

Book V

Reigns of Jeleleddin Hassan III., Son of Mohammed Hassan II.—and of his Son, Alaeddin Mohammed III.

The retributive and avenging Fury proceeds with steady step through the domain of history, but the traces of her silent progress are not always visible to the eye of man. Generations have passed away, and empires sunk in ruin, without its being possible, satisfactorily to point out the remote and proximate causes of their fall. The judgment of the conscientious historian stands, then, in the middle point, between blind scepticism on the one hand, and rash credulity on the other. He avoids the explaining of events as an officious interpreter of Providence, no less than wishing to behold in their progress, nothing but the concatenation of blind necessity. On the other hand, incidents emerge, from time to time, from the ocean of history, under the same circumstances and forms, and in which it is as impossible not to perceive the hand of heaven, as it is to overlook the operation of submarine fire in the formation of a new island. As in the extensive department of acoustics, different nations have appropriated different sounds to one and the same object, and have expressed it by different words,—hence, the variety of languages; so, in the many-toned domain of history, one and the same occurrence has been passed unnoticed by many nations, and, by many others, viewed and represented in different lights. Hence the variety of histories, according to the difference of the characters and genius of countries and nations.

The universally opposed *polarity*, if we may so express it, of the east and the west, appears even in the different mode of writing history. Some events are related by European, some by oriental writers, and when they coincide, the same occurrence is viewed in an entirely different light. What escapes the one is seized by the other, and the latter considers attentively what the other passes over. How very different are the judgments of eastern and western historians, concerning the original condition of mankind, the rise of kingdoms, the institution of religions, the developement of civilization, the horrors of despotism, the struggles of liberty, and the continued connexion of causes and effects! Where the one views immutable necessity, the other perceives very often blind chance; and what is deemed by the latter the consequence of a present crime, appears to the former the punishment of one long past. This, however, is not the place to proceed farther with these remarks; yet we have an opportunity of advantageously applying them to the next event which we shall have to consider.

The people of the east have the highest notions of the sanctity of filial duty and paternal authority; to them the patriarchal is the exemplar of the most perfect government. Though the violations of filial piety, and the crimes of unnatural sons, are punished in the west as in the east, and though parricides in no region escape the vengeance of heaven, yet it is only oriental historians who inculcate the experimental truth, that the curse of infanticide follows, in the same family, parricide; and that the first murdered father is avenged by the dagger of his grandson.

To the disgrace of mankind, such sanguinary examples are exhibited in the histories of the ancient Persian kings, and of the khalifs: how could they be wanting in the history of the Assassins? Khosru Parwis and the Khalif Mostanssur, who were stained with their fathers' blood, died by the hands of their sons. The resistance which Hassan, the Enlightener, opposed to his father, was avenged on his son, Mohammed, by his grandson, Jeleleddin; first, by similar refractoriness, and then, it appears, by poison.

Jelaleddin Hassan, the son of Mohammed, and grandson of Hassan, was born in the 552d year of the Hegira, had attained the age of twenty-five years, ere he assumed the helm of affairs, and had, therefore, had sufficient time, during the long reign, or rather anarchy, to make salutary reflections on the pernicious consequences of his enlightening, and the abrogation of all ties of morality, proceeding from it. Discontented with the innovation, which had made public to the people and the profane, the secret doctrine of the founder and the initiated, he openly, during his father's life, declared himself against it, and, by that means, drew upon himself clouds of the darkest suspicion. The father feared the son, and the son the father; and their mutual dread was justified by the sanguinary examples of their predecessors.

Mohammed's father, Hassan II., had fallen by the poniard of one of his nearest relations; and Hassan I. had put to death his two sons. Father and son regarded each other reciprocally as murderers: on the days of public audience, when the latter appeared at court, the former wore a coat of mail under his clothes, and strengthened the guard; but where the dagger can find no entrance, poison may; and, in fact, as several historians affirm, Mohammed is said to have died from the effects of poison. Jelaleddin Hassan, the third of that name among the grand-masters of the order, stood forward as the restorer of the true religion, according to the strictest principles of Islamism. He prohibited every thing that his father and grandfather had declared to be allowed; commanded the erection of mosques, the re-establishment of the call to prayers, and the solemn assembly on Fridays. He called round him imams, readers of the Koran, preachers, scribes, and professors, whom he loaded with presents and favours, and appointed to the newly-built mosques, convents and schools.

He sent circulars, not only to the grand-priors in Syria²³⁰ and Kuhistan, by which he enjoined the re-establishment of Islamism among the Ismailites, but also to the contemporary princes, to make known to them his adhesion to the true religion. He sent ambassadors to Nassir-ledinillah, the khalif of Bagdad; to the sultan of Transoxana, Mohammed Khowaresmshah; and other Persian potentates, to assure them of the purity of his faith. The khalif, the sultan, and the princes, who considered this declaration to be sincere, received the envoys with distinction, clothed them in pelisses of honour, gave them re-credentials, and, for the first time, designated their lord by the titles proper to reigning princes, and which, hitherto, none of the preceding grand-masters could assume. The imams, and great scribes of the time, issued formal declarations, in which they attested the sincerity of his conversion, and the orthodoxy of his tenets; and gave him the honorary tide of Nev Musulman, or New Musulman.

