

Notes

Note A.

After giving a view of the dogmas of the Ismailites, Rousseau adds:—²⁹⁹

“Such were, substantially, the dogmas of the first Ismailis; and such, nearly, are those which their descendants in Syria profess to this day. I say, nearly; for there can be no doubt that the latter, having fallen so tremendously from their ancient social organization, must also have lapsed from their original faith. This belief, now more than ever disfigured, is become, to the last degree, extravagant, from a mass of abuses and senseless superstitions, introduced in the course of time. A certain Sheikh Rashideddin, who appeared among them, I believe, three hundred years ago, put the finishing stroke to their errors, by making them believe that he was the last of the prophets, in whom the divine power was to be manifested. This impostor, who was profoundly versed in the sacred writings, appears to be the author of the book, some fragments of which I have translated, and in which he promulgates his principles as if he were himself the Almighty.”

Note B.

The sovereign of the Assassins is called *sheikh*, by oriental authors. Vincent le Blanc names him, *Ségucmir*, a word compounded of *sheikh* and *emir*, and makes him reside in Arabia; but nothing that such an author says is astonishing. The Arabic word *sheikh*, which is equivalent to the Latin *Senior*, and which has its two significations in the lower Latinity, has been ridiculously rendered *Vetus*, *Vetulus*; *Senex*, instead of *Senior*, when *Dominus* was not meant. We read *Vetulus de Monte*, in the chronicle of Nicholas of Treveth, A. D. 1236; *Vetulus de Montanis*, in that of William de Nangis, of the same year; *Vetulus de Montibus*, several times in Sanuto; and *Senex de Montanis*, in the Latin translation of Marco Polo. In Haïton, *Sexmontius* is but the contraction of *Senex montis*, which Batilli, who translates it, *Prince of Six Mountains*, has not understood: we have seen him called *Summus Abbas*, *Prolatus*, *Magister Cultellorum*, by James de Vitri: in the same author, we read that this sovereign was commonly called *simplex*. He gives himself the title of “*Simplicitas Nostra*,” in his letter to Philip Augustus, handed down by William of Newbury: this is one of the two which have been supposititiously attributed to him. This *simplicity* consisted in inhumanly putting to death those whom he deemed enemies of his sect, or whom he regarded as extortioners, as William of Tyre expresses himself. The Assassins exercised their enormities alike, against both Mahomedans and Christians: we see in history the catalogue of khalifs, princes, and viziers, slain by their emissaries.³⁰⁰ I am also convinced, that the sheikh, simple as he entitled himself, caused assassinations to be committed at the solicitation of other princes, from motives of interest, in which religion had no share. We are justified in believing this, from what their commandant in Syria said to Henry the Second, Count of Champagne, when he invited him to pass through his domains: “*Si inimicum aut insidiatorem regni haberet, ab hujus modi servis suis continuò interfici procuraret.*” These are the words given by Sanuto; so that, when the chief of the Assassins is made to speak otherwise, in his letter, dated from Massiat, and inserted by Nicholas of Treveth, in his chronicle (A. D. 1192): “*Sciatis quod nullum hominem mercede aliqua vel pecuniâ occidimus*,” it is a reason why we should suspect it to be false. In fact, it is very probable that the English fabricated the letter addressed to Leopold, Duke of

Austria, in order to procure the liberty of King Richard I., whom he detained in prison; and that, at the same time, they addressed another to Philip Augustus, to remove his suspicions about the murder of the Marquess of Montferrat, and to obviate his acting hostilely against them in their king's absence. The best justification of Richard must be derived from the generosity of his character, whatever ferocity his valour may have possessed. This king, when mortally wounded at the siege of Chaluz, in the Limousin, by a cross-bowman, not only pardoned him after the town was taken, but also before his death ordered him to have a hundred shillings given to him.

With regard to the true cause of the assassination of Conrad, Marquess of Montferrat, there is great reason to believe that Humphrey, Lord of Thoron, the first husband of Isabel, the daughter of Amalric, and heiress to the kingdom of Jerusalem, seeing his wife, together with the crown, fall into the possession of Conrad, employed the Assassins as the ministers of his revenge.³⁰¹

Note C.

