

Book II

Establishment of the Order of the Assassins, and Reign of the first Grand Master, Hassan Sabah.

Egypt, that extraordinary country, so distinguished from all others by the many wonderful phenomena of nature, has ever been in history the memorable theatre of extraordinary exhibitions of the art of governing mankind by wisdom or folly in the name of heaven or earth. In the remote ages of antiquity reigned a caste of priests, in whose hands the king was the servile tool of their power, the lituus (our present bishop's crosier) was the real sceptre. Superstition, and the external worship of statues and pictures, was the religion of the people, while the secret doctrine of the initiated was concealed under symbols and hieroglyphics. Their mysteries had a particular relation to the state of the soul after death; whereas the popular belief confined its duration to that of its earthly existence. It was a deeply designed but ill-calculated policy, which excluded from the doctrine of immortality the multitude who cleave to the clod, and made it the peculiar prerogative of a certain number of elect, to whom it was permitted to soar beyond the limits of the tomb, without at the same time neglecting the duties and objects of civil life. It was imagined, that the vulgar could only fulfil them with all their energies, and to their full extent, when, instead of being actuated by views extending beyond the grave, they confine to earth the whole activity and faculty of their mind, during the space of time which intervenes between the cradle and the coffin. Thus, neither time nor vigour would be lost in vain hopes or useless speculations; every application of them was devoted to civil existence: this was the object of the state, which reserved to itself the allotment of rewards and punishments, not only here but hereafter. In order to satisfy, in some measure, that longing after continued existence implanted by nature in every breast, though deriving little support from reason, the people sought to preserve their bodies and names for the longest possible period, by mummies and tombs: hence those mighty monuments, and the secret judgment of the dead, in which the priests, as assessors and judges, were the dispensers of this transitory immortality of stone and dust. To the few better informed, and who were not satisfied with this mummerly, the judgment of the dead was symbolically explained in the mysteries, and the real immortality of the soul taught; and explanations were afforded by the priests of subjects of which they were themselves entirely ignorant.

Moses, imbued with the Egyptian policy, and initiated into the mysteries of the sacerdotal colleges, among many other of their institutions, retained this, of not imparting to his people the doctrine of immortality, which, in all probability, remained, as in Egypt, the peculiar privilege of the priestly order. We find no trace of it in the books of the Hebrews; except in the Arabic poem of Job, which, in fact, does not belong to them.

How much this concealment of the doctrine of immortality, deemed by the priests such a master-piece of policy, has repressed the spirit of the people, and impeded every loftier aspiration, is sufficiently made known to us, not only in the history of their government, but also by their still remaining monuments, which are so entirely unconsecrated by the hand of art. The sphinxes and colossal statues, the temples, and the pyramids, those astounding monuments of human activity, and of the power of numbers directed to one end, bear the stamp of greatness, from the extent of their proportions, but by no means that of beauty in their execution. This latter dwells only in those favoured regions of light, to which art and religion are together elevated by the idea of immortality. Although this mysterious policy set bounds to the more free developement of civilization, and the elevation of the people to a higher social grade, it is nevertheless very probable, that it proceeded from purely intellectual views,

and the honest intention of laying the foundation of the highest prosperity for the kingdom, and the greatest temporal happiness of the people, by the undisturbed activity of all human energies, and the continued application of them to one political object. The secret doctrine benefited the initiated, while it did not injure the profane. Of an entirely opposite nature, was, as we have seen, that which prevailed in modern Egypt, during the middle ages; the former contrived for the strengthening of the throne and the altar, the latter imagined for their ruin. As wide a chasm, as that which lies between the building of ancient Memphis and the founding of modern Cairo, divides the secret tenets of the academies of Heliopolis from those of the modern house of science. Egypt, in remote antiquity the cradle of science and social institutions, afterwards the mother of alchemy and treasure-hunting, by means of the philosopher's stone and talismans,—became, in modern times, the native soil of secret sciences and societies.

The lodge of Cairo, whose political aim was, as we have already seen, to overthrow the khalifat of the family of Abbas, in favour of the Fatimites, spread its secret doctrine, by its Dais (*i. e.* political and religious missionaries). To these were subordinate the ordinary partisans, Refik, or fellows, who, initiated into one or several grades of the mysteries, were, nevertheless, neither to teach them, nor to collect the suffrages for any dynasty; this being the peculiar privilege of the Dais, whose chief, the Dail-doat, or grand-master, resided at Cairo, in the House of Sciences. This institution remained unchanged, from its foundation by Hakem,³² to the time of the khalif, Emr-Biahkam-illah,³³ when the Emir-ol-juyush, or commander-in-chief of the army Efdhal, on the occasion of an insurrection fomented by the members of the lodge,³⁴ caused it to be shut up, and, as it appears, to be destroyed. When, after his death in the following year, the society strongly urged their re-opening, the vizier, Maimun, refused to open the academy on the same spot, but permitted them to erect, in a different situation, another building, dedicated to the same purpose, which was Darolilm-jedide (*i. e.* the new House of Sciences); where public courses of instruction and secret meetings, as before, continued, till the downfall of the Fatimite dynasty. The effects of their doctrine soon appeared in the increasing power of the Fatimites, and the feebleness into which the khalifat of the family of Abbas gradually sank.³⁵ The Emir Bessassiri, one of the most zealous partisans and defenders of the former, took possession,³⁶ for a whole year, at Bagdad, of the two royal prerogatives of Islamism, the mint and the pulpit, in the name of the Egyptian khalif, Mostanssur, who would have retained them, had not Bessassiri fallen in the following year, by the sword of Togrul, who had hastened to the assistance of the Abbassides. In the meanwhile, the fellows, Refik, and the masters, Dai, inundated the whole of Asia; and one of the latter, Hassan-ben-Sabah Homairi, was the founder of a new branch of the sect, namely, the eastern Ismailites, or Assassins, before whose cradle we now stand.

Hassan Sabah, or Hassan-ben-Sabah, that is, one of the descendants of Sabah, was the son of Ali, a strict Shiite of Rei, who took his name from Sabah Homairi, and pretended that his father had gone from Kufa to Kum, and from Kum to Rei. This allegation met, however, with considerable contradiction from the natives of Khorassan, particularly those of Tus, who unanimously asserted that his ancestors had constantly dwelt in the villages of that province. Ali was universally suspected of heretical notions and expressions, which gained him the reputation of Rafedhi, or Motasal (Dissenter, or Separatist). He sought, by false confessions and oaths, to prove his orthodoxy to Abumoslem, the governor of the province, a strict Soonnite, and afterwards withdrew to a monastery, to lead a life of contemplation. This retirement, however, had not the effect of securing him from public report, which at one time accused him of heresy and heterodoxy, at another, of infidelity and atheism. In order to clear himself, as much as possible, from this suspicion, he sent his young son, Hassan, to Nishabur, and placed him in the school of the illustrious Mowafek Nishaburi, who, at that time past eighty years of age, not only enjoyed the well-merited consideration of being the first doctor of the Soonna, but also

the advantageous reputation, which events justified, of securing the temporal happiness of all who studied the Koran and Soonna under his auspices. Great was the concourse of distinguished youths who sought from him happiness and instruction, and justified, by the developement of fortunate talents, the established opinion of the Imam's wisdom and auspicious conversation. His last pupils, even to his death, contributed to confirm his reputation:—three of them, who flourished at the same time,—Hassan, Omar Khiam, and Nisam-ol-mulk, endued with the most splendid talents, pursued the most different careers, with the most fortunate results. They shone among the constellations of mighty minds of their age, like the three stars in Orion's belt,—Omar Khiam, as an astronomer and philosophical poet; Nisam-ol-mulk, as grand vizier; and Hassan-ben-Sabah, as the head of a sect and founder of the Assassins. The first, useless in civil society, was innoxious, by his epicurean mode of life; the second was a beneficent, active, and learned statesman, under three of the Seljukide sultans; and the third, by his diabolical policy, became a pernicious scourge to humanity.

