

"He is very deceitful, will speak to you very caressingly at one moment and in your absence ill of you. When a man is very rich he has some calumny invented about it and has him killed and confiscates his fortune. He trusts no one . . . and thus he will go to the place where the Julfa Armenians are, to the house of a private person and sit there two or three hours drinking with them, finding out what he wants to know. . . . He is also wont to go for a pastime to other places hardly respectable, such as to his kitchen, which is a house separate from the palace, and sit down there, eating whatever please him. Sometimes passing through the city on foot he will come to the shops of the grocers, fruiterers and those who sell preserves and sweetmeats: here he will take a mouthful, there another: in one place taste a preserve, in another some fruit. He enters the house of a shoemaker, takes the shoe that he fancies, puts it on at the threshold of the door, and then continues on his way. Once walking about after this fashion he said to the Augustinian Fathers: 'How does what I am doing appear to you, Fathers? I am a king after my own will, and to go about in this way is to be a king: not like yours, who is always sitting indoors!'"

As further evidence of the fractious mood in which 'Abbas I was with Europeans at this time, from the letter of 14.5.1609<sup>1</sup> of Fr. John Thaddeus to his colleague, Fr. Vincent, at Hurmuz it may be noted:

"The king hurls a thousand words of abuse against the (Augustinian) Fathers, and told the one who came out from the Emperor that, if this year our king" (Philip III of Spain) "does not make war on the Turks, they had better depart for their own country, for he will have no need of them. But, although he says this, he is not likely to send them away till he gets the money from the silk which he sent with Fr. Antonio" (i.e. de Gouvea). "God grant that the latter return with the Shah's money, or else they will be in difficulties and put in prison."<sup>2</sup> . . . His envoy" (Zain-ul-'Abidin Khan Baig) "had written ill of the Emperor and the Christian princes, saying that all their professions of friendship were false, and that all they wanted was for the Turks and Persians to destroy each other and the Muslim religion included."<sup>3</sup> So the Shah, when reading this letter, said: 'You will see what a fire I shall set alight in Christendom within two years'. This year he is going to march in the direction of Tabriz: if he be victorious, next year they may look to see him in Hurmuz, because all the time his thoughts are on how to get hold of it."<sup>4</sup> Mahdi Quli Baig has come into great favour and been made 'Head Gatekeeper' and lieutenant of 'Ali Quli Khan. . . ."

Of that envoy sent by 'Abbas I to Holland—the Shah's glee at the news of the first appearance of Dutch ships in the Gulf has been already quoted—more is learnt from another communication of Fr. John Thaddeus to Fr. Vincent in Hurmuz, dated Isfahan, 6.3.1609,<sup>5</sup> in the form of an appendix to a letter received by the former from Fr. Paul Simon in Rome, all the more interesting because endorsed by Fr. Vincent as "received in Hurmuz in the month of March," i.e. within twenty-five days the letter had been carried over 600 miles, which speaks well for the rapidity of communication in this reign, infinitely superior to that of the eighteenth century and often to that of the postal service on the same road in the first quarter of the twentieth. It is, moreover, a document probably unique for the Carmelite Order, bearing on it the writing of the three joint pioneers of their historic Mission to Persia.

<sup>1</sup> O.C.D. 237 m.

<sup>2</sup> Almost prophetic of what happened in 1613. Fr. Antonio de Gouvea, who had thus come in June 1608 from Goa with the letter from the King of Spain, had left Isfahan to return to Spain before March 1609. More will be heard of the consignment of silk, which he accompanied on this occasion.

<sup>3</sup> 'Abbas I had probably gauged the position accurately.

<sup>4</sup> Real foresight far ahead, for it was thirteen years later before he got the English to capture it for him.

<sup>5</sup> O.C.D. 238 c.