

been to that military attack on a grand scale by the Christian princes, for which he had called in vain during three decades, his answer to these envoys from Europe and the chance offered of regaining Baghdad, all Mesopotamia, perhaps Erzerum to the Black Sea?

The epic tale of king Jan Sobieski's valour and leading even so must have stirred chords of fighting sympathy not already dead in the supine, dissolute Sulaiman:

"In 1686 the king had read to him many times" (the narrative of) "the relief of Vienna, translated into Persian by Fr. — a Capuchin, his interpreter. . ."¹

The same Mgr Sebastian Knab, O.P.,² appointed, as already noted above, Archbishop of Nakhchiwan (28.9.1682), had been commissioned by Pope Innocent XI (Odescalchi) to deliver to Shah Sulaiman a Brief³ dated 29.6.1683 (i.e. before Vienna had been relieved) and thus worded:

"Illustrious and most puissant king. How pestilential to all nations the Turks always have been and will be is abundantly made manifest by their empire extended as it is by them far and wide through the violation of the law both of men and of God, and by their insatiable lust for rule. Hence it calls for the foreseeing dexterity and watchfulness of other kings and princes to be mutually ready and sharply to fall to against the common and implacable foe, when the occasion demand, lest grown in strength through daily new accessions he should get at last each one of them into his power. But, since We deem it known by the evidence of consistent report, and obviously manifest that Your Highness is endowed with those qualities of lofty and invincible spirit, by which it is necessary that a most mighty king should be distinguishable, We are justified in trusting that, when You shall have learnt that these same Turks, having gathered together immense forces from all quarters, have attacked the kingdom of Hungary, You will send Your strongest armies into their dominions, in order to take vengeance for the losses which they have so many times inflicted and are ready to inflict on Your most noble country. Out! then, most puissant king, with the sword that avenges wrongs done to the State! Embrace the fortune which invites You to the palm" (of victory) "and rest convinced that We shall not be remiss in asking constantly of the Divine goodness as payment for the rewards, which We hope will from Your strenuous efforts be diverted to help the Christian commonwealth committed to Our pastoral care, that He may bestow on Your Highness wished-for successes, but that in the first place He show You the perfect light of His truth, by which You may be able to enjoy both eternal as well as temporal blessings.

"Given at S. Peter's, Rome, the 29th day of June, 1683."

The reply to that Brief is fortunately among the few preserved in the original Persian:⁴ a photographic reproduction is given in this book. It is undated, and unsigned (as customary), but bears on the reverse a seal of Shah Sulaiman, having the date 1091 A.H. (i.e. the year beginning 2nd February 1680, which represents, however, when this seal was brought into use, not the date of the letter), and inscriptions:

(In the upper portion): "In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate."

(Inside the circle): "Sulaiman, the slave of the king, Succour, 1091" (i.e. Imam 'Ali).

(And around the circular border): "O Lord! bless Muhammad the chosen and Fatimeh the serene, 'Ali the approved, Hasan, Husain, 'Ali, Muhammad-ul-Baqir, Ja'far the Truth-teller, Musa-ul-Kazim: 'Ali-ur-Riza: Muhammad-ut-Taqi: 'Ali-un-Naqi: Hasan-ul-Askari and the proof Mahdi, lord of the times" (i.e. the names of the prophet, his daughter Fatimeh, followed by those of the twelve Imams).

¹ *Hist. delle guerre dell'Europa*, vol. I-XIII, p. 431, Bergami.

² A note in *S.R.* seems to imply that he was an Englishman.

³ Arch. Secr. Vat. *Epist. ad Princ.*, 75, p. 167. ⁴ Arch. Secr. Vat. A.A. Arm., I-XVIII, 1737