

and to this abortive enterprise of the Persians both the Carmelites Fr. Leander and Fr. Emmanuel make interesting references. In his book *Secondo Viaggio*<sup>1</sup> the former speaks of the Agent-in-chief of the English Company at Basra, Mr. French:

"The English consul, named Mr. French, had been asked by Ahmad Pasha" (i.e. the governor of Baghdad) "to defend that city" (i.e. in 1735 when Latif Khan and the Persian-Arabs attacked it), "just as at the time of the first siege of Baghdad" (i.e. 1733) "he, the Pasha, had begged him to allow him a ship to take away his—the Pasha's—womenfolk to Bengal: and the consul not only at once granted him the vessel, but also made an offer of his own person to take charge of it and be their escort, should that office be pleasing to his lordship. . . ." (Now in 1735 Tahmasp Quli Khan had sent a 'body of men to assist the Arabs, his allies, under the Khan of Hawaizeh in seizing Basra; but this Persian force was repulsed by three English ships, which were waiting in the Shatt-ul-Arab to return to India after the monsoon'.)

"By these two acts of courtesy he (Mr. French) so gained the liking and the esteem of that potentate that, in addition to paying him great respect, twice he invited him to come from Basra to Baghdad, and the first time made him a present of the value of 20 purses (of money), the second time of 30 and more purses, together with the dagger all studded with precious stones that the Pasha himself wore. . . ."

"To this consul we (the Carmelites) owe a large part of our House at Baghdad, as it was enlarged with 800 piastres which he gave to Fr. Emmanuel, my companion, as an alms-offering. I shall say further to his eternal praise that no missionary ever passed by Basra to whom he did not give an appropriate alms. . . ."

Thus qualified Mr. French proved to be a tower of strength for the struggling Catholic community. Writing to the Cardinal Prefect in Rome, 9.9.1735,<sup>2</sup> the pro-Vicar Apostolic mentioned that:

"Basra has lately been besieged by the Persians and Arabs, but some European vessels anchored there put them to flight, but for which they would have made themselves masters of the town . . .",

and, 8.3.1736:<sup>3</sup>

"the English consul from Basra<sup>4</sup> has come to Baghdad on business: he is my particular friend—of all the missionaries in fact—and his recommendation to the Pasha and the notables contributes greatly to the triumph of the Catholic Faith in this fine mission, because this consul is that one who saved Basra some months ago from invasions by the Arabs and Persians: so that his recommendation has had all the effect I could desire. . . ."

On 3.10.1736<sup>5</sup> the Carmelite pro-Vicar Apostolic wrote once more from Baghdad:

<sup>1</sup> p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> *S.N.R.*, IV, p. 390.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, p. 375.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Peter French had been 'Resident' for the East India Company at Basra, at least from 1729 (*vide Chron. Basra*, folio 432 of original MSS.). "He was an Irishman born of Catholic parents, but lived with the rest of the English after the English fashion" (i.e. not practising that religion). When the epidemic—*malignus influxus*—towards November 1737 began to rage in Basra and

"many of the merchants especially the Europeans fled to the hamlets outside the town, among them was Mr. French, the English Resident, who, when the epidemic at last ceased, returned to the town and fell into a fever, and when that became serious, Fr. Placid sent him Fr. Cyril, but the English would not admit him in the sick man's bedroom, perhaps suspecting the Father's intention: so that to our great grief the sick man died miserably without the Sacraments. God grant that he will not lose eternal reward. . . . He treated our Fathers with singular kindness and, when he obtained an opportunity, showed this by many signs of beneficence. . . . Fr. Placid, Vicar Provincial in 1730, when an Armenian of Julfa named Agapiet died here leaving by his will 2,000 isolotas for our missionaries of Persia . . . deposited the sum on interest with the said Mr. French. . . ." (*Vide Cont. Basra Chron.*)

<sup>5</sup> *S.N.R.*, IV, p. 421.