

“there was not one ready to go—till in the end, seeing the lack of zeal, the Capuchin Fathers “asked permission of our Provincial and went to do the work, although that mission field “had been of our creation.”<sup>1</sup>

When in authority the energetic Fr. Felix put those principles into practice:

“Our Father Vicar” (Provincial) “has ordered me to apply myself to the Turkish language, “which is the most common almost in the East, and is current not only in Turkey, but also “in this kingdom. It is the commonest language, and the most esteemed at the Court of “the king. . . . I find little opportunity here to practise the languages I had learnt in “Europe, even Flemish” (his own). “For even were I posted at Basra, the Dutch are only “there two months in the year, for the rest of the time there is no one; and here” (in Isfahan) “they have 4 or 5 Factors, whom one rarely meets. . . .”<sup>2</sup>

and again:

“Fr. Cornelius is making great progress in Armenian,”<sup>3</sup>

and, as regards Fr. Stephen, a much older man, he

“is now working at Armenian . . . learning it with much toil. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

In 1653 from the port of Basra, where European ships would lie in the Shatt during the monsoon, Fr. Barnabas wrote:<sup>5</sup>

“The Fr. Vicar writes that they want to provide this Residence with some young men, “but let him arrange that they shall have a knowledge of Dutch or English, because those “nations are much our friends, and there are Catholics among them . . .”

while from Bandar Rig two years later the Vicar Provincial himself asked Rome for

“four good and young missionaries, of good temperament: and, if there were an Irishman “among them knowing the English language, it would be excellent. . . .”<sup>6</sup>

As evidence that the Carmelites (and other Orders too) in the reign of 'Abbas II were far from idle (even if for certain periods infirmities and contrarities in some cases kept them from the degree of activity they themselves would have desired) one might cite their ‘campaign’ over the Armenians of Julfa: and that was only one of several similar essays. This reign, indeed, was more fruitful of initiative than any other for the Persian mission—Armenians, Chaldaeans, Mandaean, Assyrians in the Mosul district, moribund Shiah children, all were objects of enthusiastic evangelizing enterprise. Some of the band of Carmelites between 1645–60 had dynamic or forceful personalities, clamouring to find souls to whom to teach the Faith or to rid of schism and error: when disappointed, pressing Rome to allow them to go to Japan, where persecution had broken out, or to work among the Georgians and other Orthodox. But the impression made is that there was little coherent effort, no concentration by all Religious on one particular objective at a time and on stopping to till that field collectively over a period of years: one or more of the Fathers would wax enthusiastic over a fresh community to be brought into union with Rome, and then the proposal was left for something else.

<sup>1</sup> Yet, 26.11.1651, O.C.D. 238 e., Fr. Stephen claimed that the previous year he himself had been to “Fr. Dimas’ “mission, to see how help could be given the Armenians there, many families of Catholics descended from those from Alingia.”

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Casimir Joseph, 16.1.1655, O.C.D. 236 l.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Felix, 20.6.1654, O.C.D. 237 i. These young priests were shortly after sent to Basra and Goa, where Armenian was useless.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Balthazar, 4.12.1653.

<sup>5</sup> 4.8.1653, O.C.D. 241 f.

<sup>6</sup> 21.6.1655, O.C.D. 241 k.