

'two should fall in not only with Persian soldiery, but with a party of English, one of whom recognized Ilyas and denounced him to the viceroy as a Christian and servant of the Carmelites of Isfahan. When interrogated and put to the torture Ilyas declared that he was a "Frank": asked to speak a European language he explained that he was a "Frank" by religion. Khatchatur boldly admitted to Imam Quli Khan that he was a Christian and on his way to Hurmuz. The letters of Fr. John Thaddeus found on them gave the names of himself and of his companions from Isfahan, and stated that they were converts. The English agent translated the letters in his own fashion, and these were then forwarded to the Shah. Imam Quli Khan proceeded to employ blandishments to get the two men to recant, and during eight days they were kept in prison, subjected to grievous treatment. As they persisted in their new creed Imam Quli Khan had then taken to Gāmburun, opposite Hurmuz, so that they might be put to death in the sight, almost, of the Christians there. They were eight days on the road, encouraging each other as they went. Arrived at the sea-shore the executioners, finding the two men steadfast in refusal to deny Christ and acknowledge Muhammad, first had an ass killed and skinned, and then Ilyas tightly sewn up in the skin. Then he was transfixed by an iron stake, driven into the earth. In this torment it is recorded that the brave convert lived for three hours praising God and asking pardon for his executioners. Khatchatur, the brother-in-law, a witness of such horrible sufferings, but not deterred by them and constant in his refusals, was affixed to the same stake and then had his abdomen slit open, was disembowelled, and left to die painfully.¹

'Meanwhile the news and intercepted letters of Fr. John Thaddeus had reached Shah Abbas, and the three other converts, Ibrahim, Yusuf and Iskandar were arrested and, unable to deny that they had been with Ilyas and Khatchatur, put in prison. Leaving orders with his justiciars as to the action to take with the missionaries the Persian sovereign left the city, 14.2.1622, and went to stay some six miles away. When the Daruga of the city and the Lieutenant of Police, together with an armed body of men, presented themselves at the door of the convent, the Prior, Fr. Prosper, summoned by the porter, sent for Fr. John Thaddeus as the best linguist. The latter at once learnt the matter and warned the Prior that two converts had been caught with the letters he had had written to Hurmuz. With much courtesy, despite the unwillingness of the king's officers, the Fathers persuaded them to enter the refectory and partake of some refreshment: then they were asked their numbers, the names of all the Religious and seculars in the house. Having taken down this in writing, the officers left the refectory, shutting all in it except Fr. John Thaddeus who accompanied them on their inspection of the premises. They proceeded to bind Bastian, a Christian layman from Hurmuz, then staying in the convent, and Abdullah, son of the martyred Ilyas: they sealed up all doors of all the cells and the church. In the interval Frs. Dimas and Basil had returned from Julfa, whither the Prior had sent them on an errand. Warned by Christians in houses adjacent of what had happened and urged to hide at the Augustinian convent or elsewhere, these two Carmelites declined to be separated from their brethren, and so entered while guards were sealing up the doors. Fr. Basil happened to be still fasting and at the Prior's order managed by way of Lay Brother Diego's cell to enter the church and consume the Most Holy Sacrament to prevent possible profanation. When Fr. John returned from accompanying the Daruga round the premises, the missionaries sought and obtained permission to have their breviaries and to have the domestic offices opened.

'After an interrogatory they prepared to die. But the guards stopped the Carmelites from saying prayers together, apprehending that the Fathers might cast some spells.'

¹ There is a variant to this account in another letter of Fr. Prosper, writing six months later, viz. 22.11.1622:

"We have been diligent to know how Elias, the gardener, died, but, having been prisoners and unable to communicate with anyone up to now, could learn nothing. . . . He was condemned to be impaled in front of Hurmuz. He remained alive for two days, calling on Jesus Mary and making the sign of the cross, and being in this pass, they fired a musket at him and hit him in the heart. Afterwards they cut off the head of an ass, and put him in its skin, sewn well, and stood him upright in the middle of the fort at Gāmburun, tied to a great stake, where he is still kept, so that he may be taken off with the plunder from Hurmuz, when the king comes."