

to Oriental peasants and townsfolk of the humbler class, especially as God Himself had by the event declared Himself in its favour. The Christian Churches of the East have never been very persevering in their zeal to educate and elevate their adherents on the spiritual side; they have always attached the principal importance to the externalities of worship, confessional formulas, and the condemnation of heretics. A fact specially worthy of note is that Islam was accepted by a majority of the East-Syrian Christians even,—the Nestorians of the lands watered by the Tigris, whose ancestors could not be brought to apostasy by all the fierce persecutions of the Persian kings. In explaining this result, perhaps some weight ought to be assigned also to the consideration that, in adopting the priestless religion of Islam, the Christians got rid of the tutelage and oppression of their own clergy. Speaking generally, the civilisation of the Syrians, Copts, and other Oriental Christians lost but little by their change of faith. Islam, of course, severed many old associations that made for culture, but in compensation for these it called many new germs into life. Conversions were seldom due to direct compulsion. The pious rejoiced when Christians accepted Islam in crowds; but to the rulers these conversions were, for the most part, positively unwelcome, as the converts were thereby relieved from the heaviest of the taxes, and their change of faith thus meant a serious decrease of revenue. Nor were Christians systematically maltreated. They had indeed to suffer much repression and scorn, and to make up their minds to a position of inferiority; for, apart from the legal inferiority of non-Moslems as merely protected aliens, Islam gives to its followers a tone of haughty contempt for all outsiders.¹

¹ It is not inconsistent with this that individual Christians and Jews, whether by princely favour or by their own talents, occasionally rose to positions of power and dignity, especially as physicians; still less is it so that Coptic clerks were regularly employed in the administration of Egypt.

Moreover, the lords, great and small, whose exactions pressed so hard even on their Moslem subjects, saw still less reason to spare unbelievers. But this is the Oriental way in everything. The different Christian Churches might keep up their controversies as before, if they chose, but they could no longer actually persecute one another. It was certainly easier for a man to live as a Christian under the rule of the Caliphs than as a Christian heretic within the Byzantine empire. The situation of the adherents of the old Persian religion in the East was similar to that of the Christians in the West, save that their legal position was not so firmly secured by unambiguous passages of the Koran. In some parts of the old Persian empire conversion to Islam on a large scale took place very early; but in others, and particularly in Persia proper, the national faith long persisted with great tenacity.

The decline of the Abbásid caliphate begins with the celebrated Mámún (813-833). Hárún by his last will had foolishly divided the empire between his sons Amín and Mámún, but reserving for the former the suzerainty and title of Caliph. The natural consequence was civil war. After desperate struggles the incapable Amín, who both on the father's and on the mother's side was a descendant of Mansúr, lost his throne and life through the Khorásán troops of Mámún, whose mother had been a Persian slave. It was a fresh victory of the Persian over the Arabian interest. Through these occurrences, which were followed by further confusions, the governors who headed the troops of their respective provinces, and also the commanders of the mercenaries, in many cases reached a dangerous degree of power. Táhir, to whom Mámún was mainly indebted for his successes, established for himself, and handed on to his descendants, in the important province of Khorásán, a principality which was but loosely dependent on the

caliphate. Mámún knew neither how to keep his victorious generals in their proper places, nor how to destroy them, as Mansúr had done. That he was hindered by scruples of conscience, no one will believe who duly considers his conduct towards Músá, the descendant of Alí. In order to win over the still powerful Shiíte party, Mámún had made it great concessions, and had taken steps, which can hardly have been sincere, to secure the succession to Músá. But when he came to encounter the energetic opposition of his own house and its immediate dependants, he secretly made away with that unfortunate prince. Mámún had great interest in art and science, and favoured the translation into Arabic of Greek scientific works. But along with this he had an unfortunate liking for theological controversy.

The Caliphs from this time leaned for support on great bands of foreign mercenaries, chiefly Turks, and their captains became the real lords of the empire as soon as they realised their own strength. How thoroughly the Abbásid caliphate had been undermined was shown all at once in a shocking manner, when the Caliph Mutawakkil was murdered by his own servants at the command of his son, and the parricide Muntasir set upon the throne in his stead (Dec. 861). The power of the Caliphs was now at an end; they became the mere playthings of their own savage warriors. The remoter, sometimes even the nearer, provinces were practically independent. The princes formally recognised the Caliph as their sovereign, stamped his name upon their coins, and gave it precedence in public prayer, but these were honours without any solid value. Some Caliphs, indeed, recovered a measure of real power, but only as rulers of a much diminished State. Theoretically the fiction of an undivided empire of Islam was maintained, but it had long ceased to be a reality. The

names of Caliph, Commander of the Faithful, Imám, continued still to inspire some reverence; the theological doctors of law insisted that the Caliph, in spiritual things at least, must everywhere bear rule, and control all judicial posts; but even theoretically his position was far behind that of a pope, and in practice was not for a moment to be compared to it. The Caliph never was the head of a true hierarchy; Islam, in fact, knows no priesthood on which such a system could have rested. In the tenth century the Búids, three brothers who had left the hardly converted Gilán (the mountainous district at the south-west angle of the Caspian Sea) as poor adventurers, succeeded in conquering for themselves the sovereign command over wide domains, and over Bagdad itself. They even proposed to themselves to displace the Abbásids and set descendants of Alí upon the throne, and abandoned the idea only because they feared that a Caliph of the house of Alí might exercise too great an authority over their Shíite soldiers, and so become independent; while, on the other hand, they could make use of these troops for any violence they chose against the Abbásid puppet who sat in Mansúr's seat.

It was this period that for the first time witnessed any great successes of the Shíites. Out of what had originally been a political party a sect, or rather a number of sects, had gradually grown. The doctrine of the divine right of Alí and his descendants had under foreign influences, Christian and Persian, gradually developed into a complete or partial deification. At the beginning of the Abbásid period there were some who taught the divinity of Alí without qualification, and if the majority of Shíites energetically repudiated this, they nevertheless believed in a supernatural, divine illumination of Alí and his descendants the Imáms, or even that the Spirit of God passed from the one to the other of

these. As early as 750, dreams were cherished of the Messianic return of "a hidden Imám;" and the names of Abú Bekr, Omar, and Aïsha were cursed more fervently than those of the Omayyads. Here, as in other things, the ground of Islam was entirely abandoned; but men, of course, concealed this from themselves, by putting allegorical interpretations upon the sacred book, and by setting up against the (certainly much falsified) tradition or "sunna" of the orthodox ("Sunnites") a still more falsified sunna of their own. Moreover, from the simple Shítism that is still essentially Islamitic, many intermediate connecting links lead over to strange heathenish sects, as offshoots of which we still have (for example) the Druses and the Nosairians. The first actually Shíite empire on a large scale was that of the Fatimid Caliphs, founded (about 910) by Obaidalláh, a real or alleged descendant of Alí. He thoroughly understood how to utilise the credulity of the Berbers so as to become master over large territories in North Africa. But his connections reached also far into Asia. He and his successors allowed themselves to be regarded by their intimate dependants as supernatural beings. A court poet says (about 970) of the Fatimid, in whose service he is, things which the genuine Moslem could at most allow to be said of the Prophet himself. Thus in some measure we are able to understand how it has come to pass that one of them, and he the crazy Hákim (996-1021), is worshipped by the Druses as God. But while the Fatimids imposed some reserve upon themselves in their own proper kingdom, where the Shíites were certainly in the minority, they gave a free hand to their partisans elsewhere. The Karmatians in Arabia utilised the plundering zeal of the Bedouins for their own ends, threatened the capital of the Abbásids, fell upon the pilgrim caravans, and finally, during the pilgrim festival, forced their way on one occasion into

Mecca, perpetrated a horrible massacre, and carried off the black stone of the Caaba (930). This was an open breach with Islam. The Fatimid Caliph disavowed the Karmatians, but we know that they had acted on his suggestion, and they subsequently (951), at the command of his successor, again restored the holy stone for a heavy payment. After their conquest of Egypt (969) the Fatimids were the most powerful princes of Islam, and it seemed at times as if even the form of power had passed from the Abbásids. The Fatimids, moreover, governed excellently as a rule, and brought Egypt to a high pitch of prosperity. But at last they, too, shared the usual fate of Oriental dynasties; the Abbásids lived to see the utter downfall (1171) of their worst rivals, and continued to enjoy for nearly a century longer the empty satisfaction of being named in public prayer in Egypt as Commanders of the Faithful. Since then there has never been another Shiíte Caliph.

In the history of Islamite peoples the politico-religious controversies which turned upon the right to the caliphate are by far the most important. But alongside of these there were a multitude of purely dogmatic disputes. Above all, Islam was agitated with the old and ever new question as to whether, and how far, man is a free or a determined agent in his purposes and actions. The Koran, generally speaking, teaches a rather crass determinism. According to the Koran, God is the author of everything, including the dispositions of men; He guides whom He wills, and leads into error whom He wills. But at a very early period some pious souls began to take offence at the horrible thought that God should thus have foreordained multitudes of men to sin and to the everlasting pains of hell. They could recognise a divine righteousness only if God leaves men free to choose between good and evil, and determines the retribution according to the character of the choice. They

found points of support for this doctrine of theirs in the Koran itself; for Mohammed, who was anything but a consistent thinker, has in his revelations often treated man as free. A popular teacher of religion will, it is clear, whatever be his inclination to determinism, inevitably find himself ever and anon addressing himself to his hearers, in his exhortations to faith and virtue, as if they were in possession of freedom of will. The people who taught in this strain were called Kadarites. Possibly they were not wholly exempt from Christian influences. The procedure of their successors, the Mutazila ("Dissidents"), was more systematic. They constituted a school of a strongly rationalistic tendency, and with the aid of Greek dialectic, with which the Arabs became acquainted first in a limited degree, and afterwards much more fully, through the Syrians, reduced their orthodox opponents to desperation. They also opposed with special zeal the proposition that the Koran is uncreated.¹ This dogma was certainly in flagrant contradiction to the fundamental position of the Koran itself. On this point the Mutazila were in reality the orthodox; but it could hardly fail to happen that in the heat of debate some went further, and thought of the Koran altogether more lightly than befits a Moslem. The fair beginning of a truly progressive movement which was involved in this was inevitably checked within Islam at a very early stage. The school of the Mutazila could hardly have attained to any significance at all had it not been favoured by some of the earlier Abbásids. Mámún especially took sides with great zeal for the doctrine that the Koran is created. But that he is not on this account to be designated as in any sense a "friend of free thought," is evident from the fact that he imposed severe punishments on those theologians who publicly avowed their adherence

¹ See above, p. 58 sq.

to the opposite doctrine then generally prevalent. So also his successors, down to Mutawakkil, who reversed the condition of matters, and caused it to be taught that the Koran is increate.—Another controversy had reference to the divine attributes. The Koran in its unsophisticated anthropomorphism attributes human qualities to God throughout, speaks also of His hands, of the throne on which He sits, and so forth. The original Moslems took this up simply as it was written; but, later, many were stumbled by it, and sought to put such a construction on the passages as would secure for the Koran a purer conception of God. Some denied all divine attributes whatever, inasmuch as, being eternal equally with Himself, they would, if granted, necessarily destroy the divine unity, and establish a real polytheism. Many conceded only certain abstract qualities. On the other hand, some positively maintained the corporeity of God,—in other words, an anthropomorphism of the crassest kind, which even Mohammed would have rejected. The Mutazila maintained their dialectical superiority until Ash'ari (in the first third of the tenth century), who had been educated in their schools, took the dialectic method into the service of orthodoxy. It was he who created the system of orthodox dogmatic. Of course the later dogmatists did not in all points agree with him, and by some of them, on account of some remains of rationalism in his teaching, he was even regarded as heterodox. Since Ash'ari's time the commonly accepted doctrine on the three controverted points just mentioned has been:—(1) God produces the good as well as the evil deeds of man, although the latter has a certain measure of independence in his appropriation of them. (2) The Koran is eternal and increate. Some maintain this, indeed, only with regard to the original of the sacred book in heaven, but others hold it also of the words and letters of the book as it

exists on earth. (3) God really has the attributes which are attributed to Him in the Koran; it is a matter of faith that He has hands and feet, sits on His throne, and so on, but it is profane curiosity to inquire as to how these things can be. Whatever be the exceptions that a man may take to any of these doctrines, the first and the third at least are in entire accord with the Koran—even in respect of their illogicality. The Mutazilite, like other rationalistic movements which make their appearance here and there in Islam, may awaken our sympathy, but they are too plainly in contradiction with the essence of a crassly supranaturalistic religion; and this explains how it is that at a later date only a few isolated after-effects of the Mutazila continue to be met with. We must be particularly careful not to attach undue importance to these controversies of the school. The Mohammedan people as a mass was hardly touched by them. The same holds good of other dogmatic differences, unless, perhaps, when they happened to have a political side also; as, for example, the dispute between the rigorists, who regarded every grave sin as "unbelief," of which the punishment is hell; and those who, on the other side, gave prominence to the divine mercy. The former was the doctrine of the Kharijites, who declared Othmán, Alí, Aísha, Moáwiya, and many other "Companions" of Mohammed to have been unbelievers; while their opponents, more in the spirit of the Prophet, left it with God to pronounce judgment on these as well as on others who might have fallen into sin.

The theologico-juristical schools are of much greater practical importance than the dogmatic. In Islam "law" embraces ritual also in the widest sense of the word; for example, the rules of prayer (*salát*), purification, pilgrimage. Law, like dogma, rests upon the Koran and upon tradition. But this tradition is a very heterogeneous composition. All of it is alleged to come from the Prophet, and much of it

can, in fact, be traced back to him; but a great deal has another origin. Mohammed's doctrine and example could not in reality suffice as rules of life for highly-developed peoples. The law and custom of the Arabs, and still more of the lands of ancient civilisation which accepted Islam, opinions of the school, political tendencies, and many other such things, are the real sources of much that is given out as precept or practice of the Prophet. It is only recently that scholars have begun to see on how great a scale traditions were fabricated. In many cases it was believed in good faith that one was justified in ascribing immediately to the Prophet whatever one held to be right in itself and worthy of him; but other falsifications arose from baser motives. In this mass of traditions, which claim to be binding on all true believers, many contradictions, of course, occur. Hence there arose, from the eighth century onwards, a variety of schools whose masters determined for their disciples the rules of law, in the widest sense of that word, on the basis of those traditions which they themselves regarded as correct. The impulse to reconcile internal differences, which is exceedingly strong in Islam, was not successful indeed in removing the discrepancies of the schools of law, but it was able to extend recognition to four of them (which had very soon thrown all the others into the shade) as equally orthodox. These orthodox schools differed from one another in a number of juristic and ritual particulars, but were practically at one on all the most important principles. Every Sunnite is under obligation to hold by the prescriptions of one or other of the four schools. These go deeply into the affairs of daily life, especially in what relates to forms of worship and to the regulation of the family; but on another side, again, they are exceedingly doctrinaire, often presupposing as they do an ideal State, such as never existed even under Omar, and

by no means the actual conditions of greedy Oriental despotism. Of these the Hanbalite school has now almost entirely disappeared, and the Hanefites, Sháfiites, and Málíkites are distributed over the countries of Sunnite Islam.—Shíite law is something different from that of any of these four schools.

The supreme authority in law, as in other things, is the consensus of the whole Mohammedan world—that is to say, the generally accepted opinion. It decides upon the validity of traditions, and also upon the interpretation of the Koran. For in Islam, as in other Churches, it is only the accepted interpretation of the sacred book that is of consequence to believers, however violent may be the disagreement between this interpretation and the original sense. The consensus of the entire body of Mohammedanism is, of course, an ideal that is never actually realised, but nevertheless it has great practical importance. By its means gradual recognition came to be accorded to things which were foreign, and even opposed, to the teaching of Mohammed—as, for example, the worship of saints. It silently tolerates all kinds of local variations, but exercises a steady pressure towards an ever-extending realisation of its binding prescriptions.

From the prosperous period of the Abbásids onwards, freethinking spread to a considerable extent among the more highly-cultivated classes. Some poets ventured to ridicule or gainsay, more or less openly, fundamental doctrines of Islam, and even the faith itself. Persian writers expressed, in prose and verse, their detestation of Arabism; and the reflecting reader noted that the detestation extended to the Arab religion. One may imagine what expressions were used in conversation in such circles. The scholastic philosophers contrived for the most part to accommodate themselves outwardly to Islamite dogma, and often, we may be sure, in good faith; but the theologians nevertheless, and

with reason, held them in deep suspicion; the old pagan Aristotle, on whom they leaned, fits in with Islam even less than with Christianity. All sorts of ideas—some of them very fantastic, of Persian and other foreign origin, and distinctly non-Islamite—also from time to time met with acceptance in the cultivated world. Once and again, indeed, a quite too audacious freethinker or heretic was executed; but in general people were allowed to speak and write freely, if only they put on a touch of Mohammedan varnish. Islam has no inquisition, and accepts as a Moslem the man who externally professes it, however doubtful his real sentiments may be. Accordingly, in some instances individuals whose thinking and teaching was quite un-Islamite, such as the famous mystic poet Abul-Alá al Maarri (973–1057), were regarded by the people as devout, and even as saintly. But even from this very fact we can see that the danger for Islam was by no means very great. Such ideas were confined to very narrow circles of thinkers and poets, or of profligates, and were never long in dying out again. Nothing of it all penetrated to the great mass of the people, and it is in this that the strength of Islam lies.

The mysticism of the Súfis was a greater danger to the dominant religion. The impulse to self-mortification and introspection, which in Mohammed's own case was very active at only one period of his life, found new nourishment after his followers had become masters of the neighbouring Christian countries, in which this type of piety was only too flourishing. It was all genuinely Semitic; and during the ascendancy of the youthfully energetic element in Islam there was no danger of its exercising an enervating influence on the latter. But subsequently Persian and Indian ideas became associated with this mysticism. The Súfis sought to submerge themselves in God, and arrived at the Indian conception of the All-One, which is irreconcilable with Islam.

In Indian fashion, systematic rules were devised for attaining the mystic victory over earthly limitations. He who believed himself to have succeeded in this might venture to break away from the precepts of positive religion, and often enough he allowed the moral law to go in the same way. The enthusiast, essentially a supernaturalist, who had merged himself in the All and One, readily held himself to be a worker of wonders; and still more easily was he so regarded by his adherents. What are the limits of the laws of nature (which Orientals, in fact, never recognise) to one who has effected the leap from the finite to the infinite? The finest and the coarsest attributes of the human spirit often worked together here. Amongst the Súfis we find deep souls, magnificent enthusiasts, fantastic dreamers, sensual poets, many fools, and many rogues. The systematic character of their procedure, which had to be learned, and the impression produced by the personality of leading Súfis, led to the formation of schools and orders. We have here a sort of monasticism, though without celibacy and without permanent vows. The fakírs or dervishes (*i.e.* "poor") live on pious gifts or foundations, but often also carry on some civil calling. They keep up regular ascetic exercises, often of a very extraordinary character, in order to attain to the supersensuous. By these means they over-stimulate the nerves, exhaust body and spirit, and fall into a temporary insanity. However fine may be the blossoms which Súfic mysticism has produced, and however quickening its influence upon Persian poetry, the existence of dervishism, which plays a great part in almost all Mohammedan countries, is on the whole a mischief. For the rest, most Súfis believed themselves to be good Moslems. By allegorical interpretation they also were able to come to an understanding with the Koran. Not many can have clearly seen how fundamentally opposed is the pantheistic conception of God in mysticism

to the rigid monotheism of the Koran. The great mass of dervishes are, of course, much too unthinking and superficial to follow in the fanciful footsteps of the old masters. They dance and howl for the glory of God, as other men pray. The people regard the dervishes as the props of Islam, and in fact hostility against all unbelievers is fomented in a quite special way by some of these brotherhoods. There is no suspicion how un-Islamic are the fundamental ideas on which these orders rest. The simple axioms of Islam itself meanwhile remain unshaken.