The ambition of the latter burst forth even in his youth, when he endeavoured to lay the foundation of his fortune, with his two school-fellows, by mutual promises. One of them, the vizier, Nisam-ol-mulk, that is, *order of rule*, himself relates, in his character of historian, the obligations into which they entered, and their sequel. "The general opinion is," said Hassan, one day, to the other two, "that the imam's pupils are certain of their fortune; now, let us promise each other, that if this proves true of only one of us three, he will share his good fortune with the other two." Omar Khiam and Nisam-ol-mulk agreed to Hassan's proposal, with mutual engagements; the first too indolent to involve himself in politics, the second too magnanimous not to wish to share with the restless ambition of the third, that prosperity, which his great talents and honest industry ensured him in that career. Years elapsed, during which Nisam-ol-mulk travelled through the countries of Khorassan, Mawarainehr, Khasnin, and Kabul, and filled the lower offices of the state, till he at last attained, under Alparslan, the great prince of the Seljuks, the highest post in the empire,—that of vizier. He received with honour his old school-fellow, Omar Khiam, who was the first to visit him, and mindful, as he himself relates, of his youthful promise, offered him his credit and influence, in procuring him an office; which is the more probable, as Nisam's knowledge of the world convinced him that Khiam's love for epicurean enjoyments would reject the offer; and that, in any case, such a rival, as vizier, could never prove dangerous to him. Omar Khiam thanked him, and merely requested peaceful leisure to devote himself, undisturbed, to the pursuit of the sciences; and, as he constantly gave the same answer to Nisam-ol-mulk's repeated offers to make him vizier, the latter granted him an annual pension of one thousand ducats, out of the revenues of Nishabur, in which place, removed from the turmoil of public affairs, and in the bosom of luxurious independence, he henceforward devoted his life to the cultivation of his genius and the sciences, and gained great fame as a poet and astronomer. Although his love of ease did not permit him to transmit his glory to posterity, by any considerable work, yet he has preserved it in the history of Persian poetry, merely by his four-line strophes. These are unique in their kind, by the licentiousness of their overwhelming wit, which, without the least scruple, indulged itself in pleasantries, at the expense of all pious persons, and particularly the mystics, not only on the doctrines of the Sofis, but also the Koran itself; so much, as to be held by the orthodox in the worst reputation for impiety. Omar Khiam, in the collection of his quatrains (*Rubayat*), and Ibn Yemen, in that of his fragments (*Mokataat*), merit, before all Persian poets who have gained a name, that, more particularly, of philosophical. The genius of the former is allied to that of Young, the latter to that of Voltaire.

Hassan Sabah lived in obscurity, and unknown, during the ten years' reign of Alparslan. Immediately, however, after the accession of Melekshah, under whom Nisam-ol-mulk enjoyed the same unlimited power, as vizier, as he had under his predecessor,—the son of Sabah also appeared at the court of the Sultan of the Seljukides, and with harsh words from the Koran, directed against promise-breakers,

reminded the vizier of the fulfilment of the obligations of his youth. Nisam-ol-mulk received him with honour, procured him considerable titles and revenues, and introduced him to the sultan, of whom Hassan, by crafty hypocrisy, and under the mask of virtuous frankness and candid honesty, soon became master. The sultan consulted him on all important occasions, and acted according to his decision. The authority and influence of Nisam-ol-mulk were soon essentially endangered, and Hassan laboured with zeal to accomplish the fall of his benefactor. With consummate art, he caused the smallest oversights of the divan to come to the sultan's knowledge; and on being questioned, contrived, by the most insidious representations, sophisms, and unfavourable impressions, to turn his sovereign's mind against the vizier. The most cruel blow of this kind was, according to Nisam-ol-mulk's own confession, Hassan's pledging himself to lay before the sultan, within forty days, the balance sheet of the revenues and expenditure of the state,—a task, to the execution of which the vizier had requested a period ten times as long. Melekshah placed at Hassan's disposal all the secretaries of the chamber, with whose assistance he performed the desired computation within the promised time. Nisam-ol-mulk relates, that, although Hassan gained the victory, he reaped no advantage from it; for, after having sent in his accounts, he was compelled to leave the court with dishonour. He, however, does not give us the proper cause of his disgrace. According to the statement of other historians, it is very probable, that Nisam-ol-mulk, consulting his own preservation, found means to mutilate Hassan's estimate, by the abstraction of some leaves; and as no account could be given by the latter to the sultan, of this unexpected disorder in his papers, he increased the sovereign's displeasure, in order to remove so dangerous a rival for ever from the court. He declares, very *naïvely*, in his Political Institutes (Wassaya), that if this misfortune had not befallen the son of Sabah, he would himself have been necessitated to adopt the same course,—that is, to have abandoned the court and his office.³⁷

Hassan retired from Melekshah's court to Rei, and then to Ispahan, where he kept himself secluded in the house of Abufasl, in order to escape the inquiries of Nisam-ol-mulk. He soon gained over the Reis to his opinions, and lived sometime with him. One day, he concluded the complaints which he was making against Melekshah and his vizier, with the expression, that "if he had had at his bidding but two devoted friends, he would soon have overturned the power of the Turk and the peasant" (the sultan and the vizier). These remarkable words unveil the profound and extensive plans of the founder of the Assassins, who already contemplated the ruin of kings and ministers. The canon of the whole policy of this order of murderers is comprised in them. Opinions are powerless, so long as they only confuse the brain, without arming the hand. Scepticism and free-thinking, as long as they occupied only the minds of the indolent and philosophical, have caused the ruin of no throne, for which purpose religious and political fanaticism are the strongest levers in the hands of nations. It is nothing to the ambitious man what people believe, but it is everything to know how he may turn them, for the execution of his projects. He is satisfied with finding ready slaves, faithful satellites, and blind instruments. What may not two such, animated by the soul of a third, and obeying his behests, accomplish? This truth, which lay open to the enterprising soul of Hassan, found no access to the understanding of his host, the Reis Abufasl, one of the shrewdest and most intelligent men of his time. He considered these words as a sign of madness, and doubted not that they were the effusion of delirium; for, thought he, how could it occur to a man of sound intellect, to place himself, with two adherents, in opposition to Melekshah, whose power extended from Antioch to Kashgar. Without imparting his thoughts to his guest, he placed before him, at breakfast and dinner, in hopes of restoring his health, aromatic drinks and dishes, prepared with saffron, which were considered as strengtheners of the brain. Hassan guessed his host's design, and prepared to leave him. The latter in vain employed all his eloquence to retain him;³⁸ he soon after repaired to Egypt.³⁹

When, twenty years afterwards, Hassan had possessed himself of the strong fortress of Alamut, and the Vizier Nisam-ol-mulk had fallen under the daggers of his assassins, and the Sultan Melekshah had followed him to the grave soon after,—the Reis Abufasl was at the castle, as one of the most zealous of Hassan’s partisans. “Reis,” said the latter to him, “which of us two was out of his senses, I or thou? and which would the aromatic drinks, and dishes dressed with saffron, which thou settedst before me at Ispahan, have best suited,—thee or me? Thou seest how I have kept my word, as soon as I found two trusty friends.”

