

Book VII

Conquest of Bagdad—Fall of the Assassins—Remnant of them.

In the fall of Alamut, the centre of the Assassins was gone; the props of their authority were broken, in the loss of the castles of Rudbar and Kuhistan. Still, the grand-prior of Syria refused submission to the grand-master's orders to surrender,—the armies of the Mongols being, as yet, too distant to compel his obedience. A far greater object occupied the mind of Hulaku, than the destruction of a few Syrian mountain forts, in which the order, after the fall of Alamut, and the annihilation of the Ismailites in Persia, might yet, though with difficulty, raise its head. He entertained no less a project than the conquest of Bagdad, and the overthrow of the khalif's throne, on which the Arabs had, in the prophet's name, already, for six centuries and a half, ruled over the world of Islam. This great event is, not only by its immediate consequences, but also from its proximate cause, inseparably connected with the destruction of the Assassins.

In the second year after the fall of Alamut, and, consequently, before the conquest of Kirdkuh the last fortress of the Assassins, which only surrendered in the third year of the siege, Bagdad, the queen of the cities of the Tigris, fell. The overthrow of the khalifat, as we have seen, in the instructions given by Mangu to his brother Hulaku, did not enter immediately into the plan of the khan, who merely claimed submission and troops, but Nassireddin, the great *savant* and traitor, who had delivered the capital of the Assassins into the conqueror's hands, and had paved a road to his own revenge, over its ruins, laboured unceasingly to urge Hulaku to the destruction of the khalifat. Besides the close connexion of this event with the one which we have described, it is in itself so great and important, in the history of Asia, and the middle ages,—so attractive, from the novelty and rarity of the subject, that we cannot deny our readers and ourselves the pleasure of following the khan, in his expedition from Alamut to Bagdad.

The siege and conquest of Constantinople, by the Turks, is, perhaps, the only event in history, worthy to be compared with that of Bagdad, by the Mongols; and the fall of the long-sinking Byzantine empire, may be placed by the side of that of the khalifat. The conquest of other cities, on whose sieges history has dwelt with astonishment and admiration, or with pity and terror, is less mighty in its consequences, because, under their ruins, no throne of universal sway has been buried. This interest is wanting, in the most obstinate and glorious sieges of ancient and modern history, however remarkable by the great names of the assailants, or the consummate skill with which they may have been prosecuted, or the patient courage with which they have been defended. Tyre and Saguntum, illustrious in their besiegers, Alexander and Hannibal; Syracuse, which has immortalized the names of Marcellus and Archimedes; Rhodes, twice attacked by Demetrius Poliorcetes, and defended against the Turks, by Villiers de l'Isle Adam; Candia, and Saragossa; have all earned unfading glory, by the lion courage of their inhabitants and defenders; but, although these cities fought for the highest of earthly objects—their country's freedom, still their fall did not draw down with it the seat of the ancient dominion over half the world.

The history of the conquest of other celebrated cities, the seat of universal monarchy, such as Babylon and Persepolis, under whose ruin were buried the Assyrian and Persian monarchies, is wrapt in the distance of thousands of years, and impenetrable obscurity. The destruction of Jerusalem eclipses in the brightness of its lustre that of all those cities; not, however, on account of the importance of its

power, or of its siege, for that by Khosroes was not less remarkable than that by Titus; but because the latter was described by Tacitus. If Gibbon had had access to the sources which are at our command, the conquest of Bagdad would not have shone with less splendour, in his immortal work, than that of Constantinople, nor would it have been so briefly treated. What we want of his power of expression, must be supplied by the richness of the material.

After the fall of Alamut, and the other fortresses of the Assassins, except that of Kirdkuh, Hulaku vacated the territory of Kaswin, and marched to Hamadan, whither his general, Tanju Nowian, hastened from Aserbijan, to lay an account of his victories at the foot of the throne. Hulaku dismissed him, with instructions to advance to Rum and Syria, and to subject the whole of Asia and Africa, to the extreme western boundary, to his dominion. In the month of Rebi-ul-ewel, in the 555th year of the Hegira, he commenced his march against Bagdad, and proceeded as far as Tebris, whence he sent an ambassador to the khalif, Mostassem, with the message: "When we went out against Rudbar, we sent ambassadors to thee, desiring aid; thou promisedst them, but sentest not a man. Now, we request that thou wouldst change thy conduct, and refrain from thy contumacy, which will only bring about the loss of thy empire and thy treasures."

The ambassadors having despatched their mission to Mostassem, the latter sent the learned Sherefeddin Ibn Jusi, the most famous orator of his time, and Bedreddin Mohammed, of Nahjiwan, to Hulaku, with a haughty message. The khan, irritated at this, gave more easy audience to the counsels of Nassireddin, who continually urged him to march against Bagdad, and to the treacherous invitation of Ibn Alkami, the khalif's vizier. Moyededdin Mohammed Ben Mohammed Ben Abdolmelek Alkami, who, as vizier, administered the affairs of the khalifat with unlimited power, and, by the blackest treachery, caused its fall, is stigmatized ignominiously, as traitor, throughout the whole east; and the name of Alkami is not less abhorred, in their history, than is that of Antalcides, in that of the Greeks: as eloquent, and versed in poetry and the polite literature of the Arabs, as Nassireddin was in the mathematical sciences, he was no less faithless to his lord. Both poet and mathematician were traitors. ²⁶⁴

Nassireddin had personal cause of complaint against Alkami, who, by his censure, had occasioned the khalif's throwing into the Tigris the poem dedicated to him by the former; adding, that it was, in every respect, badly written. It is probable, that Nassireddin was a better astronomer than poet; but it is still more probable, that Alkami was jealous of the credit which he might gain with the khalif. The vizier would not have deemed it necessary to warn the viceroy of Khorassan, Nassireddin Mohteshem, with whom the astronomer was, against a mediocre or bad *Kasside*, who was a juggler, and wished to insinuate himself into the favour of the khalif. Out of respect for Alkami, the viceroy, on this warning, threw the astronomer into prison, notwithstanding he had dedicated his great work, Akhlaki Nassiri, to him. He escaped to Alamut, where, as vizier of the last grand-master, he, meditating revenge against Alkami and the Khalif Mostassem, laid the foundation of it in the ruin of the Assassins.

Ibn Alkami, like Nassireddin, swore vengeance against the khalif: he had to complain, not only of the neglect of some of the grandees and favourites being unpunished by Mostassem, but also, he feared for his own personal security, on account of some severe measures against the Shiites, to which sect he himself belonged. He entered, therefore, on the same path of treachery, in which Nassireddin had already preceded him, and besieged the ear of Hulaku, with complaints and invitations, which were readily accepted. Nassireddin, Hulaku's vizier, and Ibn Alkami, the khalif's, played mutually into each other's hands. The contemporaneous fall of two such powerful sovereignties, as that of the Assassins and of the khalifat, caused by the jealousy and treachery of an astronomer and a wit, is unique in

Ere we commence the detail of the fall of the khalif throne of Bagdad, it will be proper to premise a few words, relating to the foundation and splendour of this renowned city.

Bagdad, the city, valley, or house of peace, the citadel of the holy, the seat of the khalifat, called also the oblique,²⁶⁶ from the oblique position of its gates, was founded, on the banks of the Tigris, in the 148th year of the Hegira, by Abujafer Almansur, the second khalif of the Abbas family. It stretches two miles along the eastern banks of the river, in the form of a bow with an arrow on the string, and is surrounded by a brick wall, whose circumference of twelve thousand four hundred ells, is interrupted by four gates and one hundred and sixty-three turrets. When Mansur resolved upon building the city, he called his astronomers, at whose head was his vizier, Nevbakht (i. e. *new fortune*), to determine a fortunate hour for laying the foundations; and the latter chose a moment when the sun stood in the sign Sagittarius, by which the new city was promised flourishing civilization, numerous population, and long endurance. At the same time he assured the khalif, that neither he, nor any of his successors, would die within the walls of this capital; and the confidence of the astronomer, in the truth of his prophecy, is less surprising than its fulfilment by thirty-seven khalifs, the last of whom, Mostassem, during whose reign Bagdad fell, did not die within its walls, but at Samara, a place built below Bagdad, on the banks of the Tigris, by Motassem, the eighth Abbaside khalif (called the eighth from the coincidence of the number eight, in his nativity) for his Mameluke guard.²⁶⁷

As Bagdad, from the circumstance of no khalif having died within its walls, merited, most peculiarly, the name of the House, Valley, or City of Peace; so, also, on account of the great number of holy men of Islam, who are buried within or without it, and whose tombs are so many objects of the pilgrimages of the Moslimin, it gained the title of Bulwark of the Holy. Here are the mausolea of the greatest imams and the most pious sheikhs. Here reposes the Imam Mussa Kasim, the seventh of the twelve imams, who, in direct descent from Ali, claimed the right to the throne and the khalifat, on account of their relationship to the prophet; also, the imams, Hanefi and Hanbeli, the founders of two of the four orthodox sects of the Sunna; the sheikhs, Juneid, Shobli, and Abdolkadir-Ghilani,²⁶⁸ the chiefs of the mystic sect of the sofis.

