

The letter of F. Francis de Castro S. J. to Father Lawrence Zara, translated into Eng. from a Latin version published by Berchmann at Cologne 1582, on the Martyrdom of Peter Elcius in Morocco.

[p. 3 (p. 1 of the letter, p. 3 of the ms.)]

The copy of a letter wrytten by ffather ffrancis de Castro pryest, on of the socyety of Jesus, vnto father Lawrence Zara. Translated firste out of Spanishe into latin and now oute of latin into Englishe by a copy printed with pryveliedge by Birckman at Colloin a^o 1582 5

In this letter I will declare that *which* wilbe as I suppose most gratefull vnto your reverence to witt the gloryous martyrdom, which on Peeter Elcius a citizen of Madrill¹ suffered att Marockoe this present year of *our* lorde 1580² as we are informed by the true and faithfull report of the reverend Father brother Ignatius provinciall of the Trinity who went over into Affrica to redeeme Captives. 10 15

This Peter Elcius of Madrill dwelte in Marockoe who bycause he was comonly thought by some outwarde signes to have renounced his Christianity, was of the inhabitantes called Hameter This man being wery of that kind of life, after advyce taken *with* some otheres on thursday morning the 27 of December in the yere 1579 Departed thence pryvely accompanied *with* the kinges Factor being allso a Spaniard and *with* a Portugall Servant, & a moore, every on mounted on horsebacke all theese ryding foorth a lytle out of the Towne, chanced to meete twoo morisco horsmen whom they shunned willingly, fearing (as yt was lykly) that they woulde betray them and therfor consulting together, whether yt were better to holde on, or geve over theyr Journey at the lengthe they determined to proce<e> but leaving the highte way for feare of being *pursued* & overtaken, & crossing the nexte hill that they came vnto, They went very speedely towards ffesse, where when nighte came vpon them, and that wth such greate rayne & darkness as that they could neither knowe their way neither see any foote³ where thei went at laste thei came at the breake of day wthin 20 25 30 35 40

¹ Madrid.

² NB:the original letter was written in 1580.

³ OED gives a 16th-century sense, “foothold,” “standing ground” (VI.23).

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ffouer myles of Azamor⁴ unto the very hands
of their enemyes, where being forth *with*
apprehended they were by force caryed
to the Towne and from thence wer after=
wardes by com^{ma}undment of the kinge con- 5
veyed to Marocko on ffryday the 16 of
January, in the twylighte, and removed the
nexte day to another house, in *which*
certaine captives were Imprisoned, where
the moores were hardly handled, the sayde 10
Peter being faste bound hand and foote to
a gune. and not long after the kinges mess=
enger came thither who tolde Peter (*w*ith
whom bycause of his religion they were moste
offended) that the king was redy to pardon 15
him what hadd bin paste so that he woulde
returne to their moorishe religion / to whom
Peter moste couragiously replyed, that he
was & allwayes hadd bin a Christian,
and that he woulde never deny his be- 20
lyeffe in the true god, though he hadd for
feare before made som showe to the contrary
furthermore (*quoth* he) tell the king that in my
body I was never circumcysed, and in my

4 From Portuguese wikipedia:

Azamor (*Azemmour* em árabe) é uma cidade no norte de Marrocos, situada na margem esquerda do rio Morbea, a cerca de 75 quilômetros a sudoeste de Casablanca. . . . Azamor, hoje El-Jadida, conta com uma muralha que circunda toda a cidade ladeada de fosso, com acesso ao Oceano pela Porta do Mar. A antiga fortaleza - hoje um quarteirão no centro da cidade - foi entretanto transformada em cisterna, constituindo um espaço de grande beleza, reconhecido pela UNESCO como Património mundial.

Azemmour or **Azamor** (Arabic: أزموور; as a matter of fact, the name *azemmur* is Berber and means "The Olives") is a Moroccan city, on the left bank of the Oum Er-Rbia River, 75 km southwest of Casablanca. Although it was a dependency of the King of Fez, Azemmour had great autonomy. In 1486 its inhabitants became vassals and tributaries of John II of Portugal. Manuel I of Portugal confirmed the treaty in 1497 and the city paid 10 000 *savéis* every year. Later, unrest started to grow and thus Manuel sent a small fleet commanded by João de Meneses to conquer the city in 1508.