About the year 1000, Islam was in a very bad way. The Abbásid caliphate had long ceased to be of any importance, the power of the Arabs had long ago been broken. There was a multitude of Islamite States, great and small; but even the most powerful of these, that of the Fatimids, was very far from being able to give solidity to the whole, especially as it was Shiíte. In fact, large regions which had been conquered by the first Caliphs were again lost to the Byzantines, who repeatedly penetrated far into Mohammedan territory. At this point a new element came to the aid of the religion, namely, the Turks. Warriors from Turkestan had long played a part in the history of Moslem kingdoms, but now there came a wholesale migration. The Turks pressed forward in great masses from their seats in upper Asia, and, newly converted to Islam, threw themselves in the first instance upon the lands of Persia. These nomads caused dreadful devastation, trampled to the ground the flourishing civilisation of vast territories, and contributed almost nothing to the culture of the human race; but they mightily strengthened the religion of Mohammed. The rude Turks took up with zeal the faith which was just within the reach of their intellectual powers, and they became its true, often fanatical, champions against the outside world. They founded the powerful empire of the Seljuks, and conquered

new regions for Islam in the north-west. After the downfall of the Seljuk empire they still continued to be the ruling people in all its older portions. Had not the warlike character of Islam been revived by the Turks, the Crusaders perhaps might have had some prospect of more enduring success.

But this Turkish influx was followed by another of evil augury for Islam. Jenghiz Khan led his Mongols and Turks into Mohammedan territory in 1220, and his grandson Hulagu (January 1258) took Bagdad, the Mohammedan capital, and brought the Abbásid caliphate to an end. The loathly heathens were masters of Asia. But Islam, with its simple dogmas, its imposing ceremonial, and its practical character, soon won over these barbarians. Fifty years after the capture of Bagdad, those Mongols who had Moslem subjects had themselves accepted Islam. The frightful injuries they had inflicted on the lands of Islam were, however, not to be repaired. Babylonia, the home of primeval civilisation, was till then still the chief seat of Mohammedan culture; but since the Mongols set foot on it, it has been a desolation.

Through the dynasty of the Ottoman Turks, Islam once more became the terror of Christendom. The old dream of the conquest of Constantinople, and of the complete destruction of the Roman empire, was realised (1453). On his occupation of Egypt in 1517, Selím I. even proclaimed himself Caliph. The sultans of Egypt had, after the destruction of Bagdad, given their protection to a scion of the Abbásid family, to whom they gave the title of Caliph (1261), and similar nominal Caliphs, without any trace of power, "reigned" there till the Ottoman conquest. But how little the Moslem world troubled itself about them may be judged from the fact that the great philosophical historian Ibn Khaldún (of Tunis, 1332-1405), in the introduction to his *History of*

the World, where he speaks very exhaustively about the caliphate, the spiritual and the secular State, never once alludes to this make-believe. But, armed with the enormous power of the then Turkish empire, the caliphate now once more bore another aspect. Although the sultan of Stamboul was wanting in one attribute which almost all orthodox teachers had regarded as essential in Caliphs, namely, descent from the Prophet's tribe of Koraish, his claims found wide recognition, for his successes filled every Moslem heart with pride and joy, and the holy cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem did homage to him as their lord. The caliphate, let it be added, did not bring any actual increase of strength to the Ottoman sultans, who on the whole have not themselves attached much value to it; on their coins they do not assert the title either of "Caliph," or "Imám," or "Commander of the Faithful." They have never actually possessed spiritual authority over Moslems who were not their own subjects. At the same time, it might be a serious thing for the Ottoman empire if the sultan should cease to be mentioned in public prayer at Mecca and Medina as overlord and Caliph, a thing which might very well happen if besides Egypt he were to lose Syria. For a kingdom that is slowly but steadily collapsing, the removal of even a weak pillar may be of disastrous consequence. It would appear that in the last confusions in Egypt prior to the English occupation, this idea was actually made use of, and alarm thereby excited in Constantinople. The Sherifs of Mecca as Caliphs (a suggestion that has been made) would, it must be said, play but a poor part. They are descended, indeed, from Alí, and thus theoretically have a vastly greater claim to the dignity than the Ottomans have; but their territory is small and excessively poor, and they of necessity could live only by the favour of other princes. Moreover, the heads of the different branches of this numerous family are constantly in conflict with each

other in true Arabic fashion. Lastly, the sultans of Morocco have for a long time been also in the habit of calling themselves "Commanders of the Faithful," and thus, for their own kingdom at least, they expressly lay claim to the supreme spiritual authority.

In the later Middle Ages the opposition between Sunnites and Shiites seemed to be dying down. The Sunnites had at an early period accepted certain Shiite views, particularly the exaggerated respect in which Ali was held, and on the other hand, all Shiites did not go so far as to declare Abú Bekr and Omar infidels. The Sherifs of Mecca, just spoken of, from being moderate Shiites had imperceptibly become Sunnites. But the enmity of the two parties received a new lease of life when, just about the time when the Sunnite Ottomans were attaining their highest power, a great empire arose also for the Shia. In Persia the doctrine of the divine right of Ali had of old fallen on specially fruitful soil; it is to Persian influences that the Shiite dogmas chiefly owe their development. In Persian lands smaller or greater Shiite States have also arisen at various times, but it was through the founding of the Sefid¹ empire (about 1500) that Persia first became in a strict sense the land of the Shiite faith, whilst formerly (what is often overlooked) it had been in great part Sunnite. This Shiite empire constituted a weighty counterpoise to the Ottomans, and through it many a diversion was created in favour of Europe when most distressed by the pressure of the Turks. Since the fall of the Sefids in last century, Persia has continued to sink deeper and deeper; the State and the nation are far feebler than even in Turkey; but Shitism has taken Persia into its exclusive possession. So full of life is it, that even in our own time it was able to throw out a vigorous offshoot—the strange enthusiastic sect of the Bábís, which has profoundly agitated

¹ In Old English the kingdom of the Sophy.

the entire country, and has not yet been definitively eradicated. The antithesis between Shía and Sunna is very sharp to this day. The Orientals, who have extraordinarily little feeling of patriotism, have all the more zeal for religion. Bitter hatred still separates the Persians from their Moslem neighbours,—Ottomans, Arabs, Uzbeks, Afghans, and so on,—because, forsooth, the Companions of Mohammed were not able to agree as to who should be the successor of the murdered Othmán.

Islam has, on the whole, undergone but little change during the last thousand years. The spread of mysticism and dervishism, as we have seen, did not affect the faith of the multitude. These things, of course, gave fresh stimulus to the business in saints and miracles. The mystic submerges himself in God, and ignores earthly things; the masses, accordingly, are only too much inclined to take for a saint the rogue who imitates him without scruple and seemingly surpasses him, and the madman who can make nothing of the world at all. Belief in miracles is deep-seated in the blood of the Oriental; religious impostors, themselves often the victims of imposition, have never been wanting there. That saints are able to work miracles, has been faintly questioned only by a few theologians. Of long time, accordingly, the real or alleged sepulchres of saints have been venerated as fountains of grace. They give rise to local cults, and often are hotbeds of fanaticism. It is no accident that in the last troubles in Egypt atrocities were perpetrated upon Europeans at the sepulchre of the most highly venerated of the Egyptian saints, es-Seyyid el Bedawí, at Tantá. Of holy places of this class many are of ancient Christian origin, and some even date from heathen times. All sorts of chicanery, crass superstition, and much that is totally un-Islamite easily connect themselves with such places. No Moslem,

it is true, is under obligation to believe in any of these things; there is no such thing as an authoritative list of saints; and some Mohammedan scholars have even disputed the legitimacy of saint-worship altogether, but without success.

Towards the middle of last century there arose in the native land of Islam a violent storm of puritanism against the prevailing apostasy. The Wahhabites, or followers of Abdal-wahháb, brought forward no new doctrine; they were thoroughly orthodox Moslems; but they broke with tradition thus far, that they sought to abolish certain abuses which had been tolerated or even approved by general consent. In this they proceeded with a strictness which reminds more of Omar than of the Prophet. They were far from denying Mohammed to have been the Apostle of God, but they held in detestation the exaggerated honour which was paid to his name, his dwelling-places, and his grave. The worship of saints they condemned as idolatry, and wherever they went they destroyed the saints' tombs and places of martyrdom. They wanted to restore the original Islam; for example, they took in serious earnest the legal prohibition against the wearing of silk, and, in agreement with many learned theologians, interdicted tobacco as an innovation. The kingdom which they founded was a copy of the original Islamitic one; it once more reunited by force almost all the inhabitants of Arabia, but could not succeed in infusing a real spirit of religion into the great mass of the Bedouins. Their strict spiritual discipline was particularly irksome to the inhabitants of Mecca—on the whole a very secularly disposed people. The armies of Mohammed Ali of Egypt at length broke the power of the Wahhabites, not without great exertions, took back the sacred cities, Mecca and Medina, which had fallen into their hands in 1803, and penetrated into the

heart of their kingdom (1814, 1815). They again took another start at a later period, but neither was this permanent; a purely Arab State, and that, too, founded upon religion, can be kept together for any length of time only by rulers of uncommon efficiency. At present the Wahhabite kingdom, properly so called, is powerless; it is subject to that of the Shammar, which lies to the north of it, and the prince of which, Ibn Rashid, a ruler of extensive tracts, is also a professor of Wahhabitism, though with none of the fiery zeal of earlier times. The Wahhabites are no longer a menace to Damascus and Bagdad. Their reform of Islam has remained confined to Arabia, and even there is hardly likely to operate long. But it has rightly been remarked as noteworthy, that this purely Semitic religious movement with all its energy has produced nothing new; it has been directed exclusively towards the repristination of pure monotheism.

For a considerable time Islam has seemed to be in a state of deep humiliation. Even the great Moslem kingdoms are without strength. By far the larger portion of the Moslem world is ruled by Christian powers. But let us not deceive ourselves as to the vitality of this religion. How many catastrophes has it not already survived! Immediately on the death of its founder the revolt of the Arabs threatened it with extinction. Soon afterwards, from being a spiritual State (as corresponded with its essential nature), it was changed into a secular one, and it survived the transformation. Its united empire was broken up and fell into fragments. The Moslems tore one another to pieces in fierce party warfare. The Karmatians carried off the black stone, the palladium of Islam, and for years made impossible the pilgrimage, one of the most important expressions of Mohammedan life. The heathen Mongols destroyed the caliphate, and long ruled over half of the lands of Islam.

Instead of being able to carry on the holy war against the unbeliever, one Moslem State after another is in these days either directly or indirectly falling under infidel control. But the faith that there is no God but Alláh, and that Mohammed is his Prophet, and all that is involved in this faith, remain unshattered. It would seem as if Islam were now in course of being driven out from the Balkan peninsula, even as it was long ago compelled to quit Sicily and Spain; whether it shall be able to maintain its hold everywhere in Asia and North Africa may be questioned; but in the Indian Archipelago it is steadily advancing, among the nomads of Central Asia it has gained strength just as the Russian sway has extended, and in Central Africa it is achieving conquest upon conquest. Precisely because the consolidation of European power in the lands of Nigritia brings with it greater security of intercourse, it may be presumed that the spread of Islam will be powerfully promoted there. But in the dark continent, which offers no favourable soil for Christianity, the acceptance even of Islam means progress from the deepest savagery to a certain culture, however limited and limiting, and to association with peoples who in the Middle Ages were higher in civilisation than the people of Europe. Perhaps slave-hunting and kidnapping will come to an end only when practically all the negro peoples shall have become Moslem.

If religion among the higher classes in Turkey is, undeniably, sometimes a matter of doubt or even of ridicule, more as the result of frivolity than as a consequence of serious thinking, and if similar phenomena manifest themselves still more frequently among the light-minded, bright, and unconscientious Persians, the firmness of the faith nevertheless remains unshaken with the vast mass of the people, even with those who are remiss in the discharge of ritual duties. Without any qualms of doubt, peacefully resigned

to the will of God, the Moslem sees his kingdoms go down. But we must also be prepared to find the strength of this faith continuing to maintain itself in frightful outbursts of fanaticism. If the occurrences in Egypt during the last rebellion showed little of death-defying courage and energy, that is to be attributed to the languid temper of the Egyptians; a great rising in Syria or Asia Minor might conceivably give Europeans a good deal more trouble. The best strength of the great Indian Mutiny of 1856 lay with the Moslems. The Moslem subjects of Britain and other European States sigh for the moment when they shall be able to shake off the yoke of the infidel. The successes of the "dervishes" in the Soudan may serve to warn Europeans of the strength that still resides in the warrior zeal of Islam.

IV.

CALIPH MANSÚR.

THE Arabs had established a vast empire with great rapidity, but to keep it together was hardly possible so long as its purely Arab character was retained. The reigning house of the Omayyads had to contend with very dangerous political and religious antipathies; and, perhaps a greater danger, the Arabs, who now controlled a world-empire, kept up without abatement the old untractableness and exaggerated zeal for the honour of family and tribe which they had developed in their desert life. The only difference now was, that their tribal patriotism had reference not so much to the small subdivisions in which the Bedouin lives, as to large tribal groups, the unity of which was in part no more than a fiction. If a governor leaned upon the Yemenites, the Modarites forthwith became his open or secret foes; any prominent official who belonged to the Kais group was hated by the Kelb. And almost every one in authority was ready to overlook in his tribesmen even those offences which, in members of another tribe, he severely, and rightly, punished. The Omayyad Caliphs accordingly found the utmost difficulty in keeping down the private feuds even of the Arabs of Syria, who were generally loyal; and their troubles were much greater in the remoter provinces, where there was little or no sympathy with the reigning house. The kingdom of the Omayyads was never in a state of tolerable order and prosperity unless there was an eminently astute and energetic governor in Babylonia (Irak) as well as a capable

sovereign in Syria. For the seat of supreme power was tied to Syria by the circumstances under which the dynasty had arisen; while the eastern provinces, too remote to be controlled from Damascus, were necessarily administered from Irák. All steady order ceased with the reign of the talented but utterly profligate Walíd II. (743–744). The struggles of various Omayyads with one another did the rest.

The ground had long before been undermined by the efforts of a religious party hostile to the Omayyads. The descendants of Alí, who, as blood-relations, in fact descendants, of the Prophet (through his daughter Fátima), considered themselves to have the nearest right to the throne, alienated from the Omayyads the hearts of many of their subjects. There was an expectation that the house of Mohammed, should it once attain to the supreme authority, would fill the earth as full of righteousness as it was now full of iniquity. The pious professors and followers of the divine law had little liking for the rule of the reigning house, which, for all its forms of religion, was purely secular. And though the risings of the Alids were unsuccessful through the bungling of their leaders, the very failure cost the Omayyads dear; for the incapable grandchildren of the Apostle of God, who had fallen or been put to death, in the eyes of the people became martyrs, whose blood cried to heaven for vengeance.

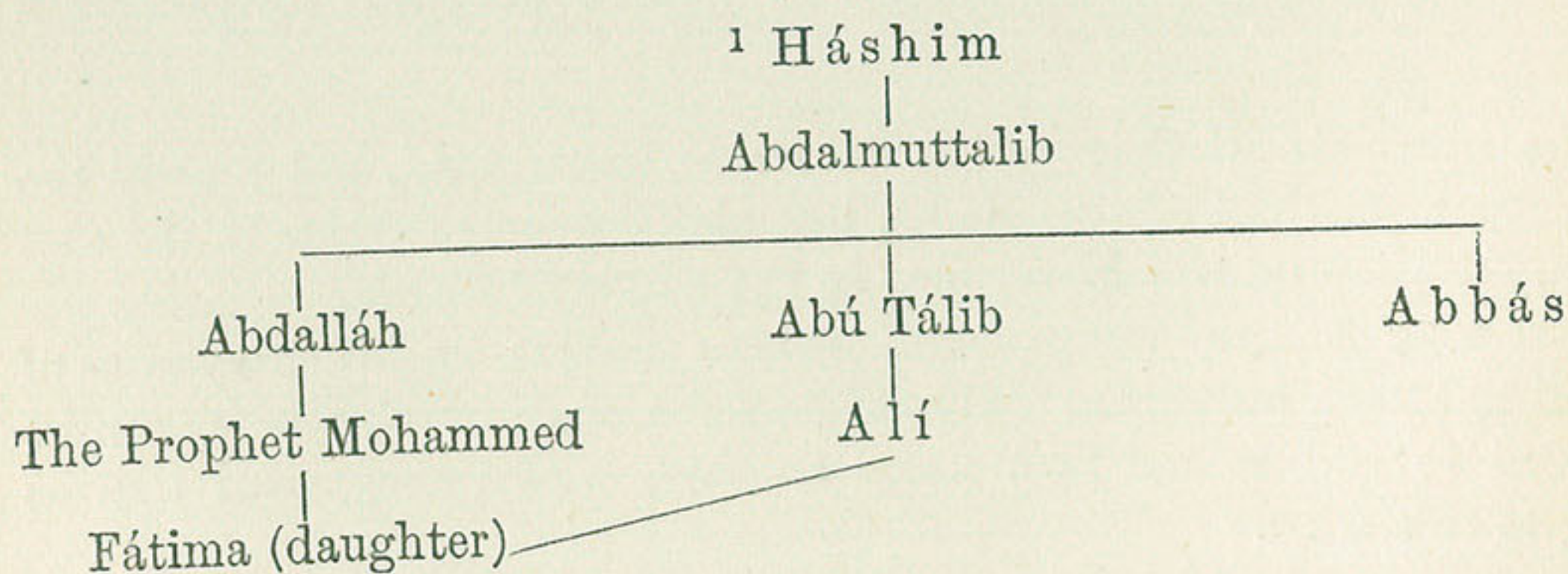
In perfect quietness, meanwhile, another family was setting itself to work to gather in the fruits of the efforts of the Alids for its own behalf,—their cousins, the Abbásids. Abbás, from whom they traced their descent, had held a somewhat ambiguous attitude towards his nephew the Prophet. His son Abdalláh passes for one of the strongest pillars of religious tradition; but, in the eyes of unprejudiced European research, he is only a crafty liar. Abdalláh's grandson Mohammed, and the sons of the latter, so far as they are

known to us, combined considerable practical vigour with their hereditary cunning and duplicity. They lived in deep retirement in Humaina, a little place to the south of the Dead Sea, seemingly far withdrawn from the world, but which, on account of its proximity to the route by which Syrian pilgrims went to Mecca, afforded opportunities for communication with the remotest lands of Islam. From this centre they carried on the propaganda in their own behalf with the utmost skill. They had genius enough to see that the best soil for their efforts was the distant Khorásán,¹—that is, the extensive north-eastern provinces of the old Persian empire. The majority of the people there had already gone over to Islam; many had embraced the new faith with ardour, and had even fought bravely on its behalf against the unbelieving populations to the north and east. But the converted Persians were held in little esteem by the dominant Arabs, who looked on them as “clients,”² and refused to accord to them the full rights to which they had a claim as Moslems. The internal wars of the Arabs, moreover, raged in those parts with exceptional violence. To the Persians it was a matter of indifference whether the Yemenites or Modarites or Rabía were victorious; but they keenly felt the devastation of their country, and their own subordinate position; and thus a great proportion of the newly-converted Persians were filled with hatred towards their Arab “brethren in the faith.” This hatred was easily turned against the reigning house, which was named as the source of all unrighteousness, and whose secular disposition

¹ By the Khorásán of that period we are to understand, not merely the modern Persian province of this name, but also extensive tracts to the east and north. Its capital was Merv, now in the hands of Russia.