The reign of Sultan Melekshah, during the twenty years of which Hassan Sabah was occupied in laying the foundation of his power,—is one of the most stormy periods of middle oriental history, many ways distinguished by the downfall of old, and the rise of new, dynasties. In Taberistan, Aleppo, and Diarbekr, the races of the Beni Siad, Beni Merdas, and Beni Merwan,⁴⁰ disappeared, and in their place, the families of Danishmend-Bawend and Ortok,⁴¹ raised themselves to the thrones of Kum, Taberistan, and Maradin.⁴² The Seljukides, who, since the time of their founder, Togrul-beg, had ruled in Iran, spread their branches into Syria,⁴³ Karman,⁴⁴ and Asia Minor;⁴⁵ Bagdad, the metropolis of the Abbasside khalifs, was torn with intestine religious wars.⁴⁶ The Soonnites and the Shiites, the followers of the Imams, Eshaari and Hanbeli, fought sanguinary combats within the city’s walls.⁴⁷ The mint, and prayers from the pulpit, had, indeed, since the death of the Emir Bessassiri,⁴⁸ been restored to the name of the family of Abbas; but in both the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, they were continued in the name of the fanatical khalif, Mostanssur, who occupied the throne of Egypt. His Dais, or missionaries, the initiated of the Ismailites, the Apostles of the lodge of Cairo, inundated the whole of Asia, in order to gain proselytes to the cause of infidelity and rebellion. It cannot afford matter of surprise that, in Hassan Sabah, their seed met with a fertile soil. We will relate the beginning of his connexion with them, in his own words, as history preserves them.⁴⁹

“From my childhood, from my seventh year, my sole effort has been to extend the bounds of my knowledge and to increase my capacities. Like my fathers, I was educated in the tenets of the twelve imams (Imamie), and I formed an acquaintance with an Ismailite Refik (Fellow), called Emire Dharab, with whom I cemented bonds of friendship. My opinion was, that the doctrine of the Ismailites was like that of the philosophers, and that the ruler of Egypt was one of the initiated: whenever, therefore, Emire spoke in favour of their principles, I disputed with him, and there was a great deal of discussion between us concerning points of faith. I did not in the least admit the justice of the reproaches which Emire lavished on my sect; nevertheless they left a deep impression on my mind. In the meanwhile he left me, and I was attacked by a severe fit of illness, during which I blamed my obstinacy in not having embraced the doctrine of the Ismailites, which was the true one; and I dreaded lest, should death await me, from which God preserved me, I might die without obtaining a knowledge of the truth: at length I recovered, and met with another Ismailite, Abu-Nedshm-Saraj, whom I questioned concerning the truth of his doctrine; Abunedshm explained it to me in the most circumstantial manner that I came fully to understand it. Lastly, I found a Dai (Missionary), called Mumin, to whom the Sheikh Abdolmelek-ben-Attash, the president of the missions of Irak, had granted permission to exercise that office. I entreated him to accept my homage in the name of the Fatimite khalif; this he at first refused, because I was of higher rank than himself, but as I urged it most pressingly, he at length acquiesced. Now when the Sheikh Abdolmelek arrived at Rei, and had become acquainted with my opinions in conversation, my demeanour pleased him so, that he immediately invested me with the office of Dai (religious and political missionary). He said to me, ‘Thou must go to Egypt to enjoy the happiness of serving the Imam Mostanssur, (the reigning Fatimite khalif).’ On the Sheikh Abdolmelek’s departure from Rei on his route to Ispahan, I journeyed into Egypt.”⁵⁰

Hassan then had been already initiated, in Persia, in the Ismailite mysteries of Atheism and immorality, and had even been deemed worthy to become a teacher and promulgator of them. The fame of his great talents, and the authority which he had enjoyed at the court of Melekshah, preceded him; and the khalif Mostanssur, delighted with the acquisition of such a partisan, received him with honour and distinction. The chief of the missionaries, or grand-master of the lodge, Dail Doat, the Sherif Tahre Kaswimi, and some other persons of rank and influence, were despatched to the frontiers to meet him; Mostanssur assigned him a residence in the city, and welcomed him in the person of his ministers and court dignitaries, and loaded him with marks of honour and favour. According to some, Hassan remained eighteen months at Cairo, during which, although the khalif had no personal interview with him, he interested himself in every thing that concerned him, and even spoke of him in terms of the highest eulogium: so great were the recommendations and predilection of the khalif, that his relations and chief officers were persuaded that Hassan would be named prime minister. In the meantime, clouds of disunion and discord arose between Hassan and Bedr Jemali (*full moon of beauty*), the Emirol Juyush, or commander-in-chief, who enjoyed unlimited power in the Ismailite dominions. The cause was the great dissensions, which, at that period, took place relating to the succession to the Egyptian throne: the khalif had declared his son Nesar his legitimate successor; while a faction, headed by Bedr Jemali, asserted that his other son, Mosteali, who eventually succeeded him, was alone worthy to be so. Hassan maintained the succession of Nesar, and by that means drew upon himself the inextinguishable hatred of the general, who employed every effort against him, and at length persuaded the reluctant khalif to imprison the son of Sabah in the castle of Damietta.⁵¹

About this period, one of the strongest towers in the city fell without any visible cause; and the terrified inhabitants saw, in this accident, a miracle performed by the fortunate stars of Hassan and Mostanssur. His enemies, and those who envied him, conveyed him with their own hands into a ship which was sailing to Africa; he was scarcely at sea, when a violent gale lashed up the waves, and filled the whole crew, except Hassan, with terror; he, calm and raised above all fear, answered one of his fellow-passengers, who asked him the cause of such security, "Our Lord (Sidna) has promised me that no evil shall befall me." The sea becoming calm some minutes afterwards, the voyagers were filled with universal confidence, and from that moment became Hassan's disciples and faithful partisans. Thus, to increase his credit, did he avail himself of accidents and natural occurrences, as if he possessed the command of both. The coolness with which he confronted the perils of the swelling sea, gave him, with the apparent rule of the elements, real authority over the mind: in the dark night of the dungeon and the storm, he meditated black projects of ambition and revenge; in the midst of the crash of the falling tower, and the thunder and lightning, and billows of the storm, he laid the foundation of his union of Assassins, for the ruin of thrones, and the wreck of dynasties.

A wind, contrary to the destination of the ship, but favourable to Hassan, drove them on the coasts of Syria instead of towards Africa; Hassan disembarked and proceeded to Aleppo, where he remained some time; thence he visited Bagdad, Khusistan, Ispahan, Yezd, and Kerman, everywhere publishing his doctrine: from Kerman he returned to Ispahan, where he resided four months, and then made a second excursion into Khusistan; after staying three months in this province, he fixed himself for as many years in Damaghan and the surrounding country: he here made a great number of proselytes, and sent to Alamut as well as other fortresses of the place, Dais of captivating eloquence. After preparing everything here for the future maturity of his plans, he went to Jorjan, whence he directed his journey towards Dilem; he would not, however, enter the territory of Rei, because Abu Moslem Rasi, the governor of that district, having received orders from Nisam-ol-mulk to possess himself of his person in any way, omitted nothing in execution of these instructions; Hassan proceeded therefore to Sari, and thence to Demawend. On his way to Kaswin, he passed through Dilem,⁵² and at length arrived at the

castle of Alamut, which became the cradle of his power and greatness. He had already, some time before, sent to this stronghold one of his most zealous and skilful Dais, Hossein Kaini, to invite the inhabitants to swear fealty to the Khalif Mostanssur. The greater number had already taken the accustomed oath to him. Ali Mehdi, the commandant, who held it in the name of Melekshah, with a few others, remained faithful to his duty, acknowledging no other spiritual supremacy than that of the khalif of Bagdad, of the family of Abbas; and submitting to no other temporal prince than the Sultan Melekshah, of the family of Seljuk. He was a descendant of Ali, and reckoned among his ancestors Dai Ilalhakk (*i. e.* the inviter to truth). Hassan ben Seid Bakeri had built this fortress two centuries and a half before.⁵³

Alamut (*i. e.* Vulture's nest), so called from its impregnable position, and situated in 50 deg. 30 min. E. longitude, and 36 deg. N. latitude, is the largest and strongest of fifty castles which lie scattered about the district of Rudbar, at the distance of sixty farsangs north of Kaswin. It is a mountainous country on the confines of Dilem and Irak, watered by the Shahrud or King's river; two streams bear this name, one of which rises in Mount Thalkan, near Kaswin, the other in Mount Sheer, and flows through the district, Rudbar of Alamut. Rudbar means river land, and is applied to another district as well as this northern one, which is called "of Alamut," to distinguish it from the southern Rudbar of Lor, which is situated near Ispahan, and is watered by the river of life, Sendrud, as the former is by the King's river, Shahrud.⁵⁴

