

mention has been already made as baptized by Fr. Dimas in 1616, sent to study in the Urban College of Propaganda, as interpreter assigned to accompany Bishop Bernard of Baghdad on his journey to Persia in 1639, and in 1642 sent with letters to the Shah from the Pope.

Several letters of Fr. Dionysius continue to refer to this visit of his: that of 26.12.1652, written from quarantine in the lazzaretto of Venice, on his way to Rome, gives the information that the "present" patriarch, (i.e. Mar Shimun III) had been the one to move from Zain . . . to Khusruabad, "three or four years ago," i.e. in 1648-9:

"It is true," the Carmelite remarks, "that they retain no remembrance of the union, "but a very great and particular devotion for the Holy See and the Holy Father, and they "think that they believe the same as does the Holy, Apostolic See, although they have "fallen back into Nestorianism (through want of culture, and the great distance between "the two places) and a thousand errors; but it is out of ignorance, not malice that they "err. . . ."¹

On his way back from Rome, after the Chapter General—from Messina, from Malta, from Aleppo, 7.11.1653, Fr. Dionysius continued to dwell in letters on the importance of something being done to assist those Assyrians of the north-west Persian frontier. Arrived in Basra early in 1654 he found there the Vicar Provincial, Fr. Felix, and galvanized the latter with his enthusiasm, both impatiently awaiting there a decision of the Sac. Congregation and authority to proceed further in the matter,² until Easter when they travelled together to Isfahan. There, in June-July, the Vicar Provincial decided to send off Fr. Dionysius³ to Khusruabad to see whether the patriarch was persevering in his good intentions, and to observe the attitude of his clergy and lay-people.⁴ As he was about to set out, letters from the Sac. Congregation arrived with news of the dispatch of the priest Ferdinand Gioerida direct to the patriarch, Mar Shimun III, in order to smooth and open the way to a return to active reunion. The Carmelite Provincial therefore dispatched Fr. Dionysius from Isfahan, 24.7.1654, to join the emissary from the Sac. Congregation. On reaching Zinjan, eight days' journey from Tabriz, about 18.8.1654, the former met Armenians who had been travelling with Father Gioerida and he learnt to his dismay and grief how in fording the Araxes between Erzerum and Erivan the priest nephew of Pietro della Valle had been carried away by the water and drowned:⁵

"An Armenian trader, now in Georgia, has preserved the papers and his effects, some "300 piastres, which will be recovered when the said Armenian trader returns to his home, "a day's distance from Abranar. The rest of the money he had on his person was taken, "because, when his body was later washed on to the river bank, it was despoiled by Kurds."⁶

Deciding to continue his journey, Fr. Dionysius reached Khusruabad via Abranar, 4.10.1654, to find Mar Shimun III upset at the death of Fr. Ferdinand Gioerida, for in his poverty he

¹ See the great authority on the 'Persian Church', the Rev. Dr. J. Labourt, in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 1908, "Chaldaeans":

"The Turco-Persian wars obliged Simeon (a) to reside in the mountains near Salmas in Persia . . . this change of "residence had important consequences: the successor of Simeon in the end retained jurisdiction only over the provinces "subject to the Persians and had no longer any intercourse with Rome except at long intervals. In this way many "Chaldaeans returned to the Nestorian heresy (if, indeed, they had ever abandoned it). Simeon died in 1593. . . . In "1619 his successor, Simeon II, wrote that he would visit Rome, which promise, however, he was unable to execute. "In 1650 Simeon III corresponded with Innocent X." (a) With all deference to Dr. Labourt, this can hardly be correct, or that the removal took place under Simeon I, seeing that Fr. Dionysius states twice that Mar Shimun III made the move into Persia in 1648-9, when Persia and Turkey were not at war.

² Fr. Dionysius, Basra, 30.3.1654, O.C.D. 242 a, and *S.R.*, vol. 292, p. 528; Fr. Felix, Basra, 10.4.1654, *S.R.*, vol. 292, p. 523.

⁴ *Vide* in *S.R.*, vol. 236, p. 205, letters from the Chaldaean patriarch to Rome.

⁵ Fr. Dionysius, 18-page report, Isfahan, 11.2.1655, *S.R.*, vol. 236, p. 215.

⁶ Fr. Dionysius, Tabriz, 28.8.1654, O.C.D. 237 c, to the Definitor General. Among the articles the dead priest was bringing was an emerald ring for the patriarch.