

HALB 8-1944

## KING CHARLES II AND QUEEN CATHERINE

## TWO LETTERS

(Contributed by Miss Virginia Rau)

Although the two letters which are here reproduced do not contain, in their general contents, any outstanding feature of value to a historian of Anglo-Portuguese connections, they nevertheless represent two interesting testimonies of a Portuguese subject who, if he did not actually witness the last moments of the death of Charles II, at least was near at hand at the time and was able to record the reaction in the royal circle which the king's demise provoked.

These two letters, the first of which was addressed to the Portuguese monarch, D. Pedro II, and the other to the first Duque de Cadaval, D. Nuno Caetano Alvares Pereira de Melo, were written by Queen Catherine's personal chaplain, Padre Manoel Dias. During his stay in England this faithful servant of Catherine of Bragança gave his greatest attention to all matters relating to political and court events. Often the Queen's messenger, he was entrusted with her most private affairs, both as regarded the religion she professed and of her political and domestic interests.

Yellowed with age, these letters describe for us, with deep feeling and preciseness, the very last days of the «Merry Monarch» and the profound grief of the Queen. Not only do they set forth the grief she felt for the «inconstant spouse» political expediency had enforced upon her — and to whom she had become devotedly attached — they yet also forecast the conflicts which were to agitate England during the ensuing reign of James II.

From the historical point of view, these letters from the pen of a Portuguese priest concur entirely with contemporaneous British records dealing with the same matters. Some of the details given, however, appear with greater focal intensity, while other facts of the time are omitted, presumably out of respect for his royal mistress: such for instance as King Charles' request to his brother, the Duke of York, that he protect his (Charles') three favourite mistresses.

The letter addressed to the first Duque de Cadaval, under date of May 14th 1685, is of particular interest for the information it gives of the sculptured bust of Charles II, the making of which the widowed Queen entrusted to «the most illustrious sculptor known in all Europe». The War does not permit of protracted enquiries throughout museums and libraries in search for this particular effigy and its sculptor's name. Later on, when peace permits, this identification may be realised, and it become possible for us to ascertain its location in one of the museums or royal palaces somewhere in England, and inspect this work of art which Queen Catherine in her fondness commanded from apt and expert hands. May this bust of King Charles II still have survived all hazards, and by its merits serve to redeem to English eyes of the 20th century a supposed «heresy» of Queen Catherine's — the refusal to buy a carving of Grinling Gibbons being attributed to her, and which led to so much adverse comment by English critics of the 17th century.

What I have here written is but a modest contribution towards enhancing the personality of a Portuguese princess whom destiny led to the throne of England; and to the task I have undertaken the kind and sympathetic understanding of the present Marquesa de Cadaval, in placing these old letters at my disposal, calls for my gratefulness in thus helping me to vindicate still further the high repute of a renowned Princess of Portugal.

«Sire:

«The great affliction and consternation I this day behold in «my royal mistress and Queen, Your Majesty's Sister, by the «death of the King, her husband, obliges me to write these «lines, ever mindful of your commands, when I was last in «your Kingdom, that happening any event of importance I

«should communicate it to your Majesty. This I now so do, «even tho' I well believe your Majesty will have heard the «news through other channels, either by the Envoy Joseph «de Faria, or by other persons.

«On the morning of Monday 2/12 of this month, at 7 «o'clock the King rose from his bed somewhat disordered by «want of sleep, and having quitted his night attire passed into «his closet where he remained alone, be it about one half an «hour, and coming forth seated himself in a chair that he «might be shaven, and just as he was thus seated there came «upon him an Appoplexy so violent and of such intensity that «he remained three hours without sign of pulse or life. The «power of the remedies applied finally brought about some «change, and little by little he gradually improved, so much «so that during the Tuesday and Wednesday the Physicians «affirmed that he was Out of Danger; and in truth it did so «appear as may concern the stroke of Appoplexy for he did «seem to have recovered his soundness of mind, and without «any more signe of the Stroke; but the effects of the Remedies «by which that Evil was withdrawn from his head had corru- «pted those humours of the body whereby that on the night of «Wednesday they did find him possessed of some Fever which «went on increasing to such extent that on the Thursday at the «time of dinner he nearly succumbed, and from that time the «Physicians began to feel uneasy respecting his very Life; while «he himself to treat of his Soul, which we may now contemplate «as translated to the Glory of Paradise.