In the midst of the monuments of the imams and sheikhs, stand those of the khalifs, and their spouses; of which that of Zobeide, the wife of Harun al Rashid, has, by the strength of its construction, survived the repeated captures and destructions of Bagdad, by the Mongols, Persians, and Turks. Equally splendid specimens of Saracenic architecture are the academies, colleges, and schools; two of which have immortalized the names of their founders in the history of Arabic literature. The academies, Nisamie and Mostansarie, the former instituted in the first half of the fifth century of the Hegira, by Nisam-ol-mulk, the great grand-vizier of Melekshah, sultan of the Seljuks, the latter, built two centuries later, by the Khalif Almostansar-billah, with four different pulpits for the four orthodox sects of the Sunnites.

The most magnificent of all the palaces was that of the Khalif Moktader-billah, called the "House of the Tree,"²⁶⁹ and seated in a wide extent of gardens. In the middle of the vestibule, near two large basins of water, stood two trees of gold and silver, each having eighteen branches, and a great number of smaller boughs. One of these bore fruit and birds, whose variegated plumage was imitated with different precious stones, and which gave forth melodious sounds, by means of the motion of the branches, produced by a mechanical contrivance. On the other tree were fifteen figures of cavaliers, dressed in pearls and gold, with drawn swords, which, on a signal being given, moved in concert. In

this palace, the Khalif Moktader gave audience to the ambassadors of the Greek emperor, Theophilus,²⁷⁰ and astonished them with the numbers of his army, and the splendour of his court.²⁷¹ A hundred and sixty thousand men stood in their ranks before the palace; the pages glittered in golden girdles; seven thousand eunuchs, three thousand of whom were white, the rest black, surrounded the entrance; and, immediately at the gate, were seven hundred chamberlains. On the Tigris floated gilded barks and gondolas, decorated with silken flags and streamers. The walls of the palace were hung with thirty-eight thousand carpets, twelve thousand five hundred of which were of gold tissue; and twenty-two thousand pieces of rich stuff covered the floors. A hundred lions, held by their keepers with golden chains, roared in concert with the sound of fifes and drums, the clang of the trumpets, and the thundering of the tamtam.²⁷²

The entrance to the audience chamber was concealed by a black silk curtain; and no one could pass the threshold, without kissing the black stone of which it was formed, like the pilgrims at Mecca.²⁷³

Behind the black curtain, on a throne seven ells high, sat the khalif, habited in the black mantle (*borda*) of the prophet, girded with his sword, and holding his staff in his hand as a sceptre. Ambassadors, and even princes, who received investiture, kissed the ground in front of the throne, and approached, conducted by the vizier and an interpreter, and were then honoured with a habit of ceremony (*khalaat*), and presents. So Togrul-beg, the founder of the Seljuks, on receiving investiture from the Khalif Kaim-Biemrillah, was dressed in seven caftans, one over the other, and presented with seven slaves, from the several different states forming the khalifat. He received two turbans, two sabres, and two standards, in token of being invested with the sovereignty of the east and the west.²⁷⁴

These proceedings of the khalif's court were copied by that of Byzantium; and traces of them have been preserved to the present day, in the ceremonials of the great kingdoms both of the east and the west. Theophilus, whose love of splendour rivalled that of the khalif, built a palace in Constantinople, the exact counterpart of the "House of the Tree," even to the golden tree,²⁷⁵ and the artificial singing birds on it; which was no less an object of admiration to the envoys of the European courts, than the original at Bagdad had been to the Greeks. The etiquette of the khalif's court, which was repeated at Byzantium, still subsists at the Constantinopolitan courts, as Luitprand describes it. When the khalif rode out, he was saluted with the shouting a long formula of benediction,²⁷⁶ in the same manner was the Greek emperor, with the cry of "Many years" (?????????????)! and so is the Ottoman sultan, at this day, with the usual "*Tehok-yasha*" (may he live long)! The two turbans, which are placed before him when he enters the mosque, signify his sovereignty over Asia and Europe; the prophet's sword and mantle are preserved in the treasury of the seraglio. The *borda*, that is, the Arabian prince's mantle of black, afterwards embroidered with gold, is still worn by the princes of Lebanon, and the emirs of the desert; its colours, black and gold, were adopted in the livery of the Roman emperor.

The military force no longer bore any proportion to the splendour and magnificence with which the sinking throne of the khalifat was still enriched, as in the glorious days of Moktader. The army, indeed, still consisted of sixty thousand cavalry, under the command of Suleimanshah; but even this number was diminished by Ibn Alkami's treachery. The latter proposed the curtailing the forces, and dismissing the men, in order to save their pay and preserve the treasure; and, in spite of the opposite warning of the four greatest officers of state, the commander-in-chief, Suleimanshah, the first and second ink-holders, or secretaries of state, and the chief cup-bearer, he lulled the khalif into security from the danger of the Mongols, so that he carelessly stretched himself on the pillow of ease and effeminacy.

While he was occupied with the conquest of Kuhistan, and the extirpation of the Assassins, Hulaku received a letter from Ibn Alkami, who promised to deliver into his hands, the bulwarks and treasure of the khalif city; and magnifying the charms of the capture, he studiously depreciated the dangers of the attempt, till they disappeared. The khan, however, did not blindly trust the traitor's promises; the former unsuccessful attempts upon Bagdad were too fresh in his memory. Churmaghun, the general of Jenghis Khan, had, during the reign of the Khalif Nassir-ledinillah, twice advanced against Bagdad, with an army of a hundred and twenty-four thousand men; and twice was he beaten back, with the loss of the greater part of his forces. Hulaku had recourse to Nassireddin, his vizier, and, through him, to the stars; in which the latter naturally read the overthrow of the khalifat, so long determined upon by his revengeful spirit. Ibn Alkami's divining-rod struck on the deeply-concealed vein of Nassireddin's inveterate rancour, and treachery responded to revenge.

In accordance with Nassireddin's counsels, Hulaku, as soon as he reached Hamadan, sent the before-mentioned embassy to the khalif, whom he requested to send to meet him, one of the two secretaries of state, the chief cup-bearer, or the commander of the army, with whose opposition to his views he was fully acquainted. The khalif sent the learned orator, Ibn-al-jusi, who poured the oil of his eloquence into the fire of wrath, and returned, without performing his task. Hulaku, still more enraged, commanded the Emir Sogranjan to advance to Erdebil, and cross the Tigris, and then to form a junction with the troops of the Emir Boyanje, on the western side of Bagdad. In the meanwhile, he himself broke up his head-quarters at Hamadan. On the news of the advance of the Mongol vanguard reaching Bagdad, the khalif despatched Fetheddin, one of his oldest and most experienced commanders, with the secretary of state, Mujeheddin, one of his young favourites, and a thousand cavalry, armed with lances, who, in the first action, beat the Mongols, and forced them to retreat.

Fetheddin's grey-headed experience wished to encamp; but Mujeheddin's youthful arrogance incited him so long with insulting charges of cowardice and treachery, that he, at last, gave orders to pursue the enemy. They overtook them at the western branch of the Tigris, called Dojail, or Little Tigris. Fetheddin mounted a common horse, on whose fore and hind legs he had iron chains fastened, and so remained in one spot, to show to all that he was determined not to desert his post in the field, and that he would either conquer or die there. Night, and the fatigue of both armies, put an end to the combat, and dropping their arms, they sank into those of sleep; but while the khalif's army were buried in slumber, the Mongols cut through some dykes, and the water broke impetuously on the opposing forces. The darkness of the rushing waters, and that of the night, was made still darker, by the despair of the army. Then they saw the words of the Koran fulfilled: "Darkness on darkness; everywhere darkness;" and, like Pharoah's host, they were buried in the waves. The brave old Fetheddin, whose prudence would have averted the danger, perished; and the rash youth, Mujeheddin, whose arrogance had produced it, escaped with two or three companions, who brought the news of the catastrophe to Bagdad. So blind was the khalif's partiality to his favourite, so slight his sorrow for the loss of his army, that on receiving the intelligence, he merely exclaimed, three times, thankfully: "God be praised for the preservation of Mujeheddin!" And when the enemy had already advanced as far as Jebel-Hamr (the red mountain), three days' march from Bagdad, and he was informed of their approach, he only replied: "How can they pass that mountain?" All representations to the contrary were either unheard or ineffectual.

