

this was because of a violent persecution excited against the poor Catholics by the Katholikos Alexander:

“Two days previously his letters had reached the principal Armenians of Tabriz, and in these he asserted that the Catholics were Nestorians, and excommunicated those Armenians who frequented the Capuchin churches and had sent their sons to Latin schools. . . .”

Mgr Maurice of S. Theresa, in his letter to the Sovereign Pontiff, used the words:

“All this, Holy Father, proceeds from the constant persecution of the missionaries and Catholics by the patriarch of the Armenians to prevent their entry into Persia: he does not hesitate to bribe the Turkish and Persian officials so that the latter harm and even beat with sticks the missionaries, as for instance a few months since happened to the Capuchin Fathers at Tiflis and Ganjeh and to the Jesuit Fathers at Shamakha. . . . Holy Father, all Armenians coming to Italy and particularly to Rome deceive Your Holiness and the Cardinals: *there* they give themselves out to be Catholics, and *here* they are the greatest persecutors of the missionaries and of true Catholics. . . .”

From Hamadan the Bishop of Baghdad, 23.10.1711,¹ confirmed what had happened, referring to:

“the evil conjuncture of the times in this country with the present very violent persecution by the schismatic Armenians who, encouraged by their patriarch at Echmiadzin, Alexander, are on the point of driving all the apostolic missionaries out of Persia. He has had revoked the favourable royal edicts granted to the very pious French envoy, Monsieur Michel, three years ago, and obtained others just in the opposite sense. . . . Some persons consider that everything is being done through the corrupt officials of this greedy Court without the knowledge of the Shah. . . .”

Bishop Pidou enclosed a letter from the French Capuchin Fr. Peter of Issoudun, written from Isfahan, whither the latter had accompanied the Bishop coadjutor of Baghdad, and where he had been present at five audiences the coadjutor had with Shah Sultan Husain; but he added that he doubted whether the orders then given for stopping this persecution could bear much fruit for long because:

“the most rampant enemy of the Roman Church, the patriarch of the Armenians, is spending much money at the Court in order to counter the privileges granted us by the king . . .”,

and he asked for protection for his mission.

“The patriarch of the Armenian race arrived here a few days ago,”

reported Fr. Jerome Francis from Isfahan, 31.10.1711,²

“and it is feared lest in this capital he should carry out that (decree) which he obtained last year against us, i.e. to drive us out of Persia . . .”,

and to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide another Carmelite, Fr. Paul Augustine, protested in connection with this fresh campaign, 20.11.1711:³

¹ *S.R.*, vol. 587, p. 28.

² *S.N.R.*, III, p. 384.

³ *Idem*, p. 386.