In 1513 Azemmour's governor Moulay Zayam refused to pay the tribute and mustered a powerful, well-equipped army. Manuel responded to this challenge by sending a massive fleet of five hundred ships and fifteen thousand soldiers (Bergreen, 19). James, Duke of Braganza led this army and on September 1 he conquered the city with no resistance from its inhabitants. Ferdinand Magellan, the man famed for leading the first-ever circumnavigation of the earth, was among the Portuguese soldiers there and lost his horse in skirmishes outside the city. However, Portuguese control of the city lasted for a short period as it was abandoned by John III of Portugal in 1541 due to economic difficulties.

minde I allwayes kepte faste printed 25
 the faithe and religion, *which* being a boy I
 professed in Spaine. neither am I ignorant
 that moste greevouse torments & deathe are
 presently for this cause prepared for me
 but these punishmentes and this death shall 30
 bring me everlasting lyffe *which* I do muche
 more esteeme than all the Empyres and king=
 domes of this worlde, then turning to the
 Christianes *which* were present (being many)
 who hadd renounced their faithe, and looked 35
 earnestly upon him he saide Returne

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returne my bretheren to god & to his holy
 Lawe & truth, for otherwyse you vndo your
 selves & runne headlong into everlasting fyer.
 Crave pardon for your sinnes of the everlasting
 ffather for his sonnes sake Iesus Christe our Sa=
 vior and desyre him to have mercy on your 5
 soules to whom I yelde & commende myne
 & doe beseeche the moste blessed Virgin our lady
 and all the Sainctes of heaven to pray for
 mee, you do now perceave how neare I am 10
 to my Deathe, *which* bindethe me to open the truthe
 sincerley vnto you. know ye my bretheren that
 all thinges are but falshed and ~~vainy~~ <to> vainty sate
 only to beleve and holde that *which* the holy Romane
 Churche beleveth and holdethe. Note you 15
 well that for feare of leeing temporall lyfe
 you leese that which ys everlasting and
 blessed yea & therwith allso god himselfe
 who will call vs before him at his greate
 and dreadfull Iudgment. what excuse shall 20
 you be able to make when he himselfe hathe
 foretolde you: *he that denyeth shall denye me
 before men: I wyll deny hym before the angelles of god*
 Soo to yf that deathe and that laste howre in
 wth no remedy can be hadd do not com vpon 25
 you when you thinke leaste of yt and
 by the lust Iudgment of god be condemmed
 to the *perpetuall* fyer of hell. When he
 hadd thus spoken to the christyannes, he 30
 turned his tale to the mores, saying I do allso
 in the name of allmighty god, and his only
 Sonne Iesus Christe, requeste you to <turne eche>
 vnto him, and to receave healthfull baptisme
 the onely, entry for you vnto sallvation yf 35
 you ~~com~~ not lykwyse to the fyre of hell
 and other infinite punishmentes. Truly I for
 my parte do truste that Iesus Christ
 my savyoure, will accepte this my con=
 fessyon and admitt me unto that glory (for 40
which I was made & created) through the

merytes of his moste blessed passyon for
which I besech & requeste him that he will *permitt*
this

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this death *which* is prepared for me to be 5
the moste sharpe and cruell of all that
ever any Martyres he^eetofore have suffered
and that he will geve me tyll the later
gaspe of my breathe *perfect* sence⁵ & vnder=
standing wth pacyece & fortytude to 10
suffer constantly all trouble & tor=
mentes for the love of his divyne ma=
maiesty. In the meane season when by chance
the Spanishe Embassadors kinsman came to the 15
courte to deliver a letter to the kinges owne
hand & dealte *with* his chamberlain to
have <hadd> recourse vnto him. the king having
inteligences thereof, fearing least he hadd
com to make suite for Peteres lyfe commanded
Mansericus Captayne of his garde to goe 20
oute at A posterne gate, So as the
Spaniarde mighte not see him, & presently
to will the sayde Peter to be putt to
a moste cruell deathe, who *with* all speed
to the place apoynted for execution: in *which* 25
Iorney he never ceased to *persuade* the revolted
Christianes, moores and Iewes (wheras
~~folowed~~ a greate company folowed him)
that they woulde converte vnto god, and
endeavor to gaine so happy a deathe as 30
he was then aboute to endure, and that
they woulde beleve in on god *which* mmighte
save them and not suffer themselves to be
seduced with the false errors of Mahumet
with whom they shoulde otherwise feele 35
the payne of everlasting punishment.
Whilste he vttered theese wordes wth a
lowde voyce, they beate and buffeted him
with their fistes, and spurned at him
with their feete, all the way that he went. 40
When he came to the place firste of all
bycause he shoulde speake no more they
cutt of his tounge, and stripped him nakede
of all clothes, saving only his sherte
and breeches. then they nayled him, *with* 45
greate spyk nayles throughe eyther
of his handes, to a gate abowte 4 elles

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⁵ Scribal error here has *pence* for *sence*. [It's kinder to the reader to correct the text and put the error in anote.]

