

“Muntafiq and Bani Lam, which had joined the Persians in lusting for the utter destruction of that town! It is almost incredible to relate, nor will it ever be understood how it did not fall at the first attack.<sup>1</sup> Yet it held out, and the indefatigable exertions of the Mutasallim of that time (Rustam Agha), and of Musa Pasha in Minawi, frustrated all attempts by the enemy to obtain any lodgment, except in one small fort on the opposite bank of the river. Three cannon-balls fell into our (Carmelite) hospice, but none on the church: one blazing one fell on our (Carmelite) guest-house (caravansarai), but the damage was made good at the cost of a mere 20 mahmudi” (=40 shahi=2 rial in modern exchange).

“At length, 8.12.1743, to universal rejoicing two messengers arrived—one a Turk, the other a Persian—reporting that a covenant of peace had been made between Nadir Shah and Ahmad Pasha, so on both sides hostilities ceased: the gates of the town were opened, and after some days the Persian army took itself back to Persia. We did not know what were the terms” (of peace) “but only heard afterwards that the principal commander of the Persian army ended his life near the town of Mashhad, whither he had fled, in punishment for the unsatisfactory outcome of the war, being beheaded by order of the Shah. . . .”

As a sequel to this brief campaign and the armistice some details may be quoted from an enclosure to a letter of the new Bishop of Baghdad, written from Malta, 25.4.1744, viz. a communication from the French ambassador in Constantinople to the Grand Master of the Knights in Malta:

“News from Constantinople, 2.3.1744,

“After the siege of Mausil was raised, the son<sup>2</sup> of Thomas Kuli K(h)an had been blockading the city of Baghdad. Thomas Kuli K(h)an himself was encamped at Altun Su, where there is the ‘golden river’ between Baghdad and Kirkuk. It was there the Kiaya<sup>3</sup> of Ahmad Pasha went to discharge the commission with which the Porte had entrusted him on the journey he made to Constantinople last October. The result of those negotiations was that Thomas Kuli K(h)an decided to retrace his steps to Persia after having arranged with Ahmad Pasha about a plan for peace, the governor of Baghdad leaving this for approval by the Porte. He dispatched his Kiaya once more to the Porte in the month of December last (1743). Thomas Kuli K(h)an, who has declared himself a Sunni, and a true Muhammadan, did not want to return to Persia without making a pilgrimage to four mosques, of which two are a quarter of a league from Baghdad.<sup>4</sup> From where he was he sent his ‘Itimad-ud-Dauleh, i.e. chief minister, to pay a visit to Ahmad Pasha, who received him at the door of his haram (‘andarun’), embraced him, made him a gift of three fine horses richly caparisoned, and said in a tone loud enough to be heard by everyone: ‘It is not men, it is God who has arranged this interview by changing

<sup>1</sup> Whereas at the time of the previous attempt by the Persians to seize Basra (in 1733) it had been Mr. French, Resident for the East India Company, who was regarded and feted by the Turks as the saviour of the town, on this occasion *Cont. Basra Chron.* has a piquant story in the opposite vein to tell of his successor, Mr. Darell:

“At the time of the siege the English Resident, Mr. Darell, retained in his house a quantity of wheat and barley contrary to the order of the Mutasallim that grain was to be sold publicly in the Maidan: further, on the arrival of the Persians he dressed his servants in Persian fashion, and it was also rumoured that he had received letters from the leaders of the Persian force: for those reasons all the Janissaries there were to be found broke out in a demonstration against him (accusing him) as a partisan of the enemy, and they settled to kill him in his own house. No sooner had this been found out than the Mutasallim, Rustam Agha, was at pains to soothe the tempers of the angry men, and to make them abandon the plot they had made, and, so as to protect him the more safely, for the whole of the time of the siege he kept the English Resident under guard in his house. . . . Taking the good deed as an insult, and wrongly construing the guard placed over him by the Mutasallim, perhaps instigated by the advice of courtiers hostile to the governor, . . . at the beginning of May (1744) the English Resident, attended by several servants, surreptitiously betook himself to Baghdad, where, being received with profuse signs of honour by Ahmad Pasha, he asked for the removal of Rustam Agha. . . . During the time of his detention no one went near him: our Fathers alone went to see him repeatedly, and he received their friendly offices in so grateful a spirit that, abandoning his former spleen, he not only restored us to his erstwhile goodwill, but gave us confirmation of it by many evidences of generosity. . . .”

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Nasrullah Mirza, or “Nazar ‘Ali Mirza,” as the Capuchin Fr. Damian, who as physician to the royal family ought to have accurately known, calls him.

<sup>3</sup> *Kahaya* or *kiaya*, properly ‘steward’—perhaps here ‘factotum’ or Nazir, as in Persia, but often acting as deputy governor in fact.

<sup>4</sup> The shrine of Kadhimain is perhaps meant.