The following is the supposititious letter, from the Old Man of the Mountain, to Leopold Duke of Austria, as given in "Rymer's Fœdera," vol. i. p. 23:—

"Limpoldo, Duci Austriæ, Vetus de Monte, salutem: Cum plurimi reges et principes ultra mare Ricardum Regem Angliæ et Dominum de morte Marchisi inculpant, juro per Deum qui in æternum regnat, et per legem quam tenemus, quod in ejus morte culpam non habuit; est causa siquidem mortis Marchisi talis.

"Unus ex fratribus nostris, in unam navem de Salteleya ad partes nostras veniebat et tempestas forte illum apud Tyrum impulit, et Marchisus fecit illum rapi et occidi, et magnum ejus pecuniam rapuit. Nos vero Marchiso nuncios nostros misimus mandantes, ut pecuniam fratris nostri nobis redderet, et de morte fratris nostri satisfaceret, quam super Reginaldum Dominum Sidonis posuit. Et nos tamen fecimus per amicos nostros quod in veritate scivimus, quod ipse fecit illum occidere et pecuniam illius rapere.

"Et iterum alium nuncium nostrum, nomine Eurisum misimus ad eum, quem in mari mergere voluit; sed amici nostri illum a Tiro festinanter fecere recedere, qui ad nos cito pervenit et ista nobis nunciavit. Nos quoque ex illa hora Marchisum desideravimus occidere. Tunc quoque duo fratres misimus ad Tirum, qui eum apertè et ferè coram omni populo Tiri occiderunt.

"Hæc itaque fuit causa mortis Marchisi, et bene dicimus vobis in veritate, quod Dominus Ricardus Rex Angliæ in hac Marchisi morte nullam culpam habuit: et qui, propter hoc Domino Regi Angliæ malum fecerunt, injustè fecerunt et sine causa.

"Sciatis pro certo quod nullum hominem hujus mundi pro mercede aliqua, vel pecunia occidimus, nisi prius malum nobis fecerit.

"Et sciatis quod literas istas fecimus in domo nostra ad castellum nostrum Massiat, in dimidio Septembris, anno ab Alexandro millesimo quingentesimo decimo quinto."

Which may be rendered as follows:

“To Leopold, Duke of Austria, the Old Man of the Mountain sends, greeting:

“Seeing that many kings and princes, beyond sea, accuse the Lord Richard, King of England, of the death of the marquess, I swear, by the God who reigns for ever, and by the laws which we observe, that he had no share in his death: the cause of the marquess’s death was as follows:—

“One of our brethren journeying in a ship, from Salteleya to our parts, was driven by a tempest near to Tyre; and the marquess had him seized and put to death, and laid hands on his money. Now, we sent our messengers to the marquess, requiring him to restore our brother’s money, and give us satisfaction for our brother’s death, of which he accused Reginald, Lord of Sidon; but we ascertained the truth, by means of our friends, that it was the marquess himself who caused him to be slain, and his money to be seized.

“And again we sent another messenger to him, by name Eurisus, whom he would have thrown into the sea, had not our friends caused him to depart hastily from Tyre: he came quickly to us, and told us these things. We, therefore, from that hour have desired to slay the marquess; so, then, we sent two brethren to Tyre, who killed him openly, and almost before the whole people of Tyre.

“This, therefore, was the cause of the marquess’s death; and we tell you of a truth, that the Lord Richard, King of England, hath had no share in this death of the marquess; and they who, on that account, ill treat the king of England, do it unjustly, and without cause.

“Know ye for certain, that we slay no man in this world for any gain or reward, unless he have first injured us.

“And know, that we have drawn up these present letters in our palace, in our castle of Massiat, in the middle of September, in the fifteen hundred and fifteenth year after Alexander.”

Note D.

Memoir on the Dynasty of the Assassins, and on the Origin of their Name, by M. Sylvestre de Sacy, read at the public meeting of the Institute of France, July 7th, 1809.