As the inhabitants of Kaswin, who had hitherto lived in the greatest hostility to the Ismailites, doubted the sincerity of Jelaleddin's religious opinions, in order to remove these doubts, he went still farther: he requested them to send some persons of respectability to Alamut, who should have ocular demonstration of the truth. They appeared, and Hassan III., in their presence, burnt a number of books, which, he affirmed, were those of the founder, Hassan I., and the secret rules of the order. He anathematized the founder and the grand-masters, his predecessors, and thus attained his object; which was, that the inhabitants of Kaswin might, likewise, vouch for the orthodoxy of his doctrine.²³¹

In the second year of Jelaleddin Hassan's reign, his harem, that is to say, his mother and his wife, undertook, with great pomp, the pilgrimage to Mecca. During the progress, a standard was carried in front, according to the custom of orthodox princes, and water was distributed to the pilgrims. To lodge travellers, to afford them every facility and convenience, to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty, to nurse the sick and to instruct the ignorant; such are the most meritorious of good works. Hence, were founded karavanserais, bridges, and baths; eating-houses and fountains, hospitals and schools, the finest monuments of Islamism, form, in the circuit of cities and mosques, so many pious

institutions. Many of these may be founded by persons of either sex, and even by eunuchs, who belong to neither.

The inscriptions on the mosques and other buildings, transmit to posterity the names of sultans and sultanas, viziers and eunuchs, and women of every rank and age. Although the latter are excluded from no public institution, on account of sex, and build bridges and schools as well as found hospitals and taverns, yet their names are found in preference on mosques, baths, and fountains; probably, because prayer and bathing are two favourite female occupations; and because, in the east, they have nowhere an opportunity of meeting in public, except at the mosque, the bath, and the well. According to the laws of Islamism, also, ablution by water is as inseparable from the prescribed prayers, five times in the day, as purity and devotion from the existence of woman: baths and fountains, therefore, are a necessary assistance to the entrance to the mosque of the female sex, who are naturally so devout. Wells, at which water is distributed gratis to the passers-by, have a still closer relation to the piety of Ismailitic women, as is indicated by their name, Sebil.

Sebil, in Arabic, “the way,” means generally the road, and the traveller is hence called *Ibn-es-sebil*, the son of the road; but it more particularly signifies the way of piety and good works, which leads to Paradise. Whatever meritorious work the Moslem undertakes, he does, *Fi sebil Allah*, on the way of God, or for the love of God; and the most meritorious which he can undertake is the holy war, or the fight for his faith and his country, *on God’s way*.²³² But, since pious women can have no immediate share in the contest, every thing which they can contribute to the nursing of the wounded, and the refreshment of the exhausted, is imputed to them as equally meritorious, as if they had fought themselves. The distribution of water to the exhausted and wounded warriors, is the highest female merit in the holy war on God’s way.

War is the first of the good works commanded by God; after it comes the pilgrimage, the difficulties of which, in the burning deserts of Arabia, are an image of those of a real campaign; and after the support of the warrior, that of the pilgrim, is the finest virtue in a beneficent woman. Hence, the distribution of water (*sebil*) to the caravans, the making of wells and aqueducts on the way to Mecca, have ever been a splendid object of the piety and ambition of Mohammedan princesses, from Zobeide, the wife of the Khalif Harun Rashid, down to the Ottoman sultanas. Jelaledin’s wife’s distribution of water surpassed even that of the wife of Khowaresmshah, the powerful sovereign of Transoxana; and the Khalif Nassir-ledinillah, gave Jelaledin’s standard the precedence of that of Khowaresmshah, which circumstance afforded the first motive to the great dissensions and earnest contest between the khalif and the shah of Khowaresm.

The latter advanced with no less than three hundred thousand men against the “*City of Salvation*.” The khalif sent the celebrated Sheikh Shehabeddin Sehewerdi as ambassador to the enemy’s camp; this learned envoy commenced a long and flowery oration, in praise of the family of Abbas, and the reigning khalif. Khowaresmshah, on the signification of the speech being communicated to him, replied, “’Tis well! he, who, as successor of the prophet, and clothed in his mantle commands the faithful, should possess such properties, but none of them are to be found in the descendants of the family of Abbas.”

The sheikh returned without attaining his object, and Khowaresmshah advanced with his armament as far as Hamadan and Holwan, when a sudden drifting snow-storm checked his farther progress, and compelled him to retreat. As he was preparing for his second expedition against Bagdad, his army was overthrown on the confines of Kashgar, by the hordes of Jengis Khan. When Khowaresmshah’s son

and successor, Alaeddin Tekesh, in execution of his father's plan against Bagdad, had advanced as far as Hamadan, a twenty days' snow-storm stopped him in his march.²³³ Winter, and the Mongols, who rushed like snow-flakes from the north, for that time preserved the khalif city from destruction; a destruction destined afterwards to befall it at the hands of the latter. Jelaledin, who saw no means of withstanding the approaching storm, secretly sent ambassadors to Jengis Khan, to offer him, as well as to the khalif, his homage and submission.

In this manner, the chieftain of the Ismailites, attained not only the reputation of unsullied orthodoxy, but also the actual rank of a sovereign prince, which the khalif had constantly refused preceding grand-masters. He supported his increasing credit by amicable relations and alliances with the neighbouring princes; and, in particular, maintained a good understanding with his nearest neighbour, the Atabeg Mosafereddin, the lord of Aran and Aserbijan. They combined against Nassireddin Mangeli, the governor of Irak, who had declared war against the atabeg, and invaded the territory of the Ismailites. Jelaledin went from Alamut to Aserbijan, where he was received by the atabeg with great splendour, and loaded with presents. His army likewise experienced the liberality of the atabeg in the amplest manner: a thousand dinars were carried, every day, to Jelaledin's residence, for the maintenance of his kitchen only.

