

Next, writing from Basra 23.12.1753,¹ after he had been for some months in Bushire in company with the Bishop, Mgr Sebastian's brother and Vicar General reported to Mgr Lercari, Secretary of the Sac. Congregation:

“. . . In the month of October 1753 such bad news came from Julfa and Isfahan that “it was no longer practicable for us to penetrate as far as there in any way whatsoever, “because the ‘general’ of the Persian army named Karim Khan, the present governor of “Isfahan, who in the capacity of protector of Julfa used to support the missionaries and “Christians there, at the end of the campaign” (i.e. season) “was defeated in the warfare “and, beaten by the enemy, was compelled to flee and abandon Isfahan. So the men “from Luristan and the Afghans² forced their way into the city and, being folk given to “pillaging and plundering and making slaves of Christians, they then at once levied a “very large and exorbitant imposition of money on the city of Isfahan and Julfa of 60,000 “Tumans (each Tuman=5 Venetian sequins) and afterwards subjected to the bastinado “and put to the sword many persons, and then looted the town of Julfa for a number of “days, and made prisoners of various Christian families.

“So the kingdom of Persia and the capital, Isfahan, in particular, and Julfa at present “are in such a state of upheaval that all the Christians have fled. . . .”

The Bishop of Isfahan had copied at Basra, 30.4.1754,³ a letter from Julfa, presumably written by the Dominican Fr. Raymond Berselli, about what happened in that incursion of October 1753:

“Finally,” he observed, “we have fallen into the hands of the rebel Afghans. Azad “Khan, their head, entered Isfahan victoriously and straightway assumed the sovereign “power, and he is taking up his lodging in the royal palace, and his troops composed of “rascals and robbers have taken up their quarters in the Convent of the Portuguese Augus- “tinian Fathers, and they are putting their horses in the church, making a stable of it, as “they did that of the Capuchin Fathers some time back,⁴ when the Lurs took and sacked “Isfahan. They tried to take up quarters also in your” (i.e. the Carmelite) “convent, but “your wideawake and adroit Lay Brother Ferdinand⁵ went personally to the head of the “rebels and managed so well that he obtained a guard with orders that no one was to “trouble him. Notwithstanding this the soldiery are so insolent that very many times in “the day officers and soldiers go and molest him. . . . Julfa has been given over to their “allies, the Uzbaks, also great rascals and robber rebels, to whom Julfa has daily to give “money for their food and other things. . . .”

How those constant irruptions of fresh looters drained the resources of and tried the missionaries as well as civilians may be judged from the same writer's letter of 4.2.1754:⁶

“. . . They have recently imposed a new fine on Julfa and consequently also on us. “They came to exact it from me at night-time with staves and lanterns. I received several “blows. Having no money I gave them the chalice once more: then, when day had “dawned I obtained some money by borrowing on loan and, when I had handed over “the money, the amount of the impost on me, I got back the chalice. Since the coming “of the Afghan robbers till today I have paid in impositions 54 ‘hazar’⁷ which make 526 “Roman scudi, for which I am in debt with interest to those who lent it me. For having

¹ Fr. Hyacinth of S. Teresa, *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 184.

² Early in July 1753, or in June, the Carmelite Fr. Adalbert in Aleppo had passed on precise news that “the Afghans “had taken the road for Isfahan in order to sack the city” (*vide S.N.R.*, VI, p. 168, Fr. Dominic Lanza, O.P., 18.7.1753).

³ and ⁶ *Vide S.R.*, vol. 759, p. 251.

⁴ i.e. towards the end of 1751.

⁵ Fra. Ferdinand of S. Teresa.

⁷ Dinar, perhaps?—1,000 dinar being the modern alternative term for 1 qran, one-tenth of 1 Tuman; but the exchange value with scudi does not seem to bear out that supposition.