

'When the party reached the confines of Persia and Muscovy, the *Persians* demanded 'duty on all the goods of the ambassador and his suite, despite the fact that he produced 'the Shah's passport granting exemption. The party was suddenly attacked, and, save a 'few, all murdered. Fr. Melchior at the time was some short distance away with a soldier, 'who recommended him to flee; but courageously the Religious dismounted and advancing 'crucifix in hand towards the band was also killed. Taken aback at such treatment of his 'honoured guest, Shah Safi sent troops who cut to pieces the inhabitants of the place 'concerned, without regard to age or sex.'¹

On the other hand, according to the Vicar Provincial of the time, Fr. Dominic of Christ, in a letter of 26.2.1640:²

"Fr. Melchior of the Kings was slaughtered in *Muscovy*, together with the Polish ambassa-
'dor and his suite, by *Muscovites*. . . .";

and this seems the more accurate version (the other being a compilation made in Rome many years later): "slaughtered on the shore of the Caspian Sea"—stated a letter of Fr. Stephen of Jesus.³ The same letter from Fr. Dominic of Christ had explained to the Procurator of the Order in Rome:

"All the Religious in this House are awaiting with the utmost eagerness the letter from
'the king of Poland for the Shah of Persia . . . it will be of no small help for this mission
'in Persia to receive it because this Shah has a very great desire to be on friendly terms with
'the king of Poland and so sets great store on any letters from the latter. . . ."

Partly as a sequel of the tragedy, and in consideration of the life of the chaplain lost, king Ladislas IV warmly took up the protection of the Carmelite missions, and there is said to be a letter from him dated Warsaw 13.3.1641 extant to that effect,⁴ with the result that Shah Safi issued a fresh 'farman', confirming and amplifying the privileges of the Carmelites.

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In this reign there can be noted a new orientation of the work of the Carmelites at Isfahan, which became in the course of time so pronounced that in another thirty or forty years the scope of that particular mission-post had been totally altered, its primitive ideals abandoned.

The reader will have observed how the earlier envoys sent by Shah 'Abbas I held out as a *quid pro quo* for material assistance against the Turks a subjecting to the Holy See (by compulsion of the civil power) of all the oriental Christian communities in the Persian dominions: how the Armenian nucleus, transplanted from the region of Erivan in particular, had become thriving commercially but was cut off from its spiritual centre in Echmiadzin under Mt. Ararat: how the Safawi monarch, none too contented with the schismatic patriarch of that time, played with and dangled before the eyes of the Catholic missionaries a notion of his to transport the more venerated parts of the actual buildings at Echmiadzin to Julfa (Isfahan) and to place in charge of one section of a great new church a Latin bishop nominated by the Pope: how on the first arrival of the representatives of the spiritual authority of the Pope the Armenian clergy on the frontier at Ardabil and at Julfa had welcomed them, visited them, invited them to their churches and liturgy, while on their part the pioneer Carmelites, in particular Fr. John

¹ and ⁴ MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, chap. 38, book 4.

² O.C.D. 237 e.

³ 23.3.1640, O.C.D. 241 p.