

THE BELL OF LHASA



FR. FULGENTIUS VANNINI O. F. M. CAP.

Books by Fr. Fulgentius Vannini O.F.M. Cap.

Bishop Hartmann

*Christian Settlements in Nepal
during the Eighteenth Century*

Tibetan-Hindustan Mission (in preparation)

THE BELL OF LHASA

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O.F.M. CAP.

NEW DELHI

1976

Published on the occasion of the 750th death anniversary
celebration of St. Francis of Assisi, 1976.

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Printed by Messers Devarsons (Stylish Printing Press),
New Delhi.

Cover design : The bell of Lhasa against the background of
Potala Palace.

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DEDICATED

*To the Capuchin Missionaries who sacrificed their lives in
the cause of the Tibetan Mission.*

FOREWORD

At a time when so much emphasis is put on local Churches one cannot but regret our ignorance of the origin of the Church in our part of the world. It would be unfortunate if we were to forget the valiant men of God, the heralds of the Good News who laid the foundation of the Church in times and situations which we, in our relatively comfortable modern way of life, can hardly imagine. Besides inspiring us by their vision and zeal, their lives have much to teach us. A well documented and comprehensive history of the Church in India is therefore to be earnestly hoped for.

Actually much material exists for the early history of the Church in North India, but in short sketchy summaries, or in rare and costly foreign publications, not within the reach and understanding of the average reader in India, even those few who have access to important public libraries or to those of ecclesiastical Institutions.

All will therefore be grateful to Fr. Fulgentius Vannini, a missionary of the Allahabad and Lucknow dioceses, who after spending thirty eight years in India, has given us various studies, fruit of over a dozen years of patient research and writing, in the midst of other important duties. He had already published in 1946 the first modern biography of Bishop Anastasius Hartmann, the first Vicar Apostolic of Patna on the occasion of the centenary of his appointment. The second edition, revised and enlarged was published in 1966, to celebrate the death centenary. Now he is giving to the reading public three substantial books of great historical and missiological interest.

*The first of these **The Bell of Lhasa**, is a well documented historical account of the Capuchin Mission in Tibet from 1704 to 1745.*

*After the suppression of the Jesuits, in addition to their vast mission of North Bihar and northern part of the present West Bengal, the Capuchins were put in charge of the whole area of **The Vicariate of the Great Moghul**, popularly termed the **Agra Mission**. The territory in the course of a century and a half has given rise to over thirty ecclesiastical units of North India and Pakistan.*

*It will probably come as a surprise to many readers in India to hear that a Catholic mission did exist in Tibet for some forty years, at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The knowledge we have of it so far may be exemplified by the curt affirmation of a mission historiographer some years ago : “That mission”, he says, “had, of Tibet, only the name. It was in reality the mission of Patna in charge of Capuchins, **none of whom ever set foot in Tibet**” (1). The present book will show how different was the reality.*

Not only did the herald of the Gospel, Fr. Horace Olivieri of Pennabili, reach Tibet; he worked there in ways that have much to teach us today. Shortly after his arrival, Fr. Horace Olivieri joined Se-Ra monastery to learn the language and the customs of the monks and of the people. He lived with them, ate their food, prayed with them, over and above the Divine Office and Eucharist to which he was always faithful : a marvellous example of true adaptation, which sometimes one is given to believe is a recent discovery.

It is interesting to know that Fr. Horace brought to Lhasa a complete printing press of Tibetan characters. Brother Paul of Florence was there to use it, as he had been in his younger days in the service of the Ducal press in Florence.

*The second volume, “**Christian Settlements in Nepal during XVIII century**”, is the history of the same missionaries in the valley of Nepal. On Pentecost eve, May 12th, 1742, Fr. Horace*

(1) *Precis d' Histoire de la mission de Pondicherry*, J. Lafrenez, 1953
pg. 40. Cf. *Clergy Monthly - India Missionary Bulletin*, June 1945,
pg. 64.

received into the Church a number of catechumens among whom there were five Tibetans. This was the occasion of a persecution against the missionaries. They were scourged in the public Square of Shame, where criminal people were chastised. However the mission in Tibet did not come to an end immediately. The Regent of Tibet was a one-time great friend of Fr. Horace and hence did not want to expel him from Lhasa; though he gave orders to the Governor of Kuti not to permit any missionary to cross over into Tibet. Things got worse from day to day. When Fr. Horace foresaw that the missionaries would one day be expelled from Tibet after his death, he anticipated the action of the Regent, and decided to quit Tibet. This was the end of the mission in Tibet.

The third volume **Tibet Hindustan Mission (1745-1845)** continues from there. During this period we find more missionary groups. Nepal was still entrusted to the Capuchins, where they had four mission stations. Tibet was the responsibility of the Foreign Missionaries of Paris, who were already working in China. The extensive territory of North India was divided in two Ecclesiastical Vicariates of Patna and Agra. The missionaries were never expelled from Nepal, but the king of Gurkhas, who controlled the whole valley of Nepal, made it next to impossible for them to stay on.

Though this history is evidently written with the rigour of a scholarly work, with a wealth of textual quotations from original documents and ample footnotes many pages read like a thrilling account of travel adventures in unknown and forbidden lands.

At a time when the accent is on "religious dialogue", one thing that will strike some readers is the outspoken, not to say, the aggressive manner in which the missionaries conducted their religious discussions. This was very much in accord with the mentality of the time, in the same manner as the Jesuits, for instance, had been doing at the court of Akbar. It would be perfectly idle speculation, after more than two centuries, to ask whether the outcome of both missions would have been better, had the missionaries adopted a more peaceful method. It would be unfair, to say the least, to judge the language of a past age by the criteria adopted today.

The same may be said of another common element of both the missions. Both groups, in Agra as in Lhasa, endeavoured from the start to gain a hearing from the head and ruling class of the country. After gaining a certain measure of initial tolerance and interest, both failed in their wonderful plan: "let us convert the ruler and the intelligentsia, and the whole country will follow". The story of the conversion of the Roman empire after the baptism of Constantine, of Gauls after the conversion of Clovis or of Hungary under its king St. Stephen has not been repeated often in later mission history, whatever may be the theoretical value of this procedure as a mission policy.

Many other questions will arise in the mind of the reader, concerned about the life of the Church. This is one of the purposes of History, that the experience of the past be a guide for the future.

The author can certainly be assured that his research over the years will certainly bear fruit and, God willing, will encourage someone to prepare a comprehensive history of the Church in India.

*Feast of the Uganda Martyrs
June 3, 1976*

*Patrick D'Souza
Bishop of Varanasi*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The present work is a study in the History of the Missions in Tibet. It is an account of the pioneering adventure of the sons of St. Francis of Assisi to bring the Good News into the strongholds of Lamaistic Buddhism. The Mission, in fact, flourished for a while, showed signs of a rich harvest; and then, the force of circumstances compelled it to an abrupt end.

I was motivated to carry on this study over a number of years for no other reason than to record in history that once in the past, the whole of the Northern Missions of India, in particular, of the Tibetan Mission as it was then called, was cared for by the Capuchin missionaries. Since then the Church has grown and is still growing as a sign of Christ's presence in India.

I would be failing in my duty if I were not to record my grateful thanks to all those who have helped me in one way or other so that this work may see the light of day. First in the list come Mgr. Malenfant O.F.M. Cap., the erstwhile Vicar Apostolic of Varanasi and Bishop Patrick D'Souza of Varanasi for their keen interest, constant encouragement and wise suggestions throughout this work. Bishop Patrick has put me under a loving obligation by providing an excellent foreword that would make an author's preface redundant. My grateful thanks to all my superiors and confreres for providing me with opportunities to take up this work and encouraging me at every stage. To Mr. Thomas Smith who kindly read through the manuscript and polished the linguistic expressions. Thanks are also due to the Director, *Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato*, Rome, Italy for permitting me to reprint some of the copyright photos from the *Il Nuovo Ramusio II* by Prof. Luciano Petech. To Fr. John Joseph and Bro. Cassian Agera, my Indian confreres for their loving service of seeing the book through the press. To

Messrs. Devarsons for the neat printing and the cover design. It would certainly be unfair if I do not acknowledge so many authors in the field whom I have freely referred to and the officials of the many libraries who put at my disposal those precious original documents. As they are too many to name individually, let me be contented only with a silent remembrance of them. To all these without whose love, encouragement and help this work would not come today to the public, let me say a sincere 'thank you'.

Fr. Fulgentius Vannini O.F.M. Cap.

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ABBREVIATIONS

We give here the abbreviations of the works which have been most frequently used as historical sources in the compilation of the present work. The other books of reference from which quotations have been used will be mentioned in full on the first occasion and thereafter will be referred to as *op. cit.*, after giving the necessary indications.

NUQVO

RAMUSIO

I Missionari Italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal, by Prof. Luciano Petech ; Parte I, la Libreria della Stato, Roma MCMLII ; parte II, Roma MCMLII ; parte III, Roma MCMLIII ; parte IV, Roma MCMLIII ; parte V, Roma MCMLIV ; parte VI, Roma MCMLV ; parte VII, Roma MCMLVI. The *Nuovo Ramusio* is a collection of letters, reports, travel accounts and other documents, relating to the Italian Missionaries in Tibet and Nepal, published by the ISMEO of Rome, that is, Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.

RAPPRESENTANZA

Alla Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide deputata sopra la Missione del Gran Thibet, rappresentanza de' Padri Cappuccini Missionari, dello stato presente della medesima e de' provvedimenti per mantenerla ed accrescerla. Roma 1738.

MEMORIE

ISTORICHE

Memorie storiche delle virtu, viaggi e fatiche del P. Giuseppe Maria De' Bernini da Gargnano, scritte dal P. Cassiano da Macerata, stato suo compagno, Verona MDCCLXVII, nella Stamperia Moroni.

GIORNALE

Il Giornale del P. Cassiano da Macerata, a 203 page manuscript narrating events and experiences of Fr. Cassian Beligatti and his companions during their journey from Rome to Lhasa (July 1738—January 1741).

TERZORIO

In India e nel Tibet, Missionari Italiani nel Paese dei Lama, 1704—1745, by Fr. Clemente da Terzorio, Rome 1932.

N. B. The document known as *Rappresentanza*, No. 2 above, was translated (with minor modifications and some additions here and there, reproduced from the missionaries' correspondence or other sources) into German and Spanish, and published at Munich and Madrid in the year 1740 and 1744 respectively. The German translation is usually known as "Missio-
Apostolica thibetano-seraphica".

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL SETTINGS OF THE MISSION

On the Tibetan hillside stands a monastery of Buddhist monks. The road that runs by it is hard and rough, swept in summer by clouds of blinding dust and grit, and in winter by ice-cold blasts, carrying with them from their mountain sources, sheets of rain and driving sleet. The monastery itself is old and quaint, with lofty painted walls and a queerly-shaped roof; and in the side facing the road are a number of niches, each containing a strange contrivance, something like a rattle.

The rattle is the world-famous Tibetan Prayer-Wheel. It is covered with lettering in strange characters which are words of Buddhist prayers. The Tibetan Buddhist believes that a turn of the Prayer-Wheel is as good as saying the prayers which are inscribed on it.

By one of these way-side shrines sat one day a Catholic Missionary and a Buddhist monk, engaged in lively conversation over the ancient past.

“Oh, yes,” replied the Buddhist sage, “I have heard it myself that in the olden times there used to be Christians all over this land of ours, but now they seem to have vanished into thin air”.

“As a matter of fact”, put in the missionary, “I have come from a far-off country in search of them. Merchants and travellers have spread rumours abroad that communities of Christians still exist in some hidden corners of Central Asia. I have noticed figures and symbols which may have significant resemblance to the Catholic mode of worship. I wonder if these external marks and signs are in any way related to the faith which was once preached in these lonely Himalayan regions.”

Trade, plunder, sheer love of adventure—all these are accepted as motives for Western expansion in the Age of

Discovery. However, there is another motive that was powerful at the time, though it tends to be forgotten today—that is, search for Christian lands and possible allies beyond the Islamic belt. Representatives of Eastern and African Christians had long been encountered at Jerusalem which gave rise to strange legends. The most inspiring of all was that of the great Christian priest-king, John Prester, differently located in China or India and sometimes in Ethiopia. Then there were the St. Thomas' Christians of India, thought to be a powerful kingdom. It was an anti-climax when Portuguese exploration reduced legend to fact.

Though the Christian kingdoms, long talked about in the west, were found to be non-existent by the Portuguese conquerors, the legend continued to persist that unspecified tracts of land in the interior of Asia held ancient Christian settlements, like water locked islands, in the midst of unexplored seas.

In the dim past, so it was believed, Christianity had spread over wide areas in Central Asia. St. Thomas, the Apostle, was credited with traversing the Himalayan Range to bring the Faith to tribes and peoples, who now lived far apart and scattered like lost sheep. Another strange tale was that Northern India, at the time of the Muslim Invasion, was full of Christians, who fled beyond the mountains to avoid persecution.

Mediaeval itinerants lent support to this wild rumour. Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish Rabbi from Spain, travelled far and wide in Europe and Asia (in the years 1159-1173) to discover where the Jews, the "lost tribes" had settled in any large numbers. He was amazed to find so many Nestorian Christians in regions so far remote as the borders of China. Marco Polo constantly gives enumerations of the Christian population in the larger centres. Other mediaeval travellers—notably Christians and less frequently Moslems—make the same observation.

The legend did not explode till late in the eighteenth century. The writings of the Capuchin Tibetan Missionaries are full of references to the existence of Christians in the mystical land of Tibet, prior to the introduction of Budd-

hism. The religious organisation, the creed, and ritual are there to confirm, they said, that St. Thomas, the Apostle, crossed into that country to preach the Gospel and that the Christian faith was once the religion of the people. Of all this nothing is left now, except a corrupt form of Christianity. In the absence of priests and churches, in the face of cruel persecution, the followers of Christ were laid low by the onslaught of Buddhism, but still they do preserve some rudimentary forms of Christian belief. The Capuchins were not alone in holding this view. Some imaginative writers went to the length of stating that the Dalai Lama was none other than the successor of the Nestorian Patriarch of the east.

Missionaries, however, never came across isolated communities which could be called Christian in origin and character. How the story came into existence and gained currency is still a puzzle. Yet, perhaps, it might be something like a mirage or the myth of the elusive "Abominable Snowman"—a thing seen, but hardly believed.

The striking similarity in the external symbols of worship between Christianity and Lamaism may partly be responsible for bungling things up. The crozier, the mitre, the dalmatic, the cope which the high-ranking Lamas wear, the office chanted alternately, the form of exorcism, the benediction given by the Lamas, not to speak of the beads, the incense, the cross, the vow of celibacy, the monasteries and nunneries, the ceremony of clothing and profession, the fast and abstinence, the spiritual retreat, the tonsure, the confession, the litanies, the use of holy water, etc.—all these are some of the similarities which can be pointed out at first sight. To make confusion worse confounded, they have also a kind of sacrifice which is offered up to God in the form of bread and wine, with the sharing in it by some of the Lamas.

Quite a lot of things, which in their external form, look identical, have now been discounted, i.e. they do have them, but there is nothing in common, in origin and in meaning, with the Christian ritual.

Merchants and travellers in their wanderings across the

plains and uplands of Central Asia witnessed these symbols and ceremonies. Unacquainted with the language and customs of the people, and looking at them from their Christian background, they were easily misled into "seeing things." Their close resemblance to Christian institutions and way of life, worked up their imagination and misled them. This is one of the possible explanations which may have given rise to the belief that vast tracts of Asia were inhabited by broken-off Christian communities.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that from the sixth to the end of the ninth century, Nestorian and Armenian Missionaries penetrated into Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan and possibly Tibet in an effort to propagate the Christian religion. Monuments and inscriptions relating to their activities are still there to be seen. Manichaeans are also known to have helped in the spread of Christianity in the eastern hemisphere. Whether, and how far, the Nestorian monks exercised any influence in the religious development of Tibet or brought some Christian ideas into the camps of Buddhism, is still open to discussion. There are some who still hold that either Buddhism copied from the Christian liturgy or else the ancient Christian populations of Asia were swallowed up by Buddhism. Under the impact, the Christians gradually merged with the new pervading faith, keeping as a remnant a few external symbols and ceremonies, which in the course of time, lost their original meaning.

We leave it at that. What we are driving at here is that the belief was kept alive over long centuries. Responsible people earnestly believed it and both the Jesuit and Capuchin Missions in Tibet were motivated by the hope of discovery by these supposedly long-last Christian colonies.

At the Court of the Great Moghul

The exploration of Tibet and the origin of Tibetan Mission are incidentally linked up with the "Jesuit Legation" to the court of Great Moghul. Up to the seventeenth century, little was known about the mysterious land of the Lamas; and even that little was vague and confused like a shattered dream. Cryptic reference can be found in the old Greek and Roman writers. The invasion of Alexander the Great

brought the west into closer touch with the east. As a consequence, western geography became vaguely acquainted with Emodon and Imaon i.e. the Himalaya the snow abode. Ptolemy, the greatest geographer of antiquity, speaks of the Bautai as people living in the Imaon regions. This is the first reference to the inhabitants of a country which may be broadly identified as Tibet.

Over one thousand years had to pass before any further progress could be made on the subject. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, missionaries, traders and travellers moved east to establish contacts with the then flourishing Mongol empire. They brought back to Europe sensational accounts of the Orient, which served to give the eastern countries and their people wide publicity. Thus the West became more curious about Asia and with it grew the urge to increase its geographical knowledge.

It is now generally admitted that none of the travellers of the Middle Ages, whose narratives have come down to us, ever entered the confines of what is now known as Tibet. Diverse allusions are made to it and under different names, but all is of a vague and hearsay nature. The places most proximate and actually reached, skirted around that secluded land. The first to introduce the name of Tibet into the European geography were Marco Polo and the Franciscan missionaries of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They had heard of it from the Mongolians who alluded to that country as Tobat, a word which was transcribed by them as Tibet. The entrance of Europeans into that high, bleak plateau, is a feat of later centuries. Nevertheless, these travellers' tales caused revolutionary changes in the geographical knowledge of Asia. It was like the temporary lifting of mist over a large landscape which brought into prominence the most salient features.

Then came the decline of the Mongol power and all interest in the east also waned. These regions sank once again, for nearly two hundred years, into oblivion. All the Christian missions disappeared in the turmoil that followed the fall of the Mongols and the accession of the Ming dynasty, (1368).

Europe had almost forgotten all about the east, but it did not so easily forget the strange stories circulated by the Middle-Age travellers. In due course, they spurred them on to action. In the almost feverish rush for conquest which gripped Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, astronomers and navigators vied with one another to cross the gates of the unknown. While astronomers scanned the skies to discover new planetary orbits, explorers and navigators sailed out to the east and west, passing over the highways of the seas, hoping somehow to reach a new promised land. The fabulous east, and in particular the glorious land of Cathay—so much talked and written about—lured Columbus across the Atlantic. A few years later, Vasco de Gama sailed from Portugal to the Orient with letters for the priest-king John Prester. In 1513 the Portuguese discovered the coast of China, a land which was easily identified with the Roman *Thin* or *Sinae*. And yet, Cathay, Europe's fondest fancy, refused to yield its secret. Had the Franciscan Missionaries been deceived or was Marco Polo's story a clever piece of fiction?

In the explorers' wake Christian priests sailed to baptise the new-born worlds. Already in 1583 the Jesuits had pushed into the mainland adjoining Macao—the Portuguese enclave on the China coast. While engaged in the exploration of the land, they were in fact searching for another country, which eluded their grasp—Cathay. On contemporary maps China was a mere fringe of the coast around Macao, but the interior still remained a repository of myth. On the contrary, Cathay, the land of the lost Christian colonies, figured like a large blank space on maps. It was tentatively marked as a vague and vast portion of territory lying east of Persia and north-west of China.

Years later, the same valiant children of St. Ignatius set out from India, to the west of Cathay, to discover the land which was still like a sealed book or a jig-saw puzzle. Cathay was attacked from the east and west. Among other things what the Jesuits had in mind was to establish an overland bridge of communication between the two far apart mission settlements. It was in the course of this probe that these daring pioneers crossed the mountain barriers

that cut off Tibet from the surrounding regions, and penetrated into that forbidden land. This brings us back to the coming of the Jesuits to the Court of the great Moghul.

Almost simultaneously the Portuguese and the Moghuls set foot on the Indian soil. The Portuguese aspired for the dominion of the eastern seas and the Moghuls fought for control of the Indian sub-continent. Both played a decisive role in the history of the country.

Of all European nations Portugal was the first to find a waterway to India. This was accomplished when Vasco de Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope and landed on the Malabar coast in 1498. The Portuguese venture was both a military expedition and a crusade. They wanted to enlarge their possessions and at the same time stem the growing power of Islam, which was then at the gates of Europe, from the rear. Together with the army, the Portuguese brought with them missionaries and traders, hoping somehow that these would win over to their side, whatever their army failed to get by conquest.

The Portuguese were firmly anchored on the shores of Goa when the Great Akbar, a boy of thirteen, succeeded his father in 1556.

From the early days of his reign Akbar realised that in order to keep his kingdom peaceful and united, he had to make friends with all people and creeds of his realm. Accordingly, he set about to oppose a militant orthodox Islam by formally abolishing, in 1564, the Jizya Tax or poll tax on non-Muslims and by rescinding the taxes previously levied on Hindu pilgrims. This greatly enhanced his popularity. Further, the bitter religious controversies of the time distressed him profoundly and he sought for a formula by which the discordant elements could be reconciled. The new type of religion he contrived to establish among his people was to be more pragmatic than theoretic—a form of eclecticism that aimed chiefly at the worship of God and at the service of our fellowmen.

To pursue his object Akbar built an 'Ibadat khana' or House of Worship at Fatehpur Sikri in 1575. This was intended to serve as a kind of academy in which the repre-

sentatives of the different religious groups—the Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Zoroastrians and Christians—could freely put forward their religious views and thrash them out in a spirit of mutual understanding. The skeptic emperor took lively interest in these discussions as it suited his political programme.

At about this time, the first two Jesuit missionaries had arrived in Bengal. Their converts had defrauded the imperial revenue ; the priests thereon refused to give them absolution. Akbar came to know about it and was greatly impressed. What was this creed which set its face against dishonesty even to a foreign government ?

In 1579, the great Emperor, sent a delegation to Goa with the object of inviting the Jesuits to his court. The invitation was readily accepted and the Portuguese Government received the news with joy. There was also great rejoicing, dreaming of an early conversion of the whole of India to the faith.

Blessed Rudolph Aquaviva, a Napolitan, Fr. Anthony de Montserrat, a Portuguese and Fr. Francis Henriques, a Persian convert from Islam, were entrusted with this important mission. They left Goa on 17th November, 1579, and travelling via Surat and Gwalior, arrived at the capital which was then at Fatehpuri Sikri, 37 kilometers to the west of Agra, on the 28th of February, 1580.

Fr. Anthony de Montserrat had a scholarly bent of mind. Before leaving Goa he was told to take down the names of rivers, the regions he traversed, the manners and customs of the different peoples and anything of interest he may eventually come across. In this way was born his “Commentary to the Moghul Legation”—a veritable store-house of information and legend.

In the years that followed the Jesuits accompanied the emperor wherever he went. They came in touch with all sorts of people—travellers and traders, adventurers and story-tellers, men of good faith and unabashed liars. They listened and noted down everything.

While in Kangra (Punjab) Fr. A. de Montserrat heard for the first time people speak of Both and Bothant as a

region to the east of Kangra Fort, in the innermost part of Imaon (Himalaya). Yogies and traders who had visited the country reported that traces of Christianity could be seen everywhere. Pressed on to give more particulars and detailed information, some pilgrims came out with the same sensational news. Imaon, they said, is a range of very high mountains, most difficult to cross, but once the top is gained, a beautiful tableland, fertile and inhabited, unfolds itself in a majestic panorama to the visitor's eye. On the banks of a lake, called Mansuor (Mansarowar) by the natives, there is an ancient city whose inhabitants gather together, every eight days, at a common place of worship. In this manner they offered up their prayers and sacrifice. The men squat down cross-legged on the right side of the temple, the womenfolk occupy the other half. In the centre, the most sacred spot, there is a raised platform with a kind of table on it. The celebrant, dressed in white, is brought two golden vases, which contain bread and wine. He reads from a book and all present respond in reply. A sermon is also preached during the ceremony. Towards the end of it, all get up, orderly and silently, first the men and then the women and go before the celebrant to receive from him a piece of bread and a sip of wine. Then they return to their respective seats. The ceremony over, every one goes back home.

This struck Fr. de Montserrat as a graphic description of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He took out a rough map and under the name Mansuor put the remark—"Hic dicuntur Christiani habitare"—(it is said that there are Christians.)

Bl. R. Aquaviva was also allergic to this tantalising news. Writing to his uncle, the Superior General of the Society, he states that they had discovered a country called Botton. It was situated beyond Lahore, towards the source of the Hindu river. The inhabitants were fair, well-inclined to religion and piety; there were no Mohammedans among them and there were good hopes of reaping an abundant harvest of souls.

This acted upon them like a thriller. Joy and curiosity mingled together in their excited minds and hearts. The

Fathers were about to probe into the matter when in 1583, the Legation returned to Goa.

Fifteen years later Fr. Jerome Xavier S.J. and Bro. Benedict de Gose S.J., both Portuguese nationals, were with the Great Akbar in Kashmir. Here again they heard about the existence of Christian communities, churches, priests and bishops in regions further east. Anxious to verify the information they wrote letters, in Persian and Portuguese, to the Bishops reported to be living in those distant places and despatched them through three different channels. It was like writing to the inhabitants of another planet. No answer was ever received.

Back at Lahore, Fr. J. Xavier, a relative of St. Francis Xavier, had another surprise. He was talking to Prince Salim, the future emperor Jahangir, when a Mohammedan merchant walked into the royal palace. He was an old man of about sixty years of age. Asked where he was coming from, he replied that he was on his way from the kingdom of Xatai via Mecca. He had been there for about 13 years. Gradually the conversation drifted to Xatai, the characteristics of the people, their religion and customs. The old man was eager to tell his story and said that he had gone to Xatai disguised as a merchant but in fact as ambassador of the King of Caygar (Kashmir). The people of Xatai, he went on to say, were fair-complexioned, good-looking and wore a long beard. In regard to their religion they were the "followers of Jesus, followers of Moses and there are also many Mohammedans."

Fr. J. Xavier was so taken in by the story that he wanted to know more about it. In a private interview with the merchant, the latter confirmed what he had already stated in regard to the existence of Christians in the kingdom of Xatai. He spoke about their churches, images, Crucifix, celibate priests, study houses, monasteries and so forth. Questioned whether there was any bishop among them, the old man became hesitant but stated that there were different ranks of ministers. The king himself was a Christian and he was most devout and generous in promoting the cult of his religion.

Fr. J. Xavier's imagination was naturally set on fire by these fascinating tidings. His feet were itching. No one could resist the temptation to go and look for these lost Christian settlements. Hopefully he wrote to his Superiors in Goa, expressing the wish to organise an expedition into the mysterious land of Xatai. The reaction was deep and swift, bringing the enthusiastic approval of the authorities. The good offices of the great Akbar were enlisted and things soon began to take a more definite shape.

Epic Journey

The missionaries were enthralled by the curious accounts they had heard of Both, Bothant or Bottan as well as Cathay, Catai or Xatai. To them these places were names without a precise geographical meaning. In particular they desired very much to know the whereabouts of Cathay, so much talked of in the thirteenth century by Marco Polo, which, according to the Mohammedan merchant, was inhabited by Christian communities.

Fr. Matthew Ricci S.J., who had already settled in Peking since January 1601, had written many letters to his confreres in India to show that China and Peking were in reality the Cathay and the Khanbalu of the travellers of the middle ages, but his theory was difficult to accept. The identity of the two had never so far been absolutely established. In the circumstances the Jesuits at the court of Akbar resolved to put an end to the doubt and to set out from India to find the exact location of Cathay in respect to the neighbouring countries and from there proceed to Peking. This would also enable them to find out whether a line of communication with China, shorter than the sea route, or at least less risky, could be established. They wrote, via Macao, to Fr. Ricci and told him that certain missionaries of the Society had determined to reach Peking by land, following the direction of the Indian embassies, which route was used for commercial purposes to Cathay. The adventurous travellers would carry letters for the Superior of the China Mission.

Many wished to share in the honour of rediscovering a lost country, of contacting isolated groups of Christians

tucked away somewhere in a remote and unmapped part of the globe. The lot, however, fell on Bro. Benedict de Goes. He was then a man in his forties, alert and physically fit for the task. As a young man he had joined the army and seen service in India. He was singled out on account of his outstanding qualities, courage and prudence combined with a good knowledge of the Persian language and of the Muslim customs.

Since the Brother would be travelling, at least during the first stages of the journey, among Muslims, he decided to hide the fact that he was a detested Portuguese. Allowing his hair and beard to grow long, he dressed as an Armenian Christian merchant, taking the auspicious name of Abdullah Isai i.e. Christ's servant of the Lord. A complement of six men was appointed to act as companions and servants. Horses and pack mules, were bought to carry a good supply of merchandise, mostly lapis lazuli, purchased in part with the emperor's generous contribution. By trading along the route the Brother would find the means of support for himself and the members of his staff. Akbar was further pleased to give him letters of recommendation to allied or tributary princes along the way.

On the 28th of October, 1602, with Akbar's blessing, the brave Brother set out from Agra in search of Cathay and the scattered groups of Christians, now lost in the maze of time and space. It was to be an epic journey, covering some six thousand kilometers and stretching over a lengthy period of four lonely years. His way led him through extensive plains, across big rivers as yet unspanned by bridges, over hills and mountains, ranging from 3 to 5 thousand meters above sea level, with dense forests in some places and barren as the desert in others, swept by strong winds and unnegotiable gorges, in every season of the year and under every kind of climate.

Lahore, the first stage of the journey, was safely reached within six weeks. Here every year a caravan of some hundred merchants was formed to travel to Kabul. The four Muslim servants, newly converted to Christianity and given to him at Agra, were sent back as they had already

given signs of being untrustworthy. In their place an Armenian Christian named Isaac was engaged. Throughout the weary and interminable land travelling Isaac proved himself a most reliable and faithful companion and friend.

In mid-March 1603, the caravan took off from Lahore wending its way north-westwards through Peshawar and the Khyber Pass. An escort of four hundred soldiers had to be provided to guard against the robbers infesting countries through which it was to traverse. Despite all precautions the caravanieri had to beat off several armed gangs before reaching Kabul, the most western point of the journey.

Bro. de Goes, always on the look-out for Christian settlements, fell in with a hermit on pilgrimage. From the manner of his speech, Goes believed, for one hopeful moment, that he had casually stumbled upon one of them until it became clear that the hermit was a follower of an ancient Iranian religion whose members had stubbornly refused to be absorbed into the Islamic fold.

While in the Afghan capital the Brother met the sister of Kashgar's ruler on her way back from a pilgrimage to Mecca. She had been robbed and lacked the money to complete the journey. Generously the Brother sold some of his merchandise and lent her what she needed. After a delay of seven months at Kabul a new caravan was at last organised. Bro. de Goes found himself once more upon the road, accompanied by the faithful Isaac. His other two companions had already lost heart and deserted him.

The road lay north north-east over the mountain range of the Hindu Kush, down into the mud hovels of Badakshan region and then, after crossing the plateau of Pamirs, made for Kashgar and Yardkhan, the capital of Turkestan. It was late in 1603 that the travellers could rest at this half way stage of the journey.

The march of the caravan was slow and in perpetual conflict with robbers ; precipitous mountains, great rivers and rushing torrents had to be negotiated at the peril of life. Many of the travellers were frozen to death and some buried beneath avalanches. Once they were caught in a local war. Prevented by the large quantity of their baggage

to escape, they made barricades out of their bales of merchandise and entrenched themselves behind them. On seeing this extempore fortification, the Tartars sent messengers to assure the travellers that far from hostile intention, they had come to defend them from the enemies.

The undaunted Brother had his share of adventure too. He fell ill and became embroiled with a local governor, who refusing to honour the letter of exemption given by Akbar, demanded duty on his merchandise. One day, while riding a little apart from the column, he was attacked by four bandits. They were on the point of robbing him when, with admirable presence of mind, he had recourse to a trick. He pulled off his rich Persian head-gear, threw it up among them and while the robbers rushed after and quarrelled over this magnificent booty, he set spurs to his horse and succeeded in gaining his companions.

Yarkand was then a large flourishing town. Merchants thronged to it from all parts of Asia. Those who intended to continue their journey eastwards were obliged to wait for sometime. To his despair, Bro de Goes was told that next caravan would not leave for a year or so. Anyway, he was pleased to hear people speak of Cathay as a well-known country and that it lay ahead, a journey of several months hard travelling.

Refreshed from the long strenuous journey Bro de Goes started moving from Yarkand in order to better acquaint himself with the main object of his expedition. A Tibetan king was lying in a local prison. It was a golden opportunity to find out from him whether the people of his country had any knowledge of Christianity. The interview left him perplexed. He was informed that their chief priest wore a mitre on his head and donned a robe akin to a chausable. Their priests did not marry; the people observed fast for forty days; believed in heaven and hell and in the last day of judgment, possessed a Sacred Book, the name of which in their own language sounded something like the Latin Evangelium. Goes thought it possible that some form of Christianity might be practised among those mountain tribes, but had no time to ascertain it as the immediate

scope of his mission lay elsewhere. Further, some articles imported from Cathay aroused his curiosity. It seemed to him that Christian symbols and figures appeared to be depicted on paintings, hand fans, hardware and porcelain which were displayed in the Yarkand bazar. Was wish father of the thought or was it the beginning of an adventure that would lead him to discover the lost Christian sects? He would soon see with his own eyes.

At the invitation of Her Highness, the sister of Kashgar's ruler, whom he had helped at Kabul, de Goes visited her palace at Khotan—ten days' journey to the south east. The region was famous throughout Asia for its jade. He returned to Yarkand with the money he had loaned and a magnificent present of jade varieties, that commanded high price in Cathay.

In the autumn of 1604, the caravan for Cathay started getting under way. The ruler of the country reserved for himself a sort of monopoly on these expeditions and sold, at a very high price, the title of chief of the caravan or rather ambassador. Whosoever bought this privilege had the right to command other travellers, direct the course of the march and in Cathay he enjoyed certain commercial advantages and was treated like an ambassador from a foreign country. This suited the emperor's vanity and the cupidity of the merchants and mandarins. The Emperor of the Celestial Empire, who always looked upon himself as the suzerain of all the kings upon the earth, felt extremely flattered by the little presents and the generous marks of respect paid to him by these bogus ambassadors. In return he would load them, on their departure, with expensive gifts and a declaration of friendship.

One night, in mid-November, the caravan filed through eastern gate of Yarkand to face the wilderness and the profound silence of the steppes of Tartary. High mountains and sandy plains were their companions through Aksu, Turfan, Hami, the Gobi or Shamo desert as far as Suchau, in the heart of China. The rotting dead bodies of merchants murdered and stripped by robbers were a common sight along the desolate route. Often it was unsafe to travel by day. The caravan waited till night closed in, and then

silently, and under cover of darkness, left the encampment. Thirsty, numbed with cold and heavy with sleep, the travellers pushed on till day-break.

Bro. de Goes stopped at Suchau about Christmas 1605, exhausted but hopeful, waiting for the turn of events. The Great Walls of China, which practically terminated at the North-western end of Suchau, was claimed to mark the frontier of Cathay. Here its capital was spoken of as Peking. Gradually the curtain lifted and the elusive and much dreamed of Cathay, was turning into the reality of China.

During his trek Bro. de Goes despatched letters to Agra and Peking to inform his confreres of the progress of the journey, his plans and difficulties, but never received any reply. Talking one day to a group of Mohammedan merchants, on their way back from Cathay, they were able to get some news about Fr. Matteo Ricci (known as Matou Lee in Chinese) and his companions. It was heartening to hear of them after such a long and anxious period of silence and expectation. The missionaries at Peking on the other hand were prey to many anxious fears. They had learnt by letter from the Superior of the Indian mission that Bro. Goes had started in the month of October, 1602 and now in 1606, no information had been received of the expedition.

On Easter Day, 1606, the much-tired Brother wrote again to Fr. Ricci and this time entrusted his letter to a Mohammedan traveller who was visiting the Chinese capital secretly. The missive stated *inter alia*—"I was sent by my Superiors to discover Cathay, but I now believe that no such country exists, for I have traversed Asia without finding it and this country which we in Europe call China, is known to the people of Central Asia as Cathay. I have found no Christians. I have suffered greatly.....I am exhausted and I wish to return to India by the sea route. If I wait until the caravan is allowed to pass to the capital, I shall be here two years, for that is the customary delay".

The letter fell into Fr. Ricci's hands in November of the same year. It brought him relief and joy for the intrepid

traveller was already mourned as dead. On receipt of the letter Fr. Ricci lost no time in sending a resourceful young man, John Fernandes, (converts were given a Christian name and a Portuguese surname) to bring Goes and his companions to Peking. He was a Chinese candidate for admission to the Society and knew Portuguese.

Travelling with great rapidity, John Fernandes was nearing the capital of the Shan-si Province when his Christian servant, a Chinese neophyte, carried off the common purse and fled with his booty. Alone and penniless, the messenger succeeded in reaching Suchau towards the end of March 1607, nearly four months after he had left Peking.

Meanwhile, Bro. De Goes had become a destitute; hunger and suffering had broken his health. He had arrived at Suchau as a prosperous merchant, still accompanied by the faithful Isaac and five servants from Yarkand. Under false excuses he was tricked into giving away substantial loans and to sell a good deal of his jade stones. His day was now far spent, but the task was accomplished.

John Fernandes found him stretched on a pallet, and about to breathe his last. On hearing that he was addressed in his native tongue in such an outlandish place, the fever-stricken patient seemed to revive and regain strength. Taking delivery of the letter sent him by Fr. Ricci, he read it with deep emotion. Then, after lifting his hands to heaven, he clenched the letter to his heart and closed his eyes. A few days later, he was dead. His mortal remains were interred at the foot of the Great Wall of China on 11th April, 1607.

During the illness of this heroic missionary many visited him in his humble dwelling on the pretext to attend to his needs but in reality their display of kindness was far from being disinterested. They robbed him systematically of his worldly possessions. The most valuable object was a complete diary of his journey, in which Goes had later made an entry in Persian of the loans he had given. This they tore to pieces so that the debts could no longer be claimed. Isaac and Fernandes, however, managed to salvage the ruined manuscript and take it to Fr. Ricci.

The Brother had passed away peacefully with a smile on his face feeling satisfied that he had fulfilled the mission entrusted to him by his Superiors. He had, in fact, solved the riddle. Cathay and China were merely two names referring to one and the same country. The difference of name had arisen from a difference of approach. Travellers in the Middle Ages had entered this country through Turkestan, to the north west, and knew their destination as Cathay, while the same territory was called China by the travellers who approached it from the south east.

This valiant missionary had made clear another important point—the lost communities of Christians he had been sent to look for, were only a myth. If in fact they existed, and if another search had to be made for them, the preachers of the Gospel would be better advised to turn their steps in another direction.

Descobrimento Do Gram Cathayo

A bitter disappointment is not sufficient for an enterprising person to give up a cherished hope. Bro. de Goes' death had proved how hard and futile was the quest for the lost Christian settlements ; yet the missionaries at the court of Akbar continued to listen with avid interest to similar stories and in their thirst for souls, were urged to search for new ventures. Meanwhile, new relevant data had come to light, narrowing down the area of search and increasing the probability of meeting with some success.

From Yarkand Bro. de Goes had written to his confreres in India about his interview with the Tibetan King. He informed them that he had so far not met any isolated pocket of Christians and that there was no likelihood of his finding any during the rest of his journey to Peking ; but it could not be excluded that the much sought after dispersed Christian communities could be living in the mountainous region of Tabete (Tibet)—a month's journey to the south east of Yarkand. The Brother's letter reached India in 1606, but the topographical identification of places (Tabete was known then in Northern India as Both or Bothant) was still so confused that his communication could not be of any appreciable assistance. Anyway, the

Brother had given the Jesuits at Agra a broad hint which might help in sorting things out.

More precise, however, was the information already received at the headquarters of the ecclesiastical authorities. At the beginning of 1603, a mysterious gentleman who called himself Mr. Diogo D'Almeida, a Portuguese by birth, knocked at the Archbishop's door in Goa. He introduced himself as a trader coming from Northern India. For two years he had been in Thibete on business. The object of his call was to say that Cathay was not the same as Thibete. They were in fact two different regions wide apart, under different rulers and inhabited by people who differed in colour, race and creed. The informant went on to explain that the Christians heard of by the Fathers at the court of Akbar were to be found in large numbers in the kingdom of Thibete and not in the territory of Cathay as wrongly reported by Mohammedan travellers. In Thibete there were many churches, richly adorned with images of Our Lord, Our Lady and the Apostles. The priests observed celibacy, wore a long soutane and were in all respects similar to the Catholic Clergy, except that they shaved their head clean. The name of the Bishop was Lamhao (Lama). He lived like a hermit in an isolated place, was venerated by all as a saint and led a most austere life of penance. On the principal feasts of the year, he left his hermitage to go over to the episcopal see to hold divine services.

Diogo D'Almeida was so sure that there were Christians in Tibet that he was even ready to take an oath to corroborate his statement. He added further that his information was voluntary and disinterested. In giving it he was motivated solely by the glory of the Church and the welfare of numberless souls, who, inexperienced as he was in ecclesiastical matters, might be like sheep outside the true fold of Christ.

The adventurous traveller went a step further; he volunteered to give a description of the way leading to Thibete—a thing which proved to be remarkably correct. Thibete, he said, is beyond the kingdom of Guiscumir (Kashmir) recently conquered (1587) by the Moghul armies. Between

the two kingdoms, he said, were high mountain ranges... dark deep forests...passes could be crossed only during certain times of the year...the road was more difficult than long. The Zoji-La (the 3,529 meter pass which then marked the boundaries between Kashmir and Ladakh) though not specifically mentioned, was alluded to in uncertain terms.

Acting upon this information, a Jesuit from Agra, whose name has not come down to us, made an abortive attempt to get into Thibete via Kashmir. We know nothing about this expedition except that the dizzy heights and the deep snow on the ground proved unsurmountable barriers for the zealous missionary.

The grey dawn started flickering at last over Tibet like a sign-post pointing to a new direction. It was now evident that if there was any hope of discovering any Christian nuclei in Central Asia, one had to traverse new ground. Bro. de Goes' expedition had obviously followed a mistaken track; the solitary pioneer who ventured to get into that unknown and isolated land via Kashmir might have been on the right path, but was mercilessly beaten back by the overpowering forces of Nature. The conclusion was clear, a different route of approach must now be struck.

In 1625 resounding and sensational news swept over Europe like wild fire. It was something akin to the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. At long last, the great Cathayo (the dream country of the remote east, idealised by the travellers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but afterwards lost sight of) had been discovered and identified. A lengthy report on "Novo descobrimento do Gram Cathayo ou Reinos de Tibet etc." (New Discovery of the Great Cathayo or Kingdoms of Tibet etc.) was first published in Lisbon in 1626. It was translated in quick succession in nearly all European languages and for a decade figured as the best-seller in the market.

The title was a misnomer, but it stuck to the book as a souvenir of a bygone age. Though it had already been established beyond any doubt that the country referred to as Cathay by travellers in the Middle Ages, was actually China, yet, in spite of it, they continued, in the mistaken fashion of the day, to give the name of Cathayo to the

territory which is now known as Tibet. For such at least was the common supposition of the time.

The man behind this feat—the first European we know for certain to enter Tibetan territory—was Fr. Antonio Andrade S.J. or Andreade as it is at times spelt. Born in Portugal in 1580 he had entered the Society of Jesus at the age of 16 and come out to India when he was 20 years old. After a brilliant academic career at Goa he was sent as Superior to the Moghul Mission in 1621. Here Fr. Andrade conceived the idea of going and discovering the ancient Christian churches and states which were rumoured to exist in Cathayo.

A good opportunity came his way. In Delhi, where he had gone to accompany Jehangir, Fr. Andrade came to know that a pilgrim caravan was to leave shortly for a famous pilgrim centre—one and a half month's travel to the north east—to a place reported to be inhabited by a Christian population. This, he thought, might be a good chance to find them and to discover the right route to get into the kingdom of Cathayo. This was quite a new road, not yet explored by any missionary, and the attempt might be crowned with success.

Accordingly, on 30th March, 1624, Fr. Andrade and Bro. Manoel Marques, accompanied by three young native Christians, left Agra to join the pilgrim caravan. The pilgrims were going to Bardinara (Badrinath), a famous Hindu shrine, passing through Serinangar (Srinagar), the old Garhwal capital, following the roaring Alaknanda—the noisy, turbulent river that further down its course, flows into the Ganges.

“We then began”, writes Fr. Andrade in his account, “to climb those lofty mountains (the first approaches to the Himalayan ranges) the like of which perhaps are not to be seen on the face of the globe. In some places the passage was so narrow that we could only just put one foot before the other...clinging on to the rocks with our hands, and at a single false step we could have been dashed to pieces. Some of these rocks stand upright as if they had been formed with a plumb line. Deep down the valley the Ganges flows

amidst boulders and cascades, making a frightful uproar. This, enhanced by the echoes, still further increases the alarm felt by the travellers across these narrow paths. The ascent is difficult enough, but the descent is worse for one knows not what to cling on to. We were several times obliged to turn round and go backwards as if we had been going down a ladder”.

The pilgrims usually proceed in single file, one after the other, for the footpath would seldom permit two going abreast. When the one heading the column perceived any danger he encouraged the others by chanting in a loud voice the name of the shrine they were going to visit, and the name was repeated successively by each traveller from the first down to the last.

From Badrinath onwards the little party had to forge ahead alone, depending solely on their own initiative and resourcefulness. They struggled on amidst difficulties of every kind. Their feet were swollen and numbed; mountain sickness made itself felt; the reflection of the sun in a sea of dazzling white rendered the wayfarers snow-blind. For 25 days Fr. Andrade could not read or make out a single letter of the breviary, though due precaution had been taken against this affliction.

Having crossed the Mana (5,450 meters) and the Churang passes, the travellers descended towards the basin of the Sutlej, in western Tibet. They found themselves in the province of Guge, the territory of the king whose capital lay at Tsaparang (rTsa-bran), in the river gorge, three marches away. Tsaparang, now in a heap ruins, was then a place of importance, half a day's march to the north west of Toling (mTho-glin), an ancient religious centre still marked on maps.

The appearance of the small caravan in the capital of Guge excited the liveliest interest. Earlier, according to custom, a courier had been sent ahead to announce their coming. In order that the party might make a solemn entrance, the King had despatched two messengers with three horses to meet them. On arrival all the town turned out and the queen herself watched the proceedings from the balcony.

At first the king took the strange visitors to be merchants who had brought him some valuable presents. When told such was not the case, his interest in them flagged and put off for two or three days the granting of an audience. Once admitted into his presence, however, they were received most kindly and entertained to a long familiar conversation. Speaking by means of an interpreter, the missionary stated that he had undertaken such a perilous journey to find out personally whether His Excellency and his subjects were by any chance Christians as reported in some quarters. If so, he had come to explain once more the principles of true Christianity and to destroy the superstitions that might have grown up in their stead. The King appeared to be puzzled a bit as he was acquainted little with the subject of the conversation. The queen who had been listening from behind a curtain, was greatly interested and sent word to say that she wanted to see the strange visitors and talk to them. Her request was immediately granted.

Things went on very smoothly. Fr. Andrade succeeded in gaining the sympathy and good will of the people and of the authorities. Whenever he desired, he could present himself at court, sure to be received in a friendly manner. He also had a good amount of provision sent to him daily—rice, mutton, flour and wine.

Time was running out. The fear of finding the road snow-bound during the winter and the promise Fr. Andrade had given to Jehangir to return quickly, brought the visit to an early end. Having arrived in the month of August, 1624, the two pioneers were once again heading for the Moghul territory after a sojourn of twenty five days in the capital of Guge. But before leaving His Majesty tried to persuade the leader of the expedition to remain and would only consent to his going on condition that he took an oath to return the following year. Fr. Andrade, who by now was convinced that though no Christians could be found in the Kingdom of Guge, the court and the people were very favourably disposed to receive the message of the Gospel, so he readily complied with the King's request.

Taking advantage of the favourable situation, the missionary contrived to have the best of the bargain. He

drew up a written document to which the King of Potente (Tibet) gave his approval. According to this document the Father was given full and complete freedom to teach the Holy law to the people, he was not to be molested in the exercise of his ministerial duties, no heed was to be paid to objections that might be raised against this good work by interested parties and a plot of ground was to be set aside whereon to build a house of prayer. The document concluded with an appeal to the Provincial at Goa to send again the said Fr. Andrade to the Kingdom of Guge that he might start instruction and teach its people the true law of God.

Fr. Andrade also mentioned that the king gave him a letter in which he ordered the Kashmiri merchants residing in Agra and Lahore and trading with the territory of Guge to carry the Father's luggage as if it were his own and to render all possible assistance.

As a token of gratitude for all the kindness and the favours received, the Jesuit Missionary presented the king and members of his household with some religious articles, amongst which figured a fine reproduction of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus in copper. The parting was moving—a clear indication of the first successful contact between two contrasting faiths and two opposite worlds which still refused to meet.

Early in November, 1624, Fr. Andrade and his party were back in Agra. There he busied himself in drafting an account of the journey, the discovery of the Gram Cathayo, and in making preparations for the next expedition.

In the summer of 1625, Fr. Andrade and a new Jesuit priest, Fr. Gonzalves de Souza were again back in Guge to be welcomed by the King. Prospects for the future seemed good and a missionary station was also established at Rudok (Ru-t'-ogs). Soon after the man who had affixed the cross atop the roof of the world had to leave the field of his labour to take up his appointment as Provincial of Goa. Some new Fathers arrived to reinforce the mission staff, and several conversions were made.

The initial success of Fr. Andrade, however, did not last long. It was like the blossoming of a flower soon destined

to wither away and die under inclement weather. The king was caught up in a feudal war, blockaded in his citadel and forced to capitulate. Guge was then annexed to the kingdom of Ladhak. The new masters were not personally hostile to the Jesuits, but without the royal patronage the missionaries were powerless, their prospective converts fell away, till finally the missionaries were expelled in 1635.

Frs. Cacella and Cabral

In his apostolic zeal to spread the Kingdom of God, Fr. Andrade did not miss any opportunity to see if the mission field at Cathayo could be extended. At Tsaparang he had collected information about another extensive territory to the east of the Kingdom of Guge caled U Tsang. Prompted by the idea of establishing a chain of missionary stations within a close range, and thus consolidating the concerted efforts, he wrote to the Provincial at Malabar suggesting to him to send some Fathers to U Tsang. Earlier there had been persistent reports that one of the passages to Cathayo was through Bengal. Presuming there were no Christians in the U Tsang province—a thing not yet fully ascertained—there was surely the possibility of finding people who would lend a willing ear to the Christian message. Why not then take the chance ?

Since 1610, the original religious province of the Jesuits in India had been split up into two—the Goa Province and the Malabar Province with its headquarters at Cochin. Bengal was then under the territorial jurisdiction of the Malabar Province. That is why Fr. Andrade had addressed himself to the Provincial of Malabar to move in the matter.

Hughli, on the bay of Bengal, which was already functioning as a mission outpost, was chosen as the base for this new enterprise. Frs. Stephen Cacella, aged 41, John Cabral aged 27 and Bro. Bartholomew Fontebona now in his fifties, sailed from Cochin on 15th March, 1626, in the direction of Hughli. The two fathers were Portuguese, while the Brother was an Italian from Florence.

At Hughli they learnt that the road to Catai was an easy one, well trodden by travellers, where they could also find

numerous brethren in the faith. The reality was to be otherwise. Cheered by the good news, the party moved out from Hughli on 2nd August, 1626, for U Tsang in central Tibet. It was to be one of the greatest adventures in the history of exploration. As a matter of fact, they were the first Europeans to set foot upon the virgin soil of four different territorial regions Bhutan, Sikkim, Central Tibet, and the kingdom of Nepal.

Many were the problems they had to grapple with ; for one thing, the Fathers were not familiar with the language and the topography of the place. Fr. Simon de Figueiredo, who had been residing in Bengal for quite some time, offered his services and the four of them set out disguised as Portuguese soldiers. Somewhere between Hughli and Dacca they had to stop. Owing to various handicaps, Fr. Cacella and de Figueiredo went ahead to pave the way ; Fr. Cabral stayed on while the Brother returned to the base, where he would wait for an all clear signal to join and proceed with the others. The poor Brother arrived at Hughli broken in health and soon after died on the 26th of December, 1626.

At Dacca Fr. Cacella and his companion were made prisoners. Set free after twelve days, they sent for Fr. Cabral. On 5th September, Frs. Cacella and Cabral, now left to their own device, pushed on to Hajo in Assam. On enquiring about the road to Catai, all seemed puzzled as no one had ever heard of the place. Only a Mohammedan came forward to say that the country lay beyond the city of Cascar (Kashgar), the gateway to the Kingdom of Catai. He did not know, however, how to get there. If the travelers could only cross the mountain passes leading into Potente (Tibet) then it would not be difficult for them to find their way about.

The ruler of Kuch Behar happened to be at Hajo at the time. He was pleased to give the two Fathers a letter of recommendation to his son, who was a governor in a state, and advised them to go through the town of Rangamati in order to get into Potente. Once in Rangamati, the missionaries were told not to proceed any further. Winter was closing in, and the mountain trail, at that time of the year,

was impassable. Quietly they fell back on Kuch Behar, the capital of the homonymous state, and settled there for the duration of the cold season.

The insalubrity of the place affected the travellers and both of them fell ill. All the information that they could gather was that Catai and Tibet were unknown regions. Tsaparang also, the royal city where Fr. Andrade had already initiated his work, was like a geographical name, off the map, unfamiliar and ignored. However, all knew of a vast country inhabited by a race of hillmen called Bhotias. As already hinted at, the Tibetan territory was given different names according to the line of approach. Bhot, or more correctly Bod, was the common appellation used by the local people, to indicate this country. The confusion of names and places did not upset the missionaries. As a consolation they were told that in Bhutan they could easily find a guide who could direct them in the course of their journey.

The end of February, 1627, saw Frs. Cacella and Cabral stepping into the Bhutan borders and then on to Paro, its capital. Everywhere they were welcomed. Dharma Raja, the Bhutan ruler, went so far as to entertain them as his guests of honour. His solicitude was so embarrassing that the Fathers felt that they were being kept under surveillance. They had been received with marks of distinction. The ruler seemed to understand and appreciate the motive of their mission, i.e. the preaching of the law of Lord Jesus Christ, a law which, according to tradition, was already known to his people. A lama was appointed as their language teacher. Really, it was too good to be true. Even the little missionary work, which had already been started, promised well. But they had not come to stay.

Months had already passed staying in the capital waiting for an opportunity to be up and again on the move. Finally, one day at the court, Fr. Cacella met a lama who was very friendly with the king of U Tsang. He took him into confidence and spoke about his plan. The lama proved co-operative; provided the missionary with supplies, an escort and means of conveyance and secretly sent him off to Shigatse (gZis-ka-rtse), the royal city of U Tsang. Fr.

Cabral soon followed suit. By January, 1628, both had reached the goal of their long and tedious peregrination. Fr. Andrade's dream at long last had turned into a reality. Tsaparang was now only 30 days from Shigatse - a comfortable distance in those early days.

The authorities at Cochin looked upon the undertaking with keen interest and appointed Fr. Manoel Dias as an additional member of the expedition. Meanwhile, Fr. Cabral, after a short rest in the capital, returned to the base at Hughli, leaving behind his companion. In so doing, he was prompted by a twofold motive—to report on the mission, which in his opinion held great promises and to blaze a new trail i.e. to discover whether the access route to Central Tibet was shorter and easier by making a round through Nepal.

Fr. Cacella soon discovered that communication between the two mission stations, Shigatse and Tsaparang, was easy. Lamas and travellers moved both ways in a regular routine. He also made an attempt to pay a visit to his confreres at Guge, but the rough going and the untimely season frustrated his plans. Solitude and poor state of health made him decide to come down to Hughli via Nepal. It was already well over a year that he had been there all alone. No news about his companion had been received. On the other hand, no programme for the future could be drawn up unless a more concrete plan of operation had been mutually agreed upon. In the spring of 1629, therefore Fr. Cacella left the 3600 meter altitude of Shigatse for the Indian plains.

On arrival at Hughli Fr. Cacella learnt, to his great regret, that the two other missionaries, Fr. Cabral and Dias,—had already left for Kuch Behar. It was their intention to go back to Shigatse, via Nepal. This would have been a much shorter and easier route, but the crossing of the tarai at this season was like walking into a death trap. On hearing that his two companions were on their way to U Tsang, Fr. Cacella, though already a spent force, started off to join them.

In September, 1629, Fr. Cacella and Dias decided to

travel light and continue the journey. Fr. Cabral remained at Kuch Behar with the heavy luggage. He was to be sent for later in January, 1630. It was an ill-conceived plan - the fatigue and hardship of travelling was more than they could stand. Fr. Dias died an untimely death at Morang (east Nepal) on 3rd November, 1629, and Fr. Cacella went to his eternal reward at Shigatse on 6th March, 1630, hardly a week after his arrival in the capital. His mortal remains were interred with all the honours due to a lama who had died in the odour of sanctity. He was the first Catholic Missionary to die on Tibetan soil.

At Kuch Behar Fr. Cabral waited for the whole year (1630) without receiving any news and anxiously expecting the King's messengers to come and take him to Shigatse. They did not come, and it was only in May 1631 that the Father could step into the capital. However, the death knell of Mission had struck. The new Provincial at Cochin, who was not much in favour of this risky mission, realising that the undertaking claimed more in men and money than he could afford, called it off and ordered Fr. Cabral back to Bengal.

In spite of the reverses at Guge and U Tsang, the agonising fight to conquer Tibet to the Cross still went on at all strategic points with varying fortunes, but never with success. For a time (about four years) a band of Jesuits had been posted to Srinagar, the old capital of Garhwal, a tributary state to the Moghuls, waiting for an opportunity to re-enter Tsaparang, in the kingdom of Guge—an opportunity that never came. In the summer of 1640, Fr. Stanislaus Malpichi, an Italian, accompanied by Bro. Marques, the old companion of Fr. Andrade, sallied forth from Srinagar to try his luck. At the Mana Pass, the frontier post, they were caught and thrown into prison, but they managed to escape. Apparently, such an action was justified on the ground that some years previously the missionaries had gone away from Tibet without taking leave and without paying the tribute which would have entitled them to leave the country. Bro. Marques, now 46 years old, already enfeebled by fatigue and privation, was recaptured to die as an hostage at the hands of the very people

whom he had endeavoured to befriend. Fr. Malpichi returned to Srinagar to convey the sad news that the last bid to penetrate Tibet had hopelessly failed.

By the middle of the seventeenth century it was generally felt that the hour of Tibet had not yet come. The price to be paid for its conversion was still too high to be worth the bargain.

Just Passing Through

In March, 1662, two Jesuit Priests, Fr. John Grueber and Albert D'Orville, straggled on into Agra. Fr. D'Orville belonged to an old Brussels family, still young, but worn out to the grey hedge of exhaustion, passed away within a few days—8th April, 1662. His *compagnon de voyage*, born in Austria 38 years earlier, trekked on to Rome to report to his Superiors. In less than one year they had come by land from Peking to India. Theirs was not an apostolic excursion but a fact-finding mission. Typhoons and Dutch warships bent on piracy rendered communications with the South China Sea extremely difficult. It was thought essential to keep the China Mission going to explore the possibility of a land route and see whether it was any safer. The arduous task had been entrusted to Frs. Grueber and D'Orville.

The bold and daring venture together with Fr. Grueber's own observation on Tibet make it worth passing mention.

Starting from Peking on 13th April, 1661, the pair took the traditional caravan track to the south-west. Details are scanty. Sining and Koko-nor are given as the main landmarks of this extraordinary feat of endurance. After six months' continuous travel, on 8th October, to be exact, they arrived at Lhasa, the first Europeans to visit the Tibetan capital. Both were naturally anxious to see the Dalai Lama, but they could not be introduced to him as they had made known before hand their unwillingness to make any prostrations in his presence.

It is a pity that Fr. Grueber did not publish his diary, though he had been working on it for many years. From the little we have, he proved to be competent, accurate and

a most conscientious observer. Fr. A. Kircher S. J., however, in his "China Monumentis.....illustrata", Rome 1667, made good use of whatever material he could gather directly from his confrere, thus introducing a radical change into contemporary cartography. It may be noted here that Fr. Grueber had served for a time at the Imperial Observatory of Peking.

Quitting Lhasa after a sojourn of nearly two months, the pair of travellers turned to the south west making for Kuti and the valley of Nepal, then on to Agra. The route traced by them was never put into service, but it was not forgotten as we shall see later. More important, however, was the valuable contribution made by Grueber to the study of the physical map of China and Tibet.

So much by way of Introduction to the history of the "Tibetan Mission".

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N.B. The introduction to this chapter, except for details, is basically historical. It is a fact that a lama of rank told Fr. Francis Horace of having read in a book written by a lama of old that “a very good and beautiful law” had been promulgated in Tibet in time past. (Nuovo Ramusio, Part III, p. 246).

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST TWO EXPEDITIONS

All thought and activity to re-organise the mission in Tibet had now been abandoned. The idea, at least for the time being, had been shelved as premature. The hazards and commitments involved in the enterprise were such as to deter the stoutest heart. There was more useful work at hand to be done and with better hope of success without embarking on a risky venture of a dubious nature. Such was the conclusion the Jesuits in Northern India had arrived at after the sad experience of the last few decades. Besides, the much heard of dispersed Christian communities receded daily from the realm of reality to become more of a distant and hazy vision in the domain of fiction.

Down in Surat, on the western Indian coast, (where the Tapti river flows into the Gulf of Cambay, an inlet of the Arabian Sea), a French Capuchin missionary was busy at his desk, collecting data and thinking over quite a few problems which of late had come to agitate his mind and the minds of his confreres. His name was Fr. Francis Mary of Tours—a middle-aged man, a scholar with a keen sense of observation and a determined will to see things through ; a little over-bearing, perhaps, and touchy in the typical French fashion, but still a man with a vision and a message. He had been in India for the past twenty years, dividing his time between Pondicherry and Surat. Languages and current ecclesiastical affairs appealed to him ; he has left us a disquisition on the Malabar Rites which was published in Liege in 1704 and a “*Thesaurus Linguae Indianae*” (a grammar cum dictionary in four languages) which he hoped to have printed at the expense of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda.

From Syria, where they had made a start in 1625, the

French Capuchins of the Tours Province had set up a net work of missionary stations which ran all along the Middle East till eventually it reached the Western Indian shores. Their first foundation in India was Surat in 1639 ; from there they branched off to Madras and Pondicherry. It was a young and fast growing religious province imbued with a particular zeal for the missions. Its members had already established themselves in Africa and Asia but they were still looking far afield for a more distant and larger sphere of activity. From Surat the missionaries cast their eyes on to the neighbouring territories of Gujarat and Sind and only wished that these also could be entrusted to them. To the south west and south east of Surat, in the Deccan, lay the former kingdom of Bijapur and Golconda, recently conquered by the Moghul army. It was tempting to go there and try their hands at the plough. Greater possibilities of evangelisation might be awaiting the labourers of the vineyard in an area scarcely touched by the hands of the morning sowers. Why not then make a bid, while the going was good, to take over this new field of apostolate ?

Those early pioneers were indeed ambitious and courageous. One would expect them to dig in and consolidate the work already started rather than keep on forever expanding and enlarging at a quick alarming pace. Not satisfied with the common toil and daily task assigned to them, they dreamt of a richer harvest in a far off land, far across the mountains, in a region hardly known, but said to be full of Christians. They dreamt of it day and night and the dream soon started having the magnetic power of an obsession. They must go there.

The commanding position Surat occupied those days made it the favourite venue of all gossips and rumours which, like a stock in trade, circulated between the Middle East and the Moghul empire and far beyond Surat was then one of the most important cities in India, with a good harbour and large business centre, the rendezvous of travellers and merchants who carried on an extensive trade between east and west. Unware of the sad experience of the Jesuits at the court of the Moghuls, Fr. Francis Mary and his companions listened with willing ear to the same old

stories and slowly came to the same conclusion (1) : That there were communities of Christians in Tibet ; that thirty three million people—an erroneous but stereotyped figure of its inhabitants—were hungering for the Bread of Life ; that they had no one to attend to their spiritual needs ; that far too many reports from different sources made one suspect that the information might not be correct ; and that an attempt must be made to reach these abandoned Christians to minister to them, no matter how heavy the price might be.

All had been put down on paper by Fr. Francis Mary, the most ardent champion of the cause. His notes were punctuated by a personal touch of enthusiasm and fervent zeal for the welfare of those far-off separated brethren. Meanwhile, over the years, an unpleasant situation had been developing in Surat. Though the mission there was outside the Padroado influence, but now and again, serious jurisdictional troubles were taking place. The Portuguese Jesuits were determined to hand over the station to the Goa Archbishop. Fr. James of Bourges, the Custos Missionis, as he was called, was worried. To prevent complications he commissioned Fr. Francis Mary to go to Rome and petition

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1. In a letter written from Leh, the capital of Ladhak, on the 5th of August, 1715, while on his way to Lhasa, Fr. H. Desideri S. J. (*Nuovo Ramusio*, part V, p. 31-32) stated that it was rumoured that 10-12 years earlier the king of the Third Tibet had sent messengers to the Moghul territories in search of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. Fr. Andrade had left there a cassock, a biretta and some personal effects and the king was anxious to get in touch with some of the Fathers of the Society. Not knowing where to go or where to look for the Jesuits, the messengers strayed on to Surat. The Capuchins kept the things secret and at the right moment acted upon the information and went to Tibet. Earlier (1706) another Jesuit, Fr. Francis Borgia Koch, had communicated the same story to his superiors. However, two hundred years later, another Jesuit, Fr. H. Hosten, proved the rumour baseless (*Letters and other papers of Fr. Ippolito Desideri S. J. in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 1938*). There is no doubt that the Jesuits and the Capuchins acted independently in regard to their expeditions to Tibet. Both had been taken in by rumours spread by the ubiquitous Armenian and Mohammedan merchants.

the Holy See to confirm the station of Surat as a Capuchin preserve, free and independent of any interference of the Padroado authorities. This would give him the chance to expound his other schemes and plans, which though not officially sponsored by the Superiors of the Order, nevertheless met with their approval and had the backing of the other missionaries as well.

With his notes safely tucked in his scanty baggage and the pilgrim's staff in his hand, Fr. Francis Mary bid good-bye to his co-workers at Surat in 1701 and set off for Europe. First he visited his homeland, his relations and friends and then hurried on to Rome to enlist support for the cause he had spoused. The notes were finalised and condensed in a Memorandum which was sent in with a wishful prayer.

Decree of Propaganda

At the special session of the Congregation of Propaganda, held on 14th March, 1703, to deal with the affairs of the Mission in India and China, the French Capuchin was called in to be present at the discussion over the Memorandum he had submitted (2). The Memorandum was short and dealt exclusively with the erection of the three missions mentioned above. In regard to the other two points for which Fr. Francis Mary had come to Rome, i.e. to confirm the mission at Surat as belonging to the Capuchins and to request the Congregation of Propaganda to print his "Thesaurus Linguae Indianae", it will suffice to say here that the former was readily granted while the latter kindly turned down. As a matter of fact the Congregation of Propaganda had already issued a Decree in April, 1698 to the effect that Surat was to be a Capuchin mission, but there had been some delay in the delivery or the execution of the document (3). The manuscript "Thesaurus Linguae Indianae" which was left in the Archives of Propaganda is now not traceable.

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2. Arch. Prop. Fide, Scritture Congregazione Particolare del 14 Marzo, 1703, Vol 2, f. 37.
 3. The controversy is dealt at length in "Essays on the Capuchin Missions in India", by Fr. Felix Finck, O. F. M. Cap. published in the Franciscan Annals of India, Agra 1910-1912.

Having dealt with the two missionary fields to be opened in India, the Memorandum referred to Tibet in these terms—“The third mission will be in the interior part of Bengal, turning towards the sources of the Ganges then gradually stepping into Thibet, which so far has not yet been penetrated. “I have heard”, so writes Fr. Francis Mary, “that in Thibet there are people who in times past were Christians, but now due to the absence of priests they do not know to what religion they belong; neither are they heathens; they are very hostile to the Mohammedans and when by chance Armenian Christian merchants pass through the country they are received most cordially. I have read about the people of Thibet in books and the same thing I have heard from the Mohammedans, the heathens, and the Armenians. It is over three years that willingly and without difficulty I would have gone there, if only I had a companion.” (4)

From a reading of this passage it is clear that Fr. Francis Mary was unaware of the attempts made earlier by Fr. Andrade, Frs. Cacella and Cabral, or else makes a reference to that portion of Tibet which had not yet been visited by any missionary. It was by then becoming a common practice to sub-divide the country into three different regions and call them the first, second and third or proper Tibet. Later on, another appellation was added which made a distinction between the lower and upper Tibet, i.e. Nepal and the high Tibetan plateau.

The Memorandum then goes on to give a rough sketch of the possible route to Tibet. Here the document is very sketchy of the possible route to Tibet. Here the document is very sketchy and vague. One way to Tibet, it says, is from Surat to Agra; but then it does not give any further indication as to the course to be followed beyond the city of Akbar. Another line of access is through the Bay of Bengal. Here, at the mouth of the Ganges, France held an important trading post (Chandernagore). It would not have been difficult for the Capuchins (read French Capuchins) to get far inland through the good offices of the French Trading Company.

4. Arch. Prop. Fide. Scritture riferite nei Congressi per le Indie e la Cina, Vol. 8 (1701-4), f. 534 a.

Two more points emerge, more or less clear, from a perusal of the document. The first, in order to put the mission on a solid basis, it would be necessary to enlist the moral support of a Catholic nation. Portugal and France were the only two Catholic countries which had established trading centres in India. Portugal in some respects was better deserving of the Catholic Faith than France, but the Padroado business scared Fr. Francis Mary out of his wits. It is not surprising then that as a good Frenchman he suggested to put the whole undertaking under the patronage of the French East India Company.

The second point was to guard against any possible criticism and to put the mission on a solid fruitful basis by looking at it not as an end in itself but in the larger context of the propagation of the faith in India and China. It was obvious that many would object to the erection of a mission in Tibet on account of the enormous distance, extending over new and unknown territories, which might stand as a formidable obstacle in the achievement of the goal. But once there, it might be easy to open up a land route linking the Middle East with China via Tibet. This would help the preachers of the Gospel to have easier access to the eastern world.

At the end of the session the devoted missionary could consider himself satisfied, if not pleased. He had to acknowledge that most of his schemes had fallen through, such as his failure to secure for the Capuchins the mission territories of Gujarat and Sind, of Bijapur and Golconda. Nevertheless, he succeeded with the Propaganda authorities in making them accept the plan he thought most important—the opening of a mission in Tibet. His arguments in this regard were found both persuasive and compelling. But even here, Fr. Francis Mary had to admit partial defeat. He hoped and pleaded that the new mission field should be entrusted to the Fathers of the Tours Province. Propaganda, however, held different views. The Province was already overburdened with other commitments and to add to its apostolic work would mean a mere dissipation of energies.

On the same day, a Decree was issued whereby the Congregation of Propaganda decided upon the opening of a

Mission in Tibet, but entrusted it to the Italian Capuchins. The territorial limits of this new ecclesiastical unit were rather vaguely described as little was known of the places to which the Italian Capuchins were being sent. The Decree stated that the new mission was to extend—"In the direction of the sources of the Ganges River, towards the kingdom of Tibet, or in a more suitable locality" (5). There was evidently another reason which made the drawing up of the Decree to be rather cautious. No one then knew whether the missionaries could ever enter Tibet. Unforeseen circumstances, as, for instance, the difficult terrain and hazards of the road, the hostile attitude of Tibetans to foreigners and other similar causes, might turn them back and hinder the opening of the new mission. In this eventuality, the Italian Capuchins would still have a territory wherein to settle down. Broadly speaking, if the Tibetan enterprise failed, they could establish a mission on the left bank of the Ganges, in an area not yet officially occupied by members of any other missionary society.

The Secretary of Propaganda was directed to take up the matter with the Procurator General of the Capuchin Order, Fr. Bernardine of Soluzzo, on whom de jure devolved the responsibility of making all internal arrangements, such as choosing the Province which would undertake to supply the personnel, presenting the candidates to Propaganda for their approval and other similar technicalities. On 28th January, 1907, the Congregation approved the following missionaries whose names were proposed by the Procurator :—Fr. John Francis of Camerino, Prefect, Frs. Felix of Montecchio, Joseph of Ascoli and Joseph Mary of Fossombrone, missionaries, Fr.

5. Arch. Prop. Fide. Atti delle Congregazione particolari per la Cina e le Indie Orientali, Vol. 2, a. 1701-17, Congr. del 14 Marzo 1703, ff. 37 b-38 a.

The Decree reads—"Item agendum cum Procuratore Generali Capuccinorum pro erectione novae Missionis Capuccinorum italorum ad oram Gangis versus regna Tibet, seu in alio loco opportuniore".

Francis Mary of Tours, "Director" and Bro. Fiacre of Paris, companion (6).

The bulk of the evangelical labourers was drawn up from the religious Province of Piceno, in the belt of the Marche D'Ancona, to which the mission had been actually committed. Fr. Francis Mary of Tours, the heart and soul behind the enterprise, was added to the personnel to act as "Director" or leader of the expedition. His long years of service in the Foreign Missions, his knowledge of the language and his experience in the mode of travelling were thought to be sufficient to render him fit for this role. Unfortunately, he proved himself unequal to the task. Once he had fulfilled his assignment which was to lead the Fathers to Lhasa, he could either have gone back to Surat or cast his lot with the Italian Capuchins. But so great was his love for the new mission that he opted to join forces with them (7) and remain there.

The Italian recruits were all hand-picked and formed a well-assorted band of workers. Their age group ranged between 30 and 35 years. They were still young and perhaps a little visionary, but eager to shoulder the burden and face the toil and hardship their apostolic mission would entail. Some of them were holding responsible posts and had given unmistakable signs of being endowed with those qualities of heart and mind that are a sure guarantee for the success of any great enterprise.

All hope for the success of the mission was based on these stalwart soldiers of Christ ; they knew it and were determined to live up to their trust. Gazing confidently into the future, they pledged their life and service to hoist the Cross atop the roof of the world.

6. Arch. Prop. Fide. Scritture originali riferite nella Congregazione Generali del 21 e del 28 Gennaio 1704, Vol. 547. No. 1.

The above documents can be found together in Bullarium Ordinis Min. Capuccinorum, Romae, Tomo VII, pp. 250-266.

7. Arch. Prop. Fide. Scritture riferite nel Congressi per le Indie e la Cina, Vol 10, a 1707-8, ff. 481-483 ; Nuovo Ramusio part I, pp. 39-41.

From Rome to Lhasa

A jet flight from Rome to Lhasa would now be a matter of hours ; we can hardly believe that the first Capuchins took well over three solid years to cover the same distance. A journey to Tibet was something more than an adventure ; it was like taking a ticket in a very odd gamble. Passengers by land or sea never knew when they would arrive at their destination, or, for that matter, whether they would ever reach the end of their journey. Often they went very reluctantly, perhaps forced by bitter necessity knowing fully well that they might never see their homes or families again. Our six missionaries left the sunny shores of Italy hale and hearty, but only two of them had the joy to greet the towering Himalayan peaks glittering in the glory of the morning light. Let us not, however, anticipate the course of events.

Within a short time, too short indeed, for such an undertaking, the first expedition was ready. Setting out from Rome in April, 1704, they took a sailing vessel at Leghorn on 6th May, bound for Alexandretta, former name of Iskenderum (modern Turkey), at the north east extremity of the Mediterranean. On boardship Fr. Joseph Mary of Fossombrone fell seriously ill and was disembarked on the island of Cyprus. His physical condition grew so bad that he was thought unfit to travel any further. He was left there with orders to go back to his religious province as soon as he had recovered (8). The list of casualties had just begun—a dark foreboding of the things to come. Landing safely at Alexandretta the party tramped on to Aleppo (Haleb, Syria) where on the 14th July they were the welcome guests of their French confreres of the Tours Province.

The change of climate and diet, together with the unaccustomed caravan life over long distances, and the difficult terrain, soon started telling on them. Bouts of malarious fever and long spells of illness became their constant companions ; Fr. Francis Mary was the only one to escape the onslaught. The blows fell thick and fast. Bro. Fiacre of Paris was the first victim. Exhausted by fever and fatigue he went to his eternal reward at Diarbakir (modern Turkey)

8. Terzorio p. 187.

on 1st October, 1704 (9). Forty days later, 10th November, the Prefect Fr. John Francis of Camerino died, young and brave, at Mardin (modern Turkey) ninety kilometers to the south of Diarbakir (10). The caravan was on the move again bound for Mosul (Iraq) when his condition worsened suddenly. He was carried back to Mardin ; while his companions, for fear of being left behind alone, continued the rest of the march with the others. Fr. Felix of Montocchio, reduced in weight and prostrated by stubborn malaria, was held up at Mosul for three months. The remaining two pressed forward to Basra, where on 23rd February, 1705, they took a boat for Bander Abbas on the Persian Gulf.

It was surely a bad start. The original team of workers had already been reduced to half the size within a few months. And that was not all : a good deal of money had already been spent on sickness ; the first misgivings or economic worries that the allocation received would not be sufficient for the journey, soon started telling on their mind. Further, national sentiments and personal interests slowly crept into their ranks causing feelings of unpleasantness. The leader of the expedition had resented the fact that the dead Prefect had appointed Fr. Felix of Montecchio as Vice Prefect, pending of course the decision of Rome, but he made no bones about it. When the new interim superior reached Bander Abbas, on 19th April, 1705, he found only his Italian companion there. Fr. Francis Mary had left his old mission just a month earlier to bring the Papal Blessing to the Christians at Surat and to make sure that the Decree of Propaganda, assigning the station to the Capuchins, was duly carried into effect (11).

Alone and stranded, the two Italians were lucky enough to secure the services of an Indian Catholic, who had formerly been with the French Capuchins at Surat. He was

9. Terzorio p. 188.

10. Terzorio, p. 188.

11. Arch. Prop. Fide. Scritture riferite nei Congressi per le Indie e la Cina. Vol. 9 (1705-6), ff. 58 and 64-65.

well-acquainted with the topography and customs of the place and spoke Portuguese and French besides his mother tongue. That was a great boon to them in their hour of need.

Boarding an English vessel on the 20th of May, the two missionaries dropped anchor at Madras towards the end of June. But what a dreadful voyage it was ! The monsoon and a serious illness vied with each other to make them miserable. At Madras another kind of storm was raging - the city was in the grips of an agitation over the visit of the Papal Legate (Archbishop Charles Thomas Maillard de Tournon, Patriarch of Antioch and Visitor General for Ecclesiastical Affairs in the East, afterwards Cardinal while in prison), who had condemned the Malabar Rites, causing sharp reaction among the clergy and the local Christian community. The British authorities in control of the area, fearing that the presence of these two strangers might add to the confusion, ordered them to quit at one hour's notice. They repaired first to nearby Mylapore in Moghul territory, and then to Pondicherry, the French settlement on the eastern shore. Here at last the tired travellers could rest and recoup their shattered health under the loving care of their French confreres (12).

Hearing that his two companions were already in Pondicherry and that they were laid up in bed, Fr. Francis Mary made haste to join them. But he too had his own good share of uncalled for risk and adventure. Late in November, 1705, the fragile coastal vessel on which he was travelling weighed anchor at Surat and slipped out to sea to circumnavigate the Indian Peninsula. From Quilon onward, to avoid the treacherous waters of Cape Comerin, he preferred to go on foot, leaving his luggage at Tuticorin from where it would be forwarded by ship.

In January 1706, the three Tibetan Missionaries were re-united again at Pondicherry, but for a short time. The

12. The spiritual care of the Catholics at Pondicherry, from the time the French Colonists settled there, was in the hands of the French Capuchins, who worked also among the natives. However, since 1599 their activities were restricted to the European immigrants, French and Portuguese.

two Italians had secured a passage for Chandernagore, the French Settlement in Bengal, and left Madras on 27th March to reach their destination on 8th April. It was a somewhat comfortable trip. Fr. Francis Mary stayed on at Madras waiting for the arrival of his luggage. This settled, he started on his voyage for Bengal. At the entrance of the Hughli, the small English craft, in which he was travelling, foundered and he lost baggage and all, but managed to save his life. It was only on the 2nd of August that the poor Father was at last with his two Italian confreres, after having wandered for nearly a month in the Sunderbans—the marshy jungle-like tract of land (the home of the royal Bengal tiger and other wild animals) which stretches between the sea and the cultivated portion of the Gangetic Delta (13).

For two years now the three had been on the road and across the sea, but the goal was still far off. These had been years of untold sufferings under the most trying conditions with yet a long way to go and a perilous future to face. The most risky and uncertain stages of the journey still lay ahead of them. They were like swimmers in a stormy sea. As with force and skill, they clove one wave after another, they more and more surged behind them dark and menacing. No one could foretell if and when they would be able to set foot on Tibet, the land of their dreams. The real test of endurance had yet to come.

Occasionally a letter would reach Rome to keep the authorities posted on the progress and the fortunes of the first group of missionaries. Meanwhile, the Congregation of Propaganda and the Superiors of the Order at Rome had come to know of the great losses and the enormous difficulties encountered by the members of the first Tibetan expedition. Two serious problems called for their immediate attention—the appointment of a new Prefect and the need to send reinforcement to sustain the efforts of the missionaries and to bring the undertaking to a successful conclusion. Accordingly a Decree was issued on the 13th of July, 1705,

13. Arch. Prop. Fide. Scritture riferite nei congressi per le Indie e la Cina, Vol. 10 (1707-8), ff. 584-589, quoting from a letter of Fr. Francis Mary dated Patna 25th November, 1706.

providing for the appointment of a Prefect and a Vice-Prefect in the persons of Fr. Joseph of Ascoli and Fr. Felix of Montecchio respectively (14). Earlier, the same year steps were taken to replace Fr. Joseph Mary of Fossombrone who had been incapacitated from continuing the journey and the two other missionaries who like brave soldiers had fallen their march to their field of operation. The choice fell this time on Frs. Dominic and John of Fano of the Piceno Province and Bro. Michael Angelo of Burgundy, a Frenchman by birth but belonging to the Roman Province—a contingent of personnel similar in nationality and status which had been lost in the cause of the mission.

Warned by the members of the first batch about the dreadful experience of an overland journey, the second group tried to reach India by sea. They set sail from Lorient, a port of the French East India Company to the north-west of France, on the 14th of July, 1706, and directed their course to Brasil, Chile, Peru and then back to the east through the Cape of Good Hope. They landed safely at Pondicherry on the 12th of July, 1708, exactly after two years of navigation. Strange as it may seem, even this roundabout course through the western hemisphere, as we shall see in another chapter, was one of the beaten sea routes to India. On this occasion, however, the voyage round the western world was motivated by reasons of trade (15).

The next lap of the voyage from Pondicherry to the French settlements in Bengal was only a matter of days. The two priests and the lay-brother embarked at Madras on 13th August to see the end of their long sea-travelling at Chandernagore on the 7th September. There the new-comers found the Vice Prefect waiting to give them a royal welcome and to acquaint them with the latest developments of the mission.

The experience of six months gained at Chandernagore by the missionaries of the first expedition, was put to good use.

14. Arch. Prop. Fide. Atti del 1705, Congr. del 13 Luglio, No. 17, f. 236.

15. Terzorio, p. 248-249.

It gave them an excellent opportunity to rest a while after the strenuous journey across the Middle East, and to adapt themselves to the climate and environment, to study the language, to become acquainted with the ways of the east and to collect necessary information to plan their future course of action.

After the rainy season, Frs. Joseph and Felix made a bid to get into Patna, the first stepping stone from the Indian plains to the harsh jagged mountains of Lhasa. On the way Fr. Felix already run down in health, fell sick and was forced to return to Chandernagore. His place was taken by Fr. Francis Mary. By the 8th of November, 1706, both Frs. Francis Mary and Joseph were in Patna (16) preparing for the next move into Nepal. Fr. Felix was expected to join them at any time now but in spite of his earnest efforts he was prevented from doing so. Sufficiently recovered in health the good Father hoped to be soon among his confreres and go up to Tibet with them. However, at Rajmahal, half way between Chandernagore and Patna, he found it impossible to go any further. He was forced back to the French colony and there he waited for some improvement in the political situation.

We have to bear in mind that a few years before his death the Emperor Aurangzeb had gone to the south to carry on the Deccan Wars. The northern provinces were gradually drained of their financial and military resources. Bands of robbers swooped down upon the rich cities of the north. The best troops and his trusted generals were with him in the Deccan. Those left behind were inefficient and powerless. It was during his absence that unrest, disorganisation and plunder started taking place in many parts of Northern and Central India. The administration grew slack and corrupt. The empire had become too large and unwieldy to be ruled by one man or from one centre, (17). Communications were disrupted and highly unsafe. The crossing from Bengal into Bihar was so dangerous that Fr. Felix thought it prudent not to take any risk. Things worsened

16. The same as per No. 13 above.

17. A History of India by Sir George Dunbar, London 1936, p. 279.

after the Emperor's death in March 1707. The war of succession among his three sons brought political affairs to near anarchy.

The two Fathers in Patna impatient to wait any longer for the arrival of the Vice-Prefect, and not hearing from him, decided to move off on their own. Time was running short and they must make the best of the good weather so long as it lasted. Packing up their belongings, the two missionaries again took to the road, leaving in the hands of a gentleman at the English Factory a letter and some money for Fr. Felix. In it the newly elected Prefect explained the reasons for their hurried departure for Nepal. They told Fr. Felix if he wished he could freely settle in Patna where a sizable Christian community was abandoned and neglected; gave him some advice and recommended himself to his prayers not knowing whether they would ever meet again.

In 35 days—from 17th January to the 21st of February, 1707,—Frs. Joseph and Francis Mary plodded on slowly and steadily to Kathmandu—another step forward to the high altar of the world. Crossing the Ganges, and the Gandak rivers on flat bottomed river boats, kindly lent them by some friends of the English factory, they directed their steps to the north east. Dharbhanga, the capital of the semi-independent state, was given as the main landmark between Patna and the Nepal borders. Having passed over into Nepal territory the pair followed, very likely, the course of the Kamla river up to Sindhuli Garhi, then on into the Sun Kosi valley, the Indrawati basin till finally they arrived, safely but exhausted, at Kathmandu, the present capital of Nepal.

The footpath, no doubt, was rough, but the harassment meted out by the petty officials at the numerous check-posts to collect transit dues was truly unbearable. It was really a kind of legalised plunder at the expense of defenceless passengers. And it was particularly more so at the historical juncture where the machinery of law and order was hardly functioning. Every day Frs. Joseph and Francis Mary were engaged in a regular tug-of-war, and more often than not, they found themselves on the losing side.

The journey was an unforgettable experience and an object lesson on the ways of the east. So many were the obstacles that confronted our missionaries that twice they seriously thought of giving up the idea of the making their way into Tibet. On one occasion the pack animal which was carrying their provisions of Mass wine ran amuck and, in its frenzy, dashed the precious load to the ground, kicking it to pieces. This posed a new agonising problem, i.e. either to go ahead without the consolation of saying Mass for months on an end or retrace their steps and replenish the stock. In their anguish they made up their minds to proceed relying on Divine Providence alone.

At Kathmandu the two Friars tried to conceal their identity for fear of being subjected to the same burdensome road duties but to no purpose. The amount expostulated from them in order to be allowed to leave the city was so high that, if disbursed in full, it would dangerously impair financial position of the whole undertaking. They were asked to pay Rs. 250/- a sum they could not dispose of without running the risk of not having sufficient money to complete the rest of the journey. It took nearly two months of protracted negotiations and pleading to reduce the amount to more reasonable proportions (18).

With a lighter purse, but heavier heart, the two of them said good-bye to the picturesque valley of Nepal towards the end of April, to step at last into the territory of Tibet. Unfortunately, we have no records either of the route followed by the two pioneers of the Gospel or of the adventures which surely crossed their solitary path. The only thing we know is that on Pentecost Sunday 12th June, 1707, they finally saw the end of their long, nerve-racking peregrination. Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, was now to be their home (19).

Finding their Bearings

While in Patna, the two Fathers were lucky enough to

18 *Nuovo Ramsuio*, part I, pp. 5-30.

19. *Bullarium Ordinis Min. Cap.*, Tomo VII, p. 251 ; *Terzorio*, p. 209 ; *Nuovo Ramusio part I*, p. 34.

get a letter of recommendation from an Armenian merchant to a fellow countryman up in Lhasa. His name was Khwaja Dawith—Khwaja being a Persian title and Dawith or Dawood the Armenian equivalent for the English name David. This gentleman had been a resident of the Tibetan capital for the past 30 years, engaged in profitable business. Mr. David had a large circle of friends at all levels and wielded considerable influence. Records do not specify whether he was a Catholic, but state that he was a rich merchant, a man of piety and integrity, well-loved and respected by every class of people. In his kindness the merchant most cordially welcomed the two missionaries and put himself out to make them comfortable. First of all, he managed to get for them a small three room apartment on rent. Then as Lhasa was a small gossip town, and the presence of two strangers without any apparent motive to justify it, might give rise to suspicion, he set about to regularise their position before the authorities. In an audience with the Regent, with whom he was on very familiar terms, Mr. David told him that the two ministers of his religion were passing through Lhasa on their way to China, but as he was old and sick he would detain them for a time in order to be treated by them. He casually added that they were also members of the medical profession. In the typical oriental fashion the Regent enquired whether the two strangers had brought some presents, whether they knew mathematics and astronomy or were skilled in any other useful profession of art and craft. The Armenian replied that the travellers were ordinary doctors without any money or any precious ware, but that wherever they went they threw their lot with the people of the same profession from whom they would receive whatever they needed. This was, of course, an understatement, but it served to give the Fathers a foothold in Lhasa and to allow them to move about cautiously and explore the possibility of making a start (20).

The Armenian merchant was not an isolated member of his community; there were quite a few of them, in addition

20. *Nuovo Ramusio*, Part III, p. 29-30.

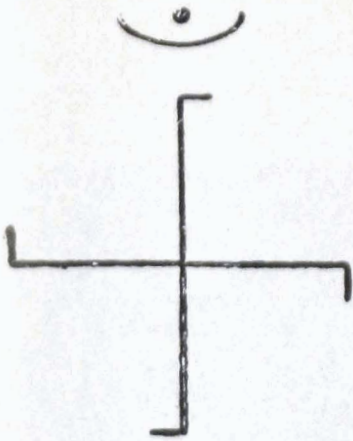
to four Russian families and even some Chinese Christians. This made things all the more easy. The Armenians in particular proved very helpful. Having come to know that the Fathers had lost their provisions of Mass-Wine, they helped in procuring rasins—a commodity which was abundant in the market, and soon the Fathers had a fresh supply ready.

Lhasa (Lha-ssa), the city of spirits, was the stronghold of Tibetan Buddhism, the national religion. The city was also known up to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by its Mongolian name of Barantola (Bara'un-tala) i.e. the region to the west. It is hemmed in by hills, bound in snow and frost and stands on the right bank of the river Kyichu (sKyid-c'u) which flows cold and crystal clear down from the glaciers into the mighty Brahmaputra (son of god Brahma) (Tibetan gTsang-po, the purifier), some eighty kilometers to the south-west. The capital is situated at 29° 39' N. Lat. and 91° 6' E. Long. on the parallel that runs south of Cairo. It lies on a plateau, 3,536 meters above sea level, under the protective shadow of the great Potala Palace. The hills around the city are barren; the plateau, however, is fertile, though in parts marshy. The climate is extremely dry and cold, but wholesome, and invigorating. Because of this and the pure mountain air, incidence of disease is remarkably low. So holy is the sacred city of Lhasa that no life can be taken within its precincts. The shambles or yak-hair tents of the butchers and scavengers, whose chief occupation is that of disposing of corpses by cutting and exposing them to the dogs and carrion birds, are situated outside the city limits.

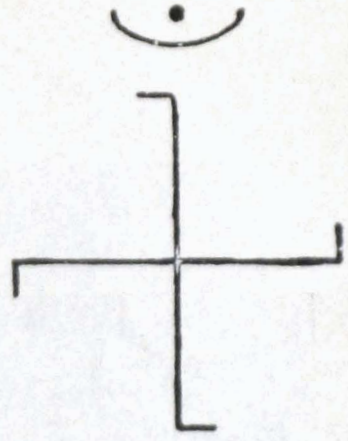
In the early eighteenth century, Lhasa was a city of no mean importance. According to our missionaries it had a population of 80,000 inhabitants, with a high percentage of traders, Kashmiris and Chinese being the chief contestants in the market (21).

The two most characteristic buildings of Lhasa are the temple of the Jo or Lord Buddha, known as Jokhang (Jo-bo-k'an) and the grandiose Potala Palace.

21. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 10.



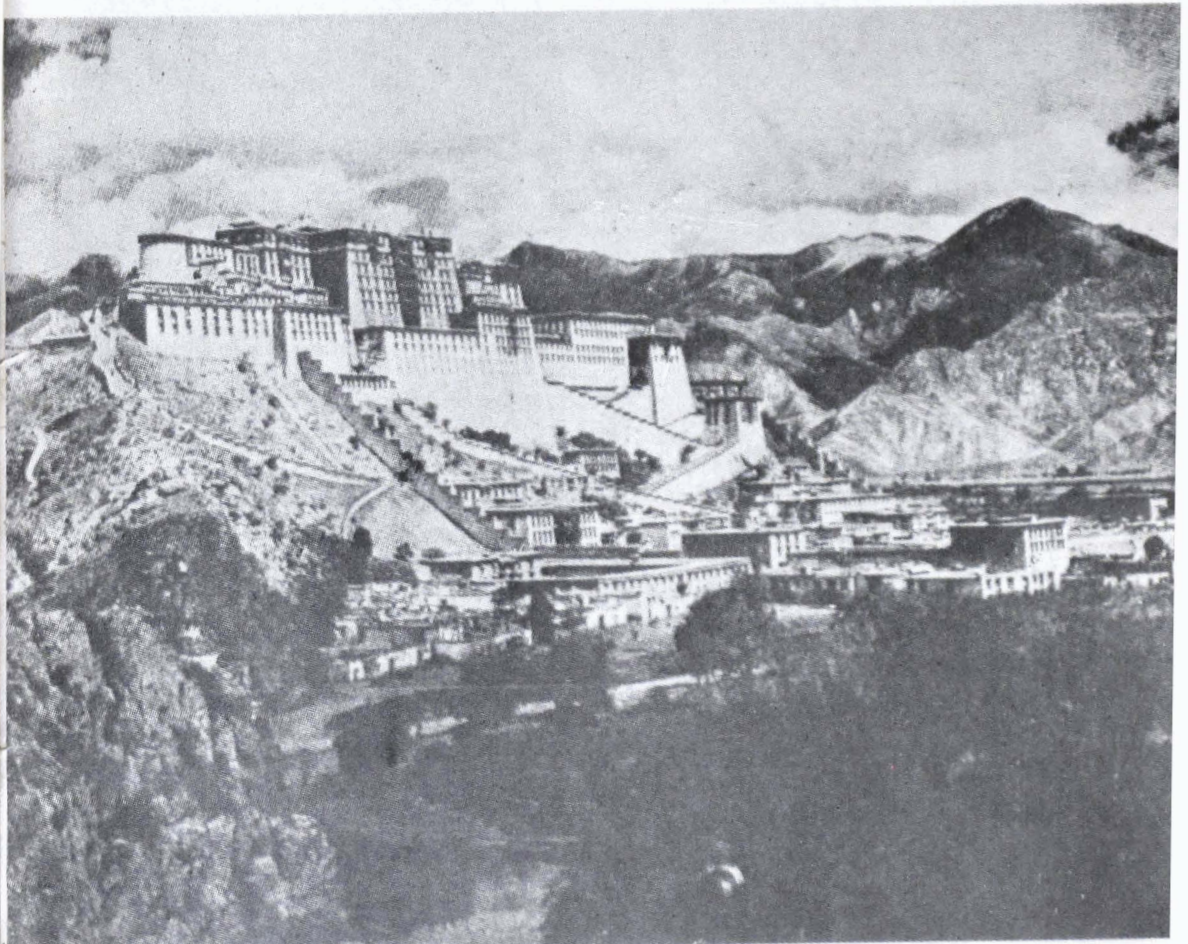
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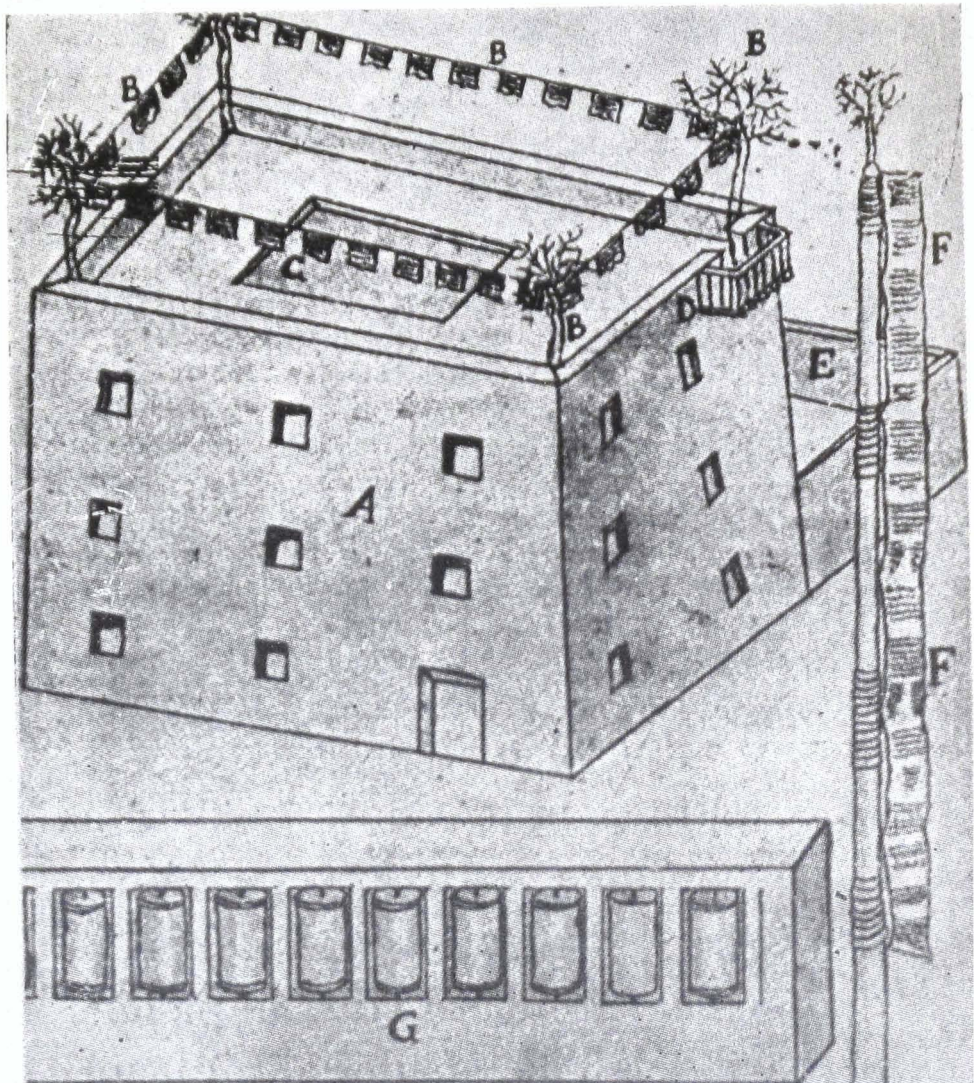
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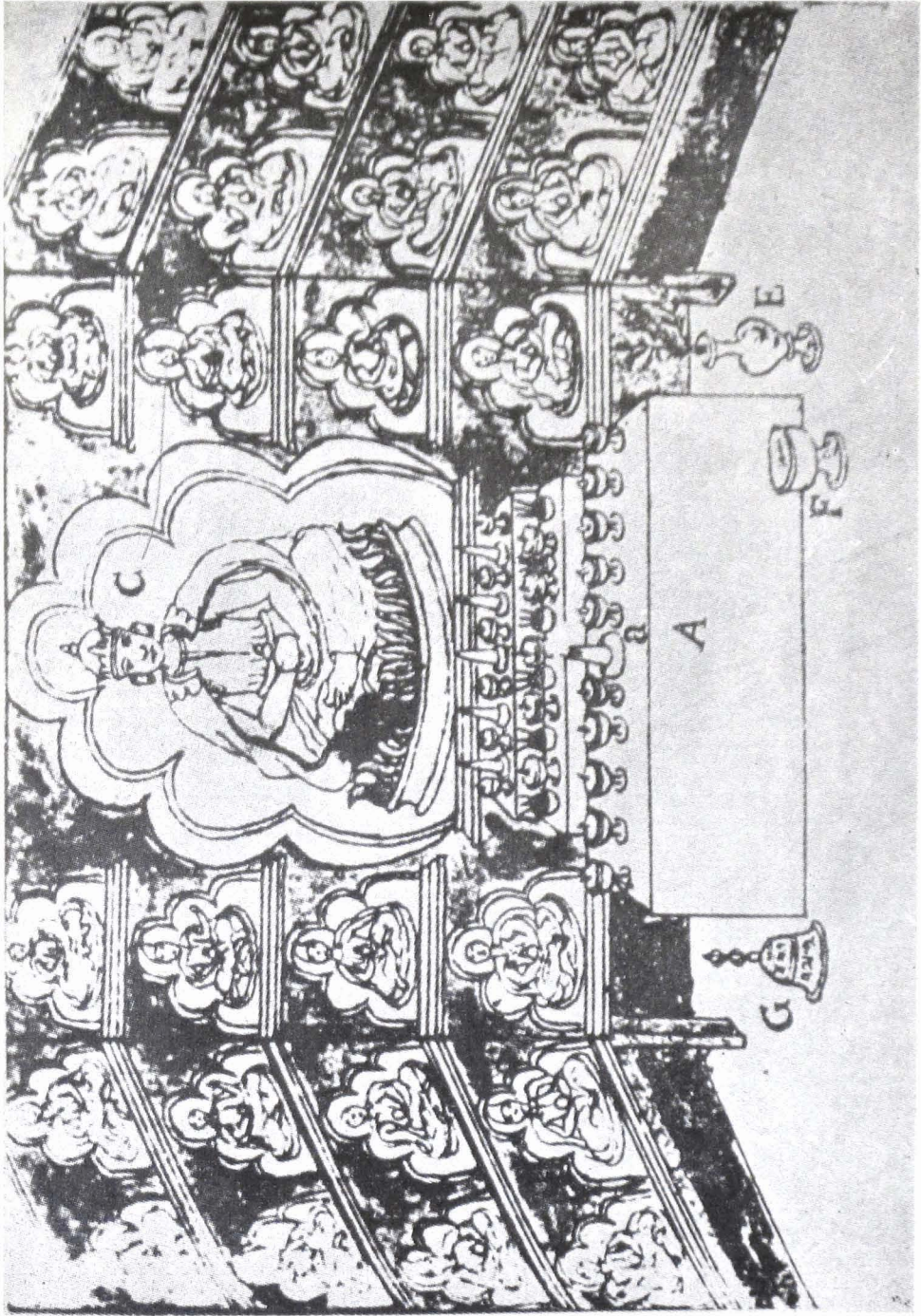
Orthodox and Unorthodox Swastika



The Potala Palace



Pattern of the best Houses in Tibet
Drawing by Fr. Cassian Beligatti



Family Altar in Tibet Drawing by Fr. Cassian Belgatti



Tibetan Charm, Jug and Bell

The Jokhang or Lhasa Cathedral, as it is styled by western writers, is the "Holy of Holies" of the Tibetans; the centre from which all the main roads are considered to radiate in every direction; the holy place where the statue of Lord Buddha, covered with the most sumptuous jewels, awaits on the high altar the multitudes of worshippers from every corner of central Asia. They prostrate themselves to the ground, touch reverently the statue and make a small offering. This consists of tea and barley flour, all piled up in the shape of a pyramid. A waiting monk pours lustral water tinted with saffron, into their cupped hands; part of which they drink and the rest they sprinkle over their heads as a sign of internal and external blessing and purification.

Externally the Jokhang is grand and imposing; the interior, however, is dark and heavy with strong odours from the fumes of incense and butter lamps, which shed a flickering gleam. Throughout the day, and particularly in the evenings and on public holidays, the temple is swarmed with pilgrims and worshippers who perform their ritual devotion. At night a team of monks stands guard over the treasures and refills the butter lamps. The main street of Lhasa runs in a circle around the Cathedral making it the hub of city life.

The other remarkable building, dominating the skyline, is the Potala Palace—the home of the Dalai Lama. It is one of the most amazing examples of architecture in Asia. Built against the slope of a low rocky hill, the Potala rises up one hundred meters from the ground and stretches out, from the left to the right, to a length of three hundred meters. Inside are more than 2,000 rooms. Another Vatican City transplanted in the mystical land of the east.

In the deep crimson section in the centre are located the main temples, the library and the government treasury. It is here, too, that the last remains of past Dalai Lamas are entombed in gold-encased "Chortens" or reliquary shrines, studded with precious stones and other most valuable treasures. On the western side of the palace are the quarters for the monks who attend on the Dalai Lama and for other high monastic dignitaries; the eastern wing is reserved for the private apartments of the Dalai Lama and for a school where a rigorously selected body of monks is strictly trained

for civil service and for their future political careers. Other apartments comprise council and audience chambers, small chapels, store rooms, army headquarters, office of the district magistrate and so forth. The rooms hold countless treasures accumulated over the centuries.

Gazing from a distance at the soaring majesty of the Potala Palace, pilgrims go down on their knees and touch the ground with their foreheads. They gaze in wonderment at the celestial vision in front of them, the dream of their whole life, the coveted goal of every true Tibetan.

The centre of attraction, of course, is not so much the splendour of the Potala Palace as the God-King, the Dalai Lama himself, the living Buddha, who abides within the walls of that holy place. Lamaist doctrine teaches that every living Dalai Lama is a transitory embodiment of the divinity on earth and that at his death the indwelling divinity passes on to his next re-incarnation (22).

When the Dalai Lama passes away to "the heavenly field", they seek his successor among the children born after his death. They consult oracles, look for portents and signs, birthmarks, but the final test is that the child must be able to pick out from an array of similar articles, those which belonged to the departed Dalai Lama. Once the test has proved successful, all present fall upon their knees. The enthronement ceremony follows soon after ; meanwhile the lucky child is given all attention due to his exalted position and is gradually brought up in the manner which behoves his unique position.

The Dalai Lama is the temporal ruler of Tibet and the Spiritual head of an army of monks and nuns. He rules the country, in temporal affairs, through a mixed body of ministers and officials, chosen from amongst the ranks of monks and lay people. He governs the religious section of

22. Contrary to common belief, the first missionaries reported that Dalai Lama, though immortal, is not worshipped as a god, but is specially venerated as a man in whom the spirit of the Supreme abides in a particular manner (Nuovo Ramusio, part I, pp. 38, 41, 55 and elsewhere).

his subjects through the help of the Panchen or Tashi Lama, his deputy in all religious matters.

