Alí accordingly, now reinforced by the fugitives from the vanquished army, took up on the river Kur (Kyros), not far from the capital, a strong position, accessible only by a narrow passage between rock and river to one rider at a time. Yakúb halted his followers some distance off from the river while he himself galloped forward, a fifteen-foot lance in his hand, to reconnoitre. The enemy contemptuously shouted: "We shall soon send you back to your pot and kettle tinkering." But he had discovered a passable place, and now caused his horsemen, leaving all encumbrances behind, to enter the rapid stream; the enemy was taken in flank, and fled without resistance. An eye-witness says that Yakúb's horsemen in this movement followed a large dog which he had caused to be thrown into the river; perhaps his object was by this means to determine the force and set of the current. Alí himself was taken prisoner in this action (Thursday, 26th April 869). On the following night, Shíráz was captured. The inhabitants had expected the whole town to be pillaged, but Yakúb seized nothing save the public treasure and the estate of Alí and his officials. Both Alí and Tauk, who had personally offended him, he compelled, by severe maltreatment, to disclose where their treasures were. By 14th May he had again left Shíráz, and set out with booty and captives for Sístán. To the Caliph he sent rich presents, and in addition, we may be certain, the assurance of his utmost loyalty. But for the time it had only been a successful robber's raid. He was not yet in a position so much as to think of taking permanent possession of Párs, which is broken up by very high mountains and other natural obstacles, and abounded in fortresses. On the other hand, he remained master, though not quite completely, of Kermán. The wild and never wholly subjugated inhabitants of the lofty, snow-clad mountain range of Páriz, which

intersects the country in a general direction from north-west to south-east, were only gradually forced to submit by himself and his successors.

Yakúb meanwhile enlarged his dominions by conquests in the mountainous region to the east, where it would seem that he had already fought much. He, as well as his successors, made many conquests and plundering raids in these lands, of which, unfortunately, we possess almost no details. In any case they contributed much to the gradual ascendency of Islam in the country now called Afghanistan. In March 871 an embassy came from him to the Caliph Motamid, bringing idols which he had taken in Cabul or in that neighbourhood. Trophies of this kind from the lands of the unbeliever had long ceased to be seen in the capital of Islam. The bold coppersmith thus figured in the eyes of all the world as a champion of the faith. But his embassy had, of course, very practical objects as well; it was to negotiate as to the lands the Caliph would assign as provinces to his faithful Yakúb. The clever regent Mowaffak for his part was anxious, on the one hand, to strengthen the praiseworthy zeal of Yakúb for conquest at the expense of heathens and of distant Moslems, and, on the other, to keep him well away from his own neighbourhood. When Yakúb was again setting out for an invasion of Párs, where at that time, after all sorts of complications, Mohammed, the son of Wásil, had gained the upper hand, and was also recognised as governor by the Caliph, there accordingly came to him a letter which, in addition to Sístán and Kermán, made him lord of Balkh (Bactria) and other eastern countries as far as India. By this means the regent got him away from Párs, left him in possession of what he already had, and pointed him to the lordship over a number of remote regions which he would first have to conquer. Whether he expected Yakúb

to make regular payment of the stipulated tribute for these fiefs may be left a question.

Yakúb seems soon to have taken possession of Balkh. We may imagine that the rude warrior chief was not too gentle in his treatment of his new subjects in this doubtful frontier territory, and that he made the most of them in the way of tribute. At least his name, as well as that of his successor, were long held in unsavoury memory among the Bactrians, and we know that oppressive taxes were inflicted on other regions which for a longer or shorter time came under his sway. We have no evidence that he or his successor, outside of Sístán and Kermán, troubled themselves at all about the welfare of their subjects, or even could have done so; but it is beyond doubt that they were very energetic in the matter of tribute. Then, as at all periods of Eastern history, many potentates have distinguished themselves in this line. Nothing else was expected of a military overlord. But that more than a century later the name of Sístánese (Segzí) had evil associations may be taken as an indication that Yakúb and his brother pressed very hardly on their subjects.

Meanwhile the power of the Táhirid Mohammed went on steadily decaying even in Khorásán. The Alid Hasin, son of Zaid, lord of Tabaristán,[1] wrested from him the border-land of Gurgán (Hyrcania, to the south-east of the Caspian Sea). Other portions of Khorásán became the prey of various petty lords. This gave the coppersmith courage to aim at the entire possession of the vast country, some eastern portions of which were already in his hands. We see that he by no means confined himself within the limits of the Caliph's grant. A pretext, if pretext were needed, was supplied by Mohammed. Abdalláh had rebelled against

[1] See above, p. 139.

Yakúb in Sístán, and afterwards fled to Khorásán; after some negotiations he was now induced by Mohammed, instead of seizing upon the capital Nísháb́ur, to take possession, under him, of certain districts which belonged to the territory of Yakúb. The coppersmith, who had already entered into all sorts of relations with disaffected grandees of Khorásán, accordingly set out from Sístán, whither it was his wont to retreat from time to time, and marched by way of Herát upon Nísháb́ur. Mohammed sent an embassy to meet him, but in vain. On Sunday, 2nd August 873, Yakúb entered the great and flourishing city of the Táhirids without a blow being struck. Mohammed either could not, or would not, make his escape. He is reported to have thought that he could make a personal impression on the victor, and to have received him with loud reproaches; but Yakúb simply put him into prison with all his kinsfolk, one hundred and sixty males. The continuous rule in Khorásán of the house of Táhir thus came to an end after having subsisted for fifty years. Yakúb now promptly sent an embassy to the Caliph to represent to him that he had set out only upon the request of the Khorásánians, because Mohammed's weak rule had allowed all sorts of disorders to spring up, and that the inhabitants of Nísháb́ur had come a ten hours' journey to meet him, to deliver their city into his hands. In token of his profound attachment he sent the head of a Kharijite captain, who in the neighbourhood of Herát had dared for thirty years to call himself "Commander of the Faithful."[1] The embassy was honourably received by the Caliph in solemn audience, but received from him emphatic orders to their master that he must quit Khorásán forthwith if

[1] The Kharijites considered themselves the only true believers, and accordingly gave this proud title to their own leaders.

he did not wish to be regarded as a rebel. Some of his people, in fact, who were in Bagdad at the time, were thrown into prison. Yakúb, however, was not to be duped, but set about establishing himself as firmly as he could in possession of the country. As Abdalláh his opponent, after the fall of Mohammed, had taken refuge with the Alid rulers of Tabaristán, who refused to deliver him up, Yakúb even resolved to invade that country. On the way he was met by a man who had risen to a kind of religious-political leadership, and who offered to accompany him on the expedition against the heretical Alids. But Yakúb could not accept the services of an independent ally; on the contrary, he put the volunteer in chains. We do not know the details well enough to say for certain that Yakúb's conduct was treacherous, but the suspicion of treachery is grave both in this case and in that of the imprisonment of the Táhirid. Yakúb turned the difficult mountain country to the east by keeping to the sea coast. The old fortifications which barred the access of the northern nomads can hardly have offered a serious obstacle. Soon he arrived in the immediate neighbourhood of Sárí, on the plain bordering the southern shore of the Caspian. Here Hasan met him, but was defeated (Monday, 17th May 874), and fled westwards to the mountains of Dílem.[1] Yakúb occupied the two chief towns, Sárí and Amol, and forthwith levied on both a whole year's taxes; he well knew that it would be impossible for him to hold them permanently. He then set out in pursuit of the fugitive, but in the high and densely-wooded mountains he fell into great danger, especially as it rained for weeks. The moist climate of the northern side of these mountains is as notorious as the drought that characterises the rest of

[1] See above, p. 139.

Irán, and consequently the country is covered with a most luxuriant vegetation. Yakúb found himself compelled to desist from the pursuit if he was not to court annihilation in some one of the narrow passes. He had already lost the greater part of his baggage and of his beasts of burden, besides many soldiers. Had he been read in history he might have consoled himself with the reflection that he had got off more easily than many another Persian or Arab general before him who had penetrated into these dangerous highlands. Returned from Tabaristán, Yakúb directed his march towards Rai,[1] where, as he had learned, Abdalláh had now taken shelter with the governor. The latter, to be rid of the dreaded warrior, handed over the fugitive. Yakúb killed Abdalláh, and retraced his steps; perhaps he thought the time had not quite arrived for conquests in Media. Hasan came back to his own country, and chastised with extreme severity those who (probably out of religious antipathy to Shíitism) had taken Yakúb's side. During the somewhat lengthened period of Yakúb's stay in Tabaristán, the Táhirid Husain, a brother of the captive Mohammed, with 2000 Turks, led by the ruler of Khárizm (Khíva), had made himself master of southern Merv (River Merv, or Mervi-Rúd); but we do not know whether he held his ground there for any time. On the whole, at least, Yakúb retained his grasp of Khorásán, in spite of the great losses in his last campaign. Yakúb, immediately after his first success at Sárí, had sent a most deferential account of the defeat of the heretics to the Commander of all true Believers, and had announced to the Abbásid the joyful news that he now had in his power sixty members of the family of Alí. But this did not procure for him pardon for his encroachments. In November or December of the same year (874) the Caliph,

[1] Near the modern Teherán.

through Obaidalláh, an uncle of Mohammed,[1] caused the Mecca pilgrims from the north-east of the empire, who were at that time in Bagdad on their return journey, to be called together to hear a document in which Yakúb was declared a usurper, and his seizure of the lawful governor a grevious crime. Such a communication was the best means of diffusing a knowledge of the Caliph's will in those remote regions, especially as the pilgrims in their religious excitement must have been in a more than usually receptive mood for the words of the head of all believers. Thirty copies of this writing were sent into the various countries.

At this time Abdalláh, son of Wáthik, and thus a full cousin of the reigning Caliph Motamid, and of the regent Mowaffak, died in Yakúb's camp. Unfortunately, we learn nothing more than the bare fact. Perhaps this prince had betaken himself to the coppersmith, that with his help he might gain the throne of his father and of his brother (Mohtadí), and had been put out of the way in their interest; but other explanations of the fact are conceivable.

Whether the solemn repudiation of himself in the presence of his subjects, and the consequent division of Khorásán among the various governors by letters of the Caliph, had proved more than Yakúb could bear, or whether the southern lands had offered a temptation to his love of conquest more than he could resist, we cannot tell; be this as it may, he now once more directed his

[1] Táhir

Abdalláh

Táhir — Obaidalláh

Mohammed — Husain

energies against Párs, leaving his brothers Amr and Alí along with others to maintain his rights in Khorásán.

Here it may be appropriate to ask whence it was that Yakúb obtained the large bodies of troops required for his campaigns, which often entailed heavy losses, as well as for the occupation of the conquered lands. By levies he can at most have raised only a small number of men. Perhaps also, after the custom at that time, he bought sturdy Turkish boys (Mamlúks),[1] and trained them as warriors; but large masses of men could hardly be procured from this source. The bulk of his armies appears to have consisted of mercenaries. The volunteer, we are told, who offered for Yakúb's service, if he was found suitable, had to give up his whole property; this was sold, and the amount set down to his credit; when he retired, it was returned to him. Obviously we are to understand that the money was retained if he left the service before the expiry of his time, or contrary to the conditions; it was caution-money. Pay and commissariat were adequate, and we cannot doubt that the former was punctually received. In the last resort the expense fell upon the conquered enemies, and still more upon the subject provinces. Yakúb had always a full military chest; mention is often made both of his treasures and of those of his successor. His troops, all of them mounted, and very mixed in their character, he kept together with an iron discipline, about which many stories were current. Thus an officer on one occasion, we are told, who was engaged in a religious ablution at the moment when the order to march was given, did not venture to take time to dress, but put his breastplate upon his naked body. On the

[1] The word Mamlúk, meaning something like "purchased slave," was not current in this sense till later; in Yakúb's time, such persons were mostly called Ghulám (plural, Ghilmán), "lads."

other hand, he won his soldiers by his open-handedness; at all events, he possessed the secret of all great *condottieri*, that of creating in his troops a strong attachment to his person. One element in his success may have been that though he was vastly their superior in ability, he was little so in culture. The story was told of this zealous defender of the faith, that on one occasion he had betrayed the haziest ideas about Caliph Othmán,—which is very much as if a good Christian were to have heard nothing about the Apostle John. His personal bravery also, which in one of his earlier battles had left its mark in a great scar slanting right across his face, must have further endeared him to his soldiers. From his best troops he had picked two divisions of Guards, the one of which, one thousand men strong, bore golden, the other silvern, maces on parade.

In the height of summer 875, Yakúb entered Párs. Mohammed, son of Wásil, hastened up from Susiana, sought to throw him off the scent by negotiations, kept back his messengers, and then pressed forward with all speed so as to surprise him. But as-Saffár was duly informed of his movements, fell upon his assailant when exhausted by heat and thirst, and at once put him to flight (August or September). The great treasure of the enemy fell into his hand. It is not to be supposed that the whole country forthwith became his without dispute; but he nevertheless ruled as lord of Párs, and among other things severely punished a tribe of Kurds who had zealously supported the son of Wásil. He did not, however, stay long, but pressed westwards to Susiana. In October he was already at Rámhormuz in the low plain of Susiana, in dangerous proximity to the Tigris. The central Government was in the greatest alarm, for, besides being himself a formidable enemy, Yakúb could cut the line of

attack upon the negro rebels, who had brought the empire into great straits.[1] Those of Yakúb's people who had been thrown into prison were accordingly set free with promptitude, and an honour ble embassy was sent to him. As he appeared disposed to treat, Mowaffak called together the eastern merchants then in Bagdad, and told them that Yakúb had been named governor of Khorásán, Tabaristán, Gurgán, Rai, and Párs, as well as military governor of Bagdad—thus conceding to him an extent of power such as Táhir himself had hardly wielded. A new embassy, which included his old superior Dirhem, carried to Yakúb the Caliph's letter with the announcement. But the powerful general knew what weight to give to offers of this kind. His feelings of respect for the imperial Government were long exhausted; he had no scruples about coming to a complete breach with it. He accordingly replied that he would make his decision in Bagdad itself. Certain Arabic verses are put into his mouth, in which, amongst other things, he says that he possesses Khorásán and Párs already, and that he does not despair of winning Irák also.[2] The man who could hardly speak a little Arabic, and who certainly was not able to use literary Arabic according to the rules of grammar, metre, and style, cannot possibly have made these verses himself; but they well express what his attitude was in the circumstances. He continued, doubtless, formally to acknowledge the Caliph as his overlord. Some years later, a vassal of his undeceived the Zenj, with whom he had entered into relations, by offering public prayers, in the first place, for the Caliph; in the second, for Yakúb. If as-Saffár had conquered, he would perhaps have retained Motamid, but hardly his

[1] See above, p. 162 sqq.

[2] In a somewhat different text these verses are given by others as his epitaph; but they are only slightly modified from a much older passage.

vigorous and able brother Mowaffak. For it is rather improbable, though not altogether inconceivable, that Mowaffak was in collusion with Yakúb, as was suspected by the Caliph's "freedmen," the Turkish generals, to whom the thought that the Sístánese might be bringing their own hateful power to an end must have been very unwelcome. Yakúb, then, continued to advance, occupying Wásit on the Tigris, and marching on Bagdad. Motamid now fell back upon his last resource; he assumed the mantle of the Prophet, and with the Prophet's staff in his hand, took command of the holy war against the godless rebel. He set out with a great army from Sámarrá, but himself kept somewhat to the rear as the two armies approached one another, some fifty miles below Bagdad. Mowaffak took the command in chief. Yakúb's army was much the smaller; and, moreover, an artificial inundation hampered his horsemen in their movements. The battle was keen. An attack upon his camp, made from the Tigris, and the arrival towards evening of powerful reinforcements for the imperial army, at last compelled as-Saffár, who had fought bravely and received three arrow wounds, to yield (Palm Sunday, 8th April 876). With the camp, rich booty fell to the victors. What was particularly unpleasant to Yakúb, the Táhirid Mohammed, whom he carried about with him in chains, made his escape. The Caliph personally removed the chains, and named him again military governor of Bagdad on the spot. This was the first great defeat sustained by the veteran warrior on the field (for in Tabaristán he had been compelled to yield to the forces of nature). The victorious enemy did not venture to pursue Yakúb, who sulkily withdrew to Gundíshábúr, between Shúshter and Susa, quite close to Babylonia. His wide dominion was now in a somewhat precarious state. He could still be

sure of Sístán and Kermán; but in Khorásán his rule had long had to contend with great difficulties, caused partly by the imperial Government, and partly by all kinds of local chiefs; the political state of Khorásán at that time, as often before and since, must have been most perplexed. With the Caliph's sanction, Párs had again been wrested from the "cursed" Yakúb by Wásil's son, who, however, was beaten by a general of as-Saffár (876–7), and himself was made a prisoner, and was carried to the citadel of Bam, in Kermán, where a number of other state prisoners were already languishing.[1]

During this period Yakúb himself was at least once in Párs, where also coins were minted in his name;[2] but for the most part he resided in Susiana, large portions of which he held directly, while others were ruled through his generals. Other potentates also, with varying fidelity, stood to him in the relation of vassals. He sent an expedition even into the highlands on the north about the sources of the river Kerkhá; it brought back one of the chiefs of the region as a prisoner (877–8). Other portions of Susiana were, at times at least, occupied by troops of the Caliph or of the Zenj. The proposals of the negro leader for a formal alliance against the common enemy were brusquely rejected by Yakúb, who would have nothing to do with unbelievers. Such an alliance might certainly have been very disastrous for the empire. His troops came even into serious collisions with those of the Zenj, but ultimately the community of interests made itself felt, and the territory of each was tacitly recognised, and mutual injuries ceased to be inflicted. In September 878 Mowallad,[3] a prominent general of the Caliph, came over

[1] This citadel, which is still kept up, has until recently often served as a place of confinement for political prisoners.

