

“Now there has betaken himself to the capital Mgr Pidou, who has become consul for the French nation, having been nominated and appointed by the Most Christian king: and he has already presented himself to the sovereign, who received him with much courtesy; but up till now he has not taken up the role, though it is expected that on the return of the king from the villa, where he went last week, he will be accepted and treated as consul. For it is very necessary that some representative of a Catholic sovereign should be here in order to support the missions, missionaries and Catholics: otherwise all will go to ruin. It is indeed true that Mgr Pidou in my opinion cannot do much in view of his decrepitude from old age,¹ and the poverty in which he is at present. To deal with this Court pluck and courage are needed. . . .”

A few days later, 7.11.1712, the same writer² informed Cardinal Sacripante that on the Wednesday of the week before SS. Simon and Jude (Oct. 28th)—doubtless with regard to the letters from Rome brought with Mgr de Galiczen—Mgr Pidou had audience of Shah Sultan Husain, who

“retained him to lunch with him, as is the custom, together with his two companions, i.e. Fr. Peter, the Capuchin missionary from Tabriz and Monsieur Richard, a French missionary priest, who is due³ to take back the replies from the Shah to the king of France.”

The dilatoriness of the Persian Court was then indescribable. On 25.3.1713 the Dominican Vicar Apostolic expressed anxiety⁴ lest the Shah should not return an answer to the king of France: he wrote:

“already five months have passed since the letters were presented:⁵ for, if the Shah give replies, he will have to grant a *raqam* in favour of the missionaries, and at present the schismatics have held one for three years past,”

and it was 2.10.1713⁶ when he could at length report:

“the chief Minister of State has at last replied to the two letters written to him by the ambassador of France at Constantinople about the affairs of the mission and the ‘Franks’. As I had already stated in my letter of last month, the reply then is to the effect that, if the king of France will send here the merchant company as arranged mutually five or six years ago, the Shah will cause to be put into effect the *raqams* given at the request both of the Bishop of Agathopolis and of M. Michel, as also all the terms settled with M. Michel; but that, if the king of France will not send the Company, everything will be done to the contrary. According to what is said by all the French (here), the Most Christian King is not in a position at present to send the Company in question. . . .”

The Dominican writer mentioned in a further letter of 7.3.1714⁷ that the chief Wazir, Itimad-ud-Dauleh, had sent for Mgr Pidou as consul for France and told him that the Shah was tired of being hoodwinked with the promises of the king of France for the establishment of the French company and, unless such a company soon began to function, all missionaries would be expelled: the minister complained, too, of the great expense incurred by the Persian Court in entertaining a succession of French ambassadors without any result.

Mgr Pidou, in fact,

¹ He was then over 76 years old.

² *S.R.*, vol. 589, 23.10.1712, Fr. Barnabas, O.P.

³ He left at end May 1713 for Erivan and France (*S.R.*, vol. 593, p. 155).

⁴ *S.R.*, vol. 589.

⁵ By 29.1.1714 Mgr Pidou had still taken no steps in his position as French consul for the benefit of the missions at Tabriz, etc.—“these Persians have not yet agreed to accept him as such” (see *S.N.R.*, III, p. 436).

⁶ *S.R.*, vol. 574.

⁷ *Idem*, vol. 597, p. 596.