Book I

Introduction—Mohammed, founder of Islamism—Exhibition of its doctrines and of its different sects, from one of which (the Ismailites) the Assassins sprung.

Although the affairs of kingdoms and of nations, like the revolutions of day and night, are generally repeated in countless and continued successions, we, nevertheless, in our survey of the destinies of the human race, encounter single great and important events, which, fertilizing like springs, or devastating like volcanoes, interrupt the uniform wilderness of history. The more flowery the strand,—the more desolating the lava,—the rarer and more worthy objects do they become to the curiosity of travellers, and the narratives of their guides. The incredible, which has never been witnessed, but is nevertheless true, affords the richest materials for historical composition, providing the sources be authentic and accessible. Of all events, the account of which, since history has been written, has descended to us, one of the most singular and wonderful is the establishment of the dominion of the Assassins—that *imperium in imperio,* which, by blind subjection, shook despotism to its foundations; that union of impostors and dupes which, under the mask of a more austere creed and severer morals, undermined all religion and morality; that order of murderers, beneath whose daggers the lords of nations fell; all powerful, because, for the space of three centuries, they were universally dreaded, until the den of ruffians fell with the khaliphate, to whom, as the centre of spiritual and temporal power, it had at the outset sworn destruction, and by whose ruins it was itself overwhelmed. The history of this empire of conspirators is solitary, and without parallel; compared to it, all earlier and later secret combinations and predatory states are crude attempts or unsuccessful imitations.

Notwithstanding the wide space, to the extremest east and west, over which the name of Assassins (of whose origin more hereafter) has spread, and that in all the European languages it has obtained and preserved the same meaning as the word *murderer*, little has hitherto been made known, in consecutive order, or satisfactory representation, of their achievements and fortunes, of their religious or civil codes. What the Byzantines, the Crusaders, and Marco Polo related of them, was long considered a groundless legend, and an oriental fiction. The narrations of the latter have not been less doubted and oppugned, than the traditions of Herodotus concerning the countries and nations of antiquity. The more, however, the east is opened by the study of languages and by travel, the greater confirmation do these venerable records of history and geography receive; and the veracity of the father of modern travel, like that of the father of ancient history, only shines with the greater lustre.

Philological and historical, chronological and topographical researches, instituted by Falconet and Silvestre de Sacy, Quatremère, and Rousseau; outlines of European and oriental history, like those of Déguignes and Herbelot; the very recent history of the Crusades, by Wilken, compiled from the most ancient documents of the narrating Crusaders, and cotemporary Arabians; smooth the path of the historian of the Assassins; which name, neither Withof nor Mariti deserve; the former, on account of his gossipping partiality, and the latter, by reason of his meagreness and obscurity. Even after Abulfeda’s Arabic, and Mirkhond’s Persian historical work, of which A. Jourdain has given a valuable extract on the dynasty of the Ismailites, other oriental sources, almost unknown, claim the attention of the historian. Among the Arabic are—Macrisi’s, large Egyptian Topography, and Ibn Khaledun’s Political Prolegomena: Hadji Khalfa’s invaluable Geography and Chronological Tables; the Khaliph’s Bed of Roses, by Nasmisade; The Two Collectors of Histories and Narrations, by Mohammed the Secretary, and Mohammed Elaufi; The Explanation and Selection of Histories, by Hessarfenn and

Mohammed Effendi, among the Turkish: and among the Persian, The Universal History of Lari; The Gallery of Pictures of Ghaffari, a master-piece of historical art and style; The History of Wassaf, the Conqueror of the World, by Jowaini; The Biographies of the Poets, by Devletshah; The History of Thaberistan and Masenderan, by Sahireddin; and, lastly, The Counsels for Kings, by Jelali of Kain, are the principal.

He, who possesses the advantage of drawing from these oriental sources, which, for the most part, remain concealed from the western world, will be astonished at the richness of the treasures still to be brought to light. There lie open before him—the sovereignty of the great monarchies converging into one point; the power of single dynasties, shooting out into a thousand rays; the fabulous chronologies of the most ancient, and the exact annals of the most modern empires; the period of ignorance anterior to the prophet, and the days of knowledge that succeeded; the wonders of the Persians; the feats of the Arabs; the universally ravaging and desolating spirit of the Mongols; and the political wisdom of the Ottomans. Amidst such an abundance, the miner's strength appears too small, and his life too short, to enable him to avail himself of all: and moreover, the very excess of riches renders selection difficult. Which vein is he first to open, and from which mass is he first to extract the ore for the manufacture of historic art? Nowhere in the labyrinthine treasury of the east will he find a perfect work, but only rich materials for the construction of his edifice. His choice is determined by accident or predilection. What is new and important always finds a sale; and the market is never glutted with building materials, at a time when architecture flourishes.

An Arabian proverb says, "The building stone is not left lying in the road." If it be indifferent to the historical investigator, who is eager for knowledge, and to whom sources are accessible, with what and to what end he begins his labour, it is by no means so with the conscientious historian, who only works with pleasure where all known sources are at his command, and when accuracy may, for the future, spare him the charge of incompleteness. In this point of view, the serried ranks of oriental histories are thinned at once. Where, either in the west or the east, is the library, which contains the works so necessary to the complete treatment of the most important oriental epochs,—works which, as yet, are known only by their names, and not by their contents? Who, for example, could precisely and circumstantially describe the history of the Khalifat, the dominion of the families Ben Ommia and Abbas, and their capitals, so long as he had not read the History of Bagdad, by Ibn Khatib, and that of Damascus, by Ibn Assaker,—the former in sixty, the latter in eighty volumes? Who could write the History of Egypt, if he has not at hand, besides Macrisi, the numerous works which he consulted?

Still greater difficulties beset the writer of Persian history, whether it be of the fabulous times of mythology, or of the middle period, where the stream of the Persian monarchy, till then restrained in one bed, flows into the numerous branches of cotemporary dynasties; or of the most modern, where it has long been lost in the desert of wild anarchy. More than one generation must pass, ere the literary treasures of the east will be completed in the libraries of the west, either by the patronage of princes, or the industry of travellers; or become more accessible, by a more extended knowledge of languages, and by translations; and ere thus, the venerable witnesses of antiquity will be assembled, all of which it is the first duty of the historian carefully to examine. An exception to this want of accumulated authorities, which has hitherto been so sensibly felt in Europe, and which checks the writer of oriental history in the midst of his career, is exhibited by that of the Ottomans. Its original sources, the eldest of which scarcely boast an antiquity of five hundred years, might (although not without considerable expenditure both of money and trouble) even now, be all procured, and moreover, might be completed and corrected from the contemporary histories of the Byzantines and modern Europeans.

A history is, however, the work of years; and the severity of the task demands strength, prepared by previous exercise. In addition to the immense importance of the subject, we were induced to impose upon ourselves the present work in preference to others, by the consideration, that being in the possession of all the before-mentioned original authorities, touching the History of the Assassins (besides which none are known in the east), we might deem the examination of historical witnesses concerning this important epoch, almost as closed. Their depositions are certainly sparing and meagre; but the barrenness of the subject in splendid descriptions of battles, expeditions, commercial enterprise, and monuments, is compensated by the deeply engrossing interest of the history of governments and religions. The Assassins are but a branch of the Ismailites; and these latter, not the Arabs generally as descendants of Ishmael, the son of Hagar, but a sect existing in the bosom of Islamism, and so called from the Imam Ismail, the son of Jafer. In order, therefore, to understand their doctrinal system, and the origin of their power, it is necessary to treat, at some length, of Islamism itself, its founder, and its sects.

