

did traffic cease, but news hardly penetrated beyond the frontiers, e.g. writing, 6.10.1722, from Basra the Carmelite Vicar Apostolic of Baghdad diocese stated:<sup>1</sup>

“. . . For about 8 months all roads are blocked, and no one can travel by them. . . .”

“1.7.1723.<sup>2</sup> . . . I await the outcome of the Persian business to see whether I can go to Hamadan, because till now the rebel, who occupied Isfahan by dint of starvation and force, remains strong in that capital, having the Shah too in his hands, while the Shah’s son with a large force appears unable to defeat this rebel. Meanwhile there is no government in Persia and the whole country is thrown into confusion. . . .”

“9.11.1723.<sup>3</sup> . . . now still less can I go” (to Hamadan) “because the Ottoman army has encamped there, wherefore the Christians have fled. . . .”

“8.2.1724<sup>4</sup> . . . it is about two months now that my companion” (Fr. John Joseph) “left Baghdad to go to his town . . . but he remains at Kirmanshah, a town in Persia four or five days’ distance from Hamadan . . . the fact is that the Pasha of Baghdad entered Persia with a strong army and among others occupied Kirmanshah in order to march on Hamadan, when the winter is over. . . .”

“29.6.1724.<sup>5</sup> . . . My companion . . . was for three months at Kirmanshah. At length he reached Hamadan, but the Pasha of the city of Baghdad has died. All the roads are blocked, and the surroundings of Hamadan have become a scene of warfare between Turks and Persians. . . .”

“28.9.1724.<sup>6</sup> . . . I write to inform your Eminence that after a siege the Turks have occupied the town of Hamadan at the cost of great bloodshed to themselves, and of greater bloodshed to the inhabitants, almost all of whom, it is said, were put to the sword. For a long time past I have been awaiting an opportunity to go to Baghdad . . . but all ways to it are blocked by the Arabs, who have also besieged this town (Basra). . . . There is still no communication with Isfahan, so that we do not know what is happening there, and whether our missionaries are alive or dead. . . .”

Two and a half years after the first investment of Isfahan, and yet even at Basra they were still without news of the fate of the Europeans of Isfahan!—evidence of how completely the central plateau of Persia had been isolated. Fr. Joseph Mary of Jesus again wrote:

“14.11.1724.<sup>7</sup> . . . I had already written to your Eminence, and now write again to say that Hamadan, a town in Persia with a large population, was occupied by the Turks after a siege of two months, no one being spared—not even the Christians, except a few taken prisoners—so that there was a torrent of blood for three days on end, the sword not ceasing to shed it. My companion” (i.e. Fr. John Joseph), “who was there in the bishop’s House, was also one of the prisoners, and robbed of everything, and the house too, in which nothing remained, but some of the Turks occupied it. But now our house has been restored to us, and my companion is staying in it and already celebrating Mass in the church; but he got into debt in order to ransom himself from the Turks. . . .”

From Constantinople there was similar admission of ignorance of what was passing in Persia. A report from Pera to the Sac. Congregation, dated 4.6.1723, remarked:<sup>8</sup>

“Here one is unable to get to the bottom of the news from Persia owing, it is thought, to action by the government here (Constantinople) whom these revolutions do not please: nothing else has been learnt since Qazwin had been won by . . . new usurper to the throne of Persia . . . and already for 1½ years past merchants, who have interests in Julfa and Isfahan, have had no letters from those parts. . . . A commercial letter of last April from Aleppo states that great scarcity of food is reigning in Persia, and many are

<sup>1</sup> *S.N.R.*, III, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, p. 564.

<sup>3</sup> *O.C.D.* 242 b.

<sup>4</sup> and <sup>5</sup> *S.N.R.*, III, p. 582.

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*, p. 584.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, p. 586.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*, p. 562.