[2] One coinage of the year 877-8 is known.

[3] See above, p. 160.

to Yakúb as a fugitive, and was received, we may be sure, with open arms. The latter, however, still hesitated to make the decisive advance. He had learned to respect Mowaffak's ability and power. But still less did Mowaffak venture to attack the redoubtable hero, especially as the Zenj were still on his hands. Indeed, he made one more attempt to come to a good understanding with him. His messenger, it is related, found as-Saffár sick. When he had delivered his master's proposals, he was bidden take back the answer that Yakúb was ill; should he die then they had peace from one another, but should he recover the sword would decide, either until Yakúb had wiped out the defeat he had sustained, or until, all his empire lost, he was compelled to return to the coarse bread and onions which had been the food of his youth. Inflexible towards his enemies, he was equally intractable with his physicians. His disease was colic; he refused to take their remedies, and died on Wednesday the 5th June 879, at Gundíshábúr. His grave was afterwards shown here, but all traces of it have doubtless disappeared with the complete desolation of the city.

Yakub was a warrior of iron strength, and certainly also of iron hardness. His enemy, Hasan (with allusion, we suppose, to his former trade), called him "the anvil." He was seldom seen to smile. His successes, in no small degree, were due to the fact that he formed all his plans by himself, and directed their execution personally as far as might be. His main recreation consisted in training boys in the exercises of war. Even when ruler of extensive territories he adhered to the very simplest style of living, probably more from mere habit than, as he himself put it, for the sake of good example. In his tent he slept upon his shield. The dishes set before himself and his attendants, at a time when the art of cookery was highly developed,

corresponded to those which would appear at the table of a tolerably well-to-do handicraftsman: mutton, rice, a sweet pottage, and a dish of dates and cream.[1] Yakúb had no attendants in his tent; but close beside him he always had a number of Mamlúks, who were required to be in readiness at any moment to execute their master's orders. No traits of gentleness are related of Yakúb, but neither also of any special cruelty, for, judged by the manners of the time, his maltreatment of Alí and Tauk can hardly be so construed. Fearful atrocities in war were then mere matters of course. Yakúb's cunning is often celebrated; without it he certainly would never have succeeded even so far as to become a captain of volunteers in Sístán. This subtlety finds its expression in his diplomatic dealings with the Caliph and other authorities. As already said, there is ground for the suspicion that it sometimes made him treacherous and disloyal to his word; but it is to be noted that our authorities, though they mainly reflect the hostile opinion of government circles in Bagdad, make no point of this; in that age, to be sure, treachery was too common to excite much remark. The circumstances of the time, and still more, by much, the whole character of the warrior-chief himself, explain why it was that he established no enduring kingdom. We meet with no indication that he combined any higher ends with his love of conquest. Certainly he never had the least idea of binding together, in any organic way, the various countries which, one after another, fell under his power, or even of instituting an efficient administration. Some buildings he reared, but he hardly devised any far-reaching measures for the common benefit; and, on the other hand, he certainly taxed his subjects very grievously. A

[1] In his native Sístán, indeed, a peculiar taste prevailed, asafœtida being a very favourite condiment.

more ideal intellect would surely have found more efficacious means to prevent the conquered countries from falling into other hands, or at least threatening to do so, as soon as his back was turned. And yet the historian cannot withhold his respect from this powerful personality who, from being a common craftsman in a remote district, raised himself to the position of a great prince, formidable at once to the heathen in Afghanistan and to the Caliph in his palace.

He was succeeded by his brother Amr, who is said to have been in his youth an ass-driver, or, by way of variety, a mason, but as early at least as his first attempts in Khorásán, and probably even at an earlier date, had been a trusty helper of Yakúb. Newly come to power, Amr was naturally indisposed to stake everything on a war with the Caliph, and forthwith he declared himself the obedient servant of the Commander of the Faithful. Mowaffak for his part was delighted to be rid of his worst enemy, and confirmed to Amr all he had offered to Yakúb. The district of Ispahán was also included in his kingdom, which thus towards the east and north extended considerably beyond, though on the north-west and west it in some places fell short of, the limits of modern Persia; but at that time those lands were much more populous and prosperous than they are to-day. In addition to this realm, he held the dignity of military governor of Bagdad and Sámarrá. Amr could not discharge this office personally; he accordingly, as the lords of Khorásán belonging to the house of Táhir had been wont to do, named a deputy, a Táhirid to boot, Obaidalláh, who in autumn 879 was solemnly installed by Mowaffak himself. It is to be presumed that Obaidalláh was on bad terms with his nephew Mohammed, whom Yakúb had dethroned. It even fell to Amr to appoint the governor of the holy

cities Mecca and Medina. But unfortunately for him, it was only in a few portions of this great kingdom that Amr's direct or indirect authority was at all sure. Khorásán in particular, in many respects the most important country of them all, was ready to slip from his grasp. Here a prominent part was played by Khujastání, a man who had at first insinuated himself into the confidence of Yakúb, and afterwards had driven out his brother Alí, and gained much ground partly on the pretext of winning back for the Táhirids the territory which hereditarily belonged to them. Amr hastened to Khorásán, where he had fought many a battle before, but was defeated by Khujastání (Thursday, 7th July 880), who took from him Níshábúr the capital, and slew his adherents. Amr went back to Sístán, but with no intention of giving up Khorásán. He might reckon with confidence that Khujastání also would have enemies enough. In Bagdad he made the complaint that the latter had been urged on by the Táhirid Mohammed. In point of fact, Khujastání and Mohammed's brother Husain, already mentioned, who had joined him, did retain the public prayer for Mohammed; and indeed he was in a certain respect the lawful ruler of the country, and much sympathy was there felt for the dynasty, which seems, on the whole, to have governed well. Mowaffak who, as long as the Zenj were still unsubdued, had to keep Amr in good humour, found himself compelled, in order to oblige the latter, to imprison Mohammed and some of his kinsmen. In Mecca, also, Amr asserted his dignity. During the pilgrim festival in July 881, it came almost to an open fight for the precedence, in the holiest mosque of all Islam, between the representatives of Amr and of the Túlúnid ruler of Egypt. Bloodshed was prevented only by the skilful conduct of the Abbásid prince, who had the management

of the whole festival. His black freedmen had taken sides for Amr, probably more out of hatred against the Egyptians than from love of the Sístánese.

In 881–2 Amr's governor in Párs revolted. Amr, however, promptly entered the country, defeated the rebel, took possession of Istakhr (Persepolis), once the capital, and gave it up to plunder. The rebel was taken prisoner in his flight. Amr now remained for some time in Shíráz, the capital. He strengthened his rule in Párs more than his predecessor had done. Thus, he succeeded in subduing the Arab family which held the eastern portion of the hot coast-land. To accomplish this required indeed two years' severe exertion, and it was at last brought about only with the help of a member of the same family.[1] Amr extracted large sums of money from the lord of Ispahán, and out of these he made handsome presents to the Caliph. He seems once more to have pretty well become master of Khorásán also, especially after the assassination of Khujastání by one of his servants (June–July 882).

He continued to be on good terms with Mowaffak, at whose wish he imprisoned the Kurd Mohammed,[2] son of Obaidalláh, a thoroughly untrustworthy person, who had even on occasions been in treaty with the Zenj. But after the total suppression of the negro rebellion (autumn 883), and after the effects of the exertions it had required had been partially recovered from, the aspect of matters changed. Mowaffak hoped to be able to restore the power of the central government in other parts of the empire also, and especially in Párs. We must assume that he, at least for form's sake, negotiated with Amr, but that the latter rejected every concession. Only thus can we explain the unusually abrupt character of the action taken

[1] The precise date of these events is unknown.

[2] See above, p. 162.

against him. On 25th March 885, the Caliph Motamid caused the pilgrims from Khorásán, who were in Bagdad on their way to Mecca, to be called together and personally informed that Amr was deposed from the governorship of Khorásán, and Mohammed the Táhirid restored to his post. He then anathematised the former in their presence, and gave orders that he should be cursed from every pulpit. The deposition applied also, of course, to all the other dominions of as-Saffár. To give effect to these orders was not easy. In the case of the remoter provinces, all that could be done for the time was to detach the people from their lord in the manner indicated. But in the nearer Párs it was possible to take more vigorous measures. As early as the middle of February 885, an army set out from Wásit for that province against Amr. Unfortunately, we know very little about the course of this war. The ruler of Ispahán inflicted on Amr (to whom he had shortly before been tributary) a severe defeat, and plundered his entire camp (probably in August 886). In August 887 Mowaffak himself set out for Párs. Amr despatched several divisions against him; but as the general in command of the vanguard went over to the enemy, he was compelled to evacuate the province. The regent followed him to Kermán; his plan no doubt was to track him to his native seat. Amr withdrew from Kermán also into Sístán; during this retreat his son Mohammed died. But Mowaffak was not in a condition to occupy Kermán even, which was in great part a desert, and the citadels of which were, we may suppose, mainly in the hands of Amr's people; to press on through the frightful wilderness to Sístán was not for a moment to be thought of. Nature had set insuperable limits to the enterprise.

Here begins a course of shifting politics, in which only a few of the leading movements are known to us. Mowaffak

must have recognised that he was not yet in a position to subdue as-Saffár, and that it was expedient to come to terms with him. In May or June 889, accordingly, the post of military governor of Bagdad was again conferred upon Amr, and his name inscribed on the standards, lances, and shields in the government office "on the bridge." Some weeks later Amr again appointed Obaidalláh his deputy in this post. This presupposes that a peace had been previously concluded, in which he had received back all, or nearly all, his provinces. That he continued to be ruler of Párs is attested by a series of his coins, extending from 888 or 889 to 898 or 899, better than by any writings of the historians. But as early as February 890 he was again deprived of his dignity as governor. Perhaps he was dissatisfied with the concessions he had received, and this was intended as a punishment. In the East, too, his hands were quite full. He had become suspicious of his youngest brother Alí, and had therefore thrown him into prison along with both his sons, but these had made their escape (890–1) to Ráfi, a rough, unscrupulous warrior of Yakúb's, who had skilfully availed himself of circumstances gradually to become master of a great part of Khorásán, and had also made Rai his own. Alí died while with him, but the breach was not thereby healed. At this point Ráfi came into conflict also with the new Caliph Motadid, who began to reign on 16th October 892, shortly after the death of his father Mowaffak. The Caliph consequently again appointed Amr to the governorship of Khorásán. While Ráfi was inflicting defeat on the Ispahánese, whom the Caliph had at the same time stirred up against him, Amr took his capital Níshábúr (July or August 893). Ráfi, however, did not abandon all hope of his cause, but now allied himself with the Alid prince of Tabaristán; and when Amr quitted Níshábúr some time afterwards, he stepped into the place, caused the public prayer to be offered

for the Alid, and professed the Shíite faith. Through force of circumstances Amr thus became the champion of orthodoxy and of the Commander of the Faithful against the heretics. How good his understanding now once more was with the court is shown by the large presents received from him in Bagdad in May 896. Besides 4,000,000 dirhems (nearly £75,000), they included a number of blood-camels and, very particularly, a bronze image, richly decked with precious stones, of a goddess who (in Indian fashion) had four arms; in front of the image, upon the car on which it was borne, were a number of other smaller idols. The whole were publicly exhibited for three days to the inhabitants of Bagdad. From this we gather that in the meanwhile Amr had carried his arms again into the eastern heathen lands which were subject to Indian influences, and this also is expressly testified. He had permanent hold of the city of Ghazni, where, among other works, he built a bridge.

While his presents were arriving in Bagdad, Amr was already in the field against Ráfi. The siege of Níshábúr began in the end of May. Ráfi was unable to hold out for long, and fled, but was pursued and beaten by Amr, whose account of what occurred, sent to the Caliph, was read before the grandees of the empire on Tuesday, 22nd December 896. Within eight days a further dispatch arrived, to the effect that the miscreant had been again defeated near Tús (north-east from Níshábúr), had thence fled to Khárizm, and there had been slain (Friday, 19th November). This letter, showing, as it did, how the hand of God had once more annihilated the foes of the house of Abbás, was read in all the great mosques at public worship on the following Friday (31st December 896). On Thursday, 10th February 897, Amr's messenger arrived with the head of Ráfi, which was publicly shown all that day. Motadid had undoubtedly good reason for hating the vanquished man. That Ráfi had done homage

to the descendant of Alí was bad enough in the eyes of the Caliph, who assumed a consuming zeal for orthodoxy, but it was much worse that he should publicly have charged Motadid with having compassed the death of his uncle Motamid, in order to hasten his own succession. This reproach was all the less pleasant if, as seems likely, it was founded on truth.

Amr, into whose hands the victory over Ráfi had brought his two nephews also, was now in undisputed possession of Khorásán. In the course of the year 897 there arrived in Nísházúr a messenger of the Caliph, who, besides a variety of complimentary gifts, invested him with the government of Rai. In return for this, Amr sent a large sum for the pious purpose of setting up hospices for the accommodation of pilgrims on the road from Irák to Mecca. He had now reached his culminating point, and was actually stronger than Yakúb had ever been.

Motadid, perhaps the ablest Caliph since Mansúr, a man whose one object was to restore the caliphate to its former glories, could not long endure so powerful a subject. Amr's want of moderation came to the Caliph's aid. He pressingly urged that he might receive the lands beyond the Oxus, which certainly had long been regarded as a dependency of Khorásán, and on which Yakúb, it would seem, had cast longing eyes. The ruling house there for some time had been that of the Sámánids, who had succeeded in raising to high prosperity the extensive oases surrounded by barbarous nomads. The cunning Motadid acceded to this petition, and in February 898 sent to Amr the tokens of his investiture with Transoxania. Simultaneously, it is said, he wrote to Ismáíl the Sámánid to the effect that he had deposed Amr, and now named him (Ismáíl) governor of Khorásán; this, however, is not probable, Amr's investiture with Transoxania having taken place in such solemn form. Even without this he was sure to gain his end, which was to set the two

princes by the ears, and at least to weaken Amr seriously; for it was a thing of course that Ismáíl should resist. Amr now sent an army to cross the Oxus near Amol (approximately where the straight line drawn from Níshábúr to Bukhárá intersects the river). But, on the Sámánid's advancing to meet it, Amr's army drew back a considerable distance, and near Abíwerd, where the cultivated part of Khorásán borders on the desert, sustained a great defeat (Monday, 29th October 898). Ismáíl thereafter retired. Amr now resolved, against the advice of his counsellors, to take the field in person. Then, or even earlier, it is said, Ismáíl wrote to him urging him to be satisfied with his great kingdom; but he would not listen, and when the difficulty of passing the mighty Oxus was represented to him, his reply was: "I could, if I choose, dam it up with money bags." He betook himself to Balkh, which lies pretty near the river. Ismáíl advanced to meet him with a superior army. It is expressly noted that that army included the "owners of the soil;" if not patriotism, strictly so called, there entered into the struggle a determination to protect their well-governed land from the violence and greed of the Sístánese. Ismáíl was successful in investing Balkh, and putting it in a state of siege; perhaps Amr had previously lost a battle. It was in vain that he sued for peace. He was compelled to fight, but his troops soon fled, and dispersed in various directions; he himself got entangled in a marsh, was taken prisoner (April 900), and sent in chains to Samarcand. Ismáíl sent a suitable message to the Caliph; the news arrived on Wednesday, 28th May. Whether Motadid had continued to recognise Amr, or whether he had already had due regard to the successes of the Sámánid, is not known; now at all events it was matter of course that he should praise the victor as his obedient officer, and censure the vanquished as a rebel. Khorásán thenceforward became for a long time a possession

of the house of Sámán; but Párs was given by the Caliph, about the middle of July, to another. Ismáíl is reported to have given Amr his choice between being detained a prisoner with himself or being sent to the Caliph; he is said to have chosen the latter. If this be the fact, he had radically mistaken the character of Motadid.

