

"The Dutch for some years have been in the habit of addressing their letters to our Fathers at Basra, for dispatch by courier to their consul in Aleppo. This happens three times a year. Because of this correspondence and the services rendered good donations and alms-offerings are received at the mission, and on many occasions the Dutch show them kindnesses. . . . If they cease to do the forwarding and have a rupture with the Dutch company's agents, it may do great harm with the fresh war there is between the Dutch and Portuguese; for the Dutch are all-powerful and with one step could have us turned out of Basra, or even all Persia. What are we in conscience to do? The trade of the Portuguese at Basra has totally ceased. The 'doubt' ("dubium") is whether we can forward these letters for the Dutch . . . and it appears contrary to the Bull. . . ."

In the following year the Apostolic Commissary sent to India by the Sacr. Congregation, Fr. Joseph of S. Mary, afterwards Bishop of Hierapolis and then of Bisignano in Italy, and his companion, Fr. Vincent Mary of S. Catharine of Siena, both Carmelites, were emphatic regarding the need for the missionaries to continue on terms with the Dutch, as witness a letter of the latter Father, 20.9.1656,¹ from Gāmbrun:

"We embarked" (from Basra) "on ships of the Dutch Company and received many kindnesses and attentions from them in consideration of the good relations which they enjoy with the Fathers of Persia and Basra. Certainly, if the missions are to continue in these parts, it will be very necessary to keep up these relations, otherwise it will be difficult to find passages on ships in these parts. . . ."

(They had been conveyed gratis, while other passengers had to pay 25 écus each.) What answer was given from Rome, if any, has not been noticed;² but the practice appears to have continued at Basra for many years.

Pope Alexander VII by his Brief of 18.2.1656 warmly commended Fr. Joseph of S. Mary to Shah 'Abbas II in this fashion:

"Pope Alexander VII to the illustrious and most puissant king of the Persians.

"Illustrious and most puissant king, greeting and the light of Divine grace. Such is 'Your Highness' culture that lands however distant and huge are filled with the bruit of your name. Unquestionably those who come thither are held to have nor soil nor father-land and not even their dwellings: So kindly do you welcome all, so generously speed their egress that, while foes abroad shrink from provoking Your valour and bravery, guests and foreigners delay naught to appeal to Your accessibility. Obviously it is the same greatness of mind that declares You fearful to Your enemies and to the seeker easy of access. And to be sure such is fact: it were in vain for man's cleverness and work to have opened for himself new ocean-ways to climes erst unknown, had the prodigious cruelty of inhospitable uncivilized countries barred every shore and place. Yet it is not so much a harbour or a bay in a calm sea as culture itself that has brought sundered tribes and nations into unity and made the trafficking by men an everyday affair. Wherefore just as nothing more useful could be given the entire race of men, so virtue which can afford so great a boon is to be carefully cherished and esteemed. But certainly there is another reason and a far stronger why We desire this to be put in use by Your Highness. For We seek not gold nor earthly things for which some are lured to travel seas and lands, but Our treasures are to spread among the nations the good news of the unsearchable

¹ O.C.D. 239 e.

² On 16.12.1656 Fr. Barnabas returned to the dilemma:

"I also desire your Reverence to give your opinion on the doubt put forward by the Vicar Provincial a year ago, i.e. whether anyone would incur excommunication or light censures according to the Bull 'Coenae,' or any other decree, for sending on the letters of the Dutch. I speak of those which concern affairs of state or the war against the Portuguese, because I am the person who was receiving all their letters which come from Europe and go to India and Persia: and it is I too who send on, untouched, their letters arriving for Europe. I do the same for the English, as they have no one here to send theirs on their way. . . ."