In the seventh century of the Christian era, when Nushirvan, the Just, adorned, with his princely virtues, the imperial throne of Persia, and the tyrant Phocas stained with his crimes that of Byzantium;—in the same year, in which Persia's host, for the first time, fled before the Arabian troops of the insurgent viceroy of Hira, and Abraha, the Christian king of Abyssinia, the Lord of the Elephants, who had hastened from Africa, in order to destroy the sacred house of the Kaaba, was driven back by that scourge of heaven, the small-pox, which commencing there, has since raged over the whole of the old continent—(birds of celestial vengeance, says the Koran, stoned his army with pebbles, that they fell); in this year, so important to Arabia, that from it began a new era—that of the year of the Elephants,—in the same night, when the foundations of the palace of Chosroes at Medain, which had baffled the attacks of time, or the builders of Bagdad, were overturned by an earthquake; when, by the operation of the same agent, lakes were dried up, and the sacred fire of Persia was extinguished by the ruins of its temple,—Mohammed first saw the light of the world, the third part of which was so soon to submit to his faith. His biography has been written in many volumes, by the historians of those nations who believe in him. From thence Maracci,[1] Gagnier,[2] and Sale,[3] have derived the accounts which they have given to Europe. The first is embued with the fanatical zeal of his church, the second is the most fundamental and complete, the third the most unprejudiced. Voltaire,[4] Gibbon,[5] and Müller,[6] have painted the legislator, conqueror and prophet; after them, it is difficult to add anything concerning him. Hence, in this case, we shall be brief, and shall only state what is necessary, and what has remained untouched by those three great historians, or that portion of his tenets which stands in the nearest connexion with those of the Ismailites, and by which, in the sequel, they were undermined.

Mohammed, the son of Abdallah, and grandson of Abdolmotaleb, was descended from a family of the highest rank among the Arabians, that of Koreish, in whose custody were the keys of the sacred house of the Kaaba. He felt himself called to lead back his countrymen, who were sunk in idolatry, to the knowledge of the only true God, and, as prophet and legislator, to complete the great work of purifying natural religion from the dross of superstition; a task which so many had previously, at different times, attempted. Arabia was divided among the religions of the Christians, the Jews, and the Sabæans. To combine these three into one, by the union of that which flowed from principles common to all, for the attainment of political liberty and greatness, was the aim of his life, which had been so long spent in meditation, and only late in years was roused to active exertion. From his infancy, his mother, Emina, who was a Jewess, and in early youth, during a journey in Syria, the Christian monk, Sergius, imbued him with the religious tenets of Moses and Jesus, and exhibited, in the full light of its infamy, the idolatrous worship of the Kaaba, where three hundred idols demanded the adoration of the people.

The Jews were expecting the Messiah as the Saviour of Israel, the Christians looked for the advent of the Paraclete, as their comforter and mediator, when, in his fortieth year (an age which, in the east, has always been considered as that of a prophet), Mohammed felt within him the voice of divine inspiration, enjoining him to read in the name of the Lord,[7] the commands of heaven, and by their promulgation, to prove himself to his people, the prophet and apostle of God. Nature had formed him a poet and an enthusiastic orator, by endowing him with an astounding power of language, a penetrating ardour of imagination, a dignity of demeanour, commanding the profoundest reverence, and a captivating suavity of manners. Valour, magnanimity, and eloquence, qualities prized by every nation, and by none more than the wild son of the desert, were the three great magnets which drew to him the hearts of his people, who had long been wont to do homage to the heroic and munificent, and more especially to the great poets, whose noble productions were hung in the Kaaba, written in golden letters, and as the immediate gifts of heaven, deemed worthy of divine adoration.

Of all Arabic poetry, the Koran is the master-piece; in it the lightning of sublimity gleams through the dreary obscurity of long prosy traditions and ordinances, and the energetic language rolls like the thunder of heaven, reverberating from rock to rock, in the echo of the rhyme; or pours on like the roaring of the wave, in the constant return of similar sounding words. It stands the glorious pyramid of Arabic poetry; no poet of this people, either before or since, has approached its excellence. Lebid, one of the seven great bards, whose works were called al-moallakat, the suspended, because they hung on the walls of the Kaaba for public admiration, tore his own down, as unworthy of the honour, the moment he had read the sublime exordium of the second sura of the Koran. Hassan, the satirist, who lampooned the prophet, on which verses of the Koran descended from heaven, was forced, at the conquest of Mecca, to confess the irresistible power of his word and his sword; and Kaab, the son of Soheir, paid him spontaneous homage, in a hymn of praise, for which the prophet gave him his mantle, which is still preserved among the precious articles of the Turkish treasury; and is annually, during the month Ramadan, worshipped and touched, in the most solemn manner, by the Sultan, accompanied by his court and the great officers of state. Mohammed's lofty destiny, in changing from poet to prophet, has induced many later Arabian poets and beaux esprits to attempt the like; the consequences of which have either been nugatory, or fraught with their own destruction. Moseleima, a cotemporary of Mohammed, and, like him, the poet of nature, nevertheless, soon became dangerous to him, as the unattainable divinity of the Koran had not yet received the sanction of ages. Ibn Mokaffaa, the elegant translator of the Fables of Bidpai, who shut himself up for whole weeks, to produce a single verse which might bear a comparison with the lofty passage of the Koran, on the deluge,—"Earth, swallow thy waters! Heaven, withhold thy cataracts!"—earned by his fruitless labours nothing but the reputation of a free-thinker; and Motenebbi, whose name signifies the "prophecying," gained, indeed, the glory of a great poet, but never that of a prophet. Thus, for twelve centuries, the Koran has maintained, undisturbed, the character of an inimitable and uncreated celestial Scripture, as the eternal Word of God.

The word of the prophet is the Soonna, that is, the collection of his orations and oral commands, which, no less than in the written Koran, by vivid fancy, energy of will, power of language, and knowledge of mankind, manifest the genius of the great poet and legislator. The former has never been estimated in the view we have just taken of it: the latter will be considered in the sequel.

The creed of Islam (*i. e.* the most implicit resignation to the will of God) is,—There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his prophet. His whole doctrine consists of only five articles of faith, and as many duties of external worship. The dogmas are—belief in God, his angels, his prophets, the day of judgment, and predestination. The religious rites are—ablution, prayer, fasting, alms, and the

pilgrimage to Mecca. Creed and worship formed a sort of Mosaic of portions of Christianity, Judaism, and Sabæanism: there are no miracles but those of the creation and of the word, that is, the verses of the Koran. Mohammed's journey to heaven, contained in it, is merely a vision in the style of Ezekiel, of whose throne bearers, the Alborak (the prophet's celestial steed with a human face) is in imitation. The doctrine of the last day, the judgment of the dead, the balance in which the souls are to be weighed, the bridge of trial, and the seven hells and eight paradises, are derived from Persian and Egyptian sources. The highest rewards of heaven are—pleasures of sensual enjoyment, shady lawns, with rills bubbling amidst flowers, gilded kiosks and vases, soft couches and rich goblets, silver fountains and handsome youths. Sparkling sherbet and generous wine from the springs, Kewsser and Selsebil, for the pious, who, during their lives, have abstained from intoxicating potations. Black-eyed damsels, ever young, for the righteous; and, in particular, for him who has earned the eternal palm of martyrdom in the holy war against the enemies of the faith. His is the everlasting reward, for "Paradise is beneath the shadow of the sword," which the faithful are to wield against the infidel, till he conforms to Islamism, or subjects himself to tribute. Even against intestine enemies of the faith, or of the realm, the execution of justice is lawful, and homicide is better than rebellion. The Koran contains much relating to the laws of marriage and inheritance, and the rights and duties of women, to whom Mohammed was the first to ensure a civil political existence, which before him they seem scarcely to have enjoyed among the Arabians. There is nothing concerning the succession to the administration of affairs, and with regard to claims to property in land and sovereignty, thus much only:—"The rule is of God, he giveth it to, and taketh it from whomsoever he will. The earth is God's, he devises it to whomsoever he will." By these general formulæ of the celestial decrees, a fair field was opened to despots and usurpers: Mohammed's idea was, that sovereignty was the right of the strongest, and he once expressly declared that Omar, who was distinguished by the great energy of his character, possessed the qualities of a prophet and khalif. Tradition has, however, handed down to us no similar expression in favour of the amiable Ali, his son-in-law. Moreover, it had not escaped him, that in the constant progress of history there is nothing immutable; that no human institution can be endued with perpetual duration, and that the spirit of one generation seldom survives that which succeeds it. It was in this sense that he said, prophetically,—"The khalifate will last only thirty years after my death."

