

In Kandahar Shah Ashraf was opposed by the dead Shah Mahmud's eldest brother and rightful heir: being unable in consequence to obtain reinforcements thence, and seeing the number of his Afghan troops much depleted by all this warfare, he decided to enclose one-eighth of the extent covered by the city of Isfahan with new walls, so as to guard against a rising. In the north, in Mazandaran, many Georgians escaping from the tyranny of the Turks, and Armenians expelled from Shamakha joined Tahmasp Mirza: and from Khurasan the Safawi prince among other adhesions received one which was notable and disastrous for him—a robber band of an Afshar tribe led by a certain Hasan Quli son of 'Ali the camelteer, who was to become before long the redoubtable Nadir Shah, monarch of Persia himself. He appears to have been inspired with a patriotic Persian dislike of the alien Afghan domination and, having been sent some 400 men by Tahmasp Mirza, during the rest of 1727 and all 1728 employed his talents of leadership and strategy in freeing various towns from Afghan soldiery and from Afghan possession. As soon as the roads became practicable at the end of February 1729 the bands of Hasan Quli, joining the force of Tahmasp Mirza, compelled the Afghans to evacuate the towns of Mashhad-i-Sar, and Damghan on the slopes towards the Caspian, and then advanced on Isfahan. But first they attacked a force of Afghans south of the capital on the road to Shiraz, so that Shah Ashraf was made to come out with reinforcements (before doing so he had put in chains in the caravansarai the English 'ambassador' (? chief agent of the East India Company, and consul) named Rich, and the Dutch Factor, from whom he demanded large sums under penalty of death after his return to the city, if not paid.¹

Although Fr. Krusinski's memoirs are silent on the date, it would appear from Fr. Leander's chronological statement that it was at this critical juncture in 1729 that the Afghan ruler of Persia caused the ex-Shah Sultan Husain and four small boys of his family to be slaughtered. Thus perished, some 36 years after his accession to the throne, this debased and feeble heir of Shahs Isma'il and 'Abbas.

In the autumn of 1729, then, Hasan Quli the Afshar and Tahmasp Mirza attacked and routed the troops of Shah Ashraf, killing thousands in three hours it is said, and afterwards Shah Ashraf returned in the direction of Isfahan, intending to massacre the inhabitants and then retreat to Kandahar. But—to quote the words of Fr. Leander:

'having by their spies learnt early of the result of the fight the English "ambassador" and "Dutch Factor warned the Isfahanis, who sounded a great bell under the arch of the city gate, usually rung only at times of triumph, while all drums were beaten. The defeated Afghan on approaching Isfahan took all that noise to mean that Hasan Quli and Tahmasp

¹ The news the Agents of the East India Company at *Gānbrun* (Bandar 'Abbas) received of the course of events may be quoted from their diaries, for added to Fr. Leander's account they clarify them, and shed light on the confused state of the country.

"... Friday, 14.11.1729. Last night the Chief" (English agent) "received a letter from Shaw Hoshroff" (= Shah Ashraf) "desiring he would assist the Afghans in case they were distressed: he likewise wrote another of the same tenor "to the Dutch Chief" (agent), "and also sent orders to — Khan to put the forts into a posture of defence, and adds "that he had met and engaged Shaw Thomas" (= Shah Tahmasp's) "troops, but wanting ammunition, etc., he was "come back for a supply and would immediately return and try the chance of another battle . . . which to us seems an "evident sign that he has been beat. The Dutch by the same 'shotter' received a letter from their Chief in Spahaun "advising that Shaw Hoshroff, after his return from the first battle, hearing that the Prince's troops were nigh, set out "from Spahaun, the 10th of October, and that at the first village his artillery arrived it was seized by the inhabitants, "who immediately declared for Shaw Thomas. . . .

"Wednesday, 3.12.1729. . . . Advices from the Dutch Chief at Spahaun that Shaw Hoshroff, having advice that the "Prince's forces under Thomas Cooley Caun" (= Tahmasp Quli Khan) "his generalissimo were near approached that "place. He cut off" (i.e. killed) "most of the Persians and Bannians" (i.e. Indian traders) "plundered and burnt "the bazars, carried all the Europeans into a caravanseray near the palace and stript them to their skins . . . but on "the sudden approach of the Persian troops, the 2nd November, he immediately fled with all his treasure and about 2,000 "men, and the next day Thos Cooley Cawn enter'd the city with 8,000 men. . . .

"24.12.1729. Isfahan . . . wrote us that the Afghans kept them prisoners 17 days . . . before they left, but by "bribing the guard they (the English Factors of the Company) made shift to escape to the Company's Factory. . . .

"14.2.1730. By a 'shotter' from Spahaun we received a letter from the Resident and Mr. Geikie advising that by the "instigation of our mortal enemies the Dutch" (the Dutch are mentioned in these diaries as having seized the island of Hurmuz in 1728) "Thos. Coolie Caun on 24.12.1729 sent to demand 3,000 Tumans from our gentlemen under the "pretence that we had been guilty of rebellion. . . ."