

“that reason we never go out into the streets, nor into the houses of the grandees, with whom we have business, without receiving insults and being called ‘dogs’; and that the vilest rascal draws away from us, afraid lest we should touch him, and that they will make an outcry if they feel our breath, or are touched by us, you would not exhort me so strongly to keep in retreat, where we are compelled to remain . . . unless some great and unavoidable need compel us to go into the city, where I never go without feeling like the ox at the butcher’s, i.e. with a thousand apprehensions. So that, in a word, reverend Father, for the past three or four years none of the Religious settled in Isfahan has had any *entrée* at the Court,<sup>1</sup> nor in consequence any favourable means for approaching the grandees, except those who are already aware that the Religious are ‘learned folk’—a factor which the Persians particularly esteem. For all the rest, such as our poverty, the meanness of our clothing, our going barefoot, and other features which in Christendom serve to edify people, here on the contrary make people indignant and shock them. . . . In reality the Muslims cannot stand our penances and austerities, and consider them mere follies (there are more than 10,000 Hindus in Isfahan, and other Indians—faqirs—whose austerities surpass those of all European Religious and are well-nigh incredible) . . . our late Fr. Philip” (i.e. of the Most Holy Trinity) “although he made only a short stay in Persia hit the nail on the head, so to speak, when he said . . . ‘In Perside mendicitas ‘est ignominia’—‘in Persia it is a disgrace to beg’.”

In the same strain Fr. Angelus observed in a later letter from Isfahan, 3.1.1673:

“We are two here . . . Fr. Ladislas never goes out, because on going through the city one receives nothing but imprecations and insults from the Muslims. . . . As to myself, I sometimes remain whole months without seeing a ‘Frank’ either outside or inside our House, even in our church and on Sundays we have only our two servants. . . .”

Six years later, 20.3.1679<sup>2</sup> Fr. Fortunatus put it:

“At present in Persia we follow the life of hermits, not that of missionaries, because when we are in choir there is no opportunity of learning the language and conversing with people. . . .”

On the other hand Fr. Aurelius of S. Augustine asserted:<sup>3</sup>

“our mission does not consist in running here and there about the town, but we do our duty when there is need. I was twenty months at Shiraz, and never once saw the town, seeing that our Christians are all living near our House. . . .”

Fr. Angelus must have been chided or exhorted in some letter from a Definitor General in regard to leaving the convent, for he explained, 8.9.1675:

“. . . There could never be introduced greater solitude than there is: for in this convent the Father Prior, for example, has only gone out twice this year, in order to visit some new arrivals. Fr. Aurelius, not knowing the language yet, does not go out once a month. As for myself I go out rather more often, as our Fr. Vicar Provincial charged me with some mission work in Julfa, and besides I do the business outside with the Muslims. . . .”

“As to excursions, we have had three in the past six years of which I know, to which all the Religious in Isfahan, and all the ‘Frank’ layfolk, French, English, Dutch, etc.,

<sup>1</sup> Yet, writing of July 1669 Fr. Valerius stated:

“Shortly before I arrived in Isfahan, Fr. Jerome had been summoned to the house of ‘Itimad-ud-Dauleh, the grand Wazir, and first person after the king, to read the Gospel and pray for a sick son of his. . . .” *S.N.R.*, II, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> O.C.D. 237 k.

<sup>3</sup> 11.5.1678, O.C.D. 241 e.