

the following year. In this connection the 'Report' by Fr. John Thaddeus to Rome, dated 1624, mentions:<sup>1</sup>

"The king of Persia had taken from the Turks the city of Baghdad together with the whole province of Mesopotamia<sup>2</sup> and, as an act of gratitude to his accursed Muhammad for such a victory, he gave the order to a favourite, who was an Armenian renegade,<sup>3</sup> to have the Armenian Christians in those 43 hamlets in the province circumcised. At once with great severity and violence the officers of justice began the circumcision (of the inhabitants). "Having no other sure help than our Fathers the poor men came weeping to Isfahan, to narrate what was happening. Although our Fathers were in great straits, none the less they borrowed 80 gold scudi from the Dutch heretics, so that by making a present of it to the favourite mentioned they might gain his goodwill and obtain an interview with him, when they asked him, with all respect, how it was that the Shah was turning anew to inflict this outrage on those poor Christians. He answered that, without risking his own head, he was unable to desist from executing the royal order. . . . The Fathers suggested that he should observe the rescript, or *raqam*, which they held from the Shah for the 'Franks' (i.e. those who publicly professed obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff of Rome) to be allowed to live without compulsion.

"As the 'farman' had not lost its validity he agreed to this and in order to please the Fathers he at once sent an order that all those Armenians who were 'Franks' should go off to the village of Shahbulaq,<sup>4</sup> which is situated in the middle of the 43 hamlets, and that none of his officers should go near it. He even permitted our Fathers to send Religious there in order to live among them and administer the Sacraments to them (which at the time could not be managed on account of shortage of Religious—instead, a secular priest was sent). Meanwhile the official dispatched a report of everything to the Shah who, seeing that the Fathers had offered opposition (to the execution of his decree) made his favourite 'Khan', i.e. governor, of those 44 hamlets, with instructions to allow everyone to live according to his own religion, while at the same time making them pay large sums of money in consideration of his restoring to them the ornaments, sacred books, and other sacred things which he had taken away from their churches. . . ."

"Now he has turned to persecuting the Armenians four leagues from the city," mentioned Fr. Prosper the Prior in a letter of 19.6.1624: and then, in another of 9.7.1624:

". . . He has stopped the persecution of the Armenians. The king is now here, and "it is said that he is off to Basra, to Mecca, to Jerusalem. . . ."

However—to return to the intercourse between the Shah and the Carmelites—in the first year of his Pontificate, 9.3.1624, without referring to the claim of the king of Spain to Hurmuz, and in language more ornate but much less direct and pointed in matter than that of his predecessors Urban VIII (Maffeo Barberini) wrote to 'Abbas I a friendly Brief, in which he commended the Carmelites in Persia to the Shah's benevolence. The Latin text (see Arch. Vat. *Epist. ad. Princ.*, vol. 38, p. 26, formerly 355) is given in the appendix—a translation of it runs:

"Pope Urban VIII to the illustrious and most puissant Shah Abbas, King of Persia.

"Illustrious and most puissant King, greeting and the light of the Divine grace. It is fit that the protection of the world and the guardianship of the human race be considered a Pontifical dignity. For the Roman See to which most powerful Kings submissively

<sup>1</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 209, p. 209 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> But not Basra and its district, it is to be presumed.

<sup>3</sup> This was perhaps Bagret, brother of Khusru, as noted in the MSS. *Hist. Miss.* It took place in May–June 1624.

<sup>4</sup> If Shah Abul Haj be the correct reading, nothing is known in the modern Financial Department of the province regarding such a place. But Shahbulaq in the district of Piria, not far from Chahar-mahal, still continues an Armenian village—according to the Superior of the Lazarist (Vincentian) Fathers, letter of 25.2.1937.