

in their country. Their letters are more domestic and less a connected contribution to the history of the reign.

With that explanation of many gaps which the student of today would wish to have been filled, it may be remarked that it was courtiers' language, and early, for the factors of the East India Company to write from Gāmbnun, 17.1.1643, regarding 'Abbas II:

"he is reported to be a prince of very great hopes."

Princes, in the Orient especially, at that period were 'forced' like early hothouse plants, and made to mature precociously. Less than 5½ years later, indeed, i.e. when the Shah would be not fourteen years of age, the factors of the Company from Gāmbnun recorded on:

"8.5.1648. . . . The king is made father of a young son . . ."¹

and the same year, 19.10.1648, came the entry in their Journal of the crime so mistakenly laid at the door of Shah Safi and already noticed in the preceding chapter:

". . . The 11th instant we had news in this place that the king, being weary of his "grandmother's accustomed presumption over him, not considering that he was now grown to more maturity, to be freed thereof comands that she . . . should be poisoned: which "was accordingly put into execution. . . ."

Already by 10.1.1644 a letter mentioned that a nephew of 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh (the style borne by a succession of chief ministers) was a fugitive at Basra:² on 30.9.1645 the Factors at Gāmbnun wrote³ that news had reached them that:

"'Itimad-ud-Dauleh had been murdered by other nobles."

No name was given that this personage might be identified: it is clear, however, that the outcome was contrary to the interests of the missionaries, for Fr. Dionysius added the information, a few months later, 2.3.1646:⁴

"Things here are not going well at present for the poor Armenian and Syrian Christians, "because a new Grand Wazir ('Itimad-ud-Dauleh) has been made—his predecessor, who "was a great administrator,⁵ was murdered in his house by other grandees of the kingdom: "he" (i.e. the new chief minister) "is a bigoted Muhammadan, and antagonistic to "Christianity."

With such deleterious influences at work small wonder that the Vicar Provincial, Fr. Dominic of S. Mary, from Isfahan, 12.7.1646,⁶ observed:

". . . the king is still very young: and it is not known properly to what he inclines—some "say that it is already he who is ruling: not a few that he governs, but through others, or "on the advice of others. . . ."

Towards the end of 1648, though yet not fifteen years old, 'Abbas II had set off on the expedition for the recovery of Kandahar, which his father had prepared, but had been prevented by death from bringing to a successful issue. When the new Vicar Provincial of the Carmelites, Fr. Dominic of S. Nicolas, reached Isfahan in December 1648 he

¹ Safi Mirza, later to succeed as Shah Sulaiman in 1666.

² Fr. Ignatius, Basra, to Fr. Basil, Rome, 10.1.1644, O.C.D. 241 m.

³ See *English Factories in India*, by Sir W. Foster.

⁵ Implying that Shah Safi's reign saw good, and better government.

⁴ O.C.D. 237 c.

⁶ O.C.D. 237 f.