

writing that in the open they were no match for the Turks, but won by ruses and stratagems: perhaps 50,000 strong the Persians would approach to within a day's march of the Turkish force, when they would themselves make off, razing the townships where they camped, burning everything they could not carry away, poisoning the wells. So, when the Turks arrived in pursuit, they were in straits for provisions and water and, finding none, had to retreat in a condition rendering them vulnerable for the Persians to fall on them.

But so critical did the project appear, with the Turks so close at Hamadan, that, fearing lest they should be overwhelmed in the ruin of Isfahan the Carmelites sent away four out of seven Religious: Fr. Philip was himself one, proceeding to Basra in May 1630. During the period of this campaign of the Turks the Capuchin Fathers, then so recently settled at Baghdad, found it prudent to withdraw temporarily to Basra:

“Two Capuchin Fathers, who were in the city of Baghdad, have retired here, and are in “this House,”

wrote Fr. Basil of S. Francis from Basra, 20.2.1630: and that port seems to have been isolated from Baghdad: for he continued:

“Since last March” (1629) “I have been unable to write, and I have been waiting till “today for a caravan, which for 6 months now has been every day on the point of leaving. “It is true I sent a man last October to Aleppo. . . . The business of the fighting over “Baghdad keeps us in suspense, because its final result will be of great importance to this “district: we all gather that it should be settled by this summer. . . .”

Then in August, 24.8.1630, he added:

“In Persia it was said that the army of the Turks had entered Persia, . . . but now it is “being rumoured that the army in question is retiring with many losses and to its no small “shame. . . .”

From the records of the East India Company a letter of 17.3.1631<sup>1</sup> refers, no doubt, to the situation as it had been a month or two previously:

“. . . The king” (Shah Safi) “is att Bagdatt and like there to reside this cuming yeare “in exspectacion of the Turkes army returning who hath been shamefully repelled and “their siedge raised by the Persian, with the loss of 15,000–20,000 of their army . . .”

But the writers continued:

“The Chan of Xiraz is att present uppon an expedecion to take in Balsora” (i.e. Basra) “from the Turke, beseedging itt both by sea and land with an army of 20,000 souldiers, “arranged thereunto by the Arrabbs inhabitants or neighbours unto that citty, . . .”

an attack not mentioned by Fr. Basil in his letter three months earlier (9.12.1630): so that the expedition, if it did materialize, must have developed after that date. No letters of Fr. Basil of the years 1631, 1632 survive, while in that of 30.12.1633 his remark that:

“. . . This land is at present most flourishing: and the concourse of people coming here “is great; because it has acquired a great name, and I doubt whether in these regions there “be any land so prosperous: and the Pasha only keeps the style of ‘Pasha’, who for the rest “is really a very flourishing king . . .”

<sup>1</sup> Edward Haynes, William Gibson at Gāmburun to the East India Company.