The two allied princes sent ambassadors to Bagdad, desiring the khalif's aid against the governor of Irak. Nassir-ledinillah sent several of his most distinguished men with full powers. Encouraged by this embassy, and reinforced with subsidiary troops, they advanced against Irak, defeated and killed the governor, Nassireddin Mangeli, and appointed another in his stead.²³⁴ After an absence of eighteen months, Jelaledin returned to his fortress of Alamut. As, during his journey and campaigns, he had everywhere proclaimed his abhorrence of the system of his ancestors, and had corroborated his declaration by his prudent conduct, the chiefs of Islamism universally met him with kindness and friendship.²³⁵

He was desirous of cementing his alliance by a closer family union with the princes and viceroys of Khilan: they, however, replied, that, without the khalif's consent, they could not comply with his wishes. Jelaledin sent an ambassador to Bagdad, and Nassir-ledinillah granted his viceroys permission to ally themselves with Jelaledin: he received in marriage the daughter of Keikawus, who bore him his successor, Alaeddin Mohammed.

In order not to confound this Keikawus, viceroy of Khilan, with his namesake, the Prince of Ruyan, of the family Kawpara (which might the more easily occur, as both have been hitherto unknown to European historians), we have purposely omitted to speak of the latter, who had already, half a century before, entered into political relations with the Ismailites, his next neighbours. We shall now embrace, at one view, the fifty years' contemporaneity of the grand-masters of the Assassins, and the princes of the house of Kawpara, or Dabuye. It is, however, necessary to premise a few words, concerning the geographical position of the northern neighbours of the Ismailites.

The mountain range, which bounds the Persian Irak Jebal on the north, is, as it were, the bulwark of Persia, against the Caspian Sea. The partly flat, and partly hilly country, lying between it and the northern declivity of this chain, is divided into four provinces; so that two of them are situated immediately at the foot of the mountains, and the other two lie between the former and the sea coast. Dilem and Thaberistan are to the south, and on the declivity of the mountains; the former to the west, the latter to the east; beyond them lie Gilan and Mazanderan; the former to the north of Dilem, the latter of Thaberistan. This quadruply-divided territory is bounded on the north by the Caspian Sea, and

on the south by the above-mentioned mountains, on the southern side of which the domain of the Ismailites extended from Alamut, the seat of government, south-easterly, to Komis and Kuhistan.

Almost in the centre of these four provinces, beyond the Caspian Alps, which maps distinguish with precision, lies the unnoticed district of Ruyan and Rostemdar, ruled by its native princes, whose family maintained its stand, uninterruptedly, for eight centuries; while in Gilan, Dilem, Thaberistan, and Mazanderan, dynasties rose and fell. As the territory of Ruyan and Rostemdar lie immediately on one side of Mount Demawend and Alamut, and its subordinate places on the other, these rulers of Rostemdar demand our attention, as the nearest neighbours of the Assassins, and, after them, the lords of Mazanderan, as the most powerful of this pentarchy. Both these ruling families, and the country over which they held sway, possess, besides the interest attaching to them, as being connected with the history of the Assassins, one more peculiar, and hitherto unnoticed in European histories; one which arises from the antiquity of their origin, and the exceedingly ancient monuments of the Persian empire, still existing in these provinces. In the time of the ancient Persian monarchy, the family of Hanefshah reigned in Thaberistan and Mazanderan, till Korad, the father of Nushirvan, transferred the government of this country to his eldest son, Keyuss. Keyuss revolted against his brother Nushirvan, who had ascended the throne of Persia, and succumbed to his arms. One of his descendants, called Bawend, successfully re-asserted the rights of his predecessors, in the 45th year of the Hegira; and the family Bawend, of the blood of Nushirvan, although twice interrupted by the Dilemides and Alides, reigned for a period of seven hundred years, until, after their third fall, the dynasty Jelawi arose on their ruin.

No less venerable than this race of the lords of Mazanderan, to whom, likewise, Kuhistan owed obedience, was that of the family Dabuye, or Kawpara, which reigned, uninterruptedly, from the 40th year of the Hegira, when Baduspan possessed himself of the sovereignty of Ruyan and Rostemdar; to the 888th, when the family Keyumers supplied their place. Baduspan was a descendant of that blacksmith, so famous in the history of the east, Kawe by name, who overthrew the tyrant Sohak, and hoisted his leathern apron for a flag; which, adorned with pearls and jewels, glittered till the end of the monarchy, as the national standard. Feridun, the legitimate heir, whose right to the throne the magnanimous smith proclaimed, was not only born in this province, in the village Wereg, the oldest place in Thaberistan, but also secretly educated there, during the reign of the tyrant.²³⁶

His mother had taken refuge there, and had fed the child with the milk of a buffalo-cow (*Kaw, cow*), the head of which, sculptured on Feridun's mace, has become no less celebrated among the national insignia, than the leathern apron. It was, then, from the mountains of Thaberistan, that the young hero commenced the fight for freedom, which the smith (Kawe) maintained in the capital. Sohak was made prisoner near Babylon, and confined in the village of Wereg, at the foot of Demawend, whence freedom issued, and where tyranny expired. Feridun divided his kingdom among his three sons, Iredj, Turan, and Salem, and retired into his native land, to Temishe Kuti; which, according to the Shah Nameh, formed a triangle with the cities, Sari and Kurgan, the ancient Astrabad. Iredj having fallen in a contest with his brothers, his son Menutshehr, excited by his grandfather Feridun, undertook to avenge him. The bones of the three brothers repose at Sari, under an edifice of stone, which has resisted the efforts of centuries, and of thousands of men, who have endeavoured to destroy it.

