

“The chief Armenian archimandrites have been put into dungeons with irons on their legs, and the churches in Julfa have been condemned to pay 400 Tumans every year (1 Tuman = 15 piastres). This persecution of the Armenians and the ill-treatment of the ‘Franks’—even of an officer of the king of France!—who do not dare to appear at the Court, and are treated by the masters of this country like dogs, and cursed for blackguards and rogues, has put fear into the vitals of all the Religious. . . . Blessed be God, who has permitted that this chief minister, the cruel persecutor of Christians, has been recently disgraced. . . .”

On 12.11.1672 he remarked:

“The captain-general” (i.e. of the Portuguese Armada) “sent to the Shah an Augustinian Father, called Fr. Manuel: after having been here two months he has done nothing, the more so as the king is always busy drinking, and at this Court there is neither anyone who governs, nor any order—everything makes for oppression of Christians. . . .”

That there had been later developments as regards the Armenians is indicated in a letter to the Sac. Congregation from the Superior of the Capuchins at Isfahan, Fr. Raphael du Mans<sup>1</sup>—for one matter, the prohibition of Shah 'Abbas II's reign had been revived in or about 1673:

“. . . our (Capuchin) Fathers, as also the Carmelites and Augustinians, have remained in the City, and the king did not order them to leave it, as he had done to the Armenians, whom he has even prohibited from coming into it to sell their wares: this bigotry of the Persians has been daily increasing, and the political favour, which formerly used to attend the Armenians, has altogether melted away and disappeared: and only self-interest has kept them from dealing with the Franks.”

By 1674 the news had reached Rome and reference been made in a General Session<sup>2</sup> of the Sac. Congregation de Propaganda Fide, 26.6.1674:

“It having been reported by Cardinal Nino that the king of Persia had caused more than twenty of the chief Armenian merchants living in Julfa to become renegades . . .”

their Eminences considered that the absence of the Bishop of Baghdad from the place of his appointed (temporary) residence, Isfahan, might be in part responsible for persecution having gone thus far.

In May 1678 the spirit of persecution flamed up again in worse form and, in one of his vivid Latin epistles, Fr. Elias of S. Albert wrote from Isfahan, 29.7.1678,<sup>3</sup> of the pass to which things had come—not that libertinage in that decade was unknown at European Courts, they were riddled with it: still there it did not prevent strong government and material progress:

“It is not meet to keep silence regarding the state of this unfortunate country, because with the king indulging in Bacchus and Venus and the officials altogether intent on making money for themselves, it is miserably abandoned.

“At one and the same time the king gives audience to those banqueting with him and those serving his debauches: at their suggestion the wrath of the king or his favours are dispensed: and there is no one who dare to interrupt with more sober advice the drunken and raging man. Cruel and unjust edicts are issued, which according to the law of the Medes and Persians it is not permissible to gainsay. To these evils there has to be added

<sup>1</sup> S.R., vol. 444, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> Acta for 1674, p. 181, vide *Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 10, by late Fr. L. Lemmens, O.F.M.

<sup>3</sup> S.N.R., I, p. 343.