

“to employ some acts of generosity and clemency, which served, however, to make known more widely his innate avarice and cruelty. . . . On his entry he had cried through the squares and round the quarters that flour and bread should be sold at 1 ‘abbasi, whereas previously they had been selling for 2 ‘abbasi; but, as the owners (of flour) who had purchased it at a dearer price did not willingly accommodate themselves to selling it at a loss at that price, the Tyrant had all their stores confiscated and distributed to soldiers, as much flour as was found in houses and shops. The other act of ‘generosity’, which he did on his departure, was to bid the governor of Isfahan take 1,000 Tumans from the rich and have the money distributed to the poor—an easy method of giving alms! . . .

“. . . When the Tyrant had departed the governor of the city, showing himself more humane than the Shah, for some days tried to tranquillize the people, refusing to listen to accusations of any kind, so that little by little those who had hidden themselves began to appear: and then it was perceived that all this clemency of the governor was nothing but a feint to catch them, for he at once had Messrs. Leo and Peter Shariman together with Mr. Wali Jan and other leading Armenians made prisoners and bastinadoed so cruelly that all their toe-nails fell off, and the bare bones of the feet were to be seen: he claimed from the Messrs. Shariman 2,500 Tumans for the release of the houses confiscated by the Tyrant: so that the poor gentlemen, who had been so despoiled of their money by the past imposts they had paid, in order not to perish miserably under the bastinado, after having given up all the silverware there was in their church, were obliged along with other Armenians to send men to Basra, accompanied by officials of the governor of Isfahan, to take from their agents all the money they could find or borrow. . . .”

A letter¹ from Fr. Sebastian of S. Margaret, dated Julfa, 16.8.1747, shows how blood-stained, almost demoniacal the monster became in the few months of February to June which closed his career—bold *condottiere* and energetic general that he had been, a ‘conquistador’, whose feats had attracted the attention of the world and flattered the pride of his race:

“The cruel man came this last winter to this capital, and his wicked occupation was nothing but mutilating, strangling and burning people, and burying them alive: all this in order to extract money and make himself the proud (monarch) feared throughout all the world. Among others he had burnt alive the pillar of the Catholic religion in this country, the good ‘Count’ Aratun Shariman, without rhyme or reason: and a few days later there died of a broken heart and fright his brother ‘Count’ Leo Shariman, both brothers of ‘Count’ David Shariman, living in Leghorn. Now there is left one brother, ‘Count’ Peter Leopold Shariman, together with various nephews all of whom may God preserve for the benefit of the Catholic Faith.

“After having sated himself with cruelties the wretch went on to the town of Kirman [? *sic* for Sistan or Qazwin], and did the same there, more or less. He continued on to Mashhad, the capital of Khurasan; and there gave way to excesses and had seven very high towers made of human heads. He had buried alive two sons of ‘Ali Quli Khan, his nephew, and the eyes put out of the mother and wife of the latter. He sallied forth from Mashhad to go elsewhere, and on the march took into his head to put to the sword all his bodyguard, consisting of 4,000 men; but they got wind of the iniquitous intention of the monarch and ten of the more courageous of them went at night into the royal tent and with their swords hacked to pieces the tyrant, and sent portions of his flesh to all parts of the country. But the head was cut off and put on the top of a lance and carried in triumph for sport.

“The cause of his end,” had said the writer at the beginning of the letter, “was nothing else than his tyrannical fits of madness, which in the last year of his life it was his whim to exploit to the utmost. . . .

¹ *S.N.R.*, V, p. 201.