Among the writers who have transmitted to us the history of those memorable wars, which, for a space of nearly two centuries, unceasingly depopulated Europe, in order to carry destruction and desolation throughout the finest regions of Asia and Africa, there is scarcely one who does not make mention of that barbarous horde, which, established in a corner of Syria, and known by the name of Assassins, rendered itself formidable both to the orientals and occidentals, and exercised its atrocities indifferently against the Moslem sultan and the Christian prince. If the historians of the Crusades have mingled a few fables with the information which they have handed down to us, regarding the tenets and manners of these sectarians, we ought not to feel surprised; for the terror which they inspired, scarcely permitted our warriors to search very deeply into their origin, or to procure exact data concerning their religious and political constitution. Even their name has been disfigured and presented

under a multitude of different forms, and it is to this that we must attribute the uncertainty of modern critics as to its origin and etymology. Among all the writers who have devoted their attention to historical and critical researches into the subject of the Assassins, none has shed more light upon it than M. Falconet. Nevertheless, as this learned gentleman had not applied himself at all to the study of the languages of the east, and could not, therefore, avail himself, in his inquiries, of the assistance of the Persian and Arabian writers, whose works had never been either published or translated, he has not been able to trace the Assassins up to their true origin, nor to give the etymology of their name. It is to supply this defect in his labours that I have decided upon treating this subject anew. In a dissertation, which I submitted to the judgment of the *classe*, and of which I shall present you with a short analysis, I proposed to inquire, what was the doctrine of this sect, and by what ties they were related to one of the principal divisions of Mohammedanism; and, lastly, why they had received a name, which, passing with a slight change into the west, has furnished several modern languages with a term expressive of a cool premeditated murder.

It is a most singular circumstance, which cannot fail to strike us in studying the history of the religion and power of the Mohammedans, that their empire, which, in a small number of years, subjected the whole of Arabia, Syria, Egypt, Persia, and several other vast regions of Asia and Africa, was, from the very first, torn by intestine divisions, which seemed as though they would arrest its progress, and insure the neighbouring potentates against the invasion which menaced them. It is difficult to explain how the spirit of faction, which armed the Musulmans against each other, should not have checked the rapidity and extent of their conquests; but, without stopping to consider this point, which forms no part of our subject, we shall content ourselves with stating the fact, that the death of Mohammed was the signal of discord amongst those who had embraced his doctrine, and hitherto fought under his victorious standard. Ali, Mohammed's cousin, and husband of his daughter, Fatima, who, to an ardent zeal for the new religion, added more instruction than the rest of the Musulmans, seemed destined to supply the place of the legislator and pontiff of Islamism, and to complete the work left still imperfect by him. But Mohammed had not had the prudence to name his successor; or, if he had done so, as Ali's partisans generally maintain, he had not given his nomination sufficient publicity to prevent its being contested; and he had neglected to invest it with that divine sanction which he so well knew how to give to all his determinations, even when the interests of his household, and the altercations excited by his wife's jealousy, were the only matters in question. Ali, in consequence, saw the wise Ebubekr, the fierce Omar, and the weak Othman, preferred before him; and it was only after the violent death of the latter, that the suffrages of the Musulmans seemed to unite in his favour. Scarcely had he ascended the throne, ere an ambitious man, supported by a powerful family, declared himself his rival; and succeeded, by treachery, and availing himself of Ali's faults, in stripping him of an authority, whose legitimacy was irrefragable. Ali soon fell beneath the murderer's dagger. His two sons were not long in experiencing the same fate; and, from that moment, were laid the immoveable foundations of that schism, which, to this day, divides the disciples of Mohammed into two great hostile factions, which, for several centuries, ceased not to steep the eastern provinces of the empire in blood, and was felt in the most southern parts of Arabia, and even on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

The partisans of Ali themselves soon split into several parties; and though united in their veneration for the blood of the prophet, which flowed in the veins of the descendant of Ali, they neither agreed in the prerogatives they attached to this noble origin, nor on the branch to which the right to the dignity of imam was transmitted. This name, which comprises the idea of all temporal and spiritual power, and which, in the opinion of some fanatics, was nearly co-equal with that of divinity, was the watch-word of all the enemies of the khalifs descended from the houses of Moawia and Abbas; but they did not all recognise the same person as imam. One of the most powerful, among the factions formed of the