Hassan, who had hitherto sought in vain for some central point for the foundation of his power, at length took possession of the castle of Alamut, on the night of Wednesday, the 6th of the month Redsheb, in the four hundred and eighty-third year after the flight of Mohammed, and the thousand and ninetieth after the birth of Christ; seven centuries before the French revolution, whose first movers were the tools or leaders of secret societies, which, like the Ismailites, then openly attempted what they had in secret contemplated—the overthrow of thrones and altars. Long experience and extensive knowledge of mankind, profound study of politics and history, had taught the son of Sabah, that an atheistical and immoral system was more calculated to accomplish the ruin, than the establishment of dynasties, and the confusion rather than the ordering of states; that lawlessness may be the canon of the ruler, but ought never to be the code of the subject; that the many are only held together by the few by the bridle of the law; and that morality and religion are the best sureties of the obedience of nations and the security of princes. Initiated into the highest grade of the lodge of Cairo, he clearly penetrated their plan of boundless ambition, whose object was nothing less than the destruction of the khalifat of the Abbassides, and the raising new thrones on their ruins. He, who had till now acted as Dai or religious nuncio and political envoy, in the name of the Fatimite khalif, Mostanssur, formed the resolution of securing power to himself instead of his superior, and did not apply himself to the destruction of the works of foreign wisdom and policy, so much as to found and fortify the edifice of his own,—since, in the opinion of the Moslimin, the supreme dominion was always vested in the person of the imam khalif; and the people were merely divided as to whether this was legally inherited by the families of Ommia, Abbas or Fatima. No other resource was left to an ambitious chief, who usurped thrones and sovereignty, than to seek them under the shadow of the khalifat (at that time itself a shadow), and in the name of the reigning khalif; so had but lately the family of Seljuk, as others had done before, possessed themselves of the rule in Asia, in the name of the khalif of Bagdad. Hassan Sabah, who had been unsuccessful in his hopes at the court of the Seljukides, and had disagreed both with the sultan and his vizier, could only come forward for the khalif of Cairo: in his name, and under the appearance of the strictest piety, he gained disciples; ostensibly, for the khalifat of Cairo and religion, but in reality, for himself and the projects of his lawless ambition.

He obtained possession of Alamut, partly by stratagem and partly by force; and the artifice by which he succeeded received a higher confirmation in the eyes of the multitude by means of the Cabbala, which very luckily found, in the letters of the word Alamut, the date of the current year 483. Hassan adopted the same trick against Mehdi, the commandant of the castle, in the name of the Sultan Melekshah, which history mentions as having been used at the foundation of Carthage and other cities. He requested, at the price of 3000 ducats, as much land as an ox's hide would only contain; he split the hide into strips, and with them surrounded the castle. Mehdi, who had already some time earlier excluded the Ismailites from the fortress, and then on an arrangement taking place had re-admitted them, was, on his not acceding to this purchase, driven out by force, and withdrew to Damaghan. Previous to his departure, Hassan gave him a laconic letter or bill of exchange, on the Reis Mosaffer, commander of the castle of Kirdkuh, in these words: "Reis Mosaffer, pay Mehdi, the descendant of Ali, 3000 ducats, as the price of the castle of Alamut. Health to the prophet and his family. God the best ruler sufficeth us." Mehdi could not believe that a man like the Reis Mosaffer, who enjoyed the highest consideration as a lieutenant of the Seljuks, would pay the slightest respect to the bill of an adventurer like Hassan: he made, therefore, no use of it until his curiosity was spurred by necessity, when, on presenting it to the Reis, to his great astonishment, the 3000 ducats were immediately paid. The Reis, in fact, was one of the earliest and most faithful followers of Hassan Sabah; the second and most active was Hossein of Kaini: they taught and acted for him as missionaries,—the former in Jebal, the latter in Kuhistan, both names meaning Highlands, and being the northern mountainous provinces of Persia. Hassan provided his metropolis with ramparts and wells; he caused a canal to be dug, bringing the water from a considerable distance to the foot of the castle; he made plantations of fruit trees around the neighbourhood, and encouraged the inhabitants in the pursuit of agriculture. While he was thus employed in the fortification and defence of his castle, which commanded the whole district of Rudbar, promoting cultivation and raising supplies, his care and attention were still more deeply engaged with the establishment of his own religious and political system, namely, the peculiar policy of the Assassins.

A power was to be established, to which laws were to be given, and the want of treasure and troops, the great arms of sovereignty, was to be compensated in unusual ways. History showed, in the sanguinary examples of Babek and Karmath, who had led hundreds of thousands to the slaughter, and had fallen themselves the victims of their ambition, how dangerous it is for infidelity and sedition to dare an open contest with the constituted faith and government. Hassan's own experience taught him, by the slender results which the Ismailite mission had exhibited in Asia, how useless it was to attempt to propagate the secret doctrine of the lodge of Cairo, as long as its superiors had heads, but not hands at their disposal.

During the two hundred years that the empire of the Fatimites had been established in Africa, the lodge first erected at Mahadia, then at Cairo, and the system of secret missions in favour of the Fatimites, had been organized; they had indeed succeeded in giving the authority of the Abbassides a shock, but without being able to extend their own; they had assumed the two prerogatives of the mint and public prayers at Bagdad, but could keep possession of them for only a year, and lost it when Bessassiri succumbed to the arms of Togrul. Under pretence of enlisting partisans to the successors of Ismail, they had preached atheism and immorality; and thereby loosened the religious and moral bonds of civil society, without troubling themselves about compensation; they had shaken thrones, without being able to overturn, or to seat themselves upon them. Nothing of this escaped Hassan's deep reflections; and as he had not been successful in the usual routine of ministerial ambition, in playing a part in the empire of the Seljukides, he afterwards, as nuncio and envoy, paved the way to his own power, and planned a system of administration of his own. "Nothing is true and all is allowed," was the ground-

work of the secret doctrine: which, however, being imparted but to few, and concealed under the veil of the most austere religionism and piety, restrained the mind under the yoke of blind obedience, by the already adopted rein of the positive commands of Islamism, the more strictly, the more temporal submission and devotion were sanctioned, by eternal rewards and glory.

Hitherto, the Ismailites had only Masters and Fellows; namely, the Dais or emissaries, who, being initiated into all the grades of the secret doctrine, enlisted proselytes; and the Refik, who, gradually intrusted with its principles, formed the great majority. It was manifest to the practical and enterprising spirit of Hassan, that, in order to execute great undertakings with security and energy, a third class would also be requisite, who, never being admitted to the mystery of atheism and immorality, which snap the bonds of all subordination, were but blind and fanatical tools in the hands of their superiors; that a well organized political body needs not merely heads but also arms, and that the master required not only intelligent and skilful fellows, but also faithful and active agents: these agents were called Fedavie (*i. e.* the self-offering or devoted), the name itself declares their destination. How they afterwards, in Syria, obtained that of the Hashishin or Assassins, we shall explain hereafter, when we speak of the means employed to animate them to blind obedience and fanatical self-devotion. Being clothed in white,⁵⁵ like the followers of Mokannaa, three hundred years before, in Transoxana, and, still earlier, the Christian Neophytes, and, in our own days, the pages of the sultan, they were termed Mobeyese, the white, or likewise, Mohammere the red, because they wore, with their white costume, red turbans, boots, or girdles, as in our own day do the warriors of the prince of Lebanon, and at Constantinople the Janissaries and Bostangis as body guard of the seraglio. Habited in the hues of innocence and blood, and of pure devotion and murder, armed with daggers (*cultelliferi*) which were constantly snatched forth at the service of the grand-master, they formed his guard, the executioners of his deadly orders, the sanguinary tools of the ambition and revenge of this order of Assassins.

