for its founding, and the factors he left there,

headed by Thomas Aldworth, gave glowing accounts of the prospects of trade in India, especially for broadcloth. Before long, however, it became evident to the men on the spot that the possibilities of selling large quantities of English goods had been over-estimated; and Aldworth, casting about for means of disposing of the stock in hand, and of the far larger stock expected shortly, bethought himself of Persia as a possible market. Inquiring from local merchants, he was assured that much broadcloth, brought overland from Aleppo, was sold in that country, while raw silk was available in abundance for export to England. The fact that Ormus, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, was in the hands of the Portuguese, who were declared enemies to all other European traders in those parts, was a formidable obstacle; but, as he wrote to the Company in November, 1613, he was informed that Bahrain was available as a port for English ships. However, nothing could be attempted until the arrival of a fresh fleet from England; meanwhile the factors did their best to collect further information. In June, 1614, the celebrated Sir Robert Sherley arrived at Ajmer, where the Emperor Jahangir was then holding his court. Sherley had been sent to Europe in 1608 by Shah Abbas of Persia to open up relations with one or other of the Christian Powers, for the double purpose of securing aid for the Shah in his perennial warfare against the Turks and of establishing a direct trade in raw silk (a royal monopoly), the traffic in which he was anxious to divert from its ordinary channel through Asiatic Turkey. The mission, however, had proved unsuccessful. Both at Madrid and in London Sherley's proposals were coldly received. In the latter city the East India merchants doubted the wisdom of extending their operations, at least until their position in India itself was on a firmer footing; while many of them were interested in the Levant trade and unwilling to do anything that might

endanger it. A further difficulty was that to purchase the whole of the Shah's silk would need the employment of very large sums of money, and it was by no means easy to raise the capital required to carry on the existing commerce with the East. So Sherley was now on his way back to Persia by way of Lahore. During his stay at Ajmer he had some talk with Thomas Kerridge, the East India Company's representative there, and urged strongly that an attempt should be made to establish English trade in Persia, declaring that otherwise he would invite thither the Dutch, who were, he said, already eager to make the venture. Soon after, there arrived at Ajmer another Englishman, Richard Steel, who had come overland through Persia and was enthusiastic about the prospects of trade in that country. Kerridge encouraged him to proceed to Surat and confer with Aldworth, who gave him a warm welcome—all the warmer, perhaps, because they were both natives of Bristol. They had much talk upon the subject; and, amongst other things, Steel pointed out that it would be dangerous to try any port that involved passing the Portuguese fortress at Ormus, and that Jask would be more suitable for the purpose.

In October, 1614, arrived a new fleet from England, under Nicholas Downton, bringing a large stock of goods for sale; and the small likelihood of vent for these increased Aldworth's anxiety to try the Persian market. In face, however, of Portuguese hostility—soon evinced in a determined attack upon Downton's fleet—a vessel could not be spared for this purpose; and, as a compromise, Steel and a young factor named Crowther were despatched overland to Ispahan for the purpose of securing, with Sherley's assistance, a *farman* or order from Shah Abbas to the Governor of Jask to admit the English whenever they should present themselves. This obtained, Steel was to continue his journey to England

and lay the matter before the East India Company; while Crowther was to return to Surat and make his report.

The two merchants started accordingly in the spring of 1615; and, travelling via Agra, Lahore, Qandahar, Fara, Tabas and Yezd, they reached Ispahan in the middle of September. Here they found Sherley, preparing to depart on a second embassy to Spain. He told them that it was now too late for the English to hope for trade, as the Shah had decided to offer afresh the monopoly of it to the Spanish king; but, after some demur, he obtained for them the desired *farman*. Thereupon Steel proceeded, by way of Baghdad and Aleppo, to England, where he arrived in May, 1616; while Crowther went back to India by the way he had come.

The fresh offer of the trade to Spain was, of course, the outcome of Sherley's advice; and his action in the matter may well seem unpatriotic. It was, however, natural enough in the circumstances. His position at the Persian court, to which, after so long an absence, he had returned empty-handed, was doubtless an uncomfortable one, and a fresh mission to Europe offered an opportunity of rehabilitating himself in the good opinion of the Shah. He had been too long out of England to feel much attachment to his native land; while the fact that he was a Roman Catholic may have further alienated his sympathies. Above all, his experiences in London had probably convinced him that the East India Company was not likely to undertake a business of the magnitude proposed, in the face of the difficulties already mentioned. On the other hand, the King of Spain was regarded as a wealthy monarch; while the position of his Portuguese subjects at Ormus,

close to the port of Gombroon (now Bandar Abbas), offered special facilities for conducting the proposed trade.

