

“It is to be feared”—naïvely and unappreciating opined the writer of the article on “Persia” in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, tenth edition, 1893, when alluding to the wars and relations between Turkey and Persia during the period of Sulaiman the “Magnificent” and Shah Tahmasp—“it is to be feared that the intrigue of European Courts as well as religious fanaticism probably contributed to stir up mutual hatred” between the two monarchs and their countries! Rather the pity was that the European Courts on various favourable occasions failed to combine to extirpate the Turks, and free oppressed Christian populations in Europe and Asia Minor: and the writer in question might have been the more shocked to learn that the intrigue or pressure came almost as much from Persia on Europe as vice versa, as has been briefly indicated in these pages, from the sending of the envoy by Shah Isma’il I to the Grand Master of Rhodes in 1515 to the dispatch of envoys in the reign of Shah Khudabandeh. In 1599 ‘Abbas I deputed Husain (or Hasan) ‘Ali Baig to accompany Sir Anthony Sherley to the Courts of Europe with

“certain general articles regarding which the king of Persia has caused negotiations to be conducted with the Emperor and the Christian princes through his ambassador Antony Sherley, a knight of England, as concerning the war against the Turks.”

Those “articles”¹ begin by

“the King of Persia offering his friendship and goodwill to all the Christian princes . . . incited to this present friendship . . . by hatred of the common enemy, the Turk, against whom his Majesty will shortly begin to war, if only assured that all the weight of the war will not fall on his shoulders. . . .”

It is, however, in the general history of Persia from the beginning of the Safawi dynasty that the *animus* against the Sultans of Turkey and the Ottoman Turks in the minds of its sovereigns, almost without exception and shared doubtless amply by their subjects, is revealed, stark enough to show that they stood in no need of prompting and incitement from Europe to war against the Turks—the feud went too deep to be allowed to heal, or remain dormant save during brief periods of truce which marked reigns of indolent or unwarlike kings on one side or the other: and this story of the Carmelite mission will demonstrate how exasperated ‘Abbas I became at times at the failure of quarrelling Christian states to unite and join him in crushing absolutely the Ottomans. In ‘Abbas’ long reign his was the will to war more even than that of Europe.

Even before the rise of the Safawis the ruthless conqueror, Timur the Lame (died 1405), had come into conflict with the growing power of the Ottoman Seljuks, for he had overrun Mesopotamia, the Caucasus, Syria and Asia Minor, penetrating to Broussa and Nicaea and almost to the Bosphorus. His son, Miran Shah, viceroy over part of the Persian dominions of Timur, lost Baghdad and it was left for Isma’il I Safawi to recover it, together with Mausil and other positions on the Tigris in 1503.

The male line of Timur ceased to rule about 1468, being supplanted by Uzun Hasan of the “White Sheep” Turkmans, who with his descendants held the chief power only till 1500, when Isma’il I the Safawi defeated and slew them. During the fourteenth century a certain mystic and pious devotee, named Shaikh Saif-ud-Din Ishaq, of the lineage of Muhammad through the seventh Imam Musa, was resident at Ardabil: and after him his son and grandson maintained a reputation for sanctity which was greatly enhanced by the fourth in descent, Shaikh Haidar, whose “Sufi”² and heterodox doctrines spread far and wide, and accentuated

¹ Vide *Lettere di Principi e Titolati, 1596–1605*, No. 54, p. 141, Vat. Arch.

² From “Sufi” (the “Sophy,” as Europeans styled the Shahs of the dynasty) comes the plural form, Safawi, by which the dynasty is distinguished. According to Fr. du Cerceau’s edition of Fr. Krusinski’s *Memoirs* it was the first of these Shaikhs who, “in order to distinguish the followers of ‘Ali from other Mussulmen made an order that, instead of linen turbans commonly worn by Mussulmen, the others should wear a red woollen cap with twelve folds in memory of the twelve Imams: and it is on account of the colour of their turban that the Turks call them Qizil-bash = ‘red-heads.’”