

“all of whom he was feeding and providing with transport. . . .”

Hardly had that Papal representative left Persia than another arrived. A secretarial minute in the Sac. Congregation recorded, 12.1.1699,<sup>1</sup>

“the Capuchin Fathers having represented the need of a letter of recommendation to the king of Persia, so that they may be able to live and work in his kingdom, and not be impeded under pain of punishment. A present to the Shah is needed in such a case, and money for his officials, also letters to the king of Poland and the Emperor. Orders passed: let 150 scudi in all be given. . . .”

Thereupon, 24.1.1699, a Brief from Pope Innocent XII was addressed to Shah Sultan Husain<sup>2</sup> by the hands of Fr. Felix Maria of Sellano, who was mentioned therein, asking that:

“Since . . . it is of the greatest concern that all, who proceed to very extensive dominions and choose there to delay for a space, shall enjoy that peace and security which it is right to expect under the rule of a just and very kindly prince, it is certainly fitting that the Order of the Brothers Minor of S. Francis, called Capuchins, shall have such a wish gratified inasmuch as being men who, not for . . . any desire of earthly lucre, which they have voluntarily and solemnly renounced, but in order that they may indicate in sincerity and humbleness of heart the right way which leads to God through the light of Catholic truth, have undertaken to penetrate this most excellent part of the world. We therefore, who by reason of Our office are now and ought to be solicitous for the spiritual progress of souls, rightly, as is proper, discerning Your perspicuous sagacity, beg of You pressingly that You be pleased to bestow on the aforesaid Capuchins the free power of remaining in the districts subject to your sway, but especially in Ganjeh and Georgia, and of performing there all those (duties) which concern the sacred ministry of the mission in their private houses or churches. That supported by Your authority they may the more energetically apply themselves to their duty We likewise entreat of You that in no wise will You suffer them or any of those same Christian faithful whatsoever coming together for the sake of religious worship to be disturbed or in any way at all molested by Your subjects, but rather that You will curb undue attempts of that kind by the threatening of severe punishments. (Our) beloved son from the aforementioned Order of Capuchins, Felix Maria da Sellano, to whom We greatly desire that You will graciously listen when he is discoursing about Our Pontifical regard towards You, will explain in more detail Our mind. . . .”

A minute in the Sac. Congregation, dated 4.5.1699,<sup>3</sup> mentions that the Capuchin Fr. Felix Mary had just been sent back to Georgia from Rome with a letter from the Pope to the Shah, so that he might obtain greater liberty for his Order to have houses and churches there (at that time, as already noted, the Capuchin Fathers and Catholics at Tiflis were being grievously persecuted by an Armenian Vartapet sent there from Echmiadzin): while, writing 9.3.1699<sup>4</sup> to the Cardinal Prefect, the Archbishop of Pisa stated that the Grand Duke of Tuscany was going to send a communication to the Shah and

“also verbally urge on some Persian merchants at Leghorn to indicate to the Shah the desire the Grand Duke has of seeing the Capuchin missionaries re-established in that country, with freedom for the exercise of their functions in their churches.”

(Fr. Felix Maria from Sellano later informed the Sac. Congregation that the Grand Duke's letter to the Shah had been “written in golden ink and enclosed in a very fine purse.”<sup>5</sup>) In

<sup>1</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 532, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> *S.N.R.*, II, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. Secr. Vat. Epist. ad Princ.*, 82, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 533, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, p. 238.