

"Religious of S. Augustine and a great number of people, and made the rest prisoners. They "sacked" (the town) "which was a thing to move one to tears, desecrating the churches, "breaking up the images, violating sacred objects. They made slaves of all the women and "children, employing every sort of barbarity. . . . The Vicar Provincial¹ happened to "be there with Fr. Matthew, and they were present at three assaults" (on the town), "the "Vicar Provincial with crucifix in hand assisted at the firing of the artillery and in the end "escaped by a miracle, leaving everything behind, in particular many books and money, "and they went on board a vessel, in which they were about 600 persons, men and women, "without a sufficiency of provisions, for which reason many died of thirst. . . ." ["After "many risks and perils, of being captured, of hunger and thirst and storms at sea, the Vicar "Provincial and I reached Goa, having lost our cloaks, breviaries and about 200 scudi . . ." wrote Fr. Matthew of S. Joseph.²]

An extract from another letter of Fr. Dominic of S. Mary, 20.4.1650, completes the story:

". . . I have already written" (to Rome) "how in December last the Arabs assaulted "Masqat, a port of the Portuguese in Arabia, and made themselves masters of the place, "only the fortress remaining to the Portuguese. Afterwards news came that *towards the end* "of January of this year" (i.e. 1650) "as there were many in the fortress, what between "military and persons unutilizable" (as soldiers) "and as there were no victuals in the forts, "the Portuguese surrendered and abandoned the fortress: the whole of Masqat is in the "power of the Arabs, which we regret greatly to hear, because of the prejudice to many "souls and to the position of the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf. . . ."

The site where stands the Sultan of 'Uman's palace today is known as Al-Jaraiza, a corruption of the Portuguese word for 'church' = *igreja*. So, after its valued possession for 142 years, from the time of its conquest by Albuquerque, Masqat passed out of Portuguese control as a strategic post. For the time being Portuguese trade suffered an entire eclipse, even at Basra: the Augustinians still had a house and one priest at Basra in 1645³ and, apparently, on 28.5.1649, when Fr. Matthew of S. Joseph⁴ mentions them; but the French traveller Tavernier on his second *Voyage*, p. 313, noted at Basra, 15.3.1652:

"the business of the Portuguese has altogether ceased, and the Augustinian Fathers, who "were of that nation, have also withdrawn thence. . . ."

They attempted to hold on to vantage-points on the Arabian coast: for there are two references—curiously in antithesis—to these two years after Masqat had been lost, both reports from Basra:

"18.8.1652.⁵ The Portuguese came with a powerful fleet against the Arabs, and have "already made good progress. . . ."

"12.10.1652.⁶ . . . The Portuguese by money have obtained from a princeling in Arabia "adjoining 'Uman" (consent) "that they should build a fort in Khasab in the vicinity of "the land of 'Uman, the chief in question having promised to guard and defend the passes "leading from 'Uman. So the Portuguese had already begun" (to build) "the fort in "question, and armed it with some good pieces of artillery, when the Imam of Masqat "came down with a numerous force of men to prevent the building of this fort. When the "Portuguese learnt this they took off the artillery and all the men, and 'like good soldiers' "all of them took to flight, so that some people speak of the Imam" (as saying) "I did not "come, nor did I see anybody, but I gained a victory."⁷

¹ He was Fr. Dominic of S. Nicolas, O.C.D.

² 22.6.1650, O.C.D. 241 n.

³ Fr. Ignatius, Basra, 20.1.1645, O.C.D. 241 m.

⁴ O.C.D. 241 n., Basra.

⁵ Fr. Ignatius, O.C.D. 241 m.

⁶ Fr. Barnabas, Basra, O.C.D. 241 f.

⁷ In the original Latin, parodying Caesar: "non veni, neque vidi, sed vici".