

Pimenta the Portuguese, who was Visitor of the Society in the East Indies, became greatly taken up with the desire of establishing a field of labour for our Society among that people ; all the more because it might well be supposed that Christians separated from their head by such vast distances must have fallen into sundry errors. Hence he thought it well to communicate on the matter both with the Pope and with His most Catholic Majesty.<sup>1</sup> And by the King's command, accordingly, despatches were sent to the Viceroy, then Arias Saldanha, desiring him to support the expedition proposed by the Visitor with both money and countenance ; an order which he carried out, and more, as might indeed have been expected from the favourable disposition that he entertained both towards the propagation of the faith, and towards our Order in particular. The Visitor proceeded to select for the exploration one of our Brethren called Benedict Goës, a Portuguese by nation, and an eminently pious and sensible man, who from his long residence in the Mogul's territories, had an accurate knowledge of the Persian tongue, and a thorough acquaintance with Mahomedan customs, two qualifications which appeared to be indispensable for any one attempting this journey.

Our brethren had heard indeed, by extracts of Father Matthew's letters from the capital of China, that Cathay was but another name for the Chinese empire, (a fact which has been established by various arguments in a previous part of this book). But as quite an opposite view was taken in the letters of the Fathers at the Mogul's court, the Visitor first wavered and then inclined to the opinions of the latter ; for whilst he found it distinctly stated in regard to Cathay that a considerable number of Mahomedans were to be met with there, it had come to be considered an established fact that the follies of that sect had never found their way to China. Moreover, whilst it was denied that there ever

<sup>1</sup> Philip III.