The plains and glens of Thaberistan were the scene of the splendid battles of Menutshehr and Afrasiab, when Iran resisted the irruption of Turan: the whole country is, in fact, as may be perceived from this cursory topographical notice, the classic ground of ancient Persian history. Besides the descendants of Nushirvan's brother, and of the liberator, Feridun, and the families of Bawend and Kawpara, whose

origin mounts to the highest Persian antiquity, that of Keyumers,²³⁷ which reigned from the fall of the Kawpara, to the foundation of the empire of the Sefi, trace their descent from the king of the same name, who appears so darkly through the remote clouds of historical traditions, that many writers actually confound the first Persian king with the first man.

Nevertheless, this family is, as far as we know, the last which has traced its origin, authentically, to the ancient Persian kings. Chance has, in the conformity of the names of the first and last sovereign, repeated the play of words, which appears in history, in the fall of several great kingdoms. The first and last rulers of the eastern and western Roman empires, of the Seljukides, of the governors of Thaberistan, of the prophets of the Moslimin, and of the last of his successors of the family of Abbas, had similar names. The names of Augustus, Constantine, Mohammed, Togrul, Keyumers, commence and terminate the series of Roman, Byzantine, Arabian, Seljukian, and Persian royal families; and, perhaps, the European Turkish empire will end, as it began, with an Othman.

After this glance at the great interest, which the country immediately bordering on the Ismailitic territory, to the north, presents to the lover of oriental history, both in a topographical and historical point of view, we shall again direct our attention to the rulers of Ruyan and Rostemdar, who, together, are called, Astandar. Astan means mountain, in the language of Thaberistan, a language entirely unknown in Europe; and Astandar, ruler of the mountains, is equivalent to the appellation, Sheikh-al-jebal, or the Old Man of the Mountain; that is, the grand-master of the Assassins. The latter shared this title, derived from the character of his territory, not only with the families of Kawpara, but also with that of Bawend, who ruled over Mazanderan, and, before the Ismailites, over Kuhistan; and also with the chiefs of the highlands beyond Demawend. Astan, Jebal, Kuh, are Thaberistanish, Arabic, and Persian words, signifying mountain. The sovereigns of the family Kawpara, called themselves Astandar, or Prince of the Mountains, as the grand-master of the Assassins, swaying the sceptre on the other side, was named Sheikh-al-jebal, Old Man of the Mountain.²³⁸

Astandar Keikawus Ben Hesarasf reigned in the first half of the sixth century of the Hegira, at Ruyan, on the one side of the Alps, while, on the other, flourished, as lord of the mountain, at Alamut, Mohammed, son of Busurgomid, grand-master of the Assassins. The innate hostility, existing between the Ismailites and all legitimate governments, was still more increased, by the natural jealousy of proximity, and by the friendly alliance between Keikawus and Shah Gazi, Prince of Thaberistan. The latter was one of the greatest and most implacable enemies of the Assassins, whose hatred against those foes of government and faith, was spurred on by motives of personal revenge. The Assassins had murdered, as he was coming out of the bath, at Sarkhos, the shah's favourite, an exceedingly handsome youth, whom he had sent with a thousand cavalry to the court of Sandjar. Shah Gasi buried him with great pomp, near the tomb of the Imam Ali Mussa, and erected a vaulted chapel over his grave, richly endowed with the lands of the surrounding villages.

From this moment he never paused in the persecution of the murderers, who, after bereaving him of what was dearer than life itself, threatened to deprive him of that also. His general, Shelku, made a nocturnal incursion into the Ismailitic territory, and immolated with the sword, many thousands of the "initiated to the dagger," and erected, in Rudbar, five towers formed of their skulls. Shah Gasi sent first against them, his brother-in-law, the prince of Dilem, Kia Busurgomid, of the same name as the then grand-master of the Assassins; and, after his death, the prince of Ruyan. Thus were irreconcilably opposed to each other, Kia Busurgomid, of Dilem, against Kia Busurgomid, of Alamut; the highland chieftain of one side of the Alps, to the Old Man of the other.²³⁹

When Keikawus, after the death of his nephew, Kia Busurgomid, of Dilem, united the government of that province with the lordship of Ruyan and Rostendar, Shah Gasi, of Thaberistan, remitted the sum of thirty thousand dinars, which Dilemistan paid, as tribute to his treasury; but on condition, that he should maintain a continued war against the order of the Assassins. The effect of this was, that, at that period, they dared not show themselves anywhere in Ruyan, Mazanderan, and Dilem, and that the Moslimin of those provinces were safe from their daggers. Keikawus undertook some expeditions against Alamut itself, and plundered and ravaged the surrounding country. He wrote a letter to the grand-master Kia Mohammed, in the following words:—

““May the life of the infidel, the wicked, the accursed, the base, the reprobate, be extirpated from the face of the earth; may the Almighty God annihilate his house, and the angel of torment prepare his dwelling in hell! God, the most high, has not in vain commanded to the faithful and the pious, the destruction of the infidel and the atheist. The greatest grace and highest favour of the Almighty, is shown in this; that the flaming sword of perdition is waving over your heads and country; that ye, having recourse to empty arrogance and senseless cunning, hemmed in on all sides, are now like the hunted fox, lost in the brake. What hinders ye now from showing your manhood, against us, who sit publicly every where, without chamberlains or door-keepers, guard or officers? against me, your greatest foe on God’s earth?”