² At that time even the noblest non-Arabian convert, on his acceptance of Islam, had to attach himself as “client” to some Arab tribe; whereupon he was entitled to add to his own name another, which designated him as belonging to this tribe.

must certainly have been very offensive to the truly pious. The Persians, moreover, were naturally inclined to legitimism, and to enthusiastic attachments to spiritual leaders. Accordingly they were drawn over in multitudes to the doctrine that "the house of the Prophet" alone is called to dominion over his kingdom and his Church. Well-chosen emissaries of the Abbásids canvassed for the family of the Prophet, for the Háshimids, by which expression were understood, in the first instance, the descendants of Alí. Other watchwords and fictitious sayings of Mohammed were also successfully put in circulation. Gradually and furtively the place of the Alids was taken by the Abbásids, who undoubtedly also were descendants of Háshim, and who, since descent from Mohammed in the female line was represented as unimportant, could claim to be just as nearly related to the Prophet as the others.¹ The main point was, that the adherents secured for the cause became entirely attached to the persons of the emissaries, so that the latter were able in the end to direct their followers as they pleased. To secure adherents there seems to have been no scruple about favouring all sorts of objectionable opinions (partly due to a mixing up of the old with the new religion) inconsistent with the fundamental laws of Islam. Of details of the progress of the agitation we know little; but so much is certain: that it was very active, that the emissaries had a regular organisation, and that frequent communication was maintained between Khorásán and the centres from



which the wires were pulled—Cufa, the residence of the supreme agent, and Humaima, the home of the Abbásids. The yearly pilgrimages gave special opportunities for meeting without arousing suspicion; many important consultations may possibly have taken place in Mecca itself. Operations had long been carried on in this way, when the head of the Abbásids—either Mohammed, who died in 743, or his son Ibráhím, it is not quite certain which—discovered the man who was destined to bring the movement to a successful issue. This was Abú Moslim, a freedman whose country and descent are unknown, but who in any case was not of Arabian blood. This quondam slave united with an agitator's adroitness and perfect unscrupulosity in the choice of his means the energy and clear outlook of a general and statesman, and even of a monarch. Within a few years he brought it about that the black banner of the Abbásids was openly unfurled (in the beginning of summer, 747). In a perfidious but masterly manner he contrived still further to foment the mutual antipathies of the Arab parties which were openly at war with each other, although Nasr, the governor, was not the only one who clearly saw that nothing less was at stake than the supremacy, and even the very life, of the Arabs. Ibráhím is even said to have given orders to Abú Moslim that, so far as possible, no Arab should be left alive in Khorásán. Soon the brave Nasr was compelled to quit the country; and immediately afterwards he died (November 748). The Khorásánians pressed steadily forwards. The chief control was in the hands of Abú Moslim, although he remained in Khorásán; not only the Persians, but also the Arab leaders, put themselves under the command of the freedman, a thing unheard-of for Arab pride. It should be added, that the Arabs of Khorásán undoubtedly had a strong strain of Persian blood, and that they had taken on much that was Persian.

A large portion of Southern Persia had not long before been seized by another of the Hášhimids, Abdalláh, son of Moáwiya, a descendant of Alí's brother Jaafar. He had had the support of the Abbásids. But this thoroughly unworthy person (for such he seems to have been) was overcome by the generals of the Omayyad Merwán II., and betook himself in flight to Abú Moslim. He had served his turn, in so far as he had thrown the empire into wilder confusion, and called the attention of the people to the family of the Prophet; now as a rival he might prove inconvenient. Abú Moslim therefore first cast him into prison, and afterwards took his life.

Babylonia, the most important province of the empire, was occupied by the troops of the Abbásids. Once more a great battle took place close to the field where Alexander had gained his final victory over Darius (middle of January 750). The men belonging to Yemenite tribes, who formed the majority of the Omayyad troops, were disinclined to stake their lives on behalf of Merwán, who was not favourably disposed towards them; and accordingly the battle was lost. Over and above this, there now arose internal struggles in Syria and Egypt, which facilitated the work of the Abbásid troops. Merwán, a tried warrior, had to flee from place to place, and soon afterwards fell, almost deserted, at the village of Búsír,¹ in Middle Egypt (August 750).

The head of the Abbásids was now no longer Ibráhím; he had been thrown into prison by Merwán when his complicity with Abú Moslim was discovered, and, shortly before the triumph of his party, had either died or been murdered in captivity. His brothers had fled to Cufa, and kept themselves in hiding there. Here, immediately after the occupation of the city by the Khorásánians, and before the last blow had been struck against Merwán, Abul-Abbás,

¹ Probably on the right bank of the Nile, opposite Eshmúnein.

now the head of the house, was proclaimed Caliph (November or December 749). In his inaugural sermon in the principal mosque, Abul-Abbás designated himself as Saffáh, *i.e.* "the bloodshedder;" and to this dreadful name, which has since been his standing title, he did ample justice. All Omayyads were ruthlessly struck down. The watchword was: "Vengeance for the Háshimids slain by the Omayyads." It is, of course, possible that the Abbásids, themselves Arabs, may really have had Arab feelings in the matter, and required vengeance for the blood of their relations as such. But the actual motives were nevertheless other than these; their object was to excite the mob against the Omayyads, as being impious men and worthy of death, and to make their whole house absolutely harmless. To this end no violence or treachery was spared. Even those members of the house who had fled for mercy to the conquerors, and had been received by them, nay more, even those who had yielded only on the solemn promise that no harm should befall them, were put to death; and the Abbásids, the Caliph himself, as well as his uncles, and particularly Abdalláh, who led the pursuit of the defeated Merwán, personally gloated over the murder of their adversaries. And yet Abdalláh had only a short time before experienced an act of clemency when, while taking part in the rebellion of the Jaafarids, he had fallen into the hands of Merwán's general. Notwithstanding the fierceness of the massacre, a few members of this very numerous Omayyad family managed to escape. Some kept themselves in hiding, and by and by were ignored or forgiven; others made their escape into the far west, where the Caliph's power did not extend. Nor was it only Omayyad blood that was freely shed at the establishment of the Abbásid rule, whether to excite terror among its subjects, or because the new ruler was hardly able to control the lust for slaughter in his victorious troops. Syria, however, did not accom-

moderate itself to the new dynasty without trouble. Various disturbances gave the conquerors a great deal to do from the very first. In particular, it proved an arduous task to suppress those insurgents who had placed at their head Abú Mohammed, a descendant of the first two Omayyad Caliphs.

Shortly after the death of Merwán, his last powerful supporter, Ibn Hobaira, who had taken possession of the important town of Wásit, on the lower Tigris, made his peace after he had been blockaded for a long time by Mansúr, the brother of the Caliph. By both these princely brothers he had been promised not only life, but continuance in his high office. But so lofty a personage, with a large body of adherents, who had already asserted a very independent position as governor of Babylon, harmonised ill with the new condition of affairs. Mansúr accordingly, in concert with his brother, caused him to be put to death; solemn promises and oaths had no meaning for these men. This was done, it is said, on the advice of Abú Moslim. It is more probable that Abú Moslim had a hand in making away with Abú Salama, "the vizier of the Háshimids," who from Babylonia had directed the movement in Khorásán, and who had rendered great services in connection with the change of dynasty. It is alleged that—perhaps in full consistency with his original orders—he had, after the death of Ibráhím, shown more inclination to the Alids than to the Abbásids. In any case he stood in the way of Abú Moslim.

Saffáh appears to have been a strong ruler, who, had he lived longer, might perhaps himself have done for the empire what it was left for his follower to achieve. Great differences between the caliphate of the Abbásids and that of the Omayyads immediately emerged, due in part to the manner in which it had been set up, and in part to the personal character of the rulers. The seat of empire was transferred to Babylonia, the true centre. The power of the sovereign

rested primarily on Persian troops, which were more amenable to discipline than Arabian. The Caliph no longer needed to take much account of the tribal jealousies of the Arabs, although he occasionally utilised them for his own ends. Hence he could act much more autocratically than his predecessors; the lands of the caliphate now formed much more of a political unity than before. In short, on the old soil of the great Asiatic empires, another was once more set up, which at the most was only half Arab in its character, the rest being Persian.

Even in Saffáh's lifetime Mansúr took a prominent place as an influential counsellor, and as governor of great provinces, but it is hardly likely that the Caliph allowed himself to be led entirely by his brother.

Abú Moslim, whose people were blindly devoted to him, and who held sway like a prince in Khorásán, in 754 desired to be the leader of the pilgrimage, that is, to represent the Caliph himself before the entire Islamite world. Saffáh, however, quickly instigated Mansúr to seek this dignity for himself, so that he had to express his regret that the office had been already bestowed, and that Abú Moslim could only go as a companion to Mansúr. It seems that in the course of the pilgrimage friction arose between the parvenu who had founded the new empire and the no less self-conscious brother of the Caliph; in any case, Abú Moslim did not by any means overdo the part of a devoted servant. By his liberality he so won over the Bedouins that they declared it a pure slander to call this man an enemy of the Arabs. The two were already on their return journey when news arrived that Saffáh had died (on Sunday, 9th June 754)¹ at Anbár (north of Cufa), and that Mansúr had been proclaimed Caliph on the same day.

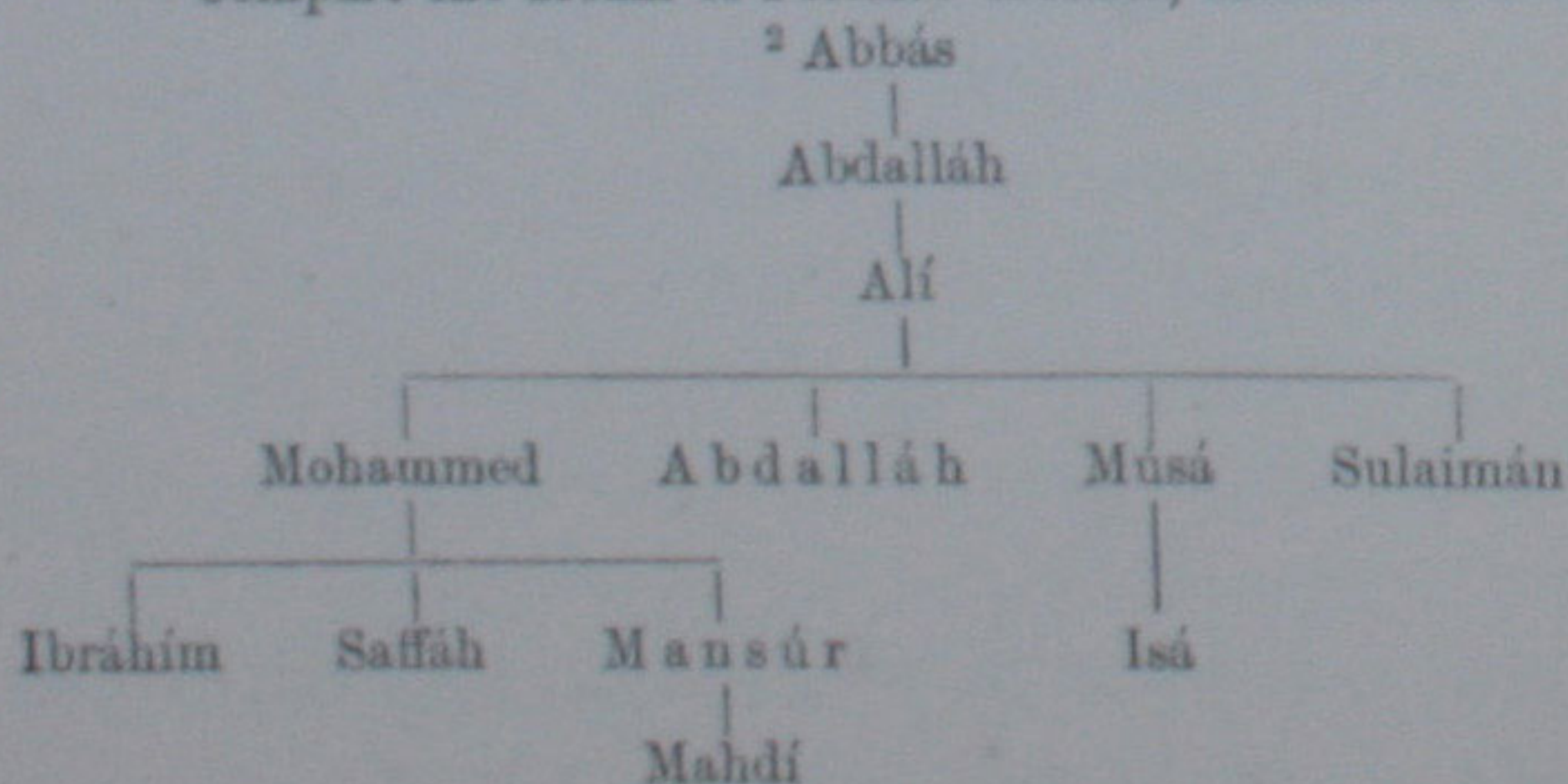
Abú Jaafar Abdalláh al Mansúr (*i.e.* "the victorious") was

¹ According to others, on Saturday, 8th June.

at that time a man of over forty. Of his outward appearance we learn that he was tall and thin, and that he had a narrow face, lank hair, thin beard, and brownish complexion. What his inward character was is shown by his deeds. His mother, the Berber slave Salláma, during her pregnancy dreamed, it is said, that she had brought forth a lion, to which other lions came from all quarters to render homage.¹ A lion, truly, who tore in pieces all who came within his reach, unless they acknowledged him as their master!

Mansúr can hardly have reached the neighbourhood of the Euphrates when he learned that he had a very dangerous rival. His uncle Abdalláh,² then posted in the far north of Syria ready to march against the Byzantines, laid claim to the throne. His pretensions, perhaps, were not altogether unfounded, for it is not so certain as is usually asserted that Saffáh nominated Mansúr as his successor. It was indeed unfortunate that the dynasty was hardly established before it was torn asunder by disputes about the succession. As Abú Moslim with the Khorásánians held by Mansúr, Abdalláh was compelled to rely upon the Arab troops of Syria and Mesopotamia, and on this account caused thousands of Khorásánians who were with him to be massacred. Humaid, son of the Arabian general Kahtaba, who five years previously had led the Khorásánian troops from victory to

¹ Compare the dream of Pericles' mother, Herod. vi. 131.



victory, suddenly went over from Abdalláh to Mansúr, and rendered to the latter conspicuous service both in this and in many subsequent wars. Abú Moslim brought an end to the war which had been going on for some months in Mesopotamia by a victory gained on 26th (or 27th) November 754. Abdalláh fled to his brother Sulaimán, Mansúr's governor in Basra (near the mouth of the Tigris), and remained here in hiding for some time.

Abú Moslim thus had not only set up the Abbásid dynasty, but also had saved the throne for Mansúr. A man who had done so much could do still more, and was a danger to his master. Mansúr resolved to get rid of Abú Moslim, a course which is said to have suggested itself even to Saffáh. How they first fell out is told in various ways. It is probable that the Caliph nominated Abú Moslim to be the governor of the western provinces of Syria and Egypt in order to keep him at a distance from Khorásán, where his power had its root, but that the latter did not agree to this. In any case he had noted that Mansúr wished to deprive him of influence, and he resolved accordingly, without reference to Mansúr, to return to Khorásán. Of his own soldiers he was perfectly sure, even in a campaign against the Caliph. At this stage a correspondence took place between the two. Abú Moslim in the end suffered himself to be befooled by the sworn assurances of Mansúr (with a slight admixture of threats), and came with but a small following to the Caliph at the "city of the Romans," a decayed place that had belonged to the Seleucia-Ctesiphon group of Persian royal cities. Mansúr received him graciously, but after having made sure of him, caused him to be slain before his eyes, and the body to be cast into the Tigris (February 755).

The removal of the powerful individuality, of whom we hear that his followers would have sacrificed their lives and

their very souls for him, but upon whose fidelity the Caliph could hardly rely, was a political necessity. An intimate of Mansúr's is said to have quoted to him against Abú Moslim the verse of the Koran in which it is said that if the world held other gods besides Alláh it would go to ruin (súra 21, 22). Such a prince as Mansúr could tolerate no rival in the kingdom. Nor can any great claim upon our pity be made for Abú Moslim, who shrank from no resource of violence or treachery, whether against enemies or against inconvenient friends, and of whom it is said (no doubt with huge exaggeration), that he caused as many as 600,000 prisoners to be slain. Mansúr gave proof of admirable astuteness when he overreached the cunningest of the cunning. But that his conduct was abominable goes without saying.

The murder was by no means without danger for its perpetrator. The soldiers indeed whom Abú Moslim had brought with him were restrained from making any disturbance, partly by their dismay at the accomplished fact, and partly by a lavish distribution of money. But mutterings were heard in Khorásán. There the dead man had thousands who clung to him with religious attachment. In fact, there were many who could not believe in his death, and who expected him to return once more as a Messiah. A Persian named Sampádh excited in that very year a great revolt in Khorásán to avenge Abú Moslim. What is reported of him, that he was a professor of the old Persian religion, is improbable; he may have belonged to one of the half Persian sects, which the majority certainly could not regard as Mohammedan. In any case the revolt was a popular movement. Sampádh advanced far towards Media, but thereupon was defeated by Jahwar, whom Mansúr had despatched against him, and slain somewhere near the spot where the last of the Dariuses met his

end. The victorious general had made himself master of the treasures of Abú Moslim, and now in turn himself rebelled, but was quickly overcome, and put to death (755 or 756). Khorásán was once more securely in the hands of the Caliph.

