

“however, to sate the hatred of the schismatic bishop against the Catholics, and, although he had said that he only wanted us (the Carmelites) driven out of Julfa, he still tried hard to expel the Jesuits,¹ Dominicans and the vicar of the Bishop of Baghdad and his missionaries. They were also saying that, if the ‘Turks’ did not slaughter me, he himself would kill me.” The letter to the Pope added: “Two Armenian Catholic priests of ours are nevertheless daily performing their rites in our former church, together with two deacons and various followers, whom our opponents have not been able to frighten away from the duty by promises, nor by charges made against them on that account before the Persian magistrates. All our Catholics assemble with the greatest constancy, and are present at the prayers and Masses they say, rendered, as it were, more fervent by this very persecution.” The letter of 10.8.1694 covering the narrative of Fr. Elias, explained, however, that: “The two Armenian priests of ours, urged repeatedly to go and submit themselves to the jurisdiction of the (schismatic) diocesan with promises of very good positions in any church where they might wish to minister, replied that they were satisfied with the bread they ate in their Catholic ministry. When threatened to be divested of their priests’ cassocks and have their beards shaved, which is considered here a sort of degradation,² and, last of all, to be handed over to the Diwan Baigi and, according to the customs in these countries chastised with hundreds of blows from sticks on the soles of their feet till the nails fall out,³ answered that even without cassock or beard they would not cease to perform their office, and in any case would glory in being tortured and even killed for the true Faith. They hid themselves, however, for several days, saying Office and celebrating earlier and more secretly than was their wont, until the Sharimans complained to the Court of that injustice and obtained that they should be served by their own Armenian priests without any hindrance. During this period the Catholics did not dare even to visit us in our convent in the city, as the king’s master of the household had threatened Khwajeh Markar that he would lose his head if they talked to the ‘Franks’, and so we comforted one another by exchanging letters and advice as to what could be done to remedy matters: now that the storm is somewhat abated they come to visit us in our convent in the city of Isfahan. . . . In any event, in order to insure the mission and the Bishop of Isfahan (whom I hear you have chosen me, all unworthy, to be) against similar insults from the schismatics, all here are of opinion that it would be very expedient to show some resentment of such violences against the principal leaders of this persecution, who are the Kalantar Khwajeh Lucas (whose brother Khwajeh Kalandarandeh and Stephanos, father of Aviet who too helped much to fan this fire, perhaps are still in Venice, or in Leghorn), Hovannes and his son Gregory, Aviet and Hovannes Karamanian, Carapiet son of Zachariah Gurak and others, their correspondents and agents, some of whom are always in those ports of Italy. If here they were to hear but once that the smallest reprisal would be made against them for the harm caused to Catholics, financial interest being the mainspring of all actions with these people, all here would come to our feet, and be the first to beg the Court to have satisfaction given us, in order to obtain by our mediation their effects there. . . .”

The main narrative of Fr. Elias of July 1694 turns, in its concluding portion, to the nemesis which overtook their enemies, particularly the chief Vartapet Stephen:

“Meanwhile Divine justice began to punish him, seeing that, as he became vindictive

¹ See *S.N.R.*, II, p. 119, the French Consul at Aleppo, Monsieur Beauvillier, under date 22.12.1694 (*S.N.R.*, II, p. 119), disclosed that:

“He” (Stephen) “wanted to chase away from Julfa all the missionaries, and destroy the fine church which the Sharimans had erected for the Jesuits; but the Portuguese Augustinians stopped this by threatening to make reprisals” (on the Armenians) “in India.”

² Forcible shaving of the beard and moustache was still in the twentieth century an insult to Persians, as was experienced during the War of 1914-8.

³ This is the process of the *bastinado*, in common use in Persia till 1912: *chub khurdan* = to eat sticks. Edmond About, in *Le Roi des Montagnes*, has also described this punishment.