

“gatherers and officials of the barbarians to render them a little milder. In order to meet such expenditure the Armenians of Julfa, no less than the Persians in Isfahan, had to get it from the gold, silver, copper and whatever they had in their houses, and chests of clothes, furniture and utensils, selling them at the most paltry prices: and, when that was insufficient, many of the poorest were also obliged to sell their own sons, daughters and brothers to Persian soldiers, who bought them at a few 'abbasi, to make an ill use of them at their pleasure afterwards, but even that did not suffice. As it was learnt that a rich caravan of the Armenians was coming from Basra, and bringing with it more than 5,000 Tumans in coin, 2,000 of which belonged to the Messrs. Shariman, together with various loads of merchandise the governor of the city and the mayor of Julfa at once went off to meet it and, having met it three days' distance from Isfahan, had brought into the city all the loads of money and goods there were, confiscating the whole indiscriminately for the royal treasury, without leaving the Armenians as much as one thread except for two boxes for the reverend Jesuit Fathers of Julfa, which a Lay Brother of theirs named Frère Brazin found means to remove. He had recently been placed in the service of the Tyrant as physician by the English gentlemen” (i.e. of the East India Company) “to whom he” (Nadir Shah) “had had recourse for a European doctor: and when he (Nadir Shah) had obtained him, he ordered that three soldiers should be given him as servants and guards, and a present of 50 Tumans in order to buy medicines—with regard to which present the Superior of the Jesuits writes that he would willingly have thanked the Tyrant, had he left them the Brother in the house.¹ But to return to the affair of Julfa.

“Not only did so much money, brought by that very rich caravan and all of it sequestered for the royal treasury, not suffice to satisfy the avarice of the tyrannical usurper; it rather served to sharpen his appetite for more. So, arguing that the Armenians must be richer than he thought, he redoubled the orders to his tax-collectors to make further efforts to extract more money still from them. They flogged the poor tormented people without mercy, and when they (the tax-gatherers) saw their efforts bootless, because it was impossible for anyone, who was not left with even a halfpenny to live, to give any more money, they then turned to persuading the poor sufferers to give the names of some other persons who should have it. ‘Money, money,’ they said, ‘the Shah wants it, whether justly or unjustly: say that another man owes you so much, and you and we shall be quits.’ So to escape dying under the blows of the sticks and the heated irons, they gave the names of some imaginary debtor of theirs, who was soon taken and put under the bastinado pole, in order that he should disgorge the money.

“Since Mr. Peter Shariman passed among the Armenians, and also among the Persians as one of the richest, very many persons gave his name; for that reason the poor gentleman had so many beatings, that he made his last confession and was given the Last Sacraments. Then, as he saw that they never came to an end, fines upon fines, imposts after imposts, hardly had he extricated himself from one than another was put on him, one day he succeeded in escaping from the hands of the extortioners by throwing himself down from the roof of his house into the neighbouring house, near the sacristy of the church of the Carmelite Fathers. He entered their house barefooted, and in a parlous state: he asked the Father for his slippers, and in them he escaped, it was not known where, and hid himself so well that for 45 days and nights that he was sought in all the houses it was never possible to find him: and this flight freed him from death, as we shall now tell.

“Ever keener to seek pretexts to have money the Tyrant one day had summoned to him his chief ‘keeper of the harness’, and reproached him for having thieved a certain horsecloth worked in gold and pearls. The ‘keeper of the harness’ replied or protested

¹ *Vide Cont. Basra Chron.:*

“23.6.1755. Brother Brazin, S.J., a Jesuit Lay Brother, had come to Basra by orders of the General to bring away Fr. Desvignes, the only surviving member of their mission at Julfa, and, as he was in bad health, to be his companion. Brother Brazin waited 13 months at Basra in the House of the Carmelites: when he heard that Fr. Desvignes had left Julfa, he himself left in a French ship for India. . . .”