Within the holy city of Lhasa there are five monasteries for men and one convent for women, of very rigid observance, all crowded with hundred of inmates. The temple of medicine, for medicine too is part and parcel of the religious system, stands on a hill-top to the west of the city, opposite the Potala Palace. All this made the capital a hallowed place and a seat of learning (23).

In the vicinity of the city there are three great monasteries of Ganden, Drepung and Sera, the three pillars of the religious, cultural and political life of Tibet. They run their own universities, which grant degrees in Buddhist disciplines and are inhabited by thousands of cowled monks (estimated at 20-25,000), whose sprawling habitations cover an area of a middle size town.

Ganden (dGa'-ldan), forty kilometers east of Lhasa, on the left bank of the Kyichu river, is the oldest monastery of the Yellow Order. It claims to have been founded by Tsong-kha-pa (1358-1419), the medieval reformer and organiser of modern orthodox Tibetan Buddhism. The two monasteries, Drepung and Sera, were established at a later date by his disciples.

Drepung ('Bras-spuns) is nine kilometers to the west of Lhasa at the foot of the hills which flank the plain on the north. It is the greatest monastery in the world, housing alone 10,000 monks. Lower down is the home of the greatest mystery of Tibet, the national oracle, invariably consulted by the government before any important decision is taken.

Sera (Se-ra) is situated on the acclivity of the hills, five kilometers to the north of the city, close to the "Pilgrims' Road", which brought pilgrims from Mangolia into the Tibetan capital. The monastery is remarkable for its shrines and gardens and for the multitude of stone houses, each accommodating, in small cells, between fifty and sixty monks.

23. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 25.

The monasteries of Drepung and Sera are made the testing ground of every young Dalai Lama before their official coming of age. There he gives proof of his maturity by taking part in religious discussions.

It was evident that religion held a large place in the life of the people. Tibet was rightly called the most religious country in the world. The land was dotted with an enormous number of monasteries and nunneries (about 3,000 of them) nestled up in the mountain side or hewed into rocks where 10-15 per cent of the total population retired to a life of prayer and penance (24). Candidates were accepted at an early age, around seven or eight years. They were placed in the charge of older monks, who tutored them in reading, writing and the memorizing of extensive passages from Buddhist Scriptures. Promising pupils were then put through a course of religious studies till they graduated in one of the theological universities. Those who failed in their studies, either returned to secular life or were assigned menial tasks around the monasteries. Special aptitudes were also taken into consideration—monks, for instance, with artistic taste were put to work adorning chapels, and men with the gift of healing were sent to one of the two famous schools of medicine and so forth.

These self-contained religious communities were richly endowed with landed property and supported as well by generous contributions from the government treasury. They were democratic in their internal organisation, with a proper hierarchy and different grades of initiation, a thing which made them resemble strikingly to the system in force in Catholic monasteries. Almost every Tibetan family aspired that a son would become a monk, not only for pious reasons but also because monasticism offered the best avenue to success and influence for those who did not belong to the nobility. At the top of the Lamaist hierarchy were the administrators and the contemplatives—the ecclesiastico-politicians and the saints.

24. The memorial to the King of Spain, 1738, compiled under the inspiration of Fr. Francis Horace, reckoned that about 300,000 people were monks and nuns at the time (Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 182).

The Lamaist monastic orders were divided into two main sects—the Red Hats and the Yellow Hats. The former were the older and more lenient. They could marry and live together with their wives and the children in monasteries. Their whole behaviour was more akin to a secular state of life than to the religious one. The Yellow Hats were a reformed sect, which dates back to the early fourteenth century, when a more stringent system, enforcing celibacy, abstinence from alcoholic drinks and rigid obedience to discipline, was introduced. In due course the Yellow Hats became predominant, constituting, so to say, “The Established Church”, headed by the Dalai Lama.

The ordinary Tibetan too, dressed in his characteristic long belted gown, was exceedingly pious. Religion was for him the chief thought of his mind and the main aspiration of his heart, the only preoccupation in life. Art, Literature and music were an expression of his religious feelings, as it used to be in the olden days in the west. Unharried by the call of civilisation, he spent his days in earning a meagre living, while the rest of the time was devoted to the exercise of religion and piety. Even the most humble home had its own chapel, or altar on which to offer the sacrifice of prayer ; while prayer-wheels, Buddhist rosaries, sacred images, religious symbols and banners could be seen everywhere. Lhasans and pilgrims constantly traversed the sacred way around the temple of Lord Buddha and the Potala Palace (eight kms. circuit) performing the ritual circumambulation as a work of merit. Muleteers and yak drivers on caravan routes paused at intervals to mutter their prayers or to chant incantations. In short, the whole land resound with the religious spirit of its people.

Unfortunately, however, the old religion, the religion of Bon, which held its sway all over the country before the introduction of Buddhism, still made its presence felt in the daily life of the people. This lowered the dignity of Buddhism, mixing it up with the practices of superstitious, animistic cult. Fear of some unknown power gripped the mind of every Tibetan. Every natural phenomenon (a thunder, a flood, an eclipse) was correlated to evil spirits. Every dark spot (a cave, a hole in the wall, a crack in the rock) was

filled with evil spirits. Hence prayer wheels turned without ceasing, prayer flags fluttered in the air, prayer-lamps burnt in every home, charms and amulets were worn on the person in order to propitiate or to ward off these evil spirits. The sub-soil, rich in borax and other minerals, was left untapped for fear of disturbing the spirit of the ground. Spells and incantations forced their way into the daily ritual. There was the Absolute, impersonal and aloof, but together with it there was also the ju-ju, the sorcerer which was also most powerful. Every village, every town, the nation itself had its own conjurer or oracle. Nothing could be undertaken, in private or in public, without consulting him. He was more feared than respected because he held sternly in his hands the destiny of the people and of the country (25)

An outsider would have found himself suddenly thrown into a new strange world, where everything was vague, undefined and mysterious. Nevertheless, the people were happy, peace-loving and friendly with respect for tradition and a desire for an uncomplicated way of life. Hospitality and friendship were easily extended to strangers and foreigners once they succeeded in gaining their confidence. Death had no secret or terror for them because they knew that the end of the solitary road there was the transmigration, the passing of the soul into another form of existence, in conformity with the inevitable law of karma.

Religion and environment helped in framing a *modus vivendi* that gave Tibet its peculiar characteristics. There were three main social groups; the religious, the nobles, and the peasants. Those who really mattered belonged to the first two social groups; the peasants were like the serfs, an anonymous crowd, without personality and voice. Outside the monasteries, the system was feudal. There was unequal distribution of wealth between the landed aristocracy and the poor toiling masses. Polyandry kept the birth rate low in a land where the soil, rugged and barren as it was, could only afford food for the few. The natural and voluntary isolation of Tibet from the outside

25. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 27-28.

world rendered it static like the everlasting snow that rests on the lonely Himalayan peaks.

These were, in short, the conditions of the new field of work that awaited the first two missionaries as they set foot in the Tibetan capital.

As it will be remembered, they had come to Tibet in the expectation of finding some sprinklings of Christianity and in the hope of reviving those smouldering embers. All their toil and labour were based on this assumption. As they looked round for signs of the lost faith, they seemed to discover strange similarities to the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Incarnation, Virgin birth, and many other Christian tenets. The Greek Cross (really the swastika) marked clearly every main doorway in the city. Monks wore the rosary around their neck or fingered it as they walked down the streets. Divine Office was chanted alternately in the monasteries by the two sections of the choir, just as it is done in the west. It was all confusion and misleading. Was this the land of the lost Christian communities of which they had so often heard from merchants and travellers? Or was all this a mere hallucination? This missionaries could not tell exactly, but they continued to believe that the message of the Gospel was once preached to the people of Tibet.

As they plodded on to Lhasa, the Prefect and Fr. Francis Mary were again told by some traders that "the Worshippers of the Cross" did exist in the vast land of central Asia. There was even a talk of venturing farther afield in quest of them, like wandering prospectors in search of gold. The thought, however, of overstepping the territorial limits assigned to them by the Congregation of Propaganda, and the experience of the long disastrous journey made so far, were deterrent enough to give up the idea.

"The Worshippers of the Cross", a group of people which became known by that name, did actually exist in north-east China, in the Shansi province, near the Great Wall. Their ancestors, Christians of the Greek rite had come to China in the eleventh century with the conquering Mongols. They used to make a cross in the air with their hand over food and

drink. This external sign made them to be known by people of other faiths as "The Adorers of the Cross". But the group became virtually extinct, absorbed into the Buddhist Mohammedan folds, but the appellation still stuck to them. No one can say how far they were responsible for the belief that the mysterious land of Cathay was inhabited by lost Christian settlements (26).

Humble Beginnings

Beginnings are always humble and hard and the foundation of the Tibetan Mission was particularly so. Enormous difficulties awaited the first missionaries there. The task of learning the language was truly of gigantic proportions, for there were no dictionaries, nor grammars, written in a comprehensible tongue upon which they could lay their hands and make a start. Moreover, they could not avail themselves of the service of a language teacher or interpreter due to their grinding poverty. The only course to be followed was to mix with the people and learn from the people. Mistakes and blunders did not matter, provided they made themselves understood somehow.

The Tibetan language belongs to the Indo-China family and is closely related to Burmese. Like Chinese, Tibetan is a monosyllable language, using intonation and stress instead of inflection. The Tibetan alphabet consists of 30 consonants and 5 vowels ; literary spelling vastly differs from phonetic transcription. There are, besides, two forms of script, both in print and in writing. It is to be noted further, that the literary or written language, used by the upper-class, and the common parlance of the people, used by the lower class, are so far apart, as to give the impression of two different languages. The upper-class used a cultured form of speech or an aristocratic jargon while the other a patois or an illiterate manner of expression. The difficulties of learning the language were therefore hard for a beginner with no experience of oriental languages and no mentor to give him a helping hand.

26. *The Wise man from the West* by Wincent Cronin, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1955, pp. 220-226.

If one tried to adapt oneself to the environment, the manners and customs of the people, their food and diet, their mentality and way of life, it called for great flexibility of mind.

Food, to illustrate a single point, was at first particularly difficult to get accustomed to. The staple food of Tibet (known as rtsam-pa) is cheap and sustaining but unappetising and monotonous. A western traveller, who lived on it for nearly three months, gives us the following description :

“It (rtsam-pa) is a parched barley meal, and can be mistaken even in good light, for fine sawdust. You eat it in tea, with butter if you have butter, or melted mutton fat if you haven’t got butter, or with nothing if you have got neither. You fill your shallow wooden bowl with tea, then you let the butter melt in the tea (the butter is usually rancid and has a good cheesy flavour) ; then, you put a handful of rtsam-pa in it. At first it floates ; then, like a child’s castle of sand, its foundations begin to be eaten by the liquid. You coax it with your fingers until it is more or less saturated and has become a paste ; this you kneed until you have a kind of doughy cake in your hand and the wooden bowl is empty and clean” (27).

As there was very little variety of food in Tibet for poor people, they lived generally on rtsam-pa and butter-tea all year round, morning, noon and night. Rice, mutton, dried fruit and the like were costly luxury ; vegetables were a rarity, except for a few radishes and some paprika (28).

All this, of course, was a mere preparation for the real task ahead ; I mean, when the priests would actually be

27. News from Tartary, a Journey from Peking to Kashmir, by Peter Fleming, London 1936, p. 108.

28. As every one knows, Buddhist are vegetarians, but in Tibet they do eat meat. This is a custom which has come down to the present day from the early pre-Buddhist times. The rigorous climatic conditions require lots of calories to keep oneself strong and fit, and so the Tibetan Buddhists have come to a compromise; they do object to killing (to any sort of killing) but they do not think it sinful to go to the shambles and purchase the meat of slaughtered animals. Butchers, however, are regarded as sinners and treated as outcasts.

engaged in the work of conversion. For the present, however, it was enough for Frs. Joseph and Francis Mary to pave the way, in prayer, study and deed as a prelude to that culminating moment of their mission. Humbly and inostensibly they drew up a modest programme of activity and set down to work. To begin with, it was a good thing that they could go about dressed in the rough brown habit of the Order. This alone served as a means of propaganda and to focus the attention of the people on them. The rest would come as a matter of course. The inhabitants of Lhasa soon noticed that these two gentlemen, who were thought at first to be Kashmiri traders, were quite different from the other foreigners in the town. They did not do any business, lived and dressed very poorly and their whole behaviour pointed to the fact that they were men of a class by themselves, out of the ordinary calling of life (29).

During the first months of their stay in the capital, some suspicion was even entertained about their real character, and their nature of work. In an interview with the Regent, Fr. Francis Mary allayed all misgivings by declaring that they had come to Lhasa just to see the place and then move on into some other country. As for going to China, he added, it was still too cold to start on the journey ; as soon as the season warmed up they would plan their future programme. Speaking about the way they spent their time, Fr. Francis Mary stated that he and his companion were doctors and wherever they went they practised medicine for God's sake. This seemed to satisfy the inquirer (30).

When it became clear that the two Fathers were men set apart, consecrated to God's service, then they began to be held in great esteem by all. The impact made by the missionaries on public imagination was so favourable that they became known as the "White Lamas"—a title of great respect and distinction (31).

29. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 37.

30. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 35.

31. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 37, 39, 43.

A room was set aside in the small apartment for Divine service. The altar, the holy pictures hanging from the wall, the sanctuary lamp, the divine office chanted alternately by the two priests was another humble way of advertising the faith. The chapel soon became a source of attraction. People started peeping in and then furtively slipped through the door, till it became a familiar sight. Buddhist monks also entered the chapel, paused for a while to admire the Cross, showed signs of profound reverence and even prostrated themselves to the ground and kissed some of the religious objects (32). In their inexperience, the new comers felt elated and thought that if they could master the language, it would not be difficult to make converts. The Tibetans were already Christians at heart.

Fr. Francis Mary, who already had long experience as a doctor, began to treat patients, while Fr. Joseph attended to the house chores. Whenever free from other work they would plunge into the study of the language till the night candle had burnt itself out. Luckily, medical herbs grew in abundance round Lhasa or could be easily procured from the local market, and other medical compounds could as easily be had. This enabled the missionary doctor to continue his practice even when the supply of medicines brought from Europe ran out. So successful was he in his profession that his name was mentioned even in the "Peking Gazette", the journal which was published in the Chinese capital (33).

Within a short time, like a blazing fire, word spread far and wide, that an unusual type of a man had appeared in the city. He was a doctor, treated everyone, high and low, alike, without charging anything, not even the cost of the medicine he administered. He did it solely out of love for his God and his brethren in God. This made a great impression. There were a lot of doctors and quacks in the capital, to be sure, but none had ever seen one like that

32. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, 51, 56.

33. Liber Memorialis O. F. M. Cap., Quarto Jam Pleno Saeculo Ab Ordine Condito, Romae 1928, p. 305; Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 68.

bearded foreigner, who not only served everybody with a joyful heart, but seemed pleased whenever patients called or asked for him.

There lived in Lhasa a gentleman from Turkestan. He had been under medical treatment for sometime, but neither doctor, nor medicine nor incantation seemed to help him out of his illness, till finally he was given up as a hopeless case. At this critical juncture, Fr. Francis Mary stepped into the picture. Through patience and skill he succeeded in restoring the desperate man to health. Happy at the miraculous recovery the gentleman, in gratitude, wanted to reward his benefactor, but all pecuniary offers were firmly declined. The only thing which was found acceptable to the French missionary was the gift of a slave child six or seven years old. This child was the first Christian flower blossomed in the desolate garden of Lhasa. Soon, however, it was to wing its flight to heaven. At the same time, a Newari from Nepal, the servant of an Armenian business man in the capital, was received into the Church. He was given the name of John, after the beloved disciple of Christ (34).

Not only did lay people trust the new foreign doctor implicitly, but also monks and lamas began going to him, feeling sure that his healing touch would do wonders. Fr. Francis Mary treated successfully many of them. On one occasion he cured a high-ranking lama of his ailments. He himself was a medical practitioner and had been appointed to be the personal physician of the Regent and the Dalai Lama (35).

The practice of medicine was surely the first step in the right direction. It served to introduce the priests to the public and to gain popularity. Once they had won the confidence of the people, they could easily find their way to speak of God and of the Christian religion. More could be accomplished if the missionaries had a sound knowledge of mechanics, mathematics and astronomy. These scientific subjects were keenly sought after by the intelligentsia of the

34. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 56 ; part III, p. 30, Giornale p. 104.

35. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 35, 43.

country. Even here the resourceful Frenchman knew how to acquit himself with credit. One day a clock was sent to him by the Regent with the request to repair it. It was a good opportunity to display his ability and make a good impression on the ruling class of Lhasa and he did not miss it. In taking the clock back, duly repaired, the Regent was pleased to entertain the Fathers to a long friendly conversation, inquired after their religion, showed great appreciation for their humanitarian work and at the end took leave by stating that he was greatly edified at their manner of living and at the faith they professed. Back home the two of them had a pleasant surprise. The Regent to show his gratitude sent some presents consisting of rice, butter and some fine silk articles for the chapel. It was indeed a God sent gift as the two Fathers were already struggling against the ugly specter of starvation (36).

In the course of some months, the two missionaries had established themselves into the life of the country and in the hearts of the people. Their humble and unassuming way of going about had gained the confidence and the respect of all. On the other hand, their readiness to help and to serve had slowly brushed aside all suspicion in regard to their presence in Lhasa. Finally, they were accepted as a familiar part of the landscape.

The main difficulties seemed to have been surmounted, except, of course, for the still precarious economic conditions. The arrival of the three members of the second expedition, which was hailed by all with boundless joy and relief, made it possible to re-organise the distribution of forces in the two working sectors of the mission and tentatively make a bid to establish a new outpost at Patna. This would greatly facilitate communications between Chandernagore and Lhasa. There were now six missionaries to depend upon in the consolidation of the work which had just been started.

The three new comers had originally been detailed to strengthen the mission manpower in Lhasa, but not all could

36. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 37.

go there at the moment. Lack of accommodation and fear that an addition to the already existing staff might strain the financial conditions to breaking point, necessitated a revision of plan. News had been received of late that it would not be advisable to despatch the new recruits to the Tibetan Capital as the two Fathers there were under the increasing necessity of withdrawing to avoid starvation. Nevertheless, Fr. Dominic was impatient to go lest the mission should suffer for want of self sacrificing spirit and a determined will to do the impossible to keep it alive and make it prosper. It was, therefore, decided that Fr. Dominic and Bro. Michael Angelo should take up their post at Lhasa at an early date. Fr. Felix of Montecchio was to make a new beginning at Patna, while Fr. John had to remain at Chandernagore to continue the work which had already been started. Willing to share in the cost of the expedition and to collect something also that would prop up the financial situation in Lhasa, the two Fathers, who were to remain behind in India, pooled their resources and contributed their mite. Fr. John joyfully surrendered whatever was left over of his allocation, which was meant for his journey to Lhasa, and Fr. Felix deprived himself of Rs. 200/-, the little he had saved by living frugally. It was next to nothing, compared with the great need for funds, but still an inspiring gesture and a noble act of encouragement to live by (37).

On 1st November, 1708, Fr. Dominic and his companion (38) footed their way through the green plains of the Gangetic Valley into the dense malarious jungles of the Nepal terrain and then on to the breath-taking heights of the Himalayan mountains. Made wise by the experience of the members of the first expedition they travelled incognito, dressed in the garb of the indigenous religious mendicants, hoping somehow that the ruse would spare them the machinations of the toll-keepers and help in saving the much-needed money for a better cause. They were partly successful in their attempt.

37. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 45 ; Part III, p. 30.

38. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 46.

At the end of February, 1709, the two missionaries walked into Kathmandu like unknown travellers. A chance meeting with Fr. Francis Mary made them reveal who they were. This created a situation that, if it brought relief to the French Missionary, was also a source of embarrassment to them. Starved, sickly and dispirited, Fr. Francis Mary had left Lhasa at the end of January 1709 to come down to India, recoup his failing health and possibly go on to Rome to report on the hopeless affairs of the Tibetan Mission. On reaching Kathmandu in February he was ordered to pay a heavy duty under the penalty of being held up in the city till the amount was paid. The poor Father was helpless. He had no money on him and was looking to heaven for a sign of deliverance. He had heard that some missionaries might be passing through Kathmandu on their way to Lhasa, but the information could not be confirmed and future prospects were grim. As good luck would have it, Fr. Dominic and Bro. Michael Angelo were strolling one day in the town when unexpectedly they came across the aged missionary, who, by the way, was going about dressed in the habit of the Order. They approached him and made known their identity. Lifting up his hands to heaven, radiant with joy, Fr. Francis Mary thanked God for having sent him the two confreres at such a critical time. Briefly he related his story and concluded that unless he paid a road-tax of Rs. 100/- he would be kept as a virtual prisoner in Kathmandu. Fr. Dominic promised to help but begged of him not to tell any one that he and his companions were Europeans, otherwise there would be no end of trouble. In his happiness and in an unguarded moment, Fr. Francis Mary gave them away. It was only after a hard bargaining that the ransom price for the three unfortunate people was reduced to Rs. 150/-. A bitter blow to their rock-bottom finances (39).

Fr. Dominic and Bro. Michael Angelo strode into the Forbidden City on the 19th May, 1709. There they found the lonely, emaciated Prefect who bore the marks of starvation and hardships written large on his face. Fr. Francis

39. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 46 ; part III p. 29.

Mary arrived in Patna in a state of sheer exhaustion and there the veteran missionary waited till his death, which occurred in May 1709 (40).

Appealing for help

So far nothing much was achieved, but the foundations of the mission were laid, in spite of the heavy draw-backs that dogged every step of its progress. But the seed of disintegration was gradually sprouting and gnawing within and, if not checked in time, might bring the undertaking to a premature end. Lack of funds and irregular remittances gave cause for anxiety from the very start. They had waved good-bye to their homeland almost four years ago, but no financial help had been forthcoming. They had to be satisfied with the little they had taken with them. When Frs. Joseph and Francis Mary arrived in Lhasa they were nearly penniless. The journey expenses were much higher than one could anticipate. The loss of money suffered in the journey drained still further their fast-dwindling resources. Fr. Francis Mary had lost everything in the shipwreck and it was only the collection he made at Chander-nagore among Catholics and Protestants that kept them still alive (41).

It was true that the French missionary practised medicine with a fair measure of success and that he did some other odd jobs besides. It was, however, an unswerving principle of all the Fathers in Tibet never to accept any remuneration which might be given them on account of their services. This principle was strictly adhered to even at the cost of starvation. The motive behind this was that if they accepted anything in the form of recompense for their work, people might think that they were making a living for themselves under the guise or pretext of religion. Moreover, begging in Tibet was considered disgraceful and the poor Fathers did not want to resort to it in order to jeopardise the future of mission. The only thing they did when money was literally forced on them was to tell clients to go and

40. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 44-45.

41. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 40.

buy with it some medical herbs or other similar ingredients needed in the compounding of medicines so that other people too might benefit by their ministrations (42).

Since the beginning of 1708, it was becoming increasingly evident that the mission was faced with an early extinction unless some kind of help came to its rescue. Anyhow, to make it last a little longer, trusting that Divine Providence would not desert His children, they started cutting down their expenses to the bare minimum. We read that their monthly expenses were reduced to such a paltry sum that, exchanged into Indian currency, it would be equal to about Rs. 10/- or Rs. 12/-. They rigorously rationed themselves, like those lost on the high seas, looking forward to the hour of deliverance and praying that their scanty supply might last till then. In their desperate attempt to live and survive the ordeal they had to live like the poorest of the poor. Their misery and squalor were so real and oppressive that the Fathers were not ashamed to live on roots and herbs like primitive savages (43).

Fr. Joseph of Ascoli would not give up the fight for survival without tapping all possible resources at his disposal. Some Chinese Christians at Lhasa had reported to the Fathers that there was a Catholic mission station at Sining in the Shen-si Province, to the north west of China, fifty days' March from Lhasa. Not knowing the name of the missionary in charge of the station and his exact address Fr. Joseph ventured to write him a letter in Latin, dated 11th January, 1708, trusting his Guardian Angel to have it delivered to the right person. He wrote expressing his kind regards and the pleasure to be able to communicate with a European and a fellow missionary. The letter went on giving a short history, or rather a summary of the Tibetan Mission and it rounded up by begging to be excused

42. Die aktensammlung des Bischofs Anastasius Hartmann zu einer Geschichte der Kapuzinermissionen in Tibet, Nepal und Hindostan, Erstmals herausgegeben von P Adelhm Jann, OFM. Cap., Luzern 1925, p. 28 ; Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 58.

43. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 204-5.

if the sender requested to be favoured with a little help as the two Fathers in Lhasa found themselves on the verge of starvation. This letter set off a chain of reaction, which made the round of China.

By sheer stroke of good fortune, the appeal for help fell into the hands of Fr. Anthony of Castrocaro who was working at Hsi-an fu (modern Sian or Changan) in the same Shen-si province. The Father sent it on to his ecclesiastical Superior, the Right Rev. Mgr. Bernardine della Chiesa, Bishop of Peking. His Excellency forwarded the same in original, accompanied by a strong recommendation, to Charles Thomas Maillard Card. de Tournon, the same Prelate to whom we referred earlier in this chapter, and who was then at Macao. The kind-hearted Bishop of Peking responded immediately to the appeal for help and remitted a sum equivalent to Rs. 45/-. In his covering letter His Excellency promised to send more and encouraged the Fathers in Lhasa to persevere in their good work, seeing sure that Divine Providence would help them in their needs. The amount was transmitted to the Father stationed at Hsi-an fu and through the good offices of an Armenian merchant, a Franciscan Tertiary, by the name of Gabriel, it was finally delivered to the Fathers in Tibet. The missionary at Hsi-an fu, in a note addressed to Fr. Joseph of Ascoli, regretted his inability to be of any immediate assistance as he himself was in great straits. For five years now he had received nothing from Rome. But he promised to recommend the case to those in authority and expressed the hope to send something later as he had heard that ships from Europe had arrived in China. If there was something for him he would surely share it with his commissioners in Tibet.

Meanwhile the Card. Legate had already been informed by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda about the establishment of the Capuchin mission in the mystic land of Tibet and was urged to do all in his power to come to its aid. Rome had also intimated to His Eminence that as all available means to send the annual allocation to Tibet had been tried, but due to wars on land and piracy at sea, it had failed, so all responsibility rested on him for the present to

render assistance. The Cardinal in turn approached Fr. Anthony of Catrocaro, the Pro Vicar Apostolic of Kan-su, in the north west of China. He was thought to be in a better financial position and the right man who could render assistance to fellow missionaries in Tibet as he was their neighbour, and a good next-door neighbour at that, living at a distance of sixty day's journey from Lhasa. In short, the will to help was there, great and sincere, but, as a matter of fact, the conditions of the missionaries in China, though slightly better, were not such as to render any appreciable assistance to those labouring in Tibet. They too were experiencing the same difficulties and were practically left to themselves to fight their battles and fend their way.

A more substantial contribution might have been received but for an unexpected turn of events which upset the then favourable situation and brought things to a climax. The Cardinal Legate, the mainstay of the missions in the East, died in solitary confinement during those troubled years. At the same time a false rumour had been circulated among the missionaries in China that the Fathers in Tibet had left for Bengal. The departure of Fr. Francis Mary might have been responsible for this rumour.

The Friars who had come to the help of their Capuchin brethren in Lhasa belonged to the Observant branch of the great Franciscan family. With their headquarters at Peking they had established, since 1701, a net-work of missionary stations in the heart of China. Of particular interest is the fact that at Hsi-an fu they actually found some native Chinese Christians and also a few more scattered in the neighbouring towns and villages. There is nothing to show whether these were the descendants from the lost Christian communities of mediaeval times or immigrant converts from some other parts of China (44).

The great distress of the Prefect did not prevent him from writing pressing letters to his confreres on the other side of the Himalaya. Feverish inquiries were made if by chance the annual allocation had reached the Indian shores or

44. Terzorio, pp. 253-257 ; Nuovo Ramusio, part I, pp. 63-68.

whether there was any hope of some relief, but no one could give a definite answer. Rome, on the other hand, had not forgotten the ambassadors of Christ, whom she had sent out into the world like the apostles of old, but, as we have already mentioned, communications had become risky and uncertain. Meanwhile, the poor Fathers up in Lhasa were languishing away.

One of the Prefect's begging letters reached Chandernagore just after the arrival of the members of the second expedition. Moved to pity at his plight, and anxious at the same time to prolong the life of mission till the dawn of better days, they squeezed their meagre resources and a letter of exchange for Rs. 272/- to be paid in Lhasa was sent to him through an Armenian trader. It was an elixir of life, but the agony persisted (45).

Lingering on

Fr. Dominic of Fano reluctantly agreed to play the role of a doctor and continue the good work started by the late Fr. Francis Mary of Tours. He forced himself into the profession, moved first by the exhortations of his confreres and then realising how the medical practice could be used as a very good means of apostolate.

The Prefect, exhausted in body and spirits, had already decided to follow the example of his first companion and come down to India, but the unexpected appearance in Lhasa of the two new comers made him change his mind. Their company cheered him a bit and toned up his morale. He now felt that his presence was essential to facilitate their task and make available to them the fruit of his own experience. This thought made him hang on a little longer, but not for very long. Since the beginning of 1710 the situation had turned so bad that something had to be done about it. With no funds or food in the house, without any news as to when some relief might come, with no letter of encouragement or word of comfort, their morale had sunk so low as to give way to a sense of frustration and near despair. And so the final, heart-rending decision was taken.

45. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 42.

All had to quit and that too before the winter set in and blocked the wind-swept snow-clad mountain route. Fr. Dominic of Fano, however, a man of courage and determination, asked to hold on alone, to cling on to the sorely tried but dearly beloved mission.

Before parting they came to an understanding—if a remittance from Rome had arrived in Bengal, Fr. Johan was to take it up immediately to Lhasa and remain there as Fr. Dominic's companion. If otherwise, a letter of obedience would be sent to the lonely missionary in the capital directing him to abandon the field and withdraw into Bengal (46).

With a twinge in his heart and tears rolling down his sunken cheeks, the Prefect embraced Fr. Dominic in the late summer of 1710 and made for the south. He was accompanied by Bro. Michael Angelo and John, the Nepalese convert. Shuffling along the Chumbi Valley and climbing over the high mountain passes of Sikkim, the party safely reached Purnea, in the Moghul territory. South of Purnea, at a place called Karhagola (where the route coming down from Tibet and Sikkim intersected with the road that went from Patna to Chandernagore) the travellers parted ways. The Brother was told to proceed to Chandernagore and replace Fr. John of Fano, while the poor Prefect dragged himself on to Patna. He staggered into the city like a ghost, a man more dead than alive, like a Rip Van Winkle. A hospitable gentleman of the English Factory kindly gave him shelter, but within a few days of his arrival, on the 20th December, 1710, his noble soul departed from this world (47). The fatigue of the long and painful journey, the anguish and untold hardships over the years brought him to a premature grave. He died at the still early age of 37, without the comforts of religion and the presence of a confrere to alleviate his last hours and close his dying eyes. Fr. Felix, the Vice-Prefect who was then stationed at Patna and whom the dead Prefect had hoped to meet and discuss with him the latest developments of the mission, had

46. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 30.

47. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 47.

temporarily absented himself. He had gone to Bengal to approach for the Sacrament of Confession, having had no opportunity to receive the Sacrament for about a year, and to attend to some other business.

Faithful to his promise the deceased Prefect had written earlier to Fr. John at Chandernagore to come and meet him at Patna. He had also told him that if any subsidy had of late arrived from Europe, he was to take it up to Lhasa as soon as possible and to remain there to keep company with Fr. Dominic. Happily, the much-needed manna had fallen from heaven like a flash of light amidst the oppressive gloom. Good Fr. John had left Chandernagore at the beginning of December, 1710, for Patna. At Rajmahal, the border town between Bengal and Bihar, he met at the caravanserai—a resting place for travellers—Bro. Michael Angelo. He had come thus far when his legs refused to carry him any further. Prostrated with disease and fatigue, he had stopped there in order to get strong enough to continue the journey. Still ridden with fever, and run down in health, the poor Brother arrived at last at Chandernagore in a hopeless condition. Rest and the care lavished on him by Fr. Felix, who had temporarily taken charge of the hospice, and the medical attention received at the hands of the French doctors in the station, soon gave him a new lease of life (48).

Having learnt from Bro. Michael Angelo that the Prefect had also suffered a lot in the treck and that he was not too well, Fr. John made haste to get into Patna, trusting to find him alive. On reaching the city he was told that the young Prefect had died eleven days earlier. Grieved and dazed at the news, Fr. John wandered about like a lost soul and for a day he could not speak to anyone or eat anything.

A resident Armenian Catholic hearing that a Catholic priest was in the station sent for him. The venerable old man greeted the despondent missionary with these words: “Be of good heart, Father, be of good heart, a saint has died in the city”; and went on to explain how on the Thursday, prior to his death, he had gone to see the Prefect at the English Factory to

48. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 32.

give him some medicine and to cheer him up. Smiling the dying man had replied—"My dear Sir, do not worry about me ; within three days I shall die. I know for certain that I will not recover from the sickness". In fact, the next Saturday, at dusk, the holy minister of God went to his eternal rest, the Armenian gentleman concluded. The prediction of his death and the happening of other future events he seemed to have foretold before passing away, caused a great sensation in the Christian community in Patna. The Prefect was buried with great reverence and high esteem in the Protestant cemetery of the English Factory (49).

Wrapped up in his sad thoughts, Fr. John gave the last blessing to grave of the heroic Prefect and resumed his journey. Striking east he took with him the Nepalese convert and some travelling documents of the deceased, which, he thought, would also be useful.

Going up the same beaten track of the late Prefect, Fr. John hastened to bring some consolation to the lonely figure now left on the Tibetan heights and to convey to him the sad news that the Prefect was no more in the land of the living. In Sikkim the poor Father fell dangerously ill. Alone in a foreign country, without any knowledge of the language, it must have been a prodigious task for him to struggle on in his sickness and nurse himself back to health. However, all was not so bad and was for the best. About this time the Regent at Lhasa had summoned the Maharaja of Sikkim, a tributary state, to come and pay his homage as an act of submission to the newly-installed puppet Dalai Lama. The Maharaja noting that Fr. John held a passport (any travelling document was then called a passport) issued by the Regent and thinking that he or some of his associates carried weight with the authorities in Lhasa, deemed it proper to add him to his retinue. In this way the Father enjoyed a privileged position with all the ease, comfort and advantages that go with it, such as free means of conveyance, the honour to be treated as a guest and so on. For 25 days it was a comfortable journey. Even when the hill pony could not negotiate the steep mountain trail, it was not

49. Terzorio, p. 267-268 ; Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 31.

difficult for the missionary to find men to carry him on their shoulders, though on these occasions he was made to pay heavily out of his own pocket.

On the Sikkim-Tibetan borders the Maharaja had to stop for a few days for some important state affairs. Fr. John was given the option either to tarry till the Maharaja had dealt with his state business or to make the rest of the journey on his own. Realising that the worst was over, and that he had not fully recovered from his illness, he preferred to hurry on to Lhasa. He felt that the company of Fr. Dominic and the complete rest he could take on arrival would be the best panacea to put him again on his feet. Late in May 1711, he had the joy at last to be at home in the small mission house at Lhasa. The four months spent between bed and convalescence spoke of the premium the poor Father had to pay as a consequence of his illness and of the one hundred and fifty days of hard travel (50).

Beyond Endurance

During the ten months Fr. Dominic remained all alone in the Tibetan capital he showed himself to be a man of faith and action. Undaunted by the lean days, and by the still bleaker prospects that lay ahead, the valiant Friar laboured on unsparingly, sustained by an abiding faith.

The practice of medicine had made him popular. He was in such great demand that he felt bound to carry on his profession even when he was unwell. Once he was bitten by a rabid dog which caused him fever for three continuous months. The pressure of work brought to bear upon him by people in high circles or of the moving entreaties of the patients themselves, compelled him to administer to all, though he himself badly needed rest and medical attention. People from every walk of life flocked to him with complete trust in his magic powers—in fact his medical skill was considered more than the magic of the white man. The successful treatment of the Regent's wife (Lha-bzan Khan was the Regent's name) figured amongst the most remarkable cures effected in the ranks of the elite in the capital.

50. Nuovo Ramusio, part III p. 32-33.

The example of his austere and ascetic life served to preach the faith more eloquently than any sermon. The spirit of poverty and detachment from the things of this world were an eye-opener to the Buddhist monks and to the ordinary lay people, so much so that they never ceased to comment upon it in the most bewildering terms. The Regent, talking to some of his intimate friends, once remarked "I do not understand who this white Lama is. He is not a trader because he does not carry on any business. He is not a knave because he is welcome everywhere like a friend ; enters into private homes and no one seems to complain about him, nay, all seem to trust him implicitly. If he is called to attend to a patient, he is immediately at his bed-side, without inquiring about his social status. If a medicine is needed he gives it freely ; when offered gold and silver, he turns it down on the plea that his religion commands him to do good to all for the sake of his God and out of love for men. I cannot really explain how a man can leave his country, his relations and friends, toil on for years to reach our land, pay for it out of his own pocket, and then serve our people with care and love without expecting anything for his labour. A religion that moves its followers to go all out to help our neighbour lovingly and disinterestedly must be truly a good one and quite above common human understanding."

These things were conveyed to Fr. Dominic by a government official who from the very beginning had let out a small apartment to the first missionaries. This government servant further stated that the Regent was aware that in China there were similar type of people. They also had come from a strange foreign country and professed a strange foreign law. Some Chinese natives were so enthralled by their manner of life, dedicated service, and wonderful teaching that they had become their followers. May be, so the Regent commented, that these White Lamas have come here for the same purpose. Fr. Dominic side-stepped the remark and simply pointed out that his religion forbade to make conversions by force, but if any one of his own accord and out of inner persuasion, became convinced of the truthfulness of the religion and was ready to embrace it, he

would be only too glad to enlist such a person among the followers of his belief. The Tibetan gentleman was deeply impressed, became more familiar with the Father and showed greater interest in all the things concerning the faith. Not satisfied with this heart to heart conversation, he asked to see the chapel and witness some of the ceremonies. He was all praise for the religious objects noticed and the explanation given (51).

A further step in the propagation of the faith was made when Fr. Dominic had the chance to speak to the Regent in person. They entered into conversation that covered a wide range of religious topics and opened up a new vista. The missionary did not precisely explain the motive of his activity and the purpose for which the white lamas are sent out into the wide non-Christian world, but he made it sufficiently clear. It was up to the Regent to understand and draw his own conclusion. This was a heartening and refreshing talk; the beginning of a road which seemed to lead to a fair start and to the ultimate goal.

Fr. Dominic had gradually come to realise that without a deeper knowledge of the language and the help of a catechism to acquaint the ordinary inquirer about the main tenets of the faith, it would not be possible to draw up a programme of missionary activity. So far quite a lot of his time had been taken up by the study and practice of medicine. A good thing in itself, no doubt, but not the whole thing. The practice of medicine went a long way to the sowing of the seed of Christianity but it was only an auxiliary means to an end. It was now more important to concentrate on the end itself and try a more direct form of apostolate. Though funds were lacking, he went on with his scheme all the same, fully convinced that a small catechism was equally essential to spread the faith as was daily bread for the sustenance of the body. Without trying it, he felt he would fail in his mission. Therefore, he engaged an interpreter (a lay man) and a scribe (a religious) for the purpose and agreed to pay them Rs. 2.50 and Rs. 3.00 per month respectively. The work went on slowly and under

51. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 34-35.

trying conditions, but it was finally brought to a successful end (52).

Zealous and enterprising as he was, Fr. Dominic thought he could do a little more for establishing the mission. It all went well, the apostolic field would not be confined to Lhasa alone, but branch off, like a vigorous and fruitful tree, in every direction. The capital could be made the base of the missionary forces which would operate in the surrounding districts. With this in mind, in 1711, he made an exploration tour, which took him to the province of Takpo (Dvags-po) in the south east of Tibet (53).

Casting his visionary glance in the far distance, Fr. Dominic seemed to see a pale, flickering light breaking over the land of the lamas. There was also a dim vision of the Cross in the distant horizon, but faint and languid like a shadowy figure. There was promise in the air and expectancy in the sky and great anticipation that the day may break, bright and clear. Soon, however, the scene was to change, moving fast to an anti-climax.

Fr. John had brought some pecuniary relief to the destitute mission. He had even taken a loan of Rs. 100/- and sold some odds and ends of the Chandernagore house to give it some economical stability, but now everything was reduced to the last farthing. Most of it had gone in paying debts contracted in the past, so that soon the two priests found themselves once again on the rocks.

The last ships of the season had already arrived from Europe. Did they bring anything for the Tibetan Missionaries? Some help, some hope to sustain them in the present critical circumstances? That is what all had ardently been praying for. Alas! once again they had to register a blank year. Sadly disappointed, and with a bleeding heart, the Vice-Prefect wrote on the 8th October, 1711, to the Superior at Lhasa informing him that for yet another year they had to go without any help from home. Hard-pressed for money and even in debt, poor Fr. Felix was in anguish

52. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 35.

53. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 54.

and pains realising on the one hand the urgent, instant need for funds, and on the other his inability to bring relief to his brethren in sheer distress.

The letter reached Fr. Dominic on 13th December (54). On reading it, his heart sank. There was now no hope and no time to be lost. A staggering dilemma confronted him with stark reality. He had to choose between quitting the mission before things became unbearable and before the season prevented him from leaving or face starvation and the fearful prospect of being carried off by a slow lingering death. The right of survival had priority claim. The two missionaries agreed to abandon Lhasa and to come down to the warm Indian climate. It broke their hearts, but there was no alternative and it could not be helped; the future was in God's hands. In Patna and Chandernagore there were Catholics and Protestants always ready to help. Here they could beg for their daily bread, a thing they refused to do in Tibet. It made a difference. They felt that begging among people of the same faith, who already knew them, and were acquainted with the ideal of poverty professed by the Mendicant Orders, was quite different from begging among non-Christians, for the latter may misinterpret their action and mistake them for loafers.

Christmas 1711 was a colourless, cheerless day for Frs. Dominic and John, for on that day of joy and glory they had to suffer the humiliation of defeat and witness their work of five years, into which all had been staked, crumble down before their eyes like a pack of cards. All was now lost except the hope of an early return. Having packed and sealed in two different boxes the few church articles, some books and medicines, they handed over the keys of the house to their landlord. He promised to keep everything safely in his own house till they would come back to Lhasa. Then the two sad looking priests gave a parting look to the city of Lhasa, at its soaring mountain peaks covered with snow, to take with them, as a souvenir, the scene that had been the arena of their apostolic labours, and finally headed for the warm Indian plains.

54. Terzorio, p. 271, note No. 2.

The route through Sikkim at this time of year proved very trying. Thick layers of snow and ice covered the passes and the pace of the march was slow and tough beyond all endurance. Long lines of footholds had to be cut with the sword (the only mountaineering gear they had) in the firm snow of the gullies. Their hands became more useful than their feet in crawling over the mountain side or in fighting against the obstacles of deep ravines. Once the inexperienced travellers found themselves at dusk over a ridge which stood out like a small island in a sea of snow and frost. There were no trees around and no type of fuel at hand to warm their frozen limbs or to prepare a hot cup of tea. The night was spent on the snow and on empty stomachs. To add to their discomforts, their food supply was running out and their strength fast failing; yet they had to force themselves on till they could meet a kind soul ready to help them with some provision for the way. Luckily, they found a man who had some rice; he refused to accept money but agreed to take in exchange some tobacco. Another wayfarer offered them some Indian corn which they ate raw to stay their hunger and to sustain them till they could get to the next shopping place.

A new odyssey awaited them in India. At Purnea they were arrested and taken into custody. The short period of anarchy which followed the death of Bahadur Shah (27th February, 1712) had disorganised the controlling powers of the civil administration; everything was in a chaotic condition. The Fathers were asked to pay an exorbitant transit duty which they were unable to do; all their possession consisted of the sum of Rs. 4/. III-treatment, hunger and sickness were their sad lot over a period of two and a half months. At the end Fr. Dominic's medical skill saved the situation. He managed to heal the brother and the son of a local chieftain. This act of mercy brought them redemption and freedom.

Down at Rajmahal, dressed in the local fashion, the soldiers of Christ turned into soldiers of Caesar bringing up the rear of a large contingent of troops on the march to Bengal. Whenever stopped and questioned they gave out that they were medical officers attached to the marching

forces. The story held good till Murshidabad, the old capital of Bengal, which was teeming with enemy forces. Unhappily, the two missionaries had been caught in the inevitable war of succession which immediately broke out after the death of Bahadur Shah. Detained for interrogation at Murshidabad, in the opposing camp of one of the claimants, the two friars made a rapid metamorphosis and over-night again became European priests travelling between Rajmahal and Kasimbazar, the headquarters of the Dutch Trading Factory. Here the name of Europeans was feared and respected for miles around and they were left off on payment of Rs. 1/. Feverish and unable to walk they asked for a lift on a Dutch vessel sailing down the river. Within four days, to be exact, on the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul, 29th June, 1712, the two stragglers could at long last enjoy peace and rest at the Chandernagore hospice. The battle of wits and the struggle for existence were finally over, but not without leaving scars of the fight on their body and spirit. For months they felt wrecks, unable to do anything (55).

55. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, pp. 35-37.

CHAPTER III

NEED OF REORGANISATION

The first phase of the Tibetan Mission had ended in a disheartening failure. The outcome could hardly have been more tragic. Death, starvation and sickness were strewn all along the path, like mile stones, trodden by the pioneers of the Cross and were ever visible at every station, a sad reminder of the near-impossible task undertaken.

Some re-thinking had to be done at this stage. Things had not worked according to plan. There was more than one dangerous crack in the whole structure ; as a matter of fact it had already caved in. The urgency was generally felt for a thorough over-hauling and for a more rational policy. The situation called for review so as to bring it in line with the existing realities. In other words, the present set-up had to be radically changed if it were to serve the purpose. It had proved inadequate and not functionable. Every detail of it needed to be examined with a cool, clear mind and in the light of past experience. Only in a new set-up, in the light of a thorough re-thinking, could the Gospel be brought to Tibet.

Set aflame by missionary ideals, and engrossed by the thought of achieving their goal, the members of the first two Tibetan expeditions had gone ahead with their work with an open, confident mind, without perhaps giving much thought to it. Most of the flaws and defects in the organisation came to light by degrees and in the course of years. Quite a few things could not be anticipated. Being a new venture, it was not possible to foresee all the implications that went with it. The times were also unpropitious, being pregnant with war and political unrest. Any way, the hour of reckoning had come. After four or five years of unremitting toil and never-ending hardships, the surviving missionaries could at last sit peacefully

together, give a retrospective glance over past events, talk things over and come to some practical conclusions. No one could doubt that they were fully qualified to sit in judgment and make an assessment. They had composed and acted their own drama ; they were still living it in their wasted bodies and in the memory of an experience that would never be forgotten.

At this stage Fr. Felix, the Vice-Prefect, prepared a fourteen point questionnaire on 22nd September, 1712, and circulated it among his colleagues (1). Therein they were requested to point out the shortcomings, factual or structural, which had brought the mission to such a pitiful state and suggest the remedies which in their opinion were necessary to put it again on its feet and make it prosper. It was a comprehensive questionnaire, touching on various points, all connected directly or indirectly with the future life of the mission. The answers received were very frank. In a simple and clear manner all the deficiencies were laid bare and concrete proposals were suggested. There was no disagreement on any matter and the replies showed insight and maturity of judgment. In this way, a complete picture of the whole situation had been obtained, all set in its true colour and against its proper background.

The outlook was indeed depressing with no silver-lining to redeem it. The balance sheet leaned dangerously on the debit side and profit was hardly noticeable. During the past few years the missionaries in Tibet had converted two or three adults and baptised twelve dying children, all of whom were now enjoying the glory of heaven. More fortunate in this respect had been the Fathers in Hindustan, who had administered 370 baptisms in articulo mortis (2). Against this stood the tragic loss of four young missionaries with yet one more to follow soon. All the others, without

1. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 49.

2. Reppresentanza No. XLII ; Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 31 ; Arch. Prop. Fide, Scritture Generali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali, Vol. 591, Congr. del 9 gennaio 1714, No. 33, specifically mentioned that in Tibet upto 1712, only one adult convert, a slave boy and twelve dying children had been baptised.

exception, were incapacitated on account of ill-health and general debility. Was it advisable, in face of these fearful odds, to press on still further or was it not better to call it off and close this unfortunate chapter? This was the first and most momentous question to be answered.

On this score opinion was unanimous. All the Fathers were in favour of persevering in their effort and meeting the challenge. With some adjustments they felt sure that far better results could be obtained. Like brave soldiers of Christ they were ready to suffer and to die on the battle-field rather than revise their position and fight a rearguard action. They were men of steel not so easily to be daunted or swayed by the pressure of the moment. The temptation to give up, of course, was there and human prudence probably suggested it, but they did not want to lay down arms without giving it another chance.

The motives which made the missionaries reach this conclusion were many and, in their estimate, compelling. They had been warmly received in every place they had called at and by every class of people they had chanced to meet. This surely was a good omen for the future. Religion seemed to be a favourable topic of conversation with the people of the east and in particular with the Tibetans. The country was studded with monasteries, shrines, prayer-flags and other signs of worship as to give the impression that the whole land was nothing but a huge temple consecrated to the service of God. And it stood there, on the highest inhabited portion of the globe, to indicate that those highlanders, isolated from the rest of world, leading a hard life, were closer to heaven than anyone else in more ways than one. It also gave evidence of the fact that all normal Tibetans regarded spiritual things as no less important than temporal matters. Religious errors were there all right, and in plenty, but once the people were enlightened on the true faith, it would not be difficult to make converts among them. The authorities seemed to be liberal and understanding and the common folk appeared appreciative and responsive. Their dispositions were good and the field promising; with God's

blessing and adequate means to do the work, there was no reason to doubt about the success of the enterprise.

On the other hand the missionaries fully realised that temporary setbacks and reverses had to be expected. All could not be plain sailing under strange skies and across unknown seas. Initial failures are often the means that leads a man to strive all the harder to achieve his objects, if he has the strength, courage and endurance required for the effort. Not all flowers will bear fruit, and we cannot expect an immediate return for our labours. Sacrifice alone has the power to redeem and to achieve. The face of the morning sower may be sad, but he carries with him the assurance that without his scattering of the seed, in sweat and tears, there is no hope of the reaper to step in and gather the harvest. These considerations consoled and encouraged our missionaries in their hour of failure and gave them strength not to slacken their endeavours.

Lack of Knowledge

The first attempt in the evangelisation of Tibet had miserably failed. This fact was beyond doubt. What were the causes of this failure? Though the replies given to Fr. Felix's questionnaire do not mention them (and they could not mention them) we have to admit that lack of knowledge in most of the essential things connected with the undertaking made the Tibetan mission break down from the outset. The new heralds of the Gospel were stepping out into the unknown; over spaces which the unscientific, medieval map-maker was content to call "terra incognita", the land of surprises, the death-trap of the unwary travellers.

Looking at it with a modern mind, few facts emerge with more glaring contrasts and with the striking impact of a bolt from the blue. The Tibetan mission was a gigantic and pioneer work, one of the greatest enterprises, if not indeed the most daring feat, in the history of Catholic missions. The authorities at home and the Fathers who were the first to be sent out did not fully realise the magnitude of the task and of the risks they were up against. The odds were overwhelming and crushing, but the enormous difficulties under-rated for want of knowledge. The attempts which

had hitherto been made were rendered futile by the unpreparedness of the men and the insufficiency of the means at their disposal.

It was undertaking far in advance of the times and too premature. Even now, with modern facilities and means of communication, it would be difficult to establish a mission in Tibet. We can hardly imagine what it meant then to go the full length of the way with primitive means and without experience. Only the thirst for souls and the determination to succeed can account for it.

Travelling by steam and planes bears the trade mark of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mountaineering is a modern and highly specialised type of sport. With the opening up of communications every nook and corner of the globe has been surveyed and explored. A colossal output of literature about every conceivable subject is there at hand for consultation. We have only to step into a library, choose the book we want and then start reading. By sitting comfortably down on a chair, we can make a mental tour of the world and acquaint ourselves with the things we want to know. Geographical maps and photographic illustrations are a powerful additional aid to the mind what the written word is unable to express so vividly. In the olden days it was not so. People lived, so to speak, in a nutshell. Their experience was limited and their mentality insular. The outer world was like another planet, never seen and probably never heard of. The decree of erection of the Tibetan Mission bears witness to the fact that the territory entrusted to the Piceno religious Province was to a great extent unmapped and unknown, a mere vague vastness. Dangers and risks were, of course, anticipated, but the most wild imagination could not figure them out in their crude reality.

Hastily prepared, with scanty and far insufficient supply of money, with no mountaineering gear or experience, unacquainted with the mode of travel in the east, the Tibetan missionaries were thrown, so to speak, overboard and left alone to swim to the shore. Only the bravest of the brave could swim clear of dangers. The others were bound to fall victims of the risks and perils that lay about them.

With no guide-book to consult and proper geographic map to follow, the missionaries had no alternative other than to collect information, often contradictory and in most cases imperfect, from any available source. Wherever they went they established friendly relations with the local people, discussed about their problems, asked for advice and often secured from them letters of introduction for their friends in the interior of the country. At night, all alone in a foreign land, they compared notes, pieced together the information that came to hand during the day and drew up plans for the future.

At every halting place they did the same carefully charting out the next stage of the journey.

It was no small task to forge ahead with means far below their minimum requirement. A school boy would now heartily laugh at the foolishness of the heroic band of missionaries that they had to cross high altitude ranging from 5 to 6 thousand meters above sea level, or perform some other acrobatic mountaineering feats without even the most rudimentary equipment, not even as little as a small camp tent (3). But he would gape at you in astonishment and dumb surprise, with a look of unbelief, when told that they were among the very first European travellers to scale the mighty Himalayas and see its lofty peaks basking in the light of the morning sun. Unknowingly they had the honour to be the first Europeans to set foot into the Forbidden Land through the high snowy mountains of Sikkim, a route which is most common now. The few other European travellers who ventured into these strange and wonderful snow regions wrestled with the same obstacles and experienced the same difficulties, but they did not always come off best in the contest, though they were slightly better equipped and more trained in the art of scaling mountains. The very name of Himalaya was still unknown in Europe. In their letters and reports the missionaries described it with the name of Caucasus; the same name given to this mass of

3. This is inferred from *Giornale*, p. 52, which states that the Head of the French Factory in Patna presented the missionaries in 1739 with a beautiful camp tent for journey.

dazzling and giant mountain peaks by Flavius Arrian, the Greek historian and philosopher of the second century A.D. in his book "Indica."

The expeditions that followed were no better, for mountaineering equipment was not a commodity obtainable in the market or a thing that could be made to order, except perhaps an axe and some other primitive tools. Everything was left to the Priests' initiative and leadership. They had to disentangle themselves to the best of their ability from any misadventure or trap that might befall them. Some experience, of course, was made available from one expedition to the other, but all the same it was a trifle when compared with the many different problems that had to be faced.

Rome followed anxiously the various fortunes of the different expeditions. They tried to encourage and help but from such a distance it was impossible to visualise the situation. Occasionally, letters were received giving a graphic description of the hurdles encountered and overcome, but failed to convey an adequate idea of extent of danger or the real feel of things. In short, the missionaries fought a life-and-death battle and Rome read about it as it were in a newspaper report. Imagination or description is a poor substitute for the hard reality of things.

These remarks are not meant, of course, to be a criticism of, or to cast aspersions on, the men in the rear or on the soldiers in the front line. Far from it. This would be not only unfair, but downright unjust. All played their part exceedingly well. Whatever fault may be laid to their charge was the fault of the times and not their own. Here I want only to pinpoint a state of facts that went beyond their power and responsibility. The eighteenth century had not yet progressed scientifically enough to assist the men who had launched out on such a generous, gigantic and magnanimous enterprise. In a few words, the lack of knowledge prevailing at the time about travelling and the lack of means to facilitate their heroic effort, were the root-cause of the failure; the imponderable that came to upset the balance of things; the rest followed in logical sequence.

Other Causes

The answers given to Fr. Felix's questionnaire tell plainly that shortage of funds, lack of organisation and want of personnel were the other causes at work which brought the mission to an abrupt end.

On leaving Rome, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda had sanctioned for each missionary 340 Roman scudi, a sum equal to about Rs. 800/-. The foregoing allocation was to be appropriated as follows : 250 Roman scudi (Rs. 575/-) had to serve for their maintenance, travelling expenses, sickness and other incidental expenses which might be incurred during the journey, 50 Roman scudi (Rs. 135/-) were ear-marked as one year's subsidy paid to them in advance; and the other 40 Roman scudi (Rs. 90/-) were meant to provide for themselves Church articles and personal effects. Further, about Rs. 125/- per annum were nominally sent out for the support of each missionary toiling and starving in the far-flung area (4).

On paper the calculation might have worked out satisfactorily, though in fact it gave the missionaries an insecure economical basis to live upon. Their whole expenditure, once they had reached their destination, had to be kept within the narrow margin of Rs. 10/- per month. The Procurator General of the Order had asked for more, for at least 300 Roman scudi (Rs. 710/-) on account of the length of the journey, which none could foresee how long it might last, but the Congregation could not afford more or perhaps thought that the allowance for the journey would be sufficient (5).

The trouble was that the travelling expenses were much higher than anticipated, and to make matters worse, the annual subsidy was never received regularly and too often

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4. Arch. Prop. Fide, Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali, Vol. 557, del 22 Febbraio, 1707, No. 13 ; *Analecta Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum, Romae, Vol. XXXVII (1921), No. X ; Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 204.*
 5. Arch. Prop. Fide Atti dell'anno 1704, f. 11 ; *Analecta Ordinis etc., op. cit., as per footnote No. 4 above.*

it fell into arrears. This was bad enough, but this was not the whole truth. The recipients complained that the annual allocation was reduced by one-third before it came into their hands ; exchange, tolls, carriage and other incidental charges claimed a good deal of it. With no savings set aside for a rainy day, it fell very hard on them to keep body and soul together (6).

There is no need to elaborate further on this matter. What we have briefly related in the previous chapter is sufficient to show that the sum allotted for travelling was miserably small to cope with any emergency that might crop up. To quote an instance, the first two Fathers who went up to Tibet were deprived—grabbed would be the more appropriate word—of Rs. 160/- on that stage of the route that goes between Patna and Kathmandu. The members of the second expedition, who were more plucky and fortunate managed to escape from the snares laid by the men in charge of road tolls at a cost Rs. 100/- (7). Similar instances could be found all along the way to Lhasa. The art of duping or taking undue advantage over the weaker, specially unsuspecting strangers, is as old as the world and is practised everywhere with success.

In regard to the annual allowance, we have already mentioned the difficulties Rome experienced in remitting it. From the year 1707 till the time the Fathers withdrew from Lhasa in December 1711, only once did they have the joy of welcoming the much needed help from home (8). The other

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6. An anonymous report speaking of the journey and expenses from Rome to Lhasa (*Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 204) states that 100 Roman scudi (Rs. 225/-) paid in Rome became 70 Roman scudi (Rs. 158/-) when exchanged in a local currency in Bihar.
 7. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 29 ; part III, p. 29. From Patna to Nepal, writes Fr. Dominic of Fano, one suffers a good deal ; he must have either a good purse or good shoulders. Once in Nepal, if the shoulders fare well, the pursue is nearly empty.
 8. *Representanza* No. XLII writes that up to the beginning of 1713, the Congregation of Propaganda had spent 5,200 Roman scudi on the Tibetan enterprise, making it, in round figures, Rs. 11,000/-. Considering that up to then three expeditions had been sent out with a total strength of 15 missionaries, no more than one year's allocation could have been remitted to them. Lay brothers were given a little less than the priests not having to provide for church articles.

years of their stay in Tibet were spent in struggling against hunger and in the vain expectation of receiving some good news.

Another thing which reduced further still their slender resources, was the fact that at the beginning the missionaries had no place they could call their own. They were required to find accommodation in rented houses. The money that went for the rent was taken away from the table. Of all the missionary stations, Lhasa was the worst hit economically in many respects. Here the cost of living was very high compared to other places. One of the missionaries writing about it says that food-stuffs was very cheap in Bengal, cheap in Bihar, expensive in Nepal and very expensive in Tibet (9). The price line followed, like a spiral, the length of the land. Consumer goods became progressively more difficult to find and more costly to acquire as one advanced farther into the interior. The country around Lhasa was poor and everything had to be imported from far away. Firewood was brought from a distance of 6 or 8 days' journey; meat, butter etc. were carried over from even far remoter places; the food was eaten raw or half cooked due to the difficulty of getting fuel or on account of its high cost. Rice, sugar, tea, cotton cloth and other commodities of daily use were imported directly from foreign countries. All this, of course, had a devastating effect on the monthly budget.

A look at the account books for the month of February 1712 shows that the financial side of the mission was insufficiently cared for and that was the most vulnerable point in the whole organisation. All stations were in deficit; Chandernagore was indebted to the tune of Rs. 125/-, Patna for Rs. 450/- and Lhasa was also in debt. It is not easy to ascertain the real deficit in Lhasa as it is given in local currency, gold standard; but it could be anything in the region of Rs. 200/- (10). Such a plight could not last indefinitely. Something had to be done before getting into deep waters or becoming insolvent.

9. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 205.

10. This statement of account is given by Fr. Felix of Montecchio, the Vice-Prefect Apostolic of the mission, in a letter dated Golgata (Calcutta), February, 1712, (Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 48).

It would be interesting to know the purchasing power of the Rupee at that time as compared with its present market value. Any guess, unfortunately, is bound to fall short of the mark. There is no mathematical or even approximate way of reckoning it. Some articles, as far back as the beginning of the eighteenth century, might have cost, say Rs. 1/- while today we may be made to pay anything from Rs. 50/- to Rs. 100/- for the same things. Of others the price-difference could be less or even more, all depending on the prevailing market conditions. We know for instance that Rs. 2/- per month was considered a fair wage for a clerk. A modest house could be let out in Bengal for Rs. 3.50 per month. Fr. Mark della (1726—1803), one of the later Tibetan missionaries, informs us that in the good old days i.e. before the British occupation of Northern India, they could buy 60 (sixty) fowls for a rupee! (11). At the same time other commodities were comparatively more expensive than at the present day. A few items of expenditure do not compare favourably with the price index of our modern age. Travelling in particular was relatively more expensive than now. An army of porters and other attendants were required to carry the luggage and to attend to the Sabhi's (Sahib's) personal needs. Customs and transit duties spiralled the cost of transportation sky high. The journey never seemed to end; the stops to be made at any place, for any reason or for no reason at all, ran into weeks and months. Often quarrels ensued, followed occasionally by imprisonment. All this and much more helped to empty the wayfarer's pocket in no time.

Be that as it may, what we are concerned with is the inadequacy of funds necessary for the efficient running of the mission as one of the points, and the most important one at that, to be brought home to the authorities. They failed to understand how the allotment given fell miserably short of the needs, while they were convinced that they had been not only fair but even generous. The missionaries should therefore have insisted on an increment of the

11. Terzorio p. 264 ; *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 78 ; *Gli scritti del P. Marco della Tomba, Missionario nelle Indie Orientali* by Angelo De Gubernatis, Monnier Firenze 1878, p. 36.

allowance while further ways and means were devised to ensure a quick and regular remittance of funds. If this were not possible, because the system of transmitting money could not be improved, then the annual subsidies should have been forwarded to them far in advance.

Next came the lack of internal organisation. Without modern banking facilities and the net-work of post offices, the people must have been very hard put to keep open a long line of communication. Correspondence and other things could be despatched, but with no certainty as to if, and when, they would be delivered to the addressee, and, most important of all, whether they would ever reach safely. Normally it took one, two and even more years for a letter from India to reach its destination in Europe and the same length of time to reach India from Europe. There are instances on record to show that a letter was delivered after four, five and even six years. For instance, the election decree of Fr. Francis Horace as Prefect of the mission was issued in Rome in August 1719 and reached him in Lhasa only in September 1725 (12). To make sure that an important communication would not go astray they used to make two, three or four copies and forward them at different intervals and by different routes (13). Shipwrecks were a common occurrence ; death like a dark and gloomy shadow lurked at seas while pirates swarmed them in search of intended loot. In order to safeguard secrets falling into the hands of aliens or rivals, trading companies threw all files, documents, correspondences and money into the sea. In case of danger or any other emergency, all superfluous load was hurled in the same watery grave. In these conditions it was well nigh impossible to maintain regular contact between the home base and the missionaries working thousands of kilometers away. Rome did not know what was going on and the Fathers felt like outcasts, completely cut off from the outer world.

The land route was none the safer. Robbers swarmed every road. They killed and plundered the people.

12. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 87.

13. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 109, 262.

Villagers were attacked and crops stolen or set on fire. A growing sense of insecurity was rampant and pervaded the whole atmosphere. Things were very often left to chance. The usual means of communication was through caravans. Couriers and runners were few and far between and exposed to the risks and perils of the roads and climate. Not infrequently they were found dead by the road side because of exposure or some other unfortunate incident, such as murder or robbery.

These things were taken for granted and there was nothing much one could do about them. Nevertheless, much more satisfactory working arrangements could have been introduced into the internal organisation of the mission. The Fathers could be more evenly spaced and kept at a more reasonable distance from one another to make them feel that they were part of the same working team. Moreover, it was desirable to station two or more priests in each place. As things stood, they felt absolutely abandoned and isolated. Each one of them was like a separate unit cut off from the main body of missionaries. They could never meet together, exchange views or make plans for the future. Such an undertaking and mutual intercourse was essential, specially at the beginning, when no tradition was yet established and no concerted action planned. Their spiritual life and moral welfare also demanded it. One of the major personal problems was to go to confession. To approach the sacrament of penance meant a lot of extra expense and months of travelling. If things could be re-organised in a more practical way, many of the difficulties would have been solved.

Last, but by no means the least, was the problem of staffing the mission. The dearth of personnel was very acute. Here again the relevant data was based on experience. It was not so much the galling experience of the newly erected Tibetan mission as the general condition of missionary life prevailing at the time that made things difficult. Way back, at the dawn of the eighteenth century, it was not easy to be an apostle of Christ in foreign lands. Physical endurance was heavily taxed and moral stamina put to a severe test. Hardships, shipwrecks, robbers and

the plethora of tropical diseases incapacitated the missionaries or were the cause of untimely death of nearly twentyfive per cent of the number before they could reach the land of their apostolic labours. It was indeed an exciting life, full of risks and adventures. And we must not forget that the climatic conditions, the lack of proper diet and medical care told heavily on them, shortening their mortal existence or reducing their working capacity. Statistics coldly tell us that the normal span of life was reduced by 20 and even 30 years. Nearly all the Fathers of Tibetan mission died at an early age, priests and victims of a sacrifice offered to God for the redemption of souls.

The flow of missionaries was slow and limited in number. Their presence and action could hardly be felt by their immediate environment. More labourers and more man-power had to be recruited, if some concrete results were to be achieved. Rome was surely aware of it, but needed a reminder, a cogent representation of the case.

Fr. Dominic is sent to Rome

With these problems confronting them, the Vice-Prefect decided to despatch Fr. Dominic to Rome that he might personally represent to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda and to the Superiors of the Order, the sad suspension of the work that promised so well. They all agreed with this decision. It was of no use, they thought, of doing it by correspondence. Letters, no matter how carefully worded, can never portray a picture in its true colours and more often than not they are a source of misunderstanding. Time and again the Superiors and the Fathers in the mission had written to Rome, stressing one point or another, but none of their letters served to bring any appreciable improvement in their hopeless condition. Fr. Dominic was the right man for the purpose. He had a strong, persuasive personality and had valiantly borne the burden and heat of the day. The two other surviving priests were in an indifferent state of health and could ill-afford a sea voyage.

The Father set sail in December 1712 and by autumn the following year he was already in the Eternal City. Bro.

Michael Angelo who was accompanying him, but travelling on another boat, suffered shipwreck and died off the Cape of Good Hope. Another faithful servant had gone to his reward (14).

In Rome, Fr. Dominic gave himself no rest. He wrote an enlightening Report on the mission and gave a copy to the authorities concerned. Here we make just a passing reference to it, but at a later stage we shall have the opportunity to deal with it in greater detail. Feelingly he pleaded before the Procurator General of the Order and the Cardinal Prefect for the cause so dear to his heart. In forcible language he expressed the hope and the fear that lay embedded in his breast ; spoke of the advisability to keep up the good work ; of the need to send re-inforcements to regain lost ground and possibly to enlarge the apostolic field. Chandernagore and Lhasa were too far apart ; new stations should be opened in between like stepping-stones leading up to the starry solitudes of the Himalaya ; it was impossible to keep the Tibetan Mission in efficient working condition unless a line of communication linking Chandernagore, Patna, Nepal and possibly two or more places on the route was established. Each of these centres should have a hospice with two or more priests. In this way there would be continuity in the field of their work and mutual assistance among the labourers. Funds were also most urgently needed, missionaries had been starving ; without money nothing could be done and there was a lot to do. Should the authorities decide upon the continuation of the mission, a more liberal policy must be adopted.

In an audience with Pope Clement XI, the patron of the missions, Fr. Dominic repeated the same things. He begged of His Holiness to bless and lend his moral support to the dying mission. Wherever he went and whomsoever he met, the tenacious champion of the Tibetan Mission never failed to impress upon his listeners the need for more men and means in the furtherance of the cause.

It was no mean task to convince Rome to throw in more men and money in so doubtful an adventure. The first

14. Terzorio, p. 277.

reaction was decidedly unfavourable and opinions were sharply divided. Some took a business-like view of the whole matter. They grudged the constant outlay in a work which so far had yielded exceedingly poor results. Five men were already lost and too few souls had been gained. Up to now Rs. 11,000/- had been spent and the turnover did not justify the expenditure. The past could be written off as a total loss ; in regard to the future, serious doubts were entertained as to whether it was worth while taking such an enormous risk.

Negotiations were still in progress and the result uncertain, when like a detective story, there was a turn in the events which tipped the scale. About this time a letter was received in Rome from the Bishop of Mylapore describing the collapse of the mission and urging its rescue. Before leaving for Italy, Fr. Dominic met Mgr. Francis Laynes S.J. who was then on pastoral visitation to Bengal. The zealous missionary had a heart to heart talk with His Excellency, acquainted him with all his problems, told him that shortly he would be going to Rome to campaign for the revival of the mission and kindly asked the Prelate to put in a good word. The obliging Bishop promised to help and to make use of his good offices.

In his letter of the 3rd December, 1712, to Propaganda, the Bishop of Mylapore made out a strong case (15). He praised the exemplary religious life, the zeal and fervour of the Tibetan Missionaries; touched on the very same points emphasized by Fr. Dominic and rounded up his remarks by concluding that the prospects of a good harvest were bright, but the labourers in the vineyard and the means at their disposal to do the spade work, were too few. He went to the length of suggesting remitting in advance two or three years' annual allocation to relieve the missionaries of any economical preoccupations so that free from this pressing problem they could more easily attend to the work of the mission. The refrain was more or less the same, but the

15. Terzorio, pp. 275-279, gives the text of the Bishop's letter to Propaganda and the reply he received from Propaganda.

combined efforts of these two noble souls brought about a change in the atmosphere. Even the most sceptic members of the council were now more remissive and inclined to make allowances for the failure of the past.

Boundless was the joy of Fr. Dominic when he was told that an organic plan designed to give the mission new life and stability had finally been approved. It must have been a hard-fought battle; over a year was spent in arguing the point, but at the end the ardent Capuchin had won the day. On 9th January, 1714, the Congregation of Propaganda decided that henceforth no less than 12 missionaries, excluding the number of lay-brothers, were to be attached to the Tibetan Mission. The annual subsidy was raised to one thousand Roman scudi, i.e. Rs. 2250/- in addition to travelling and other initial expenses. The following five stations were to be maintained:

1. Chandernagore, in Bengal;
2. Patna, in the kingdom of Bihar;
3. Kathmandu, in the kingdom of Nepal;
4. Lhasa, in the kingdom of Tibet, also called Boutan;
5. Tron-gne, in the province of Takpo, south-east Tibet (16).

Two priests were to reside in each of the above-mentioned stations; while Lhasa, the headquarters, had to be served by four. The decision to keep two Fathers in every station was prompted by many considerations. It was good for them to be together for the sake of company, to be a solace to each other in time of sickness and to be of reciprocal religious assistance. Further, if one absented himself or died the other could look after the mission property and prevent it from being ransacked or falling into the hands of unscrupulous people. Acts of vandalism were then the common sport of the rabble; not infrequently buildings and other movable and immovable property were illegally taken possession of in the long absence of the owner. But, above

16. Rappresentanza No. XLI Arch. Prop. Fide, Atti del 1714, Congr. del 9 Gennaio, 1714 ; No. 38, f. 32v.

all, the prospects of a lonely death were terrifying even apart from any religious consideration. In Tibet the mortal remains of the deceased would in all probability be chopped up like a log of wood and scattered all over to feed the dogs and vultures. A similar fate, or cremation at the best, would await the poor priest who happened to die alone in Nepal, for this was the expeditious ritual to dispose of unclaimed and uncared-for corpses. The idea, though revolting to our Christian sense of reverence for the departed, was not altogether devoid of deep religious significance. Man, according to the teachings of Buddhism, is born to serve. After death the only service he can render is to let his mortal frame be the food of carnivorous beasts and birds of prey.

The geographical position of Chandernagore, Patna and Kathmandu was such as to enable communications to be more conveniently spaced and be more accessible between the two extreme ends of the large mission area. The existing gaps had been reduced and postal relays, so to speak, made much easier. Till now the missionaries had seldom made use of couriers in order to save money; their means of communication consisted chiefly in despatching letters or sending messages through trusted friends—a merchant in transit or similar casual opportunities. This resulted in great delays and loss of time. A merchant, to illustrate the point, might have stopped months in a place to attend to his business before pushing on and deliver the mail. As things had been arranged, it should not be difficult now to forward articles or exchange correspondence among the priests placed at the main rallying points along the trade route. The Father at Chandernagore could despatch things to the priest in Patna and he, in turn, could see his way to send them on to the next till it reached Lhasa.

The increase in the annual allowance was welcome, but still it was considered insufficient. The per capita quota in the new scale of grant, came to approximately Rs. 175/- per annum. If this were enough to stave off hunger, it did not provide for quite a lot of extra things that are so essential at the initial stage of any enterprise. However, if the arrangements made to ensure regular and speedy delivery of

the annual allocation worked out satisfactorily, there was every reason to believe that the mission would now be put on a sound footing. One way to remit the annual subsidy was to send it to Paris, to the Directors of the French East India Company, with the request to forward the same to the Governor of Pondicherry. From there it could be easily taken to the Father at Chandernagore, as there was a regular boat service between these two French settlements. The Jesuits could also help. Their Procurator General for the French Missions in Rome received every year a certain amount from the missionaries of the Society serving in the French trading posts in India. This could be easily exchanged, the Capuchins taking over from them the quota meant for Rome and Propaganda making good the amount pro rata to their Procurator General for the French Missions (17).

Some Other Points

At the same session some other minor matters were also deliberated upon. The duties and responsibilities of the Congregation of propaganda and of the Capuchin Order, which so far were not well defined, were clearly stated. The Order had to see to the recruitment of personnel, prepare and equip it and defray all expenses which may be incurred in this connection. At the time of leaving the country for the mission, the responsibility of the Order would cease and the Congregation of Propaganda would take over. The candidates had to be examined by the Ordinary of the place as a condition for their approval. Their term of service was to last at least ten years at a time after which they could go home and remain there. Likewise, the Prefect Apostolic would hold office for the same period of time subject to confirmation.

In the meantime, on the 19th of December, 1713, Fr. Dominic had been elected Prefect, a just recognition of his zeal and organising ability. He had proved himself to be an accomplished leader, intelligent, fearless and active.

17. Terzorio, p. 193, note 2, quoting from Arch. Prop Fide, Scritture originali riferite nelle Congr. Generali, Vol. 564, Congr. del 17 Dic. 1708. n. 23.

Everyone would welcome his election, confident that the destiny of the Mission would be in safe hands. Earlier, after Fr. Joseph's death, Fr. Felix of Montecchio had been appointed Prefect (2nd May, 1712) and ruled the Prefecture till the coming of Fr. Dominic. The change of guard, within such a short time, was motivated by the fact that the condition of Fr. Felix's health would not allow him to stand the rigorous climate of Lhasa, the mission headquarters (18).

There was also the talk of dividing the extensive Mission territory into two separate Prefectures. Propaganda, however, opposed the move and suggested that a deputy, if given wide powers, could preside over the pre-Himalayan missionary stations and act in conformity with the directions issued from time to time by the Prefect, with his residence at Lhasa.

Occasionally, the question of territory jurisdiction, in respect of the neighbouring ecclesiastical units, would crop up, a thing which in normal times did not occur. The Tibetan Mission was surrounded on every side by what may be called "No man's land" and "every body's land". Confines were vaguely marked. In this uncertainty it was possible to stray on the territory which another Bishop or Prefect might have claimed as his own. The next door neighbours of the Prefect Apostolic of Tibet were--the Padroado Bishop of Mylapore who extended his jurisdiction over Bengal and the coast of Burma; the far away Bishop of Peking in China; the Vicar Apostolic of Siam (Thailand) to the south east and the so-called Vicar Apostolic of the Great Moghul to the west, at Agra. Surely there was space enough for everyone of them without treading on the toes of another. However, at the time, the Bishops, Priests and the faithful were very jealous about ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The fight between Padroado and Propaganda, that is, between missionaries who came under the Patronage granted by the Holy See to the Portuguese Government and those sent out directly by the "Congregation for the Propaganda

18. Terzorio, p. 271, 281.

of the Faith" in Rome, had made it so. The least encroachment, or what might appear to be one, on the ecclesiastical preserves of another, was enough to spark off the fire.

As already noted, the Decree of erection described in nebulous terms the territory within which the Italian Capuchins were to exercise their pastoral ministry. From the beginning they felt that precautions had to be taken to see that the area assigned to them did not encroach on the rights of others. Patna and the surrounding districts in India were not specifically mentioned as being part of the mission. The only ones who would lay claim on these regions, bordering on Nepal and Sikkim and standing as a half-way stage on the road between Chandernagore and Lhasa, were the Bishops of Mylapore and the Vicar Apostolic of the Great Moghul, but none of them had ever exercised any jurisdiction over these territories.

When the first two missionaries stopped at Patna for a while before proceeding to their ultimate destination, they fully realised the importance of the place as an integral part of the Tibetan mission. The city offered great advantages because of its geographical position in respect of the surrounding territories which had been assigned to them as their field of apostolate. Apart from that, the Catholic population of the place badly needed the presence of a priest to attend to their spiritual welfare.

These considerations urged Fr. Joseph of Ascoli to write to Rome and to petition the Holy See to transfer officially these areas to the control of the Tibetan Mission. Accordingly, the Congregation of Propaganda, in a Decree, issued on 17th September, 1708, was pleased to extend the authority of the Prefect Apostolic of Tibet over Patna and the other Indian regions adjoining Tibet, provided they were not actually subject to the jurisdiction of any other Bishop or Prefect Apostolic (19).

19. *Reppresentanza No. XL ; Monumenta Anastasiana, documenta vitam et gesta Servi Dei Anastasii Hartmann O. M. Cap. collustrantia ; collegit atque critica ratione consuit Adelhelmus Jann a Stans O. M. Cap., editio mere private, Lucernal 1939, Vol. I p. 986.*

In this way the territorial jurisdiction of the Tibetan Mission came roughly to be delimited as follows—Rajmahal, an important town on the Bengal-Bihar borders, marked the partition point between the circumscription of the Mylapore Bishop and the newly-erected ecclesiastical unit. From Rajmahal the demarcation line ran down across the right bank of the Ganges, embracing the semi-independent states of Bhagalpur and Monghyr, as far as Patna to somewhere beyond it. Then, on the left bank of the river, it comprised all the remaining Indian territories bracketed between Purnea to the north-east and Saran to the north-west, such as Tirhut, Darbhanga, Bettiah and so on. As for Nepal, Sikkim and Tibet, it was clear that these countries were within the territorial limits of the Tibetan Mission (20).

The material side of the mission seemed sufficiently cared for, but what about the formation of the men who had to run it? The success of the whole enterprise rested exclusively upon them. Poor indeed is the artist who blames the material for his own failure! Were they fit for task? Indeed, so much was expostulated of any candidate that very few could be endowed with all those sterling qualities required of them. They had to be saints and apostles, scientists and polyglots and even medical practitioners, all combined into one.

Sanctity and apostolic spirit easily go together and the Tibetan missionaries were second to none in this respect. They were all men of great piety and integrity, moulded in that Franciscan land that gave so many saints to the Church. At times, they even performed wonders more by the visible help of God than by their personal ability or endeavours. Decadence in the rank and file of European missionaries crept in at a later period, as an outcome of the French Revolution. Before that, monasteries in Europe were real nurseries of holy people, full of vigour and a high standard of spiritual life. If a remark can be made against our missionaries, according to our modern way of thinking,

20. Gli scritti del P. Marco dalla Tomba etc., op. cit., p. 43-44.

it would be that they overdid things thoroughly neglecting themselves, falling very often victims of their zeal.

Not so easy was the predicament to expect them to be men of science; yet this would have been the best method of approach and a sure way to achieve their main object. It will be remembered that one of the first questions put by the Regent in Lhasa to the Armenian gentleman who had gone to see him in connection with the arrival of the two European priests, was—"Do they know mathematics, astronomy? Can they repair watches or do any other mechanical work?" When told that they were medical practitioners his interest flagged and he seemed sorely disappointed. There were so many doctors in the capital that an addition of two more was of not much interest nor any startling news.

A reader unacquainted with the early history of the missions may wonder why priests who first went out into foreign non-Christian lands with the sole object of making converts were expected to be scientists or at least medical practitioners. Though this is not the place to go into this question, but an inkling ought to be given. Religion was very much appreciated in olden days, even among non-Christians, specially in the conservative countries of the east. It was considered as the chief purpose in life. If missionaries presented themselves as such to the non-Christian world, their fate would be sealed. Martyrdom or expulsion would be the only outcome, except of course, if they were protected by the conquering arms of the colonial powers. Some parts of the earth are still forbidden lands, lands in which no missionary or foreigner is allowed to enter. In the circumstances it was but natural to look for a solution to the problem. And the most obvious thing missionaries could do was to introduce themselves under the garb which would not give rise to any suspicion and at the same time make their presence gratefully welcome. Once established in the place, they could work their way in by stages. Mathematics and astronomy gave them access to the intelligentia and ruling classes, making their influence felt in the high spheres of society. The practice of medicine had a more humble role. It tried to reach the top by working

its way up from the bottom of the ladder, that is, the common man in the street. This last method offered the additional advantage of enabling missionaries to baptise dying children. As a rule the Capuchin, the Friars of the people, resorted to the practice of medicine as the most suitable means to achieve their end. Only those among them who had a natural aptitude for science did their best to deepen their scientific knowledge, so as to play their part and fit in with the situation.

The study of languages added its weight to the existing difficulties. It was a personal worry, but it cast its long shadow over the internal working of the Mission. Not all could be endowed with the gift of tongues and not all could be expected to learn six or more foreign languages; French, Portuguese and Bengali were chiefly spoken at Chandernagore. Patna was a veritable melting pot of races with the resulting confusion of tongues. Portuguese and Urdu were most common, though English, French and Dutch were also spoken by the different sections of the Christian community. Newari was the official language of the Nepal Valley, while in the capital of Tibet one had to learn two or more languages. As the missionaries were soon to realise, knowledge of the Tibetan language was not enough to enable them to carry on efficiently their ministerial duties. A working knowledge of Urdu, Newari, Chinese and other Tartarian tongues was considered essential on account of the presence in the capital of people of different nationalities. Actually foreigners showed themselves more inclined towards the faith than the Tibetan themselves. This predicament, unavoidable and regrettable, reduced considerably the efficiency of the labourers and made things awkward when need arose, which unfortunately was only too frequently, to shift the Fathers from one station to another.

Wherever they looked and wherever they went the Tibetan missionaries were pressed all around by so many trials and worries as to crush any ordinary man under their weight. We must give them credit for having faced the ordeal with an iron will and valiant heart.

Line of Communication

It is not within our scope to give the history of the whole chain of the Capuchin Missionary stations stretching out from Chandernagore to the fastnesses of Tibet, or what mountaineers of today would call "Camp I, II, and III". A simple sketch will be enough to show how the keeping open of this line of communication with the outside world was a condition sine qua non to the welfare of the enterprise. Without it, the mission in the Tibetan capital could be compared to a military headquarters completely cut off from its outposts.

From 1683 till 1950, when it became part of the Indian Union, Chandernagore was a small French settlement north of Calcutta. Due to its geographical position it had gradually developed into a big commercial emporium and for a time rivalled even Calcutta in trade and business. French, Dutch, English and Portuguese ships called at and sailed from this harbour making it a favourite rendezvous for people who travelled between Europe and north-east India.

The population of the town at the time our missionaries settled at Chandernagore, is put down at 20,000 inhabitants, out of which 5,000 were Catholics of mixed parentage (21), though the majority were of French extraction.

Chandernagore was, so to speak, the gateway to the Tibetan Mission ; the port our travellers were bound to use on their way to and from Europe. Being the closest and most conveniently situated outlet to the sea in respect of the geographical position, as far as it affected the Tibetan venture, it was felt necessary to have a base or foothold on this French settlement. This base would serve for manifold purposes—to receive the new missionaries, provide them some rest after the strenuous journey, get them acclimatised, learn the rudimentary elements of the languages which would help them in the long journey ahead, and so forth. Indeed a residence here would be very useful as a resting place for the aged and sick as well as for those who at times had to wait for months before they were able to book their passage

21. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 6.

home. In short, Chandernagore was meant to be a pivot, or a bridge placed in between the starting and the ending points of every expedition into Tibet.

Ecclesiastically, the French settlement was in an abnormal situation. The whole of Bengal in general was then under the jurisdiction of the Padroado Bishop of Mylapore and was entrusted to the Augustinians of the Indian Congregation. However, in 1696 Chandernagore was made, so to say, into an ecclesiastical enclave and handed over to the French Jesuits,—refugees from Sima. As private priests, the Jesuits were under Propaganda, but as a body for the care of souls, they acknowledged the jurisdiction of the local Padroado Ordinary. Though it would seem appropriate to appoint French Priests for a French settlement, the move was resented by the Augustinians, who claimed a kind of monopoly over the Bengal territory. The coming of the Capuchins into Chandernagore did not improve matters but aggravated the jurisdiction trouble, though their religious ministrations were confined to non-parochial duties.

Since 1706 one, two or more priests had always been stationed at Chandernagore. The Father in charge of the hospice, as it was technically called, was given the title of Procurator of the Tibetan Mission. It was his duty to handle the funds received from Europe and transmit the same to the Prefect residing in Lhasa and transact any other business connected with the welfare of the missionaries or of the different stations entrusted to them, such as to see to the incoming and out going mail and provide things which could not be obtained by the Fathers living in the interior. In short, he had to act as a liaison officer between the home base and the remotest parts of the mission. Chandernagore was never meant to be a missionary station in the strict sense of the word. It was, therefore, a task more responsible than heavy. As a rule, it was entrusted to a priest who was either old or failing in health.

At the beginning Fr. Felix had to be housed in a small rented building. Towards 1709, Fr. John of Fano realising the need of a residence to utilise it as a clearing house for the mission, set his eyes on a small bungalow belonging to the French East India Company. For this purpose he wrote

to the Governor of Pondicherry, with whom he had travelled on his way out to India. The Governor was pleased to grant the Father's request. With the generous help of some local benefactors the house was bought for about Rs. 300/-. It was subsequently repaired, re-adapted and enlarged and in 1710 the building was ready for occupation (22).

It was also an easy matter to purchase a plot of land adjoining the priest-house, on which to erect a chapel. The local French authorities were most co-operative once approached and willingly let the site go to the mission free of cost. But endless trouble however arose when it came to the question of obtaining permission from the ecclesiastical authorities for the building of the chapel and getting it recognised as a public place of worship. Whom should the missionaries approach? Propaganda or Padroado? Seeing no way out of the tangle, the Capuchins judged it the wisest to deal directly with the Holy See. Formalities and correspondence dragged on for years; meanwhile the Chapel, dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto was blessed and inaugurated in 1720.

The first impression about Patna reported by the two Fathers who first halted there in 1706 on their way to Lhasa was most favourable. Here was life and activity and the place offered an excellent opportunity as a field for missionary work. The French, the Dutch and the English had their own trading factories with a motely crowd of people which gave Patna the air of a cosmopolitan city. Its population was estimated around one million inhabitants. The small Catholic community, though fluctuating was on the increase. At any given time it could be between one hundred and one hundred and fifty. The other Christian denominations put together had even a higher number of followers, but unfortunately there was none to cater for the Catholics and for the other Christian communities. This alone was a good reason for settling down in Patna and helping to strengthen and spreading the faith. Besides, twice a year trading caravans arrived at and started from Patna for Nepal and Tibet, bringing and supplying goods to those widely scattered

22. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 48.

areas. These caravans would surely be of great assistance to the missionaries travelling up to Lhasa. Patna was therefore most suitable as a field of missionary activity and as a link in the long chain of communication, between Chandernagore and the distant land of Tibet.

This was not the first time missionaries had pitched their tent in Patna. Ninety years earlier the Jesuits had made a beginning which unfortunately was short-lived. In 1618, Jehangir had appointed a certain Muqarrib Khan, a Muslim by birth, to be the Nawab or Viceroy of Patna. Previously he had served as the Moghul ambassador to the Portuguese Governor at Goa. While there, Muqarrib Khan had been baptised in the Catholic Faith by Fr. Nicholas Pimenta S.J. of the Goa Jesuit College. Though secretly a Christian, the Nawab conformed himself to the Mohammedan way of life.

On his appointment to the post of Viceroy at Patna, Muqarrib Khan, or Lord John as the Catholics called him, summoned friendly Portuguese traders to the city. From them he learned that some priests of the Society of Jesus were working in Bengal. Wishing to have the Jesuits at his Court, after the example of the Great Akbar, he invited them to Patna in 1620. The Father who was sent, Fr. Simon Figuieredo S.J., was received with much pomp and ceremony. A house was put at his disposal and he was given freedom to preach his religion. Stiff opposition was encountered, but four converts were made. However, the ire of the population exploded by attacking the Father's household. One young man, Gonsalves by name, was murdered and Fr. Figuieredo himself was wounded. The Viceroy inflicted the death penalty upon the murderer of Gonsalves; but this act served to increase the furore against the missionary and the Christian religion. Shortly after Fr. Figuieredo went back to Bengal leaving buried in Patna a little martyr—a seed and a summons for the next Capuchin beginning (23).

23. Foundation of the Jesuit Mission at Patna (1620) by L. Besse S. J., notes by H. Hosten S. J. in the Catholic Herald, Calcutta, 1906, p. 804-805; The Jesuits and the Great Moghul by Sir Edward Maclagan, Burns Oats and Washbourne Ltd. London 1932, p. 78.

Fr. Felix of Montecchio was the first Capuchin priest to put up his residence at Patna. He reached there at the end of June, 1709, and for a time he made himself comfortable in a humble rented house (24). In 1715 the zealous missionary purchased a substantial building at a cost of Rs. 1,500/-. About the same time a small church was opened to the public and continued to serve the needs of the Catholic population till the erection of the magnificent old Cathedral, in 1779. Both the church and the priest house were centrally situated, that is to the north of the main road leading to the fort and to the Nawab's palace (25).

Patna always lived up to the expectation of the first Missionaries. When Nepal was abandoned, Patna became the headquarters of the Tibetan Mission and now shares with Agra the honour of being the Mother Church in Northern India. It was from here, from the capital of Bihar that the Tibetan missionaries marched off in all directions to bring the light of the Gospel to the people of North India. After the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, the "Vicariate Apostolic of the Great Moghul" passed over to the Carmelites. Unable to staff the large territory with an adequate number of priests, the Carmelites petitioned Rome to hand it over to the neighbouring ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Accordingly, the Holy See, by a decree issued on 17th May, 1784, annexed the northern part of the Vicariate of the Great Moghul, to the Prefecture of the Tibetan Mission. It was then that the Italian Capuchins took charge of this new field of apostolate and the territory entrusted to them became known as the Tibetan-Hindustan Mission.

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24. Basing themselves on the Old Baptism Register of Patna, which states: "Notandum quod cultus religionis Catholicæ in hac nostra ecclesia Patnae incepit anno 1713 sub PP. Capuccinorum Thibeti Missionis cura," some mission writers have come to the conclusion that the first Capuchin Missionaries established themselves in the city of Patna in 1713. However, there is ample evidence on record to indicate that Fr. Felix of Montecchio went to Patna to stay in 1709.
25. Terzorio, p. 287-288 ; Giornale, p. 51 ; Die Aktensammlung des Bischofs Anastasius Hartmann, etc., op. cit., p. 49.

Kathmandu is situated at 27° 42' N. Lat. and 85° 18' E. Long. on a valley amidst verdant surroundings. It is indeed a good resting-place for the weary traveller who has just crossed the unhealthy, marshy land of the Tarai, abounding in tigers and other large wild animals, and is about to face the formidable challenge of the Himalayan solitudes. The Valley of Nepal was a compulsory passage for the caravans plying to and fro from south to north. Looking back at the length of the journey which had already been left far behind, one of the first missionaries wrote to Rome—"We cannot hope to put the mission on a sound basis unless we get a foothold in Nepal" (26). If Tibet was the statue, Nepal was the pedestal, the blood-stream in the life of the whole undertaking.

Particulars about the foundation of the first mission in Nepal will be given later in the course of the present narrative. Here it is sufficient to mention that the country was then divided into small feudal states, very often at war amongst themselves. Actually, before the Gurkha wars, all commercial and social life centered round the high valley watered by the river Bagmati. Nepal was the valley and the valley was Nepal. The other states or petty kingdoms were hardly considered as parts of the whole country as it is now. It is perhaps the largest valley in those Himalayan regions being approximately 20 kilometers in length by 15 kilometers in breadth. It is bounded on all sides by lofty mountains; its undulating surface is covered with a rich fertile expanse of well-cultivated fields, watered by numerous winding streams and studded with villages and towns. The valley which has the appearance of a like-bed, rises up to 1,400 meters above sea level and is oval in shape.

The valley contained in its circumference, and within a short distance, the capitals of three small kingdoms; the kingdom of Bhatgaon to the north-east, the kingdom of Kathmandu to the north-west, and the kingdom of Patan to the south-east, known as Lalit Patan. The missionaries have further supplied us with the information that "the city of

26. Arch. Prop. Fide, Scritture riferita nei Congressi Generali, Vol. 591 del 9 Gennaio 1714, No. 38.

Patan is inhabited by 24 thousand families, Kathmandu by 18 and Bhatgaon by 12 thousand families" (27). There were moreover in the valley other villages and towns with five, six and even eight thousand families. These three capitals were then thriving centres of trade and were well kept. Fr. Dominic tells us that Kathmandu specially had the look and charm of a European city.

The Nepal valley, the headquarters of the three kingdoms fanning out in different directions, was ruled over by the Malla dynasty. The paramount power rested, at least apparently, with the senior most ruler, who at that time was the king of Bhatgaon (28).

The outpost of Tron-gne, in the province of Takpo (Dvags-po), was the last residential station to come into existence amongst the five envisaged in the re-organisation plan of 1714. It is situated near the border of east Bhutan at a distance of 15 days' journey to the south east of the Tibetan capital. Fr. John Francis of Fossombrone was sent there in February, 1717, to buy a house and make other necessary arrangements for one or two more priests (29).

The utility of this branch station, as an integral part in the running of the mission, has never been very clear. Apparently it was meant to be a hospice or resting place for the Fathers who chose to enter Tibet via Sikkim. With the opening of Kathmandu, however, they preferred the Patna-Nepal route which was more conveniently spaced and offered more facilities to the traveller. It might be also that Fr. Dominic, who suggested Tron-gne as a possible place for missionary development, had an eye on Sikkim. In his mind the "Garden of Himalaya" looked a promising soil in which to sow the seed of the Gospel. In fact, for a time, negotiations were afoot between the Prefect and the Maharaja of Sikkim to found a mission house in the "Land of Lightening", till eventually all fizzled out.

Tron-gne never played an important role. It began to prosper between the years 1717 and 1721, at a time when an

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27. *Giornale*, p. 72. The figures given are stereotyped, giving an approximate idea of the number of inhabitants.
 28. *Account of Nepal* by Kirkpatrick, London 1811, p. 268.
 29. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I. p. 86.

internecine strife broke out in Lhasa and the missionaries held their lives in a somewhat precarious condition. It was then a house of refuge from the revolutionary monks in the capital. After the year 1722, Tron-gne became a visiting station and gradually lost importance.

There were also economic reasons that made the opening of Tron-gne desirable. The majority of the people in Tibet live in the lower valley where the climate is milder and the presence of alluvial soil renders the land more fertile. The upper regions are barren with sparse shrubs and an occasional stunted tree that dominates the desolate landscape like the few hair on the head of a bald man. Things were different in the province of Takpo, and the cost of living was lower. Here apricots, peaches and even a small quantity of grapes as well as wheat, barley, maize and peas are produced on its more generous soil. Once a year at least a missionary from Lhasa used to go to Tron-gne to make the annual provision of Mass wine. But even this was stopped when the Fathers found that it was easier, after having obtained a pass, to get the same supply from Bengal. This alone was a costly item as Mass wine was brought into Bengal from France.

It was felt necessary also to open two or more missionary stations to further consolidate the work. A suggestion was made to erect an intermediary rest camp between Lhasa and Sining and thus link up the Tibetan with the Chinese mission. The solitary tract from Nepal to the Tibetan capital was considered too long and trying to be covered at one time, without making a long stop in between. The important town of Gyang-tse (rGyal-rtse) was strongly suggested as an ideal place for a hospice. This would establish three missionary centres in Tibet itself within a relatively short distance.

Rome, however, thought it prudent to carry out first the plan which had already been approved. This was considered enough for the time being to give the mission a fair chance to stand on its feet and hold its own. Proposals for the future expansion could be studied at a later date and implemented if and when the first stage of re-organisation had proved its worth.

CHAPTER IV

WAY TO LHASA

A simple outline of the Tibetan Mission will not be complete unless a reference is made to the route from Europe to Lhasa. One must have an idea of the life on the road to know what it meant to cover a distance of 20 or 30 thousand kilometers on foot or by primitive modes of transportation. The land route through the Middle East, from Rome to Lhasa, on the round-about course it followed could not have been less than 20 thousand kilometers. Likewise, the length of the sea-voyage, round the Cape of Good Hope together with the rest of the land journey, ran easily into about 30 thousand kilometers. Accustomed as we are to modern fast means of travelling, we find it difficult, even imaginatively, to reconstruct the hardships that beset the path of the early pioneers in those days of slow communication and difficult transport.

It was indeed something of an experience to be an apostle of Christ in a strange, foreign land, away from the natural environment in which one was born and bred and to live among people who had nothing in common except the original human stock. Yet, the way to their apostolic field proved the testing-ground of their vocation, the touch-stone of their physical and moral endurance. It was more irksome to get into Lhasa than to live in Lhasa, though even there trials and crosses were not wanting. The number of missionaries who fell on the way, the number of those who retreated from their respective expeditions, after having had a foretaste of the life on the road, as well as of those who died soon after their arrival from Europe, is truly impressive. And they were not weaklings, but were, nevertheless, mowed down all the same by the keen edge of suffering and died like soldiers in a battle.

Two or three years' continuous travel, packed with

hardships and perils, due largely to unfriendly seas or to inhospitable surroundings, look so very simple when set down on paper, but to live through it all required unusual physical strength and a will tempered with the spirit of faith and sacrifice. This alone throws a side-light on the men, brave to the point of heroism, who were called up to fulfil such a hard task—a thing which is so often overlooked.

The travelling incidents we have so far related are a sample of the gruelling, nerve-racking hazards and annoyances which were to be their lot in the long way to Lhasa. The adjectives commonly used to qualify the risks of the journey ring with a language of alarm and danger. Often in their narratives they write of the exhausting and disastrous marches and of the galling and cruel experiences they had to undergo before reaching the destination of their expedition. Every tract of the journey, the sea, and the desert, the steamy depths of the jungle and the icy summits of the Himalaya, had its own peculiar difficulties. The whole long way was a calvary, a series of stumbling-blocks and obstructions, patiently endured for the sake of bringing the Tree of Life to the people of Tibet.

By Land and Sea

At the beginning of the eighteenth century one could come to India from Europe by land or sea. Both routes were equally common and both had their own advantages and disadvantages. As for the time and expenditure, if everything went well, it would not make much of a difference to take either of the two ways.

Since the very dawn of history, south-western Asia has been of great importance. It forms in fact the central part of a bridge linking the three continents of the old world—Asia, Africa and Europe. For centuries it was the busiest thoroughfare in the highways of the ancient world. Men and goods passed through it to reach the four corners of the globe.

Travellers from Italy who chose the land route,—a thing which was very common at a time when war and piracy were

a common occurrence on the high seas—took a sailing vessel at one of the different ports trading with one or other of the eastern Mediterranean harbours. Usually these boats did not make a straight run for Syria, but called at various places on the Mediterranean sea routes and even at cities in Greece and Turkey. On the whole it was a slow voyage, but safe and pretty easy. Once disembarked on the mainland, passengers joined the local caravans which took them to the two main trading centres in south-west Asia - Aleppo and Damascus. These two cities controlled the trade which from South Europe converged on to the Persian Gulf. All caravans going east were formed or regrouped at these two commercial centres and from there branched off in different directions. Damascus, which at the time of our missionaries, was a large city with around half a million population, commanded chiefly the desert routes. Aleppo, however, was more conveniently situated. It stands midway between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean, and, through the part of Alexandretta, reaped all the advantages formerly enjoyed by Antioch. The city had then a population of 700,000 inhabitants ; about 10,000 camels were engaged in the local trade route between the port of Alexandretta and Aleppo.

Three or four times during the year huge caravans moved out from Aleppo and Damascus directed to Baghdad, the Babylon of the olden days. They followed different routes according to the various seasons of the year as climate and weather conditions did not permit them to pursue the same course all the year round, even though the trail might have been much shorter. In summer caravans from Aleppo struck northwards, towards the mountains, touching on Urfa (the old, famous city of Edessa), Diarbakir, Mardin and Mosul, in Iraq. Mosul stands on the right bank of the Tigris, 350 kilometers north of Baghdad, opposite the ruins of Nineveh. Another caravan track, which was usually taken during the cold season, left Aleppo to join the course of the Euphrates to Baghdad. Likewise, the route Damascus-Baghdad was served by two different lines of march. One was along the small desert, as it was called by the missionaries, i.e. from Damascus the track

cut to the north east, across the fertile oasis of Palmyra (the city of palms, also known by its original Hebrew name as Tadmor) till eventually it got to the Euphrates, some 400 kilometers to the north-west of Baghdad, and then followed the river course. During the winter caravans preferred to take the south-east trail, which connected Damascus with Baghdad. It was the shortest line of communication, but half of it (about 400 kilometers) ran through the trackless Syrian desert.

A caravan was then the only means of communication and trade. It was a huge affair and an imposing sight. The size varied according to the season and the occasion, but it could be anything between one hundred and one thousand camels, which followed each other in single file. Traders, merchants and travellers, the business community and the men in search of adventure joined together to form the caravan for the sake of mutual help and protection.

Before leaving Aleppo or Damascus, the wayfarers had to comply with the formalities of the caravan protocol. A written contract was entered into between the passengers and the leader of the caravan. The latter bound himself to supply his clients, against cash payments, with food, water, a tent for the night and means of transport. The food rations were palpably matched to the dreary, cheerless landscape. A piece of dry bread at midday and a handful of rice in the evening was all they had for days on end. The water, often muddy and polluted, was supplemented at times with the still more unsavoury liquid which could occasionally be found by the way side. The roving king of the desert, some days before the caravan would break up, relaxed his iron grip on rations. However, it was not without motives. Pleased with his ability as a caterer, and and proud of having taught his proteges a practical lesson on frugality, he made an attempt to extort from them some extra money on account of his good services and kind generosity.

Once on the move, the caravan pushed on its way like a marching army in rigid discipline and formation. Patrols were sent ahead to watch over the trail while guards took care of the flanks and brought up the rear. "When it was

time to break camp, the captain of the caravan ordered drums to be beaten. At the first roll, every one packed away tents and equipment in corded bales; at the second, camels and carts were loaded; at the third, the travellers mounted and shambled off. When darkness fell, lest any of the party strayed, drummers rode before and behind the column sounding away through the night". Sentries kept vigil round the encampment till day-break.

Every member of the caravan had to be a soldier, armed to the teeth and ready to beat off any attack from any quarter it might come. Professional bands of highway robbers infested the trade routes to loot and to plunder. With no police force to protect them, the men had to organise themselves in such a way as to face any emergency. It was not uncommon for members of a gang of dacoits to infiltrate the ranks of the caravan posing as ordinary bona fide travellers to go into action at a convened place, where the main body of their forces was lying in wait for the ambush. Anything could happen and the situation was not at times without its sense of humour. The patrolmen saw at a distance a fast moving column coming in their direction. The visibility was poor; the dust and the glare of the setting sun depicted fantastic figures far away in the distant horizon. It gave the impression of being in the presence of a gang of robbers getting ready for an encounter and the patrol raised the alarm. Two friendly caravans were up in arms to undo each other. Orders were issued, positions were taken and the first shots fired when the mistake was discovered. The battle array ended in a fraternal embrace, for, after all, they were not enemies but brothers on the road, suffering under the same illusion and worked up by the same excitement.

Petty thefts and free fights also played their part among the people of the same caravan. One might get up in the morning still sleepy and dazed after the exhausting trek of the previous night to find that his money or some of his personal effects were missing. It was useless to lodge a complaint. Silence and vigilance was a better policy than voicing one's grievance or searching for the culprit. The heat and fatigue, the thirst and hunger frayed the tempers

and drove people mad. In that small world of men and animals, moving in the same direction, but thrown together by mere chance, it was not easy to preserve peace. Any pretext was enough to engage rough characters in a furious battle of words or make them wage a minor war with dead and wounded on both sides. Relations were strained and the atmosphere decidedly unfavourable most of the time.

All travellers directed to the Persian Gulf, no matter what route they selected, had a taste of the desert. Even the mountain trail through Diarbakri traverses portions of it in the tract between Mardin and Mosul. And the desert is the enemy to man and to all living things. It chokes and kills in the embrace of fire or it dries and withers in the barrenness of its vast sandy plains.

The hot, dry, suffocating, dust-laden wind called Simoon, that sweeps over the desert of Africa and Western Asia, makes it impossible to cross the howling wilderness in the months of July and August without courting death. Fierce gusts of hot wind, accompanied by clouds of red and burning sand, move forward in a whirling storm like a great wave lifted to the sky and refusing to fall. At its approach men throw themselves flat on the ground and cover their faces; animals scoop with their paws into the sand to put in their head and protect their muzzle. The Simoon leaves always some victims behind it as a mark of its onslaught. Entire caravans and great armies are known to have been destroyed by its fury. Even outside the months of July and August, it can make itself felt, though to a lesser degree. Some of the missionaries had an experience of what the prophet Jeremiah describes as “*ventus urens in viis, quae sunt in deserto*”; they fully realised that to pass through the desert meant, in the words of the same prophet, to go “*per terram inviam, per terram sitis et imaginem mortis*”.

