

“ . . . Our (Capuchin) Fathers at Tiflis have suffered much persecution at the hands of the patriarch and of his heretical Armenian agents. I have obtained from the king three decrees, by virtue of which all the damage suffered by our Fathers is to be made good, and the Catholic Armenians are to be free, and our Order to be allowed free “exercise” (of religion) “everywhere in Persia, and in particular a decree in favour of our mission at Tabriz, which gives me great privileges. At Tabriz I left in my stead Fr. Pellerin from la Mirandole: he writes that the Archbishop of Nakhchiwan had arrived “and joined him on account of the disturbances there are in his diocese . . .”;

while in his second letter of 22.11.1742¹ Fr. Damian added:

“ . . . I arrived by the post at Tiflis a few days ago with officers from the Shah to have “executed the orders I have brought, which are that everything taken from our Fathers “be restored, and that there should be entire liberty for our religion and that whoever “might want to come to our church should be free to do so, without any apprehension. “I have therefore reopened our church: the Fathers are coming back, and two have already “arrived. . . . The Shah has given me a fine decree for our House at Tabriz: in it he “permits me to install bells. . . .”

Thus a very effectual redress seems to have been made in the case of the Capuchin Mission in Georgia, of a nature to satisfy amply the repeated demands of the Holy See; for, though Clement XI (Albani) who had so insistently championed the cause of these Capuchins and their flock was long dead, Benedict XIV (Lambertini) who then reigned, warming to the defeats inflicted on the Turks ever a plague in the eyes of Christendom, had hastened to congratulate Nadir Shah and at the same time press the rights of the Capuchins against the schismatics and relief of their flock from oppression in a Brief dated a few months earlier, 30.6.1742 (*Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 109, p. 709—see appendix) addressed to:

“The illustrious and most puissant Tahmasp Quli Khan, king of the Persians.

“A report gathered from very delightful messages has reached Us that no less by military “skill and by the invincible strength of Your armies Your Highness has smashed the “ferocious Turks than by mildness and a gentle method of procedure You have won for “Yourself the liking, loyalty and obedience of Your peoples.

“At so happy an event We did indeed greatly rejoice, thinking that those foes crushed “by You equally most hostile to Christians and to Persians would henceforth be little burden “and trouble to us, but at the same time that with the strictness of Your rule the Catholics “living throughout Your widespread dominions would have fitting and decent conditions “of existence. Therefore We determined to inform Your Highness of the joy experienced “by Us on learning of the deeds so successfully and judiciously done by You so that, when “You hear that We are well disposed towards and applaud Your success and renown, the “more willingly You will attend with Your royal clemency the citizens of Our religion “subjects of Your empire who, You should rest assured, rejoice with Us at this signal “glory of Yours, and attracted by Your mildness but still more by the ordinances of the “Christian religion remain steady in their fidelity and obedience towards You.

“As We reckon that You are wholly convinced of this, the more confidently We implore “Your benevolence for the Capuchin Brothers missionaries in the kingdom of Georgia “dispatched there by the Roman See to train all as are of the Catholic Faith there in “piety. For hitherto exempt from taxation but now grievously burdened by it they have “been brought to the utmost straits, inasmuch as, being by the rule of their Order very “poor, they have not the wherewithal to pay the money for themselves. This would be “enough to excite the commiseration of Your generous mind, but there is that additional “fact that they have abandoned their own country with no thought of human reward,

¹ *S.N.R.*, V, p. 76.