

“who had to stop there, so that by doing so they should compel their husbands, who were outside, to return to Isfahan.

“The Messrs. Shariman, an Armenian family well known both by their illustrious relatives who live in Europe and have the title of ‘Count’, and for their great riches which they have placed in the hands of various agents of theirs in all parts of the world, and much more by their great attachment and zeal which they have always shown in defending and maintaining in Persia the Catholic Faith and the missionaries, also succeeded in getting their children away from Persia before the return of the Shah. Messrs. Leo and Peter, both brothers of Count David living in Leghorn, themselves tried to do the same on the occasion of a caravan leaving for Basra; but their flight being discovered by the governor of the city and Kalantar of Julfa, the latter sent armed men after them, who brought them back to Julfa, to their great misfortune, because they were afterwards obliged to suffer great tribulations, as we shall now tell.

“The 14th December of last year, 1746, then, was the day on which the barbarous Quli Khan returned to Isfahan. He made his entry with no other escort than that of his guards and soldiers, having declined to permit the heads of the city and of Julfa to go out and meet him, and having on the contrary had a ban published of the death penalty for whosoever should be found on the road by which he was to pass. The Europeans alone, i.e. Messrs. Pearson and Bland, Englishmen, and Mynheer Bentquem, Agent of the Dutch Company in Isfahan, had permission to make their bows to him from a distance, and to follow him as far as the Royal Palace, where they were later admitted to an audience with him, which consisted in no other ceremonies than in acceptance of the valuable gifts the gentlemen in question made to him, in exchange for which he had given to each one of them a coat of gold and silver brocade after the Persian style.

“Then the first order he gave was to send to all houses in the city and district of Isfahan and Julfa a quantity of royal tax-gatherers to extract money out of the stones, so to speak: so that it is said that in the whole time of this second visit and stay in Isfahan, which was for 5 weeks, he had extracted from the city and its villages more than 300,000 Tumans; and to find so much money in a place already ruined, what efforts must the tax-collectors and officers of the Tyrant not have made! Every day they killed under the bastinado a quantity of people, and sticks not being sufficient in the end they used irons and stakes hardened in the fire, without regard either to the sex or to the status of the person: men, women, poor and rich, old people and children, they took them all and put them under the pole, either to make them give money or, if the persons did not have any, denounce those who had it. To satisfy the avarice of the insatiable Tyrant, in exchange” (for money) “there were put up for auction whatever women’s ornaments, furniture, utensils, etc., were to be found in the houses: and, because for want of money it was difficult to find anyone to buy these, in order to make purchase easy the poor wretches were obliged to sell them to the very soldiers and servants of the barbarian usurper: the best gold at 4 ‘abbasi a mithqal: silver at 2 bisti: 1 batman-i-Shah of copper at 2 ‘abbasi: and so on the other things proportionately.¹ But because despite all these efforts they still remained powerless to acquit themselves entirely of such great imposts, they were at last obliged to sell their own offspring at such low prices that a child of 12 years was being sold for 10 mahmudi, a girl of the same age for 5 mahmudi—a thing unbelievable, but true and as true as it is at present in almost all Persia.

“The share which on this occasion fell to be paid by the Armenians of Julfa it is not yet known to what sum it amounted precisely. Letters from private persons state that Julfa for its portion paid about 30,000 Tumans, i.e. 13,000 Tumans of it for a certain rice, which the year before the Tyrant left them to sell, three parts of which were not to be found and the other quarter remaining they had been unable to finish selling. The balance of that sum was for other impositions, and payments and gifts made to the tax-

¹ In margin of original MSS. The ‘abbasi of Persia = 1 livre in France: the bisti = 2½ soldi: 1 batman-i-Shah is a weight of 16 lb. of 12 ounces (the batman-i-Shah of the 1900’s being 13 lb. avoirdupois).