Admittedly, there were difficulties to tackle, all along the land journey, but the worse would come when one fell sick; Fever, malarious or otherwise, was the common lot of travellers, and particularly so with the new and inexperienced among them. The climate was unhealthy and the most rudimentary principles of hygiene were unknown. With no medical officer to see to the welfare of the marching men,

one was bound to contract some disease or other. The caravan went on all the same. The poor patient, unattended and neglected, had no other choice but to drag himself along with it. When he could not bear it any longer, he was dumped at the first inhabited place with the prospect of death before him or of a long wait till the next caravan showed up.

Besides, the daily toil and heavy burden common to all the caravan men, the missionaries had quite a few peculiar problems of their own. Though they went dressed like Arab merchants and tried to become one with the rest of the party, yet complexion and the retired way of life might betray their identity. In an age of religious fanaticism and travelling through non-Christian lands, among people who harboured a secret hatred against the followers of Christ, they lived in constant dread of their life. The motive of religion and the greed to get hold of their possessions redoubled the danger.

Fr. James of Colza and his companion, who journeyed by the Aleppo Diarbakir route in the summer of 1763, had to resort to a trick to escape death. It was a hot day in August and the caravan with which they were travelling pitched tents to take some rest. The encampment was surrounded by unfriendly tribes and fear of a raid was also entertained. The Captain, however, knew what was to be done. He posted the escort at strategic points in readiness for a surprise attack. After a frugal meal all settled down to relax in the inviting stillness of the hot afternoon hours.

Fr. James had scarcely turned in when two suspicious characters, rough and unkempt, appeared in front of his tent. They had come from a nearby village to sell their ware, but along with it they carried also sharp, murderous looking weapons. They spoke and gesticulated, but the missionaries made no response. Rendered inquisitive by the strangeness of the situation the callers asked a camp attendant, who hated the sight of Christians, who they were. He told them the travellers they had just spoken to did not know the language, that they were Christians, infidels coming from a far-off country. Not satisfied with it, the informant went on to heap abuses on them and on their religion.

The information thus gained changed the look of the two

tribals, who started talking in a low voice between themselves. Fr. James, who had picked up some smattering of Arabic during his stay at Aleppo, was quick to take in the situation. He realised that the two were plotting to do away with the infidels. He did not understand much, but the expression on the face, the few stray words he could understand were most significant.

All was quiet in the camp, the travellers enjoying the afternoon siesta. This was considered the most propitious moment to send the infidels to their heaven and run away with their belongings. And there would be not much ado about it for they were people cursed by God and men. In case of trouble, an excuse could always be found. Meanwhile, Fr. James steadied his nerves and set his mind working on a plan to solve the tragic situation he found in. He waved off his companion and told him to go out of the tent. Then, putting his hand in his pocket, the priest produced his travelling papers, on which the Crescent and seal of the Great Sultan of Constantinople was prominently displayed. Taken aback, the unwelcome visitors asked to see the document. Better to make sure, they must have thought, to commit a blunder. Reverently Fr. James kissed the paper and showed it to them. The pair was baffled and for a moment betrayed confusion of mind. The strange gesture of the infidel and the picture of the Crescent in front of them acted like a magic touch of the wand. Suddenly, the two potential murderers turned into beggars and asked the missionary for some medicines—a request which the much-relieved priest obligingly complied with.

As a rule, caravans broke up at Mosul and Baghdad, according to the route which had been taken. The rest of the journey to Basra was completed by following the downstream course of the Tigris and Euphrates. The two rivers joined at Korna to flow placidly into the Persian Gulf.

The pace of travelling was considered fair and even fast if one could arrive at Basra, from the Italian shores, within five or six months, with yet another three months ahead before getting into the Bay of Bengal.

Travellers for India gathered then at Bunder Abbas, an

important sea-port town at the entrance of the Persian Gulf, opposite the island of Ormuz. From here Dutch, French and English vessels left the anchorage for the east. Ships, however, did not leave Bunder Abbas at any time of the year. There were seasonal sailings open to navigations i.e. from the month of November till the end of April. For the rest of the year navigation was closed. A delay of six months before getting on boardship was considered normal and passengers did not lose their temper on account of it. Time moved slowly and men moved with the time. The hope, however, of securing a free passage from one of the sea-captains made the day pass in happy anticipation of receiving a free lift. If all went well, a thing which was well nigh impossible, the cost of travelling from Italy to the Bay of Bengal, by the overland route, could be reckoned in a round figure at Rs. 300/- (1).

Life on the ship, the manner of the sea, from the Persian Gulf to the Bay of Bengal did not differ much in peril and from the dangers encountered by those who came to India by the sea route. The voyage was longer but the fate of the sea-farer was more or less the same. Conditions on boardship, as we shall presently see, were far from ideal, not to say frightful.

At that time there were four sea services (if they can be called by that name) between Europe and India run by the four merchantile nations which carried on extensive business with the latter country—Portugal, France, Holland and England. The Tibetan missionaries preferred for obvious reasons to travel by the French East India Company. However, in time of war between French and England, they made use also of Portuguese ships plying between Lisbon and Goa. When the French power was on the wane, missionaries started coming out to India by ships of the

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1. The information on land travelling has been culled from different sources, but chiefly from:—Il Padre Cappuccino Giacomo da Colza e il suo viaggio al Tibet, by Emilo Patriarca, Verona Tipografica Don Bosco, 1941 ; La Missione del Tibet-Hindustan negli scritti del P. Giuseppe da Rovato O.F.M. Cap., by P. Gottardo da Como, Asmara, Scuola Tipografica Francescana, 1954 ; *Analecta Ordinis etc.*, op. cit. Vol. XLIII (1927), pp. 260-265

English Company. It was not until 1830 that steam vessels began to ply between Suez and Bombay. Passengers by the "overland route", as it was called, made for Alexandria of Egypt, sailed up the Nile as far as Cairo, then they trekked across the Egyptian desert up to Kosseir, on the Red Sea. Before 1830 the only course open to navigation was the long route round the Cape of Good Hope.

From 1706 to 1734 the French East India Company was kind enough to grant missionaries a free passage. During this period they availed themselves of this facility and came out to India by sea. They embarked at one of the north-western French harbours. It might have been St. Malo, Nantes, Port Louis, Bordeaux, though Lorient was the most common port for the Orient, as the very name implies. The usual procedure before sailing was to travel from Rome to Leghorn, or to some other Italian port, in search of a vessel bound for South France. From there they took the way to Paris to comply with the usual passport and other formalities. This done, the party proceeded to the north west of France, waiting for east bound ships. There was no scheduled time for departure or arrival; meanwhile they could rest at the Capuchin Monastery of Hennebont—some 15 kilometers inland.

From 1734, onwards the French East India Company made the missionaries pay the customary charges (2) i.e. Rs. 1/- per day approximately (3). As the duration of the voyage was uncertain the matter was easily settled by making the passengers disburse the fare of eight months in advance. Any extra dues or refund of passage money, if any, would be finally adjusted at the end of the voyage. The rate charged to the missionaries was the lowest; captains charged their richer clients what they pleased or what they knew they could pay. It was their perquisite and the ship owners never interfered in this matter.

Once a year, between the months of December and March, slow moving vessels sailed to the east. It took them on an

2. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 205, 208.

3. Nuovo Ramusio, part III p. 93, 208-209; therein it is stated that eight months' advanced payment should also be made; Gli scritti del P. Marco dalla Tomba etc., op. cit., p. 2.

average of seven-eight months to cover the distance between the starting-point and the destination. The same ship could be expected in Bengal at any time from September to December. Fast sailing boats, under favourable conditions, could make the run within five months, but this was exceptional. With a wind directly eastern, the craft could speed away at 15 knots per hour. On the other hand, the sea-god in one of its whims and bad moods, might lengthen the time employed in the voyage up to 11 and even 12 months. The Captains were also not always very dependable in checking the position of the ship, for navigation in those days was often "by guess and by God".

A sea-voyage in the early part of the eighteenth century was no pleasure cruise and offered no glamour. Already Kipling at his time called the passengers who sailed to India "the chain gangs of the East". It was a voyage of horror, dreaded like the the gates of hell, made on small crowded and uncomfortable ships, an easy sport of the wind and the wave. On a heavy, choppy sea the egg-like shell bounced and danced like a drunken man ; when caught in a storm, the fragile vessel was tossed about like a play-toy, all alone in the midst of a raging sea to battle her way against the mounting waves or to sink in the deep.

The age of sailing vessels is long past and forgotten ; we have no idea of what it really meant to be travelling in one of them, in fair or bad weather. It was a three or four masted sailing craft, weighing between 400 and 900 tons, with a complement, passengers and crew, of about, say, fifty to one hundred souls—a midget compared with even the tiny ocean tramps of today. And within that little space a small bazaar and a farmyard had to be crammed in. Drinking water was strictly rationed and often became polluted. By way of consolation the ship carried a large stock of hard drinks, which were very cheap. They served a double purpose—to keep up the spirits when the morale was low and to heal all ailments. In the days when scientific medicine was practically unknown doctors were in the habit of prescribing to their patients a dose of a few extra hard drinks. That was the panacea, the cure-all remedy then in vogue.

One of the standing instructions issued to passengers by "the shipping company" was to take with them a bucket and a rope for "drawing up salt water whenever required", that is, for washing clothes and taking a bath. "Luxury Liners" could dispose of a few cabins reserved for first class passengers. These cubicles were usually referred to as "that dirty little hole". They were bare and unfurnished and the sahibs were allowed to decorate them with their own pieces of furniture if they so desired.

Tons of firewood for cooking was stacked up in the hold. The food problem was easily solved—having no ice chambers, pigs, sheep, goats and even cows, hens, geese, ducks and other feathered birds were hauled alive into the boat to provide eggs, milk and meat. Dry bread and stale biscuits took the place of the fresh, fragrant loaf served now-a-days at the table. Fish was in plenty and it was the main pastime of passengers to catch them on baited hooks. Apart from the noise, a sailing vessel of those years must have combined the smells of a farmyard with those of the slaughter-house. It was indeed a real ordeal and together with it the passengers had to endure such incidents as leaks, sprung masts, a damaged helm, several near collusions, gales, hurricanes, the occasional drunkenness of the crew, the threats of pirates who scoured the ocean in every direction and all the rest of it. About ten per cent of the vessels that ventured to sea, were, lost due to the hostile forces of nature while much higher was the number of ships captured as a result of war or piracy, and no sailing went without registering some casualties. It cannot have been pleasant for any passenger to know that such possibilities of death or capture hung over a seven month-voyage. Yet, the sea route was more popular with travellers than the land route. One has to conclude then what a rough time must have been the lot of those who made their way to India via the Middle East.

Unless disaster occurred and the ship ran out of water or provision, there were no regular ports to call for the outward bound voyage. These occasional halts lasted at times for weeks, giving the passengers a welcome respite from the dread and drudgery of a life at sea. However,

once ashore they were not usually allowed to consume the ship's supplies of water and food and they had to see to their boarding and lodging elsewhere and pay for it. At the crossing of the Equator the traditional baptism ceremony was performed on those who traversed it for the first time.

Curiously enough, after crossing the equinoctial line, ships on their way out to the east might be forced to divert their route to the west on account of the winds and the strong currents. The ships which usually left Europe late in the sailing season, were just taking risks. Often when getting in the proximity of the Cape of Good Hope they found that the direction of the wind had changed and they had to steer their course to South America. There they waited till the proper time to make a run to the east.

The rounding of the Cape of Good Hope and the approaches to the Hughli in the Bay of Bengal were the most treacherous spots in the course of navigation. The Cape of Good Hope had the reputation of being considered by the sailors, the graveyard of ships. It is well known how it got this name. After a long sad adventurous voyage along the coast of Africa, B. Diaz, the Portuguese navigator, returned to Lisbon in 1487. As he related the story of his voyage before the court, he said that at the extremity of Africa was a cape so celebrated for its storm that he called it the Cape of Torments. "No", cried King Juan II, "it shall be called the Cape of Good Hope, as a happy omen of the advantages to be derived from this great discovery". The hopes were fulfilled in the course of years, but the cape continued to be the Cape of Torments for the sea-farers. After rounding it, passengers and crew joined together to sing a solemn Te Deum as a thanks giving for the escaped sea-trap.

Anything might happen in the Bay of Bengal. Ships that had traversed the ocean safely were wrecked at the mouth of the river on arrival. While sailing along the Sunderbunds jungle, even tigers could be expected to pay an unwelcome visit. Sailors told one of the missionaries that they had seen with their own eyes tigers brutally snatching away six or seven men while the vessel had come alongside the river bank. And the Captain testified to having witnessed

a tiger making a five and a half meter leap over a pit with a man in its jaws. The landing of ships at Chandernagore was a lengthy and laborious manoeuvre. On disembarking one felt like a convict, low and dejected, who just served a seven month sentence of hard labour (4).

On to the Nepal Valley

From the small French settlement in Bengal to the capital of Bihar, the travellers had the option to go either by road or sailing up the river. The journey, however, could be done safely only at stated times. The river was dangerous and the road unpassable during the rainy season. Passengers coming in at the wrong time had to make a forced stop of some months at Chandernagore.

During the south-west monsoon the Hughli is subject to the phenomenon known as "the bore"—a tidal flood which rushes with great violence up to the estuary of the river making navigation extremely perilous. Every year the river took an appalling toll. Four Tibetan missionaries, in the second half of the eighteenth century who were travelling on fluvial boats, between Bengal and Bihar, perished in the waters of the Sacred Ganges and the Hughli river (5).

The 600 kilometers land journey between Chandernagore and Patna would normally take 30 days. It could extend over 2 or 3 months if a spoke was put in one's wheel. The road cut across thick jungles and open fields, often exposed to prowling wild animals, or to some bands of dacoits that terrorised the area. Moreover, the incautious traveller in

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4. Information on the sea voyage has chiefly been taken from: *Giornale*, pp. 39-55; *Ladies in the Sun*, edited by J.K. Stanford, The Galley Press Ltd., London 1962; *La Missione del Tibet-Hindustan etc.*, op. cit.; *Memorie del viaggio da Roma sin a Lhasa etc.*, by Fr. Ippolite Desideri S. J. (Nuovo Ramusio, part V. pp. 125-134).
 5. Fr. John Baptist of Bergamo got drowned in the Ganges in the year 1752; Fr. James of Colza and his companion, Br. Eusebius of Rodeano, perished in the same river on the 26th April, 1765; while Fr. Juvenal of Nizza lost his life in the Hughli on the 11th of January, 1797.

India could easily be seized by cholera, small pox, plague, dysentery and fevers. The novelty of the landscape, however, and the manners and customs of the people, offered a welcome change from the life at sea or the desolate caravan trail across the Middle East. Bullock cart and dhooly were the only means of conveyance for the sick and the road-weary. The river course was longer and more costly, but equally serviceable. With careful handling of men and things the expediture could be limited to Rs. 40/- per head. At Rajmahal, an important transit trade centre, which stands on the steep eminence on the right bank of the Ganges, the land route could be exchanged for the river course.

There were three possible access routes from Bengal and Bihar to the mission headquarters, each of which ran through the three southern states adjoining Tibet-Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal. The way through the mountainous states of Bhutan was never used by our missionaries, but it was often talked about as an alternative approach to get into the Forbidden City. Rumours had it that the country was wild and its people hostile. Cases of cannibalism had also been reported. The Raja of Bhutan seemed willing to grant the right of passage, but the traveller was expected to come back the same way, making it hard for people in transit to go beyond the other end of the border. On the other hand, the track was lonely and entirely unexplored (6).

The nine hundred kilometers journey across Sikkim was better served. Considerable trade was carried on during the season and the country with its picturesque landscape and stately trees looked more inviting. The mountain system of which Sikkim is formed consists of two great spurs jutting out from the Himalayan watershed in the shadow of Mt. Kanchenjunga, the world's third highest mountain peak. The trail over the 4,700 meter high Nathu-la ("La" a Tibetan word means pass) on the Sikkim-Tibet border provides the shortest line of march between the Indian plain and the far-flung ramparts of the Tibetan plateau. The main objection to this route, which after 1712, was

6. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 53-54.

abandoned, was that its steep snowy passes were very hardly negotiable except during the months of April and May. On the other hand, the way was free from the petulant rapacity of toll-keepers ; the plague of those who travelled from Patna to the Valley of Nepal. It would be difficult to trace out the course followed by the traveller who passed through Sikkim, but Nathu-La, the Chumbi Valley, Phari Dzong ; Gyangtse and Yamdok Ts'o are given as the possible landmarks en route to Lhasa.

On the whole, the road through Sikkim was preferable to that of Nepal. Besides, being the shortest line of communication between India and Tibet, travellers had in addition the advantage of being able to use pack animals all along the trail. The track in Nepal was such that porters and pack animals had to be alternated. Two factors, however, contributed to the abandoning of the Sikkim route. One was that passengers were exposed to the danger of malaria throughout the year, while the way through Nepal enjoyed a certain degree of immunity during the cold season. Then, the Raja of Sikkim did not like outsiders to make use of the country as a short-cut to Tibet. As a deterrent he levied, round the year 1712, a peculiar kind of tax. One tenth of the luggage was taken away at random from travellers by way of road toll (7)—a thing which made travellers hesitate to take such a risk. The closing of this route to missionaries may account for the failure of Tron-gne to rise up to the expectation.

After the reorganisation of the mission and the fact that Sikkim was now virtually closed to traffic, the way through Nepal became a necessity. The valley was also most suitable as a resting place and access to it comparatively easy, at least during certain times of the year. The road passing through Dharbhanga and the Sun Kosi Valley, used by the missionaries in the early stage, was subsequently given up in favour of the other to the north-west touching Bettiah and Raxaul. The distance was more or less the same and so was the length of time employed in covering it, i.e. about 20 days.

7. *Giornale*, p. 117.

As the reader may have already noticed there was then no hard and fast rule of reckoning the time to be spent in travelling from one place to another ; nor was there any specific schedule to know exactly the amount of money which would be required in making the same journey. In reality all depended on so many factors that it would be impossible to enumerate them. In regard to money in particular, it was more a question of personal ability to extricate oneself from a tight corner than anything else. Moreover, we have to remember that distances were more often measured at the time in the number of days one spent in walking than in miles or leagues.

The seasonal caravans from Patna upwards Nepal and Tibet were not of the same size as those which traversed the Middle East. A few pack animals and a few attendants were enough to form the equipage. At times a guide and some servants would do to ensure a safe and sufficient escort for the journey. The road was comparatively good and the going easy. The main complaint invariably registered by all the missionaries was the oppressive charge levied at the toll barriers on goods in transit. It was a real nightmare which had to be patiently endured over a length of 300 kilometers, that is all along the road from Patna to Kathmandu.

This tract of the country was then divided into small semi-independent states with limited resources or revenue ; the transit duty was one of the means devised to replenish the coffers of the local chieftains. The check-posts were so numerous that hardly a day wore out without running into one of them. Here the traveller had an anxious time and was subjected to humiliation and harassment. The luggage was opened and searched and with it the haggling soon began ; the least article was valued like gold and accordingly charged. On one occasion a small box of pills was priced at Re. 1/- per pill. Endless quarrels ensued ; reports were lodged with the higher authorities, necessitating a trip to the headquarters, where further wrangling took place. The hours dragged into days without bringing the bargain to a head. If the wayfarer showed weakness and inability to cope with the situation he was sure to be harassed more

at the next toll. Word was sent ahead that the incoming passenger could be easily hoodwinked and the net was cast for the catch. Fr. Mark della Tomba writing home to warn prospective missionaries of the traps which might be laid for them on the journey, states that these toll-keepers were not exactly thieves, but sharpers, particularly rude and very exacting with the foreigners (8). Occasionally, the traveller would meet with sympathy and understanding, but these occurrences were few and far between ; in the majority of cases he would be simply fleeced.

The magic of the white man is a dictum full of meaning. The few European adventurers who had come east had left a fantastic impression on the minds of the natives. They were credited with magic powers and were all considered fabulously rich. People thought them to be endowed with the touch of Midas, the occult faculty of turning everything into gold. When some of them pleaded poverty or inability to pay the exorbitant toll-tax, the usual rebuff was—"You are a European, you can coin silver and gold in an instant by the magic of your fingers, and so pay up with a smile" (9). The poor missionaries harassed and beleaguered, deemed it advisable to avoid any vexation, to strip themselves off their religious habit and move about dressed in the fashion of local religious mendicants. One of the tips given by Fr. Joseph of Ascoli to the new and inexperienced travellers about to undertake the same journey was that they should join one of the traders going up to Nepal and Tibet and leave everything into his hands. As the head of the caravan he would be willing to help in consideration of a few rupees—an assurance which had to be taken in writing. For the rest the traveller had only to pose as an attendant in the service of his master. Some of the missionaries acted their part awfully well and got off lightly ; while others, who must have been third rate actors, were made to pay the penalty even in lieu of their more able and fortunate confreres.

One instance is enough to show how exasperating it was to travel at the time. The incident we are about to relate

8. Gli scritti del P. Marco dalla Tomba etc., op. cit., p. 33.

9. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 36-37.

occurred in the winter of 1707 to Frs. Joseph and Francis Mary, the two missionaries of the first expedition. It took all Fr. Joseph's resourcefulness and power of imagination to make the score. Fr. Francis Mary with all his experience of the country and its people could not manage it.

The boxes of the two wayfarers were piled up on the ground, all emptied out of their contents to the last pin. The petty official at the toll-bar examined the articles scattered about, and though he admitted that there was no merchandise, he solemnly gave the verdict that the cost of medicines, books and all other things amounted to Rs. 2,000/- and claimed Rs. 100/-, for his dues. The Fathers were flabbergasted and in the confusion and hoped to settle the deal and save the little money still left over, went so far as to offer him all their personal effects. The little tyrant of the law did not budge and insisted on being handed over the original amount he had asked for. In the impasse Fr. Joseph had a brain wave, hit upon a plan, communicated the idea to his companion and decided to try it out.

The attendants were ordered to gather grass and twigs and set them on fire ; then, slowly and deliberately, books, medicines and other items of minor importance were thrown into the heap to feed the flames, staging the whole show in such a way as to draw the attention of the passerby. This little piece of mastermind-strategy produced the desired effect immediately. No sooner did the display start than an old woman wondering at the strange, unusual performance cried out with a loud voice—"Look, look at the doctors, burning their medicines and books, what is happening to them ?" The cry summoned on the spot a bustling crowd of men, women and children eager to satisfy their curiosity. Not knowing what it was all about and keen to help, some of the persons began the rescue work, pulling out from the fire with hands and sticks the derelicts of the conflagration. In the meantime, more people had assembled. Fr. Joseph unconcerned and with a telling gesture, to add to the dramatic effect, urged the attendants to speed up the operation until those present became so enraged as to threaten them with sticks and clenched fists unless they stopped it immediately.

The show had already reached its climax and needed some clarification. The Fathers explained that they were men of God, going round the world to do good to all without any personal aim or interest, but that their dreadful experience of road duties was such as to warrant the destruction of all their goods rather than allow such an open injustice or fall into the clutches of such unscrupulous people. The good, understanding villagers requested the missionaries to desist from their action and not to worry as they would set things right. Leaving the place, they trooped to the residence of the Qazi, further up the way, to lodge a strong protest. During the Moghul administration the Qazi was a judge appointed by the centre and posted in every town of a certain importance to act as public relations officer. Here the good country-folk staged a demonstration—"Why", they shouted, addressing themselves to the judge, "why do you allow such things? You the guardian of the law? Don't you see that the doctors feel compelled to burn their medicines and Holy Books to escape the extortions and humiliations inflicted upon them by those who are in charge to collect transit duty?"

The frightened official showed great courtesy, directed some members of his staff to go to the spot, make inquiries and report. Satisfied that the two travellers did not carry any merchandise the Qazi sent for them, treated them with utmost kindness and entertained them as his guests. So, the scene which had started so dramatically ended in a warm embrace and in an exchange of presents. In his eagerness to help, the official gave the priests a way-bill and a letter which he claimed would exempt them from tolls and any other molestation so long as they travelled within the Moghul territory.

The story did not end here. The day after, while passing in front of the tax-collector's residence, who had been the cause of all this trouble, the Fathers were arrogantly stopped and asked on what authority they were leaving the place without paying their dues. Patiently the priests produced the way-bill and the letter issued to them by the Qazi and pointed out to a man who had been detailed by the officer to act as their escort. The understrapper questioned the

authority of the Qazi and impounded their belongings. Such acts of insubordination were then a common occurrence. Fr. Francis Mary had to come back to report the underling to his superior but even then he refused to give in. Annoyed and disgusted at his behaviour the Qazi despatched an ultimatum to the man asking to appear immediately in his presence. A regular trial took place in the presence of an excited crowd and the worthy was literally kicked out of the court-room. Wanting further to prove him wrong, the judge ordered the offending luggage to be brought in front of him and that a jury should give its decision. The body of the jury was called upon to minutely inspect the goods, see whether, according to law, there was any article subject to duty and then pass their sentence. The verdict was of course, "not guilty", but in the meantime four days' march was lost by this tragic but comic incident (10).

Enough of this, now we have to record another kind of trouble that afflicts traveller as he approaches Nepal. The belt of the country between India and Nepal is known as Tarai—the kingdom of wild animals and the eternal abode of fever. Man enters it as a trespasser and as an enemy. The fever-haunted jungle is inhabited by countless insects that come out with the dying of the day. They sting and molest the traveller while thorny bushes cut into his flesh as he walks along the path. Hordes of robbers haunt the highways. Large tracts of elephant grass, which provides ideal cover for tigers, grows up to an immense height, making walls on either side of the road. In the olden days, natives, before encamping in this forbidden land, used to offer the sacrifice of a cock to their dieties in order to keep away wild animals and evil spirits during their sojourn in the valley of death. Other wayfarers warded off the danger by shouting and making other unearthly noise, while the camp fires were lit up as soon as darkness closed in. A round the clock vigil was kept up in turns at night and the air was stirred by occasional shots fired from guns (11). Here and there thick impenetrable patches of jungle

10. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, pp. 9-12.

11. Giornale, pp. 105-115.

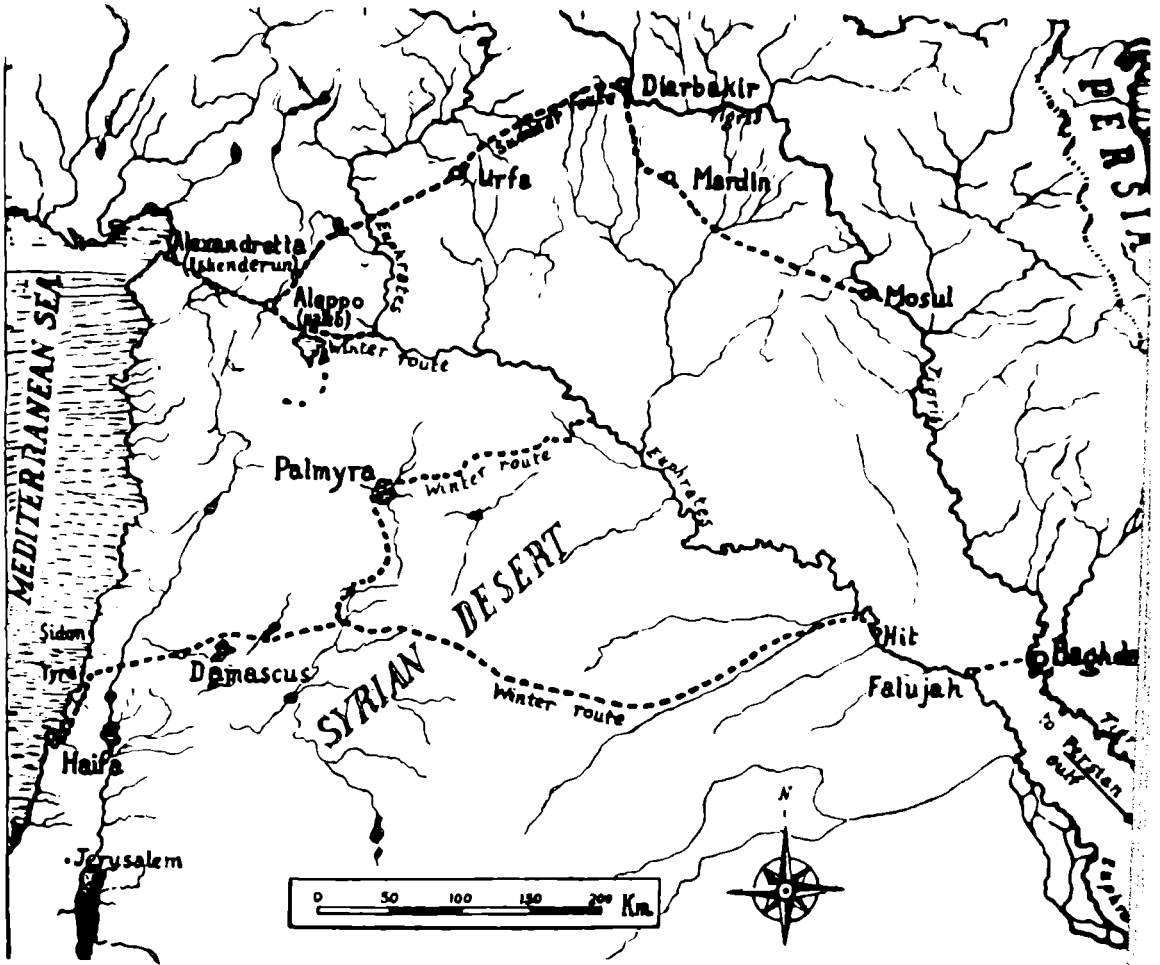
have to be literally hacked to make a way through it. There are dangerous morasses into which one might stray and disappear without hope of rescue. The family of reptiles slithers like malignant spirits and prepares to attack at the approach of any unfriendly thing.

Food and drinking water have to be carried from the land of man. The pools and streams, which can be found everywhere, breed disease and death. A thoughtless traveller may be seen straining the slimy germ-infected water by means of handkerchief for quenching his thirst. Human life in the Tarai is continually faced with death, and one can never be cautious enough to avoid its sting.

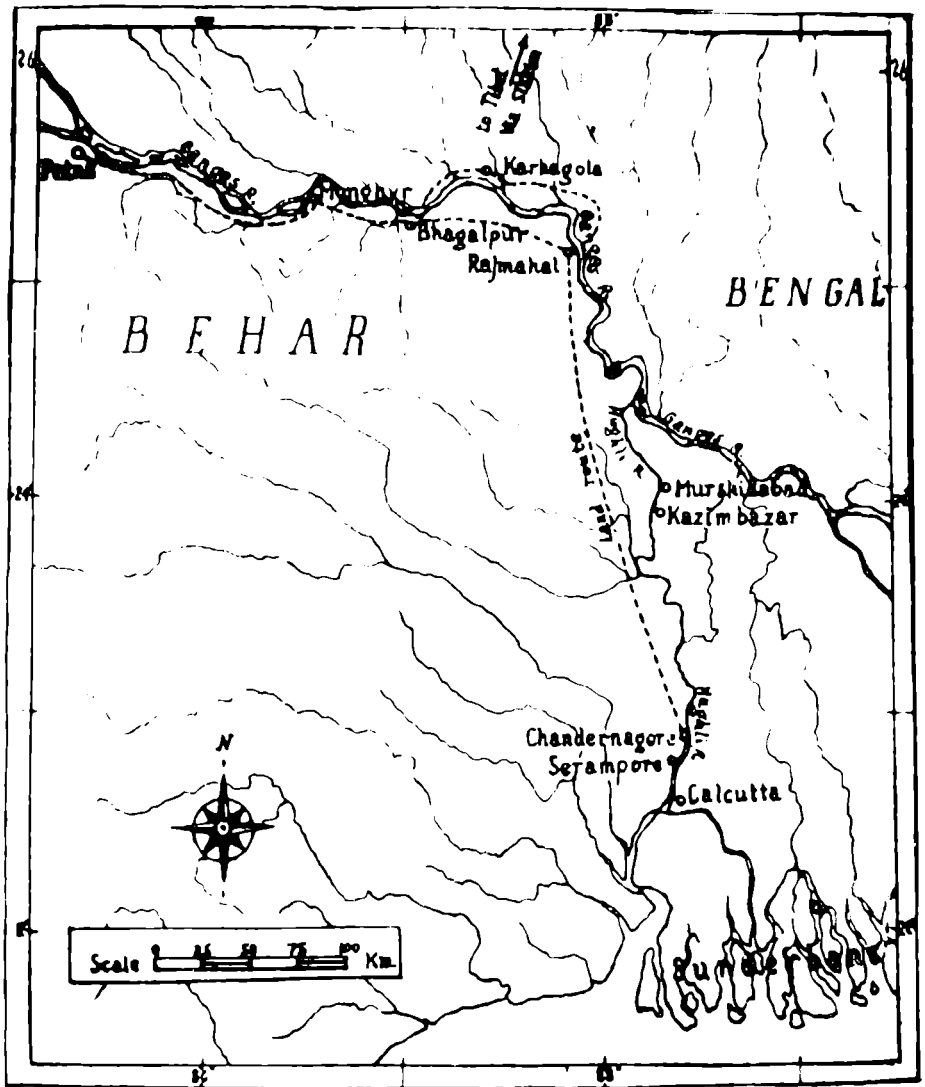
In the midst of this wealth of vegetation there are a few scattered villages, inhabited by quiet cultivators of the Taru tribe; people of gentle life, who through centuries of experience have acquired a certain degree of immunity from the ravages of the deadly Tarai. The country spreads itself over a maze of hillocks, which soon turn into hills and then into high mountain ranges, running in all directions like giant waves in the midst of a surging sea. With the ascent of the first ramparts difficulties also increase. Goat-like tracks, choked with underwood, slow down the progress of the journey and make the march more exhausting.

For eight months in the year, from March to November, the Tarai is a sealed kingdom, malaria kills anyone rash enough to trespass into its domain. Three types of fever plague these places—the Jar, the Aul and the Shit. The most dreaded of all is the Shit, which brings death in four or five days (12). Missionaries speak mostly of the Aul. One of them describes it as—“A vaporous exhalation that wells up in mist from the earth at the end of March and continues to infect the air till November, when the cold season sets in to counteract its evil effects. This pestiferous exhalation spreads over a long track of the journey between India and the Valley of Nepal. If one spends a night in these swamps he is sure to fall ill. A putrid fever accompanied by splitting headache and stubborn dysentery carries the

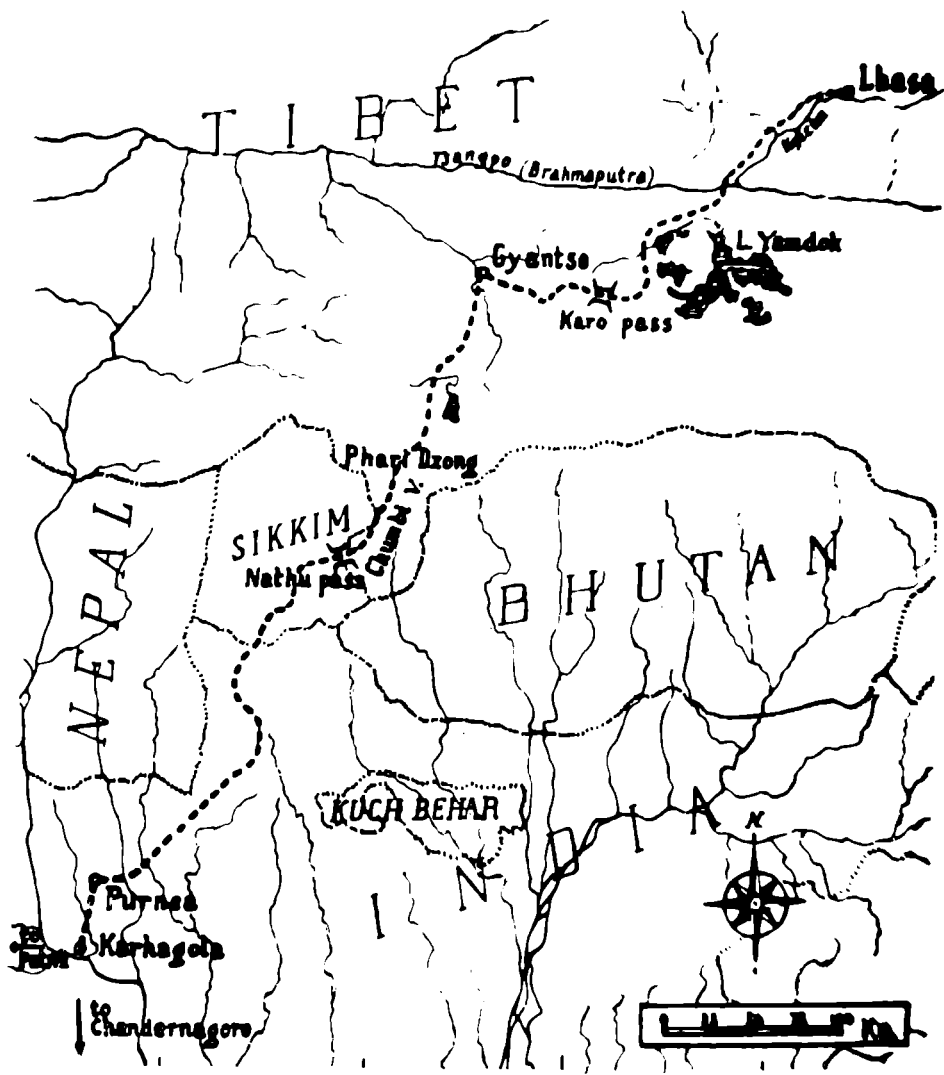
12. Nepal by Giuseppe Tucci, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. London, 1962, p. 74.



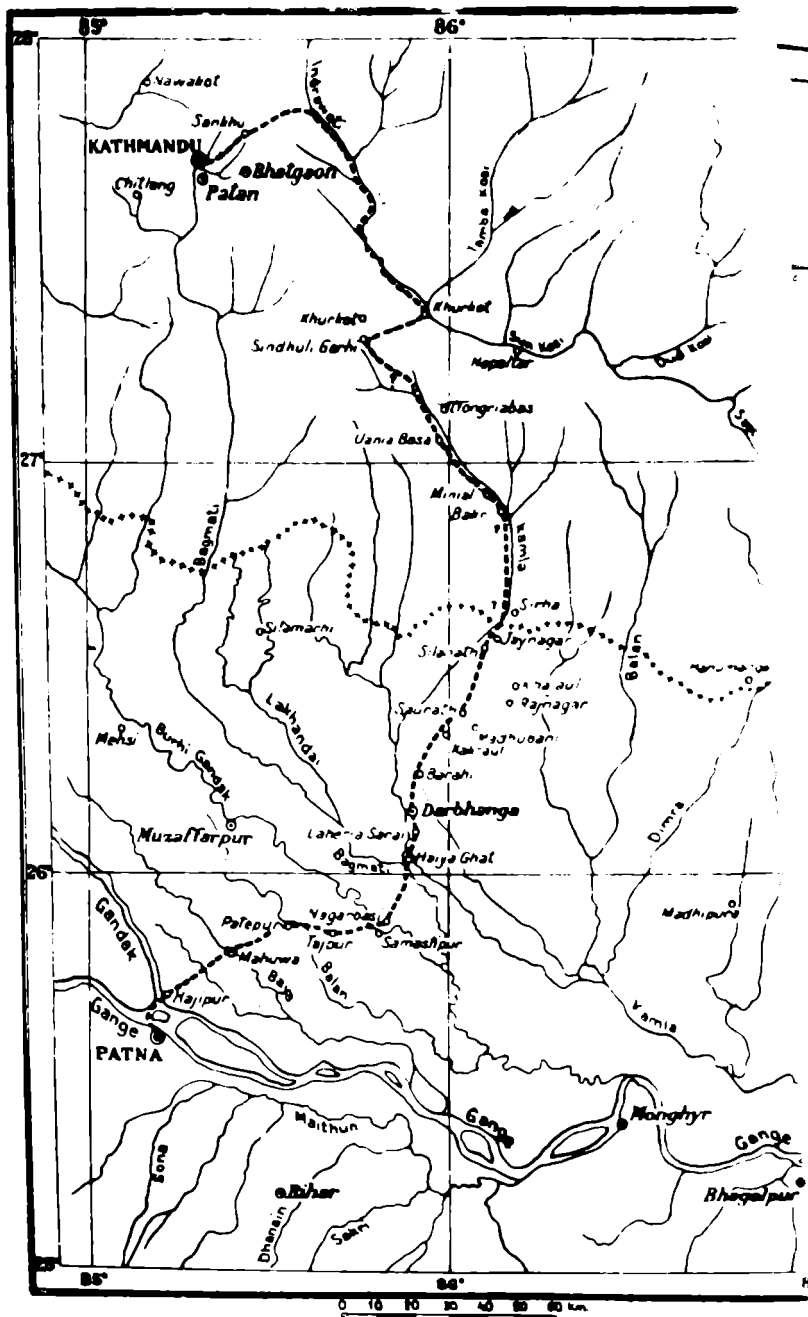
Land Routes from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf



Land and River Route from Chandernagore to Patna

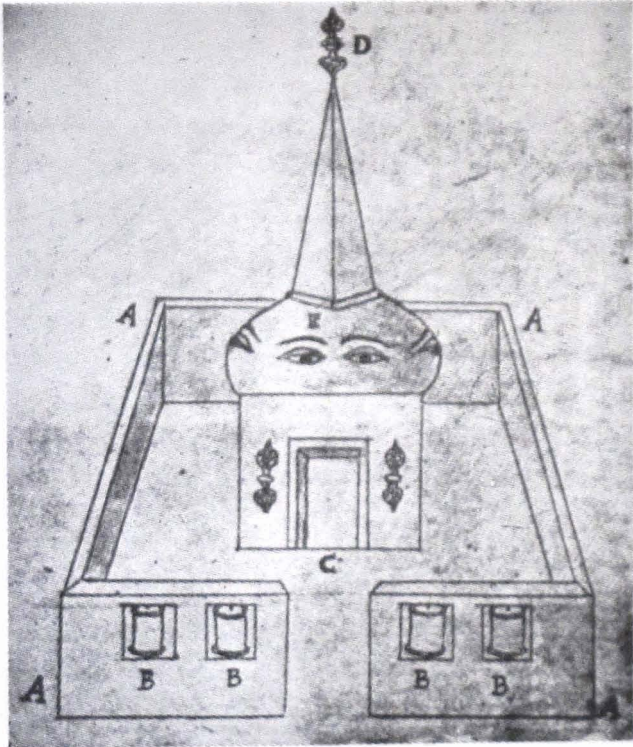


Route from Karhagola to Lhasa Via Sikkim



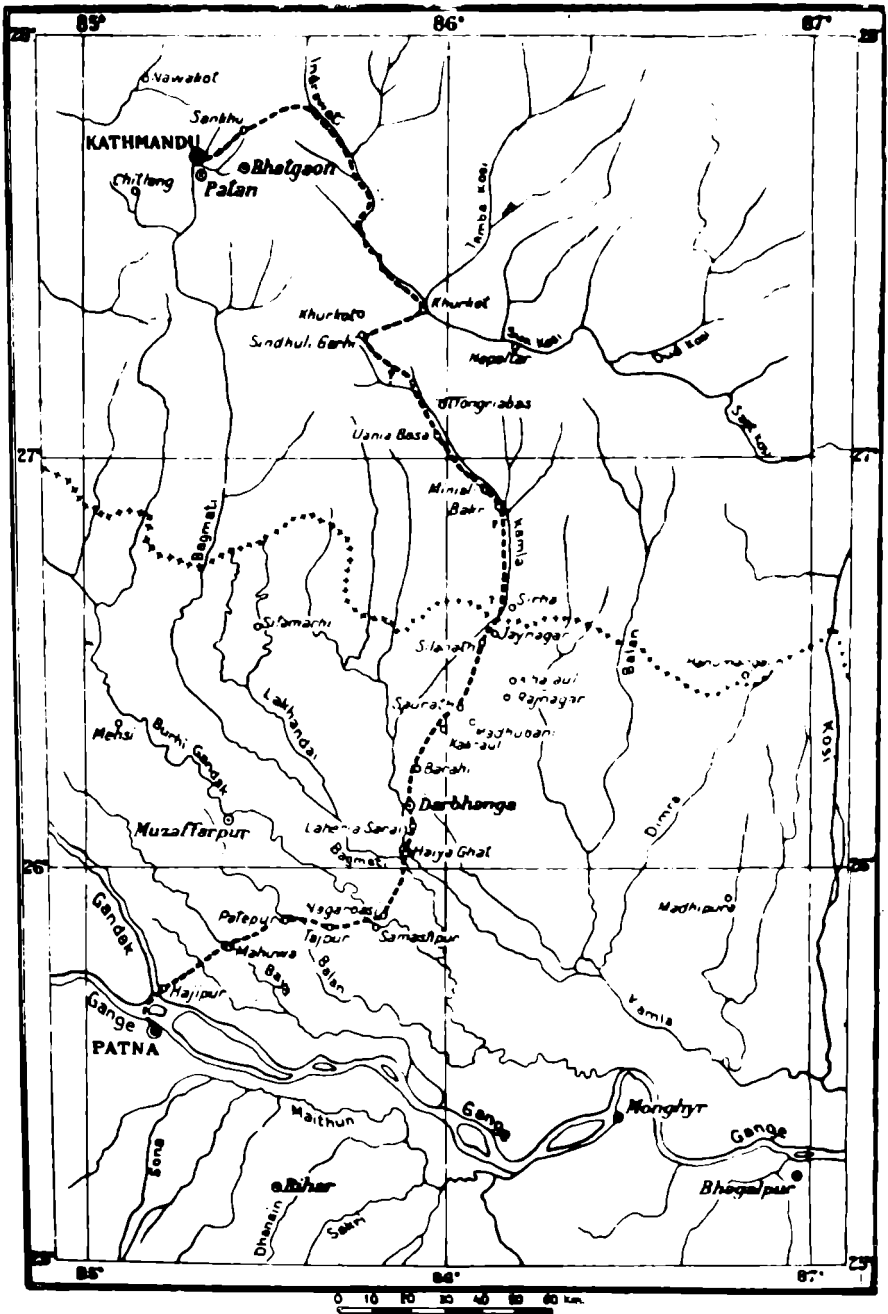
Itinerary of Fr. Joseph of Ascoli from Patna to Kathmandu in

With acknowledgement to Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato
 —From *Il Nuovo Ramusio II*, By Prof. Luciano Petech, Part I



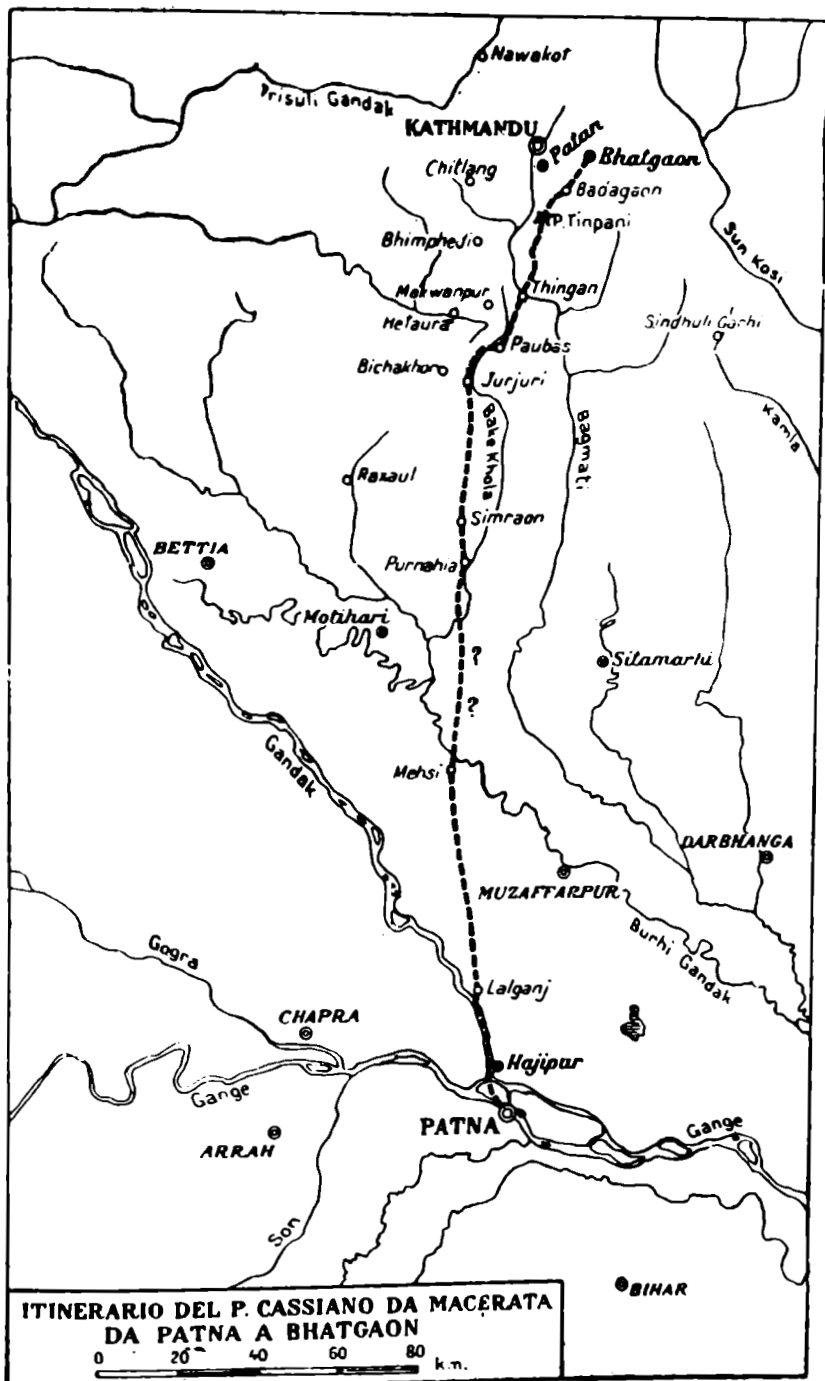
Buddhist shrine in Nepal taken care of by "Una Lamessa" or a nun lama

Drawing by Fr. Cassian Beligatti.

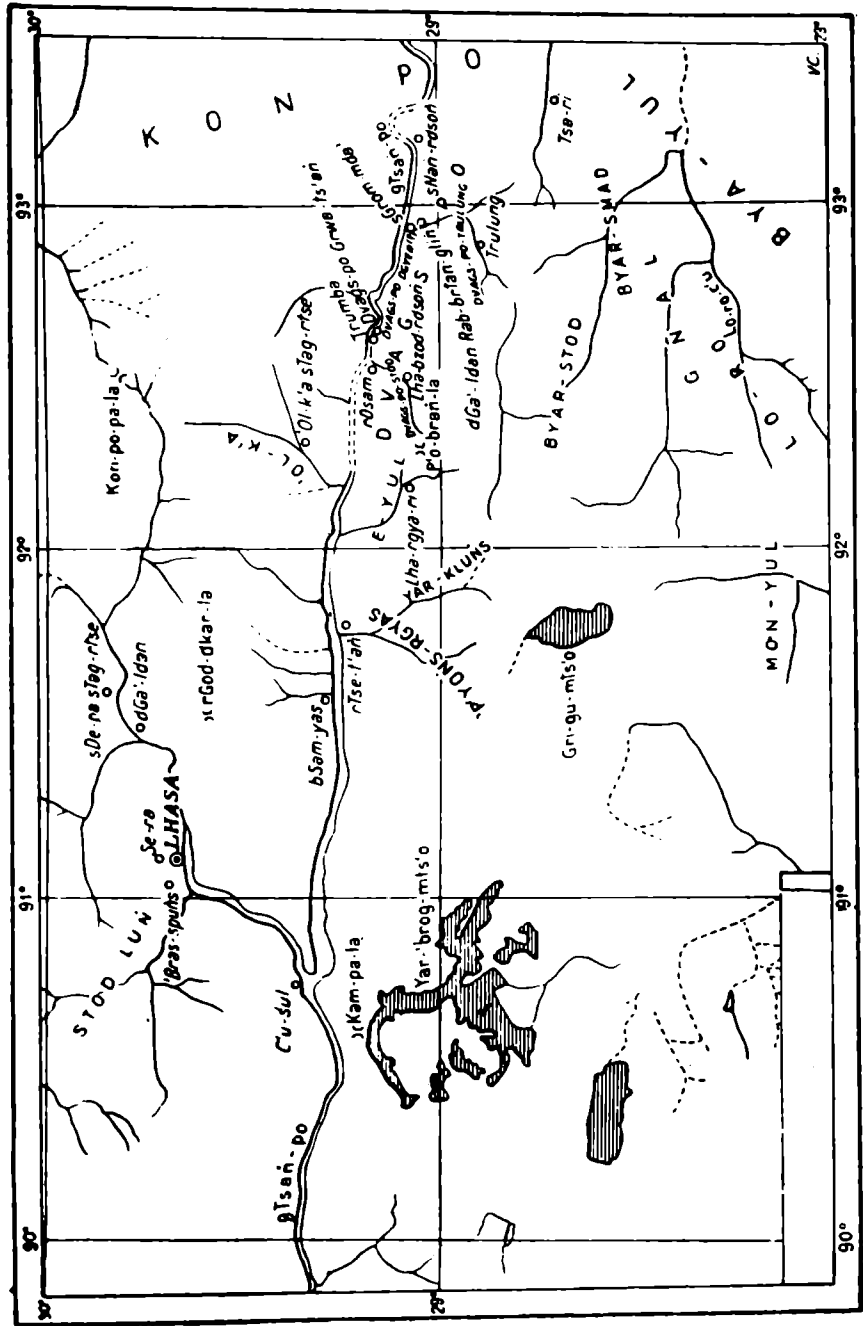


Itinerary of Fr. Joseph of Ascoli from Patna to Kathmandu in 1707

With acknowledgement to Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato (Rome)
 —From *Il Nuovo Ramusio II*, By Prof. Luciano Petech, Part IV.

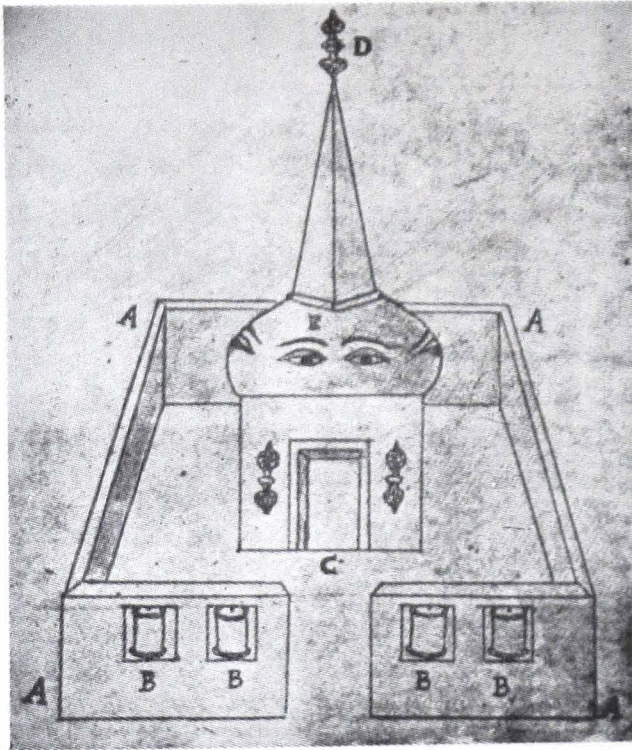


Itinerary of Fr. Cassian Beligatti from Patna to Bhatgaon
 With acknowledgement to Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato
 (Rome) —From *Il Nuovo Ramusio II*, by Prof. Luciano Petech,
 Part IV.

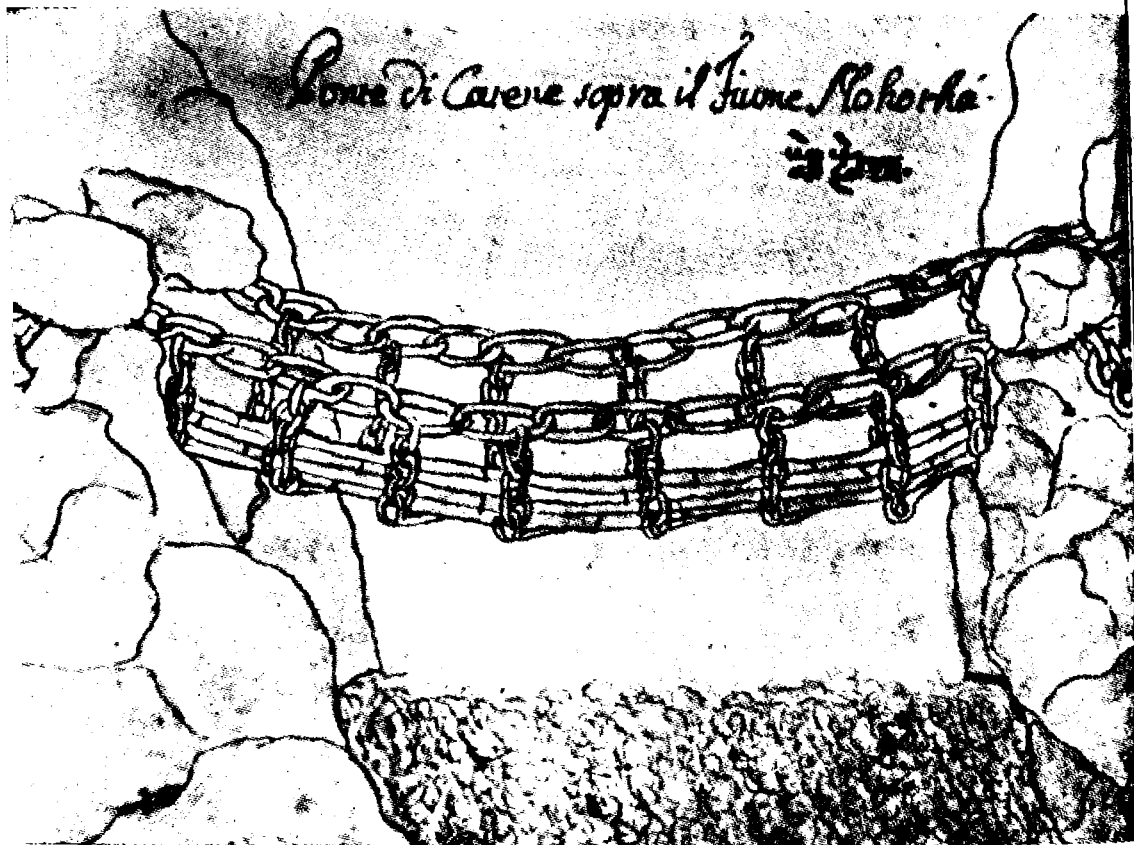


Dvags-Po and Surrounding Regions

With acknowledgement to Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato (Rome) —From *Il Nuovo Ramusio II*,
 By Prof. Luciano Petech, Part IV.



Buddhist shrine in Nepal taken care of by "Una Lamessa" or a nun lama
Drawing by Fr. Cassian Beligatti.



Chain bridge over the river Nohot-ha, Nepal
Drawing by Fr. Cassian Beligatti

victim off within a few days" (13). Hardly ten per cent of those who exposed themselves to the risks of Tarai during the forbidden season managed to survive. They were called the Aulees, the men that braved the Aul. They were in great demand and highly paid for the services which might have been required at that time of the year.

The Tarai is inimical to man and the crossing of the area is most feared. The bold and inexperienced who venture into it at any untimely season walk into the jaws of death. Fr. Cassian Beligatti (a missionary of the ninth Tibetan expedition) reports in his *Journal* of a most disconcerting instance that tells of the awful vengeance the Tarai takes on those who trespass upon its boundaries out of season. He writes—"Myself I have seen in 1754 (when he was stationed in Bettiah) two merchants who by doubling the usual wages, convinced some porters of Bettiah to carry their merchandise to Nepal. The two merchants and the twenty-eight porters that had been engaged, left Bettiah towards the end of April; one merchant and sixteen porters died on the road to Nepal, the other merchant and three porters passed away on Nepal territory; out of the remaining nine porters, four died on the way back to Bettiah, and the others died within eight days of their arrival at Bettiah" (14). It is a well-known fact that the Expeditionary Force under the command of Major Kilnock, consisting of 3000 men and officers was completely wiped off more by the disastrous effects of the deadly malaria of the Tarai than by the hands of the Gurkha warriors (Battle of Haripur, 1767).

Above the malaria zone, way up to the Nepal Valley, further discomfort awaits the weary traveller, but of a different nature. The passes do not bother him so much; they are hard but accessible and the highest altitude may rise up to 2,500 meters above sea level. Giddy precipices and extremely steep tracks, overhanging the cliffs and boulders are part of the scenery enveloped by the solemn silence of the forest.

13. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 46.

14. *Giornale*, p. 63.

Swift torrents and rivers furrow their course down the valley compelling the traveller [to ford them many a time. The water is waist deep and icy cold, causing cramps and swelling of the feet. The river bed is full of slippery and jagged cutting stones which commend caution and a sense of balance. This is a daily routine till the lower limbs become numb like a log. One of the missionaries writes that he had to criss-cross the same winding river, running at the bottom of the two high forbidding mountains, 30 times within a day's march (15). The nights, windy and cold, had to be spent very often at the "Star Hotel", under the canopy of heaven. Indeed, nature seems to put heavy premium over what little conquest is made by man. What costs nothing has no value.

Over the Mountains and Far Away

It was bad enough to wade through the Nepal rivers during the cold winter season, but the flimsy, rickety bridges one had to cross beyond Kathmandu, afforded the traveller no better consolation. Twisted bamboo cables, swaying dizzily above the chasm, called for presence of mind and steel nerves if a man wanted to make it at all. Any false step might prove fatal. The one hundred odd kilometers that divide the Valley of Nepal from Kuti, the first hamlet on Tibetan territory, are full of these hurdles.

Roughly speaking, there are three kinds of bridges—wooden, chain and rope. All of them are a nightmare, a real ordeal to travellers. The thought alone of having to cross any of them gives one a cold shiver down the spine.

Wooden bridges consist mostly of a rough narrow plank, broken all over the place and hanging dangerously over whirling waters, thrown across the river just to reach the opposite bank. They have no hand-rail on either side. If the span is a little too long, two or three planks, tied together by twisted twigs or any other suitable material on hand, have to serve the purpose. A man passing over

15. *La Missione del Tibet-Hindustan etc.*, op. cit., p. 45 ; *Giornale*, p. 64.

one of this type of bridges looks like a ghost, perched in mid-air, swinging up and down in a mad dance of death. Another variation of the wooden bridge is made of poles embedded in heaps of boulders with a superstructure of twigs and branches. The whole thing is not very long, but high and exceedingly narrow, ending often at the foot of an overhanging cliff. This, contrivance with child-like delight, takes pleasure in splattering water over the unfortunate traveller, who is thus caught between two fires.

The easiest to negotiate are the chain bridges. In general they consist of two main chains suspended horizontally from posts on the banks. A net of smaller iron links is added on to them till finally they are roped in at the bottom by iron rods. A few planks thrown over them serve to give it the finishing touch.

There are quite a variety of rope-bridges, but all require the skill of an acrobat to cross them. One is made of three ropes in a V shape, which serve respectively as a foot-board and hand-railing. The passenger walks forward on the lower one, and in grasping the upper ones has to be mighty careful not to lean too heavily on them at the peril of tripping over and falling into the river. In a strong wind, or when the water is so high, that the lower rope dips in the swift-flowing current, the passage is dangerous even to natives who are quite accustomed to it. Ponies, cattle, sheep and goats have their four feet tied together, and drawn across by another rope tied round their necks, the natives gravely asserting that they understand it and do not mind it. Another kind of bridge has one rope, from which a basket or a board is suspended, the passenger drawing himself across, by a cord, or he is drawn by some one standing on the bank. The one-rope bridge may be differently designed and laborious manoeuvring is needed to negotiate it. The ordinary native climbs over by the help of his hands and feet, being kept from falling into the abyss of angry waters by a noose of rope, round his body, to which is fixed a bar of wood to counteract the friction. In this position he drags himself along by grasping the cord above him.

Luckily, our missionaries had no occasion to cross any rope bridge, which are uncommon this side of the country.

but they had to traverse, between big and small, well over fifty wooden bridges, one chain bridge, besides wading several times through icy cold water. On one occasion, they had to make use of a small country craft to gain the opposite bank of the river. The flat-bottom boat is left to the whims of the deep, swift current, till it gets somehow close to the land and then oars are put into commission to come on shore. It is a hair-raising experience not easily to be forgotten (16).

The personal reaction of some of the missionaries in crossing these bridges as narrated by them are more telling than any description. Fr. Constantine of Loro Piceno, speaking of one of them, writes : "I mustered all my courage and started walking over it alone. So great was the vibration that after a few steps I hurried back to the bank, lest half way through my strength failed me. Then holding tightly on to the shoulders of a native, slowly, slowly but not without fear I crept across. The bridge is built in such a way that I am at a loss to put it in words; only I say that the very sight of it is enough to give a fright; it looks as if it might collapse at any moment". And this was one of the first bridges Fr. Constantine had to cross, but not the worst of the whole lot. In his narrative he often mentions that he breathed a silent prayer and made an act of perfect contrition before setting out to face the horrible ordeal...that gazing at another bridge the blood froze in his veins and he started shivering from head to foot out of fright...that on reaching opposite bank, passengers looked death-pale, as ghosts just come out from a graveyard...so forth (17).

At Kathmandu arrangements have to be made for porters to carry all the freight, for the mountain track cannot be negotiated by caravan mules or hill ponies. The luggage has to be unpacked and remade to reduce each load to the standard weight of approximately 40 kilos. The brave Nepalese porters, short and sturdy, can carry it with ease and adroitness over steep goat trails and across the bridges we have just described. The streams of dogged porters with

16. *Giornale*, pp. 105-116 ; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 51.

17. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 51.

baskets on their backs, supported by braids across their foreheads can still be seen marching through the streets of Kathmandu to demonstrate that the most normal mode of transport of goods through Nepal has not changed much since the time of our missionaries clambered up to Tibet.

Before setting out on the journey, government tax agents are called in to inspect and seal each load, upon which a tax of Rs. 4.50 apiece is levied. Charges are nearly doubled for foreign travellers. There is also a heavy head-tax to pay. However, rates are fixed and much haggling can be avoided (18). More troublesome instead is the task of finding porters and settling their wages. All this being done, the head-porter is handed over one half of the total amount due to him and his group, the balance being given on the completion of the journey.

The pathway strikes to the north-east amidst ascents and descents along the trail that ascends inclines strewn with boulders, ducks under overhanging rocks and then goes down gradients so rough that a porter has to hold on to the rock to support himself, till finally it reaches the heights of Kuti. This stands at 4,236 meters above sea level. Here nature defies the temerity of man and contests every step of his progress. Fear and death walk hand in hand with the traveller. Any slip of his feet might plunge him to his death at the bottom of the yawning abyss or amidst the whirling, roaring waters of the turbulent river.

The roughness of the landscape seems to have taught these mountain people to be kind and gentle. Hospitality is sacred among them. They have a characteristic custom, which is both moving and refreshing. The home which takes in a traveller on the first occasion of his journey claims the right of hospitality over the wayfarer. Each time he passes that way he is in duty bound to go and put up for the night with the same people. It is an age-old custom that binds both the host and the guest; any infringement of it may be subject to legal proceedings. Even our missionaries had their own traveller's host, or Karbare, as he is called in the Nepalese language. He might be poor; his guest might be

18. *Giornale*, p. 95-96.

compelled to spend the night in a pigsty or in a goatshed, but such being the custom of the land it could not be helped. The host was pleased to offer his guest the best he could, even though he could ill-afford it. On taking leave the traveller hands out to the Karbare a gift in cash or kind in consideration for his hospitality and as an act of goodwill (19). This was the rule even in the interior of Tibet, though in that sparsely inhabited country, it was rare to meet a Karbare to welcome and entertain his old and new customers. Owing to the general plan of the journey, it was found easier to encamp in the open. Mother earth was hard and the caravan people were lulled to sleep by the freezing cold and biting wind.

Before reaching Kuti the traveller begins to have a foretaste of Tibetan life. The atmosphere of the land of lamas comes gradually upon him like the first timid flowers that herald the spring. Prayer-flags flutter atop tall poles to blow supplications into the gusty winds and inspire hope into the hearts of pilgrims. Dainty shrines and Mantras roughly engraven upon the rocks become more frequent. Further up on the steep winding trail the itinerant comes upon a temple where dwells a Tibetan nun (Lamessa, she Lama) in solitary state. A large prayer-cylinder rests on a stand; she pulls a string and the prayer-wheel starts rotating from left to right. Morning and evening she turns it one hundred and eight times (a sacred number) and spends the rest of the day in contemplation (20).

Kuti is the Nepalese name for the Tibetan town of Nyalam. It is a frontier post and as such one of the most important stages on the journey to Lhasa. Nepal has now been left behind and one enters into the Tibetan tableland. The place itself is devoid of trees and almost of vegetation and stands lonely amidst stony and desolate mountains. About 100 houses cluster around the jong-pon or Government Officer, whose main duty is to collect the large revenue that comes from the head-tax and goods in transit.

At Kuti the Nepalese porters are replaced by pack animals. Small caravans of yaks and yak-drivers will do the needful

19. *Giornale*, p. 106.

20. *Giornale*, p. 109-110.

up to Lhasa or at least as far as Tingri (Din-ri) Valley, where a relay can easily be found. It is the duty of the Karbare to provide the traveller with beasts of burden and food supplies till the next shopping place. He does it with a willing heart; nevertheless it is not an easy deal. The animals are never available or they are insufficient in number, till the host invariably manages to get them at a premium. There are fixed rates for every animal thus engaged either for transport or for riding, but these rates are seldom adhered to. The amount to be disbursed according to the rates in force and up to Lhasa, may be equal to about Rs. 20/- per animal. Rs. 10/- went to the Yak owner and the rest was shared equally between the Karbare and the government officer (21). In later years, the missionaries, by virtue of the pass which had been granted to them, were to receive to a limited extent the benefit of the ula ('u-lag) or free portage from the villages on the way, as well as supplies of dry dung wherewith to cook their evening meal. This was no mean concession as fuel was one of the commodities that are more scarce.

The road to Lhasa trails over an altitude of three and four kilometers above the Indian plains and is swept by a syberian wind unchecked by want of forest vegetation. Frost, ice and snow accompany the traveller most part of the year. While on the march, nothing can be obtained by means of money, every transaction being based on the barter system.

Half way between Kuti and the Tingri valley the traveller comes across the highest mountain pass en route. Our missionaries call it Lhan-gur; other writers give it the name of Pango Pass, which may be a corruption of Thung-la or Thunga-la, its true denomination. It rises up, solemn and austere, to an elevation of 5,900 meters above sea level. At such an altitude, man suffers untold agonies; respiration becomes heavy and laborious; nausea, headache, sleeplessness and lack of appetite reduce one's vitality to its lowest level. The body begins to dehydrate; the mind and will powers are impaired; hallucination and delirium becomes commonplace

21. *Giornale*, p. 120.

as the brain is starved of oxygen. In a graphic sentence Fr. Cassian Beligatti depicts the scene by stating that it gives a true picture of hell (22). Men writhe in pains and the beasts bellow in distress and seem to be under the spell of an unknown, strange fear. Everything is disorderly and confused; the least exertion prostrates one within minutes.

The Tingri Valley, shallow and poverty-stricken, stands now fairly on the road to Lhasa. The route treads constantly to the north-east, keeping to a steady elevation, except for some mountain passes and ravines broken by rivers and valleys. Days and weeks may be wasted in Tingri in the process of bargaining for fresh yak-drivers, provisions and riding beasts. It is the last trial one has to submit himself to in regard to this tedious business; once the caravan is formed it will keep on the move till Lhasa is gained, though not without giving some kind of trouble. A good stock of supplies has to be made here, for until Gyangtse, 15 marches ahead, the country side is poor and sparsely populated. Living is hard on these heights and the soil unyielding to man's labour; no wonder then if the inhabitants speculate on any possibility of gain.

Further on, six marches out from the valley, at a place called Tso-nga, there is a choice of three routes to the metropolis. They branch off in three different directions to converge at the end on the Palte (dPal-sde) Lake. The route which lay first due north is the longest and the most solitary of the three. No missionary, it appears, ever followed this lonely track. The other route lay up to the north-north-east via Shigatse (gZis-ka-rtse) and the third passes through Gyangtse (rGyal-rtse) to the north-east. The road that touches on Shigatse is longer, but is thought to be easier for the traveller and more abundant in pasture for the animals

22. *Giornale*, p. 128.⁶¹ All the missionaries and other travellers of the time invariably called the high Himalayan peaks by the name of Mount Lhangur. However, it is clear that Lhangur is not the proper name of a mountain, but the term is commonly used by the people south of the Himalayas in Nepal just to mean a high mountain pass, snowy mountain peak, high mountain top and the like.

than that of Gyangtse. In general, the missionaries preferred the shortest line of march, even though Shigatse might have offered an additional attraction on account of its well-known monasteries and renowned fort.

At the confluence of the Yeru-tsangpo and Phungchu rivers (gYas-ru-gtsan-po and P'un-c'u) before Gyangtse, the traveller enters a wide-open space of sandy waste, called 'arenario' by our missionaries, which gives the impression of a trackless desert. Gusts of cold wind swoop down through the gorges picking up and whirling into the air masses of sand to fall down in a pelting downpour. Sand-dunes are formed and swept away like leaves. The path turns into a maze, where the traveller, often blinded, struggles on in a choking sand storm. The visibility is reduced to naught; it is difficult at times to keep track with the rest of the party, even though they may be just a few steps ahead. Fr. Joseph Mary Bernini and his servant who traversed it all alone in the spring of 1742 lost contact with each other, missed the way and nearly lost their lives (23).

This territory came then under the small province of Sa-skya. There was in force here such a peculiar custom that it is worth relating, even if a bit out of place. The Sa-skya ruler was a high lama with sovereign temporal power. It was an hereditary monarchy and the high lama was allowed to marry to ensure the line of succession. The marriage was monogamous, but failure to obtain a male issue from the first wife entitled the ruler to take other women. In order to test whether the heir-apparent was legitimate or not, he was taken immediately after his birth to the door-step of the temple and left there unattended for the next 24 hours. His survival meant that the child was legitimate, his death that he was spurious. If the child was spurious the high lama served a 'libellum repudii' to his wife and passed on to a second wedlock; otherwise both parents separated and went alone into the mountain to do penance. Their heir was left into the hands of tutors till he came of age (24).

23. *Giornale*, p. 149 ; *Memorie Istoriche*, pp. 24-26.

24. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 66.

The approach to Gyangtse, the next important milestone to Lhasa, is characterised by more familiar scenery. Vegetation has a better grip on the ground and groves of dwarf plants, which had been missing all along the way since the time one left Nepal, come back to life to assert themselves over the high altitude and the rigour of the climate. The description of the town, as it appeared in the early eighteenth century, agrees entirely with the account given by modern travellers. "Gyangtse", writes one of the missionaries, "is a fortress, very strong for Tibet, being massed together on the summit of a small hill or rocks uplifted in the midst of a wide valley. The shelf upon which it stands is surrounded by running water. A little distance from the fortress in the plain lies the city itself, which is fairly populated; also a large monastery of religious who are more than a thousand in number".

Travelling to the east, in five days' easy march, the caravan gets to the Palte Lake. Here the traveller can recoup and store up some energy before scaling the second highest pass on the way to Tibetan capital. The road skirts along the lake, then, leaving it to the south, ascends due north over the giddy mountain top of Kam-pa-la. This stands, bald-headed and sad-looking, a little over 5000 meters above the sea-level. The same effects are again experienced here as in crossing the Thung-la. From the Kam-pa-la summit, facing the north-east, the impressive vista of the Brahmaputra Valley and its river (the mighty Brahmaputra) burst forth in view. It is a welcome sight in more senses than one, but particularly because it means that the end of the long pilgrimage is coming to a close. The descent is precipitous and beast-killing as the Tibetans call it. Carcasses are scattered on the steep northern face of the Kam-pa-la to show that the mountain claims its victims (25). The rest of the journey till Lhasa is pleasant and comfortable. After the crossing of the Brahmaputra, the road descends very gradually till it meets the Potala Palace, beckoning from a distance its welcome to the weary traveller.

25. *Giornale*, p. 161-162.

A strange phenomenon is observed while traversing the Kam-pa-la. "The summit of this mountain" writes Fr. Beligatti, "is desolate and as void of vegetation as the highest passes ; but beyond the grey rocks may be seen wide stretches of sandy soil. We noticed, when passing with our horses over these same spaces of soil, that there issued forth a deep echo from the tramping of the animals as if they were treading upon a huge barrel. Desirous of satisfying our curiosity we got off our horses to see if the same effect was produced in walking on foot and found, as we struck the ground with more or less force, that the booming was returned more or less sonorously". The narrator adds that, on his return journey from Lhasa two years later, finding the same effects, he concluded that the reverberation arose from the profound depth of the valley beneath and not from any subterrenean caverns (26).

The malady caused by the rarefied mountain air is now called mountain sickness. It may interest the reader to know the explanation given to phenomenon by the people of the time. All of them ascribed the strange effects produced by high altitude to the rarefied air, but they were not quite sure about it. As an alternative explanation they believed that the one reason for it may be found in the exhalation of some poisonous herbs that grew somewhere hidden in the escarpment of the mountains or to some magnetic powers of minerals which were thought to be abundant in the region (27).

The distance between Kathmandu and Lhasa runs into nearly 1200 kilometers. Two months are considered to be the normal time to be spent on the road, though this may lengthen into several months if unfavourable circumstances come into play. The expenditure, of course, is subject to number of contingent factors, which are difficult to account, but the minimum cost can easily be kept below Rs. 100/-.

Excerpts from a Diary

Fr. Cassian Beligatti (1708-1791) a member of the ninth

26. Gironale, p. 162.

27. Giornale, p. 130-131 ; Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 60-61.

expedition, has left to us an important diary of his journey from Italy to Lhasa in the years 1738-1741, about which we shall see later. For the moment we are interested in giving here a description of the daily routine pursued on the road to Lhasa after he and his companions were far inside the Tibetan frontier. The following excerpts will serve as a fitting conclusion to the present chapter.

“In the morning, on rising with the sun”, so the missionary writes, “tea was prepared and served, a process usually taking an hour and a half. In the meantime, two other muleteers attended to the animals and got them ready for the start. After tea the beasts were driven on and the journey pursued until about noon. On the way the muleteers gave their attention to collecting all the dried dung to be found on the path wherewith another course of tea might be made at midday, during which the animals helped themselves to some small roots they could find by kicking up the ground with their hooves. At times, either for lack of dried dung to make the fire or to get over it quicker and gain time for the journey, country beer was purchased instead of the tea or butter. This was mixed with the satu (satu is the Nepalese name for rtsam-pa, the staple food of the Tibetans) making it taste like yeast. After this we would go forward until the evening, or as far as the place where we ought to spend the night, which was for the most part on the open ground.

“About one hour before arriving at the place of encampment we riders would scatter about in order to collect as much dried dung noticeable of cattle, horses, mule or ass, all being exquisite because dry, to cook the tea and the supper. Arrived at the place determined on, we would pitch the tent on the site least exposed to the wind; the mule driver, whose duty was to make tea for us and for the seven men whom we ought to rule, would excavate in the ground two holes to form little ovens large enough to brew the tea and would then at once heap up the combustible to make it and kindle the dung with a bellow similar to that used by the copper-smiths for their work. At the same time, the other muleteers would unload the beasts, barricading the luggage in between the tents and the

side where the wind was blowing, leaving a place for themselves wherein to sleep, while the beasts were left free to graze.

“After tea, supper would be got ready and it consisted of one piece of stewed meat, the broth of which would serve to make the *topa* (t’ug-pa) a dish that resembled a liquid cutlet made out of broth. During the time supper was being prepared, we said together matins and lauds for the following day having already recited vespers and compline on our arrival, while tea was getting ready for the first time, which was re-made again for supper ; each time taking three cups with *satu* at discretion. As for the seven men whom we ought to have ruled, besides their daily ration of 18 cups of tea with *satu*, were given every evening seven large pieces of flesh of approximately half a kilo each. After supper the muleteers collected the animals and arranged, between the barriers made with our baggage and the tent, two long ropes with two heavy pieces of iron, within which the beasts were secured from straying. Two dogs, we had taken with us for the purpose, were chained up at both ends of the baggage barrier. They were so strong and ferocious that there was no way of getting near our luggage. They would drag away the box or bale to which they were tied up to jump at any one, except the muleteers, bold enough to come within close range.

“We, of course, slept in the tent, where besides John (a Nepalese trader and a convert) and Turibazu (Turi Bhaju a Catechumen from Nepal) three other Nepalese who had joined us, were also accommodated. Notwithstanding we were so well-packed together, we suffered great cold during the night and most of the morning we might be found with our beards matted together with the ice engendered by the humidity of our breath. Such was the ordinary routine that prevailed as far as Lhasa” (28).

The yak drivers proved both lazy and gluttonous, besides being often troublesome and unreliable. The progress made was consequently less than it should have been. Their promise to reach a certain place on schedule was seldom

28. *Giornale*, pp. 135-137.

kept. The following lines give a glimpse of their character : “We remained today (18th December, 1740) without any provision of *satu* and in the villages found only a very little, of the worst quality, and at a very dear price. But to stave off our hunger we were compelled to buy it from the muleteers who re-sold to us what on the preceding days we had given them as rations. Moreover, the meat was deficient because on the road, the muleteers would be continually cutting off chunks of flesh from the legs of the mutton and eating it raw. Hence, in the evening, when about to cook them, the carcasses would always be discovered with their legs despoiled, and it could never be found who it was that had eaten the meat”.

This was surely an act of selfishness and greed, yet understandable in a way. “Occasionally”, states the same Fr. Beligatti, “travellers at those high altitudes would be assailed with such a ravenous voracity that the pangs of hunger could never be stayed, no matter how often and how much food was gorged”.

The crossing of the Brahmaputra is one of the landmarks on the journey. We have merely mentioned it as we wanted to give more details in the description made by our diarist. It runs, “We journeyed along the banks of the river the space of 3 kos (nearly 10 kilometers), now mounting, now descending between large grey rocks, and finally arriving at the place of embarkation where the river is crossed to the other side. By virtue of the king’s passport, we, the animals and the baggage experienced no difficulty in being ferried across....”

Then remarking upon the strength of the current, the writer observes that the river rushes down from on high in a tremendous impact. The huge volume of waters gets into the valley through a large mountain gap to be formed soon into a big and swift river. Embankments, which at places may be 10 meters thick, are built as a precaution against floods; the river is intersected by waterfalls and channels to break the force of the current.

The passage over the river is not so difficult, as it could be expected. “The boat in which we crossed the river”, so

the narrative proceeds, "is flat-bottomed, and is able to carry at the maximum 15 or 16 persons at a time. The boat is adjusted by a thick rope to a good-sized pully-wheel, which runs along a cable stretched aloft from one bank to the other of the river; and by such means is the boat kept up against the impetus of the current. This same river has, in the same place, a chain bridge of great length, each horizontal line of the chain consisting of 500 oblong links, everyone of them being over 35 centimeters in length. The danger in this type of bridge is that it has no perpendicular chains and connecting bars of iron under these, like those in Nepal. Instead of these subsidiary chains there are only ropes moderately thick made of straw, to which is attached a straw net; upon this is placed a narrow pathway of boards unevenly cut and put down. The ropes in places are much worn and rotten rendering it almost useless as a bridge; and, even if it were in good condition, it would be inconvenient to traverse because of its great sagging in the middle, so that from whatever part one starts to negotiate it he has to go down and up tottering all the way on account of the swinging of the chains". (29).

29. *Giornale*, pp. 163-164.

CHAPTER V

MAKING A NEW START

Rome was keen on helping the nascent mission, which still like a baby struggling to get on its feet. The losses suffered in the first few years of its existence had come as a shock, but they did not dismay the authorities into passive inaction or idle speculation. It was felt that sacrifices had to be made to forge ahead and to bring redemption to the people in these parts of the world. The sustained efforts and the loving care however, showered on the enterprise by the morning sowers was a sure guarantee for success. New re-inforcements were therefore recruited and sent out to replace the valiant soldiers of Christ who had fallen at their post of duty.

While Fr. Dominic was going to Rome to represent the case of the Tibetan Mission, the Congregation of Propaganda had already provided this apostolate field with six new missionaries. They arrived by the sea route in two different batches and at different times. The first group, which consisted of Frs. Francis Horace of Penna Billi, Paul Mary of Matelica and Bro. James of Breno, landed safely at Chandernagore on 1st September, 1713. Six months later, in March 1714, the second batch set foot on Indian soil. Their names are—Frs. Joachim of Loreto, John Francis of Fossombrone and Joseph Felix of Morro.

There was one among them who deserves some kind of introduction. He was Fr. Francis Horace of Penna Billi (Marche D'Ancona), the future Apostle of Lhasa and the brightest Star of the Tibetan Mission. Born of the well-known Olivieri family, which for five centuries had given men of high rank to religion, literature, science and civil administration, Fr. Francis Horace was 32 years of age when he set out from his native land to live the dream of his youth. The family rose to fame in 1300 and became extinct at the beginning of the nineteenth century.



Fr. Francis Horace Olivieri, Prefect Apostolic of the Tibetan Mission
Photostat

In his ancestral home little Luzio Olivieri, for such was his baptismal name, was brought up to honour the family traditions, to devote his time to study and piety in order to hold tomorrow a respectable position in life. Though he could enjoy all the comforts that wealth can give and the company of good society, yet he retired within himself and started giving the serious thought to the things that matter. At the age of 20, when he had brilliantly finished his study of humanities and was faced with the problem of choosing a career in life, he joined the Capuchin Novitiate at Pietrarubbia, in central Italy. Gradually, the vocation of the mission manifested itself. It was during the time of his ecclesiastical training that the Piceno Province had been entrusted with the Tibetan Mission. There was a good deal of talk and excitement about it among the young students of the theological course. Wishing to dedicate himself to God in the service of the foreign missions, young Fr. Francis Horace sent in application and great was his joy when he learnt that his petition was finally granted.

Fr. Francis Horace's priestly life had not been an easy one. Nature seemed to have endowed him with those qualities of mind and heart so suitable for the role he was called upon to fulfil. As he grew up in life, he showed himself to be a priest of many gifts. He was a saint and a born leader, a man of God ready to show the way and set the example by following it. In him was embodied the boundless zeal of a missionary and the keen mind of a scholar, the dynamic drive and wisdom of a Superior and the unbending will of a fighter who can withstand constant opposition and disappointments without losing courage. Speaking of him, Fr. Paul Mary of Matelica, his school companion and missionary confrere, expressed himself in these words: "He seems to fly in his apostolic journeys, carried, as it were, by the Angels."

Socially, Fr. Francis Horace was well loved and revered by people in high places and by the common man in the street. For twenty eventful years he ruled over his confreres as Prefect Apostolic of the Mission more by the persuasive force of his good example than the power of his authority.

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With such outstanding qualities he was bound to leave the imprint of his strong personality in whatever walk of life he might have chosen to enter (1).

First Mission in Nepal

With the new arrivals there were now eight Tibetan missionaries in India. The Chandernagore residence was too small to accommodate the new comers and so they were divided between the hospice of Patna and that of Bengal. After some months, dedicated to the study of language and to acquiring the necessary knowledge and experience of the people they were going to preach the Gospel, the Prefect, Fr. Felix of Montecchio, took the initiative of consolidating the pre-Himalayan bases of the mission. Having seen to the needs of Patna and Chandernagore, he thought the time had come again to press forward towards Tibet and establish the first missionary station at Kathmandu. It was a wise move and a daring scheme undertaken at his own risk and responsibility. When he conceived the idea of making a start in Nepal, as a first step to implement the organisation plan, no news had by then been received in regard to the outcome of Fr. Dominic's representation to Rome. This became known only a short time before the actual departure of the missionaries for Nepal. The fact, however, that a new contingent had arrived was interpreted by the Prefect as an approval in principle, of the plan which had earlier been envisaged and discussed among the Fathers (2).

Encouraged by this thought, Fr. Felix detailed Frs. Francis Horace of Penna Billi, Joseph Felix of Morro and John Francis of Fossombrone to go to Nepal and open the first missionary station at Kathmandu. After Christmas,

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1. *Memorie sulla vita del ven. servo di Dio P. Francesco Orazio dalla Penna* by Mattei Gentili Dott. Paolo, Urbino 1845. This short biography (pp. 17, 26 x 19 cms.) was very likely compiled out of the letters Fr. Francis Horace sent to his relations. This being the case, the writing is patchy and incomplete, though a first hand source of information in regard to certain particulars of his life.
 2. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 71-72.

on 27th December, 1714, they left Patna and reached their new destination by the middle of January, 1715 (3). Kathmandu was chosen in preference to the other two petty kingdoms in the valley because the route to Tibet passed through its territory. The Raja's good will was therefore considered necessary to facilitate the transit of missionaries and goods directed to Lhasa (4). Moreover, the first Tibetan missionaries had a fancy for Nepal. The most encouraging feature about this mission was that all prospective converts and the first adult converts made by them were either Nepalese or originally belonging to the same stock. This made the Fathers feel that here was plenty of scope for missionary action and that the Nepalese were better disposed to embrace the faith than the natives of the surrounding territories.

The three young missionaries set to work at Kathmandu with youthful zeal and enthusiasm, leaving everything else in God's hands. The thought-provoking message they were preaching, the treatment of patients, which was done gratis and with considerable success, and above all, the example of a truly apostolic life, made them popular from the very beginning. In marked contrast to the mixed reception accorded to the first missionaries in Tibet, their presence did not give rise to any suspicion or create any unfriendly atmosphere about them. On the contrary, they were welcome and respected. It was surely a good start. The Raja himself (Jagaj Jaya Malla) was the first to give the lead. Realising that the new comers were men consecrated to God and to serve mankind, that they lived very poorly and had no income of their own, he volunteered to provide them with whatever they needed for their maintenance. The offer was kindly but firmly declined. However, the missionaries gratefully accepted from His Highness the use of a small but comfortable house, which was given them free of rent (5).

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3. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 86 ; *Analecta Ordinis etc.*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXXVII, (1921), p. 285-286.
 4. *Giornale*, p. 74.
 5. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 73, 77.

This kind and generous disposition towards the missionaries was not a matter of a fleeting moment prompted by the novelty of the thing or by a sense of hospitality to strangers but continued to increase and enlarge as months went by. It reached such a stage that some interested party launched a counter-attack. The Brahmans, jealous of the popularity of the missionaries and fully aware of the reason why they had come to Kathmandu and grudging the apparent patronage granted to them by the King, stirred up the feeling of the people in an effort to take revenge and assert their undisputed supremacy. To make matters worse a terrible plague devastated the city and the countryside about this time, taking a heavy toll. About 20,000 people were reported to have been wiped out by the dreadful disease. This lent support to the Brahmans propaganda, who worked overtime to have the missionaries ousted. The brown habit worn by the strangers, signifying another faith, was also a sign of ill-omen. It was of an unpropitious colour that gave offence to the deities and brought the curse upon the city. The only remedy to propitiate the gods of the land was to expel the bearers of this curse.

In this connection the Brahmans resorted also to the national oracle, giving the thing wide publicity. They hoped that this would increase the glamour of the case and bolster up their cause. The oracle, to their dismay, did not respond and preferred to remain silent. This baffled its devotees, but served all the same to obtain the desired effect. The grip of fear was already getting infectious; the public opinion was that the foreign sahebs, preaching a new religion and wearing a brown habit, must be responsible for all the evils which had befallen the country.

The wave of excitement was mounting fever high and there was danger for the missionaries either to be expelled or persecuted when the king intervened to calm the troubled waters. Publicly he assured the missionaries that he had never given them any financial help, or, for that matter, they never asked for anything. Their work was disinterested and their lives blameless. They had only one object in mind, the uplift of every class of people (6).

6. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 82-83 ; Terzorio, p. 318-319.

The uprising of the Brahmans against the good work which had already been started and their attempt to uproot the mission from its very foundation, would show that the first apostles of Nepal had made considerable headway in sowing the seed of the word of God. Though the Fathers at Kathmandu enjoyed the favour of the king and of a large section of the public, yet more often than not, they were in trouble. But this is not the place to anticipate the development of the mission in Nepal. We have made a passing reference to it only to show how soon preliminary steps were taken to consolidate the bases of the Tibetan Mission and, in due course, make a new start in Lhasa.

When Fr. Dominic of Fano was back late in August, 1715, at the head of six young missionaries, he found conditions greatly improved and a new will to push ahead was evident everywhere. The news of his success in Rome and the fact that Pope Clement XI, as a mark of encouragement and paternal benevolence, had made a personal substantial contribution to the cause of the mission, made the small band of evangelical workers jubilant (7). It made them feel that God too willed it. The three stations already established and the 15 missionaries now at hand to carry on the task was indeed a rare accomplishment, a sign of the things to come. The embers of yesterday fanned into a glowing fire to bring new life and warmth into the dying mission. It would not be difficult now, with the existing number of priests, to advance once again to Lhasa and from there open the mission house at Tron-gne. The re-organisation plan would thus be implemented in full to the credit of the brave labourers of the vineyard and to the satisfaction of Rome.

The six new priests brought out by Fr. Dominic, i. e. Frs. Angelicus of Brescia, Anthony Mary of Jesi, Bonaventure of Lapedona, Francis Anthony of Castignano, Gregory of Lapedona and Peter of Serra Petrona, were all young and impatient to spend themselves in the service of the mission. They dreamt of their future in prayer, placing their supreme trust in God.

7. Clement XI as a mark of encouragement had given Fr. Dominic of Fano 400 Roman scudi, i.e. Rs. 850/- as his personal contribution to the cause of the mission.

These high spirits did not unfortunately last long. Before the year was out Bro. James of Breno and Fr. Francis Anthony of Castignano were carried off by death at Chandernagore, before they could even set their hands to the plough. The effects of the tropical climate and consequences of the hardships sustained during the voyage had the better of them. Seven missionaries had already laid down their lives in an oblation to God for the redemption of the souls they had come to bring to the fold of Christ.

The premature death of these two young and promising evangelical workers, within such a short time, cast a gloom over the whole mission. The rank of apostles was again thinning down, but Fr. Dominic was a man not so easily dispirited even in the face of death. After having taken over charge from Fr. Felix of Montecchio and settled the affairs of the two stations in India, the new Prefect hastened from Chandernagore to Patna towards the end of 1715 to equip the expedition which was to advance a second time on to the appointed field of Labour.

Three priests were left at Chandernagore and four in Patna; the remaining six were to be equally divided between Kathmandu and Lhasa. It was of course a temporary arrangement, pending the opening of the branch station in the Province of Takpo (Dvags-po) to the south-east of Tibet, and the prospects of expansion which might be offered by the missions in Nepal and Tibet. The station at Kathmandu had just started and though it promised well it was deemed prudent to wait and see before making further commitments. In regard to Lhasa, it was already about four years since the priests had left the place and in the meantime the situation might have considerably changed. On the other hand, accommodation then was limited. A reconnaissance on the spot before bringing in the full complement, might be instrumental in saving funds and in avoiding unnecessary hardships in travelling. The surplus man-power which was kept at present in India, was held, so to speak, as a reserve.

Once in Patna, Fr. Dominic hoped to join the caravan bound for Nepal and Lhasa, which was due to leave in January 1716. But man proposes and God disposes. He

expected to be in Lhasa by the month of May or June at the latest, but something happened which upset his plans. His experience is worth relating as it sheds a new light on, and is in confirmation of, what we have narrated in the previous chapter.

In Patna Fr. Dominic was told that the caravan for Nepal and Tibet had been cancelled. Intelligence had been received that some four hundred dacoits had come down the mountain side and were freely moving about over a wide range of the route to Nepal, robbing, killing and setting on fire anything they could lay their hands on. There was no hope of starting the journey until reports had reached Patna that the road was clear. Impatient at having to wait, and eager to visit the Christian settlement in Nepal, Frs. Dominic and Gregory of Lapedona volunteered to join a Kashmiri trader, who at the head of a patrol party, was sent ahead to investigate the whereabouts of the band of dacoits and report.

The patrol party consisted of 18 men, heavily armed. They moved slowly and cautiously, keeping away from all inhabited places. It was tough going. There was no path to follow and no friendly face to meet. The apprehension of an encounter and the dread of an ambush followed them like a shadow over long watchful days and sleepless nights. In its wanderings across the country, the party eventually reached a river bank, and there, just on the opposite side, they spotted a group of dacoits. There was no doubt about their wicked intentions, but luckily they could not do anything. A deep, swift river was running between the gang of robbers and their intended victims, but there was no way of crossing it. The villagers in a bid for safety, had fled their homes in panic, taking away with them all the boats that now lay mooring over against the position taken by the dacoits.

Looking for a sheltered place wherein to find safety and protection, the patrol party and many other travellers, who in the meantime had joined them, took refuge in a rambling tumbledown old earthwork, the remnants of an erstwhile fortress. Next day some of the men were sent to explore whether the robbers had left the place. Reports

were viewed that they were still terrorising the area. In the hope of getting away from them the patrol party was compelled to make a long detour, cross country, but while trying to avoid one danger they fell into another. The new line of escape brought them by nightfall into a thick jungle infested with tigers and other wild animals. It was really the case of falling into Scylla while attempting to get away from Charybdis. The whole trek was a series of adventures that unnerved the travellers. Somehow, with God's visible help and a stout heart, the two Fathers were able to get into Kathmandu in March 1716 (8).

It was a brave deed, but no one could foresee the heavy penalty that was to be paid for it. Fr. Gregory of Lapedona, a kind and generous soul living within a vulnerable physical frame took ill on the way. He wavered between life and death for some months, till on 4th July, 1716, he passed away peacefully into eternity, aged 36. He was the first priest to fall victim to his own exertion in the newly-established mission of Nepal scarcely after eleven months of his arrival in India (9).

The long-awaited caravan did not turn up till the month of June, after nearly 90 days spent in wandering over rugged mountain regions and battling against heavy odds and other kinds of risks. Some important articles in the luggage were lost or damaged as the devious track which had been taken caused the beasts of burden to stumble and fall into the river or roll down the hill. The Prefect and Fr. Gregory had travelled light, taking with them only a few personal effects, and a good supply of food provision as the success of the expedition demanded alertness of mind and freedom of movement. The other missionaries and the bulk of the baggage were to follow up with the incoming caravan. Its delay forced Fr. Prefect to postpone the journey to Lhasa. Meanwhile, he had an excellent opportunity and ample time to acquaint himself with the state and future prospects of the mission in Nepal. He felt very sorry, however, that

8. Nuovo Ramusio ,part I, pp. 74-76

9. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 83.

the delay of the caravan prevented him from presenting a wall clock to the king of Kathmandu at the time he would be calling on His Royal Highness. The present, Fr. Dominic knew, would be fondly cherished by His Majesty.

The Prefect was very pleased with everything he saw. People were friendly and the missionaries well-loved and respected. The king of Kathmandu had gone all out to make them comfortable and give them every facility in the exercise of their medical work. Their activity was mostly confined for the present to an indirect form of apostolate, but the day would not be far when the tilling of the field would be followed by the sowing of the seed. If nothing untoward happened, there was every hope of establishing a flourishing mission centre within a short time. The soil was rich and promising and the labourers willing to break it in toil and sweat.

The Prefect then busied himself by making a round of courtesy calls. He went first to pay his respects to the king of Kathmandu. He thanked him for all he had done for the three Fathers and in particular for having given them a rent-free house which he had confiscated from one of his Pradhans or nobles. So great was the friendly disposition of the Raja and confidence he inspired, that the Father was encouraged to point out it was very good of him to have given the missionaries a place where to stay, but this of course could serve only as a provisional measure ; it would be very much appreciated if he could kindly provide them with a suitable house of their own. It was well known that the nobles, the high functionaries of the court, gained the favour of the king and fell into disgrace in a routine sort of way. The missionaries were therefore liable to be thrown out of the house at any time and without any notice.

Next on the list of engagements was a visit to the king of Bhatgaon (Bhupatindra Malla) a few miles to the south-east of Kathmandu. Accompanied by Fr. Francis Horace, the Prefect called at the King's palace. The main purpose of the visit was to explore His Highness' mind and see whether he was disposed to welcome the missionaries in his territory. Earlier, a member of the Royal household had

reported the Raja as saying: "Why do not the Fathers who reside at Kathmandu come over to my kingdom and stay with me?"

Once admitted into the king's presence, the two missionaries were received cordially and entertained to a friendly conversation. However, the subject of establishing a house at Bhatgaon did not crop up in the course of the conversation. The visit made a good impression on the Fathers and the Prefect decided that if an opportunity offered itself it should be taken advantage of to open a new residence at Bhatgaon (10).

Before leaving for Lhasa, Fr. Dominic made some important changes—he took with him to Tibet Frs. Francis Horace of Penna Billi and John Francis of Fossombrone and appointed for Kathmandu two young Fathers to replace the much lamented Fr. Gregory of Lapedona. They were Frs. Paul Mary of Matelica and Anthony Mary of Jesi. He left them under the leadership of Fr. Joseph Felix of Morro who had already proved himself to be prudent and an experienced missionary (11). One of the instructions of the Prefect to the Fathers left behind in Nepal was to advise them to go often to Bhatgaon with a view to keeping in touch with the king and his people. This might be a providential means in preparing the ground in order to open a second missionary station in the valley of Nepal. The object of the mission was of course to concentrate the main forces on Tibet, but Nepal held a key position in the reorganisation system. Besides, both territories had mutual religious, commercial and political connections; the strength of Nepal will ensure in the long run a stronger hold on Tibet.

It was in the midst of the rainy season, on 4th August, 1716, that the Prefect and his small band slogged on to Kuti and Lhasa. In 58 days (on 1st October, 1716) the party was brought into the Tibetan capital. They were exhausted, but happy to be there (12).

10. Terzorio, pp. 300-305; Nuovo Ramusio, part I, pp. 74-79.

11. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, pp. 74-79.

12. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 86-87.

Clement XI Writes to the Regent

One of the uppermost thoughts in the mind of the Prefect, on reaching the Sacred City of Lhasa, was to seek for himself and for his two other confreres an audience with the Regent. The object was to hand over to him a letter from Pope Clement XI. The Regent at the time was called Lha-bzan Khan, a Mongol by birth. He had always shown great sympathy towards the missionaries. The letter of His Holiness was translated into the Tibetan language and characters (13), but unfortunately it could not be delivered immediately. According to the age old custom of the land it was considered an unpardonable breach of etiquette to go before the Regent empty-handed. The baggage which contained the coveted gifts was lost on the way and no one knew if and when it could ever be retrieved. Fr. Dominic, not to be kept waiting indefinitely, approached a Court gentleman, who was on friendly terms with him, and with the Regent, explained the predicament and asked for his advice.

The audience was fixed for 7th November, 1716. With all the solemnity of the Tibetan protocol the missionaries were ushered into the audience hall. After the presentation of a large cobweb scarf (k'a-btags) made of silk—the customary way of salutation, friendship and respect—Fr. Dominic delivered His Holiness' letter to the Regent. While accepting it, the Regent showed signs of deep reverence and gratitude. In order to read and ponder over it at his own leisure he ordered the letter to be taken to his own private chamber. Instead of the traditional gift the Regent was offered a letter wherein the cause of the failure to comply with the time-honoured custom was stated and an appeal was made to use

13. Fr. H. Desideri S.J. stated (*Nuovo Ramusio*, part V, p. 217) that he translated the Pope's letter into Tibetan. Perhaps Fr. Dominic translated the letter personally or through the help of an interpreter and then, out of courtesy, passed it on to Fr. Desideri to obtain his opinion (*Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 84). It is true that Fr. Dominic knew the colloquial or spoken language and that he was not well-versed in the literary or written language; however, it looks strange that Fr. Desideri should have learned the literary language so well within 7 months as to be preferred to an interpreter in making the translation.

his authority with the king of Kathmandu and the head of the traders to retrace the lost articles (14). The audience helped to strengthen the bond of unity and friendship between the Regent and the missionaries.

It took sometime to retrace the lost gift, but eventually it was found in Patna. The Kashmiri merchant, to whom it was handed over to deliver at Lhasa, in the confusion that followed over the incident of the dacoits had either misplaced the articles or taken the opportunity of the chaotic confusion to make it disappear to his own advantage. Anyway, in July 1717, it was brought to the capital by Frs. Angelicus of Brescia and Bonaventure of Lapedona who had in the meantime been summoned to Tibet to strengthen the mission in Lhasa and to make it possible to open the new station at Tron-gne. The gift was presented to the Regent in September of the same year, on his return from his summer holiday in the Province of Dam (15), eight days' journey to the north of Lhasa. Needless to say, he accepted it with a grateful heart.

We have often mentioned the name of the Regent, or Gyalpo, as he is called by some western writers, and it is good to know who he was and what part he played in shaping the political life of the country. The missionaries very often called him the King of Tibet, though such a title was not due to him.

The Dalai Lamas had not always been the supreme spiritual and temporal rulers of Tibet. Since they were chosen in infancy, their power, during the earlier parts of their reigns, was invariably wielded by the Regents. Gradually, the Regency, like the Shogunate in Japan, became a permanent institution. What was originally meant to be a transitory rule became a stable and recognised form of government, due chiefly to the lust for power that dominated the Regents. During the greater part of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Dalai Lamas were mere figureheads, vested with spiritual power only, while the political and

14. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, pp. 84-86.

15. Nuovo Ramusio, part V, p. 190; China and Tibet in the early 18th Century by L. Petech, Leiden 1950, p. 8. Every year the Regent used to spend the summer in the province of Dam and return to the capital in the month of September.

temporal control of the country was in the hands of the Regents. Some of them became virtual dictators, ruling with supreme authority.

The Pope's letter to the Regent is rather a lengthy one, but the document is perhaps worth giving in full, being such a unique thing. The letter is addressed "to the King of Lhasa", and reads :

"We wish you, illustrious and most mighty king, the light and well being of the Divine Grace. Among the many princely and noble qualities displayed by Your Majesty in a striking degree, the fame of which has reached us, the foremost place and rank must be assigned to the gracious kindness and special favour which you have shown to those who profess the Christian Faith in your vast and important kingdom ; which we have heard of with the greatest rejoicing and contentment of heart from our beloved son Dominic of Fano, of the Order of the Minor Brothers of St. Francis called Capuchins, who for a considerable time has dwelt in your dominions as an Apostolic Missionary, and is also proposing to return thither. As this favour shown to all believers of Christ, specially to the Apostolic Missionaries, is a source of the utmost gratification to us, we deem it but right and fitting to send you a despatch expressing our heartfelt thanks for your great kindness, begging Your Majesty to continue it, and to afford the Mission all the support and encouragement you possibly can. And, although we are now hearing day after day of your favourable disposition towards the Apostolic missionaries, we cannot but feel impelled to commend them most earnestly to Your Majesty's royal and all powerful protection and safe guardianship. Meanwhile, we on our part, will not fail incessantly to entreat the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, to look down with favour upon your kingdom from above, to pour out His blessing upon it and to visit it with His grace and heavenly gifts ; and, above all, to let the bright light of His truth and Gospel shine upon your own heart and mind.

Given at Rome on the 6th January, 1714.

Pope Clement XI "(16)

16. Bullarium Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum, Vol. VII Romae 1752, p. 253.

The letter caused a stir among the members of the Tibetan government and in the ranks of the Buddhist hierarchy. It made the round of the Court bringing Rome and Lhasa into closer contact ; curiosity and talk did the rest. The news that a Grand Foreign Lama, living in an unknown and far-off land, took such lively interest in the welfare of their country and its people, served as a stimulant to one and all to inquire about him and the Christian Law he represented. Some of the Buddhist Lamas residing at the court were urged to know more in regard to the religion professed by the White Lamas of the West. They came over to the Fathers' residence to talk with them, put forward their doubts and have their questions answered (17). It was an encouraging sign ; a moment long awaited by the bearers of the good tidings. The wheel had been set in motion and the atmosphere was tense with expectancy.