The grand master was called Sidna (Sidney) our lord, and commonly Sheikh al Jebal, the Sheikh, the old man or supreme master of the mountain; because the order always possessed themselves of the castles in the mountainous regions, both in Irak, Kuhistan, and Syria, and the ancient of the mountains, resided in the mountain fort of Alamut, robed in white, like the Ancient of days in Daniel.⁵⁶ He was neither king nor prince in the usual sense of the word, and never assumed the title either of Sultan, Melek, or Emir, but merely that of Sheikh, which to this day the heads of the Arab tribes and the superiors of the religious order of the sofis and dervishes bear. His authority could be no kingdom or principality, but that of a brotherhood or order; European historians, therefore, fall into a great mistake in confounding the empire of the Assassins with hereditary dynasties, as in the form of its institution it was only an order like that of the knights of St. John, the Teutonic knights, or the Templars—the latter of these, besides the grand-master and grand-priors, and religious nuncios, had also some resemblance to the Assassins in their spirit of political interference and secret doctrine. Dressed in white, with the distinctive mark of the red cross on their mantles, as were the Assassins with red girdles and caps, the Templars had also secret tenets, which denied and abjured the sanctity of the cross, as the others did the commandments of Islamism. The fundamental maxim of the policy of both was to obtain possession of the castles and strong places of the adjacent country, and thus without pecuniary or military means, to maintain an *imperium in imperio*, to keep the nations in subjection as dangerous rivals to princes.

The flat part of a country is always commanded by the more mountainous, and the latter by the fortresses scattered through it. To become masters of these by stratagem or force, and to awe princes either by fraud or fear, and to arm the murderer's hand against the enemies of the order, was the political maxim of the Assassins. Their internal safety was secured by the strict observance of religious

ordinances; their external, by fortresses and the poniard. From the proper subjects of the order, or the profane, was only expected the fulfilment of the duties of Islamism, even of the most austere, such as refraining from wine and music: from the devoted satellites was demanded blind subjection and the faithful use of their daggers. The emissaries, or initiated, worked with their heads, and led the arms in execution of the orders of the Sheikh, who, in the centre of his sovereignty, tranquilly directed, like an animating soul, their hearts and poniards to the accomplishment of his ambitious projects.

Immediately under him the grand-master, stood the Dailkebir, grand recruiters or grand-priors, his lieutenants in the three provinces to which the power of the order extended, namely, Jebal, Kuhistan, and Syria. Beneath them, were the Dai, or religious nuncios, and political emissaries in ordinary, as initiated masters. The fellows (Refik) were those who were advancing to the mastership, through the several grades of initiation into the secret doctrine. The guards of the order, the warriors, were the devoted murderers (Fedavie), and the Lassik (aspirants) seem to have been the novices or lay brethren. Besides this seven-fold gradation from Sheikh (grand-master), Dailkebir (grand-prior), Dai (master), Refik (fellows), Fedavie (agents), Lassik (lay brothers), down to the profane or the people, there was also another seven-fold gradation of the spiritual hierarchy, who applied themselves exclusively to the before-mentioned doctrine of the Ismailis concerning the seven speaking and seven mute imams, and belonged more properly to the theoretical frame-work of the schism, than to the destruction of political powers. According to this arrangement, there live, in every generation, seven persons distinguished from each other by their different grades of rank: 1st. The divinely appointed Imam; 2nd. The proof Hudshet, designated by him, which the Ismailis called Esas, (the seat); 3rd. The Sumassa, who received instruction from the Hudshet, as they did from the Imam; 4th. The Missionaries (Dai); 5th. Mesuni, (the Freed) who were admitted to the solemn promise or oath (Ahd); 6th. Mukellebi, the dog-like, who sought out subjects fit for conversion for the missionaries, as hounds run down the game for the huntsman; 7th, Mumini, the believers, the people. On comparing these two divisions, we perceive that, according to the first, the invisible imam, in whose name the sheikh claimed the obedience of the people, and in the second, the guard, of which he made use against the foes of the order, are wanting; but that, in other respects, the different grades coincide. The *proof* was the grand-master; the Sumassa, the grand-prior; the fellows were the freed; and the dog-like the lay-brethren; the fourth and seventh, that is the preachers of the faith and the believers, the cheating missionaries, and the duped people are the same in both.⁵⁷

We have seen above, that the first founder of secret societies in the heart of Islamism, Abdollah Maimun, the son of Kaddah, established seven degrees of his doctrine, for which reason, as well as their opinions concerning the seven imams, his disciples obtained the by-name of Seveners. This appellation, which had been assigned, hitherto, to the western Ismailites, although they had increased the number of grades from seven to nine, was, with greater justice, transferred to their new branch, the eastern Ismailites or Assassins, whose founder, Hassan, the son of Sabah, not only restored the grades to their original number, seven, but also sketched out for the Dais, or missionaries, a particular rule of conduct, consisting of seven points, which had reference, not so much to the gradual enlightenment of those who were to be taught, as to the necessary qualifications of the teachers; and was the proper rubric of the order.

The introductory rule was called Ashinai-risk (*knowledge of the calling*), and comprised the maxims of the knowledge of mankind, necessary to the selection of subjects suited to the initiated. Several proverbs, of much vogue among the Dais, had relation to this; they contained a sense different from their literal meaning:—"Sow not in barren soil;" "Speak not in a house, where there is a lamp;" implied "Waste not your words on the incapable;" "Venture not to speak them in the presence of a

lawyer;" for it was equally dangerous to engage with blockheads, as with men of tried knowledge and probity; because the former misunderstand, and the latter unmask, the doctrine, and neither would be available either as teachers or instruments. These allegorical sentences, and the prudential rules so necessary to avoid all chance of discovery, remind us of a secret society of high antiquity, and a celebrated order of modern times;—in short, of Pythagoras and the Jesuits. The mysterious adages of the former, which have come down to us, and whose peculiar sense is now unintelligible, were probably nothing more than similar maxims to the initiated in his doctrine; and the political prudence in the selection of subjects fit for the different designs of a society, reached the highest perfection in that of Jesus. Thus the Pythagoreans and the Jesuits have a resemblance to the Assassins. The second rule of conduct was called Teenis, (*gaining confidence*), and taught them to gain over candidates by flattering their inclinations and passions. As soon as they were won, it was requisite, in the third place, to involve them, by a thousand doubts and questions concerning the positive religious commands and absurdities of the Koran, in a maze of scruples, which were not to be resolved, and of uncertainty, which was not to be disentangled.

In the fourth place, followed the oath (Ahd) by which the acolyte bound himself, in the most solemn manner, to inviolable silence and submission; that he would impart his doubts to none but his superior; that he would blindly obey him and none but him. In the fifth rule, Teddlis, the candidates were taught how their doctrine and opinions agreed with those of the greatest men in church and state; this was done the more to attract and fire them, by the examples of the great and powerful. The sixth, Tessiss (i. e. *confirmation*), merely recapitulated all that had preceded, in order to confirm and strengthen the learner's faith. After this followed, in the seventh place, Teevil (i. e. *the allegorical instruction*), which was the conclusion of the course of atheistical instruction. In Teevil, the allegorical explanation, in opposition to Tensil, or the literal sense of the divine word, was the principal essence of the secret doctrine, from which they were named Bateni, the Esoterics, to distinguish them from the Jaheri, or followers of the outward worship.⁵⁸ By means of this crafty system of exposition and interpretation, which, in our own days, has often been applied to the Bible, articles of faith and duties became mere allegories; the external form, merely contingent; the inner sense alone, essential; the observance, or non-observance of religious ordinances and moral laws, equally indifferent; consequently, all was doubtful, and nothing prohibited. This was the *acme* of the philosophy of the Assassins, which was not imparted by the founder to the majority, but reserved only for a few of the initiated and principal leaders, while the people were held under the yoke of the strictest exercise of the precepts of Islamism. His greatest policy consisted in designing his doctrine of infidelity and immorality, not for the ruled, but only for the rulers; in subjecting the tensely-reined and blind obedience of the former, to the equally blind but unbridled despotic commands of the second; and thus, he made both serve the aim of his ambition,—the former by the renunciation, the latter by the full gratification of their passions. Study and the sciences were, therefore, the lot of only a few who were initiated. For the immediate attainment of their objects, the order was less in need of heads than arms; and did not employ pens, but daggers, whose points were everywhere, while their hilts were in the hand of the grand-master.

