

On

"Sunday, after Vespers, the 4th July 1604, they went to receive the blessing and kiss "the feet of the Pontiff at the Quirinal Palace: Clement VIII conversed with them for a "good while, and it was his wish that the two senior Fathers should add to their names "in religion those of the Apostles in Persia, S. Simon and S. Thaddaeus, thus becoming "Fr. 'Paul Simon' and Fr. 'John Thaddeus' respectively."¹

After discussion with the Commissary-General of the Carmelites, the Pope turned to the Fathers with the colloquial expression:

"Or su!—Well then! Fathers, Will you go to Persia? You want to undertake this "journey and emprise?" To which the Fathers answered: "Holy Father, yes." Then said he once more: "Or su!—Go, and God bless you as I bless you: and I hope that "you will make a great harvest, as I shall always be begging the Lord: because We have "good hopes, seeing that the king there shows goodwill and does not abhor our Catholic "religion, even taking pleasure in speaking about it."

The Pope bestowed the triple benediction, and they kissed his foot and withdrew. On the 6th July they renewed their religious profession and took three further vows—in addition to the general vows of obedience, chastity, poverty: (a) to go wherever ordered by competent authority; (b) to embrace death valiantly, if so required in confession of their Faith; (c) to receive and keep no gold, silver, precious stones, nor the like unless in case of extreme need, then as certified by their proper superior: and they quitted Rome on that same 6th July, 1604.

Apart from the protracted sea voyage with the Portuguese fleet, which in those days set out from Lisbon once a year for Goa, a route which perhaps for other and political reasons was thought inexpedient, there lay before them as alternatives that *via* Alexandretta, Aleppo, Baghdad and Isfahan, and the longer northerly journey by way of Poland and Muscovy: and, because of the state of war prevailing between Persia and Turkey at the time, as well as the lawless conditions arising out of the revolt in Syria, the matter was decided for the missionaries by the Vatican authorities selecting that latter alternative, unwisely as was to be experienced.

Travelling by Loreto, Venice, Trent and Prague (arrival August 1st 1604), and everywhere accorded marked attention and hospitality by the ecclesiastical authorities, cardinals, various bishops and religious communities, received in audience by the Emperor Rudolf, then already reigning for 28 years past, at Prague, where they found the Persian envoy, Zainul-'Abidin Baig, the Carmelites reached, 25.8.1604, Cracow, capital of the Polish king Sigismund III, to whom they were presented by the Nuncio, Monsignor Rangoni, on August 29th, and who granted them a gracious welcome and through the papal representative proffered a substantial donation towards their travelling expenses, declined like other gifts of money from the Cardinal of Cracow, Nuncio and nobles, as they wrote to the Pope. On their departure, 13.9.1604, they were accompanied for two miles by the Cardinal Primate Mokiouski in his coach, and he then insisted on sending them on by carriage to Vilna: he moreover wrote to Rome begging the Order to found a convent of the Discalced Carmelites in Poland, and sent a large parchment book as a gift for the king of Persia: it contained four pictures on each page illustrating the Old Testament from Genesis to the Book of Kings.

At Vilna, 23.9.1604, the Carmelites went to find the "grand chancellor" of Lithuania, and were warned by him that the turmoil and civil war in Muscovy might render their forward progress difficult. For they had reached the frontier of Great Russia at a critical period in Russian history. Ivan "Grozni", the "Terrible", who had absorbed and annexed Siberia, Astrakhan and the lands of the Tatars, had died in 1584: his elder son Feodor had succeeded: a younger son, Dmitri, was deemed to have been murdered in 1591 at the instigation of Boris

¹ Much of the following abstract is taken from *A Persia*, cited, which quotes Fr. Paul Simon's account of the Russian experiences.