Discussions, however, are like a boundless ocean ; they drift too easily from the main point as issue unless a rigid, logical method is followed in the procedure. Conversation may be stimulating but if the subject-matter is not well defined and circumscribed, it may end in a mere academic exercise in which both parties feel satisfied in pressing forward their respective arguments without reaching any concrete solution. This thought gave Fr. Dominic an idea and he made a start. It made him realise the need of setting down on paper some leading principles on religion and for the moment confine all discussions to this focal point. The rest would follow as a matter of course. Accordingly, Fr. Prefect wrote a little treatise on the nature of religion, how there can be only one true and universal religion for all men and the marks that single it out from the others.

On Epiphany Day 1717, a copy of the treatise was presented to the Regent who was simply delighted to have it. On the occasion of the presentation there was also present at the audience a Buddhist monk who volunteered to disprove in writing the thesis propounded by the mission-

17. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, pp. 83-86.

aries. That was what the Fathers wanted, i.e. to set the ball rolling and then, little by little, pave the way to a closer understanding, and possibly conversion. In the traditional manner of every missionary enterprise the priest tackled the citadel of Lamaism from within without neglecting to care also for the lower strata of society.

It was a step in the right direction. The Regent became more and more interested in the Christian religion. The letter from the Pope and the gift he had sent made him all the more receptive. Each time the missionaries went to see him he entertained them to a friendly, religious conversation. He read and re-read the booklet on the true nature of religion asking for an explanation on one point or other. The existence of the Holy Spirit without being united somehow to any material element puzzled him most. He could not reconcile himself to the idea even when told that their sacred books admitted the existence of pure spirit without the aid of any corporal substance (18).

Fr. Dominic in his zeal and impatience to spread the faith thought the time had finally come to strike. Clearly without any ambiguity he set forth the reasons why he and his comrades had been sent to Tibet. The sole scope of their mission was the conversion of its people to the Christian Law. A quick and sharp reaction was awaited, but the Regent brushed aside the issue by simply saying: "O Lama, know you that the law which I and all my subjects profess, has always appeared good to me, we having been raised therein; but I confess to you that yours, which you say you have come to announce to me and to my people, appears to be better". To this the Prefect answered that if God in His infinite mercy had enlightened him he was in duty bound to embrace the Christian Law and see his way that his subjects too did the same. His Highness then butted in saying: "O Lama, the time is not yet. Learn the language well, you and your companions and then begin to teach the new law" (19). "The time is not yet" and, unfortunately, it was never to be.

18. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, pp. 83-86.

19. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 193-194.

Within a few months Lha-bzan Khan was assassinated. The sympathy he felt for the new faith never went beyond the discussion stage, but his growing friendship with the Fathers was shown in many ways, among which figured the special concession granted to them on custom duty. It is a short and interesting document, which may be rendered in the following words :

“Notification to all dignitaries, that is, superintendents and functionaries of Lhasa etc.

This is to say that the white-headed European-Lamas have been received in audience by me. They have come from distant countries and among the things they have taken with them in the way of food and personal effects there is no marketable article. You are therefore directed to make them pay custom duty in accordance with the rules now in force with the Nepalese, our confederate neighbours.

Given on the 24th day of the 9th month of the year of the fire-bird (i. e. 9th November, 1716).

True copy without mistakes of the King’s document,” (20).

It was an extraordinary economical relief. The privilege, according to contemporary sources, reduced the liability of the missionaries on goods, to about, 90 per cent. The Regent’s friendship could not have been shown in a better way as lack of funds had become a chronic malady with the white-headed lamas.

In the meantime, the re-settling of the mission was taking shape. Very little was left of the work which had been done in the years 1707—1711, except perhaps, a residue of good will, which made things all the more easy to start all afresh. For the immediate present the most urgent problem to be faced was the learning of the language by the new comers. Fr. Francis Horace showed special aptitude for it. He was bright and promising if given a fair chance he would easily become a learned Tibetan scholar. Why not then make all possible sacrifices and attempts to give him the best training ? The Prefect had tried to send him to a Buddhist

20. Nuovo Ramusio, part IV, p. 183.

monastery, but his efforts proved in vain. When everything else had failed, Fr. Dominic interviewed the Regent about it. Lha-bzan Khan took a liking for the idea; through his good offices, Frs. Francis Horace and Hyppolitus Desideri, an Italian Jesuit, were admitted into the renowned Buddhist Monastery of Sera, in the vicinity of Lhasa. A learned lama was assigned to them as their teacher. In order that he might devote all his time to his charges he was dispensed from attending the choir and from any other religious exercises proper of the monastic life. Here the two missionaries could learn the literary language, discuss freely with the monks and understand better their way of life and dogmatic belief, besides having daily access to the valuable library of the monastery. It was indeed a golden opportunity to make themselves known and know all about the mentality and culture of the Tibetan people (21).

For some months the two Catholic Priests lived side by side with the learned lamas in a Buddhist monastery. Fr. Francis Horace stayed on for nearly a year, while Fr. H. Desideri remained there for a shorter period of time. Mass was said there and the other spiritual exercises were performed in an atmosphere of brotherly understanding. The rest of the day was spent in study and discussion; They partook of the same food and of the same community life, becoming one with the large body of monks. It was indeed a rare example of adaptation. This new sort of environment must have required of them humility and self-abnegation, but they joyfully submitted to it feeling that only by lowering themselves they could hope to uplift others.

In the past humanitarian work had been the pass-word

21. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 87. At the beginning Fr. Desideri went to study the language in a monastery at Lhasa (Nuovo Ramusio, part V, p. 196); then in August 1717 he passed to the monastery of Sera (Nuovo Ramusio, part V, p. 198). According to Fr. Felix of Montecchio (Memoria IV) Fr. Francis Horace remained in the Sera monastery for nine months, i.e. from April 1717 to January 1718. However, for a period of four years he continued to learn "the common and literary language" under the tuition of a qualified lama (Memoria sulla vita del Ven. servo di Dio P. Francesco Orazio etc., op. cit. p. 12).

which enabled the missionaries to gain admission into society, commanding the respect and confidences of the people. Fr. Dominic knew it. Soon he started his medical mission and became so successful that every day 80 to 90 patients flocked regularly to his dispensary (22). Whenever free he went about to attend to the sick in their private dwellings. He never spared himself; his spirit of service exercised with keen interest and utter self-abnegation was an unfailing source of wonder and admiration. The inhabitants of the capital paid him back by opening their door and their hearts to him.

But there is a price even on success and fame. There were in Lhasa at that time some high ranking Chinese officials, popularly known as ambassadors. One of them was laid down with dropsy. He sent for the renowned white hakim who treated him most successfully. A few days later a deputation called on the humble Capuchin. They thanked their benefactor for his medical skill and tried to persuade him to go with them to China and set up his practice in the capital of the celestial empire. The priest in his simplicity thought it was a mere formality only, a way to express their deep appreciation for all he had done for one of their countrymen. He hastened to parry their compliments by directing them to give thanks to God, who alone, through him, had given power to the ministration of his medicine. The busy missionary doctor then dismissed the incident as a part of the ceremonious way of the east.

The day after the Prefect was made to realise the full impact of the words spoken by the Chinese admirers. Having obtained leave from the Regent, they brought pressure on the priest and even threatened to kidnap him if he refused to go to the Imperial Court of Peking. A triangular fight then ensued. The Fathers were reluctant to leave Lhasa, the assigned field of their labour. The Regent was hesitating—he was unwilling to part with the missionaries, but at the same time he was under an obligation to the present overlords of Tibet. On the other hand, the Chinese officials were quite determined to have their own way, even at the cost of resorting to force. Before

22. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 87

taking sides and making use of his authority Lha-bzan Khan thought it proper to ascertain the will of the Fathers. Faintly he suggested to them to go to China backing his suggestion with the promise of a handsome reward. In the name of all, the Prefect replied saying that if His Highness wanted them to go they were ready to obey, but if they were left free to choose they would prefer to remain in Tibet, the country they have been purposely sent to preach the law of the True God. Thereupon the Regent took it upon himself to inform the would-be kidnappers that it was not fair to go against the express wishes of the Fathers. Nevertheless, the possibility of being taken away to China by force still persisted for quite some time (23).

Soon after the re-settlement of the mission in the capital, Fr. Dominic thought of opening the branch station of Tron-gne, in the lower Tibet. Now was the time to do it, for there was enough personnel at hand to staff the five missionary stations which had been approved in the re-organisation plan of 1714. Fr. John Francis of Fossombrone, who during the few months' stay in the Tibetan metropolis, had acquired sufficient knowledge of the language, was therefore sent there, early in February, 1717. He was entrusted with the task of choosing the place and render it fit for a mission house. Later on a helper would be given him in the person of Fr. Angelicus of Brescia.

Tron-gne was then a little more than a mere village, but according to the geographical standard in Tibet it was considered a place of certain importance. There is no possible way to identify the exact location of Tron-gne, but, as we have stated elsewhere, it lay to the south-east of Lhasa and four days' journey from Bhutan's eastern border. The population of Tron-gne, simple and primitive as it was, was pleased to welcome the White Lama, who soon found himself at home among them. A kind landlord let out to him a house for 15 years, at the nominal rent of Rs. 4.50 per annum (24). The house was small but convenient for the purpose; it needed only some repairs and a little work of

23. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 92.

24. Nuove Ramusio, part I. pp. 86-95

adaptation. Good Fr. John Francis set about giving it a new look and making it suitable as a presbytery.

In less than five months from his arrival in Lhasa, the Prefect could write home and say that whatever Propaganda had planned for the Tibetan Mission had already been carried out. Chandernagore, Patna, Kathmandu, Lhasa and Tron-gne were now full-fledged missionary stations. Quite a lot had been done in a relatively short time if we consider the pace with which things moved early in the eighteenth century.

The joy of the achieved goal was beginning to be overshadowed again by economic anxieties, which made the Prefect doubt whether he would be in a position to support all the five stations. Remittances from Rome, besides being inadequate, never reached in time and the labourers were forced again to live on the borderline of starvation. The days were hard and lean, but still they carried on bravely, feeling confident that the arrangements made for the transmission of the funds would not fail them. Things had come to such a pass that Fr. Dominic, who wished to keep up the contacts he had already established with the court, had to search anxiously his pocket to find the few cents required to buy a scarf to be placed in the hands of the person to be called upon; without this no one could pay a visit to another under penalty of going against the universal symbol of Tibetan greeting.

Already in June, 1717, writing to the Procurator General of the Order, Fr. Dominic expressed his fear about the financial position of the mission and wrote—"In order to save money we have imposed on ourselves such a strict regime of life, that it cannot last forever. For instance, we fast rigorously all year round taking only one square meal in the day, that is, in the evening time, while in the morning we have to be satisfied with two cups of tea and a little barley flour (rtsam-pa)." "I have said and I repeat", the Father concluded, "this kind of life cannot last long. Nevertheless, if we want to keep the mission going, we cannot help doing otherwise. This is a clear indication that we stay on out of zeal and love for the cause of the mission; we would not lead such a miserable life, an existence far below the living

standard of even the poorest of the poor, if we were not prompted by a superhuman motive" (25).

Apart from this handicap, everything was going on smoothly when another period of internecine strife broke out in Lhasa, arresting for a while the noble work. But before narrating the vicissitudes of this time we have to take notice of a fact that came to insert itself in the troubled history of the mission.

A Controversy

When Fr. Dominic and his two companions reached Lhasa on 1st October, 1716, they found that the house taken on rent by the Fathers of the first and second Tibetan expedition was already occupied. Fr. Hyppolitus Desideri, a member of the Society of Jesus, had comfortably settled himself there since 18th March, 1716, taking as his servant the same man who had formerly been in the employment of the Capuchins. On hearing that the three sons of St. Francis of Assisi were approaching the capital, he went out to meet them and played the host to the new comers (26).

The news that Frs. Hyppolitus Desideri and Manuel Freyre S.J. were in Lhasa was first heard by Fr. Dominic while still in Khatmandu in April 1716. At the beginning it came as a strange rumour till it was confirmed by Fr. M. Freyre's arrival in the Valley of Nepal in June 1716. After 20 days' stay in the capital, the Jesuit priest had left for the Agra Mission. The Tarai at this time of the year was impassable and so before proceeding to Delhi he made a five months' stop at Kathmandu as a guest of the Capuchin Friars (27). From his conversation it transpired, according to what Fr. Dominic wrote to Rome on 20th June, 1716, that the Jesuits had the intention of establishing themselves in Tibet, Nepal and Bihar, in the very same places which

25. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 94-95.

26. Nuovo Ramusio, part V, p. 215-216.

27. Nuovo Ramusio, part VII, p. 205.

were entrusted to the Capuchin missionaries of the Marche d'Ancona Province (28).

Fr. Desideri had met Fr. Freyre for the first time at Delhi in 1714 and for two years they laboured together to pursue the same goal. They were men quite apart, with different backgrounds, nationality and intellectual stature. Fr. Desideri was born of a noble family at Pistoia, north Italy, on 20th December, 1684. From his early youth his imagination was very likely fired by Fr. Andrade's exploits, whose name and fame were still something of a legend among the educated class of the time. At the age of 16 he entered the Society of Jesus in Rome and there he conceived the idea of following in the footsteps of his great confrere. Ordained priest in August 1712, he soon left Rome for Lisbon to embark for Goa on the 8th April, 1713.

The Provincial of Goa, acting on instructions of the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, commissioned

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28. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 80-81. Since the time Fr. Dominic was in Rome he guessed that the Jesuits might enter Lhasa. In a letter written from Kathmandu on the 20th June, 1716, he states "What was foreseen by me while in Rome about the entrance of the Jesuits in our mission, has come to pass by the arrival of two Jesuits in Lhasa". (Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 81). When back in Bengal his presentiment became so strong that he wrote to the Card. Prefect of Propaganda telling his Eminence that the Capuchins would not remain in Tibet unless the mission was entrusted to them "privative quoad alios" (Nuovo Ramusio, part V, pp. 98, 204-208). The obedience letter or patente issued to the two Jesuit missionaries stated that they were sent to Tibet for the salvation of those souls "quas olim excolendas instruendasque susceperat Societas nostra" (Nuovo Ramusio, part V. p. 79).

An old Decree, issued by the Congregation of Propaganda on 11th January, 1956, was also unearthed in this connection. It stated—*"Sacra Congregatio censuit, nullo modo in posterum licere pro bono religionis catholicae, ad tollendas inter missionarios dissensiones et litigia, in locis, in quibus existunt missionarii apostolici unius Ordinis, novam missionem aliorum religiosorum, etiam Societatis Jesu, fundare, vel illam sub quovis praetextu aut autoritate exercere absque expressa licentia eiusdem sacrae congregationis, sub poena privationis officii, privilegii et facultatis, ipso facto incurrenda"* (Monumenta Anastasiana etc., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 987).

Fr. Desideri to reopen the mission in Tibet. The Father rejoiced at this longed for news and hastened to set out on his journey. Passing through Surat in January, 1714, he got as far north as Delhi on the 11th of May, 1714. The Jesuit visitor to the Moghul Mission, Fr. Joseph de Silva, thought it prudent to give him a superior and a companion in the person of Fr. Manuel Freyre, a Portuguese Jesuit, who was then serving in the Agra mission. Fr. Freyre was senior to Fr. Desideri, but not so well prepared mentally and morally as his Italian counterpart. He had done his studies in Goa and though a man of no mean ability yet he did not compare favourably with the scholarly bent, missionary drive and personal resourcefulness of Fr. Desideri.

After the rainy season, on 24th September, 1714, the two Jesuits started from Delhi for Kashmir. The winter 1714-15 was spent in Srinagar, occupying themselves in useful studies. Leaving Srinagar on 17th May, 1715, they reached Leh, the capital of Ladakh on the 26th June, the same year.

“All this journey from Kashmir to Leh”, writes Fr. Desideri, “which is one and forty days, cannot be done in any other manner except on foot, the pathway being in several tracts impervious to pack animals. The greater part of the road is along the flanks of the loftiest and most awful mountains and in which ordinarily there is not found sufficient space for one man to pass by another. In certain places the mountain being rent asunder, sometimes by the avalanches of snow, sometimes by the forces of the deluge of rain, the trail becomes wanting altogether and the passenger does not know where to plant his feet. In such cases, one of our guides going in front with a hatchet cuts out just space enough to hold one’s foot; then seizing with his left my hand, he assists me to put my foot in the hole already made ; thence he recommences to excavate a little further on and we advance exactly as before, until at length we find the narrow pathway not altogether obliterated. On other occasions the mountains are found to be frozen over with slippery glazing and the narrow paths blocked with ice, so that you run the greatest risk of sliding down; and the only slightest carelessness with your feet would cause you inevitably to be precipitated down the slope and to be

dashed to pieces in the torrent which runs below between the two mountains. Many of the natives of Kashmir who perform this journey for the purpose of conveying and fetching back wool often lose their lives and others become miserably crippled..." (29).

On 17th August, 1715, Frs. Freyre and Desideri resumed their travels eastward, entering the city of Lhasa after seven months of weary walking and riding over a trail never before followed by Europeans.

But why had they come ? Lhasa was a Capuchin mission. It had been committed to them by the Congregation of Propaganda since 1703. Actually they had been in peaceful possession of it all this time. Before leaving the capital in December, 1711, they had handed over the keys of the rented house in which they had lived for over four years to their landlord, kindly requesting him to keep everything in safe custody till their return ; a thing which he promised to do faithfully and without fail. The will to come back was so strong that they took all possible step in their power to continue the work which had already been started. Surely, the two Jesuits knew that they could not freely trespass into the territory of another ecclesiastical jurisdiction on their own accord and then settle themselves therein just as if it were a new mission entrusted to their pastoral care. What did this mean, and what had happened ? What was the reason that brought them to Lhasa ?

We have to exclude *a priori* the contention of some Protestant writers, who saw in Fr. Desideri an "agent of the Society", a "Jesuit spy", who had been sent purposely to the Tibetan capital to cause trouble, to discredit the Capuchins and ultimately to wrest the mission territory from them. The same idea seems to be vaguely at the back of the mind of some Catholic writers. As a first step to implement this plan, they say, the Jesuits sought to acquire material to support their case. Accordingly, a capable and crafty member of the Society was despatched into Tibet to collect evidence against the Capuchins and give his own version upon the alleged importance of their work in the capital.

29. Nuovo Ramusio, part V, p, 167-168.

Once the machine was set in motion, it would not be difficult, with a tactful handling of the question, to give the move an appearance of legality. The children of St. Ignatius knew how to do it. By hook or by crook therefore the Capuchins could easily be pushed out of Lhasa and the Jesuits would honourably take over their coveted place (30).

This excluded, there remains but one possible answer to the question. The answer is given by Fr. C. Wessels S.J. in his exhaustive book—"Early Jesuit travellers in Central Asia". Fr. Desideri seconded by his Superiors, wanted to revive the Jesuit mission in the kingdom of Guge. It had been a promising mission, but unfavourable circumstances prevented it from growing to its full size, like a tender flower nipped in the bud by the fury of the storm. Times might have changed, a more friendly atmosphere might have come over the land of Guge, portending a new era of fruitful missionary activity. The hope was worth the try. With the best of intentions, Fr. Desideri made a mistake ; instead of getting into the kingdom of Guge he blundered on to Lhasa.

There is ample evidence to prove that though the Society had temporarily abandoned the idea to make any further attempt to penetrate into Tibet after the reverses suffered in seventeenth century, yet they had never given up the hope to re-enter the mission land once watered by the toil and sweat of Fr. Andrade and his brave companions. And how could they have so easily forgotten one of the most glorious pages in the missionary annals of the Society ?

The credit to have brought to the forefront the idea of reviving the old Jesuit mission in Tibet goes to Fr. Miguel de Amaral, the visitor of the Goa Jesuit province. As far back as the year 1704, he had written to one of the Jesuit Fathers in Delhi to collect information on Tibet. He wanted to be sure that the enterprise was feasible before making any commitment. Correspondence on the subject had been exchanged between the Provincial in Goa and the Superior General of the Society. The latter, Fr. Michael Angelo Tamburini, not only was in favour of it, but wrote on 6th

30. The Exploration of Tibet by Graham Sandberg, Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta 1904, pp. 51-60.

July, 1709, to the Provincial at Goa strongly recommending the re-opening of the mission in Tibet, in spite of difficulties. The letter thrilled Fr. Desideri, who found in it that his own wishes were warmly endorsed by the highest authority of the Society. Actually, between the years 1708 and 1710 four Jesuits, on two different occasions, were officially appointed to go up to Tibet, but unfortunately the tide of events worked against their plans. Unforeseen circumstances came in the way and again the idea of re-opening the mission in the kingdom of Guge had to be postponed. On the other hand, financial backing to foster the enterprise was not wanting. An Armenian Catholic gentleman, a noble serving at the court of the Moghuls had bequeathed since the time of Fr. Andrade, a large sum of money to further the cause of the mission. Moreover additional monetary help could easily be obtained from other sources. The main drawback therefore was to find the right man for such a task. Such a man was born in Fr. Desideri.

In his native country Fr. Desideri had dreamt of the vast and little known territory in which between 1624 and 1644 no less than 26 of his confreres had actually laboured or had been detailed to labour in that mysterious land. Their pioneering work should not go waste. Other evangelical labourers should be sent there to finish the task. But his dream was a real day-dream, little connected with the reality of things.

Wars and subsequent occupation had so disfigured the kingdom of Guge and its capital that nothing was left of its former splendour. A casual visitor would be at a loss to locate the place. Again, while still in Italy, Fr. Desideri knew little or nothing about the geographical position of the former Jesuit mission. This, however, did not bother him so much, sure that the regions were well known in India. Once on Indian soil, he would be put on the right track. He was, however, to be sadly disappointed.

In India, Fr. Desideri was told that the only portion of the country which was now roughly described as western Tibet and its adjoining territories to the north-west was then known as Tibet. The best way to enter it was through

Kashmir. Following his geographical light, Fr. Desideri stepped into the First or Little Tibet. The region went also by the name of Chota Tibet in the Hindustani language, but the local people called it Baltistan. Then he went on to the Second or Greater Tibet. The capital of this was Slei (Leh) and the territory of the Kingdom was known as Lhata (Ladags or Ladakh), Bara Tubat or Tubat-i-Kalan.

In times past, the region was divided into small kingdoms, such as the kingdom of Guge, the kingdom of Rudok (Ru-t'ogs) and others. But now all these former kingdoms were ruled over by the king of Ladakh. It was to the Second Tibet that Fr. Andrade had come in search of the lost Christian communities.

Fr. Desideri thought of establishing a mission in Ladakh, but his Superior, Fr. Freyre, could not stand the rigorous climate and the high altitude of these regions. He wanted by any means to return to India. Having inquired whether it was possible from Ladakh to go back to Moghul territory via Srinagar (Srinagar of Garhwal, the same route as followed by Fr. Andrade), Fr. Freyre was told that it was a very difficult journey as there were high mountain passes to be crossed; the road was infested with robbers and had to be done on foot all along. Not feeling inclined to take this way, and unwilling to go back the same route he had come, Fr. Freyre made further inquiries. These led to the following information: three months' march ahead of them lay the third Tibet, whose capital was Lhasa. The road to Lhasa was comparatively easy and once there it would not be difficult to cross over into Moghul territory. On hearing this, Fr. Freyre urged his companion to go to Bhotant, the Third or Greater Tibet with a view to making for the warm Indian plains as soon as possible. This is how Fr. Desideri, according to his own account, had come to Lhasa (31). His presence in the capital gave rise to the question—to whom does the Lhasa Mission belong, to the Capuchins or to the Jesuits?

To elucidate the question we have to know that while still in Leh, Fr. Desideri wrote to the Superior General of

31. Nuovo Ramusio, part V, pp. 29-32

the Order on the 5th August, 1715, acknowledging that the Capuchins had been in Lhasa and that, perhaps, they might still be there. In the same letter he expressed the opinion, shared by his travelling companion, that this was likely the place where Fr. Andrade had come to establish the mission in Tibet. It was further stated that Fr. Andrade had probably left there a cassock, a biretta and some other personal effects and it was rumoured that 10 or 12 years earlier the King of the Third Tibet had sent messengers to the Moghul territory in search of Jesuits as he wanted to have them teach his people the true law (32).

It did not take long for Fr. Dominic to prove that the Capuchins and not the Jesuits had earlier been residing in Lhasa and that in any case even though they had left the capital for a time, they had every intention of staging a come-back. He sent for the landlord and requested him to bring in his presence the luggage he had left in his custody before taking the way to the south. Then turning to Fr. Desideri the Prefect told him: "See how carefully the Tibetans have kept the things which had been entrusted to their care during our absence!" "You say", "Fr. Dominic went on addressing himself to the Jesuit missionary, "that one of your Fathers had left here in Lhasa a biretta and perhaps a cassock. The person you mention as the keeper of these articles lives close by. Please call him in". At this Fr. Desideri kept silent (33).

32. Nuovo Ramusio, part V, pp. 29-32. Fr. Freyre himself tells us in his report (Nuovo Ramusio, part VII, p. 198) how he and his companion had come to know that the Capuchins had been or might be still in Lhasa. He writes: "Postea tamen unus Cazimirinus (a man from Kashmir) veniens de Rudak (Rudok, Ru-t'-ogs) nobis dixit, tertium quidem extare Tibetum caeteris majorem, in quo et se vidisse quosdam pauperes homines atque lanoso vestitos sago, pila ad terga pendente, populo quoque multas exhibere medecinas, ac certe se scire Europeos esse. Ex notis ego intelligens Capucinos, itinerum distantiam perquirens ab eo, dixit trium mensium iter esse, multaque reperire deserta". See also Nuovo Ramusio, part V, p. 64-65, 98 No. 31. As for the story of the cassock, biretta etc. left behind by Fr. Andrade refer to footnote No. 1 Chapter II of the present publication.

3. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 156.

It was evident that Fr. Desideri could not press forward the claim that the Lhasa station was the very same as the one founded by Fr. Andrade, ninety years earlier. He had to admit that he had lost the first round. However, at this stage the controversy entered into a second phase. There were other reasons which gave the Jesuit a certain claim over Lhasa. They advanced the plea of first occupancy and rightful inheritance. The territory of Tibet, they said, was more or less subordinate to China, where for nearly a century and a half the missionaries of the Society had been working. Their most tangible argument, however, was the foundation of a mission in Tibet by Andrade in 1624, and the heroic adventure of Frs. Cacella and Cabral.

Basing himself on these unquestionable historical facts, Fr. Desideri tried to make out his case by establishing a claim of priority by right of discovery and by being the first missionaries on the field. The argument in itself looked sound : the only snag about it was that the Capuchins were officially sent by Propaganda "ad oram Gangis versus regna Tibet"; while the Jesuits had come to Tibet on their own private initiative and at their own risk and responsibility—a thing Fr. Desideri seemed to be ignorant of.

The controversy was referred to Rome—each party pressing its own arguments and asking for a decision. By return of mail, which was five years later, the answer came that Fr. Desideri was to leave and that the Capuchins were to stay in Lhasa. The Congregation of Propaganda had thus provisionally settled the question ; the final verdict would follow in due course.

The letter of the Superior General of the Society, Fr. M. Tamburini, dated Rome 16th January, 1719, recalling Fr. Desideri from Lhasa, revealed a curious fact. When Fr. Tamburini gave Fr. Desideri leave to go to Tibet he did not know that the territory was already assigned to the Capuchins by the Congregation of Propaganda. He was under the impression that the mission now under dispute was none other than the one originally started by the Fathers of the Society, peacefully held by them till the time of the persecution, during which time they were expelled, and that it had not been re-opened by anyone ever since. The

letter concludes by saying that Fr. Desideri should not therefore be surprised at this new disposition as he (the Superior General) had now been acquainted with the true state of things by the Congregation of Propaganda (34). There was surely a missing link somewhere in the course of this unusual story. Some imponderable factor had mixed things up in such a way as to outwit the human element.

Regretfully, but in a spirit of obedience, Fr. Desideri left Lhasa on the 28th April, 1721, and travelling by the Nepal route he came down to Delhi, till eventually he was recalled to Goa in 1725. At Kuti, where he had stopped for some months, waiting for the good season to set in, he appealed to the Pope (29th September, 1721) against the decision taken by the Congregation of Propaganda.

When nine years earlier Fr. Desideri was received in audience by Clement XI, His Holiness had asked him to what part of the East Indies was he going, the Jesuit Missionary pointedly stated that he had been assigned to the mission of Tibet. Thereupon the Pope Commented: "So far!" and then inquired who was going to defray the journey expenses. On hearing that the Society would see to everything, Clement XI simply remarked—"Dabit tibi panem arctum et aquam brevem" (35). Evidently even the Pope, the patron of the Lhasa enterprise, was convinced that the mission in Tibet was quite another thing from the mission of Lhasa. The geographical knowledge of the time was so limited and the different regions in the east were known by so many names, according to different ways of approach, that any mistake in this connection could easily be pardonable.

34. Nuovo Ramusio, part V. p. 61. The relevant portion of Fr. Tamburini's letter in its original Italian text reads: *Quando diedi a V.R. licenza di andare in Tibet, non mi era noto quest'assegnamento fatto dalla Sagra Congreg. ai PP. Cappuccini della Missione del Tibet, anzi mi fu supposto che, dopo di haver fondata quella missione i nostri Padri e d' esservi dimorati fino al 1650, quando ne furono discacciati per una persecuzione, non si era piu' riaperta da altri. E percio' V.R. non si meravigli di questa nuova disposizione, per le nuove notizie havute dalla Sagra Congreg."*

35. Nuovo Ramusio, part V, p. 122.

The fact itself that to revive the Tsaparang Mission, Frs. Freyre and Desideri passed through Srinagar in Kashmir instead of going there via Srinagar in Garhwal reveals a lamentable lack of geographical knowledge and of the circumstances that led to the foundation of the Jesuit Mission in Tibet.

In 1726, Fr. Desideri was commissioned to take to the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome the judicial inquiries instituted by the Diocesan Curia of Mylapore over the cause of beatification of the servant of God, John de Britto. In January, 1727, he sailed from Pondicherry for Europe.

In Rome Fr. Desideri was once again at work to maintain his claim. In 1728, he drew up three elaborate Difese or Defences in answer to the case put forward by Fr. Felix of Montecchio on behalf of the Capuchins. The controversy still dragged on, when finally on the 29th November, 1732, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda gave its judgement. While praising the zealous work of the Jesuits in Tibet, it determined the matter in favour of the Capuchins. This decision seemed to have acted as a sort of death-knell for Fr. Desideri, for he died a few months later, 14th April, 1733, at the still early age of 48 years.

The presence of Fr. Desideri at Lhasa had led to unpleasantness between the Society he represented and the Capuchin body, though it did not interfere in any way with missionary activities. Relations between the two were at times strained, but always correct. They lived together under the same roof and they administered to one another's spiritual needs. The question was kept on the plane of principle. Both parties honestly believed that their respective stand was demanded by the honour of their religious Order to which they belonged and that it was further a matter of conscience. When ultimately the dispute came up for final settlement at Rome, the amity of their personal relations was admitted on both sides (36).

36. Fr. Desideri speaks about it on many occasions; in particular he devoted chapter XVII of his "Notizie Istoriche del Tibet e Memorie de' Viaggi e Missione ivi fatta dal P. Ippolito Desideri S.J." to the subject (Nuovo Ramusio, part V, pp. 215-219).

Whatever one may think or feel about the whole controversy, one thing is clear, it undoubtedly served to enrich the world with a mass of knowledge and kindered topics, which otherwise might have been lost. For five years and one month, Fr. Desideri laboured tirelessly in Tibet. "From that day (the day of his entry into the country) to the last which I passed in that kingdom", he writes in one of his reports, "I studied from morning till night". The result of his studies was 1,003 pages of Tibetan manuscript, and a 630 page Italian account. A priceless source of information that made Fr. Desideri rate among the best, if not actually the best, Tibetan scholars of all times. (37).

Historical Background

The establishment of the Capuchin mission in Tibet came at a time when the chequered history of the country was at a cross-road. The struggle to restore the secular monarchy led to a series of political disturbances, which ultimately ended in reducing Tibet under the Protectorate of China. Even before the Fathers entered Lhasa they had heard of the long drawn-out fight that was taking place in the unhappy land and which would make the mission a still more difficult field to work in. It is necessary to sum up here the historical and political background against which they were to exercise their ministry in order to see its impact on their life and activity.

From the middle of the seventeenth century to the time our missionaries appeared on the Tibetan scene, the Dalai

37. The controversy has been dealt with here as a simple incident in the whole story. It was, therefore, bound to be limited within a certain scope. The reader who wants to know more about it, is referred to the following sources :

Early Jesuit travellers in Central Asia, 1603-1721, by C. Wessels, The Hague 1924 ; An account of Tibet ; the Travels of Ippolito Desideri of Pistoia, S.J., 1712-1727, by F. De Filippi, 2nd ed., London 1937 ; Nel Tibet : il P. Ippolito Desideri S.J. e la sua missione (1684-1733) by G. Castellani, Roma 1934 ; Nuovo Ramusio, part V ; Letters and other papers of Fr. Ippolito Desideri S. J., a Missionary in Tibet (1713-1721) by H. Hosten, in Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal of 1938.

Lama held undisputed sway over the country. He was the high Pontiff, the Priest-King centering in his august person all and full civil and religious authority. This power had been invested in him and naturally he was averse to any encroachment from whatever quarters it might come. It had not always been like that.

The early Tibetan history is wrapped in myth and legend. In the seventh century of the Christian era a powerful, secular monarchy, formed out of nomadic tribes and clans, came into existence. It marked the Golden Age of Tibet, an age which steadily rose to status of a much feared pan-Asiatic power. Being set in Central Asia it served to form a kind of buffer zone between the Chinese and the Arabic Muslim world. The monarchy, at its height, extended its dominion from Ladakh in the west and in the south carried its power through Nepal to the Indian side of the Himalaya. Large portions of Mongolia and China came also under its control. It was at this historical juncture that Buddhism was introduced into the country. The bitter fight between the new and the old national religion, the religion of Bon brought about the downfall of the secular monarchy, round about the tenth century, giving place to a fragmentation of states. A severe blow had meanwhile been dealt to the Bon religion, but the nobles and the ruling class that governed under it, still remained a powerful political force to be reckoned with. The struggle between the secular and religious powers for the supremacy of the land ran down through the centuries, like a deep water current, shaping in its course the history of Tibet.

Meanwhile, Buddhism was slowly gaining ground and consolidating its position. Driven out from India the land of its birth, by the Brahmans and the Mohammedan invaders, it found a congenial home in Tibet. Buddhist teachers from India followed suit, making the country absorb, together with the religion, a good deal of Indian civilisation and culture. The Buddhist monks steadily organised themselves and during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries increased their hold over the land. Supported by their large number and strong organisation, possessed of vast landed property bequeathed to the monasteries in the course of time, they

became a major political force in the life of the country. Their religious influence was felt even beyond the borders, as far as Mongolia and China. The High Lama of the great monastery of Sakya, to the south-west of Shigatse in Central Tibet, whose name was Chogyal-Phag-Pa, went to China to become the religious instructor of the Chinese Emperor. He came back in the year of the "Water Bull" (A.D. 1253) receiving, in return for his services, sovereign power over three Chol-khas or provinces of Tibet. He was the first in the line of priest-kings to rule in the country. The main events in the history of the land will now be centered round these two political movements—the supporters of the secular monarchy and the group of men who stood for a theocratic government. For the next 182 years the three Tibetan provinces will be under a theocratic regime, till 1435 when there was a return to a secular monarchy. This lasted up to 1641.

At the turn of the fourteenth century, a new factor that took Tibet by storm, and was destined to have far-reaching consequences, made its appearance. The rapid increase in the number of Buddhist monks, their ascension to political power led to a lax priestly discipline and to religious corruption. Animistic beliefs and practices from the old religion of Bon crept into the doctrine of Buddhism. Its most ardent followers became dissatisfied; the bulk of the people fell away from the strict religious observance. Reform was needed and reform came from within.

In the year 1357 the much needed reformer was born. His name was Tsong-kha-pa, "the man from the land of onions". He enforced a more stringent discipline in the monasteries and purified religion of all its heterogeneous elements. The reaction to a purer and nobler faith against the existing decadent Lamaism led to a schism. The reformers became known as the "yellow caps" (dGe-lug-pa) in contradistinction to the others who were called the "red caps" (rNin-ma-pa). To ensure that the new established church of Buddhism would persevere in the purity of faith and integrity of morals, Tsong-kha-pa introduced into the organisation the theory of the reincarnation of the head-lamas. In this way a new system of the lama hierarchy

came into being. These head-lamas have achieved, through their own saintly life, perfection, immortality and a certain degree of infallibility. After death they again re-incarnate in a newly-born child to lead others on the right path. They are saints and leaders whose life and doctrine will teach men how to live and what to believe. The method to make out their re-incarnation does not differ much from the procedure adopted in choosing the Dalai Lama after the death of his predecessor (38).

As was to be expected the Yellow Caps rose up against the Red Caps till the former became more predominant by degrees. Monasteries were contended between the two—the faithful wavered for a time and then made their choice and finally the line of separation was drawn up. The fight between the two sects was not confined to discipline and religious matters only, but easily shifted to a more dangerous ground, the ground of politics.

In their new missionary zeal and to gain support to their cause, the Yellow Caps went out to spread the faith into Mongolia striking in return an exceedingly good bargain. The head of the new sect received from a newly converted Mongol chieftain the ambitious title of Dalai Lama Vajradhara, “the all-embracing ocean, the holder of the thunderbolt”. And thus the title of Dalai Lama came into use and continues even to this day. Again, it was by the hands of the Mongols, in the year of the “water horse” (A.D. 1642), that out of respect for religious authority, they made over to him the whole of the country, after having defeated the secular monarchy (39).

It was the V Dalai Lama (1617—1682) who first assumed these temporal powers. He was a shrewd politician and an able administrator. The great Potala palace, emblem of sovereignty and majesty, was rebuilt on a larger scale, under his rule. In 1652 the V Dalai Lama accepted an invitation to visit the Emperor of China at Peking, whom he regarded as his religious tutor, and was received with all the honour

38. Rappresentanza No. V ; Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 261

39. Rappresentanza No. XXXV.

and respect due to an independent sovereign. The form of Tibetan government, known as Gaden-Phodrang was started by him and with minor changes continued to be in force till the time of the Chinese invasion in 1951.

The Great Fifth, as he was generally known, died in 1682. His Prime Minister, ambitious and power-greedy, concealed his death and ruled in his master's name. That was the first danger signal ahead of the times. Only in 1696, under pressure of the Chinese Emperor and the Mongol princes, the Prime Minister gave way and formally installed a successor—the Sixth Dalai Lama (1683-1706). And with him the trouble began. He had all the qualities demanded of his high office, but lacked the most essential one—the new Dalai Lama was entirely unorthodox. As he blossomed into youth, the call of the world and of the flesh became quite appealing; the lonely, ascetic life of the Potala palace proved too irksome and unsuitable to his exuberant temperament. He wrote light amorous verse and started flirting with the maids of the capital. His nocturnal escapades became the talk of the town. Dissatisfaction set in and a major political crisis was in the offing. The Mongols and the Chinese who did not mind submitting themselves to the spiritual leadership of Lhasa were not quite prepared to acknowledge the Dalai Lama as the temporal ruler of Tibet. They constantly tried to counter-balance his power. The situation was explosive and they made capital out of it. Secretly they planned to interfere and take over the internal administration.

The governor of the Tibetan province of Dam, Lha-bzan Khan by name, whom we have already mentioned, backed the Chinese Emperor, rose in revolt. In 1705, he marched on to Lhasa, put the Regent to death and proclaimed himself as successor. Now the Dalai Lama was the main stumbling-block, for in him rested all power. He could lend support or stamp out the revolutionary movement from the very outset. But there was remedy even for this. The worldly life of the reigning lama was used as a weapon to fight him on his own ground. Surely he could not be the real re-incarnation of the divine spirit which dwelt in all true Dalai Lamas; his frivolous life, his sinful deeds are a clear

indication of it. Consequently, the poor lad was forthwith declared spurious and illegitimate. He was politely invited to visit China and thus removed from Lhasa. The unfortunate youth was only 19 years old when he died of a suspicious death while on his way to the Chinese capital in the year 1706.

Amidst opposition and bloodshed Lha-bzan Khan succeeded to place himself in the seat of the Regent and to provide also for a more suitable and accommodating Dalai Lama. In 1707, he installed on the Potala throne a monk whom rumour had it to be his illegitimate son. Taking advantage of the situation, the Chinese were pleased to acknowledge the puppet religious leader. This enabled them to increase their hold over Tibet till finally in 1710 they officially proclaimed it to be their Protectorate (40). It was for China a matter of prime importance by reason of the religious authority exercised by the Dalai Lama in Tibet Mongolia and Manchuria.

The Mongolian Buddhists viewed with growing apprehension the establishing of the Chinese political power in Tibet and decided to intervene by force. Moreover, they were encouraged to do so by the dissatisfaction the new regime had created in a section of the Buddhist monks, that is, the Yellow Caps. On 1st December, 1717, Lhasa was taken by storm and within a short time everything was laid low. The capital was ransacked, the Regent (Lha-bzan Khan) killed (3rd December, 1717) and his Dalai Lama was dethroned to be interned in the monastery of his origin. Eventually in 1720 he was deported to China where he died in solitary confinement. A new government, headed by a Tibetan noble, (sTag-rtse-pa) was set up, while relentless persecution went on against the red hat monks (41).

China could not take it lying down. A strong army, thirsting for vengeance, entered Lhasa on the 16th October, 1720, to drive out the Mongols. They had made themselves odious to such an extent through their cruelty and oppression that the population welcomed the Chinese as a

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40. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, pp. 4-7. The proclamation of the edict took place on the 10th April, 1710.
41. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 213-214

liberation army. The scuffle was short, resulting in the flight of the Mongols and in the summary execution of responsible members in the government. The new Dalai Lama, the seventh in order of succession, was already thought of and kept in readiness by the Chinese for such a contingency. According to the prophecy of the ill-fated sixth Dalai Lama, he was to be reincarnated in the year 1708. The prophecy was easily credited ; after a search, the lucky child was found in a tiny village scattered on the eastern Tibetan hillside. There was great commotion and rejoicing at the discovery. Laymen and Buddhist monks readily acknowledged him as their legitimate head, but the Chinese did not share in their feeling and belief. For the moment they were interested in supporting the then Lha-bzan Khan government ; so they hushed things up by relegating the child and his family to China, keeping them under strong guard. As the Chinese troops moved on to Lhasa in 1720, they took the boy and his family along. They solemnly hoisted him on the Potala throne and victory over the evil days was acclaimed. The seventh Dalai Lama (1708-1757), a twelve year boy, was pleased with all the fuss that made around him. Little did he know then that he was only a tool in the hands of unscrupulous people. He ruled over his unhappy country as its religious leader, but the diadem of temporal power was meanwhile stripped off his crown (42).

When things came back to normal, the temporary military rule established at the beginning by the Chinese was succeeded (1721) by the formation of a regular civil government. It was made up of four ministers of state (bka'-blon), to whom later on, a new one was added. The new ministry was headed by K'an-c'en-nas, better known by his Mongolian title as Taiji Batur. The new cabinet was ill-assorted and the situation soon began to be uneasy. Meanwhile, China maintained its high suzerainty over Tibet by keeping quartered at Lhasa, a strong garrison (43).

42. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 62-63

43. We have quoted mainly missionary sources in regard to these historical events in Tibet, but full confirmation of them may be found in any text book ; in particular we refer to "China and Tibet in the early 18th century" by L. Peiech, Leiden 1950.

How Missionaries Fared

During the years of the upheaval (1717-1720) in Lhasa, the missionaries were caught up in the political storm like leaves in a whirlwind. They had an anxious time and lived in trepidation in regard to their lives and the future of the mission. There were then four Fathers in the capital. Two of them—Frs. H. Desideri and Francis Horace of Penna Billi, were attending to their studies in the nearby monastery of Se-ra. All told, they were much safer than the two others, Fr. Dominic of Fano and Angelicus of Brescia, who lived unprotected in a small rented house, in the midst of a town in the grip of lawlessness and anarchy. Fr. Bonaventure of Lapedona, who had come up on 25th July, 1717, left Lhasa for Kathmandu after three months' sojourn, just in time to be out of reach when the evil days came down upon the mission (44).

In December, 1717, a Mongolian raiding party swooped down, like ravenous wolves, upon the little hospice, pillaging and looting. Whatever articles of clothing they could lay their hands on, whatever little money was there to be found, they angrily robbed and pocketed, complaining that it was too little. The poor Fathers were stripped off naked and bloodily flogged. No mercy was shown to them and no human feeling saved them from being so ill-treated (45). The excitement of the moment had thrown the Mongols off their balance and they behaved like maniacs.

But why were the priests so shamefully treated? To make them disclose where they had hoarded their riches. The raiders were money greedy; they did not believe that these foreigners, in spite of their protestations, were really wallowing in poverty. "They are traders, they are doctors of high standing and so they must have plenty of money, lots of jewels and precious stones tucked away secretly somewhere. Unless they tell us where they have hidden their treasure, we will not stop torturing them." But the hoped for treasure could not be found and the merciless flogging did not help in recovering what had never existed.

44. Nuovo Ramusio, part V, p. 217.

45. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 109, 112.

Insufficiently clad in the wintry cold of Lhasa, with bleeding, gaping wounds to nurse and no funds to provide for the least comfort, it might have fallen hard on them to live all through those days in a city of revolt amidst hostile surroundings. Wherever they looked they did not find any sign of hope, any lifting of the low, still threatening clouds that hung heavily all around them. Luckily, Fr. Francis Horace managed to smuggle out from his sheltered monastery of Se-ra, a few items of clothing that went to cover the naked bodies and to protect them against the biting, unbearable cold that enveloped the capital in winter. The Superior of the Kathmandu hospice, Fr. Joseph Felix of Morro, too did his best to alleviate their sufferings. As soon as he heard of the sad plight in which the Prefect and his sickly companion found themselves in Lhasa, the kind-hearted missionary sent to them, through a trusted messenger, some money, whatever he could spare. It was not much but the prompt, spontaneous help and the generosity of his heart served to uplift the downcast spirits of his needy brothers in Christ more than the material assistance provided (46).

By now, Fr. H. Desideri had started thinking that the monastery of Se-ra was no safe place for him to stay in. He had been friendly with the Regent (Lha-bzan Khan) who had just been assassinated and felt that the murderous hands of the Mongols, out to extirpate all his supporters, might reach him there. In December, 1717, therefore he left the monastery of Se-ra and together with Fr. Angelicus of Brescia went to the more hospitable place of Tron-gne. There he could pursue his studies in safety and peace of mind (47).

Brave Fr. Prefect was determined to stay on in Lhasa, no matter what the future held in store for him. A desertion from the field of his labour, at this crucial moment in the life of the country, may be interpreted as an act of cowardice and the cause of the mission might suffer on account of it. People are bound to lose respect for the man and for the

46. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p 112.

47. Nuovo Ramusio, part V, p. 201,

ideal he stands for when in the midst of danger he fails to live up to the standard required by his profession in life. After the departure of Fr. Angelicus of Brescia for the Tron-gne hospice, Fr. Dominic was joined in his trial by Fr. Francis Horace of Penna Billi. The latter might have wished to continue his studies in the peace of the Se-ra monastery but the call of brotherly charity and mutual assistance was above any other human consideration. Together they would feel better and more confident to bear up courageously the ill-wind that still blew over Lhasa.

Circumstances and occasion make the man. Fr. Dominic was a resourceful priest and soon made friends out of his bitter enemies. If he could not appease the Mongol hordes with money he did not have, he would try to please them by putting at their service his medical skill. Sick and wounded, Mongol soldiers started queuing in front of his dispensary to be attended in turns by the busy doctor. There was no time now to brood over the unhappy days into which the mission had fallen ; no time also to recollect his thoughts and make some kind of plans for the future. All his days were taken up by the absorbing care of treating the patients who flocked night and day at his door and by going from house to house to administer to those who could not come to him. It did not matter if the little money he had received from Kathmandu went nearly all in buying ingredients of the medicines, which he would prepare with his own hands. He knew that he was doing good work and that one day, in God's good time and in God's own ways, his zeal and labour would be generously rewarded. Poor Father, he did not realise then the danger he was running into !

Human events very often move like the pendulum of the clock. They swing to and fro in a mechanical succession. Tireless, Fr. Perfect had devoted himself, his time and energies, entirely to the welfare of the Mongols as if he had nothing else in life to do. He had also shown exceptional ability in the handling of the profession. His selfless dedicated service and the great success that crowned his work won the hearts of one and all and did not escape the observation of men in authority. They had come to hold him in great esteem. They wanted him to be with them all the

time and to administer to their needs. Only a few months earlier he had been ill-treated and despised like an ordinary beggar in the street, but now, after he had proved his worth, the Mongols were out to kidnap him into Mongolia. They had never found a man like him—conscientious and competent in his profession, ready to serve one and all and at any time, treating all, high and low, with equal courtesy and free of charge. Who could this man be? They did not know, but they knew that he was their friend and they could trust him (48).

The Mongols were all of the same opinion ; Fr. Dominic must be taken away into their country, to live among them as one of their own, to be their beloved doctor and spend the rest of his life for their benefit. Allurements and pressure, persuasion and threat were used in turn to achieve their purpose, till the danger of abduction into the Mongolian steppes became so real that Fr. Dominic and his companion had to run away from Lhasa to frustrate their plan. One moonless night they quietly slipped out to hide themselves in a cave. It was January 1719 when they took to their flight and the place they had gone to live in concealment was called Thuee, a locality not identifiable on the map, but two days' march from the capital (49).

For six months the two missionaries lived in a cave like primitive cavemen (50) away from all human contact, alone in the barren solitudes of Tibet that would cast a damp over the most ardent spirits. Hunger and fever, however, brought upon by privations and lack of comfort, urged them again to seek the company of men. Furtively they returned to Lhasa and went underground, waiting impatiently for the arrival of the Chinese. Every one knew that a Chinese army was on the move and that before long they would be in Lhasa. It was hoped that their presence would put an end to the reign of terror set up by the Mongols and give way to a new age of peace and order ; the necessary premises for any useful activity.

48. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 115. Therein Fr. Dominic writes that within one year or so he spent over Rs. 250/- out of his own pocket to buy medicines, or compounds of medicines, to be administered to the patients who flocked to him.

49. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 112 ; part III, p. 214.

50. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 117.

CHAPTER VI

HOPES AND FEARS

In his hide-out in Lhasa, Fr. Dominic, starved and sickly, sat alone one day in a pensive mood. He had time now to recollect his thoughts, see to his personal problems and review all the affairs of the Mission. Looking at himself, he found that he had aged a lot and that his day was far spent, even though his baptism certificate showed that he was only fortysix years old—an age in which a man is usually at his best. The long taxing experience of the past, the knowledge of the language and the many friends he had made in the course of his practice as a doctor, should in the ordinary course, have stimulated him to carry on his work with unflinching zeal, for now was the time to bring his labours to fruition; but he did not feel like it. His energies were fast ebbing out and he found himself no longer capable of being at the head of the Mission. It was a sad realisation, but his present condition of health had made him come to this conclusion. Too many things had happened in his busy life and in the midst of them he had grown old, tired and listless like a spent-force. His health, once as strong and vigorous as that of a Roman wrestler, was now giving way under the relentless strain which privations and sufferings had brought upon him. He thought he had not been selfish in writing to Rome in May, 1718 asking to be relieved of his duties which now weighed on his stooping shoulders as too heavy a burden to be carried any longer, even for the few more years he had to remain in office. He felt he could not do justice to his work as Prefect Apostolic and that a younger man, with new ideas and a fresh impetus, should step into his place and take charge of the Mission. He hoped his Superiors would understand it and gratefully accept his resignation. It was his intention to go into retirement and spend the last few years of his life within the peaceful shelter of a monastic cloister. He was so broken down in

health and spirit that he felt his presence in the Mission would be more of a liability or a burden than an asset. For this purpose he had tendered his resignation and asked for Obedience and go back home (1).

Poor Fr. Prefect had made a realistic appraisal of his physical endurance. Within a few years he passed away into eternity. He died, full of merits and worn out by fatigue, at Chandernagore on the 16th November, 1728.

Taking stock of the progress which had so far been made by the Mission, Fr. Dominic considered himself at least satisfied, if not pleased. There were lights and shadows in the picture, hopeful signs of a promising future and dark gathering clouds on the horizon. Nevertheless, there was no ground for despair. He had to admit that nothing much had been achieved, but the slow pace with which things had moved on was chiefly due to the present unsettled political conditions and to the lack of a more congenial climate to favour the propagation of the Gospel. Things were bound to change.

The present political situation was for the moment the main obstacle to the activity of the Mission. So long as the Mongols were in control of Lhasa it was impossible to do anything. People lived in fear and this was not the time to preach a new religion. However, the long-awaited arrival of the Chinese punitive expedition should not be long in coming. The Chinese army will surely be welcomed by the Tibetans. They will drive out the invaders who had made themselves hateful all over the land and had brought nothing but desolation and misery, destruction and death in their wake. The triumph of evil cannot last forever; Fr. Dominic was sure of it. The new government will enforce peace and order with an iron hand. Better days will come and with them the hope of doing more fruitful missionary work. Even this consoling thought was not without misgivings. The missionaries were already well known and highly appreciated by the Chinese. Once before they had tried to abduct them into China and the threat might be renewed with greater

1. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 110, 113.

insistence on their arrival (2). Anyhow, Fr. Dominic dismissed the idea as inopportune. There was enough trouble on hand to occupy one's mind without anticipating the difficulties of tomorrow. The only important thing now was to be set free from the present state of uncertainty, come out again into the open and be allowed to work in peace.

The reputation and good name which the Mission had gained during the first few years of its existence in Tibet was another redeeming feature that served to light up the oppressing gloom. People had come to know the missionaries; everyone in Lhasa knew who they were; where they had come from and to a certain extent, they knew even the purpose of their coming. They might have not realised the full impact of their mission, but all were aware that these White Lamas of the west professed a strange law and that they had come to preach this law to the people living in the mountains and valleys of Tibet. Further, the missionaries were held in high esteem and their activities were greatly appreciated by the poor and noble alike. Surely, there had been a remarkable change of outlook. From the day the messengers of the Gospel had entered Lhasa, some twelve years earlier, like unknown, suspected and unwelcomed travellers, to the present atmosphere of mutual trust and reciprocal good-will that had been created around them at present was a far cry, but leading steadily towards the final goal. The hour for the conversion of Tibet was still far-off, no doubt, but some headway had been made to hasten it. The soil has to be slowly and patiently prepared before sowing the seed of Christianity. And this is what had been done all these years. This reflection raised the hopes of the despondent Prefect and made him feel that after all he had not prayed, toiled and suffered in vain.

There was no denying the fact that the White Lamas were well liked and that their ministrations were in great demand. Of late Fr. Dominic had received a petition for missionaries from the Raja of Bhatgaon, in the valley of Nepal, while the Maharaja of Sikkim, a vassal state, was willing to welcome

3. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 116.

them in his territory. There were other places too in Tibet which were ready to open their portals to these poor, humble dedicated servants of God (3). This was indeed heartening news. In the present circumstances nothing could be done to enlarge the missionary field in Tibet, Nepal or Sikkim, but the fact was there to bear testimony to the growing popularity of the missionaries.

The Raja of Bhatgaon impressed by the simple edifying life led by the Fathers of the neighbouring state of Kathmandu, who occasionally called on him, and attracted still more by the selfless humanitarian work they did there, wished to secure their much-needed service for the welfare of his people. His Highness had already asked the Fathers at Kathmandu to come over to his place and settle there, promising them his favour and even his help. In his eagerness to have them he had also written to the Prefect in Lhasa, who in return replied saying that he could not accept the kind invitation for the present but expressed the hope to be able to comply with his request at a future date.

About the same time, and in connection with the same matter, correspondence and gifts (the customary manner of introduction and greetings) were being exchanged between the Prefect and the Maharaja of Sikkim. We have still copies of two letters addressed by His Highness to Fr. Dominic. They are dated the 30th November, 1717, and the 29th November, 1718, respectively. The Maharaja's first letter was in answer to an earlier one addressed to him by Fr. Dominic in which the Father kindly enquired of His Highness about the possibility of setting up a missionary outpost in his territory. In his reply the Maharaja showed himself pleased at the proposal and added that the coming of the white-headed lamas, as he graciously called the foreign priests, would be a source of "great good" to the country, particularly on account of their medical practice (4).

Though the proposed opening of a station at Sikkim was not part of the re-organisation plan sanctioned in 1714, it

3. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 113.

4. Rappresentanza, Summary No. VI; Nuovo Ramusio, part IV, pp. 184-185.

was nonetheless suggested by tactical reasons. No one knew as yet the outcome of the political war which was going on in the capital. In case the situation worsened, placing the missionaries in the impossible position of doing any work, it was advisable to look for another field of activity outside Tibet and within a reasonable distance from Lhasa till the time they could go back to the mission headquarters. In this respect Sikkim was indicated in preference to any other place in these mountain regions. On the other hand, Fr. Dominic was keen on opening a residence in this Himalayan kingdom because of his anxiety to establish a series of stations to the south-east of Lhasa in order to keep open communications with the Tibetan capital, should the line through Nepal or south-west be cut off by war or by any other similar emergency. The Prefect, of course, was banking on the arrival of new re-inforcement to implement his scheme. Things, however, did not work according to plan. Later, Fr. Dominic informed the Maharaja of Sikkim about it expressing regret at his inability to do so and work among his dear people. It was on this occasion that His Highness wrote his second letter to the Prefect telling him about his grief at this sad news and requesting him at the same time to continue correspondence on the subject.

These were indeed hopeful signs that promised well for the future. On the other hand, the mission laboured under restrictions and difficulties. Fr. Dominic in his review of the situation, did not fail to take them into account and see what could be done to ensure the stability of the undertaking. The bright side of the picture was overshadowed by internal signs of weakness which began again to tell on the mission organisation. The priests were too few to cope with the increasing demand for work which extended over such a vast area, and at the same time, the indifferent state of health of some of them, made it doubly hard to maintain their position. The arrangement arrived at in 1714, looked all right on paper, but death and sickness were beyond human reckoning. Up to now it had not been possible to station four Fathers in Lhasa, as it was originally planned. The Prefect feared that, apart from any political development,

this might not be feasible even in future. Doubts were also entertained as to whether the station of Tron-gne could be kept open for long. Recent events, in the internal life of the Mission, pointed to a precarious state of affairs which rendered the situation very uncertain. Things had fared a little better in India and Nepal, but this was very poor consolation when the main mission endeavour was to be centered in the land of the Dalai Lama.

Three missionaries had in the meantime gone up to Tibet from India and Nepal, but the same number of priests was forced to retreat from there, suffering, as they were, continuous pains in the head and other ailments caused by the effect of altitude. Fr. Bonaventure of Lapedona, who had made an appearance in Lhasa in July, 1717, was back again in Kathmandu by the end of the same year. The founder of Tron-gne station, Fr. John Francis of Fossombrone, and his assistant, Fr. Angelicus of Brescia had to leave the uplands of Tibet to seek relief from their growing pains of head and body in a more suitable climate. Poor Father Angelicus, who had suffered a good deal at the time of the early uprising in Lhasa, and for whom Obedience to repatriate had already been asked because of being incapacitated to do any work, succumbed to fever and exhaustion at the Dutch Factory in Patna towards the end of 1719. He was not yet in his forties at the time of his death. The place of Fr. John Francis of Fossombrone at Tron-gne was taken by Fr. Joseph Felix of Morro, the Superior of the Kathmandu hospice.

There had been in the meantime two new expeditions—the fifth and sixth in chronological order,—but none of their number could make their way up to Tibet. Moreover, both expeditions had been most unfortunate. The two Fathers of the fifth expedition, Frs. Francis Mary of Urbana and Peter Augustine of Lecce, landed at the French settlement on the Hughli on the 10th of October, 1718. Within a month or so, from the date of his arrival in India, Fr. Francis Mary of Urbana, prostrated by hardship and fatigue, sustained during the voyage, was carried off by an untimely death. The sixth expedition had been so far the largest of the lot. Seven young priests hopefully set out from Italy in December

1718, to reach the mission field. At an early stage of the journey, i. e. from Paris, four of them dropped out. The remaining three (Frs. Francis Anthony of Cingoli, Joachim of St. Antolia and Seraphin of Civitanuova) proceeded on their course to find themselves at Chandernagore on the 10th of August, 1720, at a time when the political storm was about to blow off over Lhasa. Comparing notes it was not very encouraging to see that the new comers were still insufficient in number to replace those who had been mowed down by the cold hand of death or had been disabled by sickness or climate.

Financial worries, as was to be expected, were another factor which darkened the hopeful vision of the mission's future. Fr. Dominic knew that he had practically nothing to support himself and his confreres. Nothing had come from Europe, or, if it had come, it could not be safely remitted to him because of the war-conditions prevailing those days. It was still a hand to mouth sort of existence, made worse by the uncertainty of the times. It was easy to foresee that in the wake of the war, prices would soar up and that famine might break over the land. The rigour of the climate together with the subsistence level to which the missionaries had been subjected to live for such a long time, were bound to weaken their constitution, affect their morale and ruin their health. It was a disturbing thought, but if the economic conditions did not improve, the future of the Mission in Lhasa would be jeopardized and eventually the day might come when it had to be abandoned again. In a letter written at this time, Fr. Dominic refers to this hopeless situation by pointing out that he did not even attempt to describe the poverty and misery in which they had to live because if he did, they would not believe him.

The lack of funds affected adversely the welfare of the Mission even in other respects. The Prefect was a man with modern ideas. He strongly believed in the power of propaganda. The Christian message could never reach the people by preaching alone or by holding discussions within a closed circle of friends. A mass of Christian literature had to be produced and distributed free to all those who might be interested in it. This was the best means to carry

the good tidings. In this regard, Fr. Dominic had in mind a vast programme of activity. He intended to translate the Bible, write the life of Christ, compile a large size catechism book and many other works of minor importance were on the list of the things to be done for the propagation of the faith (5). But all his literary plans had to remain a wishful thinking. He had neither the money to engage a copyist nor to pay for the language teacher (usually a lama) who would help in the work of the translation. Meanwhile, the poor man spent his days of solitary confinement in prayer and study.

On the whole, the future of the Mission was still in the balance. There was much to console the spirits of the long suffering Prefect and on the other hand, there was also a good deal to make him feel uneasy. Hopes and fears flickered in his loving heart like the tide and ebb of a troubled sea.

Triple Apostolate

May first 1721, was a day of great rejoicing in Lhasa. On that day Fr. Joachim of St. Anatolia, a member of the last unfortunate expedition, had come up at least to the Holy City of Tibet after fifty days' treck across the snowy peaks of the Himalaya (6). He had come, young and hopeful, at a time when Fr. Dominic's and Fr. Francis' drooping spirits needed more than ever a cheering word, a new companion in life, a man who could help in the re-organisation of the Mission after the forced inactivity of the past few years. Fr. Joachim and one of his travelling companions, Fr. Seraphin of Civitanuova, had been appointed to go up to Lhasa. On reaching Kathmandu, on the last day of the year 1720, they found there a letter from the Prefect waiting for them. In it the Prefect ordered one of the two priests to remain in Kathmandu to help in the service of the station, while the other was to proceed to the Tibetan capital. The lot fell on Fr. Joachim

5. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 118.

6. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 210.

and it proved, as we shall presently see, a providential choice (7).

Fr. Joachim had arrived at the right moment. Only two days earlier, on the 28th April, 1721, the two Lhasa veterans had bid farewell to Fr. Desideri S.J. and to Fr. Joseph Felix of Morro. These two missionaries had left Tron-gne for good and were on their way down to Nepal and India. If the departure of Fr. Desideri was hailed with relief in the sense that it meant a step forward in the solution of the controversy between the Jesuits and the Capuchins in regard to the claim over the Mission, the departure of Fr. Joseph Felix from Tron-gne, on the other hand, was viewed with considerable apprehension. It meant the retreat from a forward position which had been so painstakingly conquered. The fears of Fr. Dominic about the possibility of maintaining the station were not altogether groundless. Tron-gne was abandoned never to be opened again as a residential station. It was a serious setback, no doubt, but Fr. Joseph Felix of Morro was forced to leave the place due to his shattered condition of health. In his younger days he used to be a strong and hefty man, with the built of a giant, but privations and hardships had reduced him to skin and bones. On his way down he dragged himself along like an old man (and he was only forty five years of age) and occasionally he was carried on shoulders by porters. At Kuti Fr. Desideri advised him not to proceed any further, but to wait till the coming of the good season. The sudden change of climate might prove fatal to his delicate health. The poor Father did not pay any attention to this friendly advice and reached Kathmandu like a victim, ready for immolation. He died there on the 31st of August, 1721—the second Capuchin missionary to lay down his life in the Valley of Nepal (8).

Meanwhile, the Chinese had established themselves in Lhasa driving out the arrogant Mongols. The city had the appearance of a winter landscape; it was barren and desolate. The colony of foreign Russian and Armenian traders, which gave the capital a cheering and bustling look, had

7. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 209.

8. Nuovo Ramusio, part VII, p. 235.

left, never to return (9). The military were in control of the situation and everything was quiet. The uneasy pace brought to the land by the new masters, and the timely arrival of Fr. Joachim on the scene, helped to open a new glorious chapter in the history of the Mission. Conditions were now far more favourable than in the past for the preaching of the Gospel and the missionaries were all out to take full advantage of it. For twelve long, lonely years, Fr. Francis Horace of Pennabilli and Fr. Joachim of St. Anatolia had laboured on together with complete dedication to their apostolic work. They were men with different talents, but, by a happy combination of nature, they complemented each other admirably, blending their activities into one, harmonious whole. They were indeed well-matched in every respect and their splendid team work produced wonderful results. Fr. Joachim took to the practice of medicine in order to foster good will and maintain the social contacts which had been the leading characteristic of the Mission since its inception. He so distinguished himself in his new profession as to become one of the best known doctors in the capital. Fr. Francis Horace, a man of many gifts, knew how to acquit himself with honour with the rest of the mission work. He was a scholar easily at par with the most learned Buddhist lamas; he was a warm and engaging controversialist well versed in the technique of the art. Apart from that, he was an exceptional worker, a man who knew no rest. Every spare minute till far into the night, was employed by him in the study of the Sacred Books of Tibet or in works of translation. This great, but little known figure of a scholar and apostle made an invaluable contribution to the knowledge of Tibet and preached the faith with such an ardent zeal and love as to be worthy to be numbered amongst the greatest missionaries of all times. Indeed, those lonely twelve years of Apostolate in Tibet, were the best and most fruitful years in the life of the mission. The years in which Christianity made itself felt to the people of Tibet as a living force, as a faith worthy to be followed, and if rejected, yet commanded the attention of men.

9. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 109.

Good and faithful Fr. Dominic could now say that his work was done and that his mission was accomplished. He spent his last months in Lhasa by initiating Fr. Joachim into his new career as a medical practitioner. This done, he thought of moving down to more suitable quarters. Early in 1722, he embraced his two colleagues and wished them godspeed (10). Before parting, the Prefect appointed Fr. Francis Horace Superior of the Lhasa hospice. Visibly moved and with tears in his eyes, but strengthened by the thought of having given his best to the service of the Mission, Fr. Dominic left the high snows of the Tibetan plateau directing his weary steps towards the Valley of Nepal and then down to the warm Indian plains. He knew he could not help doing otherwise; his strength was gone and nothing much could be expected of him, but, he was worried. Nearly four years had passed since the day of his resignation, but up to the present moment nothing had been heard of it. Had Rome received his letters (he had written quite a few) of resignation? Had they accepted it and appointed another Father in his office, or was he expected to carry on his duties? He did not know and his mind was not at ease. Rome, however, did act promptly on this occasion. On the 19th of August, 1719, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda had accepted his resignation and had appointed Fr. Francis Horace of Pennabilli in his place. It took three years for the document to reach India and another three years before it could be conveyed up to Lhasa. Fr. Francis Horace came to know that he had been elected Prefect Apostolic of the Tibetan Mission on the 25th of September, 1725! And no wonder and no complaint, that was the way things moved in the early eighteenth century (11).

Left to himself and still fresh from home, Fr. Joachim started on his "Medical Mission", the mission of mercy, of healing the sick and consoling the poor with gusto. The young doctor had been a good disciple of Fr. Dominic and now he was going to be his worthy successor. Experience, recipes and professional secrets were handed down from one to another, and from the very outset the venture was a great

10. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 137; part V, p. 218.

11. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 87.

success. Between fifty and sixty patients were treated daily at the small dispensary attached to the Lhasa hospice by the new missionary doctor, we are told by Fr. Francis Horace (12); and this at a time when he was not yet well-trained in the profession and his name was still very little known. The practice increased in the course of years till Fr. Joachim could hardly cope with the rush of patients. He was always busy, attending to out-door patients, or going out wherever he was called at any time of the day or night. It was hard work but the kind-hearted and dedicated man did it unreservedly, sparing no effort and grudging no sacrifice to help in the cause of the mission. Not infrequently the overworked doctor burnt the mid-night oil and retired "with pain in his body and weariness in his head", as he wrote in one of his letters (13). His power of endurance was indeed amazing; one may wonder how he could stand the strain of his exacting professional duties with so little rest and less food. Occasionally, he might have felt like taking a day off, but he never did. If by any chance he had a free hour to himself even that went to help his companion in making copies of Fr. Francis Horace's Tibetan writings.

The name and fame of the white hakim, who was also a lama, soon spread far and wide. People came from distances to be treated by him or to seek his professional advice. The practice had made Fr. Joachim more self-confident, so much so that he tried his hand also at surgery. With primitive surgical instruments, and with careful preparation for his new role, he succeeded in performing operations such as would have done credit to a trained western surgeon of the day (14).

Fr. Joachim had become the beloved doctor not only of the poor people or the bazar rabble who could not afford to go to any other practitioner and pay his fees, but his services were keenly sought after even by persons in high places, such as the Regent and his family, the ministers of state, high ranking lamas and the elite of Lhasa. The Chinese troops

12. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 129.

13. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 124, 165.

14. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 129.

quartered in the station, both officers and men, refused to go to the local doctor and wanted to be attended to by the one who treated them freely and with such high standard of professional skill. They never failed to show their appreciation. Occasionally, Chinese officers would call at the Father's residence to express their gratitude and to thank him for the paternal care he was taking for the welfare of their countrymen. (15).

Well-meaning friends and well-wishers seeing the dejected poverty in which these two followers of St. Francis, the little poor man of Assisi, were spending their days, suggested to them to levy a nominal charge, if not a professional fee, on account of their medical services, or at least to make their clients pay the cost price of the medicines administered to them. The suggestion was repeatedly turned down. This was a thing the Tibetans could not understand. In a world where everything was sold and bought for money, the constant refusal of the White Lamas to accept remuneration for their labour was to these simple mountain-folk an unending source of inspiration and wonder. They were inspired to see how these men of God, who professed a strange religion, lived to perfection the ideal of renunciation and service preached by Buddhist Lamaism ; and they also wondered why these lamas of the west had left behind everything to come and do good to the people of Tibet. The life of the missionaries was thus surrounded by a halo of a mystic atmosphere which evoked feelings of curiosity and veneration at one and the same time.

While Fr. Joachim drew the people to himself and gained their confidence through his mission of mercy, Fr. Francis Horace was engaged in the direct work of conversion and worked with might and main to win them over to the faith. He was not a man who had any inclination or aptitude for the medical profession. Speaking of himself in this connection, he stated that he was *tamquam tabula rasa*, that is, he understood nothing about medicine. However, the work he did in Lhasa was destined to leave his footprints on the sands of time. Very few, if any, could do what he did and

15. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 140, 150, 151.

with such professional competence. His apostolate was the apostolate of the pen and of the spoken word. He wrote and preached. He wrote for his own benefit and for the benefit of his own confreres in order to grasp the mind, ethics and religion of the people of Tibet so as to be in a position to hold his own ground whenever engaged in a religious debate. He translated a mass of Christian literature into the Tibetan language with a view to explaining the Christian message to the people of Tibet, to make them get an insight into the meaning and claim of Christianity. The writings alone of Fr. Francis Horace are a monumental work of such importance that it would immortalise the name of a professional writer. He is one of the three best Tibetologists, whoever the other two may be. This particular subject will be dealt with separately in another chapter, but we mention it here just to emphasise the fact that the apostolate of the written word figured prominently among the activities of Fr. Francis Horace during the particular period of mission history.

Fr. Francis Horace's literary work was not an end in itself but a means to be better equipped for the apostolate of the spoken word. It was hard to combine the exigencies of a contemplative and active life at the same time, but he strove to be a monk faithful to his religious profession, a keen scholar, immersed in his studies by night and during the day he went out into the streets, into the monasteries around Lhasa, to the houses of nobles and even the residence of the Regent and the Potala Palace itself, to make known to all, the Christian message, to explain and discuss the teachings of his Divine Master. He went all over, wherever he could find a willing ear to listen to him, wherever he hoped to sow the seed of Christianity. Early in his missionary career Fr. Francis Horace had realised the need of a Catechism—a booklet containing the fundamentals of Christian faith and morals; and written in such a way as to appeal to, or touch upon, the religious mentality of prospective catechumens. With meticulous care he had compiled one. It cost him its weight in gold. Depriving himself and his companion of their daily bread, the apostle of Lhasa had engaged a scribe to make copies of it, which

he had distributed to the inquirers and even to the communities of Buddhist monks. With this in hand, and making it as a basis of his religious discussions, he started his missionary campaign (16).

The first reaction to the preaching of the new faith was on the whole favourable. The commanding personality of Fr. Francis Horace, the sincerity and fervour with which he went about his mission, the novelty of the doctrine he was announcing to all so fearlessly and with true apostolic spirit, aroused considerable interest. Some people received the word of God with joy and showed even an inclination to be baptised ; quite a few rose in revolt against the new religion, branding it as a foreign and superstitious cult which would eventually destroy their shrines and prayer wheels ; the majority, however, were pleased to talk about it and even to enter into discussion on the merits of their respective religious beliefs. It was an encouraging start. Fr. Francis Horace did not entertain the hope of making converts in a hurry ; he even refused at first to baptise a few who had asked to be received into the Church ; anyhow, it was gratifying to see that he was welcome everywhere, listened to with great attention and that his words were greeted with clear indications of approval. Some tangible results had already been achieved. At the beginning the missionaries, though highly respected for their blameless life and social service, were often pointed out as heathens and infidels, as men who had not been enlightened in the tenets of religion. After the spade work done by Fr. Francis Horace in explaining and propagating the Christian message, the inhabitants of Lhasa were ready to admit that these strangers were after all believers, that they too had their Sacred Books, their God to worship, their code of morality. In short, that they held and professed a faith. It might have appeared to the people of Tibet a queer and puzzling sort of faith but it was a faith, a flaming source of life and strength worth to live by and die for (17).

16. Nuovo Ramusio, par I, p. 124, 125, 171.

17. Nuovo Ramusio, par I, p. 124.

The religious propaganda was carried right inside the strong-holds of Buddhist Lamaism. The five or six monasteries in and around Lhasa, amongst which the famous Drepung and Sera monasteries, were made the chief targets of Fr. Francis Horace's missionary endeavour. The courageous missionary tackled them in the hope that if he succeeded in making a breach into the fortress of their compact and well-organised religious system, the rest would easily yield to the influence of Christianity. He made the round of the monasteries, talked and discussed with the inmates about the law of the White Lamas and on parting left behind a copy of his catechism. Every subsequent book translated into Tibetan by the Prefect was made available to the different religious communities. There was no monk or lama in the capital, whatever was his rank in the monastic hierarchy, who did not hear or read something about the Christian religion.

A match had been set to an explosive matter and immediately small glimmering sparks started shooting off from it. They were sparks of joy caused by the pleasure of having found a new revealing light; there were also irrepressible sparks of anger at the thought that this might set their own house on fire. The catechism booklet was read and commented upon; it was read in private and in the public assembly of monks. Some of the lamas did not hesitate to write out a few copies to make it more easily accessible to others. A religious of the Sera monastery, the head of his community (all monastic towns are divided into houses and groups with their respective temples, quarters and gardens) undertook to read it out in a loud voice before a large gathering of four hundred monks, causing a stir among them. There was nothing wrong, they said, with the law of the White Lamas, except that it did not admit transmigration and it did not acknowledge the power of magic; for the rest there was nothing to which they could reasonably object. A few even ventured to say that it was just as good as their own, if not better (18).

18. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 125, 130, 133, 160.

It was a burning issue and one was bound to take sides, to pronounce oneself in favour or against the new doctrine preached by Fr. Francis Horace. Soon some of the monks started wavering in their faith ; others were fully convinced that they had been in the wrong and asked to be baptised. The mission hospice was alive with numerous visitors ; monks and lamas, men and women from every walk of life started coming in more frequently. They talked and discussed ; they inquired about one point or other of the faith ; they asked for a copy of the catechism and on taking leave they promised to come again. One day a lama called at the mission house ; he was visibly perturbed. Pressing the catechism booklet against his breast and with tears streaming down his cheeks, he greeted Fr. Prefect with these words : "I have understood your law ; I have it all in my heart ; I want to embrace it." On another occasion, a Buddhist monk, to stress his sincerity to join the church of his own accord and free will, put in an application in writing. Fr. Francis Horace, however, always cautioned prudence and advised his catechumens to be patient and wait, to become more proficient in the Christian faith before taking such a decisive step. He feared, perhaps that at this stage the conversion of a few might be more prejudicial than helpful to the cause of the mission (19).

We must not think, however, that everything went on quietly and smoothly. Not all viewed with sympathy and understanding the infiltration of the new religious doctrine into the compact ranks of Buddhist Lamaism. Opposition started and gathered force. Many began to realise the potential risk involved in allowing these foreign apostles to propagate their sacred books in the holy land of the lamas. They realistically felt that it was not a question of peaceful co-existence between two faiths, but rather of an all-out war for religious supremacy. Threats, accompanied by most telling gestures, were used to make Fr. Francis Horace stop his religious campaign. They told him that he had already incurred the displeasure of the

19. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 130, 159, 160.

people. "Unless these foreign lamas desist from spreading their execrable law", it was frequently rumoured in the monasteries and in the streets, "they will be beheaded". On occasions copies of the catechism were dashed to the ground and trampled under foot amidst oaths and most insulting words. An unfortunate monk was once caught by the Superior of the monastery reading the booklet. Snatching it away from him and flinging it into the air, the infuriated head-lama told him with a terrific scowl on his face : "Don't you know that this booklet will one day destroy our religion? Away with it !" And the warning was enforced by a sound beating. Another monk had fallen in love with the catechism. He had read and studied it and was convinced of its teaching. Opening his mind one day to the abbot of the monastery, and pointing to the booklet which he held in his hands, he told him : "This is the true law, I want to follow it, ours is no good". In return for his boldness the unfortunate man was severely rebuked and mercilessly flogged. A frequent visitor from the Drepung monastery was threatened with expulsion from the religious community if he did not stop going over to see the Fathers (20).

The catechism had really become a sign of contradiction, a source of love and hatred, of these two over-powering human passions which shape the course of history. The struggle between Christianity and Buddhist Lamaism had already begun and time alone would decide on the final issue.

The religious controversy was not confined to narrow limits but ranged over a variety of subjects and even touched the depths of metaphysical subtilities. Fr. Francis claimed that after the teaching of the missionaries in Lhasa about the nature and perfection of God, the Buddhist divines were persuaded to admit the existence of a personal, absolute, supreme and self-existing God. The notion gained currency and was utilised when speaking and even in writing. The conception of a personal, self-existing God

20. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 159, 160 ; part III, p. 217, 218.

was alien to the Buddhist theology and the Fathers had to coin a new term to express the idea. It was not unusual for them to be greeted in the streets by a friendly lama with the words : "Thanks be to the self-existing God" to which the priests would reply : "Be He always thanked, the self-existing God." One of the divines not to be outdone in theological speculation took the trouble of searching into their ancient, half-forgotten sacred texts to find out that the notion of a self-existing God was not all together inconsistent with their religious mentality. The missionaries asked to see the sacred books in which this conception of the divinity was contained or even vaguely adumbrated. They were promised to be shown the book but in the end nothing was shown. As is well known, the idea of a supreme, uncreated, self-existing being is condemned as a heretical proposition by the Buddhist divines (21).

It was daring enough to enter the monasteries, the treasure house of faith and holiness, this fountain-head from which religious communities in Tibet derive their political and social standing and their enormous temporal well-being. Nevertheless, brave Fr. Francis Horace did it. Not only that but he tackled also the citadel of the Potala palace, the inner sanctuary of the national faith and there, to discuss points of religion with the supreme ruler of Tibet, the high pontiff of Buddhist Lamaism, he came face to face with the living Buddha himself. At one time the Prefect went daily to the residence of the Dalai Lama to hold religious discussion in his presence and in the presence of his tutors in theology. Unfortunately, we cannot say how long these daily visits lasted and the effect produced on the minds of all concerned (22).

21. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 130, 139 ; part III, p. 89. The terms chosen by the missionaries to express the idea of self-existing God were : "ran-sgrub" (self-existing) and "dKon-mc'og" (God). The word "dKon-mc'-og" literally means the best of all things in existence, i.e. summum bonum and it is reminiscent of the argument used by St. Anselm to prove the existence of God.

22. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 173.

Debates with the Dalai Lama were carried on orally and in writing. Mention is made in documents of three interchanges of correspondence between the two, all apologetic in nature and character. The Dalai Lama or his tutor would put down on paper some tenets pertinent to his faith, such as the power of magic, the theory of transmigration, the law of karma (i. e. action as determining the condition under which one is re-born), the problem of evil and similar controversial topics. Fr. Francis Horace in his written reply would argue the points and then set forth and explain the Catholic doctrine in regard to the subject under discussion.

In the only document of this kind, which is still extant, the Dalai Lama begins by addressing Fr. Francis Horace in this way : "Let the teacher be honoured. Listen to us attentively and keep our words in your mind; we will clear all your doubts..." Then he goes on to set out the teaching of Tibetan Buddhism vis-a-vis the Christian doctrine.

In the course of his argumentation the Dalai Lama makes this extraordinary statement : "The fact", he writes, "that your religion has the power to raise the dead does not impress me, even the malevolent demons can do that and medicine also has the property of bringing the dead back to life".

Before rounding up his writing, the enlightened one makes this request to Fr. Francis Horace: "Send this letter of mine to the lama of your country (the Pope) and if he has anything to say (about the doctrine expressed therein) let him say it straightaway. I beg of him to give me his blessing and pray for me" (23).

In his reply the Prefect answers point by point to the objections raised by the Dalai Lama; apologizes to him for not having sent his letter to the Pope as the latter would pull him up for his ignorance and inability to uphold the tenets of the religion he had been sent forth to preach, and at the end, he assures the Dalai Lama that the Pope will pray for him and give him his blessing (24).

23-24. *Rappresentanza*, Summary No. XV ; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part IV, pp. 145-157.

Years later the Prefect summing up the outcome of these discussions gave the following version. The worthy champion of the faith may be understandingly forgiven if the account seems somewhat overdrawn to his side. Here is what he wrote :

“We have inserted the Defence (the insertion is in the appendix to a report which Fr. Francis Horace addressed to the Congregation of Propaganda in the year 1738) of his religion by the Grand Lama which he considered, or pretended to consider, as conclusive. On receipt of this, missionaries drew up a paper in reply, refuting his arguments one by one. This he studied with close attention and was at length convinced of the palpable truth and sweet attractiveness of our holy religion. He experienced a deep sense of pleasure and an equally deep feeling of shame—of pleasure, because his reason could now be fully satisfied and could rest on firm ground; of shame because he now saw so plainly how grossly he had deceived himself by thinking that his arguments were as firmly knit together as the Gordian knot and that they could never be undone; but like the famous knot, they were now rent as under and all his ideas have undergone a total change. He lost his former depression and became quite strong and cheerful again; the agony of uncertainty, and all the doubts and fears which had weighed so heavily upon him, being now removed, afforded him the most welcome relief. He now concerned himself as to how he could show us his good will in a practical form and give an open and public testimony to the superiority of our religion, as well as express his own personal reverence and esteem for it. He therefore caused to be drawn up in proper form a document empowering the Capuchins to build a monastery or hospice and a public church to be used for the free and unhindered exercise of the Christian religion” (25).

Even Fr. Joachim in a letter from Lhasa refers to the three controversies carried on in writing. He adds that in the last correspondence Fr. Francis Horace, after having disposed

25. *Rappresentanza*, Summary No. XV ; *The Exploration of Tibet etc.* by Graham Sandberg, op. cit., p. 41.

of the objections put to him by the Dalai Lama, struck back by putting to His Holiness some stringent questions to which the latter never replied (26).

Relations between the missionaries and the seventh Dalai Lama had always been friendly. They were broken off only by the tragic events of the year 1727-1728. Out of respect for the feelings of the missionaries, quite a few protocol formalities, such as bowing before the High Pontiff of the Potala and receiving his blessing were brushed aside whenever the Prefect or his companion called on him. They had let him know that they were most willing to revere him, and obey him as a sovereign king but that it was against their conscience to honour and acknowledge him as a god (27).

Equally successful were the missionary contacts established by Fr. Francis Horace with the civil authorities, the nobles and other inhabitants of Lhasa. In this connection Fr. Joachim writes that if he were to relate all the discussions on religion held by the Prefect with every class of people, high and low, there would be no end to it. He further remarks that the courageous apostle won his point on every occasion to the greater glory of God, and of our religion (28). In general, lay people, whatever might have been their station in life, were more receptive and less sensitive than the class of men bound by monastic vows, to the preaching of the new doctrine. They were more liberal and open-minded as they had no vested interest to protect.

The Regent of the time, Taiji Batur, alias K'an-c'en-nas, was so well disposed towards Christianity, that he evinced more than an academic interest whenever the religion of the White Lamas became the topic of conversation. He was the one who ordered Fr. Francis Horace to enlarge his original catechism and to translate into Tibetan the Life of Christ in order to compare it with the life of Buddha. Often Taiji Batur was present at religious debates which were attended

26. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 138.

27. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, 126, 131.

28. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 138.

by some of the nobles and the most learned lamas. He took pleasure in them and he did not disguise where his sympathies lay. This might have been as a sort of taunt or spite on his part, but there it was. We may note here that there had never been good blood between the religious and civil authorities serving in the various government departments. As a rule, they were even in number and one resented the presence of the other. Anyway, the Regent went so far as to say that, after the reasons given by the Prefect against the doctrine of transmigration, a fundamental belief of all true Buddhists, he did not believe in it any more. Publicly, he acknowledged that the law of the missionaries was a good law. He did not hesitate to admit to any one that now he had no scruples to eat the flesh of animals, even of spotted ones. Formerly, he believed that this was sinful because he thought that the soul of one of his ancestors or of some other human being might have transmigrated into them or might be animating them. Now that the white lama had disproved all this, he firmly believed that Fr. Francis Horace was right. The Prefect was so convinced of the good disposition of K'an-c'en-nas that some years later he wrote that he and his numerous family members as well as many of the nobles had publicly expressed the idea of embracing the Catholic religion. However, the turbulent times in which they lived, Fr. Francis added, prevented them from carrying their resolutions into effect (29).

It was still premature to predict the future, but there were omens appearing in the sky. Would they be harbingers of twilight that heralds the dawn of a new glorious day or would they be like the flicker of an *ignisfatuus* which misleads the traveller and leaves things unchanged? No one could tell. Meanwhile, it was good to pray, to toil and to hope.

Catholic Monastery in Lhasa

As we have seen above, Fr. Francis Horace ascribed the erection of a Catholic monastery in Lhasa—a mere speck of Christian life standing against the monastic towns of Tibet—

29. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 89, 90.

to the success of his debates with the Dalai Lama. How far these debates were instrumental in obtaining permission from the highest authority of the land to build a Catholic monastery in the Capital, we are not in a position to say. However, it is a fact that a Catholic Monastery did come up slowly and amidst numberless difficulties, on the outskirts of the Holy City. And it did come up, among other things, to show to the lamas of Tibet that the lamas of the west were second to none in their spirit of poverty, simplicity of life and in their devotion to duty. This little Friary was meant to be an illuminating beacon light pointing out the path along which people must walk and the way in which they must live to reach safely the harbour of salvation.

The building of a small Catholic monastery in Lhasa and the right of ownership granted by the government to the Holy See on behalf of the Italian Capuchins marks the greatest moral triumph in the history of the Tibetan Mission. It goes to prove the influence wielded by the missionaries and the great sympathy in which they were held. Speaking of this unique privilege, Fr. Joachim is emphatic in declaring that since the world came into existence it has never been heard of a foreigner owning property in Tibet (30). To understand the significance of this statement one has to recall to mind the system then in force in regard to land tenure.

All land in Tibet belonged to the State in a most strict form. Any individual holder of land was nothing more than a tenant from whom the possession could be taken back by government at any time. This is an example of communal land-holding in totality, characteristic of the Tibeto-Burman economy. It was a centralised, indivisible form of ownership which did not permit the transfer of sovereign rights to any party. The land was given out to land-holders and farmers under a kind of lease-hold directly from the state. Rent was paid in different ways: "Some of them paid their rent in kind with a proportion of their produce and this was the main source of the government's

30. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 215.

stocks which were distributed to the monasteries, the army, and officials. Some paid by labour and some were required to provide free transport for government officials, and in some cases for the monasteries too.....” (31). Once the land was rented out to the farmer, he had a certain freedom of action over it. He could mortgage it, lease it out to others or even transfer the right of use to a third party, a thing which was rarely done as it was considered a sacred trust to hand over the land intact and free of encumbrance, to the people of the next generation.

The same thing is to be said in regard to the erection and ownership of buildings. The system was so strictly adhered to that no exception to it was ever made, even for foreign ambassadors, legates and other highranking dignitaries. And what made the erection of a Catholic monastery in Lhasa still more wonderful, was the fact that such a privilege was granted to the White Lamas not only “because the Capuchins live in Tibet for no other purpose than to do good to all”, but also, as Fr. Joachim claims, in consideration of their religious status, as men dedicated to God, sent out to teach the people of the land the Christian Law (32).

The origin of this privilege dates back to the days of the Chinese occupation in 1722. Earlier Fr. Dominic had made an attempt to obtain permission to build a monastery, but the idea had to be abandoned due to the turbulent times in which he lived. As already stated, the Fathers lived in a small rented house. Because of this they were liable to be ejected at any time, besides being too often put to a great deal of inconvenience. The same building was inhabited by other tenants who kept different time table from that of the missionaries. Noise and feasting went on night and day and this did not fit in well with the quiet atmosphere of recollection, study and prayer proper to a religious community. The Fathers were therefore keen on having a place

31. *My Land and my people*, the autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, edited by David Howarth, Indian Edition, Asia Publishing House, 1962, p. 58.

32. This claim is made by Fr. Dominic, Fr Francis Horace and Fr. Joachim; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 108, 131; part III, p. 215.

to themselves, which they could call their own. They spoke about it to an influential Chinese gentleman who on account of shortage of accommodation in the metropolis had come to stay with them. One day this gentleman fell seriously ill and kindly requested the missionary doctor to attend to him. So pleased was he with the restored gift of health, and with the courtesy and treatment he had received at the hands of the missionaries, that he set about showing in a practical way his gratitude and appreciation. It was a laborious affair, but the grateful gentleman did not stop short of difficulties to achieve his object. He used his influence with the Regent and the ministers of state; he begged and pleased his cause with the Dalai Lama himself and with his father; he left no means untried to clear the way to secure for his host, permission to erect a monastery (33).

The two Fathers also did not remain idle. They contacted every one who in their opinion could be of some assistance in furthering their scheme. They were already well known to all high officials and this helped a good deal to make them move in the matter. The combined efforts of the priests and the Chinese gentleman began at last to yield fruit. Already on the 6th January, 1724, (others give the date as 27th February, 1724) sanction was obtained from the highest civil and religious authorities of the kingdom to the purchase of land by depositing the amount into the government treasury and to the building on it of a monastery and of a Christian place of public worship (34). The document, drafted in the flourishing style of the east, was written on yellow satin in print-like characters. It was issued by the order of the "Golden King in the country of the Great Hor", that is, the Emperor of China. The "Great Hor" was the name of a Chinese Dynasty, and it bore the signature of "His Holiness, the Great Omniscient", viz. the Dalai Lama. The introduction of this document alone makes one wonder whether the Tibetan authorities, on their own

33. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 214, 215.

34. Rappresentanza, Summary No. XI; Nuovo Ramusio, Part IV, p. 186.

༡༡། ཉི་ལོག་ཏུ་འཁོད་པའི་སྤྱི་ལྷན་གྱི་དང་། བྱེ་བྱེ་གཞི་ལྟར་། ལྷ་གཉེར་། མི་དཔོན་། བརྟ་
 དཔོན་། བཅུ་དཔོན་། རྩ་རོ་ཁ་སོགས་བྱ་བ་ཞི་དྲག་གི་སྤེ་མོར་མངགས་སྤྱི་བ་སྤྱིར་བཏང་དམིགས་
 བསལ་སོགས་དྲག་ལམ་མཐའ་དག་ལ་སྤྱིངས་པ། མགོ་དཀར་གླ་མ་འདི་རྣམས་ས་ལམ་ཐག་རིངས་
 པོ་ནས་བོད་ཀྱི་སེམས་ཅན་ལ་ཡན་པ་སྐྱབ་པའི་བསམ་པས་ཡོངས་ཤིང་། ལྷ་ས་ཤར་རྒྱུད་ན་ཁར་
 རྩ་ཡོས་ལོ་གཞུང་ལ་ས་རིན་སྲུང་པས་དགོན་རྒྱང་ཞིག་རྒྱག་བཅུག་འདུག་པ། ད་ཆ་ཡང་གཞན་
 འདྲེས་མེད་ཅིང་། སེམས་བསྐྱེད་བྱུང་ཕྱིན་ཇི་སྲིད་ནས་གནས་ཀྱི་བར་གནས་པའི་ཐོན་ཕྱིན་པ་ཡིན་
 པས། རྒྱུད་གོང་འཁོད་དྲག་ལམ་སྤྱི་དང་། སོག་བོད་ལོར་སོགས་མེར་སྐྱ་ཆེ་བཅེན་སྲུང་གྲང་སྲུང་
 གཙམ་མི་བྱེད་ཅིང་། ཁང་པར་རྟེན་པའི་བོགས་ཁྲུལ་འཕག་ཚོ་ཁྲུལ་སོགས་ཆེ་འཕྲ་གང་ཡང་གསར་
 འགལ་ཟོས་མི་བདེ་བའི་རིགས་སྤྱུ་ཅམ་ཡང་བྱས་ཚོག་རྒྱ་མིན་པས་བདེ་བར་ཡི་གེ་འཛིན་འཇུག་པ་
 གྱིས། ས་བྱ་རྒྱ་རྩྭ་ལ་ཕྱོགས་ལས་རྣམ་པར་རྒྱལ་བའི་དགའ་ལྷན་ཁང་གསར་ནས་བྱིས། །

༡༢། མི་དབང་དཔལ་ལའི་བཀའ་ཤོག་རིན་པོ་ཆའི་ཞལ་གསུང་འབྲུལ་མེད་ལགས་སྟེ།

Document confirming exemption from Taxes and other duties, issued in 1730 (See p. 235)
 With acknowledgement to Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato (Rome) —From Il Nuovo
 Ramusio II, By Prof. Luciano Petech, Part IV.

༡༣། མགོ་དཀར་། རང་གྲུབ་དགོན་མཚོག་གི་ཆབ་དམ་པ་གླ་མ་ཆེན་པོ་སོམ་སོ་བོན་དེ་ཕྱི་ཆེ་
 རོ་ས་ལོ་ཡིན་ལོ་ཆེན་ཚོའི་བཅུ་གསུམ་པས། ། བོད་ལྷུལ་གྱི་དོ་ཇི་གདན་ཤུགས་རྒྱལ་བོའི་ཕོ་བྱང་ར་
 ས་འཕུལ་སྤང་གི་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་ཆེན་བོའི་ཉེ་འདབ། གླ་མ་ག་བུའི་ཇི་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་རྣམས་ད་ལྟ་
 གནས་པ་དང་བརྒྱུད་པར་ཇེས་སྤྱ་ཡོངས་པའི་དོན་དུ། ཤར་རྒྱུད་ན་ཁ་ཕྱིང་། ཆོས་སྤེ་ཡན་བདེ་དགོན་
 གསར་ཀ་བ་བཅུ་གཉིས་སོགས་ས་གོ་ཁང་དེ་བ་དུ་གསལ་བའི། ས་ཐབ་རྩ་རིན་ལ་དུལ་སྤང་བཙོ་
 བརྒྱུད་གཙང་སྐྱབ་བྱུང་ཅིང་། ཁྲུལ་རིགས་སྟེར། ། ། གོང་ཞབས་རིན་པོ་ཆའི་ ། ། ཐུགས་
 དམ་གྱི་དགོངས་དོན་ལྟར་ཡིན། ། ཤིང་སྐྱུལ་རྒྱ་རྩྭ་ལ། །

༡༤། བཀའ་ཤོག་བཀའ་ཤོག་གི་ཞལ་གསུང་འབྲུལ་མེད།

Sale deed of the land for erecting the chapel and Friary at Lhasa
 With acknowledgement to Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato (Rome) —From Il Nuovo
 Ramusio II, By Prof. Luciano Petech, Part IV.

གསེར་གྱི་རྒྱལ་པོའི་ལྷང་གིས། ཚེས་པོ་ཚོར་གྱི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ས་སྤྲུལ་ལའི་སྐྱ་མ་བཟང་རྒྱ་རར་
འཁོད་པའི་གདམ།

ཉི་འོག་ཏུ་འཁོད་པའི་སྤྱི་དགུ་སྤྱི་དང་། ཉེ་བྱེད་ཞེས་དང་། རྒྱ་གཉེར་། མི་དཔོན་། རྒྱ་དཔོན་།
བཅུ་དཔོན་། ར་རོ་ཁ། ལྷང་སྤང་བ་སོགས་ཀྱི་བཞི་དྲག་གང་དང་གང་གི་སྤེ་སོར་སངས་སྤེབ་སྤྱིར་
བདང་དམིགས་བསལ་སོགས་དྲག་ཞུ་མཐའ་དག་ལ་སྤྱིངས་པ། མགོ་དཀར་སྐྱ་མ་འདི་རྣམས་བོད་
ཀྱི་སེམས་ཅན་ལ་ཕན་པ་སྤུབ་ཕྱིར་ཡོངས་འདུག་པ། རྒྱ་ས་ཁུལ་གར་རྒྱ་ར་ཁར་གཞུང་དུ་ས་རིན་
སྤྲད་པར་ཁོ་པའི་དབུ་གནས་པ་དགོན་རྒྱང་ཞིག་རྒྱག་བཅུག་པར་གཞན་འདུས་མེད་ཅིང་སེམས་ཅན་
ལ་ཕན་པ་བྱུང་ཕྱིན་ཇི་སྤྱད་རྒྱལ་བའི་བལྟ་པ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ནས་གནས་པར་འཇགས་གནས་ཀྱི་ཐོབ་
བྱིན་པ་ཡིན་པས། རྒྱུད་གོང་འཁོད་དྲག་ཞུ་སྤྱི་དང་གྱི་སོག་ཚོར་སོགས་སེར་སྤྱ་སྤུས་ཀྱང་བཀག་
ཆ་མི་བྱེད་ཅིང་། འབྲི་སོགས་ཁུལ་གསར་འགྲེལ་སོགས་མོས་མི་བདེའི་རིགས་སྤྱི་ཅམ་བྱས་ཚོག་
རྒྱ་མིན་པས་བདེ་བར་ཡི་གེ་འཛིན་འཇུག་པ་བྱིས། རྒྱ་ཡོས་རྒྱ་ཚེས་ལ་པོ་བྱང་ཆེན་པོ་པོ་ཏེ་ལ་ནས་
བྱིས།

༡། གོང་ས་ཐམས་ཅད་སུམ་གཟིགས་ཆེན་པོའི་གེ་དམ།

ཞལ་ཤུས་འཁུལ་མེད་ཡིན།

Privilege granted by the Dalai Lama to build a Friary in Lhasa.

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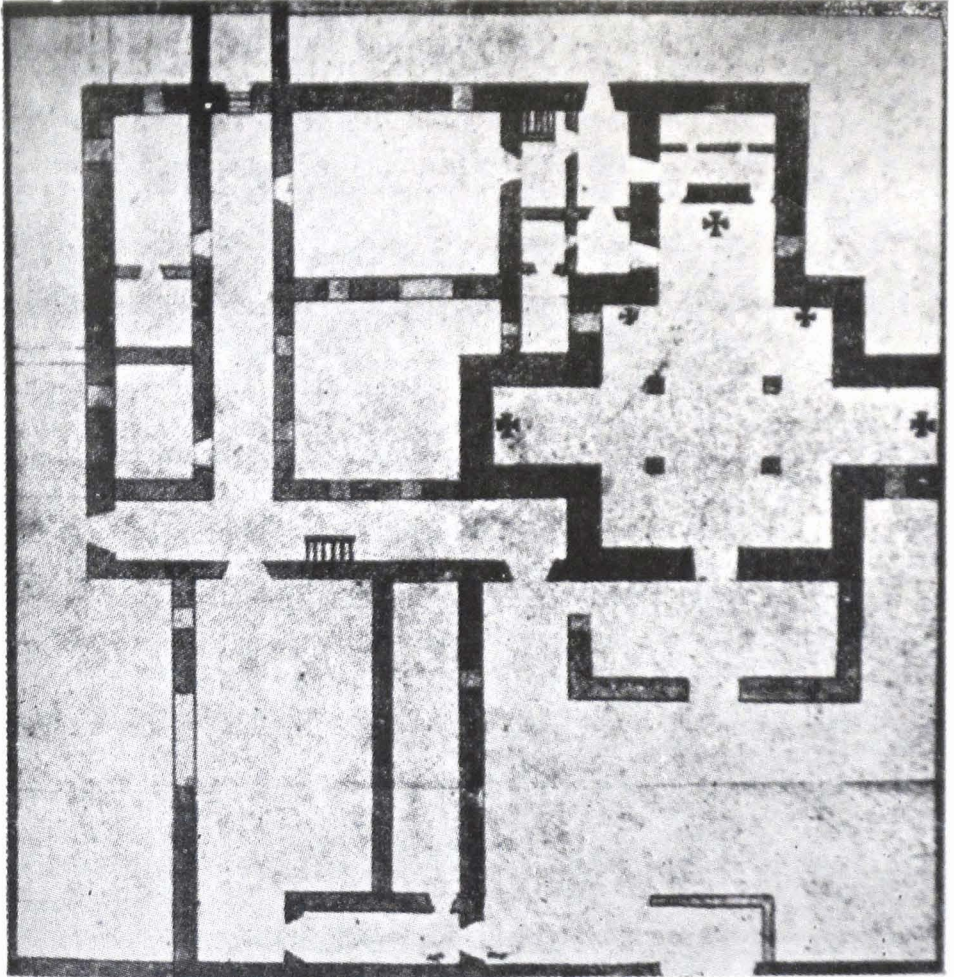
༡ འབྲས་ལྗོངས་ནས།

༢ མགོ་དཀར་སྐྱ་མར།

༡ མགོ་དཀར་སྐྱ་མ་དེ། ལྷ་ཚོ་བདེ་ནས་གསུང་རིས་དེམ་རྒྱ་གོས་བཅས་འབྱོར་པས་སྤོབ་འདས།
འདིར་ཡང་ལྷགས་རྒྱང་གི་སྤངས་དོར་དང་དགེ་སྤྱོར་འདུག་པ་གཅིག་པར་གནས། མཚམས་
འབྲལ་ཇི་ལྟར་སོལ་མཚིད་བཞིན་བྱིས་མི་རྣམས་སེམས་དང་ཁ་ལ་ཚོད་བཞིན་མེད་པའི་སྤོངས་སང་
བ་ཚོས་ཉིད་ལ་སྤོ་གཡོངས་ས་དགོས། ཉིད་ཀྱང་འདི་ཕྱོགས་ཕེབ་རྒྱགས་ན་སྤོམ་དབྱེད་སོགས་གཞན་
ཕན་ཆེ་བ་ཡོང་འདུག་ཅིང་། དེམ་ཅམ་རྒྱ་ཏམ་བཅས། ལྷགས་བྱི་རྒྱ་ཚེས་བཟང་པར།

Reply to Maharaja of Sikkim to the proposal of opening a missionary station in his territory made by Fr. Dominic of Fano (See p. 198)

With acknowledgement to Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato (Rome) —From Il Nuovo Ramusio II, By Prof. Luciano Petech, Part IV.



Plan of the chapel and Friary at Lhasa
Drawing by Fr. Cassian Beligatti

initiative, would have granted such an extraordinary privilege to the missionaries. Unfortunately, we have no way of judging the part played by the Chinese and the Tibetans in this gesture of good-will.

The imperial decree was addressed to "every one living under the light of the sun" and in particular to all men holding a position of authority in the country (and here follows a long list of dignitaries) inclusive of the military forces of occupation. It goes on to state that the "white-headed Lamas have come to Tibet to do good to all creatures and that the present document, duly certified by the impression of the seal, is being issued to them so that they may build in Lhasa a small monastery of their own, on payment of the land cost to Government". In view of this the priests should not be burdened with new taxes or other duties and those in authority are bound to see that the order is properly carried into effect without causing any harassment to the missionaries. The decree was to be valid so long as "the Precious Law of the Victorious One" remained in force in the land.

Red tape and bureaucracy in government offices is not a monopoly of our own times. It was known, and perhaps even more, in the days of old. Before the missionaries could set about to erect the mission hospice and the public chapel, they had to go through a lengthy procedure. Among other things an audience for this specific purpose had to be arranged with the "Great Omniscient". The two Fathers were received with utmost kindness and the customary exchange of gifts took place. They presented the Dalai Lama with a silken scarf each, a small pair of scissors, a small microscope, some hand-made European writing paper and two figure drawings, a design of Fr. Peter of Serra Petrona, a missionary of the fourth expedition. In return they received a measure of white sugar, two measures of dates and a good quantity of sweetmeats. A treasured gift indeed, which was joyfully received and brought home to supplement the meagre ration. On that occasion the two priests had also the honour to share in the refreshment with the ministers of state, the

nobles of the court and other dignitaries who happened to be present at the audience (35).

An audience with the Dalai Lama is always an occasion of great pomp and solemn ceremonies. "The Great Omniscient" stands on a gilded throne, covered with costly brocade, surrounded by his entourage. At the appointed time those admitted to the audience on that day (they may be district governors on a routine visit, high ranking state officials, nobles or abbots from the various monasteries) are ushered into the great hall, richly decorated and resplendent with fineries. The court chamberlain introduces the visitors who file pass the priest-king to receive his blessing. This is given in two different ways, all depending on the social status of the person who is admitted to the audience. Distinguished visitors are blessed by the imposition of His Holiness' hand on their head ; while if the caller is a commoner he receives the same blessing, but by means of another simple and suggestive ceremony. The laying on of the hand on the head is replaced by a touch of a silken mop. The Dalai Lama holds a staff in his hands and as the person approaches the throne in humble obeisance and with down-cast eyes, he is gently touched on the head by the tuft or tassel hanging at the other end of the staff.

