

The Carmelites were first admitted to Julfa

“at a time when some small present of a curiosity had been made to the Head of the Armenians, and when the latter had need of a recommendation in order to obtain the release of three Armenians from the galleys at Venice . . .”

explained Fr. Felix in a letter of 20.12.1655.<sup>1</sup>

Fr. Balthazar of S. Mary gives the story<sup>2</sup> of the early experience of opposition:

“Our Fathers began the Residence at Julfa on Sunday in the Octave of Corpus Christi” (= 15th June 1652). “At the first they were well received and welcomed by the principal men, who showed them many kindnesses. Fifteen days after the new Residence” (was started) “there arrived in Isfahan the Reverend Fathers of the Society of Jesus. . . . Two or three days after their arrival they all went into Julfa to pay a visit, and as already for a year past the Capuchin Fathers had been there, our (Carmelite) Fathers following, when the populace saw so many European Religious they were struck with amazement and stupefaction, and in a short time a small storm arose so that ‘commota est universa civitas’—the whole town was in an uproar—commencing with the clergy, and the bishop did not fail to issue his threats and prohibitions, and to stop the Julfa people from sending their sons to our Fathers to be taught (for the Capuchin Fathers already had a considerable number of boys). But, thanks to the Lord, up till now their wicked intention has had no effect, the fathers of the boys, most of whom are well-to-do merchants trading usually in Europe, resisting it, as they want their sons to learn our languages, expecting something useful to come out of it, and also having in view that it may be of great benefit to them to have, and to have had, good relations with the European Religious . . . so many documents and powers of attorney the Religious here have drawn up for them for the courts in Europe, by which they have recovered much of their money and goods, which would have been as good as lost owing to the failure and neglect of their own agents and representatives: and they also make use of our Religious to get translated the letters which sovereigns write here and there in their favour. . . . At present our Fathers are enjoying peace and quiet in Julfa. Fr. Stephen and Fr. Cornelius . . . are dwelling there . . . after the departure of Fr. Felix to Basra orders arrived from the Fr. Vicar Provincial in Goa making Fr. Felix Vicar of the mission in Julfa, should a good opportunity of getting into Julfa occur, as for long past our superiors had desired. . . . We are much befriended by the Headman of Julfa, named Sarfaraz, who has his own house next that one where at present they are dwelling . . . the kindnesses he does to the ‘Carmelite Fathers of the ‘Pope’, as they call us here. . . .”

A few weeks later:

“things at Julfa are so far going well, under the protection of Sarfaraz, though the bishop and priests have shown some opposition and made difficulties . . .”<sup>3</sup>

and the writer added the suggestion that

“from Florence and Leghorn, where Armenian merchants trade, letters should be written to Julfa, laying stress on the importance of maintaining good relations with the Fathers. . . .”

Notwithstanding the evidence they had had of the resentment of an influential part of the populace of Julfa at so many Latin Religious taking up residence there, the Jesuits persisted.

<sup>1</sup> O.C.D. 237 i.

<sup>2</sup> 9.8.1653, O.C.D. 236 k.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, 26.8.1653.