No sooner had Hassan Sabah obtained possession of the castle of Alamut, and before he had provided it with magazines, than an emir, on whom the sultan had conferred the fief of the district of Rudbar, cut off all access and supplies. The inhabitants were on the point of abandoning the place, when Hassan inspired them with new courage, by the assurance that fortune would favour them there. They remained, and the castle henceforth received the name of the Abode of Fortune. The Sultan Melekshah, who had at first viewed the efforts of the Ismailites with contempt, was at length roused to secure the internal peace, which was threatened by Hassan's insurrection. He commanded the Emir Arslantash (*Lion-Rock*),⁵⁹ to destroy the son of Sabah, with all his followers. The latter, although he

had only seventy companions, and few provisions, defended himself courageously, until the deputy Abu Ali, who was collecting, as Dai, troops and disciples in Kaswin, sent three hundred men,—who, during the night, having formed a junction with the garrison, and falling upon the besiegers, put them to flight. Sultan Melekshah, being awakened to serious consideration by this check, sent Kisil Sarik, one of his most confidential officers, with troops of Khorassan, against Hossein Kaini, Hassan Sabah's Dai, who was spreading the principles of sedition throughout the provinces of Kuhistan. Hossein retreated to a castle in the district Muminabad, where he was not less straitened than Hassan had been in Alamut. The latter now thought, that the moment was arrived for him to put into execution a decisive stroke, and long-matured plan of murder, and to rid himself of his most powerful foes, by the ready mode of dagger or poison. Nisam-ol-mulk, the vizier of the Seljukides, great by his wisdom and power, under the three first sultans of that family, Togrul, Alparslan, and Melekshah,—he who, in his early youth, had rivalled Hassan at the school of the Imam Mosawek, in industry; afterwards, at the court of Melekshah, in their disputes concerning the dignity of vizier and the monarch's favour; and who, last of all, now openly contended with the lord of Alamut for power and rule,—he, the great support of the Seljuk empire, and the first great enemy of the order of the Ismailites,—fell, as the first victim of Hassan's revenge and ambition, under the poniards of his Fedavi, or Devoted. His fall, and the death of Melekshah, not without suspicion of poison, which followed shortly afterwards, and with which all Asia echoed,—were the frightful signals for assassination, which henceforth became Hassan's policy, and, like the plague, selected its victims from all classes of society.

It was a fearful period of murders and reprisals, equally destructive to the declared foes and friends of the new doctrine.⁶⁰ The former fell under the daggers of the Assassins, the latter under the sword of the princes, who, now roused to the dangers with which Hassan Sabah's sect threatened all thrones, visited its partisans and adherents with proclamations and condemnation to death. The first imams and priests issued, voluntarily or by order, fetwas and judgments, in which the Ismailites were condemned and anathematized, as the most dangerous enemies of the throne and the altar, as hardened criminals and lawless atheists; and which delivered them over to the avenging arm of justice, either in open war, or as outlaws, as infidels, separatists, and rebels, whom to slay was a law of Islamism. The Imam Ghasali, one of the first moralists of Islam, and most celebrated Persian teachers of ethics, wrote a treatise, peculiarly directed against the adherents of the esoteric doctrine, entitled, *On the Folly of the Supporters of the doctrine of Indifference, that is, the impious (Mulahid), whom may God condemn.*⁶¹ In that entitled, *Pearls of the Fetwas,*⁶² a celebrated collection of legal decisions, the sect of the impious (Mulahid) of Kuhistan were condemned according to the ancient sentences of the Imams, Ebi Jussuf and Mohammed, pronounced against the Karmathites, and their lives and goods given as free prey to all the Moslemin. In the “*Confluence*” (Multakath), and the “*treasures of the Fetwas*” (Khasanetol Fetavi), even the repentance of the Mulhad, or the impious, is rejected as entirely invalid and impossible, if they have ever exercised the office of Dai, or missionary; and their execution commanded as legal, even though they become converts and wish to abjure their errors; because perjury itself was one of their maxims, and no recovery could be expected from libertine atheists. Thus, the minds of both parties were mutually embittered; governments and the order were at open war, and heads fell a rich harvest to the assassin's dagger and the executioner's sword.⁶³

Those who were of the highest rank were the first to fall: such were the Emir Borsak, who had been appointed by Togrul-beg first governor of Bagdad, and Araash Nisami, to whom Yakut, the uncle of Barkyarok, the reigning Seljukide sultan, had given his daughter in marriage.⁶⁴ The civil war between the brothers, Barkyarok and Mohammed,⁶⁵ concerning the territories of Irak and Khorassan, facilitated the execution of Hassan's ambitious designs; and in the bloody hotbed of intestine discord, the poisonous plant of murder and sedition flourished. By degrees, his partisans made themselves masters

of the strongest castles of Irak, and even of that of Ispahan, called *Shah durr* (*the king's pearl*), built by Melekshah. That prince, hunting once near this place, in company with the ambassador of the Roman emperor at Constantinople, a hound strayed to an inaccessible mountain plateau, on which the castle was afterwards situated. The envoy observed, that, in his master's territories, a place presenting so many natural advantages of fortification would not be neglected, and that on the spot a fortress would long ago have been erected. The sultan availed himself of the ambassador's suggestion and the situation, and the castle was built, which was wrested by the Ismailites out of the hands of its commander. This gave rise to the saying—"A fort, the situation of which a dog pointed out and an infidel advised, could only bring perdition."

Besides the *king's pearl*, they took also the castles of Derkul and Khalenjan, near Ispahan, the last, five farsangs distant from that city; the castle of Wastamkuh, near Abhar; those of Tambur and Khalowkhan, between Fars and Kuhistan; those of Damaghan, Firuskuh, and Kirdkuh, in the province of Komis; and, lastly, in Kuhistan, those of Tabs, Kain, Toon, and several others in the district of Muminabad.⁶⁶ Abulfettah, Hassan's nephew, captured Esdahan, and Kia Busurgomid took Lamsir, both of them being, together with Reis Mosaffer, and Hossein Kaini, as Dais, energetic promulgators of the doctrine, and supporters of the greatness of Hassan Sabah, whose most intimate friends and confidants they were, as Abubekr, Omar, Osman, and Ali, had been those of the prophet. The acquisition of these fortresses, excepting those of Alamut and Wastamkuh, which came into the possession of the Ismailites ten years earlier, happened the year after the taking of Jerusalem by the Crusaders.⁶⁷ Christianity and infidelity, the cross of the pious warriors and the dagger of the Assassins, at the same time conspired the ruin of Mohammedanism and its monarchies.

For a long period, the Assassins have only been known to Europe by the accounts of the Crusaders, and recent historians have dated their appearance in Syria later than it really took place. They, however, appeared in Palestine contemporaneously with the Crusaders; for, already, in the first year of the twelfth century of the Christian era, Jenaheddevlet, Prince of Emessa, fell beneath their daggers as he was hastening to the relief of the castle of the Kurds, Hossnal a-kurd, which was besieged by the Count St. Gilles. Four years before,⁶⁸ he had been attacked, by three Persian assassins, in his palace, as he was preparing for his devotions. Suspicion, as the author of this attempt, fell upon Riswan, Prince of Aleppo, the political opponent of Jenaheddevlet, and a great friend of the Assassins, who had gained him over by the agency of one of their emissaries, a physician, who was also an astrologer, and thus doubly qualified to deceive himself and others, without having recourse to the false doctrine of his order. This man died twenty-four days after this first unsuccessful attempt at murder; but the sanguinary views of the order were not extinguished with him. His place was supplied by a Persian goldsmith, one Abutaher Essaigh, who inflamed the Prince of Aleppo, Riswan, to deeds of blood. This chieftain, who was constantly at enmity with the Crusaders,⁶⁹ and his brother, Dokak, Prince of Damascus, favoured the emigration and colonization of the Bateni, or Assassins, as their doctrine was agreeable to him, he being but a bad Moslem, and a free-thinker. He entered into the closest tie of friendship with them, and forgot, in the pursuit of his infidelity and short-sighted policy, the interest of his people and posterity. Sarmin, a strong place, only a day's journey south of Aleppo,⁷⁰ became the residence of Abulfettah, the nephew of Hassan Sabah, who was his grand-prior in Syria, as were Hossein Kaini, the Reis Mosaffer, and Busurgomid, in Kuhistan, Komis, and Irak. A few years afterwards,⁷¹ when the inhabitants of Apamea besought the assistance of Abutaher Essaigh, the commandant of Sarmin, against their Egyptian governor, Khalaf; he caused him to be assassinated, and took possession of the town in the name of Riswan, Prince of Aleppo, and remained in command of the citadel.⁷² He could not, however, resist Tancred, to whom the town surrendered, and who, contrary to his promise, carried Abutaher prisoner to Antioch, and only released him on receiving a ransom.