None of the visitors approaches the audience empty handed. It is part of the Tibetan etiquette, when paying a visit or presenting a petition to a person of higher standing, to bring along scarves and other presents. Scarves of every kind and quality are sold in the bazaar like any other marketable articles. Both scarves and gifts (in cash or kind) must be consistent with the social status of the giver. They are taken care of by the ushers and piled up on a high gilded table standing at the right of the throne. The gifts and money offerings go into the treasury of the Dalai Lama while the scarves are sold or given out as prizes. This ceremony over, the visitors talk and mix freely among themselves, partake of light refreshments in an adjoining hall and on leaving each of them is handed

35. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 126, 127, 131.

over gifts or presents on behalf of the Dalai Lama, which they take home with them.

The two priests were more than pleased at the marks of respect shown them on this occasion. All their requests had been faithfully complied with. They were asked beforehand whether they wished to be present at an audience which was attended by a few or by a large group of people. They preferred to be received at a time when there were few people and this was granted them. In the audience hall they were given precedence and placed amongst the highest dignitaries of the land, that is, the ministers of states. And when they approached the throne of the Dalai Lama to pay their respects to him he withdrew his hand in front of them instead of laying it on their heads in blessing. The Prefect and his companion were surely honoured more than they could expect (36).

Coming back to the main point of our narrative, we have to say that the title deed and contract of purchase relating to the land and the building site for the erection of a small monastery and church in Lhasa granted to the Capuchin Missionaries by the royal exchequer, was signed and registered on the 11th day of the second month of the year of the "Wooden Serpent," that is on the 8th April, 1725.

This document is a good source of information. Therein we learn that the land was purchased in the name of Pope Innocent XIII at the cost of 18 ounces of silver and that the site consisted of 12 pillars or columns on each side. The exact location of the monastery, which the document considers as a useful religious institution, is also given. With regard to the taxes and duties it says that the concessions which have been granted are in conformity with "the mind" of the Precious Sovereign, i. e. the Dalai Lama. After giving the date, the title deed concludes by stating that this is "a copy without mistakes of the document issued by the Council of ministers".

36. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 126, 127, 131.

It is good perhaps to elucidate this document a bit; at least as far as we are in a position to do. The first question the reader may ask is—Why was the land purchased in the name of Pope Innocent XIII, or better still in the name of the Holy See? It appears that the Tibetan missionaries had received oral instructions from Rome to buy all immovable property in the name of the Holy See, represented in the person of the reigning Pontiff. The instruction was later on embodied in a Papal decree (37). This was due to the religious vow of poverty professed by the Capuchins which binds them not to own anything either as individuals or as a corporate body. In regard to the price paid for the land, it may be said that the total cost works out to about Rs. 18/-; a price unanimously admitted to be far below the actual value of the plot sold by government to the missionaries. Unofficially, the cost of the land was estimated at Rs. 100/- or Rs. 200/- (38). More difficult instead is to find out the exact area that had been purchased. A contemporary version of the document in the Italian language translated the lineal measure given in Tibetan (ka-ba) by the term pillar, but unfortunately the

37. The Decree issued by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide on the 12th December, 1718, reads :

“Referente Em. mo ac Rev. mo D. D. Cardinali Francisco Barberino, Sacra Congregatio decrevit omnia et singula loca, et hospitia hucusque acquisita, et acquirenda per emptionem vel piorum benefactorum donationem aut alio quovis titulo a PP. Capuccinis italis, missionariis in regnis Tibet, et aliis in Indiis Orientalibus, ac praecipue in oppidis Chandernagore et Patna; praeterea quidquid aliud ipsis missionariis relictum, donatum, vel in eleemosinam traditum fuerit, ab iisdem proprio nomine possideri non posse; sed omnia esse debeant, et intelligi sub immediata proprietate et dominio Sedis Apostolicae; quibus uti tantum valeant dicti PP. missionarii pro tempore, quo degunt in iis regionibus. Id autem exprimendum esse in quibuscumque scripturis, et contractibus per syndacum saecularem catholicum, si haberi potest, faciendis tam privatim quam in publica forma, sub poena contra id agentes, ultra alias inflictas in Extravagantibus, sacrarum congregationum expressas, privationis officii, ac vocis activae et passivae.”

38. Nuovo Ramusio, part I. p. 131.

corresponding measure in the European system then in force was left blank. A pillar was equivalent to about 18 Roman feet. The location of the proposed building (mentioned in the document as being above the place called Sar-rgyud-na-k'a) cannot be identified on the Lhasa map now. Fr. Cassian Beligatti, however, makes a casual reference to the site of the monastery in his journal and states that the mission house stood near the Moru monastery (39). Now we know that the Moru monastery was situated to the extreme north-east quarters of the capital.

The sale deed was followed up in quick succession by three other documents—the permission to build on the land (21st May, 1725), the licence for the use of the building material (1st (?) July, 1725) and at the end the licence for the unmolested employment of labour (6th (?) July, 1725). As we can see, even in Lhasa those days were plagued by a routine system of permits and red tape before the work could be taken in hand (40).

The Unexpected Happened

All the above-mentioned documents ordered, either explicitly or implicitly that “everyone living under the light of the sun” and in particular all those in authority in the kingdom of Tibet not to cause any trouble, but rather to help the missionaries in the building of the new monastery. On the strength of these injunctions, coming from no less a person than the “Golden King in the court of the Great Hor” and “His Holiness the Great Omniscient”, the Fathers felt pretty sure that the work of construction would proceed smoothly and completed within a short time. They did not reckon with the vagaries of nature, and with the fanatical religious loyalty of the people which is capable of any act of lawlessness when excited by some interested party.

The foundation of the monastery had already been laid and the construction of the building was a little above ground

39. *Giornale* p. 171.

40. *Rappresentanza*, Summary Nos. XII and XIII ; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part IV, pp. 189-192.

level when two untoward events occurred, intimately connected with each other, which seemed for a while to destroy all hopes of seeing the plan through. In the month of August, 1725 (or according to Fr. Joachim in the month of July, 1775) torrential rain, unprecedented in living memory, started falling in the region all round Lhasa, swelling the freshets from the mountains and causing havoc in the valley below. It kept on pouring for days till the weather-god was pleased to switch off the flood-gates of heaven over the sky of Lhasa. The river Kyichu which runs down from the glaciers and flows along the southern suburbs of the city burst the revetment banks abutting the road in that quarter, swept over the entire capital like liquid lava, steadily turning the whole area into a muddy sea. Hundreds were rendered homeless and fled to the mountains. Like an invading army, the turbulent floodwaters took possession of the lanes and streets, inundating the bazaar, poured into the houses dislodging the inhabitants. For eight days, the helpless inhabitants had to make use of their yak-skin boats, the boats of the country, to move about.

That was a timely signal from heaven. In one of their sacred books it was written that "there will come foreign lamas, belonging to another religion different from ours; they will come to destroy and annihilate our own Tibetan religion; the signs thereof will be that when these foreign lamas begin building a monastery in Lhasa, rain will fall so abundantly that the river bank will burst and the whole city will be on the point of being inundated. At this signal their monastery had to be levelled to the ground and the foreign lamas had to be driven out of the kingdom" (41).

People knew why the Capuchins had come to Lhasa. The erection of the monastery and the coincidence of the flood

41. Rappresentanza, No. LVII. It looks very strange that a similar prophecy should be contained in the Sacred Books of the Tibetans; yet the missionaries give it for certain without making any comment. There are some who claim that the expedition of Col. F. E. Younghusband to Tibet in 1904, and the flight of the present Dalai Lama from the country were also predicted in the Sacred Scriptures of the Tibetans.

had played on their mind and made them alive to the danger that threatened their state religion. Shocked, aggrieved and bewildered by what was taking place among them, they worked themselves up into a frenzy. They were determined to fulfil the words of the prophecy to the letter by destroying the building and driving out the missionaries. The sacred soil of Lhasa, they claimed, had been desecrated by allowing a hostile religion to plant its tent thereon. The spirits of the land were rightly filled with wrathful indignation at the intrusion of these foreign priests and called for vengeance. Hence, the reason of the flood that devastated the sacred city.

Taking into account the Tibetan mentality which interprets even natural phenomena, such as rain, storm or flood, as a warning from heaven it was easy enough to stir up the feelings of the populace and to cause a great commotion. Yet there is something in the story which is not very clear. Did the mob rise spontaneously against the building of the new monastery or were they instigated by the enemies of the missionaries, who were interested in staging a demonstration in order to have the White Lamas expelled from Tibet? It seems pretty evident that the whole show was organised to produce a stage effect on the public. All those who had harboured ill-feelings against the lamas of the west, that is, the magicians, the soothsayers, the oracles and the keen-minded scholars of the monasteries who saw in the Christian faith an arch enemy of their established religion and some others, had an excellent opportunity to incite the crowd and launch a crusade in defence of their gods and of the country. The effect of such an agitation on the popular mind at a time when their emotional feelings were deeply perturbed by the unforeseen calamity, may more easily be imagined than described.

Another important question which may be asked in this connection is—was the disturbance created solely and exclusively because the new construction was destined to be a Christian monastery or were the people given to understand that the building was being erected by a small religious community that existed in Tibet and which was openly

hostile to the religion of the lamas ? There was then in the country a small religious group known as the Sivaitees, the worshippers of Maha-deva, the great god. The followers of this sect were immigrants and settlers originally from India and Nepal and popular belief had it that they had burnt the Sacred Books of the Tibetans and were definitely spiteful of their religion and culture. From our subsequent narrative it will appear that the organisers of the demonstration against the missionaries had given out, to make a more sensational effect on the people, that the White Lamas were nothing else than the worshippers of Maha-deva in disguise.

Anyway, feelings ran high; public remonstrations were made to intimidate the Fathers and to make them desist from continuing the work of the monastery. A violent mob, including both foreigners and Tibetan nationals, made for the scene of the heretical building bent on demolition and possibly on homicide. They came in batches like waves whipped by a raging storm. On two occasions the rowdy crowd kept on coming to protest and demonstrate against the new construction and the much despised ministers of a foreign cult. The two Capuchins managed to keep them at bay by showing to the ring-leaders the imperial decree, written on yellow satin bearing the signature of "His Holiness, the Great Omniscient" and issued by the order of the celestial emperor, the "Golden King in the country of the Great Hor".

To strengthen their case, and in order not to incur the wrath of the emperor of China and the Dalai Lama, who had granted the privilege to the missionaries, the infuriated mob had recourse to the local oracle—the great magician who presided over the destiny of Lhasa. The oracle was a mysterious and much feared personality, but he was considered by all as the defender of the law and the holder of the fate of the people. Unfortunately, the magician pronounced himself in favour of the excited crowd and even urged them on to fight their battle with unabated vigour to avenge the glory of their gods and to promote the welfare of their country. Again another surging wave of men sallied out in the direction of the mission building to be again arrested by the exhibition of the magic document.

Once more the crowd was impelled to retreat dejected and crest-fallen like a defeated army (42).

Realising now that nothing could be done with impunity against the missionaries so long as they could exhibit the document allowing them to erect the monastery and the order addressed to all men living under the light of the sun not to molest the priests or the labour engaged by them, the riotous mob of monks and lay-people vented their fury against the authorities by taking to task those responsible for this disgraceful state of affairs, i.e. the Dalai Lama and the Regent, the representative of the Chinese power.

The Regent on receipt of the intelligence, sent a messenger to the Dalai Lama, soliciting his orders. His Holiness replied to the effect that it was his wish not to destroy the building or to harass the Fathers. However, if the ministers of state, after due consideration, thought it advisable to yield to the pressure in order to appease the excitement of the moment, he was of opinion that the missionaries should be compensated for the loss they were going to suffer on account of the demolition of the monastery, or else be given in exchange better accommodation elsewhere, but on no account should they be inconvenienced and much less expelled from the kingdom. They were men of good will, who had come from afar to do good to all. Their life was blameless and scrupulous to a fault and no one could hold them responsible for the disaster of the flood.

The Regent made known to all the wishes of the Dalai Lama. This helped a good deal to relax the tension. The wishes of the holy one in Lhasa were taken by all as an expression of his order and no one dared to contradict him or to call into question any of his dispositions. He was the supreme and the infallible oracle. Meanwhile, propitiatory rites were performed at the Potala Palace and on the southern site of the river bank to appease the spirits of the land. These consisted mostly in taking venerated statues, treasured

42. The account of this sub-heading : "The unexpected happened" has been culled from *Rappresentanza* No. LVII and from a report written by Fr. Joachim (*Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 214-217).

amulets and charms, powerful antidotes against every conceivable form of misfortune, to the river bed, chanting at the same time religious texts to the tune of eerie music and performing the ceremonies of exorcism to dislodge the demons that had taken possession of the turbulent flood waters. Even on the top of the Potala Palace, on the side facing the river, the Dalai Lama had some statues installed to ward off the danger. At the same time the breaches made by the on-rushing waters of the river, were plugged up by erecting bunds and dikes across the most vulnerable spots. The flood waters started receding, at first slowly and then at a quick pace, leaving behind a thick viscid layer of silt, as a reminder of those unhappy days. The holy city was saved, but the commotion did not die altogether.

For four long agonising months the missionaries were shunned by one and all for fear of public opinion. The building site of the monastery was looked upon as a plague infected spot and by-passed at a distance. The work of construction was stopped and the Fathers were personally hustled and made fun of whenever they ventured out in public and in the streets. Finally the "Great Omniscient" and the Regent, to justify themselves, or out of sincere love for the missionaries, decided to refer the issue to the oracle of the reigning Dalai Lama's birth place—the oracle of bSam-yas. The response of this oracle was supposed to carry a special weight, being closely associated with the supreme head of the state religion.

In due time the anxiously awaited answer was delivered in Lhasa and it left all dumbfounded. It was not true, it stated, that the flood was brought about by the tutelar spirits of the land as a signal from heaven to destroy the monastery and to expell the missionaries, who wanted to establish themselves in the holy city, but it was caused by the sinful life of the people. It was a just punishment and a salutary message from on high delivered to the inhabitants of the capital warning them to retrace their steps and mend their evil ways. There were also other reasons, the oracle went on to say, which for the time being should not be revealed. Emboldened by this reply and to assert his

authority the Regent issued a proclamation, which was to be affixed in all public places throughout the city.

The proclamation or "edict", as we read in contemporary documents, made it a penal offence, to harass the missionaries or to damage their property. No one should be allowed, it stated in substance, to interfere with the labourers employed by the White Lamas in the building of the monastery except in cases when their services are requisitioned by the legal authority and this only whenever public welfare demanded it. It was a rewarding premium for all that the Fathers had suffered and an explicit promise of moral support that augured well for the future of the mission. Words were soon followed by facts. Ample facilities were immediately given for obtaining building material. Some of the nobles and other well-to-do people in Lhasa came forward generously to give a helping hand. They did not hesitate to send their men to assist in the work. All free of cost, of course, with the only condition that the workmen should be given their noon meal. In this way the prestige of the missionaries was boosted up and the construction of the monastery expedited.

Slowly, the little church and the mission house were taking shape under the wondering eyes of the people. The erection of the two buildings, which only a few months earlier seemed to be doomed to failure, was gradually coming up to be a consoling reality.

The Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the 4th October, 1726, (which by the way also marked the Fifth Centenary of the death of this great Saint) was fixed for the solemn blessing of the chapel and the official opening of the Friary. It was a grand occasion. On that day the Fathers had the joy of saying the first Mass in that little chapel, dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady, in the presence of eleven neophytes, mostly Newari, natives of Nepal. Mingled feelings of joy, thanksgiving and hope must have filled the heart of the small congregation as the Prefect Apostolic went up the altar to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass in the first and the only temple ever erected to the true living God atop the roof of the world.

On that day, and on the following days, people came over to the mission house to congratulate the Fathers on their

wonderful achievement, to look with curiosity at the little church and the pictures hanging from its walls. They were filled with admiration and eager to inquire about the God of the Christians, who had finally made his home amongst them. Untold sufferings and trials had gone into the building of that little church and small monastery but these were amply compensated by the credit bestowed on the God of the Christians and by the tribute paid to the fight so gallantly put up by His ministers. It afforded them great consolation to hear lamas and monks of every rank and state, as also lay people from every walk of life, exclaim with a genuine feeling of pleasure and admiration: "Your monastery was like dead, but now it has come back to life," "It is indeed a great wonder that without funds and in spite of all opposition you have been able to do so much", or "This surely must be due to the power of the self-existing God". The Dalai Lama himself deigned to pay a visit to the Christian place of worship (43). It must have been such a wonder that he could not help seeing it with his own eyes. On taking leave, probably thinking of all the trouble that had been given to the priests during the erection of the monastery, he was heard telling them - "Your God is in truth a great God".

It must not be thought, however, that all ended in glory. The embers of yesterday flared up violently every now and then. In fact, they had never been extinguished. They were smouldering all the time like a potential danger to the safety of the mission. A year had not even passed since the blessing of the chapel when influential groups of monks and lay-people started causing trouble again. Demonstrations were held; a strong protest was lodged with the Regent for favouring the ministers of an abominable foreign cult. In short, opposition never ceased until the missionaries were practically forced into leaving the country and their little monastery was literally uprooted from its foundation. In this connection (still in the year 1727) a kind of judicial inquiry was also held. The Fathers had been accused of being the followers of the Maha-Deva sect, the sect which

43. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 159.

opposed the national religion. In consequence, their catechism was subjected to the closest judicial scrutiny to see whether it contained anything objectionable. Eventually the case was dismissed. The Regent publicly declared that he had read the law of the Christians (catechism) and that he had personally known the two white lamas. Their law, he said, was "very good" and there was nothing in it to which exception might be taken or which might hurt the religious feelings of the people. In regard to the White Lamas, they were men of God and no one would lift a finger against them, he concluded (44).

The chapel and the monastery were indeed a mirror of Franciscan poverty built on the style of the most humble dwelling in Lhasa. Nevertheless, Fr. Joachim took pride in saying that it looked like a bit of heaven fallen down on earth, so peaceful and so God-inspiring it was! From an incomplete description left to us by Frs. Cassian Beligatti of Macerata and Constantine Mochi of Loro (two Tibetan missionaries of a later period) we gather that the chapel stood to the right of the monastery. It measured five meters in height by ten or eleven meters in length, the breadth of the building is not given. The inside of the chapel was fitted with five altars and also with a small sacristy and a small choir for the recital of the canonical hours in common. The ground floor of the monastery housed the refectory, the dispensary and the kitchen while the upper storey was partitioned off into eight cells or cubicles in addition to a small drawing room. The height of the whole building did not exceed five meters. The upper storey was so low that one could touch the ceiling by lifting up one's hand. It was truly a humble abode, a monastery which St. Francis himself, with all his love for Lady Poverty, would have gladly blessed as the ideal dwelling place for his friars (45).

And now let us answer a question the reader might have had in mind ever since he started reading about the erection of the monastery. The missionaries always pleaded poverty

44. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 132, 133, 160 172, 173.

45. *Giornale*, p. 167 ; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 73.

and lived, as they so often affirmed, in squalor. How is it then that they found the means to purchase a plot of land, even if it was sold to them at concessional rates, and managed to put up two buildings, though the labour was cheap and the structures did not entail a large outlay of money? The answer is simple. The other Tibetan missionaries residing at Patna and Chandernagore collected enough funds from amongst the Catholic and Protestant population of these two places, not only to supplement their own meagre allowance, but also to help others. What was over and above their bare subsistence was sent to the mission headquarters in Lhasa to assist their brethren in need. Further, the Fathers in Tibet had won the sympathy of the trading community in the capital. It was, therefore, easy for them to obtain a loan, free of interest, from one of the foreign merchants who was carrying on business in Lhasa: Particular mention may be made here of a certain Mohammedan trader from Kashmir, named Khwaja Yusuf, who volunteered to give the missionaries a substantial loan. Another Tibetan gentleman, whose name has not been recorded, was also of great assistance (46). It is not clear from the narrative whether he too gave a loan free of interest or donated a substantial sum to defray part of the building expenditure—a gift which the Fathers might have gratefully accepted as it was not meant for their personal maintenance but for the erection of a temple to the glory of the self-existing God. Anyway, with thrift, loans or spontaneous offerings of money, the chapel and the friary sprang up from the ground like a newly blossomed flower in the flat pasture valley of the Kyichu river and under the very shadow of the great Potala Palace.

Yet Another Trial

There was no doubt that the authorities in Lhasa, and in particular the Regent and the Dalai Lama, were all well disposed towards the missionaries. The Regent had given more proof than one, of his attachment to the priests and of his unqualified moral support to their cause. The friendly religious discussions held occasionally in his

46. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 135 ; part III, p. 91-93.

presence pleased him greatly. No one can say if his interest in them and his whole attitude towards the White Lamas and the religion they represented had been motivated by reasons of expediency or of opportunism, but in the context of things it carried some weight and left on all the impression that he favoured them. Equally patronising was the attitude of the Dalai Lama towards the preachers of the Gospel and this too at a time when Lhasa was disturbed by political unrest and a cross section of monks and representatives of the lay people were agitating against them. New privileges were granted and the priests enjoyed considerable freedom in the fulfilment of their mission.

In October and in December, 1727, respectively, two new documents were issued from the Potala Palace (47). They were meant to give financial relief to the hard pressed mission and also show the good will of the men in authority towards the Prefect and his companion. The first document refers to the exemption of taxes in regard to the "small monastery". The reason given therein was that the white-headed lamas had already paid for the cost of the land, and, as was already mentioned in the privilege sanctioning the erection of the monastery (6th January, 1724), they should not be burdened with any extra duties, not even as much as "a hair's weight". That indeed was most welcome news. Another thing which, besides being a source of great annoyance, drained still further the slender resources of the mission, was the transit duty imposed on goods and travellers moving from one place to another. There were two kinds of transit duty—one was reserved for the subjects of the confederate states such as Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, while the other was imposed on all those who were officially considered as foreigners i.e. on people coming from India, China, Kashmir and other places. The difference between these two types of transit duty was indeed enormous. To take a case in point, on a baggage weighing, say, 200 Roman lbs. (custom duty was charged on the weight and not on the contents of the baggage) was two Paoli (Rs. 0.50)

47. Nuovo Ramusio, part IV, pp. 193-194.

for subjects of the confederate states, while a foreigner was made to pay forty four Paoli (Rs. 11.00) for the same amount. On account of this concession, the missionaries were treated as "our good friends, the Nepalese...provided that their luggage did not exceed four horse loads". The motivation given in the document, which was issued by the "Council of Ministers", is that such a privilege is being given to the "white-headed lamas" in view of the fact that they are neither traders nor merchants. Eleven years earlier Lha-bazn Khan, the Regent at the time, had favoured Fr. Dominic with a similar concession, but due to the change of government, it was thought prudent to renew it just in case the men at the toll barriers raised some objections to it.

Another great financial relief was a part of this privilege. This was a kind of travel pass or travel permit without which no one was allowed to enter or stay in Tibet. This document entitled the traveller to buy whatever provision he required along the route at the local market price; to get free fuel (usually dried yak's dung) and servants for the evening in addition to the right of safe conduct and the right to requisition pack animals for the journey at the stipulated rate. In this way the traveller felt at ease and the long tedious journey was rendered as comfortable as possible.

Fr. Joachim of Anatolia in a letter to a friend writes that on completion of the monastery building they would again approach the Dalai Lama and request him to kindly "promise the liberty of conscience" to all his subjects. In a subsequent report the same Father speaks of such a privilege having been graciously granted already. The same thing is also mentioned by Fr. Francis Horace (48). There is no written document to substantiate this statement. In all probability (and this will be corroborated by the events of a later date) it was only an oral undertaking given by the Dalai Lama to the Fathers. In due course this might have been put in black and white, but for the moment the word of the supreme religious authority in the state was thought

48. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 126 ; part III, p. 86, 220.

to be sufficient guarantee to protect them and to safeguard the interest of the new converts and catechumens. Political unrest and other reasons, however, delayed for long the giving in writing of the liberty of conscience.

It was nice and peaceful to live in the new monastery after all the trouble the Fathers had undergone in erecting it. It gave the first two occupants an inexplicable sense of home feeling and urged them to work with renewed spirit of fervour and dedication. An important mile-stone in the life of the mission had already been reached in spite of all the opposition and difficulties and the authorities looked favourably on the activities of the missionaries. The devout little chapel, dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady, stood there in the city of oracles, in the stronghold of the Lama religion, like a sentinel of prayer and a promise of hope for the future expansion of the Church in Tibet. But alas! The times were again not propitious. All the while there were disquieting signs on the horizon. The struggle for the re-instatement of a theocratic government was again throwing everything into disorder. This explosive seed, which had been left dormant under the fertile soil of Lhasa, was fast growing into maturity, waiting for an occasion to burst forth into a new political conflagration.

In 1723 the new Chinese emperor Yung Ch'eng (1722-1735) had the unhappy idea of withdrawing the military garrison from Lhasa, leaving the government in the hands of rival factions. The military governor (a Manchu general with his 2000 Chinese troops) was replaced by a civil servant, so that Tibet once again regained a certain amount of political autonomy. The powerful nobles on the Council of Ministers with their respective followers were just looking for an opportunity like this to play a political chess game among themselves. Day by day, the ranks were sharply drawn between the Seventh Dalai Lama, his supporters and those who stood for the overlordship of China. They were now facing each other like two opposing armies contesting the field. The situation was grave, but Peking underestimated the strength of the forces at work. Finally, the revolt broke out and another civil war gripped the streets of Lhasa. The Regent (Taiji Batur) was assassinated in the Royal Hall on

the 6th August, 1727; his supporters met with a similar fate. Three ministers of state, many of the nobles, the Dalai Lama himself and his father were the moving forces behind the coup. The seventh Dalai Lama was again installed on the Lion Throne as the supreme temporal ruler of the country.

The three ministers of state, faithful to the cause of the Dalai Lama, formed themselves into a triumvirate and started bringing the situation under control, waiting anxiously for reaction from China. They did not have to wait long. One of the dissident ministers in the former government, P'o-lha-nas, who due to his absence from Lhasa at the time of the Regent's assassination, had escaped death, entered the field, rallied around him the forces loyal to the Chinese cause, appealed for help to the emperor of China and immediately engaged the rebels in a long drawn-out contest. Meanwhile, China hastily equipped a strong army to be despatched to Lhasa to clamp down the revolt. It was a quick march. At the beginning of July, 1728, the Chinese punitive expedition entered the Tibetan capital, followed by a commissary with full powers to settle accounts. He took quick drastic action, which soon put Tibet well on way to a more peaceful and stable government. All responsible for the coup were rounded up and mercilessly put to death. Those who managed to escape took to the mountains or went underground. The Dalai Lama, his father and his entourage were relegated into exile to Peking and kept there in close confinement until 1735. A Vicar Dalai Lama rGyal-sras Rin-po-c'e by name, who on account of his outstanding qualities commanded the respect of all, was seated on the Potala Throne. He was installed there with all pomp and solemnity so that the Tibetans might look up on him as the supreme visible head of their national religion. Meanwhile, the Chinese would be kind enough to lighten him of half of his burden by seeing to the temporal interests of the country.

Every will to resist was thus broken down. This time the Chinese interfered vigorously in the internal affairs of the Tibetans. They were determined to prevent another revolt and took all precautions. On 20th January, 1729, a decree

was issued from the Imperial Court of China which gave P'o-lha-nas a free hand to deal with the internal affairs of the country making him the virtual dictator of Tibet. He was assisted in his high office by four Tibetan ministers of state (bka'blon), who were invested with mere executive power and two Chinese officials, called amban, whose duty was to advise the new ruler and report on his activities. P'o-lha-nas proved himself worthy of the great trust; till the end of his life (he died of a natural death on the 12th March, 1747) he ruled with firmness and wisdom like a king of old.

All these events stirred up again the feelings of the mob. Confusion and lawlessness prevailed over the metropolis for quite a while. There was again bloodshed, looting, and plundering in and around Lhasa causing fear and panic among the population. Crimes were perpetrated, property was destroyed and no one felt safe; but the situation was not as bad as during the days of the Dzungarian Mongol invasion. In the melee even the small Catholic monastery was not spared. The missionaries were robbed of all the little money they had, but no injury was inflicted on their person or damage caused to their property. This was due to the timely intervention of P'o-lha-nas. He had foreseen that his old friends were in danger and in spite of his other preoccupations, he thought of them and of the small monastery on the outskirts of the city and sent some of his trusted men to protect them against the fury of the riotous mob and of the revelling soldiers in search of booty (49).

Even this new threatening wave rolled by without submerging the two veteran missionaries. Meanwhile, time was hopelessly running out in the changing panorama of events, without giving them much chance to make further progress in their work. They had lived all through these

49. Nuovo Ramusio, part 1, p. 136, 144. It may be asked why P'o-lha-nas allowed the missionaries to be robbed while he sent some of his trusted men to protect them and their immovable property. It may be that when the P'o-lha-nas' men reached the friary, the Fathers had already been robbed of the little money they had or that he wanted to protect the missionaries and at the same time he did not wish to deprive the soldiers of their right to the booty.

eventful years in hopes and fears and after such a long period of anxiety and expectation they were still at sea, still wondering what the future had in store for them for the morrow. The hopes, which had inspired them and by which they lived, continued to be a cherished desire, an unfulfilled promise, while the fears, like a monstrous spectre, were daily taking more definite shape.

CHAPTER VII

SECOND WITHDRAWAL

The change in the political situation in Lhasa did not make much difference to our missionaries. On the contrary, prospects for the propagation of the faith in this faction-ridden capital looked brighter than ever before. The new political climate created by the coming of the Chinese, and their determination to maintain law and order at any cost, was in itself an assurance that things would fare better in the future. Peace had come at last over the land and this indeed was a great blessing as it gave the people and priests a feeling of security and freedom in the pursuit of their respective occupations. The new masters, that is the Regent and the Vicar Dalai Lama, were already well known to the Fathers. Their good disposition towards the missionaries and their cause, was even greater than that shown by their predecessors. In short, there was sympathy, good-will and understanding all around, except, of course, for the few who still harboured ill-feelings against the preachers of the Christian message; but even these were becoming more tolerant. They realised that they were fighting a losing campaign and for a moment they thought it better to revise their position and keep their own counsels. Taking everything into account, we may say that the stage seemed to be finally set for a period of peaceful and fruitful missionary activity.

The Chinese troops had come in full strength and they had come to stay. Their number ran into thousands, a clear indication that this time the emperor of the celestial empire did not want to take any chances in order to ensure, if not a just, at least a more lasting peace. Nothing outwardly warranted a fresh outbreak of another civil war that might overthrow the government or upset the present political balance. Every possible step had been taken to prevent the repetition of another tussel for supremacy between the

secular and the theocratic government, the major source of trouble in the history of Tibet, specially during these last two decades. In their wake the Chinese troops had brought along a colony of civilians whose purpose was to intensify trade between the two countries and to further the policy of their government. Both, among the civilians and the military personnel, who in the course of their business or posting had come to Lhasa, there were Christians and even Catholics. Mention is made in particular of some Catholic officers with their families. These Chinese Catholics were most faithful in the practice of their religion (1). Their good example would be an instrument in attracting others to embrace the faith. On the whole, the Chinese community in Lhasa looked favourably upon Christianity. With a little tact and careful handling of things, it would be easy now to find some new prospective converts in the cosmopolitan population of the capital. The possibility of conversion had increased considerably and we may be sure that the two veteran apostles of the Cross were not going to let this golden opportunity slip by.

Again the two missionaries settled down to their old routine of activities. Fr. Joachim went back to the dispensary and to his medical practice in order to continue his mission of mercy. He had already established a reputation for himself as a great doctor and patients flocked in every day in great numbers. They seemed to have grown fonder of him and he of them after the period of forced inactivity of the last few months during which he was compelled to abandon his practice. Meanwhile, Fr. Francis Horace lost no time to re-establish his contact with the monks and lamas living in the monasteries in and around Lhasa and to go about in the streets to speak of Christ and of His religion to all. In the course of his apostolic excursions he met his old friends and made new ones. He too was welcomed by all everywhere like a dear person who had been missed for a long time. Together with the apostolate of the spoken word the indefatigable man carried on, with unabated perseverance the apostolate of the pen. He spent many long hours at his

1. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 219-220.

desk engaged in study and in the work of translation. The pair of them, forgetting themselves, the loneliness and poverty, the weariness and frustration, which occasionally must have come upon them, redoubled their energies to get on with the work, for this, they thought, was really the time to sow in sweat and tears. They felt that the day would surely come when they would reap with joy.

The past friendly association of the Vicar Dalai Lama with the missionaries was in itself a vary happy augury. They felt sure that he would continue on the best of terms with them even now when intrigue and good luck had brought him to the throne of the Potala Palace. In the past he had been one of the most distinguished and frequent visitors to the monastery. In his capacity as the most influential member of the court of the exiled Dalai Lama, he had every opportunity to watch the Fathers at close quarters. He had entertained such a high regard for them and for the law they professed that he took delight in going over to their place in order to hold friendly discussions with them on religion. His relations with the missionaries were so intimate that Fr. Francis Horace, in one of his letters, did not hesitate to say that they used to deal with him as with a true brother (2). And this was surely auspicious and a good beginning to start off.

The Fathers had not deceived themselves. Notwithstanding his exalted position and the pressure brought to bear on him by some interested parties, the Vicar Dalai Lama did not change his attitude towards them. He remained very much the same, friendly, sympathetic and even posing as a patron of their cause. During the seven years he remained in office (1728-1735) the Vicar Dalai Lama took lively interest in the apostolic work of the priests and often spoke of the faith as if he were already a member of the fold. Prevented on account of his position to go personally to the small Catholic monastery, and in order not to give rise to any suspicion amongst his own people because of his inclinations towards religion of the white lamas, he had a Catechism (a new translation made by Fr. Francis Horace) brought to his residence.

2. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 144-145.

He kept it by his bedside and at night he went through it slowly and meditatively. He was so taken up with the law of the Christians that he did not confine the reading to himself but read passages of the Catechism to his own personal staff for their own spiritual benefit.

The Prefect was not slow in taking full advantage of it and in seconding the desire of His Holiness to know more about the faith. For over two months Fr. Francis Horace never failed to go daily to the Potala Palace in order to explain, discuss and argue over the merits of the two religions which had so much in common and yet fell simultaneously so much apart. "Your law is excellent", the Vicar Dalai Lama was heard to remark, referring to the teaching of the missionaries. "It is a pity that we cannot find any fault with it or that we are short of arguments to reject it". He had no difficulty in accepting the doctrine of Purgatory, Heaven and Hell as a true belief because the Fathers had explained it to him with such stringent logic that his mind was fully satisfied. The simplicity and humility, the detachment from all earthly goods and the missionary spirit with which the two priests went about their daily duty often struck this incarnate lama as a thing out of this world. "These are the true lamas", he often exclaimed, "they have come here not to trade, not to gain gold and silver, as people of other countries do, but they have come here solely out of love for men and to propagate their law. What a wonder, what an example!" The Vicar Dalai Lama had travelled so far on the road leading to Rome that the Fathers earnestly believed that he would eventually take the final decision and become a Catholic (3).

The same disposition was that of P'o-lha-nas towards the missionaries, the Regent of the time, the strong man at the head of the government. The spiritual and temporal rulers of Tibet might have disagreed on many issues, but they were at one in regard to the White Lamas ; they sympathised with them, they rejoiced at their success. P'o-lha-nas knew that the Fathers went often to the Potala Palace and in his

3. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 160, 168, 172-173 ; Rappresentanza No. LIX.

routine visits to the Vicar Dalai Lama he never failed to inquire from him how the missionaries fared, whether they were making any progress in the preaching of the law, what the people thought of it and of them, and so forth (4). And the interest he took in their personal welfare and in the success of their mission was motivated by no other reason than a sincere desire to see them happy and to go ahead with their work.

P'o-lha-nas was a busy man but he always found time for the Fathers. Whenever the Fr. Prefect called on him he would immediately dismiss all others to receive his dear friend, entertain him as his guest and talk with him about one point or other of the Christian law. The good example of the Regent, his mark of respect for the lamas of the west, was followed by many of the nobles and other people in the city who were held in high esteem. No matter how busy they were or who was with them, they immediately gave admission to "the lama of the soul" and made him feel at home.

Religious debates with the Regent were held by way of conversation and not infrequently even in writing. This last method of controverting seemed to have been a recognised and official form of debating, specially when dealing with topics of some importance or among people in a responsible position. Having asked in writing some explanation on certain points bearing on the Christian teaching, P'o-lha-nas was so pleased with the written reply he received that he was forced to exclaim: "I never dreamt that these lamas of the west could profess such a wonderful law!" As it was to be expected the theory of transmigration was one of the subjects which came up most frequently for discussion. And even to this, brave Fr. Francis Horace carried off the prize. An abridgement of the Christian doctrine had been sent to P'o-lha-nas. There this burning issue was treated at length. The skilled politician read it and became convinced that there was no sin in killing animals and in eating their

4. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 168.

flesh—a thing which caused a great sensation among the incarnate lamas.

There is no doubt that the new temporal ruler of Tibet stood by the missionaries, in fair weather and foul, and even went to the extent of helping them. All privileges and concessions granted to them by the former government were again endorsed by him but in a more comprehensive manner. The new document (issued on 29th January, 1730) was to remain in force so long as the white lamas resided in the country. The earnestness and eagerness of the new Regent to hear and discuss about the Christian law, his undisguised patronage for the cause of the mission had made Fr. Joachim think that he was already a Christian at heart. The day would not be long before he and his family would be regenerated to life by the purifying waters of Baptism (5).

We have already said enough about the Vicar Dalai Lama and the Regent to indicate that the Fathers could rely on them implicitly in every eventuality. With these two powerful men at the top so well disposed towards them, one could safely feel that the mission had nothing to fear. It now remains to be seen how the rest of the people received the good news or how they reacted to the preaching of the Christian message in order to get an adequate picture of the situation which had been gradually developing in Lhasa after Chinese occupation. For this purpose it is enough to select a few revealing incidents out of the many which one could quote to avoid boring the reader by going into too much detail.

About this time Fr. Francis Horace was engrossed in the translation of "Le Tresor de la Religion Chretienne" by Mgr. N. Turlot into the Tibetan language. It was a work of a discouraging nature as it was very long, consisting of 900 large Buttanese (Tibetan) sheets of paper. To do it, probably with the assistance of a competent person, and without any waste of time, the Prefect decided to reside in the monastery of bZi-sde—one of the minor Buddhist monasteries in the city of Lhasa, as he felt that the lama who

5. Rappresentanza No. LIII, Summary No. XV ; Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 139, 144-145, 168 ; part III, p. 64 ; part IV, p. 195.

was helping him in this exacting task might not be allowed to stay all the time in the Catholic Friary. The news that Fr. Francis Horace was working on this new and larger composition (earlier he had rendered into the Tibetan language the book on "The Christian Doctrine" by St. Robert Bellarmine, a writing which had made a great stir and was widely read) spread rapidly far and wide, even, according to a report, to the far ends of Tibet. Together with this news, rumour went round that the White Lama was now giving the finishing touches to the work. It was also rumoured that the work could compare very favourably with, and was perhaps of a higher order than that of the Lam-rim-c'en-mo, a book highly credited among the Tibetans and whose author was venerated as a saint. The scribe who had been working for the Prefect during the past 14 years was partly responsible for circulating such an opinion. Frankly, without fear, he was telling one and all that the law of the European lamas was far superior to their own. Even the other scribes, who had off and on been engaged by Fr. Francis Horace in making copies of his translation into the Tibetan language, spoke very highly of the missionaries and of their faith and morals (6).

There was great expectation. Curiosity and genuine interest over this Christian counterpart of the Tibetan Lam-rim-c'en-mo had excited the imagination of a large section of the lay-people and the religious who were living in the monasteries. Many were looking forward to it; others pressed the Prefect to finish the work as quickly as possible to make it available to the reading public without delay, while the boldest of the bold could not resist the temptation of walking eagerly over to bZi-sde monastery in order to have a foretaste of the forthcoming publication. All were unanimous in acknowledging that the law of the Christians was holy and very good. Two ministers of state were among those who, more than others, were waiting patiently to read this new book. One was bKa'-blon-T'on-pa, a prince by birth, and the chief among the ministers of state. He was so captivated by the little he had read that he asked for every

6. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 138-139, 167, 173.

subsequent page of the book as soon as it was ready. The prince insisted on accompanying Fr. Francis Horace when he presented the complimentary copy of this new work to the Regent. More critical and sceptic was the other minister of state in regard to the success of the new book, though he had always taken keen interest in the activity of the Fathers. His name was bKa-blon Beise, a man with a varied and troubled political career. Having one day gone to the bZi-sde monastery and urged the missionary to finish the translation at an early date as he wanted to go through it, the minister added after a pause: "If the law is good I am ready to embrace it, otherwise I will throw the whole thing into the fire". In reply the Prefect assured him that he would find the Christian law excellent and that if it did not satisfy him he was at liberty to throw the book and the translator as well into the fire (7).

The Fathers could count upon a lot of sympathisers and well-wishers both among the abbots or incarnate lamas of the different monasteries as well as among the nobles and people in the lower rungs of society. Their number was so great that Fr. Joachim wrote that it would be impossible to mention them all. The situation was indeed promising; the rosy dawn of Christianity seemed at last to be breaking over the mystical land of Tibet. The same Father, with a note of optimism, expressed his feelings in these words: "I will only say this, things are so well under way that nothing better could be expected" (8).

It must not be thought that the message preached by the missionaries was confined to the walls of the sacred city. It had also caught up, like a voice in the distance, with the rest of the country, even as far as China and Mongolia. The metropolis was then one of the main centres of attraction in the whole of Central Asia. Abbots from distant monasteries, re-born lamas, governors, district officials and many other important people would come periodically to Lhasa on routine visits. Travellers and merchants from far away places would call at the capital in the course of their journey or on business. This motley crowd of visitors and pilgrims

7. & 8. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 138, 174.

had also heard of the new gospel which was preached in the land; they had heard of the two bearded foreign lamas, dressed in a strange fashion, coming across the sea, doing good to all without exception and without expecting anything in return and propagating a religion which seemed so queer and yet not without a strong appeal.

The novelty of the thing had aroused much interest. Out of mere curiosity or prompted by higher motives, all wanted to see these much talked about foreign lamas and speak to them. Even governors and high-ranking lamas on an official visit to Lhasa, called on the Fathers,—some thing out of the ordinary, for it was generally considered a breach of etiquette to pay a visit to anyone else while in the capital except the Regent and the Dalai Lama or his Vicar. And while with the Fathers, these visitors from far off regions enquired about the Christian law, they talked and discussed it, they promised to come again and as a rule before leaving, they asked for a copy of the catechism. It was truly an apostolic life with all the excitement and surprises of adventure.

The spiritual head of the Mongol Buddhists of Koko-nor (bTsan-po Nomun Khan Qutuqtu) and six Karma-pa lamas from China, just to mention two instances of religious leaders coming from remote regions and living wide apart, were among those who called on the Fathers and had frequent discussions with them. Nomun Khan, the Sovereign of the Law as his name denotes in his own tongue, had become so enthusiastic about the Christian teaching and had taken such a fancy to the missionaries, that before going back to his monastery of Koko-nor, he wanted to leave a letter addressed to the Grand White Lama of Rome asking for his prayers as he felt deeply touched by the Divine Grace and was inclined to embrace the law of the Christians. The Prefect refused to take delivery of the letter and forward it to Rome, for at this stage he did not know how long he would still remain in Lhasa and what was the intention of Propaganda in regard to the future of the mission. In his message to the Pope, the Mongol Buddhist leader further requested His Holiness not to allow Fr. Francis Horace to abandon the capital as he was doing much good work

among every class of people to the great edification of all. Similar feelings of esteem for and recognition at the merits of the Christian law were also expressed by the Karma-pa lamas, a group of six re-incarnate lamas from China, who were venerated almost with the same degree of respect as was paid to the Dalai Lama. During their sojourn in Lhasa, which lasted for about four or five months, they called on the Fathers three times, creating great admiration among the people. Often they discussed religion and constantly asked for a copy of the Turlot Catechism in the Tibetan language. As the translation of this work was not yet, so to say, put in a presentable form, Fr. Francis Horace declined to accede to their repeated requests. The existence of a personal, absolute, self-existing God, the ultimate cause of everything in creation, was one of the main points which came up for discussion very often. We are told that the arguments brought forth by the Prefect to prove the existence of a personal, self-existing God were so convincing that the six Karma-pa lamas did not know how they could be refuted (9).

There was decidedly a new re-thinking, a different orientation of thought among the intelligentsia in regard to some of the fundamental teachings held sacred by Buddhist Lamaism, and in particular about the power of magic and the theory of transmigration. After the spade-work done by the Prefect in talks and in writing, not a few had come to consider magic as superstition, and a thing which degraded the dignity of man. They believed that the prayers of the White Lamas were more powerful in dispelling evil than any charm or witchcraft. Often the ministers of the self-existing God were approached and asked for prayers either to bring relief to people in distress or to ward off, or cast out some magical spell. Even the belief in transmigration, the topic most frequently and hotly debated, was no more so readily accepted as an irrefutable dogma. Quite a few among the Tibetan divines and the more progressive laymen had been won over by the persuasive logic of the intrepid missionary. It was, perhaps,

9. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 160, 168.

on this score that Fr. Francis Horace gained the reputation of being a brilliant dialectician (10).

It would be an exaggeration to say that the whole fabric of the Tibetan religion felt the impact brought to bear upon it by the preaching of the Christian faith. It was still too strong and too closely knit for that. However, there is no doubt that some vulnerable spots began showing up, little cracks started to appear here and there; and opinion was divided as to whether the whole structure of Tibetan Buddhism was so safe and impregnable as it was taken to be. And this in itself was of no little wonder when we realise that the change had been brought about in a matter of a few years and through the exertion of a single individual.

The drive for the propagation of the faith went on unabated and without hindrance, touching new depths and breadths. Everything proceeded smoothly and peacefully like a sailing vessel gliding on the placid sea under favourable winds. A new healthy atmosphere now surrounded the White Lamas and their cause; they had become one with the people of Tibet. The mission had entered, so to speak, into its golden age. It enjoyed the favour of the court and the population was most favourable to it. Lamas and lay people were no longer afraid to side with the missionaries, in private and in public, whenever some misguided individual tried to run them down or to speak evil of them or their law (11).

The Labourers are few

The first stage, in the laborious process which goes before sowing the seed of the word of God, had been successfully and painstakingly achieved, but at the same time a curious, anomalous situation was gradually developing within the mission organisation itself. It was the anti-climax, the logical sequence of events which had slowly brought things to a crisis. As the enterprise grew in strength and popularity, it became increasingly weak from within and unable to maintain its position. That was the most unfortunate

10. Rappresentanza No. LII.

11. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 167.

thing. The highest mark of success coincided with the lowest level of endurance. The missionaries were once again forced to withdraw.

The Biblical expression "sowing the seed of the word of God" implies that the work of conversion has to be done in different stages of development. The most important of all is to clear the ground from thorns and brambles and to enrich the soil which has to nourish the seed. Without this intense work of preparation and the toil of getting the field ready for the sowing, the seed will have no chance to develop its mighty potentiality; it will never grow up to maturity and bear abundant fruit. Speaking in plain language, this means that there is no hope for conversion unless the missionary wins the confidence of those whom he wants to convert, unless he opens the door to their hearts. They have first to become friends, that is, to meet on the same level; then they can talk and understand one another for all barriers will have been removed and every prejudice cleared up. Nothing is left now to prevent truth, the seed of the word of God, to sink deep into the soil so well prepared and take roots.

This the missionaries had done all through these years of untold hardships, and they had done it beyond measure to the point of heroism. It was no more the White Lamas who went out to meet the people, to talk to them, to win them over; but it was now the people who came to the priests, to inquire about their law, to show their appreciation of what these strangers, who had chosen Tibet as their field of work, were doing for the children of the land, to take an interest in their temporal welfare and even to encourage and help them in the spreading of the Christian message. There are some striking instances on record to bear out the truth of what I have just stated. They prove beyond doubt that the soil was ready for the sowing; that the land which had been tilled was vast and rich and that the labourers were being rewarded for their long and patient toil.

Every one in Lhasa was aware that the missionaries lived in extreme poverty, the kind of poverty which edifies and inspires; which is rich and fruitful in the eyes of God and

of man. Though the Tibetan highly valued this ideal of renunciation and moral detachment from the things of this world, they realised nevertheless that it was a source of no little anxiety to the priests. They wished the Father to be free from it so that they might attend to their work without any preoccupation. Some important and prominent religious and lay people, with a view to alleviating their hardships, advanced the opinion that the two Capuchin priests, to all intents and purposes, were like the lamas of the land and in some respects even better. It was therefore becoming that they should be treated in the same manner. An allotment of land or of money should be sanctioned by the government treasury for their maintenance. They deserved it. All these years they had worked hard and proved their worth; now the time had come to recognise their merits and to consider them as members of their own religious community. The Regent, in particular, was all for it. He insisted on the Fathers to accept an allowance from government, if not in the form of a salary, at least as a token of gratitude for all the good work they were doing among the people of Tibet (12).

Needless to remark that the two missionaries did not want to hear of it, even though it was evident to all that they were struggling hard to make both ends meet and stood desperately in need of funds to make copies of the numerous translations made by Fr. Francis Horace into the Tibetan language, for free distribution to the public. In their opinion an acceptance of any remuneration from government for their services would mean the destruction of all that they had patiently built up through their own example and teaching. They were firmly convinced that the spirit of evangelical poverty, in which they lived, accounted more for their success than anything else.

Another touching incident—one that we would have wished had been taken full advantage of by Fr. Francis—occurred just a short time before Fr. Prefect's departure from Lhasa. Every one had come to know that the tired and sickly man was leaving the capital and that he might

12. *Rappresentanza* No. LIV ; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 105.

possibly go to Rome. In a gesture of sincere love for the faith, and feeling of doing something which would please the missionaries exceedingly, the Vicar Dalai Lama made an offer of five or six novices and of two or three monks to Fr. Francis to be taken to Rome with him and there to be trained as Christians in the theological seminary. The Centre for Christendom would be the ideal place for them to imbibe the spirit of Christ. The novices and monks who had been selected for this purpose were young and in a better position to grasp the Christian spirit and learn about the faith. The Vicar Dalai Lama must have felt that there was no better way to carry the good tidings to the people of Tibet than to prepare the children of the soil to fulfil this noble mission among their own countrymen. The first minister of state too came generously forward with a similar proposal and offered other youths to Fr. Francis Horace (13). Unfortunately the Prefect turned down the proposal.

But why did he refuse such an extraordinary and tempting offer? It is difficult to say. Many considerations must have weighed with him to come to such a decision. Three of them at least can be mentioned here and each of them was sufficient to justify his action. Though Fr. Francis Horace had already made up his mind to leave Lhasa, he was still uncertain about his future plans, that is, he did not know at the moment whether it was necessary for him to go to Rome to represent the case of the Tibetan Mission; nor was he certain if the present critical situation would take a turn for the better in the course of the next few months. Mingled with this was another thought, sad and frustrating, yet not to be ruled out altogether. Years had now passed without bringing any news from home, any help to relieve their economic distress or any new recruit to fill up their depleted ranks. What was happening? Had they been forgotten or had Rome decided to close down the mission? Fr. Francis Horace did not know anything then. In this uncertainty he thought it advisable not to commit himself to the tempting offer made to him by the

13. Rappresentanza No. LIX ; Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 93.

Vicar Dalai Lama and the first minister of state. Here again, as a consideration, came the holy vow of poverty. The poor Prefect could hardly support himself and his companion ; surely he could not afford to maintain others and much less have the means to take along with him to Rome eight or ten passengers. The Vicar Dalai Lama and the first minister of state, who had made the offer, were aware of the economic burden which would thus be imposed on the mission and were ready to finance the scheme generously, but the holy man of God did not think it proper to accept this financial help. His acceptance of the help might have been misinterpreted and create a bad impression to the detriment of the mission interest. It was a point of honour with him, and for that matter, with the other Tibetan missionaries also, not to depend on the local people for their temporal needs. He had come to Tibet in search of souls and not for money. And this is what he wanted to be deeply impressed on the mind of all. With apostolic spirit he could truly say : "Da mihi animas coetera tolle".

The dawn was radiant and the vision breath-taking ; a well-deserved success seemed now to be within easy reach ; and yet in spite of it all, the two valiant apostles of Christ were compelled to abandon the Tibetan heights a second time. Things had come to such a pass that it was now impossible to hold out any longer. The skeleton mission staff and the shattered condition of their health were making the departure from Tibet a sheer necessity. The situation was even worse than that which existed towards the end of 1711. There was a difference, however. The first time Frs. Dominic and John of Fano felt bound to abandon Tibet, it was because of the complete failure of means of support. Had they not left in time they would have been condemned to a slow death by starvation. On this occasion, Frs. Francis Horace and Joachim of Anatolia were forced to withdraw from sheer want of missionaries, though economic difficulties were also keenly felt. The labourers were indeed few and, to make things worse, none of them was physically fit to do any work. They had worked themselves to the bone.

For nearly twenty years now the Prefect had toiled unsparingly in the mission field. He had made himself, in

the words of St. Paul, all things to all men to gain all. The zeal and tenacity displayed by him in the fulfilment of his duties had been a source of wonder and inspiration to all his co-workers. He was the moving and sustaining force behind every missionary undertaking ; a tower of strength that had made it possible to achieve whatever had been accomplished. So long as there was work to be done, he worked and slogged, without giving himself rest. But human endurance has a limit ; he had ruined his health ; he had come to the end of his tether. Pains in the body and pains in the head had become his constant companions all day long. The nights were very often blank and the food too poor to replace the energies which were daily wasting away. He was reduced to skin and bones like a living skeleton, or to put it in the more forcible expression used by his companion, he looked like a lamp-post ; tall, lean, emaciated and starved. The rarefied air and the cold climate of Lhasa, which he had endured for so long, had greatly impaired his otherwise strong physical constitution and reduced to nought his working capacity (14).

Fr. Joachim of Aantolia was in no better shape. Kept going by sheer will power, he managed to continue his work for years under the most exacting conditions, but now his strength was fast fading day by day. He had turned all white like a patriarch of old ; his hands were shaky and his body was a mass of pains. Often he had said that he might eventually die of pulmonary consumption. Divine Providence, however, had been very kind to them ; they never fell ill at the same time, but they took to bed, so to say, by rotation. And this was a good thing—one could attend to the needs of the other in a spirit of brotherly love and mutual assistance (15).

Man suffers not only through the senses of his body, but even through the mental agony of his soul. The two intrepid apostles of Lhasa had also to endure this kind of moral suffering : the pangs of the heart and of the spirit, the feeling of abandonment and frustration. They did not mind

14. Nuovo Romusio, part I, p. 140, 164 ; part III, p. 210-211.

15. Nuovo Ramusio, part I. 140, 162, 166.

so much the work and the hunger, the cold and the fatigue, they could put up with all this ; but what they felt very much was the neglect and isolation ; the loneliness and eerie solitude which now encompassed them on all sides. They were more or less dead to the outer world, the world of their homeland, to their superiors and friends. The annual subsidies from the home base failed to arrive ; new recruits had not been sent out ; letters too failed to reach their destination—all this was most distressing. Fr. Francis Horace sadly reviewed the situation years later in Rome : “during about eighteen years, there was no assistance... even of one letter of consolation !” Fr. Joachim, the most loquacious and out-going of the two. gives us a graphic picture of the tragic conditions in which they had to live and says : “We are abandoned and forgotten... We are practically dead to Rome... We do not know what to do... If they do not want to help us, or if they have no means to support us, why they do not recall us from the mission ?... No new missionaries or any kind of economic assistance is forthcoming... I do not write about the wretchedly poor life we are bound to lead to carry on our missionary work because if I were to put it on paper, you would say that I am exaggerating... I cannot bear the thought of abandoning the mission after all that has been done and suffered to establish it...” Nearly all his letters repeat this pitiful refrain (16).

No news and no recruits, that was the thing that puzzled missionaries most. This was all the more perplexing as it went against the re-organisation plan which was sanctioned in 1714. For the past twelve years now (we refer to the year 1733) no new priests had come out to re-inforce the small band of workers. Meanwhile, not a few of the old guard had either gone back home or died on their field of labour. The last expedition (the seventh in order of time) goes back to the year 1721. It consisted of a batch of four missionaries i.e. Frs. Andrew of Morro di Jesi, Francis of Cagli, Michael Angelo of Monte Alboddo and Venantius of Fossobrone. They were also strong and promising young

16. Nuouo Ramusio, part I, p. 124, 127, 136, 140, 142-143, 145, 153, 161, 164, 176-177 ; part III, p. 97.

priests, the hope of tomorrow, but none of them survived to see the grey dawn of the year 1733. They were all called at an early hour by the master of the vineyard to receive their eternal reward. One of them, Fr. Venantius of Fossonbrone, had died in September, 1722, shortly after his arrival from Europe, on his way from Chandernagore to Patna.

By the end of 1730, the numerical strength of the Tibetan mission, which had started its second phase of existence with sixteen members on its roll, had already thinned down to five priests only; and death was soon to claim two more from among them. There were the two priests in Lhasa, Fr. Seraphin of Civitavuova still clinging on in Nepal, while Frs. Francis Anthony of Cingoli and Peter of Serra Petrona were stationed at Patna and Chandernagore respectively. It was indeed a hopeless state of affairs. Only five missionaries and all of them either sickly or disabled—were now left to care for such a large area and posted to stations so wide apart. The mission organisation was once more on the verge of collapse; it was too loosely knit to stand together.

Was not Rome aware of it? Surely it must have been. But why did they allow the mission to fall upon such evil days and that too at such a critical juncture when everything looked rosy and promising? It is difficult to answer this question fully and with any degree of certainty. More than one reason must have forced things into such a desperate plight.

Europe, the supply base of mission man-power and financial means of support, was bubbling with wars and political unrest. People at home were worried over things affecting them most intimately. They surely thought of what was happening to a handful of missionaries struggling on desperately somewhere in a secluded corner of the world, but it was also difficult to come to their aid. Piracy ruled over the sea and war devastated the land. Under these circumstances it was highly unsafe to send out missionaries, remit funds or even despatch letters. They felt sure that nothing could reach the other end or at the best it would be so delayed that it would not serve the purpose. The best policy then was to mark time and wait for better days.

If all this can be put forward as a general reason to explain the difficulties that confronted the Tibetan Mission at this stage, there was yet another particular motive which made the authorities reluctant to commit themselves any further in this matter.

Till the year 1731, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda had not given its final verdict in regard to the controversy that had arisen between the Jesuits and the Capuchins over the Tibetan Mission, whether Lhasa was going to be entrusted to the sons of St. Francis or to the sons of St. Ignatius. There was a time when it was even rumoured (perhaps to appease both the Jesuits and the Capuchins) that the territory of the mission might be divided between the two—the Capuchins remaining in Lhasa and the Jesuits taking over the Province of Shigatse and the surrounding regions (17). Anyway, the delay in taking a final decision over such a vital issue had made the Superiors of the Capuchin Order cautious. They wanted to see clearly to whom the mission belonged before sending out more men and to shoulder the burden which a new expedition would entail (18).

Meanwhile, the Prefect and his companions still hung on in Tibet, waiting for the development of events; hoping some how that the passage of time would bring some good news, or a welcome change in the present unbearable state of uncertainty and isolation. For some time now they were torn asunder by two opposite feelings—the desire to withdraw to India, talk things over with the other Fathers and see what could possibly be done to solve the present impasse, and the urge to carry on till the arrival of new reinforcements or at the worst till the end of their days. At this stage the attraction which Lhasa exercised was difficult to resist and to leave it. Things had never been so good and promising; the mission work was going on smoothly and with accelerated rhythm and success seemed to be just a step ahead of them. Then why should they abandon the field just now? If they left, the whole situation might change within a short

17. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 161.

18. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 10

time and the work of nearly twenty years lost. As things stood, it was far better now to wait and see.

A Prisoner of the Lord

If the two Fathers remained undecided about the next move, the course of events showed them the way to follow. Fr. Prefect's state of health was fast deteriorating and the doctors strongly advised him to seek a change of climate. On the other hand, not all was well with the remaining parts of the mission. News had reached Lhasa that the settlement in the Valley of Nepal had already been abandoned. One of the two missionaries residing there (Fr. Francis of Cagli, a member of the seventh expedition) had died at Bathgaon on Christmas Day, 1730. His companions, Fr. Seraphin of Civitanuova, who had already served in Nepal for an unbroken period of ten years, feeling lonely and low had made up his mind to come down to Patna early in 1731, in order to keep company with the lonely confrere left in that station—Fr. Francis Anthony of Cingoli.

The state of health and the latest development of the mission in Nepal had finally prevailed upon Fr. Francis Horace to leave the altitude of Tibet for a lower and warmer climate. On the 25th August, 1732, the dispirited Prefect made his way down to the south in order to see if a change of air and of environment might not be the providential means to restore his health. On that day—a sad and memorable day for him—Fr. Francis Horace bade farewell to his companion and friend, Fr. Joachim of Anatolia, who was visibly moved to tears and then set out in the company of some Nepalese Christians, newly converted in Lhasa, on the long and trying journey to the Valley of Nepal.

The last days in Lhasa were both heart-rending and soul-inspiring at the same time. Fr. Francis Horace was pained to leave his confrere behind all alone. They had lived together under the same roof, sharing their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears for more than eleven years. And now their companionship had developed into a sincere friendship, mutual esteem and respect. One had been the support of the other in the dark hours of their missionary career. It was but natural that they should now feel bitterly

their separation. The uncertainty as to what the future had in store for them and for their dear mission made their grief all the more poignant. Besides, there were many friends and well-wishers, sincere inquirers and prospective converts, souls he had hoped to bring soon to the fold of Christ; people he had be-friended and for whom he had worked with all the faith and dedication of an apostle. All these and many more things made him feel that the ties with Tibet and its people, the chief and only aspiration of his missionary life, were abruptly severed by the mysterious hand of God.

It was also an up-lifting of the soul. When the news of his imminent departure became known, streams of people went to see the aged and infirm missionary and bid him good-bye. They expressed the hope that he would soon recover and be back again in their midst. They made him feel how much he was loved and respected. He was made the object of general sympathy and regret. The humble minister of God had never dreamt that they would miss him so much. This was for him a source of great consolation in the sense that he was made to realise that his work was already bearing fruit. If conversions had been few, if all these years had been an up-hill task and struggle, it was evident now that the land of Tibet was a fertile soil in which to sow the seed. A new climate towards the Christian ideal was making itself felt everywhere. Thaw had set in and there was a sure change in the air. Spring laden with warmth and flowers should not be far behind now.

The Regent, who was very fond of Fr. Francis Horace, permitted him to leave grudgingly, after extracting a promise of returning as soon as possible. On his own accord P'o-lha-nas dictated a valedictory letter to his secretary on 1st July, 1732, which he kept to be presented to the Prefect on the occasion of his leave taking. It is a beautiful testimonial, spontaneous and unsolicited, which outlines the noble character of the two missionaries as seen by the strong man of Tibet and by a disinterested witness. The testimonial, being a confirmation of what we have written about Fr. Francis Horace and Fr. Joachim, deserves to be

quoted in full : It reads :

“Since you have come to Lhasa not only have you done all the good you could do to all men, the Chinese, the Mongolians and the Tibetans as well as the Kashmiri, the Nepalese and the Indians, but also you have never committed a single evil action, not even as such as a hair’s root. We are glad to say that we have been very pleased with your behaviour ; you have done nothing against the civil and religious laws of the land. And we state this in regard to you, O white-headed lama, and also in respect of the other lama, the physician. Now you are going to Nepal and we feel sure that your good disposition of heart and mind will urge you to do good to all men there also. We know that you are in difficulty and we accompany you by our good wishes and with our most sincere prayers. Though we know not your religion, yet we believe and nurse a feeling of profound veneration for all religions, ours and yours. You may be assured that in the past we have never said anything against your law, and we shall never do so in the future.

“Please inform your lama (the Pope) of our good will and kind disposition towards you. Wherever you go do not fail to write to us now and then. As you are a good lama, a lama of great virtue with a pure and sincere soul, we shall feel in duty bound to reply to you” (19).

Equally flattering was the passport or travelling paper issued by the Regent to Fr. Francis Horace. It bears the date 7th August, 1732. As stated elsewhere a passport was a very important document. Strictly speaking there were different kinds of passports. They varied according to the social status of the person to whom they were issued and the various degrees of travelling facilities granted to the passengers. The passport of Fr. Francis Horace was drafted in such a way as to make him a dignitary of great importance.

After the usual preliminaries, which are part of all such documents, such as stating that the present travel permit is directed “to all our subjects, the officers, great and small, who live on the road leading to Nepal”, the passport issued

19. Rappresentanza, Summary No. VIII ; Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 90, 153 ; part IV, 196-197.

to the Prefect orders that - "None of the customs officers shall demand any tribute, either of those that are imposed or that may be newly imposed, not even the tribute for repassing the borders of the kingdom".

The document goes on to say : "We ordain that no one, although a passenger, do any harm to the said lama, or to the people whom he takes with him, but that all treat him well and help him as much as they can, that he be given a room to sleep in and another with a chimney to cook in, and wood to make a fire with, as much as he may require; that he be given a boat of skins to cross the rivers, and a wooden boat to cross the river Cihsum (that is at the intersection of the Brahmaputra with the Kyichu, the river that flows down from Lhasa) and let all the officials see to it that he is not delayed, but give him all the possible help; and let none of the road guards stop him or place any hindrance in his way, but endeavour that he travels peacefully and with the greatest ease" (20).

The send-off from Lhasa was grand and moving, in sharp contrast to the inhuman and barbarous treatment the Prefect was to receive on his arrival in Nepal. The Raja of Kathmandu (Jagaj Jaya Malla, a man endowed with an erratic temperament) bluntly and without standing on any ceremony cast Fr. Francis Horace, worn out by fatigue and prostrated by illness as he was, into prison where he remained several months. It was the same petty ruler who had put a premium on the transit of the earlier Tibetan missionaries through Nepal; who welcomed Fr. Francis Horace and his companions in January, 1715 and finally expelled the Missionaries from Kathmandu in 1722. The Prefect knew beforehand that he would not be welcomed to Kathmandu. He knew also that by going there he might court arrest. However, he had his own reasons for choosing Kathmandu in preference to the neighbouring kingdom of Bhatgaon, whose ruler, throughout his long reign, had always been a true friend to the missionaries. The reason was that the few Nepalese Christians - who, by the way were petty traders by profession - the Prefect had taken with him to Nepal were

20. Rappresentanza, Summary No. VII ; Nuovo Ramusio, part IV, p. 198-199.

subjects or nationals of the Kingdom of Kathmandu. They had their own business, relations and friends there and they wanted to stay there in spite of the unfriendly dispositions of the ruler towards them. It was but natural for the Prefect to stand by them notwithstanding the harassment he might be subjected to. He wanted to keep them together, to help them in their spiritual needs and possibly form the first nucleus of Christians which might be instrumental in bringing others into the fold of Christ.

Fr. Francis Horace, in one of his reports to Rome, tells us the reason which led to his imprisonment. He writes: "For several months (there must have been four or five months in all) I suffered formal imprisonment and the spoliation of whatever was in the house. This was done by order of the king of Kathmandu, instigated by the Brahmans, who considered themselves aggrieved, because I had made Christians of some of his subjects. They too had their property confiscated, and they endured it firmly, together with the violence they were put to, the threats and also flatteries used to make them abandon their Holy Faith, and adhere to their erroneous and foul sect. Their constancy angered him all the more" (21).

Finally, the Brahmans' plots came to light. The poor Father was released from prison and allowed to continue work peacefully. Not only that but the king himself gave him considerable encouragement, moved, it seems, by political considerations. It was not wise, he must have thought, to ill-treat a person who was held in such high esteem by the Tibetan authorities. This might be the cause of some unpleasantness and complications between the two governments.

On release from prison, the articles which had been confiscated were duly returned to the missionary except for a few things on which the guardians of law and order had already set their eyes and hands. In this connection some money had also to be paid by way of tips because of the "good services" rendered by the government servants in keeping things in safe custody (22).

21. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 97. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 221, specifically mentions that Fr. Francis Horace was in prison for four or five months.

22. Rappresentanza No. LXIII ; Nuovo Ramusio part, III, p. 98, 221.

The Brahmans had taken advantage of Fr. Francis Horace's foreign nationality to cause trouble again and to checkmate the spread of Christianity. They worked themselves into a frenzy and circulated the report that the doctrine preached by this foreign sahib was against the welfare of the country. It encouraged, they alleged, disobedience to the lawfully constituted authorities, a thing which may eventually lead to revolution and anarchy. It was therefore necessary for the good of the country to bridle the stranger in such a way that it would be impossible for him to do any harm, either by banning him from the kingdom or sending him to jail. And the Brahmans succeeded in their plan.

The news of Fr. Francis Horace's imprisonment caused something of a stir in the town. The Raj Guru or High priest— an influential person in the state and a member of the royal council—was one of the first to come to know about it. He was a kind and understanding man. Out of sympathy or curiosity, or else moved by a sincere desire to ascertain the truth, the Raj Guru went to see the prisoner in his cell. The two talked things over. The Prefect tried to make the High Priest understand how unjust was the accusation levelled against him. He explained how the Christian law was not opposed to any established order, even secular, but rather fostered good relations between the rulers and their subjects. As a matter of fact, it inculcated obedience and reverence for all those who were in authority. The Raj Guru who had had some previous association with the other Capuchin missionaries, who had been in Kathmandu, and who knew that their conduct was blameless and that their teaching was above suspicion, readily understood the argument put forward by Fr. Francis Horace in his defence. He was convinced that the missionary had been falsely accused by some interested party. Faithful to his conviction he made use of his good offices with the king to get the prisoner released from jail.

“The royal person then”, so Fr. Francis Horace continues in his narrative, “having assured himself of this truth (that the Christian law was not against the established government of the land) was pacified so much so that

it was proposed not only to grant the Capuchins a permanent residence in Kathmandu but also to give them a royal decree of liberty of conscience. The king even called me to his presence to favour me with such a privilege, but I deferred acceptance of it because I could not afford the thirty Roman Scudi (about Rs. 70/-) for the presents which are to be given on such occasions to the Secretary of State, the keeper of the Seal, and the other ministers of State, whom one must honour as is the custom of the land" (23).

In another report the Prefect stated that he declined to accept the decree of the liberty of conscience even on some other grounds. He felt that the mission was on its last legs. Of late, news had been received from India that another priest, Fr. Seraphin of Civitanuova, had passed away peacefully in Patna in 1732. If things went on like that it was most likely that even Nepal would have to be abandoned in the near future. There was therefore no point to accept the decree of liberty of conscience when no one could be left in Kathmandu to avail himself of it. And bad news continued to come in. A communication from Rome despatched in 1731 and received two years later, informed the Prefect that no new re-inforcement would be sent, the reason being that the controversy between the Jesuits and the Capuchins over the claim to the mission was still pending before the Congregation (24). It was a desperate situation, a few more steps along the same road and then all missionary stations would have to be closed one after the other.

It was now the turn of Lhasa. The invigorating climate of Nepal had somehow restored Fr. Francis Horace's state of health, but his mind was not at peace. His thoughts were often with the lonely missionary now left in the uplands of Tibet. He too badly needed rest and a change of climate. On the other hand, the skeleton mission staff, reduced now to four priests, demanded that the long line of communication between Chandernagore and the Tibetan capital should be shortened and that the remaining forces should now be

23. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 97-98 ; Rappresentanza No. LXIII.

24. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 97-98. A letter conveying this sad news had been written from Rome in October, 1731, and was received by Fr. Francis Horace at Kathmandu in November, 1733.

concentrated on a few stations, if the mission was to survive the present testing time. In Nepal and India life would not be so hard as in the land of the lamas. The climate was better, and in India the missionaries could even beg from door to door for their daily bread, sure to find generous hearts among their brethren in the faith. In the circumstances, the Prefect thought it advisable to recall his comrade from Tibet. It was a great wrench for him to take this decision. It broke his heart. Lhasa had been the goal, the promised land, the dream of all missionaries and now, he, the Prefect, the leader of the enterprise, was forced to call it off. What a defeat! and this at a time when the hour of triumph seemed to be so near. But it could not be helped and the last missionary left Lhasa, the mission headquarters.

On receipt of the Prefect's letter, telling him to come down to Nepal, Fr. Joachim proceeded to wind up the affairs of the mission. The news caused a sensation in Lhasa, or, to put it in the words of Fr. Joachim, it was a source of scandal. The authorities and the people could hardly explain why these White Lamas had made up their mind to leave, specially at this stage, after having built the friary and the little church and obtained so many privileges and when everything was in their favour. All were ready and even eager to welcome new White Lamas and no one was prepared to see even the last one quit so soon and so unexpectedly (25).

The last few days in Lhasa were busy days. The lama of the body started to put things in order and to pack up the few personal effects he wanted to take with him to Nepal. The Church and the priest house were bolted and locked, the keys handed over to the Regent who proceeded to seal the premises with his royal seal. For greater safety, he appointed two members of his personal staff to look after the mission property. Further he put down in writing not to give the friary and the chapel to anyone except to the

25. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 222. Actually it appears that it was Fr. Joachim who had expressed the wish to come down to Nepal and that the Superior of the mission had sent him the "Obedience". (Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 98, 221-222).

White Lamas he already knew or to any other person who would produce the document he had signed (26).

Armed with an "honourable passport", similar to Fr. Francis Horace a year earlier by the Regent, the missionary doctor took the road to Nepal towards the middle of August 1733. The parting was sad and sad were the thoughts that accompanied him down all the way to Kathmandu.

For a year or so, Frs. Francis Horace and Joachim (who had arrived in the month of October, 1733) laboured together in Kathmandu and Bathgaon respectively with some measure of success. They worked and studied late into the night till they were heavy with sleep. The translation of Turlot's Catechism into the Newari language by the Prefect can easily be considered his greatest achievement during his sojourn in Kathmandu. He also succeeded in converting some adults and in administering the sacrament of Baptism to quite a number of dying children (27).

Well done good and faithful servants

If the success of an enterprise is to be judged by its external and tangible results or by the achievement of its objective, we may say that the Tibetan Mission had been a failure. The number of conversions had been very few, and surely out of proportion to the toil and labour, to the number of lives which had been lost and to the amount of funds that had been spent on it in an effort to make it a success. Speaking in the third person, Fr. Francis Horace records the work he had accomplished in Tibet prior to his departure in 1732 in these modest terms :

"During the eight years he had been Prefect (it must be remembered that the news of his appointment reached him in 1725) Holy Baptism had been administered in Tibet, Nepal and Patna to 2,587 children who had departed this life soon after their admission into the Church of God. At Lhasa he had baptised seven adults, natives of Newari or Nepal, who were

26. Rappresentanza No. LVIII ; Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 90, 222 ; part IV pp. 202-204.

27. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 130, 175, 178 ; part III, p. 98, 222.

there engaged in business. Of these one was a priest, a member of a religious community and from a good family. Besides these he could count as belonging to his church at Lhasa, thirteen Tibetan catechumens and five Nepalese catechumens" (28). The record goes on to say that "there were many others among the religious and lay people who were well inclined to embrace our Holy Religion".

The good Father ascribed the scantiness of the harvest to the paucity of labourers. Work begun was found impossible to bring to fruition. The men who were supposed to be sent out regularly to sustain and strengthen the initial effort failed to come while the few who were still left working in the field of their labour tapered off to the point of near extinction. It was a real tragedy. The soil was ready, the time for sowing had come but at the critical hour no one was there to cast the seed into the open furrow. Obviously enough, Fr. Francis Horace also tells that the political unrest prevailing at the time in the capital was another reason which adversely affected the interests of the mission and retarded its progress. He had been in Tibet for sixteen uninterrupted years, half of which were years of strife and war, of fear and bloodshed—tormented years during which it was impossible to dedicate oneself directly to the work of the apostolate.

It was indeed a humble record as far as facts and figures go, but missionary work cannot be measured exclusively by this yardstick. There are other factors which must be taken into account. The Capuchins had been sent to Tibet to preach the Gospel and they did it bravely and fearlessly,

28. *Rappresentanza* No. LX. Speaking in another report of the facility of administering Baptism to dying children in Nepal, Fr. Francis Horace states that the parents themselves send for the priests when they see that their children are about to die in order to administer to them the water of Baptism; the parents having already been instructed by the missionaries that this is the best way to make their off-spring enjoy the glory of God. Referring to the Nepalese convert belonging to a priestly caste, the Prefect further specified that he was of royal blood and that his eldest brother was the head of the Nepalese community in Tibet and that he enjoyed the rank of Ambassador of his country to the Tibetan Government. (*Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 94-95).

in and out of season, with every possible means at their disposal and to anyone who was ready to listen. All had become aware of the new religion, good and holy, coming from across the sea, which had pushed its way beyond the range of the forbidding Himalayan mountains. The diligence and love, the zeal and fervour with which these "White Lamas" carried out their mission, made people wonder at their faith and courage. The poverty in which they lived, and the holiness of life which emanated from each one of their actions, made them to be favourably compared with the best of lamas of the land, giving all an object lesson on Christianity. The poor friars had really preached the Gospel in words, deed and example, making the people of Tibet realise the inner transforming power which the teaching of Christ exhibits in the life of men. And this in itself was no mean achievement.

There is yet another aspect to gauge the measure of their success. This is demonstrated perhaps better than anything else by the good relations established between the missionaries and the authorities, by the glowing letters of esteem and respect remitted to them after their second withdrawal and, above all, by the insistence, on the part of the authorities, upon their returning with more White Lamas in order to continue the noble work which they had initiated in Lhasa. We shall quote these letters as they speak for themselves. Apart from the pompous and flourished style of the east there is underlined in each of them a yearning, a longing for the priests who had gone away—the kind of feeling one would express to a dear friend whose absence is keenly felt.

The first letter in order of time (30th March, 1733) is from the senior most of the four ministers of state, bKa'-blon T'on-pa, whose name we have already mentioned earlier in this chapter. He expressed his kind regards and good wishes to Fr. Francis Horace and gave him some news :

"Triumph over all infidels", writes the minister of state, "and make yourself holy. I rejoice to hear that you are well, and that the branches of your heart reach out to reap the fruit of your excellent law. I received your letter together with the tobacco wrapped in the purest paper linen;

and the tobacco as well as your letter gave me much pleasure. We are also well here and in peace. As regards the book of the refutation of my law presented by you to the Regent shortly before your departure from here, I am pleased to say that all who have heard about it try to have it, and they read it with great interest, so that my heart receives great joy. Again I wish you health and may you live many years without illness and may you propagate your excellent and holy law. And do pray so that whatever I have wished you may, according to my desire, come to pass. Though you are far I am still your sincere friend. Write to me from time to time. The present letter is accompanied by a gift" (29).

The Vicar Dalai Lama, with whom the Prefect had spent many happy hours conversing about religion, could not so easily forget his dear friend. One lucky day, the first of the sixth month of the year of the "water-bull" (the 23rd July, 1733) he addressed this warm tribute to the esteemed European lama :—

"Not small", so starts the letter of the High Pontiff of Lhasa to the Prefect, "was the pleasure and the consolation given us by your letter and the news of your good health, and the scarf sent to us by you, O Lama Francis Horace, who having banished all passions are in possession of all virtues and of a golden heart and a lofty mind. And because you have the bowels of a Father for your dear friend, I must regard your life as always very precious. As for us, though by the grace of God, we are in the best of health, we feel nevertheless very great displeasure on reading your letter because it reminds us once again that you have left our kingdom. But take care of yourself on your journey considering that our heart is united to yours. We have helped in all things your companion Joachim, our intimate friend. Although you go so far in your journey as the kingdom of your native land, yet do not forget us. Impressed upon our heart are all the discourses you addressed us with

29. Rappresentanza No. IX ; Nuovo Ramusio, part IV, p. 200-201. There are, of course, slightly different translations of this and other Tibetan documents, according to contemporary sources, but basically they all express the same feelings and ideas.

a great love of your law and the reading of the book dealing with the same law has given us great satisfaction” (30).

Next comes a kind of message from P'o-lha-nas, the Regent. It is dated the 3rd August, 1733, and was handed over to Fr. Joachim, just before his leaving the Tibetan capital for Nepal, to be delivered to Fr. Francis Horace personally.

“We experience much pleasure”, the Regent writes to the Prefect, “in learning that by the grace of God you, O European Lama, are well. May your body be like fine shining gold, and like the moon growing to her perfect fullness. Be your heart beneficent and of help to the living so that they may dispel vice and walk on the road which leads to the summit of virtue. We received a letter of yours with the accompanying gift together with the glass articles you sent us. (The text does not specify what kind of gift it was. The expression “glass articles” may mean crystals, spectacles or lens or anything of that kind, it is difficult to make out which.) They pleased us very much and were received with the same pleasure we would have felt if we had met you personally. Here by the grace of God, we too are well, but without zeal to help the living and to work for the law and the new life. The lama doctor will tell you more about it orally. Return soon with other Fathers. It will give me the greatest satisfaction. And continue to write to me regularly with the same regularity with which the Ganges flows along its course” (31).

The farewell and testimonial letter issued by the Regent (7th July, 1733) to Fr. Joachim on the occasion of his departure from Lhasa bears also abundant witness to the

30. The original Tibetan text of this letter has been lost. The earliest copy, still extant, appeared in the “Relazione a Stampa del 1742” (or Press Report of the year 1742), published “In Roma, nella stamperia di Antonio de’Rossi, 1742. Con licenza de’ superiori”. After that the letter re-appeared re-printed in different times and in different places and even in different languages. (Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 192 ; part IV, p. 205).

31. Rappresentanza, Summary X ; Nuovo Ramusio, part IV, p. 206-207.

good services rendered by the "lama of the body" and the "lama of the soul" during their stay in the capital. It is rather a lengthy document and we give here only the gist of it.

The letter begins by praising the Grand Lama of the west (the Pope) who out of his great kindness and deep feeling of compassion for every creature sent out the two European Lamas into a distant country to do good to all. Pursuing a long difficult journey, unmindful of their personal comfort, they finally reached Lhasa, "the centre of the world (literally "the navel of the earth"), this great miraculous temple". Then the Regent, referring to the two holy men of God in more direct terms speaks about their work, the good name and sweet memory they left behind on parting. "You", he tells them, "have devoted yourselves unsparingly to the welfare of all people with a noble spirit and unselfish dedication, disregarding food, drink, gain, renown, women and any other things which might make life comfortable. Because of this my predecessor (K' an-c'en-nas) and myself not only have treated you with cordial affection but realising that we could not be of any material help to you, we tried to show our appreciation for the work you did by taking you under our protection and by seeing to it that no harm would come to you".

The letter then proceeds: "First of all the 'lama of the soul' has left us. Though we endeavoured to persuade him to remain with us, yet we could not go against his wishes and finally we had to resign ourselves to his departure. And now you also, the 'lama of the body,' have made up your mind to go. We regret it because we thought you would be with us a little longer. You have been very useful in many maladies that have afflicted the land; you have never taken anything in return for your services, not even the cost of the medicines you have administered. We have much pleasure saying that you have done good to all men with a generous heart and a pure intention. Regretfully we let you go also and for this purpose we have issued a passport to you".

Speaking of the two missionaries jointly, the Regent concludes his farewell letter by stating that "you two, who

have always in your hearts thought the good of all men and who lead most exemplary life, have been with us for a long time, but now you return to your home, to a distant land. Though we are deeply attached to you, there is nothing we can do about it, for in the law it is written that whatever is united must one day be separated. However, on our part we shall do whatever is possible to help you so that your hopes and desires may be fulfilled. Be sure of this in your mind.”

It is in this solemn testimonial letter that the Regent pledges himself to look after the mission property. Here are the textual words : “We shall appoint a watchman to take care of your monastery. The door will be sealed permanently and the keys will be kept with caution. We will take it in our safe custody and undertake not only to give it back to the two of you, Lama and Physician, but also to anyone else of yours who may come to this country” (32).

Even the governor of Kuti, the frontier town, showed great regard and esteem for the persons of the two humble Capuchins. In a letter dated the 2nd May, 1734, and addressed to the “European Lama and the noble doctor”, he requests them, among other things, to come back and stay in Lhasa as long as they can. Their presence there, he writes, “will be very useful to a lot of people”.

In conclusion, we may say that the relationship and good will established between Lhasa and Rome, between the representatives of the Lama religion and the two messengers of the Catholic Faith sent to Tibet to carry the good news, could not have been better. The foundation of the future Lhasa church had been truly laid, deep and solid ; the rest of the building could be safely erected upon it. But...

The Prefect Goes to Rome

Only a few years earlier, the Tibetan missionaries had pushed on hopefully to Kathmandu, Lhasa and Tron-gne.

32. *Rappresentanza*, Summary No. XV ; Nuovo Ramusio, part IV, pp. 202-204.

It was the hey-day of their apostolate and apostolic activity. In climbing over those starry solitudes they must have felt the thrill that all pioneers experience. Their joy, however, was to be short lived. Tron-gne and Lhasa had already been abandoned, and now the zero hour had also struck for Kathmandu. But before falling back to India it seemed, for a hopeful moment, that all difficulties were about to be soon overcome.

At long last the Congregation of Propaganda had decided the claim, lodged by the Jesuits and the Capuchins over the Tibetan Mission. It was to be a Capuchin mission. One of the main stumbling blocks to its progress had been removed. The road was now clear to ensure a regular flow of men and means into the abandoned field of labour. So at least Fr. Francis Horace thought. The news cheered him up a bit and raised his hopes. It was like a clearing in the sky, harbinger of fair weather. Though still unwell and burdened with the weight of work and advancing age, the indefatigable apostle started making plans for the future, sure that new re-inforcements would not be slow in coming now. He even approached Fr. Joachim with the proposal to get ready and go back to his old post in order to prepare the way for the new recruits, while he still tarried on in Nepal waiting for their arrival. The mission needed badly to be re-organised. The Prefect would see to this first and then move on in the company of the new comers into the table land of Tibet.

The reaction of Fr. Joachim to the proposal of returning to Tibet was typical of a man broken down in health and spirit. It was hardly a month since he had come down to Nepal when he was approached in this connection. He was still feeling exhausted by the tiring journey and broken down by want of rest for the last thirteen years. "I have not yet replied yes or no", he wrote to a friend, "because I feel death nearer to me than my shadow. If I go I will obey men, if I do not go I will obey God who calls me to Himself"(33).

33. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 178. Towards the end of 1734, Fr. Francis Horace had received two letters from Rome dated December, 1732 and January, 1733 respectively, telling him that the controversy between the Capuchins and the Jesuits over the mission of Lhasa had been finally decided in favour of the Capuchins. (Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 98).

Alas! the hope for the arrival of new re-inforcements upon which the resurrection of the dying mission depended, was soon dead. It was like a dream, a formless and fugitive dream of the night. The stark reality of things woke up the Prefect with a start to the actual facts. Two new staggering blows struck the mission within a short time, upsetting all plans and shattering all expectations. Down in Patna good Fr. Francis Anthony of Cingoli, a member of the sixth expedition, had gone to his heavenly home towards the second half of the year 1734. With his untimely death, he was still in his forties, the whole mission staff had dwindled to three priests only. The death rattle seemed now to be fast approaching.

Writing about the three survivors years later while in Rome, Fr. Francis Horace described them in these pathetic terms: "One had been a missionary for seventeen years and was now weak, ailing and unfit for work (Fr. Joachim of Anatolia); another who had served in the mission for twenty two years, was about seventy seven years old (actually he was only sixty six) and was blind of one eye, (Fr. Peter of Serra Petrona, who had been working all the time at Chandernagore); and the third (the Prefect himself) had already completed twenty five years of service out in the mission land" (34). None of them had been home on leave even once for a well deserved rest.

Following Fr. Francis Anthony's death the harried Prefect felt bound to take another painful decision. Both he and his companion were to leave Kathmandu and come down to Patna. Fr. Joachim was to replace the much lamented Fr. Francis Anthony while the Prefect was to press on to Bengal waiting at Chandernagore for the arrival of some news or of new missionaries. Disheartened, but hopeful, he was still expecting that relief of some sort would be soon forthcoming. Perhaps, he thought, the new missionaries were on the way. Within a year or so the situation would change for the better and a wishful prayer went up to heaven.

The decision to abandon Nepal was a painful one in more ways than one. The few Christians in Kathmandu and

34. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 96

Bhatgaon entreated the two Fathers not to leave them orphans. They were all newly converted. They were like saplings in the nursery still in need of care, still wanting to be guided and strengthened by that moral light and spiritual food which had to sustain them all through life. But no matter how hard it was on the pastor to leave the newly-born lambs alone and unprotected, it could not be helped. There were Catholics in Patna too, sheep without shepherd, who might stray from the fold. They also had to be tended with loving care, Apart from this there were other considerations which weighed in abandoning Nepal. Not the least of all was the fear that the mission property in Patna might be confiscated. At the death of the owner or of the occupier, if no one came forward to claim it, the estate was ransacked by the rabble or taken over by government. That was the law of the land those days. Incidentally, we may add here that at the death of Fr. Francis Anthony of Cingoli some traders of the Dutch Factory in Patna had kindly taken charge of the mission property to hand it over, whole and intact, to the first missionary who might arrive at the station (35).

Frs. Francis Horace and Joachim had scarcely reached Patna at the end of December, 1734, or the beginning of January, 1735, when they learnt that another blow, the severest of all, had struck the mission. It left them stunned with grief and shock. Rome had decided to cut down the number of missionaries. That was the fatal communication they received there, and not the longed, hoped for news that new priests were on their way out to India.

Short of funds and hard-pressed by other commitments, the Congregation of Propaganda had passed a resolution on the 29th November, 1732, to the effect that the Tibetan Mission was to be maintained but the personnel had to be reduced to five members only. It was further resolved to fix the annual allocation at 500 Roman Scudi i. e, Rs. 1,100/- (36). That sounded the death-knell of the mission and razed it to the dust.

35. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 222-223.

36. Rappresentanza, Summary No. III.

The decision electrified the Prefect into action. He resolved to go to Rome to represent in forceful language the crying needs of the Mission. In his opinion it was impossible to maintain all the stations with a staff of five priests. For him it was a matter of life or death—either the mission was to be closed down for good or all necessary efforts were to be made to keep it going with relative ease and reasonable prospects of success. In the new set-up, any one could easily foresee that the enterprise was doomed to failure, or, at the most, it might linger on, but at the cost of a protracted life-long agony.

Fr. Joachim was nominated Vice-Prefect of the Mission with his residence at Patna, while Fr. Francis Horace got ready to leave for Rome. Chandernagore was the first halt on the outward journey. He was there at that time of the year when ships were expected to arrive from Europe. They were due in September or October, but if the voyage had been unfavourable, they might cast anchor as late as November or December. The Prefect would wait there anxiously till the arrival of the last ship from Europe. He would go down to the wharf, when he heard of some incoming vessels, to look round, ask, enquire in the desperate hope of receiving some consoling news, some letter or better still of welcoming some new faces, fresh from home. Who knew? Divine Providence has a mysterious way to come to one's help at the last moment, when everything looks hopeless. But though ships came, they only brought a chilling silence to the man waiting for them in suspense.

It was now imperative for the Prefect to go to Rome. He had hoped against hope that some one might come in time to prevent the total collapse of the mission. At this sad juncture, even five priests would have been enough to prop up the tottering building, but this was not to be, and the poor man had to proceed to Rome to appeal for help. As the disheartened apostle was thinking over his problems, another difficulty stared him in the face. He had insufficient money for the voyage. Humbly, like a poor beggar in the streets, he made the rounds of the merchants, Catholics and Protestants, of any one in the station who was willing to stretch out a helping hand in order to make

up for the passage money (37). It was a rather big amount. Of late missionaries had been made to pay for their passage and it was not an easy matter to raise Rs. 250/- for the voyage alone. This settled, the Prefect of the Tibetan Mission sailed westward at the end of December, 1735. Twenty three years earlier, he had left his native Italy, young, hopeful and in high spirits. And now he was homeward bound, but his heart was heavy, his body bore the marks of hardships and advancing years, while dark forebodings loomed large in his troubled mind.

In the fall of 1736, Fr. Francis Horace was in Rome, in the city which had either to fulfil his cherished dreams or bring them to naught. He took it by storm, so to say. He did not budge from there; he did not go and see his native land or dear relatives; he pressed things relentlessly and refused to do anything else unless and until the destiny of his beloved mission was decided.

It was an impossible task. All odds were against him and only a miracle could save the Tibetan Mission. To begin with, there was the resolution of November 1732 which ordered the scaling down of the number of missionaries to five members only. This had already been endorsed and confirmed by the Pope. It was clear and unmistakable and stood there like a granite wall to parry off all objections which might be raised against it. To make Rome reverse its decision within such a short time was an unheard of thing. Further, Fr. Francis Horace sensed that the whole atmosphere around him, both in the Vatican and at the General Curia of the Capuchins, was decidedly unfavourable to say the least. Some sympathy was shown, perhaps, for the man who had bravely borne the burden of the day and of the heat, but none for the cause he had come to plead. The Vatican authorities told him in plain spoken language that they could not afford to disburse more funds than the annual allocation which had been sanctioned of late. Besides, they made him understand that the cost to finance the Tibetan Mission had been excessive, while the returns or results

37. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 93.

so far had been very poor. There was no proportion between the outlay and the turnover. It was senseless to sink more money in an undertaking which yielded such meagre dividends. Facts and figures were there to prove it. It was pointed out that from the beginning of the mission to the present day, a sum of twenty two thousand Roman Scudi (about Rs. 50,000/-) had been spent to finance the enterprise and that up to this date there was little to show for it (38). The argument was conclusive.

At the Capuchin Curia in Rome the tune was slightly different, but based more or less on the same argument. Here the stress was laid on the number of missionaries who had died for a noble cause—a fact which could not be denied—but without the consolation of bringing souls to Christ. It was argued that out of the thirty four priests and brothers who up to the year 1721 had been sent out to the east, twenty six of them had already died (39) and the few who had returned home were not very enthusiastic about the idea of giving the mission a new lease of life. The whole thing was considered a sheer waste of man-power which could be better utilised elsewhere. No matter what Father della Penna had to say in defence, the fact remained that definite figures and concrete results were the final criterion from which the success of an enterprise should be judged. And in this the Tibetan Mission was found wanting. Poor Fr. Francis Horace had to bow his head and admit regretfully that even this was true.

However, the door was closed, but not locked and bolted. There was still some hope to have it opened gently through the power of persuasion and through the valuable assistance of some influential members of the Roman Curia. On the other hand, it was already a great blessing that the mission was allowed to survive even on a reduced scale. This was

38. This means that about Rs. 30,000/- was handed over to the 34 Missionaries at the time of leaving their homeland and that about Rs. 20,000/- had been remitted periodically as annual allocation.

39. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 111.

the thin edge of the wedge which Fr. Prefect cleverly used to turn the scales in his favour. He knew where he stood and what arguments should be pressed to bring home to the authorities the impracticability of their latest decision. As for the objections raised by the Vatican and at the Capuchin Curia in Rome, these could be easily disposed of if they could only give him a patient hearing.

The magnanimous apostle started explaining the reasons which in his opinion made it impossible for five missionaries to care for four or five stations spread over an area of two million square kilometers. These were many and varied. There was, of course, the difficulty of the language, climate and customs. A priest who knew the language of the place, who had acclimatised himself to the new environments and who was well-acquainted with the manners and customs of the people, could not be so easily posted to another station where the language, customs and, climate were totally different. He had to start his missionary training all over again. There were already five stations in the whole territory, but there were more than ten languages spoken within its confines. It was, therefore, necessary to increase the number of priests to give stability to the organisation—a thing which could not be done if the present arrangement were allowed to go on indefinitely.

The distance too from one place to another was enormous and the means of communication very primitive. This meant that at least two missionaries should be posted in each station. Months and years might go by without affording a lonely priest the joy to see a dear face, the consolation of going to confession and, who knew, death might overtake him all alone like a cast away on a desert island. Solitude over an unlimited period of time is not the best of advisers—it might drive one to despair or even make one lose one's mental balance. And Fr. Francis Horace went on in the same strain listing no less than seven reasons (40), all of them stringent and cogent that militated against the decision taken by Propaganda in November, 1732.

40. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, pp. 99-101 ; Rappresentanza No. LXI.

In his impassionate plea the Prefect was not out to impose his opinion on any one but he made one point very clear, and it was this : either the mission was given a fair chance to succeed in its purpose or the whole undertaking was called off as unrealistic, as a plan impossible to be implemented. In the present state of things he was reduced to the condition of a field commander without men and means at his disposal to carry on a tremendous campaign.

There were, of course, dark spots in the picture of the mission. Fr. Francis Horace did not gloss over them. He frankly admitted his shortcomings and failures, at the same time he had quite a lot to say for himself, for his work, for the moral success he had achieved. He did not come to the Eternal City unprepared. Carefully tucked away in his travelling baggage were all the letters and documents issued to the missionaries from the Potala Palace to show them, in original, to the sceptic Roman authorities. They spoke volumes. They told of the extraordinary privileges granted to the mission and to the missionaries, of the great esteem the Christian faith and the messengers of the Gospel enjoyed in the land of the lamas ; of the great hope of making conversions among the people of Tibet who were already Christians at heart ; of the sincere and heart-felt desire expressed by no less a person than the Regent in person for having more Capuchins back in the capital to continue their noble work and so on. And all this had been achieved in a matter of a few years, by a few starved missionaries, labouring under innumerable restrictions and difficulties and during one of the most tormented periods in the history of the country. Would there be any one who dared to accuse the Prefect that he had been a failure ? Or, say that all the Fathers who had died in the mission had died in vain ? Would it not be better to continue in their foot-steps till final victory ? These were thought-provoking questions worth pondering over.

As for the financial side of the enterprise, the main objection raised by Propaganda, Fr. Francis Horace fully realised that he was up against a great, but not unsurmountable obstacle. New sources of income could be tapped. Other ways and means could be explored to raise funds. If

God really wanted the mission to live and prosper, He would surely find the way to come to the rescue of His servants, provide them with bare minimum to carry on their work. They had lived so far in misery and were determined to face once again hunger and starvation, to pay the price for the salvation of so many people whom they saw so well-disposed to receiving the gift of faith.

It was hard to convince Rome. Ironically, perhaps, Fr. Francis Horace, had found it much easier to draw the attention of the Tibetan people when speaking to them of Christ and His religion than he did in Rome in trying to put forward his point of view in regard to the future of the Mission. The things he had said and repeated (and he had said and repeated them not just to carry his point but as a matter of conscience so as not to be guilty before God for the eventual loss of so many souls (41) did make an impression. No doubt he had made out a strong case. He might have been right; and not a few began to think that he was right. Lewis Anthony Card. Belluga, a Cardinal of the Roman Curia, became a staunch supporter of the intrepid Prefect. He began to take a keen interest in the mission and promised to lend it his unqualified support. The Cardinal was a Spaniard by birth and carried great weight with the court of Spain. He was in a position to help both morally and economically. It was he who became, so to say, the lever of the movement that served to lift up the fallen fortunes of the Tibetan Mission. The Pope himself, Clement XII, did not disguise where his sympathies lay; others followed suit. A new current of sympathetic understanding started mounting up in favour of the brave man who bore on his body traces of the hardships and starvation and who could speak with the tongue of an apostle.

Fr. Francis Horace had finally won his point, but more than one year, the whole of 1737, had been spent in negotiations. Another long period of time was taken up in writing. He was told to give an overall picture of the Mission and to answer a number of questions put to him by the Secretary of the Congregation of Propaganda. This would serve as a

41. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 99.

comprehensive report to be submitted to the authorities and upon which a final decision would be taken.

The Prefect was equally at home in talking and in writing. Four long and ponderous reports or accounts were prepared by his facile pen during the year 1738. All but one are still extant. They stand as a monument to his zeal and power of persuasion, besides giving a fair idea of the colossal work which had been done by the missionaries in Lhasa. They dealt with the history of the time and with the religious and social life of the country. For the moment we are not interested in them, though, perhaps, the reader may like to know that even in these later writings mention is made of the legend that St. Thomas, the Apostle had been to Tibet and that in the pre-Buddhist days there had been Christians all over the land (42).

The upshot of these protracted negotiations may be briefly summed up as follows: According to the Prefect, there were two possible re-organisation plans to put the mission again in good working condition. The first was to go back to the re-organisation programme already sanctioned by the Congregation of Propaganda in the year 1714 and to adhere to it in spirit and letter. Twelve priests and a few lay-brothers were to be permanently on the mission roll. This was the bare minimum required to secure stability of work and a reasonable guarantee of success. The most crucial point, however, was how to finance the enterprise. The annual allocation of 1000 Roman Scudi (Rs. 2,250/-) was wholly inadequate. By the time it reached Lhasa it was slashed down by nearly one third due to the unfavourable rate of exchange, tolls, transport and other incidental charges. Further, a good deal of the annual allocation had to be set aside as wages to be paid to one or more amanuenses engaged in making copies of the Catechism and other books of religious propaganda to be distributed free of cost to any one who might be interested in them. This was one of the essential items of expenditure. But if the Congregation of Propaganda was kind enough to remit every year one thousand Roman scudi, and saw to it that the amount

42. Rappresentanza No. LXV.

reached regularly, and that the loss suffered by the rate of exchange was to be reduced to the minimum, the missionaries on their part would be satisfied with that much and this would be their contribution to the welfare of the Tibetan Mission (43).

The other plan was more ambitious and would give the Mission a larger breath of life. It was to be an addition to the plan already referred to above—an addition which would be at the same time a consolidation of the work which had already been started, and a probe into new missionary territories. New stations were to be opened to the south and to the east of Lhasa, the mission headquarters, in order to link up Chandernagore, the small French Settlement in Bengal, with Peking, the capital of the celestial empire. It was indeed a plan with a comprehensive span of vision. The new venture, in the opinion of the Prefect, required the services of an additional twelve or more labourers and a further outlay of one thousand Roman Scudi to implement it. The proposed new stations were:

Bhatgaon in the Valley of Nepal; the Raja of the place, Ranajita Malla was more than well disposed towards the Missionaries, the people were simple, hardworking and responsive to the preaching of the faith. The place offered large scope as a missionary field and the Fathers had already been working there.

Sikkim, the capital itself, or another town more conveniently situated, was another territory with a warm glow of attraction. Here the climate was good and the geographical position of the country made it a key-point in the line of communication. Correspondence had already been exchanged between the former Prefect and the Rajakumar in order to bring missionaries into Sikkim. They were sure of a welcome and would find there a fair scope for their apostolate.

Two more missionary stations were to be opened within Tibet proper, on the ancient trade route leading to Lhasa—one was to be at Sakya (Sa-skya) and the other at Shigatse

43. Rappresentanza No. LXIII

(gZis-ka-rtse). Sakya was a renowned Buddhist centre, older than, but equal in importance, to Lhasa. It had a large and famous monastery and university, headed by a re-born Grand Lama. Shigatse was indicated more as a resting place than a missionary station. Two months was the normal time employed in the trek between Kathmandu and Lhasa. It was good to take a well-deserved rest in between, and Shigatse was the ideal place. It was besides a thriving business town with a growing population.

Casting his eyes to the east, towards the immense territory of the Chinese empire, Fr. Francis Horace proposed to open a station in Sining, in the Province of Shensi, central China. The idea was again revived to link up Lhasa with Peking. Sining was a key town along the caravan route between Tibet and China. The distance from Lhasa to Peking could be covered in three months, i.e. fifty days from Lhasa to Sining and forty days from Sining to Peking. So the land journey from Chandernagore, the first base of the Tibetan Mission, to Peking, at the other end of the line, would take, if all went well, six or seven months—the same length of time as employed by ships in the voyage between France and India (44).

The opening of a missionary station at Sining was suggested more for tactical reasons than anything else. It was thought that the over-land travelling between India and China via Lhasa was quicker, safer and more comfortable than the sea route along the Chinese coast. On the other hand, the need was felt to co-ordinate and bring into closer contact the missionary activities between Tibet and China. They were two adjoining countries with common interests, but the missionaries working there were like men living on another planet.

This is all that Fr. Francis Horace had to say. In all his reports, he is assiduously trying to make it clear that he does not want to influence the decision of the Roman Curia and that all that he had said, done and written was as in duty bound and in order to clear his conscience.

44. Rappresentanza No. LXV ; Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 191.

The summing up of the points to enforce his arguments gives an insight of the man and reminds one of the impassioned pleading of some classical orators :

“Amidst so many hindrances”, so he concludes one of his reports to the Cardinal of Propaganda, “amidst so many hindrances from wars and privations of subsidies, necessitating the abandonment of the mission in Lhasa in 1711; amidst such scarcity of labourers, compelling the abandonment of the same Mission and that of Nepal in 1733; amidst so many sufferings, persecutions, difficulties and the deaths of so many Fathers—twenty six Missionaries having sacrificed their lives for the glory of God...—it has pleased God to found the Mission of Tibet and to bring it to such a good position that it promises great fruits...Still I do not want Your Eminence to make this good position permanent and stable, for to make such a plea would be to do great wrong to the ardent zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls which inflames the heart of Your Eminence; neither do I request the suppression of the Mission for that would precipitate my soul into the very abysses of hell, but as during these last twelve or thirteen years that the poor Mission had become weaker and weaker even to the extent of seeming that all the demons have united to destroy it...I, accordingly, humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Eminence, respectfully beseech you finally and for all, to decide what is for the greater glory of God and for the salvation of poor souls. Be pleased to make the afflicted and few missionaries who are on the field, breathe easily and freely once again or to recall them, and to allow me, after twenty five years and more of hardships and sufferings endured in the service of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda of the Faith, to return to my Province in holy peace” (45).

45. This peroration for the Tibetan Mission appears in the German version of *Rappresentanza*, known as “*Missio-Apostolica Tibetano-Seraphica* etc.”.

CHAPTER VIII

BACK TO LHASA

Like an expeditionary force, worn out by a long exhausting campaign in a far off land, which withdraws to a rest camp in order to regain its lost strength, re-organises its ranks and then moves again into action, so did Fr. Francis Horace, a veteran of so many campaigns, sally forth from the home base in the month of September, 1738, at the head of a small band of valiant soldiers of Christ in order to make an all-out attack on the fortress of Buddhist Lamaism.

The new expedition—the ninth during the past thirty four years—was unlike the former ones. It had a peculiar character of its own and every one was aware of it. The expedition had a clear and specific mandate to fulfil—it was meant to decide the fate of the mission. The future of the enterprise depended on the success or failure that would result from the work of the men who were sent out in 1738. Their number was surely out of proportion to the magnitude of the task that was set before them, yet, it was considered sufficient to explore the possibilities which Tibet might offer to the messengers of the Gospel, as a prospective field of missionary activity.

In all his dealings with the authorities in Rome, as already stressed in the last chapter, Fr. Francis Horace had never committed himself. He had never pleaded for the continuance of the mission nor had he insisted on its suppression. But one thing was made absolutely clear that, should the Congregation of Propaganda decide to keep the Tibetan Mission, then the venture should be given a fair chance and all efforts should be made to ensure its success. Therefore, the ninth expedition was better catered for in every particular than any of the previous ones. It was more carefully planned,

much better equipped and, above all, special care was given to the selection of the personnel that was to play such an important and decisive role. In short, nothing was left to chance in order to give the Mission the last opportunity to redeem itself or to prove beyond doubt that the hour for the evangelisation of Tibet had not yet come.

