

of his office until he had reached the place fixed for his residence and unless he remained there.

“At Rome, 30.5.1661, a secret consistory was held in the Apostolic Palace on Monte Quirinale, in which His Holiness, on the proposal of Cardinal Azzolini, made provision for the diocese of Neo-Caesarea in *partibus infidelium* . . . in the person of Fr. Placid Louis du Chemin, priest and master in theology, of the Order of S. Benedict, who has made a profession of the Catholic Faith and has the requisite qualifications, and promoted him to be bishop over it and shepherd over it . . . and appointed him coadjutor with future succession in the government and administration of the church of Babylon or Isfahan of Bishop Bernard of Baghdad or Isfahan, who is afflicted with old age and ill-health, so that he asserts that he cannot leave France, where he has long resided. . . .”

A decree of the Sac. Congregation granted Mgr du Chemin the right to retain the priorship of Our Lady of Charenton in the diocese of Rupelle (La Rochelle) and the assignment of 300 scudi from the yield of the ‘Luoghi di Monti’ in the city . . . for the suitable maintenance of the said coadjutor, if and when he betook himself to his residence.<sup>1</sup>

Since Bishop du Chemin was also to be administrator of the diocese of Isfahan and reside there, Pope Alexander VII notified his appointment to Shah ‘Abbas II in a Brief, dated 16.7.1661, which after the usual salutations, ran:<sup>2</sup>

“But indeed We Ourselves . . . seize with ears altogether ready beyond others to hear these noble merits and particularly the outstanding example of that benevolence which You practise towards the Christians dwelling in those realms of Yours: and We welcome and embrace them with an exceptional emotion of very loving regard. Wherefore We earnestly pour out to the Most High constant prayers for Your good health, success and for all Your affairs to be prosperous and favourable in achievement, as in Your presence will better be able to testify Our venerable brother the Bishop of Neocaesarea, coadjutor of” (the Bishop of) “Baghdad, whom, as he is due to make his residence in the royal city of Isfahan. . . . We greatly beg You to treat with confidence and honour. . . .”

Between the newly appointed coadjutor, the Bishop of Babylon in Paris, and the Sac. Congregation there followed a protracted correspondence and dispute over travelling expenses, the property at Isfahan, jurisdiction and title, Mgr Placid du Chemin showing evident unwillingness to leave for the East until at a session of the Sac. Congregation, 30.8.1666, it was reported that he

“represented that he is already 65 years old and in poor health, nor has he the necessary knowledge of the language, so that, even were he to set out, it would be providing the diocese (with a bishop) for a brief space of time, and the money to be given him for making the journey would be fruitlessly spent. . . .”

On which the rescript was issued:

“Let Placid du Chemin be compelled to go to his place of residence: should he still decline to do so, let the Nuncio see to it that both he and the Bishop” (i.e. of Babylon) “resign the titles of the churches they hold: for another title will be given the Bishop. . . .”<sup>3</sup>

Another Brief of 1661, dated 19th November (see appendix, Arch. Vat. *Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 64, p. 206) was also a recommendation for Mgr du Chemin, and in its first half identical in wording with that of July: they are given in its appendix for completeness, so that the

<sup>1</sup> S.R., vol. 418, p. 357.

<sup>2</sup> Arch. Secr. Vat. *Epist. ad Princ.*, vol. 64, p. 166, Alex. VII, ann. 7.

<sup>3</sup> See *Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, cited above.