The friendship that had subsisted between the two since the accession of the latter had never been sincere; at no time had the Caliph seen in as-Saffár anything but a usurper of his lawful rights, who had attained to power only *injuriâ temporum*. But probably it was at the Caliph's own express demand that Amr was delivered up to him. He had sent messengers to bring him; and the fact that these did not arrive in Bagdad till 23rd April 901, indicates protracted negotiations. The Sámánid had sent an attendant along with Amr, with instructions at once to behead him if any movement should occur in his favour. The mighty ruler, whose presents and trophies four short years before had been the finest spectacle that could be furnished to the mob of Bagdad, was now paraded before that mob in procession, as customary at the arrest of great State offenders or heretical princes. From henceforward the Saffárs were now officially designated as unbelievers or arch-heretics, certainly with great injustice. The one-eyed, sun-burnt captive sat upon a great caparisoned two-bunched camel,[1]—one of the animals that he himself had sent in a present on the occasion just alluded to,—clothed in a rich silken robe, and with a tall cap upon his head. The sight touched the very mob in the street, and they refrained from the customary reproaches and curses. A contemporary poet tells—half pityingly, half mockingly—how, during this ride, Amr lifted up his hands to God and prayed to be

[1] In other cases delinquents of this kind were set even upon elephants. The two-bunched camel is a foreign creature in these parts.

delivered from this trouble, and to be allowed to become a coppersmith once more. The Caliph caused the unhappy man to be brought into his presence, and curtly said to him: "This comes of thy insolence." He was then cast into prison, where he lived on for about a year. In the beginning of April 902 (the date of Motadid's death) he was murdered. This, perhaps, was done at the instance of one of the grandees, who was afraid that Amr might again return to power by the aid of the successor to the throne, with whom he stood on a good footing. But it is also possible that the dying Motadid[1] may himself have given the order to have him put to death; it was not inconceivable that as-Saffár, should he chance to make his escape in the confusion attending the change of sovereign, might yet become a great trouble to the new Caliph. So long as he lived he was "an object of hope and fear." In fact, rather more than a year before this (February 901), "out of wrath for Amr,"[2] troops which had served under him had raised upon the shield his grandson Táhir, son of Mohammed (who had died in 887), taken Párs from the Government, and threatened Susiana.

Amr was hardly so doughty a warrior as his brother; he was not unfrequently worsted. But his great craft is spoken of with admiration, and the skill with which he watched over his people by means of a careful system of espionage. He was greatly beloved by his soldiers. Like Yakúb, he kept a full treasury. Occasionally his high officers, even those who enjoyed his special favour, were compelled to surrender large sums which they had gained *per fas* or, oftener, *per nefas*; it is only the sovereign exchequer[3] that

[1] Motadid once declared it to be a maxim of his, never to let an enemy out of prison except to his grave.

[2] The French translation of Mas' údí renders this expression quite wrongly.

[3] ("Die Kirch' allein, meine lieben Frauen,
Kann ungerechtes Gut verdauen."—*Goethe.*)

in the East, and most of all in Persian lands,[1] can digest every kind of unrighteous gain. By good finance and great cleverness, Amr always came out successfully from his misfortunes, until at last his land-hunger and the double-dealing of his suzerain completely undid him. Posterity, for the most part, soon forgot him; only a few considerable ecclesiastical and other edifices continued to testify to his power and magnificence.

His grandson Táhir continued to play a part for some years in Párs and Sístán, until at last he too, in a struggle with a former Mamlúk of Amr, was taken captive and sent to Bagdad (908–9). Several other Saffárids, among them three sons of Alí, came forward in the following years, but all were overpowered. Three of them, among whom was a great-grandson of Amr, also named Amr, were subdued by the Sámánid Ismáíl and his successor; this Amr had been chosen by the Sístánese as their ruler in 914.[2]

Fifty years later we find Khalaf, son of Ahmed, ruling Sístán, under an overlordship of the Sámánids, which was little more than a name. In his elevation he had been helped by the circumstance that, through his mother Bánó, he was a descendant of Amr. Contemporaries even designate him as "descended from Amr." His native country, it is clear, still held as-Saffár's name in high honour. Khalaf was a very pious ruler; a protector of poets, who sang his praises; and of scholars, to whose number he is himself

[1] See above, p. 133.

[2] Laith

Yakúb — Amr — Alí

Amr

Mohammed

Táhir — Yakúb

Amr

reckoned. Amongst other literary works, he caused a commentary on the Koran, in one hundred volumes, to be prepared, the largest of the numerous books of this kind of which we have any information. But yet he, too, cared more for property and power than for piety or culture. Tradition represents him not only as a cunning, but also as a rather untrustworthy person. Out of mistrust he threw his son Táhir into prison, where he died—a suicide, it was alleged. After many vicissitudes of fortune, Khalaf fell into the hands of the great conqueror Mahmúd of Ghazni (1002–3), and died in captivity in March 1008. His son Abú Hafs survived him, and entered the service of Mahmúd. So ended the mighty race of princes of Sístán.

VII.

SOME SYRIAN SAINTS.

In the first centuries of our era there was, in the eastern portions of the Roman empire, a growing tendency to renounce even lawful worldly pleasures for the sake of religion.[1] But the inclination to asceticism acquired peculiar strength after the victory of Christianity, particularly in Egypt and Syria. Was it not the duty of Christians (Gal. v. 24) "to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts"? The men of the cloister retained at least a social life; but many ascetics withdrew into entire solitude to serve God, remote from the world and its pleasures. They could not be always fasting; but they contented themselves with the simplest food, which they either gathered for themselves or received in gifts from their admirers. Many exposed themselves, without any protection, to all vicissitudes of weather. Some paid so little attention to the care of their persons as to give up the practice of washing altogether; the legends often speak with reverential wonder of the filth and vermin of these disgusting saints.[2] Among the number of these Christian hermits there doubtless were some elevated, if mistaken, spirits, of whom, however, only a few can actually have found peace and satisfaction in such a manner of life. But the majority certainly consisted of

[1] For the pagan world compare Jacob Burckhardt, *Constantin* (2nd ed.), p. 218.

[2] I am told by one who knows, that most Indian ascetics, who in self-mortification in other respects, as a rule, go far beyond the Christian, pay strict attention to cleanliness. There are, however (or have been), ascetics in India, also, who have abjured washing.

petty souls, whom it cost but little to renounce many of those things by which man is really made man. The mendicant who in our day sits silent and solitary in the same spot in all weathers, waiting for the charity of the passers by, might perhaps, in those times and regions, have become a holy anchorite. Many of these last may have suffered in their past lives through fault of their own, or through innocent misfortune; others had, perhaps, crimes on their conscience which they sought to atone for. Fastings and macerations are apt to act on the nervous system and produce visions—now pleasant, now horrible. This must have been very specially the case with persons of the sort we are describing—religiously disposed, and brought up to believe in miracles and manifestations. The saint had at one time to contend with demons in terrible or in alluring shapes, whom, in the last resort, he repelled with blows or volleys of stones; at another time there appeared to him angels and godly men of old, who exhorted and encouraged him, or even revealed to him the future. If the actual events coincided tolerably with what had been previously revealed, the coincidence would gradually come to appear, in the dreamer's mind, greater than it really was. A reputation for prophetic gifts was thus easily acquired. The unfulfilled was forgotten, or the vagueness of the oracles allowed new interpretations. Similarly with miraculous healings. Here, indeed, we must remember that certain nervous diseases can for the moment, or even permanently, be cured by faith in the healing power of another; cures of this sort still occur, and will, perhaps, repeatedly be wrought within the next few months at Treves, in connection with the exhibition of the Holy Coat.[1] Other cures were immediately ascribed to

[1] This was written in August 1891. As it turns out, the crop of miracles at Treves has been very poor. This may be explained partly by the strong light of publicity; partly by the fact that, after all, and even in the lower classes, there has been a considerable weakening of simple faith.

the blessing or intercession of the ascetics; while cases of failure were attributed to sin, or were forgotten. Once an ascetic had come to be reputed a prophet or miracle-worker, his fame rapidly grew, and often stood highest at a distance from the scene of his activity, or after the lapse of some time.

I have already indicated that the hermit seldom or never lived in absolute solitude. Disciples who learned from him and waited upon him, and other admirers, gathered round him. The looks of admiration which others bent upon the man who had given up all earthly things for God were easily understood and well received; these are not the only devout men in whom an overpowering pride has clothed itself in expressions of the deepest humility.

Once men of this kind had attained high consideration they were often applied to for counsel and advice in matters not strictly religious. Governors and princes occasionally paid attention to them, voluntarily, or to some extent under popular compulsion. Still more had the bishops to do so, to whom it can hardly always have been any particular pleasure to share their power (reaching far into secular matters) with a class of men for the most part uneducated and obstinate. The ascetics, it is true, who did not need to consult worldly interests, often espoused the cause of oppressed innocence, and with success; but there was always great risk of their abusing their authority; for the very conditions of his life often made it impossible for the ascetic to judge fairly of the case laid before him. In the deplorable ecclesiastical controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries, the holy hermits and monks often exerted an exciting, seldom a soothing, influence.

Viewing the subject as a whole, we cannot regard this asceticism as other than a morbid phenomenon. It did little good and much evil. The mania for self-mortification

spread among the Syrians like an infection, and, combined with their absorption in hair-splitting dogmatic controversies, had a large influence in giving a false direction to the mind of that people.

In what follows I shall endeavour to exhibit to the reader a few Syrian ascetics. I begin with one of the most famous of them all, and shall afterwards go on to others whose portraits have been drawn for us only by one contemporary, but are characteristic for the whole class.

Simeon Stylites.

Simeon was born, towards the end of the fourth century, in Sís, a village near Nicopolis (the modern Isláhíyeh, in Northern Syria).[1] His parents seem to have been fairly substantial people of the lower ranks. He had one surviving brother named Shimshai; the rest of the family died early. While still a child he tended the flocks of his parents, thus becoming accustomed to solitude and privation, and having early opportunity for undisturbed contemplation. He grew up to be a strong and good-looking youth, but of small stature. At this period of his life he repeatedly collected storax, a sweet-smelling resin, and burnt it as an offering without knowing to whom; perhaps in doing so he was unconsciously following some old pagan custom. For, though baptized, he was still at that time without any education, whether religious or secular.

On one occasion, when Simeon accompanied his parents to church in his native village, he was powerfully arrested by the words of the gospel about the blessedness of the poor and the mourner. He had, moreover, according to

[1] Sís itself has not been identified. It is not to be confounded with the Sis in the interior of Cilicia.

a not improbable tradition, visions which pointed him to the path of renunciation; and he gave himself with zeal to asceticism. Even at this early stage the old Syrian biography of Simeon makes him a worker of miracles. The first of these is very peculiar, and deserves to be shortly told as characteristic for its narrators, and also for the readers for whom they wrote. Simeon, after a twenty days' fast, longed for some fish, and went accordingly to the daughter of a fisherman, who had made a large catch in a neighbouring lake, and asked her to sell him five pounds of fish. Untruthfully, but upon oath, she declared that she had none. Just after he had turned and gone a mysterious power suddenly seized upon her and her fish; the latter tumbled out on the road before him and leapt towards him, while the girl rushed after them like one demented. All this occurred in presence of the people, and of the soldiers then in garrison to defend the place against Isaurian pirates. Simeon finally quieted the fish and the girl, delivering to the latter a severe admonition. He then went on his way, but soon saw a large fish right in front of him, which he took, after crossing himself; God so blessed it that he and other shepherds, as well as two soldiers, lived upon it for three whole days.

Simeon was still but young when he entered the monastery of Eusebonas at Tel'edá, in the district of Antioch. To this and other monasteries he handed over his entire fortune, which had been not inconsiderably increased by inheritance from an aunt. At the head of its eighty or one hundred and twenty monks was Heliodorus, who had entered its cloisters whilst still a little child, and never again quitted it; he had never in all his life seen a pig or a cock. Here Simeon remained for nine or ten years, distinguishing himself above his fellows by his severe mortifications.

They fasted only on alternate days, he on every week day; only on Sundays did he eat a few lentils. In order to keep awake in his devotional exercises, he supported himself on a round piece of wood, from which he slipped as soon as he became drowsy; this was a kind of prologue to his subsequent performances. He girt himself round his naked waist with a rough cord of palm bast, which wore into his flesh. After ten days this came to be known, and his brethren, who already had marked with growing disapproval that instead of confining himself to their rules he went far beyond them, succeeded in inducing their superior to expel their eccentric companion. Simeon hid himself in an empty cistern, full of poisonous snakes, scorpions, and other repulsive creatures, as later writers add. Five days afterwards his superior regretted what he had done, and caused Simeon to be sought for and brought back. Soon afterwards, however, he left Tel'edá finally; he was not adapted for any society. He now betook himself to the village of Telnishé (somewhat nearer to Aleppo than to Antioch) to the monastery of Maris, whose sole occupants were an old man and a boy. Here he caused himself to be walled in for the great Lenten fast. Bassus of Edessa, who held the spiritual office of a periodeutes or visiter, and who happened to be present, at his urgent request closed up the entrance, after setting down some bread and water for his use. When, at the end of the fast, the door was opened, it was found that both were untouched. This is related by two contemporaries. The belief that during the great fast Simeon never ate anything was certainly general; but whether the thing be perfectly true may be doubted even after the performances of modern fasting men, for, according to the story, we must suppose that the feat was repeated thirty times, year after year. During the fast he, at any rate, ate

less than ever; at the beginning of it he stood, then he sat down as his strength waned, reclining more and more as he sat, until at last he sank half dead upon the ground. On the heights of Telnishé he caused a mandra or "enclosure" to be built for his permanent residence; the ground for it was given him by a priest named Daniel. Here he riveted his right leg to a large stone with an iron chain twenty cubits long. When he at last took off this chain, at the request of the patriarch Meletius of Antioch, there were found in the piece of leather which had protected his skin from the iron more than twenty fat bugs, which he had left quite undisturbed,[1] never stretching out a finger against them,—so Meletius himself informed his biographer Theodoret. The exact zoological designation of the creatures need not be discussed; what is certain is, that for the glory of God the saint allowed himself to swarm with vermin.

In the time during which Simeon sat here in a lonely corner on the ground, he is said to have wrought various miracles, mostly healings, such as befit the regular saint. They were wrought sometimes directly, but sometimes through the agency of objects which he sent,—such as water, or even what was called hnáná, or "grace," meaning thereby a mass of dust or filth of the saint kneaded up with oil,—an instrumentality much used in those times in the regions of Syria. Simeon had many visions also, which were guarantees of his high standing. "Out of modesty" he related these only to his most trusted disciples, who were not to speak about them during his lifetime; but, as was to be expected, many of these fine things about him spread far and wide. The consciousness which he enjoyed of his acceptance with God, and the veneration

[1] "Where the skin has little feeling, so also has the mind and the soul" (Hehn, *Culturpflanzen u. Hausthiere*, 3rd ed., p. 472, n. 6).

which men accorded to him, compensated for all the pain which he inflicted on himself.

Simeon's pride finds its most marked expression in the choice of a pillar as his abode. Long before this, at the great sanctuary of the Syrian goddess Attar'athé (or Atargatis), in Hierapolis (Mabbog, Arabic Membij), some ninety English miles distant, there had been a colossal pillar, to the top of which a man twice every year ascended for seven days' converse with the gods;[1] but this practice must have died out long before Simeon's time, and it is highly improbable that such an uninformed person as he should have ever heard anything about it. Moreover, Theodoret, himself a Syrian, and a man of many-sided culture, as well as the other contemporaries of Simeon, all regard this pillar-life as something quite new. We can therefore, at most, attribute both phenomena to similar religious motives; so that Burckhardt—who, so far as I know, has been the first to bring the two facts together—is, to a certain extent, justified in regarding the use of Hierapolis as "the prototype of the later pillar-saints;" but, historically, they are hardly connected.

Simeon began with standing for three months continuously upon the sill of the hole in the wall, through which the sacrament was handed in to him in his enclosure, because during the great fast he had seen, for three whole nights, an angel performing ritual prayer upon this stone, with bowings and prostrations. Next he caused a pillar to be raised for him to stand on; it was only six cubits high, so that he could still, without difficulty, converse with the people below. The top, a cubit or so square, had probably some kind of balustrade for him to lean on, but had no covering; and was completely exposed to the broiling rays

[1] Lucian, *De dea Syria*, c. 28 sq. The scoffer gravely calls the pillar a phallus.

of the Syrian sun, as well as to the rains and snows of the winter, which in Northern Syria, in such an exposed situation, is often bitterly cold. To live upon a pillar was a grave addition to his self-mortification, but at the same time it served to raise him above the world and above men. Many, it is true, even then asked what good purpose was gained, and others openly scoffed at his folly; all that his defenders could say in reply was, that he had done so because God had commanded him—in other words, as we would translate the expression, because he had taken it into his head to do so. But on the majority the very singularity of his position made a great impression. Had he kept to the level ground he would never have become nearly so famous. With admiring astonishment his biographers go on to relate how, in the course of seven years, Simeon thrice caused pillars to be set up of increasing height, until at last a maximum was reached of thirty-six or forty cubits, at which elevation he remained for fully thirty years. Of this last pillar the following is related:—When he was standing upon his pillar of twenty-two cubits, he at the beginning of the great fast (during which he always withdrew entirely from mankind) gave instructions to prepare, against the end of the forty days, another of thirty cubits, to consist of two parts. The workpeople set themselves to the task, but somehow it always failed; four weeks had passed, and nothing had been accomplished. His most intimate disciple ventured one night to shout up to the saint tidings of their ill success. Simeon ordered him to come back the following night, when he told him that, by a revelation he had received, the pillar must be forty cubits high and made in three parts, corresponding to the persons in the Trinity. This high pillar was quickly gone on with, so that it was ready by the end of the fast to be brought within the enclosure for the saint to take his stand on it.

