

“deposed, and deprived of everything found on him. . . . This, added to his other expenditure in the past four years that we have been most cruelly persecuted (by him), may be reckoned as totalling more than 10,000 Tumans = about 150,000 scudi. . . . With this some of the more circumspect chief merchants began to open their eyes, and to show with much courtesy their desire for reconciliation with me. However, a number of other persons along with the bigoted party of the Vartapets are wanting once more to obtain the disgrace of Nahapiet by writing and obliging the people to sign new defamatory libels against the patriarch. But, as they no longer have anyone ready to disburse the money to bring these to the Shah’s notice, it is not thought that they will achieve any result. . . .”

The Dominican Fr. John Bartholomew records the end of this pugnacious character in a letter of 9.3.1699:¹

“Stephen, the declared enemy of the ‘Franks’, died last year” (i.e. 1698) “in prison at Erivan, on which it appeared that Nahapiet would remain firmly fixed in the patriarchal see: . . . all the same, the ecclesiastics at Julfa and lay-people do not remain quiet: on the contrary, recently in defiance of Nahapiet they have on their own initiative chosen as their bishop a certain Vartapet Alexander, an intimate associate of Stephen, and with much solemnity they have put him in possession, so that now the Julfa folk are separated not only from the Roman Church, but also from their own patriarch. This happened in the month of January” (1698) “some days after an abominable and impious sacrilegious sin committed near the high altar of the principal church in Julfa. . . .”

The version given by the Carmelite Lay Brother Francis Mary in his *Vita P. F. Elia* is that:

‘the governor of Erivan, on the excuse that Stephen had not invited him to the blessing of waters at Epiphany, made him a prisoner. . . . Again bastinadoed . . . he was confined on an islet in a lake and allowed to perish miserably of hunger, his body being eventually found by his followers half eaten by rodents’.

The *Vita* sums up his character as

‘very corrupt, but so strong and influential a personality had he that, had he wished it, he could have obliged all the Armenians to become Catholics’.

The Katholikos Nahapiet had evidently written in 1697, shortly after his restoration and the imprisonment of Stephen, expressing sentiments of respect for the Holy See, calling the Roman Church ‘Mother’: in the appendix will be found the Latin Brief dated 3.5.1698 (Arch. Secr. Vat. *Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 82, p. 89) which Pope Innocent XII wrote in reply. It is translated in part below: the Pope was grateful for the expression of reverence: laid stress on all that was done at Rome to make Armenians comfortable there: urged the Katholikos to work for unity: congratulated him on his escape from the machinations of Stephen: sent him gifts by an emissary.

“Pope Innocent XII to the venerable brother Nahapiet, Patriarch of the whole people of the Armenians.

“Venerable brother greeting and the Apostolic blessing. Grievous though not unusual is the sadness cast over the mind of the Pontiff by the frequent remembrance of the very great woes under which the race of the Armenians once very flourishing and of exemplary obedience to this holy See has so long and pitifully been bowed. Still the letter of your Fraternity to Us was able to soften them not a little, for in it you, excellent man and

¹ *S.N.R.*, II, p. 232.