

On 2.10.1613 the Bishop of Cyrene and the European Religious met to debate whether they should not abandon the country.¹ They reflected that the continuance of their presence in Isfahan might be actually harmful to the Armenians, since under fresh pretexts the Shah might think that by molesting them he would bring pressure on the Pope, while not advancing the union with the Holy See desired. So they decided each to record his opinion,² but to take no action until they had informed the representatives of their Orders at Hurmuz and those of the king of Spain there, so that his Majesty and the Pope should be informed of the position. Mgr de Gouvea had, however, perceived the Shah's dislike for him, and in his own mind determined to quit the country without asking for the Shah's permit or assent: it is averred (in MSS. *Hist. Miss.*) that he produced an alleged letter from the Proveditor at Hurmuz to the effect that, as ambassador of the king of Spain, Don Garcia de Silva had already arrived at Masqat, on which account the Bishop wanted to have sent at once a large number of camels for the transport of the gifts from king Philip III for 'Abbas I, for which a detailed order from the Shah would be needed. The Carmelites took to the Shah a list of requirements for the reception of the ambassador, as furnished by the Bishop, and, seemingly gratified at the prospect of receiving an embassy of rank and circumstance, 'Abbas I gave orders for everything to be got ready. But Mgr de Gouvea made another blunder by allowing to fall into the hands of the Shah some writing he had obtained from Hurmuz to confirm his statement (already noted) that the silk had been sent as a gift to the king of Spain. 'Abbas I is said to have flown into a temper and to have had the Bishop told that he himself and his officials would take charge of the arrangements for the arrival of the ambassador: only for the Bishop of Cyrene to commit a further indiscretion by sending a message to the effect that, since his presence was no longer required at Isfahan, he was going to meet the ambassador of his sovereign, as was right and proper. Angered at such persistent argumentativeness the autocrat is recorded to have curtly replied: 'Jahannum bi-rawad' ('He can go to hell!'). This Mgr de Gouvea chose to consider licence to depart and, as soon as the Shah went off northwards to Georgia, summoned the Religious of his own Order and the Carmelites and apprised them of his intention. In vain they tried to dissuade him from such an unwise course. Knowing such early arrival of the ambassador from Spain to be a figment of his own imagination, a misunderstanding or plain fiction in order to furnish a pretext for his escape from the embarrassing situation in Persia, which would be discovered before long were he to remain, Mgr de Gouvea departed, 21.10.1613,³ from Isfahan with a large party and many carriages, in one a comfortable seat being arranged for the imaginary ambassador. (Actually

"any, merely out of hatred for our holy faith, and for the propagation of his own false religion. That same night there came on the Shah a fit, accompanied by rigors of his whole body, and stenocardia and pain in his heart, so that it appeared that he was about to enter the death agony. On the morrow he changed his mind and sent 30,000 gold sequins to Julfa for them to be distributed, saying that the money of the Christians had been well earned and that he wanted to make a gift of it as alms, as it seemed to him that alms from the money of Muslims is not acceptable to Allah: and he gave orders that these Christians who did not owe him money should be allowed to continue to live in the Christian Faith." (The symptoms described resemble those in a false, or true, angina pectoris.)

¹ The account in *En Persia*, vol. III, pp. 100-1, gives reasons which read intelligibly, viz.:

"The Shah had signed peace with the Turks and so no longer required assistance from the princes of Christendom for the prosecution of that war, nor had he been able to find through their intermediary a sale and outlet for his silk trade, and so on his side 'Abbas I was in no mood to implement his half promises about the building of churches and protection of the Christian religion. The mere sight of the Religious irritated him against Pope and Christian princes: and he was already scheming to attack Hurmuz and make war on the Portuguese. Moreover, shortly before—between August and October—a tragedy had occurred at the Persian court, which was to render the mind of 'Abbas I still more unbalanced and, with conspiracy and treachery feared, his moods dangerous. The Bishop was convinced that he himself already was in danger because of the Shah's insistence on payment for the silk, and that he himself ought to be the first to get away to Hurmuz: the Religious on the other hand wanted to arrange departure without creating an incident, or arousing suspicion of concerted flight. It was then that the Bishop, feeling himself in disgrace, commissioned the Carmelites to announce to 'Abbas I the coming of an ambassador of high rank from Spain, and they took the opportunity to ask the Shah for passports for the Bishop, the Augustinian Fathers, on the ground that their position as representatives of the king of Spain would cease with the ambassador's arrival. But the Shah paid no heed to the request for the passports."

² A copy of the document signed by the Bishop of Cyrene, Fr. Redempt and Fr. Bartholemew Mary of S. Francis for the Carmelites, Fr. Bernard de Azevedo and Melchior of S. Anne for the Portuguese Augustinians is to be found in O.C.D. 236 a.

³ Not 21.10.1614, as in *En Persia*.