

'Afghans did not give way to an excess of confidence, or abandon a sense of respect for the Safawi monarchy and its representative: to be independent and free from aggression in their own country might have sufficed them: the Indian *dai*, attendant and instructor of Mir Mahmud's early years, in the council of war suggested that the Shah be invited to give one of his daughters in marriage to Mir Mahmud and assign the two Afghan provinces of Kandahar and Hazara as her marriage portion, an oath on the Quran to accompany the gift and investiture. The pride of the effete Sultan Husain could not however stomach the giving of a daughter of his to a rebel of no lineage'—(strange, if true and the main reason for refusal, when the customs in his own 'Haram' are recalled)—and he allowed to pass neglected a course which might have saved his throne and spared Persia years of horror and turmoil. Worse, his suspicions or his advisers prevented measures of defence from being taken; though the Armenians, many of them sturdy muleteers, were ready to defend Julfa, he gave orders for all Armenians to collect with their arms on the great Maidan of Isfahan on the 19th March, and there and then he caused them to be disarmed, when on the contrary he should have put a strong force into Farrahabad to act as a screen for the defence of the capital.

'On the same day the Afghans entered the suburb of Farrahabad, where the Shah's pleasure resort was: on the next night they took Julfa by assault after two hours' opposition from the Armenians. The latter capitulated and were taken to Mir Mahmud at Farrahabad: he demanded a fine of 70,000 Tumans, and fifty of the handsomest girls to be sent to his camp, well clothed and with jewels. The Armenians actually did send the girls, but bargained to pay the money after Isfahan had been captured, saying that their money and goods lay in the city. The Afghans agreed on condition that they should first make a perquisition in the houses so that in the end the Armenians were in worse case than if they had paid the fine; for the Afghans let the Armenians understand that they did not believe there was enough in Julfa to pay the sum stipulated and, having need of ready money, they would content themselves with what was then in Julfa and wait for the rest. So the houses must all be searched and a just account rendered. But the search became a pillage, with the exception of murder every sort of violence being used, gold, silver and jewels being seized, men bastinadoed and tortured to disclose where their valuables were. 40,000 pounds were said to be found in the house of Aratun Shariman, for instance. The Afghans even sold at nominal prices to the poor what they had plundered from the rich.

'On the other hand the Isfahanis (not taking into account that they had deprived them of their arms) looked upon the Armenians as traitors for surrendering their township. When, after the second general assault on Isfahan, 23.3.1722, Monday in Passion week, the Afghans were worsted (and might have been driven off the ground, had the Shaikh of Hawaizeh not refrained from joining with his Arabs in the combat) and were in doubt whether they had not better after all retire on Kirman, they asked the Armenians of Julfa to negotiate; the miserable Armenians dared not accept the office, though probably it would have saved the dynasty. For they realized how greatly the Court and city people were incensed against them, "the very women . . . in the markets, loading them with "curses, threatening to tear the Armenian children out of their mothers' wombs: if ever . . . the Persians should again be masters, the Armenians need look forward to nothing "but quitting the country. . . ."'¹

'On 21.3.1722 the attack on Isfahan began, but the two bridges across the river were guarded, and the Afghans could not carry the city. Mir Mahmud decided to blockade it, laying in forage during the next month or so and devastating villages near at hand, while constantly keeping the Court occupied with the discussion of terms of peace. On 1.5.1722 he captured the Abuzabi bridge, the Georgian guards being drunk or asleep: and he was then able to block all roads to the city. Various small forces collected in various parts of the country round were beaten off and dispersed by Afghans on approach-

¹ Quoted from Fr. Krusinski's *Memoirs*, p. 51, vol. II, and p. 88 respectively of Fr. du Cerceau's edition.