

'to Julfa, at least to pay a visit, but more favourable circumstances were to be awaited. He trusted it would be soon, as then he would be in a climate infinitely healthier, and similar to that of Milan, his home, with all the conveniences of life—exquisite wines, iced water, fruits and most excellent vegetables, whereas in Bushire, except for fish, there was a lack of all comforts: in summer one was obliged to suffer the heat of hell, with brackish water as the only refreshment. And with all respect he trusted that their Eminences did not imagine that in Persia the bishop had a house, kept an episcopal table, had a cathedral chapter, and the like things possessed by the smallest diocesan in Europe. The bishop of Isfahan had a diocese a hundred times larger than that of Rome, with neither house nor roof nor church of his own: at one time he is obliged to lodge with the missionaries: at another with some Catholic layman, or in a room in the open country. His flock is what forms his church, often an ambulating church: at that time in its largest numbers it was to be found in Bushire and Kharg. So he concluded by hoping that their Eminences would not take it ill that he had been stopping in those two places. . . .'

It was at Bushire in February 1765 that the noted German traveller and writer, Karsten Niebühr, met Bishop Cornelius and his companion, Fr. Antony Marian. It was only on the decline of Bandar 'Abbas (Gāmbrun) at the end of Nadir Shah's rule that this peninsula had come into prominence as a caravan terminus for the interior: and this was due presumably, in the first instance, to the fixing by Karim Khan Zand of his chief residence at Shiraz and campaigning between Shiraz and the coast at Bushire on the one hand as well as the development of trade by refugee Armenians, on the other by the transfer of both Dutch and English Companies to Bushire, when they abandoned Gāmbrun—both events in the decade 1753–63. It became the port for transshipment up and down the Gulf. In former times a traveller from Isfahan for Basra after passing Shiraz had made for Bandar Rig. An attempt at a settlement had been made by Fr. Urban in 1744, a house bought. After the brief stay in Bushire of Bishop Sebastian and his brother in 1753 there were Religious residing in the small port for periods of some months in 1757–8.¹ From 9.11.1764, when Bishop Cornelius left Basra for Bushire, there were Carmelites in residence till February 1769 when, as narrated in the first section of the chapter, the English Factory was transferred to Basra owing to their discord with Karim Khan, and Fr. Antony Marian thought it well to abandon that mission² also: and, though the date is not on record, the Bishop of Isfahan too withdrew once more to Basra. While it lasted it was not unfruitful as a field, for Bishop Cornelius could write, 2.5.1765:³

"Here in Bushire, where I am, in less than one year 21 persons have been baptized, the majority of them adults, i.e. one Persian Gabr (Zoroastrian) the rest pagan (Hindus) who had come from India, as well as some apostates reconciled and three Armenian heretics converted. . . ."

Afterwards Bushire was occasionally visited by the Carmelites, however, for *Cont. Basra Chron.* records Fr. Ferdinand of S. Charles and Fr. Aloysius Mary going there from Basra, 28.7.1776, and the latter returning from Bushire in September 1777 and again leaving for Persia in April 1778: and a building or house may have been retained because, 8.7.1780, the Cardinal Prefect of the Sac. Congregation wrote from Rome⁴ referring to the sadness caused him by

"the news that our mission at Bushire is in great danger because of that town having fallen into the hands of some rebel Persian . . ."

and applauding Fr. Aloysius Mary's readiness to go to Bushire and "join the other missionaries".

¹ Vide Fr. Hyacinth, 8.3.1758, *S.N.R.*, VI, p. 380.

³ *S.N.R.*, VII, p. 308.

² Vide *Cont. Basra Chron.*

⁴ *Lettere dalla S. Cong.*, 1780, vol. 236, p. 493.