A letter from Steel and Crowther, written at Ispahan and detailing the results of their mission, reached Ajmer in February, 1616. This was directed to Edwards, who had succeeded Kerridge in the charge of the factory there; but, as Edwards had now gone home, it was delivered to Sir Thomas Roe, who had recently arrived in that city as ambassador from King James; and Roe, judging the matter to fall within his province, at once wrote to the Company on the subject. The *farman* which had been procured he thought of little consequence, as no trade worth speaking of could be obtained upon the coast, while the Shah could not be expected to send down his silk until a formal agreement had been concluded. To the ambassador it seemed that the dominant factor in the situation was Sherley's fresh mission to Europe. Roe had a diplomatist's faith in diplomacy, and he felt sure that the Spanish king would embrace the proffer of this valuable commerce, in which case all efforts of the English to obtain a footing would be unavailing. The only hope lay either in defeating Sherley's negotiations at Madrid or in effecting some amicable arrangement there by which both nations would share in the trade. For the present, all that Roe considered it advisable to do was to write a respectful remonstrance to the Shah, pointing out the perils of allowing the Portuguese to dominate his coast and urging him to establish a free port and throw open the trade to all comers. This letter he forwarded to the care of William Robbins, an Englishman residing at Ispahan; and then he turned his attention to other matters until an answer should come from England to the letter he had addressed to the Company.

Quite another view, however, was taken at Surat,

where Kerridge was now the Company's Agent. The ambassador's action in opening and dealing with the letter from Steel and Crowther was warmly resented, as the question of trade with Persia was, in the factors' opinion, a matter purely commercial, and therefore outside Roe's province. Moreover, the fleet in which the ambassador had come had brought out a fresh stock of broadcloth and other goods, for which there was no immediate prospect of sale; and these commodities, it was argued, might just as well be ventured to Persia as lie unsold at Surat. Accordingly, at a consultation held early in October, 1616, it was decided to send a ship to Jask. Pepwell, the commander of the fleet, opposed the project, urging the views already set forth by Roe; but these the merchants set aside, with the remark that the ambassador's letter showed him to be "far transported in error of opinion" on other mercantile matters, and that he was evidently as far wrong in this. Sherley's absence was thought to be favourable rather than otherwise; while the renewal of the war between Turkey and Persia was considered likely to occasion both a dearth of broadcloth and a surfeit of silk, thus increasing the chances of profitable trading. It was further determined that the leadership of the enterprise should be entrusted to Edward Connock, the chief of the factors newly arrived from England. Connock, it seems, had had long experience in the Turkey trade, and was therefore held to be peculiarly well fitted for the post. Thomas Barker, then second at Surat, was chosen for his principal assistant; while the rest of the party was made up of three of the new factors and an interpreter. The instructions given to the merchants were to carry the cargo, on landing, to some "good town of defence," for security against robbers or the Portuguese; then Connock was to proceed to the court, deliver to the Shah a letter from King James (an unaddressed

one in which the Shah's name had been inserted at Surat), together with a present, and solicit a grant of the concessions required. This obtained, he was to advise the Company overland, and also the factors at Surat and Bantam, whence spices might be sent to Persia, should the prospects of trade warrant this course. The stock entrusted to the merchants amounted to £6,333, of which £550 was in cash.

Naturally, Roe was much annoyed when he discovered that his opinion had been slighted and that a party of merchants had actually been dispatched. Both publicly to the Company and privately to its Governor, he complained bitterly of the behaviour of the Surat factors. However, it was not in his power to alter the facts, and he decided to make the best of the situation. After consulting an ambassador from Persia who had arrived at Ajmer, and enlisting his advocacy, he wrote again to Robbins at Ispahan. The ship which had been sent, he said, was "but to trye and settle our enterteynment," and he hoped the Shah would not "judge us by this beginning." He enclosed a draft of privileges desired, and intimated that, if these were granted, the English would "roundly and duly" fulfil the Shah's requirements. He strongly urged Robbins to obtain these concessions; and he concluded by saying that possibly by the next fleet he would receive instructions to proceed to Persia and bring matters to a conclusion.

