

“decree—full of many calumnies against our missionaries, so that the very Turks had a “horror of it—with orders to expel all from the Ottoman Empire. . . .”

That these constantly recurring attacks stirred up by the schismatic Armenians, whether patriarchs, principal ecclesiastics or seculars, much preoccupied the Latin Fathers is to be seen also from a letter of the Carmelite Vicar Provincial, Fr. Joseph Mary of Jesus, 28.2.1712,¹ to the Cardinal Prefect, in which he put forward schemes for remedy—far-fetched and wild, it is true, so that they brought him a reprimand from the Secretary to the Sac. Congregation (“Let a reply be written to the petitioner that he should not mix himself in affairs which do “not concern the office of a missionary”):

“I consider that two steps would be of great utility for reconciling the Armenians to the “Roman Church. The first is if the king of France were to grant freedom of trade in his “realms to the Shariman family and to whomsoever we should give an attestation that “they are Catholics and frequent our churches: the second, that Masqat, which is an “important port of the Persian Gulf and was in the hands of the Portuguese, is now occupied “by the Arabs. The latter inflict heavy loss on the Persian coast, and the king of the “Persians has nothing more to his heart than either to gain possession of that town, or to “see it held by some Christian sovereign. But, if the king of France care to promise to “besiege it on condition that, if he agreed, he would have the appointment of the patriarch “of the Armenians, it would beyond doubt be granted him, and, since the patriarch “nominates the bishops, and the latter the parish priests, the whole Armenian nation in “these parts would become Catholic and with God’s favour we should see what for many “centuries past has been attempted in vain. . . .”

If particularly virulent in Persian centres the bitter feeling was not confined to them and can be seen in the Ottoman Empire, not only in the persecution launched by the Katholikos Alexander in 1708 just cited: in 1712 the Capuchins had to abandon Baghdad for the second time, and were asking for a secular envoy to be sent to obtain the reopening of their hospice. Of the first time, in 1701, their Superior wrote:²

“Five years ago we informed you that an agitation having been stirred up by the “Nestorian, Jacobite and Armenian priests . . . in order to save the Catholics and those “who had to be released from chains it became necessary to borrow 7,000 scudi and give “them to the governor. Now in this present year a similar persecution has been started “by the Armenian and Jacobite bishops, who complained to the Turks that all the Christians (i.e. at Baghdad) “have embraced the Catholic Faith, for which reason the governor, when “he had received an order sent express from the Porte for the purpose, at noon on the “12th September (1701) without our having any previous warning of it, came with the “commander of the Janissaries, the Mufti, the Qadi and six officers with 2,000 men mounted “and on foot, with staves and swords and muskets and other iron weapons to pull down “our hospice to its foundations . . . so much so that the governor entered our house and “without any rhyme or reason took an axe and struck at the wall. All followed suit, “imitating him and striking blows: and in a short time both our hospice and church had “been laid in ruins, and plundered. Our books were condemned by the governor to be “burnt, and by the judge to be thrown into the river. . . .”

From 1712 in Julfa and Persia, too, the vindictiveness of the schismatics became unconscionable. In a letter of 22.1.1713³ the Vicar Apostolic of the diocese of Isfahan reported:

“The schismatics obtained a fresh *raqam* in their favour a few days ago, of which I “send a copy . . .”

¹ *S.R.*, vol. 587, p. 134.

² *S.N.R.*, II, p. 412, 10.12.1701, Fr. John Baptist.

³ *S.R.*, vol. 590, p. 29; see also *S.N.R.*, III, p. 418, 21.6.1713.