In the meanwhile, the main body of the Mongols had pushed forward on the road of Yakuba, and was encamped on the eastern bank of the Tigris. Then only did the khalif command the gates of Bagdad to

be shut, the fortifications to be garrisoned, and preparations to be made for defence. The two secretaries and Suleimanshah once more led the *élite* of the army, against the enemy. The battle lasted two days, with various fortune, but with equal loss: on the third, Hulaku prohibited the Mongols from renewing the attack, and resolved to enclose the city in a blockade. On all the heights without the city, and on all the towers and palaces which commanded it, were placed projectile engines, throwing masses of rock and flaming naphtha, which breached the walls, and set the buildings on fire.

At this period, the three presidents of the sherifs, or descendants of Ali, who resided at Helle, on the banks of the Euphrates, not far from the ruins of Babylon, sent a letter to Hulaku, in which they offered their submission, and added bitter complaints of the wrongs which they had suffered from the khalif. They informed him, that according to a tradition preserved by their glorious ancestor, the Lion of God, the sage of the faith, the son-in-law of the prophet Ali, the son of Abu-taleb, the period of the fall of the family of Abbas, and the conquest of Bagdad, was arrived. Hulaku, equally pleased with the homage of the descendants of the prophet and with the prophecy, answered them graciously, and commanded his general, Emir Alaeddin, to occupy the district of Helle, and to protect the inhabitants from violence. Thus their hatred against the family of Abbas secured them against the rage of the Mongols.

After the siege had lasted forty days, the khalif convoked a general assembly of all the grandees of the realm, in which Ibn Alkami spoke at great length of the innumerable host of the Mongols, and the impossibility of long resisting them; he therefore, recommended a treaty with Hulaku, who was more desirous of the treasures than the dominions of the khalif; he advised a mutual alliance between a daughter of Hulaku and a son of the khalif, and between a daughter of the latter and a son of the former, that the ties of peace and friendship might be drawn the closer. For this purpose, the khalif should go in person to the khan's camp, and thus the blood of thousands would be spared, the city preserved from utter destruction, and the khalifat fortified against every enemy by the acquisition of so powerful an ally.

The fear and pusillanimity of the khalif caused him to listen to Alkami's faithless advice. He sent him, in the first place, into the camp to negotiate peace, under the same conditions as had been offered to him from Hamadan; he returned with the answer, probably suggested by himself, that "What was admissible at Hamadan, is no longer so before the gates of Bagdad." Then, only one of the great dignities of the realm was demanded; now all four were, namely: the commander of the army, Suleimanshah, the two ink-holders or secretaries of state, and the chief cup-bearer. The siege continued six days longer with renewed vehemence; on the seventh, Hulaku caused six letters of immunity to be prepared, in which it was stated that the kadis and the seids, the sheikhs and imams who had not borne arms should be secure of their lives and property; these letters were attached to arrows, and shot into the city on six sides. One of the two secretaries, who despaired of the safety of the city, and was more anxious for his own, embarked on the Tigris to seek it in flight; as however, he came abreast of Kariet-ol-akab, he was stopped by a body of the Mongol troops, posted there for the purpose of cutting off the communication between Medain and Basra. Three of his vessels fell a prey to the flaming naphtha, and he was himself compelled to return. The khalif, who had already renounced all hope, now sent Fakhreddin Damaghani, and Ibn Derwish, with presents to Hulaku, and to treat with him concerning the conditions of peace. These two, however, returning without success, he despatched, on the following day, his son Abulfase Abdorrahman, with very considerable presents, and, on the third, his brother Abulfasl Abubekr, with the noblest and greatest personages in the state. These embassies were as fruitless as the first, and the vizier, who was sent into the camp along with Ibn-al-jusi, again brought back the surrender of Suleimanshah and the secretaries, as the indisputable condition of the khalif's

free exit.

Suleimanshah, and one of the secretaries, after being assured of a safe conduct, went to Hulaku, who sent them back to the city, commanding them to bring with them their families and whole household, in order that he might send them unobstructedly to Syria and Egypt; they returned to the camp with a considerable escort of troops, who seized this opportunity of deserting the city. Different quarters had just been assigned them, when an Indian struck out the eye of one of Hulaku's principal emirs, with an arrow; Hulaku seized this accident as a pretext for the most sanguinary rage; he commanded the secretary of state and his suite to be put to death, and the general, Suleimanshah, and his officers, to be brought, bound, before him: he said to him, "How comes it, that so great an astrologer as thou could not foresee the hour of thy death? Wherefore didst thou not counsel thy lord to enter the path of submission, in order to save thy own life and that of others?" Suleimanshah replied, that "the khalif's evil star had made him deaf to good advice." After some interrogatories and replies of this kind, the general and his officers were put to the sword.

Many thousands, who had surrendered into the hands of the conqueror on the faith of the safe conduct, were murdered, unarmed, after they had been separated from each other, on pretence of being sent into different provinces; a cold-blooded and faithless cruelty, which, however, is not without example, having been repeated both in the east and in the west. The history of Alexander, of Charlemagne, Jengiskhan, Timur, and other conquerors, presents us with instances similar to this atrocity of Hulaku, agreeing also wonderfully with it in the number of the victims,—from three to four thousand,—as well as in the circumstances of the promised safe retreat, the division into detachments, and the dialogue held with the commanders, who, for that very reason, were the more certain of their lives being spared.

The khalif seeing no farther hope of saving his life except by surrendering to the conqueror, repaired to the khan's camp, after a siege of forty-nine days, on Sunday, the 4th of the month Jafer, in the 656th year of the Hegira; he was attended by his brother and his two sons, together with a suite of nearly three thousand persons, kadhis, seids, sheikhs, and imams; only the khalif and the three princes, his brother and two sons, together with three of the suite (one in a thousand), in all, seven persons, were admitted to an audience. Hulaku concealed the perfidy of his designs under the mask of smooth words, and the most friendly reception. He requested the khalif to send word into the city that the armed inhabitants should throw away their weapons, and assemble before the gates, in order that a general census might be taken. At the order of the khalif the city poured out its unarmed defenders, who, as well as the person of Mostassem, were secured. The next day, at sunrise, Hulaku issued commands to fill up the ditch, demolish the walls, pillage the city, and massacre the inhabitants. The ditch, according to the expression of the Persian historian, deep as the deep reflections of wisdom, and the walls as high as the soaring of a lofty mind, were, in an hour, levelled. The army of the Mongols, as numerous as ants and locusts, mined the fortifications like an ant-hill, and then fell upon the city as destructive as a cloud of the latter; the Tigris was dyed with blood, and flowed as red as the Nile, when Moses, by a miracle, changed its waves into blood; or, it was at least as red as the Egyptian river is to this day, when it is swollen by that annual miracle of nature, its overflow, and coloured red by the red loam and sand which it washes down from Abyssinia; affording a natural explanation of the Mosaic miracle.

The city was a prey to fire and the sword; the minarets and domes of the mosques glowed, like fiery columns and cupolas; from the roofs of the mosques and baths, flowed melted gold and lead, setting on fire the palm and cypress groves which surrounded them. The gilded battlements of the palaces fell like stars to the earth,—like the demons who endeavoured to scale the battlements of Heaven. In the mausolea, the mortal remains of the sheikhs and pious imams, and in the academies, the immortal

works of great and learned men, were consumed to ashes; books were thrown into the fire, or where that was distant and the Tigris near, were buried in the waters of the latter. Gold and silver vessels from the palaces and kitchens of the great, fell, in such quantities, into the hands of the ignorant Mongols, that they sold them by weight, like brass or tin. The treasures of Asiatic splendour and art, accumulated for centuries in the khalif's city, became the booty of barbarians. So great a quantity of Persian and Chinese gold tissues, Arab horses, Egyptian mules, Greek and Abyssinian slaves of both sexes, coined and uncoined gold, silver, pearls, and precious stones, was found, that the private soldier became richer than even the chiefs of the army or the khan himself had ever been before. And yet the treasures of the khalif's palace had not been touched, as these the khan retained for himself.