On the top of his pillar Simeon prayed continually, with strict regard to external forms. Once an admirer counted that he had prostrated himself one thousand two hundred and forty-four times in succession in prayer; he then stopped counting, but the saint still went on with his devotional exercise. With a very limited intelligence Simeon must have combined an uncommonly healthy and vigorous constitution to be able to carry on such a life for so long. Even the strength of lung which made it possible for him to speak from that height to the people below deserves our respect. He suffered indeed severely in one of his legs from festering sores with maggots; but latterly this malady seems to have abated somewhat,—the pure, dry air doubtless being favourable to a cure. His biographers revel in descriptions of these bodily troubles. In their pages the maggots become at last huge worms, which his favourite disciple must always replace if they slip away. On one occasion, it is related, one of these fell from the top of the pillar to the ground; an Arab chieftain, a believer, took it up, and, full of fervour, laid it to his eyes and to his heart, whereupon it was turned into a precious pearl. During the night and the greater part of the day Simeon occupied himself in prayer and meditation, except, of course, in the hours of sleep; but his afternoons he gave to mankind, and spent in addressing the multitude below,—instructing, consoling, rebuking, admonishing, and settling disputes. We need not doubt that he often espoused the cause of the oppressed with success. In the Roman empire there were then only too many occasions for such intervention. The man who had no one to fear could dare to make his voice heard; and in presence of the great authority which he enjoyed far and wide, many an official must certainly have been compelled to yield, however unwillingly. We still possess the text of a letter in which a priest named

Cosmas, and all the clergy and notables of his village, pledged themselves to a moral and pious life, and, in particular, never to take a higher rate of interest than one-half per cent. per month—that is to say, the half of the then usual interest of twelve per cent. per annum. That he insisted upon this lower rate of interest never being exceeded appears also from other testimony. But in this connection, where the covetousness of the individual is so powerfully supported by the general conditions of trade and commerce, his influence cannot have extended far. On the other side of the account, there was no proper guarantee against abuse of the power which the saint had over the multitude; nor were instances of this wanting. Perhaps the following case comes under the category:—Notoriously one of the worst defects in the constitution of the Roman empire was that the higher municipal officials were weighted with heavy expenses, which often ruined their fortunes; every one therefore, who could, evaded the burden of such charges. It happened on one occasion that the governor of the province wished to bring two young citizens into the Council of the city of Antioch. They betook themselves to Simeon, and represented the conduct of the governor as a piece of vindictiveness. Simeon interfered on their behalf, but without success; the governor immediately afterwards, we are told, was deposed with contumely, summoned to Constantinople, and relegated to exile. This was a divine punishment.

According to the Syriac biography, the powerful minister Asclepiodotus published an ordinance of the emperor Theodosius II., commanding the restoration to the Jews of all the synagogues which had been forcibly taken from them by the Christians. All good Christians were indignant at the idea that buildings where Christian worship had been held should again fall into the hands of "the crucifiers."

Several bishops, accordingly, turned with this complaint to Simeon, who wrote a blunt letter to the emperor. Theodosius promptly recalled the edict, sent to the saint a humble letter of apology, and deposed Asclepiodotus, the friend of Jews and heathen, the enemy of Christians.—The affair cannot, however, have happened exactly in the manner related. We still possess the text of the imperial mandate to the chancellor (*præfectus prætorio*) Asclepiodotus, in which it is forbidden henceforward to take their synagogues from the Jews, and order is made to pay them reasonable compensation for such as had already been used for Christian worship, and so could not be restored. We can scarcely suppose this order to have cancelled another more favourable to the Jews, and, in any case, Simeon can hardly have had a great share in procuring it, for it was issued as early as 423, when he can have been but little known. The story is nevertheless instructive, as illustrating how unfair men can become through fanaticism; for here a simple claim of justice is represented as a shocking crime. It shows, at the same time, how great was the authority attributed to Simeon.

Once and again, on other occasions, Simeon condescended to hold correspondence with the great ones of the earth. Thus, in the closing period of his life (457–459 A.D.), he gave the emperor Leo a written opinion in favour of the Council of Chalcedon (451), which had defined the dogma of the two natures of Christ. In the same sense he wrote also, about the same time, to the patriarch Basil of Antioch. Whether the saint understood—so far as they are at all intelligible—the dogmatic niceties which were dealt with at Chalcedon, may be left an open question. The Monophysites of Syria, who were opposed to the Council of Chalcedon, and who were a majority in that country, afterwards ignored this action of Simeon and reckoned him among their saints; as

was also occasionally done by the Nestorians, although their doctrine—which refused to call Mary the "mother of God," and which had been condemned as early as 431 by the Council of Ephesus—was held in detestation by Simeon, and had been expressly repudiated in a letter of his to a former patriarch of Antioch. Simeon, it may be conjectured, dictated his letters to one of his disciples, who stood at the top of the ladder by which his confidants climbed up. Whether he himself could read and write is uncertain.

The actions of this eccentric saint and the anecdotes told about him made, as already hinted, a particular impression on the uneducated. All our informants dwell on the admiration he excited in the wild Arabs. It is credible enough that many Bedouins were induced by him to receive baptism, though hardly in such numbers as is asserted. In doing so they vowed to abstain from the flesh of the wild ass and of the camel. This vow can have been kept only by tribes possessing sheep or goats; with most Arabs camel's flesh is the only available meat, apart from game, which is not plentiful. When Theodoret once, at Simeon's instance, bestowed his blessing on some newly-converted Arabs, these believers so crowded and jostled to touch his limbs and his garments (to secure the blessing properly) that he feared for his life. And once, in true Arab style, the representatives of two different tribes had a free fight at the foot of Simeon's pillar, because each demanded that the saint should send his blessing to its own chief, and not to that of the other. Simeon, with invectives and threats, had the utmost difficulty in separating the combatants. This improvised Christianity did not strike deep root among these Arabs. In some tribes baptism had certainly already disappeared before the rise of Islam, and the Arabs of the then Roman dominion who had continued to profess Christianity, soon went over

to the new religion. His influence on the inhabitants of Lebanon, who at that time were still mostly pagans, appears to have been more permanent; for it is probable that the Maronites are the descendants of the converts who accepted baptism after Simeon's intercession, as they believed, had freed them from the ravages of wild beasts. These beasts are represented as having been a kind of spectres who appeared in shifting forms; but as it is said that the skins of two of them were hung up beside Simeon's pillar, even the pious editor of the Syriac biography cannot quite free himself of the rationalistic idea that there must have been great exaggeration in this, and that the creatures were actually hyænas.

It is not inconceivable how the fame of the saint, growing ever from mouth to mouth, should have reached Persia also, and even the Persian court: superstition does not always pay heed to differences of religion. Theodoret says only that the king of Persia is reported to have begged consecrated oil of him, but less cautious writers positively assert both this and more.

I spare my readers most of Simeon's miracles, which are mainly of the conventional type. Most of what is related by Theodoret in this connection may be historical; all that is required is to allow for some involuntary corrections of the facts, and to bear in mind the weight of the principle—*post hoc, ergo propter hoc.* Thus, Simeon is said to have predicted on one occasion the coming of a swarm of locusts as a punishment, but that through the divine mercy it would not cause great harm; and this actually came to pass. The story may be essentially true. In these regions locusts are a frequent plague, and so an obvious element in all preaching of sin and its punishment; such preaching must also include some reference to the divine compassion in case of repentance, and thus an announcement of the kind is always justified by

the event, whether that be the punishment of sin or the compassion that follows repentance. Nor have we any reason to doubt that the wife of an Arab prince had a son after Simeon had prayed for her; it is only a somewhat late biography that connects with this fact an incredible miracle of healing. The appearance or disappearance of local calamities was certainly often ascribed to his curse or blessing. His miraculous cures are covered by the general remarks made above (p. 208).

Superstition, however, did not content itself with such miracles as were wrought by every petty saint, but went on to attribute to Simeon magical powers. Thus it is related that creatures so fleet and so shy as the ibex or the stag could be so charmed by means of his name as to become easy captures; this, however, was regarded as a culpable abuse. On the other hand, it was naturally viewed as very praiseworthy when a cleric, by the same means, took away all power of motion from a great snake which was about to devour a child; in this state it continued for three days, when it was released by Simeon with the command to do harm no more. It is even said that a male snake once came to Simeon to beg healing for his female, which was ill; the application was of course successful; the patient attended outside the enclosure, for Simeon (as we know in other connections) strictly prohibited any female to enter that sacred plot of ground.

But the most wonderful miracle of all is as follows. A ship was labouring in the high seas in a heavy storm. At the mast-head there appeared a black man in token that the vessel was doomed. But it so happened that there was on board a man of the region of Amid (Diárbekr, in Mesopotamia), who had with him some of Simeon's holy dust;[1] with this he made a cross upon the mast, scattering the rest over

[1] See above, p. 213.

the ship, whereupon all with one voice called upon Simeon to procure their deliverance from God. Instantaneously, Simeon himself appeared, vigorously chastising the black man with a scourge, and driving him away. As he fled, the evil one complained of the saint for persecuting him, not by land only, but also by water. The sea forthwith became calm. Let it be observed, that this miracle is effected by Simeon while he is still alive and standing on his pillar. An old popular superstition about the demon of the storm and the heavenly deliverer[1] is here crassly transferred to Simeon, even in his lifetime. According to a shorter version of this story, Simeon once stood long inattentive to the assembled multitude beneath who were imploring his blessing; at last he began to speak, and informed them that in the interval he had in person been saving a ship with 300 souls. That is to say, his spirit had been absent, and unable to pay attention to the people below. He had become a supernatural being, and could be in two places at once.

After fifty-six years of severest asceticism (thirty-seven of them upon his pillars) Simeon died, upwards of seventy years of age, on Wednesday, 2nd September 459. His death was at first kept as secret as possible, that no one might carry off the corpse, so full of blessing. The preparations for his burial were prolonged, and probably the body was embalmed. On 21st September began a funeral procession of unprecedented solemnity, which arrived with the body of the saint at Antioch on the 25th. Bishops and clergy of every grade, officials, and innumerable people accompanied it, as well as the generalissimo of the forces in the eastern provinces, Ardaburius, son of Aspar, with some thousands of Gothic soldiers, who indeed, like their commander, were heretical Arians, but doubtless shared the superstitious veneration of the Syrians. For the first hour the coffin was carried by

[1] Compare Leucothea, the Dioscuri, and the like.

bishops and priests; it was then transferred to a car. The burial took place in the great church of Constantine at Antioch. The emperor Leo wished to transport the body to Constantinople, but abandoned the idea on the earnest entreaty of the Antiochenes. It may be conjectured that the function was the more frequented because men's minds were still agitated on account of the two earthquakes (of September 457 and June 459) which had caused dreadful havoc in Antioch. In the body of the saint the Antiochenes hoped to possess a charm against the recurrence of such manifestations of the "wrath of God"—a hope which proved vain. Evagrius, the Church historian, saw the body of Simeon when the Commander of the Forces in the East, Philippicus, son-in-law of the emperor Maurice, caused it to be exhibited (probably in 588). At that time it was still well preserved, though it had lost some teeth, to which believers had helped themselves as salutary relics. I have not found any later writer who notices, at first hand, the grave and relics of Simeon.

A large building was soon erected on the spot where Simeon had lived. The name of this despiser of all earthly things, whose whole life was a scornful protest against all concern for the beautiful, was commemorated in a master-piece of architecture, the only fine art which then flourished vigorously, connecting mediæval and modern art with pagan antiquity by great and original works. On the heights of Telnishé arose a splendid church, described by Evagrius, the ruins of which still leave an impression of grandeur on the traveller. The main building forms a cross, the arms of which, at the point of intersection, enclose an open space. In the centre of this still stands the base of Simeon's pillar. In the time of the historian a great shining star was often seen above, in a gallery of the inner space. Evagrius, a native of Syria, regarded this phenomenon, which he himself

had witnessed, as supernatural, just as his pagan countrymen had formerly believed in the divine origin of the light which from time to time was seen above the sacred lake of Aphrodite in Lebanon, or as the Russian pilgrims of the present day still ascribe to a supernatural source the light in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, at which they kindled their Easter tapers.

Simeon has had several successors in Syrian lands. Some at least of these must, however, have greatly modified the penance of standing on the pillar, for several authors are included in their number, and one at least, Joshua Stylites, was a very sober-minded and sensible person.

An enthusiastic deacon named Vulfilaicus, somewhere about the middle of the sixth century, set up for himself in the neighbourhood of Treves a similar pillar. But the bishops ordered him down, as he could not possibly vie with the holy Simeon; and his own bishop, when his back was turned, caused the pillar to be broken to fragments. If not so learned as the Syrians, the Frankish bishops had more common sense. Such ridiculous asceticism did not suit the West, where, on the other hand, the early mediæval Church rose to the task of educating the rude peoples in a way that has no parallel in the East.[1]

The famous ecclesiastical writer Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus, in Northern Syria, has given us a sketch of Simeon Stylites, with whom he was acquainted, and by whom indeed he was survived. In spite of its somewhat ornate style, this is, on the whole, the most trustworthy biography; the author was a man of education.

Much fuller is the account which was written not long

[1] The horrible rule of the Trappists is of comparatively modern origin.

after Simeon's death by two honest, but rather uneducated Syrians (probably in 472),[1] and which has incorrectly been ascribed by the learned Maronites to the Cosmas mentioned above (p. 217). It gives very useful additions to Theodoret's picture, with a good deal of the legendary exaggeration which already had begun to gather round the figure of the saint. It is, however, highly characteristic for the ideas and manner of expression that prevailed in the circles where it was written. It became very popular, and the MSS. present considerable variations of text, as is usual in such popular books.[2] Evagrius used it. Quite inferior to both these is the Greek biography which is said to have been written by Antony, a disciple of Simeon. It contains so many extravagances that it can hardly be so old as it professes to be.

Our later authorities about Simeon have no independent value. There are some Syriac letters of Simeon in the British Museum which might be worth publishing, but the editor would have to be on his guard against spurious or interpolated pieces.

John, Monophysite bishop of Asia (the province so called), or Ephesus, a Syrian of Amid (Diárbekr), but who spent great part of his life in Constantinople and elsewhere in the West, composed in his mother-tongue a Church history, of which considerable portions have reached us directly or through other writers, and also a book containing sketches of pious men or saints whom he had met

[1] This is the date of its composition, not of its transcription, as has been supposed.

[2] This applies even to the Roman and London MSS., which are both very old. Of the latter I was able to use some years ago a transcript kindly lent me by Prof. Kleyn, of Utrecht, but in the preparation of this essay I have had only a few notes from it at my disposal.

in the course of his long life. John was learned, and, as it seems, a man of some activity, but of little enlightenment. Naturally of a mild disposition, he was nevertheless a zealous Monophysite, and hated the Council of Chalcedon with all his heart. All his pious characters accordingly are strict Monophysites. The world brought before us in these sketches is dismal enough, but if we arm ourselves with the needful impartiality, we can learn from them a great deal about the period to which they relate. In presenting a few of these figures to my readers I do not select the most important, but such as exhibit most clearly some of the characteristics of the Syrians of that age.

Simeon and Sergius.

In the neighbourhood of Amid there were many ascetics about the year 500. One of these, called Simeon (one of the commonest names of the time), lived indeed as a hermit like the others, yet was of a very hospitable spirit. When he was alone he mortified himself with the utmost severity, and ate absolutely nothing for as many as ten days at a stretch; for, since it is written that where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them (Matt. xviii. 20), it followed that Simeon by himself was not able to secure the presence of Christ, and without this he would not eat. If, however, a strange monk, or monks, arrived, he admitted them over the doorless wall of his enclosure by a kind of ladder, received them cordially, washed their feet, and after further proving his humility by secretly drinking three times of the water with which he had washed them (!), set wine before them, and the produce of his garden. He then ate with them and was happy. To laymen and to women he gave food through a hole in the wall. His garden is said to have

grown enough to feed forty people, although it was only twenty cubits long and ten cubits broad, which may be believed if we consider that the climate was favourable and the guests very abstemious. Aided by one or two disciples who were usually with him, Simeon through the hole in his wall, at different times of the day, taught children of various ages to read the Psalter and other holy books. He was evidently a man of cheerful and amiable character, and worthy of a better vocation.

