

reader, seem to have taken appreciable effect for twenty years or more. But to it, eventually, may perhaps be attributed in part the great reduction in the number of letters from missionaries on record in the archives of the Order—no longer directly responsible for their direction and needs, the Curia of the Order may have ceased to keep up a regular correspondence from their side, while meeting with no response the missionaries may have refrained from writing.

The difficulties which confronted the Mission as a whole and prevented it from progress in evangelization were indeed multiple—not only with latent Shiah fanaticism, or in internal discipline and financial administration. Successive Vicars Provincial of this period were the victims of misfortune. In 1641 Fr. Dominic of Christ, setting off from a sense of duty to deal with the situation in Goa, perished from the results of a heat-stroke near Shiraz. In 1646 Fr. Dominic of S. Mary had been expelled from Goa by the intruding Visitor from Portugal, and infirmities immobilized him in Isfahan for nearly all the rest of his life. The next appointment, Fr. Augustine of S. Teresa, setting out from Rome in 1646, was captured by the Barbary corsairs and remained a slave, first at Algiers, afterwards being re-sold to Moors at Tunis, where he was treated very harshly and threatened continually with greater cruelty, if he did not secure exchange with a certain Tunisian Muslim, held by the Knights in Malta.¹ His letters, a number of which safely reached Rome—in one he remarked that “vessels from “Leghorn, Genoa, from Naples, Sicily and Malta used to call at Tunis”, so that relations between the corsairs’ ports and Europe were not closed—give pitiful descriptions of the misery of the unransomed Christian captives. He had had teeth knocked out, and ‘the beatings he ‘had had made him the colour of his habit’.² A fourth Vicar Provincial, after spending only a few months at his headquarters, Fr. Dominic of S. Nicolas, left Goa suddenly in January 1654 in somewhat strange circumstances—some said deported—on the same ship as took the viceroy Conde de Obbidos, who had been expelled after a rising in Goa: and when the ship reached the Azores Fr. Dominic was put ashore and died of an infectious disease caught when consoling another sick and bereaved person on board.³

If in the whole province of the Mission—two Convents and four Residences—there were 24 Religious in 1655,⁴ and at the convent in Isfahan alone 9 Religious in 1650 (when three more were on the way from Europe),⁵ eight Religious in 1651, three of these already by 1645 were “so infirm that they are unable to leave the House”,⁶ and on 15.11.1651 Fr. Felix lamented:

“This House at Isfahan has become an infirmary: no mission work is done except by “Fr. Dionysius who sees to baptizing moribund infants,”

and he went on that

¹ The Order had ransomed one of his companions for 50 scudi, but was poor, and the release of the others had to suit Tunisian demands: *vide* Fr. Felix, 6.11.1649, *S.R.*, vol. 135, p. 279.

² O.C.D. 270 m., 14.6.1649. In another letter Fr. Augustine alludes to a strange figure in the royal family of Spain: “a tearful event which occurred some days ago, here in Tunis. From Malaga there has arrived Don Philip of Austria, . . . and he has turned ‘Turk’ a second time; and he, who was called ‘Don Philip of Austria’, is now named ‘Sidi ‘Muhammad’. He went on board in Malaga, saying that he intended to cross to Rome for the Holy Year in an “English vessel, which pretended to proceed to Leghorn, but bore away for Tunis: the first vessel, on which he had gone “on board, feigning to be making much water, went off, leaving all its passengers on the other vessel (also English) “which was going to Leghorn. Don Philip remained hidden for 10 days till that vessel had gone off, and then wrote “secretly to the Dey of Tunis to come and fetch him, and then he went ashore by a stratagem . . . when he arrived he “put on his former ‘Turkish’ clothes. He took with him some of his familiars and a concubine, and the latter’s mother “. . . Don Philip has caused a great storm, because the chief people wanted to burn him, saying that he had tricked the “‘Turks’ ” (before) “and the Christians. Some of the Turks praised him, others blamed him. He is now going about “so sadly and melancholy—as it seems to me, like another Cain. Some say he had a hand in this: others that there had “been treachery by the English . . . and that the English captain, who did this, received 5,000 pieces of eight. . . .” Curiously enough, Fr. Augustine added that among the persons landed at Tunis with this prince were “two of our “Fathers from Spain, whom he (the prince) had taken as his chaplains, i.e. Fr. Antonio de Jesus, prior of Malaga, and “another priest, his companion. It was said that all of them had come to become Muslims, but this was false: I had “a talk with the said Fr. Prior who . . . told me that he wanted to go and salute your Reverence . . .” (i.e. in Rome, so presumably the party had a definite intention of making the Holy Year visit).

³ Letter of Dr. L. Murz, S.J., 31.8.1654, O.C.D. 270 m.

⁵ *Idem*, 31.1.1650, O.C.D. 237 i.

⁴ Fr. Felix, 20.2.1655, O.C.D. 237 i.

⁶ Fr. Dominic of S. Mary, 13.7.1645.