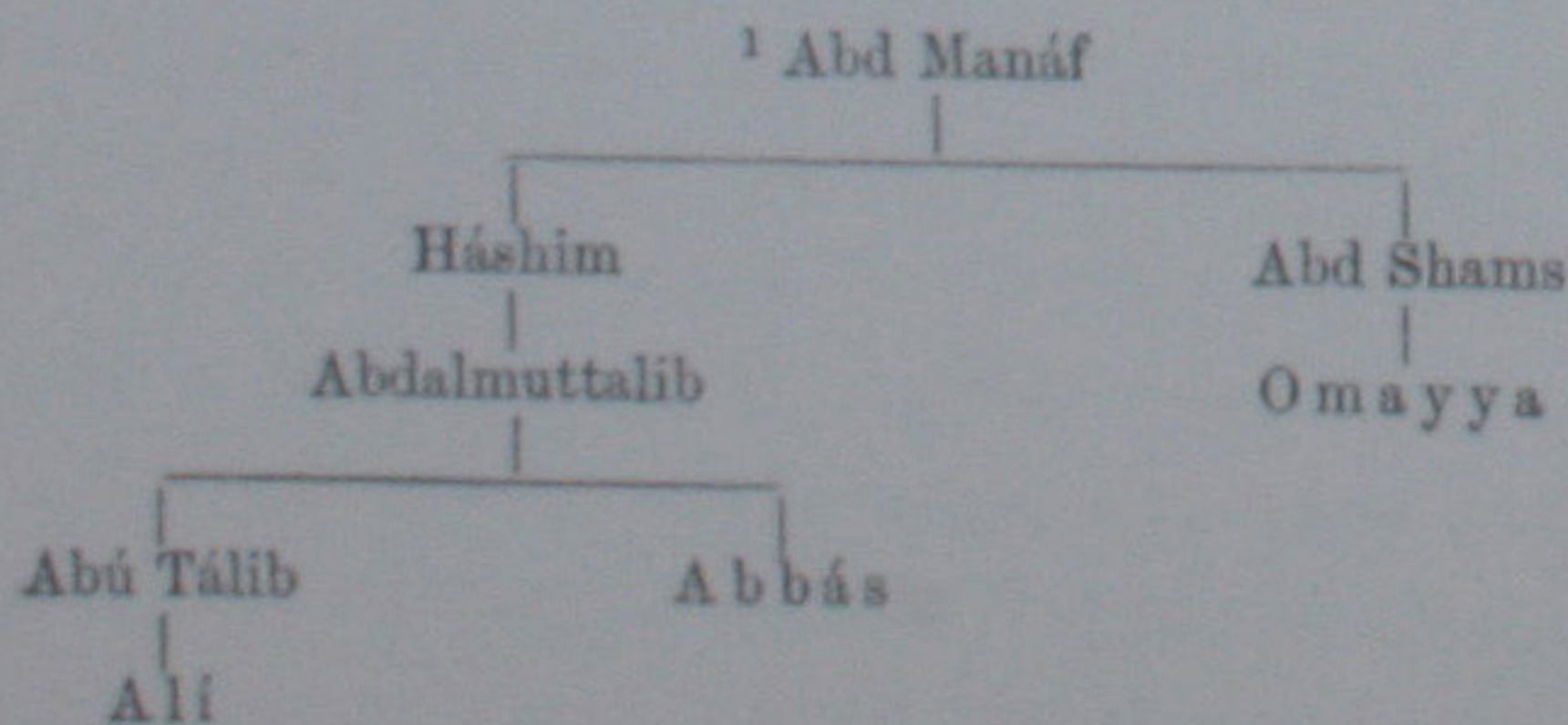
In other directions also disturbances of various kinds occurred. The Kharijites,¹ who had no reason for regarding the rule of the Prophet's kinsmen as juster or more in accordance with the laws of God than that of the Omayyads, fought on for their ideals in various parts of the empire, with few followers indeed, but with a courage that defied death. Thus a certain Kharijite, Mulabbid, in Mesopotamia gave much trouble to the armies of the Caliph, and was only at last overcome in 756 by Házim, perhaps the ablest of Mansúr's generals.

A handful of strange mortals brought the Caliph into a very difficult position, probably in 757-8. The Ráwendí, who are guessed to have been connected with Abú Moslim, not only believed in the transmigration of souls, but had also taken into their heads that Mansúr was God Himself. They accordingly betook themselves to his capital, and set themselves in an attitude of worship around his palace. Mansúr, indeed, was quite of the mind that it was better to have people obey him and go to hell in consequence, than earn heaven by rebellion against him; but the Commander of the Faithful durst not tolerate such conduct as this of the Ráwendí, unless he wished to provoke a universal rising of all Moslems against him. He accordingly caused a number of the fanatics to be imprisoned. But they did not take this well; they freed their comrades and now assailed the life of the Caliph, who only had a limited guard at hand. In mastering them, which he did only with difficulty, he displayed great courage. In the struggle

¹ See above, p. 80.

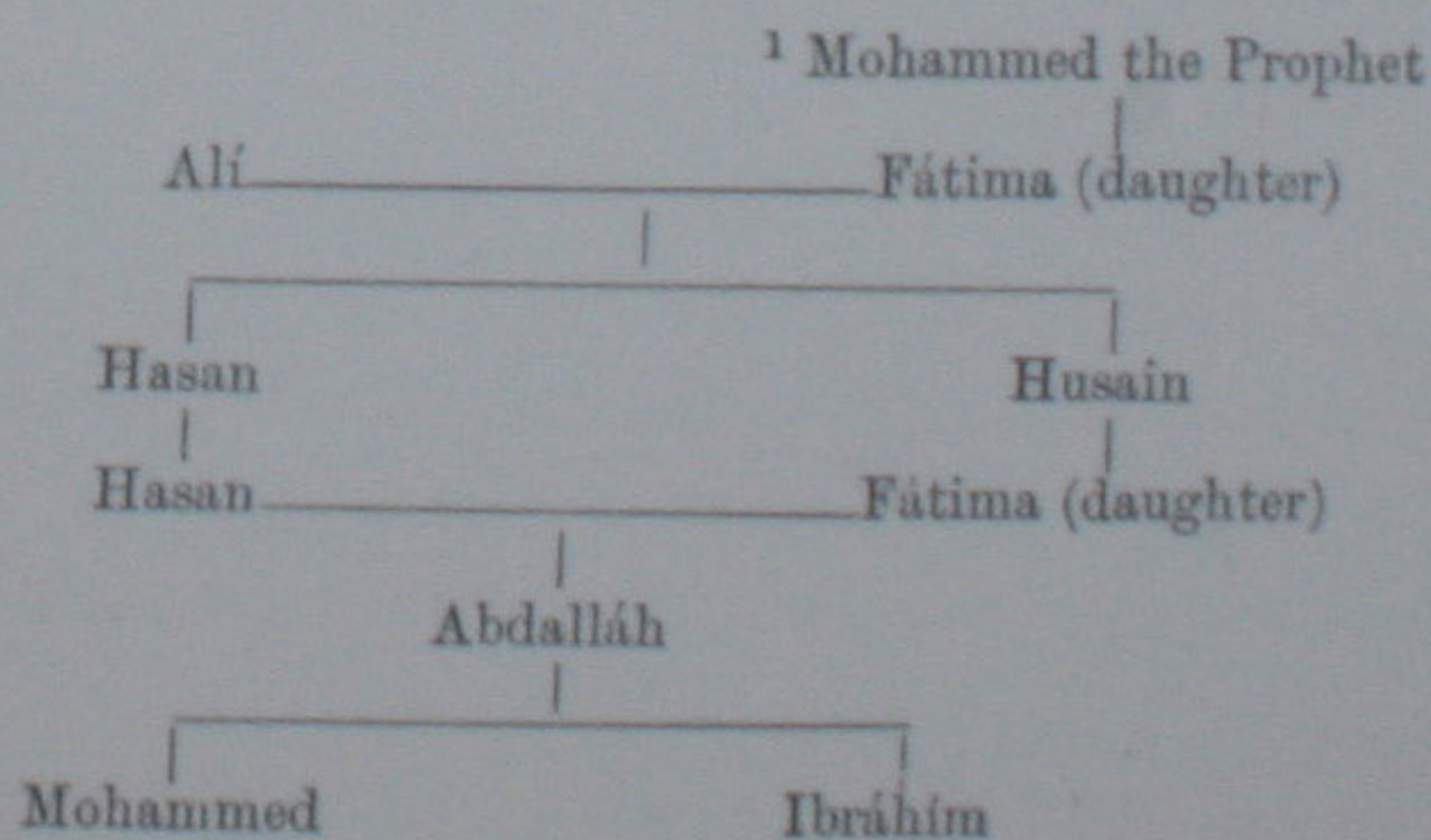
there came to the front one who had been a conspicuous general under the Omayyads, afterwards had kept himself in concealment, and now seized this opportunity to gain favour with the Caliph. This was Maan, son of Záida, famed for his bravery, and still more for his liberality, but at the same time stern and pitiless towards his foes. Mansúr, whom it thoroughly suited to intermingle pure Arabs with his Khorásán generals of mixed Arabian and Persian origin, willingly took the fire-eater into his grace. Shortly afterwards he sent him into Yemen, where, during his nine years' governorship, he subdued all opponents with much bloodshed. Subsequently he sent him to south-eastern Persia, where he was surprised and slain by the Kharijites.

The dynasty of the Omayyads once overthrown, the Alids saw that they had not gained much. It made no difference to them whether their nearer cousins, the descendants of Abbás,¹ or whether their slightly more distant kinsmen, those of Omayya, possessed the sovereignty; the name of Háshim was not enough. When the house of the Prophet had been canvassed for, every one in the first instance had thought of his actual descendants; these last now deemed, not unrightly, that they had been defrauded of their birthright. It is probable that even the Abbásids, in the secret negotiations, at an early stage had at one time freely acknowledged the Alid Mohammed,



son of Abdalláh, as head of the entire house, and as the future Caliph. Why this particular man should have been selected from among the very numerous descendants of Alí, we are unable to say. One advantage, which fell into the scale when a legitimist claim was being urged, he undoubtedly had—namely, that the females also who came into his genealogy were all free Arabs of good family, and that the Hasanid Mohammed was through his grandmother a descendant also of Husain, and thus in a twofold way descended from the Prophet.¹ His father, who might have advanced still stronger claims, was perhaps over-timid or too little ambitious.

The Abbásids knew too well how it was that they themselves had reached the throne to be other than exceedingly jealous of the hereditary advantages of their cousins. One and another Alid now and again expressed tolerably openly his opinion of the situation. And the Mohammed just mentioned, as well as his brother Ibráhím, had betrayed themselves by refraining to come to pay their respects to Mansúr when he made the pilgrimage during the lifetime of his brother. If Mansúr actually had at one time acknowledged Mohammed's right to the caliphate, this would be to him a further motive for effort to have them in his power. But neither promises nor threats availed; they hid themselves in various quarters of Arabia, and are



said to have wandered about in even remoter lands. As their father when closely questioned persisted in declaring that he had no idea where his sons were living, Mansúr, when he came on pilgrimage once more to Mecca in April 758, caused him to be imprisoned. But even this did not avail. The governors in Medina either could not or would not find the fugitives. The inhabitants were attached to the Alids as being children of the Prophet and children of their city, and the majority of the officials even would doubtless have felt it to be a crime to deliver them up to destruction. Riyáh, however, of the tribe of Morra, who entered upon the governorship of Medina on 27th December 761, was free from any such weakness. He threatened the inhabitants with the same fate with which, sixty-eight years before, his fellow tribesman Moslim, son of Okba, had visited their rebellion against authority.¹ He caused all the nearer kinsmen of Mohammed's family, and many of his adherents, to be imprisoned, and also a number of the Juhaina Bedouins, among whose mountains, to the west of Medina,² it was supposed that the claimant was in hiding. When, at the close of another pilgrimage (March 762), Mansúr visited Medina, he took these captive Alids, including the father of the two brothers, and various other persons of consideration, and carried them with him in chains into Babylonia. Amongst these exiles was the step-brother of Abdalláh, who secretly, and in violation of his plighted word, had given his daughter in marriage to his nephew, the claimant, and is said also to have himself seemed formidable by reason of his personal distinction as a descendant of Caliph Othmán. A son of Mohammed's fell into the hands of the governor of Egypt, and was sent to the Caliph. We can readily believe what we read, that the treatment of these

¹ See above, p. 81.

² The Juhaina (Jehéne) have their home there to this day.

hostages was by no means indulgent;¹ several were put to death, many died in prison. But popular imagination, or personal hatred, has raised the colours of the picture; the story goes that the Caliph kept the bodies of all the murdered Alids in a great chamber to which no one had access but himself; in the ear of each was a label with his name and genealogy neatly written. Mansúr's son Mahdí ventured to use the key after his father's death, and, horrified at the discovery, caused them all to be buried.

Riyáh's diligent search seems at length to have led Mohammed to attempt a premature revolt, which towards the end of 762 broke out in Medina. Mohammed was proclaimed Caliph, the captives set free, the governor and other adherents of Mansúr thrown into prison. The famous doctor of Islam, Málik, son of Anas, gave his decision that the oath of allegiance to the Abbásids, having been obtained by force, was of no binding obligation. This is characteristic at once for the ethics of Islam and for the view of the rule of the Abbásids which was taken by those persons who were, properly speaking, the guardians of religion and of the sacred law.² At Málik's dictum everybody went over to Mohammed. Even the descendants of Abú Bekr and other men of Koraish, who had formerly distinguished themselves at the founding of the empire of Islam, for the most part joined him. So also did the poet Abú Adí al Ablí, who belonged to a side branch of the house of Omayya. These

¹ During the journey Abdalláh is reported to have shouted to Mansúr: "We did not so treat the prisoners we took from you at Badr!" This was a bitter allusion to the fact that Abdalláh's ancestor Alí had been a champion of Islam in the Prophet's very first battle, while the ancestor of the Abbásids, who now wished to be taken as representing the rights of the Prophet's house, took at that period the side of the heathen, and with many of his comrades had been taken prisoner, but had been mercifully treated.

² Historical tradition, on the whole, is not indeed against the Abbásids, but it is at the same time very favourable to the Alids. This is shown even by the great fulness of detail with which it records all Alid rebellions.

individuals, however, seem to have inherited but little of the statesmanlike and warlike ability of their ancestors. From the very first many clear-headed men saw that the enterprise had small prospect of success. When a volunteer courier, in the extraordinarily short space of nine days, brought news of the insurrection to Mansúr at Cufa, he was far from dissatisfied with this clearing of the situation. "Now, at last," said he, "I have the fox out of his hole!" Medina was of all places least suited for the foundation of an anti-caliphate,—for this, among other reasons, that the whole region was dependent on imports from Egypt, the supply of which was now at once cut off. Mansúr sent his cousin Isá, son of Músá, with a small but tried army against Medina. Mohammed proved no more equal to his task than the other Alid pretenders had done. Instead of taking the advice of persons skilled in war, and assuming the offensive, he remained within the city of the Prophet, the sanctity of which he took to be his best defence: once, in a dream, it had appeared to the Prophet under the figure of a breastplate. By way of fortification he caused the fosse of the Prophet to be restored; a work which indeed had filled with astonishment the Arabs combined against Mohammed,—men who had had no experience of war on a large scale, or indeed of any kind of strenuous united action,—but which was mere child's play for the veterans of Khorásán. Isá had already, by letters, won over from Mohammed various important persons. The great bulk of his followers quietly melted away as the foe drew near. Isá paused for three days before Medina, to obtain, if possible, an amicable settlement by negotiation, and operations then began. The fosse was bridged with some house-doors. A woman of the family of Abbás secretly caused a large black cloth to be hoisted on the tallest minaret; upon this all the pious townsmen immediately rushed to the conclusion that the Khorásánians

had entered the city by the rear, and there had planted the black banner of the Abbásids. Only a few, including a company of Juhaina Bedouins, stood by Mohammed. Mohammed, a tall and handsome man, fell after a heroic struggle late on the afternoon of Monday, 6th December 762. He had caused the captive Riyáh to be put to death immediately before. One more addition was thus now made to the roll of Alid "martyrs," who had inherited from their ancestors courage and bravery, but with these also an incapacity for generalship and supreme command. The supporters of the house surnamed Mohammed as "the pure soul."

Isá, obeying orders, showed comparative clemency. It was of importance to the descendants of Abbás that the sanctity of the city of the Prophet, to whom they traced back their rights, should not be violated too grossly. Some prominent participators in the rebellion, indeed, were put to death, or else imprisoned or subjected to severe corporal chastisement. The goods of that branch of the Alid family to which the pretender had belonged were confiscated. According to the custom of the time, his head was brought to the Caliph, who sent it by courier-post round the provinces as an awful example. It arrived in Egypt in the spring of 763, just in time to check a rising of the Alid party there.

While affairs in Medina were still undecided, the Caliph learned that Ibráhím had risen in the interests of his brother Mohammed at Basra (Monday, 22nd November 762). Mansúr had previously come to know that Ibráhím was in hiding there, and had taken some precautionary measures accordingly; but he nevertheless seems to have been greatly taken aback by this new insurrection. Basra was not merely a wealthy trading city, but also, from a military point of view, very different in importance from Medina.

To a man of enterprise it offered great opportunities; from it as a basis, the Tigris and Euphrates could be blockaded, and the maritime provinces to the east comparatively easily mastered. Nor was this all; the very important city, in the immediate neighbourhood of which Mansúr had his residence, the turbulent Cufa, was thoroughly Alid in its sympathies. Should an Alid make his appearance in the neighbourhood with an army, an outbreak might be expected within it at any moment. In addition to this, the whole central province was in a state of ferment. But Mansúr had at the moment only a very few troops at hand. He afterwards confessed that it had been a great mistake to leave himself so bare, and declared that in future he would always retain at least 30,000 men beside him. He managed, however, to arrange them so that the Cufans considerably overestimated the number of his forces. The Cufans were, moreover, always much more heroic in words than in deeds. Mansúr, however, was not yet able to take the offensive against Ibráhím; but was constrained to suffer the latter, into whose hands the treasure of the rich province of Basra had fallen, to become master of Susiana and Persis also. Wásit also received the troops of Ibráhím. In the neighbourhood of this city, indeed, he was encountered by an officer of Mansúr's; and here the two armies stood, facing one another, until the whole struggle was ended.

Ibráhím deemed himself already a sovereign, and spent his time with a wife whom he had just married. Mansúr, on the other hand, never looked on the face of woman till the conflict was over. A contemporary praises, in eloquent words, the courage and determination which he maintained in his critical position. The advice to incite Cufa to revolt was set aside by Ibráhím because such a step would cause much harm to children, women, and other non-combatants. In the same spirit he forbade pursuit of fugitives, and so

forth. All this sounds very well, but is out of place in one who, for his own interests, is carrying on a rebellion which, under any circumstances, must involve much bloodshed, and can ultimately achieve success only by concentration of every energy. In such tenderness there is more of weakness than of humanity. "Thou desirest the sovereignty, yet darest not to slay!" some one said to him. *Pour faire des omelettes il faut casser les œufs.*

Soon after the middle of December 762, Ibráhím received the crushing intelligence of his brother's death. Yet if even now he had advanced immediately, he would still have been able to put Mansúr to great straits. But when he finally marched towards Cufa with barely 10,000 men, a sixth or a tenth of his strength on paper, Isá had already arrived at the head of a superior army. The Caliph had ordered troops from Media against Susiana, which soon captured the capital Ahwáz. In Bákhmrá, only sixteen hours south of Cufa, the army of Ibráhím, who had now assumed the title of Caliph, encountered the advancing host of Isá (Monday, 14th February 763). Mansúr's vanguard was driven back; but Isá held his ground, and the fugitives soon rallied. Mansúr's cousins, the sons of Sulaimán, fell upon Ibráhím's rear. After a fierce battle he fell, mortally wounded with an arrow. The Caliph caused his head also to be publicly exhibited, but would not suffer a bystander to treat the dead with contumely. He punished with frightful cruelty a coarse person who had spat on Ibráhím's head in his presence.

A victory for Ibráhím seems to have been widely counted upon. The famous blind poet, Basshár, no sectary, but an enlightened freethinker, had sent him a poem, in which he was praised, and Mansúr violently attacked; after the battle he so altered the poem, that he was able to give it out as an earlier production directed against Abú Moslim.

Ibráhím's death was a much greater relief to Mansúr than

that of Mohammed. He could now feel pretty sure that henceforth no Alid claimant could be of danger to him. True, he caused the whole family of those kinsmen of his to be strictly watched, but he was particularly willing to receive into his service any members of it whom he thought he could venture to trust. Perhaps in this the old Arab feeling for family ties had still some part; however that may be, it produced a good effect, as showing to subjects that both the main branches of the Háshimids still held by one another.

