

It has been shown how, while Imam Quli Khan was at Ab-i-Kurang, Shah 'Abbas I was at Farrahabad, a favourite palace near the Caspian, in July 1623. Later that year, either at the time of the fall of Baghdad or shortly afterwards, he may have been in the newly won city or in western Persia—no definite allusion has been observed in the letters of the missionaries. (The western route was disturbed about that time, for: "the roads are too difficult for correspondence to arrive safely", the Prior had written, 8.1.1624: and from April till the end of November 1624 the Visitor General, Fr. Eugenius, and his party had had to wait in Aleppo "on account of the wars", before proceeding to Basra and Baghdad respectively).¹ During the renewed persecution of the Armenians of May–June 1624 the Shah was certainly away from Isfahan;² but it is clear that by July of that year he was back in his capital:

"The king is now here: and it is said that he is going to Basra."³

stated Fr. Prosper, 9.7.1624. The capture of Baghdad had, as already noted in Fr. Basil's letters, made the Arab Shaikh and governor of Basra apprehend an early extension of Persian operations in the direction of the Shatt-ul-'Arab: and by the end of 1624 it had materialized; for from Basra the Visitor General wrote, 16.1.1625:⁴

"This country is at peace at present, though a short time before . . . the Persians . . . had come (as near as) one day's journey off, to capture a fort, and if there had not been "twenty Portuguese ships . . . which went to the rescue . . . it might have been taken. "There is a report that Hurmuz is surrounded by the Portuguese, who prevent any supplies "whatever from reaching it. . . ."

Sometime early in 1625 (or possibly late in 1624) serious trouble had broken out in Georgia, so that in May and June of 1625 Shah 'Abbas was still detained in the Caucasus:

"The king is absent from the city occupied with the affairs of Georgia".

mentioned Fr. John Thaddeus on 27.5.1625,⁵ and on 18.6.1625 from Shiraz Fr. Dominic of S. Mary wrote:⁶

". . . The king is altogether occupied in Georgia, because of an unexpected and great "rising. Some days ago he sent a khala't, or robe of honour, for the eldest son of the Khan "of Shiraz, who would be about 13 years old, so that he may" (be invested and) "govern" (the province): "and a whiplash for his father, as a sign that he should ride for Georgia; "whither he is on his way with his men at great speed. . . ."

In 1626, on the vigil of the Annunciation, i.e. 24th March, an incident, which appeared to portend tragedy and turned to comedy, happened at the convent in Isfahan "while Shah 'Abbas was absent from Isfahan at the head of his army near *Babylon*."⁷

His 'Wazir'—perhaps the Daruga is meant—new to office, suddenly sent 200 soldiers to surround the convent of the Carmelites, which they searched thoroughly. The Fathers, asked to state their number, replied that there were in residence: Father Dimas of the Cross, Eliseus of S. Andrew, Balthazar of S. Mary and two Lay Brothers. An order was given for them all to be bound. Then the soldiers set on them, beat them with sticks and tied their hands behind their backs. They were led away and, thinking they were going to martyrdom, they sang the 'Te Deum' and hymns along the streets, refusing to be silent. A soldier made as if to strike on the mouth one of the Fathers, who promptly offered his cheek voluntarily, whereat

¹ O.C.D. 236 b. Fr. Eliseus of S. Andrew, who incidentally mentions that he gave tobacco to Arabs when crossing the desert—perhaps an early instance of smoking in Arabia.

² See MSS. *Hist. Miss.*

³ O.C.D., 238 d.

⁴ *Idem*, 241 i.

⁵ *Idem*, 237 m.

⁶ *Idem*, 238 o.

⁷ MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, chap. 12, book 5, part 3, alone relates this story.