It is probable, that had Mohammed destined the succession (or as the Arabs call it, the khalifate) to his nearest relations, he would have expressly named his son-in-law, Ali, as khalif. As, however, he enjoined nothing on this point during his life,—for some eulogiums passed on Ali, adduced by the latter's party, are vague and doubtful,—he seems to have committed the appointment of the most worthy to the selection of the Moslimin. The first whom they elected emir and imam, was the first convert to Islamism, Ebubekr Essidik (the True), and after his short reign, Omar Alfaruk (the Decisive), to whom they did homage with oath and striking of hands. Omar's severity, equally inflexible to himself and others, and the remarkable force of his character, first impressed on Islamism and the khalifat, the stamp of fanaticism and despotism, which was foreign to its first institution. The spirit of conquest, indeed, was already manifested by Mohammed's first enterprises against the Christians in Syria, against the Jews in Chaibar, and the idolators of Mecca. Ebubekr followed his footsteps with his victories in Yemen and Syria; but Omar first erected the triumphal arch of Islamism and the khalifate, by the capture of Damascus and Jerusalem, by the overthrow of the ancient Persian throne, and the sapping of that of Byzantium, from which he tore two of its strongest foundation-stones, Syria and Egypt. It was at this epoch, that the blind zeal of the khalif and his generals ruined the treasures of Greek and Persian wisdom, the accumulation of ages. It was then that the Alexandrian library fed the stoves of the baths, and the books of Medain swelled the flood of the Tigris.[8] Omar prohibited, under the severest penalties, the use of gold and silk; and the sea, as being the great medium of the intercourse of nations by commerce and exchange of ideas, he interdicted to the

Moslimin. Thus, by the vigour of his spiritual and temporal administration, did he hold his conquests, and preserve the doctrines of Islamism; zealously watching lest their integrity should be endangered by foreign influence, or the manners of the victors corrupted by the luxury of the vanquished. It was not unjustly that he dreaded the effect which the superiority in civilization and institutions of the Greeks and Persians, might exert on the Arabs: Mohammed, indeed, had already warned his story-loving people against the traditions and fabulous legends of the latter.

The reins of dominion, which Omar had held in so tight a grasp, escaped from the hands of his successor, Osman. He was the first khalif, who fell beneath the dagger of conspiracy and rebellion; and Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law, mounted the throne, which was stained with the blood of his predecessor, and which soon after was dyed with his own. Many refused to acknowledge or swear fealty to him, as Prince of the Faithful; they were called Motasali, that is, the *Separatists*,[9] and formed one of the first and largest sects of Islamism: at their head was Moawia, of the family of Ommia, whose father, Ebusofian, had been one of the most powerful opponents of the prophet. He suspended the blood-stained clothes of Osman on the pulpit of the great mosque of Damascus, to inflame Syria with vengeance against Ali. But the ambition of Moawia was less effectual in securing his destruction than the hatred of Aishe, which even during the life-time of Mohammed, and Ebubekr, her father, she had vowed against him. When in the sixth year of the hegira, during the prophet's expedition against the tribe of Mostalak, Aishe the Chaste, having wandered from the line of march with Sofwan, the son of Moattal, had given rise to certain calumnies: Ali was one of the many, who, by their doubts and conjectures, rendered the title of Chaste so problematical, that it was necessary to have a Sura descend from heaven, to hush report, and rescue the honour of Aishe and the prophet. Henceforward, by the authority of the sacred scripture of Islamism, she passed for a model of immaculate purity. Eighty calumniators fell immediately beneath the sword of justice; but Ali was destined, at a later period, to atone for his incautious scepticism, with his throne and his life. Aishe led her two generals, Talha and Sobeir, against him, and by her presence, inflamed them to the combat in which they perished. A part of his troops refused to fight, and declared aloud for the opponents. They were afterwards called Khavaredj (the Deserters), and afterwards formed a powerful sect, equally hostile with the Motasali, to the interests of the family of the prophet; but professing many tenets, differing again from theirs. At the second battle of Saffain, Moawia caused the Koran to be carried on the points of lances in the van of his army.[10] After the action near Nèheran, Ali's compulsory abdication took place at Dowmetol-Jendel, which was shortly after succeeded by his assassination. Thus the khalifat, contrary to the order of hereditary succession, came, by means of murder and rebellion, into the family of Ommia, thirty years after Mohammed had prescribed that space of time as the period of its duration.

Of all the passions which have ever called into action the tongue, the pen, or the sword, which have overturned the throne, and shaken the altar to its base, ambition is the first and mightiest. It uses crime as a means, virtue as a mask. It respects nothing sacred, and yet it has recourse to that which is most beloved, because the most secure, that of all held most sacred by man,—religion. Hence the history of religion is never more tempestuous and sanguinary than when the tiara, united to the diadem, imparts and receives an increased power. The union of the supreme temporal and spiritual rule, which the steady policy of the popes, never to be diverted from its object, has for centuries in vain sought to achieve, is a fundamental maxim of Islamism. The khalif, or successor of the prophet, was not only Emir al Mominin, Commander of the True Believers, but also Imam al Moslimin, Chief of the Devout; supreme lord and pontiff, not merely invested with the standard and the sword, but also the prophet's staff and mantle. The Moslim world could yield obedience to but one lawful khalif, as Christendom to but one pope. But as three popes have often pretended to the triple crown, so have three khalifs laid claim to the supreme rule of three portions of the earth. After the family of Ommia had lost the throne

of Damascus, it still maintained the khalifat in Spain, as did the family of Abbas, on the banks of the Tigris, and that of Fatima, on those of the Nile. As formerly, the Ommiades, the Abbasides, and the Fatimites reigned contemporaneously at Granada, Bagdad, and Cairo; so, at the present day, the sovereigns of the families of Katschar and Osman possess the dignity of khalif at Teheran and Constantinople; the latter with the most justice, since, after the conquest of Egypt by Selim the First, the insignia, which were preserved at Cairo, the banner, the sword, and the mantle of the prophet, together with the two holy cities, Mecca, his birth-place, and Medina, his burial-place, augmented their treasury and their dominions. They designate themselves guardians and servants of the two holy cities, Padishah and Shah (*i. e.* emperor and king); Sultan Alberrein and Khakan Albahrein, rulers and lords of two parts of the globe and two seas. They might, with great justice, entitle themselves sovereigns of three holy cities, rulers of three portions of the globe, and lords of three seas; because Jerusalem, as well as Mecca and Medina, is in their possession; because their dominion extends into Europe, Asia and Africa; and because the Red, as well as the Black and the White Seas, lie within the compass of their sway.

Having bestowed this rapid glance on the modern dominions of the Moslimin, which the illustration of the subject justified, we shall now revert our attention to its primitive condition. The first and greatest schisms in Islamism proceeded from the contest for temporal rule, and the faith shared the dismemberment of the empire. We have already remarked the existence of the two great political and religious factions, the Motasali and Khavaredj, the apostates and the deserters, many of whose tenets differed materially from those inculcated by the ruling doctrine; but particularly that opinion which they maintained with arms, in respect to the right to the dignity of khalif and imam. This is the origin of most of the sects of Islamism, and is the fertile root from which has grown the many-branched stem of heresy.