In Medina these struggles were followed by a little after-piece. Persian soldiers behaved with violence towards peaceful inhabitants. The people complained to the chief authority, but received no attention. Then active resistance began. The town butchers (black freedmen, it would seem) killed a soldier; from this it grew to a general *melée*. The negroes, who were numerous, both slaves and freedmen, drew together, and killed part of the little garrison. The governor fled. They even seized on the stores that had been set apart for the troops. The higher classes trembled before the wrath of Mansúr. It is noteworthy that two who specially exerted themselves for the restoration of order were a member of the Omayyad family and an official who had been imprisoned for his participation in the rising of Mohammed. The loyalty of the population towards the sovereign was strongly insisted on. The stores that had been plundered were given back or made good. The blacks suffered themselves to be persuaded by the representations of the most prominent citizens, and returned home. It was now seen to have been only a momentary outburst of temper, no social revolution. The governor returned at the earnest invitation of the notables. Four ringleaders had a hand chopped off—the punishment of thieves. The chief mischiefmaker perished in prison.

The rebellion of the Alids had interrupted Mansúr in a

great undertaking—the building of Bagdad. With the fall of the Omayyads it had become quite a matter of course that the rulers of the enormous empire, which extended from what is now Russian Turkestan and the Indus to Aden, Algeria, and Eastern Asia Minor,¹ should have their seat in Babylonia; but they had not as yet any definite capital. Mansúr lived a great deal in Háshimíya, founded by his predecessor, in the immediate neighbourhood of Cufa. But the Cufans, little attached as they were to the Abbásids, were no desirable neighbours. After the death of Ibráhím, Mansúr had preached them as sharp a sermon against their sins as any Omayyad governor could have delivered, and expressed in it his astonishment that the Omayyads had not long ago depopulated the accursed place as an abode of unbelievers. Moreover, nothing but a creation of his own could have satisfied Mansúr's haughty nature. After long deliberation he determined to build the new capital on a site on the west bank of the Tigris, then occupied by a little place named Baghdád.² So far as we can judge, the district had already before this time been brought into communication with the Euphrates by means of canals. Mansúr caused the connection to be notably extended and improved. The official name of the city here planted was Madínat-as-Salám ("the city of welfare"), but in practical use the old name Bagdad maintained exclusive currency. Mansúr's keen vision in the selection of this site may well be compared with that shown by Alexander when he founded the Egyptian Alexandria. At any rate, the situation of this city, which he

¹ In area Mansúr's empire was much greater than that of Rome at its greatest, in population much poorer, and, on that account, as well as for geographical reasons, much more difficult to govern.

² In this choice of site one element that came into consideration was the comparative absence of mosquitoes. Any one who has made acquaintance with the gnats of the Rhine or of Venice can form some faint conception of what the inhabitants of those hot countries, with their many pools and marshes, have to suffer from these little bloodsuckers.

called into being out of nothing, is so favourable that it soon became a world-city, with all the lights and shadows of such; a place which, Constantinople apart, had no rival, and which, even in the deep decline of all these countries since that time, and notwithstanding the irreparable injury suffered by Bagdad itself when it was destroyed by the Mongols in 1258, still remains a considerable city, by far the most important in the whole region of the Euphrates and Tigris. The work of building had been begun in early summer of 762. When news came of Mohammed's revolt, the walls were hardly six feet high. When Ibráhím approached, the rumour spread that he had gained a great victory. Hereupon the freedman who had been left in charge of the vast accumulations of building materials set fire to the stores of timber, that they might not fall into the hand of the enemy. As soon as the empire was once more pacified, Mansúr caused operations to be resumed. The building was carried out on a magnificent scale. Vast sums were expended by the Caliph in building residences for himself, his dependants, kinsfolk, and freedmen, as well as his officers and troops, and also in constructing mosques, government offices, aqueducts, canal bridges, and fortifications. He assigned allotments to the members of the reigning house and the grandees on which to build their houses. Troops of handicraftsmen, traders, and other settlers flocked to the spot. Houses of sun-dried brick cost but little, and it is possible that even directly, certainly indirectly, the trifling outlay of the builders was in many cases made good out of the public exchequer. Traders had, moreover, to pay a duty upon their shops. In 766 the great city was practically finished; its walls were completed in 768. Mansúr's city, as already mentioned, lay on the west bank of the river. Yet even he caused the opposite side, where now the main part of Bagdad lies, to be built on. "The camp" of his son Mahdí was there. It

seemed expedient to place a portion of the garrison on the other side of the river, so that, in case of necessity, the two divisions of the army might be able to hold one another in check. A peculiar police regulation was introduced later by Mansúr; he caused the markets, which were frequented by an excessive number of strangers, whose supervision was not easy, to be removed outside the city proper. Bagdad was strongly fortified. Mansúr caused other important inland cities also to be fortified in such a way that the garrisons might be able to cope with casual insurrections. This he did also in the case of the city of Ráfika, founded by him in 772 in the neighbourhood of Rakka (Callinicus), on the east bank of the middle Euphrates, in which he placed a garrison of Khorásánians.

The active superintendence which Mansúr gave to the building of his capital is only an instance of the whole system of his government, which was, as far as possible, personal. Posts were still conferred on a certain number of Arab nobles, who still sometimes showed the insubordination and tribal patriotism of their race, but he took care that they never overgrew himself. At the same time, he conferred the most important governorships upon various members of his own family, and made ample provision for all of them; but he kept them in strict subjection, and on occasion chastised them severely. He had absolutely trustworthy tools in his freedmen and clients of foreign extraction, to whom, to the horror of the aristocratic Arabs, he sometimes gave even the most important administrative offices. The governors and other high officials of the provinces were strictly overseen by special officers, entirely independent of them, who sent an uninterrupted series of couriers with their reports to the Caliph.¹ When, for

¹ The imperial posts were, as in the ancient Persian empire, well managed, —not, however, for general use, but only for that of government.

example, Mansúr on one occasion learned through this channel that the governor of Hadramaut (in the extreme south of Arabia) was more attentive to the pleasures of the chase than to the duties of his office, he deposed him at once. Even the actions of Mahdí, the heir-apparent, in his capacity as governor of the lands of the east were subjected to this kind of control. Thus, the Caliph having on one occasion learned that Mahdí had given to a certain poet much too great a reward for a laudatory copy of verses, he compelled the recipient to repay the greater part of the sum.¹ These officers, in addition to their special duties, reported all the more important law cases, and all occurrences of any particular interest; they further apprised the Caliph of the price of provisions; for, with a view to public peace and security, it was judged necessary to take prompt measures for the prevention of dearths.² So well was Mansúr informed as to the state of the provinces, that it was whispered he had a magic mirror in which he could see all his enemies. Still better is he characterised by his own words to his son: "Sleep not, for thy father has not slept since he came to the caliphate; when sleep fell upon his eyes, his spirit remained awake." He was an excellent financier. He is frequently reproached with avarice even; he was surnamed "the father of farthings," — a reproach which presumably came chiefly from those whose interests would have been served by that prodigality to favourites which has procured a very undeserved reputation for many Oriental sovereigns. In the same way other eminently good

¹ As Caliph, Mahdí afterwards restored the whole sum once more to the poet.

² It is much to be regretted that none of these reports have come down to us. Altogether, we have extremely few original documents for the history of the Arabian empire; nor are those very numerous even which have been preserved for us, either wholly, or in substance, in extant works. On the other hand, the narrative of the history of the caliphate is copious.

rulers, such as the Omayyads Abdalmelik and Hishám, have the reputation of avarice. Mansúr was certainly strict in money matters. The vast expenditures on the building of Bagdad he caused to be accounted for down to the last farthing, and he compelled his officials to refund little profits which they had made for themselves. He looked sharply after his tax collectors. In payment of the land tax he commanded that only certain kinds of the gold coins of the Omayyads which were quite of full weight should be received. Of course he followed also the old established principle of Oriental princes, according to which high officers who had gorged themselves were compelled to give back their accumulations.¹ Even one of such exalted position, and of such conspicuous service in the establishment and support of the Abbásid dynasty, as was the Persian² Khálid, son of Barmek, the founder of the Barmecide power, was subjected to an operation of this kind. He was called upon within a very short time to pay 3,000,000 dirhems (about £57,000); the Caliph in the end was satisfied with 2,700,000. Nay, even Mansúr's own brother Abbás was compelled to give up the money which he had squeezed from the people when governor of Mesopotamia, and was imprisoned besides. An Oriental State can never altogether prevent the abuse by which officials, small and great, enrich

¹ "At a time when no conception of any such thing as operation on the credit of the State had been thought of, whenever receipts fell short of expenditure, there was no other way of raising money but that of taking it where it was to be had. The State, that is, the Caliph, did this in the form of money fines, by taking from people of notorious wealth a portion, or the whole, of their generally ill-gotten gains. . . . The people, as a whole, found themselves under this system much better off than if ever-increasing burdens had been accumulated upon them by a universal raising of customs and dues, and for this reason, doubtless, I find no word of complaint on the subject in any of the historians of the period." A. von Kremer, in his exceedingly instructive dissertation, *Ueber das Einnahme budget des Abbasiden-Reiches vom Jahre 306 H.* (Vienna 1887) p. 11.

² More correctly, Bactrian.

themselves in illicit ways. On the occasion of a land survey at Basra it was discovered that a family of consideration, the descendants of the Prophet's freedman Abú Bekra, had increased their estate to a prodigious extent; the Caliph cut it down to a tenth. Here is a piece of the higher finance:¹ Mansúr ordered every inhabitant of Cufa to pay five dirhems (nearly two shillings); all, of course, complied. Having in this way ascertained their exact number, he imposed on all a poll-tax² of forty dirhems (fifteen shillings), and applied the money to the fortifications of the city. Whether this story is exact we will not undertake to say; in any case, it is probable that he sought by stringent measures to raise the revenue as much as possible, especially as he left to his successor an overflowing exchequer. It must, however, be considered that the comparative measure of quiet which he secured for most of the countries of his empire more than compensated for high taxation. How far the Christians' complaints of special fiscal oppression under Mansúr were justified, is a point we can hardly clear up now; perhaps they arose chiefly from the circumstance that he taxed churches and monasteries, which was not so very unreasonable. If he again reduced the tribute of the Cyprians to the sum originally fixed by treaty, this was probably due, not so much to a sense of justice as to policy; it was expedient that so exposed a possession should be considerately treated.

We are safe in saying that the rule of Mansúr, however hard, treacherous, or ruthless it may often have been, was on the whole a blessing to the empire. He could say of himself with truth, that he had done for the mass of the people the one thing which the masses needed; he had insisted on righteousness (in the administrative and judicial

¹ It recalls the anecdotes in the pseudo-Aristotelic *Oeconomica*, Bk. ii.

² So we read; but we may be sure that only heads of families are meant.

acts of his officials), had protected them against external attack, and had secured internal peace and quiet. The fruits of his exertions were reaped by his successors, who were by no means on a level with himself. The great prosperity of the empire under his grandson Hárún ar Rashíd is mainly due to Mansúr. It must be borne in mind, of course, that when we speak of an Oriental State, justice and internal peace must always be taken with large qualifications. Even the best of Oriental governments is extremely defective from our point of view.¹

The personal requirements of Mansúr were few. Born and bred in the deserts of Edom, he had no turn for such luxury as prevailed in the court of his son, and which afterwards often passed into extravagant profligacy. Like his predecessor, he seems to have been no slave of women. He drank no wine, and did not tolerate at his court music and song, which at that time were only too often the handmaids of debauchery. On the other hand, he was a friend of literature; he particularly admired the fine heroic histories of old Arabia. Himself a man of high mental endowments, he liked to associate with people of culture and intellect. He found pleasure also in the verses and drollery of the talented bibulous and frivolous negro Abú Duláma, who seems to have been more of a court fool than of a court poet. By natural gift and by cultivation, he became one of the most famous of Arabic orators. He it was, moreover, who first caused Greek scientific works to be translated into Arabic. He had at least a share in the rise of Arabic science which took place in his time.

The sovereign before whose wrath all the world bowed in shrinking fear, and of whose bloody severity frightful things were told, was under his own roof a kindly father and master. He knew how to appreciate frank, dignified

¹ In saying this, I do not mean that we Europeans live in a political Paradise.

demeanour in cases where this did not appear to carry danger. Thus he pardoned a Kharijite who was to have been beheaded in his presence, and whom he had assailed with insulting language, when the latter pointed out to him how unseemly such conduct was. And he fully appreciated the Omayyad sovereigns Moáwiya, Abdalmelik, and Hishám, as also that brave and unselfish servant of the Omayyads, the great Hajjáj.

The most devoted followers of the Alids were in the habit of asserting that they had derived from the Prophet a hereditary wisdom; this was one, or even the sole ground on which the sovereignty was claimed for them. Among the Persians, in particular, views of this kind had great currency. The first Abbásid claimants and sovereigns also made similar pretensions. It was the part of the good subject to believe that the heads of this house enjoyed a special divine illumination. But, apart from the individuals who had been won over by their emissaries at the beginning, this faith did not spread. Even the Arab Moslems were much more inclined to attribute such an advantage to the Alids than to the reigning family. Mansúr himself doubtless viewed this doctrine of his own special enlightenment much as an intelligent Roman emperor regarded the divine honours paid him by poets and subservient provincials. At any rate, his nature was cool, and religious zeal will be imputed to him by no one. So long as heterodox persons were not dangerous to the State he left them unmolested. Under his reign there were no persecutions of sectaries, such as his son Mahdí so soon afterwards instituted, and still less of the supporters of unpopular school opinions, such as occurred frequently at a later date. In his time, moreover, the unanimity of a later age as to orthodox doctrine or orthodox practice in Islam had not yet been attained; much leaven was still at work which was afterwards cast

out. His Christian physician was accustomed to wine; Mansúr in his own palace caused the obnoxious liquor to be supplied to him. On the other hand, he praised this functionary for his fidelity to the now aged wife whom he had left behind at home, when he sent back the beautiful female slaves presented to him by the Caliph because Christianity enjoined monogamy. But, of course, Mansúr's edicts and letters, according to the fashion of the time, overflowed with pious phrases and texts from the Koran; and this was most of all conspicuous in the religious political discourses which, after the example of the earlier Caliphs, he delivered on Fridays from the pulpit of some great mosque. Mansúr was further led by the traditions of his family to assume to some extent the part of a theologian, especially in giving forth alleged sayings of the Prophet. Some characteristic specimens of such oral traditions communicated by him to others have come down to us. Thus he declared the Prophet to have said, that if he had appointed to a governor a definite revenue, then everything which the latter took in excess of this was unlawful spoliation. Unfortunately, not many of Mansúr's governors were so tender of conscience as to take seriously to heart a word of the Prophet guaranteed on such authority. At the same time, all things considered, I do not venture to maintain that Mansúr was at heart an utter unbeliever. In the East, still less than in the West, does one expect to find absolute consistency in matters of religion. The man who in cold blood violated his most sacred oaths may yet have argued with himself that Alláh the All-merciful would at last forgive him, good Moslem as he was, all his sins. Perhaps he hoped even that God would impute it to him for righteousness that he was the cousin of the Apostle of God; that would have been a truly Arab thought. In the same way it is also possible that his

repeated pilgrimages, over and above their political purpose, which is obvious, may have been designed also to satisfy a personal need. It is conceivable, too, that the old sinner may have counted on the divine favour because he had vigorously carried on the holy war against unbelievers.¹

The baneful frontier war, carried on for centuries between the caliphate and the Byzantine empire, and interrupted only by short truces, pursued its course under Mansúr, though mostly only in the form of plundering forays, devastation of the open country, and destruction of single fortresses and cities. Mansúr sought to make his frontier against the Byzantines as secure as possible by freshly fortifying a number of cities and supplying them with adequate garrisons. In this respect his restorations of the ruined fortresses of Melatia in Lesser Armenia, and of that of Massísa (Mopsuhestia) in Cilicia,—a town which he almost founded anew,—were of special importance. These frontier fortresses naturally served also as bases of operations against the enemy's territory. The maritime towns on the Syrian coast were in like manner placed by Mansúr in a state of defence.

The other frontiers also gave enough to do. In 764 the wild Khazars (in what is now Southern Russia) invaded the territory south of the Caucasus, took Tiflis, devastated the country far and wide, and defeated more than one army. Before a sufficient force could be sent against them, they had again disappeared. But Mansúr now took precautions, by defensive works, to check as much as possible the inroads of these and other northern barbarians, at whose hands these lands had long suffered severely. He took firm possession of the whole territory

¹ "Tantum relligio potuit suadere malorum," wrote Lucretius, without any inkling of the misery yet destined to come upon the world through the aggressiveness of Semitic religious zeal.

up to the great mountain chain, and even levied a tax upon the naphtha-springs of Baku.

The mountainous districts on the southern margin of the Caspian, on the other hand, remained unsubdued. The Dilemites (in Gílán) made frequent plundering attacks on the adjoining country, as had been their immemorial habit. The war against them was continual. We learn incidentally that in 760-61 the Caliph summoned expressly the richer inhabitants of Cufa to take arms against the Dilemites. Now, theoretically, every Moslem capable of bearing arms is under constant obligation to fight against unbelievers; but we may conjecture that what Mansúr had chiefly in view was the money which those not very warlike people would have to pay for exemption from service.—Tabaristán (Mázenderán), which borders Gílán on the east, where a family of high functionaries of the Sásánian empire had maintained themselves as an independent dynasty and still kept up the religion of Zoroaster, was almost entirely annexed for the first time under Mansúr.¹ A former butcher of Rai (Rhagae, near the modern Teheran), who, on his own responsibility, had collected a body of men, and at its head had fought bravely against Sampádh,² received the appointment of governor. But this conquest of Tabaristán was not yet final.

The struggle continued to be carried on—with many interruptions, it is true—against the unbelievers (Turks and others) beyond the Oxus; so also on the Indian frontier, where during Mansúr's reign Kandahár, among other places, was taken. But the extension of the Mohammedan empire in these frontier regions was nowhere great. We do not know whether the fleet which Mansúr despatched from Basra in 770 to chastise a tribe of pirates in the delta of the Indus was successful. Two years before members of

¹ The exact year is unknown.

² See above, p. 118.

this tribe had ventured up the Red Sea, and had plundered Jiddah, the port of Mecca.¹

In the repression of the Alid rebellion Isá, son of Músá, had, as we have seen, specially distinguished himself, and, by a binding arrangement, the succession to the sovereignty had been secured to him. But Mansúr wished to be succeeded by his own son Mahdí. He accordingly wrote to his cousin a letter full of unction, in which he represented the troops as having taken Madhí to their heart to such a degree that the former must of necessity yield to him. The claim had even a stronger foundation, for the unscrupulous poet Mutí had produced before the assembled court a prediction of the Prophet which clearly pointed to Mahdí as the future pattern prince, and had even had the audacity to call in Abbás, the Caliph's brother, as a witness to the genuineness of the announcement,—a testimony in which the latter had, against his will, to concur. In spite of all this Isá held his own, and maintained, certainly with good reason, not only that the Caliph and his officials were obliged by the oath which they had tendered to him to protect him in his rights, but that he had also bound himself by his oath, and dared not abandon his claim. At last, by threats and all sorts of importunities, he was rendered pliable, and renounced on condition that he was to be the successor of Mahdí. Officials and people were in this way released from the terms of their oath to Isá (764). The condition attached was from the first rather illusory, for Mansúr's son was much younger than Isá, and actually survived him; but before Isá's death Mahdí as Caliph had already compelled him definitely to resign his claims in favour of Mahdí's son Hádí.

