

The Vicar Provincial left for Shiraz and India: and after his departure fresh conflict arose over the Bishop trying to take still another room for his books, contrary to directions left by the Provincial: the Bishop and his companions were French, the Fathers at the convent nearly all Italians: and the incompatibilities of temperament—"the prelate is saintly and good, but "these regions require someone more phlegmatic . . ."—¹—made matters more strained, so much so that the Visitor General, Fr. Charles of Jesus Mary, 15.7.1641, reported to Rome:

"I was on the threshold of departure and my return" (to Europe), "but seeing things "and the state of the convent of Isfahan through the presence of Mgr the Bishop of Babylon ". . . in our House, where he acts as if it belonged completely to him . . .",

and decided to remain in Isfahan to use his authority.

Bishop Bernard of Baghdad had, in fact, been endeavouring to secure separate accommodation for himself, but to be provided gratis by the Shah: and, having learnt in Rome of the offer of Shah 'Abbas I, many years previously, in connection with Echmiadzin and the Armenians to build a church and house for a bishop to be sent by the Pope, had attempted, after his arrival in 1640, to argue this to Shah Safi as a pledge still binding: in his own letter, 26.3.1641,² to the Cardinal Prefect the Bishop refers to the result:

"Since my last letter of the 5th October, by which I informed your Eminence of the "good and favourable reception I had received from the king of Persia, a considerable "time had passed without my having learnt what reply he intended to give to the Brief "from His Holiness, nor, too, how far he was willing to acquit himself on the occasion of "my arrival in this country expressly to receive the execution of the promise, which His "Holiness says he had had in letters of the late Shah 'Abbas, to build a church in Isfahan "for the bishop whom His Holiness would dispatch.

"On this the Shah contradicted that his grandfather had ever made such a promise, "and has absolutely declined to do this for me³ so that all that I have so far been able "to do is to have *obtained his (the Shah's) consent to my purchasing a house* in this city of Isfahan "at my expense, as I hope to do in a few days for myself and for my successors, notwith- "standing my poverty. After that I shall see how to obtain permission anyhow for" (making) "the church. . . ."

During the summer of 1641 Bishop Bernard of S. Teresa did in fact decide on a house and agreed on a price of 2,000 ecus⁴ (=5,500 French livres); but the contract took four months to deliver, because two Arab notables, who had been despoiled of their domains, were residing in it and waiting for Shah Safi to give them assistance in the recovery of their country; so that it was 2.10.1641 before the deed of sale was signed and legalized, purchase being in the name of the king of France⁵ (though M. Leon Mirot writes 'in the name of the Bishop personally'), and the money paid. Possession was taken, 9.10.1641.

The Bishop's secretary, Fr. Louis of S. Teresa, is presumably the writer of a communication to some dignitary in Rome, dated from Isfahan 30.11.1641:⁶

"Monsignor de Babylon, to whom I have read your letters, has bidden me write to you "that he is more obliged to you than to anyone else in the world, that he holds the honour "of your friendship dearer than that of anyone else.

"He has seen how Mgr Ingoli has told you that the Spanish bishop" (Mgr Timothy Perez of Isfahan is meant) "had obeyed the Pope and resigned the bishopric of Isfahan:

¹ Fr. Charles of Jesus Mary, O.C.D. 236 b.

² *S.N.R.*, I, p. 67.

³ *Vide* also Fr. Dominic of Christ, Shiraz, O.C.D. 237 c, 14.4.1641: ". . . The reply to his (the bishop's) memorial "to the king (was) that he (Shah Safi) was neither willing to give him a house nor permission to build a church, because the "three existing churches" (i.e. of Augustinians, Carmelites, Capuchins) "were sufficient. . . ."

⁴ M. Leon Mirot's publications, cited.

⁵ *MSS. Hist. Miss.*, chap. 6 and chap. 12, book 7, part 4.

⁶ *S.N.R.*, I, p. 65.