No less than seventy-two sects are counted, according to a tradition of Mohammed, who is said to have foretold that his people would divide into seventy-three branches, of which one only is the true one, all the rest being erroneous. A very instructive sub-division and enumeration of them is found in Sheheristani and also Macrisi, to which Silvestre de Sacy first directed public attention, in a treatise read by him to the Institute of France. We shall be satisfied with considering merely the two stems into which the tree of Islamism, as soon as it rose above the ground, bifurcated, and which even now, after the growth of twelve hundred years, still remain the two principal limbs which have given birth to the confused sectarian ramifications. These two divisions are the doctrines of the Soonnites and the Shiites, which, though otherwise multifarious, differ from each other principally in this,—that the former recognise, as legitimate, the succession of the four first khalifs, the latter only acknowledge the rights of Ali and his descendants. The Soonnite is shocked by the murder of Osman, and the Shiite is revolted by the slaughter of Ali and his sons. What the one execrates, the other defends; and what the latter receives, the former rejects. This exactly diametrical opposition of most of their dogmas became only the more decisive by the lapse of time, and the separation of political interests of the nations which subscribe to them. Most of the wars between the Turks and Persians, the former Soonnites, and the latter Shiites, have always been as much religious as inter-national wars: and the efforts, so often repeated, and last essayed by Shah Nadir, of bringing about a coalition of the two parties, remained as fruitless as the endeavours, century after century, to unite the Western and Eastern Christian churches, with whose schism that of the Soonnites and the Shiites may not inaptly be compared.

The Soonnites, whose doctrine is considered among us the orthodox one,—all the delineations of the Islamitic system, hitherto published in Europe, having been derived from Soonnitic authorities,—are again divided into four classes; these differ from each other in some non-essential points of ritual

ceremony: as, for example, the ritual of the Roman Catholic church, and the no less canonical ones of the united Greek, Armenian, and Syrian churches. In essential dogmas, however, they agree. These four thoroughly orthodox sects of the Soonnites, are named after the four great imams, Malek, Shaffi, Hanbali, and Abu Hanife, who, like fathers of the church, stand at their head. Their doctrine and that of the latter, in particular, which is acknowledged as the predominant one in the Ottoman empire, are sufficiently known by the admirable exposition of them by Mouradya d'Ohsson. We are less acquainted with the sects of the Shiites, who are divided into several, as for example, the Anti-Catholics into Protestant, Reformed, Anabaptists, Quakers, &c. The four principal are the Kaissaniye, Seidiye, Ghullat, and Imamie. We shall here give some particular account of these from Ibn Khaledun and Lary, both by reason of the novelty of subject, and the relation it bears to the present history. The chief ground of their difference consists in the proofs on which they rest the pretensions of Ali, and the order of succession in which the imamat, or right to the supreme pontificate of Islamism in his family, has been inherited by his descendants.

I.—The Kaissaniye, so named after one of Ali's freedmen, maintain that the succession did not pass, as most of the other Shiites believe, to his sons, Hassan and Hossein, but to their brother, Mohammed-Ben-Hanife. They are divided into several branches, two of which it is proper to mention: 1st. The Wakifye (*i. e.* the standing), according to whom the Imamat has remained in the person of Mohammed, and has never been transferred; he never having died, but being said to have appeared since on earth, under other names. Of this opinion were the two Arabian poets, Kossir and Seid Homairi. 2ndly. The Hashemiye, according to whom the imamat descended from Mohammed-Ben-Hanife to his son, Abu Hashem, who bequeathed it to Mohammed of the family of Abbas, who left it to his son, Ibrahim, who was succeeded by his brother, Abdallah Seffah, the founder of the dynasty. The object of the Hashemiye was evidently to strengthen the claims of the Abbasides to the throne of the khalifat, to which one of the principal doctors and preachers of this sect, Abomoslem, essentially contributed.

II.—The second[11] principal sect of the Shiites, the Seidiye, affirm that the imamat descended from Ali to Hassan, and Hossein; from the latter, to his son, Ali Seinolabidin; and from this last to his son, Seid: whereas most of the other Shiites consider, after Seinolabidin, his son, Mohammed Bakir, Seid's brother, as the legitimate imam. Besides this order of succession, the Seidiye differ from the Imamie in two essential points:—1st. In recognizing him only as the true imam, who possesses—in addition to piety—liberality, bravery, knowledge, and other princely virtues; while the Imamie are satisfied with the mere practice of religious duties, as prayers, fastings, and almsgiving. 2nd. In acknowledging, as legitimate, according to an expression of Seid, the khalifate of Ebubekr, Omar and Osman, who are rejected by the other Shiites as illegitimate, and execrated by the Imamie. This exception has obtained the Seidiye the by-name Rewafis (*i. e.* Dissenters). The Seidiye are again divided into different branches, according as they make the imamat descend from Seid to one or the other. They have given origin to many competitors for the throne, both in the east and in the west. Such was Edris, the son of Edris Mohammed's brother.[12] It was to this last, usually known by the name Nefs-sekiye (*i. e.* the pure soul), that Seid's son, Yahya, who was hanged in Khorassan, is said to have ceded his pretensions to the imamat, of which the before-named Edris availed himself to found the dynasty of the Edrissides, in his newly-built city of Fez. According to others, Mohammed, the son of Abdallah, also called the pure soul, and Mehdi, surrendered the imamat to his brother Ibrahim; and this latter to his nearest relation, Issa. These three, who raised their claims to the khalifat during the reign of Manssur, expiated them in imprisonment or with death. By their removal, the family of Abbas was established on the throne, till, at a later period, it was assailed by a descendant of Issa, with the aid of the Africans from Zanguebar (Sinji), who at that period overran Asia. In Dilem, also, a certain Nassir Atrush invited the people to recognise the claims to the khalifat of Hassan Ben Ali, a son of Omar, brother of Seinolabidin, uncle of

Seid; and hence arose the power of Hassan in Taberistan. Thus the Seidiye promulgated their doctrine respecting the succession of the imamat, both in Africa and Asia, at the expense of the existing khalifat of the Abbassides.[13]

III.—The Ghullat, the Exaggerating. This title, which is common to several sects, indicates the exaggeration and extravagance of their doctrines, which far exceed the bounds of reason, and in which traces of the metaphysics of the Gnostics and of Indian mysticism cannot be overlooked They recognise but one imam, as the Jews admit but one Messiah; and attribute to Ali divine qualities, as the Christians do to Jesus. Some distinguish in him two natures,—the human and the divine: others acknowledge only the latter. Others are of opinion that the imams alone are gifted with metempsychosis; so that the same perfect nature of Ali has descended, and will to the end of the world descend, to his successors in the imamat in their respective turns. According to others, this series was interrupted by Mohammed Bakir, the son of Seinolabidin, and brother of Seid; who is believed by some to be still alive, wandering on earth, although concealed, like Khiser, the guardian of the spring of life. Others again affirm, that this is true only of Ali, who sits immortally enthroned in clouds, from whence his voice is heard in the thunder, and the brandished scourge of his wrath is viewed in the lightning's flash.

These sects of the Ghullat are held to be damnable heretics, not merely by the Soonnites, but also by the rest of the Shiites, as the Arians and Nestorians were so estimated, not by the Roman catholics only, but also by the Byzantine Jacobites. They received the general name of Mulhad, or "impious." The basis of their doctrine lies in their extravagant homage and *de facto* deification of the first imams; who, however, far from admitting it, condemned its supporters. Ali himself doomed some to the flames; Mohammed-Ben-Hanife rejected with horror the faith of Muchtar, who ascribed god-like properties to him;—and the Imam Jafer excommunicated all who hazarded the same tenet concerning himself. This, however, did not prevent its gaining both teachers and disciples.

It is not difficult to perceive its tendency, nor how convenient an instrument of sedition and usurpation it must have been found in the hands of skilful impostors or political competitors for the throne. It was easy to turn, in the name of one invisible and perfect imam, the obedience of the people from the visible and imperfect prince, or by the ascription to an ambitious usurper of the transmigration of the souls, and the perfections of preceding imams, to achieve his investment with the sovereignty.