After four days' pillage, he went, on the 9th of the month Safir, in company with the khalif, to the palace of the latter; where he, as his guest, as he said, desired his host to give him all that he was able. This Mongol politeness struck the khalif with such terror, that his whole body trembled, and as he either had not the keys, or could not find them, he ordered the bolts and locks to be broken open. Two thousand costly garments, ten thousand ducats, and many jewels, were brought out; which the khan, without deigning them a glance, distributed among his suite, and then turned to the khalif, with the words: "Thy public treasures belong to my servants; now produce thy concealed ones." Mostassem pointed to a spot, on excavating which were found the two basins of treasure, so celebrated in the history of the khalifat, each filled with bars of gold, weighing each a hundred miscals. Nassir-ledinillah's wise economy had commenced filling these two vessels; Mostanssur's prodigality emptied them; and Mostassem's avarice again replenished them.

An anecdote is told, in the history of the last reigns of the khalifs, that Mostanssur, when he paid his first visit to this treasure, prayed aloud: "Lord, my God! grant me the favour to be enabled to empty both these vessels during my reign!" The treasurer smiled, and being asked his reason, he said: "When thy grandfather visited this treasure, he besought heaven to reign only until he had filled these two basins; while thou desirest precisely the reverse." Mostanssur applied this gold in the foundation of useful institutions, which immortalize his name; particularly in the erection of the celebrated academy, which was named after him, Mostansarie, and also Omm-ol-Medaris, that is, the Mother of Academies. Mostassem, on the other hand, hoarded gold from avarice; whereas, a politic application of his riches, in the pay of troops and tribute, might have saved his throne from ruin.

Hulaku's cruelty to Mostassem, realized the Grecian fable of the wishes of King Midas. He commanded plates filled with gold to be placed before him, instead of food; and on the khalif's observing that gold was not food, the Mongol told him, by an interpreter: "For that very reason that it is not food, wherefore hast thou not rather given it to thine army to defend thee, or distributed it amongst mine to satisfy me?" Too late, Mostassem repented the consequences of his avarice, and after spending a sleepless night, tormented with the pangs of hunger and conscience, he prayed, in the morning, in the words of the Koran: "O Lord, my God! possessor of all power; thou givest it to whom thou wilt, and takest from whom thou wilt; thou raisest up and pullest down whomsoever thou pleasest; in thy hands is all goodness, and thou art mighty over all things!"

The khan now held a council of his ministers, to deliberate concerning the fate of the khalif; and it being their unanimous opinion, that prolonging his existence would only be preserving the bloody seeds of war and insurrection, and that only with his life could the dominion of the khalifat be terminated, his death was determined. But as Hulaku himself deemed it improper that the khalif should suffer as an ordinary criminal, and the blood of the prophet's successor be shed by the sword, Mostassem was wrapped in a thick cloth, and beaten to death. So great was the religious veneration for

the sacred person of the khalif, and thus did eastern etiquette extend even to the execution of kings. From similar motives of reverence, the Ottoman sultans, when a revolt costs them their lives, are not strangled, but are put to death by compression of the genitals:—a singular and elaborate trait of executioner tenderness!

As the pillage and sack of Bagdad had commenced four days before the khalif's death, so it continued forty days afterwards; till the barbarians dropped their swords from fatigue, and fuel was wanting for the flames. If we abstract the usual horrors of insulted humanity, which have been repeated in every sacked city, and only in Bagdad were carried to the highest pitch of enormity, we shall not blame the Mongols so much in their conquest of that city, for the conflagration of the mosques, and the desecration of the mausolea, for the destruction of the immense treasures, and the melting of the gold and silver vessels, nor even for the demolition of the bulwarks of holiness, and the overthrow of the khalif throne, as for the annihilation of the libraries, and the loss of many hundred thousand volumes, which fell a prey to the flames.

They consisted of the treasures of Arabic literature, the accumulation of nearly five hundred years; together with the relics of the Persian, which had probably been saved from the destruction of Medain. As the second khalif had commanded his general, in Egypt, to consume the Alexandrian library, so he also caused that of Medain, the residence of Khosroes, to be thrown into the Tigris; and Omar, whom some European historians have in vain endeavoured to exculpate from this high treason against literature, is loaded with the double guilt of the double *auto da fe* of the Greek and the Persian library, by fire and water. As the Arabs destroyed these libraries, five centuries before, in two years; so did the Mongols, in the same space, annihilate the Arabian libraries of Alamut and Bagdad. To this double conflagration must be added, that of the great libraries of Tripoli, Nishabur, and Cairo, in the same century. Thus the conjunction of the seven planets in the same sign of the zodiac, which indicated, according to some astrologers, a universal deluge, and according to others, a universal conflagration, might be justly understood to signify the inundation of the Mongols, and the burning of the libraries.

A most melancholy observation is suggested by the destruction of the libraries of Alamut and Bagdad; it is, that the fall of both was caused by the guilt of learned men: the former, by the perfidy of the astronomer, Nassireddin; the latter, by the treachery of the *bel esprit*, Ibn Alkami; both being sacrificed to their revenge. The fate of these two learned statesmen, distinguished alike by their great talents and evil hearts, who caused the overthrow of the Assassins and the khalifat, falls now to be mentioned. A few words will suffice. After the conquest of Bagdad, Nassireddin built the celebrated observatory of Meragha; by which, as well as his astronomical tables, both his name and that of Hulaku are immortalized in the history of astronomy. Thus that science derived, at least, some advantage from the many evils in which astrology had been its handmaid. Ibn Alkami, the man of letters, and vizier, instead of the reward he expected, reaped that of a traitor. As such, treated by the Mongols with the most profound contempt, he died, in a few days, a prey to remorse and despair. The inhabitants of Bagdad wrote on every wall, over the gates of the caravanserais and schools, in large letters cut in marble: "The curse of God on him who curses not Ibn Alkami!" One of the traitor's partisans, a Shiite, having expunged the "not" from one of these inscriptions, was punished with seventy blows of the bastinado. The name of Ibn Alkami is intimately interwoven with that of Nassireddin, in the history of the fall of the Assassins, and the khalifat. Asia long trembled from the shock of the violent fall of the empire of the dagger, and the prophet's staff.

The conquest of Bagdad has almost diverted us from our proper object, not merely by the intrinsic importance of the subject, but also on account of its intimate connexion with the end of the Assassins,

whose overthrow prepared that of the khalifat.

After their castles in Rudbar and Kuhistan had been razed to the ground, and numbers of them massacred and scattered, they still maintained their stand, for fourteen years, in the mountains of Syria, against the armies of the Mongols, the Franks, and the Egyptian sultan, Bibars, one of the greatest princes of the Circassian Mamelukes of Egypt. This prince, who zealously sought for supreme power, was not inclined to share it any longer with the remains of the Assassin order, which had been chased from the mountains of Persia. During his reign, Frank and Arab vessels put into the Egyptian ports,²⁷⁷ with embassies; which the Christian and Arabic princes, such as the German emperor, Alphonso of Arragon, the commander of Yemen, and others, sent with rich presents to the Syrian Ismailites. Bibars, in order to show that he was far above all fear of the order, levied on all these presents the usual customs; and sent to the superior in Syria, a letter, full of threats and reproaches. Terrified and humbled by their misfortunes in Persia, they answered submissively, and with the request that the sultan would not forget them in his peace with the Franks, but include them in his treaty, in token of his protection of them as his slaves; and, in fact, Bibars, who, in this year, concluded a peace with the knights-hospitallers, made the abolition of the tribute paid by the Ismailites, one of the conditions of the treaty. The following year, he received an embassy of the Ismailites, who sent him a sum of money, with the words: "That the money which they had hitherto paid to the Franks, should, in future, flow into the treasury of the sultan; and serve for the pay of the defenders of the true faith".²⁷⁸