His most notable disciple was Sergius; he was a zealot *pur sang*. His special annoyance was the toleration given to the Jews in the village. "He burned with love for his Lord, and gnashed his teeth" against "the murderers of God." With a handful of younger people accordingly he one night set fire to their synagogue, and burnt it with its books and trumpets and other sacred objects. As the Jews stood under the protection of the great church in Amid, to which they paid dues, they laid a complaint against Sergius before its authorities. But in the meanwhile he and his people had lost no time in planting, on the site of the synagogue, a chapel, which they dedicated to the Mother of God; so that the soldiers sent to restore the Jews to their rights were helpless, a church once consecrated being inalienable. The Jews now, in revenge, burned down the cells of Simeon and Sergius; but these were at once rebuilt by the latter, who also destroyed by night the new synagogue, now near completion, and carried matters so that the Jews were completely terrorised. When at last Sergius withdrew from his master (with whom he had been for some twenty years), to shut himself up in a low and narrow cell, the Jews took courage to begin building once more; but the holy man caused his disciples to set fire to this also, whereupon they desisted from making any further attempt as long as he lived.

In 520 the emperor, Justin I., took strong measures against the Monophysites, to which sect our two anchorites belonged. The agents of the Government left the aged Simeon unmolested, but tried to induce Sergius to acknowledge the Council of Chalcedon. He, however, received them with curses, and swore that if they drove him out he would anathematise them from the pulpit of the great church in face of the congregation. In spite of the threat, they broke through a wall of his cell and did drive him out. He took refuge with the pillar-saint Maron, also a zealous Monophysite, after staying with whom for a short time he addressed himself to the fulfilment of his oath. Armed with the blessing of Maron, who at first had dissuaded him from the enterprise, he went on Sunday to the church when the whole congregation—including many Monophysites, who joined in the service, though they abstained from communicating with the other party—was assembled; and while the preacher was in the middle of his sermon before the "so-called bishop," the weird figure of the hermit in ragged sackcloth suddenly made its appearance. Planting the cross, which he had carried upon his back, in front of the pulpit, he sprang up the steps, fell on the preacher with cuffs and abusive language, and flung him from his place. He then solemnly pronounced from the pulpit an anathema upon the Council of Chalcedon and on all who accepted its decrees. A great uproar, of course, ensued. Sergius was arrested and taken into custody, his long hermit's beard cut off, and he himself sent in chains to a neighbouring monastery in Armenia, the monks of which, three hundred in number, were all zealous partisans of the Council.[1] The Government, we see, was very gentle with this violent opponent; if the Syrian Monophysites

[1] The Armenians for the most part were Monophysites, and still are so except those who are "United" to the Church of Rome.

had gained the upper hand, their treatment of a similar offender would have been very different. Sergius, however, managed to make his escape three days afterwards, and finding his way back to Simeon, began to build a cell beside him. His adversaries, finding themselves unable to scare him away, left him personally unmolested,—no doubt out of consideration for the temper of the populace,—and contented themselves with pulling down what he had built. He now showed the same determination as in his contest with the Jews, swearing "by Him who built up the world, and who was called the carpenter's son," that he would never cease to renew his task as often as his work was thrown down; a vow which he kept.

Sergius predeceased Simeon, who, in the closing years of his life had grown very weak and ill, so as to be no longer able (greatly to his regret) personally to serve his guests. He died after forty-seven years of a hermit life. John of Ephesus testifies that God wrought many miracles by him, but does not go into particulars.

MÁRÁ.

Márá, a native of a highland village to the north of Amid, was a huge man of great bodily strength. Although holding some inferior ecclesiastical office he was still a layman, and when about thirty years of age his parents wished him to marry. But after everything had been prepared for the wedding the spirit came upon him, and constrained him to make his escape by night.[1] He went to a wonder-working hermit named Paul, who lived near Hisn Ziyát (Kharput), in a cave which was reputed a haunt of evil spirits. Márá remained five years with Paul as his disciple in prayer,

[1] An incident that more than once occurs in the lives of Syrian saints, both legendary and historical. See below, p. 234.

fasting, and other ascetic exercises, and is alleged to have slept for only one or two hours of the twenty-four. In the severest cold of winter he went with bare and bleeding feet through deep mountain snow for firewood. His master vainly urged him not to overdo his self-mortifications. In order to be thoroughly free of his family and their worldly tendencies, he betook himself to Egypt, the chief school of asceticism, where he visited various penitents, and himself lived as one for fifteen years.

At this period Justinian's Government was making its attempt to force the Egyptians, decided Monophysites, to accept the decrees of Chalcedon. For this end here, as in Mesopotamia, it particularly sought to win over the monks and hermits, the most powerful authorities with the masses, and if they proved obstinate to scatter and drive them away. Thus Márá, as a firm Monophysite, was driven from his cell. But instead of simply withdrawing farther into the desert, he took ship for Constantinople. There, where the majority were thoroughly "Orthodox," the foreign Monophysites were tolerated by Government as harmless, and the Empress Theodora was so much their declared protectress that we must presume her to have acted with her husband's approval. Justinian may have had his own reasons for not pressing this powerful party too hard. Sheltered under Theodora's wing, many of the Monophysites were not slow to flatter that clever lady, whose questionable past was in their eyes fully atoned for by her soundness in the faith. But our hermit was not of that sort. John of Ephesus declines to repeat the terms of reproach hurled in the faces of the imperial pair by Márá when he presented himself before them in his tattered garb; it would not be fitting to do so, he tells us; and, besides, he would not be believed. All this was in execrable taste; yet it is a real pleasure

to see that there still were some people capable of confronting the servile "Byzantinism" of the day in a way that was manly and independent. Neither emperor nor empress was in a condition to meet this holy zeal with violence, if only because they themselves felt a superstitious awe in the presence of such a man. Theodora even sought to keep Márá near herself; perhaps she saw in the rough-tongued saint the confessor her long-borne burden of sin required. She even attempted to win him with a hundred pounds of gold, but he hurled the bag from him with one hand, and said: "To hell with thyself, and with the money wherewith thou wouldst tempt me!" Court and city were astounded at the bodily strength he showed in this, and still more at his contempt for Mammon,—a rare sight in Constantinople.

Márá next retired to the hills immediately to the north of Constantinople, and there lived as a hermit. The empress sent her courtiers to tell him that she would be glad to supply whatever he wished. They had great difficulty in finding him, as he had no fixed dwelling. By way of expressing his thanks, he sent back the message that she need not suppose herself to possess aught that servants of God could use, unless it were the fear of God, if she possessed such a thing as that. With all his rudeness he still maintained relations with the court. He earned his bread by making mats and baskets of palm leaves, but his principal nourishment consisted of wild fruits and herbs. Against winter he erected for himself some kind of a hut in the mountains. Being reputed a saint he had many visitors.

It, of course, came to be well known that Márá was frequently visited by messengers from the empress, and this naturally gave rise to the idea that the hermit's hovel must contain imperial gifts. One night, accordingly,

he received a visit from a robber band. But the saint wrested from one of them the club with which he had attacked him, seized him by the hair, and threw him to the ground; three others he disposed of in the same way, whereupon the six who were left took to flight. Three of these also he succeeded in overtaking, and after binding them all he triumphed over them at his leisure. Next morning the visitors who came saw what had happened; naturally they wished to hand the robbers over to the authorities, but Márá, retaining only their swords and clubs, dismissed them with a vigorous allocution. The affair became known, and a chamberlain carried the weapons to the emperor and empress, thus giving ocular demonstration of what can be done by the power of prayer when conjoined with strength of arm. There may be some exaggeration in this story, but the substance of it as related by John of Ephesus, who was resident in Constantinople at the time, and knew Márá personally, is doubtless correct.

After a sojourn of some years among the mountains, Márá allowed an official of the court to purchase for him a small villa near the city, where he lived for five years, earning what was required for the sustenance of himself and his devout and needy guests by gardening. He often sent salutary exhortations to the emperor and empress. On the outbreak of a great plague in 542, he got workpeople sent from the court to set up a cemetery with vaults and chapel for poor strangers and for himself. Hardly had they completed their task when he died. His funeral was attended by many bishops and inferior clergy, as well as monks, courtiers, and high officers of State.

Of Márá, whose vigorous and somewhat humorous figure presents a welcome variety amid the mass of ordinary ascetics, no miracles are recorded.

THEOPHILUS AND MARY.

About the year 530 there appeared in the streets of Amid a merry-andrew (*mimus*) and his female companion, who seemed to be a prostitute. People of the kind were no rarities even in the pious East, but this couple attracted special attention by their youth and beauty. The public witnessed their performances with pleasure, but treated them, as was also the custom, with brutality; the poor creatures received many little presents, doubtless, but not without kicks and cuffs. With nightfall they regularly disappeared, and no one could find out where they had gone. Some men of influence, whose carnal passions had been inflamed, now procured from the governor an order that the woman should be given over to prostitution; but a God-fearing lady named Cosmo rescued her, took her to be with herself, and exhorted her to a better life. She listened to the advice with penitential mien, but forthwith returned to her companion. Now, however, a pious man named John, an acquaintance of John of Ephesus, began to suspect something extraordinary about the pair. With much trouble he discovered the retreat where their nights were spent, and saw them engaged in long-continued prayer. He now came up to them and asked an explanation. With great reluctance they consented, but only after he had solemnly promised upon oath to tell no one as long as they continued in Amid, and even to treat them with the usual contumely wherever he should see them in public. Their story, which they told the following night, was that their names were Theophilus and Mary, and that each was an only child of noble and prosperous Antiochenes. When Theophilus was fifteen years of age, he went on to say, he one night discovered, in a stall of his father's stables, a poor man, who had hidden himself

there in the litter against the cold; his mouth and hands emitted a halo, which Theophilus alone could see, and which disappeared whenever the servants entered. The holy man, at his urgent entreaty, confessed to him (but only on condition of secrecy) that his name was Procopius, a Roman, who had fled from home to escape his approaching marriage. He predicted to Theophilus the approaching death in that year of his parents, and of those of his affianced bride, and exhorted him on this event to sell all that he had and give it to the poor, and himself to live a consecrated life in disguise; the lady also was to do the same. They actually did as they had been bidden, and lived in virginity together, while in the eyes of the world they appeared to be living in shameful immorality. For a whole year John held regular communication with this saintly pair; at the end of that time they disappeared, and for seven years he sought for them in vain; but John of Ephesus once afterwards met them near Tella (south of Amid, towards Edessa).

The author says that his informant had assured him upon his solemn oath of the truth of this story; and though one might be tempted to suspect that the pious man had simply been the victim of a couple of impostors, I, for my part, believe the narrative to be accurate in its main features. The light that proceeded from the holy beggar, and his prophecy, need not mislead us. The story, which comes to us through two intermediaries, may unintentionally have received various touches of the marvellous, and, above all, some account must be taken of the religiously excited fancy of the young man himself, which perhaps was full of such figures as that of the Roman "man of God"[1] fleeing from his nuptials, whose double the Procopius of our narrative is. It is indeed the very height of

[1] In later forms of the legend his name is St. Alexius.

unnatural self-abnegation when a virtuous maiden of even excessive spirituality ventures to assume the disguise of a common prostitute so as to bear the full shame of sin for the glory of God.

"Opfer fallen hier
Weder Lamm noch Stier
Aber Menschenopfer unerhört."[1]

These Syrians were too apt to hold everything natural for wickedness; and yet unbridled sensuality was by no means unknown in their circle.

[1] "Sacrifices here are neither lamb nor steer,
But human sacrifice unspeakable."—GOETHE.

VIII.

BARHEBRÆUS.

In the first half of the thirteenth century a great part of the population of Melatia, in the east of Asia Minor, close to the upper Euphrates, consisted of Jacobites, that is to say, Syrians of Monophysite creed.[1] These Syrians were numerous also in the adjacent districts, where they had a number of bishoprics and monasteries. Conspicuous amongst the latter was the great and wealthy monastery of St. Barsaumá, where the Jacobite patriarch often took up his abode, and where synods frequently met; its patron saint was held in high repute by the Moslems of the district also, who presented many gifts in gratitude for miraculous help. The Moslems of these parts seem to have been of Turkish speech; probably there was also an Armenian population. The land belonged to the kingdom of the Seljuks of Asia Minor (Rúm), but, lying on the marches, was much exposed to assaults, on the one hand, from the principalities of Syria and Mesopotamia; and, on the other, from the Christian Armenian State of Cilicia. It had also to suffer from the internal struggles that accompanied the decline of the Seljuk power. The Syrians in this quarter seem, however, to have enjoyed a fair degree of prosperity down to the time of the Mongols; several eminent Syrian prelates and authors came from Melatia, amongst them the subject of the following sketch. His father, a respected physician of the name of Ahrún

[1] They derived the name from Jacobus Baradæus, who gave permanent form to the Monophysite Church of Syria in the sixth century.

(Aaron), seems to have been a baptized Jew. This is not inferred from his name, which was common enough among Syrian Christians, and besides would certainly have been changed at baptism, but from the fact that his celebrated son bore the surname of "Son of the Hebrew" (Bar Evráyá, or, according to another pronunciation, Bar Evróyó). From an epigram of his we see that the epithet was by no means agreeable to him, which confirms what has just been said. His Jewish origin is perhaps confirmed by the keen and sober intelligence which appears both in his actions and in his writings. His Christian name was John, but in ordinary life he was known as Abulfaraj, an Arabic name such as Christians living amongst Mohammedans were wont to bear. But in the following pages we shall throughout call him Barhebræus, the Latinised form of his surname, which has long been familiar to European scholars.

He was born in 1225–26. His mother-tongue was, it may be presumed, a vulgar dialect of Syriac; but it is certain that from an early age he was able to speak with fluency the literary Syriac, which had already disappeared from common use, but played a great part in the language of the Church and of learning. Of the youth of Barhebræus we have no details. He must certainly have received in Melatia such a training in learning as was then given to young Syrians destined for the higher service of the Church. But the statement sometimes made, that he also became acquainted with Greek and the ecclesiastical literature of that language, is certainly incorrect; his writings nowhere show any real acquaintance with either. By that time the Arabic language and literature had long superseded its rival with all Syrians who aimed at the higher education.

When the Mongols (Tartars) invaded the country in the summer of 1243, his father Aaron, in common with many others, wished to take refuge with his family in Syria, but

was hindered by an accident, and thus he and his escaped the fate of the fugitives, who fell into the hands of the Mongols. The Christians and Moslems of Melatia on that occasion, under the leadership of the Syrian metropolitan Dionysius, came under a solemn mutual obligation to stand by one another. This incident is in the highest degree surprising to one who knows something of the social conditions of the East. The professors of the two religions habitually regard one another as born foes; but here the terrible danger effected a union, and even a subordination of the proud Moslems under the downtrodden Christians, who were manifestly in the majority, and had for their leader a man of energy, though not over scrupulous. The Mongol chief allowed himself to be bought off, and no battle took place. Falling ill, he asked for a physician; Barhebræus's father was sent to him, and did not leave him until he had reached Kharput, after being cured of his malady.

Aaron and his family after this removed to Antioch, which was still in the hands of the Franks. Here his son became a monk, doubtless with a view to the episcopal dignity, the higher ecclesiastical charges being in the Oriental Churches accessible only to monks. Soon afterwards we find Barhebræus in Tripoli, also still in the hands of the Crusaders. Along with a companion[1] he here studied dialectic and medicine under a Nestorian. This may have had something to do with the tolerance which he afterwards showed towards Christians of different creed, though indeed it was not unusual for a Syrian to frequent the lectures of a man whose doctrine he regarded as heretical. Barhebræus probably had Moslem teachers also, for he could hardly otherwise have acquired his good knowledge of the Arabic language and literature. He wrote Arabic almost as fluently as Syriac, and not much more incorrectly than most Mohammedan

[1] See below, p. 246.

writers of his time. He could also make use of Persian books without difficulty, at least in his later years. He spoke Arabic well, of course; and presumably he had acquired a colloquial knowledge of Turkish also. But he seems never to have been brought into close relations with the Franks.

Talented and industrious, he must very soon have attracted the notice of the ecclesiastical authorities, and while still a youth of only twenty he was ordained by the Jacobite patriarch (12th September 1246) to be Bishop of Gubos, near Melatia, on which occasion he assumed the ecclesiastical name of Gregory. Not long afterwards he exchanged this bishopric for that of Lakabín, in the same region.[1]

As bishop he took part in the synod held at the monastery of Barsaumá, after the death of Ignatius (14th June 1252), for the election of a new patriarch. At this juncture there arrived in the neighbourhood of Melatia a body of Mongols, a detachment of the great hordes which in those years made an end of the caliphate, and devastated on all hands with fire and sword. Barhebræus's aged father, who had again returned to his home, fled with his little son Barsaumá from the village of Margá to a rocky region beside the Euphrates, and remained there in hiding for six weeks, until the barbarians had gone. The world was trembling in its courses, but this made little impression on the Jacobite dignitaries; they went on intriguing and quarrelling just as usual. Dionysius of Melatia, who has been already mentioned, and John, surnamed Barmadeni, the maphrián or primate of the eastward dioceses,[2] a man of high repute as a scholar, were competitors for the patriarchate. By the laws of that Church no valid election could take place without the presence of the maphrián; but Dionysius procured his own

[1] I am not sure of the exact pronunciation either of Gubos or of Lakabín.

