

“to my very great sorrow I have learnt of the hardships and afflictions suffered by you during the recent revolutions. Glory be God who has preserved your persons. . . . I have written other letters to your Reverence, in particular after the death of our late Fr. Provincial and I gave much other information . . . but I gather that you have not received any of them. . . . I shall only say, dear Fr. Vicar, that in the five years that, unworthy though I be, I have been Vicar of this House of Julfa I have not had one single good day, having always had to live on alms and since the change of sovereigns, if I have not been actually beaten, I have suffered many other afflictions, in particular the famine at the time of the siege and later: up till now I have been and still am in a very hapless plight, having been obliged to sell some of the things belonging to the House, both in order to keep myself alive—I sometimes found myself with nothing but bread and water—as also to pay some debts contracted by me before the siege and others incurred during the siege after the death of our late Fr. Provincial. At present, the time to lay in stocks” (for the winter) “I have not a farthing. Blessed be the name of God! I have already written how we owed 25 Tumans to the English merchants” (i.e. the East India Company), “16 to the Dutch, with whom was pledged the greater part of the silver of our convent in Isfahan, but . . . which was taken from their residence there by the ‘newcomers’ (Afghans) . . . At our convent in Isfahan . . . there is Lay Brother Ferdinand, who had come from Europe with Fr. Jerome Francis, working in the garden with a servant: with fowls and other occupations they eke out a living. Fr. Jerome Francis continues to stay with Monsieur, the consul. Foodstuffs are dear: the batman¹ of rice costs 4 ‘abbasi, bread “11 and 12 bisti” (=5½ to 6 shahi), “meat 6½ shahi, eggs 1 gaz each” (1 gaz being the hundredth part of 1 qran) “fresh ones more, and everything else is dear. . . . We have never had one letter from Europe, and do not know who are our heads and superiors: we are living quite blindly, hoping only in the mercy of God, that He will one day will to free us from all our miseries, but also in fear lest one day or another worse may befall us. . . .”

In another letter of 17.11.1724² Fr. Philip Mary added the details:

“. . . if I have to eat soup I must make it myself, while many times I have not the wherewithal to make it: although I have a servant, as I am unable to keep one good at his work, he is good for nothing but to keep me company of nights and to fetch water for fifteen to twenty pupils whom I have. Our house at Julfa threatens to collapse and I cannot repair it; but I have busied myself in finding a few rafters to hold together some rooms in the big hall and the room adjoining, so that they do not fall down this winter. . . .”

Actual personal violence by the Afghans was spared the missionaries in Julfa, as Bishop Fedeli wrote, 17.3.1726 (*S.R.*, vol. 656):

“. . . This mission . . . is enjoying its former liberty in the matter of ecclesiastical functions . . . the Afghans have never caused us the smallest inconvenience . . .”,

and again, 4.3.1727 (*S.N.R.*, III, p. 544):

“. . . The Afghans leave us with our former freedom, as regards our functions. . . .”

Of Fr. Cyril of the Visitation, a Piedmontese, Vicar of Shiraz for twenty long years till his death, and of the stress suffered in that town or by the mission during the upheaval and captures of the place, first by one side then another, no account remains on record except in a letter of 8.5.1725³ which he wrote to Fr. Philip Mary at Isfahan, and that is little:

¹ If the Tabriz ‘batman’ this was 6½ lb. in modern times.

² O.C.D. 238 u.

³ *Idem*, 238 i.