

“communicate with him, and have an understanding with him, and consider him a friend.

“ . . . (the king of Persia should be told) that, should he wish to take advantage and assistance from the opportunity, which he has of being able to injure the Turk his enemy, “by allying himself with his Majesty” (i.e. of Spain) “not only will he more easily recover all that the Turk holds of his, unjustly seized, but he can even easily increase and extend greatly the limits of his realms . . . he can be promised that, if he move against the Turk, his Majesty will also cause the Christians and Arabs of Egypt and Syria to rise, and they could easily prevent any reinforcement from reaching the frontiers of Persia which the Turks might wish to send . . . (the King of Persia should be told) that Your Highness remains under way with the armada of the Holy League, which is the greatest and most powerful ever seen till today (in order to proceed against the Turk). . . .

“Your Highness sees and understands very well the importance of this business and the profit which will result to His Catholic Majesty and to all Christendom from the effect produced. The experience which I have of those parts is great, gained by the practice of many years, and I am very sure that with some little encouragement and help given from here to those discontented and oppressed peoples they would succeed with their own forces (which, when assisted, are very great) in freeing themselves to the enormous loss and hurt of the Turk and the incomparable advantage and gain of Your Highness. “This, most Serene Prince, is what at present it seemed that I should recall to Your Highness,

“MATTHIAS BIGUDO FURTADO”

A second letter from the writer, dated 2nd April, 1573, gives the information that Matthias Furtado had been “for 16 years in Turkey in the service of the King, your nephew and my master”: a third, written from Naples, 4.5.1573, contains the words:

“ . . . and, if it be true that Theamas” (i.e. Tahmasp) “king of Persia be dead, and Isma’il his son have succeeded to the kingdom, I promise Your Highness that you will see him soon in the field with a most powerful army against the Turk, carrying with him and to him . . . the chiefest lords of the East, all great enemies of the Ottoman blood. . . .”

With all this isolated and unorganized zeal, however, that golden opportunity of the sixteenth century was allowed to slip past: Venice played false, and Don Juan de Austria was later to be sent to try his skill in taming the rebellious Netherlands, and there to close his chivalrous career. Under date 10.6.1579, in the pontificate of Gregory XIII, there were further efforts, and accompanying a letter for the Grand Duke of Muscovy the following instructions¹ went in cypher² from the Vatican to Mgr Caligari, nuncio in Poland:

“The news, which continue from day to day, of the frequent and great defeats inflicted by the Persian on the Turk, and the grand opportunity thereby offering to Christians to liberate themselves entirely from Turkish tyranny, cause our lord” (i.e. the Pope) “to add something additional to his wonted cogitations and desires for the welfare of Christendom. Among other matters taken into consideration by His Holiness is this that, as the king of Poland has in a number of discussions shown great alacrity to employ himself in the service of God and all Christendom, whenever the opportunity might arise, now would be the time for him to put into execution his most valorous and pious intention, since his Majesty does not lack the means of being able to execute it, both because he is strong in cavalry, and because he has an easy and open means of ingress into the vitals of the Turk through the countries of Vallachia and Moldavia. But, since His Holiness knows that this could not be carried into effect unless the king first make peace with the Muscovite, who, were he at peace with his Majesty, would himself only too willingly

¹ Vide Misc. Arm. 117, p. 130 Vat. Arch.

² Note the use of cypher in diplomacy at this period.