

"But we did as Daniel did. Your Reverences," wrote Fr. Prosper in his subsequent report of 10.3.1622 to Rome, "may imagine in what case we were—the house full of guards and the doors closed, while we were preparing ourselves to go to die. The first day we read the life of S. Ignatius the martyr, the second that of S. Laurence, the third that of S. Catharine: and we began to taste the consolations that on such occasions God granted in ancient times. By the munshi of the Daruga the Shah sent to Fr. John the intercepted letters (which Fr. John Thaddeus had written to Fr. Balthasar, to the Captain of Hurmuz and to Captain Ruy Freire, who is the one who was the cause of the war) with the message that Fr. John should examine and declare whether these were in his own handwriting and well translated into Persian (by the English factory agent, who had denounced Ilyas, or otherwise himself make a translation: the Shah added to the message that Fr. John Thaddeus should also recount the favours received at his (the Shah's) hands and say whether such proceedings were the return he made for the bread and salt they had eaten together.

"The Father translated the letters very differently to the version by the Englishman ("Tell the king that it is my letter," he said, "but it has been badly translated: take down in writing what I shall faithfully interpret"): and he sent a reply to the effect that he was very sensible of all the favours and respect his Highness had invariably paid them: that it was true he had baptized these five men, and in reply to the question why he had done so he would ask in return why the Shah was making Muslims of so many Christians. Just as the Shah was working in the cause of Muhammad, so he was for that of Christ. All who might come to him and request to become Christians he would receive, because he came to the country for no other objective.

"The Shah was pleased to see the letters thus translated and have the reply: and, turning to the Mullas, who to the number of more than 200 had come to complain¹ to his Majesty that the Muhammadan religion was being ruined and demand our death, alleging that we had sent more than 5,000 persons away to Christian lands, he treated them curtly, remarking that the Father was right, and that in all the years he had dealt with him he had never found him to lie."

The Shah had had Iskandar (Alexander) stoned forthwith,² because, when the three converts were first taken before him, he confessed outright to being a Christian. Another letter of Fr. Prosper, 11.4.1622, tells:

"As to Alexander, who was the man whom the king ordered to be stoned and burnt directly he said he was a Christian, till now we have been unable to get news . . . it happened outside the city" (i.e. at the camp where the Shah was about to start on campaign). "Only we know for certain that his body is guarded, and he is considered a Christian. . . ."

The MSS. *Hist. Miss.* adds the information that the body of Alexander was not burnt, as

¹ The MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, chap. 11, book 4, points out that one reason for the severity was that in 1621 Pietro della Valle (as he himself recounts) one day had a religious disputation with a Mulla and, on returning home, drew up in Persian a thesis on the points disputed and, after submitting it to the Religious communities, sent it to the Mulla. The Mulla replied with a volume against the Christian Faith, while the Shiah priesthood as a whole made an outcry to the Shah, reproaching him for lack of zeal in his own religion. The incident and revelation by Fr. John Thaddeus' letters of his activities and conversions in their midst gave them the opportunity, when they went to bid 'Abbas I farewell on his departure for the campaign against Kandahar, to accuse the Carmelites of having baptized not five, but 7,000 Muslims, and they depicted the future as gloomy.

² Fr. John Thaddeus' long 'Report' on the Persian Mission to Rome of 1624 (*S.R.*, vol. 209) defends 'Abbas I:

"So not only do the notables, who are many in number, favour the Fathers and know that their object is to make men Christians, but even the Muslims and the Shah himself know this too, and he has shown no other sign of hostility except to have killed those four martyrs out of the five Christian Persians who were taken on the road to Hurmuz. He did this not so much because they had become Christians as for reasons of state, and because his arrangement with the English for their help in the capture of Hurmuz had become disclosed, and it seemed to the king that this should not pass without some such demonstration."