Meanwhile, Connock and his companions were speeding on their way, with high hopes of success. The ship which had been chosen to convey them was the *James*, of 600 tons, under the command of Alexander Child, whose account of the expedition may be read in the first volume of *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. The vessel started early in November, 1616, and after an uneventful voyage anchored a month later off Jask. Connock and

Barker went ashore to visit the so-called Governor. He, however, could do little to help them; but he offered to accompany them to his superior officer at "Mogustan," which seems to be identical with the modern Minab. Thither Connock and three of his companions journeyed accordingly. The master of the *James*, mindful of his instructions from Captain Pepwell, was for putting the goods ashore and returning at once to Swally; but the merchants were by no means willing to have their retreat thus cut off, and a strong protest induced Child to agree to await their return before landing the cargo.

On the way to Minab, Connock and his companions heard a rumour of an attack intended upon the *James* by a Portuguese squadron from Ormus; whereupon they resolved to order the master, should the enemy appear and cut off intercourse with the shore, to proceed to Gombroon and anchor under the guns of the Persian castle there. This seems uncommonly like running into the mouth of the lion, and it was perhaps fortunate that the Portuguese squadron did not materialize.

Minab was reached without incident, and there the party was received with much ceremony by the Governor, Zulfaqar Khan, to whom they exhibited the Shah's *farman*. He professed lack of power to conclude any agreement for trade, but promised favourable treatment and any furtherance that it was in his power to give. Connock and another merchant then set out on their return to Jask, intending to arrange for the landing of the goods and the departure of the *James*; but on reaching Kuhstak, a village on the coast about twenty miles south of Minab, Connock changed his mind and wrote to Child to bring his ship round to that place and land the cargo there; in the meantime he himself would return to Minab and fetch camels to carry up the goods. To this, however, the cautious master, anxious for the safety of his vessel, would not agree; and Connock was forced to

continue his journey to Jask and take the merchandise on shore there. This done, with a sigh of relief Child sailed on 20th January, 1617, and got back to Swally on the 6th of the following month.

At Jask the merchants, now left to their own resources, prepared at once to start for Ispahan with their goods. As the procurement of privileges from the Shah was a matter of urgency, Connock, with two others, pushed ahead, leaving the rest of the party to come on more slowly with their packs of merchandise, under the charge of Barker, the second in command. Connock reached Ispahan on 24th March, 1617, but found, to his great disappointment, that Shah Abbas was far away on the borders of his kingdom, immersed in the struggle with the Turks. Thither it was impossible to follow him until the other factors arrived with the presents intended for His Majesty and the equipment necessary for the long journey. William Bell was therefore sent back post haste to meet the caravan at Shiraz and urge the immediate despatch of supplies. Here, however, came in the usual jealousies and quarrels. Barker had much resented Connock's appointment to a post which he thought should rightly have fallen to himself, and he was inclined, therefore, to thwart rather than further the schemes of his chief. He and his companions had, after a leisurely journey, reached Shiraz on 2nd April, and had been welcomed by the Governor (probably the celebrated Imam Quli Khan), who placed at their disposal a house, as usual rather dilapidated, belonging to the Shah. By the terms of their commission, Barker was to be the head of the Shiraz factory, should one be established there; and being thus in a measure independent of Connock, he was intent chiefly upon making his own position agreeable, and paid small attention to the appeals addressed to him from Ispahan. In fact, it was not until three weeks after his arrival

that he could be induced to allow two of the factors, Pley and Pettus, to start for the capital with the presents and a portion of the stock of merchandise. Both these factors were at daggers drawn with Barker, and readily lent their support to Connock in denouncing his malpractices; while Barker, on his side, was doing his best to wreck the mission by his letters to Roe, filled with calumnies of Connock and sensational accounts of his extravagance and his supposed evil designs. These accusations—particularly an allegation (entirely false) that Connock had assumed the title of ambassador—excited Roe's anger afresh, and he wrote to Kerridge urging the recall of the offender; but Kerridge declared that the reports were unfounded, and pointed out that in any case Connock would be with the Shah long before a message could overtake him. So the ambassador was forced to allow matters to take their course.

While Connock was waiting at Ispahan he made the acquaintance of William Robbins, whom, as we have seen, Roe had endeavoured to enlist as his agent in the negotiations with the Shah. Robbins, however, was not disposed to run the risk of dealing in such matters with so imperious a monarch, who, according to Connock, cut off heads every hour; and he now very willingly made over to the newcomer all the papers he had received from Roe, including the ambassador's letters to the Shah. At Connock's entreaty he consented also to accompany him to the court, where his services, if only as an interpreter, promised to be of great assistance.

