

“received with much honour and very great welcome those ambassadors, to whom, however he gave no answer, except on one day when he entertained them at a great banquet, at which were present all the nobles of Persia. Then he said at table in a loud voice these very words: ‘The Grand Turk’ (i.e. Sultan of Turkey) ‘by these ambassadors who have come here demands of me my son, the prince, as a hostage: and I reply to you, the ambassadors, that my son, the Prince, is and will be king too of all I possess: and since I have no power to send a king as hostage to a king, you will make answer to the Turkish Sultan that I am not willing to send him my son’, the Persian (king) saying this with great haughtiness. With that the three ambassadors in question received their dismissal.”

The answer of 'Abbas I to Sultan Muhammad III's desire to be assured of peace was even more forcible, if more tardy, than those words. For the friar named remained in Qazwin and Gilan from November 1599 till July 1600, and was afterwards at Ardabil and Tabriz, and in October 1600 had gone on to Van, Bitlis and Karkamish, and, before reaching Aleppo, learnt from an Armenian caravan that Shah 'Abbas had attacked Tabriz and Ganjeh with two columns, and that the inhabitants of Tabriz were pleased at the reoccupation of their city by the Persians, for the deliverance it gave them from tyrannies of the Turks.

“The said friar affirms that he had *seen it with his own eyes in writing, and had heard the publishing of a public proclamation which had been made in Persia by order of the king, that all Christians who might wish to live in his dominions could do so in security, and also perform all the practices of their Religion and Sacraments: that they could bring in their merchandize without paying anything: that they might make their wills and nominate their heirs at pleasure, and that, whoever might die without leaving a will, the property of such a person should be kept in special and faithful custody by the captains and governors of the district. . . .*”

This independent evidence coming from the East may, in some measure, make the reader less sceptical as to the statements by Sir Anthony Sherley in Prague and Rome representing the genuine intentions of 'Abbas I, and as to his eagerness for Christian support in 1600.

Pope Clement VIII was businesslike in his promptitude to acknowledge to 'Abbas I the arrival of Sherley and Husain 'Ali Baig and the receipt of their proposals, and to dispatch emissaries to Isfahan, as desired by the Shah in the persons—utterly unworthy, as it transpired—of the priest, Francisco da Costa, and the layman Diego de Miranda, two Portuguese from Goa. The former had come to Europe at the end of the previous year, 1600, from India: he had left Hurmuz 12.5.1599, and arrived in Isfahan in July 1599: in Rome he had made a report “regarding the embassy sent by the Persian king”,<sup>1</sup> a report docketed as having been sent on 4.8.1600 to Cardinal Aldobrandini (the Pope's nephew): he had also been responsible to the authorities in Rome for the assertion that:

“What generally speaking can be said of the king is that he shows himself well disposed towards Christians, and desires extremely to have priests and Christians in his realms.”

That modicum of acquaintance of his with the country, king and people seemingly commended him as a suitably informed person to trust with the conveyance of the Briefs of the Sovereign Pontiff.

How much responsibility Fr. da Costa must bear for all the sequel of misunderstanding in Rome about the real attitude of 'Abbas I and his grandees towards the Christian religion, and for the launching of the missions of the Augustinians and Carmelites through the grossly inaccurate statements by this Portuguese Religious is confirmed by a Brief of Pope Clement VIII himself to king Philip of Spain and Portugal (Arch. Vat. Arm. XLIV, vol. 44, p. 231, No. 243). The importance attached to the imaginative fictions of this itinerant priest, the enthusiasm of the Pope to stir up all quarters so as to make the mission a success, the preliminary

<sup>1</sup> See Fondo Borghese, Ser. II, n. 20, pp. 178-9.