

“Of all the Houses, Residences and churches of the missionaries there exist no others than these last—two at Kharg and Bushire founded by me before I became bishop—and that of the Dominicans at Julfa. In addition to these, Fr. de Bernardis has just informed me that, in conformity with the wish of the Sac. Congregation communicated to him by me, he has succeeded in recovering the house of the Jesuit Fathers on payment of some money, and under the obligation of paying the annual taxes.

“But there is no objection on the part of the government to houses being held in Persia—and there can be had very fine ones at a low price, as there are an infinite number deserted and abandoned in Julfa, among them those of the Messrs. Shariman, for which their former masters mourn and grieve, as they lack money to pay the annual taxes and impositions. At present, under the rule of Karim Khan these are not very excessive, but they might be in the future through the avarice and whims of governors and tax-farmers, as already happened in the time of the famous Tahmasp Quli Khan, which was the principal reason why the Jesuit Fathers abandoned their Residence there. . . .

“I forbear to speak here about Georgia, the most noteworthy part of my diocese, both because there has not yet been notified me the assignment of a part of it by the Sac. Congregation to the pastoral care of Mgr the Vicar Apostolic at Constantinople, as also because till now I have received no acknowledgment or reply at all to my letters written to the Capuchin Father Prefect of that mission, whom I had appointed Vicar General. All that I have gathered from some Georgians who had come from there is that a Capuchin lay brother, a physician by profession, had obtained from Karim Khan three ‘farmans’ for the restitution to the missionaries of his Order of the fine church and Residence they had in Tiflis, but that Prince Heraklios had paid no attention to such orders. . . .”

Then, turning to the point whether he himself could do better by proceeding from Bushire to Julfa, Bishop Cornelius went on:

“. . . In order to get governors to give effect to such orders influential friends and money are needed (and where am I to find them?), whereas on the contrary the Armenians, our opponents, as being subjects of the country, have means both of getting their injustices put into execution, and of doing us harm. . . .

“To whom am I to have recourse to get them to listen to reason, now that there is no longer any European Resident there, nor any of the Messrs. Shariman, nor any Catholic of position able to assist me? . . . I know it would be necessary to be on the spot to understand these reasons fully, but I should think that the experience of 28 years that I have of these countries, and of dealing with Armenians ought to suffice to merit credence, even in the eyes of the most critical. No matter what might happen, I would willingly overlook all these points to the contrary and personal insults, which I might receive while dwelling in Julfa, were my presence to be able to serve in the re-establishment of the Christian community. But now I do not find in present circumstances any foundation on which to be able to hope for that, because—apart from the omnipotence of God, whose hand is not shortened—speaking solely according to human reasoning, it seems to me that from two causes alone could such a re-establishment be expected, i.e. either from the return to Julfa of the Catholic emigrants, or from a fresh conversion of the heretics and infidels. As to the former I can assert for a certainty that there is no hope of it, for, far from the invitations and pressing instances of Karim Khan having succeeded in inducing a single one to return,<sup>1</sup> they have rather served to persuade them (the Armenians) to leave Basra the sooner with their families, some for India, some for Georgia, some for Muscovy, some for Europe, as have just done (a few months ago only) four whole families of Julfa Catholics, who have departed to live in Venice, as your Eminence can ascertain: and shortly they will be followed by others.

<sup>1</sup> Fr. de Bernardis, O.P., from Julfa itself confirmed this, 20.10.1765 (*S.N.R.*, VII, p. 319):

“Neither the number of Catholics nor that of the heretics is apparently increasing, for all that Karim Khan endeavoured to invite the Armenians of the Diaspora.”