Not only Connock, but also his fellow factors, were full of hopes for the establishment of a large and profitable commerce in Persia. Already, they wrote, the royal treasurer, Lala Beg, had made overtures for the purchase of all their broadcloth, and had, further, offered to supply them with 3,000 bales of silk on his master's account, to be paid for in the following year in

spices, sugar, cloth, tin and other goods. Though their experience was so limited, they had not hesitated to write from Jask to Bantam for 500 tons of spices, or to assure the Company from Ispahan that a thousand broadcloths, with other goods in proportion, would yearly be sold in Persia. To Surat they wrote urging that, as a single ship would be exposed to capture by the Portuguese, the whole of the next fleet from England should be ordered to proceed to Jask with the greater part of its cargoes, besides a quantity of sugar and other commodities to be provided in India. On these ships, they suggested, Indian traders should be induced to embark with their merchandise, in preference to the usual journey by land via Qandahar, "shewinge them there little charge in freight, there danger lesse, and there brevitie of time in there passadge least of all." This practice once established, there was every hope that the maritime trade between India and Persia, hitherto controlled by the Portuguese, would pass into English hands; and that any blow to the power of the Portuguese would be welcomed by the Persians the factors felt assured. "They are generally hated heere," wrote Pettus, "the reason they have beene soe perfideous and base lying people. By reporte the Kinge hath spoke publickly that they neaver yet towld him a true tale. There is better expectation of us," he added, proudly. "Wee have more courteous use of the common people then ever they had, and more respect of the greate ones. I have observed at Sirash and since my coming heather [that is, Ispahan] howe the people make shewe of our welcome (God knowes their hartes), daylie presenting us with frutes and other victuals for our spendinges. The general report noysed heere abroad [is] that wee can demand nothinge of the Kinge in reason that will bee deneyed us."

Connock appears to have left Ispahan for the court some time in June, 1617, accompanied by Tracy, Robbins and a Swede named Benedict Oxenstern, who seems to have been travelling in Persia for his own amusement. Pley and Pettus were left behind with the rest of the merchandise. Soon after starting, Connock resolved to leave Tracy to bring on the presents and goods, and to push ahead with his other companions. He was anxious to reach the Shah as quickly as possible, for the friar who was watching the interests of the Portuguese had left Ispahan for the court in such secrecy that five days elapsed before the news reached the Englishmen. The party reached the royal encampment on 11th July, only to find that the friar had arrived two days before them and had already done his best to poison the Shah's mind against the newcomers by informing him that Connock was only a merchant, that the presents he brought were from his employers, not from the English king, and that the letter from that monarch had not been specially addressed to the Shah. The disclosure of these facts, which the friar had learned from Connock's traitorous subordinate, Barker, threatened to prevent the audience to which the intrepid factor had looked forward with such eagerness; but, as he expresses it, he "counterminded (though with some expence)"; and ten days after his arrival he was allowed to present himself at the court. His account of the interview may be given mostly in his own words. "In audienc[e] and sight of all the lords of the courte the Kinge tooke His Majestye our Kings letter, by mee delivered him, which he honnored by puttinge itt to his mouth, then one his head; when then he perused the seale and the manner of the sealinge. He opened itt, demands whether the King had thearto fermed [i.e., signed]; of which I satisfiinge him yes, the fryer replyed nott one woorde. The Kinge then seemed satisfied thatt itt was a true