heighte from the grounde, where hanging
 (*which* ys strange to be tolde) thoughe he
 wanted his tounge, he brake oute into these
 wordes: O my good god be mindefull of me,
 for these tormenting nayles seme vnto me, not
 to be nayles, but floweres, not thornes, but
 roses, not harde & roughe iron, but peerless
 pearles and preciouise stones. Then the
 bloody tormentors racking oute his body cru=
 elly doe againe nayle eyther of his feete
with the two passing greate nayles, wher*with*
 he sayde: thou knowest my good god, that
 I feele no paine in all this tormente, but
 rather wonderfull sweetness and pleasure
 and all that whyle he spake to none but god
 only, to whom he vttered wordes full of
 pyty and mervaylouse love./ humbly
 beseeching the everlasting father by Jesu
 Christe, that he woulde instructe him *with*
 the lyghte of his grace, So as he
 mighte allwayes profess him, and ~~la~~
 lastly that he mighte dye in the grace
 and favor of him. heer*with* the moores
 being ashamed that he spake so wysly
 of heavenly matters aagainste their
supersticion, especially being exasperated
 or moved *with* so manifeste a myracle
 of his tounge, som plucked of their
 shooes and floung them at his face, others
 did cruelly beat & broose the boones of
 his thighes *with* clubbes to breake them
 vnto whom he sayde, thinke not that you
 hurte me sany thing at all, doe unto me
 what you please all theese thinges doe
 increase my crowne & rewarde / neither
 can they ever w*th*drawe me from the
 true religion / but the moores raging
 So muche the more began to torment
 the martyr a freshe, often tymes crying
 vnto him to call upon mahumet, but
 he on the other syde replyed, tempt
 me no more yt ys harde to overcom

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him who hathe Christe his
 protector & defence (as I have) and the
 moste blessed virgin his mother and all
 the Saynctes praying for me, then
 they enquiryed of him who hadd so
 perverted him and broughte him to
 that error, vnto *which* he answered that
 they in very deede erred, *which* knew
 not truthe, and being blynde were
 vyolently pushed forwarde into hell

and that he felte and *perceaved*
 muche more sorow for theire misery
 then for his owne tormentes./ Then the
 cursed tormentors pearsing him throw
 the browe and head *with* a greate 15
 nayle, fastoned yt to the gate, when
 yet for all this there came no blood of
 any wounde, either of his handes feete
 or head but shaking his head a litle
 he did e<a>syly lose yt from the gate, 20
 and turning his necke somewhat on the
 ryghte syde, hee seemed to shyne *with*
 a muche more fayre & cheerfull counte=
 nance and lyfting vp his head again
 he fixed his eyes towardes heaven 25
 speaking secrettly to him selfe, I know
 not what, which no man vnderstoode
 thoughe every on *perceaved*, he made
 his prayeres vnto god, after this
 the nayle being pluckte oute of his 30
 head, *which* coulde not easily be don
 for that yt was *with* great force driven ~~qu~~
 quyte throughe the boone they ther*with*
 so pearsed his throte that th<ei>nyled yt
 to the tablinges of the gate and out 35
 of

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of this wounde only the blood insued
 So this noble Martyre, (hanging som=
 what longe) eftsoones opened his eyes
~~minde~~ cheerfully & looked vp towardes
 heaven *with* incredible pacionce & quyete of 5
 minde *which* shynded in his face & conte=
 nance allthoughe he resigned his
 moste happy Soule to his maker, his
 whole body remaining passing fayer &
 whyte, *without* any scar or spott, ha=
 ving his righte eye <close> shutt & his lefte 10
 wyde open this was the end of this
 moste blessed Champione. of *which* as
 soone as the king knewe, he comaunded
 the Embassades kinsman to be broughte 15
 vnto him, who hearing of the matter
 amongeste other thinges begged the bo=
 dy of the C martyr, & when yt was
 by the king granted vnto him, the
 Christianes to caoller the matter made 20
 as yf thei caryed him out of the
 gate wheras the vsuall place of
 buryall ys but they lefte yt where the
 execution was don, that they mighte after
 warde bury yt in the Chappell of the 25
 most blessed virgin, where Christianes

are accustomed to heare masse, & to exercise
other sacramentes in *which* place no other
hadd ever before beene buryed. Brother
Ignatius (of whom I spake of) devided his
shert and breeches into litle peeces ~~among~~ 30
amongst the Christianes and these Re=
lyques they doe all kepe, wth no smalle
devotion. The next day folowing the
Christianes made a solempine holy day 35
vnto *which* all the other Christian Captives
in lyke manner resorted, to whom ffather
Ignatius himselfe (who was a wittnesse
and beholder of the whole matter) dis=
coursed in 40

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In a Sermon of every thing *particularly*, as
yt hadd happened, *which* so moved every
on of them, that they determined zelously
& devoutly every mouthe in ~~the~~ his honor
to reverence and ~~honor~~ kepe holy in the 5
same Chappell that day, in *which* this b Saint
was crowned *with* martirdom. / deo gratias
ocania 10 July 1580 Convertanur qui ode=
runt Sion.