

After relating the incident of the shot being fired at Nadir Shah in Mazandaran, and his suppressing his Khurasani bodyguard for one that was composed of Armenian Christians, Fr. Leander's narrative continued:

"Then it was that the rumour spread that Quli Khan (as Europeans continued always to call him) was thinking of becoming a Christian, and that our missionaries together with the Armenians hastened to take him the translation of the New Testament, and caused the Persians to do the same with the Quran and the Jews with the Old Testament—all together, *eight months after the incident just narrated*, they arrived in Qazwin, one of the royal cities of Persia, whither he had proceeded at this time. They asked for audience of the Shah, and had it in fact in the royal gardens. Orders were given that in the meantime all these religious translators should be received, and courteously and honourably treated as guests of the Shah: and, because he had failed to do this perhaps out of carelessness or of contempt, before they were introduced to the sovereign's presence they were begged by the Chief Steward to forgive his negligence and that, should by chance the monarch enquire from them how they had been treated, they would not denounce him for paying no attention to them: and he promised in future to amend his ways, as in fact he did by giving them every attention.

"When the day appointed for the audience arrived, they were all together conducted to the gate of the garden and there, made to halt, they saw to their horror every now and then enter that gate men of all sorts, who were led before the Shah with halters round their necks and there strangled, to be afterwards dragged out like animals and their corpses thrown out in the fields for the wild beasts to eat. This spectacle lasted almost an hour, during which time eighteen were strangled.

"The Persian translators trembled, and so did the Jews, the Armenians showed some sort of courage in their looks; but our Fathers were beyond measure delighted, hoping to have attained the crown of martyrdom so much desired by them. In fine emulation they mutually encouraged each other: the controversy, truly worthy of the Apostles, which was fought out between the bishop, Mgr Philip Mary, and Fr. Urban as to which of them ought to be the first to give his life in witness to the holy Gospel deserved to have the whole world as spectator. The Bishop claimed that honour because it became him as shepherd to give the example to his flock. But Fr. Urban would not yield him precedence because, he said, being the senior of all the missionaries in Persia, he had laboured most of all in the translation: so it seemed to him that for him rather was it to give his life first, and for Monsignor to give his the last: as he was the feebler in health, he ought to take his rest before the others and, as the Bishop was the shepherd, it was his duty to look after his flock and his brethren in the Carmelite Order in order to tend them in all their needs. Those two heroes of Carmel were still engaged in that contest of courage and valour—and may I be permitted to say this in their praise, for both are already gone to the better life—when they were informed that the time had come for them to enter: and our missionaries were, in fact, placed the first in order, the Persian Mullahs following them, next the Jews and last the Armenians, each of them having in the hands of their principal representative the translation in question of the books.

"At about 50 paces' distance from the monarch it was signed to them to halt, and soldiers at once came and made way for them, while on either side the officers and personages of rank at the Court took their places in the positions fitting their respective posts. Then, in accordance with Persian custom, the translators had to begin, the lowest in order the first, their salutation and so from hand to hand cause the homage and obeisance to reach the Shah. The monarch returned their greeting in the same manner and bade them welcome, communicating his replies in an undertone to the person nearest to him, and the latter to another and so on until the words came to the translators.<sup>1</sup> Then he

<sup>1</sup> Even in Muzaffar-ud-Din Shah's reign (i.e. 1906) at a reception of the Diplomatic Corps the reply to the address by the doyen was thus passed to the Shah by a young minister acting as Imperial master of the ceremonies.