

and tribes-people, still nearly three centuries later believing in the 'evil eye' and inauspicious signs in many parts of the country, that an 'unbelieving Frank' should have penetrated without harm to himself into the quarters of Shiah women, and always, it might well have come to be in their eyes, as a harbinger of woe. Indeed on one journey Fr. Dionysius baptized twins, who both died: and it is mentioned by the chronicler in MSS. *Hist. Miss.* that such a commotion was raised on the suspicion being bruited that he had accelerated their death, that he had to leave hurriedly. But some explanation of the tolerance, and often welcome, which he met is perhaps afforded by the note:

"the disinterested labour of Fr. Dionysius . . . was ascribed by the Persians to the Carmelites being paid to do this by the king, who has made a vow. . . ."

In 1652 Fr. Dionysius had, as has been read, to proceed as Procurator from the Mission to the Chapter General in Rome: Lay Brother Alexander of S. Silvester adequately took up and carried on the former's self-appointed task of love, so that from Baghdad Fr. Dionysius himself wrote to the Procurator General of the Order in Rome,<sup>1</sup> 16.1.1654:

". . . Of Lay Brother Alexander's zeal and skill marvellous things are told: they are continuing the mission to dying children with so much fruit that since my departure they have baptized 2,500 (because there is great mortality of small children). . . ."<sup>2</sup>

There is to be found in the Archives Nationales in Paris<sup>3</sup> a manuscript, *Brieve Relation des Missions des RR.PP. Carmes en Syrie et en Perse, faite en l'année 1656, par Alexandre de S. Silvestre*, in which the Lay Brother in question wrote of the

"charitable works practised by our Fathers at the cost of much labour and fatigue, as they are obliged to be almost always outside the convent during the extremes of heat and cold. As they knew that I was somewhat versed in medicine they used not only to bring me their sick children to the House, even the chief citizens, for some bodily remedy to be given them and for me to read the Gospel in their presence. . . . I have baptized with my own hands 2,916 children (Fr. Dionysius more than 2,000 with his own hands, the other Fathers 900)—children in danger of death. When I went through the villages the inhabitants, seeing me from afar, used to come out of their houses with their children in their arms, each waiting for me to pass and begging me to touch their child with my hands, or else that I should let them kiss my habit, others that I would put the 'book' of the Gospels on their head. . . ."

This Lay Brother Alexander had been away from Isfahan, on business in India between 1654 and 1656,<sup>4</sup> and immediately after his return to Isfahan left for Aleppo:<sup>5</sup> there is little doubt but that it was he who went on to Rome and was the Lay Brother referred to by the Sac. Congregation in 1658. His own baptizing must therefore have been done mainly before the middle of 1654. When Fr. Felix of S. Antony, 20.12.1658,<sup>6</sup> reported from Shiraz to Rome that

"572 Muslim children were baptized between May 1655 and May 1658"

he could not have been referring to the Lay Brother, but to Fr. Dionysius.

The diversity of activities of Fr. Dionysius of the Crown of Thorns here so briefly recorded will have shown the reader that he was a missionary out of the ordinary: it is not surprising,

<sup>1</sup> O.C.D. 242 c.

<sup>2</sup> "Una pernicioso influenza"—the phrase used for 1647 in his report—so long ago was the scourge known by that name.

<sup>3</sup> At L. 932, No. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Stephen, Isfahan, 22.11.1654, O.C.D. 241 p.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Dionysius, O.C.D. 237 c.

<sup>6</sup> S.R., vol. 238, p. 58.