

on a point of conscience—the decrees lay down that a bishop-elect *before* consecration shall take the oath: to take it afterwards, owing to neglect in informing him of the obligation and not by his own fault, appeared to him to involve an inversion of order, and he thought the verbal assurances given by him to the Secretary would suffice. But the threat of penalties he found misplaced because—in regard to the obligation on oath to return to his convent in case of resignation—the Cardinal Prefect and Congregation might have been aware of his repugnance in accepting, and repeated requests to be spared the burden of episcopal dignity, so that he would a thousand times rather have the poorest cell in a convent.

At the beginning Mgr Cornelius took up a similar line as his predecessor, and soon after his arrival in Rome—according to the *Acta* of the session of 17.3.1760,<sup>1</sup> when Cardinal Antonelli reported that:

“Mgr Cornelius of S. Joseph, Bishop of Isfahan, at present in Curia” (i.e. in Rome) “makes the following requests:

- “(a) as he cannot reside in Isfahan, Julfa or any other place in his diocese subject to the Persian empire in view of the present disturbed condition of that country, he begs to be allowed to stay in Basra. . . .
- “(b) as there are in Basra two Armenian priests from Julfa and many Armenian Catholic families, also refugees from Persia, the Bishop requests that he may be permitted to use pontificals . . . and to bless the Holy Oils.
- “(c) a decree to be issued by the Sac. Congregation declaring Kharg island to belong to the diocese of Isfahan. . . .”

The rescript granted allowed him to stay at Basra and use pontificals for three years, provided the Pope permitted and the assent of the Ordinary (i.e. the Bishop of Baghdad) were obtained: while Kharg was assigned to Isfahan. The Pope gave his approval, 23.3.1760. The new Bishop struggled also to obtain more liberal grants of money from the Sac. Congregation on the ground of his having taken John son of Aratun from Basra to Aleppo and then sent him to Leghorn and maintained him for a year in 1758, and brought John son of Isaac with him to Rome, at some expense: on account of expenses over his consecration: for building the church and hospice on Kharg island, unfinished then,—heretic Armenians had even lodged their priests in it<sup>2</sup> (these applications were considered in the session of 2.6.1760): the more so because he asserted from Milan, 2.8.1760, that he was unable to make the return journey without more funds. He does not appear to have obtained more than the usual consecration and journey expenses, and an advance of 100 scudi in regard to the young Armenian students: nothing for the Kharg project, which was noted merely ‘lectum’; but during his tenure of the see the correspondence is pleasantly free from complaints about stipends and money.

“After various delays—in Tripoli for three months on account of plague in Aleppo: then for six months in Aleppo because of no caravan being available: lastly for another four months in Baghdad because the death of the famous Sulaiman Pasha led to an upheaval in all the surrounding country—I got to Basra, safe and sound, on 14.8.1762,”

wrote Mgr Cornelius. Several letters, which he mentions<sup>3</sup> having

‘dispatched to the Cardinal Prefect from those various stages were presumably lost in transit, for he mentions this as being the sixth written since he got back to the Levant: it was the more painful to him therefore that he heard by letter from a Dominican Father at Mausil that the Sac. Congregation was dissatisfied with him, complaining that he had not written since his arrival in the East, and so they had suspended remittance of his allowances. As

<sup>1</sup> *Acta* for 1760, p. 149, and *S.R.*, vol. 785, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> See: 14.1.1760, *S.R.*, vol. 784, p. 143; 19.1.1760 *Acta*; 2.6.1760, *S.R.*, vol. 785, p. 270; and *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 217; 2.8.1760, *S.R.*, vol. 787; *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 374, 15.9.1760.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of 10.9.1762, *S.N.R.*, VII, p. 73.