The grand-master replied in the style of the order, laconically, and cutting as their stilettoes:—

““We have read thy letter; the contents are insults, and insult recoils on the insulter.”

240

The successor of Keikawus, Astandar Hasarasf, son of Shehrnush, struck into an entirely different line of policy. Weary of the war against the Assassins, he concluded a treaty of peace and amity, resigned his strongest castles to them, and even abandoned himself to the extravagances of drunkenness.

Two of the grandees of his court, whom he had injured by killing the favourite of one, and the brother of the other, fled to Erdeshir, King of Mazanderan; they complained that their prince, allied with the Assassins, even trod in their steps; and represented that, if the king should suffer this to proceed unresented, the murderers would soon spread themselves through Mazanderan, and cause universal desolation. Erdeshir entered into the spirit of this representation, retained the complainants at his court, and despatched a person of distinction to Hasarasf, to admonish him to more reasonable conduct. The admonition being ineffectual, his nobles deserted him, and fled to Erdeshir’s court; others took up arms against him, supported by Erdeshir with an army. Hasarasf, thus abandoned, went over to the Assassins, with whom he sought refuge.

Shah Erdeshir appointed the Seid Eddai Ilulhaki Aburisa, governor of Dilem. In a nocturnal attack, executed by Hasarasf, supported by the Ismailites, the seid was slain; and Shah Erdeshir swore that he would not rest, till he had revenged the murder of the seid, with the death of Hasarasf: the latter fled to the strong castle, Welidj. Erdeshir took Nur and Nadju, and besieged Welidj for a considerable time;

finding, however, the investment of it too difficult, he retreated, and appointed Hesbereddin Khurshid, viceroy of Ruyan and Rostendar, in place of Hasarasf. The latter went into Irak, and thence to Hamadan, where he sought protection from Togrul, the last sultan of the Persian line of the Seljukides.

Togrul sent an ambassador to Erdeshir, to intercede for Hasarasf; the shah of Mazanderan replied: "If Hasarasf wishes to regain the sovereignty of Ruyan, let him do penance for his impiety, and break off his connexion with the Assassins; or the sultan may point out another place, where he may be beyond the alliance of the order of murderers." The Seljukide sultan approved of the decision of the king of Mazanderan. Hasarasf fled to Rei, where he sought the hand of the daughter of Serajeddin Kamil, and aid from his father-in-law. Being unable to effect his purpose, he went straight with his brother, to Shah Erdeshir, who wished to confine him to the castle of Welidj. The commandant, who had formerly served under Hasarasf, refused to imprison his former lord; at length, however, Hasarasf terminated his unquiet life, being murdered by Hesbereddin, unknown to Erdeshir.

The shah caused his infant son to be brought up, but ere he attained his majority and the government of Ruyan, he fell by the hand of one Bistun, who pretended to the sovereignty. The murderer fled to Alamut, which had ever been the safest asylum for such criminals. The grand-master immediately offered to deliver him up, if Erdeshir would, in return, surrender the village of Herdjan to the order. Erdeshir would not consent, but replied to the envoy, "What is a wretch like Bistun, that I should yield one of my possessions to the Assassins for him?" This happened in the 610th year of the Hejira, that is, in the third of the re-establishment of Islamism, by the grand-master, Nev Musulman, who, on offering to give up the murderer, remained, indeed, true to his newly-adopted system of restoring religion, yet at the same time made this measure of policy subordinate to the interest of the order.

Although no murder stains the history of Jelaleddin's reign, and so far his conduct was in full accordance with his system, the historian is, nevertheless, compelled not only to question the purity of his motives, but also the sincerity of his return to the doctrines of Islamism. Two circumstances place this in a very suspicious light. In the first place, the just mentioned refusal to deliver up the murderer, who had sought within the walls of Alamut, the usual sanctuary of impiety, unless in return for the cession of a village; secondly, in the burning of the books, when Jelaleddin pretended to celebrate an *auto da fe*, of the works and rubrics of former grand-masters, in order to convince the deputies from Kaswin of the truth of his conversion. In this, however, it is probable that he consumed the works of the dogmatists and fathers of Islamism, while the great library of free-thinking and immorality, together with the metaphysical and theological works of Hassan Sabah, the founder, were preserved, though secretly, and only, as we shall see below, devoted to the flames on the fall of Alamut and dissolution of the order.

It is, therefore, more than probable, that Jelaleddin's conversion of the Ismailites to Islamism, so loudly proclaimed abroad, and his public abjuration of the doctrine of impiety, was nothing else than hypocrisy and deeply designed policy, in order to re-establish the credit of the order, which had been exposed to the anathemas of priests, and the ban of princes, by the inconsiderate publication of their doctrines, and to gain for himself the title of prince, instead of the dignity of grand-master. Thus the Jesuits, when they were threatened with expulsion by the parliament, and with a bull of dissolution from the Vatican,—when, on all sides, the voices of cabinets and countries rose against the principles of their morals and policy,—denied their doctrine of lawful rebellion and regicide, which had been imprudently hinted at by some of their casuists, and openly condemned the maxims which they, nevertheless, secretly observed as the true rules of the order.

