

In the body of the letter it is noteworthy that the words used in the honorifics given to the Pope—'Isāwīeh and Masīhīeh, i.e. "Christian" from the names of Jesus and Messiah respectively, are written in gold ink, standing out against the rest in black—doubtless meant as a compliment. The preamble, apostrophizing the Pope with several lines of grandiloquent epithets (even Plato and Aristotle being used as prototypes)—abstract terms in Arabic and not concrete—strung together in a rhyming jingle, it would be beyond the skill of the greatest orientalist to render exactly, word for word, into a European tongue and yet make sense. A close translation of the kernel of the letter<sup>1</sup> is, however, as follows:

"Pope Innocent the Eleventh,

"At a time when the doors of delight and pleasure were open to our royal face and when the means of (achieving) glory and greatness were provided by the generosity of the Unquestionable Arbiter, Your noble epistle inspiring friendship and stimulating alliance acquired the honour of being received through Sebastian Knab.

"As to what You had written on the subject of the struggle with the Sultan of Turkey, as has been repeatedly intimated (by Us) to the kings of Europe and Russia, a long time ago this dynasty, following the precepts of justice, concluded peace with the monarchs of those realms" (i.e. the Turkish) "and no irregular action has come to light from that quarter.

"At this juncture, to commit an action derogatory to (Our) dignity will be opposed to the pleasure of the Unequaled (God) and contrary to the command of his holiness (i.e. the prophet) and it is therefore delayed and postponed to its proper time.

"You, crowned monarch, should ever tread the path of amity, and intimate the true conditions of affairs and such desires as you may have, so that fate-like commands may be issued from the seat of honour and glory<sup>2</sup> for carrying them out and complying with them.

"May the days of Your reign, glory, greatness, grandeur and majesty endure. . . ."

In the absence of any note attached to show the time of receipt of that letter in Rome or of its dispatch from Persia, its date can be only approximately conjectured by the reference in it to Archbishop Sebastian Knab, O.P., who had delivered Pope Innocent's letter and reached his residence, Abranar, 17.6.1684:<sup>3</sup> whether delivery to Shah Sulaiman took place before or after that date is uncertain—perhaps afterwards, in view of the statement by Fr. Fortunatus, 26.6.1684, already quoted, that: "the king of Persia is about to give audience to four of our ambassadors—from the emperor, by a Dominican bishop": Shah Sulaiman's reply translated above may, therefore, be ascribed to the latter half of 1684, or 1685.

For the time being the crisis of 1683 had passed in Europe, so that the unwillingness of Shah Sulaiman and of his Wazirs to antagonize Turkey did not matter; but before 1689, by when the Ottomans had lost nearly all their possessions beyond the Danube, they had made a fresh effort, which was only stayed by their defeat in the great battle of Mohacz on the plains of Hungary in 1687,<sup>4</sup> and the vigilant and tireless Pope Innocent XI was again hammering away at the Persian Court. His Brief of 20.7.1686<sup>5</sup> thus addressed Shah Sulaiman:

"Illustrious and most puissant king, greeting and the light of Divine grace.

"Although We are easily persuaded that the abjectness of the condition, in which for the present, with the God of battles fighting against them, the Turks are placed, both from the notable defeats received and the prosperous towns they have lost, provides Your Highness with sufficient incentive to recover from them the very wide dominions of which, through the height of injustice the distinguished kings Your ancestors were despoiled, nevertheless the bidding of Divine providence, proved by so many and such remarkable

<sup>1</sup> For assistance in which, and for decyphering the inscriptions on the seals, thanks are due to Saiyid Muhammad Ahmad (Khan Bahadur Mirza Muhammad, C.I.E.), LL.B., of Basra.

<sup>2</sup> So Shah Sulaiman alludes to himself.

<sup>3</sup> Vide *Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, No. 5; also S.R., vol. 490, p. 252 *et seq.*, letter of Fr. Elias.

<sup>4</sup> After which Sultan Muhammad IV was deposed. <sup>5</sup> Arch. Secr. Vat. *Epist. ad Princ.*, No. 77, p. 43.