

"25.2.1658. The Shah would not accept the truce for 20 years offered him by the "Sultan. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

But, while Persian military preoccupations during this reign were almost exclusively with the eastern frontier, in the waters of the Persian Gulf, on its western shore, and in the Indian Ocean, another and dual struggle was proceeding, which affected in its outcome the interests of the Carmelites and Augustinians at Isfahan, Basra, Shiraz and elsewhere more closely. Till 1635, and indeed in most places till later, the Portuguese should be visualized as holding, besides Kung on the Persian coast, a string of fortified positions on the Arab coast opposite, from Masqat to Katif. In 1643 the Dutch were still at war with the Portuguese: in December 1644 peace had been made between them in India;<sup>2</sup> prior to the renewal of that war the Arabs (those of Oman in particular) practically extinguished Portuguese interests on the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf.

"The Imam, king of the Arabs, is making war on Masqat. He has taken Suhar. . . ."

occurs in a report by Fr. Ignatius from Basra to Fr. Basil in Rome, 10.1.1644.<sup>3</sup> The same Vicar of Basra, 15.2.1647, mentioned:

"This year Masqat has been the objective of a terrible war, and attacked and besieged "by the neighbouring Arabs. . . ."

On his way to India from Isfahan the new Vicar Provincial, Fr. Dominic of S. Nicolas, writing at Masqat itself, 25.10.1649,<sup>4</sup> announced:

"The Arabs with superior forces are besieging Masqat: and terms have been broken off. "On both sides they are now preparing again for war and a siege: and yesterday evening "in the sight of all our men they posted their sentries. Both Portuguese and Arabs are "working hard, the Arabs in vain, I think, because Masqat is well fortified. . . ."

"I have heard", from Isfahan reported Fr. Dominic of S. Mary to Rome, 21.3.1650, "that about the middle of December the Arabs living round Masqat and hostile to the "Portuguese entered Masqat and made themselves masters of the place, sacking it and "making prisoners, and killing people, in particular some Augustinian Fathers, who were "in the convent: and the Portuguese soldiers had to retire to defend the forts<sup>5</sup> of the citadel "of Masqat, where, it said, they are in sufficient numbers and have enough ammunition "while awaiting succour from India. . . ."

A page of a letter of Fr. Felix of S. Antony, 4.6.1650,<sup>6</sup> from Basra, giving more details of this historic event, is reproduced on the opposite page; the translation reads:

"The Arabs have taken Masqat to our greatest possible shame, by the fault of the" (Portuguese) "general,<sup>7</sup> who died there of mortification over it. They slaughtered all the

"habitaculum Domini tot annorum clades invasit, ut plane diuturna bellorum serie sanguis tetigerit sanguinem. . . . "Quodsi vetera bellorum dissidia illustri victoria placet coronari, pugnate vicissim charitate non ficta . . .": and on 22.12.1657 (vol. 63) he gave permission to the Doge of Venice to raise 3,000 soldiers in the Papal States (for resistance to the Turks): and again His Holiness wrote, 6.7.1660: ". . . hanc autem pontificiae mentis laetitiam adauget "etiam spes qua reges principesque Catholicos alios eisdem defensae propugnataeque religionis laudibus operam pro "virili daturus esse credimus. Nos certe ut eos hortari et monere atque adeo propriis etiam supra tenues aerarii vires "exemplis incitare numquam destituimus. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Barnabas, Basra, O.C.D. 241 f.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Barnabas, Kung, 16.10.1643, O.C.D. 238 s; Fr. Dominic of S. Mary, 8.5.1645, O.C.D. 237 c.

<sup>3</sup> O.C.D. 241 m.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, 242 a.

<sup>5</sup> These bear the names 'Jalali' on the east, 'Mirani' that to the west, and still hold Portuguese cannon (see the photograph, facing p. 1249).

<sup>6</sup> O.C.D. 241 k.

<sup>7</sup> He would appear to have been Francisco de Tanora.