

and a few elsewhere: the Archbishop had in the end to abandon Nakhchiwan for Abranar, three days' journey from Tabriz, and not a few of his flock became renegades to Islam. The French traveller of the middle seventeenth century, J. B. Tavernier, wrote¹ that in his day:

"in this region there are reckoned at 6,000 souls those who follow the Roman Church in "all things except the Office and Mass which are said and sung" (i.e. according to the Latin rite and Dominican Observance) "in Armenian, so that the people may understand it. "The archbishop, being elected, is sent to Rome, where the Pope confirms the election" (usually but not always).² "He has his residence in a large hamlet" (i.e. Abranar) "which "is one of the most beautiful places in all Asia: the wine and fruit are excellent, and all "the necessaries of life are found there in abundance. . . . All the rest of the Religious go "off to work in the fields and vineyards from morning till evening, so that it is no wonder "they are very uninstructed . . . there are some Religious who have a passable knowledge "of the sciences . . . none the less they are good Religious. . . ."

Replying to a questionnaire, addressed to him by the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, 1.5.1666 and received by him 10.2.1667 in Aleppo, Fr. Felix of S. Antony, then Vicar Provincial of the Carmelites, stated³ in the course of his report that he had personally been a few years before that in Nakhchiwan, which was some thirty days' journey from Isfahan: he had seen about 4,000 Catholic Armenians, or 800 families: only one convent with some ten friars: the others living two or three together: the friars were supported by alms, and to some extent by keeping vineyards. Another description of the 'State of Armenia' of this year⁴ mentions that Greater Armenia had at one time seven Catholic bishops, now reduced to the one, Nakhchiwan; and less than 100 years previously (i.e. after 1567) twenty-seven villages of the district obeyed Catholic jurisdiction, now (in 1667) only ten:

"the inhabitants of the rest had become renegades, *the cause being the impious law, by which "any Christians becoming Muslim can claim the property of his relations however distant."*

On the death of Mgr Matthew Erasmus, after twenty years' rule, in 1627, his coadjutor, Mgr Angelo Cittadini (from Faenza in Italy) succeeded, only to die in December 1630 of cancer in the far-off town of Yucatan in Mexico, where he had gone with permission of the Holy See to collect alms for the founding of a college for Catholic Armenians in Goa,⁵ leaving 12,500 pieces of eight collected to the Pope for the purpose. For 23 years his successor, the Armenian Mgr Augustine Basrci, governed this diocese, and then came Paul Piromalli,⁶ the Dominican from Siderno in Calabria already mentioned in the reign of 'Abbas II, from 14.6.1655 till 15.12.1664. But Mgr Piromalli became involved in serious disputes with the friars, so that Fr. Antonio Tani, O.P., was sent there by the Master General of the Dominican Order in 1660, with the style of Visitor:

¹ Quoted by late Fr. L. Lemmens in *Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 5, Naxiwan.

² According to a minute made in the Sac. Congregation (*S.R.*, vol. 480, p. 75) four archbishops of Nakhchiwan only had been created by the Sovereign Pontiffs without previous election in the arch-diocese, viz. Fr. Benedict, an Armenian by race in 1478 by Sixtus V, Fr. Erasmus an Armenian in 1617, Fr. Angelo Maria Cittadini of Bologna by Paul V, and Fr. Paul Piromalli of Calabria by Alexander VII in 1655. Then, in the Session of the Sac. Cong. on 12.11.1675, a Fr. Thomas, an Armenian friar, was appointed archbishop and the Bulls for his consecration dispatched to Nakhchiwan; but, exercising their privilege, the electors there had themselves chosen a Fr. Gregory and sent him to Rome for his election to be confirmed: so in the Congregation held on 10.3.1677 in the Pope's presence orders were given for Fr. Thomas' consecration to be suspended and for Fr. Gregory to come to Rome from Venice, where he had arrived and where he died shortly afterwards: Fr. Thomas was in 1678 examined by the Cardinal Prefect's order and found insufficiently instructed for the office (*vide S.R.*, vol. 466, p. 259; *S.R.*, vol. 459, p. 327; *S.R.*, vol. 467, p. 27, on 1.3.1678). It was in these circumstances that Mgr. Picquet was directed to superintend the holding of a fresh election.

³ *S.R.*, vol. 222, p. 163 *et seq.*, also quoted by Fr. L. Lemmens, O.F.M., in *Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 5.

⁴ *S.R.*, vol. 222, p. 186.

⁵ See *Acta* of the Sac. Congregation for 1630, p. 162, 22.11.1630, quoted by *Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 5.

⁶ His 'Life' was written by Macri, *Memorie storico-critiche intorno alla vita et opera di Mgr Paolo Piromalli*, Naples,