

“and then we set out for the church:¹ the priests went in front, then I between two of them, next the Fathers, my companions, our interpreters and a crowd of Armenians with lighted candles in their hands. The priests and others sang psalms in their tongue, and played on certain instruments, which are used instead of bells. They directed the procession by way of the public square and through a good part of the town, to their delight, as they had never done the like before.² Some of the Muhammadans stopped their ears so as not to hear the sound of those instruments of the Armenians, but none dared speak (against it), since there came with us the guards of the governor. Arrived at the church, which was rather a stable and manger, one of them said Mass, and they prayed for Your Holiness, all the people saying the responses. We gave them such small alms as we were able. After the Mass, according to their custom on similar occasions, they prepared a small refection and then accompanied us back in the same manner to our house. When we came out of the church and went along the streets many women and children came to kiss our hands, weeping for joy to see the Holy Cross and pictures carried in procession where hitherto they had been little respected, saying that that was as it were almost a beginning of the fulfilment of a prophecy that they say is written in their ancient books, viz. these regions were to be taken by the Turks and then recovered by the Latins. We kept the priests to dinner with us and some of their elders: they told us that in that town many hardships were inflicted on them, that our holy Faith was cursed in public, insults proffered against the holy pictures: and they begged us to ask the governor not to permit that, and to have an edict issued publicly forbidding anyone from speaking ill of Christians. I sent the Armenians who had come with us and our interpreters to the governor about this matter: he promised to do so, and sent a ‘bailiff’ or crier, who in the morning in the square in the name of the governor forbade under severe penalties what some Armenians, who accompanied him, told him to say: and because one man infringed the order, they suspended him by the feet in the square, and beat him.³ The whole time we were in Ardabil the governor sent us an abundant supply of food.

“On the 6th November he sent horses for us, and camels for our effects, together with two gentlemen and two arquebusiers to accompany us as far as Qazwin, the capital of the next province: he would not consent that our interpreters should make any provision for the road, as I had bidden them in order to avoid the inconveniences which had occurred in coming from Shamakhi: and he said that he had already given orders that we should be provisioned, without any bother being made with all that was necessary. We set out the same day, and spent 8 days in reaching Qazwin: we crossed some mountains, although most of the road is flat: we never came across any towns, or rather burghs and fortified villis, except at every 4 leagues. Most of these the king has granted to captains of horse and favourites of his, for the country is very fertile. Two days before reaching Qazwin we passed one of 500 houses where we had to dine. The governor, or proprietor, was a renegade Armenian, brother of a noble, also a renegade. First of all one of the Persians accompanying us went to get ready a house, the governor said that he did not want to give us either provisions or a house and that we should remain in the open. So we retired to a small room where strangers go: shortly afterwards the camels came in: we spread the carpets we had bought in Ardabil, and had the meal prepared. As the governor saw that we did not ask him to supply food and paid no attention to him, he came to visit us. The Fathers and I were shut in the room saying the Office and made him wait a little. . . . He begged us to remain that night so that he might entertain us. We did not consent, and when we left he accompanied us for two miles. Notwithstanding that we had complained to the governor of Ardabil about the displeasure

¹ Interesting to note that an Armenian place of worship was allowed in 1608 in such a stronghold of Shiah orthodoxy as Ardabil.

² Such a procession would have been impossible in 1908 in most small Persian towns, and illustrates the restraint imposed by the presence of European “envoys”.

³ If on the soles of the feet, this was the bastinado properly so termed.