This assertion of a purer moral system and genuine Christianity, availed little in reinstating in the possession of their former greatness and power, the once unmasked and exposed order of the Jesuits; and equally small success had the Assassins, in regaining their preceding influence and authority, by this system of proselytism, which was preached from every pulpit. The twelve years' reign of Jelaleddin was too short to efface from the minds of the people the traces of a system which had lasted fifty years. Under his son and successor, the Ismailites sank anew into their old habits of impiety and crime, by which they and their forefathers have been the abhorrence of the world and the outcasts of mankind. Poison had put an end to the bloody reign of Mohammed II. the predecessor and father of Jelaleddin; it likewise accelerated the accession of his son, and successor, Alaeddin Mohammed III., a boy of nine years of age. The poisoned goblet, which had supplied the place of the poniard, was now replaced by it. The dagger raged unceasingly, by order of the boy, among his own relatives, who were accused as accomplices in the poisoning of his father. According to the doctrine of the Ismailites, the imam, even though a youth, is always considered as having attained his majority, and the efficiency of his commands is neither enfeebled by the age of childhood nor the childishness of age. His orders require unlimited obedience, as emanating from the higher power, centered in the vice-gerent of the Deity, and the Ismailites blindly followed the deadly behests of the young prince, by which their hands, for twelve years unused to the dagger, again became accustomed to it.

Reign of Alaeddin Mohammed III., Son of Jelaleddin Hassan Nev Musulman.

Although, in the warm climate of Arabia and Persia, human nature arrives sooner at maturity, and the intellect sooner attains the freedom of independence, than in the colder region of Europe, we can more easily conceive a maiden of nine to be marriageable, than a boy of the same age to be capable of governing. It appears more natural that Aishe should, at the age of nine, have become the bride of the prophet Mohammed, than that his namesake should, at the same age, have assumed the throne of the Assassin sovereignty. If this is not surprising, still less is it so that the boy, scarcely emancipated from the care of the harem, should surrender to it both himself, and the administration of affairs. The women governed, and Alaeddin amused himself with feeding sheep, while the Assassins, as heretofore, raged as wolves in the folds of Islamism. All the wise ordinances, which Jelaleddin, the new Musulman, had instituted for the advantage of religion and morality, were abolished by Alaeddin, the new infidel. Atheism and licentiousness again raised their heads, and the dagger was once more red with the blood of virtue and merit. In the fifth year of his reign, Alaeddin, having bled himself without the knowledge of his physician, an excessive loss of blood threw him into a deep depression and melancholy, from which he never recovered. From that time, no one ventured to propose to him any remedies, either for himself, or the disorders of his government. Whoever spoke anything in the least displeasing to him, concerning political affairs, received torture or death for his answer; thus every thing was concealed from him, whether domestic or foreign, and he was without any friends or advisers, who could venture to lay representations before him. The evil increased beyond all measure; the finances, the army, the administration, sunk into the fathomless abyss of utter ruin.

Alaeddin, nevertheless, treated the Sheikh Jemaleddin Ghili with great reverence; he was entirely devoted to him, and sent him an annual pension of five hundred dinars, on which the sheikh lived, although he enjoyed besides a gratuity from the prince of Farsistan. The inhabitants of Kaswin reproached him for distributing the latter, and living on the money of the impious; the sheikh replied, "The imams declare the executions of the Ismailites and the confiscation of their goods to be lawful; how much more lawful, then, is it, to make use of the money and goods which they give of their own accord!" Alaeddin, to whose ears, probably, this talk of the Kaswiners came, affirmed that he spared them only on the sheikh's account; and that if Jemaleddin Ghili did not reside there, he would fill

sacks with the earth of Kaswin, and hang them on the necks of its inhabitants, and drive them to Alamut. He ordered a messenger, who gave him a letter of the sheikh's once when he was intoxicated, to receive a hundred blows of the bastinado, and said to him, "Thoughtless and foolish man that thou wert, for giving me a letter of the sheikh's when I was intoxicated; thou shouldst have waited till I had come from the bath, and recovered my senses."²⁴¹ Besides the sheikh, Alaeddin held in considerable estimation the great mathematician, Nassireddin, of Tus, who had been sent as a hostage to Alamut, by Mohammed Motashem Nassireddin, to whom he had dedicated his celebrated work, Akhlaki Nasseri (*the Ethics of Nassir*). He, as we shall soon see, as prime minister of Alaeddin's successor, supported, for a time, the tottering edifice of the Ismailitic rule; it fell, however, at last, affording to the world a remarkable proof, of what talents and a thirst for revenge, are able to effect in the maintenance, and overthrow of thrones.

During the reign of this weak prince, there took place the following negotiation with Sultan Jelaeddin Mankberni, the last of the sultans of Khowaresm, according to the relation of an eye-witness. On his return from India, he had appointed the Emir Orkhan, governor of Nishabur, immediately bordering on the possessions of the Ismailites.²⁴² Orkhan's lieutenant, in his absence, ravaged, by bloody and repeated attacks, the territories of Tim and Kain, the capitals of Kuhistan and the principal seat of the Assassins. One of the latter, Kemaleddin, came as ambassador, to request the suspension of hostilities; Orkhan's lieutenant, however, deigned to give no other answer than the silent but emphatical one, of drawing several daggers from his girdle, and throwing them on the ground, before the envoy, signifying, either that he wished to show his contempt for the daggers of the Assassins, or that he would have him to understand that he would meet dagger with dagger. This hieroglyphical style of embassy is a chief feature in the diplomacy of the east, which not only speaks to women in the language of flowers, but also to princes, by images and symbols rather than words. The most ingenious messages of this kind mentioned by eastern writers, are those which passed between Alexander and the Indian king, Porus, who endeavoured to surpass each other in subtilty and vaunting. They terminated in Alexander's sending for a cock to pick up the corn which was shaken from a sack before him: intimating that though the hosts of the Indians should be as numerous as the grains of corn, the Greeks, as brave as game cocks, would soon swallow them up. A companion to this hieroglyphic of the cock, is afforded in that of the dead hen, which Alexander is said to have sent to Darius, concerning the claim of the tribute of golden eggs or besana (beisa, meaning an egg), to explain to him, that the hen which had laid these golden eggs was dead. These, and similar hieroglyphical embassies, were as little effectual in settling the quarrel between Darius and Alexander, as they were in the case of the Ismailites, who resolved to procure for themselves that satisfaction which had been denied them.