letter. The Kinge asked mee whatt cheeflie by the letter our Kinge required. I answeared hime: amyty, trade, and commerce between the two kings and their subjects; which His Majesty this kinge had formerly, by the ambasadge of Sir Sherly solicited, then by his commandements to thatt purpose latly granted us. The bennefitt thearby arrisinge to booth kings and their subjects to this kinge I discoursed. But the Spanishe agent proposinge the damage and ruine of the trade of Ormus, the stoorehowse of their empire, if the Kinge accepted us; when with our ships wee might att Jasques (the enterance of the Gulph) intercept the ships passinge to and frome Ormus. Hearuppon the Kinge asked the fryer whether the kinges of England and Spaine weare nott in amity and peace. The fryer replyed thatt, yt notwithstandinge, wee did take their ships whear wee mett them and wear able. . . . The agent thus openly taxinge our nation, and immodestly proceeding, the Kinge granted mee, and gave attent eare to my reply. And then, nott sparing relations, I assured the Kinge (and compelled the fryer agent to confess it true) thatt till the Portingall begane with us, wee gave them noe offence." Connock then described how, when the Great Mogul had granted the English permission to trade in his country, the Portuguese three times attacked their ships, only to be repulsed with great loss; and he submitted that the question whether his fellow countrymen should be allowed to trade in Persia was one to be settled by the monarchs of those two countries, and that the Spanish king had no right to interfere. "The Spanishe agent hearto would, butt could make noe reply to satisfie the Kinge; butt the Kinge sayde wee had right one our parts. And when he had farther discoursed with mee of the honnor that might arise by the frendship between His Majesty our Kinge and hime, and of the bennefitt to ther dominions, as of some

important reasons thatt moved the Portingall this frindshipp to croose and hinder, the Kinge was soe fully sattisfied thatt to the fryer agent he sayde in Italian : Padre, Padre; then in his owne landguadge thease expresse woords : lett hime splitt in tenn thowsand peeces thatt tells me lyes; which he redubled. He called for wine, and in a lardge boule he dranck His Majestie our Kings health; which he caused me to pledg, himselfe upon his knee honnoring the same. Which done, he tould mee I was welcome : our Kinge shoulde be his elder brother in his respects : his frendshipp he did dearly esteeme and tender : thatt he would grant us Jasques, or any other poort wee woulde require, and such freedome in every respect as in his honnor he maye grant. And all this in the Spanishe agents presence; to whome he hath nether afforded good woord nor countenance from that to this hower; butt hath mee graced with fower severall presents of foule and veneson; which he hath att noe time accostomed to any."

The good impression made by the English representative was increased when the presents arrived and were on 3rd August laid before the Shah. Again to quote from Connock's letter : "The agent fryer, the Kinge toulde mee, he sent for to be present, to lett hime see the honnor he would doe mee. The Kinge arose, came and satt by me, drancke His Majestie our Kings health, discoursed of England, of our kings disposition, of his greatnes and strenght, both by sea and land. He openly tould his lords the English weare a people free frome lyinge or deceite, butt thatt the Portingals had any time these twenty years toulde hime nott one true woerde. Indeed, soe much was the Kings expression of frendship to His Majesty our Kinge and affection to our nation (even in the fryers face) thatt in faith I admired yt."

In the same letter Connock told his employers that the Shah had promised to let him have 3,000 bales of silk at current prices, which would mean that it could be put free on board at Jask for about 6s. 6d. a pound. The trouble was to find the means of payment, but Connock proposed to begin with 500 bales and to sell part of these at Surat, the proceeds to be returned to Persia in sugar and other Indian products. Further, he intended to arrange for a shipload of spices from Bantam; while goods from England would help to make up the balance. The Shah, he said, fully understood that long credit was necessary and that the growth of the trade must be gradual; but his own vision of the future was that "in proceess of fewe years the whole quantyty of silke made in thease his kingdomes, amountinge to full one million starlinge, att 6s. the 16 ounces Englishe (by my computation), maye by the Englishe be hence by sea carryed and dispersed throughout Christendome, and nott more through Turcky be transported. If Your Honnors please, you may this compase, to the infinitt benefitt of yourselves [and] of our land in generall." Connock recognised that the Turkish Sultan might resent the diversion of the trade by driving the English merchants out of his dominions; but he contended that the loss of the Levant trade would be fully recompensed by "this far mayner bennefitt." He begged that two commissions should be sent to him, one from the King, appointing him his agent, the other from the Company, constituting him their chief factor or supervisor; also another letter from King James to the Shah, together with a handsome present, which should include a grand carriage, some weapons, and a supply of dogs, fighting cocks, and hens. He had already promised the Shah to write to India for peacocks, a kind of bird quite strange to him. The grateful monarch is reported to have given Connock 100 *tumans* (*i.e.*, about £333) in money, besides

other presents. He also delivered to him a reply to King James's letter and a *farman* embodying most of the concessions desired. With these Connock returned joyfully to Ispahan, and thence proceeded to Jask, to meet the fleet which he fondly hoped was on its way to that port with the materials for carrying out his grandiose schemes.

