

“churches any more, nor might we teach or preach to them. Nevertheless we tried to explain better our reasons, and to enable him to recognize how unjust the claim was. But he replied that such was the king’s order, so that we judged it best not to persist further.

“When that sentence had been pronounced and confirmed, your Eminences can imagine what a celebration and what jubilation the Armenians made, just as—on the contrary—what humiliation and bewilderment was ours. . . . It was brought to an end then by the Messrs. Shariman laying before the judge a more copious and more subtle statement and affidavit than that presented by the Armenians, so that he modified and explained his sentence more clearly in our favour, saying that from the date of the coming of the Afghans was meant and that all Armenians, who were Catholics before that date, were at liberty to continue to come to our churches and schools and with their entire families.

“At the news of such modification and explanation (of the sentence) the Armenians were very much dejected. It is impossible to describe adequately the knaveries committed by them in making representations both to the magistrate and also to the royal officials, in order to get the magistrate’s decision annulled, but all in vain. So we remain with our freedom as of old, and jurisdiction over the former Armenian Catholics and their families, but we do not possess such faculties as far as the Catholics who have become so in the time of the Afghans, and others, non-Catholics, are concerned. However, by the grace of Jesus and the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary it is hoped that the old *raqams* and permits will be restored to vigour before long. What is needed is money—at least 150 sequins: and the Messrs. Shariman, especially the brother of Count David, who is in Leghorn, although they had already spent on it 800 sequins, are determined to spend this sum too, in order to make a perfect sacrifice to Jesus Christ. . . . If it were not for these gentlemen, our missions would already have been ruined. . . .

“. . . Under the pretext that I had usurped the jurisdiction of the (schismatic) bishop, they pretended that they had only against me the charge of having ordained the above-mentioned priest, and when we had gone before the magistrate they had us all caught in a trap. After having obtained the sentence in their favour the first thing they did was to have the two priests of the Shariman church taken to the public square of Julfa and ill-treated: the next morning they entered the Shariman church¹ to profane it with their sacrileges: and they are already trying to do the same at our churches—so that your Eminences see in what a state we were. . . .”

Finally, 6.10.1728,² Bishop Fedeli remarked:

“There is a sort of famine and the whole of this town of Julfa is on the road to ruin . . . the Armenians are beginning to feel the heavy hand of justice on them. . . .”

At Hamadan the schismatic Armenians used like tactics with the new master of the town, the Turk, as the Vicar Apostolic, Fr. Joseph Mary, shows in his letters:

“25.2.1726. Baghdad. . . . I proceeded to Hamadan as quickly as I could, recovered over 400 books for our library, but not without paying money. I put the house in good order, as far as I was able, then for the third time came here. . . . The heretics in Hamadan have already exerted themselves with the Turks to get us turned out of the town: so that three times I wrote to the French ambassador in Constantinople about this business: and, if I do not get the reply, I shall myself go to Constantinople, because there is danger in delay . . .”,³

¹ Vide Conte David Shariman’s letter from Leghorn to the Sac. Cong., 22.3.1728 (*S.N.R.*, IV, p. 527):

“the persecution against our House . . . so that they had succeeded in getting hold of our church; now happily the difficulties are overcome.”

² *S.N.R.*, III, *post* p. 546.

³ *Idem*, *post* p. 588.