While Sultan Mankberni was residing at Kendja,²⁴³ Orkhan was attacked without the city walls by three Assassins, and killed on the spot; they then, with their bloody daggers in their hands, entered the city, and shouted the name of the grand-master, Alaeddin: they thus proclaimed the power and sovereignty of their superior in a manner most befitting a combination of homicides, namely, by blood and unsheathed poniards. They sought the vizier, Sherfal-mulk (*nobility of the kingdom*), in the divan of his house, but not finding him there, he being with the sultan, they wounded one of his servants, as a token of their visit; they ran through the streets of the city, and declared themselves to be Assassins, in which capacity, they had already, at the grand vizier's residence, left dagger wounds instead of a visiting card; their insolence, however, did not go, this time, unpunished; the people crowded together, and put them to death with a shower of stones.²⁴⁴

In the meanwhile, an Ismailite envoy, Bedreddin Ahmed by name, having travelled as far as Barlekan, on his way from Alamut to the sultan's court, on being informed of the above occurrence, inquired of

Sherfal-mulk, the vizier, whether he should continue his journey forwards, or return; the vizier, knowing the enterprising vigour of the Assassins, and dreading the fate of Orkhan, answered that he might come in all security; and on his arrival, the vizier applied all his energies to the satisfaction of his demands, which were the suspension of the ravages of the Ismailite territory, and the cession of the fortress of Damaghan. The vizier succeeded in having the first point promised, and the second was allowed, in a solemn instrument, in consideration of the annual sum of thirty thousand pieces of gold. The sultan departed on a journey to Aserbijan, and the envoy remained as the vizier's guest.

At a grand banquet, the wine having already mounted to their heads, the envoy said to his host, that, in the immediate retinue of the sultan, among his guards, marshals, and pages, there were several Ismailis. The vizier, curious to become acquainted with these dangerous unknown, entreated the ambassador to produce them, and gave him his handkerchief as a pledge that no harm should befall him. Immediately five of the most confidential of his chamberlains stepped forward as disguised Assassins.

“On such a day, at such an hour,” said one of them, an Indian, to the vizier, “I could have murdered thee with impunity, and unobserved; and, if I did not, it was merely from the want of my superior's command.”

The vizier terrified, and apparently naturally timid, and still more so when intoxicated, stripped off his clothes, threw himself, in his shirt, at the feet of the five murderers, conjuring them, by their own lives, to spare his; and protesting, that he would be a more faithful slave of the grand-master, Alaeddin, than of the Sultan Mankberni.

The sultan, on hearing of the cowardly baseness of his vizier, sent him an angry message, with the command to burn the five Ismailites alive. Sherfal-mulk would gladly have avoided the execution of this command; at length, he reluctantly obeyed, and caused the five Assassins to be thrown on the pile, in the flames of which they deemed themselves happy, in being the sacrifice of their master, Alaeddin. Kemaleddin, the superintendent of the pages, whose duty it was, more than that of any other officer of the court, to watch over the immediate retinue of the sultan, was condemned to death, for admitting Assassins among the pages. The sultan then departed for Irak, and the vizier remained in the province of Aserbijan, and with him the relater of this occurrence, Abulfatah Nissawi. While they were staying at Berdaa, Salaheddin came from Alamut, as ambassador of the grand-master, who, being admitted to an audience of the vizier, spoke as follows:—“Thou hast sacrificed five Ismailis to the flames; to ransom thy life, pay for each of these unhappy men the sum of ten thousand pieces of gold.”

The vizier, confounded by the message, treated the envoy with distinction, and then commanded his secretary, Abulfatah Nissawi, to prepare a deed in due form, by which he bound himself to pay the Ismailis the annual sum of ten thousand ducats, in addition to the thirty thousand due from them to the sultan's treasury. At so dear a rate did emirs and viziers purchase a respite of their lives from the daggers of the Assassins, which were constantly pointed against their breasts.

Alaeddin could seek counsel from the Sheikh Jemaleddin, and the astronomer, Nassireddin, in spiritual and temporal affairs, in objects of politics and science; but neither of them could afford him a remedy for his diseased brain and mental malady. To find a skilful physician, he applied by embassies to the Lord of Farsistan, the Atabeg Mosafareddin Ebubekr, who endeavoured to gratify him, from the natural dread of the dagger, common to all the princes of the time, and which made them incline to fulfil the wishes of the prince of the Ismailites.²⁴⁵ He despatched the Imam Behaeddin, son of

Siaeddin Elgarsuni, one of the first physicians, distinguished alike by his theoretical science and his practical art; who employed his attainments, not without some success, in the cure of Alaeddin. When the latter was somewhat better, he could never obtain license to return. For this once, it was not the death of the sick, but of the convalescent, that released the physician. Alaeddin died, not from the consequences of his early loss of blood, but from the usual remedy of the order,—assassination.

