

“are to be used, and that they wished them well and no boon greater than the salvation of their souls, and for this had spoken so freely about Catholic truth.”

The account left by Fr. Vincent began by explaining that the audience was, as far as the English were concerned, to enable them to present certain gifts: he concluded it by returning to that matter:

“What the English presented to the Shah was as follows:

“1500 arquebuses: two complete sets of armour for jousting, the one tooled and engraved: a coach, lined with crimson damask, with four horses: two dozen large and medium-sized mirrors.

“Of all this he accepted only the arquebuses. He tried on the gauntlets, armllets and the breastplate of the armour and, saying that it was more hindrance than help in fighting, did not want it.

“He went to see the coach and, feigning not to understand for what it was used, he desired the English Agent and his companions to take a turn in it through the garden and, when they returned where the Shah stood, he told them to keep it for themselves. For, he said, he did not want such an invention; because he was not a piece of stone which had to be carried about in a cart, but preferred to ride on horseback until he died, and that all his people were of like mind.”

Within two months of those asseverations of respect for Jesus, the fickle monarch, presumably instigated, had let loose a persecution of Christians. Wandering one day, incognito and almost alone, in the open country towards Chaharmahal he overheard some Armenian girls chattering together and using hard and rude words about himself. Always greedy of praise and affection, and in his vanity considering that he deserved to be belauded, he was consumed with rage and ordered all Armenians of the villages in the vicinity to be forced to become Muslims. With such vigour was the order executed, the males being made to undergo circumcision, that some from the pain and from the affliction of their hearts quitted this life. Crosses, liturgical books, priestly vestments were carried off from the churches, altars profaned. The Shah added a device to compel both males and females to apostatize, which has truly been judged diabolical: for he took their wives from the Armenians and gave them to Shiah Persians, and he mated the wives of the latter to Armenians.<sup>1</sup> This persecution, begun in five villages, was later extended to a total of forty-three in the district and created an indescribable commotion among all Armenians, for those of Julfa apprehended an inclusion of their town in the zone of forced conversion. An account<sup>2</sup> of it was taken down by one of the Carmelites from a certain Khwajeh Virdi, an Armenian of the town:

“On the morning of Friday, the 7th August of the year 1621, the second<sup>3</sup> persecution began. The principal cause was the secret hatred which the Shah has” (for the Christian faith) “and which was fomented by a great Mulla named Shaikh Baha-ud-Din, who said that it was expedient that all Christians should be made Muslims: and this Mulla, or Doctor, died while the king was making Muslims of the Christians. The news of this persecution was sent to Khwajeh Virdi by Hurijan, *rais*<sup>4</sup> of one of those hamlets, through one of his men, and he wrote that they were forcibly making Muslims of all those Christians, giving them many blows with sticks and torturing them, and that in particular they had maltreated himself, Hurijan, as being the head and the one who most resisted, and three times so that he was in great danger of dying: he wrote that the Muslims had done the same in 43 places: and he asked for advice—what he should do, whether abandon his children and flee, and what was to be done with the people.

<sup>1</sup> MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, book 4, part 2.

<sup>3</sup> The first took place in October 1613, when the Shah compelled those Armenians who owed him money to pay or apostatize—as already related.

<sup>2</sup> O.C.D. 236 a.

<sup>4</sup> Literally, ‘head’.