IV.—The Ghullat, however, notwithstanding the extravagance of their doctrines of deification and metempsychosis, were, on the whole, far from being so dangerous to the throne as the Imamie; who, indeed, adopted from them the idea of a vanished imam, but who otherwise maintained a continued series of revealed imams prior to him, but posteriorly a natural descent of concealed ones. While some closed the series of the revealed with the twelfth, and others with the seventh, none expected, from his reigning successors, the most requisite princely qualities as the Seidiye did, but merely devotion and innocence. By means of this doctrine, wily and courageous intriguers were enabled to keep their weak princes in leading strings, and by their skilful manœuvres to delude the people, to serve their own ends.

The Imamie are divided into two classes—the Esnaashrie, or the *twelvers*, so named because they make the series of revealed imams end with Mohammed-Ben-Hassan-Askeri, who was the twelfth. Of him, they believe that he disappeared in a grotto near Hella, and that he remains there invisible, to re-appear at the end of the world, under the name of Mohdi, *the leader*. The second class is the Sebiin, the *seveners*, who only reckon seven imams, in the following order: 1st. Ali; 2nd. Hassan; 3rd. Hossein; 4th. Ali Seinolabidin (*i. e.* ornament of the devout); 5th. Mohammed Bakir (*i. e.* the dealer in

secrets); 6th. Jafer Sadik (*i. e.* the just); and, 7th. His son, Ismail. The latter, who died before his father, is deemed by them the last imam, and from him they are called Ismailites, as the twelvers were named Imamites. The discrepancy between them commences at the seventh imam; as the Imamites (the twelvers) deduce the imamat from Mussa Kassim, the son of Jafer and brother of Ismail, in the following order: 7th. Mussa Kassim; 8th. Ali Risa; 9th. Mohammed Taki; 10th. Hadi; 11th. Hassan; 12th. Askeri, and his son, Mohammed Mehdi. The claims of these imams to the khalifat were so powerful and well recognised, under the first Abbassides, that Maimun publicly named Ali Risa, the eighth of them, as his successor, to the great dissatisfaction of the whole family of Abbas; who would certainly have endeavoured to prevent the execution of this law of inheritance, had not the death of Ali proceeded that of Maimun.

In maintaining their sovereignty, the *Seveners* or Ismailites, were more fortunate than the other sect. Their power first originated with the dynasty of the Fatimites, on the coast and in the interior of Africa, at Mahadia, and Cairo; and, one hundred and fifty years afterwards, in Asia, by the dominion of the Assassins, in the mountainous parts of Irak, and the coasts of Syria. By the oriental historians, the African Ismailites are termed the western, the Asiatic the eastern Ismailites.

Ere we commence our proposed subject, the history of the latter, it is of primary importance to say a few words, in circumstantial detail of the former, as being their original stock. Their founder was Obeidollah, who came forward as the son of Mohammed Habib, the son of Jafer Mossadik, the son of Mohammed, the son of Ismail, as, in fact, the fourth in descent from the seventh imam. Ismail, in the opinion of the Ismailites, was the last of the revealed imams; and his son, grandson, and great-grandson, Mohammed, Jafer Mossadik, and Mohammed Habib were concealed imams (Mectum) till Obeidollah, as the first again revealed, asserted the rights of the family of Ismail to the khalifat. These rights, however, were long and violently contested by the Abbassides, whose interest it was to annihilate together, both the genuineness of their rivals' genealogy, and the validity of their pretensions. During the reign of the Khalif Kadirbillah,[14] a secret assemblage of doctors of the laws was held, in which the most celebrated among them, Abuhamid Isfraini, Imam Kuduri, Sheikh Samir, Abjurdi, and others, declared the genuineness of the Fatimites' genealogy, and their claims to the throne, to be false and void. How well founded, if not this decision, at least the fear of the Abbassides was, appeared fifty years afterwards, when the Emir Arslan Bessassiri, a general in the service of the Dilemite Prince Behaeddewlet, originally a Mameluke of the Fatimites at Cairo, transferred, for a whole year, to Bagdad, the two royal prerogatives of Islamism,—the coining of money and the public prayer, from the name of the Bagdad khalif Kaim-Biemrillah, to that of the Egyptian sovereign Mostanssur.[15]

This rivalry, and the necessity of self-defence, caused the doubts which the Abbassides had cast on the descent of Obeidollah, the first of the Fatimites, to fall into considerable suspicion; and they are considered unfounded by great Arabian historians, such as Macrisi and Ibn Khaledun, as being the effusion of a factious policy. The great jurist Kadi Ebubekr Bakilani is of the opposite opinion, which is supported, as we shall presently see, not only by this sheik's authority, but also by other cogent arguments derived from the esoteric doctrines of the Ismailites. In order to understand these, on which also those of the Assassins are founded, it is necessary to take a still wider view of the sects and parties into which Islamism was divided.

Religious fanaticism is continually accused by history as the fomenter of those sanguinary wars which have desolated kingdoms, and convulsed states; nevertheless, religion has scarcely ever been the end, but merely the instrument, of ambitious policy and untameable lust of power. Usurpers and conquerors

perverted the beneficent spirit of the founders of religion, to their own pernicious ends. Religious systems have never operated so destructively on dynasties and governments, as in those cases where the insufficient separation of the spiritual from the temporal authorities has given the freest play to the alternation of hierarchy and tyranny. The nearer the altar is to the throne, the greater is the temptation to step from the former to the latter, and bind the diadem round the mitre; the closer the connexion of the political and ecclesiastical interests, the more numerous and prolific are the germs of tedious civil and religious wars.

The histories of the ancient Persians and Romans, of the Egyptians and Greeks, possess almost an immunity, because religion, being merely considered as popular worship, could neither weaken nor support pretensions to the supreme authority. Christianity never deluged kingdoms with blood, until it was made use of by ambitious popes and princes, contrary to the original spirit of its institution; as, under Gregory the Seventh and his successors, the crosier overpowered the sceptre; or when, to use the words of Gibbon,[16] "rebellion, as it happened in the time of Luther, was occasioned by the abuse of those benevolent principles of Christianity which inculcate the natural freedom of mankind." Entirely different was the case with Islamism, which, as we have seen, being founded as much on the sword as the koran, united in the person of the imam and khalif, both the dignity of pontiff and that of sovereign. Hence its history presents more numerous and more murderous wars than that of any other religion; hence, in almost all the sects, the chief ground of the schism is the contested succession to the throne; and hence, there is scarcely one of any importance which has not, at some period, proved dangerous to the reigning family as a political faction in the state.

There was none which did not strive to become, in the strictest sense, predominant, and to seat the princes of their faith on the throne of Islam. Their missionaries (Dai) claimed not only the faith, but also the obedience of the people, and were at once apostles and pretenders. All the heresies, which we have hitherto mentioned, were, in spirit, essentially usurping sects. Islamism, however, bore in its bosom others still more prejudicial to its existence; sects, which trampling under foot all the maxims of faith and morality, and preaching the overthrow of thrones and altars, bore as their cognizance, equality and liberty. We have still to give some details concerning these latter; to which, in order to distinguish them from the former, to whom they are entirely opposed, we shall give the name of revolutionary.

The Persian empire, the most ancient and likewise the best regulated monarchy of the east, was the first to experience, and had, for the longest period endured, all the horrors of despotism and anarchy arising from unbounded power and resisting liberty. As long as the faith of Zoroaster preserved its primeval purity, and the sacred fire still burned in the temples, religion could neither afford a shield nor a mask to rebellion; but when, under the Sassanides, the edifice of the ancient system was shaken by new opinions and reforms, the temple and the palace began alike to totter. Innovators and heretics sprung up, and sedition undermined, at the same moment, both the altar and the throne.

