

Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa was nominated ambassador in Madrid, 9.8.1613, i.e. two months only before Mgr de Gouvea at Isfahan was announcing his arrival at Masqat: and he set sail from Lisbon with the galleons in March 1614, not arriving in Persia till 1618.¹

As the step taken by Mgr de Gouvea was misunderstood in Spain and Rome as well as by Christians in Persia the following declaration left on record² by the Superior of the Portuguese Augustinians, i.e. of his own Order and race, at Isfahan may be quoted as evidence that the Bishop acted wilfully and against the counsel of the resident Religious:

"I, Fra. Bernardo de Azevedo, bear witness that, when the lord Bishop of Cyrene was "discussing with the Discalced Carmelite Fathers and with us of S. Augustine and telling "us the reasons for which he was determined to leave the capital of the Shah, we replied "to the lord Bishop that it would be more prudent to be slow in coming to a decision, "and to acquaint first the Captain of Hurmuz and our Religious there with what we had "resolved to do in respect of this business, and to await their reply and views, in order to "be guided by these. But the Bishop deemed it a sounder plan for himself to go in advance "to Hurmuz, leaving us here to await his decision, and he repeated that we should not "leave until we received it. Isfahan, 28th October, 1613."

The officials of the Shah in Isfahan did not stop the departure of the Bishop, for they were too preoccupied with meeting the requirements of the coming ambassador: and he was well received at Shiraz by the governor; but the latter had orders not to allow him to leave the kingdom³ and wrote to the king's officer at Lar to detain him until further notice: the Bishop was not allowed to communicate with the Religious at Isfahan, where mordant rumours circulated. After some time Imam Quli Khan from Shiraz solicited orders from his Majesty regarding the *détenu* and, on receiving an ambiguous reply, allowed him to continue on his way to Hurmuz. (That is the account told in *Hist. Miss.* and *En Persia*, quoting Fr. Redempt.)

Considering that he left Isfahan towards the end of October and was in Hurmuz two months later, such detention could not have been lengthy, for:

"On Christmas day 1613 there reached Hurmuz Fr. Antonio de Gouvea, Bishop of "Cyrene, returning from Persia: he gave the news that Fr. Bartholomew Mary had gone "off to Rome, and that Fr. Redempt would be coming immediately to Hurmuz with all "the house" (i.e. convent at Isfahan). "Fr. Redempt had written to Fr. Vincent asking "his opinion" (i.e. about the suggested withdrawal) "but none of his letters arrived, being "seized *en route*."⁴

The Portuguese Augustinian Fathers evacuated Isfahan, 19.10.1613, and made their way to Baghdad—fortunately for them, as Shah and Court were incensed when they found to be a myth the immediate arrival of a special ambassador from Spain.

Of the Carmelites, before those untoward events Fr. Benignus had already left via Aleppo for Rome, 4.8.1613, in order to be present at the Chapter General in the spring of 1614: the Shah had sent by him letters for the king of Poland and the Emperor Matthias⁵ and a handsome *bezoar*⁶-stone as a gift for the Pope. He did not return to the Mission. Fr. Bartholomew Mary of S. Francis also quitted Persia between October and December of this year for reasons of health, and to inform the Pope and their superiors of developments since the departure

¹ See *En Persia*, vol. III, p. 100, quoting Fr. Benignus, who on reaching Italy at the end of 1613 had been sent to Spain and, while there, learnt the news: and also "Don Luis Cabrera de Cordoba: "Don Garcia de Silva y Figueroa . . . va para embajador con los galeones que han de partir para la India este mês de Marzo 1614."

² See Fr. Eusebius ab Omn. Sanct., MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, part II, book 3, chap. IV, in O.C.D.

³ "Because he had no passports," says *En Persia*.

⁴ Letter of Fr. Leander, undated, but of 1615, in O.C.D. 236 a.

⁵ The Carmelite archives in Rome have the replies by these sovereigns, apparently undelivered, magnificent by their seals and the calligraphy.

⁶ *Pa-zahr* in Persian, considered efficacious for snake poison, a calculus taken from the stomach of wild goats. In his Brief of 16.7.1620 Pope Paul V acknowledged receipt of this stone and the letters of the Shah brought by Fr. Benignus.