Fr. Francis Horace had now been Prefect of the Mission for nearly twenty years, having been appointed in August, 1719. In the ordinary course he should have been relieved of his duties which were so onerous. Rome, however, was pleased to confirm him in his office for ten years more. He had given an exceptionally good account of himself, both as a missionary and as a Prefect. A more accomplished leader could hardly have been found. The long and varied experience of the past had served to train him in mission warfare, and his inborn quality to make others follow him made him a natural leader of men. One could feel sure that the example of the veteran missionary would be a source of inspiration and confidence to the new recruits, eager to enter the lists, and under his command to give their best in the service of the cause to which they had dedicated their life.

Though Fr. Francis Horace might have wished to be relieved of his office, yet, in a way, he was pleased to be confirmed in his post as Prefect of the Mission. This would give him the best opportunity to make more easily available to others the fruits of his own experience, to re-organise the whole missionary activity according to his own plans and finally to take upon himself the full responsibility of the undertaking. It was chiefly due to him that the Congregation of Propaganda had given the Tibetan Mission a new lease of life. It would, therefore, be only fair that he should be given the credit, if he succeeded in his own objective, or he alone should be blamed, if the course of events worked against expectations.

The expedition left Rome with a considerable amount of luggage. In the equipment which they took with them figured two items which deserve special mention here. One was a large church bell to be installed in the new chapel in

Lhasa (1). The other was a complete printing press, mobile types, in Tibetan characters. If the church bell speaks of the romantic spirit of Fr. Francis Horace, the printing press reveals him to be a man of deep vision, far ahead of his times.

Fr. Francis Horace fully realised the great power the press would exercise in the service of the faith as a means of propaganda. While in Rome, he had repeatedly stressed the need of a strong propaganda machinery for the spread of the Gospel. He had already translated a mass of Christian literature into the Tibetan language. But the main drawback to make it reach the reading public was the lack of quick, cheap and easy means to turn out copies of his translations. The time-old emanuensis was still the man for the job in the backward land of Tibet. It was a slow, costly and low productive medium and the Prefect was longing for something more modern, for something which corresponded better with the ardent desire of his apostolic heart. He dreamt of a press, but who could afford to get one? He had already asked for a lot of things and could hardly dare to ask for more. Card. Belluga, whose name we have already mentioned, however, proved once more to be a generous and understanding benefactor. He volunteered to provide the Prefect even with this costly item. His Eminence had taken a liking to the idea of having a printing machine for the mission and declared himself ready to defray the expenditure of getting one made in Rome. That is how a full printing press, in Tibetan characters, carefully packed

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1. Not a few western travellers have seen this bell, installed in the temple of Lord Buddha, or, as they call it, the Cathedral of Lhasa. We may mention here Edmund Chandler, a member of the Younghusband expedition 1904; Terzorio, p. 153; Spencer Chapman in his book, *Lhasa the Holy City*, London 1940, chapter VIII; Heinrich Harrer in his book, *Seven Years in Tibet*, Pan Books Ltd., London, 2nd printing 1965, p. 218; *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta*, in the years 1638, pp. 535-540, 1946, p. 30. G. Tucci in his book, "A Lhasa ed oltre", Rome 1950, mentions also of having found a bell dedicated to Our Lady. Could it be the same bell presented by the king of Bhatgaon to the Fathers in 1737? That too bore the name of Jesus and Mary inscribed round the base (*Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 4).

in six wooden cases, finally found its way to Lhasa (2). The types (in two complete sets, one for the Mission and the other for the Congregation of Propaganda) were cut by Messrs. Fantozzi & Co. of Rome, under the direction of the Prefect himself. This alone shows what kind of man Fr. Francis Horace was.

The will to make an all-out effort to win Tibet over to the standard of the Cross is also evinced by the number of missionaries recruited on this occasion and of their high quality. It was so far the largest single Capuchin expedition en route to the east—an extraordinary thing in itself as the times then were not so mission-minded as they are now. The fact shows beyond doubt, how highly successful had been the representation of Father della Penna (or Horatius Pennabillensis, as he was styled in the official documents of the time) with the Roman authorities. They did not fully approve his larger scheme which would give a larger breath of life to the mission, and which envisaged the opening of five or six more stations with additional man-power of twelve missionaries. He was, however, given every possible facility and moral encouragement to start afresh the re-organisation plan of 1714. In short, he had been given the opportunity to show in a practical way that he had not been a visionary or a dreamer but all that he had said and written while in Rome corresponded with the objective appraisal of the situation that Tibet was really the promised land of the mission.

The new group of Missionaries—ten in all, eight priests and two lay brothers, besides the Prefect—were among the best that had so far been sent to the mission land of Tibet. They were men with fire of zeal in their hearts and wings on the feet. Their career in the mission showed that they had been carefully selected, for all of them distinguished themselves in the various fields of activity assigned to them. Three of their number (Frs. Tranquillus of Apecchio, Antonine of Monte Alboddo and Joseph Mary of Gargano) were tipped at different times for becoming the Prefect Apostolic of the Mission after the death of Fr. Francis

2. Rappresentanza No. LXIV ; Giornale, p. 104.

Horace. Frs. Cassian of Macerata and Constantine of Loro were gifted with the keen sense of observation and a facile pen. Their writings on the religious manners and customs of the people of Tibet and Nepal are still standard works and amongst the best on the subject. The three remaining priests (Frs. Daniel of Morciano, Florian of Jesi and Innocent of Ascoli) acquitted themselves honourably with their work. Of the two lay brothers, Bro. Paul of Florence was a printer by profession. In his youth he had been in the service of the Grand Duke of Tuscany and had worked with the ducal press in Florence (3). The other, Bro. Liborius of Fermo served in the mission for nearly thirty years—a faithful companion and an untiring helper to the priests with whom he worked. These ten missionaries had been drawn up from different monastic provinces (a rare thing in those days of narrow parochialism) in order to ensure a varied and an efficient team of workers.

Fr. Joseph Mary of Gargnano was, perhaps, the most colourful character and the most talented missionary among all the members of the ninth expedition. He broke, so to say, several mission records and it is but meet that his name should find special mention here where we speak of the Mission he had so zealously and selflessly served for over twenty years.

Born of the noble family of the Counts Bernini, on the 2nd September, 1709, Fr. Joseph Mary of Gargnano shone for his religious piety and sterling qualities. His biographer tells us that he was endowed by nature with a strong, generous and ardent soul. Having been brought up as a child in the old-fashioned and austere way of life, it made him long for a life of mortification and suffering. Not yet in his teens, he entered into a pact with a younger brother to whip each other in a spirit of penance. Hence, they began to experience the rigour of flagellations. The two brothers scourged each other and when Bernardino (for such was the baptismal name of Fr. Joseph Mary) felt himself beaten lightly by his brother, he would say to him, "Courage, lay on, for I shall not have such a pity for you".

3. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 42.

Early in life, Bernardino was sent to Vienna to study at the house of an uncle. Whenever his tutor had occasion to rebuke him, his face would flare up suddenly in a rage while his hand sought the little sword hanging at his side. Once he accepted a challenge from a companion, stronger than himself and much more skilful in fencing, to duel with a sword, but fortunately the companion failed to turn up at the appointed time and place. Later he took to reading spiritual books and became so engrossed with the things of the spirit that he decided to become a hermit. He also managed to persuade one of his younger brothers to follow his example and embrace the same solitary life. The two of them fled one day from Vienna to a hiding place in the neighbourhood. After two days, however, they were found and brought back to their uncle.

Well-versed in the Latin, French, German and Italian languages, and having finished the study of humanities, young Bernardino made up his mind to enter the Capuchin Order. While in Rome in 1738, where he had been sent to complete his ecclesiastical training, Fr. Bernini met Fr. Francis Horace. They were twin souls with noble ideals and a burning desire to spend themselves for the glory of God. On being asked by the Prefect whether he was ready to join the Mission, Fr. Joseph Mary replied: "If Holy Obedience sends me to the mission I am most willing to come and work under you". That was enough for the Prefect to take the necessary steps and secure his services.

It was indeed a good acquisition, for Fr. Joseph Mary performed wonders. His medical skill was instrumental in the opening of the Bettiah Mission, the first and one of the most successful Christian settlements in northern India. He was the first foreigner to write pamphlets and religious tracts in the Hindustani language and to translate several classics of the Sanskrit literature into Italian. On account of his writings and translations, his knowledge of the eastern languages and his love for the lore of the east, he was numbered among the Orientalists of the time (4). Besides,

4. *Viggiatori e Missionari nell' Asia* by V. Prinzivalli, Torino, 1892, p. 164.

he was a holy man of God, a shepherd with boundless love for his sheep. It is a pity that no one has taken up the cause of his beatification and that his name has been allowed to fall in the void of oblivion, for truly he had the stuff which goes to make saints and heroes. Fr. Joseph Mary died in the odour of sanctity at Bettiah on the 15th January, 1761. (5).

To make things more impressive, the expedition was given some sort of official standing. It was made to serve as a kind of diplomatic mission from the Vatican to the Royal Court of Tibet. His Holiness Clement XII, with the zeal characteristic of the supreme shepherd of all souls, whose pastoral care extends also to the sheep outside the true fold, addressed official letters to the Dalai Lama and to the Regent. The letters were accompanied by expensive presents. These alone occupied the whole of twenty big boxes. The tone of the letters and the nature of the gifts were such as to indicate that the Pope was dealing with the authorities in Tibet in the very same manner as the head of a sovereign state would deal with the ruler of another sovereign state (6).

Cardinal Belluga, who had laboured so much to put the mission again on its feet, and who had implicit faith in its success, also wished to add to the expedition a personal touch of his own. He addressed a personal message to the Dalai Lama. In it he made a daring proposal which surely would have taken the head of Lamaism by surprise. His Eminence told the High Pontiff of the Potala Palace, in the name of His Holiness the Pope and of his own, that if he would embrace the Catholic faith he would not lose his dignity and position, but that his prestige and personal status

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5. *Memorie Istoriche* ; the book deals mainly with the biography of Fr. Joseph Mary Bernini.
 6. *Memorie sulla vita del Ven. servo di Dio P. Franscesso Orazio etc.* by Mattei Gentili, op. cit., pp. 13-15. The author states that Fr. Francis Horace was given the rank of Nunzio to the Royal Court of Tibet. The same thing appears at the footnote of a painting of Fr. Francis Horace by Giovanni Bistolli. It reads : "...Apostolici Nuncii potestate munitus..." Again the author claims that the art of printing was first introduced in Tibet by our missionaries.

Fr. Joseph Mary Bernini, founder of the Bethiah Mission



would be greatly enhanced by being elected Archbishop of Lhasa and Primate of the noble Kingdom of Tibet. It would be interesting to know the reaction of the Dalai Lama to this fantastic proposal, but unfortunately we have to leave it to the imagination of the reader. Though the letter was duly delivered to the holder of the thunderbolt, yet nowhere do we find what he thought of the proposal or how he reacted to it (7).

Late in September, 1738, the party was ready to start. A short moving visit to his native Pennabilli and then the Prefect joined the other missionaries who were directed to the French capital to comply with the embarkation formalities. After some delay at Port Lorient, they were able to put to sea, aboard three different vessels, on the 17th March, 1739 (8).

Financial Backing

The missionaries and in particular Fr. Francis Horace sailed east in high spirits and with a contented heart. All their difficulties seemed to have been practically solved. They were men of good will, keen on doing their utmost for the spreading of the kingdom of God, and carried with them the assurance that from then onwards their work would not suffer on account of economic stringencies or want of personnel. They would starve no more as some of their confreres had done in the past and would no more be compelled to leave the mission field due to lack of funds or for want of more labourers. An annual allocation of one thousand Roman scudi (Rs. 2,250/-) would now be remitted to them regularly and without fail. It would not be much, but whatever was required to live and to work would be adequately provided. New missionaries, to strengthen their hands or to replace those who might eventually die or drop out or be incapacitated and unable to do heavy work, would also be forthcoming. This had been solemnly promised to

7. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. LX ; p. 186, footnote No. 66; Giornale, p. 167.

8. Memorie Istoriche, p. 4.

them. It had already been decided that Tibet was now to be a Capuchin mission and the Order would not fail to honour its commitments. And, if all went well, there was even the hope that Rome might re-consider the master plan proposed by the Prefect and enlarge the field of labour. That was all Fr. Francis Horace and his travelling companions wanted—men and means and the blessing of God to carry out the task. These consoling thoughts accompanied them while on their way to the mysterious land of Central Asia.

Though the Congregation of Propaganda was actually in debt and money was tight, nevertheless funds were found to meet the immediate and urgent expenses. And it was not a small sum. Approximately, two thousand Roman Scudi (Rs. 4500/-) went to pay for the sea voyage of the eleven missionaries, for a grant of an honorarium of eighty Roman Scudi (Rs. 180/-) to each of them as annuity due and for other incidental expenses (9).

The lack of financial stability had always been the weakest point in the whole organisation. In spite of all efforts and of the many sacrifices which had so far been made, the position had remained very much the same all these years. It was a burning issue, calling for prompt and definite solution. Nothing much could be expected from men who had not even enough to live on and who were besides overburdened with work. This time, however, the authorities were determined to do whatever was humanly possible and so put the undertaking on a sound and stable financial basis.

To bring relief to the present economic distress, the Vatican drew from the Spanish Treasury. A sizable capital was held by Spain on behalf of the Holy See. This was left with government by donors and benefactors from Spain or from the Spanish colonies with the understanding that interest on the principal should be remitted periodically to Rome. The Holy Father utilised this fund to finance his manifold charitable schemes and activities. Dues had fallen into arrears and the Spanish government was urged to settle accounts up to date.

9. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 197, 208.

Through the kindness of Pope Clement XII, part of the proceeds from this particular fund were allowed to be allocated to the Tibetan Mission for a certain number of years. That saved the day (10).

The economic future of the Mission was to be provided for by setting up an organisation destined to collect funds in Mexico and other Catholic territories in South America. The intention of the organisers was to create a capital trust or fund large enough to support the Tibetan Missionaries out of the annual interest that would accrue. So many people in high position had taken to heart the scheme that it was bound to succeed.

The Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda set the ball rolling. In 1738 he wrote a lengthy Memorandum to Philip V, King of Spain (11). Therein His Eminence dealt with the religious beliefs of the Tibetan people, related how in time past the Gospel had been preached to them (but he did not say by whom and when) and how traces of the Christian faith and its practices could still be found in their midst, though mixed with not a few superstitions and prejudices. The Memorandum went on to speak of the good moral qualities of the Tibetans, their deep religious feelings and of the great hope that was entertained for their conversion. Coming closer to the point, the Cardinal added how the first missionaries, who had been sent there were well received by the authorities and by the people, the progress which had so far been made in the evangelisation of the country in spite of difficulties and other factors. In the end His Eminence stated the present needs of the Mission, stressing at the same time the kind generosity of His Majesty who had always taken an active part in the promotion of the Catholic faith in foreign lands. It was a cogent appeal to the religious sentiments of the King of Spain and an urgent request to him to extend his noble patronage to those far-off people of Tibet, still waiting for the full light of the Gospel to be brought to them.

10. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 191.

11. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 175, 191.

The Memorandum did not confine itself to empty words or deal at length with the history of the mission (though a lengthy document of well over seven thousand words) but made two concrete points. One was that the Congregation of Propaganda having no means at its disposal to finance the Tibetan enterprise, it was urgently requested of His Majesty to make available at an early date, out of the interest accumulated over the years from a certain bequest made to the Holy See and still in the hands of the Spanish Government, four annuities (two for the journey and two for maintenance) for the support and travelling expenses of the twenty four (yes, twenty four) Capuchin Missionaries directed to Tibet or already there. The King of Spain readily complied with the request, though a small sum was still held back by the Spanish Treasury.

The Cardinal's second point was meant to provide for a long term economic policy for the Mission, or rather to put it permanently on a sound financial footing. In short, His Royal Highness was asked to kindly allow four Capuchin Fathers (two Italians and two Spaniards in addition to an Italian Capuchin lay-brother as a companion) to go and beg alms in Mexico for the support of the Tibetan Mission. Even this was granted. Moreover, Card. Belluga and Car. Molina, two influential Prelates with the Royal Court of Spain, made use of their good offices to render every possible assistance to this begging expedition. They further helped in many other ways so that this time the Mission might not be abandoned again for want of means.

Things started moving quickly. By the end of the year 1738, Frs. Paul Mary of Matelica and Anthony of Bertónico, accompanied by Bro. John of Bertónico, were already in Spain to join their Spanish counterparts, Frs. Joachim of Barcelona and James of Perelada, en route to the new world. It may be remembered that Fr. Paul Mary of Matelica had been on the staff of the Tibetan Mission from 1712 to 1726, but at the time he was detailed to go to Mexico as he was attached to the Capuchin General Curia in Rome as Secretary for Foreign Missions. The title of Missionaries Apostolic together with the rights and privileges attached to that office was bestowed on the four Fathers and the lay Brother.

Unfortunately, the times were full of warfare. The three Italian missionaries, after a long delay at Cadice, could not set sail for fear of their safety. The two Spanish Capuchins wanted to play safe and waited for the opportunity to go with the two ships that were taking the Spanish Viceroy to Mexico. Unfortunately, the safety which they expected travelling with the Viceroy's party was not to be had. Not long after the two ships had reached the high seas, English pirates appeared on the scene and gave chase. The ship in which Fr. Joachim of Barcelona was travelling was captured and the poor Father died shortly after in solitary confinement. The other ship managed to escape and to reach safely the shores of Mexico. Fr. James of Perelada remained there for some time collecting funds for the Tibetan Mission.

The Italians did not fare so badly. Two of them were forced to return home for reasons of health, but the third, Fr. Anthony of Bertónico, moved his headquarters from Cadice to Madrid, where he managed to net in four thousand Roman Scudi or nearly Rs. 9,000/-. Not a bad collection indeed, if we consider the times and the corresponding value of money in those days.

If the first expedition to Mexico ran into difficulties from the very start, the others that followed were more fortunate and successful. Collections continued to be made in Mexico till far beyond the middle of the eighteenth century. Spanish and Italian Capuchins were sent there in equal proportion for about thirty years. It was only in 1768 that Charles III, the new King of Spain, ordered that no Italian, in quest of alms, should be permitted to go to Mexico and those who were already there should be recalled. In all, about twenty Capuchin Friars had been engaged in the work of collecting funds for the Tibetan Mission (12). The collection was good and even abundant. Already in 1752, the interest on the capital yielded 1,200 Roman Scudi per annum, i.e. Rs. 2,700/- which was sufficient to maintain the mission for one year.

12. *Analecta Ordinis etc.*, op. cit., Vol XXI (1905) p. 347-348.

The funds were at first invested in Mexico, but afterwards, and not without great difficulty, transferred to Rome (13).

The Pope himself, prompted by zeal for the salvation of the children of Tibet, recommended the cause to the Catholic Hierarchy of South America (14). Even the Philippine Islands were reminded of their duty to contribute their share to spread the Kingdom of God in a country which perhaps they had never even heard of. Catholics, living so wide apart, in the east and in the west, in the old and the new world, were called upon to help. It was nothing short of a crusade—Popes and Kings, influential members of the Hierarchy, monks and lay people, all joined together in a common effort to bring Christ to Tibet. Even the press, the only means of propaganda then available, was made to serve such a noble cause (15). To judge from the wide publicity given to the Tibetan Mission and the many people who had taken interest in it and the tireless effort to make it a success, it would appear that great hopes were placed on the future of the undertaking.

Surprising as it may seem, the Tibetan missionaries continued to struggle for a living, always in want, with not even enough to obtain the necessaries of life, though funds were available in Rome and in quantity even greater than that which was strictly required. What was happening? A look at the political situation of the eighteenth century will give some idea of this riddle. Europe was in a turmoil of wars, the struggle for colonial power was at its peak and all channels of communication, by land or sea, were highly unsafe. Subsidies could be remitted only occasionally and that too at great risk. Correspondence was also irregular

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13. Arch. Prop. Fide, Scritture riferite nelle Congregazioni Particolari, Vol. 112, Congreg. del 30 giugno 1738, del 16 sett. 1748 e del 14 maggio, 1752.
 14. Bullarium Ordinis Minorum Capucinorum, Tomo, VII, p. 261.
 15. Among the writings on the Tibetan Mission of the time we may quote the following : *Rappresentanza*, already referred to among the sources of the present publication ; *Relazione a Stampa del 1742*, published in Italian, Rome 1742, in Spanish, Murcia 1742 and reprinted again in 1744, 1745, in English, London 1749 and in German, Lipsia 1750. The same writing was recast and published in Mexico in 1767 and again in 1772.

and never sure to reach its destination. No one could be blamed for this abnormal state of things, but the mission and the missionaries had to bear the dire consequences of it.

New Developments

When Fr. Francis Horace and his travelling companions landed at Chandernagore late in September, 1739, he found that the Mission was well on its way to recovery. Fr. Francis had left it four years earlier in desperate condition, with only two old and infirm priests to hold on till the arrival of new reinforcements or be doomed to a lonely death. But now the situation had changed for the better, bringing it back to life slowly.

In 1735, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, fearing that the number of missionaries might be reduced below the statutory level, fixed in 1732 (years had passed without receiving any news and the authorities in Rome did not know how many missionaries were still alive) decided to send out new recruits. Three young priests, Frs. Edward of Cingoli, Sigismund of Jesi and Vito of Recanati, were therefore drafted and given the Obedience to go and replace those who might have died or whom age and infirmity might have disabled. It was the eighth expedition of Tibet, sent out after a gap of fourteen years, the last one being sent in 1721.

It so happened that while Fr. Francis Horace was sailing west in search of labourers this new expedition was moving east to strengthen the hands of the remaining few. The three Fathers found themselves safely at Chandernagore in the month of September, 1736.

Another happy event occurred soon after their arrival. The Vice-Prefect, Fr. Joachim of Anatolia, still in Patna, was wondering what to do with the new missionaries, whether to go with them to Tibet or detain them in India, awaiting the outcome of Father Prefect's representation to Rome. Unexpectedly, however, he received letters, followed by two delegations from the Rajas of Kathmandu and Bhatgaon, asking for missionaries. These two kinglets, well

impressed and edified by the work done by the Fathers who had already been in Nepal, endeavoured to get them back to their respective territories. Of late they had been receiving news that new missionaries had arrived from Europe and so without delay they hastened to procure their services. Already in January, 1737, their envoys were in Patna to petition the Vice-Prefect to kindly send the new comers to Nepal. The King of Bhatgaon, Ranajita Malla, was so insistent that he enjoined his envoy not to come back alone, even if he had to wait for two or more years in Patna. There was also a letter from the Raj Guru of Kathmandu, the spiritual adviser of the Raja, urging Fr. Joachim to do all in his power to oblige his master.

Both kings were holding out many promises. They assured the Vice-Prefect that the Fathers would be well received, that accommodation would be provided for them and that every facility would be given them in the pursuance of their activities. Notwithstanding such clear promises, Fr. Joachim remained undecided for a while whether it was wise to accept this tempting offer or turn it down. The Vice-Prefect knew the Raja of Bhatgaon well. He was a sincere, loyal and friendly person, very much attached to the priests and was sure that he would keep his promises. But what about his nephew, Jaya Prakasa Malla, the new ruler of Kathmandu? The former Raja had meanwhile passed away. He had been the one who had cast poor Fr. Francis Horace into prison and on previous occasions had fallen foul of the missionaries. Fr. Joachim reasonably suspected that the son might be like the father—unfriendly and temperamental. On the other hand, it was unwise to oblige the Raja of Bhatgaon and refuse the request of the ruler of Kathmandu. The road to Tibet passed mostly through his territory and it was in the personal interest of the missionaries to be in his good books. Before taking any decision, Fr. Joachim thought it prudent to make an inquiry about the character of the young Raja. The Vice-Prefect was informed that His Highness differed greatly from his erratic father; he was kind, generous and understanding and there was no reason to doubt his sincerity in inviting the Fathers to his dominion.

On the 13th of March, 1737, after twenty five days' trek across the Indian plains and the first ramparts of the Himalayan range, Frs. Joachim and Vitus arrived safe and sound in the Valley of Nepal. Before leaving for his new destination, the Vice Prefect re-shuffled the small team of missionary forces as follows : Fr. Edward of Cingoli was left at Chandernagore to help the aged and blind Fr. Peter of Serra Petrona while Fr. Sigismund of Jesi was put in charge of the Patna station.

True to his word, the King of Bhatgaon received the two priests with open arms giving them a truly royal welcome. Within a few months of their arrival in Nepal, His Highness donated to the mission, in the name of Pope Clement XII, a large house, capable of accommodating several persons. Besides, there was space enough to convert one of the apartments into a chapel. He further presented Fr. Joachim with a thirty kilogramme bell, having the name of Jesus and Mary inscribed round the base. And before the year was out, in the month of November, 1737, the Raja graciously granted the missionaries the decree of liberty of conscience. In handing it over he told them : "I give you this document, but in return I want from you another document wherewith you pledge yourselves to remain forever in Bhatgaon".

This is not the appropriate place to give an account of this Catholic settlement in Nepal. For our present purpose it is enough to say that throughout his long career, till his tragic end in 1769, when he lost his kingdom and his life, the king of Bhatgaon proved himself to be a sincere friend of the Capuchin missionaries and a generous benefactor to the Christians who had been converted to the faith during his unhappy reign.

There was also great rejoicing in Kathmandu at the arrival of Frs. Joachim and Vitus. When the two priests went to pay their respects to the Raja His Highness showed himself very pleased at their coming and entertained them to a friendly conversation. His good will and kindly disposition towards the missionaries were soon demonstrated by granting them, on the 24th October, 1737, the decree of

liberty of conscience and the customary transit facilities within the limits of his territory. The decree further mentions that the Raja himself, of his own free will, had called the Fathers to Kathmandu and that no one should dare harass them or do them any harm as they were men worthy of high esteem and respect. Suitable accommodation was also provided for them, but at a later date. Only in December, 1741, a house, large and spacious, confiscated from one of the nobles and similar to that of Bhatgaon, was given to the Mission. Meanwhile, Fr. Vitus of Recanati, the new resident priest of Kathmandu, had to put up with a native Christian by the name of John Baptist, one of the earlier converts made in Tibet.

When it became known that the Capuchins were back in Nepal, their old friends in Lhasa did not wait long to write and ask the European Lamas to return soon to Tibet, reminding them of the promises they had made before quitting the capital. Among others, two ministers of state sent letters to Fr. Joachim in Bhatgaon telling him that now was the time to come and work in their country. Everything was peaceful and there was no danger of any invasion from the barbarous hordes of the Dzungarian Mongols.

After a short period of rest and acclimatisation, the party led by Fr. Francis Horace was again on the road. Leaving Fr. Daniel of Morciano in the company of Fr. Edward of Cingoli in Chandernagore (good old Fr. Peter of Serra Petrona had meanwhile given up his soul to God) the Prefect with the remaining nine missionaries moved out from the French settlement in Bengal early in November, 1739, on their way to Patna. Before going to Lhasa he visited all the stations, saw to their needs and posted the priests in different places, keeping in mind natural dispositions and talents so as to make the best possible use of the men now under his charge.

In Patna, which they reached on the 16th December, 1739, the new comers were greeted by deaf Fr. Sigismund of Jesi, who was busy restoring and enlarging the mission house which had fallen into a sad state of disrepair. Here Frs. Anthony of Monte Alboddo and Joseph Mary of Gargnano were told to take charge of this important station, while

the large party together with Fr. Sigismund directed its steps to the Valley of Nepal. They arrived at Bhatgaon on the 6th February, 1740, to be soon received by the Raja. His Highness welcomed them in a "very homely manner", as we read in one of the the reports.

The Prefect was rather in a hurry to continue his journey to Lhasa as he intended to cross the high mountain passes leading to Tibet before the onset of the rainy season, but he was compelled to make a long stop in Nepal. Small-pox was raging all over the land in an epidemic form, passes were closed and no one was allowed to travel from one country to another. So, for eight months, from February to October, eleven Capuchin missionaries had to make Nepal their home. It was pleasant to be together, to study and to pray, to exchange views and to think wishfully of the future in a land where the sovereign and his people were so kind and friendly.

Making the best of his forced stay in Nepal, the Prefect set about to do some useful missionary work, A tall iron cross was erected, with the king's permission, over the mission house in Bhatgaon on the feast of St. Mathew, 24th February. Earlier in the morning a Solemn High Mass had been sung by the small religious community in the presence of the few local Christians. The Cross which was erected over the building could be seen from a distance. It stood there, tall and dark, against the wintry Himalayan sky, to remind the people of that ancient land that Christ, the Saviour of mankind, had come to stay with them.

Later, on 5th June, 1740, Fr. Francis Horace made bold and presented the Raja of Bhatgaon with an apologetic treatise which had earlier been translated into the Newari language. The missionary wanted to sound His Highness and those of his court as to whether they had ever given any serious thought to the idea of embracing the Christian law. The Raja politely brushed aside the suggestion pointing out that he was engaged in a war (it was merely a petty squabble) with the kings of Kathmandu and Patan and that he had no time to ponder over the matter. He further added that the missionaries were new to the country and that before entering into any religious controversy, they should be more

conversant with the language. Anyway, he did not dismiss the idea and promised to call one day the Brahmans and the Fathers in his presence for an open debate on religion. If the Christian law, they had come to preach, could be demonstrated as the only true one, he concluded, he and his subjects would not hesitate to embrace it.

Moving into Kathmandu a few days later the Prefect made the same overture to the Raja of the place, meeting more or less with the same response. The atmosphere in the town had decidedly changed for the better since the days poor Fr. Francis Horace had been thrown into prison in 1732. He was already well known and the social contacts he had established in the capital made it easy for him to gain the favour of the king and of the nobles. By this time even Dardan Singh, the man who had taken a leading part in his imprisonment, had become a good friend of the missionaries. On the whole, the Prefect felt that the people were well disposed towards Christianity, but that out of human respect or fearing that the assured liberty of conscience would remain a dead letter when put to the test, they were rather reluctant to come forward and be enlisted in the army of Christ.

Patan, known in the ancient days as Lalitpatan, was the third kingdom in the Valley of Nepal ruled by the same Malla dynasty. It was the most populous town of these three Himalayan domains, full of temples and monasteries situated in idyllic surroundings. The good will of this ruler was an integral part of the plan to establish a mission in Nepal. The three capitals were situated in such close proximity from one another (a few kilometers in fact) and their interests so intimately connected, that it was virtually impossible to succeed in one kingdom and fail in another without jeopardising the whole undertaking. Contacts were made, the possibility of conversion was explored, but the impression reported by the Prefect was not quite satisfactory, though not hopeless on the whole. Patan and its ruler seemed to be more refractory to the message of the Gospel than Kathmandu and Bhatgaon.

Meanwhile, the rainy season was drawing to a close and final arrangements had to be made for the expedition to

Lhasa. It was a tedious affair. First of all the selection of the personnel to be stationed in Nepal and Tibet had to be made. This caused no little headache. Originally, it was the Prefect's intention to take Fr. Sigismund with him to Tibet and make him practice medicine there, but finding that the cold climate did not suit his constitution, and that he was always ailing, plans had to be revised. Finally, it was decided to appoint Frs. Vitus and Innocent together with Bro. Liborius for Nepal. Fr. Sigismund was to remain with them provisionally, till the Terai was clear of the Aul. After that he was expected to proceed to Chandernagore for medical treatment. The other six missionaries (Fr. Joachim, Florian, Tranquillus, Constantine, Cassian and Bro. Paul, the printer) were to go with the Prefect to the Tibetan capital. Fr. Joachim of Anatolia, however, was not to remain there for long. He was already too old and worn out for that. His mission was to introduce Fr. Cassian of Macerata and put him on his feet as the new missionary doctor, revealing to him the secrets of the medical art and then return home for a well-deserved rest. At the same time he would take with him the letters and gifts which the Dalai Lama and the Regent would be sending the Pope. This would also be a good occasion for acquainting the Superiors at home with the latest developments of the Mission.

Another important business to setting out on the journey was that of obtaining the pass from the authorities. The pass, or passport as it was commonly called at the time, entitled the holder to personal protection and gave him the right to avail of the facilities granted by government to travellers, reducing considerably the charges imposed on goods in transit and the duty on the head-tax. Accordingly the Prefect applied for it to the Raja of Kathmandu. His Highness was pleased to grant it and even went out of his way ordering the custom officials to affix the Royal Seal on each piece of baggage without inspecting it—a thing which they did grudgingly as they were dying of curiosity to see the treasures and beauties brought over from another world.

Earlier, Fr. Francis Horace had written to the Regent in Lhasa to forward to him the pass for Tibet. It came in September. In grand style, it ordered all men in the land,

and in particular those in authority, not to harass the White Lamas or put hindrances in their way, not even as much as "a panic grass' grain" as we read in the original text. It went on to say that the Fathers should be provided with no less than twenty porters who had to carry the luggage free of charge, to make available at the crossing of rivers skin or wooden boats, according to the wishes of the travellers who were free to choose their own route. As a rule, the pass chartered the way which the passenger had to follow. This was done to keep a strict check on travellers.

At the end of it all came the most ticklish job. The luggage had to be unpacked to make each load of a standard weight i.e. forty kilos apiece. That was the custom with the mountain porters. At least twenty four of them would be needed to take the luggage from Kathmandu to the border town of Kuti. Here the missionaries could avail of the facilities granted them by the Regent of Lhasa. Arrangements had to be made through the "bhafiya" or head-porter and the wrangling and haggling went on for days till finally the matter was somehow settled. One half of the transport charges agreed upon was to be paid in advance and the balance would be given at the end of the journey. It was impossible to bargain. Luckily, John Baptist, whose name we have mentioned earlier in this chapter, and a friend of his had decided to go to Lhasa in the company of the priests for reasons of trade. They were much more experienced than the Fathers in this sort of business and were requested to do the needful for them.

On the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, 4th October, the priests said their last Mass in Nepal and in the afternoon they sallied forth to the north-east in the direction of Kuti. For a while confreres, friends and well-wishers accompanied them along the road till they wished each other good-bye. The next Mass was said on Christmas Day in Gyang-tse amidst the dazzling white of the Himalayan snow. A day's march from the capital, the Prefect and Fr. Florian pressed on ahead of the others in order to prepare the monastery in Lhasa for the the new-comers. The bulk of the party entered the Sacred City on the 6th January, 1741, in the late afternoon.

As the missionaries approached the metropolis they experienced the hospitality of the Tibetan people and the joy of hearty welcome. Not a few came out to meet them while still far off, bringing refreshments to refresh the tired travellers. The First Minister of State had even sent one of his men to welcome the Fathers. The refreshments were so good and abundant that one of the Fathers did not hesitate to admit that this was the second time, since he had left his native Italy, that his hunger was satiated. One of the Christians was so overcome with joy at their coming that after giving them the "kiss of peace", he broke down in tears. They were surely received with gladness to be eventually turned into anger.

By the way, it may be noted here that the arrival and departure of a dear person is a solemn occasion for the Tibetans. On such occasions they show their pleasure at his home coming or their sorrow at his parting. They bid him farewell while quite some distance on the way or go a long distance to meet a relative or friend to give him a grand welcome. The best delicacies of their kitchen are also prepared to be offered as a present to the wayfarer. It is a characteristic custom which speaks of the hospitality and friendly disposition of the Tibetan people.

The monastery was found to be in a pitiful state of neglect. In spite of the Regent's promise to keep it vacant and in good condition he had given it out to different people as a kind of government guest house. Among others, it had been occupied for about a year by the Dutch adventurer, Samuel van de Putte, a gentleman of noble birth. Government was, however, kind enough to repair and restore it at its own expense (16).

Courtesy Calls

The first month in Lhasa was spent in a round of courtesy calls. Nearly eight years had elapsed since the last

16. The information under this sub-heading has been culled from: Nuovo Ramusio, part II, pp. 3-28; part III, pp. 223-229; *Giornale*, pp. 51-167. There is also another long account of the journey from Bhatgaon to Lhasa by Fr. Constantine of Loro Piceno (Nuovo Ramusio, part II, pp. 46-83).

departure of Missionaries from the metropolis, but the political situation remained substantially unchanged. P'o-lha-nas, the Regent, was still in power and the Chinese were very much pleased with his strong government. So pleased were they with his rule that he had been awarded the title of Mi-Vagn (Mi-dban)—a title of nobility. The Vicar Dalai Lama (rGyal-sras Rin-po-c'e), the same who had offered Fr. Francis Horace some Buddhist monks to be taken to Rome to be instructed in the Christian faith, and who was like a brother to the European Lamas, was no more in the land of the living. Earlier he had retired to the monastery of his origin, where he died in February, 1740. Since 1734, the Chinese, feeling that the strong rule of P'o-lha-nas would foil any attempt to overthrow the government, had decided to recall the seventh Dalai Lama from exile. He was back on his golden throne, but as a mere figurehead, a ruler without any temporal or political power.

At the time of the arrival of our missionaries in Lhasa, the seventh Dalai Lama was not in the capital. It was therefore befitting that the first courtesy call should be made on the Regent—to the man who eight years earlier had written to the Prefect "Return soon with other Fathers, it will give me the greatest satisfaction". And greatly satisfied was he at their arrival and their visit.

Now we shall quote Fr. Cassian of Marcerata who recorded about these visits to the dignitaries in Lhasa (17).

"A few days after our arrival", the Missionary doctor records in his journal, "the king finished his spiritual retreat (the spiritual retreat was a regular feature in the spiritual life of the Tibetan monks and lay-people alike (18) and began to give public audience in the garden adjoining the palace where he resided. This garden is enclosed by walls, and within it are some hundred barren and stunted trees forming a small confused wood. Here the king admitted us to his presence and received us with the greatest affability, appearing to be pleased at our arrival. Each

17. *Giornale*, pp. 167-171.

18. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 230.

of us presented him with a fine scarf (the customary symbol of greetings) which he received with his own hands. When the Prefect had given replies to the many questions concerning our journey put to him by the king (19) he made known to the latter that he had brought from Rome a letter from the Sovereign Pontiff as well as one from Cardinal Belluga, which, however, we could not like to present to him immediately until the translation should be made and until there had arrived from India some other things which could be offered with the letter. The king seemed gratified at the news and told the Prefect to suit his own convenience in preparing the translation.

“We paid our visit to the king in our European garments and the Prefect asked His Highness whether it would meet with his approbation if we dressed in blue-coloured clothing as we could not find in Tibet cloth of the same colour of our European habit. To this he readily assented”. (There had already been trouble in Nepal about the colour of the brown habit, the colour of the brown habit worn by the Capuchins being considered inauspicious).

“There were with the king his two sons ; the elder, Gun Sku-gzgos, who at Kuti had provided us with twenty porters, all free of charge. He had been designated by the Emperor of China to succeed his father, but his younger brother was better qualified for the office. The first-born was a man devoted to religion and in spite of the fact that he had two wives and children he went about dressed like a lama. The younger son, who was already a general of high rank in the army, and at the head of a large force of Tartars, was a warrior, resolute and fierce. Together with us there had been admitted to the audience some Chinese officials of the Chinese chief who resides in Lhasa and these spoke to the king by means of an interpreter.

“At the close of the reception the king ordered a special treat, known as Themo, to be served to the Chinese and

19. In keeping with the Tibetan etiquette no one can speak in the presence of authorities unless he is questioned (Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 113).

to us. Then came two long rows of servants preceded by two stewards or masters of the chamber of the king. One of the latter put the Themo in front of the Chinese gentlemen, the other in front of us. Before Fr. Prefect and Fr. Joachim were placed six wooden platters each, one of Indian sweetmeats, another of sugar-candy, another of dried apricots, another of dates, another of almonds and the last one of raisins. Besides the platters of dried fruits, there were also six dishes full of pastry made of flour and fried in oil or butter, and a sheep apiece. (It was according to etiquette to take home what was not eaten at the reception). Before the five of us newly arrived in Tibet were placed a platter of raisins and three dishes of pastry-cakes. The Chinese were treated with greater distinction than ourselves. The reception took place in the afternoon of the 11th January (20).

“The next morning we visited the minister of state, who welcomed us courteously. This over, we went to pay our respects to the Chinese Resident. We were kept waiting for some time before admission at the outer gate of the palace, which by the way is the best in Lhasa, being detained by the lengthy inquiries concerning our state and condition made by one of the interpreters. After entering the palace we were made to wait for a long time in another apartment till finally we were admitted to the audience. The Chinese Resident, who was a fine man of about 30, was seated in a chair, having a little table in front of his, while a score of Chinese stood on either side. On entering his presence we presented to him a scarf from each of us which were received on his behalf by the master of the chamber who motioned us to sit on the ground upon some strips of Chinese silk placed for us some distance from the table. Taking his chair he addressed us through an interpreter who listened to him with one knee on the ground and folded hands and then rose to his feet to tell us what the Resident had said in the Chinese language, repeating it in the Tibetan tongue. Having inquired of what nation we were, we replied that we were Europeans. On hearing

20. Fr. Joachim tells us that the reception lasted for about two hours (Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p, 229).

this he made many demonstrations of friendliness, telling us through the interpreter that he greatly esteemed the Europeans with whom he had been acquainted in China, also that he knew our custom was not to sit on the ground like the Tibetans but on chairs as the Chinese, and that if we desired we could be seated on chairs which were inside the hall—for which we expressed our thanks. He made it plain that he was greatly pleased at our visit and that he would appreciate if we could come and see him now and again.

“After some conversation, he told us to go to another room where we were taken by the interpreter and other Chinese. Here we found prepared four very small tables on each of which were six plates of sweetmeats and dried fruit. The Prefect was made to sit at one of them and at the other three sat two of us to each table, the interpreter informing us that his master wished us to take breakfast. This began with a small glass of warm spirits (according to the custom of the Chinese); after which there were brought to us a bowl of cooked rice and eight plates each, one containing meat, another herbs, etc. all warm, each having a Chinaman that waited on us. We ate a little, and seeing that we desired no more we were served with another glass of spirits, followed by a cup of specially fine tea, which, having drunk, we returned to the hall where the Resident was.

“We thanked him for the honour done to us, and he renewed the invitation he had made earlier that we should remember to come and see him occasionally. At the end, one of the attendants placed on the neck of each one of us a large and long scarf which hung down almost to the feet after the fashion of a stole. This was a special honour. Then he took leave of us. We came out from the palace and traversed nearly the whole length of the piazza with that scarf on our neck. This was a very good idea, because the Chinese, who at the beginning considered us vagabonds, began thereafter to treat us with respect wherever we met them.

“Amongst other old friends of the Fathers in Lhasa was the incarnate lama Semba-cembo (Sems-dpa-c'en-po). He was a man very-much attached to us and universally loved and respected in Tibet, although he was by race a Tartar, not

only because he was an incarnate lama and Chang-chub (Byan-c'ub-sems-dpa or a man of high rank), but also because of the great affability with which he treated, without distinction, all men, even the poorest, as well because of his being a great alms giver. However, in regard to religion he was a thorough atheist. This lama, of whom we must speak again elsewhere, not only received us courteously, but treated us as if we were of the same rank as himself. Moreover, a little later, he made it a habit to come and see us at the monastery almost every evening. Here he would stay to take tea and converse with us in a very homely manner, entering into each little chamber and inquiring if we needed anything, and if he noticed we needed something he at once provided it for us.

“To this lama the Prefect applied to get us a teacher of the language, which he promised to do. Meanwhile, he obtained one from the incarnate lama Settru-romboce (rTse-drun Rin-po-c'e) who from his estate, at the distance of about three months' journey from the capital, had come to Lhasa. He too was a great friend of the Fathers and we received much affection from him. Having a teacher we began to learn the language from the first elements and to ascertain how to pronounce well the letters. Besides, I had my medical studies and I was busy from morning till evening, either attending to the patients who came in considerable numbers every day to the dispensary, or learning how to compound drugs under the direction of Fr. Joachim.

“At the end of January there arrived from Kuti some Nepalese traders, the greater part of whom were seriously ill from the severe cold experienced on the road. Among these was a youth of 18 years, whose hands and feet had been frost-bitten and hence gangrene had set in. It was impossible to save his life and he died on the 7th February. The Nepalese cast his body into the river from which some Tibetans hastened to rescue it searching along the banks of the river. Having got it they severed the head from the body in order to make from the skull a bowl, out of which they eat and drink. The custom is followed by the Retro-ba (Ri-k'rod-pa), a religious community of married men belonging to the Urchien (U-rgyan) sect who are magicians by profession.

“Fr. Joachim had come to Tibet not to remain there but only to instruct me in the art of medicine and then to return to Europe with the replies of the king and Grand Lama to the Pope. Accordingly, during the few months we remained together, he sought to give me, not only the knowledge of the medicine appropriate to that climate, but also introduced me to such persons as were his friends. With this in view, we went on the 11th February to pay a visit to Talebador (Dalai Batur), the second son of the king, and in his house we found also his sister. Both received us with cordiality more as intimate friends than as strangers. They entertained us for two hours in familiar conversation; they gave us tea, and the sister, by way of paying a particular compliment, put with her own hands the *satu* in our cups. To please them we had to come again the following day when they treated us with the same familiarity.

“The 13th instant both of us visited the elder son of the king, who showed us similar cordiality, but with more gravity, to uphold perhaps the dignity of a lama-elect, whose garments he wore. He too received both offerings and worship like the other lamas of his rank and shared in their merits. Nevertheless, he desired that we should stay and dine with him. He prepared for us the *Themo* which consisted of five plates of dried fruits and confectionery each, such as dates, apricots, a species of quince and raisins apart from a large tray of pastry. At the same time the dinner was served. This comprised a large wooden dish on which was half a sheep braised and stewed, another dish with a quarter of dried sheep, also another containing a large slice of raw yak flesh together with a score of myrobalan spherical in shape.

“All this sumptuous dinner was set out upon an uncovered sort of stool of about thirty centimetres in height, sixty cms. in width and one metre in length. Catching hold of the shoulder of mutton in his hand, without the aid of any other instrument, he separated it into portions, and through his servant sent us one piece each. The constraint under which we had endured so long a journey had given us the stomach of a Tibetan, that is to say, of a voracious hog. Accordingly, it was not difficult for us to overcome our repugnance to eat the cooked flesh so rudely severed apart ;

also the satu made into a paste with water and rolled into a ball with his own hands after rending asunder the meat. However, the dried and raw flesh we refused. After having eaten a little of that which had been cooked, we were obliged to wrap up the remainder in a handkerchief and take it to the hospice, together with the pastry and fruit and the great honour of having dined with the eldest son of the king and heir to the kingdom.

“The same evening of the 13th, a lama of Moru (Mo-ru) monastery, which is not far from our hospice, sent word to say that we were invited to pay him a call on the following day. In the afternoon of the 14th, a date which marked the last moon day of the Tibetan year, all of us went to the aforesaid lama who received us kindly and had tea with him...” The reason why they had been invited, Fr. Cassian tells us, “was to witness a fantastic religious ceremony in the course of which twenty four monks appeared wearing monstrous masks representing a bear, a leopard, a pig, a stag etc.” It is a kind of mummers’ dance very common in Tibet.

The journal goes on narrating minutely the visits made by the missionaries to the father of the Dalai Lama and other dignitaries in Lhasa, while spot-lighting the manners and customs of the Tibetan people.

Liberty of Conscience

Some unforeseen circumstances caused considerable delay in presenting the Pope’s letter and gifts to the Dalai Lama and to the Regent. For one thing, all the luggage which contained some of the gifts to be presented to them had not arrived from Nepal and no one knew for certain when it would be delivered. Then, there was the long absence of the Dalai Lama from the Capital and the Regent himself was at the time under pressure of heavy work. So the missionaries were told to get everything ready and they would be informed in due course about the date on which the official ceremony for the presentation of the letter and gifts sent by the Pope could be held (21).

21. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 229 ; Terzorio p. 369, Note 2.

༡༡ །། གསེར་གྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ལྟར་གིས། ཚེན་པོ་ཚོར་གྱི་རྒྱལ་ཁབས་སུ་ད་ལའི་སྐྱ་མ་བཟང་རྒྱ་རར་
འཕོད་པའི་གཏམ་

ཉི་འོག་དུ་འཁོད་པའི་སྐྱེ་དག་སྤྱི་དང་།

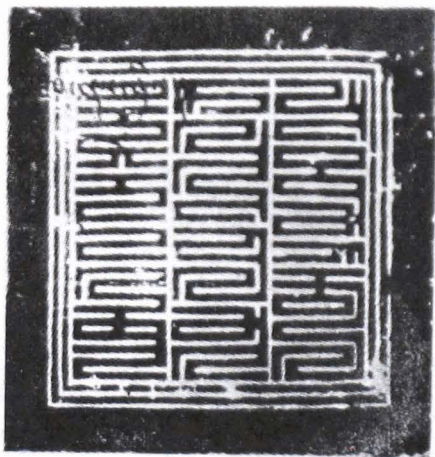
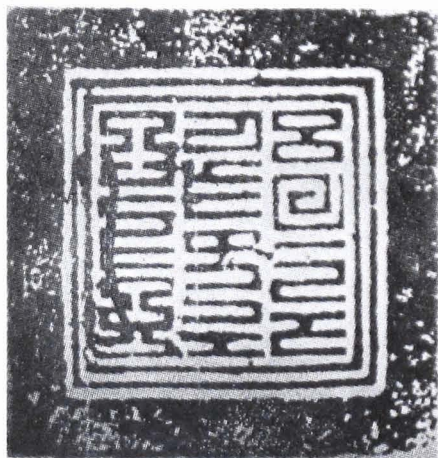
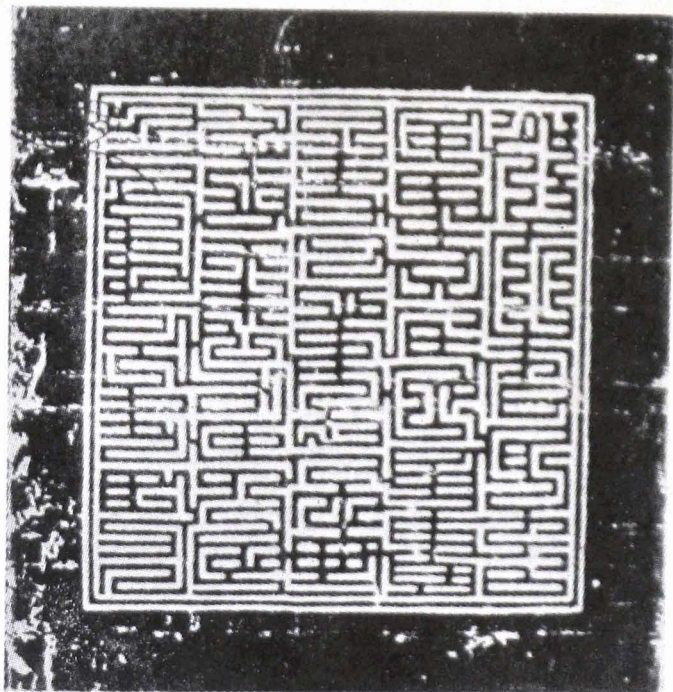
བྱེ་བྲག་རྣམས་དང་། རྩ་གཉེར། མི་དཔོན། བརྒྱ་དཔོན། བུ་དཔོན། དེ་ལོ་ཁ་སོགས་ཕྱ་བ་ཞི་
དུག་གང་དང་གང་གི་སྤེ་སོར་མངགས་སྤྱི་བ་སྤྱིར་བཏང་དམིགས་བསལ། བོད་ཀྱི་ཡུལ་ཁབས་ཐམས་
ཅད་ཀྱི་ཚོང་དཔོན། དུང་འཁོར། སྤེ་པ་སོགས་དུག་ལམ་མཐའ་དག་ལ་སྤྱི་དངས་བ། ཡ་འདྲི་ཡེ་ཉུ་རོ་
ཕིའ་མི་ཡང་ན་ཕེ་རང་ཞེས་པ་དང་བཅུ་མ་པའི་རིགས་ཀྱི་ག་ཕྱི་མི་ཞེས་པའོ། མགོ་དཀར་སྐྱ་མ་
འདི་རྣམས་བོད་ཀྱི་ཡུལ་ཁབས་ལ་གཞན་འདྲེས་མེད་ཅིང་ཚོང་བྱེད་པར་འོངས་པ་མིན་འདུག། རང་
གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་དེའི་རྒྱལ་ཚབ་ལ་སྤྱི་དང་ནས་སོས་ཏེ། སོ་སོ་སོ་སོ་དེ་ཕྱི་མི་ཚེ་ཞེས་པའི་སྐྱ་མར་གྱུར་པ་དེས།
མི་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་བརྟེ་བའི་ཕན་བ་བསྐྱབ་པར་གཏང་བ་ཡིན་འདུག་པའི་རྒྱལ་བཞིན་གར་འགྲོགས་
འདུག་ནའང་། ལུས་ཀྱང་ཕན་ཆ་རོགས་རམ་དུ་གང་འགྲོ་ལས། མི་འོས་པའི་གནོད་འགལ་རིགས་
ས་བྱེད་བར་བདེ་བར་སྤོད་ཡུལ་ཡངས་ཚུག། ཅེས་ལུགས་ཕྱ་བྱུང་སྤོད་ཀྱིས་ཉི་བའི་ཚོས་ལ་པོ་བྱང་
ཚེན་པོ་བོད་ལ་ནས་བྱིས།

Decree of liberty of conscience issued by the Dalai Lama

*With acknowledgement to Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato (Rome) —From
Il Nuovo Ramusio II, By Prof. Luciano Petech, Part IV.*

ཉེ་འོག་དུ་འཁོད་པའི་སྐྱེ་བུ་སྤྱི་དང་དབྱེ་བྱས་རྣམས་དང་། རྩལ་ཉེར། མི་དཔོན། བུ་དཔོན།
 བུ་དཔོན། རྩེ་རོ་ཁ་སོགས་ཀྱི་བཞི་དྲག་གང་དང་གང་གི་སྐྱེ་མེར་མངགས་སྤོབ་སྤྱིར་བཏང་། ཐོད་
 ཀྱི་ཡུལ་ཁམས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ཚོང་དཔོན། ལོང་འཁོར་སྡེ་པ་དམིགས་གསལ་སོགས་དྲག་ལམ་མཐུང་
 འདུག་ལ་སྤྱིངས་པ། ཡ་འདྲེ་ཡེ་ཏུ་རོ་པའི་མི་ཡང་མ་པེ་རང་ཞེས་པ་བཅུན་པའི་རིགས་ཀྱི་ག་བྱ་མི་
 ཞེས་པ་འམ་མགོ་དཀར་སྐྱམ་འདི་རྣམས་བོད་ཀྱི་ཡུལ་ཁམས་ལ་གནན་འདྲེས་མེད་ཅིང་རྫོང་བྱེད་
 པར་འབྱུང་བ་མིན་མི་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་ཡན་པ་སྐྱབ་པ་དང་། བདེན་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བྱ་བ་བྱེད་པའི་
 བསྐྱབས་པར་དང་། བདེ་བ་ཆེན་པོའི་བདེན་པའི་ལམ་ལ་བརྒྱུ་བ་དང་། རང་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་དེའི་རྒྱལ་
 འཇོ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་སྤྱིང་ཐོག་པ་ནས་བཀའ་ཉན་ཅིང་འོག་དུ་ཡིགས་པར་གནས་པའི་མངའ་འབངས་ལ་
 བསྐྱབས་པར་དང་། བདེན་པའི་དཀོན་མཚོག་གི་བདེན་པའི་ཚོས་འཆད་པ་དང་འཕེལ་བར་བྱེད་
 པའི་ཕྱིར་ཡོངས་འདུག་པ་དེ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་སོམ་སོ་པོར་དེ་ཕྱི་ཆེ་ཞེས་པ་འམ་སྐྱེ་བ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། འབྲམས་
 པ་དང་ལྔ་མ་པའི་ཡའ་ལྷ་བྱ་ཅིང་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་བྱམས་བཅེད་དང་སྤྱིང་ཇི་ཤིན་དུ་ཆེན་པོ་མཛད་པས།
 དེ་རྣམས་ཐུལ་བའི་ལམ་ལས་ཐར་པ་དང་། བདེན་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས་དང་བདེ་བ་ཆེན་པོའི་གནས་སུ་
 ཟག་པ་མེད་པའི་བདེ་བ་དང་མཐུན་མེད་པ་དང་ཟད་མེད་པའི་གཟེ་བུ་ལྷན་ཞོགས་པ་ཡོངས་སྤྱོད་
 པའི་ཕྱིར། བསམ་འདས་འགྲོ་སྐྱོལ་མི་གཟེགས་པས། བདེན་པའི་ཚོས་བཤད་པ་པོ་ཡུལ་ཁང་ལ་
 གཏང་རྣམས་འདུལ་ཐམས་ཅད་དེ་ལ་གཏང་བའི་དབང་གིས། ཡུལ་ཁམས་འདིར་དེའི་དོན་དུ་དོན་
 གཞན་ཅི་ཡང་མེད་པར་གནང་བ་ཡིན། ཡེ་རང་པ་འདྲེ་ཞེས་པ་འམ་མགོ་དཀར་སྐྱེ་བ་འདི་རྣམས་
 དང་གཞན་ཡང་ཇེས་སུ་ཡོང་བ་མཐུན་དག་གིས་རྩལ་མ་ཟད། ཐོད་ཡུལ་ཁམས་ཐམས་ཅད་དང་
 གནས་གང་ཡང་རུང་བ་རྣམས་དང་། མེར་སྐྱེ་མིའི་རིགས་གང་ཡང་ལུང་བ་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་རང་
 དགར་མངོན་སུམ་དུ་བདེན་པའི་དཀོན་མཚོག་གི་བདེན་པའི་ཚོས་འཆད་པ་པ་དང་འཕེལ་བར་བྱེད་
 པ་ལ་དུས་དྲག་དུ་རྒྱུན་སྤི་འཆད་པའི་དོན་དུ་ངེད་ཀྱི་ཐེན་བྱིང་པ་ཡིན་པས། རྩོད་གོང་འཁོད་དྲག་ལམ་
 སྤྱི་དང་བྱ་རོར་སོག་སོགས་མེར་སྐྱེ་རྣམས་སུས་ཀྱང་ལྷག་ཆ་མི་བྱེད་ཅིང་། སུའི་སེམས་ལ་བདེན་
 པའི་ཚོས་འཛིན་པར་བདེན་པའི་དཀོན་མཚོག་གི་འོད་ཟེར་གསལ་བྱེད་ཤར་བ་དེས། རང་དགར་
 དང་རང་དབང་དང་ལྔ་མ་པས་ཚོས་འདི་འཛིན་པ་འདོད་པ་ཡོད་ན་དེས་འཛིན་པ་དང་ཡང་ཚོས་དེ་
 འཛིན་པར་ཟེན་པས། བདེན་པའི་ཚོས་དེ་རང་དགར་དང་མངོན་སུམ་དུ་ཡིགས་པར་ཉམས་སུ་ཡིན་
 པ་རྩོད་གོང་འཁོད་རྣམས་སུས་ཀྱང་བཀག་ཆ་མི་བྱེད། བདེན་པའི་ཚོས་སྡེ་འཛིན་པ་པོ་དང་དེའི་
 ཉམས་སུ་ཡིན་པ་པོ་སྤར་ལས་ངེད་ཀྱི་མངའ་འབངས་སྤོ་གཏད་ཤིན་དུ་ཁེལ་བ་གཟེགས་ཤིང་། དེ་
 ཐམས་ཅད་དང་བདེན་པའི་ཚོས་འཆད་པ་པོ་རྣམས་ཀྱང་སྤྱིངས་སྤྱིངས་ཤིང་། ཇི་དེ་ཀྱི་རྩད་པར་དུ་
 སྤོབ་པའི་སྐྱབས་ཀྱི་འོག་དུ་གནས་པའི་རྩོད་གོང་འཁོད་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་མཁྱེན་པར་བཅུག། དེ་རྣམས་
 མི་བདེའི་རིགས་སུ་ཅམ་ཡང་བྱས་ཚོག་རྒྱ་མིན་པས་བདེ་བར་ཡི་གེ་འཛིན་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱུས། ལྷགས་
 བྱ་སྐྱེ་སྤོལ་ལ་བྱོགས་ལས་རྣམས་པར་རྒྱལ་བའི་དགའ་ལྔ་མ་ཁང་གསར་ནས་བྱིས།

Decree of the liberty of conscience issued by the Regent
 With acknowledgement to Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato (Rome)
 —From Il Nuovo Ramusio II, Prof. Luciano Petech, Part IV.



Copy of Great and Small Seals affixed on various documents

With acknowledgement to Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato (Rome) – From Il Nuovo Ramusio II, By Prof. Luciano Petech, Part IV.

The Regent fixed the 9th September as an auspicious day for such a solemn occasion. In the morning the Prefect, accompanied by all the other six confreres, went to His Highness' Palace. The gifts were displayed on tables and the rarities of the West made a strange, striking sight in the reception hall of an oriental ruler. There was a fine drawing-room clock which struck the quarter hour, ringing out the full hour every sixty minutes. For this purpose the clock was fitted with eight small bells. A special ornamental device made it follow daily the course of the moon in the lunar month. The face of the clock was further equipped with four hands indicating respectively the day of the month, the actual phase of the moon, the hours and quarter hours. It was indeed a fine piece of work, made in London and purchased at the cost of about Rs. 250/-. Among the other presents figured a good assortment of first class European fabrics in varied designs and colours, "a very long and big pair of binocular," a microscope, a coral pearl, a string of 212 beads of good amber, a gold medal with the image of the Pope engraved on it, scissors, pen-knives, Bohemian crystals, broaches, etc. etc. The cost of this fine collection of European luxuries amounted approximately to Rs. 1,300/-. The Pope's and Card. Belluga's kind generosity made all this possible (22).

After the customary formalities of protocol, the Prefect stepped forward and handed over to P'o-lha-nas the Pope's letter, duly translated into the literal language, and written upon strong hand made European paper.

"Your kindness,—His Holiness, the Pope wrote to the Regent—"to the missionaries, and your desire to know the truth, binds us to you with the sweet bond of charity. We wish to make this known to your Highness by addressing you the present letter. We shall always gratefully remember the protection you have given them in the past and this gives us great hopes that you will continue to do so even in the future. And that you may the more readily fulfil these hopes, we, yielding to your wishes, have ordered the said Fr. Horace, whose great virtues have found no less favour

22. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 33, 82.

with us than with Your Highness, to return to you with some companions of the same religious order, who will help him in preaching and teaching to the peoples subject to your rule the truth of the Gospel, which alone, as you must consider to be certain, can open the gate and pave the way to eternal happiness. We earnestly beg and entreat you to protect them with your royal authority and to extend to them the favour they have so far experienced from your Highness.

“The great reputation which has reached us about your sterling character makes us feel sure that you will comply with our wish. As Your Highness can easily realise, we have been prompted to send you these excellent men, to make them undertake such an arduous journey, for no other reason than to try and obtain your eternal salvation and that of your people. And though your people owe you and your wise rule no small part of their present prosperity, yet, you must think that you have done nothing for them and for yourself unless the one way to salvation makes secure your eternal happiness. This is the greatest and chief wish we can entertain for Your Highness” (23).

As all can see, the letter of the Pope to the Regent in Lhasa is clear and to the point. His Holiness did not mince matters or beat about the bush, but in plain-spoken terms he set forth the scope of the mission which the lamas of the west were to fulfil in the mystical land of Tibet.

To make the occasion more solemn, and to get the most out of it, Fr. Francis Horace delivered also a short touching address. He spoke of the great love the Grand Lama of the west, His Holiness Pope Clement XII (who by way had already died on 6th February, 1740) felt for the Tibetan people, the sacrifices made by him in sending out the priests to the country and how greatly it would please him if the Christian law could be freely preached and propagated in the land. This would be the best of gifts Tibet could offer the Pope. Referring to the services rendered by the Regent to the missionaries in the past, the speaker went on to praise and to thank him in his own name and in the name of all for his help, kindness and understanding, expressing at the same

23. Bullarium Ord. Min. Cap., Tomo VII, p. 256.

time the moral certainty that under his kind protection and good will the mission would surely flourish and prosper. In his final peroration Fr. Della Penna requested the Regent to kindly grant the Decree of Liberty of Conscience to all his subjects (24).

P'o-lha-nas was besides himself with joy. Incensed with happiness and flattered by the letter and gifts sent by His Holiness and by the few chosen words spoken by one of his best and most esteemed friends, he was in a jolly, talkative mood, ready to grant anything. For hours (according to a report written by Fr. Joachim, the missionaries remained with the Regent for several hours) he kept gazing ecstatically at the presents, fondly caressing them with his eyes and hands like a child would do to its birthday gifts or Christmas toys. On the same day, before the missionaries left his palace the Regent issued, in the most solemn form, the Decree of Liberty of Conscience, imprinting upon it the Great Seal to show that it came from the highest authority of the country. The Fathers returned home in high spirits taking along with them an abundant supply of tea and other rare delicacies of the land, feeling sure that this was the day which the Lord had made for the conversion of Tibet.

The Decree of Liberty of Conscience is the most important document on the Tibetan Mission and should be given the place of honour. It was drafted at the Lhasa Chancery and was issued in two original copies. One copy was written on yellow satin and it was to be kept in the Capuchin Friary at Lhasa, while the other copy, written on yellow Chinese papers, was to be forwarded to the Archives of Propaganda in Rome (25). The latter is still extant. We shall give here the highlights of the Decree.

24. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 230.

25. Actually the two copies of the Decree of Liberty of Conscience were not issued on the 9th September, 1741. Sometime after the presentation of gifts, two of the Fathers (they must have been Frs. Francis Horace and Joachim) together with the head lamas of the universities and the chief representatives of the monasteries in Lhasa were invited to dinner by the Regent. It was on this occasion that P'o-lha-nas presented the missionaries with the duplicate copy of the Decree of Liberty of Conscience. It seems also that the idea of forwarding one copy of the document to Rome and of keeping the other in the Capuchin Friary at Lhasa originated from his mind (Nuovo Ramusio part II, pp. 44-45).

“Be it known to all men”, we read in the Decree of Liberty of Conscience, “living under the sun in general, and in particular to...(and here follows a long list of authorities and dignitaries in Tibet) that these European Priests, otherwise known as Capuchins or white-headed Lamas, have come to Tibet for the sole purpose of doing good to all, to teach men to live honestly, guide them on the way to heaven, tell the subjects to obey and respect those who are in authority, to preach and propagate the true law of God”.

Reference is made here to the Noble Lama or Supreme Pontiff in Rome who “like a very loving Father, having compassion and love for all men and in order to save them from the road to hell and to make them enjoy the everlasting glory of paradise sends out, notwithstanding expenses and difficulties, the preachers of the true law into every part of the world, and for this sole purpose and without any other motive he has commissioned them to come also to this great kingdom of ours.”

“Accordingly, we give and grant the white-headed lamas, known also under the name of European Fathers, and all those who will come after them, our royal seal so that forever and without any interruption they may preach and propagate freely and publicly the law of the true God. And this not only in Lhasa, but in all the regions of Tibet, in whatever place they may go and with whomsoever they may meet.

“And you dignitaries and superiors in general, whatever may be your station in life, laymen or ecclesiastics, Chinese or Mongols...dare not to prevent them from doing so. Should any one be enlightened by the grace of the true God and embrace the true law of his own free will, or he has already embraced it, none of you must harass or hinder him from observing it freely, openly and publicly.

“We further make it known to you that all those who shall embrace the true law and shall keep it, shall be regarded by us, even more than before, as our loyal and faithful subjects, and that all such men and all the preachers of the true law are under our special protection. Do not therefore wrong them in any way not even as much as a hair’s breadth and see that this document is scrupulously carried into effect.”

Given at dGa'-Idan-k'an-gsar (the royal palace) in the year of the "iron fowl," the 30th of the seventh month (26)—9th September, 1741.

The Regent was truly overwhelmed by a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction at the presentation of the Pope's letter and gifts. Nonetheless, he had already manifested in many ways all his consideration and love for the missionaries. In this connection Fr. Constantine of Loro wrote in one of his letters from Lhasa : "To show his special affection for all the Fathers the king gave us two diplomas, in one of which he exempted us from the inspection of goods forwarded to us and in the other declared us free from the duties which invariably had to be paid on everything and by everyone without exception, whether the owner is a foreigner or a Tibetan national that comes into Tibet from Kuti, on the frontier of Nepal. And not satisfied with this he eulogised us very highly in public audiences, commending our zeal in assisting the living both spiritually and corporally. The entire city, which is said to be inhabited by some 90,000 souls, seeing what account the king made of us, spoke of us with particular respect" (27).

The presentation of the Pope's letter and gifts to the Dalai Lama, which took place on the 18th September, was also attended by ceremonial splendour and unrestrained feelings of joy. Any outward sign indicating veneration or worship for the august person of the Potala Palace was graciously waived aside out of consideration for the sentiments of the foreign lamas. Here again was a fine assortment of European niceties on display. The presents sent to the Regent and the Dalai Lama were not all of the same kind, but corresponded more or less to the same monetary value. A detailed list of the gifts sent by Clement XII to the seventh Dalai Lama will take up no less than twenty lines in print. As a matter of fact, three porters were engaged to carry them

26. Translations of this document appeared in : *Relazione a Stampa* of 1742, an anonymous writing published in Rome in 1742 ; *Bullarium Ord. Min. Cap.*, Tomo VII, Roma 1752, p. 258 ; *Memorie Istoriche* pp. 16-21.

27. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 110.

from the Friary to the Potala Palace. We shall mention the most significant ones duly. These were a mural clock with weights, two triangular glasses which make the rainbow, a crown of amber, one good large telescope and four small ones of different kinds, six pairs of spectacles, two magnifying glasses, a crystal encased in silver to light a fire and magnify letters, a piece of coral, twelve pen knives, two pairs of scissors, two ivory cases adorned with silk and having many needles, a beautiful painting of a Cardinal, a small amber statue of the Pope, the picture of all the Popes and Emperors, the Kings of France, Spain, Poland, Portugal and of the Grand Master of Malta...(28).

The religious leader of Tibet was no less pleased than the Regent at being the recipient of so many wonderful things and showed himself particularly interested to know more about the Grand Lama of the West who had been so kind and generous to him. For a while, writes one of the Fathers, he forgot his exalted dignity and lost himself in wonderment at the sight of those lovely presents now before his entranced eyes. Tea was served to all in the presence of the great omniscient and afterwards the missionaries were taken to some other apartments of the great Potala Palace for a special treat—a thing usually reserved for the highly honoured guests (29).

Another thing served to heighten the occasion—the Pope's letter to the Dalai Lama. His Holiness had written to him :

“The many things which our beloved son, Francis Horace of Penna, has told us of your kindness and good will towards him and his companions have won from us for you the greatest benevolence and leave no doubt that the memory of your name will ever remain most pleasing to us...

“We rejoiced exceedingly to hear that your excellent and sagacious mind and your docility enabled you to see the refulgent light of our Catholic religion, to love its truth and to esteem highly its moral laws...

28. The Pope's gifts to the Dalai Lama are enumerated one by one in the letter of the latter to His Holiness referred to here below in footnote No. 33.

29. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 31, 42 ; part III, p. 230.

“We hope, not without reason, that by the mercy of God Almighty you will at least be brought to see clearly that there is no other way to obtain the bliss of eternal life than to follow the doctrine of the Gospel...

“We, therefore, exhort you to follow it and to enrich the peoples whom you rule most gloriously with this most excellent and necessary favour, the favour, we mean, of your example and of your authority leading them on with you to the kingdom of heaven. And this, we feel, will easily come about if you allow our beloved son, Fr. Francis Horace and his companions to promulgate the Christian teaching among your subjects.

“Given at Rome on the 24th September, 1738” (30).

The Prefect, eager to seize the opportunity to obtain from the supreme head of the Lama Religion the Decree of Liberty of Conscience, already granted by the Regent, harped on the same tune and even made an open request to be favoured with the same privilege. The Dalai Lama promised to do it. Meanwhile, he took leave of the missionaries and bade them to take home sweetmeats, dried fruit and other delicacies of the country.

The Decree of Liberty of Conscience was finally issued on the 7th October after thinking it over for nineteen long days. It was delivered in two original copies, one to be kept in Lhasa and the other to be forwarded to Rome. The following is the translation :

“By order of the Golden King, in the country of the Great Hor (Tibet, China, Mongolia...) document of the Dalai Lama, known as Vajradhara.

“Be it known to all men living under the sun in general, and in particular to...(and here follows the usual list of dignitaries and authorities) that these European Fathers... did not come to Tibet for trading and that they do not mix with the trading community, but have come here only in order to obey whole-heartedly the wishes of their Lama or Supreme Pontiff, who, out of love and compassion for men sends them into the whole world to do good to all. Such

being the case, we order to help them in their needs, wherever they are and wherever they may go and to make their activity easy so that they may be enabled to carry out their work peacefully.

“Given at the great Potala Palace on the day of the full moon, in the 8th month of the “Iron Fowl” year (i.e. the 7th October, 1741).” (31)

The reader will have noticed the difference in the tone and manner that exists between the documents issued by the Regent and the Dalai Lama. The Decree of the Liberty of Conscience given by the Regent is ample in its form, clear in its meaning and all embracing in its sphere of action. Perhaps, in giving the document he had taken into account the political aspect of the issue only, without giving much thought to all the possible implications that went with it. While the Decree issued by the Dalai Lama is cautious, uncompromising and intentionally meaningless and indefinite. He did not commit himself in any way. It is clear that he knew what he was doing. One may reasonably suspect that the Regent was helped or tutored in the drafting of the document. The style is definitely not that of the Lhasa Chancery. From a remark made by Fr. Cassian we learn that it was the Dalai Lama’s intention to issue a document similar to that of the Regent, but his spiritual adviser warned him that by doing it he would sign his own death warrant and that of the national religion he stood for. That is why the Decree of the Vajradhara is so vague and colourless (32).

Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama and the Regent got ready gifts and the reply to be sent to the Pope. In doing this the Vajradhara, or the “holder of the thunderbolt”, was quicker than P’o-lha-nas, the virtual dictator of Tibet. On the same day in which the head of the Lama religion issued the Decree of Liberty of Conscience, he replied also to

31. The text of the document is given in Tibetan types in *Nuovo Ramusio*, part IV, p. 212. Translations in the Italian language appeared in *Relazione a Stampa* of 1742 and in *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 18-19.

32. *Memorie Istoriche* p. 19.

His Holiness. He wrote :

“I offer this letter to Clement XII called Pontiff, who peacefully rules over the great land or the kingdom of Rome.

“The Fathers called Europeans, members of the Capuchin Order, whom you have sent to the kingdom of Tibet, have handed over to us your Brief and your gifts”. (Here he enumerates one by one the presents sent to him by the Pope).

After having spoken highly of the noble qualities of His Holiness and of his wise rule, whose chief aims were to maintain peace and order among his subjects, to love them all and to be interested in the welfare of people living in other countries, the letter makes an ad hoc reference and adds : “Although there lie between you and us the plains, the mountains and the sea, the heart of friendship should not be distant”.

At the end of the document, mention is made of the gifts which were being sent with the letter. These were, “a scarf of white silk (the customary symbol of introduction and friendship), five thanghas (tam-ka) of gold ore (or about half a kilo of gold ore), a precious rosary of lapislazuli (that is a Tibetan Rosary made of 108 beads, the number 108 being sacred with the Tibetans), two pieces of flaming cloth and three pieces of China brocade” (33).

More complimentary and less formal than the letter of the Dalai Lama was the Regent’s reply to the Pope :

“To the king”, writes the Tibetan monarch, “who rules according to the Law of the Great European land in the West, and who helps all wayfarers to reach the feasts and the boundless and endless joy of paradise.

“Your body is as shining as the vast mountain peak of Ricoulnumbo’ (Ri-rgyal-lhun-po, a fabulous mountain of

33. Bullarium Ord. Min-Cap., Tomo VII, pp. 259-260. We have it on the testimony of Fr. Francis Horace himself, in a letter addressed to the Procurator General of the Order of the 14th October 1741 (Nuovo Ramusio, part II, pp. 43-46), that five thanghas corresponded to half a kilo and that the term “Corona” referred to in the Italian translation is nothing else than a Tibetan rosary. The Prefect further adds that the beads of the Rosary were interwoven with four or five coral pearls.

the Tibetan mythology) which from afar beams with steady radiance to all eyes like the splendours of the sun and of the moon. As your law, brings peace to all the living so you also have given it to us by favouring us, through your lama (Fr. Francis Horace), with your letter and many gifts and marvellous presents...which reached us safely and in very good condition...

“We too acknowledge every living being as our father and our mother and try to help them and to do good to all. In particular we have a true and loving heart towards you and your men, whom we have received together with the gifts with ineffable delight, chiefly because they have come to us from so far and by such impervious roads, without thinking of trade, but solely for the sake of the law. The Lama (Fr. Francis Horace) takes care to teach the law; the Doctor (Fr. Joachim) takes care to free the living from illness. Truly excellent and steadfast is your zeal in sending out men for such purpose, without having regard to so many toils and hardships that must be undergone on so long a journey. As this great land bears the weight of the whole world (the Tibetans believed that Tibet was the centre of gravity of the whole earth) so you do bear the weight of all the living and therefore it is a thing worthy of wonder, of praise and of thanks. Your Lama, the Doctor, together with all the others who are in Tibet or go to China and elsewhere have no other purpose in mind than to do good and to serve every human being; and we, in order to help them and ward off any harm, danger and enmity, have issued on their behalf our public letters, that is, the Diploma of Liberty of Conscience, fulfilling in this way your cherished hopes.

“As regards propagating the Law of the true God and following it, I am to say that there are different kinds of beliefs among men. It is not according to canons of justice to forbid anyone to follow the dictates of his own conscience to exert pressure on him, or to act in such a way as to make one transfer his allegiance from one law to another; that would be prejudicial to the interests of the people and of the country. Nevertheless, if there be anyone who should believe the Law of the true God, and should wish to accept and follow it, he will not be prevented by us nor will it be

forbidden. Though our kingdoms are far from each other, our hearts ought to be near and this can be done by a steady exchange of letters.

“The gifts we are sending consist of five thanghas of gold ore, a piece of China brocade and one hundred cods of musk (a speciality of Tibet).

“We offer you this letter from the great palace of Lhasa, on the meritorious day in the month of the ‘Iron Fowl’ year (11th October, 1741)” (34).

At the end of October, 1741, Fr. Joachim of Anatolia left, for the last time, the heights of Tibet en route to Rome to place at the feet of the Holy Father the above mentioned letter and gifts. He could, however, only accomplish his mission in the month of June, 1745. On taking leave from the authorities and his friends, the old Lhasa doctor was offered, as a token of gratitude, a lot of presents, which he refused to accept. However, whatever was literally forced on him, was left, in a true spirit of brotherly charity, for his poor confreres living in the small Catholic Friary on the outskirts of Lhasa (35).

Making a good start

Favoured by the new atmosphere that prevailed in Lhasa by the publication of the Decree of Liberty of Conscience, and by the good will of the population, the Prefect plunged headlong into a new whirl of activity. Though aged and infirm, he used all his energies to take up the scattered threads of the past and make a new start. The task was hard, but not so difficult as it had been in the beginning. All the toil and labour that had gone into the making of the Tibetan Mission had not been lost. They still remembered the intrepid apostle of Christ and some of his teachings, and cherished the memory of the missionary doctor who did not spare himself to alleviate their sufferings. And this made things easy all the more. The only way to achieve success was to start working in right earnest and according to a well thought out plan of action. However, the veiled hostility

34. Bullarium Ord. Min. Cap., Tomo VII, p. 257-258.

35. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, pp. 231-233.

that still persisted in certain sensitive sections of the monasteries against the missionaries, required to be handled with great tact and prudence as these might be the hot-beds of revolt.

At the Potala Palace and at the Regent's Court, among the nobles and the poor people in the streets, the old crusader moved about with ease and confidence, speaking to all of the new religion which had been legally allowed to establish itself in the old land of lamas. At the same time he did not forget to turn out from his facile pen apologetic pamphlets and tracts, which set forth the claim of the true law of God. Now specially was the time to do it as the press and the printer were at his command.

The new missionaries, who had as a language tutor, a lama of the Sera monastery, were slowly coming out into the open. No sooner had they learnt the language sufficiently well to hold conversation than they began to be engaged in the apostolate of the word. They were bold enough to carry their message not only to the poor, simple folk of Lhasa, but made the rounds of the monasteries, and even went, to bear testimony to Christ, before the highest seats of Buddhist learning—the monastic universities of Sera and Drepung (36). It was such a sight to see this band of bearded-men going about barefooted and dressed in a queer fashion to announce to all, the existence of the unknown God. The novelty of the thing in itself was bound to arouse considerable interest and make a deep impression, and such was the case.

36. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 36, 45 ; part III, p. 231. With regard to the language teacher, we are informed from a correspondence of the Prefect, dated Lhasa the 28th August, 1742, (*Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 128) that he was found later to be unfit for the task, though the Regent had issued orders to give a fully qualified man for the new missionaries. Was it done on purpose? It may be. Moreover, we are told in the same letter that a few days before the Christians were taken by the police to the judges to stand trial, the language teacher took leave of the Fathers on the plea of visiting his native village. Was he in the know of the things to come? If he was, then, it means that the hostility against the missionaries had started since their arrival in Lhasa and that it had been cleverly concealed all this time.

It was indeed an encouraging start. Like the proverbial lump of leaven, capable of fermenting a whole mass of dough, giving taste and vigour to it, the apostolate of the new missionaries was beginning to make its action felt among the people of Lhasa. Many laughed in scorn at the new law brought to the land of Tibet by strange lamas of the West ; others began to waver in their faith ; a few were ready to admit that the religion of the unknown God was better than their own. Somehow, the entire city became aware that something new and bracing, like a wind blowing between the clefts of the mountains, was happening under their wondering eyes. If the High Pontiff of the Potala Palace kept a dignified silence over the activities carried on by the messengers of the Gospel, the Regent, on the other hand, was rather loud in his praise for them. He spoke of them and of their law with marked respect and commended them for their zeal in assisting the living in their needs of the body and of the soul (37).

The Regent's words of appreciation for the work of the Fathers were not like the lonely voice of one crying in the wilderness. Many followed his example. Three of the four ministers of state were friendly and spoke highly of the missionaries. Often they went to see them in their own home to talk about religion. The other minister of state was an elderly man, aloof and bitter, and took pride in despising the white Lamas and treated them as infidels. The brother of the Dalai Lama was also another influential person, most kind and understanding towards the cause of the mission (38). Many others, in high social position, either laymen or re-born lamas, entertained the same feelings. The Catholic Friary on the outskirts of Lhasa had become gradually the centre of attraction. It was open to all. They went there freely to receive medical treatment, for a friendly chat, to enquire about one point or other of the faith, to discuss on religious matters or simply out of curiosity. They were all welcomed and made to feel at home.

The most enthusiastic friend of the missionaries was perhaps a re-born lama called Sems-dpa'-c'en-po. A

37. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 110.

38. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 113.

reference has already been made to him earlier in this chapter in the journal of Fr. Cassian. He had been an important person at the court of the Dalai Lama and was venerated by the people almost like a god. So long as he was able (he died on 2nd June, 1741 and his mortal remains were kept exposed for the veneration of the public for a week) he never failed to visit daily the small Catholic Friary. He was kind beyond description and loved to be in the company of the White Lamas whom he greatly admired for their simplicity and austere living. In his death the Tibetan mission lost one of its greatest patrons. Another regular caller at the Friary was Se-tru' Rin-po-c'e, a re-born lama of the highest order. He visited the Fathers often and wanted to be visited by them at his monastery. Meanwhile, he had taken to reading Christian literature and to inquire about the faith. One day the Rin-po-c'e asked whether he could attend a religious service at the Catholic Chapel. On the second day after Easter (4th April, 1741) he was there for Mass. He seemed to join in devout prayers with the others and was deeply moved by all he saw and heard. What impressed him most was a picture of St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen O.F.M. Cap., the proto-martyr of Propaganda Fide, with a Crucifix in his hand, a gaping wound in his head and having a buldgeon for his emblem. On being told that the picture represented a holy European Lama who was struck dead by the heretics for preaching the law of the true God, pausing for a little while he remarked : "Oh ! then the heretics were like we Tibetans, infidels" (39).

These and many other friends and well-wishers helped to enhance the prestige of the missionaries and make them popular.

At times it was not even necessary for the heralds of the Gospel to go out in search of prospective converts. On occasions they would come to the Friary of their own accord to register their names for instruction. Such was the case of C'os-skyid, a young lady in her twenties, the daughter of an inter-marriage between a Nepalese trader and a Tibetan woman. Within a few

39. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 81, 114.

days after the Father's arrival at Lhasa she presented herself to them to be instructed in the new law. On inquiry as to the motives which had made her decide to become a Christian, she avoided giving a direct answer to the question, but stated that she had already given up the practice of her religion and had been thinking of taking this step for quite sometime. Eventually she was baptised on Holy Saturday, 1st April, 1741, and was given the name of Caterina. Later, she joined in wedlock with Francis, a Nepalese convert, of old standing. Caterina always lived up to her baptismal vows and was even pointed out as a true model for all Christian women (40). Andrea was another youth of twenty three who joined the Church in similar circumstances. He was a Nepalese by birth and a farmer by profession. After his conversion he was engaged as a servant in the Lhasa hospice.

Some spiritual fruits were also obtained by visiting the sick and administering medicines to patients. Within months, seven children and a middle aged Tibetan woman, were baptised in articulo mortis. The woman was stricken with dropsy and gladly welcomed the visit of the missionary doctor to her home. Sufficiently instructed, she was regenerated in the waters of Baptism with the name of Felicita. She died a holy and happy death with the names

40. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 29-30, 75. The reader may wonder at the bold behaviour of Caterina. It looks very strange that a young lady in her twenties, should go alone to the house of strangers with such a request. There is a plausible explanation for this. She was baptised on 1st April, 1741, and probably, within a month or so from her entering the church, she was given in marriage to Francis. Within that year she bore a child which was baptised under the name of Mary (Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 100, 113, footnote). The conclusion is that either she had already entered into a civil marriage with Francis or that she had committed herself with him. In any case, it is evident that she was pressed by Francis to go before the priest in order to regularise her position. Francis might have felt backward to go with her, for fear of being rebuked. This also explains why, when questioned about her desire to embrace Christianity, she avoided giving a direct answer.

of Jesus and Mary on her lips, a few hours after having become a Christian (41).

However, it was not all plain and smooth sailing. The missionaries experienced the first difficulties in the exercise of their ministry. The teaching propounded by the European Lamas was bound to make its impact felt on the Tibetan mentality and way of life. There were age-old traditions and vested interests, to say nothing of superstitions and prejudices, to be reckoned with. These obviously obstructed the work of conversion. We give here a few significant instances.

Caterina had three brothers, the second being enlightened by the grace of God expressed an earnest desire to follow his sister into the Church. Enthusiastically he underwent a course of religious instruction and even shed tears of joy when explained of the love of the true God for men. One day, however, when told that if he wanted to become a true follower of Christ, he had to give up the wife he was sharing with his eldest brother, he demurred and fell suddenly silent. It was of no use to assure him that he would be given a wife whom he could call his own. He walked away protesting that he would never desert the woman given him as a legitimate consort by his father according to the custom of the land (42). The curse of polyandry was one of the chief obstacles which prevented Tibet from becoming Christian.

The sly behaviour of Lama Topa, one of the big four who ruled over the monastic town of Sera, tells of another major difficulty that was to be faced in the work of conversion. He used to come pretty often to the Friary. From his conversation, however, it became increasingly clear that the objective of his visits was not to have a greater insight into the Christian law, but to find fault with it. All intelligent lamas fully realised that the spread of Christianity posed a serious threat to their national religion which gave them wealth and power. It was necessary, therefore, so they thought, to gather evidence against the pernicious teaching

41. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 45, 85 ; part III, p. 231.

42. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 75.

of the Christian law in order to stamp it out before the festering evil grew beyond control (43).

There is yet another revealing story to tell. The missionary doctor, in his quest for souls, had come across a bed-ridden old woman. She had been a butcher in her life and as such she belonged to the most despised class of people in Tibet. The lama religion forbids to kill, to eat meat and the butchers, who commit the unpardonable sin of slaughtering animals, are condemned, according to popular belief, to a special kind of hell before transmigrating again into this world. While attending to the old woman, the priest spoke to her about the Christian law, the future bliss of heaven and the necessity of saving one's soul. She was so taken up that she renounced all superstitions and even removed the amulets from round her neck. Devotedly, she started praying and invoking the names of Jesus and Mary. The old woman had already gone pretty far in her catechetical instructions when one day she abruptly turned out the missionary doctor, refused his medical attention and bluntly told him not to show his face any more. What had happened? Things had gone to the ears of a jealous lama or some interested party, who for fear of losing his hold over his followers had threatened the old woman with dire consequences if she gave up the faith of her fore-fathers (44).

Anyway, by the time Fr. Joachim left for Europe, the situation in Lhasa was decidedly tinged in rosy colours. There was resistance and opposition, of course, but there were also well founded hopes of establishing in a few years a choice Christianity. So at least was the opinion of Fr. Francis Horace. While bidding farewell to his old companion and friend, the Prefect told him to send up one of the two Fathers residing in Patna, in case the newly expected recruits had already arrived from Europe. More men were required to cope with the daily increasing amount of missionary work. Slowly but steadily, the little church in Lhasa had been forging ahead.

43. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 114.

44. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 85, 112.

Down in Patna, Fr. Joachim found that the promised assistance from home was not in sight. With self-sacrificing spirit and disregarding his own personal convenience, the veteran volunteered to stay on so that one of the two Fathers posted there might be relieved of his duties and sent where his help was more necessary. Accordingly, in January, 1742, Fr. Joseph Mary Bernini, alone and inexperienced, walked out of Patna bound for the holy city of Lhasa. At Kathmandu he joined the caravan going to Kuti. There the procrastinating tactics of the head caravaner made him impatient and he ventured on with an outcast for his guide. Time and again the worthy tried his monkey tricks on the helpless priest and even threatened to leave him. The poor missionary, not knowing the language and the route, humiliated himself to the point of carrying on his back the luggage of his fellow traveller and even serving him tea. A count by birth, but on his way to Lhasa, he became a servant of one belonging to the lowest of the low.

Three days' march from the capital, Fr. Joseph Mary was met by Andrea, the Nepalese convert, who handed him over a letter from the Prefect bidding him to go back. The times were not propitious and it was feared that the entry of a new missionary into Lhasa might precipitate the crisis. Tired of travelling and already at the journey's end, Fr. Joseph Mary sent back a message to the Prefect begging him to be permitted to enter the city and anxiously waited for a reply. A few days later, Fr. Cassian came to take him up to the mission hospice. For the sake of precaution the two stole silently into the Friary under cover of darkness. It was the 27th May, 1742 (45).

For some time past, things had been going on well in Lhasa, when, all of a sudden, the situation had taken a turn for the worse. The number of people under instruction was well over sixty and day by day more would come to ask to join the brethren in the faith. Ordinary inquirers could be counted by the hundreds. No doubt Lhasa was turning slowly but surely to Christ (46).

45. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 30.

46. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 27.

On the vigil of Pentecost at 3 p.m., which on that year fell on the 12th May, twelve catechumens, all members of three families, were solemnly baptised in the little chapel dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady. It was truly a new Pentecost for the small Christian community in Lhasa. Their names are—Thomas (31 years) and his wife Agatha (34 years) with their four children, Agnes, 13, James, 11, Lewis 6, and little Elizabeth 2 years; Peter and his wife Magdalen, aged 29 and 43 respectively, with their 8 year old daughter named Anna; Anthony 29 years and his wife Lucy 31, with their two year old son Joseph. The first two families lived in the city and had a small business of their own, while Anthony and his wife were farmers and lived a few kilometers away from the capital (47).

So far 27 people had become Christians and eight more families were getting ready to be baptised on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady. The Fathers had planned to receive batches of catechumens into the Church on every major solemnity of the liturgical year (48).

On Pentecost Sunday, the birthday of the Universal Church the small Christian community in Lhasa was assembled in the chapel for the evening service. While the Prefect was raising his thanks to God for this new wonder He had performed among them and was invoking the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit on the new converts to quicken their faith, to enlighten their mind, to strengthen their will and multiply their little flock, a chilling, devastating storm, coming from the nearby monasteries, was gathering over their heads. Within two or three hours their faith would be put to a severe test.

47. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 85-86 ; 112-113 ; *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 27.

48. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 27 ; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 86.

CHAPTER IX

A GLORIOUS PAGE

We begin this chapter with a short introduction which is necessary for its better understanding.

The exaction of money from an individual, or from a number of persons associated in trade or other business, in the form of taxation for service rendered by the state to the public, is something which has come into existence in modern times and is contemporaneous with the age of industrialisation. In former times, and even now in some backward countries, the whole structure is based on different economic footings. The modern imposition of taxes on property or person for the benefit of the state replaced what is now known in French as "corvee". This is a kind of obligation on inhabitants of districts to do gratuitous labour for their sovereign or feudal lord. The Tibetans called it "u-lag," an Arabic word which stands for the right vested in the authorities to requisition man-power to do unpaid labour for any social service.

The system covered a very large field of activities and lent itself to all sorts of abuses and arbitrary impositions. In fact, feudal lords or their executives could recruit free labour at any time and for any kind of work. This might have consisted, to illustrate the point, in the building and maintenance of roads, sweeping of streets or carrying water for public purposes, providing free transport for state travellers or supplying them with fuel and other commodities along the journey, tilling the land and harvesting the crops or doing any other agricultural chore for the master. It also embraced the looking after of public property such as temples, buildings, or preparing things connected with the sacrifices offered in public places of worship; in short, any kind of work which the authorities wanted to be done. The 'u-lag in Tibet went beyond its recognised scope and meant much more public utility service run by government.

Having made all this clear, we now revert to our narrative.

On the 28th April, 1742, a certain Pu-ts'e-rin (a shoemaker by profession and one of the catechumens who was going to be baptised on the 12th May under the name of Thomas) was called to carry a load of gifts to the Potala Palace. It was for a very important and solemn occasion.

After the annual retreat the Dalai Lama gave, in conformity with the traditional custom, a public audience. This is one of the greatest event in the year. The day was fixed by the master of ceremonies and a procession of dignitaries moved on to the Potala Palace. Among them there might be governors from far away provinces, ministers of state, high-ranking lamas and civil officers. The Regent himself with his retinue made it a point of duty to be present on the occasion (1). They would come from far and near with loads of gifts, some very costly, others less valuable, all in keeping with the social status of each making the gift. They came to congratulate the Holy One on the completion of his retreat, to pay homage to him and to crave his blessing. Many porters were therefore required for the occasion to carry all these gifts to the audience hall of the Dalai Lama.

The Audience Hall was packed. The Regent and the Dalai Lama sat majestically on two different well-decorated thrones, surrounded by their respective staff. The porters entered the vast hall through one door and then came out of another. The ceremony prescribed that after they had handed over their load of gifts to one of the men in waiting to be placed on a stand close to the throne of the Great Omniscient, they were to go and pay their respects to the Regent and to the Dalai Lama. A simple act of reverence was sufficient to acknowledge the temporal power wielded by the Tibetan ruler. But far more impressive and complicated was the ceremony which ordinary mortals had to perform in the presence of the living Buddha. While filing past in front of him the porters had to kneel down, bow reverently and with folded hands wait for his blessing and communication of his great merits, that is, the remission of all their sins. It was commonly believed that the rite amounted to an act of

1. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 234.

worship. On his part, the Dalai Lama, still seated on his throne, imparted the devoutly implored blessing by touching the head of the worshipper with a silken tassel fixed to one end of a well-worked and multi-coloured staff.

Pu-ts'e-rin, the catechumen, was well aware of what was in store for him if he took the load-gift to the audience hall. He realised that the prostrations before the Dalai Lama and the receiving of his blessing was tantamount to an act of idolatry and this disturbed him gravely—qualms of conscience. In his distress he looked for someone to take his place, but he could not find anyone. The poor man went to the extent of offering to pay a substitute out of his own pocket, though the service should have been done free, but even then no one came forward and he had to go (2).

As the catechumen's turn came to go before the mighty one and receive his blessing, he wavered for a while and then withdrew. A fellow porter elbowed him gently to bring him back to the reality of things and to remind him of his duty. The gesture evoked from the catechumen this astonishing reply: "As I am about to embrace the law of the true living God which the European Lamas are teaching me, I cannot receive any other blessing than that of the True God" (3).

At these words a mingled feeling of surprise and disapproval flittered over the faces of people who were at a hearing distance. The high pontiff of the Potala Palace withdrew his staff without saying anything. The Regent, perhaps bored by the long and tiring ceremony, did not see what had happened and much less hear what the catechumen had said till it was brought to his notice by one of the attendants. To avoid a commotion which would mar the proceedings of such a solemn state function, nothing much was said or done at this sacrilegious gesture, at that time.

But what the catechumen had done had all the explosive force of a sensational news. It was impossible to keep it

2. Ibidem.

3. This and the following information is culled from the official account sent to Rome by the Prefect. See footnote No. 6 herebelow.

within the limits of the audience hall and it spread rapidly through the city. People began to talk about it. Sharp tongues began nibbling at the reputation of the poor missionaries and commented unfavourably at the arrogant behaviour of their followers. The outrage of the catechumen's behaviour was further enhanced owing to the fanatical devotion which the mysterious personage of the Potala Palace inspired. Pilgrims come from thousands of miles, prostrate themselves in the dust and sometimes walk on their knees to see the living Buddha and receive his blessing. They consider it a rare privilege and the greatest moment of their lives. And here, a vile cobbler, a contemptible creature, in public, and under his very eyes, had dared to stand up against the supreme leader of Tibet, the holder of the thunderbolt! What an unheard of crime! The missionaries came under fire for teaching a new doctrine, subversive to law and order, and openly derogatory to the honour due to the Dalai Lama. The few Christians and the catechumens were accused of treachery. They were denounced as an unscrupulous band of people, ready to give up their birthright in order to follow a strange, foreign cult which waged war on the national religion and went against the time-honoured traditions of their motherland.

The catechumen's refusal to bow in humble obeisance before the Dalai Lama and receive his blessing, made the occasion to set off the spark. It must not be thought that the unfriendly wind that blew across the sky in that solitary spot of the world some two hundred and thirty years ago, was something sudden and unexpected, like the sudden eruption of a quiet volcano. It had been brewing for quite some time, before bursting into the open. The opposition was quietly gathering force, like a deep undercurrent, maintaining the powerful silence of the growth of a tree. The number of those who harboured ill feelings against the foreign lamas far outnumbered the relatively small group of sympathisers. All outward activity was allowed to go on unobtrusively, waiting for an opportunity to crush the missionaries. There were many reasons for it.

Though the Tibetans as a race are hospitable, friendly and cheerful, yet the labour is under a great handicap. They are

by nature suspicious of foreigners : they mistrust any influence from the outside world. The sad experience of constant invasions of the past and the geographical configuration of the territory have made them aloof, withdrawn and isolated. They have an insular complex. Lhasa has been known for centuries as the "Forbidden City", the Holy of Holies upon which no one is allowed to trespass. It is a well known fact that Tibetans are proud of their organisation and keeping foreigners out of the country. If by chance a foreigner is allowed to enter it, he is kept under rigorous control. The route is chartered, all his movements are watched and no provision can be sold to him along the way without the production of the travel permit.

This general trait in the Tibetan character must be coupled with the religious mentality of the people. Religion was the heart and soul of the state. This conception runs through the whole history of the land like the flow of water in a river. It was true that the civil and religious authorities at the time were vested in two different persons, but one must not forget that the theocratic idea of the state still survived in spite of the dust and din of battles. The religion was the state and the state religion. In other words, a Tibetan must be a Buddhist, if he is not a Buddhist, he is not a Tibetan, according to the old saying, "cuius regio illius et religio". It was, therefore, obvious that any infiltration into the fortress of Buddhist Lamaism would be more stubbornly resisted than any attempt to invade the land. Both were sacred and inviolable to the same degree.

In the circumstances, even the decree of liberty of conscience, as was expected, was found to founder. When put to the test it could not hold water. It was a mere scrap of paper. The Regent issued it in a light-hearted manner, in the same way as he would sign any other non-committal document for he knew he had the power to dictate the law, to do and to undo things at will like a dictator. The uneducated class of monks and lay-people were not in a position to notice that something new and revolutionary was taking place in their midst, at least they did not care. However, the intellectual elite of the capital, the learned lamas of the monasteries, in and around Lhasa, realised that a powerful

potential enemy capable of destroying the hearth and the altar, was insidiously entrenching itself within the walls of the sacred city. This was a thing which could not be tolerated. Their future was at stake. Tacitly they organised themselves to put an end to it. The Regent, the few Christians and all those who sympathised with the cause of these execrable foreign lamas must be made to feel the crushing weight of their wrath. An opportunity to do it would not be slow to come by.

It is as easy of course to visualise the situation in retrospect as it is to see that part of the blame for pushing things to such a pass must be shared by the missionaries themselves. They had come to Lhasa in full strength: their presence there was too conspicuous to escape attention. Further the decree of liberty of conscience, which was perhaps too much advertised in the vain hope of strengthening their position, turned out to be a trump card in the hands of their bitter enemies. They made use of it to press their own demand which was to outlaw the foreign lamas. All things, in short, began to work against the missionaries from the very start.

To crown it all, there was a serious misunderstanding. Long before the catechumen caused the sensation in the audience hall of the Dalai Lama, the priests had called upon the government executives to clarify some pertinent points in the implementation of the decree of liberty of conscience. The decree in itself was clear and unmistakable, but the practical application of it might present some particular difficulties. How could the Christians, for instance, keep holy the Sabbath when Tibetans could be called up at any time to do servile work for government? Again, how could the Christians practise their religion freely without hindrance, when their services could be requisitioned by government to do any kind of work for places of worship? and so forth. A clear understanding between government officials and the Christians was needed to obviate any practical difficulty arising from the implementation of the decree. Accordingly, the missionaries requested the authorities to exempt the Christians from doing servile work for government on Sundays and other days of obligation. The exemption was asked for in the name of the Decree of

Liberty of Conscience, and on the strength of the Christian law which commands its followers to devote a day in the week to the service of God. A similar request was made in regard to employing Christians in works connected with the Buddhist shrines or with religious services. The authorities were sympathetic and seemed agreeable and understanding.

The men in charge of the 'u-lag, who assigned duties to the citizens, being ignorant of certain subtleties of the Christian morals, could not see the point in the argument and gave a sinister interpretation to the request. True, the Christians did not ask to be exempted from free labour, nevertheless they claimed certain rights and privileges in the exercise of it, restraining in this way the hands of government in the free use of man-power. This caused an extremely bad impression. The predicament was based on a misunderstanding. The Christians thought that their religious rights were covered by the Decree of Liberty of Conscience so solemnly granted while the government officials felt that the missionaries and the Christians were taking undue advantage of it to suit their own purpose and interfere with public administration. They were ready to tolerate the Christians so long as the difference between them and the common Tibetan in the street was merely a matter of belief, but when this touched on some practical aspects of life, they resented to be dictated to by a handful of men and their power to assign work to the citizens thus curtailed. Moreover, there was another reason which made them a bit uneasy. If the Christians increased in number, their presence in the Tibetan society might pose a serious threat and the government system of recruiting free labour seriously jeopardized.

Another unfortunate incident took place on the 12th May, 1742, the very day the twelve catechumens were solemnly received into the Church. The same evening, Peter, still wet from the waters of Holy Baptism, was called to recite the Mani Prayer—the official prayer of the Tibetans. In itself there was nothing unusual about it. As a matter of fact the recital of the Mani Prayer in common was one of the religious duties imposed on all citizens under the 'u-lag system. This was done in the evening, after the day's work.

Messengers were sent round to inform all those who were expected to attend the prayer-meeting about the time and place where the service would be held. There was no hard and fast rules prescribing the conditions, number of times and other formalities under which one could be summoned in order to recite the prayer. All depended on the whims of the men responsible for the discharge of this particular public duty. It was a grave religious obligation binding on every one. Failure to attend the prayer-meeting was punishable under the law.

It was but natural for Peter to tell the messenger who had come to his house to call him to recite the Mani Prayer at the appointed place with the others who had been likewise called, that in conscience he could not do it. He had just embraced the law of the true God, he declared and so he could not recite a prayer which in its form and meaning was directly opposed to the teaching of the Christian law. He went on to explain that he would all the same pray for the welfare of the king and of the country as it was the duty of any loyal Tibetan subject. But his prayer would not be addressed to Buddha, "the jewel of the lotus flower", but to the true living God, creator of heaven and earth. When the neophyte's reply was conveyed to the judges (for such was the designation of the officers responsible for the organisation of these meetings) they got angry and insolent. They became all the more confirmed in the bad opinion they entertained of the Christians, men without home and country, devoid of all religious scruples, arrogant and proud, in short a truly bad lot.

The official account sent to Rome by the Prefect on the happenings in Lhasa consequent upon the baptism of the twelve catechumens on the 12th May, 1742, does not specify whether Peter was summoned on purpose to recite the Mani Prayer in order to test his loyalty to the old faith or if this was done in the ordinary course of things. But Fr. Joachim was of the opinion that on this occasion the authorities acted *mala fide* (4). They had maliciously called upon Peter to recite the Mani Prayer in order to get the last damaging

4. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 235.

proof that all those who embraced the Christian law were undesirable characters. This being so, both the missionaries and their followers should be banned from the country. Fr. Joachim's opinion was a near certainty when read in the context of the whole narrative.

But what was this Mani Prayer which the Christians refused to say and which brought upon them the wrath of the Dalai Lama and of the Regent himself, causing in its wake an earthquake of emotions among all classes of people ? This needs a short explanation.

The Mani Prayer, so called after the opening words, is rather a long one, and at the same time, a true profession of faith. It is something like the Apostles' Creed of the Tibetans, though formulated in a different manner of expression and without precise ideological content. The language is difficult and abstruse, while the substance is more symbolic than real.

The Mani Prayers, said together by a section of the community, was the chief act of public worship of the Tibetans. The service did not consist merely in the recitation of this prayer, but also comprised some other devotional practices. Nevertheless, the Mani Prayer was the thing, the reason and mainstay of the whole religious function.

The opening words of the Mani Prayer are—"Om mani padme hum, Om svasti siddham." It is a prayer found on the lips of every Tibetan, engraven upon stones and rocks, chanted by devotees, fingered upon the beads of the Tibetan Rosary by pilgrims. It is written every where, all over the country by the road side, along the highways, in deep valleys or on the tops of mountain passes ; wherever a man can tread, there are Mani Shrines (a heap of stones, a barren wall or other similar structures) where people stop to recite this formula. It is usually translated as meaning : "O Saviour ! the gem emerging from the lotus flower." Or even : "Hail jewel of the lotus flower, hail !" The lotus flower, as all know, is the sacred symbol of Buddhism because it pushes its delicate stalk up through the earth's dirt and mire, spreading its pure and perfect blossom in the clean air, and radiant sunshine, reminding man of the long, difficult struggle upwards to "nirvana".

The prayer is addressed to Buddha, or to his living incarnation, the Dalai Lama. The entire future happiness of every Tibetan and of every believer in Lamaism hangs upon the Dalai Lama, who can deal with him as he pleases, according to his likes or dislikes, marring or making his future bright. The Mani Prayer therefore is a request made to the "Jewel of the lotus flower" to look favourably upon the worshipper and grant him in this life the necessary assistance to reach the goal of salvation. The prayer goes on beseeching "the gem emerging from the lotus flower" to look leniently upon the soul after death and apportion it to a favourable region after rebirth.

The Mani Prayer is the backbone of the Tibetan faith, the heart and soul of all its worship. Without it and without the prayer wheel, the whole spiritual life of the country would perhaps come to a stand still.