The sects of Magianism are very little known to us; hence, the erroneousness of the prevailing opinions concerning the religion of the Persians. Dualism, or Manicheism, has often been cited as the original doctrine of Zoroaster. It has been attempted to combine into one system, opinions in vogue at very different epochs; hence, the vague and contradictory accounts not only of the Greeks, but even of Anquetil, and Kleuker, since the discovery of some books of the Zend; to which Herder was the first to direct our attention. His conjectures confirm what Macrisi, probably taking Sheheristani as his guide, has said respecting the sects of the Magians. He enumerates several; and 1st. The Keyumerssie, followers of the ancient doctrine according to Keyumers, called the first man or king; 2nd. The

Servaniye, who consider Servan (*i. e.* eternity) as the matrix and sole origin of all things; 3rd. The Zerdushtiye, or disciples of Zerdusht or Zoroaster, the reformer of the ancient doctrine of Hom; 4th. Sfeneviye the Dualists, properly so called; 5th. The Maneviye or Manicheans; 6th. The Farkuniye, a species of Gnostics who admit two principles, the father and the son, whose discord was mediated by a third celestial power; 7th. The Masdekiye, the adherents of Masdek, who declared war against all religion and morality, and preached universal liberty and equality, the indifference of human actions, and community of goods and women. As he gave free rein to all the passions, he gained all their slaves; not merely the poor and needy,—that numerous class, having nothing to lose and all to win,—but also those who, on the contrary had all to lose and nothing to win, the grandees, and King Kobad himself, the father of Nushirvan. This latter expiated the weakness of his concession by the loss of his throne, and an incarceration, from which he was released only by the wisdom and virtue of his vizier, Bisiirjimihr. His son Nushirvan, however, purified the faith, and exterminated this scandalous brood with fire and sword, without being able, as appears from later incidents, entirely to annihilate them.[17] For, in the first century of Islamism, the same spirit showed itself in the liberal doctrines of several heads of sects; till at last, in the hands of Babek and Karmath, it raised itself over heaps of carcases and ruins, the terror of the kingdom, and the abhorrence of mankind.

The Persians, says Macrisi, have ever considered themselves the freest and most cultivated of nations, and others as mere ignorant slaves. After the destruction of their empire by the Arabians, they looked down upon their victors with contempt and hatred; and sought the ruin of Islamism, not only by open war, but also by secret doctrines and pernicious dissensions, which, breaking forth in rebellion, must have shaken the kingdom to its base. As these opinions bore the stamp of irreligion and libertinism, those who maintained them were called Sindik[18] (libertines), a word corrupted from Zend, the living word of Zerdusht. Their first appearance in Islamism was in the commencement of the khalifat of the family of Abbas, of whom, the first khalifs in vain endeavoured to eradicate them with the sword. The eastern provinces of the ancient Persian empire, whither the remaining adherents of the ancient dynasty and form of worship had taken refuge, and whither Ismalism had, as yet, scarcely penetrated, were the fertile sources of these heresies so fatal to the imamat and khalifat. Thus, in the reign of the Khalif Manssur,[19] the Rawendi, who maintained the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, revolted; and twenty years afterwards,[20] under the command of Abdol Kahir, the Mohammer (*i. e.* the red, or the ass-like), so called, either because they wore red clothes, or because they were called the true believers asses (the arabic root Hamara meaning, both, he has been red and he has been an ass); and in the same year, in Transoxana, the Sefidjamegan or white-dressed, founded by Hakem Ben Hashem, called Mokannaa the concealed, from wearing a golden mask; or Sasendeimah (*i. e.* the moonshine-maker), because he, at night, produced a miraculous illumination from a well at Nakhsheb, which caused the place to appear to be lighted by the moon. By this juggling he wished to attest his divine mission, as by a miracle; as Mani had proved the celestial origin of his, by the divinity of art, namely, with a book adorned with splendid paintings (Ertengi Mani). Mokannaa taught that God had assumed the human form since he had commanded the angels to adore the first man; and that, since that period, the divine nature had passed from prophet to prophet, to Abu Moslem, who had founded the glory of the Abbasides, and descended lastly to himself. He was a disciple of Abu Moslem, who was acknowledged also by the Rawendi as their head, and who seems to have been the first to introduce the doctrine of transmigration into Islamism.

Mokannaa added to the metempsychosis (Tenasukh), the incarnation of the human and divine nature, a dogma originating in India, and afterwards adopted, as we have seen above, by the Ghullat as one of their principal tenets.[21]

In the reign of Maimun, the seventh Abbasside khalif, when translations, and the invitation to Bagdad of the literati of Greece and Persia, had caused the seeds of science, already planted, to bloom in full luxuriance,—the spirit of the Arabian, which was now imbued with the systems of Grecian philosophy, Persian theology, and Indian mysticism, shook off, more and more, the narrow trammels of Islamism. The appellation of Mulhad (atheist), and Sindik (libertine), became constantly more and more common with their cause, and the wisest and best informed of the khalif's court, were thus stigmatized. In the first year of the third century of the Hegira, arose a revolutionary sectarian, who, like Masdek, two centuries and a half before, in Persia, preached the indifference of actions and community of goods, and menaced the throne of the khalif with ruin, as his prototype had that of Chosru. Babek, surnamed Khurremi, either, according to Lari, from the town Khurrem, his birth-place, or, according to others, from the gay licentiousness of his doctrines (Khurrem, in Persian, signifying gay), for a space of twenty years, filled the whole circuit of the khalif's dominions with carnage and ruins, until at length, in the reign of Motassem, he was overthrown, taken prisoner, and put to death in the khalif's presence.[22] Babek, before he delivered his captives to the axe, caused their wives and daughters to be violated before their eyes; and it is said, that, in his turn, he received the same treatment from the commandant of the castle in which he was imprisoned. When his hands and feet were struck off, by order of the khalif, he laughed, and smilingly sealed with his blood the criminal gaiety of his tenets. The number of those who fell by the sword in twenty years, is estimated by historians to amount to a million. Nud, one of his ten executioners, boasted that he alone had butchered twenty thousand men,—so terrible and sanguinary was the contest between the assertors of liberty and equality, and the defenders of the khalif's throne and the pulpit of Islamism.[23]

At this tempestuous and blood-stained epoch, there lived at Ahwas, in the southern part of Persia, Abdallah, the son of Maimun-Kaddah, a son of Daissan, the Dualist. By his father and grandfather, who had introduced Dualism, from the system of the Magi into that of Islamism, he was educated in the principles of the ancient empire and faith of the Persians; and stimulated to deeds, by which, if he could not accomplish their re-establishment, he might at least achieve the overthrow of those of the Arabians.

Profoundly versed in all the sciences, and taught by the study of history and the dire experience of his own day, Abdallah, the son of Maimun, had sufficient opportunity to perceive the risk of declaring open war against the established religion and reigning dynasty, so long as the conscience of the people, and the military power, stood at their command. He determined, therefore, by a deeply laid plan, to undermine in secret, that which he dared not attack openly. His system was to be enveloped in a veil of mystery, nor was it to appear in the face of day, until it had succeeded in placing the sovereignty in the hands of its partisans. It is always extremely dangerous to endeavour, at once, to eradicate from the minds of men the deeply imprinted reverence which they feel for the throne and altars of their fathers. Men can only by degrees emancipate themselves from their prejudices; many but imperfectly, and it is but few who can throw them off entirely. As, however, it was Abdallah's design to annihilate not merely the prejudices of positive religion and authority, but to aim at the very foundation of all, he resolved to promulgate his doctrines gradually, and divided them into seven degrees, after the fashion of the Pythagorean and Indian philosophers. The last degree inculcated the vanity of all religion,—the indifference of actions, which, according to him, are neither visited with recompense or chastisement, either now or hereafter. This alone is the path of truth and right, all the rest imposture and error. He appointed emissaries, whom he despatched to enlist disciples, and to initiate them, according to their capacity for libertinism and turbulence, in some or all of the degrees. The pretensions of the descendants of Mohammed, the son of Ismail, served him as a political mask; these his missionaries asserted as partisans, while they were secretly but the apostles of crime and impiety. Under these two

relations, they and their followers were sometimes called Ismailites, and sometimes Ibahie, “ *indifferent.*” Abdallah proceeded from Ahwas to Basra, and thence to Syria, where he settled at Salemiye: from this place his son, Ahmed, and Ahmed’s sons, Abulabbas and Mohammed Sholalaa, and his envoys (Dai), at once emissaries and missionaries, spread forth his doctrines. The most celebrated of the latter was Hossein of Ahwas, who, in the country of Kufa, initiated, amongst others, Ahmed, the son of Eshaas (called Karmath), in the mysteries of revolt and infidelity, of which he soon gave an earnest to the world, in torrents of blood and the smoking ruins of cities.[24]

