

"he used to do so with an old Father of the Augustinians, a great servant of God and much liked by the king, he would make for him the sign of the cross over the drinking-glass: and by many other signs he showed himself well disposed towards our Holy Faith. . . ."

Of the very few original letters in Persian script from the Safawi monarchs preserved in the Vatican the only two by Shah 'Abbas I out of all those he sent with his envoys to Europe happen to be precisely those which deal with these Portuguese Religious and Miranda, and for years had been exposed under glass on exhibition in the Sistine Gallery. They are reproduced here and a typescript¹ in Persian characters is added in the appendix for those who wish to study the language: the translation of the one runs:

"Lord Pope of Rome,"

(The preamble apostrophizes the Sovereign Pontiff in untranslatable epithets as the supreme master of all professing the Christian Faith.)

" . . . After the establishing of the basis of amity and love, and expressing the utmost sincerity and unity, it is submitted to Your sunlike notice and moonlike mind that at this auspicious season the cordial communication, which You had dispatched by those eloquent envoys, namely that most distinguished of Christian literati, the priest Francisco Costa, and that respected gentleman, Diego Miranda, arrived at a most fortunate juncture. Its welcome contents, the substance of which was the expression of Your goodwill and friendly feelings and amity, and a confirmation of the bonds of intimacy, alliance and unity, were duly noted by Us: and from the purport of Your esteemed letter and the charming statements of the eloquent envoys it became evident (to Us) that Our friendship and cordiality have produced a (good) impression on their minds. The statement to that tenor in Your valued letter is the exact truth and a true fact. It is obvious to Your illustrious mind that in past times there has never been a habit of correspondence between the Shahs of Iran and the Sovereigns of Europe, and that they have not exchanged courtesies and acquaintance with one another. Because of the fact that friendship for them" (the Christian princes) "appealed of itself to Our heart, and before any gesture was made on their part, or they had manifested any desire for amity and cordiality, We ourselves took the initiative and opened the doors of correspondence and friendliness, sending an envoy to Your august Court. Now that they have become Our friends, heart and soul, and have reposed faith in Us, and expressed (their) friendship and amity, We shall be their friends more than before, and We desire that terms of intimacy and concord and relations of friendship and amity should ever be observed between Us and the Frankish sovereigns, that Our friendliness and theirs should grow day by day, and that the" (doors of) "traffic with these regions should always remain open to the Christian sects. This fact is evident to Us, that Your august² Majesty is the chief and lord of all the Christian monarchs, and that because of the learning and eminence and excellence and glory and greatness, which You have among the princes of the Franks, all the Christian kings have reverence for You and render You obedience as the Pontiff of the Christian Faith. More than they do We also consider Your Highness³ exalted and are Your friend: and absolutely We do not deviate from Your Highness' desire and advice, and We do not fail for a moment in respecting and honouring the Christian⁴ community, and in paying due attention and care to the Christian sect, who go to and fro in and frequent Our dominions; while the Christian community who remain in this country are all engaged, with tranquillity of mind, in their own places of worship in devotion and prayer to the Lord the Creator of the worlds: and We pay them greater respect and accord them greater esteem than We do to Our own people. It may be that the truth of this state of affairs has

¹ Which Khan Bahadur Mirza Muhammad C.I.E., of Basra, has kindly made, as well as giving his aid to present a version in English as near the original as possible—an extremely difficult matter, when so many pompous expressions are strung together, meaningless in European eyes.

² Hazrat, for which "Holiness" is hardly an equivalent.

³ "An Padishah-i-'Alijah, buzurg wa sarur."

⁴ In the Persian "Kristan", not Masihin.