

“of lords Who lives in the heavens and from Whom all good things do come, to be propitious and favourable to Your Highness, both with a view to Your complete acceptance of the true Faith and to all the happy condition that belongs to prosperity.  
 “Given at S. Mary Major, Rome, 28.1.1695, and in the fourth year of Our Pontificate.”

“This letter of His Holiness, asking for our readmission to Julfa to be permitted,” wrote Bishop Elias to the Cardinals of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, 27.4.1697,<sup>1</sup>

“arrived at a time when our enemies by steps well backed at the Court and supported by the power of their money might have been able to evade what it proposed to do; and, as we had no gifts with which to accompany the presentation of it, as is the custom of this country, I deemed it well to await the coming of the ambassador from Portugal, who was on his way with great state and with rich presents. . . .”

(By royal order the Armenians of Julfa in gala costume were bidden to escort him ceremonially from a garden outside the city<sup>2</sup>—which to these days has been in Persia a customary halting-place, where anyone of outstanding authority or of exceptional distinction is received by Persian officials and notables and Europeans concerned, and whence after refreshments he is accompanied by them into the city or town.)

“I found him at once excellently well inclined to back up all my designs. He had, too, an express commission from his Excellency the Viceroy of the East Indies, in whose name in presenting that letter<sup>3</sup> from His Holiness, accompanied by another from the Grand Duke of Tuscany<sup>4</sup> with regard to the same subject, he proceeded with great discretion and courage to manage the affair so that at last, when he had overcome all opposition, he conducted us in triumph to our Residence . . .” (i.e. Julfa).

To Pope Innocent XII himself in Latin Bishop Elias, 28.6.1697 (after his consecration) expressed himself greatly indebted on this account:

“With the expression of gratitude due I lay at the feet of Your Holiness the reply from the king of the Persians<sup>5</sup> to the Briefs, which You had deigned to write in our favour with regard to the matter of our expulsion from Julfa, and along with this I offer You the congratulations of a joyful heart for the success so desired, which the recommendation of so great weight and authority has obtained. For from it there ensued the restoration of our apostolic mission in this chief colony of the Armenians: and thus the bishopric of Isfahan becomes established in the midst of exulting Catholics and of schismatics gnashing their teeth.

“To this the envoy of the king of Portugal, his Excellency Don Gregorio Pereira Fidalgo, greatly contributed by becoming the providential presenter of the aforesaid Briefs of Your Holiness and asking for their object” (to be accorded) “and a reply given to them: for, after very strong opposition and difficulties had been overcome, he himself conducted us triumphantly back into Julfa. On that account I humbly beg Your Holiness to deign to reply with an expression of gratification to his letter attached hereto, together with others. . . .”

Of Fr. Conrad, the Procurator, who must have reached Rome in or before December 1694, there had been

<sup>1</sup> *S.N.R.*, II, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide Vita P. F. Elia a S. Alberto*, O.C.D. 320 e.

<sup>3</sup> “The first letters of His Holiness”, according to Fr. Elias, 15.9.1697, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> “And from the viceroy of Goa” wrote Fr. Elias, 15.9.1697.

<sup>5</sup> No trace of this reply having been received in Rome is to be found in the Vatican Archives.