He called himself Karmath, from the broken Arabic letters of this name, and became the leader of the Karmathites, who, issuing from Lahssa and Bakhrein, like the Wahabees, nine hundred years afterwards, menaced Islamism with destruction. His doctrine, in addition to the circumstance of its forbidding nothing, and declaring every thing allowable and indifferent, meriting neither reward nor punishment, undermined more particularly the basis of Mohammedanism, by declaring that all its commands were allegorical, and merely a disguise of political precepts and maxims. Moreover, all was to be referred to the blameless and irreproachable Imam Maassum, as the model of a prince, whom, although he had occupied no existing throne, they pretended to seek, and declared war against bad and good princes, without distinction, in order that, under the pretext of contending for a better, they might be able to unravel at once the thickly interwoven web of religion and government. The injunction of prayer meant nothing but obedience to the Imam Maassum; alms, the tithes to be given to him; fasting, the preservation of the polititl secret regarding the imam of the family of Ismail.

Every thing depended on the interpretation (Terwil), without which, the whole word of the Koran (Tensil) had neither meaning nor value. Religion did not consist in external observances (Sahir), but in the internal feeling (Bathin). According to the variations of this doctrine, which, in many points, touches those mentioned above, their assertors received various names in the different provinces of the khalifat. In Taberistan, they were called Seveners, from the seven degrees of the secret doctrines of Abdallah, the son of Maimun Kadah; in Khorassan, Mohammere (*i. e.* the Red), and in Syria, Mobeiyese, the White, from their dress; in Transoxana, Rawendi and Borkai (*i. e.* the Veiled), because Mokannaa covered his face with a golden mask; at Ispahan, Batheni (*i. e.* the Esoterics), and also Mutewilin (*i. e.* the interpreting Allegorists); at Kufa, Karmathi, or Mobareki; at Lahssa and Bahrein, Jenabi; in Western Africa, Saidi, from Karmath, Mobarek, Jenabi, and Said, four of their chiefs. They named themselves in general Ismaili, from deducing them pretensions to the khalifat from Ismail, the son of Jafer Sadik. From their opponents, they all received in common the well merited appellations of Mulhad (*i. e.* Atheists), or Sindik (libertines[25]).

The Karmathites differed from the doctrine of Abdallah, the son of Maimun, in hoisting the standard of revolt, instead of, according to the secret system, waiting their time tranquilly, till the throne should be occupied by one of their number, and openly taking the field against the existing power of the khalifat. The contest was sanguinary, like that of Babek twenty years before; but more tedious and dangerous both to the altar and the throne. Even Khalif Motadhadbillah, who strengthened, with the iron remedy of the sword, those nerves of the khalifat, so deplorably enfeebled since his sixth ancestor, Motewekul, and received in history the name of the second founder of the Abbassides, Seffahssanni, the second blood-spiller,—Abbas being the first,—was unable, with all his energy, to extirpate this pernicious brood. The astrologers, philosophers, soothsayers, and story-tellers, had entirely lost all the credit which they once possessed at court, in the reigns of Harun and Maimun:[26] these, however, being without weapons, or leaders, were in nowise dangerous; while commanders of military genius and

courage, such as Abusaid, Jenabi, and Abutaher, guided the mailed arm of the Karmathites against the head and heart of Islamism. Under the conduct of the latter, the Karmathites took the holy city of Mecca, as the Wahabees have done in our own days,[27]—so little novelty do such doctrines and deeds possess in the history of Mohammedanism. Thirty thousand Moslimin fell in defence of the sanctity of the Kaaba against its impious assailants, who set fire to the temple, and carried away to Hadjar even the black stone said to have fallen from heaven in the time of Abraham. This stone was an aërolite, and for that reason, like many others, an object of popular veneration. It was restored, after a lapse of twenty-two years, when the Emir of Irak redeemed it at the price of fifty thousand ducats. The adoration of the Kaaba, which was founded on this stone, was not to have the gates of hell prevail against it. For a whole century, the pernicious doctrines of Karmath raged with fire and sword in the very bosom of Islamism, until the wide spread conflagration was extinguished in blood.

The fate of the Karmathites, like that of the followers of Babek, was a bloody lesson to those initiated into the secret doctrines of Abdallah, the son of Maimun-Kaddah, not to propagate them otherwise than covertly until they should be masters of the throne itself. At length, one of their most zealous and active partisans, the Dai Abdollah, a pretended descendant of Mohammed, the son of Ismail, succeeded in escaping from the dungeons of Sejelmessa, in which he had been confined by order of the Khalif Motadhad, and seated himself on the throne in Africa, under the name of Obeidollah Mehdi.[28] This adventurer was the founder of the dynasty of the Egyptian khalifs, who tracing their descent to Ismail, son of Jafer Sadik, and from him to Fatima, the prophet's daughter, are known by the name of the Fatimites, or eastern Ismailites. Thus the name, which hitherto had designated a sect, was applied to a race. Ismailitism, which governed as a ready tool the founder of the dynasty it had placed on the throne, was, in Africa, in every sense, the predominant doctrine; and the khalif throne of Mahadia, the first residence of these princes, soon threatened that of Bagdad. It was from that ancient metropolis of the khalifat that proceeded the allegations against the purity of Obeidollah's extraction. According to them, he was anything but a descendant of Mohammed, the son of Ismail; but was the half-brother, by a Jewess, of Hossein and Abushelalaa, the two sons of Ahmed, the son of Abdollah, the son of Maimun-Kaddah. His name was affirmed to be originally Said, but that after he had been set at liberty by Abdollah, it was changed to Obeidollah; and in fact, if it is considered that the doctrine of Abdollah, the son of Maimun, so utterly subversive of that of Islamism, became, on the establishment of the Fatimite sovereignty, the prevalent one in the court and the government, and that it was first publicly taught at Mahadia, and, after the conquest of Egypt under the fourth khalif of this dynasty, at Cairo; that its chief, under the title of Daial-doat, supreme missionary of the crown, was, as Kadhiol Kodhat, or supreme judge, invested with one of the first dignities of the empire, both offices being frequently united in the same person; the supposition that the chiefs of this sect, to whom nothing was sacred and all was permitted, had placed one of their own number on the throne, acquires very great probability, notwithstanding the assertions of Macrisi and Ibn Khaledun to the contrary. The accounts which the former of these two great historians has preserved, concerning the promulgation of this doctrine, and the degrees of initiation, which were now increased from seven to nine, form a very precious and the most ancient document on the history of the secret societies of the east, in whose steps those of the west afterwards trod. Their immediate connexion with the doctrine of the eastern Ismailites, or Assassins, renders it necessary to give a brief outline of it here.