At this time also (764) Mansúr's quondam rival, his uncle

¹ At sea the great Arab dynasties, like the Roman, have seldom done anything considerable.

Abdalláh, died. Abdalláh, as already related, had after his defeat taken refuge with his brother Sulaimán at Basra (end of 754). When Mansúr came to know that he was in hiding there, he demanded his surrender; but this was not granted until after he had pledged himself in the most solemn way that no harm should befall Abdalláh. In the deed in which this security was promised,—a deed accepted by the Caliph,—it was specified, among other things, that Mansúr, should he break the agreement, would be held as renouncing the sovereignty, and as releasing his subjects from their oath of allegiance. These clauses were little to Mansúr's taste; people might, perhaps, one day think of taking him at his word! The author of the document, Ibn Mokaffa, famous as a stylist and as a poet, and particularly meritorious as translator of older Persian works, was accordingly, on account of the words in question, put to death with cruelty on a hint from the Caliph. And when Abdalláh (12th May 759) came to his nephew, in spite of every promise he was seized, and his companions slain. Abdalláh himself also, according to accounts, died a violent death. Yet it is difficult to see why Mansúr should have spared his uncle for so long a time if imprisonment was not a sufficient measure of security; a seven years' imprisonment was of itself enough to account for the death of a man no longer young. Still less can we rely on the various rumours according to which the death of Mohammed, son of Saffáh (beginning of 767), was due to violence; for Mansúr had no occasion to be afraid of this dissolute nephew. The fantastic stories that are told in connection with these things show us, at all events, what the Commander of the Faithful was deemed capable of. On the other hand, I am bound to point out that Mansúr, if he never shrank from an atrocity that he deemed serviceable, hardly can have found his pleasure in mere murder and bloodshed. Accordingly, he disapproved

of Isá's having put to death a son of Nasr; for, bravely as Nasr had fought on behalf of the Omayyad, his son was now no source of danger.

Though, after the defeat of the Alids, Mansúr had the empire as a whole well in hand, yet in the remoter provinces all sorts of trouble still arose, some of them very serious. For example, the Armenian nobles, who had always been restless, had once more to be put down by force. In 767 there was another violent outbreak in Khorásán. Its leader¹ is said to have claimed to possess the gift of prophecy; however this may be, the movement undoubtedly was of a religious, strongly heretical character. The histories do not recognise the insurgents as Moslems at all. Kházim himself born or bred in Khorásán, was sent against them; but could effect nothing until he got it arranged that the vizier of Madhí, the heir-apparent, who governed the eastern provinces from Rai as viceroy, should no longer be allowed to interfere with the unity of the command by giving separate orders to the subordinate officers. This done, he brought the insurrection to an end by a brilliant victory and a terrible massacre (768). He is said to have caused 14,000 prisoners to be beheaded. If we consider that Charlemagne, fourteen years afterwards, caused 4,000 captive Saxons to be massacred,² and that by command of prince (afterwards Caliph) Hárún, who certainly was a man of much higher culture than either Mansúr's general or the Frankish king, 2,900 Byzantine prisoners were put to death in the year 765, the number just given will not appear much too great. From other facts, also, we know Kházim to have been a man of great severity. The wars with unbelievers, especially with Turks and Byzantines, and the civil wars, had trained

¹ His name is now, owing to the ambiguity of the Arabic characters and the mistakes of copyists, quite uncertain.

² The objections that have recently been urged against this statement are hardly strong enough to invalidate it.

a race of brave but pitiless fighters. The leader of the insurrection was brought a prisoner before Mansúr, and executed.

Another great rebellion broke out soon afterwards in the province of "Africa" (corresponding nearly to the modern Tripoli and Tunis), where, indeed, matters had never been thoroughly quiet. It, too, had a religious and also a national origin; the rebels were Berbers and Kharijites. The Caliph's governor, who shortly before had been transferred to Africa from the Indian frontier,—a distance of about sixty degrees of longitude,—fell in battle against them. Mansúr now sent Yezíd, son of Hátim, with a great army upon the scene, and, to show how important the matter was in his eyes, accompanied him in person as far as to Jerusalem (770). In the following year Yezíd gained a decisive victory, and triumphantly entered the capital, Kairawán, where he remained as governor till long after Mansúr's death. The Caliph's territory did not extend much farther than this. The regions more to the west had been separated from the caliphate since the fall of the Omayyads. In Spain the Omayyad Abderrahmán, a grandson of Caliph Hishám, after surmounting innumerable dangers, and landing in the country without resources and without allies, at the age of twenty-five, in the spring of 756, had rapidly established an independent empire. All efforts of Mansúr to shatter his power proved vain. Like Mansúr himself, he was the son of a Berber slave-girl. The Caliph, who, as we have seen, knew how to recognise valour and greatness even in enemies of his house, called him "the falcon of the Koraish" (the tribe to which the Omayyads, Abbásids, and many other families of consideration belonged).

Much less important than either of those just spoken of were the risings in northern Arabia, which were quelled by Okba in 768 or 769. In doing so Okba, a Yemenite Arab,

out of tribal hostility shed an inordinate quantity of blood. Wishing to give a handsome present to an official whom the Caliph had sent to him, he handed over to him fifty prisoners, whom he was to take with him to Basra, making as if he was about to decapitate them and hang up their bodies; their tribesmen in that city would then be ready to redeem them at 10,000 dirhems (nearly £200) a piece. The pretty plan was unfortunately spoiled by the temper of the populace and the interference of an intelligent Cadi. On the report of the latter to the Caliph, he was thanked, and the prisoners let go.

It was while returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca that Mansúr had become Caliph; on a similar journey to Mecca he was destined to die. In 775 he once more set out; on the way he was seized with a disease of the bowels (dysentery?), which was probably connected with troubles of the digestive system from which he had formerly suffered. The heat of the Arabian late summer, and the fatigues and privations of the journey (on which even the Caliph must often have had to content himself with very indifferent drinking water), can only have aggravated the malady in a man now somewhat advanced in years, if they did not even occasion it. He succeeded in reaching the holy territory, but not the sanctuary itself. His death took place on Saturday, 7th October 775,—according to other authorities, on the Wednesday before,—at Bír Maimún, about one hour's journey from Mecca, after a reign of twenty-one years and some months; his age was over sixty, the authorities vacillating between sixty-three and sixty-eight lunar (sixty-one and sixty-six solar) years.¹ The only persons present were the freedman Rabí, an influential confidant, and some servants. Rabí kept the death secret for some little time, with

¹ Compare above, p. 70. Probably Mansúr himself did not know exactly his own birth year, not to speak of his birthday.

a view to the arrangements necessary to secure the throne for Mahdí. Mansúr lies buried near the holy city, the cradle of his family. Later generations believed they knew his grave; but the statement is not improbably correct that at the time a number of graves ("a hundred," it is said) were dug, in order that his true resting-place might remain unknown. At this meeting-place of all restless spirits, where the power of the central government was never able to assert itself so firmly as in the lands of ancient civilisation, some embittered enemy of the dynasty might easily one day gain the upper hand, in which case it was not inconceivable that he might disinter and insult the body of its most powerful and most hated member, as Mansúr's own uncle Abdalláh had done with the bodies of the Omayyads.

The East has seen many sovereigns who came near, or even surpassed, Mansúr in duplicity and absolutely unscrupulous egoism, but hardly one who was at the same time endowed with such commanding intellect, or who (speaking generally and on the whole) had so strong an influence for good on the development of his empire.

V.

A SERVILE WAR IN THE EAST.

IMMEDIATELY after the tragic night in which the Caliph Mutawakkil was murdered at the instigation of his own son (11th or 12th December 861), the proud fabric of the Abbásid empire—already greatly shaken—began to collapse. The troops, Turkish and others, raised and deposed the Caliphs; the generals, for the most part quondam slaves, like those whom they commanded, strove for a mastery which in turn was often dependent on the humours of the soldiery. In the provinces new rulers arose, who did not always think it necessary to acknowledge the Caliph as lord, even in name. Claimants belonging to the house of Alí had success in some places. In the great towns of the Tigris region there were serious popular tumults. Peace and security were enjoyed only in those districts where a governor, practically independent, held firm and strict rule.

This circumstance alone makes it in some degree intelligible how a clever and unscrupulous adventurer, leaning for support on the most despised class of the population, should have been able, not far from the heart of the empire, to set up a rule which for a long time was the terror of the surrounding regions, and only yielded at last, after nearly fourteen years of effort on the part of the caliphate, which had in the meanwhile recovered a little of its former strength.

Alí, son of Mohammed, a native of the large village of Verzenín, not far from the modern Teherán, gave himself out to be a descendant of Alí and of his wife Fátima, the daughter

of the Prophet. The claim may have been just; the descendants of Alí by that time were reckoned by thousands, and were very far from being, all of them, persons of distinction. It is, of course, equally possible that his alleged descent was a mere invention. According to some authorities his family belonged to Bahrein, a district of north-eastern Arabia, and was a branch of the tribe of Abdalkais, which had its seat there. In any case, he passed for a man of Arab blood. Before he became known to the world, Alí is said, among other adventures, to have gone about for a while in Bahrein, seeking a following there. This statement is made extremely probable by the fact that several of his principal followers belonged to that district, though it is far removed from the world's highways, and but seldom mentioned in history; among these was the black freedman, Sulaimán, son of Jámi, one of his most capable generals. The ambitious Alí, utilising the prevailing anarchy, next sought to secure a footing in Basra. This great commercial city, next to Bagdad the most important place in the central provinces, was suffering much at that time from the conflicts of two parties, to all appearance the inhabitants of two different quarters of the town.¹ Yet Alí gained little here; some of his followers, and even the members of his own family, were thrown into prison, a lot which he himself escaped only by flight to Bagdad. But soon afterwards, in connection with a change of governor, new disturbances broke out in Basra, the prisons were broken, and Alí was soon again on the spot. He had already thoroughly surveyed the ground for his plans.

We are very imperfectly acquainted with the scene of the occurrences which I am about to relate. Even if the modern condition of these parts admitted of being represented on maps much more closely than defective surveys allow, and

¹ Enmity of this kind between two quarters or guilds is nothing unusual in Arab towns.

were the surveys better, they would not help us very much, for the whole face of the land has greatly changed since the times we write of. At that time the Euphrates in the lowest part of its course discharged itself into a region of lake and marsh, connected with the sea by a number of tidal channels. The most important of these waters was near Basra, which lay farther to the west than the modern much smaller city of the same name (Bussorah). That place and its immediate neighbourhood was intersected by innumerable canals (more than 120,000, it is asserted). The chief arm of the Tigris was at that time the southward flowing, now called Shatt al Hai, upon which stood the city of Wásit. Farther down, the stream must have turned towards the south-east. The present main arm, whose main course is to the south-east, was at that time dry, or had a very limited volume of water. The lowest part of the Tigris was connected with the stream on which Basra stood by numerous canals, some of them navigable to large sea-going ships. All these waters were reached by the tide. Floods and broken embankments had even by that time converted much arable land into marshes; while, on the other hand, by drainage and embanking, many pieces of land had been reclaimed. Since that time, in common with all the rest of Irák (Babylonia), this southern portion, in a very conspicuous degree, has been so grievously wasted and neglected, that the forces of nature have entirely gained the upper hand. What was a smiling country has been turned into a wilderness by the spread of the marshes, or by the silting up and stoppage of the drainage channels. The rivers have in part quite changed their beds. On this account we can follow only in a vague way the very precise topographical details which our sources give in describing the campaigns against Alí and his bands.

At no great distance eastward from Basra there were

extensive flats, traversed by ditches, in which great numbers of black slaves, mostly from the east coast of Africa, the land of the Zenj,¹ were employed by rich *entrepreneurs* of the city in digging away the nitrous surface soil, so as to lay bare the fruitful ground underneath, and at the same time to obtain the saltpetre that occurred in the upper stratum. An industry of such magnitude in the open country is seldom met with in the East. The work in such a case is very hard, and the supervision must be strict. The feeling of affection which in the East binds the slave very closely to the family in which he lives and has grown up, is here altogether wanting. On the other hand, among such masses of slaves working together there easily springs up a certain community of feeling, a common sense of embitterment against their masters, and, under favourable circumstances, a consciousness of their own strength; thus are combined the conditions of a powerful insurrection. So it was in the servile wars of the last century of the Roman republic, and so it was here. Alí recognised the strength latent in those black slaves. The fact that he was able to set this strength in motion, and that he developed it into a terrible power which required long time and the very greatest exertions to overcome it, conclusively shows that he was a man of genius. The "leader of the Zenj," the "Alid," or the "false Alid," plays a very great part in the annals of his time—such a part, indeed, that it is easy to understand why our main informant, Tabarí, should by preference call him "the abominable one," "the wicked one," or "the traitor."

Once before in Babylonia a talented and unscrupulous Arab had utilised a time of internal confusion to raise a sovereignty on religious pretexts by the aid of a despised class; the cunning Mokhtár had appealed to the Persian or half-Persian population of the great cities, particularly

¹ Properly Zeng, hence Zangebar (corrupted into Zanzibar).

Cufa, upon whom the dominant Arabs in those early days of Islam looked down with supreme contempt (685–687 A.D.). But our hero went much deeper, and maintained himself much longer, than Mokhtár.

Before openly declaring himself, Alí had sought out from among the lowest strata of the population, and the freedmen in particular, suitable tools for the execution of his plans. In the beginning of September 869 he betook himself, at first under the guise of business agent for a princely family, to the saltpetre district, and began at once to rouse the slaves. Saturday, 10th September 869, is reckoned as the date at which he openly declared himself. He represented to the negro slaves how badly they were being treated, and promised them, if they joined him, freedom, wealth, and—slaves. In other words, he did not preach universal equality and well-being, but reserved the supremacy for the particular class to which he addressed himself. All this, of course, was clothed in religious forms. He proclaimed the restoration of true legality. None but those who followed himself were believers, or entitled to claim the heavenly and earthly rights of the true Moslem. Alí thus appealed at once to the nobler and to the more vulgar feelings of the rudest masses, and with complete success. We may accept the statement that he gave himself out for inspired; at any rate to the blacks he seemed to be a messenger of God. That he himself believed in his own heavenly vocation is hardly to be assumed; all that we know of him bespeaks a very cool understanding. We learn much more, it is true, about his warlike deeds than about his true character; religious fancy has often great influence even upon coolly calculating natures, and in the East especially it is very difficult to draw the line between self-deception and imposition upon others. That Alí was sincere when he betook himself to astrology in important crises need not

be doubted, for this superstition at that time held sway over even the clearest heads with hardly an exception.

Since the rebel leader claimed, as we have seen, to be descended from Alí, Mohammed's son-in-law, we should naturally have expected to find him, like other Alids, appealing to the divine right of his house, and coming forward as founder of a sect of Shíites. But instead of this he declared himself for the doctrine of those most decided enemies of Shíite legitimism, the Kharijites or Zealots, who held the first two Caliphs alone to have been lawful, and rejected Othmán and Alí alike, because they had adopted worldly views; who demanded that none but "the best man" should wield the sovereignty, "though he were an Abyssinian slave;"¹ who, moreover, in their ethical rigorism regarded as idolatry every grave sin, and most of all, of course, opposition to their own doctrine as the true Islam; and who accordingly regarded all their Moslem enemies, with their wives and families, as lawfully given over to the sword or to slavery. One of the most prominent officers of the negro leader preached in this sense in Basra when it was taken; the same idea lent fury to his black troops; and even his banner bore the text of the Koran² which had been one of the chief watchwords of the old death-defying Kharijites. It was certainly also with a purpose that he called himself upon this banner simply, "Alí, son of Mohammed," without allusion to his high descent. With this it agrees that an original document of the period shortly after his death designates him as a Kharijite. His choice of party was in the highest degree

¹ See above, p. 80.

² "God has bought from the faithful their life and their goods with this price—that Paradise is to be their portion, and they are to fight, slay, and be slain in the path of God," and so on (súra 9, 112). In accordance with this word "bought," the Kharijites called themselves by preference "sellers" (*Shurát*); for heaven as their price they gave God their souls.

appropriate. The slaves were easily gained by a strong personality who could condescend to them, but they were not to be inspired with enthusiasm for a mystical hereditary claim. But that they themselves were the true believers and the lawful destroyers or masters of all others, the blacks were ready to believe; and they acted accordingly. Perhaps their leader took this also into account, that in Basra (on the lower classes of which place he seems at first to have reckoned), the Shi'ite doctrine was at that time very unpopular, quite the opposite of what it was in Cufa, the old rival of Basra. From what has been said it will be abundantly clear why Karmat, one of the founders of the Karmatians, an extreme Shi'ite sect which was destined soon after this to fill the whole Mohammedan world with fear and dismay, should, on religious grounds, have decided not to connect himself with the negro leader, however useful this association might otherwise have been to him.

The nature of the ground was highly favourable to a rising of the kind. Indeed, some forty years before this, in the marshes between Wásit and Basra, the Gypsies (Zutt) settled there had, augmented by offscourings of humanity brought together from all quarters, lived the life, first of robbers, and afterwards of declared rebels, and were only after the greatest exertion compelled to capitulate; yet these were people who neither in courage nor in numbers could be compared to the East Africans, and that, too, at a time when the caliphate was still in reality a world-empire.¹

Of the beginning of the negro insurrection we have exceptionally minute details from the accounts of eye-witnesses. We learn how one band of slaves after another

¹ An Arab rebel at that time mockingly said of Caliph Mámún that he was not able to catch "four hundred frogs" that were within arm's-length of him.

—a troop of fifty, a troop of five hundred, and so forth—obeyed the call of the new Messiah. We even know the names of those slaves who incited their companions to join the rebel leader. As was natural, their wrath was directed, not merely against their masters, who were mostly absent, but even more against the taskmasters, all of them, we may suppose, themselves slaves or at most freedmen. Yet the leader spared their lives and let them go, after they had first been soundly beaten by their former subordinates. The owners more than once begged him to let them have their slaves back again, promising him amnesty and five gold pieces per head; but he refused all offers; and when the blacks began to show uneasiness about such negotiations, he solemnly pledged himself never to betray them, and to further their best interests. This oath he kept.

The most numerous class of these negroes—the Zenj, properly so called—were almost all of them ignorant of Arabic; for during their common labours in the open air they had had no occasion to learn this language, though the Oriental black, for the most part, very readily drops his mother-tongue to take up that of his master. With these, accordingly, Alí had to use an interpreter. But others of the negroes—those from more northern countries (Nubia and the like)—already spoke Arabic. With the saltpetre workers were undoubtedly associated many fugitive slaves from the villages and towns, and probably all sorts of fair-skinned people as well, but apparently few representatives of the urban proletariat. A valuable accession to their strength was contributed by the black soldiers who, especially after defeats, went over to the Zenj from the government troops. So, for example, at the very outset a division of the army fell upon the almost unarmed rebels, but was beaten; whereupon three hundred blacks at once went over to the latter.

