

“on the way. Four days’ distance from Isfahan Shah Ashraf, who was the last king of the Afghan nation, met him with a small force of 11,000 to 13,000 mounted men. . . . The Persians remained masters of the field of battle and of all the baggage. . . . All I have related as far as this, in addition to having seen it admirably acted, I have myself heard related not only by many Persian soldiers on the very spot where they had been present at the battle, but by the general himself, Ahmad Pasha, about whom I shall have much to say later.

“Shah Ashraf, having won the victory, turned round with his force against the town of Khunsar, which the Afghans had in vain tried to subjugate; but here his army was routed by the townspeople, and the slaughter was so great on both sides that in the month of June 1736, when I passed by there, there were still two piles—as it were two large towers—composed of the heads of soldiers dead in that fight. Ashraf withdrew to Isfahan with the few of his army whom he could collect: and Ahmad Pasha was reinforced by more troops, remaining in possession of Hamadan.”<sup>1</sup>

By the end of 1725 the Turks were masters of Persian country for a wide belt from northern Georgia to Hamadan: and Shah Ashraf sent a mission to Constantinople to treat for terms, one of the assistant envoys being Emmanuel, son of Markar Shariman. But the Grand Vizir declined to treat with them and declaring Shah Ashraf an enemy of the Sultan sent them away. In 1726, therefore, a very large Turkish force invaded Persia and surprised Qazwin, but they found Isfahan too strongly protected by troops, and the Qazwinis revolted, so that the Turkish army retired into Georgia. In 1727 the Turkish army, which two years previously had taken Tabriz, was defeated by the Afghans; but the Afghans were three times worsted by the Muscovites in skirmishes in Gilan. Early in October of that year the Afghans gained another victory over the Turks near Shamakha, and then, having lost 150,000 of their troops their war-chest exhausted, the Turks consented to open negotiations for peace.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With that account of Fr. Leander, which seems entitled to credence because of his first-hand evidence, it is interesting to collate such notices as there are in the diaries of the East India Company’s Factors at Gāmburun (Bandar ‘Abbas), which the India Office, London, possess from 1726 onwards, the only previous years recorded being 1708–10. It would appear that the European trading companies on the Persian Gulf were left for months together, sometimes, in ignorance of what was really happening up-country. Gāmburun diary, 1.12.1726:

“There is a further account that the Turks from Baghdad have marched another army into Persia of 170,000 men, under the command of Achmet Bashaw, late Bashaw of Basra. . . .”

Gāmburun diary, 19.1.1726–7:

“Private shooters” (i.e. *shatirs* = runners) “came from Spahaun this day reporting that Shah Asaf marched out of Spahaun with all his forces six days’ journey, with a resolution to fight the Turks. It was given out just before they (the runners) “came away that the Turks were entirely routed by the Afghans.”

Gāmburun diary, Wednesday, March 1st 1726–7:

“Yesterday evening arrived shooters from Spahan with letters dated 30th November, 18th December, and 1st January. Under the 30th November gives an account of the Afghans marching out of Spahaun the 10th of October last” (Fr. Leander wrote “May”—if he is referring to the same movement) “with 8,000 Afghans and 30,000 militia to engage the Turks, who were on their march from Hamedoon. Eighteen days after they were met and fought them and the Afghans at first had the worst, and some that fled arrived in the city with the news of their defeat, yet at last . . . routed the Turks, killing as reported upwards of 30,000 men . . . the conquerors . . . also brought into Spahaun 45 pieces of brass cannon, 5 mortars, a great quantity of ammunition and baggage, so that it may be conjectured the defeat was very extraordinary. The gentlemen” (i.e. East India Company’s agents in Isfahan) “also advise that before the king” (Ashraf) “set out on this enterprise he commanded all the Europeans to get ready to accompany him and, tho’ they excused themselves in the best manner they could, yet they were obliged to give a present of 40 tomaunds to ‘Itimad-ud-Dauleh to have a Talligaw” (i.e. *taligeh* = written permit) “of leave, for they consider’d to appear in arms against the Turks might prove of very bad consequence. . . .”

<sup>2</sup> Thus far Fr. Leander; from the appendix in Fr. du Cerceau’s book it may be added that,

“as signed between Shah Ashraf and the Saraskar Pasha in September 1727 and published at Constantinople, 18.11.1727, the conditions included recognition of Sultan Ashraf as sovereign of Persia by any title he chose, and of his marriage to Shah Sultan Husain’s daughter: Tabriz and Hamadan and other Turkish conquests to remain theirs: Hawaizeh district to be Turkish: Persians to be allowed to make pilgrimages to Makkeh and to the shrines in Mesopotamia and to trade in Turkey: a sum to be voluntarily paid each year to the Sultan of Turkey by Ashraf: Tahmasp Mirza Safawi not to be aided by the Turks.

“Simultaneously with the Turkish invasions in 1724 the Russians had seized all the west coast of the Caspian Sea and the coast of Gilan for some 160 leagues in length, but for no great depth into the interior: and in 1728 Shah Ashraf negotiated with the Czar Peter II by a mission sent to Moscow with rich presents a treaty of peace, which was signed in Gilan, 13.2.1729, the Russians to keep all conquests on the Caspian, and from Darband to the river Araxes, while ‘Astarabad and Mazandaran were to remain Persian. All these efforts to be free from attack from abroad availed Shah Ashraf little in view of his fate in 1729.”