

autocrat with the assurances that he took on himself to obtain (*post factum*, that is) the consent of His Holiness and of the Praepositus General of the Order, that the business was simple and could be accomplished by a Religious travelling unostentatiously better than by others, for the main reason that it was to inform the Christian princes of his ('Abbas I's) plans, and finally that Fr. John's knowledge of various languages would obviate any need of interpreters. Seeing that the Shah had made up his mind in advance and was resolute, Fr. John Thaddeus deferred a definite answer until after consultation with the other Religious, whose opinion was that the task should be accepted inasmuch as it might prove useful in alleviating difficulties of the mission and, since it was to finish at Rome, it might be considered to fall within the scope of the functions of ambassadors between Shah and Pope. Fr. John Thaddeus, however, demurred on yet another ground, and this in public one day when he suggested that the grandees and notables of Persia might well and reasonably object to a humble European friar being given such a position of ambassador from the Shah of Persia. Again 'Abbas I had his answer ready:

'The grandees of his empire had been taught to respect as law the smallest hints from 'his lips: in Persia he alone gave orders, without the need of anyone's opinions.'

Then, raising his voice, he called out to the courtiers present:

"Fr. John goes as my ambassador to the Grand Duke of Muscovy, to the king of Poland, "and to the Pope":

and, putting his hand on the shoulder of the Carmelite, added:

"His word is my word . . . this Father has come to me with the Pope's words, and his "word has always been the truth—'yes, yes: no, no': and of all the Franks who have come "to my court no one has pleased me as much as this Father—and one other, a Portuguese "with a white beard" (his name was Fr. Jeronimo de la Cruz).

From the letters and credentials made out in the name of Fr. John Thaddeus it is known that, apart from the commercial question of the silk and carpet trade, 'Abbas I desired that the Cossacks should repair the fort of Zarzu [*? sic*], whence he had dislodged the Turks, and which he needed so as to protect and cover against Turkish raids the passage of caravans. Moreover, besides promotion of an alliance of the sovereigns of Christendom for operations of war against the Turks, on which 'Abbas I still vehemently insisted, the Carmelite envoy was charged to invite His Holiness to dispatch a 'Khalifeh' (so Persians style a Catholic Religious superior, or bishop, to this day) to undertake jurisdiction over all oriental Christians in his kingdom, Jacobites, Greeks, Georgians and Armenians of Julfa and the rest, and thirdly to offer on the Shah's behalf to construct in place of the churches of Greater Armenia which had been greatly damaged in the wars three new churches in the new Julfa or suburb of Isfahan—one for the 'Franks', i.e. Europeans and Uniats with a prelate to be sent from Rome, one for the Armenian monks, the third for Armenian secular priests. He was further offering to construct at his own cost one convent for the Carmelites, another for the Augustinians, and a house for ambassadors sent out from European courts.¹

¹ In this connection it should be mentioned that there exist in the Carmelite archives—not in the original Persian, unfortunately—what purport to be translations of an ordinance issued by Shah 'Abbas I in the month of Sha'ban 1023 A.H., i.e. in September 1614 (*vide* MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, chap. 26, bk. 2, and *En Persia*, part 3, p. 74, quoting Fr. Blas, vol. II). That is a date (coinciding almost with the attack on the Portuguese at Gãbrun fort) difficult to reconcile with any fresh approach by the Shah to the Pope or European monarchs: the MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, it is true, assigns the issue of the edict to 1615, and takes it as an affirmation of the genuineness of the Shah's intention when in 1611 one of his commissions to Fr. John Thaddeus dispatched to Europe was: "to inform the Pope that he, 'Abbas, wished to have built in Julfa three churches in the place of those at Echmiadzin—one for the 'Franks' (Armenians) and their prelate to be appointed by the Pope, another for the Armenian monks and their metropolitan, the third for the Armenian secular priests. . . ."

If the Persian original was genuinely and actually promulgated, the importance of this edict lies in the intention the Shah had of transporting and transferring the stones from the historic building of the patriarchate at Echmiadzin to the new