

'In Azarbaijan Azad Khan, a general of Nadir, had established a separate government. 'Ali Mardan Khan, brother of the Bakhtiari chief, took forcible possession of Isfahan and put forward Isma'il, nephew of Shah Sultan Husain, with himself as one of Isma'il's two 'ministers' (Wazirs) 'the other being Karim Khan, chief of the Zand Kurds. After a time 'Ali Mardan Khan was assassinated, and Karim Khan was solely in power at Isfahan. 'A three-sided war between Karim Khan (Zand), Azad Khan (Afghan) and Muhammad Hasan Khan (Qajar) ensued.

'Karim Khan, after arranging matters with Isfahan, marched to the borders of Mazandaran: victory in the fight was with Muhammad Hasan Khan, who was unable to follow up the foe, as he had to encounter Azad Khan. The latter . . . in Gilan. Karim Khan reunited his troops at Tihiran, and retired to Isfahan.

'Azad Khan shut himself up in Qazwin. Next spring Karim Khan advanced to meet Azad Khan, and was defeated and pursued to Isfahan by Azad Khan: he continued on to Shiraz, with Azad Khan following. He (Karim Khan) threw himself on the mercy of the Arabs of the Garmsir,<sup>1</sup> who rose in a body to turn on Azad Khan. With their aid Karim Khan repaired his losses and advanced on Isfahan. The Afghan did not await his coming, but retired to his government of Tabriz. The Zand issued from Isfahan, was defeated by the Qajar a second time and then took refuge behind the walls of Shiraz. The Qajar then invaded Azarbaijan and turned out Azad Khan.

'Next year Muhammad Hasan Khan returned to march on Shiraz with 80,000 men. Karim Khan was obliged to take shelter in Shiraz and the neighbourhood was laid waste. Muhammad Hasan Khan had to retire to the north. Karim Khan moved to Isfahan, where he received the submission of nearly all the chief cities of Persia.

'Muhammad Hasan Khan was murdered. . . .'

All the second part of that abridgment reads like moves in a game of chess, but complicated with three kings and forces instead of the usual number; and it is the more confusing because no dates, nor even years, are mentioned. For greater precision the Carmelites and other Religious often prove useful sources.

Perhaps early in 1751 there was no extensive fighting or struggle. Fr. Berselli, O.P., left in Isfahan, had 'written that affairs in Persia are recovering a better outlook', so another Dominican<sup>2</sup> reported. But

"towards the end of last year" (i.e. 1751) "on the occasion the Lurs or Bakhtiari, a race of robbers by profession, took by assault and entered the city of Isfahan, a payment of money was imposed by them on everyone—and we, as we had no longer the Sharimans to protect us, were also taxed to pay the sum mentioned in order to be freed from molestation and imprisonment. . . . At present all Persia is in upheaval, for which cause many of our Catholic flock have fled to the frontier, and others to India, Muscovy and Europe. . . ."

To cite one example of the insecurity prevailing on the roads, the writer, Bishop Sebastian of S. Margaret,<sup>3</sup> when he had travelled to Baghdad from Isfahan in the beginning of 1752,

"had paid 40 scudi on the cost of the journey itself, 20 scudi on 'Rahdari',<sup>4</sup> and 40 scudi for the five hundred musketeers who were taken from Isfahan as an escort for the great caravan with which I came and arrived safely in forty days at Baghdad, for which I and my servant were taxed—one scudo *per diem*: without the escort the caravan would undoubtedly have been looted, and we passengers massacred or made prisoners by the robber rebels, who made several attempts in Kurdistan to attack it. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> 'Garmsir' = the 'hot country', i.e. the littoral of the Persian Gulf and belt of Fars just above it.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Gaetano Codileonino from Mausil, 2.7.1751, *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> 25.4.1752, *S.R.*, vol. 753.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. illegal tolls taken by local potentates—such as were still being taken by *force majeure* on the southern roads in 1912, and after the war.