«The way in which this second Crown of Glory was attain- «ed was remarkable and worthy of ponderation, for it so «strangely happened that the same person who four and thirty «years ago was the principal instrument in saving his life was «the same in the saving now of his Soul, all of which I did «acquaint very privately to Jozeph de Faria, and he, I conclu- «de, shall transmit it to your Majesty with all the detail and cir- «cumsppection of secrecy which the matter requires.

«From Thursday to the time of dinner and onwards the «King was growing worse and worse, and about Midnight to «one o'clock he sent for his Brother and told him to take his «breeches and other things that were at his bed-side for that

«his Life was Finished; and thus he continued until Friday in «the morning, always of sound mind.

«The Physicians seeing that he grew no worse gave him a «blood-letting in the Foot though without any hope of success; «after the blood-letting he breathed slightly easier, but from «nine until the hour of ten he realised that he was drawing to «his last Hour; he called his Brother, and commended the «Queen my royal mistress, and all his servants to him, and also «his four sons, naming them one by one, the Duke of Grafton, «the Duke of Northumberland, the Duke of Richmond, and «the Duke of St. Alban; but made no mention of Monmouth, «nor even of his daughters. Then there arrived to his bedside «many of the principal lords and the Council of State to whom «he said that they ,on his behalf, should ask pardon to the «Queen his Wife, and that he asked it of his Brother, and of «all his People, and that he commanded them that so soon as «he should expire they should proclaim his Brother Ja- «mes the second, King ;and then he bade them all retire; and at «eleven o'clock and three quarters he gave his Soul to God, «exchanging this temporal life for the Eternal one, and the «crown of the Kingdom for that of Paradise.

«The Queen my royal mistress was with him until the «night of Thursday notwithstanding the many swoons and «nervous attacks she suffered, whereof she was from time to «time carried in their arms away; but when it was seen that he «was to die and began to enter into his Agony they took her «back to her own room, and then did not permit the ladies who «accompanied her to allow her to come again for the grief «they felt, for the one and the other.

«As soon as he breathed his last, which was as I have «said, Friday the sixteenth day of this month, at a quarter to «mid-day, the Council of State and the Duke of York met, «and James the Second was proclaimed King of these kingdoms; «and at three hours and a half this proclamation was made «known in the customary places in this City with great ceremony «and display, such as is the usual manner, and with great «acclaim from all the people; yet not without the presence of «four or five thousand men-at-arms, both Cavalry and Infantry «which is what their body-guard consists, and are those who

«guarded his Brother, and are to act as body-guard for him also.

«It is astounding with what respect the King and the Queen hold to the Queen my royal mistress; The King came to speak with her yesterday, and the day before, some twice or thrice, and at no time did he sit down, but spoke kneeling although he had become already King himself; but nothing of all this is sufficient to console her in such great affliction; I and the other of her servants have attended her all this time by day and by night, and console her as much as is possible; but when we see her now in this solitude, all dressed in mourning, weeping such tears, we cannot indeed restrain our own; and thus all is grief and tears which shall last until God shall mitigate so great a grief; and the Queen my royal mistress is of such disposition that only after she shall receive letters from your Majesty do I believe some alleviation of her trouble shall appear. Thenceforward Time shall bring some remedy which is the only one, though but slow.

«I yesterday put forward to my royal mistress that our Majesty be written to giving you an account of what has taken place, and her Majesty replied that I should do so. I much desired I should be the personal relater of these tidings in order to give your Majesty notice of several details concerning the present status of my royal mistress, and to touch also upon what the future may bring, but the time and the distance do not permit this. If her Majesty's grief permits she may write to your Majesty to-day or tomorrow, and it may be the King shall do likewise.

«This Prince (sic) is worthy of all that affection which I well remember your Majesty acquainted to me more than once you held for him, and which I repeated to him when I came to this kingdom; he is a Prince of honour and of resolution; God has already blessed him even during his lifetime which he has held in the constancy of his faith; much time I should need to relate his virtues but your Majesty will be already wearied of reading a long relation, and thus I do not wish to presume further, rather must I ask your Majesty's pardon for having been already too prolix; my zeal and duty as a servant and vassal of your Majesty's have been my motive

«of such confidence, relying further upon the benevolence I experienced when I had the honour of being in your Royal presence.