The refusal therefore of the neophyte, Peter, to recite the Mani Prayer amounted to a capital issue. His was a test case. Upon it was to depend the victory or the downfall of the Tibetan Mission. If the priests succeeded in convincing the authorities that the Christians were exempted from reciting the Mani Prayer in virtue of the Decree of Liberty of Conscience, they would win their point on this crucial issue. On the contrary, if the Fathers' plea was turned down and the Christians were made to say the Mani Prayer like other good Tibetans, then the future of the mission would be doomed.

On being informed of what had happened to Peter and realising the impending danger, the missionaries set out immediately to assist their converts in their time of trial. They called on the judges at their private residences since they were the government executives mainly responsible for the Mani Prayer service. With palpitating hearts the White Lamas tried to clarify the matter and to explain the position of the Christians. They stressed the fact that the Christian law binds its followers to obey and respect lawfully constituted authorities and to pray for them; to render Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. No country has anything to fear by the preaching of the Gospel. Both the Tibetan law and the

Christian law have the same purpose in view with regard to the loyalty to government and the welfare of the motherland. The only difference is that they are quite apart in their application. The Christians having been granted the Decree of Liberty of Conscience must be allowed to worship the true God and serve their country in conformity with the tenets of the law they had embraced.

The judges do not seem to have been very much impressed and much less convinced at the arguments put forward. Yet, the missionaries pressed on with stringent logic and fearless courage. In their zeal, perhaps a little exaggerated, they overstepped the bounds of contention and went to the extent of telling the judges that they too were in duty bound to embrace the Christian law if they wanted to save their souls. The law they had come to preach was the law of the true, self-existing God, not confined to national borders, but extending to the whole world like the light of the sun. Even this last tactless dig did not help to serve the cause; on the contrary it was a source of irritation.

While the European Lamas were advocating the cause of the Christians before the judges, a protest meeting was being held in another part of the capital. They came to know of it sometime later. Since the day Pu-ts'e-rin, the catechumen, shocked the audience hall at the Potala Palace by refusing the blessing of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Priesthood had looked down upon the Christians and viewed with growing disfavour the patronage extended to the missionaries by the Regent. The lamas had become very suspicious and watched closely every move of the Fathers and their followers. In secret they were plotting revenge. The Baptism ceremony held on the 12th May could not be so easily kept concealed from their knowledge. It was a public ceremony held in the presence of a large gathering, catechumens, sympathisers and well-wishers; and in all probability it was performed with a certain amount of outward solemnity in order to advertise the faith and draw the attention of non-Christians.

That very evening, without any undue delay, the ring leaders of the movement against the missionaries and the Christians alerted the various monasteries in and around Lhasa. Four hundred infuriated lamas and monks invaded

the Royal Palace at 9 p.m. and upbraided the Regent for his partiality towards the ministers of a degrading, foreign cult. Voices of protest were raised clamouring for the expulsion of these heretical foreign lamas and the punishment of the Christians. They pressed for the enactment of a law which would ban the introduction of the Christian faith and for that matter of any other religion into the country. The words were accompanied by disparaging remarks and furious threats. They told the Regent bluntly that he had disgraced himself before the fair kingdom of Tibet; that all his merits and administrative abilities would come to naught when weighed against the calamity he had brought upon the land by allowing infidels to set foot in the holy city of Lhasa during the time he ruled the country; that he would go down in history as a renegade, as one who betrayed the faith of his forefathers. They threatened him also that they would rise in revolt if he did not take immediate action against the Christians, that they would not rest till the last of them was relegated into exile with the mark of infamy upon his brow and that if he continued in his evil ways, he would meet with the same fate as his three immediate predecessors. Indeed, this was a grand occasion for the envious lamas and their faithful acolytes to vent upon the Regent and through him upon the supporters of the mission, all the rancour and bitter feelings they had been nursing in their hearts over the years (5).

P'o-lha-nas realised full well that the words and threats held out by the infuriated lamas were not empty and meaningless but would be translated into turbulent demonstrations. He knew more than well that three of his predecessors had been murdered and that the people now protesting and remonstrating in front of his palace were chiefly responsible for their tragic end. Hemmed in on all

5. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 27-28. It is difficult to state the exact date on which the missionaries came to know about this protest meeting. The news does not appear in any of the reports that have come down to us. Yet the matter was of such vital importance and the event so significant that they would have surely mentioned it if it had come to their knowledge before despatching their report to Rome.

sides and terrified at the fate that stared him in the face, the Regent declared forthwith that the missionaries had fallen from his favour and that the Christians would be compelled to recite the Mani Prayer, or else they would be flogged and suitable action would be taken against them. Only on this assurance the enraged mob of lamas dispersed.

After this, things started moving pretty fast. In the ensuing narrative we shall follow, as closely as possible, the official account sent to Rome by the Prefect. The report was dated the 18th July, 1742, and was countersigned by the other five priests then present in the capital. The document was forwarded to Rome at two different times and through different routes in the hope that at least one copy should reach its destination and acquaint the Superiors at home with the latest developments in the mission (6). It

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6. There are two copies of this official account—one copy was addressed to the Card. Prefect of Propaganda and the other to the Procurator General of the Order (Arch. Prop. Fide, Scrittura riferite nei congressi per le Indie e la Cina, Vol. 23 (1741-1743), ff. 439-448; Arch. Prop. Fide, Scritture riferite nelle Congregazioni generali, Vol. 718, congregazione del primo Giugno 1744, ff. 305-315—Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 83-108). Both copies of this official account are dated Lhasa, the 18th July, 1742. Though different in wording, they are identical in substance. The copies were signed by Fr. Francis Horace, Prefect Apostolic, and countersigned by Fr. Florian of Jesi, Fr. Tranquillus of Apecchio, Fr. Constantine of Loro, Fr. Cassian of Macerata and Fr. Joseph Mary of Gargnano. All these priests, with the sole exception of Fr. Joseph Mary of Gargnano, had been eye-witnesses to the happenings of these days in the capital.

Another account, in the form of a letter, was written by Fr. Constantine of Loro. As a matter of fact, there are still three autographed copies of the same letter, addressed to three different persons. The subject matter and the wording of these three letters may be said to be the same, only that a few minor details, here and there, are omitted in one letter. The letter is shorter than the official account and less informative, but there are no discrepancies between the two.

One copy of the letter, dated Lhasa the 20th July, 1742, is kept in the General Archives of the Order. This was published under the title "Relatio Antiqua Missionis Thibetanae", in *Analecta Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum*, Vol. XVIII (1902) pp. 337-349.

(Continued on next page)

is a beautiful and most moving page in the history of the Tibetan Mission and reads like "The Acts of the Martyrs" of the early church.

Diary of the trial

May 13: Pentecost Sunday. After the evening service, at about 3 o'clock, barely twentyfour hours since the twelve catechumens had been solemnly baptised, the small Christian community in Lhasa (26, or according to another report 27 in all) left the little chapel dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady, at the fringe of the capital and were soon on their way home. They looked confident and happy, ready to bear

The second and third copies of the letter bear the date of Lhasa, the 21st July, 1742. One of these is in the Biblioteca Vaticana, Fondo Borgiano Latino, No. 759, while the other is in the Arch. Prop. Fide, scritture riferite nei Congressi per le Indie e la Cina, Vol. 23, (1741-1743) ff. 290-291. The most extraordinary thing about the first two copies referred to above is that they are written on a single sheet of paper measuring 161 x 54 cms. and 154 x 49 cms. respectively, though the subject matter in each letter runs into 7,500 words. The letter with the variations is published in Nuovo Ramusio, part II, pp. 109-127.

The third account appeared in *Memorie Istoriche* as an appendix p. 257-277. It was written by Fr. Joseph Mary dei Bernini da Gargnano to an uncle of his, an abbot, then residing in Rome. It bears the date of Lhasa, the 28th August, 1742. The account is totally dependent on the official report. Particularly worth mentioning here is that Fr. Joseph Mary at the end of the letter mentions a phenomenon of the skies that portended, according to him, the sad events that took place in Lhasa in the month of May 1742. He writes :

"Even the heavens themselves seem to have prophesied such a persecution a few days in advance. In fact, on the 23rd February, of this year a huge comet, which lasted a month, rising between south-east and setting between east and north, was seen in this kingdom and specially here in Lhasa. And it seems also that it was a special thing seen in this kingdom only, as it was not seen in any other place ; for while I was staying in Nepal, at that time, it was not seen by any one in the whole of that kingdom, nor at Kuti, nor did I hear any one at all speak of it except in Lhasa. The Tibetans believe that this sign indicated the coming of the Dzungarian Tartars, who are much feared in this kingdom, but I, for one, feel that (if the comet has appeared as an evil omen) it was an infallible sign of the persecution that has come about, and it is not yet over..."

witness to the newly acquired faith before the world. On reaching his residence Peter found that the police were already at his house waiting for him. He was told to follow them before the judges.

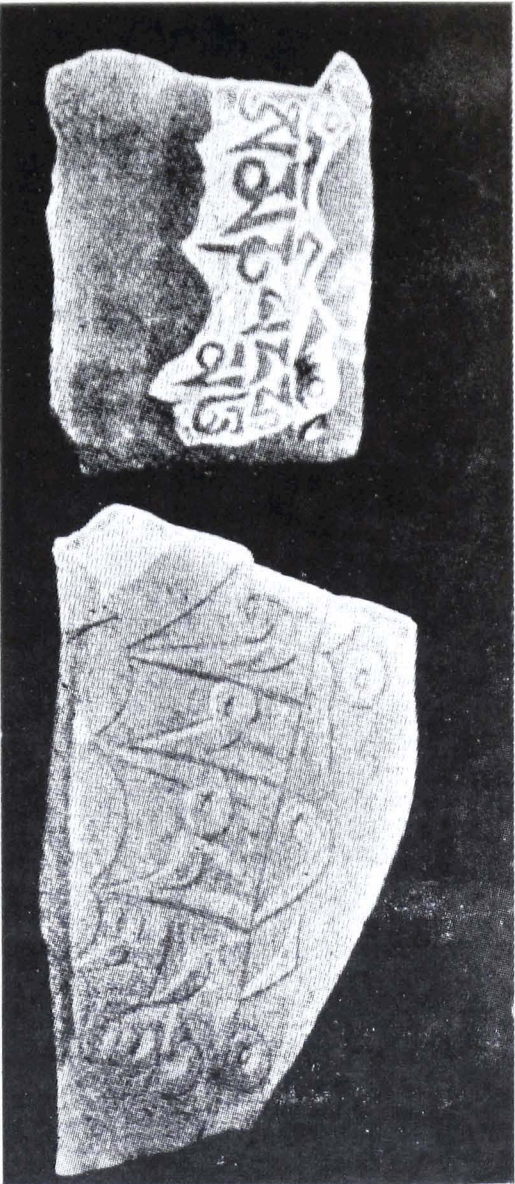
The judges, or mi-dpon, as they were called in the Tibetan language, are second grade magistrates in charge of the executive and judiciary. The whole capital is served by three of them. In the first instance all civil and criminal cases are tried at their court. They have two sittings on every working day—one in the morning and the other in the evening. They are very regular in attending their office. No shopkeeper or merchant can transact any business until the main railing of the court house is opened. At midday there is a recess and work starts again in the afternoon. All business houses and public offices and others have to follow the working hours of the court (7).

When brought before the judges, the new convert was ordered to name all the Tibetans who had embraced the Christian law. Without suspecting anything foul, Peter, without any hesitation, mentioned them all, in the same natural manner as he would have spoken to a friend. Immediately the judges summoned Magdalene, the wife of Peter, Thomas and his wife Agatha and Catherine, the wife of Francis the Nepalese merchant. Only these five were ordered to appear without delay before the judges.

Apparently, Peter had been asked by the judges to give the names of all the Tibetans who had become Christians, whether they had been baptised on the 12th May or on previous occasions. Either through some misunderstanding or lack of reflection he gave the names of all the Christians then residing in Lhasa and the surrounding areas. He did not mention the few converts who, though received into the Church in the capital, were at the time out of Tibet on business.

The judges ordered the Tibetan nationals only, who had embraced the Christian law, to be brought to court. The remaining adult Christians, such as Francis, Andrew and

7. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 65-66.



Two stones inscribed with the magic Mani Prayer

others were ignored because they were Nepalese subjects. For political reasons it was considered imprudent to summon them also. Anthony and his wife Lucy, though they were Tibetans, and their names figured in the list of those who were ordered to be brought before the judges, were never produced before the court. It appears that the police shielded them for one reason or other. When Lucy heard that the other Christians were at the court for the sake of the faith, she went there on her own accord and openly declared that she professed the same religion as the others. Earlier the missionaries tried to dissuade her from going because of her advanced pregnancy, but she would not hear of it. She wanted to share in the honour or ignominy of being a Christian together with her country men and women. This is the first and the last appearance of Lucy before the court. All the three different accounts of the trial of the Christians in Lhasa, which have come down to us, do not mention what happened to her and to Anthony. There may have been strong reasons to spare them from being prosecuted. But one thing is pretty sure that they did not deny their faith.

When the Fathers came to know that the Christians had already been taken to court solely on account of their religion they did not make much of it and wondered at the coincidence of things. They thought that some evil genius must have played a trick on the new converts just for the fun of it or out of spite and that ultimately no harm would come to them. The Decree of Liberty of Conscience was still in force and their great friend P'o-lha-nas, was there to square things up for them. Poor White Lamas ! They did not know then that they had fallen on evil days and that the judges were acting under instructions from the Regent. Though the priests did not realise at the moment the gravity of the situation, yet some of them thought it advisable to go to Court all the same to be of some help to the Christians in case of need and to ascertain the actual facts.

Interrogated about the teaching of the European Lamas, the neophytes answered all the questions put to them frankly and correctly. During the interrogation the Christian religion came under severe scrutiny, specially in matters

bearing on faith and morals with particular reference to its attitude towards Buddha, the Dalai Lama and the loyalty to one's country. All the time the attitude of the judges was predominantly hostile. They hurled cutting remarks at the Christians, they heaped abuses on their religion, they urged the poor wretches to come back to the fold of their fathers if they did not want to be cruelly flogged. At this threat the six Christians with the courage worthy of the early martyrs, unanimously replied : "You may cut off our heads, it does not matter to us; the law we have adopted we want to keep and we will never give it up".

At the closing of the evening session, the judges released the Christians on bail. On this the Priests lodged a strong protest and added that they would appeal to the Regent. The judges did not say anything at the remonstrations of the fathers but told the police to carry out the formalities of the case. It was not difficult to find someone in the crowd to stand security for the neophytes ; even a policeman came spontaneously forward to offer his services. This done, the Christians were set free with the injunctions to return the next day.

May 14 : All the Christians came to Church to hear Holy Mass. Some of the Fathers who had celebrated Mass earlier went to the first royal chamberlain, a Tartar from Koko-nor. He had always been friendly with the missionaries. They went to acquaint him with the proceedings of the previous day, to request him kindly to inform the Regent about it so that he might issue orders to have the Decree of Liberty of Conscience duly carried into effect. Contrary to their expectation, the chamberlain received them coldly. In the course of conversation he remarked casually that it was the duty of all good Tibetans to recite the Mani Prayer. If the Christians refused to say it, they had no one to blame except themselves and that they might be beaten if they persisted in their obstinacy. He went on to say that the neophytes had been unwise to take the new law. He told them that they should have done as he did. Though the White-headed Lamas had taught him the new law and time after time had impressed upon him the need to embrace it if he wanted to save his soul, he never

gave ear to their words. Next he added : "Come to the Royal Palace, I shall speak to the Regent about it".

At the Royal Palace the priests put in an application to be received in audience by the Regent. Just before the audience, after being kept waiting for about two hours, the Regent sent the first chamberlain with another to tell them, in the presence of all who had gathered there for the audience, that : "The King will not grant you an audience and is highly indignant with you as you have stated in public that neither the Grand Lama nor Cenresi, nor Cianciub (i.e. sPyan-ras-gzigs and Byan-c'ub-sems-dpa, two of the Highest saints in the lamaistic hierarchy) are re-born lamas, that Sachiatuba (Sakyat'ub-pa, i.e. Buddha) is neither a saint nor a god nor a true law-giver, and that Pel Lamo' (dPal Lhamo), the chief oracle of Lhasa, is a human being like any other mortal, that he is not endowed with supernatural power or prophetic spirit and that no reliance is to be given to his predictions. By saying all this", the chamberlain concluded, "you have seriously hurt the religious feelings of the Tibetan people".

"Yes, it is true", the missionaries readily admitted, "we have said it, we confirm it and we shall again prove it with clear reasons and cogent arguments as we have already done many times in the past. However, we have given offence to no one as we have only spoken the truth".

The two chamberlains could not keep silent after such a rebuff. Foaming with rage and fury, they shot back: "The King has also said that he disowns you because you do not adore Sachiatuba and you do not perform the Chora' (skor-ba). Unless you do it and desist from preaching your abominable law to the Tibetans, he will have you and your followers beheaded".

"Let him do whatever he wants with us," was the intrepid reply of the priests to the threat. "We cannot bow our head to a false religion for the sake of our own life".

Here it must be explained that the "skor-ba" referred to above is as much a part of the Tibetan ritual as the Mani Prayer. The skor-ba or circumambulation consists in circling round a temple, the Potala Palace or any other sacred

building or things. The circumambulation must be done by keeping to the left and in the same way one must turn the prayer-wheel. It must be revolved from left to right for the prayer to be effective. If revolved in the opposite way, though it would not mean that the person was guilty of swearing, but only that his prayers would not be effective.

The circumambulation, according to the laws of Tibetan Buddhism, is a powerful means of turning the thoughts of the person who does it upon his own soul, seeking after the Lord. One of its effects is the remission of all sins in the form, so to say, of a plenary indulgence. It is performed with great solemnity by a great concourse of people. Being a public manifestation of faith, every good Tibetan makes it a point of duty to do it many times in the year.

Taking exception at the slur cast upon the nation by the missionaries that they would not submit to a false religion for the sake of their lives, the first chamberlain got unnerved and told them that if they continued to speak of the Tibetan religion as being false, they would be beheaded.

Animated by the grace of God, the Fathers retorted: "If you want us dead, here we are, most ready, for gladly we suffer death for the love of the true God. It is a glory for us to testify to the faith we hold dear and profess with the shedding of our blood." This they repeated several times in the presence of all.

Irritated and offended at such a bold declaration the chamberlain dismissed the priests saying: "Go, the king has put the whole matter in the hands of the judges. Go, and discuss things with them. It is of no use for us to go on arguing here". This did not quite satisfy the champions of the Christian cause. "Our judge", he protested, "is the king. We appeal to his patronage. We want to be judged by him and him alone". "Go", retorted the chamberlain, "I have already told you to go. The king does not want to see you. He refused to give you an audience and you know the reason for it".

Finding the door shut in their face, the unhappy messengers went back to the friary. Here they found a different reception. The priests and the people were anxiously waiting

for them. They were still in the chapel; they were still praying. They did not know what would happen to them, but in that hour of suspense and uncertainty they felt the need of God's grace more than ever. When the news was broken to them that the hour of trial had come, that there was very little hope for justice and clemency, the little flock of Lhasa did not lose their courage or waver in their faith. With a set mind and firm will they cried out saying : "If the king wants to punish us let him do so; we are most ready for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ to suffer and to die."

The little community went back to the chapel to pray with renewed faith and fervour. They implored the true living God to give them strength and courage, to bestow upon them the palm of martyrdom. They encouraged one another, they rejoiced at the prospect of sealing the faith they had embraced with their blood. It was truly a moving sight which brought tears to the eyes of the priests. They felt elated and consoled to hear from their spiritual children, still clothed in the baptismal robe of innocence, that they were ready to suffer anything and even die a most cruel death rather than betray their Christian faith, dignity and character. The only regret they had was to leave their children behind, to die alone, without knowing what may befall them. It was such an anguish of heart and mind that they desired their off-spring to be dead before their own eyes rather than that they might be led astray or brought up in a faith different from that for which their parents laid down their lives so gladly. They prayed again together for themselves and for their children to God to be merciful and keep them safe under the shield of his divine protection.

Strengthened by the grace of God and, refreshed by prayer and mutual emulation, the five soldiers of Christ were now morally prepared to face their trial. They had scarcely arrived at the house when they were called again to court. It was about midday. After they had been made to wait for a long time in the public square, they were at last ushered into the room of the assistant judges, the magistrates who had tried their case on the previous day being engaged in more urgent matter.

Before the hearing started, a fire was lit with dry odoriferous herbs. They caused grey smoke to curl up in the air and float all over the place. Strange as it may seem, this introductory ceremony was meant to prevent the germs of evil carried by the culprits from infecting the judges and other innocent people present in the court room. In other words, the smoke was made to serve as a kind of moral steriliser. It is a beautiful and colourful symbol of the contagion of evil, but a rather bad and irritating sort of steriliser (8).

Thomas, Peter, Catherine, Magdalene and Agatha now stood before the three assistant judges, the police on their right and the missionaries on the other side. The first thing the assistant judges did was to question the accused on the real motive which made them leave the Tibetan law and embrace the one of the Christians. In plain and clear language they replied that they had changed their faith because they were fully convinced that those who embraced the Christian law would enjoy the glory of heaven, while the law of the Tibetans leads those who practise it to eternal damnation of hell.

The unexpected answer struck the assistant judges with horror and anger. They became furious and began to pour vituperations and curses on the accused, telling them that they were worse than criminals and were liable to the capital punishment unless they came back to their native law, the law of the saints and repudiated the law of the Christians, the law of the infidels. The imprecations and threats of the judges could neither provoke any sign of wrath nor instil any feeling of fear in the hearts of those who had been fortified by the grace of the true living God.

The prosecution went on to probe into the teaching of the missionaries and into the creed of the Christian law. The accused were asked to tell clearly and without any hesitation what they had been taught in regard to obedience and subjection to the authorities : how God can be one and three

8. This particular is mentioned only in the letter of Fr. Constantine of Loro.

at the same time. They were also questioned on some other points concerning the faith.

It was not an easy task, especially for beginners, but the neophytes stood up to the test and acquitted themselves with honour. They answered all the points put to them one by one in simple language and in clear terms so as to convey to all the exact meaning of what they wanted to say. The only occasion on which the priests thought it prudent to intervene was when the subject of obedience and respect to the authorities came up for discussion. They interceded, not to correct and rectify what the accused had said, but just to confirm and enlarge upon it. In the present context of things, it was such a vital point that needed to be brought home to the sceptic judges.

Among the five accused, Thomas was the one who outshone all the others in his clear exposition of the Christian doctrine. He reported what he had been taught by the Missionaries with such emphasis and force of conviction that all were surprised at his eloquence. He was quiet with anyone who tried to poke fun at him. Though meek and gentle in dealing with others, he showed himself staunch and fearless in the defence of his faith. Once he was asked rudely the reason why he refused to say the Mani Prayer. This drew a reply from him which was sharp enough to raise a protest and to enrage one of the policemen standing by his side. The guardian of law and order, getting hold of a thick, long stick, struck him on his back with all his might. The blow was so severe that poor Thomas felt the pain and bore the mark of injury for quite some time. He would have received many more blows if the entreating prayer of one of the missionaries had not restrained the ruffian (9).

And now, who would believe it? Thomas turned to the policeman who had beaten him and told him gently: "To me it does not seem that I have done any wrong by answering all the questions which have been put to me. I would also say that I did not offend you either. Why then did you ill-

9. The official account and the letter of Fr. Joseph Mary mention that Thomas was struck on the kidneys.

treat me like that?" Later on, outside the court room, Thomas approached the ill-tempered policeman and talked to him in a friendly manner just as if nothing had happened between them.

The action of the policeman was most provocative and unworthy of a man of his profession. The priests and some of the bystanders were moved to pity and compassion at the inhuman treatment meted out to the new converts whose faith and patience had already been sorely tried. Fr. Constantine of Loro walked out of the court room overpowered by a fainting sensation. The Prefect, on whom fell the heavy responsibility of that dark hour, came nobly forward and volunteered to receive, in lieu of the Christians, as many blows as the fury of the policeman was capable of administering. At this magnanimous gesture, the other priests rallied round their leader and with a loud voice proclaimed: "Whosoever professes the law of the true God does not deserve to be punished. On the contrary he is worthy of honour and praise before God and man. If, however, the conversion of any Tibetan subject to the law of the true God is considered in this country to be a crime, then let the authorities unleash their vengeance upon us and not upon these innocent people, for we are chiefly responsible for it. This open profession of faith and moral fortitude served to boost the morale of the Christians. It made them more determined to hold their own ground.

It also caused quite a stir in the court room. The words spoken by the priests were received with contempt and admiration. Whatever could be said against them, it was said freely and with vengeance. Not all however reacted in the same manner. There were also those who deeply appreciated their loyalty towards their converts and greatly admired them for their faith and courage. "These are indeed the words of saints" or "We have never seen men like them"—were some of the comments that could be heard above the confusion. Many on that day, we read in the official account, began to praise and realise the inner moral power of the Christian faith. It was something of a revelation to the people of Tibet to see the followers of the new law and their lamas stand together, firm and fearless, in defence of their common religious ideals.

Having finished the judicial inquiries for the day, the assistant judges referred the proceedings to the judges who were in the upper storey of the building attending to their work. Peter and Thomas were called in separately by these judges. Here again the faith of the neophytes was put to another severe test. They had been called separately in order to gain confidence, to know their mind, and to influence them more easily and win them over. Pressure and threats were used to cow them down, but to no purpose. They remained firm and steadfast in their profession of faith. When the judges realised that they were striving in vain to induce Peter and Thomas to deny the faith or to recite the Mani Prayer, they dismissed the accused with orders to come back the following morning.

The day ended with yet another slight inflicted on the Christians. While Peter and Thomas were undergoing a separate trial before the judges, Catherine, Magdalene and Agatha were told to leave the court room and go outside. It was raining. The three women took shelter under a portico of a nearby house. The police went there also to drive them away from the place in a most insolent manner. This was particularly harmful to Catherine who was in the family way and carried on her shoulders a tender child. Uncomplainingly, the three women submitted to this new humiliation for the love of God.

Each time the trial was adjourned the Christians had to look for someone to stand security for them. Such was the custom of the land.

May 15: Again some of the Fathers set off early in the morning to the residence of the first chamberlain. This time they were under no illusion, though it was hard to believe that the Regent had so suddenly and unexpectedly turned against them and the Christians. He had been so kind and understanding in the past—so helpful and obliging whenever the mission was in difficulty. He was ever so ready to admit the priests to an audience and listen sympathetically to them. So they could not understand the reason of this sudden change that had now come upon him. It was like a bolt from the blue. What could have happened to make him so cold and unconcerned towards his

old friends? They were in the dark, but they felt confident that he would not let them down specially now in the time of need. They thought that perhaps he was acting on the instigation of some evil genius out to destroy the work of God and that in the end everything would come right, and that he would not allow the Christians, on whose behalf he had written in the Decree of Liberty of Conscience that they "shall be regarded by us, even more than before, as our loyal and faithful subjects", to be treated like vulgar criminals.

With this hope and thought in mind the missionaries went to the first Chamberlain early in the morning. They pleaded with him to intercede before the Regent, to spare their flock and to honour his word and not to punish the innocent. Nothing which was wrong could be laid to their charge. They had acted within the law and availed themselves of the privilege which had been granted to all the Tibetan subjects without any reservation. It was true that the Christians had refused to say the Mani Prayer and to perform the "shor-ba", but apart from this they were peaceful and law-abiding citizens, as loyal as any Tibetan could be. Let the Regent give them a chance and they will prove their worth; they had already shown their mettle in words and deed, in bearing patiently accusations and affronts, humiliations and trials. In any case, the priests pressed on, if the Regent wanted to use the rod instead of clemency, let him do it but upon the foreign lamas. "We are quite prepared for it. We take upon ourselves the full responsibility of their conversion; we have taught them the new law; we have made them Christians and it is but proper that we bear the consequences of it".

The answer of the first chamberlain to this cogent plea is typical of the man who is at odds with himself, who reasons with absurd logic of contradiction.

"You are not at fault", the first chamberlain told the missionaries. "In terms of the royal concession of liberty of conscience you can preach your law freely, publicly and everywhere in Tibet. But it is indeed the Tibetans who are at fault and have done wrong in embracing it. They should have done as I did, that is, they could have listened to you

but they should not have gone further than that. There is therefore no alternative for them but to live in conformity with the law of the Tibetans, or else they will be flogged till they are reduced to submission. This will also serve as an example to others who intend to become Christians”.

Then, as an after-thought, the wise chamberlain added: “As for you, it would have been much better if you had preached your law and, at the same time, praised that of the Tibetans allowing your disciples to follow the ancient customs of their motherland”.

“How can that be possible ?” retorted the missionaries. “The fundamentals of the Christian and Tibetan law are poles apart. How can we believe and practise both of them at the same time ? This is impossible to do; we cannot do it. We shall never do it”.

The chamberlain perceiving that the priests could never be brought round to his point of view dismissed them saying: “You must know that the king is the sovereign and chief master of Tibet and that he and he alone has the power to dictate the law. He wants his subjects to obey him, to follow his command and not the false law of the European Lamas”. Having said this, the chamberlain left the room in a huff. The missionaries, who did not want to acknowledge defeat, waited for him at the head of the staircase. There they tried to clear themselves of all the accusations levelled against them and the law they had come to preach. But it was too late. The dice had already been cast.

Late in the morning the Fathers went to the private house of one of the Christians (Peter, perhaps) whom they feared might give in under pressure and fear of punishment. Every apprehension vanished when they saw the little community gathered there with him encouraging one another to suffer for the love of God and for the salvation of their souls whatever punishment might be inflicted on them. With great edification they heard their spiritual children speak about the example of the early martyrs in order to enkindle their fervour and strain their nerves to fight, as it were, like those who had been called to receive the crown before them. At this moving scene, their mind travelled back to the

nascent church of Jerusalem which, no matter how much tried and persecuted by the Jews, held fast together in one spirit.

On this day the Christians were not summoned to court after all. The judges had to attend to arrangements connected with the farewell ceremony of the Regent's second son, who was leaving for Lhasa for his feud on that day. Thomas was detailed to do the porter's work for the occasion while the others were told to keep ready for the following day.

May 16 : It was humiliating, but even on this day, the priests could not think of anything else to spare their little flock from destruction than to make another desperate bid on their behalf and beg for clemency. Once again two of the Fathers walked with heavy hearts into the streets and lanes leading to the residence of the first chamberlain. This time they were received rudely. They did not mind it so long as there was some hope to stem the tidal wave that threatened to engulf the mission. Humbly they petitioned the chamberlain to tell the Regent not to call the Christians for examination in court, not to test their constancy in the faith any longer. They had already been disgraced enough before the public, they had already faced their trial and now it was time to show a little mercy. Finding himself at the end of his patience, and annoyed at the repeated supplications of the Fathers, the impetuous government servant blurted out: "I cannot speak any more to the Regent about this matter. Each time I broach the subject he flares up in a temper and answers me back sharply. In plain words, he does not want to hear of it." Then, mellowing down a bit, he added: "I have already told you that the Regent has placed the case into the hands of the judges. The rest is left to them. Why do you want to bother me uselessly?" He further warned the priests to stop preaching their law, because it served only to alienate the Tibetans from the allegiance they owe their country and their ruler.

"But how can we do that?" the missionaries queried. "For this reason we have left our native land; for this reason our Grand Lama has sent us to this country; for this reason we have asked for liberty of conscience—to preach the law of

the true God is our bounden duty, the mandate we have from above, the sole end and purpose of our life and activity.”

“You are insane”, was all they got back from the chamberlain in reply. Not a very pleasing or satisfactory answer was thus given to the men who had abandoned all to give all for an ideal. Asked for an explanation, the chamberlain told the priests that he had used such an expression just to say that it was senseless on their part to have come all the way from the West and to have taken such a lot of trouble just to preach their law to the Tibetans.

Finding the door of the Regent’s Palace barred, the missionaries felt that they had to look somewhere else for help. It was no use now to go to him any longer, for each time they had sought his protection for their beloved spiritual children he had turned down their requests bluntly and told them to deal with the judges. Accordingly, the priests got together for a family council, to explore ways and means to overcome the present awkward situation. It was resolved to make an approach to the judges. They were the men who had to try the accused and come to a final decision. The Regent was sure to accept their verdict, whatever that might be. However, even this course of action was not without difficulties. The second judge in fact was the brother-in-law of Pal Lhamo, the chief oracle of Lhasa, the man who had been often and publicly discredited by the Fathers. He was sure to influence the other two judges and turn them against the Christians and the missionaries. But what could be done in the present circumstances? There was no other way out of the difficulty than to face it.

That was not all. From the beginning of the trial, one thing was made pretty evident and it was this—the Christians must be condemned. The attitude of the Regent and that of the judges was decidedly hostile. The only logical conclusion one could draw from this was that the authorities were bent on inflicting a salutary punishment on the neophytes, not because they really deserved it, but chiefly in order to deter all other Tibetans, who might be inclined to embrace the Christian law, from following their example. Such being the case, it was futile, the Fathers felt, to approach the judges and

beg for clemency. It would be like praying to a wall for mercy. The case had already been decided. Taking this for granted, the priests started working on a plan that might be acceptable to the Christians and at the same time, please the people and appease the wrath of those who wanted to see them punished. After an exchange of views, they arrived at the conclusion that if the judges were pressed upon to relegate the converts into exile instead of punishing them most shamefully, they might succeed in their objective. That would clinch the issue of the case to the satisfaction of all. And the idea of taking the neophytes down to Nepal, where things fared much better than in Tibet, started gradually to take a more definite shape in their mind.

The first approach was encouraging. Unfortunately, only the first judge was to be found at home, as he was confined to bed with some ailment. The other two judges could not be contacted on that day. The first judge listened sympathetically to the proposal of the priests and promised to lend it his moral support. In their presence he passed orders to the assistant judges, who were going to try the case on that day, in his name and that of his colleagues, not to flog these scoundrels (for such was the name the Christians had now come to be known by) as a proposal was afoot to have them banished into exile.

Taken to the court again in the morning, the Christians were kept waiting in the inner yard of the building. In the evening they were sent back home. They were neither questioned or ill-treated. For about five hours they were left exposed to the gaze and ridicule of the populace hanging about the place.

May 17 : A blank day. In the early afternoon the Christians were called up to the Court to make them wait for a long time in the public square under the rays of the sun—a butt and a target of ignominy to all passers-by. The hours wore on in anxious expectation till the evening when they were told to go home.

May 18 : The first judge had already pronounced himself favourably in regard to the plan proposed by the missionaries. It was therefore advisable to sound the other two judges on

the point. One of the Fathers hastened early in the morning to the private residence of the second judge, the brother-in-law of the chief oracle of Lhasa, for an interview. There the poor priest was kept waiting outside for a long time. In the end the second judge sent word that he did not want to receive him and if he had anything to say, this should be said in court. The missionary was told to go there and the judge would be there within a short time.

Lonely and disappointed, Fr. Francis Horace (he must have been the one who had gone on this errand of mercy as the most experienced and influential of the lot) pushed his way to the private residence of the third judge. Here again there was a long wait. The official was more obliging than the second judge though equally uncommittal. They talked and discussed freely about the religion till the conversation gradually turned to the topic that had been the real motive of the visit. Here the judge became more reserved and avoided to give a direct answer to the proposal put forward by the Prefect. He excused himself by saying that he was not alone to try the case and that he could not say anything till he had heard the opinion of the two other judges. He concluded by inviting the priest to come to the court. There they could talk things over and see what could be done.

In court the three of them (the second and third judge and Fr. Francis Horace, the first judge being absent on that day because of illness) waged a furious battle of words. But it ended nowhere, each holding to his opinion with determination, making reconciliation impossible. The second judge, who acted for the first, was particularly virulent. He attacked what the Prefect had to say on behalf of the Christians with strong language and undisguised pride. The two argued, but to no purpose.

The brother-in-law of the chief oracle of Lhasa began blurting out accusations against the Christians with great emphasis, giving a foretaste of the things to come. Pompously he announced that those few gullible citizens would be compelled to render adoration to Buddha, the Dalai Lama and recite the Mani Prayer as well if they cared for their dear lives. There was no alternative for them. Exile or mercy will be too mild a punishment to uproot the cause of

an evil which was already spreading. "The new law is a thing foreign to our land and must not be allowed to grow in our midst, especially in the sacred city of Lhasa, where everything bespeaks of our national faith. The followers of the Christian law will have therefore either to come over to the Tibetan fold of their own free will or they will be forced into it or else they will be flogged to death.

Interrupting the eloquent judge, Fr. Francis Horace retorted : "The believer in the law of the true God, creator of heaven and earth, cannot pray to or worship Buddha or the Dalai Lama or any other idol for the law he has embraced makes it incompatible for him to regard as right what is wrong, to believe as true what is false, just as it is impossible for a man to walk in two opposite directions at the same time. As for the Mani Prayer, the Christians cannot in any way recite it. The prayer is superstitious and its contents most detestable. In its stead, however, they say a holy prayer, they worship the true, self-existing God".

"I do not know anything about your holy prayer and your self-existing God", parried the judge. The curt answer gave the Prefect an opportunity to illustrate his point of view. He had not gone far in his explanation when the official cut him short by saying—"Shut up, you White Lama, I do not want to hear of it, if you continue I will tap my ears. The Mani Prayer is the prayer we have to say in Tibet and that is enough for me".

"Do you know the real meaning of the Mani Prayer ? Do you want me to explain it to you ? Do you realise that it is not a prayer but a curse, an act of dark superstition ?". The reply thrown back in the Prefect's face reveals that the judge was unwilling to consider things on merits, that he had already made up his mind, that the Christians must be condemned. "Whether the Mani Prayer", he said, "is good or bad does not matter to me, neither do I care to know it. It is sufficient for me to know that in the kingdom of Tibet it is an excellent prayer and that all good Tibetans are bound by law to say it".

The argument ended where it had started. It was impossible to come to terms. And when the Prefect made a last

attempt to speak once again in praise of the Catholic religion, of its excellent law, of the true God of the Christians, the judge, at the height of his indignation, drove the poor missionary away with the words : "Whether your law is good or bad and whether the one in which we believe is true or false, is a thing which I am not here to investigate. I do not know it nor am I interested in knowing it."

The Christians were summoned to court on that date, but after they had waited for three hours in the public square with some of the Fathers, they were informed that the hearing had been adjourned to the 20th of the month.

May 19 : Court holiday. It was the fifteenth day of the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar, the day on which, according to tradition, Buddha or Sakya-t'ub-pa, the law-giver, had died. This day was particularly holy and meritorious for the performance of certain devotional practices. From the crowing of the cock till after sunset, people in great numbers performed the Skor-ba or ritual of circumambulation around the temple of Lord Buddha, the Potala Palace or other sacred buildings, while chanting the Mani Prayer. All are expected to perform the Skor-ba at least once during the day. At night, when people are already tired of walking around the sacred buildings, some of the most fervent devotees, men and women, begin to perform the Korma (Skor-lam). It is a penitential ceremony which is preceded by days of fast and abstinence.

Fr. Cassian Beligatti has left to us in his journal an interesting description of the way in which Skor-lam is performed : "The devotee who does the Korma", he writes, "begins his circumambulation by kneeling down and after having folded his hands in prayer he touches the ground three times with his forehead. Then lying flat upon his body he stretches his hands and feet full length, marking the spot he has reached with the extremities of his joined hands with a stick he carries with him. This done, he arches himself up to a standing position and covers, walking, the distance that comes between himself and the spot marked by the stick. Here he starts all over again his acts of adoration and movements of the body, repeating them all along the way

till at the end he comes back to the place where he commenced the Skor-lam” (10).

The Skor-lam is not a compulsory devotional practice like the Mani Prayer and the Skor-ba, but is a free and most meritorious act of worship left to the personal initiative of the devotees.

May 20 : Another blank day. The Christians waited for more than four hours in the public square in front of the court building to be once again dismissed without making any judicial investigation.

At this strange procedure, the missionaries began to worry and wonder as to what was happening. Four times in succession the Christians had been summoned to court, but on each occasion their case was adjourned without giving an explanation for it. What was wrong? Surely something must have gone wrong, but no one seemed to know for certain and all sorts of reasons came into the mind of the priests. It might be that the Tibetans would not pass a sentence in the presence of foreigners : that the Regent had issued secret orders to defame publicly the reputation of the Christians in order to avenge the sacrilegious behaviour of Thomas before the Dalai Lama on the 28th April or to make amends for the obstinacy of Peter on 12th May who stubbornly refused to say the Mani Prayer : that the authorities wanted to tire them out into surrender or even that the converts would not be punished after all and would only be disgraced before one and all and eventually be set free and so on.

The missionaries were still guessing at the motive of such an unusual procedure when a kindly policeman volunteered to tell them the reason for the delay. “If you wish to finish the case within a short time”, he advised them, “do not accompany the Christians any more to court nor remain there with them”. “The judges, he added, “are ashamed to condemn the followers of the new law in your presence. They have received nothing but good from you and feel embarrassed to deal you such a hard blow straight at your face”.

10. *Giornale* p. 181.

May 21 : The same routine. The Christians were once again summoned to court. The Fathers did not go with them but remained in the house of a Nepalese friend nearby. They had gone there just to keep watch over their flock at a distance and in order to be of some help in case of need. Even this did not work. After having been kept waiting for a long time, the accused were told that for that day there would be no hearing and that they could return to their homes.

It was frustrating. The suspense was beginning to bear heavily upon all concerned like a lingering agony. The priests did not know what to do to bring the trial to a conclusion and the Christians were getting restless over it. Yet, there was still something standing in the way. It might be that, though the missionaries had not gone to the court room, they were still too dangerously close to it to be present at the time in which the judges would deliver the sentence. On the assumption that this might be the reason, the Fathers were advised to remain at the hospice on the next day. On the other hand, the Christians themselves begged them earnestly to do so in order that the hour of their martyrdom might not be prolonged indefinitely and to spare them also the humiliation of being again jeered at and made sport of in the court. The priests promised to keep indoors the whole day and not to get in touch with any one, though it broke their heart to think that their spiritual children had to face the ordeal alone and unprotected. Nevertheless, they requested some Nepalese merchants, who were very friendly and resided next to the court building, to follow the proceedings and inform them no sooner than the judges were about to sentence the Christians. This they promised to do.

Bloodily Flogged

Early in the morning of the 22nd May, 1742, Peter, Thomas, Magdalene, Agatha and Catherine were taken to court by the police. This was to be their last chance : repentance or punishment. Confronted with this alternative, they promptly admitted that they were ready to suffer anything for the love of the true God rather than surrender

or deny the faith which they had embraced of their own accord and out of inner conviction. They stood firmly together to a man, with one heart, one mind and one spirit. It was pointless to keep on questioning them any longer. They had already cast their lot; today or tomorrow would find them equally resolved to profess the faith with the same undaunted courage and persevering determination.

At 2 o'clock in the afternoon the police rudely drove the two men and the three women from the court room to take them to the place where they would be bloodily flogged. This was a public square which was set aside for the punishment of thieves and other most abandoned criminals (11). Once there, a magistrate (one of the judges) turned to a policeman and ordered him to read out the sentence aloud.

“These five Tibetans, because of having adopted the law of the true God, taught them by the European Lamas, and because of having turned their back upon our Tibetan law, and because of having refused to recite the Mani Prayer are sentenced and condemned to receive on their naked bodies twenty lashes each”.

It is to be noted that the expression used in the sentence pronounced against the neophytes—“the law of the true God”—does not mean what it denotes. It was merely a conventional phrase, repeated mechanically just to pin-point the group of persons who had been converted to the Christian faith.

The whip, the instrument with which the punishment was to be inflicted, was the usual means of torture used in Tibet. It is made of leather, finely cut in strips, which afterwards are woven together into a cord of the thickness of the thumb. It is an awful instrument of torture. When savagely used by a Tibetan arm, it is enough for ten or twelve blows to make chunks of flesh fly in the air.

The blows are always delivered on the tendon above the knee, the object being to prevent the unfortunate man from walking for some considerable time. The stripes do not

11. The square may correspond to No. 74 of the Lhasa map drawn by Col. Wadell in his book “Lhasa and its mysteries”, London 1905.

break the bone, but cripple the man and cause him severe pain.

As the sentence delivered against the Christians rang out in the clear afternoon sky, men, women and children crowded in the square, pouring in from adjoining avenues to witness the pitiful spectacle, to the greatest shame and confusion of the three women. And all of those who had not clearly heard or understood the reason of the sentence started inquiring with inquisitive curiosity: "Who are they? What have they done?". Mixed feelings of anger and sympathy ran through the crowd when told that the two men and the three women now exposed to the gaze of all, were not ordinary criminals, but followers of a new strange law, inimical to the traditional law of the Tibetans. They had turned their back on the official religion of the country to adopt the one preached to them by the European lamas. This was their crime and for this they had been condemned to twenty whip lashes each.

And so standing in the place of shame, with thousands of eyes focussed on them the alleged criminals, who had never committed any crime, offered themselves gladly to receive their punishment. The victims were brutally seized by the police and thrown on the ground with their faces down. One policeman strongly holding their head and another their legs, head and legs apart so that they should be held down firmly, as if stretched on the rack. Having rolled back their clothes from behind, the executioners flogged the innocent Christians, each one on the bare flesh, while an official counted the strokes one by one in a loud ringing voice till they summed up to the required number of twenty.

The first to be beaten were Peter, Magdalene and Thomas, each by a different executioner, to allow rest after such an exertion. In this way the first Tibetan Christians, the first blossoms of the land, gave public testimony to the law of the true, self-existing and living God by the shedding of their blood. The first blows made the flesh turn livid and the others which followed ruptured it in several places, causing the blood to flow freely on the ground. Where the flesh did not tear asunder by the strokes there appeared great livid swellings.

It was a ghastly sight to behold, so much so that one of the policemen, more humane than the others, could not stand so cruel a spectacle without being moved to pity and compassion. Tenderly he besought the executioners not to administer those scoundrels such heavy blows as they usually did to ordinary criminals. He pleaded that after all these poor people had not committed any crime. They had only followed the dictates of their conscience and embraced the law which in all sincerity they believed to be right and true (12).

All faced the ordeal bravely. Only Agatha showed signs of weakness and mental distress. When she looked at her husband, Thomas, she saw him bleeding, unable to stand on his feet and frightfully shaken by the heavy blows he had been administered, a silent pathetic figure in the midst of a mocking crowd. Reflecting that she herself within a short time would be reduced to the same miserable condition, gripped with fear, she began to strike her breast—the customary sign in Tibet to express mental anguish and internal affliction. When Catherine noticed it, she turned to her companion and said: “My dear sister in Christ, what are you afraid of? Why are you frightened? Why are you so troubled and distressed? Look at our brethren in the faith and at your own husband, they have given us an example of Christian fortitude. Are you not inspired by their suffering? Are you not urged to imitate them? Come, take courage and let us suffer joyfully in the name of the true God.” Strengthened by these heartening words, Agatha submitted herself unflinchingly to the flogging. Poor Agatha, she was the most frightened of the lot, and by an irony of fate, she was the one who was more mercilessly whipped than any of the other four.

Catherine was the last to be flogged. She was the youngest, a mere girl in her twenties, but by far the bravest of the lot—a fitting crown and a glorious ending to the first and the last

12. According to the letter of Fr. Constantine of Loro, the executioners did show some consideration in flogging the Christians, except for poor Agatha.

Christian drama of suffering and shame that was enacted in the uplands of Tibet.

This young lady was not in the least frightened by the sufferings that awaited her. Rather, she looked forward to them with an ineffable joy and peace. She was holding her tender child in her arms, a six-month old suckling that clung to her with the abandonment of all children. When the judges noticed it, they decided, moved by a natural feeling of compassion, to make an exception for her, to commute the scourging into a fine. But the truly valiant woman refused point blank such a mitigation of punishment and said: "My brothers and sisters in Christ have been beaten for the sake of the faith, why should I be exempted from being put to the same test and deprived of mingling my own blood with theirs, I, who profess the same faith? Let it never be". And handing over her little daughter to one of the bystanders, she laid herself down on the ground of her own accord, ready for the flogging.

Rejoicing in the Lord

It was now all over. The spirit had finally triumphed over the weakness of the flesh. Peter, Thomas, Magdalene, Agatha and Catherine, dressed in the flaming robe of the Baptism of blood, had been Christ's witnesses before the assembled multitude, in full view of the high snowy peaks encircling the holy city of Lhasa. An inward peace settled over their mangled bodies, still dripping with blood, like a soothing aroma.

Unable to walk by themselves, the five wounded ones were supported on their way home by their relations and some pious Samaritans. The curious crowd of people that had gathered to see the sad spectacle soon fanned out in all directions from the square of shame to be once again engaged in their daily preoccupations. For the majority of them, whipping, here though they were Christians, was one of the many scenes they had witnessed before and it was soon forgotten. The pious, devout lamas, in the seclusion of the monasteries, chanted an extra prayer of thanksgiving to the Sakya-t'ub-pa and to the protective spirits of the land for having avenged their honour and spared the country from an

impending calamity. Meanwhile, the setting sun picked up in bright crimson colour the coagulated blood on the ground of the first Tibetan martyrs and offered it to heaven.

During all this time the six Fathers and the lay Brother had remained indoors in their little Friary on the outskirts of Lhasa. They stayed there all the while in prayer and anxious expectation, waiting for news. They earnestly implored the Holy Spirit to deign to bestow upon their new converts the strength and courage necessary to confess the faith before the world. With a trepidant heart they waited in suspense for a message from their Nepalese friends. The hours ticked off slow and heavy. But still no sign of any intelligence was coming though the day was far gone. Their friends, the Nepalese who resided near the court, did not turn up. They had been requested by the Christians themselves not to inform the priests about it lest they rushed to the spot and their presence delayed the execution of the sentence (13). It was Francis, the Nepalese petty trader, the husband of the brave Catherine, who, when everything was over, came running down to the hospice. In a halting voice, mixed with pride and sympathy, he related to the missionaries the particulars of the last hearing of the trial and of the execution of the sentence.

It was indeed an extraordinary bit of news worth waiting for. It made the priests jubilant and rewarded them abundantly for all the sorrows, sufferings, humiliations and trials, for all the hardships they had experienced in their missionary life. From the chapel, where they had gone to say a short prayer of thanksgiving, they hurried out into the open at a quick pace to visit their spiritual children, to be with them in their hour of boundless joy and great moral victory, to congratulate them on their public profession of faith, to rejoice with them and heal their gaping wounds. In that unforgettable moment of excitement the priests had

13. The version of Fr. Constantine of Loro states that the Nepalese friends were so overwhelmed by the extraordinary events they had witnessed on that day that they did not dare to come and break the news to the priests. It was such awful tidings that this might disturb the missionaries rather than do them any good.

not neglected to take with them medicines and other restoratives to revive the bodies of those who with their blood had just sealed their belief in Christ.

The ministers of the true God had gone to see their disciples with some misgivings. They felt that their spiritual children badly needed a word of consolation, a lot of encouragement after the ordeal they had gone through. Instead they found the new converts so cheerful and so radiant with joy that all declared themselves to be most ready to suffer even more cruel torments, and death itself, if necessary, in the name of the One who was crucified for their sake. They had suffered awful pains in their bodies, but now they were extremely happy in their spirit. They even went to the extent of begging the Fathers not to feel sorry for them, for the dismal straits to which they had been reduced, but rather to rejoice with them at the wonders worked out by the true God. Tears gathered in the eyes of the priests and slowly forced themselves down their cheeks. They were tears of joy and consolation at the sight of these valiant soldiers of Christ who had fought their battle and won their crown. They were also tears of sympathy and compassion to see their spiritual children reduced to such a pitiful state.

Without fear of exaggeration it may truly be repeated of the first Tibetan Christians what was written of the Apostles that "they went from the sight of the council rejoicing to have been counted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" and that "they were glad to seal their testimony with their blood".

Lots of friends and acquaintances had already gathered at the different houses of the Christians before the missionaries could make their way there. They too had come to congratulate the athletes of Christ on their noble display (14). They had come to tell them that though they had been punished like common criminals in the square of

14. Fr. Constantine of Loro writes that the crowd, that had assembled in the house of the Christians, uttered cries, sobs and lamentations to express their sorrow and sympathy.

shame they had done nothing wrong to leave the mark of infamy upon their character. On the contrary, they had won the admiration of all right-thinking men for the courage they had shown in living up to their own belief and this under the cruel test of stripes.

When the news spread over the capital, and in the neighbourhood and neighbouring villages, most of the inhabitants commented favourably on the fortitude of the Christians and on the abiding power contained in the Christian message. The faith that gives such moral strength to those who profess it must be a very good one indeed, was the most common remark that could be heard from the lips of the people.

And one must not wonder at this gesture of general solidarity of the people for the Christians. It was genuine and sincere, though not wholly inspired by the motive of the faith. One of the characteristic traits of the Tibetan psychology, queer as it may seem, is to reserve all its sympathy and compassion for the sufferers and the vanquished.

It was learnt later (and exactly on the 7th July, 1742, fortyfive days after the execution of the sentence) that the punishment on the Christians was very lenient indeed compared with the one the Regent wanted to be administered to them. The brother-in-law of Thomas informed the missionaries that the first judge, to whom he had gone on some private business, had told him that the Regent had ordered that each Tibetan who had embraced the law of the European Lamas should either receive one hundred stripes each or else that they should be branded with red hot iron on their forehead and then relegated into exile. In either case, it meant a death sentence. Fifty lashes were considered sufficient to cause the death of any man, even the strongest. If the Christians had been condemned to receive one hundred lashes each they would have died on the spot under the blows. The exile was no better than death. It was located in a region outside the kingdom of Tibet, barren and inhospitable, whose inhabitants had the sad reputation of being cannibals. There, the poor exile was left to himself, condemned to a lonely, untimely death. Further, it was a

place of infamy, where the worst criminals only, such as those guilty of patricide or matricide and the like, were sent to meditate upon their misdeeds for the rest of their lives.

The judges, however, had pleaded for clemency before the Regent, suggesting that all these Christians, or scoundrels, were able-bodied, who in time past did good service for the state. By whipping them to death or relegating them into exile, the government stood to lose their free manual labour. For such frivolous reason they had the death sentence commuted into twenty stripes each.

The official account concluded that the missionaries never came to know whether this story was true or not. It might have been invented by the first judge himself to make them believe that he had pleaded on behalf of the "scoundrels" as he used to call the Christians. This opinion is somewhat corroborated by the fact that the first judge was under an obligation to the missionaries who, through their own medical skill, had saved him from death.

Thus ends the story of the five Tibetan Christians who were whipped for the sake of the true living God in that distant month of May. It is indeed a beautiful and glorious page in the annals of the missions. Few people of any religion stood their ground as bravely and loyally as did those five Tibetans in the square of shame. They truly professed and proclaimed their faith in thought, word and deed from the roof of the world.

CHAPTER X

FINAL EXODUS

After the 22nd of May, 1742, there was partial blackout of news from Lhasa. The Tibetan Mission carried on for three years more and then came to a sad end.

For some months the Lhasa Church went, so to say, underground. They lived in fear and alone, shunned by one and all. Thus they were restricted in their freedom of movement and even in the free exercise of their profession. This made it doubly hard for the poor Christians to live and to earn their daily bread. All of them had a small business and often they found that their meagre income was not sufficient to support themselves and their families. At times they had to be helped by some relations or kind friends. It was distressing and humiliating, but they bore it up patiently with the same faith and spirit of resignation with which they had submitted themselves to the flogging.

The missionaries too were in no better position. They made themselves scarce. Wherever they went, they were sure to be made a laughing stock. They could not appear in public without being exposed to ridicule, insults and even to physical danger. The activity of the Medical Mission too had to be curtailed to the bare minimum, thus cutting off the poor priests from any social contact, and this at a time when isolation and loneliness were most dreaded. Notwithstanding this, a little work was done all the same. The Christians continued to attend Mass and the catechetical instructions were regularly given, though every thing was done behind closed doors.

The future was still shrouded in darkness, without any gleam of light. The effect of this atmosphere of uncertainty and suspension began to tell heavily on the priests and the Christians. Meanwhile, the catechumens, not to speak of the ordinary inquirers, began to keep clear of their masters.

Only a few had remained secretly faithful to them. In the circumstances, new conversions were impossible. The authorities might have taken these repressive measures against the Christians just to teach the foreign lamas a lesson. They might even be thinking of expelling them from the country or turning their wrath upon them. It was difficult to say who were to be their targets, the priests or the Christians. Anything could be expected at this stage. On the other hand, the Decree of Liberty of Conscience was still considered to be officially in force, but to all intents and purposes it was a dead and forgotten document. Without this document being in force and the safeguard it provided, the priests could not exercise any missionary activity in public and their presence in Tibet was rendered superfluous.

The Christians also feared the worst was not over yet. The sword of vengeance was still hanging threateningly over their heads and no one knew for certain when it would fall upon them. Their punishment had achieved one sure objective, at least in the mind of the authorities. It had checkmated the initial movement of conversion from the very start and all of a sudden. Was this all that they wanted or had they any other ulterior motive? Would they be satisfied with this or was this to be only the beginning of a long sad story of intimidation and punishment or even death? No one could yet give a definite answer to these disturbing questions. The brave soldiers of Christ might soon be again called to recite the Mani Prayer or commanded to perform anything connected with the service of the temple. With the help of divine grace they will again refuse to do it. Again they might be sentenced to another flogging. Even this would not matter much, but the crucial point was, how long was this going to last? Man, after all, stands in need of a certain amount of security to attend to his business and to provide for the daily means of living. If deprived of this, life becomes unbearable.

Since the time the situation had taken a turn for the worse, the missionaries had thought out a plan of action. They wanted to get away with their converts into the friendly territory of Nepal and remain there till the coming of better days. But even this was not without insurmountable

difficulties. The rules about the movement of citizens within the territory of Tibet, under the 'u-lag system, were so stringent that no one could settle down even in another province without first obtaining special sanction from the authorities. And this too was subject to heavy pecuniary compensation for the loss of free manual labour the province would be deprived of in allowing one of its citizens to emigrate elsewhere. It was a cumbersome piece of legislation. And even those who wanted to absent themselves temporarily from the place in which they were registered for the service of 'u-lag, they had to ask leave of the authorities. Sanction for emigration and expatriation—a thing which was rarely granted to Tibetan subjects—could be obtained exclusively from the Regent himself. If by chance, one tried to run away on the quiet, even if he be a foreigner, he was sure to be caught and then there would be the devil to pay. He was tied to the stake and then so mercilessly beaten that he would either expire under the torturing blows of the whip or be crippled for the rest of his life (1). And so the line of escape to Nepal remained at its best a beautiful dream, but an impossible reality.

The calm that followed the punishment of the Christians, to say the least, was deceptive. It was just like the calm before the storm. The official silence of the court was getting daily more oppressive. Tentatively, the priests tried to make an approach, to start afresh a dialogue between them and the Regent, to explore his mind and find a way out of the present deadlock.

On the 5th June, 1742, the Prefect asked the first chamberlain to kindly arrange for an audience with the Regent. At this unexpected request the Tartar gentleman was startled and pleaded his inability to do so. However he was in a talkative mood that morning and volunteered to speak at length about the problems that beset the mission and was generous in giving his own advice to the priests. The White Lamas, he stated, had ample liberty to preach and propagate their law

1. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 276; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 99, 127.

to all the foreigners who happen to be in Lhasa on business. The Regent would not mind these strangers, who were not his subjects, becoming Christians. They were in fact not bound by the religion of the country. Then passing on to speak about the Tibetans and their religion, he said that the best thing to be done was to leave them alone, not to interfere or criticise their national faith and this sound principle applied also to the few Tibetans who had embraced the western law. They should be left free to practise their own religion. The first chamberlain had also a little bit of advice to give to the missionaries themselves. "As for you", he concluded, "the only thing I can say is that you should keep to your law and spend your time in prayers. That is all that is required of you so long as you remain in this land of ours".

"Of course, we know", the Prefect replied to the chamberlain, "that it is our duty to keep our law and to pray. That we do, but it is equally our duty, as the ambassadors of the true God, to enlighten every human being on his divine law, to praise virtue and to condemn vice, to uproot idolatry from the face of the earth and to establish in its place the worship of the one true and living God. For this sole end we have come to this country. If it will be possible for us to fulfil our duty we will gladly spend ourselves in the service of the people of this noble land. On the contrary, if the force of circumstances is such as to frustrate or defeat the very purpose of our mission, we are equally prepared to leave the country and go elsewhere to carry the good tidings. For this reason we are here to ask an audience with the Regent, for this reason we urge you once again to speak to His Highness on our behalf." The chamberlain promised to do his best and told the priests to call again on the following day.

Next day, early in the morning, the missionaries were once more at the residence of the chamberlain to hear what the Regent had to say. The response was disappointedly laconic and sibylline. "The Fathers have their own little friary in Lhasa. They have enough to live, let them stay there". The bearer of this message regretting the loquacity of the previous day, hastened to rectify what he had said. He pointed out that whatever he had told the priests on the previous day did not reflect by any means the official opinion of the court, but

was simply his own personal opinion. This only served to make confusion worse confounded (2).

Realising that it would be impossible at this stage to obtain an audience from the Regent, the priests decided, after mature deliberation, to address a petition to him. He would surely give a reply and if he was pressed in cogent and forceful language, he might even speak out his mind and let the priests know where they stood. And so in went a petition on the 8th June.

The petition began by stating that the writer was an old man, very much troubled in his heart, nevertheless he dared to address himself to His Highness as in the past they had many friendly religious discussions and because of his well-known kindness and compassion for all men. After this introduction the Prefect came to the core of the matter and wrote :

“His Holiness the Pope in a brief addressed to Your Highness states in very clear terms that we have come to this kingdom of Tibet with the sole and only purpose of preaching and teaching the law of the only and true law giver, Jesus Christ, true God and true man. This true and only Legislator, Jesus Christ, says in his Gospel, addressing himself to the Apostles and to their successors in office : ‘Go out into the whole world and preach the law to all men’. Soon after, however, the same Legislator adds to abandon those places to which His messengers are not well received and to go and preach the law elsewhere. Therefore, we humbly beseech you to order us what we have to do”.

Then, suspecting that the Regent might have been misled by some interested parties, in regard to the teaching and social activities of the Christian law, Father Della Penna offered himself to clear up the matter by sending His Highness a booklet, translated into the Tibetan language, which contained an abridgement of the Christian doctrine. Pointedly, the Prefect remarked that the Regent could see for himself whether the law preached by the White Lamas was true or false, whether it commanded or forbade obedience and respect to those in authority. “We ask only for justice”, the

2. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 102-103.

petition concluded, "and that the Christian law be judged on its own merits."

P'o-lha-nas was a shrewd politician and was sure to score a point on the missionaries. On the same day and on the same sheet of paper in which the petition was presented, the Regent, under his own seal, underlined the obligation of all the various races and people in Tibet to keep everyone to his own religious belief. In substance, he affirmed, religion is something which one inherits like a birthright.

The wise ruler went on to blame the missionaries for the present state of affairs. They had spoken evil of the Tibetan religion and hurt the feelings of the people. "If any of us", he asked, "would go to your country and preached our religion to you in the same manner as you have done with us, what would you think, how would you feel? We have respected your law: we want you to respect ours." Then touching upon the main point at issue the Regent concluded: "You came here of your own accord, we did not call you, it follows therefore that it is up to you to decide where to go and what to do" (3).

At this curt reply the priests tried to drag the Regent into a religious debate. They wrote back that whatever they had said about the Tibetan religion was true and he, as the ruler and judge of the people, should be kind enough to give them the chance to substantiate whatever they had said before condemning them downright. This did not please the Regent. Partly he let them know that he had no intention of prolonging the controversy and that he had said whatever he had to say in reply to their petition.

Reducing of Personnel

It was senseless to knock again at the Regent's door. He would not change his mind so easily. The Fathers therefore must resort to some other ways and means if they wanted to succeed in their objective and to create an all round atmosphere of understanding.

3. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, pp. 103-105.

The disheartened Capuchins got together again for a family council. Someone suggested that if the total strength of missionaries in Lhasa were reduced, this might perhaps allay the fears of the angry lamas and ease the tension considerably. The move was sure to be interpreted as an acknowledgement of defeat. The furious lamas and their supporters would be left under the impression that the Friars were gradually packing up to quit the capital on the quiet. It served them right. They had been badly beaten in the uneven contest against the Tibetan priesthood and now, ashamed of themselves, they sneaked away quietly from the scene of humiliation and dishonour. The few who still held on to Lhasa would soon follow them, or made wiser by the sad experience of the past they would not cause any trouble again or even that the number was too insignificant to be molested or taken notice of.

It was therefore decided to reduce the number of priests in Lhasa to three only, and to send the other three to Nepal where better prospects for conversions were held out. The resolution could be implemented only towards the end of the rainy season, at a time when travelling conditions were more favourable. The three Fathers transferred to Nepal were Frs. Cassian of Macerata, Constantine of Loro and Florian of Jesi. The Prefect with Frs. Tranquillus of Apecchio, Joseph Mary of Gargnano and Bro. Paul of Florence were to remain in the capital, waiting for the development of events. Their numerical strength was halved, it was true, but their efficiency and capacity for work was in no way impaired. Fr. Tranquillus of Apecchio was second to none for zeal and thoroughness while Fr. Joseph Mary of Gargnano had already given an extraordinary good account of himself as a missionary doctor in Patna and in Bettiah. Bro. Paul of Florence, the printer, had already taken in hand his old job, and was ready to do all that was expected of him (4).

The departure of the three Fathers for Nepal offered an excellent opportunity to get in touch with the court and sound the Regent's reaction to this latest move. Earlier, the Prefect had gone to see the first chamberlain and inquire

4. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 35; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 134.

from him whether it would please His Highness to receive the three Fathers in audience and pay their respects before leaving the capital. They were under an obligation to the Regent as he had already issued the pass granting them travelling facilities down to the frontier post of Kuti. The chamberlain hesitated for a while and then promised to inquire from the Regent accordingly. A few days later news came that P'o-lha-nas was ready to welcome the priests to an audience. It was a day of great rejoicing at the small Capuchin Friary in Lhasa. All felt that the storm was blowing off at a distance to bring in fair weather at last.

Early in the morning of the appointed day, the 20th August, the three priests accompanied by the Prefect and Fr. Joseph Mary of Gargnano, went hopefully to the Royal Palace. There they were kept waiting outside for about three hours and treated as ordinary people in the streets. At last they were sent for and ushered into one of the idol-rooms by the chamberlains—the place usually reserved for refreshments after the audience. Here they were served with tea, pastry and dried fruits. Before leaving the room, the first chamberlain offered them a parting gift (a brick of fairly good tea each, weighing about three kilos, a present in cash equal to about Rs. 10/- each, a white silken scarf each, the customary symbol of greetings) on behalf of the Regent and wished them god-speed. As for the audience, the first chamberlain regretted that the master was indisposed and could not grant it. Asked as to whether they could come another day to pay their homage to the ruler, the court official told the missionaries that as they were about to leave the country, there would be hardly any time to arrange for another audience and that he would in any case have them excused before His Highness (5).

The five disappointed priests walked back in silence to the hospice. They had been there for about two hours when a friendly lama called at the Capuchin Friary. He told them that he was present at the Regent's audience at the time when they were at the Royal Palace. It was not true that the Regent was unwell. He had admitted to an audience

5. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 37; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 135-136.

everyone who had gone there except the missionaries. Earlier His Highness had given orders to the court personnel not to let them in. By this gesture, the ruler wanted to show publicly his displeasure at the objectionable manner in which the white Lamas had spoken against the national religion (6).

On the 30th August, 1742, one year and eight months since the time of their arrival in the capital, Fr. Cassian and his two travelling companions bid good-bye to their confreres in Lhasa, to their friends and well-wishers and moved down to the friendly Valley of Nepal. On the 13th October they were safe and sound in Kathmandu. They had covered the distance in forty five days, a near record time.

A perceptible difference was soon noticed in the court's attitude towards the missionaries after the departure of the three Fathers from Lhasa. Two months had not yet elapsed since they had left the capital, when the first chamberlain, who, though cold and reserved outwardly, could still be counted upon as a trusted friend, informed the missionaries (on 25th October, 1742) that if they wanted an audience with the Regent he would not refuse it to them. On the other hand, he had already given orders to the ushers and to the members of his personal staff to let them into the Audience Hall as in former days. He warned them, however, not to bring any gift. The Tibetans and in particular the sensitive Buddhist monks, he explained, were very suspicious and each time they offered the Regent a present they thought that they were out to beg favours from him. In fact, he had already laid himself upon to severe criticism for having accepted the Pope's gifts, though he made no mystery about the great pleasure they afforded him. The first chamberlain went on to tell the missionaries that P'o-lha-nas still had a soft corner for his White Lamas and that whatever he did to the Christians was chiefly due to the pressure brought to bear upon him by the hostile monks and some other influential lay people. In taking leave, the official consoled and sympathised with the Fathers in their present trial, giving hopes that somehow things might change for the better in the future. (7)

6. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 38.

7. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 38, *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 239.

Before attempting to visit the Royal Court, the Prefect thought it prudent to take advice from a friendly lama, residing at the monastery of Drepung, nine kilometers to the south-west of Lhasa. The monastery, a veritable walled up town of monks, was governed by a college of four head lamas. To one of them (sGo-mans by name) went Father Della Penna. He went to this incarnate lama for counsel and in order to enlist his moral support for the next meeting with the Regent. Much importance was attached to the forthcoming audience as it was felt that the future of the mission would depend, to a large extent, on the outcome of this meeting. It was the first granted to the missionaries after the flogging of the Christians and it was bound to have far reaching consequences—either for better or for worse.

The incarnate lama of the Drepung monastery was kind and helpful. He expressed the hope that everything would go well. He, however, cautioned the missionary not to speak ill of the Tibetan law or of their manners and customs as this was at the root of the whole trouble. (8) It was indeed difficult to follow the advice, specially for one who had pledged himself to hold aloft the bright light of truth like a lamp against the darkness of bigotry and prejudice.

On the way back to the hospice, the Fathers met the eldest sister of the Dalai Lama, on a routine visit to Lhasa from her feud in the province of Kam (K'ams). Forgetting her rank she became quite friendly with the priests and in the course of the conversation she inquired, among other things, whether she could come and see their little monastery and chapel. On being assured that they would consider themselves highly honoured by her visit, she kept her word. Entering the chapel with her two daughters and a large retinue, she paused for a while in silent prayer, looked round the building in admiration and wonderment, struck by the newness of the sight and parted highly edified at the simplicity and poverty that gave the place a pleasing atmosphere of warmth, recollection and peace (9).

8. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 239.

9. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 240.

With a prayerful heart, the Prefect and Fr. Joseph Mary paid a visit to the Regent on the 8th November, 1742. They wanted to find out whether what they had been told by the first chamberlain was true. Promptly and without any difficulty or other formalities, that would make the callers feel unwelcomed, they were admitted into the Audience Hall. P'o-lha-nas showed himself very kind and friendly and had them seated in the place reserved for honoured guests as they used to do in days gone by.

Being a day of public audience, the ruler spoke first to some other distinguished persons and then finally addressed himself to the Fathers. He inquired from them how they had been faring these days. Without waiting for an answer he immediately added : "I know, of late you have been in trouble, but that, as you are aware, was due to the fact that you have spoken against Sakya-t'ub-pa, the Dalai Lama and dPal Lhamo, the great goddess of magic".

"Well", the Prefect replied, "I think we have given offence to no one, whatever we have said against your law or your people, we have proved it".

Taking no heed of the remark as it was besides the point, the Regent observed : "But one of you has insulted the Temple (it was called the Temple, par excellence, the Temple of Jo or Lord Buddha, which we have already described elsewhere) and Sakya-t'ub-pa, our only law giver". And in support of his statement His Highness called to one of the ministers of the Temple, who happened to be present at the audience, to bear him out. This the minister did with vengeance.

Fr. Horace refused to acknowledge defeat all the same and answered that the Father in question did not insult any one. He simply showed by reasoning that Sakya-t'ub-pa was neither a god nor a saint and that it was therefore wrong to worship him as such. Truth, he added, may be hurtful at times, but no one should feel offended by it.

The Christians then became the subject of conversation. The ruler reproached them for stubbornly refusing to recite the Mani Prayer like all good Tibetans. "This is too bad" he said. It serves only to estrange them, to make one

doubt their loyalty and the validity of the new law they embraced. The Prefect parried the objection explaining that those who professed and practised the law of the true God must pray to Him and worship Him alone. The Mani Prayer was an act of superstition which was inconsistent with the Christian law and as such forbidden to the followers of Christ.

The ardent apostle, seeing the Regent greatly interested in the conversation mustered courage and went on to illustrate the idea more clearly. Making use of an ad hoc argument he pointed out to His Highness that he was the true and only ruler of Tibet and as such he had the right to dictate the law and that all his subjects were in duty bound to obey him. He would not tolerate anyone else standing in his way or go against his authority. In like manner, the Prefect argued, there was but one true law and one true God in the whole world. He was the Lord and Master of the universe, the Ruler and Sovereign of every creature, He had brought into existence. All should acknowledge Him and serve Him alone. This supreme self-existing true God could not countenance in the world He created any other god or any other law but Himself and His own law. He could not leave his subjects free to acknowledge Him or another, to worship Him or another man-made god, just to suit their own fancy and whim. That was why once the Christians had embraced the law of the true God they could not worship any other god, or pay allegiance to any other type of religion. That would be an outright betrayal of one's religious belief; the most heinous crime a man could ever commit.

The impassionate plea failed to impress the Regent, who retorted emphatically that the Mani Prayer was a good prayer and that Sakya-t'ub-pa was a true law giver.

"It is well and good for Your Highness to say that the Mani Prayer is a good prayer and that Sakya-t'ub-pa is a true law giver", retorted the intrepid missionary, "but you have to demonstrate it, you have to prove that whatever we have said against them is wrong—a thing which neither you nor any of your learned lamas will be able to do."

"But we have done it" remarked the Regent, referring to a libel written by one of the lamas (Dvags-po Rab-'byams-

pa was his name) in refutation of a booklet written by Fr. Horace, in which he had proved among other things, that it was not sinful to kill animals in order to eat their flesh.

“I am convinced”, quipped the Prefect, “that your Highness will not consider the lama’s reply as a satisfactory refutation of the arguments put forward in the booklet, in fact it is nothing but a heap of abuses against the missionaries and their work”. The Regent smiled tolerantly, just as to indicate that he was of the same opinion. It was such a malicious and defamatory publication that it was believed that the Regent himself felt bound to order the lama to apologize—a thing which he did sometime later (10).

In his anxiety to put an end to such a thorny question, His Highness cut it short and summed up his thought in a simple clear sentence. “We do not insult your law, you should not insult ours”, he concluded. The Prefect, however, was not of the same opinion and tried to argue him out of it. “It is our duty”, he said, “to speak the truth and condemn whatever is false or untrue. This we do with reasonable arguments, and basing ourselves on authority. To all we preach the law of the true God and compel no one to embrace it”.

“Very well then”, put in the Regent, a little annoyed at the persistence of the missionary, “but why don’t you do what you did in the time of our predecessor?” Here the ruler made a reference to the fact that the early missionaries devoted themselves more to charitable works than to preaching the word of God. This was done, of course, on purpose in order to win over first of all the confidence of the people and then enter gradually into the main object of their mission.

It was clear that the Prefect wanted to have the last word and hastened to inform the Regent that even during the time of his predecessors the White Lamas spoke of religion and distributed religious literature. While saying this, he took out a book from his cowl and presented it to His Highness. The book dealt chiefly with the principles of natural

10. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 154.

theology with particular reference to Catholic belief. A copy of it had already been given, by order of the Regent, to the Dalai Lama and to some other leading scholars (11).

The conversation with the priests had already exceeded the time limit prescribed for such an occasion and the Regent turned to speak to some other guests. Before the end of the audience he inquired whether Fr. Joseph Mary was as good a physician as Fr. Joachim, to which the Prefect nodded assent.

The two missionaries left the Audience Hall with mixed feelings. They were pleased to see that P'o-lha-nas had treated them with courtesy, but at the same time they felt that the situation had remained substantially unchanged.

The Dalai Lama was also glad to grant the Prefect an audience. On the 13th of the same month they went to the Potala Palace to be cordially received by His Holiness. The conversation embraced a variety of topics, such as inquiring about their health, their number, how many had left for Nepal and other things, but no mention was made of the recent events. He was given a copy of a book (the translation of Tourlot's Catechism in Tibetan) which he accepted gratefully and promised to read it during his leisure hours.

At the audience—a kind of a social gathering—one of the Dalai Lama's personal assistants engaged the priests in a friendly conversation over religion. Praising them and their work he stuck up the thumb of his right hand to indicate that he rated them and their law very highly. It is a characteristic custom among the Tibetans to stick out one of the fingers to mark the degree of appreciation of things. The quality of values is demonstrated by lifting up first the thumb and then the other fingers according to their natural order (12).

The audience over, the priests were ushered into an adjoining hall, where they partook of some refreshments together with the other visitors.

11. *Memorie Istoriche*, pp. 38-40; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, pp. 241-244.

12. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 244-245.

To all outward appearance the missionaries were received in the same manner and treated in the same way as on previous occasions, just as if nothing had happened in the intervening period. This was a mere formality. The one who then sat on the golden throne of the Potala Palace was a simple spectator, a mere figure head, with no power to tip the balance of state affairs. The missionaries knew it and all their efforts were directed chiefly to persuading the Regent on the claim of the Christian religion. He alone could save the situation.

A fortnight later (29th November, 1742) the first chamberlain, the missionaries and some lay people and religious of rank happened to be together in a chit chat. All expressed great surprise at the audience granted by the Dalai Lama to the priests. Still more sensational was the news that he had received the book presented to him by Fr. Francis Horace. The first chamberlain re-affirmed that it was not the Regent's intention to punish the Christians and that the claim put forward by the missionaries, that there was and could be but one God, one religion, one worship, was very strong indeed, and that it did not leave much room for doubt. He went on to say that the religion professed by the lamas of the west was not a foreign or an imported religion, as it used to be a part of their ancient heritage. The same belief was sponsored by a lama of rank, who remembered having read the same thing in a book written by an old author (13).

Getting More Spiteful

Once more the outstanding personality and diplomatic tact of Fr. Francis Horace had succeeded in gaining admission into the Royal Court and the Potala Palace. It was something, but in reality nothing better than a mirage. The Regent, this worldly wise ruler, preferred rather to stand uncommitted than to run the risk of losing his throne and life. On the other hand, the deeply ingrained attachment of the people to their ancestral faith made them all the more to resist all external influence.

If a rapprochement with the ruling power was welcome, the

13. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 246.

cleavage between the European lamas and the mass of the people was widening day by day. The monks and lamas specially were getting more contemptuous and openly spiteful. Knowing how the wind was blowing in certain areas, the missionaries did not fail to resort to all those means which zeal and prudence suggested to them in order to ease the tension, but to no purpose. The dice had already been cast.

Fr. Joseph Mary, the missionary doctor, was the priest most exposed to the hostility of the anonymous crowd. Jeers, mockeries and insults were often his lot as he went quietly to visit his patients. An occasional push or being manhandled in the streets by some miscreants did not come to him as a surprise till he got gradually accustomed to this sort of treatment.

Once the missionary doctor was called urgently to the monastery of Sera to attend to a graduate lama, who was lying in bed in a serious condition. An abscess, not properly treated by one of the local physicians, had turned into gangrene.

Every day Fr. Joseph Mary was taken on horse back to see the patient. Full of zeal as he was for the salvation of souls, he spent sometime with the graduate lama in religious conversation, trusting that his free medical treatment and his talks on the nature of the true God might yield some fruit. Each time the priest was received with marks of respect and his words listened to with a grateful heart. The patient was well on the way to recovery when his comrades planned to show all their gratitude for the services done by the missionary doctor in their own hostile fashion. The priest, they said, did not pay homage to their divinities, willy-nilly he would be made to do it and they tried to trick him into bowing before the images of their saints and sages.

The groom, who used to take the missionary daily to the quarters of the sick lama, was instructed one day to enter the monastery through a different gate. This particular gate led to the entrance of a shrine. The place was so small and congested that a man who ventured there on horse-back had no other choice but to dismount, turn slowly round the corner and then come back. The lamas who had engineered

this trick felt sure that once there the priest was bound to alight, and in doing so, he had to make some kind of prostration before the shrine. That was all they wanted.

Absorbed in his thought, and far from suspecting anything, good Fr. Joseph Mary followed in good faith the lead of the groom. On reaching the spot a band of infuriated lamas rushed out from the adjoining alleys and taking the horse by the reins shouted at the rider to get down and bow in prayer before the shrine. The place was sacred, they said, and it was a sacrilegious act to ride on that hallowed ground and he had to make amends for it. The harassed friar pleaded ignorance and begged to be forgiven, but the lamas did not want to hear of it and insisted on an act of reparation. Realising that this time they were determined to have their own way and better of him, the missionary mustered all his courage, spurred the horse, whirled it round and finally managed to make for the gate, leaving his would be sneerers sneered instead.

The hostile lamas were soon to regret it. The wound of their comrade, left unattended, began to get worse. Reluctantly they were compelled to send for the doctor they had jeered at and jostled if they wanted to save him (14).

While Fr. Joseph Mary was engaged in making friends out of a disaffected and hostile population by doing good to all, Frs. Francis Horace and Tranquillus went all out to counteract the pernicious and derogatory propaganda against Christianity carried on everywhere. The Christian religion was openly scoffed at and slandered. People were told that it was nothing else than a primitive pagan cult, the superstition of infidels. It was said to be even worse than the Mohammedan religion which they held in great contempt (15).

The apparent change of atmosphere that had been brought about by the audience granted to the priests by the Regent and the Dalai Lama made them feel more confident and hopeful. Taking advantage of it, the missionaries plucked

14. *Memorie Istoriche*, pp. 31-33.

15. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 33.

up their courage and came out again into the open. They wanted to see whether they could regain the good will of the learned lamas and the educated people. In spoken word and in writing they worked feverishly to stem the tide and re-establish the lost confidence.

It was going to be a work of persuasion, a campaign in favour of the Catholic faith. The forced inactivity that followed the happening of May, 1742, gave the missionaries time to think over their difficulties and to prepare a plan of action. The faith was attacked and misrepresented. Their first duty was to defend it, to demonstrate that all accusations levelled against the Christian law were false and baseless. A defence of the Christian faith, however, was not enough to establish its claim, to make it acceptable to the people of Tibet. It was necessary to give a positive, clear exposition of its tenets and principles, to prove, beyond doubt, that it was the only true means of attaining eternal life.

These considerations prompted the Prefect to write a booklet, in which all these ideas would be incorporated. Particular stress was to be laid on the most controversial point, that is, to show how the Christian faith upheld the authority of all legitimate rulers and how the loyalty of the Christians could not be called in question. It was a sort of miscellaneous work but useful enough to serve the purpose. The typical western mentality of the writer, however, prevented him from taking a more objective view of the reality of things. He did not reckon with the national character of the Tibetan religion which was essentially monolithic and uncompromising.

Accordingly, a defense of the Catholic faith was drawn up and printed. The booklet was liberally distributed to all who cared to have it. A copy of the same, with some other religious literature, was given to the ministers of state, leading lamas, influential lay-people and to the monastic universities around Lhasa. The booklet met with cold reception everywhere. A few fingered through its pages and had a word of praise for the "very good law". Others commented on it favourably, but with some reservation. The Christian law, they said, could be turned down en masse. It was good, except for condemning as superstitious the practice of magic

and the doctrine of transmigration. The majority of people, however, heaped upon it scorn and abuse. They showed their contempt by tearing the pages of the booklet and throwing them to the children. The latter grabbed the paper for making kites, flying them gleefully in the air (16).

The last particular has been handed down to us by one of the Fathers of the Tibetan Mission and there is reason for it. Kite flying is a seasonal sport in Tibet. When the rainy season is over and the clear autumn weather sets in, kites begin to go up in the sky. It is not just a children's game, but everyone takes part in it. The main object is to cross the opponent's thread and cut it through.

Fully aware that the spoken word is more convincing than the printed letter, the priests made the round of the monasteries, called on influential people, moved about the streets, talking, arguing, pleading to be given a hearing before condemning them. It was a thankless work. No matter what they said or did, the opposition was growing stronger. At times doors were slammed in their faces, on other occasions they could hear someone chanting the Mani Prayer at a distance in a derisive, desultory tone, just to annoy them. Physical violence was also resorted to, such as pushing and knocking them about or flinging stones at them. In short, differences had reached a point of no return. The Prefect summed up the situation stating: "We have been made the butt of everyone, we have become the scum of society (17)."

It was indeed a pitiful and at the same time, an anomalous state of things. The situation was getting stagnant. Even the defence of the Catholic faith had failed miserably, and did not produce the desired effect. The morale of the priests was low. They had entered, so to speak, into a blind alley. It did not lead them to the glory of martyrdom; nor were new conversions made possible. Some catechumens still entertained the hope of being baptised, but they recoiled from it for fear of taking a leap in the dark. On the other hand, the Christians began to enjoy a little more freedom. Except, of

16. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 34; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 144.

17. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 34; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 142, 168.

course, for the usual bitter aspersions, which of late had become their sad lot, nothing outwardly seemed to foreshadow a new outbreak of violence against them. They felt more confident and began to attend Mass and catechetical instructions without taking the precautions of closing the doors of the chapel (18).

The courageous campaign in defense of the Christian law was not confined to a restricted circle of people, but spread far and wide. It was taken even to the Royal Palace. But even here, except for the outward, official condescension which had always been experienced by the priests on such occasions, it did not make any impact.

On 1st December, 1742, Fr. Francis Horace and Fr. Tranquillus were admitted again to an audience with the Regent. The lobby was crowded. The ruler on being presented by the chamberlain with the list of callers, ordered to let in first the White Lamas. They handed over to him their latest publication, the booklet in defense of the Christian religion, together with a short petition. After the Tertullian plea, "ne ignorata damnetur", the two priests begged of the ruler to understand the Christian religion before outlawing it. "The faith we profess", the petition stated, "is good, both for the prosperity of the country and for the welfare of the soul. Unfortunately, it has been misrepresented by some unscrupulous people. We have been accused of introducing a false law into this land and our followers have been accused of disloyalty to the country. As a consequence, we, the preachers of the good tidings, have suffered morally and our Christians have been bloodily flogged. Now we stand condemned by all, shunned by every one as outcasts, branded as infidels, insulted and jeered at as we move about in the streets. We forgive and pray for them all for the sake of the true living God, but we want Your Highness to do us justice. We know that all this has been brought upon us by our enemies, and we know as well that it is solely due to your kindness that we are still here. A word from you can change the situation, make it possible for us to preach publicly the true law, gladden the heart of

18. Nuovo Ramusio, par. II, p. 144.

those who have already suffered so much on account of it and dispel all misgivings from those of your subjects who might be willing to embrace the new law with joy.

The Regent seemed to accept the book with pleasure and then began to read the petition slowly and in a low voice. Then finding it to his liking, he began to read it aloud so that all might be able to listen to it. The hall was packed. Among those present figured some leading lamas, governors and princes from far away Mongolia and last, but not least, the chief oracle of Drepung monastery. The reading over, the Regent was pleased to address the assembly and say that the law of these White Lamas was not a law of infidels, as some had called it. Nay, it was a good and praiseworthy law, neither the White Lamas could be called infidels. Their behaviour was above reproach, they did good to all and even those who spoke ill of them or harboured ill-feelings against them.

Thumbing through the pages of the book, the ruler promised to read it slowly, some pages every day. Should he have any doubt on one point or other of the teaching expounded therein he would submit it to the Fathers for clarification. The Prefect then pointed out to him the most important passage of the book and added that he would be only too pleased to explain to him points which might be found obscure.

In the refreshment hall, after the audience, P'o-lha-nas approached again the priests telling them that he had enjoyed conversation and that they might call on him now and again and they would be always welcome (19).

The Regent must have read the booklet, or at least some passages of it, for at the next audience (30th December, 1742) he put to the missionaries some pertinent questions.

“Can you see me?” He asked inquisitively.

“Yes, of course, I can see you, your face, your body are plainly visible to my naked eye”.

“I do not mean that”, explained the ruler, “I mean to say, can you read my heart, know my thoughts, see my soul?”.

19. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, pp. 247-249.

“No, only the self-existing God can read the heart of men. All things are clear and visible to Him as in broad-day-light”.

“Yet”, continued the ruler wonderingly, “our lamas can read my heart”.

“It cannot be, reason and experience tell us that no human being, unless he is endowed with this particular gift from God, can penetrate the heart of man.”

“Now tell me”, the puzzled ruler added, “this God of yours, the God of your land, can He read the hearts of all men?”

“Well, it is not correct to speak about the god of one’s country. There is but one true God, the God of all men, the creator of heaven and earth. There is no other god besides Him. He alone can read and understand the hearts of all men”.

The reply left the Regent more puzzled and confused. He did not ask any more questions, However, one of the chamberlains ventured to say: “This is indeed an awful truth. If there is but one true God in the whole world, then all the other gods must be false and man-made”.

“That is exactly what we are driving at. And we have come here to preach the law of the true God to the people of Tibet,” concluded the Prefect.

The conversation about the true nature of God ended here. There was whispering amongst the guests and the ruler fearing of being overheard and in order not to give rise to the suspicion of the jealous lamas preferred to switch over to a lighter topic (20).

In the audiences granted to the priests by the Dalai Lama and the Regent in 1743, there was no appreciable change in the situation.

The Dalai Lama was kind but uncommunicative. The missionaries never came to know whether he had read the book presented to him, what he thought of it, or, for that

20. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, pp. 247-249.

matter, what was in his mind in regard to them and their followers. They wanted to hear something from him badly, which might cast some light over their future prospect in Tibet, but invariably he kept his mouth shut on this particular subject.

On the contrary, the Regent was more friendly and talkative, but always noncommittal. He liked to talk and argue about religion with the White Lamas. On one occasion, the discussion went on for over two hours (21). It seemed to have been a favourite topic with him, but of a purely academic interest. From the way he talked and dealt with the priests, he surely liked, esteemed and even loved them, but this personal sentiment did not go beyond purely human consideration. It was sympathy for the men, but not for their cause. He was too shrewd a diplomat to speak out his mind.

Late in the year 1743, another book was printed. It was meant to be a direct attack on Buddhist Lamaism. Part of it, the portion which refuted the theory of transmigration, was prepared on behalf of the missionaries, by Card. Belluga, the patron of the Tibetan Mission. He was a scholar of good standing. While the rest of book was written by the Prefect, as he was more conversant with the subject-matter (22).

Here we see a change of tactics. The defence and exposition of Christian law had hopelessly failed to appeal to the Tibetan mind. Now the missionaries tried another method, in the hope that things, in one way or another, would come to a head. Basing themselves on the assumption that no campaign was ever won by keeping on the defence, they launched an all out attack on the religion of Tibet. This was bound to force the issue, to open a way out of the present impasse. In fact, if the book succeeded in making the Tibetans realise the weakness of their position, they would surely become more agreeable to accept, or at least to consider, the claim of Christianity. On the other hand, it

21. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 41; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II p. 155.

22. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 33; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 144, 156.

might only serve to alienate them and stiffen the opposition, in which case there would be a show-down. Anyway, it was no use to continue the negotiations in the present atmosphere of uncertainty and hostility. This was the last trump card in the hands of the priests and they thought it worth while to take the risk.

The book was presented to the Regent and to the Dalai Lama together with the personal letters and gifts sent to them by Card. Belluga. The presentation of letters and gifts, of course, should have been done earlier, but force of circumstances had not made this possible and so it had to be postponed till the present occasion. The book and letters were accepted, but the gifts were politely refused (23). This gesture alone was more eloquent than words. Actually, it meant that friendly, personal relations between the Tibetan authorities and the western lamas could be maintained, but any reconciliation between the Tibetan law and the Catholic law was impossible.

The reaction of the public to the book was even more clear and sharp. The counter-offensive launched by the missionaries had failed, the battle was lost. Tibet was decidedly an ill-chosen field of apostolate.

Soul Wrenching Decision.

Things did not improve in the year 1744-45. Though the Fathers did not relax in their effort, their influence continued to wane. Hedged in on every side and left alone with a few friends, who preferred to be like Nichodemus, it became increasingly impossible for the White Lamas to hold their own ground any longer. If a handful of missionaries and a few Christians, a mere drop of water in the immensity of the ocean, had stirred up such a commotion as to cause a near revolution in the capital, what would happen if their number were allowed to grow? And then considering that the logical purpose of their sojourn in Lhasa was to overturn Buddhist Lamaism in its main centre and stronghold, they could hardly expect the Tibetan authorities, who derived their position solely from the national religion, to lend them their moral

23. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 33; *Nuovo Ramusio*, Part II Page 144,-156.

support even, had they cared to brave the ill-will of the people and the influential political power wielded by the lamas. It is true that P'o-lha-nas was the strong man of Tibet, but he knew well that in a traditionally theocratic government, he could not afford to displease them. In a trial of strength, they would surely knuckle him under.

Each time the priests had gone to see the Regent, they had but one main purpose in mind : they wanted to know from him the official attitude of government in their respect and in respect of the Christians. To make out whether the Decree of Liberty of Conscience was still in force or it had become a mere scrap of paper. This information would have enabled them to see things in their proper perspective and to prepare their future plans in conformity with it. However, the ruler was always evasive and reticent on the point. The only thing they got out of him was that they were not allowed to aggregate his subjects to their fold (24), thereby implying that he was not concerned about what they did with other people who were not Tibetan nationals.

Taking this for granted, the missionaries began to move cautiously among the Nepalese and Indian elements in the capital, in the hope of finding some proselytes among them. But even these were hard to come by. The humiliation and punishment inflicted upon the Christians in the public square of shame was still fresh in the minds of the people and it proved a deadly deterrant in getting anyone enrolled under the banner of Christ. Nevertheless, a few people, three or four at the most, were brave enough to come forward and ask to be instructed and baptised; among them was a lad from Nepal who had recently gone to Tibet in search of employment.

In his errands of mercy, in and out of the capital, the missionary doctor did not forget his *compagnon de voyage* from Kuti to Lhasa. Socially he belonged to the lowest of the low, but in his thirst for souls, Fr. Joseph Mary prayed and hoped that he might become a child of God. The worthy was working in a small business concern, where the employees were drawn mostly from the working class of Nepal and

24. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 144.

India. On one occasion the priest went to see him in his dingy quarters to speak to him of religion, of the love of God for all men, of the need to follow the true law of God. The outcast, having heard that the missionaries were despised and avoided by all like plague infected people, thought it below his dignity to be seen talking to one of them and forthwith he refused to have any dealing with the priest. However, God who will never let any work done for His glory go unrewarded, was pleased to offer his faithful apostle a better prize. In that small community of workers, Fr. Joseph Mary came across a young man of good birth who setting aside human respect, showed himself pleased to talk with the missionary and become greatly interested in his conversation. Eventually, this young man was received into the church and was given the name of Michael, the courageous, the warrior (25).

His name is mentioned here in particular because he was probably the last convert baptised in Lhasa (the date of his christening being given as the 6th January, 1745) and chiefly because he was destined to become the right-hand man of his spiritual father in the foundation of the Bettiah Mission.

The possibility of still making a few converts out of the Nepalese and Indian elements working in the capital (a thing still very doubtful and fraught with enormous difficulties) was indeed a very poor consolation prize for the loss of the whole mission field in Tibet.

This was bad enough. But taking stock of the men and means that have been employed in the three different sectors of the mission (Tibet, Nepal and India, and the results which attended the missionary endeavour in each of these three fields of apostolic activity, one had to come to the conclusion that Tibet presented the most depressing overall picture. The harvest which had been reaped so far could hardly warrant the presence of missionaries in that vast, isolated land. The few hundred baptism which had been administered in articulo mortis did not compare favourably

25. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 34; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 250, speaks of a new convert, without giving his name, who lived two days' journey from Lhasa.

with those which had been performed in Nepal and India over the same period of time (26). That, of course, could be ascribed mainly to the cold climate of Lhasa which made epidemic disease rare, but even then there was no reason being optimistic.

Even the number of adult converts and the baptisms of children of Catholic parents, performed during the time the priests were in Tibet, bear witness to the fact that the pace of progress had been very slow and most discouraging. Unfortunately, we have no statistics at hand to make an accurate appraisal of the situation. However, it will not fall wide of the mark to say that the sum total of Christians in Tibet did not exceed thirty or forty at the most, half of whom, and perhaps even more, were not Tibetan subjects (27). Against this scanty result stood the actual work of twenty-five years, carried on unsparingly by no less than fifteen stalwart soldiers of Christ. It was indeed a dismal picture, darkened still more by the fact that the way to new conversions was now practically precluded. The time had arrived to abandon the work.

But why did the Prefect, an experienced campaigner of Christ wait so long before coming to the decision? He should have known better. Surely, he knew, but was waiting for directions from Rome before taking the final step. In his report to Rome of 18th July, 1742, in which Fr. Francis Horace had given a detailed account of the punishment meted out to the Christians, he had drawn also the attention of the authorities to the changed conditions that were taking place in the capital, making things more difficult and precarious. He had explained the reason for and against the decision of holding on to the post or of relinquishing it. He had expressed his hopes and fears for the future destiny of the Church in Lhasa. In short, he had given all the necessary information to enable his superiors to make an assessment of the situation and arrive at a decision. As for himself, he

26-27. *Die Aktensammlung des Bischofs Anastasius Hartmann etc.*, op. cit. p. 21, 34, 35. The author quotes statistics from an old document which was found in the mission house of Choori (Chuhari), north Bihar.

wrote, he felt that in conscience he could not shoulder alone the burden of such a heavy responsibility and was declining to take any action before hearing from them (28).

In the fall of 1744, in a relatively short time, the Prefect received a letter and a copy of an Apostolic Brief from Rome. The letter stated that the Congregation of Propaganda was leaving it entirely to his own prudent discretion and zeal to remain in Tibet or abandon it. Having been in the capital for so long and knowing the conditions of the place, the character of the people and the future prospects of the mission, he was better qualified than anyone else to judge the situation and take a decision. Under the same cover was enclosed a copy of the Apostolic Brief. In it Pope Benedict XIV approved of the offer made by the semi-independent Raja of Bettiah, North Bihar, Raja Dhurup Singh, a Rajput, to open a new missionary station in his petty kingdom and ordered two priests to be sent there for the purpose.

While still stationed in Patna, Fr. Joseph Mary had come in touch, on account of his medical profession, with the Raja of Bettiah. The ruler was so impressed by the charming personality, the medical skill and the religious spirit of the priest that he wanted him, to come and settle permanently in his domain. The missionary had informed His Highness that it was not within his power to accept his kind invitation, but that if he wanted a priest in his territory he had only to write to the "Great Guru" in Rome. He was the man who had sent them out to the east and he alone could dispose of their service. The Raja of Bettiah did write to the "Great Guru" in Rome and the Pope was pleased to accede to his request (29).

That was an additional motive to abandon Tibet. Meanwhile the situation was becoming perceptibly worse day by day. The restless lamas were getting more boisterous and intolerant. They gave themselves no peace and urged the Regent to take suitable action against these heretical, foreign monks, either by expelling them from the country or dealing

28. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, pp. 105-108, 130.

29. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 35-36.

with them more severely. His indecision and Fabian tactics, they told him, had only served to alienate the good will of the people, and weaken his position as the head of government. P'o-lha-nas could not be insensible to this sort of accusation and slowly he turned against the missionaries. He began to criticise them and their religion, the audiences became more rare and formal and so on. Obviously the priests had fallen into disgrace.

Though he knew that everything was lost, the aged and enfeebled Prefect nevertheless, still seemed to perceive a glimmer of light, a ray of hope amidst the gathering darkness. It broke his heart to see that the work of a life-time was ending in an irreparable disaster and before acknowledging defeat summoned once again all his courage and made two more attempts, one was a direct approach and the other some kind of feeler.

First of all the Prefect wrote a Memorandum to the Regent. In it the holy man of God went over again to the claim of the Christian law and defended it strenuously against all accusations. He explained the temporal advantage accruing from its profession in as much as it commanded strict obedience and fidelity to those in authority. The whole thing was a mere repetition of what he had already written in the past, but culled in a more cogent language. The only new feature in the Memorandum was an appeal to the Regent to re-inforce the Decree of Liberty of Conscience, or if, it pleased him to issue a new one. In any case, it should cover the object and fulfil the purpose for which it had been asked.

Poor Fr. Francis Horace ! He could have spared himself the trouble of making this new bid. Right away and obviously vexed, the Regent replied by commending the Tibetan religion above all other religions, because of its magic and of its high moral standard. All other religions, he wrote, were religions of infidels, of "men who are inferior to us". He went on to note that he had no difficulty in allowing the missionaries to preach the Christian law in Tibet provided they would recommend and praise at the same time the Tibetan religion and rate it first among all other religious persuasions on account of its inner goodness

and perfection. If they were not ready to do this, then they should stop preaching the law of Christ in his dominions. As for the Decree of Liberty of Conscience, the Regent explained, it was granted out of ignorance. He was not ready to confirm it or to issue a new one.

The conclusion of the Regent's reply to the Memorandum was even more curt and significant. In short, he told them that he was tired with their petitions and supplications. They should not press their claim any further, that he would not allow any of his subjects to change the religion in which he was born and that even those who had become Christians were in no way bound to keep the Christian law (30).

With his head already under water, brave Fr. Francis Horace still clung desperately to the last plank of hope. This time he made a probe into the future. He wanted to ascertain whether the destiny of the mission was already a fait accompli, or what might be the position of the priests, in case they chose to retire to private life in their little monastery in Lhasa. They had been told to stop preaching, but so far they had never been threatened with the order of expulsion. The knowledge of this little detail was of capital importance, for the future course of the mission history might depend on this bit of information.

Hoping against hope, the missionaries drew up a petition and asked for an audience with the ruler.

"What do you want to see the Regent for?", bullied the chamberlain and the Regent's son-in-law. "You know already that he does not want to see you, or to be bothered by you".

"Yes, we know", was the humble reply, "but we want to beg him to kindly grant us a pass for the entry of a new missionary. The Prefect, being old and infirm, is about to leave the country".

A sardonic laughter filled the room at this fantastic piece of news. And one and all joined in a chorus to say: "New Missionaries will not come, they will never come".

30. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 36; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 167.

Chagrined and humiliated by those who once pretended to be their friends, the poor priests still begged and insisted on the petition being presented to the Regent. It was done and this struck the final blow.

In the presence of all the people, assembled there for the audience, the first chamberlain spoke out in a loud ringing voice. Addressing himself to the priests he told them—"The Regent is most ready to grant you a pass to get out of the country, but he will never issue a pass to any of your kind to enter Tibet, because your religion is the religion of infidels" (31).

Soon after, the missionaries were informed by a friendly reliable source that P'o-lha-nas had already passed orders to the governor of Kuti, the frontier town, not to allow any priest to come across the borders. It was further brought to their notice that the Regent intended to wait till the death of Fr. Francis Horace and then he would have turned them all out of the country. It was known that the days of the Prefect were numbered and that the end would not be far off. He was already advanced in years and for some time he had given unmistakable signs of being stricken with dropsy (32).

The dejected and feeble apostle of Lhasa proved to be brave and wise to the last. Instead of letting his beloved confreres to be expelled from the country after his death, he forestalled the Regent's move and decided to quit. It was a soul-wrenching decision, the most painful and momentous decision he had ever taken in his life—a decision that brought him nearer to the grave. As all hopes departed forever, so the man, almost at once, began to fade and to die.

Death comes to the Prefect

On Easter Monday, 20th April, 1745, the missionaries (Frs. Francis Horace of Pennabilli, Tranquillus of Appecchio, Joseph Mary of Gargnano and Bro. Paul of Florence) gathered together the small Christian community in Lhasa—twenty four in all—in the little church dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady on the outskirts of the capital, to bid them

31. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, 167.

32. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 36-37; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 168.

2. सम्बत ८६५. आषा ङ. बदि ६. अगां
Sambat 865. Akha 8. badi 6 Agan
 Anno a solutis debitis 865. Cvel. (Acha) 8 Lun. deficiem 6 November

बालकुन्हा पाद्री फ्राचिस्को बोरशीबो
Balkunha Padri Phrancesco Voracio
 Clarissimus Pater Franciscus Horatius

धायाम्दां फ्रिगी
Dajamhan Phringhi
 Progenie Phrancus

दूव भरत खनुस सुय स्वदातो ३३. सभ्यम्दां
Tuou bart kahnusa suja suoddato 33. Sabjamhan
 In his Regionibus commoratus An. jam elapsis 33. Dei Summi legem

परमेस्वर या मार्ग. बखालहा
Parmesuur ja Marg' bakhalha
 Praedicavit: Postremo in Patanae

डालि पेला देस सिता ॥
Danli Hela Des Scita.
 Civitate Decessit.

Nepalese inscription over the grave of Fr. Francis Horace, transliterated in Roman characters and translated in Latin

farewell (33). It was a moving scene. In the name of his co-workers and his own, the aged Prefect exhorted his spiritual children to hold fast to their faith, to set good example to the people around them, to pray that the separation may not be too hard or last too long, that God in His mercy may change the heart of the authorities who had been the cause of such a calamity so that the messengers of the Gospel may soon return to the land to preach the good tidings to the children of Tibet. With a trepidant heart and a trembling hand, the old crusader of Christ gave them the Bread of Life, the Viaticum that would enable them to face up to the hardships and difficulties they were bound to encounter in their new solitary journey through life. They embraced one another with tears in their eyes, giving each other the parting kiss of peace and then the four valiant soldiers of Christ moved out in silence, casting a last glance on the city that had been the arena of their intrepid struggles. The gates of Lhasa closed behind them and they are closed up to this day.

The way down to Nepal was rough and painful. It was like the path into exile, hard, cheerless and lonely. However, the priests departed from Tibet with a safe conscience, with the knowledge of having fought a good fight and upheld the faith. Their only regret was that they had been forced to leave behind, alone and unprotected, their beloved children, the children they had begotten to Christ. These, exposed to the guile of a hostile world, without the help of the sacraments and the fostering care of their spiritual guides, were in constant danger of losing the faith.

It was a disturbing thought and gave the priests no peace of mind. Up to the last moment, they had made a determined bid to take all their converts down with them to the friendly Valley of Nepal, but all their efforts had been in vain. Earlier they had written, after obtaining the approval of the Christians, to the Raja of Bhatgaon, Ranajita Malla, to inquire from him whether he would be kind enough to allow the neophytes to settle down in his territory, give them land or help them in any other way to earn an honest living. The Raja of Bhatgaon had written to say that he was ready

33. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 43; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 168, 185.

to welcome these Christian refugees in his territory and that he would do all in his power to render them every possible assistance. Yet, the Tibetan authorities were adamant in their determination to refuse the pass. They would not let any Tibetan Christian cross the frontier for any reason whatsoever, either for trade or for any other purpose. Only Michael, the Nepalese convert, was permitted to return in the company of the priests to his native land (34).

Fr. Francis Horace, now sixty five years old, had shown all along characteristic courage and resilience, but of late the extraordinary vitality, subjected to intense strain for so many years, was beginning to flag. It was indeed a miracle that he had lasted so long and under such trying conditions. His illness made itself felt more and more as he was brought along the rugged narrow paths by primitive means of transport, though his devoted confreres did their best to alleviate his sufferings and to make the rough journey as comfortable as possible.

On reaching Kuti his condition became so precarious that it was feared he might not be able to survive the ordeal. After resting there for a while, the sad little party decided that it would be better for the patient to cross over into the territory of Nepal, where the climate was milder and the air less rarefied. The water and altitude of Kuti had decidedly given him a turn for the worse.

