

almost millenary struggle of the Cross against the Crescent had the Christian hosts been assured of support in the rear of the enemy, on a front of hundreds of miles, by a tried military machine with a technique in oriental warfare that had often defeated Turkish generals, been assured of an ally burning with potent incentive, divergences of creed hopelessly embittered by century-long bloodshed and ill-will?

At that juncture internally the Ottoman empire was weakened by revolts and disorganized. With the pincers pressed firmly and long enough—with another naval force such as had won Lepanto penetrating the straits up to the Golden Horn, with Poland and the Empire pressing down through the Balkans to the gates of Byzantium and then onward across the Bosphorus, with columns from France and Spain landed on the coasts of Syria and Palestine, while the other arm came sweeping over the plains from the east as Timur the Lame had done with his horde—the Ottoman empire might well have collapsed within a few years, the bulk of the Turks have been driven and pushed back over the Russian steppes and Transcaucasia into central Asia. The pity of it was that in 1600 there were no King John Sobieski, nor Prince Eugene, nor Emperor Henry, nor Louis IX to ignore the internal troubles of their own countries, and march for a Cause. Rudolph II was not the man to inspire and lead Europe to the ridding it of the menace of the past centuries: he let his local situation take his attention: perhaps too he did not grasp of what 'Abbas I, properly helped with artillery and gunners, would have been capable as a general in the field. His reply to the *Articles* presented by Anthony Sherley, dated Prague 11.12.1600 and addressed "Persarum Regis legatis Domino Antonio Syherli anglo eique adiuncto Cuscinali Bego exhibitum" is not given here, but it can be read in *Lettere di Principi e Titolati*, No. 54 (1596-1605), Secr. Arch. Vat., p. 148.

The "Privilege", or charter, mentioned in the letter from the Nuncio at Prague cited above as having been produced by Anthony Sherley and Husain Ali Baig, in the version in Italian forwarded by the Nuncio to the Vatican runs, translated:¹

"Charter by the most puissant Shah 'Abbas. "Grand Sufi" of Persia.

"We, the great king, whose empire extends to the four cardinal points of the world, whose word can be broken by no force nor power, neither by Ourselves, nor by Our son, nor yet by Our successors, Declare by these presents that Our mind, will and pleasure is this that our realms, dominions and provinces from henceforth be open to all Christians, and that they be in all liberty to choose places already founded, or to found in them others, for the exercise of their religion, whether in public or private, according as it may seem good to them, in any place, in such wise that none of Our (subjects) of whatever condition dare to cause them the least trouble or hindrance of any sort. And, because of the friendship which We have now to establish and maintain with the Christian princes, We extend and grant by these patents to all Christian merchants and other (Christians) of whatever degree permission to frequent and trade within, and in every part of, Our realms, dominions and territories without risk or hindrance, or harm whatsoever, more-over without being charged or mulcted by any of Our officials, ministers, governors of whatever rank and condition these may be—nay, any effects they may have are to be so privileged that no one of whatever dignity and superiority or authority shall have permission to pursue or arrest them for the sake of the convenience of Our person, even to the extent of one 'aspro' (groat).

"With all this, no one of Our religion, of whatever degree he may be, is to be so bold as to cause them any annoyance by deeds or words, or gesture or signs whatever in religious matters. Our police too will not take on itself impertinently to lay hands on the persons and property of these (Christians) for any cause or act, whatever it may be.

"Should perchance some Christian merchant die (in Our realms) it shall be permitted to no one to touch anything belonging to the said deceased. But, should that dead man have any associate or partners, the associate or partners shall be empowered to take entire possession of all the goods left. And, if perchance the defunct shall have been alone,

¹ *Lettere di Principi e Titolati*, No. 54, p. 147, Secr. Arch. Vat.