

“killed some Afghans at the time they attempted to enter Isfahan the people in three large villages near Isfahan have been looted, part carried off as slaves, and part put to death.¹ “The caravans, which were coming from Bushire and Bandar Rig to Isfahan” (God inspired your Illustr. lordship not to come by them . . .) “were entirely looted by the Afghans and “Tatars” (i.e. Uzbaks) “. . . one day’s march from Isfahan. The head of the caravan, “Khvajeh Muhammad, who also had nearly 4,000 Tumans in merchandise from India “and Europe, was plundered of it all, and carried off a prisoner and, when afterwards “taken to Isfahan, ransomed by his relations for 25 Tumans. Some Armenians, who threw “themselves into a well to save themselves, were suffocated: three Armenians alone escaped “and arrived half dead and naked in Julfa: as to all the rest some were killed, some carried “off as prisoners. Everything your Illustr. lordship was sending us for food and clothing “and to carry on was taken. Well, well! patience! We thank you neither more nor less “for your kind heart and compassion on us. . . .”

Speaking of the constant raiding by the Lurs or Bakhtiari, and latterly by the Afghans, who the previous October had once more sacked Isfahan and Julfa, Bishop Sebastian, in his letter of 14.1.1754,² after mentioning that all his flock had fled from those and other places in Persia and the majority taken refuge with him in Basra, added this item:

“. . . impositions were so great that they are selling men, women, boys and girls like oxen, “sheep, and horses. . . .”

Another observation on the condition of the country may be cited: the Bishop of Baghdad, 20.9.1754, wrote:

“From Hamadan to Baghdad there is not a single Christian: the Residence and the “church at Hamadan are entirely destroyed, and the town itself to such a degree that “there are not to be found 200 inhabitants. . . . Not a single Armenian remains, all “having been killed, or carried off into slavery, or become refugees in the Turkish “dominions . . .” (see his report to the Pope, printed in Rome).

These reports tend to show that there were two raids, one by the Bakhtiari at the end of 1751, the other by men of Luristan and the Afghans in October 1753.³

¹ Another letter: “They demand 1,800 Tumans from Julfa. . . . We are all being badly handled: they plunder the “house of him who has no cash ready down to his clothing. . . .”

² Basra, S.R., vol. 759, p. 248.

³ Of the operations in 1754-6 details to fill in the gap may be borrowed from the diaries of the East India Company’s agent at Gämbrun:

“22.8.1754. Advices from Lhar (Lar) mention that Azad Caun (Khan) has taken Shyrash (Shiraz) and has sent the “principal inhabitants to Spahan . . . he massacred upwards of 4,000 people. It is reported that Careem (Karim) “Caun is at Dashtistan” (i.e. the district of the littoral lying immediately behind Bushire and Bandar Rig, and south- “wards to Tangistan) “with a body of 2,000 men. Spahaun advices mention that ‘Ali Mardan Caun has pulled out the “eyes of —, that Azad Caun has gained another battle over the joint forces of Karim Khan and . . .

“9.9.1754. Karim Khan has made several attempts to wrest the government from Azad Khan, but hitherto proved “unsuccessful: he is now at Kazarun. Azad Khan was at Shiraz with an army of about 12,000 men, it is said.

“Tuesday, 17.9.1754. Spahan was in the possession of Azad Khan, which he took 10th of September last, a few days after “his entering the city he began to levy taxes, not only on its inhabitants, but likewise on those of Julfa: the inhabitants “there have broken open and plundered everything therein: those who were unable to answer his demands in ready “money were obliged to submit to have goods taken from them to much more than the amount . . . taxed from 1 “to 100 Tumans in proportion with their circumstances. Most inhuman punishments have been inflicted, so that both “sexes have been obliged to sell themselves to the ‘Turks’ and others, in order to raise the sums demanded. Yazd is “said to be almost ruined through his exactions, he having demanded 50,000 Tumans.

“Tuesday, 24.9.1754. Advices from Bandar Rig” (the small port, 30 miles NW. of Bushire) “mention that Azad Khan “sent Fath ‘Ali Khan with a body to Kazarun” (a town now of some 6,000 inhabitants, 100 miles from Bushire on the main road to Shiraz, from which it is 75 miles) “where they have massacred numbers of innocent people, that the “inhabitants of Dashtistan have joined the Shaikh of Bandar Rig, who is making the necessary preparations to defend “himself . . . that upon the report of Fath ‘Ali Khan’s designing to march to Bandar Rig and Bushire most of the “principal merchants retired with their effects to Carack” (i.e. Kharg).