

aim, and field of activity subsequently taken by the Mission. That same report of 3.1.1619 observes:

“ . . . As to the Armenians of Julfa I will tell your Reverence that I am not keen on sending for them: and it does not seem well for us to do so. The reason on which I base my view is that the more simple folk among them, in that crass ignorance and good faith in which they live, may easily win salvation: and, as for those who are more instructed, I do not find them so far separated (from us) as some think but, on the contrary, that almost all are staunch in recognizing and confessing the primacy of the Roman Church and the obedience due to the Sovereign Pontiff, which are the principal points. It is true that in their rites and observances they hold to and retain many abuses and errors, born among them more through ignorance and negligence on the part of their own priests and the want of sound teaching than out of ill-will, and these errors, although inveterate, with a little time can be gradually extirpated. . . . ”

The oriental Christians who formed the flock for the Carmelites in Isfahan city were, he tells us:

“ . . . The people who come to our church, besides our few Franks, are Syrians, Armenians, Georgians, Arabs—and Chaldaeans particularly since the marriage of Pietro della Valle. . . . ”

This mention of that celebrated and pleasant writer, with such gifts for oriental tongues and accurate observation, calls for some notes regarding his career and other matters, which come from the Carmelite archives:

‘He came,’ wrote Antonio Vittorelli, ‘of a distinguished family, which had numbered in former times Rustico de’ Rustici, created cardinal by Pope Honorius III, and Andrea della Valle, created cardinal and made protector of the Franciscans by Pope Leo X. Born at Rome 22.4.1586 to Pompeo della Valle and Giovanna Albertini, as a young man in his grief at a disappointed love he had gone to Naples and thence set out for the Holy Land. Later in Baghdad’ (about 1616) ‘he married Ma’ani Gioerida, an “Assyrian” i.e. Chaldaean, who had been born at Mardin. His *Journeys* bear vivid testimony to the love he bore for this companion of his years in Persia: and, when she died after childbirth wasted with fever at Minab on the shores of the Persian Gulf, 30.12.1621, at the age of 22, he had her body embalmed and, in circumstances of great difficulty, transported it in a coffin with him through perilous sojourns in India and Mesopotamia, until on reaching Rome he was able to deposit it in his family vault under the chapel of S. Paul’ (“our chapel,” he calls it) ‘in the ancient church of Ara Coeli in the Campidoglio, to the right of the altar, 25.7.1626.

‘After his long wanderings he had returned to Rome, 28.3.1626: and on 8.4.1626 he was received in audience by Pope Urban VIII, to whom he represented the religious condition of the Georgians which, eagerly taken up by the Pope, resulted in the decision, 4.5.1626, to dispatch a mission of Theatine Fathers to wean that race over to reunion with Rome. He was made a Chamberlain of the Cape and Sword. Later Pietro della Valle, remarried to a Georgian girl whose father had been killed in the war with Shah Abbas, and who had been carried into captivity to Isfahan, where Pietro and Ma’ani, to save her, adopted her, changed her name from Tinatin to Maria, and took her with them on their travels. Pietro had fourteen children by her, but of the four sons who came to manhood there were no descendants. Four daughters took the veil: one was married in Rieti, the eldest into the noble family of Bufalo in Rome.

‘It is recorded that in later years Pietro had to escape to Palliano and thence to Naples in order to save his life, because he gave a buffet to a servant of the palace in the square