

To return to Bishop Cornelius of S. Joseph. Finding himself once more cut off from Persia (though it was a few years before the English Residency returned to Bushire), he offered his resignation and in the session of the Sac. Congregation, 22.5.1769, it was considered and the rescript issued:

“Let a letter be written to the Bishops of Baghdad and Isfahan for their opinions” (about the future of the diocese). “Our view is for it to be committed to the charge of the Bishop of Baghdad, but that for the time being the Bishop of Isfahan should carry on with his pastoral duties. . . .”

A minute made of proceedings at the session of 2.4.1770 makes clear the date and part of the motive for the resignation:

“as he remained in Basra idle in the midst of his former flock, without being able to exercise any jurisdiction over them in view of the jealousy of the Bishop of Baghdad, the diocesan, on 22.8.1769 he requested permission to resign voluntarily his bishopric; but the Sac. Congregation did not accept it and wrote an unofficial letter to the Bishop of Baghdad” (telling the latter) “to use great forbearance towards the Bishop of Isfahan as far as regarded the superintendence of his former flock, at least until the Congregation could otherwise dispose of the prelate. . . .”

But the following year,¹ at the session of 2.4.1770, when it was read to the Congregation that

“His Holiness has handed over to your Eminences a letter from Mgr Cornelius of S. Joseph, Bishop of Isfahan, in which that prelate represents that as a plain missionary he had served for 22 years in the Persian mission, and then being made bishop . . . he had never been able to get through to his place of residence and had been constrained for the space of 10 years to go first here, then there, to different places on the Persian Gulf . . . as he is now of advanced age” (he was 60) “and worn out by sickness and fatigue suffered . . . he needs . . . to return to his province and hopes to obtain that favour when it is reflected that, so long as present circumstances continue, residence of a Bishop in Persia is, in fact, useless: and that the only need there can be of one is to provide with the Holy Oils the only two churches remaining at Julfa and Rasht, and Mgr the Latin Bishop of Baghdad could easily see to this, as ‘coadjutor’ of the Bishop of Isfahan resident on the borders of Persia. . . .”,

orders were passed:

“they” (the Cardinals in the Congregation) “allowed the application, and directed that a letter be written to the Bishop of Baghdad to look after the diocese of Isfahan. . . .”

Actually Mgr Cornelius had not quitted Basra by 20.5.1770, when a letter from him was addressed to the Sac. Congregation,² which illustrates the long intervals between departures of caravans across the desert to Aleppo in those times:

“By a letter of 12.1.1770 . . . I also notified the Sac. Congregation that I was about to accept the courteous offer made me by the French consul here to travel in his company at his expense to Aleppo. But . . . the extraordinary delay in the caravan, which was due to depart last February and now will only get off on the road in the coming June, has caused the consul to put off his projected journey to a more temperate season, so as not to expose himself and me to crossing the desert at the time of the most broiling summer heat, to the risk of our lives. So I shall have, I hope, every convenience for receiving,

¹ *Acta* for 1770, p. 70, para. 10.

² *S.N.R.*, VII, p. 580.