The rest of the frightful journey from Kuti to Patan, in the Valley of Nepal, was done at quick forced marches. The distance was usually covered in no less than fifteen days, but on this occasion they hurried through it within twelve days. The journey was made all the more unbearable as no means of conveyance could be used on account of the narrow, steep footpaths, running over rocky precipices and hanging cliffs. The rivers and streams had to be either waded through to the opposite bank or crossed over by means of an iron chain bridge or a rickety swinging beam. And the performance had to be repeated several times a day.

The poor Prefect suffered greatly because of the impracticability of the track and it pained him still more to see his

34. *Memorie Istoriche*, p.44.

dear confreres racing against time to take him down alive to the Valley of Nepal, where some kind of facilities could be made available to revive his exhausted energies. Feverish and unable to walk, he had to be carried on shoulders by two porters, who alternatively exchanged duty, till the next halting place. Not every day, however, one could find men ready to do this work of mercy, even when offered handsome remuneration. When this happened, it fell on the two priests and the brother, themselves weary and sore footed, to put their hands to the job, though it grieved the old man to see them toiling along for his sake. Gently they placed their venerated superior on a blanket, laid hold of the four ends, fastened them round their shoulders and carried him over the most difficult tracts of the terrain. It was a most exacting task of adroitness, that would have put to the test even the dexterity of an experienced mountaineers.

In this way the party arrived at the Mission House in Patan on the 4th June, 1745. The devastating journey was over in fortyfive days—a truly gallant feat of bravery and endurance. Here the Prefect rallied a bit. The rest, the climate, the care lavished on him by one and all made him feel better, more cheerful and bright. He was making such good progress that hopes of recovery were even entertained. His companions of travel, however, were made to pay a heavy premium on the hurried journey. For a time they were laid up in bed with temperature, looking thin, emaciated and worn out (35).

Several days after their arrival in the Valley of Nepal, the Prefect received letters from his Nepalese friends in Lhasa telling him all about the happenings that had taken place after their departure. A few hours had not yet elapsed since the priests had walked out from their little monastery, when a tumultuous mob rushed to the residence of the Regent and complained bitterly that the White Lamas had managed to secure some volumes of the Tibetan Bible, the Kangyur, (bKa'-gyur, a collection of 108 volumes, the number being sacred) and that out of contempt for their holy religion they had interred the sacred books under the threshold of the

35. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 43-44.

hospice main entrance in order that all those who entered and came out of the door might trample them under foot. It was an act of desecration which called for vengeance. These holy people worked themselves into such a frenzy that the Regent was compelled to grant permission to raze the chapel and the mission house to the ground in order to placate their anger. In this way nothing would be left standing in the capital that might bring back unhappy memories of the past, namely, that in times gone by, a group of cursed lamas from the West had been permitted to live and to work within the sacred precincts of such a holy place.

The mob was inexorable. All suggestions that had been made to save the buildings, either by selling them to the highest bidder or utilising the premises for some other useful purpose, were angrily turned down. Once they had obtained permission to demolish the buildings, they proceeded in their work of destruction relentlessly, even to the extent of digging up the whole thing from its very foundation.

The materials were transported to the river bank to strengthen its embankments. No news has ever been received of what happened to the printing press which cost the mission so much money and labour. While the bell, with the inscription around the base, "Te Deum Laudamus" has been seen installed in the Temple of Lord Buddha in Lhasa by several European travellers before the Chinese invasion of Tibet (36).

One hundred years after the departure of the missionaries from Lhasa, Sir B. H. Hodgson, former British Resident in Nepal and a member of the Asiatic Society, ventured into the capital of Tibet. There he found fortyseven volumes, "the whole remaining relics of the library of the Tibetan Mission of the Propaganda at Rome", as he wrote to the Secretary, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, on the 20th October, 1847. The books, written in Latin and Italian and only one in French, dealt mainly with religious, ascetical and historical matters. The Dalai Lama was unwilling to part with them, but on assurance that the volumes did not contain anything concerning the Tibetan religion, he acceded to the

36. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 44-45; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part II, p. 168, 185.

request of Sir Hodgson, who in turn presented the books to Pope Pius IX, through the Secretary of the Asiatic Society (37).

Not satisfied with the permission to demolish the chapel and the friary, the infuriated mob insisted on the Regent to send out soldiers in hot pursuit of the sacrilegious profaners of their sacred books and to bring them back to Lhasa to take punishment for their horrible crime. The ruler, "well aware of the perfidy of his lamas and monks" as we read in a contemporary record, pointed out to them that it would be difficult to do it as there were three routes leading from Lhasa to Kuti and none was sure which one they had taken. "We know it", was the unanimous reply, "they have taken the shortest route, the one which keeps more to the north." P'o-lha-nas knew that the lamas were mistaken as the missionaries had taken the track to the south. It was a little longer, but it was considered to be more suitable to the precarious state of health of the Prefect. Thinking that no harm would come to the priests by allowing the soldiers to follow them, the Regent yielded to the pressure of the lamas. The soldiers did go in hot pursuit of the Fathers, but being on the wrong track their search proved fruitless (38), as fruitless as the quest for finding the Tibetan Bible buried under the main door of the mission house.

This distressing news, conveying so tragically the uncompromising attitude of the Lamaistic religion for the Christian faith, and the utter end of work that had cost untold hardships and which had been the life-blood of his very existence, so undermined the health of the spiritless Prefect that he began virtually to die day by day. He was like a withered flower that no rain or sunshine could revive. The climate, the medical treatment and the care that had been bestowed on him had no effect on his morale and physical constitution. Fortysix days after his arrival in the Valley of Nepal in the presence of his sobbing confreres, the noble soul succumbed

37. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XVI, Calcutta, 1847, pp. 1250-1252; Vol. XVII, 1848, p. 452.

38. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 45.

to disease and grief on the 20th July, 1745 at 7 p.m. (local time) at the mission house in Patan (39).

This valiant soldier of Christ had remained at his post to the end. But unlike a soldier of war, who is laid to rest with a fanfare of trumpets, this herald of truth and peace, was laid to rest in the humble Christian cemetery, outside the city walls, to the north of the town, amidst the tears and prayers of a few comrades he had so ably served and commanded. With his death, the Tibetan Mission was marked for the grave.

Over the tomb of the Apostle of Lhasa his sorrowing confreres placed a stone slab bearing the inscription in Latin and Newari. The translation of the Latin inscription reads :

“The Very Rev. Fr. Francis Horace of Pennabilli, a member of the Capuchin Province of Piceno, born in 1680, and desiring the conversion of the infidels, was sent by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda to the Tibetan Mission. Having spent thirtythree years among the infidels, and having been for twenty years Prefect of the Mission, at last, broken down with age and disease, and full of merits, he departed this life, aged sixty five, on the 20th July, 1745. His surviving fellow missionaries have erected this monument to his memory for the greater glory of God” (40).

39. *Memorie Istoriche*, p. 46; *Memorie sulla vita del Ven. Servo di Dio P. Francesco Orazio dalla Penna etc.*, op. cit., p. 16-17.

40. The Latin and Newari inscription over the grave of Fr. Francis Horace can be found in *Alphabetum Tibetanum* p. 434-435. (*Alphabetum Tibetanum Missionum Apostolicarum commodo editum* by Fr. Anthony Giorgi, a monk of St. Augustine, Romae MDCCLIX, Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide). The Latin inscription reads :

A.R.P. Franciscus Horatius a Penna Billorum
Picenae Provinciae Capucinatorum alumnus
MDCLXXX natus
Infidelium conversiones optans
A S.C.P.F. ad Tibeti Missiones missus
XXXIII an. inter infideles versatus
XX eisdem missionibus praefuit
Tandem
Senio ac morbo confectus et meritis cumulatus
LXV an. agens secessit e vivis
Superstites missionarii
M.H.P.
A.M.D.G.

The inscription states that Fr. Francis Horace had been Prefect of the Mission for twenty years. Actually, he was appointed Prefect

(Contd. on page 415)

Fruitless Attempts

The Tibetan Mission was abandoned for the time being, such at least was the intention of the priests who walked out from Lhasa on that early spring day of 1745. In spite of everything, they still cherished the hope of staging a comeback and put to profit their past work and experience. It was futile.

On the death of Fr. Francis Horace, the helm of the mission fell into the hands of Fr. Tranquillus of Apecchio. He had already been appointed Vice Prefect by the Congregation of Propaganda on 27th November, 1743 (41). He was a man not yet in his forties, full of zeal and burning love for souls, and endowed by nature with an uncommon capacity for work. Unfortunately, he lacked the leadership and commanding personality of the late Prefect. Upon him now was vested the duty to open again the closed door, to find his way back to Lhasa.

The first step he took was to re-establish contact with the authorities in the Tibetan capital and see their reaction. He wrote a letter to the governor of Kuti to inquire from him whether it was possible to enter Tibet. This brought back the information that no missionary was allowed to cross the frontier if he did not hold valid travelling documents issued

(Contd. from page 414)

of the Mission on the 13th August, 1719, but received the news of his appointment only on the 15th September, 1725.

The inscription in the Newari language was dictated, according to the *Alphabetum*, by the Pundit who was the language teacher of the Missionaries and is slightly different from the inscription in Latin. Dates and figures are given in conformity with the Nepalese era and calendar. The text of the inscription may be translated as follows: "The renowned Fr. Francis Horace, a European by birth, spent thirtythree years in these regions announcing the law of the one supreme God and at last broken down by age and infirmity departed this life at Patan on" etc.

In 1895, Mr. Graham Sandberg B.A., the author of the book "The Exploration of Tibet", p. 101, wrote to the English Resident in Nepal begging him to discover the cemetery and to look for Fr. Francis Horace's grave. The English Resident replied that even the site of the cemetery was unknown.

41. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 168.

by the Regent. Accordingly, Fr. Tranquillus wrote three letters in 1746, addressing them to the Regent, the Dalai Lama and a friendly lama respectively. In them he pleaded his cause and showed the need to go back to Tibet to assist the handful of Christians, who had stayed behind. The letters were lost in transit due to the war-like conditions prevailing at the time among the petty rulers of those Himalayan regions (42).

On the 12th March, 1747, P'o-lha-nas died a natural death and was succeeded by his second son (Gyur-med-rnam-rgyal), already well-known for his cruelty and despotism. Conditions had become decidedly worse, nevertheless the Vice-Prefect (Fr. Tranquillus had been nominated Prefect of the mission on the 20th September, 1746, but received the news of his appointment only in 1748) did not lose hope and wrote again to the Dalai Lama and to the new Regent to explore tentatively if the coming in power of the new government had brought any change of policy in regard to the missionaries. No answer was returned (43).

By now he had become painfully aware that nothing could be concluded through correspondence and decided to press things forward. In November, 1747, Fr. Tranquillus, in the company of Fr. Florian of Jesi and Bro. Liborius of Fermo found themselves in Kuti trying to force their way into the Forbidden Land. There they were stopped by the governor who promised to get in touch with the authorities in Lhasa in order to obtain for them a pass. However, complications set in, which caused a considerable delay in the exchange of correspondence. The priests, feeling that it would not be advisable to undertake such a journey at that time of the year, even if they had been granted permission to enter into Tibet, decided to return to their base (44).

At the end of December, 1747, a government courier turned up unexpectedly at Kathmandu with a message for the priests. It was the ticket for Tibet—the pass had been

42. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 169.

43. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 170-171.

44. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 175-176.

granted. It was a wonderful Christmas present and there was great rejoicing at the small Capuchin Friary in the Valley of Nepal (45).

In March, 1748, the tireless Prefect was again on the move. Two days' march from Kuti, he was ordered not to proceed any further. The borders were closed, he was told, due to an epidemic of small-pox. Sniffing the unfriendly air, but armed with the pass, Fr. Tranquillus pressed on his way to be once again stopped before reaching the frontier town. The reason was the same: small-pox had broken out in a most virulent form and precautions had to be taken to prevent the spread of the disease.

It was only an excuse. Annoyed and disgusted at this ruse-de-guerre, the experienced missionary requested the governor of Kuti to allow him at least to enter the town. There he could feel his way about to get some information in regard to his own case. The permission being granted, the poor man was again vexed by a sentry who did not allow him to take his luggage into the town unless he had been authorised to do it. This done, the harassed missionary found himself at last in Kuti on the 23rd March, 1748.

Here, Fr. Tranquillus waited patiently for some good news. One evening, on 25th April, the governor received a letter from Lhasa. The Regent ordered him to turn back the missionary immediately. Next day the Prefect called on the governor hoping to receive the all clear signal for the capital. He was to be sadly disappointed. In a round about way the government official made him understand that the travel permit was cancelled.

“How can this be?” queried the priest. “How could the Regent issue a pass for Lhasa and then so suddenly go back on his word?”

“You ought to know. The Buddhist lamas do not want you to settle in Tibet”, the governor pointed out.

“That may be, but then this is not a new thing. Long ~~before~~ before issuing the pass, the Regent was well aware of it.

45. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, 175-176.

How is it then that he has so unexpectedly changed his mind?"

The governor was unable to give a convincing answer to the question ; he simply stated that he himself was highly puzzled at this strange behaviour (46).

If an explanation can be given to this Tibetan puzzle, it may be this. The Regent on his own accord, without consulting the other members of the government, had granted the missionaries permission to come to Lhasa, but when the news leaked out he was prevailed upon to withdraw the travel permit he had issued by some pressure groups.

That was the last serious attempt to penetrate again into the forbidden land of Tibet. The overthrowing of the secular monarchy, that followed soon after, and the coming back into power of the Dalai Lama as the spiritual and temporal head of the country (1750-1751), under strict Chinese control, shattered all hopes of a re-entry into the Tibetan territory. Meanwhile, Rome, to ease the troubled conscience of Fr. Tranquillus, had written to say that it was of no use to keep on trying to re-open the mission in Lhasa unless they were sure of being able to establish there a permanent and flourishing Christian centre (47).

Still, the brave little Christian Community in Lhasa lingered on living on hopes. Occasionally, they would write begging for a priest to come and attend to their spiritual needs. As late as 1768 they sent word to Fr. Joseph of Rovato, the Prefect Apostolic of the time, to come back and remain with them, pledging themselves to do their utmost with the Chinese and Tibetan authorities to obtain the required permission (48). It was only a wishful thinking. The Capuchin missionaries now reduced in number and about to

46. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 175-176.

47. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, 185.

48. CL. 32, as per correspondence of Fr. Joseph of Rovato, Prefect Apostolic of the Tibetan Mission. See: "La Missione del Tibet-Hindustan, negli scritti del P. Giuseppe da Rovato O.F.M. Cap., Prefetto a Apostolico del Tibet (1761-1786)" by Fr. Gottardo da Como, Asmara, Scuola Tipografica Franciscana, 1954, p. 142.

be forced out of Nepal were in no position to go up the current and regain the lost ground.

What finally happened to the little Christian community of Lhasa? There is no definite answer to the question. Many suppositions can be formulated, all of them probable, but none certain. They might have been sentenced to death to end as martyrs; they might have given up their faith under pressure and threat; they might have extinguished, like a candle, for want of inner moral strength; they might have compromised with the state religion, keeping the faith to themselves as a private, personal concern while conforming themselves, in their social contacts, to the manners and customs of their fellow-countrymen. It cannot be ruled out that they might have managed to keep the faith, handing it down to their children till the present day as it happened to the Old Japanese Catholics of Nagasaki and Nara. The fact, however, that twentythree years after the departure of the missionaries from Tibet, the Lhasa Christians were still in existence, apparently unmolested and still wanting the ministrations of a priest leads one to think that they had been left to their own destiny—a valiant Christian outpost, lost and alone, in the desolate uplands of Tibet (49).

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49. Miss Dervla Murphy, who worked for sometime in 1963, with the Tibetan refugees in northern India, in her book "Tibetan Foothold", John Murray, London, 1966, p. 94, writes :

"The other day (14th October, 1963) I chanced on an interesting discovery. A father had come to visit his daughters (at Dharamsala Refugee Camp) and around his neck hung two handsome silver medallions—each about the size of a half crown—which at once attracted my attention. I asked if I might examine them more closely and was considerably astonished to find that they were old Catholic Medals, inscribed in Latin. The inscriptions were no longer entirely legible, yet their Catholicity was beyond doubt. My inquiries as to their origin led nowhere; the owner only knew that these were powerful religious charms which had been in the family for many generations. His home village lies between Lhasa and Sikkim, so the medals may well be mementoes of the seventeenth century French Jesuits who visited Lhasa."

This Tibetan refugee was, very likely, a descendant of one of the Catholic families baptised in Lhasa by the Capuchin missionaries.

Thus ends the story of the Glorious Tibetan Mission, one of the most, if not the most, daring epics and one of the most unfortunate undertakings that ever had been written in the annals of the mission history. It is indeed a strange story, with something in it more sensational than a thriller. It all started with the fruitless search for the lost Christian communities beyond the Islamic belt and when the curtain dropped over the scene, we lose sight even of the few converts that had been made in Tibet. We may truly say that truth is indeed stronger than fiction.

CHAPTER XI

APOSTOLATE OF THE PEN

Some of the Capuchin missionaries who lived and worked in the mystical land of the lamas became prominent Tibetan scholars and pioneers in the field. Their study and writings cover a large range of subjects, such as religion, history, geography and notably ethnology and philology. Their humble efforts were instrumental in spreading abroad news of the religion, manners and customs and the lore and knowledge of that secluded country which, up to the beginning of the eighteenth century, had remained a sealed book to the western world.

To determine the value of their writings correctly, their importance and their obvious limitations, one has to take into account the real motive which prompted these generous sons of St. Francis to undertake such a task and to know the appalling conditions under which they laboured. Obviously the translations into the Tibetan language had no other purpose than to present the Christian message to the people of Tibet. Though this was a most exacting task, it was necessary. Without it there was no hope of reaching the masses and all their efforts would be confined to a few people, who might soon forget all about their teaching. Yet they found themselves handicapped on every side. In the beginning insufficient knowledge of the language, the lack of grammars and dictionaries and above all the difficulty of rendering the exact meaning of technical terms into a foreign tongue without being misunderstood, posed an insurmountable obstacle. They had to employ some learned lamas on payment to help them and even to resort to some other cheaper labour to achieve their object as they were short of funds and were forced to live on the verge of starvation (1).

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1. Fr. H. Desideri S.J. (Nuovo Ramusio. part V, p. 102, 110-113) accused the Capuchins of having made use of a Hindu, who himself did not know the language properly, in the translation of the first catechetical writings; a thing which Fr. Felix of Montecchio O.F.M. Cap. flatly contradicted in Memoria No. IV (Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 42).

The translations from the Tibetan languages were a courageous attempt to get an insight into the Tibetan mentality, to grasp the religious and philosophical tenets of Buddhist lamaism in order to acquire first hand knowledge on the subject. This was meant to serve a triple purpose: first of all to get ready a stock of information to be used by the priests themselves, and for the use of their successors who would be saved of the trouble of trying to collect such information afresh, to find out the difference between the Buddhist and Christian creed which could enable them to be at par with the learned lamas when engaged in a religious debate to refute their errors with sure knowledge of facts and finally to discover common points of contact which might inevitably exist between these two different ideologies and establish a common form through which to initiate their discussions. This would be of great help in driving home the claims of Christianity.

All the literary production of the Capuchins on Tibet had therefore but one aim in view, to avail themselves of all means which were considered necessary in furthering the cause which was the conversion of Tibet. All the rest, and other literary exertions were to be subordinate and conducive to this main objective. None of the Tibetan missionaries in fact had any intention of writing anything with the scientific mind of a critic. They were neither equipped for it nor did they want their works to be printed for the use of the general public. Whatever they wrote was written, so to say, for "home consumption", as a means to a specific end and in a spirit of brotherly love and mutual assistance in the work of the ministry. Better work could be produced at a later date, but for the present their intention was to have something in hand to put to profitable use.

The scope of their literary activity imposed on the writers some obvious limitations. There is nothing professional about the whole thing. They cared more to get at the root of the things they wanted to convey than to put it in polished literary form. Quite a few things were dealt with care, while others were just touched upon cursorily. Everything was conditioned by the use they wanted to make of it. The whole literary production of the Capuchin Fathers in

Tibet has to be viewed from this particular angle, if one wants to look at it in its proper perspective or gauge its real dimension. The limited scope set before them makes them vulnerable to that type of criticism which judges things chiefly on their merits as a work of science or as a piece of art.

By this I do not mean to say that their writings have to be dismissed like a traveller's tale. Far from it, the few that have come down to us show that their authors were well prepared and had a sound knowledge of the subject about which they wrote, which makes them most valuable to modern scholars.

The private character and the special purpose of their writings are mainly responsible for their loss. Once the Tibetan Mission was closed, all interest in it or anything connected with it began to wane. Very little now remains of the work brought out by the Tibetan Missionaries. Whatever is still extant has been rescued from oblivion by a few interested scholars, none of whom belongs to the religious order of the original writers, who scabbled them through dust-heaps of libraries in India, Italy and even France, where they were searched for. As for the writings which have been lost, we have some knowledge for their existence and the nature of their contents as they have been casually mentioned by the missionaries in their letters and reports.

On the other hand, one has to admit that an unfortunate series of events went against the preservation of these manuscripts. On quitting Lhasa, the missionaries travelled light, taking with them only what they thought was most essential, leaving the rest in the capital in the custody of friends. They still hoped that one day they might be able to return to Tibet to continue their interrupted activity. Whatever material they managed to bring with them must have found its way into the archives of the mission house at Kathmandu, Bettiah and Patna. But even these places did not prove to be the right repositories for the safe keeping of these papers due to the disturbed conditions of the times. On three

different occasions the mission houses at Kathmandu, Bettiah and Patna were ransacked and looted (2)

We know that Fr. Francis Horace sent a copy of some important documents and letters to his family and that Fr. Cassian Beligatti wrote to his friends and confreres at Macerata, but everything has disappeared in the whirling events. The Olivieri family came to an end in the nineteenth century (3) while the Capuchin Friary at Macerata was destroyed by a devastating fire in 1799. Indeed, bad luck and carelessness vied with each other in causing the loss of a work which would have been treasured today.

We would like to point out that in the present chapter we shall deal only with the writings which have direct reference to Tibet and which have been written by the missionaries who actually resided there. No mention therefore will be made of their works which refer to Nepal and India, nor to any other literary publication which, though containing material supplied by the Fathers of the Tibetan Mission, were not actually the fruit of their literary activity (4).

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2. *La Missione del Tibet-Hindustan negli scritti del P. Giuseppe etc. by Fr. Gottardo da Como, op. cit., pp. 25-39, 91, 92; Gli scritti del P. Marco dalla Tomba etc. by De Gubernatis, op. cit., p. 20.*
 3. *Memorie sulla vita del Ven. servo di Dio P. Francesco Orazio etc. by Dott. Paolo Mattei Gentili, op. cit., p. 8.*
 4. We refer in particular to the "Alphabetum Tibetanum" written by Fr. Augustine Anthony Giorgi, a member of the Hermits of St. Augustine. The last edition of the work was printed in Rome with the Types of Propaganda in 1762 and runs into XCIV-820 pages in quarto. The book is a veritable store-house on Tibet. All materia Tibetana (history and geography, religion and customs, grammar and mathematics, etc.) are put here on display but in a rather disorderly fashion.

Fr. Giorgi, a scholar and a polyglot of renown, was born in the hamlet of San Mauro, close to Rimini, on the Adriatic coast, in 1711. At the age of 16 he entered the religious life and eventually was nominated Director of the Angelica Library in Rome, where he died in 1797. Fr. Giorgi knew 11 languages. His contact in Rome with the missionaries who had returned from Tibet made him interested in that country and its people. In the compilation of his book, he drew largely on his own vast knowledge and availed himself also of Fr. Francis Horace's and Fr. Cassian's writings, as well as of the oral information supplied to him by the latter. Fr. Cassian Beligatti in fact was in Rome for sometime to give the author a helping hand in his work. Fr. Giorgi acknowledges his debt of gratitude to the two missionaries on page 154 of the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*.

Translations into Tibetan

All translations into the Tibetan language which were made by the missionaries have been lost. They consisted mostly of catechetical and apologetic works. They were either translations from the original Italian or French texts or adaptations of the same. The baselessness of the theory of transmigration, the legality of killing animals and eating of their flesh and other allied subjects were often the subject matter of their writings as these were the most crucial points in dealing with the religious beliefs of the Tibetans. We know of the existence of the following translations into the Tibetan language :

1. A small catechism, a joint venture of Frs. Francis Mary of Tours and Joseph of Ascoli. It was compiled during the years 1707-1708. The two priests did not learn the literary language as lack of funds prevented them from engaging a language teacher. The booklet was therefore written in the language of the people which differs markedly from the literary language. They were helped in the translation by Khwaja Dawood (David), their Armenian friend. It was indeed a modest attempt to bring some knowledge of Christianity to the people of Tibet. Nevertheless, it was undertaken in all sincerity, with great courage and at an enormous amount of personal labour. Being a hand-written catechism, it is reasonable to presume that it underwent several changes in the course of getting out new copies. We have no idea as to the length of the booklet and the cost of its production (5).

2. An apologetic treatise written by Fr. Dominic of Fano in the year 1711. Even in this case the Father did not know the literary language and the work must have been written in the language of the people. In doing it, Fr. Dominic availed himself of the services of an Indian interpreter and of a friendly Tibetan lama. The gist of the booklet, according to the author was to establish the existence of one true God and of one true religion and to point out the marks or characters which single out the true God and the true religion from all others. It seems that the work was neither a

5. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 42.

catechism booklet, nor an apologetic writing, in the strict sense of the word, but rather a combination of both. In fact, it was at times called a catechism and on other occasions it is referred to as an apologetic treatise. Amongst the other subjects treated therein there was a dissertation on the Holy Spirit, whose existence and nature greatly puzzled the readers (6).

A revised, improved and enlarged copy of this writing was presented to the Regent (Lha-bzan Khan) on the 6th January 1717. He received it with a grateful heart and read it with great interest, tickled by the novelty of the thing. However, he complained that the missionaries did not know the language sufficiently well to talk freely with him as he wanted to be enlightened by them on a few points without the assistance of an interpreter. The Regent found it hard to understand the existence of the Holy Spirit by itself, without being embodied in something material, if not "ut informans" at least "ut assistans". The work must have raised considerable interest among the readers as one of the lamas undertook to answer it point by point. We do not know, however, if this was ever done (7).

The same catechism or apologetic treatise underwent substantial change sometime before the year 1725 by the hand of Fr. Francis Horace. He renewed it in its contents and literary form in such a way as to make it an entirely new work. It was this third edition of the early catechism compiled by Fr. Dominic that was presented to the Regent (Taiji Batur) in 1726, at a time when feelings ran high against the missionaries because of the erection of the small Capuchin Friary on the outskirts of the capital. As it will be recalled the priests were accused of being members of a small religious group which was dead opposed to the national religion. A careful and critical examination of this catechism cleared the missionaries of the charge and put to silence the maligning tongues (8).

6. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 35.

7. Nuovo Ramusio. part I, p. 84, 87.

8. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 132-133, 160, 171-173.

3. "The Christian Doctrine" by Cardinal Bellarmine was rendered into the Tibetan language by Fr. Francis Horace in 1724. This was translated into various languages. But the Tibetan version of it was not a literal translation of the original text. Some passages were newly added, while some others were left out to be substituted by some pertinent matters, more in keeping with the conditions of the place and the mentality of the people for whom it was meant. This translation as well as other works by Fr. Della Penna, were written in the literary language (9).

The translation into the Tibetan language of the "Christian Doctrine" by Card. Bellarmine, together with the last edition of Fr. Dominic's work, became the mainstay of all missionary propaganda and the battle ground upon which every campaign for the spreading of the faith was fought during the second period of the Tibetan Mission, that is, from 1716 to 1733. It helped to enhance the prestige of the "White Lamas" as representatives of a religious creed and to centre around them and their writings much sympathy and controversy over the fundamental principles of the Christian law.

4. The conversion into the Tibetan language of "Le tresor de la doctrine Chretienne" by Mgr. Nicholas Thurlot (1590-1651) is the magnum opus of Francis Horace as far as his literary translations into the Tibetan language are concerned. It was a lengthy work, re-touched here and there to better suit the purpose it was intended for. It runs into nine hundred pages; the translation started before the year 1727, and, in the ordinary course of things, it should have been completed within one year or two, but, owing to the disturbed conditions of the time, it took much longer. The book was translated, at least a good deal of it, in the Buddhist monastery of bZi-sde (Lhasa) in order to have on hand, whenever necessary, the help and advice of a qualified lama. Even during its translation the work had evoked considerable interest and curiosity, among the upper class of the people. The first minister of state (bK'blon Beise), quite a few learned lamas and some influential dignitaries dropped in now and then to inquire about the progress of the translation, to read some

9. Rappresentanza, No. L.

passages of the manuscript and to urge the missionary to get it completed soon, as it was awaited with great expectation by all concerned. (10)

The first hand-written copy of the Tibetan version of the book (a kind of a preliminary preparation of the final edition) was ready in 1732. It was written by an ordinary scribe on payment of Rs. 50/-. The Prefect had in mind to bring out at least two de-luxe copies to be presented to the Regent and to the Dalai Lama respectively. He had, however, to give up the idea of making use of this book for starting a new campaign in favour of the Christian faith.

-Fr. Joachim of St. Anatolia, in a report to Rome, explains the reason why the whole scheme was shelved. First of all, he writes, because the translation was not yet finalised in all its details. The Prefect, meanwhile, had become so weak and infirm that he was in no position to attend to it any more and moreover he was advised to go down to Nepal to see whether a change of climate would improve his shattered health. On the other hand, the publication of the work was bound to raise a lot of opposition, and once Fr. Francis Horace had abandoned the capital, there would be no one to answer the objections which might be raised against it. However, the situation in Lhasa had reached such a critical stage that it was felt that it was time to quit the mission, at least for the time being. At the end there were the usual money difficulties. The missionaries could not afford at the moment the outlay of funds required for the publication of the work. An ordinary hand-written copy would cost not less than Rs. 60/-, while the price of a single de-luxe copy amounted to about Rs. 100/-—surely a prohibitive cost even for making a few copies available for the public (11).

However, the labour which had gone into the bringing out of the translation of the book into the Tibetan language was not all lost. The work did serve a very useful purpose during the last period of the Tibetan Mission and the book was eventually presented to the Regent and to the Dalai Lama.

10. *Rappresentanza*, No. L; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 137-138, 167-168.

11. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, p. 221.

5. As referred to in another chapter, there were at least three polemical scripts, written in a literary form, being an exchange of views on different religious topics, between the Dalai Lama and Fr. Francis Horace. One of these only is extant, that is a copy of the Dalai Lama's writing (a five hundred word exposition in Tibetan characters) and Fr. Francis Horace's reply in its Italian version. This runs into a composition of nearly 4000 words. The main point of the controversy, on this particular occasion, is centered round the existence of evil—the eternal problem that had always baffled the mind of all great philosophers and thinkers. In his exposition, the Holy One of Lhasa maintained that the explanation given to the existence of evil by the Buddhist religious system (i.e. the doctrine of karma and dharma) fully satisfied the mind of every intelligent enquirer. This assertion gave Fr. Francis Horace an opportunity to set forth the basic teaching of the Christian faith and to expound how the existence of evil could be better explained in the context of the Christian religious system. The time when this exchange of views on religious matters was held, is unknown, but in all probability it took place during the year 1726 or 1727 (12).

6. The only writing which may be considered original in its composition, is a strictly apologetic work. It has a rather lengthy title, but has the merit of being self-explanatory, that is, to state the nature of its contents. The title reads: "The natural duty of every human being to acknowledge the first cause and to keep the natural law in order that one should be enabled and worthy to receive the grace for embracing the true religion". The credit for this work goes again to the tireless pen of the Prefect, who prepared it during the year 1741-1742. The book is a kind of treatise of natural theology. In particular, it gives ample description of the ten commandments as an embodiment of the natural law and sums up the teaching of the Church in this specific field of knowledge. At the end of this apologetic treatise there is a short refutation of the main errors of the Lamaistic creed. The work should have been presented to Regent, the Dalai Lama and to some other dignitaries in May, 1742, but owing to the unfortunate

12. Rappresentanza, Summary No. XV; Nuovo Ramusio, part IV, pp. 145-157.

happenings which took place at the time, this could not be done. However, this was presented to the Regent at a later date and it was largely used in the defence of Christianity in the following years (13).

7. The last work of translation into the Tibetan language was printed at the end of 1743. It was a direct refutation of the Tibetan religion, a combined effort of Card. Belluga and Fr. Francis Horace. We have already spoken about it in the previous chapter and there is no need here to go into further details.

As a conclusion of this sub-heading, we may mention here that an abortive attempt had been made by Fr. Dominic of Fano around the year 1717, to translate the Bible into the Tibetan language. He had already started the work and put aside some funds for the purpose. However, he had soon to give up the idea in favour of a more useful and practical undertaking—the revision of the catechism he had compiled earlier. The translation of the Bible into the Tibetan language was indeed an ambitious but an impossible project. This would have required years of work at a prohibitive cost. Two language teachers, an interpreter and a copyist were to be engaged on this task each at Rs. 2.25 per month, besides providing them with a square meal per day. According to Fr. Dominic's own reckoning, the estimate for bringing out a single copy of the Bible, in print-like characters, would amount to Rs. 1100/-. He had also in mind to translate into the Tibetan language the life of Our Lord, and some other useful works, but evidently his courage and good will were far in excess of his scanty preparations and limited means (14).

Translation from Tibetan

We have already given the reason why the missionaries were keen on translating into the Italian language the religious books of the Tibetans; now we have only to list these translations. Even here we have to lament the near loss of everything.

13. Nuovo Ramusio, part II, p. 128, 143, 146.

14. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. 118.

1. The place of honour must be given to the book known as Lam-rim-c'en-mo (otherwise Lam-rim-c'e-ba) i.e. the steps of the road or the three ways that lead to salvation. It is a classical work, written in the classical language and has the great merit of being an organic summary of the moral and ascetical teaching (though reference is often made to the philosophical and dogmatic tenets of Buddhist Lamaism) contained in the bKa'-gyur, the holy scriptures of the Tibetans.

The author, Tsong-k'-a-pa (1357-1419), is the founder of the Yellow Sect (dGe-lugs-pa) and is venerated as a saint. The book, a fundamental text for the Yellow Sect, has all the qualities of a clear, well-thought out moral and ascetical treatise. Its contents are of a high standard and set forth the best spiritual values of philosophic thinking and practical morality that have ever been produced by Buddhist Lamaism. The translator, Fr. Francis Horace, has no hesitation in stating that, apart from the different ideological background on which Christianity and Lamaism are based, such as the theory of transmigration, the practice of magic and the like, the Lam-rim-c'en-mo is "a beautiful and sound spiritual guide, good enough to instruct and enlighten Christians in their way to perfection". Only a meagre summary of this wonderful book (hardly two or three pages) is now left of the Italian version, the translation of which must have cost Fr. Francis Horace months of hard labour. This is indeed a great pity in the sense that della Penna's translation was, and still is, the only full version of the book, which so far has been made into any foreign language.

The summary of the book, given in the appendix of Rappresentanza, makes striking reading as it bears a surprisingly close resemblance to similar ascetico-mystic works written by Christian authors. It speaks of the need of a spiritual guide to attain salvation, of his knowledge and qualities as well as of the duties and good dispositions of the discipline in order to make good progress in the spiritual life. It deals with mortal and venial sins, of human passions and frailty and so on. However, what strikes the reader most is that the classical division of the three different stages to perfection described in the Christian ascetico-mystical hand-

books, that is the purgative, illuminative and contemplative life, are here alluded to in an unmistakable manner (15).

2. Second in importance is the Sakya-t'ub-pa' i-rnam-t'ar or a biography of Buddha. The work was translated by Fr. della Penna. We have no knowledge of the original text (there were many) from which the translation had been made and of the length of the book. It must have been one of the most popular biographies of Buddha in vogue at the time (16).

3. A third book translated by Fr. Francis Horace bears the title "skyabssu-'gro-ba" and means to whom we should have recourse to obtain salvation, i.e. the Three Holy Ones, or the three gems (Ratnas). These are : Buddha, Dharma and Sangha or Buddha, the Law and the Church (Assembly): the three powers, which according to the Buddhist system, condition and rule over the destiny of man. It is mainly a speculative and philosophical book, which explains the Buddhist thought and way of life. This is a work most necessary for the missionaries to grasp the mentality of the people they had been sent to evangelise. It is not possible to identify the original text from which the translation has been made amongst the many books dealing with the same subject (17).

4. From the Tibetan Buddhist Canonical Texts Fr. Francis Horace translated the "So-sor-t'ar-pa' i-mdo", which ranks amongst the most important volumes of the Tibetan Sacred Scriptures. The subject matter of the book refers to the rule or way of shortening the multiplicity of transmigrations, popularly believed to be five hundred. To be noted here is that in Tibet the ordinary mortal transmigrates, while the Dalai Lama and the other high-ranking lamas of the Tibetan hierarchy reincarnate (18).

5. The following writings, all of secondary importance, can be considered as translations from the Tibetan language in

15. Rappresentanza, No. XLIX, Summary No. XV; Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 212-213.

16. Rappresentanza, No. XLIX.

17. Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 88.

18. Rappresentanza, No. XLIX; Nuovo Ramusio, part III, p. 88.

so far as their contents have been culled from one or more books written in that language. They are :

- (a) A dissertation on the Tibetan idols,
- (b) An explanation of the Tibetan world, a kind of cosmogony,
- (c) An essay on the concept of deity, according to the teaching of Buddhist Lamaism.
- (d) An abridgement of the monastic rules in Tibet.
- (e) A list of the Tibetan Kings.

All these works have been compiled by Fr. Francis Horace but their enumeration is not complete. The worthy missionary, after having specifically mentioned the above writings, concluded by adding "et cetera" to the list of them (19).

Nothing is left of all these writings; except the list of the Tibetan Kings, which has been incorporated in the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, pp. 296-341.

6. A book on Buddhist Lamaism (the exact original title of the book is not known) was rendered into the Italian language by Fr. Joseph Felix of Moro, sometime before the year 1721, during his stay at Tron-gne. From a summary of the work, given by the translator in one of his letters, we gather that it was a kind of hand-book, touching on the various aspects of religious teachings—short in its outline, but dealing with all the essentials of the belief of the Tibetans. Here again mention is made of the three ways or means of shortening the multiplicity of transmigrations, which, Fr. Joseph Felix says, could, in a way, be compared to the purgative, illuminative and unitive life, written about in manuals of Mystical Theology (20).

7. Under this category of writings we have to place also an "Abridgement of Buddha's Biography, the Lawgiver of

19. *Rappresentanza*, No. XLIX; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 171; part III, p. 88. Practically all these translations are also mentioned in the short biography of Fr. Francis Horace by Dott. Paolo Mattei Gentili, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

20. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 120.

Tibet", a compendium of two or more Tibetan biographies of Buddha drawn up by Fr. Cassian Beligatti. Even this autographic manuscript, which was traceable up to the beginning of the present century, has now been lost (21).

Grammars and Lexicons

This line of literary activity finds the Capuchins in the forefront. Among the European scholars they were the first in the field. Needless to stress that such a hard and tedious task was of paramount importance to them in the persuasion of their missionary work. The knowledge of the language in fact had the right of priority over everything else, being the only and indispensable means of communicating with the people. Without it nothing could be done. Accordingly, they set to face this enormous difficulty from the very beginning, trying to lay the foundation of a work that might eventually lead to the compilation of a lexicon. Slowly and concertedly they hoped to succeed in their endeavour.

They did succeed, and as far as we can know, whatever the Capuchins wrote, in the matter of grammars and lexicons has been again brought to light, though it cost a few silent scholars years of patient research. The importance of the writings and their pioneering work was mainly responsible for the preservation of these literary productions.

A humble start at lexicon making was made by the first two Tibetan missionaries. It was a joint venture of Fr. Francis Mary of Tours and of Fr. Joseph of Ascoli Piceno. The initiative came probably from Fr. Francis Mary, who had already a good deal of experience in this subject and realised more than his companion the need of it.

Very little is known of the plan and length of this first attempt. Our only source of information is based on a letter written by Fr. Francis Mary from Lhasa on the 27th January, 1708. Speaking in the name of his confrere and his own he states: "We apply ourselves night and day to the study of the language. We have nearly brought to completion a Latin Tibetan dictionary, a copy of which will be kept

21. Nuovo Ramusio, part 1. p. LXXXIX-XC.

here in Lhasa for the perusal of the new missionaries while I will take a copy to Rome to show that I did not spend my time idly. Fr. Joseph and I know how to read and write (the Tibetan language) and we ourselves compile our own dictionaries". This last word, used in the plural, may mean that they had in mind also to write a Tibetan-Latin lexicon (22).

The first Latin-Tibetan lexicon was surely a rough, crude and unsatisfactory composition, considering the fact that the two missionaries had been in the capital just over six months when the work was nearly finished—a length of time hardly enough to learn the fundamental elements of a foreign language. Nevertheless, these two brave men deserve our admiration, if for nothing else, for their courage and sincerity for the task they undertook.

Taking the lexicon written by Frs. Francis Mary and Joseph as the guide-line, Fr. Dominic of Fano improved and enlarged it bringing out a new and a better edition, though still far from being complete and correct. The author himself is painfully aware of the imperfections of his work and readily admits it.

In his introduction to the lexicon, Fr. Dominic candidly remarks: "That's all that I have been able to learn about the Tibetan language and characters till now. Apart from the short time we had been in the mission, we had to contend also with extreme poverty, which prevented us from engaging a language teacher or an interpreter. To keep ourselves alive we were compelled to gather stinging nettles and similar herbs. Therefore, no one should be surprised if at any time he finds the introduction to the alphabet or the explanations given in the body of the dictionary not very clear and imperfectly written. I must confess that all my knowledge of the Tibetan language has been picked up by talking with the people or inquiring from those who could help me in my difficulties".

The humble missionary goes on to say that in the compilation of the present work he had availed himself of the lexicon written by his two confreres, and that out of it he was careful

22. *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 39.

to choose only those things which in his own estimate he considered correct. Speaking of the motive which had prompted him to undertake such a hard task, Fr. Dominic states that he had been urged to do it by the sole intention to please God and to be of some help to the young missionaries (23).

When Fr. Dominic went to Rome at the end of 1712, he took the dictionary with him. The man and the dictionary made news in the Roman intellectual circles. Rumours that a missionary, coming from across the seas, had compiled a dictionary in an unknown language, crossed the barrier of the Alps. Two French brothers, Stephen and Michael Fourmont, who were teaching oriental languages in the Academy of Paris, came to know of it. Stimulated by the novelty of the thing, they got in touch with Fr. Dominic and kindly requested him to prepare for them an extract of his work as they wanted to make a study of the Tibetan language.

While in Paris, on his way back to Tibet (December, 1714, or January 1715), Fr. Dominic handed over his manuscript, an "extract" or a selection from his original work, to the two brothers. They became greatly interested and in this way the study of the Tibetan language was introduced for the first time in Europe.

The manuscript of Fr. Dominic had been for a while lost sight of and then dug out again. At present it is kept in the Paris National Library. It is a leather bound, 41 large sheet (22.5 x 35.5 cms) thickly written tome, bearing Napoleon's Coat-of-Arms. The lexicon is divided into two parts; sheets 1-4 deal with "the Tibetan alphabet to know and read the characters to be found in the books of Great Tibet or Butant". Besides the alphabet there is also a detailed description of the rules governing the pronunciation of words. The body of the lexicon (sheets 5-40) consists of 2,538 terms. It gives the Latin word, the equivalent in the Tibetan language, written in dbu-can characters, together with the phonetic pronunciation transcribed in Latin. The last sheet (41) contains the Tibetan numerals, from 1 to 10,000, both in words and figures (24).

23-24. From the introduction to the dictionary; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. XCI-XCII; *Analecta Ordinis etc.*, op. cit., Vol. L (1934) pp. 15-17.

If the lexicons compiled by Frs. Francis Mary, Joseph and Dominic are considered the work of a beginner, the dictionary compiled by Fr. Francis Horace is surely the literary production of a professional man. He had both the talent and the qualification to do it. His 35,000 terms (both ways) Tibetan-Italian and Italian-Tibetan dictionary is a monumental work, worthy to immortalise the name of any lexicographer. Nevertheless, it was soon forgotten.

There is no doubt that Fr. Francis Horace was the author of the dictionary. He wrote it in the literary language, in dbu-can characters, sometimes before the year 1732. The writing is mentioned at least twice in the various reports he submitted to his superiors while in Rome. In both instances it is stated that he was the author of a 35,000 terms Tibetan-Italian and Italian-Tibetan dictionary. Even Fr. Joachim of Anatolia refers to it in one of his letters. However, after the departure of the priests from Lhasa in 1745, the manuscript found its way to one of the archives of the mission from where it disappeared mysteriously. It is a long and interesting story, but worth relating (25).

In 1826 a Tibetan-English Dictionary was printed at Serampore, a town on the right bank of the Hughli, 20 kilometers north of Calcutta, which at the time was an important Danish settlement. The Serampore Press was owned by the Baptist Mission. It was started in 1799 by Rev. William Carey, English Orientalist and missionary, in conjunction with Joshua Marshman and others. The main object of the press was to bring out lexicons in different Indian languages and to make various translations of the Scriptures. The full title of this first Tibetan work printed at the Serampore Press reads : "A dictionary of Bhotanta or Boutan language printed from manuscript copy made, by the late Rev. Frederic Christian Gotthelf Schroeter, edited by

25. *Rappresentanza*, No. L; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. 88. Even the biography of Fr. Francis Horace by Dott. Paolo Mattei Gentili, *op. cit.*, p. 12 makes mention of the dictionary. The only discrepancy among these references consists in the different number of terms of which the dictionary is composed; Fr. Francis Horace states that the dictionary is composed of 35,000 terms, Fr. Joachim of about 30,000 terms and Dott. Paolo Mattei Gentili of 36,000 terms.

Joshua Marshman, to which is prefixed a grammar of the Bhotanta language by Frederic Christian Gotthelf Schroeter edited by William Carey". The second part of the dictionary, English-Tibetan never saw the light of day.

The Tibetan-English dictionary is a volume in quarto consisting of IV-35-475 pages. Two pages bear the same number, making in all 477 pages. The four pages marked in Roman numerals serve as an introduction or preface to the main work. Here, we learn that : "The printing of the whole was sanctioned by the Government, and the expenses supported by a generous subscription". The editor himself, Rev. W. Carey, suggests the hypothesis in the preface that the dictionary may be the work of an Italian missionary. "It is highly probable—he says—that the following dictionary was written by some of the Roman Catholic Missionaries who formerly laboured in Tibet". He goes on to note that the work was originally written in Tibetan-Italian language and that the Italian version was now substituted by an English translation.

The first 35 pages in Arabic numbers contain the Tibetan Grammar ; while the remaining pages form the body of the dictionary. Every page is divided into two column. Every column gives the explanation of a number of terms which vary from 20 to 40. The whole dictionary consists of 27,000 vocabula, falling short of 8,000 terms, as per the original work written by Fr. Francis Horace.

Was there any relation between the Serampore Tibetan English Dictionary and the Tibetan-Italian manuscript left by Fr. Francis Horace ? How did the manuscript of Fr. Francis Horace fall into the hands of the Serampore editor ? No one seemed to know and much less care. It was only eighty five years later that the truth came to light.

In January, 1911, Calcutta was surprised to hear that a number of original manuscripts—some of them relics of the Capuchin Mission of Lhasa and Nepal—had been discovered at Bishop's College. Eventually, two or three more Tibetan and Hindi dictionaries were found on the shelves of the library. Fr. H. Hosten, S.J. a historian of note went on two occasions to Bishop's College to examine the

manuscripts, till he succeeded in establishing, beyond doubt, their identity. In March, 1912, Fr. Felix Finck O.F.M. Cap., of the Lahore Diocese, a man eminently suited for this kind of historical research, did the same and gave a description of "The Tibetan Manuscript Vocabularies in Bishop's College" (26).

The Tibetan-Italian manuscript dictionary (31 x 16½ cms. in size) found in Bishop's College at Calcutta is badly mutilated and here and there eaten by insects. It is written on Tibetan paper, dbu-can characters, and follows the order of the Tibetan alphabet. The tome consists of 382 unnumbered pages of about 38 lines to a page, though not divided into columns. It is not possible to state with certainty whether the work is in Fr. Francis Horace's own handwriting or simply a copy made out from the original, though the presumption is in his favour.

Comparing the dusty Tibetan manuscript discovered in Bishop's College in 1911, with the Tibetan-English dictionary published in Serampore in 1826, it became more evident than ever that the latter was nothing but an adapted version in English of the monumental work written one hundred years earlier by the Italian Capuchin. The hypothesis advanced by the editor in his introduction to the Serampore Dictionary clenches the matter.

How did all this happen? It is difficult to unravel the mystery. One thing is sure that Fr. Horace's dictionary followed the fortunes of the mission. From Lhasa it was taken to Patan or Kathmandu, in the Valley of Nepal. When in 1769 the Fathers left Nepal, the manuscript was brought down to India to be stacked up in the archives of Patna or Bettiah. Then we lose trace of it.

Till about 1815 the dictionary was still in the hands of the Capuchins. In their correspondence, we read that they were often pestered by visitors, mostly Protestant clergymen, inquiring about some Tibetan writings which were supposed

26. Remarks on the Tibetan Manuscript Vocabularies in Bishop's College, Calcutta, in the *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, new series, Vol. VIII, No. 10 pp. 397, Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, 1912.

to be lying in their archives. They spoke vaguely of the translation of the Bible into the Tibetan language by some Capuchin missionary, or possibly by Fr. H. Desideri, the Jesuit Tibetan scholar. Apparently they had no knowledge of what it was all about, but they knew for certain that some precious Tibetan manuscripts were in their possession, and they were out to get them. They even showed themselves ready to pay anything to obtain this hidden literary treasure (27).

From 1814 to 1816 Britain was engaged in a frontier war against Nepal. In the sur-charged atmosphere of the day there were talks that the British Army might conquer Nepal and then press on the conquest of Tibet. It was rumoured that Tibet was a land rich in minerals and raw materials. It was a prize worth fighting for. On the other hand, the Protestant missionaries were only too pleased to prepare themselves well in advance for the new field of apostolate which might be opened to them in the near future. That is why they were keen on getting hold of any valuable material, especially such as contained of language and religion, relating to Tibet.

Major Barre' Latter was one of the British officers who distinguished himself in the Nepalese campaign. His duty might have called him often to Patna and Bettiah, both being situated in the rear of the war zone. It was from one of these two mission houses, most probably, the one at Patna, that he came into possession of this long sought after Tibetan manuscript (28).

27. *Monumenta Anastasiana* etc., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 991.

28. That there were troops quartered in Bettiah during this time is evident from the following interesting passage written by Major General Sir. W.H. Sleeman, K.C.B. (*Rambles and Recollections* Edition of 1893, Vol. I, p. 15). He says that during the war with Nepal in 1814 and 1815, the division with which he was serving, came upon a very interesting colony of about two hundred Christian families, in Bettiah. This colony had been created by the Italian Capuchins, who were working among its people with little or no support from Europe or from any quarter. There were men of all trades among them, and they formed one large street, remarkable for the superior style of its buildings and the sober industry of the inhabitants. The General states that he had never seen in India better workmen than these masons, carpenters and blacksmiths. They worked also in his camp every-day while the British Army remained in the vicinity of Bettiah; but they would all insist upon going to Divine Service at the prescribed hours.

How did the manuscript pass into his hands? No one can say. It might have been presented to him out of friendship or just given in appreciation of services rendered to the mission, paid for or even asked for on loan and never returned. Anyway, to Major Barre' Latter goes the credit of having providentially rescued the manuscript from falling into oblivion.

The rest of the story is briefly told: Major Barre' Latter handed over the manuscript to his friend, the Baptist missionary Schroeter, a keen scholar, well-grounded in Tibetan studies. At his untimely death in 1820, when the greater part of the work had already been done, the task of giving the final touches to the Tibetan English dictionary fell on his two colleagues, the Baptist missionaries, Joshua Marshman and William Carey.

The next question is—how did the manuscript find its way into Bishop's College, Calcutta? The question is easy to answer. At the death of major Barre' Latter in 1822, his wife, in compliance with the deceased's last will to bequeath his library and manuscripts to a literary society, made them over in 1824 to the Bishop's College, Calcutta—an institution which had been recently established. There the manuscript remained unknown and forgotten till the time it was discovered in 1911. Meanwhile the war against Nepal was over and no one dreamt any more of a possible conquest of Tibet by the British Army. Tibet and Tibetan studies had lost all interest.

In the same Bishop's College, was discovered, evidently part and parcel of Major Latter's literary collection, the sister work of Fr. Francis Horace, i.e. the Italian-Tibetan portion of the dictionary. There are two incomplete specimens of the same. Let us call them specimens A and B.

Specimen A is a large tome, 27 x 20 cms., well preserved, strongly bound, written on English paper, but by several copyists. The manuscript goes from the syllable A to the letter S of the Roman alphabet. It gives the Italian word, the corresponding word in Tibetan, dbu-can characters, the number of pages runs into well over 850, each being divided into the two columns.

Specimen B, the older of the two, has been written by a single hand on Tibetan or Nepalese paper, i. e. ex charta radicis arboreae. The size is a little larger than specimen A, measuring 34 x 19 cms. It consists of 430 pages, not numbered, two columns to a page, and gives the second part of the Italian-Tibetan dictionary, that is, from the letter N to the letter Z. At the end of the manuscript there is an appendix which explains some peculiarities of the Tibetan grammar and numerals (29).

The genesis of these two specimens is not very clear. Specimen A appears to be a transcription copied out by different people on behalf of Major Barre' Latter, or some of his friends. Specimen B is very likely a copy, made out from the original by one of the Tibetan missionaries. However, it cannot be excluded to be part of the original work in Fr. Francis Horace's own handwriting.

“Alphabetum Tangutanum sive Thibetanum” is the title of another work, written by Fr. Cassian Beligatti, which can be classified under the present sub-heading, “Tangut,” out of which the adjective “Tangutanum” is formed and is the Mongolian equivalent for Tibet.

Fr. Cassian Beligatti left for Italy on the 18th February 1755, for reasons of health, after 16 year's service in the mission fields of Tibet, Nepal and northern India. While at home he continued to occupy himself with the affairs of the Mission. The present writing (a XVI-138 page booklet in octavo) was published in 1773 by the press types of the Congregation of propaganda. The text is in Latin and Tibetan, making use of that set of Tibetan types which was engraved in Rome in 1738 and left with Propaganda. The booklet contains all one has to know in regard to the complicated Tibetan alphabet, spelling, pronunciation and allied matters. It is detailed and exhaustive treatment of the subject, which

29. Some other sources of information in regard to the dictionary, besides the main ones, quoted above at No. 25, are: *Analecta Ordinis*, etc., op. cit., Vol. XLVII (1931) pp. 303-312; Vol. L (1934) pp. 15-23, 43-49; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, pp. XCIL-XCIV; *Gli scrittori Cappuccini delle Marche* by Fr. Giuseppe da Fermo, Iesi 1928, pp. 24-30; *Franciscan Annals of India*, Agra, Vol. III, May 1912, pp. 184-190, June, p. 206-212; Vol. VII, February 1916, pp. 61-65.

helped European scholars to tackle the first elements of the Tibetan grammar. The last chapter gives the Latin text and Tibetan version, in dbu-can characters of: the Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Angel of the Lord, the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments (30).

Cartography and Ethnology

Modest is the contribution of the Tibetan missionaries on the subject of cartography; however, it is worth a passing mention. In all fairness it must be noted that whatever map-drawing they did, it was not done with the intention of making a new scientific contribution to this highly specialised branch of knowledge, but rather with the sole object of giving in a rough sketch, to the Superiors at home, of the unification of places, of the distances to be covered, of the itineraries to be followed and so forth, so that those in power may visualise the vastness of the field entrusted to their care and the enormous difficulties they had to encounter in the fulfilment of their mission.

Considering their work from this point of view, they surely deserve the highest praise and respect, even though their effort falls often short of the mark, even according to the scientific standards of the time. Unaided by any geographical book, and inexperienced in this kind of art, they fully succeeded in their purpose and even contributed positively to the better knowledge of those territories which were then little explored and to a great extent unmapped.

In the archives of Propaganda in Rome, there are still three geographical sketches drawn by the Capuchins of the Tibetan Mission. The first sketch, made in Rome under the supervision of Fr. Felix of Montecchio, was occasioned by the controversy (1728-1732) between the Capuchins and the Jesuits in regard to their respective claim over the mission. The map gives a summary view of nearly the whole of Asia, with very few details, not always correct; but it is a fair enough attempt to acquaint the authorities with the subject at issue.

30. *Analecta Ordinis etc.*, op. cit., Vol L (1934) p. 47-48; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. XCIV.

The second sketch is the work of Fr. Tranquillus of Apecchio, who was nominated Prefect Apostolic of the mission in 1746. It was sent in one of his letters to Rome in 1753. He wanted to show the route pursued by the missionaries on their way from Chandernagore to Lhasa via Patna and Kathmandu. The localities are pretty well detailed, but the tract of land between the Nepal frontier and the Tibetan capital is considerably out of proportion when compared to the scale of the whole map. Probably this was done on purpose as that territory had already been abandoned. There is scarcely any sign of orography and hydrography in the sketch, the only rivers mentioned being the Ganges, the Jumna and the Bagmati.

Better quality of work is revealed in the map drawn by Fr. Joseph Mary Bernini in 1758. He mentions of having sent a copy to the Procurator General of the Capuchin Order and another to His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, but only the latter is still extant. His purpose was to give an idea of the vast territory entrusted to the mission, inclusive of Tibet. It gives the longitude and latitude and other valuable information. The course of the gTsan-po or Brahmaputra river is correctly drawn except for minor details.

These three sketches had no influence on contemporary cartography because once they had served the purpose, they were locked up in the Vatican archives. Some valuable contribution instead was rendered by Fr. Cassian and Fr. Francis Horace. They supplied the geographical data to the Augustinian monk, Fr. A.A. Giorgi, the author of the "Alphabetum Tibetanum," a store-house on Tibetan information. The material contained in the book (pp. 417-453) was utilised, at a later date, by some cartographers, notably Rennell and Grimm. A sketch of the Valley of Nepal by Fr. Cassian, which appeared in his journal, would have done him much credit, had it come to light earlier (31).

Speaking of the Tibetan missionaries as a whole, one has to note that in their correspondence, diaries and reports,

31. Nuovo Ramusio, part I, pp. LXXXII-LXXXVI ; Terzorio p. 290.

there appears incidentally a lot of new valuable geographical, historical and ethnological material. It is not possible to deal with each of these works separately, some of them being at times of negligible length. However, it is but fair to give at least a cursory and collective appreciation of their work.

The description of places in general is good and accurate. Their narration of things experienced or observed in journeying tallies with similar accounts given by modern travellers. The description, for instance, of the route from Kathmandu to Lhasa, left by Fr. Constantine of Loro, is a little masterpiece of travel reporting—colourful, impressive, absorbing. And there are more like this. Practically the whole journey from Rome to Lhasa, and in particular from Patna to Lhasa, is described by one or more of the missionaries in an interesting manner. By piecing together their narratives one could have a panoramic picture, rich in detail and varied in matter, of the conditions of life and mode of travelling in those early days.

It was quite natural that the major events of the time and quite a few trifling incidents should have crept into the writings of the missionaries. They lived through them and the incidents conditioned their work. The historical date supplied by the writers is seldom a source of primary importance, nonetheless it helps in throwing light on men and things, which otherwise would have remained somewhat out of focus. Their contribution in this particular field could be compared to a marginal addition to the main stream of Tibetan history—not substantial yet subsidiary.

There is, however, a sphere of study in which the Capuchins are still unequalled. I refer to their contribution in the field of ethnology. Their factual description, free from unnecessary technicalities, of the customs and folklore of the people of Nepal and Tibet is comprehensive and penetrating. Modern professional writers have little to add to, and much less make reservation for, the mass of ethnological information, which free and easy, gets into their pages.

It is indeed a pity that apart from the research work done by Sven Hedin, the noted Swedish author and explorer, on

the geographical contribution of the missionaries on Tibet, nothing has been done so far to tap the rich and varied material both historical and ethnological, which has been left to us by these quiet workers. It would surely make a rewarding study (32).

Fr. Cassian Beligatti was “a born ethnologist” and a “master of the art of depicting travels”. He deserves a special mention for the size of his work, and, above all, for the importance of its contents. All his observations and impressions, from the day he left Rome (14th July, 1738) till his arrival in the Tibetan capital (6th January, 1741), are vividly and faithfully portrayed in his “Journal,” a superb travel account. It has all the charm and simplicity of a story which is told without inhibition. Yet even this writing was soon buried in oblivion.

The autographic manuscript was discovered, at the end of the last century, by Prof. Albert Magnaghi in the Macerata Municipal Library, the priest’s native town, in central Italy. The Professor edited and published this valuable discovery in the “Italian Geographical Review” in 1901 and 1902. Originally the writing was donated, “with the Superiors’ permission”, by Fr. Cassian to one of his uncles to end finally in the Macerata Municipal Library, amidst the dust-heap of forgotten papers.

The Journal is a 203 page manuscript in octavo, written in Italian. It is illustrated by the author himself with pen and water colour sketches, for the most part, of deities and sacred ceremonies. There are also plans of the various mission houses and other buildings in Lhasa, together with a map of the Nepal Valley, showing the relative position of the three mission stations of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon.

32-33. Southern Tibet by Sven Hedin, IX Volumes, Stockholm 1917-1922. The author deals with the geographical contributions of missionaries at the following places: Vol. II, pp. 217-218, 267-269 ; Vol. III pp. 15-23 ; Vol. VII, p. 87.

The same author gives all the credit to Catholic Missionaries for the exploration of Tibet and the discovery of “Mount Everest”. “I do not want”, —Sven Hedin says in his book, Mount Everest—

(Contd. on next page)

A glowing appreciation of the work, chiefly as a piece of travelling description, has been made by Sven Hedin. He writes :

“Beligatti is a master of the art of depicting travels. In one respect he differs from the travellers of our own time; he rarely speaks of himself. When he journeyed to Lhasa through the Valley of Bhutia Kosi, across the Thangla, he experienced, no doubt, many other adventures as well as the mountain sickness, but he kept them all to himself. They did not interest him. It was the knowledge of new countries and new men, their culture, customs and above all, their religious ideas and festivals, which Beligatti wished to preserve for the western world. With a keen eye he observed everything and furnishes us a description of his travels, so exact and reliable that innumerable travellers of our day might be happy if they had been able to fill their own volumes with material equally valuable. One who has travelled himself and who once had an opportunity to verify the accounts of the early Jesuits and Capuchins, takes off his hat and willingly accords them admiration” (33).

The chief merit of the work, however, rests in the ethnological observations made by the author. Nearly all the phases of Tibetan life and folklore (birth, death, wedding, festivals, mummers' dance, religious ceremonies, the first day of the Tibetan year, etc.) find their way therein in a most natural setting. The Beligatti Journal can be equated, for its high quality and variety of subjects, with “Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies” by Abbe' J. A. Dubois, though the people and surroundings are different. Without any scientific pretension the author has succeeded admirably to produce a standard work of lasting value.

“to deprive Colonel Everest and his party of surveyers of the honour of the discovery of this peak in 1845. But I cannot help bringing truth from the obscurity of oblivion to light, by pointing out that mount Everest, with only slight inaccuracies, is found under its true Tibetan name “Tschomo-Lungma” on maps made from native materials by French Jesuits in Peking in the year 1717. These maps were later engraved in Paris and published in 1733, one hundred and twelve years before the Everest Expedition.

Materia Tibetana

Under the present sub-heading we shall single out some of the most significant writings on Tibet because of their comprehensive span of vision. They were submitted originally to the Superiors in Rome in the form of a report or were intended to illustrate some aspects of the missionary life set against the wider background of the Tibetan scene. Their contents go beyond the limited scope of a report to lift the curtain on that mysterious country of monasteries and nunneries. Here we find the true Tibet, the land and the people, its institutions and organisations, vividly depicted in their natural environment, in the day-to-day life.

First in chronological order comes a "Report of the Kingdom of Tibet" written by Fr. Dominic of Fano in 1913. It must have enjoyed considerable popularity in Europe, being one of the first accounts on Tibet which appeared in the western press. Between 1718 and 1720, the report was translated and published, either in full or in part, in three French Magazines (34).

The writing can be compared to a 35 page account which one may expect to read in an encyclopedia or geographical magazine now-a-days, i.e. something of everything without going deep into anything particular. To give an idea, for instance, of the vastness of the country, the author states that to traverse it from east to west and from north to south takes ninety and forty days' travelling respectively. The distance between Bengal and Lhasa can be covered in three months' forced marches. The country-side is so barren and so sparsely inhabited that for days one has to carry with him victuals, fuel, and water, if he wants to eat and drink. At night he has to camp out in the open as it is not always easy to find shelter of any kind.

The report offers a good description of the so-called Cathedral of Lhasa, the national oracle, the monastic life, musk deer, yak (out of whose hair Fr. Dominic had a habit made for himself) and other interesting topics. Referring

34. In recent times this report on the Kingdom of Tibet was published by Terzorio, pp. 142-173 ; *Studia Picena*, VIII (1902), pp. 81-101 ; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part III, pp. 3-37.

to the monastic life, the writer remarks that the Tibetans had, strange to say, a kind of secular institutes of monks and nuns. They lived in their own homes, went about dressed in their religious habits and kept the rules of the community to which they were affiliated. However, to show their obedience and subjection, they reported their presence, on certain occasions during the year, to their respective Superiors.

Speaking of the administration of justice, Fr. Dominic writes that it was speedy and most rigorous, without red tape or the need of recording anything on paper. As a rule the law of retaliation was enforced with a vengeance—whoever caused damage to his neighbour was made to pay tenfold. No one was allowed to take the law into his hands, even when dealing with domestic servants. The master could slap, beat or punish them in any way. The police were never called to round up an offender, but it was enough for the plaintiff to say—“come with me before the judge” and he would never dare to do otherwise. There the matter would be quickly settled. However, if it was proved that the offence was committed in a state of intoxication or under the influence of a sudden momentary impulse, the respondent was declared legally insane and the blame was thrown on the wine or on the spirit of evil within him.

We learn from the report that the Tibetans knew how to forecast the lunar and solar eclipse. The event was celebrated with great pomp such as beating of drums, blowing of trumpets, lighting of bon-fires and so forth.

Fr. Dominic is the only missionary who explains the reckoning of the Tibetan year, the months, weeks and days. Each year is called after the name of an animal, for example, the year of the serpent, the lion, the tiger, the rabbit, the hog and so forth. The number of animals, after which the years are named, is limited to twelve, thus forming a set of twelve years (duodecimal cycle). Five sets of twelve years go to form a cycle of sixty years (sexagesimal cycle). Each set of twelve years is differentiated from the others by adding before the name of the animal that marks the year, the name of one of the five elements of Nature, i.e. wood, fire, iron, earth and water. For instance, the year of the wooden ser-

pent is cycle first, the year of the water rabbit, cycle second and so on, according to the year they want to indicate. The Tibetan era starts from the year 1027 A.D. We are at present in the 16th cycle. The Tibetan New Year falls on the day of the February full moon. In regard to the months, they follow the lunar system and approximately every three years they add to the twelve months an extra one to streamline the whole thing. The months are enumerated according to the ordinal numbers and so are the days in the month. The week is made up of seven days and each day bears the name of the sun, the moon and of the other five major planets. The day, which consists of twenty four hours, is sub-divided in four parts of six hours each.

Equally informative are the four reports written by Fr. Francis Horace in the year 1738. His wide knowledge and great experience, acquired through deep study and long association with the people, had made him a recognised authority on Tibetan matters. One of his reports, in some respects the most valuable and thought provoking, has since then been lost. Only the title of the work (*Relatio ad S. Congregationem de Propaganda Fide de moribus et religione populorum Tibet et Nepal*) and some verbatim quotations from the *Alphabetum Tibetanum* by Fr. A. A. Giorgi, are still extant. The quotations make it clear that this was a work apart from the three other accounts written by the same author. The title of the booklet, printed by the types of the Congregation of Propaganda in 1738, tells of its contents. However, it is a matter of regret that such a work, written by such a competent person and dealing exclusively with the religion and customs of the people of Tibet and Nepal, should have come to such an end. It would have been a first hand source of information on a topic of great interest and still so widely unknown.

The three remaining accounts of Tibet by Fr. Francis Horace are entitled—"Short Description of the Kingdom of Tibet," "Appraisalment of Mission Work" and "Future Prospects of the Mission" (35).

35. Actually the titles of these three reports on Tibet have been shortened quite a bit, but they convey all the same, the meaning
(*Contd. on page 451*)

“The Description of the Kingdom of Tibet”, a 15,000 word account, starts by giving a geographical description and political divisions of the country. This is followed by sundry information on food, drink, trade, fauna, flora, minerals, climatic conditions, products of the soil, characteristic traits of the people and some pertinent news about the political intrigues of the day. The most important features of the report, however, are devoted to the administration of justice and to the religion of the Tibetans, both in theory and in practice. The whole section on the administration of justice reveals a primitive and yet a deeply ingrained sense of justice, nay, the severity of the punishment leads one to think that the mind of the legislator was more concerned about the prevention of the offence than to meet the end of justice. Let us cite a few instances.

“If someone is fatally wounded in a quarrel,” so writes the author, “and dies within a certain number of days, the culprit is thrown alive into the river with a big stone hanging round his neck. On the other hand, if some one dies in the melee, the corpse is put aside, waiting for the arrest of the assassin. Once the murderer is caught, both he and his victim are tied together for 24 hours, then they are interred in a common grave, the murderer being still alive. Whosoever witnesses two opponents drawing out their weapons to start a fight and does nothing to prevent, he is condemned to a fine for aiding and abetting.

“At the end of the Tibetan year, the three Judges of Lhasa go together before the ministers of state to give an account of the money they have realised on fines. The amount collected in civil cases goes to replenish the government

(Contd. from page 450)

intended by the author. The full title of the last report is : “Alla Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide deputata sopra la Missione, del Gran Tibet, rappresentanza de’ Padri Cappuccini Missionari, dello stato presente della medesima e de’ provvedimenti per mantenerla ed accrescerla—1738”. As a rule, however, this report is known by the name of “Rappresentanza del 1738”. These three reports have been published in Nuovo Ramusio, part III, pp. 47-173.

treasury, while the amount collected in criminal cases is distributed among the religious and lamas with the injunction to offer prayers and sacrifices for the atonement of the crimes which have been committed.”

The second report reviews the activity of the mission from the beginning to the time Fr. Francis Horace went to Rome to plead for help. There is nothing special in the first part of the account, except, of course, for mission news. Some important matter on Tibet and Tibetan religion and institutions can be found towards the end of the work. Here the author elucidates certain points in answer to questions put to him by the Secretary of Propaganda. He speaks of the various Buddhist sects, of the different grades and offices held by the lamas, of the entourage attached to the personal court of the Dalai Lama, of studies and universities and so on. Worthy of note is the distinction which Fr. Francis Horace makes between monks and lamas. A monk, he says, is an ordinary religious or a subject, while a lama is one vested with authority or a Superior.

The last few pages of the report deals with the religion and cosmology of the Tibetan world. It is a short but a clear appraisal of the subject.

One of the most curious things in Tibet is the institution of confession. Every monk and lama belonging to the dGe-lugs-pa sect or yellow caps, is bound to go to confession twice a month, at the time of rising and waning moon. In this report, Fr. Francis Horace explains how they make their confession. The penitent, he writes, goes before his spiritual director in humble posture and tells him “I have sinned exceedingly”, without adding anything else. Thereupon the spiritual director exhorts the penitent to be truly sorry for his faults and to resolve to sin no more. At the end he recites a short prayer over the penitent. From other sources we know that the office of spiritual director in the monasteries is reserved for a particular class of lamas, who have duly qualified for the purpose.

There is a certain sequence among the reports on Tibet by Father della Penna. They describe the external and internal conditions affecting the missionary work, the good

will of the rulers, the good disposition of the people, the sure hope of success if all available resources are pulled together in a determined bid to clear the hurdles in the way. This is particularly evident in this last report.

The account was addressed to the Congregation of Propaganda and it is by far the most scholarly work of the kind that was written by the Capuchins of the Tibetan Mission. The writing is anonymous, but it is generally admitted to be due to the pen of Fr. Francis Horace in collaboration with Mgr. F. Monti, Secretary of Propaganda, a warm supporter of the cause.

The Italian text runs into 55 pages in print in addition to the summary or appendix which alone consists of 22 pages. The summary contains a collection of documents, most of them issued by the Tibetan authorities in favour of the missionaries, which are referred to in the body of the report. They had been translated and reproduced here in support of the argument put forward by the Prefect. With minor modifications and some additions here and there, reproduced from the missionaries' correspondence or other sources, the original text was translated into German and Spanish and published at Munich and Madrid in the year 1740 and 1744 respectively.

The chief merit of the work, apart from its obvious value as a source of information for the mission history, is to offer a detailed and accurate description of the monastic life and monastic organisation in Tibet. "Unbelievable is the number of religious" we read in the report, "scattered throughout the length and breadth of Tibet... There is no family which does not wish to have a lama from amongst the member of its household... The provinces from which children are drawn up for the religious life are exempted from recruiting soldiers for the defence of the country... It is enough for a child to be seven years old to be qualified to enter the monastery..."

Strange as it may seem, the Tibetans too have rules and regulations covering such matters as fast and spiritual retreat. In this connection, Fr. Francis Horace remarks that there are two kinds of fast, i.e. simple fast and rigorous fast. The first type of fast, usually kept by laymen, allows drinking

or smoking, nay, even to swallow one's own saliva for twenty four hours. However, if a person wants to fast for three consecutive days, as most of the religious do, he is permitted to drink three cups of plain tea in the morning.

The spiritual retreat, we learn from the report, is an annual feature in the life of a religious in Tibet. It is made privately and may last from ten days to a month, as one pleases. Even well-to-do people make it a point of duty to go every year to one of the monasteries for their retreat. It is a time of silence, prayer, reading and meditation. No one is allowed to talk without leave.

Sundry Writings

It was a practice with the early missionaries to introduce themselves to the new countries they had to evangelise in the guise of doctors, astronomers, mathematicians, scientists and the like, according to the tradition of each missionary congregation or the mental aptitude of every individual. This they did in order not to raise the suspicion of those to whom they had been sent to preach the Gospel. The name and character of a missionary was still, to a great extent, something new and unknown. He was a kind of a mysterious man, whose life and activity might have served to antagonise the people rather than to draw them to himself. On the contrary, the magic power of the "white hakim", his conjurer's tricks (for such was called his medical and scientific prowess) had already become a familiar sight to the people of Asia and Africa. It was an unfailing source of wonder and a sure means to demonstrate one's superiority. In this way the apostles of Christ slowly and prudently managed to make friends, win over the confidence of every class of persons and identify themselves with the rest of the people. Once this was achieved, the rest would follow in due course.

One of the Tibetan missionaries, who made a name for himself in *materia medica et pharmaceutica* is Fr. Dominic of Fano. He is the author of a 500 page medical hand-book which is still preserved in the archives of the Order in Rome. The precious manuscript, in Fr. Dominic's own hand-writing, is eaten by white ants and bears the marks of the ravages of

time. Nevertheless, the writing can still be made out. There is no indication as to when the manual was written. Most probably it was compiled during his second sojourn in Tibet, when he had gained knowledge and experience of the subject. This may be argued from the fact that the book was written for the benefit of the new missionaries, as we are told in the introduction.

The volume (33 x 19 cms.) is divided into five sections, i.e. elementary principles on the practice of medicine, common diseases and their remedies, particular diseases which affect certain parts of the body, the art of compounding medicines, various ailments proper to the female sex. The last 72 pages give a synopsis of the contents, namely, the list of diseases and their medical prescription, the list of drugs mentioned in the volume, and their respective ingredients.

There is no doubt that this handy manual served a useful purpose. The younger generation of missionaries used it and even made copies of it to keep with them for ready reference.

In the introduction Fr. Dominic tells us of his apostolic dreams and of the reality which encompassed him now ; of the things he looked forward to do in the mission and how he had come to be a doctor. He writes, "I had always been under the impression that the main duty of a priest in a mission land was to instruct the neophytes, whom I expected to find everywhere in goodly numbers. However, I was soon to be disillusioned. The neophytes did not yet exist and to make them one had to go about it very cautiously, making use of some suitable expedient. Wishing nevertheless to be useful to the cause I had dedicated my life, I inquired what I should do to serve the mission to the best of my ability. I got a shock when I was told that the method of approach in force in the mission to bring the erring sheep into the fold was to become a doctor, visiting the sick, administering medicine free of charge and doing any other charitable work for the sake of Christ".

The missionary doctor goes on to say that at the beginning he found it very hard to cope with his new role. He had neither the qualifications nor the natural talent for the

medical profession. However, the love of Christ and the salvation of souls urged him to undertake the work with willing heart and missionary spirit. The constant study and the assiduous practice rendered him more proficient day by day while the encouraging results, obtained through the tangible assistance of God, made him realise that this was the right way to make a start on the hard road that leads people to conversion.

Furthermore, the author informs us that the list of recipes prescribed in his manual is confined to ingredients of drugs and herbs which can be purchased in the Lhasa market or that they are easily obtainable from Hindustan and Bengal. (36)

Another work which comes under the category of sundry writings is : "Historical memoirs on the virtues, travellings and hardships of Fr. Joseph Mary Bernini of Gargnano" by Fr. Cassian Beligatti. It is now a rare book (pp.XXXII-278, Verona 1767) chiefly hagiographical in character, but of no mean historical importance. As it will be remembered, the author and Fr. Bernini were members of the same 1738 expedition and spent most of their missionary career together.

Fr. Beligatti wrote the biography of his departed companion on his return to Italy at the instance of one of his Capuchin friends. He finished it at Macerata on the 7th March, 1766. The manuscript was passed on to Fr. Sylvius of Brescia O.F.M. Cap., who added an account of Fr. Bernini's early life and inserted in the book some letters which Fr. Bernini had sent from Tibet and India to one of his uncles. This gave rise to a misunderstanding. The Biography is quoted at times as being written by Fr. Sylvius, while there is no possible doubt that Fr. Cassian Beligatti was the real author, or at least the chief author of the book. Fr. Sylvius of Brescia played at the most the role of an editor (37).

36. Die Aktensammlung des Bischofs Anastasius Hartmann etc., op. cit., p. 19, 28-29 Nuovo Ramusio, part I, p. XCVI-XCVII.

37. For the bibliography of this work see : *Lexicon Capuccinum*, Romae 1951, p. 864, under the name of Josephus M. Gargnano.

The greater part of the work is devoted to the foundation and early beginnings of the Bettiah station. However, there is a lot of news on the Tibetan mission. The last days in Lhasa and the subsequent events are given due place. Actually, the writing is the main source of information in regard to certain details, which would have remained otherwise obscure and confused.

The same Fr. Beligatti wrote also another book which has now been lost. This is inferred from the concluding words of his Journal which states plainly :

“In letting my pen run too freely over the principal festivals of the Tibetans, I have omitted to give some information on their customs, inclinations, natural character and other similar things which I consider essential to the understanding of what I am about to say. Well, I think it proper to put a full stop to this first book. In the second book I shall take up again the narrative from the time of our arrival in Lhasa till the day of my departure on the 31st August, 1742, in the company of Fr. Florian and of Fr. Constantine. Here I shall relate what had been done by us to establish our religion in the capital and give an account of the persecution that had been stirred up against us by the lamas and other religious” (38).

After the discovery of the Journal a fruitless search has been made to unearth this manuscript also. All expectations to retrace it have receded by degrees into the dim past, till all hopes have finally been given up. Researchers have come to the conclusion that it must have perished in the fire which broke out in the Capuchin monastery at Macerata in 1799. It was indeed a sad loss.

In the last paragraph of Fr. Cassian's Journal we are given a broad hint on the nature and contents of the work. The dramatic events of 1742, the fanatical outbursts of the monks and lamas against the missionaries and their converts, their valiant efforts to save a hopeless situation would have been cast together, highlighting the scene, with the tradition and culture of the Tibetan people, their customs and institu-

38. *Giornale*, p. 191.

tions, their moral and emotional temper, and above all, the political intrigues of the court that brought things to a final crisis. Being a master in the art of description and observation, one may be sure that Fr. Cassian would have acquitted himself with honour.

Another Journal was written by Fr. Tranquillus of Apecchio, a missionary of the ninth expedition. The Journal has now been lost but Fr. Mark della Tomba, a later Tibetan missionary, makes a passing reference to it in his: "Brief description of East India or Hindustan, or little treatise of geography". He writes that his information on Tibet and Nepal was culled from the Journal of Fr. Tranquillus of Apecchio, who was well acquainted with the geography of these regions. The Journal was presumably a travel account combined with the socio-political situation prevailing in these two countries. The worthy missionary might have written it to illustrate the impact of the external conditions on the life and progress of the Tibet-Nepal Mission (39).

There is in the Vatican Library a collection of the sacred books of the Tibetans: the bKa'-'gyur in 108 volumes. It is an old and incomplete set which has been there from time immemorial. No one can say definitely who presented this rare gift to the Vatican Library and how and when the collection came to take its honourable place amongst the Sacred Scriptures of people of other lands. Some give credit for it to the Capuchins of the Tibetan Mission; others deny it. But the arguments advanced in support of either view do not seem to be fully convincing. We are not in a position to say more than that (40).

The Bell of Lhasa

The Capuchin missionaries left the uplands of Tibet a long time ago. Nothing now remains to remind a casual traveller of the great missionaries who, in obedience to the command of

39. Gli scritti del P. Marco della Tomba, op. cit., p. 55.

40. *Analecta Ordinis etc.*, op. cit. Vol. L (1934), pp. 47-49; *Nuovo Ramusio*, part I, p. XCIV.

Christ "to go and preach the gospel to all nations," penetrated the very depths of the Forbidden City to preach the good news, and of their toil and sufferings there, except a lonely bell.

The installation of a bell in any institution, specially a Church, is of great importance and significance. It is used for all occasions, specially for calls to the worship of the one true living God. Its sweet and mellow tone conveys to one and all, far and wide, a message—be it a message of joy or sorrow or a call to duty.

In their great desire to save souls, these heralds of Christ, ready to sacrifice and forego everything else they held dear, realised the importance of a bell and the joy it would give them in their loneliness. Not only would it remind them of their homeland, of their child-hood days when it summoned them to church but also remind them, when as boys, they heard with joy, in the stillness of the night, the sound of the village bell, ringing out the old year while welcoming the new. They realised the importance of a bell in a land like Tibet, with far-flung houses and abodes, where the sound of the bell, after it ceased to be rung, would echo and re-echo and resound over valleys and dales, between the mountain-wall and far away, reminding all that heart and soul must be raised in praise and thanks-giving to the one true living God.

A bell is invariably installed on a high tower so that its message may be broadcast everywhere and there was no exception in the case of the Lhasa Bell. Installed high above the monastery, it was a mute unseen witness to all the happenings in and around the Tibetan capital. It saw all that transpired during those awful days—the labour, the tears and the sweat shed by the missionaries in trying to spread the Christian faith, the plots that were hatched against them, unknown and unseen by others, and the bitter suffering to which the first converts were subjected and the spots where the first Christian blood soaked into Tibetan soil.

In like manner, even now, though perhaps hidden for sight, the bell is still a witness to the tragic happenings of recent times.

If it could only speak, it would also reveal the fate of those

poor Christians who were left behind. It is the one solitary witness, over the years, to see the rise and fall of Tibet.

So it is good to know that the Bell of Lhasa, the bell of hope is still there, like a forlorn child, waiting for the return of its loved ones. The loved ones may return—return in a manner and at a time, when a living God so wills it. It will then reawaken to life to welcome them and to announce the glorious resurrection of Tibet, and proclaim the presence of the messengers of Christ and summon once again one and all to prayer and sacrifice to Him who is Lord and Master of all creation. And it will ring, true and clear, to the accompaniment of that wonderful Hymn of Praise and Thanksgiving the opening words of which are inscribed round its base—**Te Deum Laudmus.**

APPENDIX

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON TIBETAN MISSIONARIES

In this appendix we shall give the names and a short biographical note on each of the 49 missionaries who, in ten different expeditions, were sent out to Tibet, till the time that apostolic field was closed in 1745. Not all of them, of course, managed to reach and labour in that remote land, but they were called Tibetan missionaries all the same. It is to be noted further that all these ten expeditions came out by sea, except the first, which followed the so-called "overland route" to India. From 1706 the French East India Company was kind enough to grant the missionaries free passage to India. This held good till 1734, when the missionaries were made to pay for their passage.

Traditionally, Capuchins added the name of their native place to the name they were given on entering their religious Order. Whenever possible, we shall give, within brackets, the baptismal name and surname of each of them.

First Expedition—1704—(6 Members)

The members of this expedition left Leghorn (Italy) on 6th May, 1704.

1. Fr. John Francis of Camerino, the Prefect Apostolic of the Mission, died, worn out by hardships and fatigue, at Mardin (modern Turkey) on the 10th November, 1704.
2. Fr. Francis Mary of Tours, a member of the religious Province of Tours, had already been working in the mission fields of Pondicherry and Surat since 1680, when in 1701 he was sent to Rome in connection with some jurisdiction trouble over the Surat station and to plead for the opening of a Mission in Tibet; arrived at Chandernagore on the 2nd August, 1706, at Patna on

8th November, 1706, at Kathmandu on 21st February, 1707, entered Lhasa on 12th June, 1707; worried over the state of the mission and run down in health, left the Tibetan capital in January, 1709, and came down to India; died in Patna, at the Dutch Factory, in the month of May of the same year (See bibliography; *Lexicon Capuccinum*, Rome 1951, p. 639).

3. Fr. Joseph of Ascoli (Andrea Tassi) landed at Chandernagore on the 8th April, 1706, arrived at Patna on 8th November, 1706, at Kathmandu on 21st February, 1707, and reached Lhasa on the 12th June, 1707; nominated Prefect on the 13th July, 1705, received news of his election in December, 1708; left Lhasa in the summer of 1710, and died in Patna at the English Factory, on the 20th December, 1710, aged 37; was buried in the Protestant cemetery of the English Factory.
4. Fr. Felix of Montecchio (Antonic Maria Bianchi), appointed interim Vice-Prefect by the dying Fr. John Francis of Camerino, was confirmed in this office on the 13th July, 1705; arrived at Chandernagore on the 8th April, 1706, unable to proceed due to illness and war, remained at Chandernagore till 1709, in which year he went to Patna and settled provisionally there; at the death of Fr. Joseph of Ascoli, took charge of the mission and was nominated Prefect on the 2nd May, 1712, to hand over charge to Fr. Dominic of Fano in August, 1715, retaining the office of Vice-Prefect; in 1721, went to Lhasa for a short visit, returned to Italy in 1724 and died in Rome, where he had been acting as Secretary for the foreign missions, on the 1st June, 1732, aged 61. (See bibliography: *Lexicon Capuccinum*, p. 577).
5. Fr. Joseph Mary of Fossombrone fell seriously ill on board-ship and was disembarked at the island of Cyprus with the injunction to go back to Italy, when fit to travel.
6. Bro. Fiacre of Paris (a lay brother) died at Diarbakir (modern Turkey) on 1st October, 1704, and was buried

there on 2nd October in the Catholic Cemetery of the Chaldeans.

Second Expedition—1706—(3 Members)

7. Fr. Dominic of Fano (Francesco Magnanini) sailed from Lorient on the 14th July, 1706, landed at Pondicherry on 12th July, 1708, at Chandernagore on the 7th September, 1708, reached Lhasa, via Nepal, on the 19th May, 1709 ; left the capital on the 25th December, 1711, was back to Chandernagore, via Sikkim, on the 29th June, 1712 ; sent to Rome to plead for the cause of the mission at the end of 1712, arrived there the following year ; was made Prefect of the mission on the 19th December, 1713 ; led the 4th Expedition and was again at Chandernagore in August, 1715 ; took official charge of the mission from Fr. Felix of Montecchio, and moved on to Patna and Kathmandu to get finally into Lhasa, for a second time, on the 1st October, 1716 ; resigned his office in May, 1718, and quit the capital, for the last time, early in 1722, heading for Chandernagore, where he died on the 16th November, 1728, aged 54. (See bibliography :*Lexicon Capuccinum*. p. 513).
8. Fr. John of Fano (Giovanni Battista Lombardi) travelled with Fr. Dominic till Chandernagore where he remained to see to the building of the mission hospice ; at the beginning of December, 1710, went to Patna and then clambered up to Lhasa, via Sikkim, getting into the capital late in May 1711 ; together with Fr. Dominic left the city on the 25th December, 1711, to find themselves again at Chandernagore on the 29th June, 1712 ; for a while was Superior of the Chandernagore hospice and was back to Italy in 1726 ; died at Pesaro on the 5th September, 1734, aged 60.
9. Bro. Michael Angelo of Burgundy (a lay brother) followed Fr. Dominic up to Lhasa ; came down with the Prefect, Fr. Joseph of Ascoli, via Sikkim, parted ways at Karhagola (Indian territory, district of Purnea), the Prefect directing his steps to Patna and the Brother moving down to the Chandernagore ; left for Europe in

1712, suffered shipwreck and died at sea while rounding up the Cape of Good Hope.

Third Expedition—1712—(6 Members)

The missionaries of this expedition arrived in India in two different batches and at different times. The first group, which consisted of Frs. Francis Horace of Pennabilli, Paul Mary of Matelica and Bro. James of Breno, landed at Chandernagore on 1st September, 1713.

10. Fr. Francis Horace of Pennabilli (Luzio Olivieri) proceeded from Chandernagore to Patna ; soon after Christmas 1714, was sent to Kathmandu to open the first missionary station in the Valley of Nepal ; was taken up to Lhasa by Fr. Dominic, reaching their destination on the 1st October, 1716, and there he remained for 16 years (1716—1732); nominated Prefect Apostolic on the 13th August, 1719; received news of his appointment on 15th September, 1725; reasons of health compelled him to abandon the capital and on 25th August, 1732, made for Kathmandu where he was imprisoned for several months; at the end of 1734 came down to Patna to take charge of the station, the only priest there, Fr. Francis Anthony of Cingoli, having meanwhile passed away; in December, 1735, sailed for Europe to represent to the authorities the hopeless state of the mission; confirmed Prefect Apostolic in 1738, headed the ninth expedition and reached Chandernagore on the 25th September, 1739; passing through Patna and Nepal was once again in Lhasa on 6th January, 1741, from where he departed with all his confreres on the 20th April, 1745; died at Patan on the 20th July, 1745; aged 65 years (See bibliography: *Lexicon Capuccinum*, p. 632).
11. Fr. Paul Mary of Matelica (Mattia Ciccarelli) worked for about two years (1716-1718) in Nepal; was back to Chandernagore on the 28th November, 1718, from where he sailed for Europe in 1726; towards the end of 1738, was deputed to collect funds in Mexico for the support of the Tibetan mission, died at Anatolia (at present Esanatoglia) on the 2nd June, 1751, aged 71.

12. Bro. James of Breno (a lay brother) remained at Chandernagore where he died on the 15th September, 1715, being all the time sickly and unfit for work.

The second group of this expedition i.e., Frs. Joachim of Loreto, John Francis of Fossombrone and Joseph Felix of Morro, landed at Chandernagore in March, 1714.

13. Fr. Joachim of Loreto (Silvestro Angeletti) spent most of his years in the mission at Patna and left for Europe in 1723, died at Recanati on 6th February, 1750, aged 68.
14. Fr. John Francis of Fossombrone (Bacciaglia) on arrival at Chandernagore left for Patna and Nepal, entering Kathmandu at the beginning of 1715; joined the party led by Fr. Dominic and was in Lhasa on the 1st October, 1716; early in 1717 was entrusted with the task of opening the new mission hospice at Tron-gne; where he remained till about 1720; back to Kathmandu fell foul of the Raja and repaired to Bhatgaon in 1722, embarked for Europe in 1723 and died at Surat while on his way home in 1724 or 1725, aged 47 or 48.
15. Fr. Joseph Felix of Morro (Angelo Vitali) was stationed since the beginning of 1715 at Kathmandu; left the Valley of Nepal for Tron-gne in 1718 or 1719; was the last resident missionary of that station moving out from there in the spring of 1721; heading for Lhasa, Kuti and Kathmandu, where he died of sheer exhaustion on the 31st August, 1721, aged 40.

Fourth Expedition—1714—(6 New Members)

This expedition (led by Fr. Dominic of Fano, the new Prefect Apostolic, who was returning to Tibet after his successful mission in Rome) dropped anchor at Chandernagore in August, 1715.

16. Fr. Angelico of Brescia, left provisionally in the Valley of Nepal by Fr. Dominic in 1716, was called up to Lhasa reaching the city in July, 1717; from there he proceeded to Tron-gne to help in the work of that newly established outpost; broken down in health was

sent back to Europe, dying exhausted at the Dutch Factory in Patna at the end of 1719, or at the beginning of 1720.

17. Fr. Anthony Mary of Jesi (Stefano Cacciatori) worked for a time in Nepal, returned sick at Chandernagore on the 18th November, 1718; sailed back to Europe and reached his homeland in 1726; died on the 25th January, 1738, aged 52.
18. Fr. Bonaventure of Lapedona (Giacomo Filippo D'Alberto) was provisionally stationed from the beginning at Kathmandu; called up to Lhasa, stayed on for about three months (July-October, 1717) due to political unrest; moved down again to the Valley of Nepal, left his station in Nepal in January, 1722 and died at Chandernagore in 1735, aged 55.
19. Fr. Francis Anthony of Castignano (Giovanni Antonio Fioravanti) died at Chandernagore, scarcely 3 months after his arrival, on the 28th November, 1715, aged 38.
20. Fr. Gregory of Lapedona (Domenico Mercuri) followed Fr. Dominic on his way to the Valley of Nepal and died at Kathmandu on the 4th July, 1716, aged 36.
21. Fr. Peter of Serra Petrona (Cristoforo Cucchiaroni) remained all the while at Chandernagore till the time of his death, which occurred in 1739 or 1740, aged 66 or 67.

Fifth Expedition—1717—(2 Members)

22. Fr. Francis Mary of Urbana (Francesco Maria Marchetti), arrived at Chandernagore on the 10th October, 1718, and died there on the 19th of December the same year, aged 40.
23. Fr. Peter Augustine of Lecce (Carrasta) landed at Chandernagore on the 10th October, 1718 and died at the Dutch Factory in Patna on the 6th June, 1719, aged 46.

Sixth Expedition—1718—(7 Members)

At the beginning of December, 1718, the members of this most unfortunate expedition board a sailing vessel

at Leghorn en route to Marseilles and then on to Paris to comply with the embarkation formalities. At Paris, four members of the expedition, having had a foretaste of the life on the road, felt that their physical endurance would not carry them up to the heights of Tibet and decided to return to Italy. Their names are :

24. Fr. Charles Mary of Matelica.
25. Fr. Ludovic of Monte S. Pietro.
26. Fr. Ludovic of Lubiana.
27. Fr. Ubald of S. Ippolito.

The three remaining missionaries set sail from Lorient on the 13th December, 1719, to find themselves at Chandernagore on the 10th August, 1720. They are :

28. Fr. Joachim of Anatolia, at present Esanatoglia, (Simone Gioacchino Albrici) was ordered to proceed as soon as possible to Lhasa, where he arrived on the 1st May, 1721; for 12 uninterrupted years (1721-1733) remained in the capital, engaged chiefly in the practice of medicine; by the middle of August, 1733, moved down to Kathmandu, reaching the station in October, 1733; there he worked till the end of 1734, in which year or at the beginning of 1735, took up his post at Patna; during the absence of Fr. Francis Horace (1735-1740), ruled the mission in the capacity of Vice-Prefect; on arrival of three new recruits from Europe in 1736, moved up to Nepal and was in Bhatgaon on 13th March, 1737. From there he joined the party which left the Valley of Nepal on the 4th October, 1740, to be in Lhasa on the 6th January, 1741. However, he had not gone to stay; he was to take to Rome the replies and exchange of gifts which the Regent and the Dalai Lama would be sending to the Pope and report the authorities on the progress of the mission as well. late in October, 1741, left Lhasa, reached Patna in winter 1742, spent some months there and was in Chandernagore in October, 1742; sailed for Europe in 1744, arrived at Rome in June, 1745 and died on the 3rd August, 1764, aged 80.

29. Fr. Francis Anthony of Cingoli (Francesco Saverio Castiglioni) worked for sometime in Nepal and then in Patna, where he died in 1734.
30. Fr. Seraphin of Civitanuova (Pietro Marone Gerbozzi) accompanied Fr. Joachim on his way to Lhasa till they reached Kathmandu on the 31st December, 1720; there a letter awaited them to say that one of the two should remain in the Valley of Nepal while the other should continue his journey to Lhasa. Fr. Seraphin stayed on at Kathmandu; was transferred to the station of Bhatgaon in 1722; served there till 1731 and died at Patna in 1732, aged about 45 years.

Seventh Expedition—1721—(4 Members)

31. Fr. Venantius of Fossombrone (Matteo Duranti) set foot at Chandernagore in August, 1722, and died at Sacrigalli (Sakrigali, district of Bhagalpur) while on his way to Patna, on the 15th September, 1722, aged 35.
32. Fr. Andrew of Morro D'Alba (Andrea Socchetti) landed at Chandernagore in August, 1722, and died there in 1729, or 1730, aged 38 or 39.
33. Fr. Francis of Cagli (Antonio Lanzi) arrived at Chandernagore in August, 1722; stationed at first in Patna, was sent to Nepal round about 1727 and died at Bhatgaon on Christmas Day in 1730, aged 34 years.
34. Fr. Michael Angelo of Monte Alboddo, at present Ostra, (Saverio Domeniconi) disembarked at Chandernagore in August, 1722, and died there on the 31st December, 1725, aged 30.

Eight Expedition—1735—(3 Members)

35. Fr. Edward of Cingoli (Giuseppe Maria Sartini) arrived at Chandernagore on the 27th September, 1736, and remained there as Procurator of the mission, till incapacitated to work by illness, returned to Europe in 1753, sufficiently recovered in health, joined the 14th expedition to die at Lorient, before embarking on the 20th August, 1756, aged 54.

36. Fr. Vito of Recanati (Carlo Nicola Belli), on arrival at Chandernagore on the 27th September, 1736, moved on to Patna at the end of the rainy season, where he joined Fr. Joachim going to Nepal, reaching Bhatgaon on the 13th March, 1737, spent most of his time in the station of Kathmandu and died at Chandernagore on the 4th June, 1747, aged 44.
37. Fr. Sigismund of Jesi (Giacomo Antonio Gandolfi) set on shore at Chandernagore on the 27th September, 1736, passed on to Patna, where, except for a stay in Nepal in 1740, served in that station till he left for Europe in 1746, or 1749; died at Jesi on the 15th September, 1768, aged 70.

Ninth Expedition—1738—(10 New Members)

This expedition, which was led by Fr. Francis Horace, who was returning to Tibet a second time, had been so far the most numerous. They started from Italy early in Autumn 1738, set sail from Lorient, aboard three different vessels, on the 11th March, 1739, and landed at Chandernagore at different times, but all within the 25th and the 29th September, 1739.

38. Fr. Cassian of Macerata (Giovanni Beligatti) followed the Prefect up to Tibet, reaching Lhasa on the 6th January, 1741, left the capital on the 30th August, 1742, coming down to Bhatgaon, where he remained till the 21st of November, 1746, except for a few months spent in Patna on medical treatment; was Superior of the newly established Bettiah Mission from 1749 to 1753, spending the rest of his time, always in poor condition of health, in Bettiah, Patna and Chandernagore; sailed back to Italy on the 18th February, 1755, reaching Rome, after an adventurous sea voyage, on the 7th August, 1756; at home he continued to write and occupy himself with the affairs of the mission; died at Macerata on the 4th February, 1791, aged 83 years (See bibliography: *Lexicon Capuccinum*, p. 361).
39. Fr. Antonine of Monte Alboddo, at present Ostra (Pietro Maria Mancini) was appointed Superior of

Patna at the end of 1739. He left for Europe on the 18th February, 1755, arriving in Rome on 7th August 1756; there he came to know about his nomination as Prefect Apostolic of the mission, which was issued by Propaganda on the 23rd June, 1755, and tendered his resignation; died at Ancona on the 22nd September, 1769, aged 64.

40. Fr. Daniel of Morciano (Matteo Ciotti) posted to Chandernagore in 1739, left for Europe in 1749; stopped on his way home at the island of Mauritius to return to Chandernagore in 1753; sometime between 1765 and 1766 set sail for Manila to see to the mission funds collected there, but suffered shipwreck on the coast of the Malacca Peninsula and died at sea on the 24th November, 1765, or on the 18th October, 1766, aged 59 or 60.
41. Fr. Constantine of Loro Piceno (Giuseppe Liberato Mochi) entered Lhasa on the 6th January, 1741; left the capital on the 30th August, 1742, to settle in Bhatgaon till 1744; on the 23rd August, 1744, was sent to open the missionary station of Patna; embarked for Europe on the 12th December, 1751, and died at Ascoli Riceno on the 31st August, 1770, aged 66. (See bibliography : Lexicon Capuccinum, p. 453).
42. Fr. Florian of Jesi (Pietro Domenico Zara) reached Lhasa with the rest of the party on the 6th January, 1741; left the city on the 30th August, 1742, and was appointed Superior of the mission house at Kathmandu; sick and tired left the Valley of Nepal, at the end of 1752 or at the beginning of 1753, for rest and medical treatment in Patna; died at Bettiah on the 4th February 1753, aged 49 years, while on his way down to the capital of Bihar.
43. Fr. Joseph Mary of Gargnano (Bernardino Bernini) was posted to Patna at the end of 1739; being called up to Lhasa, set out for his new destination in January, 1742, reaching the Tibetan capital on the 27th of May, 1742; moved out of the city with all the missionaries on the 20th April, 1745; remained in the Valley of

Nepal till the 30th November, 1745; commissioned to open the Bettiah station in 1745, spent the rest of his days there, except for protracted spells of illness that took him to Patna and Chandernagore; nominated Vice-Prefect by the parting Prefect (Fr. Tranquillus of Apecchio) in 1758, held office till the end of his days; died at Bettiah of over-exertion and in the odour of sanctity on the 15th January, 1721, aged 52 (See bibliography : Lexicon Capuccinum, p. 864).

44. Fr. Innocent of Ascoli (Angelo Marini) stationed at Bhatgaon in June, 1740, divided his time between Bhatgaon and Kathmandu till he went back to Europe in 1749 or 1751 and died in the Middle East while on his way home, aged about 43.
45. Fr. Tranquillus of Apecchio (Nicolo' Lanzi) arrived at Lhasa on the 6th January, 1741; was appointed Vice-Prefect on the 27th November, 1743, left Lhasa with the other missionaries on the 20th April, 1745, settling down in the Valley of Nepal till the 9th December, 1757; nominated Prefect on the 20th September, 1746, took charge of his office in 1748, making Kathmandu his head-quarters from 1758, at the expiry of his term of office, twice he tried to return to Europe, and once went so far as Pondicherry, but had to come back due to dearth of missionaries; in December, 1759, was once again at Kathmandu as a simple missionary to leave for good the Valley of Nepal; on his way home at the end of 1763, was detained because of shortage of priests, at Chandernagore, where he died on the 21st of May, 1768, aged 60 years.
46. Bro. Liborius of Fermo, a lay brother, (Tommaso Antonio Piattoni) served in Nepal from 1740 to 1755. After that he went to Bettiah till 1757, to recoup his health; his whereabouts from 1758 till 1769 are unknown; may have returned to Nepal in 1758 to come back again to India in 1764; died at Bettiah on the 20th September, 1769, aged 61 years.
47. Bro. Paul of Florence, a lay brother, (Amatucci) was a printer by profession. Before entering the Capuchin

Order he had been in the service of the Grand Duke of Tuscany and worked with the ducal press in Florence. Because of his knowledge of printing, was solicited to go to Tibet to operate the complete printing press, in Tibetan characters which Fr. Francis Horace had taken to Lhasa with the members of the 9th Expedition; reached the Tibetan capital on the 6th January, 1741; left the city with the last group of missionaries on the 20th April 1745, settling down in Nepal till December, 1757 when he came down to India with a view to going home; his subsequent postings, till the time he sailed for Europe in 1761, are unknown; was lost at sea; the ship in which he was travelling never reached her destination. He was about 50 years old at the time of his death.

Tenth Expedition—1742—(2 Members)

The two Priests of this expedition were detailed for the mission station of Bettiah. They arrived at Chandernagore by sea on the 2nd August, 1743.

48. Fr. Fidelis of Arona (Fedele Antonio Corti) remained for a while at Chandernagore, was sent to Bettiah, but on account of ill-health, returned to Chandernagore, where he died on 4th November, 1752, aged 37.
49. Fr. Nicholas Fidelis of Pergola (Giovanni Filippo Baldacelli) posted to Bettiah, and then to Bhatgaon; died at Bhatgaon on the 24th January, 1759, aged 51. He was the last missionary to die in Nepal.

The next expedition was sent out in 1748, and therefore, it is not covered by the period of time under review. However, it is worth noting that the two Fathers of this expedition repatriated on reaching the port of embarkation.

Summing up of these biographical notes on the 49 Tibetan missionaries (44 priests and 5 lay brothers) who between 1704 and 1742 were sent out to the east, makes a dismal picture indeed; 5 of them went back home without having been able to set foot on the territory of

the mission, 1 died at sea or on the road, while on their way out or on their way in (including Fr. Edward of Cingoli who passed away at Lorient while setting out for the mission a second time); 26 died on the mission soil, 8 of whom within one month and three years from their arrival from Europe; 10 went back home, nearly all impaired in health.

Out of the 26 missionaries who died in India and Nepal, 12 of them passed away at Chandernagore, this being the station where the aged, disabled and infirm were sent for rest or treatment. As for the others, we know that 1 died while struggling on the place of his appointment; 8 more breathed their last (leaving out those who might have died at Chandernagore in similar circumstances) soon after arriving at a station, as a clear consequence of prostration and fatigue. We know nothing of the circumstances that occasioned the death of the remaining 5 missionaries. However, it is likely that some of them at least might have met with a similar untimely end.

Coming to the number of missionaries who actually lived and worked in Tibet (without taking into account the appearance made in Lhasa in 1717 and in 1721 by Fr. Bonaventure of Lapedona and Fr. Felix of Montecchio respectively), we have to note that 15 of them (13 priests and two lay brothers) spent various lengths of time in the mystical land of lamas. The roll of honour is headed by Fr. Francis Horace who served there for 20 years; next comes Fr. Joachim of Anatolia with his 13 years of medical practice; then we have Fr. Dominic of Fano, who had been in Tibet for 8 years.

None of the missionaries died on Tibetan soil.

Bishop Hartmann

Fr. Fulgentius Vannini O.F.M. Cap.

St. Paul Publications, Allahabad (India),
1966, pp. 471

This is a fascinating biography of the servant of God, Bishop Hartmann, the Vicar Apostolic of Patna 'who wrote with his own tears and invisible blood a glorious chapter in the annals of the Church in India'. It is also a veritable source of information on the growth of the Church in North India.

Christian Settlements in Nepal During the Eighteenth Century

Fr. Fulgentius Vannini O.F.M. Cap.

New Delhi, 1976

As a companion-volume to the BELL OF LHASA, this work depicts the history of the pioneering efforts of the Capuchin Missionaries in Nepal. The work also throws light on many a forgotten chapter of the Missions in North India.