

inability', for they had "no establishment at Isfahan, nor at any other place in Persia." Fr. Barnabas Fedeli in that letter had written:

" 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh, the chief Minister of state of the monarch, has received from the minister of the Most Christian King letters of compliment and great cordiality. . . .

" . . . Beside the two letters written by the ambassador of the king of France at Constantinople to 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh, last week there arrived one from the Comte de Pontchartrain, minister of state of the Most Christian King, very polite and full of courteous expressions, which he conveyed to 'Itimad-ud-Dauleh on behalf of the Most Christian King, and assuring him that he" (Comte de Pontchartrain) "wished to dispatch the promised company of merchants immediately peace was settled, and that meanwhile he was sending a large war-vessel to the port of Mukha and had given orders that, as soon as the business there was settled, that vessel escorted by other ships should proceed to the Persian coast and place itself at the disposal of the Shah. These steps, which have been much appreciated in this capital, lead us to hope that we should find it favourable to us and be able to enjoy a little quiet. . . . Since I wrote the above I hear that rumour has spread in the city that the French warship mentioned has arrived at Bandar 'Abbas, a port 25 days away from this city. . . ."

There had been a succession of French East India companies, replacing one another, the fifth under the minister Colbert in 1644: and in 1719 a sixth was launched on a combination of various interests. No doubt it was to that of 1644, the fifth, to which reference was made in that remark by the Carmelite Vicar Provincial, Fr. Faustin, in his letter of 1719 already quoted:¹

" . . . we are in great poverty . . . because of the *bankruptcy* of the French company, in which this mission had more than 7,000 rupees' capital . . . now for 9 years past not a farthing has been got from it. . . ."

It has been mentioned too that the French Carmelite, Fr. Jerome Francis, had been dispatched to Paris in 1719, in order to recover as much as possible of the sum lost: in a letter written by him while in Paris, 13.10.1720,² to the Cardinal Prefect, he spoke of the:

" . . . Comte de Toulouse" (one of natural sons of Louis XIV) "a prince with great fervour for the Catholic religion, who has greatly helped me in the commission entrusted to me. . . ."

There had been, moreover, an attempt at the aggrandizement of French influence in another sphere—by the ecclesiastics in Paris to make the direction of missionary enterprise in Persia an appanage of France, just as there was already secured to them an exclusive claim to the bishopric of Baghdad.

Notice has been taken in these pages of the specific objection by Bishop Elias of Isfahan (himself a French-speaking Walloon by race) to the activities of the Seminary for Foreign Missions, Paris, a number of whose graduates were in turn assigned to Mgr Pidou as his chaplains, at his expense: and in this Bishop Elias but followed Mgr Pidou himself, who in several letters complained of their ways.³

When the death of Bishop Elias became known, there was submitted from Paris to the Sac. Congregation de Prop. Fide a long statement⁴ (emanating either from the Seminary at Paris, or from the Jesuits):

"Information regarding the bishops of Babylon and their jurisdiction in Persia."

¹ O.C.D. 242 b.

³ "These gentlemen, whom they send him and who are always coming and going, are the cause of his poverty, always running up debts, and few of them succeed in missionizing in these parts," wrote Fr. Jerome Francis, French himself, *S.N.R.*, II, p. 70, 18.9.1714.

² *S.N.R.*, III, p. 504.

⁴ *S.N.R.*, III, p. 14.