

“him a bodyguard of some soldiers to protect their Houses and the churches, whom they maintained at their own expense till the departure of the Tyrant, when they felt out of danger and free from any molestation.

“It is, however, true that this” (intended) “massacre did not take place, God having changed or postponed the evil design of the Tyrant who, when about to depart from Isfahan, said to the mayor (Kalantar) of Julfa who had gone to wish him a ‘safe journey’: ‘For the present I keep in suspense the massacre of the Julfa people, and I overlook the blood of Peter and Aqa Nazar: on my return I shall look into the ‘accounts’!’ Then he demanded at how much they were selling children in Julfa. The answer was given him: ‘Five ‘abbasi for a girl, ten for a boy.’ ‘Well,’ he (Nadir Shah) added, ‘on my return I shall cause girls to be sold for one mahmudi, and one ‘abbasi the boys!’¹

“It is said, besides, that in the space of five weeks that the Tyrant stayed in Isfahan, in killed, mutilated and tortured the number of persons reached 5,000.

“The cause why the Tyrant was so angered against the Armenians they say to have been that, having levied an imposition of a certain great sum of money on their patriarch, who usually resides in Echmiadzin,² a place in Persian territory, the latter finding himself unable to make so large a disbursement took refuge in Erzerum, a city of the Ottoman dominions: and for that he began to treat all the Armenians as rebels, although the Armenian community were not alone in having the misfortune to experience the effects of the cruelty and avarice of the tyrant on their race: Persians, even the more distinguished, were not exempt and in particular all officials and soldiers. For any slight suspicion or pretext found he caused very many of them to perish daily, either by the bowstring or under the pole . . . of eyes every day he had so many put out that heaps could be made of them. There were few men in his army who had not either their ears amputated, or nose cut off, or one eye lost, or had not been marked in another manner by the savagery of the Barbarian. Among those blinded in this, his latest stay in Isfahan, one was the young prince of Georgia. The reason for this punishment was that the Tyrant, having required of his father whom *two* years ago he (Nadir Shah) had honoured with the title and diadem of ‘king of Georgia’, that he should pay a certain very large sum of money, when he” (the ‘king of Georgia’) “sent a reply, according to what is said, that instead of money he had bullets to fire at his (Nadir Shah’s) head. These and similar atrocities, which he was wont to practise on the people and his army, without regard either to the deserts or status of the persons concerned, were the cause that daily very many officers and soldiers were deserting from it; so that one day, when he held a general review of his army, he found it reduced to 80,000 soldiers only, when formerly there had been 200,000: thereupon he went into such a fury that he began to swear horribly at God, sparing no less his . . . prophet Muhammad.

“. . . At last on 21.1.1747 the Tyrant departed from Isfahan with all his army, proceeding to the province of Sistan, the governor of which, named Fath ‘Ali Khan, had rebelled against him and awaited him in the field with a force that numbered 100,000 men. Already Quli Khan had sent against him two great armies to fight him; but both had been defeated and dispersed by the victorious troops of the governor in question, who was growing in strength daily by the multitude of deserters and other Persian chiefs who went over constantly to his side. He was already coining money with his own image and superscription, and had assumed the title of ‘king of Persia’, having himself called ‘Shah Safi. . . .

“It is certain that the Tyrant is in great straits owing to this new and unforeseen revolt, seeing himself daily more abandoned by his own men and his party diminishing.

“To appease the petty people, both when coming to and going from Isfahan, he sought

¹ Five ‘abbasi = 20 shahi = one-fifth of 1 qran, or rial (latest nomenclature): i.e. Nadir Shah hinted that parents would be ten times more ready to sell their offspring.

² Perhaps this was the fine inflicted (in 1745) on the Katholikos Lazarus of 5,000 Tumans, already mentioned in this chapter.