Three years afterwards,²⁷⁹ when Sultan Bibars was marching against the Franks, in Syria, the commanders of the different towns appeared to do him homage. Nejmeddin, the grand-master of the Assassins, however, instead of following this example, requested a diminution of the tribute, which the order now paid to the sultan instead of the Franks. Saremeddin Mobarek, the commandant of the Ismailite fortress, Alika, had formerly drawn upon himself the anger of the sultan; but having received pardon on the intercession of the governor of Sihinn, or, according to others, of Hama, he appeared with a numerous suite, in Bibar's presence, who received him into favour and loaded him with honours. He granted him the supreme command of all the castles of the Ismailites in Syria, which were no longer to be governed by Nejmeddin, but by Saremeddin, in the name of the sultan of Egypt. Massiat, as the property of the sultan, was subjected to the command of Emir Aseddin. In conformity with his orders, Saremeddin appeared before the walls of this fortress; of which he possessed himself, partly by stratagem, and partly by the massacre of a number of the inhabitants. Nejmeddin, the late grand-master of the order, an old man of seventy years of age, and his son, implored the sultan's clemency. He had compassion on them; and granted the former the restoration of his authority, in conjunction with Saremeddin, in consideration of an annual tribute of a hundred and twenty thousand drachmas. A contribution of two thousand gold pieces, was required of Saremeddin; and Nejmeddin left his son in the sultan's court, as a pledge of his obedience and fidelity.²⁸⁰

In the meanwhile, Saremeddin having taken possession of Massiat, drove out Aseddin, the governor named by the sultan; but not being able to maintain the place against the approaching forces of the sultan, he threw himself into the castle of Alika. Aseddin returned from Damascus, whither he had taken refuge, again to Massiat, to the command of which he was restored by the sultan's troops, who left him a garrison and body guard. Malik Manssur, Prince of Hama, who had been charged by Bibars with the restoration of the emir, and the deposition of Saremeddin, took the latter prisoner, and brought him before the sultan, who threw him into a dungeon. The castle of Alika surrendered to the sultan's army on the 9th of Shewal.

Nejmeddin, the former grand-prior, again held the command of the Ismailite castles in Syria,²⁸¹ in the name of the sultan, by whom Shemseddin was retained at court, as the pledge of his father's fidelity. On a suspicion being raised against him, he came in person to court, and offered, with his son, Shemseddin, to deliver up all the castles, and to live in future in Egypt; his offer was accepted, and Shemseddin departed for Kehef, to induce the inhabitants to surrender within twenty days. Not appearing, however, at the end of this term, the sultan admonished him, by letter, to fulfill his promise; and Shemseddin desired that the castle of Kolaia should be left in his possession, in exchange for which he engaged to yield all the rest. The sultan acceded to his request; and sent Aalemeddin Sanjar, the judge of Hama, for the purpose of receiving from Shemseddin, the oath of allegiance, and the keys of Kehef; the inhabitants, however, secretly instigated by the latter, refused to admit the envoy.

A second embassy having no better effect, Bibars gave orders for the castle to be besieged. On this, Shemseddin left Kehef, and repaired to the sultan, who was encamped before Hama, and was honourably received; receiving, however, intelligence in a letter, that the inhabitants of Kehef had sent Assassins into the camp, in order to murder his principal emirs, Bibars caused Shemseddin and all his suite to be arrested, and carried into Egypt. At the same time, two officers of the order, who had persuaded their friends in the castle of Khawabi, to surrender to the sultan, were seized at Sarmin. This castle surrendered to negotiation, that of Kolaia to force; and, in the following year, those of Menifa and Kadmus fell into the sultan's hands. The inhabitants of Kehef wished to oppose a longer resistance; but being closely blockaded, and cut off from all relief, they at length sent Bibars the keys of the town; and the Emir Jemaledin Akonsa made his entry on the 22d of Silvide.

From this moment, Bibars was master of all the forts and castles which had been in the possession of the Ismailites; and he ruined their power in Syria, as Hulaku had done in Persia. Next to Massiat, the residence of the grand-master, Shiun, a strong place on a rock, abundantly supplied with water,²⁸² and at a short day's journey from Latakia, had been lately particularly distinguished, by the valiant exploits of its commandant, Hamsa, one of the greatest heroes among the Syrian Ismailites. This Hamsa must not be confounded with Hamsa, the companion of the prophet, and one of the bravest heroes of Mohammedanism; nor with Hamsa, the founder of the religion of the Druses. The numerous battles and enterprises of the Assassins, their valorous defence against the armies of the Crusaders, and the Egyptian sultan, Bibars, and the adventurous character of their whole history, offered a fertile source to the Syrian romance writers and story-tellers; a source of which they did not fail to avail themselves.

This was the origin of the Hamsaname, or Hamsiads,²⁸³ a kind of chivalrous romance, modelled after the style of the Antar, Dulhemmet, Benihilal, and other Egyptian works. After the conquest of Syria, by the Ottomans, the tales of the feats and adventures of Hamsa passed from the mouths of the Arabian story-tellers and coffee-house orators, to those of the Turks; and Hamsa, together with Sid Battal (Cid y Campeador) the proper Cid of the orientals, an Arabian hero, who fell in battle against the Greeks, at the siege of Constantinople, by Harun al Rashid,²⁸⁴ afforded the richest materials for Turkish romances, which are exclusively occupied by the feats of Hamsa and Sid Battal. The tomb of the Sid in the Anatolian Sanjak Sultanoghi is, to this day, a much frequented resort of pilgrimages, enriched by the Sultan Suleiman, the legislator, with the endowment of a mosque, a convent, and an academy.²⁸⁵

The conquest of Massiat was succeeded by that of Alike, and, at length, two years after, by that of Kahaf, Mainoka Kadmus, and of the other castles on the Antilebanon; and thus the power of the Ismailites was overthrown, both in Syria and Persia. One of their last attempts at assassination is said to have been directed against the person of St. Louis, King of France, but the falsity of this supposition has already been demonstrated, by French writers.²⁸⁶

The power of the Ismailites had now terminated, both in Persia and Syria; the citadels of the grand-master, in Rudbar, and of the grand-priors, in Kuhistan and Syria, had fallen; the bands of the Assassins were massacred and scattered; their doctrine was publicly condemned, yet, nevertheless, continued to be secretly taught, and the order of the Assassins, like that of the Jesuits, endured long after its suppression. In Kuhistan, in particular, remains of them still existed; that being a region which, on account of its very mountainous character, was more impracticable than the surrounding countries, and, being less accessible to the persecutors of the order, it afforded the partisans of the latter a more secure asylum.

Seventy years after the taking of Alamut and Bagdad, in the reign of Hulaku's eighth successor, Abu Said Behadir Khan, the great protector of the sciences, to whom Wassaf dedicated his history, the whole of Kuhistan was devoted to the pernicious sect of the Ismailites, and the doctrine of Islamism had not yet been able to enter the hearts of the natives, hard as their mountain rocks. Abusaid determined, in concert with the lieutenant of the province, Shah Ali Sejestani, to send an apostolic mission, for the conversion of these miscreants and infidels. At the head of the society of missionaries, which was composed of zealous divines, was the Sheikh Amadeddin, surnamed of Bokhara, one of the most esteemed jurisconsults, who, on the destruction of that city, had fled to Kuhistan. His grandson, Jelali, in his work, "*Nassaih-ol-Moluk*" (*Counsels for Kings*), dedicated to the Sultan Shahrokh, the son of Timur, relates the history of this mission from the mouth of his father, who had accompanied his grandfather to Kuhistan.²⁸⁷

Amadeddin, with his two sons, Hossameddin and Nejmeddin, the father of Jelali, and four other Ulemas, in all seven persons, went to Kain, the chief seat of the Ismailites; where, since the illuminative period of Hassan II., the mosques had fallen down, the pious institutions decayed—where the word of the Koran was no longer heard from the pulpit, nor the call to prayers sounded from the minaret. As prayer, five times a day, is the first of the duties of Islamism, and the call to it proclaims aloud the creed of the faithful, Amadeddin resolved to commence his mission with it. He went, therefore, with his six companions armed, to the terrace of the castle of Kain, from whence, they began, at the same instant, to cry out on all sides: "Say God is great! there is no God but God, and Mohammed is his prophet. To prayers! Up! to do good!" This summons, to which the unbelieving inhabitants had long been unaccustomed, instead of collecting them in the mosque, excited them to a tumult against the summoners; and, although the latter had taken the precaution to be armed, they did not deem it expedient to purchase the crown of martyrdom with their lives, by defending themselves, but took refuge in a drain, where they hid. As soon as the people were dispersed, they again mounted the terrace, and repeated the call to prayers, and the retreat to the drain. In this manner, their obstinate zeal, supported by the power of the governor, succeeded in accustoming the ears of the infidels to the formula of the summons to prayer, and then to that of prayer itself; and sowed the good seed of the true doctrine of Islamism on the waste field of infidelity and atheism.²⁸⁸

While the political wisdom of Abusaid was endeavouring to extirpate the Ismailite doctrine in Persia, its ashes still smouldered in Syria; and, from time to time, threw out destructive flames, which were extinguished in the blood of the slaughtered victims. As it had originated in Egypt, and had but served as an instrument of the ambitious designs of the Fatimites; so the Circassian sultans of that country availed themselves of the last fruits of the wide-spread tree of murderous policy, in order to execute their revenge, and to try the dagger on those enemies who resisted the sword. A memorable instance of such an attempt, is afforded us in the history of the Emir Kara Sonkor, who had deserted the court of the Egyptian sultans, and had entered into the service of the khan of the Mongols.

