

Visitor General of the Carmelites, Fr. Epiphanius of S. John Baptist, from Goa on 25.12.1631, to the Secretary of the Sac. Congregation in Rome<sup>1</sup>—doubtless he had so received it, or made a résumé of the full details, from the Vicar Provincial, Fr. Dimas, in Isfahan. It is headed:

“Brief narrative of a noteworthy event, which occurred at the Persian Court to Donna Teresa Sherley, together with the Discalced Carmelite Fathers.

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“The Countess Donna Teresa Sherley, a Circassian by race and Christian by religion, was from her earliest years taken to the Court of the Shah of Persia and, there brought up with good training of her character, was given in wife by the Shah himself to Don Robert Sherley, an Englishman by race and Catholic in religion. . . .

“Having discharged his embassy to his great credit and that of his wife, whom he had taken with him for certain honourable reasons, they returned to the Persian Court, which at that time was at Qazwin, and were there received with marked distinction by the Shah and rewarded with great dignities and gifts of high value. For that reason they were the object of the envy of some of the grandees of the Court, such as is usually the case: and these men contrived to get them into discredit with the Shah by saying that Donna Teresa, before she became a Christian, had professed the Muhammadan religion, and that she had been baptized by the Discalced Carmelites<sup>2</sup> to the hurt of their false religion.

“By this means they” (the jealous grandees) “succeeded in making them fall into disgrace with the Shah; although the story was false and a calumny, still for all that it was published abroad in the Court that the king intended to have her burnt. When the Count heard this, he was so much upset that it was sufficient to bring on him a very serious illness, from which he died at the end of 15 days, while the Countess remained always courageous in spirit and resisting the many blows which were aimed at her from all sides.

“Don Robert died at the Court of the king, having tried to make a confession and receive Communion like a true son of the Roman Church; but it was not possible because of the distance of 15 days’ journey which separates Qazwin from Isfahan, where are the Discalced Carmelite Fathers, to whom he was accustomed to make his confession, when the Court was staying in Isfahan. In short, as it was impossible for him to obtain this consolation he did many acts of contrition and gave many signs of true and exceeding great penitence. After all this he died, and by his instructions his corpse was carried to Isfahan and buried in the church of the Discalced Carmelites with the customary funeral Masses, Offices of the Dead, almsgiving and other obsequies.

“Meanwhile, no sooner had the first trouble ended than immediately there followed greater ones, for the Shah at the instance of her persecutors summoned the Countess before him and questioned her as to the reasons why they were so incensed against her. In order not to harm by her replies those men who were persecuting her, she gave him no answer at all: on which account her fortitude was much commended by the Shah: and he told her not to be afraid, for it would be harder for him to put a woman to death than 100 men.

“All the same his officials did not cease to take away from her, under this pretext of her religion, all she possessed in effects, jewels and wealth: and after all this our Lord ordained that she should become very seriously ill, so that she should have the greater reason for exercising her patience, and that the greatness and nobility of her soul should be displayed in such great trials.

“While she was in this condition, worse from her illness, she had herself carried to Isfahan in order to be able to receive the Sacraments from the hands of the Fathers, to whom,

<sup>1</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 104 (Lettere di Spagna, Armenia, etc.), p. 299 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> That she was baptized by the Carmelites on 2.2.1608 is a definite fact, recorded in their list of baptisms: had she not been baptized by Orthodox rite in Circassia, then?