

After his journey of visitation in Azarbaijan Bishop Philip Mary had intended, and perhaps hoped, to proceed to Rome *ad limina*, having reached the limit of ten years in his episcopate; however, he

“received a letter from the Sacr. Congregation (telling him) to remain in Persia: so he has “already resigned himself to the Divine will . . .”,¹

sad perhaps that he was thus deprived of an opportunity to see again his homeland. Allusion has been made to Nadir Shah having Catholics and other Armenian inhabitants of the province of Nakhchiwan transplanted to Kalat-i-Nadiri: there is a minute in the secretariat de Propaganda Fide:²

“The reigning monarch having sent many Catholic families to Mashhad, more than 30 “days’ journey away, as it were in exile, to provide for the spiritual needs of those who “were asking for it he” (Bishop Philip Mary) “dispatched there at his own expense two “Religious, and paid for their return. . . .”

However, shortly after the period covered by the reign of Nadir Shah there passed to the other life and his reward this, perhaps the most lovable figure in the history of the bishops of Isfahan for his simplicity of life, his poverty (as shown by his worn and meagre possessions at his death); his pastoral care in visiting distant provinces of the diocese, which no predecessor had done, his suffering and privations through many years of war and persecution and privation, his courage in remaining at his post, and the charity of his disposition displayed in his writings.

A letter from the Vicar of Julfa, his successor, Fr. Sebastian of S. Margaret, dated 15.12.1749,³ notified the Cardinal Prefect of the

“general and great loss we have all had in the death of our good shepherd, Mgr Philip “Mary, . . . which happened on 13.8.(1749) . . . bitterly and immensely mourned by “all. . . .

“I have made a faithful inventory⁴ of what I found belonging to the late, saintly bishop “. . . as the sale would not have brought in sufficient to pay his debts wholly . . . I “asked Count Peter Leopold Shariman, brother of Count David, dwelling in Leghorn . . . “to lend me 100 Roman scudi. . . . The late Monsignor left no vicar-general by letters “patent, because his strength failed him all of a sudden, except that of his tongue, which “failed him four hours before his death: before losing his speech, in the presence of Count “Peter Leopold Shariman and other Religious and laymen verbally he laid it on me to “act for him, and to write at once to Rome, so that the Sacr. Congregation may have “thought for a successor . . . on which he spoke no more, and began to recite the ‘Clamavi “‘in toto corde meo, exaudi me, Domine’ and other Psalms till he fell into the death-agony. “As one of the two Dominican Fathers here in Julfa has died a septuagenarian, and the “other remains alone, a sexagenarian, tortured with gout, the late bishop laid it as an “obligation on me to write to your Eminence to arrange for him to have a companion, as “the deceased prelate had several times written to the Sacr. Congregation. . . .”

The letter concluded by mentioning other behests of the dying bishop in favour of those Sharimans still in Julfa, that their brothers in Leghorn and Venice be moved to assist them in their financial difficulties for the sake of the Catholic position in Julfa, to which the family

¹ *S.N.R.*, V, p. 201, Fr. Sebastian, 16.8.1747.

² *S.R.*, vol. 756, p. 22.

³ *Idem*, vol. 747, p. 89.

⁴ Among the articles were

“one book of the Gospels in Persian” (the second copy made, presumably), “two sorts of miserable rugs, here called “*gilims*, two coverlets and no more because he slept always on the ground, with one of these rugs and one coverlet under “him, and the other one over him, and in winter the other rug. . . . Money found after his death—3 rupees, distributed “to the poor on the day of his death. . . .”