[2] See below, p. 244.

election in September 1252 in defiance of this rule, and in a very thinly attended synod. The youthful Barhebræus was sent into Mesopotamia to convey to John the apologies of the synod, and to beg his concurrence. But John had meantime gone to Aleppo, where, on 4th December of the same year, he got himself chosen to the patriarchate,—an election which certainly has a greater apparent claim to validity than the other. But the all-important question was as to which patriarch the Moslem rulers would recognise. There began accordingly a scandalous competition between the rivals (not a rare occurrence in the Eastern Churches). On both sides the effort was made to gain over princes and potentates, as well as individual bishops and other ecclesiastics of influence, by money or fair words. Along with his nephew, a monk, Barhebræus was sent into the mountains of Túr Abdín, in northern Mesopotamia, which were mostly inhabited by Jacobites, to collect funds in the monasteries and villages for gaining over to Dionysius the local prince, to whom John had promised a sum of money for recognition, but had as yet failed to pay it. The mission was successful. It is well worth noticing, though not very edifying, to see how coolly Barhebræus, certainly one of the most respectable persons of his class, relates these transactions. It must be remembered that the laity, from whom the money was drawn, were for the most part exceedingly poor; bright prospects of a reward in heaven[1] were, to be sure, held out to them by way of compensation, and all the proceedings

[1] In a little Syriac treatise, which, gross forgery though it is, seems to have been popular, God says: "To every believer who gives of the earnings of his hand to the holy Church, I make it good in this world, and repay him thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold in the world to come, and write his name in the book of life;" and again: "Honour God's priests, who sacrifice the living lamb, so that ye may find mercy in the world to come. He who despises them shall fall under my wrath, for my priests are the salt of the earth." The Jews, who contribute handsomely to their synagogues, are cited as patterns for Christians.

were carried on in the most approved Christian phraseology. The Eastern Churches were, of course, unable to secure immunity from the caprice and violence of the Moslem authorities without a skilful use of the mammon of unrighteousness, but it is a very different matter when the faithful are taxed that one of their own spiritual heads may be able to secure an effectual triumph over another. Occurrences of the kind have not been wholly unknown in the West, but the abuse attained far larger proportions in the East.

Dionysius now proceeded to Damascus, where he was honourably received by the governor, Barhebræus acting as interpreter. In these negotiations, however, Dionysius fell into a stupid blunder, exhibiting the letter of a Mongol magnate which had been intended for his supporters in Melatia. This caused great offence, for the Tartars were regarded as mortal enemies by the Moslems. It was only with great trouble, and through the intervention of Ibn Amíd (Elmacinus), the well-known Coptic author, that Dionysius at last succeeded in obtaining his diploma of confirmation on payment of a large bribe.

Barhebræus was soon afterwards named by Dionysius to be bishop of Aleppo; but on the installation there of a partisan of John's, he withdrew, along with his father, to the Barsaumá monastery, where his patriarch was. John betook himself to the Armenian king of Sís, while Dionysius received recognition almost everywhere. Barhebræus soon again took up his abode in Aleppo. When the Mongols, who in the meantime had taken Bagdad (January 1258), entered Syria he wished to go to meet them, plainly with the object of securing mild treatment for the Christians. The idea was not unreasonable, for their common antipathy to Islam readily predisposed the Mongol chiefs in favour of the Christians, who, moreover, sought only toleration, and did not fight for sovereignty like the Moslems. Some

of those wild Tartars had, moreover, been baptized, for the Nestorians had successful missions among the Turkish tribes. Dokuz Khatun herself, a wife of the sovereign Hulagu, who formerly had been one of the wives of his father Tuli, and who in accordance with Mongol custom had passed with the rest of the inheritance to the son, was a Christian, and did much for the protection and advantage of her co-religionists. But the attempt in this instance was unsuccessful. Barhebræus was detained at Kalat-Nejm, one of the Euphrates ferries; and Hulagu meanwhile coming to Aleppo, occupied the town, and inflicted on Moslems and Christians alike all the horrors of a sack (January 1260).

Dionysius compromised himself seriously. That he obtained letters of confirmation from the Mongol sovereign (1259) was not amiss, especially as the Seljuks and the Armenian Christian king had equally acknowledged the Tartar as their overlord. But it was a scandal that he connived at the robberies of the Christian subjects of the St. Barsaumá monastery, who had broken loose from all restraint in this period of general corruption and dissoluteness. And he finally lost the last shred of reputation by procuring the assassination of a cousin who had been a great trouble to him, and of his cousin's brother, only a few days after a reconciliation had taken place; even the *chronique scandaleuse* of the history of the Jacobites supplied no parallel to such conduct. To escape the consequences of his deed the patriarch again went to Hulagu, and after overcoming many obstacles was lucky enough to secure his special protection, so that he was able to lord it more tyrannically than ever. And now the monastery of St. Barsaumá witnessed an unheard-of scene; the murderous patriarch was assassinated before the altar as he was holding a night service (17th–18th February) by a monk, a

deacon, and a layman, nephew of one of the abbats. The assassins threw the "disciple" of the patriarch, who had been his instrument in the murder of his cousin, down the rock.

Whether Barhebræus had before these occurrences openly broken with Dionysius is not known; but one of his poems shows that latterly he was no longer at one with him, and some verses upon his death indicate that he regarded his assassination as a righteous judgment.

A Mongolian commissioner, himself a Christian, made his appearance for the punishment of the perpetrators of the deed. One of the abbats, who tacitly, at least, had approved it, was cruelly chastised and driven half-dead from the monastery. He was replaced by a brother of the priest and physician Simeon, who had risen to great favour with Hulagu, had grown very wealthy, and stood out as the main support of the Jacobites, in return for which he exercised influence in extraordinary ways in Church affairs. Some of the murderers and their accomplices were executed, and others committed suicide in prison.

By this shocking occurrence John became sole patriarch, and met with universal recognition; but he remained in Cilicia. Barhebræus now stood on good terms with him; and when he died in the spring of 1263, the bishop of Aleppo wrote in his honour a long poem commemorating his many excellences.

Abbat Theodore now hastened to the court, or rather to the camp, of the Mongolian sovereign to seek the patriarchate for himself. But Simeon the physician declined to undertake his cause, and also persuaded Barhebræus, who was also at that time at court, certainly not by mere chance, to oppose his claims. Barhebræus then proceeded to Cilicia and took part at Sís in the election of abbat Joshua, who, as patriarch, assumed the name of Ignatius (6th January 1264). Forthwith they proceeded to fill up

also the office of maphrián, or primate of the Jacobites of the East, which had been vacant since June 1258. The origin of this dignity may be here explained. The Persian sovereigns had gradually suffered the Christians of various denominations in their empire to constitute themselves into distinct bodies, insisting, however, that while the head of each was to be independent of every external authority, he was to be in entire subjection to the throne.[1] These heads bore the title of "Catholicus." The Syrian Monophysites did not receive a fixed constitution under a catholicus until a comparatively late date (in the sixth century); they stood in much closer connection with the Christians of the hostile empire of Rome than the Nestorians did, and, on the other hand, were much less able to compel recognition than the sometimes very warlike Monophysites of insubordinate Armenia. The main seat of the Jacobites of the Persian empire was the considerable town of Tagrít, on the middle course of the Tigris; but nowhere in Persia were they nearly so numerous as the Nestorians. The Jacobite catholicus bore also the title of maphrián (mafriyáná), *i.e.* "the fructifier," who spreads the Church by instituting priests and bishops. After the Arabs had become masters of all the countries in which Monophysite Syrians were found, the separation of the provinces of the Jacobite "patriarch of Antioch" and that of the maphrián was, strictly speaking, no longer necessary; but the force of custom, and still more the interest which many of the clergy had in not allowing so influential and remunerative

[1] The Christians of the Sásánian empire originally had bishops only, without any single head. Even after they had placed themselves under the catholicus of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, the Church of Persia proper, for some time, continued to maintain its independence. The statement that the patriarchal authority of Antioch had been delegated from the earliest times to the bishop of Seleucia and Ctesiphon is, of course, a mere fiction, resting upon the later conception of the unity of the Church in its outward organisation.

a post as that of maphrián to go down, were enough to maintain the old arrangement. But many disputes arose as to the boundaries of the two provinces, and the whole relation of maphrián to patriarch; on the whole, however, it was agreed that the patriarch's indeed was the higher rank, but that the maphrián in his sphere was quite independent of him; and further, that for the election of a patriarch the co-operation of the maphrián was indispensable (unless that post also was vacant), and that a maphrián could only be nominated with the sanction of the patriarch. In the choice of a maphrián the wishes of the Eastern dioceses (*i.e.* of the bishops and heads of monasteries there) had to be respected; yet, as a rule, he was taken from the West. Now Barhebræus had already been designated as maphrián by the late patriarch, and, moreover, he seems to have been the ruling spirit in the electoral synod; accordingly he was chosen "maphrián of Tagrít and the East" on Sunday, 20th January 1264. The Armenian king with his suite and officials, spiritual and secular, were present at his consecration on the same day in the church of the Theotokos at Sís. Barhebræus preached the sermon, which an interpreter translated into Armenian. The Armenians, be it noted in passing, were of the same creed as the Jacobites, but differed from them on many points of ritual, and perhaps also in some subordinate matters of dogma. Armenians and Jacobites were thus very ready to suspect one another of heresy, and at best there was little love lost between the two parties.[1] After patriarch and maphrián had received their diplomas of confirmation from the Mongol sovereign (whose assent had doubtless been secured before the election) they withdrew, the one to Asia Minor and the other to Mosul.

The Jacobites of the East had long been without any

[1] The relations of the Jacobites with the Monophysite Copts were better.

proper government; for the predecessor of Barhebræus, his old fellow-student at Tripoli, had failed to establish his authority in the East, and soon withdrew into Syria, and after his death the vacancy had continued for nearly six years. The lands of the Tigris were terribly wasted. Although the Mongols still were more favourable to the Christians than to the Moslems, they were neither willing nor able to spare them in those wholesale massacres which constantly occurred. Moreover, the position of the Christians, which was one of greater friendliness with the Mongols, and thus gave them a somewhat more self-reliant bearing, repeatedly excited the jealousy and fanaticism of the Mohammedan population, which was greatly superior in numbers and in strength; in the district of Mosul, in particular, many bloody encounters took place. Matters were better in Aderbiján (north-western Media), the favourite seat of the Mongolian rulers. There, until the reaction set in, the Christians suffered little molestation, and monasteries and churches arose in the capital cities of Merághá and Tabríz. The Jacobites were here less numerous than either Armenians or Nestorians. Barhebræus now laboured indefatigably as maphrián for the strengthening of his Church. He made many extensive journeys within his territory, took measures for the erection of ecclesiastical edifices, and consecrated numerous priests and bishops. He succeeded in maintaining good relations with the Mongolian court without coming into too close contact with it. And with all this he studied, wrote, and taught without intermission.

At Mosul the maphrián was met in solemn procession by the officials of the Mohammedan prince as well as by the Christians: the vassal of the Mongols had good reason for treating in a friendly way a man of mark who had just been the recipient of their favour. Still more solemn

was the reception of Barhebræus when, at Easter 1265, he came to Bagdad—still an important place, notwithstanding its recent terrible sack. Such was the consideration enjoyed by Barhebræus, that even the catholicus of the Nestorians sent a deputation, including two of his own nephews, to escort him into his presence. A harmony like this, between the representatives of two creeds which had been separated by the hostility of eight centuries, is well worth remarking. Many Nestorians took part also in the service held by Barhebræus, at which was wrought the customary miracle of a spontaneous overflow of the chrism at the moment of consecration.[1] The catholicus, indeed, presently became jealous of his colleague's popularity, but no mischief followed, for he died a fortnight after the festival (Saturday, 18th April 1265). After spending the entire summer in Bagdad, and consecrating numerous clergy of various grades, Barhebræus returned again to the district of Mosul, where his proper see was. He usually lived in the great fortified monastery of St. Matthew, which was for the maphrián something like what that of Barsaumá was for the patriarch.

The patriarch Ignatius, in the years immediately following, fell into a violent dispute with the physician Simeon, already mentioned, who had taken possession of the government of the monastery of Barsaumá. As he had done this on the strength of orders issued by the Mongols, Ignatius sought to obtain from these a decision in an opposite sense; and although Barhebræus earnestly urged him to come to some amicable settlement of the difficulty, and not to expose himself before "the barbarian Huns," he persevered in the line he had chosen. The maphrián naturally took this very ill. When, accordingly, in 1268,

[1] This miracle recalls that of the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples, and no doubt admits of a similar natural explanation.

in the course of a journey westward to visit his relatives near Lake Van, he encountered the patriarch on his way to the Mongol court to complain of Simeon, he sought to avoid a meeting, and the patriarch obtained one at last only with difficulty. Abaga, who had succeeded his father Hulagu in the sovereignty of the Mongols in February 1265, actually promulgated a decree in accordance with the wishes of Ignatius; but the influential Simeon contrived that it should straightway be cancelled by another, and Barhebræus, detained in Cilicia by a serious illness, saw Simeon return in triumph with the decree in his hand. But the dispute was further prolonged. The Government pronounced alternately for this party and for that; neither reconciliation nor compromise proved permanent. At last, in 1273, Barhebræus, who had been called in as arbiter, was successful in composing the difference. On this occasion he found his native land in poor case. Moslem troops from Syria had invaded the Mongol territory, wasting it far and wide, and dragging many Christian women and children into slavery. The lords of Egypt and the petty princes of Syria were at that time at continual war with the Tartars, whom in the end they succeeded in shaking off; but the struggles in the meantime had completed the ruin of many districts. Additional insecurity was caused by the presence of robber tribes, which now could do pretty much as they pleased. Barhebræus, who had taken up temporary quarters in the monastery of St. Sergius, was escorted thence to that of St. Barsaumá by a body of fifty armed dependants.

In Easter of 1277, Barhebræus was again in Bagdad, where some years before a large new Jacobite church had been built in the neighbourhood of the former palaces of the Caliphs, mainly at the expense of a rich Christian official named Safíaddaula. At this period, when the

Christians for a short time were able to raise their heads under the rule of the religiously indifferent, not to say stolid barbarians, frequent instances are met with in which wealthy private individuals devoted money to building churches. The smaller contributions of the poorer members of the community — doubtless the main source of income for the higher clergy — were forthcoming, we may be sure, in unusual abundance during the term of a maphrián so respected as Barhebræus. He was again received with great pomp by the Christians of Bagdad. The catholicus of that time also, Denhá by name, sent a deputation to meet him, and received him immediately afterwards with honour. Jacobites and Nestorians, at such a juncture at least, felt themselves to be branches of a common stem.

In autumn of the same year Barhebræus came to Tagrít, which, although nominally the see of the maphrián, had beheld no incumbent of that office for sixty years. The Christian population of the place, to be sure, had been sadly diminished; for immediately after the fall of Bagdad the Mongols had put to death the Christians of Tagrít (whom they had at first spared) in their usual wholesale manner, for having concealed much property of the Moslems instead of giving it up to the conquerors (Palm Sunday, 1258). Barhebræus remained here in his nominal residence for two months. The following years he spent partly in the neighbourhood of Mosul and partly in Aderbiján.

It is characteristic of the time that, in 1281, the Nestorians, on the death of their patriarch Denhá, chose as his successor a clergyman deficient in ecclesiastical learning, whose recommendation was that he belonged to a nationality of Central Asia which was also largely represented at the Mongol court. This was Marcus, an

Uigur, or Turk of the farthest East, who had come from China on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but on account of the insecurity of the roads from war and robbers had been unable to complete the last comparatively short portion of the journey. As patriarch he bore the name Yavalláhá, and he distinguished himself alike by his honesty and by his knowledge of the world. He showed great friendliness to the Jacobites; but as he knew little of the old dogmatic controversies, and even in the simplicity of his heart sought relations with the pope, he is hardly entitled to so much credit for liberality of spirit as Barhebræus is, who was well versed in the dogmatic questions which divided the Christians of those countries, but, in marked contrast to the old champions of his Church, sought to minimise their importance. He expressly declared that the one thing needful was not love to Nestorius or to Jacobus (Baradæus), but to Christ, appealing to the words of the apostle: "Who is Paul? and who is Apollos?" (1 Cor. iii. 5). Isolated instances of similar irenical tendencies are met with elsewhere in the East during the crusading period.

