

“know the singular goodwill with which We regard You and the earnest longing which “possesses Us of continuing that affection which existed between Our predecessor of “happy memory and Your Highness.

“So We wish to bring all diligence to bear so that We may get to know what has befallen “these three sons of Ours dispatched to You; and, because We have the greatest confidence “in Your particular courtesy and kindness, and certain as We are that no one better than “You can furnish this for Us, We urgently beg of You to be so good as to give instructions “that search for these three sons of Ours, Paul Simon, John Thaddeus and Vincent, Dis- “calced Carmelite Brothers who were coming with Your envoy to Persia, be assiduously “and carefully made, especially among the Muscovites and Tatars, and even among the “Turks by the Caspian Sea. By this good office You will indeed put Our regard under “a great obligation to You, for, as You see, We are very troubled in mind for this reason, “as will be related to You by this beloved son, John of Avila, whom, as We have indicated “in Our other letter to You and heartily desire, We beg that You will receive kindly, and “We pray too for Your Highness true happiness in Him Who alone can make men happy “and blessed.

“Given at S. Peter’s, Rome, under the Fisherman’s Ring, 11th Kalends of April (22nd “March) 1608, the third year of our Pontificate.”

In the narrative<sup>1</sup> left by Fr. Paul Simon, the first Superior, there are many points of comparative interest to the reader who knows modern Persia, much in the ceremoniousness and customs observed, which bridge the gulf between 1600 and 1900.

“The same evening,” he writes after describing the landing, “we went to lodge in a “hamlet two miles off, where we learnt that the viceroy of that province, called Shirwan, “was then staying at Baku. He was what they call a ‘khan’, and his name Z’ulfiqar Khan. “We three Religious had disembarked . . . and there had come in our ship two Armenian “traders, who had stayed with us for a year in Muscovy in the village of Tsaritsin. They “landed with us, and begged the Fathers, my companions, to be allowed to accompany “us, because otherwise they would have been looted, since the countryside (although it “belonged to the king of Persia) was full of soldiers, and it was barely two months since “he had taken it from the Turks:<sup>2</sup> they offered to serve us as interpreters, seeing that we “had none for the Turkish language. It appeared uncharitable not to oblige them, apart “from the fact that we hoped they might be of help to us in the matter of the union (of “the church) “of the Armenians. When we had reached the hamlet we dispatched one of “them to the town of Baku, where the viceroy of the province was, with a letter which “we wrote to the King of Persia in the following terms:

“Most serene and puissant king. The Sovereign Pontiff Paul V, our lord, head of “the Christian princes, has sent us with letters of his, and secret business to Your “Majesty. The disturbances in Muscovy have kept us in those parts more than we “thought, to our displeasure at being unable to execute the bidding of His Holiness “that we were to reach Your Majesty as quickly as possible. Today we have arrived “close to Baku, Your town, and beg You to give orders that we be conducted to You “as soon as may be. We carry also letters from Rudolph, Emperor of the Romans; “Sigismund, king of Poland; and other Christian princes for Your Majesty.’

“By the Armenian in question we asked the viceroy to forward the letter to his Majesty “forthwith. The next day the Armenian returned, and with him a gentleman of Z’ulfiqar “Khan, with orders to bring us to Baku, where he was. When the gentleman saw our “poor garb, he remained somewhat taken aback, but did not show it. . . . When we “arrived at Baku, they had not got ready rooms to lodge us, and so they kept us for about “an hour in the square, and after that gave us a fairly comfortable dwelling.

“The town of Baku . . . was then almost in ruins from having been taken a few months

<sup>1</sup> O.C.D. 234 b.

<sup>2</sup> This dates the conquest of Shirwan by Shah 'Abbas to July 1607.