

Archbishop Matthew, O.P., of Nakhchiwan, who had gone there in May 1674, died while on a visit to the Court at Qazwin, and instructions were given for his corpse to be brought back to Abranar.¹

There was an interval of several years before the appointment of the next archbishop: but, when Mgr Picquet, as Vicar Apostolic of Baghdad and Isfahan, was about to leave Europe for Persia, 17.2.1678, in the General Session of the Sacr. Congregation²

“His Holiness ordered . . . that a letter should be written to Mgr Picquet, Bishop of “Caesaropolis, that on his way to his vicariate of Baghdad he should pass by Nakhchiwan “and endeavour that one of the missionary Fathers from Leghorn be elected archbishop.”

Mgr Picquet, who reached Abranar, 14.8.1681, reported to the Sacr. Congregation on 8.10.1681³ that the friars had finally agreed on Fr. Sebastian Knab, O.P.: his report continued:⁴

“ . . . The ill-treatment, extortion and tyranny of these Persian governors is continual “and perhaps harsher than that of the Turks, at least in respect to these poor Religious and “the Catholic population: on this account they bring much pressure on me to go and speak “to the king on their behalf. . . .”

Promptly after the news had reached Rome, on 26.10.1682 Pope Innocent XI wrote to Shah Sulaiman (*Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 75, p. 94) a Brief to be delivered by the new Archbishop, in which the words occur:

“ . . . Since by the witness of continual report there became known to Us how kindly “an attitude You adopt towards those who profess the Christian Faith in the very extensive “dominions of Your kingdom, We did not want to let pass the opportunity offered by the “departure of (Our) venerable brother Sebastian, Archbishop of Nakhchiwan, to the diocese “entrusted to him for sending this letter to Your Highness as a witness of Our grateful heart “and to notify You that all matters, whether good or bad, which happen to those professing “that religion are of particular concern to Us. Therefore We eagerly beg of Your sense of “equity that You will proceed to guard effectually those professing that religion from the “attacks and oppression of wicked men, and in all things liberally to assist them. First of “all We greatly recommend to Your Highness the aforesaid Archbishop of Nakhchiwan, “a man of singular uprightness and virtue, begging of You to be so good as to be of help “to him in the exercise of his office. . . .”

And Popes Innocent XI and Alexander VIII returned to urge the desideratum of the district being managed as a personal fief of the Shah, the former in his Brief of 12.4.1687 (*Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 77, p. 152) stating:

“Since it has become known to Us that the Catholic Armenians, who are subject to the “pastoral care of the Archbishop of Nakhchiwan, by a certain special grant of Your royal “benevolence are placed under the administration of You yourself, with no one coming “between, We could not omit to make splendidly public to You by this (letter) Our immense “joy over this matter, earnestly entreating of Your perspicuous greatness of heart, so very “celebrated throughout the whole world, that You will give orders for the aforesaid privilege “to be observed inviolate by Your officials, by enjoining on them that they should strive “to shield those same Catholics from molestation by the soldiers and from being harassed, “and to make them exempt from such. And because indeed the apostolic missionaries,

¹ Letter of Fr. Francis Piskop, O.P., Abranar, 21.7.1674, *S.R.*, vol. 456, p. 166.

² *Vide Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 5, by late Fr. L. Lemmens.

³ *Idem*, quoting *Acta* of the Sacr. Cong. for 1682, p. 156.

4. R. vol. 485.