

controlled by an Amir of the Desert, chosen by them, who paid tribute to the Sultan and dwelt in tents among them, possessing many thousand horses and accompanied by a mounted force, being able to raise in wartime up to 20,000 men: at certain points on the river his subordinates collected tolls from travellers and traders. The Fathers found the banks of the Euphrates, especially in the part nearest Baghdad, one of the most beautiful sights there can be in the world, for besides a continuous belt of tall palms there were buildings with gardens full of citrons, oranges, lemons and other very fine fruits, various islets in midstream all cultivated, the ground intersected by irrigation canals.

“Baghdad . . . is considerably smaller than the city of Aleppo, both in size and in trade and the number of its inhabitants, which however is still very large by reason of the great quantities of merchandize arriving from Hurmuz by water, and from Lahore and Persia by land with continual caravans, so that there is a huge number of shops so full of all manner of goods imaginable that spectators marvel. On one side passes the river Tigris, which serves as a wall for the city for a very long stretch, being exceptionally broad: it can be crossed by a long bridge made of great boats, some 25 to 30 in number, more or less according as the river rises or contracts, and these are held together by a very thick iron chain. By this bridge the city is linked up with a very extensive quantity of dwellings on the other side of the river. . . . In the city . . . where the wall comes to an end at the river, there is a fairly large and ancient castle, in which the Pasha, governor of the city, has his residence: and it is held by a considerable guard of Janissaries, some 400 of whom are stationed in the city, as guards of the gates and certain main points of the city, as it were a permanent garrison, on account of the distrust they have of the population.¹

“Huge taxes are paid: and from them the Pasha extracts countless wealth, as also from Spanish coin, very large quantities of which—more in fact than any other kind—are brought here from Aleppo for purposes of trade. For that reason those in charge of the mint keep many officials, who standing in the streets at certain points search all passers—by with most exact thoroughness and, should they find a coin on them, take it away from them to the Mint, whence the persons concerned afterwards receive the value in the currency of the country, but with a notable deduction. Twice in the street we were stopped by these men, who after they had with no small roughness searched those who were in our company, when they came to us did not say a word to us, but very respectfully allowed us to go on our way, remarking that we were good folk. One of them said that, even if we had been carrying 10,000 ducats, they would not have taken a farthing from us. The Venetian merchant besides his own things had taken our trunk in accordance with local custom to the Customshouse: and, when the merchant in question went there to recover it and pay what was due on it as well as on the other goods of his own, those Customs officers having learnt that the trunk was ours, saying that they did not want us to pay anything at all on it, asked the merchant merely for their amusement to show them the articles we were bringing, which, they stated, must in any case be very curious. The merchant having agreed, and many of them having collected to one side they took much pleasure in looking at the pictures of our Lady we were bringing, asking with great curiosity about these, as also about all the other things they saw, such as chalice, burse, corporals, and other articles used in church. They were informed about these, one by one, by the merchants, and so much time was taken up over it that, it being already very late and they themselves tired, they proceeded to pass in a lump and in such haste the merchant's own goods that it was, according to him, of no small profit to him. Later the same day two of the chief of those Customs officers came to pay us a visit, and, having told us that they had inspected with great pleasure our effects, they made us many courteous offers, after which they took their leave. Having learnt through our

¹ It would seem from these remarks that the Turkish government had re-obtained control of Baghdad, and the rebel Pasha dominating it in April 1608 during Fr. Paul Simon's stay there had been ousted.