

“escort of an English man-o’-war¹ which was to arrive there in the past month of May.
“So their lateness is attributed to the winds being contrary. . . .”

He was wrong in his optimism, as the following entries in *Cont. Basra Chron.* show:

“1775. . . . About the middle of March a Persian force, making war on Turks, straitly
“besieged this town . . . the people of Basra aimed at nothing more than defending them-
“selves against the ‘external’ enemy, having no suspicions at all about an ‘internal’ enemy,
“or—as I should rather say—they let themselves be deluded into thinking that the Persians
“would at length get tired of the trouble and raise the siege; but they were deceived, as
“will appear under the following year.

“26.7.1775. . . . Meanwhile distress and misfortune increased from day to day: the
“deariness of corn and all food was rising.

“1776 . . . whatever was being sold was at very high prices: the measure which they
“call a ‘mān’ ” (vulg. ‘maund’) “of wheat and barley was being sold at a price of 20–90
“piastres, meat was not being sold at any price . . . everywhere famine grew, and cats,
“dogs, horses, asses, the tops of date-trees did not suffice to assuage that hunger. . . .

“10.4.1776. On this day the town, defeated by the ‘internal’ enemy, was handed over
“to the Persians, and thus freed from the tyranny of hunger fell into the tyrannical hands of
“the Persians, to whom the town was surrendered on certain conditions and articles of
“capitulation; but the perfidious Persians, having obtained possession of the town, kept
“none of the conditions, refused to recognize articles of capitulation or any promises. They
“practised, however, unheard tyrannical methods in extracting money. How shall I
“describe this tyranny . . . Basra at that time had to witness and suffer! The chief
“personages of the town, i.e. the governor with his chief officials, the leader of the Chris-
“tians, the principal Turk, the headman of the Jews were taken away to Shiraz in Persia:
“in addition Karim Khan, acting as king of the Persians, exacted from this town, already
“exhausted, 128,000 Tumans: the sum was apportioned among the divers communities in
“the town, and it fell to the share of the Christians to pay 18,000 Tumans, and this sum was
“extorted with usury to the last farthing from the inhabitants. I shall say nothing about
“the gifts made to General Sadiq Khan, brother of Karim Khan, and his officers. . . .

“1777. In this year the abominable state of affairs grew worse: the Persians, who up
“till now had been ‘out for’ money, being given over to lust beyond measure, began to
“want girls also. . . . When the source of money at Basra was dry the perfidious Persians
“began to lay ambushes for the Arabs, and so the afflicted people of Basra were not
“liberated, but just for so long released from greater oppression and vexations. In the
“month of December . . . the Persians destroyed Basra, looted the town and the families
“there: and, when we were hoping for better in the following year, the times turned out
“worse for us. For the Persians in the interval made war on the Arabs but were defeated
“by the Arabs and saved themselves by flight. The victory of the Arabs increased our
“miseries, for the Persians wanted to take revenge on the people of Basra. . . .”

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Before such an exposition of Persian political affairs and conditions during the period as revealed in the correspondence investigated for this work be concluded, it will be well to add something about those prevalent in that stronghold hitherto of Catholicism, oasis in the midst of a contingent of hostility and schism—Nakhchiwan—at that date still part of the northernmost province of Persia. From Smyrna, 12.10.1752,² Mgr Dominic Salvini, O.P., Archbishop of Nakhchiwan, informed the Sac. Congregation about his diocese that:

¹ An early instance of British policing and patrol of the Persian Gulf.

² *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 111.