

“might pass among the commodious convents and the other among the fine churches of Europe: Deo gratias!”

This is stated by the Priests of the Mission (i.e. the Lazarist or Vincentian Fathers) to be the church in which they officiated down till 1935—the sole edifice standing of the four Catholic and Uniat churches in Julfa of the 17th and 18th centuries, doubtless much altered by repairs in the interval.

But “Fr. Bartholomew, the Dominican from Rome, a missionary here, was strangled at “night and his house ransacked” was the regrettable news one Carmelite later had to tell.¹

“It is true that through the death of Fr. Bartholomew the Dominican House here was “in danger of falling into the hands of the ‘Turks’ ” (i.e. Muslims) “for they wanted to be “placed in charge of it, and at least to put a seal on everything. But I . . . have preserved “the house . . . and kept in deposit with the Jesuit Fathers a list of everything inventoried “by Fr. Columban, the Discalced Carmelite.”

wrote the Vicar General, who was an Augustinian, two years later.² But by that time four Dominican Fathers, as arranged by the Master General, had been selected, and were ready to start from Italy in 1701,³ three of them, Frs. Peter Martyr from Parma, Archangelo Ferri from Brescia and Antoninus from Poschiavo will often be found mentioned in the archives, the two first in fact being in after years and successively nominated Archbishops of Nakhchiwan: and they reached Julfa before 5.4.1702:

“. . . By the Dominican Fathers two letters have arrived here, one of which was from “the Sovereign Pontiff to the king of Persia,”

the Vicar General of the diocese reported.⁴

The Sovereign Pontiffs (with the Sac. Congregation de Propaganda Fide advising it, doubtless) were indefatigable at every turn in trying by means of polite exhortations and complaints in their Briefs—the only method they could use in such case—to protect from ruin the Catholic inhabitants of the small district of Nakhchiwan, exposed as they were to administrative oppression, to the malice of schismatics and to frontier fighting. From 1670 onwards in that part of the East Nakhchiwan was ever a special object of Papal solicitude and predilection: other mission posts were evidently considered better able to fend for themselves. Thus, 17.4.1703, and by the hand of Archbishop Stephen Shiran returning from Rome to his diocese Pope Clement XI again addressed the Shah (*Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 83A, p. 61):⁵

“. . . We earnestly recommend to Your Highness (Our) venerable brother Stephen, “the Armenian Archbishop of Nakhchiwan, outstanding in uprightness of character and “godly piety, and We ardently desire that You will so fortify him with Your protection “and favour that no one dare to cause him trouble or hindrance from freely being able to “discharge his duty for the salvation of souls, nay rather that You permit him and other “Catholics to restore their former churches of their religion ruined in many places, and “particularly those which are at Kushakan and Shahbuniz; for, since all these are nothing

¹ 2.2.1700, *S.R.*, vol. 538, p. 407.

² 5.4.1702, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 421.

³ *S.R.*, vol. 538, p. 373.

⁴ *S.N.R.*, II, p. 241. This Brief was dated 20.4.1701 (*Arch. Vat. Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 83, p. 107): Pope Clement XI asked Shah Sultan Husain:

“. . . to do Us a favour that You will permit those same Religious to exercise and enjoy at the present time also the “freedom and privileges in which they rejoiced in past times: so that no trouble be caused them, neither as to their persons “nor as to their possessions, and that besides they may retain and possess now at once and peacefully inhabit the house “and dwelling which they held previously in the suburbs of Your royal City of Isfahan. . . .”

⁵ This Brief is mentioned as having been brought by Archbishop Stephen of Nakhchiwan along with a letter from the Republic of Venice, 23.10.1704, to Isfahan, where he stayed some three months—*vide* letter of 31.6.1705 from Fr. Peter Martyr, Superior at Julfa, *S.R.*, vol. 554, p. 290.