

“celebrated, in the middle of it a sermon in Arabic being preached by Fr. Basil of S. Francis, Vicar of the convent: a plenary indulgence was published.

“The Archbishop of Nakhchiwan, at that time visiting Isfahan on business concerning his church, was also present. . . . For the rest of his stay in Persia Bishop Bernard continued to officiate publicly in this church, without experiencing the least molestation from Muslims. . . .”¹

There is extant,² in a letter in Latin from the Bishop to the Pope, dated 20.12.1641, the announcement of this ceremonial opening:

“. . . I make known to Your Holiness, Holy Father, that the first cathedral church has been founded in this city of Isfahan, and erected under the patronage of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the sacred offices being celebrated in it on the day dedicated to her Immaculate Conception. . . .”

(This account duly reached Rome, and was reported by Cardinal Spada in a session of the Sacr. Congregation, 24.11.1642.)

The MSS. *Hist. Miss.* (chap. 12, book 7) explains:

“The Catholics of all races in Isfahan had hailed Mgr Bernard as a new Moses and liberator on his arrival: they had looked to see in a Latin bishop one who would be effectual in his good offices with the Shah, in order to lighten the yokes on them, and one who would relieve their wants and financial straits. Seeing then” (after this interval) “that he obtained nothing beyond mere words from the Shah, and that he was more in need of monetary offerings than in a position to dispense alms, they began to treat him with indifference and, except for the devout, to care little whether he established his position in Persia or not. . . .”³

On his part Bishop Bernard had formed a bad opinion of the local Christians, and M. Leon Mirot, in his publication in *Études Carmelitaines*, cited—‘Lettres du Père Bernard de S. Thérèse . . . etc.’, p. 152—quotes a letter to the bishop’s sister, 19.9.1641, in which he speaks of Christians in Persia:

“qui se disent Catholiques mais qui sont plus meschans que les Mahommetans. . . . J’advoue que les Chrestiens de ce pays ici me font incomparablement plus de peine que les Infidèles, et je tiens que leur vie abominable et scandaleuse qu’ils menent empesche la conversion des autres et que Dieu est plus prest de verser sa colère sur ce pays, à cause des offenses de ceux qui lui appartiennent en apparence que sa foy . . . si celuy que l’on envoie à ma place, ou moy si je reviens icy après le voyage que je me dispose à faire en Chrestienté ne vient avec plus de pouvoir que je n’y suis venu pour reprimer les moeurs détestables de ce pais . . . on n’a que faire de retourner, car ils détruisent plus en un jour que tant de grands serviteurs de Dieu ne pourroient faire de bien en des années entières. . . .”

M. Leon Mirot also brings out that the hostility of the Dutch⁴ in Isfahan was such that the life of Bishop Bernard was in danger, and that

“at the beginning of 1642 he was attacked, and received two or three cuts on his head from a scimitar, and two to three hundred blows from sticks on the rest of his body for

¹ and ³ MSS. *Hist. Miss.*, chap. 12, book 7.

² *S.N.R.*, I, p. 65 *et seq.*

⁴ MSS. *Hist. Miss.* does not mention the armed attack, but that they threatened him if he did not leave the country, and an attempt was made to poison him in a dish of which the bishop, suspicious, did not partake, while the bearer did and escaped death only on administration of antidotes.