

“that he knew nothing about any such thing: he had three committed to his charge, and he could account for three, as could be clearly seen from the Daftar or book of accounts. Without saying more the Tyrant had both his eyes at once put out: then, after a few hours, having had the man again led before him, he threatened to make him die a painful death, unless he at once declared to whom he had sold that horsecloth.<sup>1</sup> The luckless servant, fearing to lose his life, gave the names of four Hebrews, four Zoroastrians, and four Armenians—who were the two brothers Aratun and Peter Shariman, Aqa Nazar and Khwajeh Minas, the first three Catholics and the fourth a schismatic. Immediately diligent search was made for all, but for all the zeal used they were never able to find Mr. Peter, for the reason given above that he had hidden himself some days before, nor Aqa Nazar, and two of the four Zoroastrians accused, for the like reason that they had escaped or fled.

“On 13.1.1747, therefore, the others were led into the presence of the Tyrant, viz. Mr. Aratun and Mr. Minas, the Armenians, two Zoroastrians and four Jews: and the same day, without further enquiry, he had one eye of each of them put out, their houses searched, their property confiscated. As one of these Zoroastrians was the Sarraf” (i.e. money-changer and cashier) “of the English gentlemen” (i.e. the Agents of the East India Company), taken in error because he had the same name as the other Gabr accused, the English gentlemen tried by promises and by disbursing much money which they spent to free him, but all in vain. To this end also they had a petition presented to the Tyrant, but, instead of soothing him, this enraged him the more.

“‘How,’ said the Tyrant, ‘they have complained of the sentence I gave, which was no more than an act of mercy. Very well: let justice in its entirety be done!’ So he had the poor sufferers again led before him, and without consenting to listen to reasoning or prayers he gave orders that all of them should be burnt alive in the great square” (Maidan-i-Shah) “of the city: and because ‘jussio regis urgebat’” (see the book of Daniel, 3-21) “that same day, which was 14.1.1747, at the same hour, about four in the afternoon, there was soon lighted a great fire in the Maidan-i-Shah. In it the first to be thrown were the unfortunate Mr. Aratun Shariman and Mr. Minas, bound together by a chain: then the two Zoroastrians, and, lastly two by two, the four Jews, all of them ‘cum bracciis suis et tiaris et calceamentis et vestibus’” (see Daniel 3-21 regarding Shadrach, Mesach, Abednego).

“Mr. Minas died almost at once, because before he was thrown into the flames he had lost consciousness in a swoon; but Mr. Aratun lingered more than an hour in the flames, crying out for mercy and pardon for his sins till he expired. The night after, relatives searched for their bones and, when recognized, those of Mr. Aratun were interred by the Catholics in the sepulchre of his ancestors, and those of Mr. Minas by the heretics in the cemetery of the Armenians. Both were sexagenarians and former heads of Julfa. As to Mr. Minas, he always showed himself very zealous on the side of the heretics, and Mr. Aratun as much on that of the Catholics, whose religion he had always promoted both with his authority and with his money, supporting the missions and missionaries in Isfahan and Julfa. . . . Happy he . . . for so glorious a motive to have so lost his life, as indeed he lost it, dying by so inhuman an execution for a crime of which he was totally innocent. He left three male children, the eldest of whom is Count Stephen, who at present is in Venice.

“So cruel a death, which caused horror in the very Muhammadans, ended by throwing into consternation the whole Armenian community, already terrified by the fear of being all put to the sword, in accordance with the threats of the barbarian Shah. In fact many asserted the order had already been given to the soldiers to be ready at the first signal to fall upon all the Armenians in Julfa. When the missionary Fathers got to know of this design, they made a petition to the chief minister of the Court and obtained from

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the gold and pearls on the cloth were alleged to have been sold separately to various persons, not the single horsecloth to one guilty party.