Immediately after the establishment of the monarchy of the Fatimites,[29] history mentions similar assemblages, which were convened twice a week, every Monday and Wednesday, by the Daial-doat, and were frequented in crowds both by men and women, who had separate seats. These assemblages were named Mejalisol-hikmet, or Societies of Wisdom. The candidates for initiation were dressed in white; the chief went on those two days to the khalif, and read something to him, if possible, but in

every case received his signature on the cover of his manuscript. After the lecture, the pupils kissed his hands, and touched the signature of the khalif reverently with their foreheads. In the reign of the sixth Fatimite khalif, Hakem Biemvillah, (the most stupid tyrant of which the history of Islamism makes mention, who desired to receive divine honours, and what is still more absurd, is to this day worshipped by the Druses as an incarnate god), these societies, the house in which their meetings were held, and the institutions for the maintenance of teachers and servants, were increased on a very large scale: an extensive building or lodge was erected,[30] called Darol-hikmet, or the House of Wisdom, and richly furnished with books, mathematical instruments, professors and attendants; access, and the use of these literary treasures was free to all, and writing materials were afforded gratis. The khalifs frequently held learned disputations, at which the professors of this academy appeared, divided according to their different faculties—logicians, mathematicians, jurists, and physicians, were dressed in their gala costume, khalaa, or their doctoral mantles. The gowns of the English universities still have the original form of the Arabic khalaa or kaftan.

Two hundred and fifty-seven thousand ducats, raised by the tenths and eighth of the tenth, was the amount of the annual revenue of this academy, for the salaries of the professors and officials, for the provision of the requisites for teaching, and other objects of public scientific instruction, as well as of the secret articles of faith: the former comprised all the branches of human knowledge—the latter inculcated, in nine successive degrees, the following principles:[31] The first degree was the longest and most difficult of all, as it was necessary to inspire the pupil with the most implicit confidence in the knowledge of his teacher, and to incline him to take that most solemn oath, by which he bound himself to the secret doctrine with blind faith and unconditional obedience. For this purpose, every possible expedient was adopted to perplex the mind by the many contradictions of positive religion and reason, to render the absurdities of the Koran still more involved by the most insidious questions and most subtle doubts, and to point from the apparent literal signification to a deeper sense, which was properly the kernel, as the former was but the husk. The more ardent the curiosity of the novice, the more resolute was the refusal of the master to afford the least solution to these difficulties, until he had taken the most unrestricted oath; on this, he was admitted to the second degree. This inculcated the recognition of divinely appointed imams, who were the source of all knowledge. As soon as the faith in them was well established, the third degree taught their number, which could not exceed the holy seven; for, as God had created seven heavens, seven earths, seven seas, seven planets, seven colours, seven musical sounds, and seven metals, so had he appointed seven of the most excellent of his creatures as revealed imams: these were, Ali, Hassan, Hossein, Ali Seinolabidin, Mohammed Albakir, Jafer Assadik, and Ismail, his son, as the last and seventh. This was the great leap or the proper schism from the Imamie, who, as we have seen, reckoned twelve, and considerably facilitated the passing into the fourth grade. This taught, that since the beginning of the world there have been seven divine lawgivers, or speaking apostles of God, of whom each had always, by the command of heaven, altered the doctrine of his predecessor. That each of these had seven coadjutors, who succeeded each other in the epoch from one speaking lawgiver to another, but who, as they did not appear manifestly, were called the Mutes (Samit).

The first of the Mutes was named Sus, the seat as it were of the ministers of the speaking prophet. These seven speaking prophets, with their seven seats, were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, and Ismail, the son of Jafer, who, as the last, was called Sahibeseman (*i. e.* the Lord of time). Their seven assistants were Seth, Shem, Ishmael, son of Abraham, Aaron, Simeon, Ali, and Mohammed, son of Ismail. It is evident from this dexterous arrangement, which gained the Ismailites the name of Seveners, that as they named only the first of the mute divine envoys in each prophetic period; and since Mohammed, the son of Ismail, the first of the last prophet’s coadjutors had been dead

only a hundred years, the teachers were at full liberty to present to those whose progress stopped at this degree, whomsoever they pleased, as one of the mute prophets of the current age. The fifth degree must necessarily render the credibility of the doctrine more manifest to the minds of the learners; for this reason, it taught that each of the seven mute prophets had twelve apostles for the extension of the true faith; for the number twelve is the most excellent after seven: hence the twelve signs of the zodiac, the twelve months, the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve bones of the fingers of each hand, the thumb excepted, and so on.

After these five degrees, the precepts of Islamism were examined; and in the sixth it was shown, that all positive religious legislation must be subordinate to the general and philosophical. The dogmas of Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras were adduced as proofs, and laid down as axioms. This degree was very tedious, and only when the acolyte was fully penetrated with the wisdom of the philosophers, was admission granted him to the seventh, where he passed from philosophy to mysticism. This was the doctrine of unity, which the Sofis have exhibited in their works. In the eighth, the positive precepts of religion were again brought forward, to fall to dust by all that preceded; then was the pupil perfectly enlightened as to the superfluity of all prophets and apostles, the non-existence of heaven and hell, the indifference of all actions, for which there is neither reward nor punishment either in this world or the next; and thus was he matured for the ninth and last degree, to become the blind instrument of all the passions of unbridled thirst of power. To believe nothing and to dare all, was, in two words, the sum of this system, which annihilated every principle of religion and morality, and had no other object than to execute ambitious designs with suitable ministers, who, daring all and honouring nothing, since they consider every thing a cheat and nothing forbidden, are the best tools of an infernal policy. A system, which, with no other aim than the gratification of an insatiable lust of dominion, instead of seeking the highest of human objects, precipitates itself into the abyss, and mangling itself, is buried amidst the ruins of thrones and altars, the horrors of anarchy, the wreck of national happiness, and the universal execration of mankind.

END OF BOOK I.

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1. Maracci Prodromus Alcorani Patavii, 1698.
2. Gagnier Vita Mohammedis ex Abulfeda Oxonii, 1723.
3. Sale’s Koran, London, 1734.
4. Essai sur les Mœurs et l’Esprit des Nations, par Voltaire, tom. 2, Chap. 6.
5. The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, by Gibbon, chap. 50.
6. Vier und Zwanzig Bücher Allgemeine Geschichten, durch Johannes von Müller, 12 buch, 2 kap.
7. Ikra-bi-ismi reblike, *read in the name of the Lord*. The commencement of the first published Sura, the 90th in the present arrangement.
8. This fact is not related by Aboulfaraj alone, but also by Macrisi and Ibn Khaledun, and after them by Hadji Khalfa.
9. Abulfeda, Annales Moslemici, I. 282.
10. Abulfeda, Annales Moslemici, I. 314.
11. A. D. 750; A. H. 132.
12. A. D. 787; A. H. 172.
13. Ibn Khaledun, Book l, c 3, § 25. Lari, Chapter of the Twelve Imams.
14. A. D. 1011; A. H. 402.
15. A. D. 1058; A. H. 450.
16. Chap. XIII.
17. Macrisi. Lari.
18. *Vide* Hadji Khalfa, and Reiskii’s Notas ad Abulfeda, 2nd. p. B. 36.
19. A. D. 758; A. H. 141.
20. A. D. 778; A. H. 162.
21. See Herbelot, art. Mani, Erteng, Mokannaa, and Hakem Ben Hashem.

22. A. D. 837; A. H. 223; according to Hadji Khala. A. D. 841; A. H. 227; according to Lari.
23. See Lari. Herbelot, art. Babek.
24. Macrisi, in the beginning of the chapter of the Genealogy of the Fatimite Khalifs, and below, in the section on the Doctrines of the Dais; Art. beginning of the Missions of Ibtidai Dawet.
25. Gulsheni Khalifa, the Khalif's Bed of Roses, by Nasmisade, after the Jamius-seir (*i. e.* Collector of Memoirs), and the History of Nisam-ol-mulk, p. 20.
26. Nasmisade ibid. See also the Magasin Encyclopédique.
27. A. D. 920; A. H. 308.
28. A. D. 909; A. H. 297.
29. A. D. 977; A. H. 335.
30. A. D. 1004; A. H. 395.
31. Macrisi, art. Mohawal and Darol-hikmet.

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