The Arabian historian, Kemaleddin, for this reason, accused Tancred of forfeiting his word; and, on the other hand, Albert of Aix, the Christian annalist of the crusades, blames him for granting so vile a ruffian so much as his life. His companions, however, whose lives were secured by no treaty, were delivered up by Tancred to the vengeance of the sons of Khalaf, and Abulfettah himself expired under the anguish of the torture.⁷³ Soon after this, Tancred took from the Assassins the strong castle of Kefrlana.

Abutaher having returned to his protector, Riswan, exerted his influence still further in schemes of assassination. Abu Harb Issa (*i. e.* Jesus, Father of Battles), a rich merchant of Khojend, a sworn enemy of the Bateni, who had expended large sums in injuring them, arrived at Aleppo with a rich caravan, consisting of five hundred camels. An Assassin, a native of Rei, by name Ahmed, son of Nassr, had accompanied him from the borders of Khorassan, watching an opportunity to avenge on his person the blood of a brother, who had fallen under the blows of Abu Harb's people. On his arrival at Aleppo, the murderer had a conference with Abutaher and his protector, Riswan, whom he won the more easily to his purposes, as the richness of the booty, and Abu Harb's known hostility to the Assassins, invited to vengeance. Abutaher provided Assassins, and Riswan guards, for the execution of the deed. As Abu Harb was, one day, counting his camels, surrounded by his slaves, the murderers attacked him; but before they could pierce their victim's heart, they all fell themselves under the blows of the brave and faithful slaves, who exhibited their courage and attachment in defence of their master. The princes of Syria, to whom Abu Harb communicated this attack, loaded Riswan with reproaches for this scandalous breach of hospitality. He excused himself with the lie, that he had had no share in the transaction, and added, to the universal horror of his deed, the public contempt which eventually falls to the lot of all liars. Abutaher, in order to escape the daily increasing rage of the inhabitants of Aleppo against the Ismailites, returned into his own country to his sanguinary associates.⁷⁴

As unsuccessful as their enterprise against Apamea, was the attack of the Bathenites on Shiser, of which they wished to deprive the family of Monkad and subject it to themselves. While the inhabitants of this castle had gone into the town,⁷⁵ to participate in the festivities of the Christians at the celebration of Easter, the Assassins took possession of it and barricaded the gates. On the return of the inhabitants, they were drawn up through the windows with ropes, by their wives, during the night, and drove out the Assassins.

Soon after, Mewdud, the prince of Mossul, fell under their daggers at Damascus, as he was walking with Togteghin, the prince of that city, on a feast day, in the fore court of the great mosque. An Assassin stabbed him, for which he lost his head on the spot.⁷⁶ In the same year⁷⁷ died Riswan, the prince of Aleppo, the great protector of the Ismailites, who made use of their swords and daggers for the defence and extension of his power. His death was the signal of theirs: the eunuch Lulu, who, with Riswan's son, Akhras, a youth of sixteen, carried on the government, commenced it with condemning to death all the Bathenites; which sentence was executed less in a legal manner than in a promiscuous carnage.

No less than three hundred men, women, and children, were cut in pieces, and about two hundred thrown into prison alive. Abulfettah,—not the one who was tortured to death by the sons of Khalaf, but a son of Abutaher, the goldsmith, and his successor, after his return to Persia, as head of the Assassins in Syria, met with a fate no less horrible and merited than his namesake: after being hewed to pieces at the gate looking towards Irak, his limbs were burnt, but his head was carried about through Syria for a show. The Dai Ismail, brother of the astrologer, who had first brought himself and his sect into credit with Riswan, paid for it with his life; several of the Assassins were thrown from the top of the wall

into the moat; Hossameddin, son of Dimlatsh, a newly-arrived Dai from Persia, fled from the popular rage to Rakka, where he died; several also saved themselves by flight, and were dispersed in the towns of Syria; others, to escape the fatal suspicion of belonging to the order, denounced their brothers and murdered them. Their treasures were sought out and were confiscated.⁷⁸ They revenged this persecution variously and sanguinarily. In an audience, granted by the khalif of Bagdad to Togteghin Atabeg, of Damascus, three conspirators in succession attacked the Emir Ahmed Bal, governor of Khorassan, whom they probably mistook for the Atabeg. They all three fell, together with the emir, who had been selected for their daggers, and who was in reality their sworn foe, and had frequently besieged their castles. The governors of provinces, as being the principal instruments of the state for the preservation of peace and good order, were their natural enemies, and, as such, more than all exposed to their daggers. Bedii, the governor of Aleppo, became their victim,⁷⁹ as also one of his sons, who was on his way to the court of the Emir Ilghasi. His other sons cut down the two murderers, but a third sprang forward and gave one of them, who was already wounded, his death-blow. Being seized, and carried before the princes Togteghin and Ilghasi, he was condemned by them only to imprisonment, but he sought his death by drowning himself.

The following year⁸⁰ Ilghasi received a message from Abu Mohammed, the head of the Ismailis in Aleppo, with a request to put them in possession of the castle of Sherif. Ilghasi, dreading his power, pretended to grant it; but before the envoy could return with this consent, the inhabitants of Aleppo destroyed the walls, filled up the ditches, and united the castle with the town. Ibn Khashshab, who had made this proposition, in order not to increase the power of the Ismailites by the possession of the fortress, paid for it with his blood. A few years afterwards, they made a similar request to Nureddin, the celebrated prince of Damascus, for the possession of the castle Beitlaha; which was, in the same way, apparently granted, and frustrated by a similar stratagem: for the inhabitants, secretly instigated by Nureddin, to prevent the Ismailites obtaining a firm footing, immediately set about destroying their fortifications. So great was the dread in which princes held the order, that they did not dare to refuse them the strong places of their own countries, and preferred destroying them, to abandoning them for citadels of the power and sovereignty of the Assassins.⁸¹

In Persia, also, their vengeance chose the most illustrious victims. Fakrolmulk⁸² (*Glory of the kingdom*), Abulmosaffer Ali, the son of the grand vizier Nisam-ol-mulk, who had filled the office he inherited from his father, along with his hatred of the Assassins, during the two reigns of the sultans Mohammed and Sandjar, with credit and industry, and Chakarbeg, the son of Mikail, brother of Togrul, grand-uncle of Sandjar, the reigning sultan of the Seljuks, were amongst them.⁸³ A sanguinary lesson for the latter, whom the son of Sabah warned by still farther menaces. He found it more adviseable frequently to restrain his powerful enemies by impending danger, and preferred unnerving their arm by terror, to multiplying uselessly avengers by repeated murders. He gained over a slave of the sultan's, who, while the latter slept, stuck a dagger in the ground close to his head. The prince was terror-struck when, on waking, he espied the murderous weapon but concealed his fear. Some days after, the grand-master wrote to him in the style of the order, brief and cutting like their stilettos: "Had we not been well-disposed towards the sultan, we might have plunged the dagger into his heart, instead of the ground."