Barhebræus, in the spring of 1282, wished to go to Tabríz, and, accordingly, owing to the insecurity of the roads through the Kurdish country, attached himself to the caravan of a Mongol princess. News now coming of the death of Abaga, he proceeded to Alatag (also in Aderbiján), where, according to the provisions of Jenghiz Khan's fundamental law, the new sovereign was to be chosen by the Mongolian assembly. Here he paid homage to Abaga's brother Ahmed, who ascended the throne on 21st June. He obtained also a diploma of confirmation. Ahmed, as his Arabic name testifies, had accepted Islam, and is reported to have ruled his conduct expressly with a view to the caliphate; but he was by no means fanatical, and he even renewed to the Christian monasteries, churches,

and priesthood their privilege of exemption from taxation. And the pagan Argun, Abaga's son, who overthrew Ahmed in July 1284 and caused him to be put to death, was again exceptionally gracious to the Christians. The Mongols had already, indeed, begun by this time to go over in troops to Islam, which was better suited to their character than even the crudest type of Christianity; but Barhebræus did not live long enough to see all the hopes which the Christians of the East[1] had built upon these brutal barbarians completely falsified, and Islam once more restored to undivided ascendency in the wasted lands.

In the autumn of 1282, Barhebræus received in Tabríz a letter, in which the patriarch told him of his serious illness, and besought him to come and relieve him of the cares of his office; this was clearly intended to convey the wish that Barhebræus should be his successor. Winter being at hand, and the roads dangerous, the maphrián, however, did not comply with this invitation. Ignatius died of dropsy on Tuesday, 17th November, and the party of Simeon hastened to elect bishop Philoxenus to the patriarchate (2nd February 1283). The election was held in the Barsaumá monastery, and only three bishops, all belonging to depopulated dioceses in the neighbourhood, took part in it. But confirmation was obtained without delay from Alatag. Humble apologies were now tendered to the maphrián for the uncanonical procedure, and he was entreated to give it his after-concurrence, without which the election could not hope for the approval of a majority of the bishops; but he turned the messengers away. Even when Simeon the physician came in person, he continued steadfast. It was not until the son of Simeon, a pupil of his own, with whom he was on personally friendly terms,

[1] Similar expectations were sometimes cherished in the West also.

had a meeting with him (August 1284) that he condescended to accept the offered presents and to sanction the appointment. We can well believe the assurance he then gave that he was far from wishing to be himself made patriarch, the secure and influential post he actually held being worth more to him than the headship of the Jacobite Church in the West, which had been entirely desolated by war; hard as the times were, he was better off than his predecessors. But he had to maintain the maphrián's dignity, and his self-esteem also had been undoubtedly hurt, for he was well entitled to consider himself the foremost of the Jacobite clergy. The meeting referred to took place as Barhebræus was once again travelling in the caravan of a princess from Tabríz to the district of Mosul.

Near the village of Bartellé, not far from the monastery of St. Matthew, he had built to the martyr "John the carpenter's son" a new church, which he caused to be decorated by an artist from Constantinople, one of two painters whom the widow of Abaga, a natural daughter of the Greek emperor Michael, had fetched from the imperial city to adorn the church of her own denonination (the Greek "Orthodox") in Tabríz. But the old church had been searched in vain for the relics of the martyr. After every one else had failed it was given to the maphrián, as he himself tells us, to discover the marble sarcophagus, in consequence of a vision for which he had prepared himself by prayer and fasting (23rd November 1284). How far self-deception entered into this, we can hardly say. Barhebræus was a cool-headed person, but like all his contemporaries he had sucked in belief in miracles and wonders with his mother's milk; on the other hand, we shall hardly be doing an injustice even to the best representative of the Oriental clergy of that day if we deem him not incapable of a little pious fraud.

In 1285–86,[1] Barhebræus, as we learn from one of his verses, was led by astrological calculations to expect his end; a presentiment which proved true. His brother Barsaumá, who was constantly beside him, and took charge of his building undertakings, sought to withdraw him as far as possible from danger by inducing him to quit the neighbourhood of Mosul, which was now yearly harassed by marauding bands from Syria, and to return to Merághá. Here he continued to labour for a while; but on the night of 29th–30th July 1286 he died after a short illness of three days. He had previously expressed his regret for having left his proper place from fear of the death that was inevitable. It may be supposed that he had felt some warnings of weakness, although his brother declares him to have been at the time in exceptionally good health.

There were then in Merághá only four Jacobite priests to conduct the funeral obsequies. But the Nestorian patriarch Yavalláhá, who happened to be also in the place, enjoined a day of strict mourning on all those in his obedience, and sent the bishops who were with him to the funeral. The Armenian and even the Greek clergy also took part in it; there were altogether about two hundred mourners, and for once the Christians showed a united front in face of the Moslems to do honour to a person so distinguished. With solemnities which lasted over nine hours, Barhebræus was buried at the spot where he had been wont to pray and administer the sacrament; but at a later date his body was removed to the monastery of St. Matthew, where his grave is still shown.

We do not need to make very great deductions from the high praise lavished on the character of Barhebræus by Barsaumá, his brother and successor. Had he not been amiable and humane, he would hardly have stood in such

[1] The Syrian Julian year begins with 1st October.

pleasant relations with those of other Christian communions. And yet he was no weakling, but a thoroughly forceful man, not without ambition; and in point of character, with all his imperfections, he certainly stood far above the large majority of the higher clergy of the East.

His great activity is attested by his ecclesiastical buildings, already begun when he was bishop of Aleppo, and by his literary works. From his twentieth year down to his last hour, his brother tells us, he studied and wrote without intermission. Barsaumá's list, which is not quite exhaustive, enumerates thirty-one writings of Barhebræus, among which are several works of some compass. They are mostly in Syriac, but some in Arabic. Manuscripts of most of them can be found in European libraries, and sometimes there are more copies than one—a sign that they were much read. His books embrace almost all branches of the knowledge of his day. It would indeed be idle to expect much original thought or independent research in such a mediæval and Eastern scholar. His principal object was to make accessible to the Syrians the productions of Arabian and older science. Most of his encyclopædic and separate scientific works are for the most part, accordingly, merely intelligent compilations or excerpts from earlier treatises in Syriac or Arabic. Some are simply translations; thus he rendered some works of the famous Aristotelian Avicenna from Arabic into Syriac. Barhebræus wrote on philosophy, medicine, astronomy and astrology, geography, history, jurisprudence, grammar, and so on; among the subjects treated, the secular sciences are on the whole more prominent than theology proper. He even compiled two little books of anecdotes. He earned the respect of learned Moslems by his writings, and no doubt also by his skill in oral teaching and disputation. An odd proof of this is the foolish rumour that Barhebræus on his death-

bed had turned Moslem; the thought was the expression of the wish to gain for Islam and eternal blessedness so distinguished a scholar.

Some works of Barhebræus are still of great value, particularly his Sacred and Profane History, drawn from older Arabic, Syriac, and Persian works, and especially from the Syriac Church History of Michael, his fellow-townsman of Melatia, who was Jacobite patriarch from 1166 to 1199.[1] It is distinguished by an apt selection of materials, contains much that is not to be found elsewhere, and is an important authority for the author's own period. In his very last days Barhebræus wrote at Merághá, at the request of some Moslems, an Arabic edition of the Profane History, which is shorter than the Syriac work, but contains some new matter. Next in importance to the History is his larger Syriac Grammar, in which he tries to combine the method not very happily borrowed by the older Syrians from the Greek grammarians with the Arabian system. Viewed in the light of modern philology the book shows great defects, but it is far ahead of the works that preceded it, and still very instructive. Further, his Scholia to the Bible, which are more philological than theological, are of value (especially for the history of the Syriac text); and so is his collection of Jacobite Canon Law.

Barhebræus wrote metrical pieces also. He has certainly none of the gifts of the heaven-born poet. These compositions have neither fancy nor passion. He writes them with his understanding, partly after the pattern of older Syrians, partly on Arabian and Persian models. The didactic wordiness of the Syrian poetry is often also apparent. But the skill and elegance with which he

[1] A work hitherto known only by an abridged and interpolated Armenian translation. The original has been recently discovered, but is not yet accessible.

handles the unpromising materials of the ecclesiastical language is worthy of recognition, and he shows spirit and taste, especially in the short epigrammatic poems. He is further entitled to the credit of being almost entirely free from the verbal conceits which were so greatly affected in the poetry of that time. Generally speaking, he can fairly be put on a level with the average Arabic poets of his age, and certainly above most of the Syriac. Altogether he was one of the most eminent men of his Church and nation.

IX.

KING THEODORE OF ABYSSINIA.[1]

Abyssinia, that marvellous mountain land in which the advantages of the tropical and temperate zones are united, was for centuries a single monarchy. The only African country which retained its Christianity, it had not escaped without grievous injury the many external assaults and inward struggles through which it had passed; and the bond which held together its different provinces, ruled by local princes, and in part separated by well-marked physical features, was by no means strong. But, with all this, it still was a powerful kingdom, governed by a race which an alleged descent from Solomon, and still more a rule that had continued without interruption from the thirteenth century, had invested with a nimbus of sanctity. But shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century the power of its sovereigns broke down. Petty princes asserted independence, and sought to extend their own dominions; rude soldiers grasped a royal authority, and there was a constant succession of civil wars. The unspeakable atrocities connected with these contests completed the ruin of the Abyssinian civilisation, which, it must not be forgotten, had never stood very high. The prestige of the Solomonic dynasty was so great that the actual rulers, some of them Mohammedans and Gallas, maintained it in name; but its sovereigns, set up or dethroned at the pleasure of the conqueror for the time being, had not the faintest shadow

[1] Originally published in *Deutsche Rundschau*, x. (1884) p. 406 sqq.

of power. When Rüppell visited the capital Gondar in 1833, the reigning "king of the kings of Ethiopia" hardly had the revenue of a tolerably well-to-do private citizen. The clergy, who were extraordinarily numerous, were the only class who continued to flourish; in the never-ending warfare a church might be destroyed or a sanctuary desecrated here and there, but the old endowments were so rich, and the holders so skilful in working upon the superstitions of the people, that their interests never seriously suffered. They themselves were grossly superstitious, and for the most part little superior to the laity in culture. With some worthy exceptions the degenerate clergy have been, and still are, along with a brutal soldiery, the worst curses of this unhappy country, so richly gifted by nature.

Towards the middle of the present century, Abyssinia was partitioned into three main principalities. The north was firmly and strongly held by the cunning Ubié, hereditary chief of the Alpine district of Semyén, who had taken possession of Tigré, the seat of the oldest kingdom of Abyssinia and of the most ancient Abyssinian civilisation. The largest portion of the country was under Ras Ali, a Galla by race. Though a Mohammedan by origin, he had received baptism; but he was regarded as a lukewarm Christian, — not because his life was irregular, for the same could be said of many good Christians, but because he tolerated Moslems: there were even whispers that, dreadful to relate, he had more than once eaten of the flesh of animals that Mohammedans had killed. He was good-humoured and indolent, permitted the local chiefs to do what they pleased, and was never able to bring some of the more powerful princes to obedience. The chiefs of the unruly Wollo-Gallas, some of them related to him, acknowledged his suzerainty on the tacit condition that he should never trouble himself about anything they

did. In the extreme south was Shoa, completely independent, under a dynasty which had been in power from the beginning of the eighteenth century, and had at last assumed the royal title. Shoa, governed with considerable firmness, had no share in the confusions of the rest of Abyssinia, from which it is separated both by natural barriers and by wild Galla tribes. If, now, these chief rulers had remained contented with the territory that each had acquired, the division would have been to the positive advantage of the country; for Abyssinia, with its Alpine ranges and deep erosion valleys, which put a stop to all intercourse during the rainy season (our summer), is not fitted by nature to be a single State with effective administration from a single centre. But each ruler strove to extend his own authority by violence, or fraud and perjury, at the expense of his neighbour. It was only with difficulty that Ras Ali, the lord of the central portion, resisted the encroachments of Ubié, and the everlasting turbulence of great vassals and petty insurgents.

In this condition of affairs a powerful upstart suddenly arose and overthrew all the princes of Abyssinia. Few Europeans had so much as heard Kasa's name as long as he continued to be a mere governor or rebel against his lord; and even to them it was a surprise when Kasa suddenly restored the old monarchy as "Theodore, king of the kings of Ethiopia," and united the entire country under his sway. The kingdom seemed once more to have a future before it; for the new ruler was a man of exceptional endowments, a mighty warrior, and a friend of progress. This anticipation was unfortunately not realised. Theodore had to carry on a constant struggle for his authority, and his power had already been restricted almost to his own camp when the conflict with the English began. This conflict, through which his name

first came to be really known in Europe, reduced him to the alternatives of surrender or death; nor did he hesitate in his choice, dying as a king and a hero by his own hand,—a death which in the remembrance of posterity will ever place him in a different category from that of the many other rulers of savage peoples whom the British arms have subdued.

Theodore was a barbarian, a frightful despot, and yet a great man. If ever there was a tragedy, it is to be seen in the story of this child of the wilderness, who was called to, and achieved, the highest position; but after unceasing struggle was overthrown by error, passion, and crime, more than by a foreign power. It will not be unprofitable to look for a little at his life. For his earlier history we are so fortunate as to possess, not merely the notices of various European travellers, but also a consecutive narrative down to the year 1860, written in Amharic (the chief dialect of modern Abyssinia) by Debtera Zenab, a cleric with whom he had personal relations.[1]

Kasa was born about the year 1820 in the land of Quara, in the extreme west of Abyssinia; his mother-tongue was doubtless the non-Semitic Agau there prevalent, and it is probable that his blood was mainly Agau. His origin was not low, as has sometimes been asserted; his father, Hailu (or Haila Maryam), was a great noble, and for some time ruled Quara, in the capacity of governor, for his powerful brother Kenfu. Kasa's mother, however, seems to have been of humble condition. As the loosest kind of polygamy prevails among the nobles of Abyssinia, it is impossible for them to take very great care of all their offspring. But it is not uncommon for the obscurer

[1] The MS. was presented to the Royal Library in Berlin by the worthy missionary Flad, along with a German abridgment. A portion of the abridgment appears in his instructive work, entitled *Twelve Years in Abyssinia* (*Zwölf Jahre in Abessinien*).

children of princely fathers by mothers of lower rank to rise to distinction. Ubié also was the son of a peasant girl. The youthful Kasa had been designed for a modest career; it was intended that he should be trained for the Church in a monastery not far from Gondar, the capital. But he had early experience of war and its desolations. The governor for the time being had rebelled against his master, Ras Imam (uncle and predecessor of Ras Ali), who invaded the province in 1827. In the invasion Kasa's monastery was destroyed, and Imam's Galla soldiers made eunuchs of its forty-eight pupils, Kasa alone escaping. In this he must afterwards have recognised the hand of God, who had designed him for another career than the clerical, and delivered him from danger; for his faith in his "star" scarcely ever failed him to the last. I very much doubt the assertion of many Europeans, that his monkish education deeply influenced him. At an age of less than eight years, the boy cannot have become a theological scholar. His literary acquirements, measured even by Abyssinian standards, were never high. The use of Biblical expressions which he affected is not necessarily to be regarded in a man of his temperament as a result of direct teaching; in words all Abyssinians are excellent Christians.

Kasa now entered the household of his uncle Kenfu, who ruled an extensive territory, and after his death, that of one of his sons. But Kasa's cousins soon came to open war with each other, and in this he also took part. The cousin on whose side he was had the worst of it; Kasa was made a prisoner, but released by the victor in consideration of their youthful companionship. Misfortune upon misfortune now befell Kasa. On one occasion, when he again was unlucky enough to be on the losing side, he had to remain in hiding for a month, and this within the territory that belonged to his own family; as a scion of

a princely house he bore the pretentious title of Ledj ("Youth," *i.e.* "Junker" or "Prince"), and if discovered he would hardly have been spared by the enemy. In later prosperous days he conferred high honour and princely rewards on the countrymen who had sheltered him in this strait. Kasa served under a variety of captains great and small, and distinguished himself by his boldness and skill in battle and in the chase. For example, he once on horseback killed two elephants; but in doing so he so roused the jealousy of his less fortunate chief that he found it necessary to quit his service without delay. On such lines zeal and patience might easily have raised him to high position; but he had a mind to be a master, not a servant, and became the leader of a robber band. In these parts, to be sure, it is difficult to draw the line between a robber chief and a petty prince. For years Kasa conducted plundering raids, great and small, in Western Abyssinia. His Abyssinian biographer, a peaceable man, with great seriousness and visible satisfaction, describes his "first triumph" as follows. Kasa had come to a sworn agreement with seventy robbers that all booty was to be common property. But on learning that they had secretly slaughtered for their own use a cow which they had stolen, he with twelve others fell upon his perjured "brethren," put them to flight, and cruelly mutilated seven of their number who fell into his hands. In this he was no doubt already acting in his character as a God-appointed judge; breach of oath demanded severe punishment. But it is too obvious how hardening must have been the tendency of such a life upon the future sovereign. It may be conjectured that he justified his robber life by the consideration that his energies were mainly directed against Mohammedans and heathen. The great trading caravans are chiefly in the service of

Mohammedan merchants; and the neighbours of Abyssinia are almost all Moslem tribes, partly Arab, partly pure Africans. In these parts the two religions have been at enmity for many centuries. No one dreams of establishing peace between them; and Kasa could not doubt that he served God better the more energetically he fought against the infidel. And he hated Islam all his life with his whole soul. Enlightened as he was in many respects, and profound as was the contempt he ultimately came to feel for the Christian priests of his nation, he was constant in regarding himself as an instrument of God for the humiliation or extirpation of Islam, and in ever looking for the forgiveness of all his sins as the reward of his merit as champion against the enemies of Christ. Yet in the course of his freebooting life he was occasionally led to make alliance with Moslems, especially in undertakings against heathen negroes, who from time immemorial had been the objects of plundering expeditions and slave hunts on the part of Christians and Mohammedans, great sovereigns and petty princelings alike.[1] Of course, in dealing with heathen, no more pity was shown than if they had been wild beasts, or rather less, for the hunted blacks often had the audacity to defend themselves with bravery. Active participation in operations of this kind was no school of clemency or amiable qualities, but it served to train Kasa as a general in prudence, promptitude, and solicitous care for his warriors.