«Other details will be conveyed to your Majesty by Jozeph de Faria whom I have continued to assist as your Majesty's Minister, giving him all the news and information I may know so that with greater clarity he may perform the service of your Majesty, which is my only purpose beyond the great zeal and affection which I ever had towards the Royal Person of your Majesty, whom God prosper and guard for the consolation of the Queen my royal mistress and the support of her servants. London, 19 February 1685.

«Your Majesty's humble vassal & obedient servant,

*Manuel Dias* (1)

LONDON, 14 May 1685

«My Lord,

«I do not want to miss the opportunity of giving by every Post news of the Queen — whom God have in His care — knowing as I do the anxiety with which they are awaited; and although I know that letters proceed by several ways it behoves me none the less that I fulfil this duty seeing that as a servant of the House I am in a position to do so with greater detail. Her Majesty has lately these four or five days complained somewhat of indigestions but thanks be to God she says she now feels better, and eats with more appetite; the profound depression and melancholy which so often assail her causes her stomach to fail in its function, thereby occasioning her at times no little indisposition, and recently with good reason, for she desires to have a marble sculpture made of the King her Husband in the likeness in which he remained after death, and for this purpose it was necessary that the sculptor bring and show her the death mask of wax which was taken after

(1) Arquivo Cadaval, «Papeis Varios», fols. 340-341.

«he had died; I have observed that from the day she first saw  
 «it she has since been very much pulled down, and be it that  
 «she has wept so often or that the image of it remained so  
 «fixed in her mind that she could not put it from her, every  
 «effort was made that she should not see it, but without avail;  
 «The Sculptor showed it to me when he was taking it to show  
 «the Queen, and said to me that «sooner would he be hung-by-  
 «-the-neck» than show it to her Majesty, it being such a likeness  
 «that it seemed the very face of the King in death. The sculpture  
 «that the Queen is having made is the Head of the King from  
 «the breast upwards, with a shroud around the head and a  
 «weeping Cupid facing the King's countenance, with Crowns  
 «below and sceptres above, all to be mounted on a marble  
 «pedestal, which will be most excellent, for the sculptor is the  
 «most illustrious that is known in all Europe.

«The (new) King continues to come and see the Queen  
 «my royal mistress every day and treats her with every respect  
 «one can imagine. His Coronation and that of his Queen took  
 «place on the 23rd of the past month in the greatest grandeur  
 «and ostentation in the world.

«In a fortnight's time Parliament is to meet, and it is  
 «certain that the King will obtain all that he requires from it.  
 «All those men of Parliament known to me with whom I have  
 «spoken tell me that they will give the King a large sum of  
 «money, and will endow him in all the incomes which his  
 «Brother enjoyed; The Scots Parliament serves them as an  
 «example for it has not only assured those revenues which the  
 «King held in that kingdom but has accorded him new ones.

«The Queen (Catherine) asked of me two or three days  
 «ago whether I had news from your Court, and that she was  
 «amazed that her special messenger had not yet returned either  
 «by sea or by land; I told her Majesty that he would have  
 «reached you about the time that the Relief for India was  
 «being fitted out but now that it had sailed we might expect  
 «the messenger any day. Her Majesty had also hoped for some  
 «Envoy from the Court, and that it seemed to her that he was  
 «much in delay. I gave her the same excuse, and time has  
 «gone by; but with the arrival from Rome and elsewhere of  
 «the Count of St. Angello, Envoy of the Duchess of Modena

«and other places (sic) it appeared to her that our own could  
 «have well reached us already. From Spain the Marquez de  
 «Belparaizo is expected, coming as an Envoy. Whenever ours  
 «arrives he will be more than welcome. God blesse and protect  
 «your Excellency.

*Manoel Dias (1)*

«(His Excellency, Duque de Cadaval)», etc.

*(Translations by A. R. Walford).*

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(1) Arquivo Cadaval, «Cartas», 11, fols. 365-366.