Sandjar, who had despatched some troops against the castles of the Ismailites in Kuhistan, was the more fearful, after this warning, of prosecuting the siege; as his brother Mohammed, who had caused the two strongest fortresses of the Ismailites in Irak, Alamut and Lamsir, to be invested by the Atabeg Nushteghin Shirghir, for more than a year, died at the very moment when, being reduced to extremities, they were on the point of surrendering.⁸⁴ This death was too favourable to the Assassins, not to be considered less the work of accident than of their policy, which, though trusting to the

dagger, did not neglect the use of poison. Admonished by this, Sandjar offered to make peace with the Ismailites on three conditions:—1st. They should erect no new fortifications about their castles; 2nd. They should purchase no arms nor ammunition; and, 3rd. That they should make no more proselytes. As, however, the jurists, who had thundered the ban of general condemnation and persecution against the impiety of the order, would hear of no compromise or peace with them, the sultan fell under the popular suspicion of being a secret partisan of their impious doctrines. Peace was, however, concluded between Hassan and Sandjar; and the latter not only exempted the Ismailites from all duties and imposts in the district of Kirdkuh, but even assigned them a certain portion of the revenues of Kumis, as the annual pension of the order. Thus, this society of murderers increased daily in power and authority.

It was not, however, merely since his accession, but twelve or fourteen years earlier, that the Sultan Sandjar had exhibited tokens of forbearance towards the Assassins; for on his journey from Khorassan to Irak, he visited at Damaghan the Reis Mosaffer, venerable both on account of his age and influence, who, as we have already seen, had declared himself an adherent of Hassan Sabah, and had obtained for him, by stratagem, the treasures of the Emir David Habeshi. Some officers proposed to demand them back, but on Mosaffer's representation, that he had always loaded the inhabitants of the place with favours, as the proper subjects of the sultan, the latter lavished honours upon him. Thus died Reis Mosaffer,⁸⁵ respected and honoured as the patriarch of the new doctrine, at the age of one hundred and one.⁸⁶

Hassan Sabah survived the most faithful of his disciples, and his nearest relations, to whom the ties of attachment and consanguinity seemed to secure the highest rights to the succession to the sovereignty. His nephew and grand-prior in Syria, Abulfettah, had fallen by the sword of the enemy; Hossein Kaini, grand-prior in Kuhistan, under the dagger of a murderer, probably Ostad, one of the two sons of Hassan: and Ostad and his brother under the hand of their own father, who seemed to revel even in spilling his own blood. Without proof or measure of guilt, he sacrificed them, not to offended justice, but apparently to mere love of murder, and that terrific policy, by virtue of which the order snapped all ties of relationship or friendship, to bind the more closely those of impiety and slaughter.

Ostad (i. e. *the master*), probably so called because the public voice had destined him as the successor of his father as grand-master, was put to death on the mere suspicion of being concerned in Hossein's murder; and his brother, because he had drunk wine: the former, probably, because he had, by his crime, which was without orders, interfered with his father's prerogative; the latter, because he had infringed one of the least essential laws of Islamism, but whose strict observance was part of the system of the order. In the execution of his two sons, the grand-master gave the profane and the initiated a sanguinary example of avenged disobedience to the ordinance of outward worship, and the rules of internal discipline; but probably, besides this apparent motive, the son of Sabah was urged by another, to the destruction of his race; possibly, his sons, disgusted with the long reign of their father, were expecting with impatience to succeed him; it is probable, that on that account he deemed them incompetent, as not having learned to obey, or as being wanting in the necessary princely qualities; or, it is probable, that he set them aside, in order to avoid sinking the order into a dynasty by inheritance, and that the succession of grand-masters might be determined by the nearest relationship of mind and character, irreligion and impiety. Human nature is not usually so diabolical, that the historian must, among several doubtful motives to an action, always decide for the worst; but, in the founder of this society of vice, the establisher of the murderous order of the Assassins, the most horrible is the most likely.

Of the most faithful promulgators of the new doctrine, of whom we have hitherto made mention, there still remained the Dai Kiabusurgomid, who had not quitted the castle of Lamin during the twenty years that had elapsed since he took it, and the Lieutenant Abu Ali, Dai in Kaswin. When the son of Sabah felt his end approaching, he sent for them to Alamut; and, by his last will, divided the government between them in such a manner, that Abu Ali was invested with the external command and civil administration, and Kiabusurgomid, as proper grand-master, with the supreme spiritual power and government of the order. Thus, at a very advanced age, died Hassan Sabah,⁸⁷ for more than seventy years had elapsed, since, as a youth of twenty, he studied with Nisam-ol-mulk, under the Imam Mowasek, in the reign of Togrul. He expired, not on the bed of torture, which his crimes merited, but in his own; not under the poniards, which he had drawn against the hearts of the best and greatest of his contemporaries, but by the natural effect of age; after a blood-stained reign of thirty-five years, during which he not only never quitted the castle of Alamut, but had never removed more than twice, during this long period, from his chamber to the terrace. Immoveable in one spot, and persisting in one plan, he meditated the revolutions of empires by carnage and rebellion; or wrote rules for his order, and the catechism of the secret doctrine of libertinism and impiety. Fixed in the centre of his power, he extended its circumference to the extreme confines of Khorassan and Syria; with the pen in his hand, he guided the daggers of his Assassins. He was, himself, in the hand of Providence, like war and pestilence,—a dreadful scourge for the chastisement of feeble sovereigns and corrupted nations.

END OF BOOK II.

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1. A. D. 1004; A. H. 395.
 2. A. D. 1122; A. H. 516.
 3. A. D. 1123; A. H. 517.
 4. Macrisi art. Mohaval, Darolilm and Darolilm-jedide.
 5. A. D. 1058; A. H. 450.
 6. Mirkhond and Devletshah; art. Shahfur of Nishabur.
 7. A. D. 1078; A. H. 471.
 8. Nokhbetet-tevarikh and Mirkhond.
 9. A. D. 1078; A. H. 471.
 10. A. D. 1079; A. H. 472.
 11. A. D. 1085; A. H. 478.
 12. A. D. 1072; A. H. 465.
 13. A. D. 1077; A. H. 470.
 14. A. D. 1084; A. H. 477.
 15. A. D. 1077; A. H. 470.
 16. A. D. 1079; A. H. 472.
 17. A. D. 1084; A. H. 477.
 18. Mirkhond and Takwimet-tevarikh.
 19. Mirkhond.
 20. Mirkhond.
 21. Mirkhond.
 22. A. D. 860; A. H. 246.
 23. Jehannuma, p. 296 and 304.
 24. Dealbati.
 25. Daniel, 7, 9.
 26. Nassaih-ol-Moluk.
 27. Nassaih-ol-Moluk, after the Mevakit of the judge Asadeddin.
 28. A. D. 1092; A. H. 485.
 29. Mirkhond.
 30. The Hamakati ehli ilahat yeni Mulahide khaselehum Allah.
 31. Jevahitol Fetavi.
 32. See the Nassaih-ol-Moluk and the Mevakif.
 33. Abulfeda Anno 494; Jihannuma, Mirkhond.

34. A. D. 1096; A. H. 490.
35. A. D. 1100; A. H. 494.
36. Abulfeda Anno 494; Jihannumma, Mirkhond.
37. Anno H. 490.
38. Ibn Forat and Kemaleddin.
39. Jihannumma, art: Sarmin.
40. A. D. 1107.
41. Wilken, Geschichte der Kreuzzüge, II. p. 272, after Kemaleddin, and Albert of Aix. This latter constantly confounds names: he calls Riswan, Brodoan; Apamea, Femia; Abutaher, Botherus, and the Assassins, Azopart. *Vide Gesta Dei per Francos*, p. 350 and 375.
42. A. D. 1110; A. H. 504.
43. Ibn Forat and Kemaleddin.
44. A. D. 1108; A. H. 512.
45. Abulfeda, Takwimet tevarik, Mirkhond Abulfaradj.
46. A. D. 1113; A. H. 507.
47. A. D. 1115; A. H. 509.
48. A. D. 1119; A. H. 513.
49. A. D. 1120; A. H. 514.
50. Ibn Forat.
51. A. D. 1114; A. H. 508.
52. Abulfeda, Takwimet-tevarikh Mirkhond Abulfaradj.
53. A. D. 1117; A. H. 511.
54. A. D. 1104; A. H. 498.
55. Mirkhond.
56. A. D. 1124; A. H. 518.

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