

“or priests allowed to remain. . . . In a short space the Portuguese have lost eleven places
 “—partly taken from them by the Imam ‘prince’ of the Arabs of Arabia Felix, partly by
 “the king of Canara, partly by the Dutch . . . now that the Portuguese are no longer
 “Portuguese. . . .”

Although by the suppression of the Portuguese ascendancy and trading activity the Carmelites at Basra lost the generous financial support which had been the mainstay of that Residence, the Fathers adapted themselves rapidly to the change of influence, and indeed made themselves useful to the Dutch.

The Netherlanders had first appeared at Basra about 1640¹:

“These Dutch this year sent their ships to Basra with the intention of continuing their
 “trade in this port, where already some years ago they began it. Also the English—which
 “is a disadvantage and prejudicial to the Portuguese and, consequently, for our House
 “there, which is sustained by the latter. . . .”²

That was in 1645, when the Vicar of Basra also refers to a courier being sent off by, or for the “English gentlemen” (i.e. of the East India Company) to Aleppo. At that time relations between the Dutch and Persians were none too good:

“I have been told as a fact that on the 2nd inst. a courier was sent off in haste with
 “an order from the king to seize the ‘captain’ and all the other Dutch at the port” (Gām-
 brun), “because all³ are there now on account of certain disputes: and so a rupture between
 “the Dutch and Persians is expected. . . . The rumour is that the Dutch have gone to
 “war with the Persians, having retired to their ships, where they have been joined by
 “several others, and thence” (i.e. Gāmbrun) “they have committed several hostile acts.
 “The Persians desire peace and, as a Dutchman had remained in their hands, they brought
 “him to Isfahan and the king has paid him great honour, sending him back post-haste
 “with a courier to negotiate peace with his compatriots. . . .”⁴

On 9.7.1651, from Basra Fr. Matthew of S. Joseph, the physician or herbalist, wrote:

“The Dutch gentlemen” (i.e. of the Dutch East India Company) “are here with two
 “ships, and very well disposed towards us: and I am also treating them medically. . . .”⁵

As trustworthy agents for the transmission of letters between Europe and India via Aleppo the Carmelites at Basra were extensively employed for a considerable period by both Dutch and English East India companies. The Agent and Factors at Isfahan of the latter wrote to their President and Council at Surat, 1.9.1654:

“Padree Felice, the Carmelite Padree that was in Buszarah, we have thanked for his
 “courtesie in despeeding and receiveing our letters, and also rewarded him with some small
 “matter. . . .”⁶

But, when the war between the Dutch and Portuguese showed signs of being protracted, that same Fr. Felix, then Vicar Provincial, had scruples whether such service to heretic enemies of the Portuguese was legitimate, or exposed the missionaries to ecclesiastical censures, and therefore referred the matter to Rome, 12.5.1655, from Isfahan:

¹ Besides the mentions of them in the last years of Shah 'Abbas I's reign it is stated that in 1635 'a certain Antonio Pereira re-embarked for India in a vessel of the captain of Masqat, which was taken by the Dutch 35 leagues beyond Ras-ul-Had, and plundered. Pereira taken to Gāmbrun was sold as a slave.' See *S.R.*, vol. 107, p. 143.

² Fr. Dionysius of the Crown of Thorns, 30.7.1645, O.C.D. 237 c.

³ At Isfahan in 1655 the Dutch were only four or five Factors, see Fr. Casimir, 16.1.1655.

⁴ Fr. Dionysius, 8.5.1645, O.C.D. 237 c.

⁵ See *English Factories in India* by Sir W. Foster.

⁶ O.C.D. 241 n.