He and his companions were often in great straits, especially for want of food; but he gradually acquired the position of a considerable prince in his native land of Quara. Though the terror of his enemies and of trading

[1] The good-natured Menilek of Shoa (now king of all Abyssinia) has undertaken many similar expeditions against neighbouring peoples on a larger scale than the nefarious slave hunts of the Arabs, and not less inhuman.

caravans, he even thus early gave attention to the cultivation of the soil, and protected the husbandmen. He further extended his influence by matrimonial alliances. His reputation steadily increased, and the mother of Ras Ali, Menen, began to see that her best policy would be to put a good face on a bad business and formally bestow upon Kasa the governorship of Quara, which he already exercised in fact. This energetic and immoral woman ruled Gondar and its neighbouring lands for her son; in her old age (1844) she married a member of the old royal family, whom she caused Ras Ali to proclaim as sovereign, herself assuming the title of Itégé ("great queen" or "empress"). Soon afterwards Menen even offered her granddaughter Tewabetch, daughter of Ras Ali, to Kasa in marriage. Such unions in the case of Abyssinian princes are of even less political consequence than they are in Europe; nevertheless it was a great elevation for Kasa to be brought in this way into such close connection with the most powerful family in the kingdom. He accordingly dismissed all the wives he had already married —an ordinary proceeding in Abyssinia, requiring no special formalities—and espoused Tewabetch, who was still very young. The union was solemnised in the face of the church,—which is seldom done in these parts,—and Kasa remained faithful to his admirable consort as long as she lived,—a thing unheard of in the case of an Abyssinian grandee. Even after her death he kept her in tender remembrance; she was his good genius. But the marriage had not the effect of making Kasa an obedient subject; in the autumn of 1846 he became a declared rebel, and defeated army after army. In one instance he even made a naval expedition, attacking an island on Lake Tana, where a general opposed to him had taken refuge, with five hundred light reed-rafts, the only craft known in Abyssinia; each

raft carried a musketeer, a spearman, and a slinger. One of Menen's generals had grossly insulted Kasa. All over the country the story went that Kasa's mother had in early life followed the humble calling of a dealer in kousso, the well-known remedy for tape-worm, a very common trouble in Abyssinia. The general in question had boastfully said before Menen and her people: "Never fear; I shall bring you this son of the kousso-seller with a string round his neck like an ichneumon." But it was his evil fortune to be defeated and taken; whereupon his conqueror caused a large quantity of pounded kousso to be brought, and thus addressed him: "My mother has unfortunately not sold any kousso to-day, and so has no money to buy corn; please therefore accept by way of refreshment the kousso that is left." He then compelled the unfortunate man to swallow a large quantity of the nasty stuff.[1]

In June 1847, Menen took the field in person, but was wounded and made prisoner. As a ransom for his mother, Ras Ali handed over to Kasa her whole territory, reserving his own suzerainty. Kasa, who now assumed the title of Dejazmatch or Dejaz, borne by rulers of large provinces, and by those in higher military commands (thus corresponding partly to our "duke" and partly to our "general"), in this way became one of the most powerful princes in the country. As such he followed alike his inclination and his conscience in leading an expedition against the "Turks"—that is, the Egyptians. He penetrated far into Senaar, but learned, in the neighbourhood of Deberki, how powerless the bravest Abyssinian warriors were against soldiers who had European weapons

[1] I repeat the story exactly as given in the Amharic biography. D'Abbadie at the time heard a somewhat different version in Gondar (*L'Abyssinie et le roi Théodore*, Paris 1868). D'Abbadie partly differs also in his order of events from the Abyssinian writer whom I follow; perhaps he may in some instances be right, but in others he has indubitably been misled by inaccurate recollection or by false information.

and some elements of discipline. He was beaten, and compelled to retreat—a humiliation he never forgot. His hatred against all Moslems, and especially all Turks, became blind. As our ancestors once used to regard the possession of the Holy Land by the infidel as a personal reproach to themselves, so also did Kasa, along with many of his countrymen; but what vexed him still more was the thought that the coasts bordering upon Abyssinia, as well as so many other lands of Africa which he (in some cases rightly and in others wrongly) regarded as the ancient property of his own country, were in the hands of Turks or other Moslems. He laid deeply to heart the lesson that European arms and European discipline give an army overpowering superiority, and it was always to him a matter of bitter regret that he could do so little to introduce real discipline among his troops.

A new rebellion of Kasa's ended less fortunately than his previous ones. He hoped to be a match for the numerous cavalry of his suzerain by the use of a kind of mines, and of wooden cannons bound with iron rings—his first attempt at gun-making, a pursuit that latterly became a passion with him. But the enemy found out his secret, and he had to submit himself without striking a blow. For two years he kept quiet; but in 1852 a quarrel again arose. Ras Ali stirred up against his son-in-law the powerful Goshu of Gojam, who had often been a thorn in his own side. Doubtless he hoped that the two troublesome vassals would wear out their strength against one another. But on 27th November 1852, Kasa surprised and defeated Goshu by one of those bold and rapid marches over difficult country which were the special terror of his foes. Goshu himself, one of the most distinguished warriors of Abyssinia, perished. The fame of the victor rose to a high pitch. He made as if he desired peace with Ras Ali, but the Austrian vice-consul

Reiz, who was with him in January 1853, saw even then that the ambitious prince would soon be at blows, not only with him, but also with Ubié. And so it fell out. In two bloody battles the power of Ras Ali was utterly broken. From the battle of Aishal (28th June 1853), Kasa's biographer reckons the fall in Central Abyssinia of the Galla power, that is to say, of the dynasty of the Gallas, with their hordes of Mohammedan Galla cavalry. Ras Ali retired to a remote corner of the territory of his tribesmen, the Yeju-Gallas, where, it would seem, by the sufferance of his son-in-law, he continued to live for some ten years, and at last died in utter obscurity.

After this (26th May 1854) a stratagem placed Beru, the son of Goshu, the bravest hero in all Abyssinia, in the hands of Kasa, who thus became master of the whole south-west. Beru, deserted by his army, prostrated himself before Kasa, with a stone on his neck, after the custom of the country; but his conqueror seated him beside him, and asked, "What would you have done to me, had I been your prisoner?" "I would not have allowed you to come into my presence, but would have taken good care to have you put to death without an audience," was the answer; upon which Kasa thanked God aloud for his victory. Beru remained in custody until the death of his conqueror.

Of the same expedition the following anecdote is told. One of his servants boasted, after the fashion of Abyssinian warriors, "No one, O Kasa, can look even thy servants in the face, not to speak of thyself." The prince happened to have in his hand at the moment one of the very brittle glass vessels in use among the Abyssinians. This, by way of confirmation of what the man had said, he dashed upon a wooden dish; the glass remained unbroken, but the wood fell into pieces. He now drew his sword, and proudly said, "I, Christ's servant, hold by Christ; who can stand before

my face?" He then offered prayer, and drank mead from the glass. The story is no doubt an adorned version of something that really happened; it is of interest to us as showing that people had already begun to regard Kasa as invincible.

In the same summer (1854) Kasa attacked Ubié, the most powerful of his rivals, resorting not only to arms, but to cunning and diplomacy. By the favour which he ostentatiously showed to the Roman Catholic bishop, an Italian named De Jacobis, he contrived to rouse the fears of Abba Selama, the spiritual head (Abuna) of the Abyssinian Church, that in the end Kasa's territory was to be withdrawn from him, and brought into connection with the Roman Church; to prevent this the Abuna made a rapid change of front, and went over from Ubié, his benefactor, to Kasa, promising to crown him as sovereign. On this Kasa now expelled De Jacobis[1] and all the other Catholic priests, as Ubié had previously banished the Protestant missionaries.

On 9th February 1855 a decisive battle was fought, in which Ubié was made prisoner, and his whole dominions fell under the power of Kasa. Almost immediately (11th February) Kasa had himself anointed and crowned in the church of Deresgé Maryam, by Abuna Selama, under the name of Theodore, as "king of the kings of Ethiopia." The choice of the name, which, confident of victory, he had announced to his soldiers before the battle, was well con-

[1] De Jacobis is highly spoken of by all unprejudiced witnesses. With regard to all persons and things involving ecclesiastical interests, the judgments of Protestant and Catholic missionaries alike, and their partisans (D'Abbadie, for example), must be received with caution. It is undeniable that Abyssinia offers a much less favourable field to Protestant than to Catholic missions. Even the narrowest type of Protestantism is something much too high for the Abyssinians, not to speak of negroes. The desires that occasionally find expression on the part of Russia for a union of the Abyssinian with the "Orthodox" Church have small prospect of ever being fulfilled.

sidered. Throughout the country hopes had long been cherished of the appearance of a Messianic ruler, Theodore, who should restore the glories of the kingdom and subdue unbelievers, and this was the character which Kasa now took on himself to represent; but, curiously enough, he did not assume the proper imperial title of Hatsé (or Haté, Até), leaving it to the old and feeble John, husband of Menen, who survived Theodore, and was always treated by him with the greatest respect, doubtless from some superstitious idea. The defect of Kasa's ancestry was made good by courtly genealogists, who soon supplied a pedigree establishing the descent of his mother from Solomon (that of his father was perhaps too well known), and thus making him to some extent a legitimate sovereign in the eyes of the people.

But he attached no value to the outward display of royalty. He dressed like an ordinary officer, slept almost invariably in a military tent, and went barefoot like all his subjects. At the same time, like some other great warrior kings, he had a touch of the theatrical in his character, which doubtless helped to enhance his reputation with the Abyssinians. Thus, for example, he had a fancy for keeping tame lions. There must have been something kinglike in the whole aspect of the man; he was of the middle height, very dark even for an Abyssinian, with aristocratic features, aquiline nose, and fiery black eyes; almost all Europeans who came before him were much impressed by him at first sight. Some of them also detected a trace of cunning in his face, and this was no doubt correct. Of insinuating address in his friendly moods, he could be terrible in the outbursts of his wrath. Possibly this wrath may sometimes have been merely assumed, as in the case of Napoleon I.

One of his first acts as king was to renew the old laws against the slave trade and polygamy. But unfortunately

his constant wars made it impossible to give full effect to the former prohibition; and a real reformation of the frightfully loose marriage relations which prevail in this very "Christian" State could not be effected by edicts apart from a movement of moral reformation. The law remained a dead letter, all the more that he himself personally in after years violated it grossly.

Theodore threw himself with all his might into the maintenance of justice. All the oppressed, so far as was at all possible, betook themselves directly to him. In Abyssinia the head of the State still personally discharges the functions of judge. He sought to protect the country folk against the excesses of the soldiers. His punishments were frightfully severe, but at the same time often milder than the laws prescribed. We would not excuse the excessive and shocking severity of Theodore's punishments, such as the chopping off of hands and feet, and so on; but it is fair to remember that it is only modern humanitarianism that has finally put a stop to similar atrocities among ourselves, and that in Europe revolting corporal punishments were still sanctioned by law in an age where they were much less in harmony with the prevailing civilisation than in modern Abyssinia. It ought to be added, that he not unfrequently pardoned vanquished foes. In his legal judgments he showed good sense. Decisions of his are quoted which are much better entitled to the epithet "Solomonic" than his genealogy is.

Immediately after the subjugation of Ubié, Theodore marched against the Wollo-Gallas, reduced them to apparent subjection at the very first onset, and pushed farther to the south into the kingdom of Shoa, which, as we learn from the missionary Krapf, feared no assailant from the north, being covered (as it deemed) by the Wollos. Such an opinion would have been justified in the case of any ordinary Abyssinian prince, but not in that of Theodore.

He was soon master of all Shoa, and, the native king dying at the time, nominated a member of the same family, not as king, but as governor. Thus within less than a year Theodore had added to his old provinces all that remained of Abyssinia.

But to conquer and to hold are not quite the same. Had Theodore been a cool-headed and highly-educated European, he would from the first have called a halt at the natural northern frontier of the Wollo country, the valley of the Beshelo. Really to subjugate this people was a much heavier task than he could have supposed. The Wollos have long been Mohammedans, and are proud of their faith, although they know but little of the doctrines of Islam, and have retained much that is of pagan origin. They are divided against themselves in genuine African fashion; tribe is at war with tribe, clan with clan, but they were all at one in their love of independence and in hatred of the Christian conqueror. All the Gallas (all, at least, who live in or near Abyssinia) are savage and bloodthirsty, with all the instincts of the robber, not very courageous in open fight, but dangerous in guerilla warfare. The Wollos have the reputation also of being exceptionally treacherous. Their country, somewhat less, perhaps, than the kingdom of Saxony, is broken up by great mountain ranges rising close to the snow line, and by numerous deep valleys, so as to make the reduction of a recalcitrant population under a united rule an excessively difficult task. On the other hand, it offers abundant cover for rebels and robbers; and any one acquainted with the byways can easily incommode even considerable bodies of troops. The Wollos are born horsemen, and gallop along the steepest hillsides on their hardy ponies. Theodore carried on his war with them year after year. He was never defeated by them, and, in fact, they were afraid so

much as to look him in the face.[1] His generals also were for the most part successful against them. Great parts of the country, and even prominent chiefs, were often subdued by him, but he never became master of the whole. Sometimes with kindness, often with severity rising to atrocious cruelty, he sought to bring them under his sway; but the result was always the same, that in the end in Walloland he could call nothing his own except garrisoned fortresses like Makdala.[2]

Meanwhile arose, now in one province, now in another, various rebels, some of them members of old princely families, sometimes bold soldiers of fortune. None of them was at all a match for him. Wherever he made his appearance the armies of the insurgents were scattered like dust. By force or by artifice he succeeded in getting several of them into his power, and among them one who, as it seemed, was the most formidable of all—Negusié of Tigré (beginning of 1861), with whom France had already entered into relations as "King of Abyssinia." Others took refuge in inaccessible deserts, or in steep rocky fastnesses, of which so many are found in Abyssinia. Had he not been hampered by the Wollos, he would doubtless have got the better of them all; but his war of extermination against these savages crippled him completely. He found no exceptional difficulty indeed in recruiting his armies, decimated though they were by the sword, and still more by periodical pestilence; for Abyssinia has no lack of men with a taste for war and plunder, and Theodore's name acted like a charm. The very size of his armies was his misfortune. He could not feed them in any regular way.

[1] When the English, immediately after the death of Theodore, showed his picture to the Wollo princess Mastiat, his bitter enemy, and asked her whether it was like him, she replied, "How can I tell? Who has ever seen him and lived?"

[2] Not Magdala, as it is usually written in England and Germany.

Though at the outset he strictly repressed all plundering in friendly districts, he soon had to concede everything to his hungry soldiers, and even to order the systematic robbery of prosperous regions. In this way the veneration of his people was turned into hatred; the poverty-stricken peasants went to swell the ranks of the rebels, or, at least, robbed and murdered in secret.

Theodore's embarrassments were further increased by his relations with the ecclesiastical authorities. At the head of the Abyssinian Church, a branch of the Coptic (the whole civilisation of Abyssinia, so far as it is Christian, is derived from the impure Coptic source), stands a bishop, who must be, not a native, but a Copt, sent by the (Monophysite) patriarch of Alexandria. This "Abuna," in power and consideration, stands almost on a level with the king, has much larger revenues, and is reverenced by the masses as a god. Since November 1841 this position had been occupied by Abba Selama, mentioned above, a man of about the same age as Kasa-Theodore. Having as a child attended an English mission school, many English and German Protestants cherished great hopes regarding him; but other Europeans who happened to be in Abyssinia at the time of his arrival there,—Ferret and Galinier (French), and Mansfield Parkins (English),—who had no ecclesiastical preoccupations, at once perceived him to be an insignificant, narrow-minded individual. Nowhere, moreover, could a prelate, with any serious inclination to reformation, have a more difficult position than in the wretched Church of Abyssinia: to make any progress with the laity would be difficult; with the priesthood, impossible. As Abba Selama at the outset had the immeasurable advantage over the natives of a somewhat higher education and a much greater knowledge of the world, he ought certainly to have been able, in conjunction with such a man as