

them. On his part he had left various written directions for his two companions, dated 12.2.1608, to wit—they were to endeavour to obtain a signed and sealed order from 'Abbas I to the effect that no one save his Majesty might intervene in the affairs of the Carmelites, that they be authorized to circulate freely in the country, that they should report to Rome punctually any matter of importance, especially over the treatment of the Armenians.

Till the eve of his departure the headman of Julfa was uncertain whether to dispatch the travellers by Tabriz or Baghdad, but the latter route was chosen: Fr. Paul Simon was given as a disguise the clothing a poor Armenian would wear and a miserable mount to suit the part: all that he took with him was a quilt, the 'books' mentioned, the diary of his mission, the dispatches from the Shah, and a little money. With his guides he remained some miles from the city in a *manzil*—a halting-place for caravans—till on 3.3.1608 the caravan was ready to start. In many cases it is impossible to identify from the spelling of the Genoese Father the Persian names of the stages travelled daily; but what does impress the reader of his manuscript is the deserted condition of this road to the western frontier, the poverty and misery of the hamlets passed. For seven days, together with his Armenian guides, traders who were on their way to Aleppo to sell four loads of silk, he had to make his quarters in the hut of a peasant five leagues from Hamadan because the caravan was halting for the celebration of the Nauruz equinox festival of the 21st March. On the 24th they were at Kangawar, where there was then no caravansarai: and they passed a stream without a bridge. On the 25th they were at Sahen (or Sakineh, ? *sic*), a small hamlet 6 leagues from Kangawar, having crossed at the first mile a stream where during the night robbers had carried off loads from the camels. The road was flat and uninhabited. There was another small and good caravansarai at the entrance of that village, where bread, rice and corn were obtained. There provisions were laid in for the march to Hasan Khan [? *sic*], four days away—the country being quite uninhabited. It was 7 leagues from Sakineh [? *sic*] to Shirinu (can this be Qasr-i-Shirin?), where there were but four or five habitations, though a new and fine caravansarai had been built by Shah 'Abbas: the road deserted. Numbers of Kurdish nomads were however seen in their tents (*oba*): one mile before they reached Shirinu, a broad river, over which was an ancient bridge in ruins, was crossed. Seven leagues farther on, at Pul-i-Shah they found a 'sultan' (i.e. a captain) with 500 soldiers guarding the pass—the country uninhabited. Four leagues from Pul-i-Shah over a mountainous road was Buzgudar: then another 12 leagues¹ lay ahead to make Hasan Sultan, a march of two days still in hilly country. Another day brought them to Darbangand [? *sic*] over a very bad road, to which there was no alternative, all around being high mountains: a stream, the Gandeh, was passed. It was Easter-day. From Darbangand to Dissa [? *sic*] there were 4 leagues of very bad road: the travellers camped in the open, having nothing except bread and cheese to eat. The following day there arrived a captain with 4,000 mounted men on his way to plunder the neighbourhood of Baghdad, seven days' journey distant: the leaders of the caravan felt obliged to turn back, fearing lest it should be taken from them in Baghdad on account of their being subjects of the king of Persia, as had happened in the previous year when the same captain had similarly gone to raid the country. . . . Here, Fr. Paul Simon's own words may be allowed to resume, with their vivid details of perils encountered and the utter devastation and insecurity of the region:

“. . . I had a talk with the captain, showed him the passport I had from the king, and explained how I was proceeding on his service, saying that, as the caravan was turning back, he being an officer of the Shah should tell me what I ought to do. . . . He sent for me to go to his tent and told me that the Shah was not then marching against Baghdad, as was said by the people, that he would not tell me a falsehood: transit would be very risky. . . . He gave me a man to return with me to the caravan, where I had the letters and books, so that I might get them, and bade the man bring me back at once to wherever he would be.

“The 'sultan' left, marching in haste with his column, which was following him, to the

¹ His "leagues" doubtless refer to the Persian *farsakhs*—*parasangs* of the ancients—varying from 3½ to 4 miles.