Two years after²⁸⁹ Abusaid had sent the before-mentioned learned Jelali to Kuhistan, the Egyptian sultan, Mohammed, the son of Bibars, sent no less than thirty Assassins from Massiat to Persia, to sacrifice the Emir Kara Sonkor to his vengeance. They arrived at Tebris, and the first having been cut to pieces in his murderous attempt, the report was soon spread that Assassins were come to murder the Khan Abusaid, the Emir Juban, the Vizier Ali Shah, and all the Mongol nobles. A second attempt on the life of Kara Sonkor cost, like the former one, that of the murderer. A similar attack had been made on the governor of Bagdad, and Abusaid, the great khan, prudently shut himself up in his tent for eleven days. Nevertheless, the Egyptian sultan, Mohammed, did not give up his vengeful attempt on the life of Kara Sonkor. He sent a merchant, named Yunis, to Tebris, with a large sum of money, to hire new Assassins. Yunis sent for them from Massiat, and concealed them in his house. One day, as the Emir Juban was riding in company with the Emirs Kara Sonkor and Afrem, two Assassins watched a favourable opportunity to murder the two latter. The first assailant, who was too hasty in his attack on the Emir Afrem, only tore his clothes with his dagger, instead of wounding his breast, and being cut down on the spot, the second did not think it advisable to approach Kara Sonkor.

Inquiries were immediately set on foot into the Funduks (*Fondaeki*) of Tebris, for the purpose of discovering the haunts of the Assassins; the merchant, Yunis, was arrested, but his life was preserved by the interest of the vizier. The Emirs Afrem and Kara Sonkor took all necessary precautions for the preservation of their own. A servant of the latter, a native of Massiat, searched the whole city of Tebris, to find out the Assassin who was to have poniarded his lord; and found him, at last, in the person of his own brother. The emir, in order to gain him over, gave him a hundred pieces of gold, and a monthly salary of three hundred dirhems, together with other presents; for which, he was induced to betray his accomplices. One of them escaped; another stabbed himself; a third expired under the torture, without confessing anything.

In the meanwhile, the Assassins at Bagdad executed their commission better than those at Tebris. One of them threw himself on the governor, as he was going out to ride, and plunged his dagger into his breast, saying: "In the name of Melek Nassir;" and escaped so quickly to Massiat, that he could not be overtaken. From that place, he sent information of the accomplishment of the murder of the governor, to Sultan Mohammed.²⁹⁰ The two emirs redoubled their vigilance; and, by means of the Ismailite in Kara Sonkor's pay, discovered four others, who were immediately put to death. Nejmeddin Selami, who had been sent as ambassador, from Mohammed to the Khan Abusaid, insinuated himself into a confidential intercourse with the Emir Juban, and the vizier. He informed his master of the execution of the four Assassins; in whose place four others were immediately sent; three of them being arrested and discovered, expired under the pangs of the torture; fortunately for Selami, the fourth escaped, who was the bearer of the sultan's letter to his plenipotentiary at Massiat, whence he apprised the sultan of the ill success of his mission.

Selami continued his negotiations with the Emir Juban and the vizier, so happily, that they concluded a peace with the sultan, on condition that he should send no more Assassins into their country. Notwithstanding this, the Emir Kara Sonkor was attacked anew, while he was hunting, by a murderer, who only, however, wounded his horse in the thigh, and was immediately killed by the guard. Even in the suite of the Emir Itmash, who came on his second embassy to Abusaid's court, two Assassins were detected; one of whom immediately stabbed himself, and the other, after refusing to confess, was put to death in chains. Juban loaded Itmash with reproaches, saying that, by sending these murderers, the sultan scoffed at the treaty; and the ambassador assured him, in return, that if they really were Assassins, they must have arrived at Tebris, before it was signed. After Itmash and Selami had returned to the sultan, their master, in Cairo, the latter wrote once more to the Massiat Ismailites,

reproaching them for not fulfilling their contract. They sent him for answer, one of their best Fedavis, a great eater, who devoured a calf, and drank forty measures of wine a-day. After being kept some time, at Keremeddin's house, in Cairo, he went to the court of the great Khan Abusaid, in the suite of Selami, who was sent as ambassador, with presents.

At the feast of Bairam, when the emirs were attending the khan, Selami ordered the Assassin to watch the moment when Kara Sonkor should leave the palace, from the banquet: "The first," said he, "who comes out, is the destined victim." By accident, the vizier called the Emir Kara Sonkor back, just as he was on the point of quitting the palace; and the governor of Rum, who was dressed in red, like him, fell beneath the blows of the murderer, who jumped from a roof on to the governor's horse, and stabbed him. Being taken, he died under the most horrible tortures, without confessing a word. Murderer succeeded murderer, in attempting to satisfy the sultan's desire of revenge; but, fortunately, Kara Sonkor escaped them all. If we may credit the testimony of Macrisi, no less than one hundred and twenty-four Assassins lost their lives in attempting that of Kara Sonkor; so little is the life of man in the power of his species, and so incapable are the tools of murder of cutting the thread of those days, which the Almighty has numbered.

Three generations after Abusaid's mission, when the whole of Kuhistan had returned, at least in appearance, within the pale of the true faith, the Sultan Shahrokh, the son of Timur, sent Jelali, of Kain, who usually lived in Herat, and was thence called Al Herat, and Al Kaini, for the purpose of ascertaining the state of belief in that province. Jelali felt himself the more called upon to engage in this inquisitorial affair, as his grandfather had presided over the apostolic mission, and because the prophet had appeared to him in a dream, and put a broom in his hand, with which he was to sweep the country. He interpreted this vision as a celestial call, by which he was appointed to the high office of cleansing away all the impurities of unbelief; and he entered upon it with a conscientious zeal, and a spirit of more than Islamitic toleration. His before-mentioned work, "The Counsels for Kings," contains the results of the report of his inquiry given to Sultan Shahrokh, and likewise, some information respecting the secret policy of the still unconverted Ismailites, taken from Jowaini's "History of Jehan Kusha (*the Conqueror of Worlds*)."

Within the space of eighteen months, Jelali travelled through the whole of Kuhistan; and every where found that the Ulemas, or teachers of the law, were true orthodox Sunnites. The seids, the descendants of the prophet, passed for such; and, still more, the dervishes, who represented themselves to be sofis, or mystics. The emirs of Tabs and Shirkuh were good Sunnites; but the commanders of the other castles, and even the servants of the government (*Beg-jian*), were to be suspected. For the rest, the peasants, merchants, mechanics, were all good Moslimin.

Notwithstanding the people were entirely devoted to the true doctrine of Islamism, still it appears that the order preserved its existence in secret, long after the loss of temporal power, in the hope of, sometime or other, recovering it, under more favourable circumstances. The Ismailites, indeed, no longer ventured to unsheath the dagger against their foes; but the chief aim of their policy, to acquire influence in affairs of state, remained; they, in particular, sought to make proselytes of the members of the divan; in order, by this means, to secure the majority of voices in their favour, and to stifle in their birth, all complaints and denunciations of their secret doctrine. For this reason, the author of "Jehan Kusha, (*Conqueror of the World*)," as well as the writer of the "Siasset-ol-Moluk" (*Art of Governing; or, Discipline of Kings*), warns princes to place in the divan none of the officers of Kuhistan, who were more or less to be suspected, on account of their principles. When intrusted with the management of the finances, they were, indeed, never in arrear with their contracts; so that the

public treasury had never any claims against them; they, however, ruined the villages which they farmed, and sent the surplus of the taxes to their secret superiors, who still preserved an existence at Alamut, the centre of the ancient splendour of the order. Thither also flowed a portion of the revenues of pious institutions, the produce of which was destined for the support of mosques and schools, servants of religion, and teachers. Similar well-intentioned warnings have, in our own times, been frequently given to princes: the attentive ear of government is always the most powerful obstacle to the rise of secret orders and societies to power.

