

“a servant of the king, even if he be the humblest scullion, has married one of these girls, “he goes to the house of her father and mother and takes all the property, as being the only “real and rightful heir—a cause of the greatest ruin and desolation imaginable, so that “many fathers or brothers become Muhammadans in order to save their possessions. This “is the only way to prevent it, and remedy they have. . . . Francis, bishop of Caesaropolis, “Vicar Apostolic of Babylon and of Persia.”

So much to correct any wrong impression derived from writers with a brief acquaintance of Persia late in this reign, such as Père Sanson (quoted by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* “kindness “to Christian missionaries”), regarding the opinion in which Shah Sulaiman was really held by the European Religious in Persia.

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That iniquitous decree, to which Bishop Picquet alluded, making the transfer of goods and property a reward for those who apostatized from Christianity and a bait for the avarice of oriental Armenians, a trait all too prevalent among them, has been already met under 'Abbas I and again under 'Abbas II: and it was particularly damaging and bewailed in the 'Catholic' district of Greater Armenia called Nakhchiwan, lying between the Araxes and Erivan in the lower Caucasus. There have been and will be so many references in this work to this district and to the Dominican Fathers, who had pastoral charge of it, that succinctly the position in this Persian province (as it was till 1828) had better be here explained. The Church owed this enclave in the midst of schism to the Dominican Order. In the Pontificate of John XXII, the Blessed Bartholomew of Bologna, consecrated bishop of the province of Maragha, went there with a lay brother, Peter of Aragon, and about the year 1328 he was enabled by a nephew of a prince of Mingrelia, named John, who was Superior of a monastery and became impressed by the virtues and doctrines of the Dominicans, to bring it about that the Superiors of a number of Basilian monks, after meeting in council, proclaimed union with Rome at Karna, where a church was erected. Father John proceeded to have the Scriptures translated from the Latin, which he had learnt from Blessed Bartholomew, into Armenian: it is recorded that he was aided in the task by an English priest, companion to the bishop. The latter died in 1333, and later Father John, having been to Rome and compared the laxity of the Basilian Armenians with the monks in Italy, decided on his return to the Caucasus to create a new congregation. He chose the Dominican habit with a slight variation, and the rule of S. Augustine within the constitution of S. Dominic, giving his congregation the appellation “Uniate of S. Gregory the Illuminator of the Catholic Church” (‘Frères Uniteurs’ is the name commonly used in French), he himself becoming the first Provincial. This Congregation took root and spread in Greater Armenia, in Georgia and in the Crimea (then in the hands of the Genoese), where they set up a college at Caffa, afterwards celebrated. The invasions of the Turks and the Tatars appear, however, to have wrought devastation among the communities and in the tracts where this Order worked, so that they remained in strength in the district of Nakhchiwan only, and thence in 1356 they sent emissaries to the Pope and to the Master General of the Dominicans in Rome, praying to be admitted into that Order, and admitted they were. The archbishopric (which formed one of the dioceses of the ecclesiastical province of Sultanieh erected in 1318) continued to be recruited from the ranks of the Dominicans, who in Armenia from time to time received doctrinal strength in the persons of Italian friars from Dominican convents, while many young Armenian seminarists were sent to Rome for training in theology, languages and liberal sciences, in order to return as instructed priests to Nakhchiwan. In the course of the next two and a half centuries the friars, and the community of ‘Frank’ Armenians from whom they were drawn, suffered much misery and penury from wars and economic adversities, so that at one time the Congregation was reduced to 12 friars at Nakhchiwan