

that to unravel the facts about Shiraz could not be done without widening the research to cover the mother-mission at Isfahan: and, as will be read elsewhere in the explanatory notes to this book, that was a formidable task, for upwards of one thousand letters written by Religious in Iran and Basra are preserved in Rome in the original Italian, Latin, French, Spanish, Portuguese or Flemish, many far from easy to decipher.

Apart from Fr. Eusebius' unpublished work in four great volumes, which in the florid, verbose style of the period cover at random the whole range of the interests of the Order—from Ireland to Poland, from Malabar to the Congo, but down to 1655 only—two little books had been published on its "Persian" mission in French and Spanish in 1885 and 1920 respectively by Fr. Berthold Ignace de Ste Anne and by Fr. Florencio del Niño Jesus: one, however, reached only the year 1612, the other 1625, and they were largely descriptive of the first pioneer journey in 1604-7: that was almost the sum total of attempts to write up the lost annals of the 170 years in Iran. It is only in the past eight years or so, since the present Archivist General, Fr. Ambrosius a Sta Theresia, has classified the manuscript letters and devoted himself in conjunction with the editing of the *Analecta* of the Order to a series of instructive monographs on its missionary prelates and to the edition of the *Chronica Bassorensis Missionis* mentioned that long-buried knowledge about the "Persian Mission" has begun to see light in modern scientific treatment.

Moreover the seven hundred letters and reports preserved in the archives of the Order in Rome leave unfilled large gaps in the 170 years. It is in the archives of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide that much additional correspondence of the Discalced Carmelites from Persia and Mesopotamia is to be found and, also of great value, other descriptions and reports regarding changing conditions in Iran written by members of the other religious Orders working in that country. Together with some investigation in the secret archives of the Vatican as to the interests of the Holy See in Persia prior to the creation of the Sacred Congregation in 1622 search in and copying from that source took up a portion of the years 1933 to 1935. There is, in fact, a plethora of material of one kind or another for any compilation of ordinary length to give an adequate representation of the activities, subjects and history covered by all the documents relating to Iran on record in these two mines of information: disregarding all that perished at sea and on land—"lost in the post" of those days—it is possible that as much fresh material remains to be garnered from the archives of the Sac. Congregation and, perhaps, from other sources as that reproduced here, and that future searchers will be well rewarded and able to supplement, correct and revise this; the research involved for a complete survey would, however, be far more protracted than in the present case and circumstances has been possible; much has doubtless escaped notice and many volumes and sources remain uninspected.

An article in *The Times* of February 16th 1935 emphasized the importance, the unique interest, the range of material of the archives in London of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, estimated to contain over 160,000 documents dating before 1900, of which over 30,000 are of the eighteenth century. But that is child's play compared with the archives of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide which, in existence for nearly one hundred years longer and drawing on so much larger a personnel in the religious Orders planted in four continents (Europe itself being in large parts a "mission field") by the greatest world-church, has accumulated over 5,000 bound volumes. For the present work, for instance, a large proportion of 400 volumes, many of them 600 to 800 pages thick, in one series alone have been examined, some carefully, others cursorily: and, there being no indexes, the contents bound haphazard by order of consideration at the several sessions each year of the Congregation, a letter from China may follow one from Ireland, a "summary" on the Grecian archipelago reports from India: correspondence from Dalmatia and Syria, Constantinople and North America, Muscovy and Egypt, or about the Armenians and Ruthenians, Poland and England and Cyprus have to be scanned and turned before a letter from "Persia" may be discovered. The searcher has a special reward, when he comes across a parchment bearing the sign manual