Remains of the Ismailites still exist both in Persia and Syria,²⁹¹ but merely as one of the many sects and heresies of Islamism, without any claims to power, without the means of obtaining their former importance, of which they seem, in fact, to have lost all remembrance. The policy of the secret state-subverting doctrine of the first lodge of the Ismailites, and the murderous tactics of the Assassins, are equally foreign to them. Their writings are a shapeless mixture of Ismailite and Christian traditions, glossed over with the ravings of the mystic theology. Their places of abode are, both in Persia and Syria, those of their forefathers, in the mountains of Irak, and at the foot of Antilebanon.²⁹²

The Persian Ismailites recognise, as their chief, an imam, whose descent they deduce from Ismael the son of Jafer-Essadik, and who resides at Khekh, a village in the district of Kum, under the protection of the shah. As, according to their doctrine, the imam is an incarnate emanation of the Deity, the imam of Khekh enjoys, to this day, the reputation of miraculous powers; and the Ismailites, some of whom are dispersed as far as India, go in pilgrimage, from the banks of the Ganges and the Indus, in order to share his benediction. The castles in the district of Rudbar, in the mountains of Kuhistan, particularly in the vicinity of Alamut, are still inhabited, to this day, by Ismailites, who, according to a late traveller, go by the general name of Hosseinis.²⁹³

The Syrian Ismailites live in eighteen villages, dispersed round their ancient chief place, Massiat, and are under the rule of a sheikh or emir, who is the nominee of the governor of Hamah. Being clothed in a pelisse of honour, he engages to pay to Hamah an annual sum of sixteen thousand five hundred piastres; his vassals are divided into two parties, the Suweidani and Khisrewi: the former so named after one of their former sheikhs; the latter, for their extraordinary veneration of the prophet Khiser (Elias), the guardian of the spring of life: the former, who are by far the smaller number, live principally at Feudara, one of the eighteen places under the jurisdiction of Massiat; three miles east of that fortress lies a strong castle, whose name, pronounced Kalamus, is probably the same with the Kadmos of Arabian historians and geographers; from thence, the chain of mountains, after several windings, descends to the sea, near Tripoli.

In 1809, the Nossairis, the neighbours and enemies of the Ismailites, possessed themselves, by treachery, of their chief fortress, Massiat; the inhabitants were pillaged and murdered; the booty amounted to more than a million piastres in value. The governor of Hamah did not suffer this rash enterprise of the Nossairis to go unpunished; he besieged Massiat, and compelled them to resign the fortress to its ancient possessors; the latter, however, sunk into complete political insignificance. Externally they practise the duties of Islamism with austerity, although they internally renounce them: they believe in the divinity of Ali; in uncreated light as the principle of all created things; and in the Sheikh Rashideddin, the grand-prior of the order in Syria, contemporary with the grand-master, Hassan II., as the last representative of the Deity on earth.

We shall mention here, in passing, as they are neighbours of the Ismailites, the Nossairis, the Motewellis, and the Druses, three sects anathematized by the Moslems, on account of their infidelity

and lawlessness. Their doctrine agrees, in many points, with that of the Ismailites; their founders having been animated with the same spirit of extravagant fanaticism,—of unprincipled licentiousness. The Nossairis and Druses are both older in their origin than the eastern Ismailites; the former having appeared in Syria, as a branch of the Karmathites, as early as the fifth century of the Hegira; the latter received their laws from Hamsa, a missionary of Hakem-biemrillah's from the lodge of Cairo. The former believe, like the Ismailites, in the incarnation of the divinity in Ali; the latter consider that maddest of tyrants, Hakem-biemrillah, as a god in the flesh. Both abjure all the rules of Islamism, or only observe them in appearance; both hold secret and nocturnal assemblies stigmatized by the Moslimin, where they give themselves up to the enjoyment of wine and promiscuous intercourse.

The origin and doctrine of the Motewelli is less known than that of the Nossairis and Druses. Their name is corrupted from Motewilin, the *interpreters*; and therefore, probably, indicates a sect of the Ismailites, who taught the *Tenvil*, or allegorical interpretation of the commands of Islamism, in opposition to the *Tensil*, or positive letter of the word, not from God, the sense of which is a command to the true believer.²⁹⁴

The reproach of immorality, which these sects share in common, is certainly much more applicable to the Motewellis than to their neighbours. For the inhabitants of the village of Martaban, on the road from Latakia to Aleppo, who offer travellers the enjoyment of their wives and daughters, and who consider their refusal as an affront, are Motewellis.²⁹⁵

In still worse report than the Ismailites, Motewellis, Nossairis and Druses, are some tribes of Syrian and Assyrian kurds, who are called Yezidis, because they hold in peculiar veneration Yezid, the khalif of the Ommia family, who persecuted, sanguinarily, the family of the prophet, and likewise the devil, neither of whom they curse like other Moslimin. Their sheikh is called Karabash, that is, Blackhead, because he covers his head with a black scarf. The name of their founder is Sheikh Hadi, who, according to opinion, prayed, fasted, and gave alms for all his future disciples; so that they believe themselves exempted from these duties of Mohammedanism, and that, in consideration of his merits, they will go to heaven without appearing before the tribunal of God.²⁹⁶

All these still existing sects are designated by the Moslimin, generally, Sindike (*free-thinkers*), Mulhad (*impious*), and Batheni (*esoterics*), and, on account of their nocturnal assemblies, sometimes the one, sometimes the other, receive from the Turks the name of *Mumsoindiren*, or the *extinguishers*; because, according to the accusations of their religious adversaries, they extinguish the lights, for the purpose of indulging in promiscuous intercourse, without regard to kindred or sex.

Similar charges have been, at all times, raised against secret societies, whenever they concealed their mysteries under the veil of night; sometimes groundlessly, as against the assemblies of the early Christians, of whose innocence Pliny affords a testimony; sometimes but too well founded, as against the mysteries of Isis, and, still earlier, against the Bacchanalia of Rome. As the latter was the first secret society mentioned in Roman history, as dangerous to the state, and which assumed religion as a cloak to every enormity, the similarity of the subject, renders the mentioning them not out of place here.

As, in the sixth century, after the flight of the prophet, and the establishment of Islamism, the pest of the Ismailites threatened, under the appearance of religion, to undermine and overthrow the edifice, so, also, in the sixth century, after the foundation of Rome and the republic, the pest of the Bacchanalians, menaced the ruin of the city and the state, under the mask of religion.²⁹⁷

“A Greek, of mean extraction,” says Livy, “came first into Etruria, skilled in none of the arts which that most learned of all nations has devoted to the culture of the mind and the body, but a sacrificer and soothsayer; not that he spread his doctrine by public teaching, or filling the mind with a sacred horror, but, as the president of secret and nocturnal sacrifices. At first, but few were initiated; afterwards, however, the people, both men and women, were admitted. In order to attract the mind the more, wine and banquets were added to religious sacrifices. When the intoxication of the wine, night, the mixture of the sexes, and of youth and age, had extinguished every shadow of shame, vice and corruption of all kinds burst forth, every one having at hand the means of gratifying his desires. There was not merely one species of vice and the mere promiscuous intercourse of noble youths and maidens; but also from this source proceeded false witnesses, false documents, false informations, and accusations, poisoning, and secret murder,—so secret, indeed, that even the bodies of the dead were not found for sepulchre. Much was attempted by stratagem, but most by violence. Violence remained concealed, because, in the midst of the yells, and noise of cymbals and drums, the cries of the violated and the murdered could not be heard.”

