

nominee had necessarily to be a Frenchman: one of them the superior of the Jesuit missions in Syria and Persia, another the Carmelite Fr. Ferdinand of S. Liduwina, the third was Fr. Pidou, "a Theatine, native of Paris, aged about 55", the collaborator already cited of Mgr Picquet, all three

"considered by the Nuncio very precious jewels of the missions in the East, as all know how to read and write and speak Arabic, Turkish, Greek and Armenian, besides Latin and Italian, and leading very religious and virtuous lives. . . ."

Their Eminences decreed that Fr. Pidou should be proposed to His Holiness, and at an audience on 25.6.1687 the Pope gave his approval, the Bull for the appointment being dated 23.11.1687.<sup>1</sup>

The new Bishop of Baghdad, whose full name was Louis Marie Pidou de St. Olon, brother of that Monsieur de St. Olon, a noble and official at the Court of Louis XIV, had already worked for about thirty years as a missionary, chiefly among the Armenians in Poland. (There is a letter on record,<sup>2</sup> dated 16.2.1674, from Leopoli in praise of Fr. Pidou, signed 'Joannes Sobieski, regii Poloniae exercitus Supremus'.) He was for ten years rector of the College for Armenians at Leopoli:<sup>3</sup> and at the time of the invitation from Mgr Picquet he had been at Constantinople on behalf of the Theatines. Fr. Pidou had the advantage over his predecessor of being on the spot; for, as a sequel to Bishop Picquet's invitation, he had proceeded to Persia: his correspondence shows him on his way East to have left Aleppo, 20.9.1684, to have been at Diarbakr 25.10.1684<sup>4</sup> and to have left Mausil, 20.11.1684, and been in Baghdad, 11.12.1684. He arrived at Hamadan, 7.1.1685, and shortly afterwards Mgr Picquet bought the premises for 48 Tumans=2,400 French livres (*S.N.R.*, II, p. 281): so he was already in Hamadan when Mgr Picquet died there: in a letter written years later<sup>5</sup> he referred to "the perfidy of the servants of the deceased prelate, one of whom had almost totally ruined him in the end . . . and to the malice of the schismatics." According to a letter of the Chevalier d'Arvieux, written from Paris, 22.4.1688,<sup>6</sup> Fr. Pidou did not wish to become bishop of Baghdad, and thrice in that year through the Cardinal Nuncio in Paris he had begged the prefect of the Sac. Congregation that his refusal should be accepted, and the Carmelite nominee appointed in his stead. His exercise of the episcopal dignity was hardly any speedier, however, than the leisurely assumption by his predecessors of their duties—not by his own fault, because there was no one to consecrate him. All 1687, 1688 and 1689 he had remained in Hamadan,<sup>7</sup> where Mgr Picquet and he in turn put together a considerable library: then at the end of July 1690 he moved to Isfahan in view of notice that the Archbishop of Nakhchiwan, Mgr Sebastian Knab, O.P., had been instructed to consecrate him, arriving there, 16.8.1690,<sup>8</sup> only to learn a little later that on the journey Mgr Knab had died, 8.9.1690.<sup>9</sup>

Mgr Pidou was nearly 60 years of age; the estate left by Mgr Picquet was the subject of Persian litigation, and not available, even the ownership of the residence the latter had acquired at Hamadan being disputed. Mgr Pidou, therefore, is found in a letter of 28.3.1691<sup>10</sup> begging the Cardinal Prefect

'to release him from the intolerable burden of the episcopal office, or else to provide him with some means of supporting the missionaries' (i.e. the chaplains from France) 'he had with him, and of establishing this mission through the agency of the director of the Seminary for Foreign Missions at Paris'.

'Repeated letters had been written by the king of France to the Grand Sufi' (i.e. the

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 5, by late Fr. L. Lemmens.

<sup>2</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 447, p. 94; among others there is also a letter of his from Rome, 28.7.1673, in *S.R.*, vol. 441, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 468.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, p. 509, letter of 31.1.1689.

<sup>5</sup> See his letters written thence of 6.10.1687, *S.N.R.*, I; 19.2.1688; 31.1.1689, *S.N.R.*, I, p. 509; 29.11.1689.

<sup>6</sup> *Vide* his letters 14.4.1690 and 30.6.1690 from Hamadan, *S.N.R.*, I, p. 509 *et seq.*

<sup>7</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 511.

<sup>8</sup> *S.N.R.*, I, p. 459 and p. 479.

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*, p. 502.

<sup>10</sup> *S.N.R.*, II, p. 1.