

“better return to their own country in Armenia: those married should retract and be recon-
 “ciled (to Christianity) and make a confession: and that, if the Muslim Mullas were to
 “come among them to circumcise them, or perform the practices of Islam, such men should
 “be driven away with blows and sticks from their villages. . . .

“With this reply they went off. Before they reached their district two Christian women
 “died, and the Muslim Mullas took them off to bury them: when the (twelve) men got back,
 “a girl aged 15 died and the Mullas in question went to bury her. The head of the place
 “called on the people to chase them away with blows, and this was done, the people
 “saying that by the grace of God they were Christians and did not believe in the Muham-
 “madan faith and, using many bad words, ejected them half dead from the blows received.
 “Six individuals, relatives of the Mullas, came and put them on two donkeys and said they
 “were going to complain to the Shah: and they proceeded one day's journey on the way.
 “The Christians did not move and merely answered they they might go to the Shah and
 “make any complaints they liked. The Mullas and their people took counsel together,
 “reflecting that they had not gone there by express orders of the Shah, and it might be
 “that he was by then in another frame of mind, and would have them put to death in
 “order to give satisfaction to the Christians. So they considered it might be better to return
 “home, as they did. . . . Khwajeh Viridi sent them a silver cross and a pair of small bells
 “to serve for their churches and incense, so that they might hold a procession, confess the
 “Christian faith and return thanks.”

The above account, if lengthy, will have served to give a picture of conditions during that reign (and indeed of Persian mass reaction to oppression up till recent years). While forcible conversion lasted the Carmelites did all they could to exhort the Armenians to stand steadfast in the Christian faith, going about among them. Through the Armenians the Shah derived personal profit from the silk trade and, having become aware of the commotion caused among the community in Julfa too, and that their caravans laden with merchandise had halted on the roads, he returned to the Court at Isfahan, 20.8.1621, and, sending for Khwajeh Nazar, a leader of the race, gave him assurances that he would not molest the Armenians further on account of their religion. Some forty-five families of Assyrians, i.e. Chaldaeans, also suffered in this persecution, thirty of whom became renegades and Shiah: of the remaining twenty-five seven left Isfahan, but the others stood firm and with their priest were gained to the Catholic faith. Though in time 'Abbas I went so far as to say that he would not be displeased, were those forcibly converted to revert to Christianity, he showed his annoyance with the Carmelites for encouraging resistance by procrastinating in giving a reply to the Brief from the Pope brought by the Visitor General.

Whether before, during that persecution (which by deduction from the two dates given occurred between 7th and 20th August 1621), or when it was over, 'Abbas I was passing the summer at Ab-i-Kurang, where Fr. Vincent of S. Francis attempted to find him in order to obtain his *congé*. But that summer residence was hurriedly abandoned because of the tragic incident of Khudabandeh Mirza¹, the elder of the two surviving sons of the jealous monarch. The Carmelite chronicler, from original material no longer to be traced, merely noted that on some slight suspicion 'Abbas I had this son blinded, a white-hot silver dagger being passed before his eyes, and that, in pity, the executioners had not left the youth altogether blind, but so that he could distinguish objects as it were shadows. It was not long before, thinking to avenge himself, the unfortunate prince fled from Isfahan, and it was in order to pursue Khudabandeh that the despotic father suddenly left Ab-i-Kurang. Many who had aided this son were put to death: and, after being himself captured, Khudabandeh Mirza was shut up by his father and never seen again by the public.

¹ See the miniature on the opposite page. There is another portrait, clearly of the same individual, in a collection of Mogul portraits recently brought to light in the Gulistan Museum at Tihiran; and in the long notice by Madame Godard in No. 2, vol. 2 of the periodical *Athar-i-Iran*, No. 98, it has in the margin in handwriting known to be that of the Mogul Emperor Jahangir the words “Shabih pisr-i-Shah baradarm Shah 'Abbas Khudabandeh Mirza 'amal-i-Bishndas” i.e. “likeness of the son of the king my brother Shah 'Abbas Khudabandeh Mirza, the work of Bishndas”.