

“some signal punishment, and that You deign to save from wrongs and kindly support  
 “with Your royal protection the said Catholics and missionaries, You will comprehend  
 “from the letters of those princes, which will be brought to You along with this. To such  
 “demands We the more willingly add Our own present good offices with Your Highness  
 “in that We, as part of Our pastoral duty and of the charge committed Us to care for all  
 “the churches, are the more closely bound by checking the impudence of the schismatics  
 “to take careful pains that everyone professing or preaching the Catholic religion in Your  
 “dominions may continue to enjoy that freedom from anxiety and the quiet which Your  
 “ancestors and You too have hitherto very kindly granted them. . . . Given at Rome,  
 “the 22nd day of March 1720. . . .”

The Court was at the time away from Isfahan—at Tihran it would seem: and the Bishop found it more useful to avail himself of Fr. Judas Thaddeus Krusinski, then nearly fifteen years in the country, than to make the journey himself. It was while this matter was being pursued that the Bishop had to convey to the Sac. Congregation, 12.1.1721,<sup>1</sup> not the progress of his representations, but news of one of the tragedies of Persian history, which in this case accelerated the fall of the Safawi dynasty.

“On the 11th December last” (i.e. 1720) “there returned from the Court a Jesuit missionary Father, a Pole, who had gone thither at my instance. But the same evening  
 “there arrived one after the other express couriers with the news that ‘Itimad-ud-Dauleh  
 “had been deposed and disgraced because of his faithless and treacherous conduct towards  
 “the king, since it had become known from certain letters, as was commonly stated, that  
 “he was conspiring against the king himself—wherefore the king ordered that he should  
 “be at once beheaded, but one of his loyal and sagacious officials suggested that it would  
 “be better to hold him prisoner for some time, well guarded, in order to discover the more  
 “accurately his treasures and his great riches, which up till now amount to more than  
 “20 million Roman scudi amassed in the five or six years that he has been in office. For  
 “the present they have gouged out his eyes with a dagger<sup>2</sup> and then presented them to the  
 “Shah on a golden tray. One nephew of his, who was commander of the troops, has  
 “been arrested and bound, to be taken before the king—he too had got together very great

<sup>1</sup> S.R., vol. 634.

<sup>2</sup> The recension in English by Fr. du Cerceau of Fr. Krusinski's *Memoirs* relates the events leading up to this event to have been as follows. Fath 'Ali Khan, 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh, was a Lesghian by race, from the Daghistan country: he had been instrumental in having his brother-in-law (or nephew, as Bishop Fedeli calls him?), Lutf 'Ali Khan, appointed commander of the forces sent to reoccupy Kandahar. Enemies jealous of the latter's military success had spoilt and upset an arrangement he had made with the Portuguese for an expedition against Masqat. In revenge Lutf 'Ali Khan proceeded to refit and quarter his troops on the villages and property in the hinterland of the Persian shore belonging to those enemies at Court, taking away horses and supplies and levying large contributions. With a vast provision loaded on camels in November 1720 he moved up to Shiraz, intending to march towards Kandahar. But in their turn his enemies, incensed at his treatment of their properties, made common cause with the opposition faction at Court and determined to ruin Lutf 'Ali Khan by encompassing the downfall of his relative, the chief Wazir, for many years the Shah's *alter ego*. Two intimate attendants of Shah Sultan Husain, his Mulla or 'chaplain' and his Hakim-bashi, or physician-in-chief, in the middle of the night, therefore, broke all the rules by entering the bedchamber of the monarch and waking him: throwing down their turbans on to the ground, always a sign of crisis with orientals, they poured out to the frightened Shah a tale of a plot that had been detected—that his chief minister, 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh, had planned to murder him and the royal family that night. They even produced a paper which seemed to bear the seal of the chief Wazir: according to this the latter had sent for 3,000 Kurds to make his *coup*. Without reflection or any further enquiry, Shah Sultan Husain, summoning some of his eunuchs, took counsel with them and then ordered the chief of the guards, the Qurchi-bashi to break into the house of Fath 'Ali Khan and cut off his head. The Minister, quiet in his house and unaware of all this, offered no resistance: he was not decapitated but at the Qurchi-bashi's house his eyes were removed from their sockets, and he was tortured to give information as to his fortune and valuables, estimated in Krusinski's *Memoirs* at 900,000 Tumans. Meanwhile couriers from the Shah had been sent off to Shiraz to trap Lutf 'Ali Khan, the successful general, and brother-in-law, or nephew of the blinded Wazir: and he was brought to Isfahan and kept in confinement but, the Shah having by then been convinced of the innocence of 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh, no worse measure was taken against him. His army encamped round Shiraz no sooner had learnt of one of the grounds for their general's removal being the booty they had carried off from the Gulf littoral than they melted away with it. This typical Court drama with its fateful results took place at the end of November 1720, while the Shah was at Tihran—"a little village, but well fortified with walls and very strong from its situation." Its immediate result in the spring of 1721 was that the Daghistanis, fellow-countrymen of the blinded Fath 'Ali Khan, rose in force, plundered several towns including Shamakha and ravaged the province of Shirwan. This disorder was followed in the summer of 1721 by the great earthquake which laid Tabriz in ruins.