

Except for one other, then at Bushire or Bandar 'Abbas, Fr. Sebastian happened to be the last Carmelite in priest's Orders left in Persia proper, so low in numbers had that Mission been allowed to fall: and, more regrettably still, he was never replaced: when early in 1752 he quitted Julfa, it was to leave the Carmelite Convent at Isfahan, Residence at Julfa, in the charge of one solitary Lay Brother, Brother Ferdinand of S. Teresa. In his letter of 25.4.1752<sup>1</sup> the new prelate, who was a Piedmontese, explained, after thanks for the honour conferred on him:

“. . . On the arrival of my Bulls,<sup>2</sup> which for my greater convenience left me at liberty to go for consecration to whatever bishop . . . I wished, I soon decided, as a good opportunity by a caravan occurred, to betake myself to the nearest bishop, who is Mgr Emmanuel, Bishop of Baghdad. Also he had done me the honour to invite me, so that, when I arrived, I was welcomed by him with considerable marks of affection and religious charity. Afterwards . . . I was consecrated by him, 16.4.1752, the second Sunday after Easter, he being assisted by the senior missionaries in Mesopotamia of his Order, Fr. Fidelis the vicar, and Fr. Constantius, the Bishop's companion: besides them there were other missionaries passing through Baghdad . . . (two, destined for the Mogul's dominions, had brought me the Bulls) together with two Chaldaean Catholic priests, who all had the pleasure of assisting at such a function which was performed very solemnly in the presence of a great concourse of people and to the indescribable honour of all Catholics, so that the very heretics were much edified at witnessing such a fine, serious, becoming and solemn function.

“I enclose the oath taken,<sup>3</sup> and the profession of Faith made by me before my consecration to Bishop Emmanuel, my consecrator. I send it as soon as I can to the Sac. Congregation, as required by the Bulls: as I also notify you of having taken an oath to observe the contents of the decree of Alexander VII regarding the residence of bishops. . . .”

He had been allotted the fixed allowance for a missionary bishop's journey to be consecrated, and return to his diocese, 60 scudi, and on this point continued his letter:

“You will allow me to say candidly that that sum would perhaps have sufficed in the times of peace and quiet in Persia, and when the Messrs. Shariman on such occasions counted it an honour to add to it of their liberality. But with the great upheavals all over Persia, and the great misfortune of the poor Messrs. Shariman . . . not even 100 scudi were sufficient for me to reach Baghdad, and I have already spent 100 odd on the unutterable extortions and forced levies practised in these times of turmoil at the *rah-dars*, i.e. the toll-houses and the imposts everywhere. With regard to my return I think I shall be able to do it for 60 scudi, because, if there are no disturbances or danger, the caravans will not need a large escort . . . so that I hope the Sac. Congregation will complete its favours by adding 40 scudi to the 60 for my coming, and another 60 for my return, which would make 100 scudi.”

This bishop, in his short holding of the see, did not leave the like impression of respect, or capacity of high courage that the other holders make on the reader of their *gesta*. Like most of them he was beset by financial stringency, and in his case from the start almost, and he had to suffer vicariously. True, according to accounts in existence<sup>4</sup> in the archives of the Order, in conformity with the

<sup>1</sup> *S.R.*, vol. 753.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide Cont. Basra Chron.* under 29.10.1751: “We received the Bulls sent from Europe for Fr. Sebastian of S. Margaret, vicar at Isfahan, to be consecrated Bishop of Isfahan.”

<sup>3</sup> It is given in original as taken by him, in *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 69, dated 16.4.1752.

<sup>4</sup> *Vide* in O.C.D. an account-book containing “Orders of the Sac. Cong. to the Monti di Pietà in Rome for payments regarding the grants to our missions and the allowances to missionaries for the year 1750,” p. 61.