



FEUVRIER, JEAN-BAPTISTE

FEUVRIER, JEAN-BAPTISTE, called Joannès (b. Saulx, near Vesoul, Haute-Saône, France, 6 October 1842; d. Saulx, 29 November 1926; [Figure 1](#)), French military physician, Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's personal physician from August 1889 to October 1892, and author of a travelogue, *Trois ans à la cour de Perse*.

The only son of François Antoine, a military veterinary surgeon at the Garde Impériale (Fontainebleau), Feuvrier studied at the Military School of Hygiene in Strasbourg (1861-65) and attended a post-doctoral course at Val de Grâce in Paris. Beginning in October 1866, serving at the rank of major, he held appointments in Algeria (1866-69) and Colmar (1869), and he participated in many battles during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 (Froeschwiller, Sedan, Patay, etc.). His career took a new turn with his appointment as a personal physician to Prince Nicolas of Montenegro (r. 1860-1918) on a first mission (1873-80) and on a second one both medical and political (1886-88). He participated in Nicolas' campaign in support of the Hercegovinian insurgents against the Ottomans (1876-77). In the interval between his Montenegrin missions, he held various appointments, notably in Tunisia (1881-82), where he created and directed the hospital of La Manouba (Archives du Service Historique; Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères; d'Amat, col. 1238f.).

The presence of a French doctor as a first physician to the shah was an important pillar of French diplomacy. The position had been occupied by Dr. Joseph Désiré Tholozan for thirty years until he decided to retire at the end of 1888. The French chargé d'affaires, Gédéon-Jacques-Christian Paulze d'Ivoy de la Poype, and the minister at Tehran, Marie-René-Davy de Chavigné de Balloy,



therefore asked for a replacement. Eugène Spuller, the French minister of foreign affairs, urged the Ministry of War in January 1889 to commission Feuvrier, whom he subsequently contacted personally (June 1889). While in Paris with Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah on his third European tour, Tholozan fell ill and could not continue the journey back to Tehran. He introduced Feuvrier as his locum tenens (August 1889). Feuvrier was granted a year's leave to replace Tholozan on a mission similar to his Montenegrin experience. This mission was plagued from the outset by the fact, later discovered by French diplomats, that the British minister in Persia, Sir Drummond Wolff, had his own candidate, Dr. Joseph Dickson, to replace Tholozan. Amīn-al-Solṭān (later Atābak-e A'zam, q.v.) being pro-British at the time, failed to impose this candidate on the shah. Leaving Paris in August, the shah and his retinue traveled through Europe to Russia by train. At Vladikavkaz, warned by a Russian friend, Feuvrier foiled a scheme by Amīn-al-Solṭān to send him with another group to Tehran via Baku and Anzelī (Feuvrier, 1900, pp. 19-22). Traveling instead overland with Nāṣer-al-Dīn, he managed to save the shah when he fell seriously ill at Bāsmenj near Tabrīz in September 1889 (ibid., pp. 66-76). This was accomplished despite the machinations of Amīn-al-Solṭān and the shah's Persian physicians but with the support of E'temād-al-Salṭana (q.v.). As the latter noted in his diary, the shah's illness near Tabrīz increased the friction among opposing factions at the crown prince's court (E'temād-al-Salṭana, *Rūz-nāma-ye kāṭerāt*, pp. 664-65; see also Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah, III, pp. 90-99). Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's rapid recovery won Feuvrier a solid reputation at the Persian court. He now had free access to the royal *andarūn* and accompanied the shah on his travels and hunting parties. Many Qājār officials, notably the prince Kāmṛān Mīrzā Nāyeb-al-Salṭana, were among his patients. Despite strong backing from both the shah and the French embassy, he was not always successful against his opponents. A court intrigue prevented him from carrying out an eye operation on Amīna Aqdas, the rival of Anīs-al-Dawla (qq.v.), as the shah's favorite. A problematic and costly operation at Vienna could not save her sight (Feuvrier, 1900, pp. 189 ff., 214 ff., 228, 251, 363). Feuvrier did perform a successful cataract operation on Badr-al-Salṭana at the Negārestān Palace (ibid., pp. 212 ff.)

Feuvrier soon discovered that his leave of absence for special service in Persia had created problems in terms of promotion for him in his regular post and that his salary in France had been stopped. Since he was given only half of Tholozan's stipends by the shah, he kept complaining to the French Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs to settle his rights, on the basis of his Montenegrin



mission, regarding his salary and promotion. After an exhausting trip with the shah, who was a relentless traveler, to “Feraghan” (i.e., Farāhān, but in fact far beyond that district), followed by a cholera pandemic while approaching Tehran (May-September 1892), Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah granted Feuvrier authorization for a leave and a *farmān* certifying the shah’s satisfaction with his services, citing in particular his courage during the cholera pandemic, and bestowed on him the Order of the Lion and the Sun, first class with green sash (Feuvrier, 1900, p. 412; see also [DECORATIONS](#)).

Soon after Feuvrier’s arrival at Paris (December 1892), the French Embassy and the shah urged him to return to Tehran (January-February 1893). However, Tholozan, having recovered from illness, had already gone back to Tehran and resumed his involvement in the business of economic concessions and political intrigues to such an extent that he became embroiled in conflict with the Russian Embassy. To avoid a conflict with him, Feuvrier asked de Balloy to present his resignation to the shah, who then declared he would urge Tholozan to retire. Feuvrier agreed to return to Tehran for six months provided he could choose his own successor. But Tholozan stayed on. Finally the shah accepted Feuvrier’s resignation, and the Ministry of War put an end to his mission (20 March 1893). Feuvrier was put on the inactive list on grounds of ill health (malaria and liver hypertrophy), and ended his career as a Médecin principal de première classe (after December 1892). When he retired in December 1895, he was still a bachelor. In addition to his foreign decorations (Russian, Montenegrin, and Persian) he was awarded the Légion d’Honneur (chevalier, 1875; officier, 1890). He apparently did not play any active role in the Persian Sanitary Council created and headed by Tholozan, and later by Dr. Jean-Etienne Justin Schneider, Feuvrier’s successor, who also created with Tholozan the first Persian Public Health Department (Elgood, pp. 524 ff.).

Feuvrier’s medical and diplomatic skills were highly appreciated. His linguistic abilities in Serbian, Italian, Russian, English, and German were positive assets for his missions. Despite his limited knowledge of Persian language and culture, acquired mainly on the spot, his *Trois ans à la cour de Perse* provides a precious eye-witness account of the various aspects of the state of Persia at a momentous period of Qajar history. The first edition contained 83 engravings from photographs in the collections of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah and his retinue, Feuvrier’s own drawings, Persian contemporary paintings, one plan and three maps; the second edition included 204 engravings. The book remains a major



primary source of information, notably on the Tobacco Concession, the large scale protest bringing about its cancellation, and the political and financial problems of its aftermath (Feuvrier, 1900, pp. 307-49; see, e.g., ATĀBAK-E A'ZAM, AMĪN -AL-SOLTĀN). In it, Feuvrier also informs us about political intrigues, life in the *andarūn*, the Dār al-fonūn (q.v.; *ibid.*, pp. 179-82), Shi'ite mourning, *ta'zīa-k'vòānī*, and the Takīya-ye Dawlat, near which his residence was located (*ibid.*, pp. 139-44). Through his personal interest in Persian culture, his book also contains precious information on archaeology; geography; architecture; urbanism; economy; courtly life in palaces and camps; social life in towns, villages, and tribal areas; etc. The extent of his personal involvement in Persian politics remains to be studied.

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