There were, however, cooler heads than Connock's, both in England and in India; and in neither country was there any intention of rushing too hastily into a commerce which, though not without promise of profit, had also some evident elements of danger. At the beginning of 1617, when the despatches for the outgoing fleet were under consideration in London, the Company had, of course, heard nothing of Connock's mission; but they had received Roe's letter, speaking slightly of the prospects of trade, yet insisting earnestly on the danger of allowing the Portuguese to dominate the situation; and they had heard all that the plausible tongue of Richard Steel, backed by his experience of two recent journeys across Persia, could urge on behalf of the proposed venture. The deliberations appear to have been long and anxious. The probable damage to the Levant trade was considered; also the fact that to take all the Shah's silk would require large sums of ready money—estimated as high as 600,000*l.* per annum. In the end, the arguments of those in favour of the project carried the day; and, after obtaining the approval of the Privy Council, instructions were sent to Roe on the matter. These reflected the hesitation felt lest the Company should be committed too deeply. Permission was given to the ambassador, if, after making careful inquiries, he saw fit so to do, to despatch some fitting person or persons to negotiate with the Shah for the establishment of such a trade as should be found consistent with the Company's means; stipulations were made as to customs

duties and the provision of a suitable port; it was to be arranged that at least one-half of the price of the silk should be accepted in English goods, and the remainder in money, spices and Indian products; while the price of the silk was not to exceed about 6*s.* the pound. With these instructions went a letter from King James to Roe, approving his past proceedings in the matter and authorising him to conclude a commercial treaty with the Shah.

These documents, which came to Roe's hands in October, 1617, gave him the liveliest satisfaction. It was now open to him, if he chose, to displace Connock and entrust the negotiations to someone in whom he had more confidence; but he acted with his usual moderation and good sense. Since nothing had yet been heard in India of the success or failure of the mission, he judged it inadvisable to send a further supply of merchandise; though even that he did not insist upon. He left it to Kerridge and the commander of the fleet to despatch, if they chose, a vessel to Jask for news; and he drew up a commission to Connock to negotiate with the Shah on the basis of the instructions received from the Company.

Accordingly, on 14th November, 1617, a small vessel, the *Bee*, was sent to Jask under the charge of Edward Monox and another factor. The ship reached its destination on 6th December, and Connock was found awaiting its arrival. Pley, who had accompanied his chief from Ispahan, had died four days earlier, while Connock himself was far from well. The discovery that the *Bee* had brought neither money nor cargo was doubtless a severe blow; while the fact that the Company required, before any trade was begun, a formal contract for the price of silk, etc. (which would necessitate a fresh journey to court) must have been a further aggravation. Before he could decide upon a course of action, the news that the Governor of the province had detained some of

the silk that was following him to the coast, called him to Minab; and on his way thither he fell sick at Gatan, a village one day's journey on the road. Worn out by his tireless activity, depressed by the failure of his cherished plans, and worried by the suspicious attitude of the newcomers, his illness soon took an unfavourable turn. He lingered during ten days of misery, and then, after making his will and burning his papers, he expired on Christmas Eve. During his sickness his thoughts had turned more and more to the old religion which still retained its influence over many of the Englishmen of the day—especially those who spent much time abroad—and before he died he professed himself a Roman Catholic; indeed, to the unsympathetic Monox he appeared to be “chieffie troubled for want of a confesser and other rightes of that his blind religyon; also grived that he had written to Your Honnours so much to the disgrace of a Portugall frier at Spahan.” “He lived an atheist and dyed a Papist,” was the comment of the implacable Barker. Thus ended in sadness and gloom the career of the indefatigable merchant to whom was mainly due the establishment of English commerce in the dominions of Shah Abbas.

Here, too, must end this paper, which is already of inordinate length. It tells only the beginning of the long connexion between England and Persia; but this was a real beginning, and henceforward there is no break in the story. Probably you were already acquainted with the main outlines; yet there is sometimes an advantage in treating an episode of this kind upon a larger scale than is possible in a general sketch, and perhaps what I have said will bring home to you the great difficulties which the early traders encountered in their efforts to find fresh markets in the East, and the courage and persistence with which they met and overcame such obstacles. Nor is the story destitute of interest in other respects,

especially in the glimpses it affords us of that extraordinary character, Shah Abbas the Great, of the romantic adventurer, Sir Robert Sherley, and of the unfortunate merchant who was the pioneer of Anglo-Persian trade and who paid the penalty of his enterprise with his life.