The consul, Posthumus, had no sooner given intelligence to the senate of the discovery of the existence and object of this secret society, than the latter adopted the most powerful measures, for the safety of the state and the commonweal, and proceeded against the members of the Bacchanalia, as criminals against the state, with the utmost rigour. The speech of the consul to the people, advised them to watch over the peril which threatened the state, from the conspiracy of vice with religion. “I am not sure (said he) that some of you may not have fallen into error; for nothing has a more deceptive appearance than corrupted religion. When the Deity is made a cloak for iniquity, the mind is seized with terror, lest, in the punishment of human imposture, some divine law may be transgressed.” This unveiling of crime, from which the mask of religion had been torn, and the rigour with which the Bacchanalians were persecuted, not only in Rome, but also throughout Italy, with the sword and exile, stifled, in its birth, the monster whose increasing strength menaced the state with ruin. Had the princes of the east acted in the same spirit towards the first secret societies and the emissaries of the lodge of Cairo, as the senate and consuls had done, the sect of the Ismailites would never have attained political influence, nor would the blood-dropping branch of Assassins have sprouted from that poisonous stem.

Unfortunately, as we have seen in the course of this history, several princes were themselves devoted to the secret doctrine of infidelity and immorality, and others were deficient in strength to restrain its progress with effect. Thus, through the blindness of princes and the weakness of governments—through the credulity of nations, and the criminal presumption of an ambitious adventurer, like Hassan Sabah, the monstrous existence of secret societies and an *imperium in imperio*, attained so frightful an extent and power, that the murderer seated himself openly upon the throne, and the unbounded dominion of the dagger in the hands of the Assassins was an object of terror to princes and rulers, and insulted mankind in a manner unexampled and unique in history. We have, more than once, briefly pointed out the analogy which the constitution of the order of the Assassins presents with contemporary or more modern orders; but, although so many points of similarity are found, which can neither be accidental nor yet spring from the same cause, but which, probably, through the medium of the Crusades, passed from the spirit of the east into that of the west, they are still insufficient to make a perfect companion to the order of the Assassins, which, thank Heaven, has hitherto been without parallel. The Templars, incontrovertibly, stand in the next rank to them; their secret maxims, particularly in so far as relates to the renunciation of positive religion, and the extension of their power by the acquisition of castles and strong places, seem to have been the same as those of the order of the Assassins. The accordance, likewise, of the white dress and red fillets of the Assassins, with the white mantle and red cross of the Templars, is certainly remarkably striking.

As the Templars, in many respects, trod in the footsteps of the Assassins, so also did the Jesuits, whose exertions for the aggrandisement of their order, and its preservation, if not by political power, at least by secret connexions and influence, agree entirely with the similar policy of the Assassins after the fall of Alamut. The Assassins were, themselves, as we have seen, a branch of the Ismailites, the proper Illuminati of the east. The institution of their lodge at Cairo; the various grades of initiation; the appellations of master, companions, and novices; the public and the secret doctrine; the oath of unconditional obedience to unknown superiors, to serve the ends of the order; all agree completely with what we have heard and read, in our own days, concerning secret revolutionary societies; and they coincide not less in the form or their constitution, than in the common object of declaring all kings and priests superfluous.

The ostensible object of this institution was in itself sufficiently laudable, and the exoteric doctrine had merely for its object the extension of knowledge, and the mutual support of the members. The house of science, at Cairo, or the public school of the lodge, was the temple of the sciences, and the model of all academies; the greater number of the members were certainly deceived into good faith by the fair exterior of a beneficent, philanthropical, knowledge-spreading form; they were a kind of Freemasons, whose native country, as we have seen, may really be sought and found in Egypt, if not in the most ancient times, at least in the history of the middle ages. As in the west, revolutionary societies arose from the bosom of the Freemasons, so in the east, did the Assassins spring from the Ismailites.

Traces of retribution immediately executed, which fulfilled the sentence of the order as infallibly as though it were the arm of fate itself, are, perhaps, likewise to be found in the proceedings of the Vehme, or secret tribunal, although its existence only commenced two hundred years after the extermination of the order of murderers in Asia.²⁹⁸ The insanity of the enlighteners, who thought that by mere preaching, they could emancipate nations from the protecting care of princes, and the leading-strings of practical religion, has shown itself in the most terrible manner by the effects of the French revolution, as it did in Asia, in the reign of Hassan II; and as, at that period, the doctrine of assassination and treason openly proceeded from Alamut, so did the doctrine of regicide produce from the French National Convention, in Jean de Brie, a legion of regicides. The members of the Convention who sat with Robespierre on the side of the mountain, and who decreed the king's execution, would have been satellites worthy of the Old Man of the Mountain. Like the initiated to murder, they almost all died a violent death.

The dominion of the Assassins sank under the iron tramp of Hulaku; their fall drew after it that of the ancient throne of the khalif, and of other dynasties; thousands bled under the conquering sword of the Mongols, who went forth as the scourge of Heaven—like Attila and Jengis Khan, to steel with blood the deadened nerves of nations. After him, the remains of the hydra of Assassination quivered in the remnant of the sect of the Ismailites, but powerless and venomless; held down by the preponderance of the government in Persia and Syria; politically harmless, somewhat like the juggling of the Templars of the present day, and other secret societies watched by the vigilant eye of the police in France.

In writing this history, we have set two things before us as our object, to have attained which is less our hope than our wish. In the first place, to present a lively picture of the pernicious influence of secret societies in weak governments, and of the dreadful prostitution of religion to the horrors of unbridled ambition. Secondly, to give a view of the important, rare, and unused historical treasures, which are contained in the rich magazine of oriental literature. We have but seized the prey which the lions of history have abandoned: for Müller, in his twenty-four books of history, has not mentioned the Assassins at all; and Gibbon, who, according to his own avowal, let no opportunity escape him of

painting scenes of blood, has treated them but superficially; although, at the same time, both these great historians have snatched from oblivion, with the pencil of the most masterly description, many other insignificant events, the sources of which were accessible to them. We may easily estimate from this condensed account of all that is worth knowing of and concerning the order of Assassins, and which is but sparingly scattered through the works of eastern writers, how many concealed rarities and costly pearls are to be found in the untrodden depths of the ocean of Oriental history.

END OF BOOK VII.

1. Mirkhond. Wassaf. Gulsheni Khulifa.
 2. Aali's Historical Sketches. Imp. Lib. Vienna. No. 115.
 3. Dar-es-selam, the house of peace. Wadi-es-selam, the valley of peace. Medenet-es-selam, the city of peace. Burj ol evlia, castle of the holy. Sevra, oblique.
 4. Jehannuma, p. 459.
 5. Ibid, p. 479, 480.
 6. Dar-es-shedshret.
 7. A. D. 918; A. H. 306.
 8. There is a more circumstantial detail in Abulfeda, Part II. p. 332, and Jehannuma, pp. 459 and 478, and in the Gulsheni Khulifa and Lari, than in Gibbon, c. LII.
 9. The Persian Damdama, as well as the Arabic Thanthana, and the Latin Tinnitus, are onomatopœias of this musical sound.
 10. Mirkhond, Wassaf, Gulsheni Khulifa.
 11. Deguignes, Part II. p.197, and Abulfeda, ad. ann. 449.
 12. Continuator Theophanis. Gibbon, c. LIII.
 13. Mirkhond, Wassaf, Gulsheni Khulifa.
 14. A. D. 1165; A. H. 664.
 15. Macrisi, in the Book of the Sects. Ibn Forat.
 16. A. D. 1269; A. H. 668.
 17. Macrisi. Ibn Forat.
 18. A. D. 1270; A. H. 669.
 19. Jehannuma.
 20. Ibid, p. 590.
 21. About A. D. 790; A. H. 109.
 22. Jehannuma, p. 642.
 23. Eclaircissemens sur quelques circonstances de l'Histoire du Vieux de la Montagne, Prince des Assassins. Histoire de l'Académie des Inscriptions, XVI. p. 163.
 24. Nassaih-ol-Moluk, by Jelali. Imp. Library Vienna, No. 163.
 25. Ibid.
 26. A. D. 1326; A. H. 720.
 27. Macrisi, in the Book of Sects. Abulfeda.
 28. Mémoires sur les Ismaelis et Nossairis de Syrie, adressé à M. Silv. de Sacy, par M. Rousseau. Annales des Voyages. Cahier XLII.
 29. Extrait d'un livre des Ismailis, pour faire suite au Mémoire sur les Ismailis et Nossairis. Annales des Voyages, LII.
 30. A topographical Memoir on Persia.
 31. De Tenvil et Tensil autore Silvestre de Sacy, in novis Commentariis Societatis Göttingensis.
 32. Volney Voyages.
 33. Jehannuma, p. 419.
 34. Livy. I. XXXIX. c. 8.
 35. Kopp, Ueber die Verfassung der heimlichen Gerichte in Westphalen.
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