

“promise than the last one, showing himself in fact very well disposed towards the Christian religion: and till now he does not exhibit himself so artificial and scheming as his predecessor. . . .”

was the report to Rome of the Visitor General, Fr. Epiphanius, 25.12.1631. That might be qualified as the impression of a Religious with short acquaintance of Persia and when the new reign was only three years old. But Fr. Dimas, Vicar Provincial for some seven years and over twenty years in Persia, should surely not be ignored, as he wrote year after year:

“3.12.36. . . . Our ‘patron’ ” (or ‘lord’ i.e. the Shah) “is here in Isfahan, where he arrived ‘victorious, and on account of his coming and his (state) entry great celebrations have been ‘held, and more than 20,000 Tumans spent on making an illumination’ (*Chiraghani*, the Persian word, is used as today) ‘and on other things, so that the populace have been ‘spellbound and thrilled, there having never been seen the like in this city. We have seen ‘him twice, though we have not yet’—Fr. Dimas was just back from a visitation of Indian mission posts—‘spoken to him, and are awaiting an opportunity to do so. Zaman¹ makes ‘a great show of the ‘Frank’ tongue: he has visited some of the grandees: and in particular ‘‘Itimad-ud-Dauleh, the second person’’ (in the country) ‘after the Shah, has said that he ‘intends to summon us, and it may be that he will send us other pupils. . . .”

(The illuminations and celebrations, and the ‘victory’ mentioned above perhaps refer to the events cited by Archbishop Augustine, O.P. of Nakhchiwan, writing from Warsaw to the Sac. Cong., 23.2.1637 (*S.R.*, vol. 106, p. 293):

“. . . As the seven-yearly period for my visit *ad limina* was ending. . . . I was on “my way *ad limina*, when there arrived a formidable Turkish army against the king “of Persia and invaded Greater Armenia, taking Erivan, the key and fortress of the “province, and then *Tabriz* and also many other places, and putting to the sword and “fire. . . . In the ruin 6 places in my diocese of Nakhchiwan were involved (Abranar, “Karna, etc.) and 335 Christians carried off slaves, among them some priests, two of “whom were killed, as well as some novices. The majority of the slaves were re- “deemed, some by the king of Persia himself on the recovery of those places.”)

“14.1.1637” (to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, Rome). . . . “The affairs of the “mission proceed prosperously. This prince is pleased to see us in his dominions: he takes “account of us, and has a great opinion of His Holiness. . . .”

“23.1.1637. . . . In Isfahan we have the king, of whom as yet we have not had audience. “We have indeed paid visits to many of the most important men of the Court, who have “promised us to have us spoken of to the king, who shows himself very kindly disposed “towards the ‘Franks’. We have seen him on many occasions, and he us. We are having “translated into Persian, in order to make him a present of it, a book which deals with good “government by princes, because they say *he is interested in books; and in matters of morality ‘he is distinctly good, and he is beloved by the people. He has more grandeur than the last Shah: ‘and in his affairs he is fortunate. It is said for certain that an ambassador is coming from “the king of Poland, to whom this Shah two years ago sent as ambassador Monsgr the “Archbishop of Alingia’’* (i.e. Nakhchiwan), “Fr. Augustine the Dominican. . . .”

“6.6.1637. . . . The king . . . bestows favours on us, and so do too the greater per- “sonages of the Court, many of whom come to see us: and some days ago we went to visit “the king and made him a gift of a book in Persian, which deals with good government “by princes. He was much obliged to us for it.”

“1.1.1638. The king recently has given us a very favourable ‘farman’, as Persians “call it. . . .”

¹ Vide MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, chap. 29, book 5: “. . . 1629. Shah Safi sent a noble young Persian youth to be taught “Italian by the Fathers”—in the end the youth became a convert. As “Paolo Zaman” he became well known as a painter, after studying in Italy as some claim.