Unfortunately we possess practically no particulars as to the internal arrangements of this singular State, composed of fanatical warriors or robbers who once had been, for the most part, negro slaves. With regard to their great achievements in war, it is to be remembered that they were excellently led; that they fought upon a favourable and familiar soil, full of marshes and canals, of which they thoroughly knew how to take advantage, while the enemy was equipped for an altogether different kind of fighting; and, finally, that the East African blacks, as a rule, are brave. It was not without reason that many negroes were at that time enrolled in the troops of the empire; even at present the black regiments of the Khedive are much more serviceable than those raised in Egypt. We know, too, that the negro leader maintained strict discipline.

It would seem that he had exerted himself to win over the villagers also, who for the most part, if not altogether, were dependent on aristocratic or wealthy masters. Perhaps he was more successful in this than our authorities say. He sometimes gave up hostile villages to plunder; but the provisioning of his large masses of men was probably, to a considerable extent, made easier for him through the connivance of the peasants. And when, at the very outset, he allowed a band of Mecca pilgrims to pass unharmed, this action was not only sagacious, but also in accordance with the doctrine which he professed.

Hardly had the slaves' revolt declared itself when troops upon troops were sent for its suppression; but within a few weeks the Zenj had gained several victories. The imperial armies were, it may be presumed, not large enough, and were badly led; the enemy, as was natural, was underrated. Here, at the outset, we find the Zenj's peculiar mode of fighting,—namely, out of concealed side-channels, heavily overgrown with reeds, to fall suddenly upon the rear of the

enemy's troops as they rowed along. In this war it is the regular thing that a number of the vanquished are drowned. The leader of the Zenj was always well served by his scouts.

Of the booty taken in the first encounters, the most important part consisted of arms. Prisoners were remorselessly put to death. In fact, according to Kharijite doctrine, they were unbelievers, and worthy of death; while the women and the children, as non-Moslems, were made slaves. When at last the negro chief had defeated an army consisting principally of inhabitants of Basra, he marched in person against that town; he calculated, it would seem, that one of the two town parties, with which he had frequently had dealings, would declare itself for him; but in this he was deceived. The people, high and low, stood together. They faced him on Sunday, 23rd October 869 (full six weeks only after the date of his first rising), and completely shattered his army; he himself barely escaped death, fighting bravely. But the citizen-army, though it had manfully defended hearth and home, was hardly fit to take the offensive, and certainly had no leader who could be matched with Alí, who quickly rallied his followers. When, on the second day, the first division of the Basrans was advancing by water, bodies of Zenj posted in ambush on both sides of the canal fell upon their rear. Some vessels capsized. The negroes fought with fury; their women threw bricks. Those also who were advancing by land were involved in the disaster; many were killed or drowned. The defeat of the townspeople was complete. A large number of members of the ruling family even, descendants of Sulaimán,¹ the brother of the first two Abbásid Caliphs, perished. Alí caused a whole ship to be laden with heads of the slain and sent along a canal to Basra. His associates now urged him immediately to fall upon the town; but his reply was,

¹ See above, p. 116, note.

that they ought to be glad that they might now count upon peace for some time, so far as the Basrans were concerned. He had in the meanwhile no doubt satisfied himself that he had no substantial following in Basra, and still felt himself too weak to make himself master of the great city.

After these events the Zenj chief caused to be established, on a suitable dry spot, impregnated with salt and thus without vegetation, a settlement of his blacks, which he exchanged for another in the following year. His people reared huts of palm branches, we may suppose, or perhaps of mud. The "palaces" of the chief and of his principal officers, the prisons for the numerous captives, the mosques, and some other public buildings which were gradually added, may in some cases have been relatively handsome and internally adorned with the spoils of the enemy, but their material was certainly, at best, sun-dried brick. In the broader sense, the city finally founded, called Mokhtára ("the elect city"), covered a large area, and included extensive fields and palm groves. It lay somewhat below Basra, abutted on the west bank of the Tigris, and was intersected by the canal Nahr Abilkhasib, the main direction of whose course was from north to south (or perhaps from north-east to south-west); other canals also surrounded, or, we may suppose, traversed it. With the complete change of the water-courses in that region, it is hardly likely that its site will ever be exactly made out.

The inhabitants of this ephemeral capital for the most part, doubtless, drew the necessities of life from the immediate neighbourhood. Yet they were also dependent to some extent on imports; so that in the end, when the blockade was fully established and all communications cut off, they were reduced to great extremity. Until then traders and Bedouins had ventured to bring provisions to the negro city even in full sight of the hostile army. The

dates grown there served, in part at least, as payment for the Bedouins. But as the home consumption of this chief article of produce hardly left much over for trade, we must assume that the dealers who thus risked their lives for the sake of gain must have been paid for the flour, fish, and other provisions which they brought with articles of plunder, and with money that had been accumulated by plunder and taxation, or rather black-mail.

At the pressing entreaty of the terrified Basrans the government sent the Turkish general Jolán. For six months he lay in camp face to face with the Zenj. His troops, consisting mostly of horsemen, could not move freely over the ground, thickly planted as it was with date-palms and other trees, and broken up by water-courses. At last a night attack by the negroes upon the entrenched camp made such an impression upon his soldiers, that Jolán judged it expedient to withdraw to Basra. Previously to this an attack of the Basrans had been victoriously repelled by the Zenj. The latter now grew so bold that they seized upon a fleet of twenty-four vessels bound for Basra; much blood was shed in this action, and the booty, including many captive women and children, was very great. On Wednesday, 19th June 870, they attacked the flourishing town of Obolla, which lay four hours from Basra, on the Tigris (approximately on the site of the modern Bussorah), and captured it after a brief struggle, in which the commandant fell along with his son. The slaughter was great: many were drowned; the city, built of wood, fell a prey to the flames. The fall of Obolla had such an effect upon the inhabitants of Abbádán, a town on an island at the mouth of the Tigris, that they made their submission to the Zenj; in doing so they had to deliver up their slaves and all their arms; the former augmenting the fighting strength of the victors. Hereupon the negro chief sent an army far into

Khúzistán (Susiana), the adjoining country on the east. Wherever submission was not made, fire and sword did their work. On Monday, 14th August, the capital Ahwáz (on the stream now known as the Kárún) was taken. The garrison of this important place had prudently withdrawn, and this doubtless secured for the inhabitants a milder treatment. But, of course, all the property of the government and of the governor, who with his people had remained at his post, was confiscated.

Thus, then, within less than a year an adventurer at the head of negro slaves had taken considerable cities, made himself master of the mouth of the Tigris, and gained control of wide territories. Even the disturbance to commerce was very serious. The communications of Bagdad, the world-city, were broken, and its victualling rendered a matter of difficulty. Basra trembled at the fate of Obolla. Matters certainly could never have gone quite so far, if in the meantime the greatest confusion had not prevailed at the then residence of the Caliph, Sámarrá (on the Tigris, some three days' journey above Bagdad). At the very time of the fall of Obolla the disputes of those in authority had led to the death, after less than a year's reign, of the pious Caliph Muhtadí, and the proclamation of his cousin Motamid as Caliph. But this was the beginning of an improved state of affairs. For though Motamid was not at all such a sovereign as the times demanded, yet his brother Mowaffak, who in reality held the reins of government, leaving to the Caliph only the honour and luxury of the exalted position, had intelligence and perseverance enough gradually to restore the power of the dynasty, in the central provinces at least. At first, indeed, he had too much on hand elsewhere to be able to think of the Zenj, but in the early summer of 871 he had got so far as to send against them an army under the command of his chamberlain Saíd. Saíd at first inflicted

serious losses on them, but in the end suffered a disastrous defeat through a night attack. He was recalled, but his successor fared no better. Five hundred heads of soldiers of his were exhibited in the immediate neighbourhood of Basra; many were drowned. In Susiana, too, a general of the blacks had fought with success, but their chief called him back to cut off the Basrans anew from communication with the Tigris, which had recently been reopened for them by the imperial troops. This done, the Zenj for some time pressed hard on Basra itself, which had but an inadequate garrison, was torn by party dissensions, and was suffering from dearth. The negroes were joined by a number of Bedouins. Great as is the contempt with which the genuine Arab regards the black, the prospect of plunder, and the plunder of so rich a town as Basra, is an attraction which the hungry son of the desert cannot resist. These Bedouins were not equal to the Zenj, either in bravery or in loyalty; but they were valuable to the chief, as supplying him with a body of cavalry. On the 7th September 871, during the Friday service, the negro general Mohallabí, with these Arab horsemen and with black foot soldiers, penetrated into the city, but retired once more, after setting fire to it in several places. It was not till Monday that the Zenj took full possession. The massacre that followed was frightful. It is even alleged that many inhabitants were induced, by offers of quarter, to gather together at certain places, where they could more easily be cut down. The chief had vowed direst vengeance on the city which had deceived his hopes. His general Alí, son of Abbán, had allowed a deputation from one of the parties of the town to approach his chief with prayers for quarter; but he would not admit them to his presence, and superseded the general by a less soft-hearted man. The brutal negro slaves waded in the blood of the free men. The lowest estimate places the number of the

slain in Basra at 300,000. The captured women and children were carried into slavery. The noblest women of the houses of Ali and of the reigning house of Abbás were sold to the highest bidder. Many negroes are said to have received as many as ten slaves, or more, for their share.

But a permanent occupation of the great city was not feasible. It was forthwith evacuated, and the army, which, immediately after the arrival of the shocking tidings, had been despatched from the capital, under Mowallad, against the Zenj, was able, in conjunction with the remains of the troops already in the district, to occupy Basra and Obolla without striking a blow. Many inhabitants who had been lucky enough to escape gathered together once more in Basra. But when Mowallad proceeded further against the Zenj, he was, like his predecessors, defeated in a night attack, and compelled to withdraw again to the neighbourhood of the town. In Susiana likewise the fortunes of war, after some fluctuations, proved favourable to the Zenj.

Mowaffak himself now advanced with a brilliant force to the neighbourhood of the negro city; but this also suffered defeat (29th April 872). The mortal wound of Moflih, the actual commander, seems to have thrown the soldiers into confusion at once. Mowaffak remained in the district of Obolla, keeping the Zenj steadily in his eye. In one of the battles of this period one of their best generals, Yahyá of Bahrein, was wounded and made prisoner. He was brought to Sámarrá, and there, in the brutal and cowardly fashion then customary in the treatment of prominent captive rebels, was led about on a camel for exhibition before being cruelly put to death in the presence of the Caliph.

After Mowaffak's troops had somewhat recovered from the severe sicknesses from which they had suffered in those hot marshy regions, and had repaired their equipment, he again marched against the enemy; but although he occasionally

gained some advantage and succeeded in rescuing captive women and children, he in the end sustained another reverse; and, to add to his misfortunes, his camp took fire and was burned. Towards the beginning of full summer, accordingly, he found himself compelled to quit the proper seat of war, and to withdraw to Wásit. His army melted away almost entirely, and he himself, in January 873, returned to Sámarrá, leaving Mowallad behind him in Wásit. The expedition on which such great hopes had been built had come to nothing; yet it had not been wholly vain, for Mowaffak had come to know the enemy more perfectly, and had seen more clearly how he was to be reached.

After the imperial army had left the field, the negro chief again sent considerable forces into Susiana, who, with some trouble, succeeded a second time in taking Ahwáz, the capital (beginning of May 873). Several prisoners of distinction, who had fallen into the hands of the victors there, had their lives spared by the chief, doubtless with a view to heavy ransoms. The expeditions of the Zenj into the neighbouring countries, be it noted, were designed less for the acquisition of permanent possessions than to procure food and booty, perhaps also to inspire terror in the enemy. The Zenj leader may sometimes have dreamt of conquests on the grand scale, but in the end he always recognised that he and his negroes were safe only among their marshes and ditches.

A new army, despatched from the capital, ultimately defeated the Zenj in Susiana, and drove them out of the country. Other armies pressed on them from other quarters, and sought to cut off their supplies. The principal leader in these enterprises was one of the most powerful men in the empire—Músá the Turk, son of Boghá, who had left Sámarrá in September 873. Still nothing decisive took place.

A considerable interval passes, during which we learn

nothing of the Zenj. Meanwhile, they were aided by a rising to which they had not contributed, and which had not them in view. For when a rebel, who had made himself master of Persia proper (Persis), had vanquished one of the subordinates of Músá, the latter found himself uncomfortable in Wásit, and begged to be relieved of his post (spring, 875). Provisionally, Mowaffak undertook, nominally at least, the government of Músá's provinces along with the war against the Zenj. The latter had meanwhile taken Ahwáz a third time, and had proved disastrous occupants. They had to be left alone, for now a quite new and very dangerous enemy made a diversion in their favour. Yakúb, son of Laith, the coppersmith (Saffár), who had conquered for himself a great empire in the East, aiming also at the possession of the central lands of the caliphate, forced his way through Persia and Susiana and advanced upon Bagdad. But between Wásit and the capital he was met by Mowaffak with the imperial army, and decisively defeated (April 876).¹

The Zenj, of course, took advantage of the withdrawal of troops from the lower Tigris, every available soldier being required against the coppersmith. They extended themselves farther to the north, where the Arab tribes who had their settlements in the marshy districts to the south of Wásit lent them a helping hand. Isolated efforts to drive them back had no result. The negro king now seriously exerted himself to become sovereign of Susiana. A Kurdish upstart, Mohammed, son of Obaidalláh, who, under Yakúb as his superior, had made himself master of part of that province, became his ally, but with no sincere intentions. The two armies parted, and consequently the Zenj were defeated by the imperial troops, especially as a number of Bedouins had gone over to the latter. The *Societas malorum* had not held good. Yet the government derived no sub-

¹ See below, p. 191.

stantial benefit; in the long-run the Zenj retained, even in these regions, the upper hand. All sorts of troubles, and, in particular, the threatening proximity of Yakúb, who would not be propitiated by Mowaffak, and who might break out again at any moment, sufficiently explain why nothing considerable was attempted against them. For the inhabitants of those countries this must have been a dreadful time. Yakúb peremptorily rejected the alliance tendered by the chief of the Zenj, yet, at last, without definite agreement, a truce was established between the two enemies of Mowaffak. But after Yakúb's death (4th June 879) the imperial regent quickly induced his successor, his brother Amr, to conclude a peace. Meanwhile, he made him very great concessions, in order that in his great expedition against the blacks his left flank and his rear might remain covered.

In 878 the Zenj succeeded in capturing Wásit and other cities of Babylonia; the customary atrocities were, of course, not wanting. But in the end not even Wásit was held; Mowaffak's lieutenant again forced the Zenj back to bounds. The latter continued to make plundering and devastating incursions; in 879 they ventured as far as Jarjaráyá, less than seventy miles below Bagdad, so that the terrified inhabitants of the country fled for refuge to the capital.

In Susiana, Tekín the general opposed the Zenj with vigour, and relieved the great city of Shúshter which they were besieging, but afterwards entered into negotiations with them. When these became known, one portion of his army went over to the enemy, another joined Mohammed, son of Obaidalláh. Such things throw a strange light upon the discipline and loyalty of the imperial army. After much fighting and conference the Kurdish Mohammed had at last to bring himself to recognise the supremacy of the negro chief, to surrender to him a part of his territory,

along with the important town of Rámhormuz, and to pay tribute; but even now he continued to act in a thoroughly untrustworthy manner, and caused all kinds of mischief to the Zenj.

In any case, the power of the Zenj was now (879) greater than ever. But it was at this point that the tide really began to turn. Mowaffak's position had gradually grown stronger, and the death of Yakúb had given him a free hand. He now no longer delayed to summon all his resources for making an end of the black robber-scurge. In doing so he proceeded with great deliberation and unwonted caution. He had learned wisdom at last, from many failures of the imperial troops, which, in part, had followed close on brilliant victories. He now knew that it was impossible to get at these amphibians in the same way as enemies on firm accessible soil are reached. His preparations for a decisive campaign against the Zenj would require to be of a quite peculiar character, and in the campaign itself it would be of supreme importance, along with bravery, to exercise all caution. A great general with similar resources at his command would certainly have annihilated the blacks much more quickly than Mowaffak did; the latter in the campaign plays the part rather of the prudent statesman who acts only with hesitation, does not place much at stake, and strives towards his end slowly, if surely.

The task of expelling the Zenj from the northern territories near Wásit was entrusted by Mowaffak, in the first instance, to his son Abul Abbás (afterwards Caliph Motadid), who was now but twenty-three years old. In November or December 879 the troops and ships of the latter were reviewed by his father near Bagdad. The fleet consisted of very diverse kinds of craft, but all of them rowing vessels. The largest served partly for transport, partly

as floating fortresses; a smaller kind, of which some are mentioned as carrying twenty, and others as carrying forty rowers, seem chiefly to have been used for attack. The young prince justified the confidence reposed in him. He gave battle repeatedly with success, and, though operations had often to be suspended, the Zenj were steadily compelled to give place. One of their captains was taken and pardoned; this is the first instance of the application of a new policy which was to gain over the officers and soldiers of the rebel. This course, more astute than heroic, had great success. In proportion as the situation of the negro chief grew serious, his subordinates were more ready to desert him, and, instead of continuing to endure the dangers and privations of a siege, to accept from Mowaffak amnesty, honours, rewards. Care was taken to make the deserters in their robes of honour conspicuous, so that the rebels might be able to see them. Their prince, of course, did all he could on the other side to check the falling away. Thus, we are told that he caused "the son of the king of the Zenj" to be put to death, because he had heard that he proposed to go over to the enemy. Of this real negro prince we would gladly know more. The prisoners taken by the imperial troops were, as a rule, killed. Abul Abbás distinguished himself personally by his bravery. In one of the battles twenty arrows were found sticking in the coat of felt which he wore over his breastplate. Almost a year passed before Mowaffak in person appeared with a great army on the scene (Tuesday, 11th October 880). The first result of consequence was the capture of the city of Manía, built by the Zenj not very far from Wásit, when five thousand captive women and children were restored to freedom. The liberation of great masses of women and children becomes an occurrence of increasing frequency as one place after another is taken from the possession of the

negroes. At every advance Mowaffak was very careful to secure his rearward communications, and to make it impossible for the blacks to attack him from behind. This rendered necessary, among other things, much river-engineering, making and breaking of dams. The regent thereupon again left the campaign for a time in the hands of his son, and marched towards Susiana (Friday, 6th January 881), to clear that portion of the empire. This was quickly done, and without much trouble, for the negro chief himself had given orders to evacuate the territory which was not to be definitively held; so as to concentrate his whole power. On their march back the Zenj continued to loot some villages, although these had made their submission to the chief. Several bands cut off from the main army asked and obtained pardon. That honest Kurd Mohammed naturally made his peace with Mowaffak without delay, and was received into favour. On Saturday, 18th February 881, Mowaffak again joined his son Abul Abbás and his other son Hárún, whom he had sent on before with his army from Wásit towards the south, and the united hosts advanced.

The negroes were now confined to their own proper territory in and around Mokhtára. Before the attack on this place began, Mowaffak sent once more a solemn summons to the rebel calling upon him to surrender, and promising him a full pardon if he obeyed. It need not be said that such a demand had no effect. Bad as the position of the Zenj chief was,—and it grew worse every day,—he could not stoop to become a pensioner of the Caliph. Moreover, it was at any moment possible that troubles in Bagdad or Sámarrá, or the appearance of some dangerous rebel in one of the provinces, might compel the persistent adversary to abandon the siege and all that he had gained. Some of his officers were less steadfast. The

desertion of these to the regent, who received them with open arms, began with his first approach, and went on repeating itself to the end of the bloody tragedy. Many soldiers also went over. Mowaffak so arranged that the negroes in his army tempted those of the enemy over to his side. All so inclined were forthwith enrolled in his ranks. Naturally, no one dreamed for a moment of considering the claims of their former masters upon these slaves. In this way the negro chief found many of his best forces gradually drawn away from himself and augmenting the strength of the enemy; this they did less by their direct fighting capacity than by their accurate acquaintance with the localities and with the whole condition of things. To the cause of the Zenj it was, moreover, highly prejudicial that their leader had to become ever more mistrustful of his subordinates. In fact, several of his best colleagues, in whom he had placed perfect confidence, abandoned him, though others held by him to the death. The amnesty was extended also to those Bedouins who should fall away from the Zenj. On the other hand, a leader of the negroes, who had been made a prisoner, when it was proved that he had treated women who had fallen into his hands with singular atrocity, was put to a painful death. In other cases also, cruel punishments were sometimes inflicted on prisoners.