Ambition, and the fear of not attaining the supreme power till late, or not at all, was the cause of his murder, as it had been of similar preceding ones. Alaeddin had several sons, and had declared the eldest of them, Rokneddin, while yet a child, his successor. As he grew in years, he was honoured as their superior, by the Ismailites, who made no difference between his commands and those of his father. Alaeddin, irritated by this premature obedience,²⁴⁶ declared that the right of succession was transferred to another of his sons; but the Ismailites paid no attention to this declaration, in accordance with the received maxim of their sect, that the first declaration is always the true one, and that with it the business ends. Our readers may recollect a similar example, in the history of the Egyptian khalif, Mostanssur, mentioned in the second book, who first declared his son Nisar, and afterwards, being compelled by the Emir-ol-juyush, his younger son, Mosteali, as his successor; whence arose the great schism of the Ismailites, some adopting the side of Nisar, and others that of Mosteali.

Hassan Sabah, the founder of the Assassins, who was at that time in Egypt, was obliged to quit the country, as he belonged to the former; and much the more natural was the prepossession of the Ismailites, which, in the spirit of their founder, decided in favour of the first declaration. Rokneddin, fearing for his life, which was threatened by his father, resolved to retire from the court, and to wait in some strong castle for the moment which should call him to the government.

The same year, Alaeddin afforded likewise matter of suspicion to several of his grandees, and occasion to look after their personal safety. They concealed their well-grounded fears, under the mask of the most fawning adulation, and conspired with Rokneddin against Alaeddin's life, in order to secure their own. Hassan of Masenderan, no Ismailite, but a Musulman, but who stained his faith by a disgraceful connexion with Alaeddin, was selected by them to be the murderer; and as he was the instrument of Alaeddin's unnatural lust, to be the instrument of his unnatural death. They watched the opportunity when Alaeddin lay, as usual, intoxicated among his sheep and shepherds. In order to devote himself to this pleasure, he had built a wooden house near his flocks; and while he was sunk in sleep, Hassan of Masenderan, by command of Rokneddin, shot him through the neck with an arrow. The murderer received the proper reward: he and his children were put to death, and their bodies burnt. The planner of the murder was tortured, if not by the stings of conscience, by the reproaches of his mother, until the vengeance of heaven reached him also.

Thus Alaeddin, whose father had been poisoned by his nearest relation, was murdered by an Assassin employed by his son; and the horror of parricide revenged parricide. Thus we come back upon the remark so frequently repeated by oriental historians, and noticed by us in the commencement of this book, that parricide begets parricide; as though heaven would proclaim the atrocity of the crime, by the horror of the punishment; as if an unnatural son were the only fitting executioner of an unnatural son, and the terrible alone could revenge the terrible.

If a double parricide stain the annals of other dynasties, nature and terror stop with the second, lest, by a long enchainment of horrors, and a series of parricides, our belief in humanity, and in the most sacred feelings, should expire. The history of the Assassins alone, in heaping atrocity on atrocity, surpasses hell itself; we see four murders in succession, by near relations, criminally and horribly

avenged by near relations. From Hassan, the Illuminator, to the fall of the order, the blood of the grand-masters dropped, from step to step, down to the last: two of them died by the hands of their sons; two by those of their nearest relatives: poison and the dagger prepared the grave which the order had opened for so many.

Hassan fell by the dagger of his brother-in-law, and his wicked son, Mohammed: the latter, aiming at the life of his son, Jelaeddin, was anticipated by him with poison; which murder was again revenged by poison, by his nearest relative. Alaeddin, son of Jelaeddin, had the mixer of the poison put to death, and was himself murdered, by his own son's command. The place of the ruby goblet of Jemshid, and the sparkling sword of Rustam, the royal insignia of the ancient Persian kings, was supplied with the Assassins, by the envenomed cup and polished dagger. The grand-masters directed it to the hearts of their enemies, without being able to turn it from their own. Their guards, the devoted to death, were common murderers. Hell reserved for the grand-masters themselves the privilege of parricide.

END OF BOOK V.

-
1. Abulfeda, ad. ann. 607. Mirkhond. Wassaf.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Trumpet of the holy war, from the mouth of the prophet Mohammed, son of Abdallah. Vienna, 1813.
 4. Gulsheni's Khulifa.
 5. A. D. 1214; A. H. 611.
 6. Mirkhond.
 7. History of Thaberistan and Mazanderan, by Sahereddin, in the Imperial Library, at Vienna, No. 117.
 8. Jehannuma, p. 442.
 9. Sehareddin's History of Mazanderan and Thaberistan.
 10. Sehareddin's History of Mazanderan and Thaberistan.
 11. Sehareddin, op. cit.
 12. Mirkhond.
 13. Mohammed Nisawi, Biography of Jelaeddin Mankberni.
 14. A. D. 1226; A. H. 624.
 15. Mohammed Nissawi's Biography of Sultan Mankberni, and Hassan ben Ibrahim, both extracted in Quatremère's Notice Historique sur les Ismaéliens, in vol. IV. Mines de l'Orient.
 16. Wassaf.
 17. A. D. 1255; A. H. 653.

Revision #3

Created 2019-08-25 12:51:22 UTC by Textpedia

Updated 2019-09-05 21:16:11 UTC by Textpedia