The city of Mokhtára, the siege of which henceforward constitutes the whole war, was protected, not only by water-courses and dams, but also by a variety of fortifications properly so called. It even had catapults upon its walls. During the course of the long siege new defensive works of various kinds continued to be erected, and artificial inundations were also resorted to. Nor was there any lack of boats, and still less of men, though we may take it that the number of 300,000 fighting men claimed for the

negro leader is greatly exaggerated. The Zenj may very well have outnumbered their assailants, whose strength is given at 50,000, at least at the beginning of the struggle; but the latter were, on the whole, certainly much better equipped, better fed, and continually recruited by newly arriving troops. Mowaffak, however, had so little thought of taking Mokhtára by sudden attack, that in front of the place, though judiciously separated from it by the breadth of the river, he built for himself on the east bank of the Tigris a city-camp, which he named after himself Mowaffakiya. The matter of supreme importance was to cut off the supplies of the Zenj, and to secure his own. In Mowaffakiya a lively trade sprang up: he even caused money to be coined there. But the Zenj still showed themselves very troublesome enemies, and occasionally captured transports that had been destined for the imperial troops. It was not until a new fleet arrived from the Persian coast that intercourse with the outer world was made almost impossible for the negroes; and henceforward provisions could only be introduced occasionally and by stealth. For the Bedouins, who had still been venturesome enough to supply the Zenj with various kinds of food in exchange for dates, Mowaffak established an easy and safe market in Basra. Thus gradually the scarcity of food began to be keenly felt among the blacks, and the supply of bread virtually ceased. Nevertheless, they held out bravely; and in the numerous collisions which took place, as our authorities make plain, notwithstanding their highly official colouring, the imperialists had by no means always the best of it.

Towards the end of July 881¹ the troops succeeded in

¹ The very precise details of this war occasionally include notices of meteorological facts. In the beginning of December 880 the troops (in about 30° 30' N. lat. and near sea level) suffered in violent rain from bitter

forcing their way into Mokhtára, and had begun their work of destruction with fire and sword, but the same evening they again abandoned their capture. The same thing frequently recurred; moreover, the invading troops were more than once again driven out by the Zenj. At a comparatively late stage of the siege (end of 882) Mowaffak found himself under the necessity of again removing his base, which he had recently advanced to the western bank of the Tigris, back to the eastern, so troublesome had the Zenj proved themselves to be. The main action was, moreover, more than once interrupted; as, for example, from the end of summer 881 till October of that year. In their assaults on the town the besiegers specially directed their efforts to destruction of the defensive works, so that several approaches lay open in a way that did not admit of their being again closed; they also set themselves as much as possible to clear away the obstacles—bridges, dams, chains—which the besieged had introduced to prevent the entrance of great ships into the water-ways, and especially into the main canal—the Nahr Abilhasib. In these operations the tide proved sometimes a help, sometimes a hindrance; it frequently happened that the ebb would leave the vessels high and dry on the sand. As the opposing parties were often quite near one another, separated only, it might be, by narrow ditches, wounds were frequent. In addition to the ordinary weapons of war, molten lead was hurled against the foe. The besiegers had also with them “naphtha men,” who threw Greek fire at the Zenj or their works. Fireships were also sometimes used against the bridges. Occasionally the assailants made way far into the city; on Monday, 10th December 882, they in this manner destroyed the building which “the cold. In December 883 so thick a fog prevailed that a man could hardly distinguish his neighbour in the ranks.

abominable ones called their mosque," but which the Faithful naturally regarded as nothing better than a synagogue of Satan. But in this particular attack Mowaffak himself was seriously wounded with an arrow, shot by a quondam Byzantine slave; and as he did not spare himself, his wound grew alarmingly worse. Operations were on this account suspended for a considerable time, and many became so filled with fear that they quitted Mowaffakiya. And in the meanwhile an untoward circumstance of another kind arose. The Caliph Motamid manifested an inclination to free himself from the tutelage of his brother, and (in the beginning of December 882) quitted Sámarrá, to take refuge with Ibn Túlún, the vassal prince of Egypt. But the governor of Bagdad, Ibn Kondáj, who held by Mowaffak, intercepted the Caliph and brought him back to the residency (middle of February 883). For this service Mowaffak loaded Ibn Kondáj with honours. The wretched Caliph had even to submit so far as to cause Ibn Túlún, whom he had just been regarding as his liberator, to be cursed from every pulpit as a rebel against the ordinance of God; nay, his own son, designated to be his successor (though afterwards compelled to surrender his right), had to be the first solemnly to pronounce this curse. We can easily understand how in these circumstances Mowaffak was pressingly urged to abandon his camp for a while and betake himself to the centre of the empire; but he continued steadfast in his task. What he had neither heroic courage nor brilliant generalship to achieve, he effected by caution and perseverance.

The Zenj leader utilised to the utmost the truce that had been thus forced upon his assailants, to place his defensive works in as complete repair as possible, or even to strengthen them still further. It is certain, too, that he was adequately informed by his spies and scouts as to

the seriousness of Mowaffak's then position, both personally and politically, and he may well have cherished new hopes; but in February 883 he was again sorely pressed: his own palace was plundered and burnt, and he himself exposed to great danger. In March and April the illness of Mowaffak rendered necessary another cessation of the attack, but from the end of April onwards the struggle was seldom intermitted for any time. The rebel chief transferred the centre of his defence from the west to the east side of the main canal, though without wholly abandoning the former.

The desertions of his officers went on increasing. It is alleged that even his own son opened negotiations with Mowaffak; these, however, we may conjecture to have been quite hollow. But, among others, Shibl, a former slave, one of his most prominent lieutenants, went over to Mowaffak, and allowed himself forthwith to be sent directly against his old comrades. To another of these people, Sharání, whose wicked deeds had been many, there was at first an inclination to refuse pardon; but, in order not to scare his accomplices, he too was at last accepted, and received a rich reward for his treachery. The official account gives us a touching scene, in which Mowaffak, shortly before the last decisive struggle, solemnly admonishes the deserters to make good their evil deeds by bravery and fidelity; and this, deeply moved, they promised to do.

In the actual encounters the Zenj still continued to show great courage. The imperialists were not now, it is true, invariably forced to give up again in the evening the ground they had gained during the day; yet even in the great battle of Tuesday, 21st May 883, in which the harem of the negro chief, with more than a hundred women and children, had been sacked, and Prince Abul Abbás, in his advance, had burned great stores of grain, the assailants found themselves at last so hard pressed by the blacks that Mowaffak judged

it advisable to withdraw them to his ships. He did not yet feel himself strong enough to deliver the mortal blow. But now new reinforcements were continually coming in, though indeed, for the most part, these did nothing more than repair the continual losses through battle and sickness. Among the new-comers were numerous volunteers, who, from religious motives, entered upon the holy war against the heretics. An event of very special importance was the separation from his master of Lúlú, the commander in Northern Syria of the forces of Ibn Túlún, the ruler of Egypt mentioned above; he entered into negotiations with Mowaffak, of which the result was that with a considerable army behind him he joined the latter on Thursday, 11th July 883. The preparations for a decisive assault were now complete; transport ships for large masses of troops were in immediate readiness, and the great waterways of the hostile territory were by this time so entirely free of all obstacles as to be passable at all states of the tide. Mowaffak is said to have brought more than 50,000 men into the great battle of Monday, 5th August, while yet leaving a large number behind in Mowaffakiya. After a severe struggle the whole city was taken. The negro chief fled; but as the imperialists, instead of pursuing him keenly, occupied themselves with plunder, and, by becoming scattered, exposed themselves to the danger of surprise, a withdrawal was again in the end found necessary, and Alí returned once more to the city. The respite, however, was but short. The final assault was delivered on Saturday, 11th August 883. From the first the advanced troops broke up the Zenj. Their leader was separated from his companions; Sulaimán, son of Jámi, along with others, was made prisoner. A section of the Zenj, indeed, drove back the enemy once more, but this was of no avail; in a little news was brought that the rebel chief was dead, and one of Lúlú's people almost immediately confirmed this intelli-

gence by bringing in his head. It is not certain how he met his death. Perhaps we may venture to believe a statement¹ that he poisoned himself. According to another story, he perished in flight. That he did not fall in battle is further indicated by the circumstance that none of our authorities, with all their fulness, speak of any combatant as having sought to obtain the royal reward for slaying the arch-rebel. Death by his own hand seems the most appropriate to the nature of the man; at the same time, I am free to confess that we can form a tolerably vivid picture of him only if we bring a good deal of fancy into play.

When Mowaffak saw the head of his enemy, he threw himself upon the ground in an attitude of worship, full of thankfulness to God. The example was followed by officers and troops. It would almost seem as if without the energy of Lúlú the mortal struggle of the Zenj might have been still further protracted. This is not indeed exactly what is said by the history, written as it is entirely in the government sense, but there is evidence for it in a couplet which the soldiers sang, to the effect that—

“Beyond all doubt, say what you choose,
The victory was all Lúlú's.”²

On this and the following days some thousands of Zenj surrendered themselves, and were pardoned; it would have been a senseless thing to have driven the last remnants of the enemy to desperation, especially when they could be utilised as soldiers. Others, again, fared badly who had fled into the desert, some dying of thirst, and some being made slaves by the Bedouins. Yet a number of blacks still remained unsubdued, and from the swampy thickets to the

¹ By Hamza Isfahání (Leyden MS.; not in the printed text).

² Some years later Mowaffak caused Lúlú to be thrown into prison in order to obtain possession of his great wealth—wealth, we may be sure, which had not been quite innocently gained.

west of Basra, whither they had a considerable time before been sent by the negro chief, continued to carry on their robberies and murders. Mowaffak was on the point of sending a division against them, when they, too, made their submission.¹ When they showed themselves, their good condition struck the beholders; they had not gone through the hardships of the long siege.

The son of the rebel chief and five of his high commanders had fallen alive into the hands of the victors. They were kept in prison in Wásit, until one day the negroes there once more raised an insurrection, and by acclamation chose the first-named as their chief. The prisoners were then beheaded (885). The bowman who had hit Mowaffak was recognised far away from the seat of war at Rámhormuz in Susiana, and brought to Mowaffak, who handed him over to his son Abul Abbás to be put to death.

Mowaffak remained for a considerable time in the city he had founded, to bring matters into order. A general proclamation was issued, that all who had fled through fear of the Zenj should return to their homes. Many betook themselves to Mowaffakiya, but this city also had only an ephemeral existence; even the geographers of the following century no longer mention it. The great trading city of Basra, which once more rose to prosperity, proved too powerful a rival for its neighbour.

Abul Abbás arrived in Bagdad, the capital, with the head of the negro leader displayed on a pole, on Saturday, 23rd November 883.

Thus ended one of the bloodiest and most destructive rebellions which the history of Western Asia records. Its consequences must long have continued to be felt, and it

¹ The Zenj who were received into the service of the Caliph after the death of their leader are described in an original source, dating from the period of his successor, as pure barbarians, who spoke no Arabic, and ate carrion, and even human flesh.

can hardly be doubted that the cities and regions of the lower Tigris never entirely recovered from the injuries which they at that time suffered.

Several contemporaries, among them former adherents of Alí, wrote the story of this rebellion. Out of their writings, along with official documents, Tabarí, himself a contemporary, incorporated in his great Chronicle, a very comprehensive narrative, especially of the events of the war. The well-known book of Mas'údí supplies us with valuable additions to our information; did we possess his greater works also, we should doubtless know more as to the person of the negro chief and the institutions of his State. Other writers supply us only with incidental notices.

VI.

YAKÚB THE COPPERSMITH, AND HIS DYNASTY.

IN eastern Irán lies the marshy district of lake Hámún, formed by waters draining from the east and north. The area of water varies greatly according to the season, as the streams rise and fall. These, and notably the Hélmend, which in the lower part of its course is broken up into a number of natural and artificial channels, render a great part of the hot low-lying plain extremely fertile, but the rest of the country is a dreary waste. The plain was anciently called, from the lake, Zaranka ("lakeland"), a designation preserved down to the Middle Ages in the name of the chief town Zereng. From the occupation of the region in the second century B.C. by the Sacæ, barbarians from the north, it was called Sakastán ("land of the Sacæ"), more recent forms of the word being Segistán (Arabic, Sejistân) or Sístán. The low country, which is notorious for its serpents, is almost surrounded by desert; on the east it borders upon Zábulistán,¹ which geographically belongs to the Afghan highlands, and in whole or part often fell under the same government with them, and was included under their name. Sístán was the home of the most heroic parts of the Iránian legends, the stories of Rostam the Strong and his race, of which no trace is to be found in the ancient sacred books. The legend may be taken as reflecting the brave character of the inhabitants,

¹ Approximately corresponding to the upper basin of the Hélmend.

who were plainly separated by strongly marked distinctions from the other Iránians.

Sístán had been conquered at a comparatively early period by the Arabs, but the country was difficult of access, and long remained an insecure possession. Islam soon made great progress in the plain, but among the mountains to the east the new-comers only slowly established a footing. And even in Sístán proper the stubborn spirit of the natives inclined them to adhere rather to the Kharijites¹ than to the State Church. The governors of the first Abbásids had much difficulty with these Independents. The family of Táhir also, which from the days of Caliph Mámún had held the governorship of Khorásán, and of Sístán, which was regarded as an appendage, was unable to put down the Kharijites here, who steadily became more unruly as the power of the Táhirids waned. But in Sístán, as in other desert lands, Kharijite was often little more than a polite name for bandit. We thus understand how it was that, in the midst of this vigorous population, as the power of the State dwindled, volunteer bands were formed for defence against the Kharijites. Like their adversaries they, of course, declared that they were fighting solely for God; with what truth, we need not pause to discuss. At the head of a band of such volunteers one of the name of Dirhem succeeded in seizing Zereng, the chief town, and driving out the Táhirid prefect. Among his people was a certain Yakúb, son of Laith, who had formerly followed the trade of a coppersmith—a prosperous industry in Sístán,² whence the surname of “coppersmith” (Saffár) borne by himself and his successors. He, and his equally warlike brothers, belonged to the little town of

¹ See above, p. 80.

² A contemporary incidentally mentions the great production of copper and brass work in Sístán.

Karmín, a day's journey to the east of Zereng, in the direction of the notable city of Bust, the ruins of which are still visible. Near his birthplace was, and still is, shown the stable of Rostam's gigantic war-horse.¹ It is possible that the heroic legend had its influence upon him. Yakúb had once before laid down the hammer for the sword. He had fought under Sálíh of Bust (852), who had made himself master of Sístán, or at least of a part of Sístán, for a time, but afterwards had been overcome by Táhir, a grandson of the founder of the Táhirid dynasty. Subsequently Yakúb had passed through other adventures. Under Dirhem, his boldness and ability brought him to the front. Thus he killed in single combat a dreaded captain of the Kharijites named Ammán. In this way he rose to such repute among his fellows that Dirhem found it expedient to set out on pilgrimage to Mecca, and afterwards to settle in Bagdad, leaving the leadership to Yakúb.² Yakúb having thus risen to a position of command, doubtless assumed the title of Emír, which was vague enough to mean either a general or a local captain, but could also denote a powerful prince by whom even the Caliph was recognised as a merely nominal suzerain. He gradually became ruler of his native land, which always continued to be the central State and the place of refuge of himself and family. His energetic suppression of the robbers, whose villages he destroyed, and the security he obtained for traffic, brought him, it would seem, into high credit, and in any case the brave Sístánese felt themselves drawn to this countryman of theirs who had proved himself a born ruler. Accordingly, the kingdom founded by him is generally designated as that of the Sístánese. That Yakúb

¹ Rostam's stable is pointed out in several other parts of Sístán also.

² According to another account the governor of Khorásán had got Dirhem into his power and sent him as a prisoner to Bagdad. Our information as to the earlier history of our hero is at every point full of contradictions.

at every Friday service caused prayer to be offered, in the first instance, for the Caliph as the general commander of all the faithful, need hardly be said. A theoretical dependence such as this, which in fact was rendered necessary by his protest against the Kharijite independence, involved no real restriction of his power, but at most made it necessary to send money and presents more or less regularly to court. At the outset he seems to have recognised, also, the Táhirid Mohammed as overlord. In those times, indeed, it often happened that a lawful governor or vassal and a usurper made appeal to the same lord, and that in that case the usurper, if victorious, was also recognised by the overlord as his faithful subject.¹ The date of these occurrences was about 860.

As early as 867 Yakúb crossed the frontier of his native land, and after hard fighting took from Mohammed's representative Herát, which has often been an object of struggle at many different times, and also Púsheng, ten hours from Herát. For the time he contented himself with this portion of Khorásán; the house of Táhir was still too powerful for him. He brought back with him as prisoners to Sístán some members of that family, restoring to them their freedom, however, when that was demanded by Caliph Motazz. With this Caliph he had already had frequent dealings, sending him magnificent presents, mostly the result of plunder gained in his struggles with the heathen of the East. He was making suit for the governorship of Kermán, which lay to the west of Sístán; but simultaneously a similar application was being made by Alí, son of Husain, who was at that time powerful in Persis (Párs). Kermán is, in fact, essentially a mere appendage of Párs. The Caliph, or rather the Táhirid

¹ Something similar happened not unfrequently in the Ottoman empire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Mohammed, who had control of the chief towns, Bagdad and Sámarrá, sent a commission to both applicants, in the hope that they would attack and destroy one another. Ali's general, Tauk, promptly seized the capital of Kermán before Yakúb was able to cover the exceedingly arduous desert journey from Sístán. The coppersmith lay encamped for a month or two a day's journey from the capital; he then retired a little, but kept himself accurately informed as to his adversary. When Tauk was now off his guard, Yakúb made a forced march and fell upon him, taking him prisoner (869). In the camp there were found, along with many other valuables, a chest full of necklaces and bracelets intended as rewards of bravery, and another with chains and halters for prisoners. Yakúb decorated his own braves with the contents of the one, and appropriated those of the other to his captives, the heaviest chains being reserved for Tauk himself. When these were being placed upon Tauk, it appeared that shortly before, "on account of the heat," he had had a vein opened. The conqueror made this the occasion of a lecture to the effect that in his luxury he might have thought twice before venturing upon a contest with one who for two months had lain on no bed, had never put off his shoes, and had lived on the hard bread which he had carried while marching in these shoes.¹

Yakúb immediately pressed forward against Párs, which was much more valuable than Kermán, and indeed one of the richest lands in all the Caliph's dominions. It was in vain that Ali and the leading men of Shíráz, the capital, wrote to represent to him that though his contendings against heretics had been very meritorious, he would fall into the greatest crime if he were to force his way into that country and shed blood without the Caliph's authority.

¹ The details of these struggles are again very variously given.