followers of Ali, was that of the Ismailians, so called, because they maintained that the dignity of imam had been transmitted, through an uninterrupted succession of descendants, from Ali to a prince named Ismail; and that, since his time, this same office had been filled by personages unknown to man, awaiting the moment when the posterity of Ali should at length triumph over its enemies. A character peculiar to this sect is, that it explains all the precepts of the Musulman law allegorically; and this allegory was pushed so far by some of the Ismailian doctors, that it tended to nothing less than the abolition of all public worship, and the foundation of a purely philosophical doctrine, and a very licentious moral code, on the ruins of all revelation and divine authority. To this sect belong the Karmathites, whose enormities we shall not here mention, to whom the Wahabees, who, at this time, fill several of the provinces of the Ottoman empire with the terror of their name, and who, under the mask of reformers, appear destined to overthrow the Mohammedan religion, seem to have succeeded. From this same sect issued the Fatimite khalifs. These, after establishing themselves in Africa, were not long in depriving the khalifs of Bagdad, of Egypt and Syria, and they formed a potent empire, which lasted two centuries and a half, until it was overthrown by Saladin. These Fatimite khalifs acknowledged themselves to be Ismailians; but the interests of their policy obliged them to disguise the secret doctrines of their sect, which were known only to a small number of adepts, and the most intolerant of them imposed no other obligation on their subjects, than the recognition of Ali and his descendants' right to the sovereignty, and to vow a mortal hatred against the khalifs of Bagdad. In the person of the Fatimites, the Ismailians had ascended the throne, and deprived the Abbassides of a considerable portion of their empire: but their ambition was not satisfied. The race of the prophet ought not to share the sovereignty with the descendants of usurpers, and even the honour of Islamism, and of the doctrine taught and propagated by the imams, required that all Musulmans should be united in the same faith, and pay obedience to a single legitimate pontiff. To attain this end, missionaries, spread throughout all the oriental provinces, secretly taught the dogmas of the Ismailians, and laboured unceasingly to increase the number of their proselytes, and to inspire them with the spirit of revolt against the khalifs of Bagdad and the princes who acknowledged their authority.

About the middle of the sixth century of the Hegira, one of these missionaries, named Hassan, son of Ali, having been gained over to the Ismailians, afterwards signalized himself by his zeal in the propagation of his adopted sect. This man, in other respects a good Musulman, being persuaded that the Fatimite khalif, Mostanssur, at that time reigning in Egypt, was the legitimate imam, resolved to repair to his court, deeming himself happy in being able to proffer his homage, and to revere in him the image and vice-gerent of the Deity. For this purpose, he left the northern provinces of Persia, where he was exercising the secret and dangerous functions of missionary, and proceeded to Egypt. His reputation had preceded him thither. The reception which he met with from the khalif, rendered it beyond the reach of doubt, that he would soon be called to the first offices. As usual, favour excited jealousy, and Hassan's enemies soon found an opportunity of rendering him an object of the khalif's suspicion. They even wished to have him arrested; but Mostanssur acceding reluctantly to their plans of revenge, they were satisfied with putting him on board a vessel bound for the northern coast of Africa. After some adventures, strongly tinged with the marvellous, Hassan returned to Syria, and thence passing through Aleppo, Bagdad, and Ispahan, he traversed the several provinces submitted to the Seljukide rule, everywhere performing his missionary functions, and omitting no means to effect the recognition of Mostanssur's pontificate. After much travelling about, he at length established himself in the fortress of Alamut, situated in ancient Parthia, a short distance from Kaswin. The predictions of Hassan and some other missionaries, had multiplied the partisans of the Ismailites in these regions so considerably, that it was far from difficult to him, to compel the governor of that fortress, commanding in the of the Sultan Melekshah, to sell it to him for a moderate sum of money. Having become master of the place, he was able to maintain himself in its possession against all the

sultan's forces; and, by the insinuations of the missionaries, whom he sent into the environs, and by planned excursions, he subjected several places in the immediate neighbourhood, and erected for himself an independent sovereignty; in which, however, he only exercised his authority in the name of the imam, whose minister he acknowledged himself to be. The position of Alamut, situated as it is in the midst of a mountainous region, caused its prince to receive the title of *Sheikh al Jebal* (i. e. *Sheikh*, or *Prince of the Mountains*); and the double sense of the word *Sheikh*, which means both prince and old man, has occasioned the historians of the Crusades, and the celebrated Marco Polo, to call him the "*Old Man of the Mountain*."

Hassan and his successors, for nearly three centuries, were not satisfied with having established their power in Persia: they soon found means to possess themselves of several strong places in Syria. Masyat, a place situated in the mountains of the Anti-Libanus, became their chief seat, in that province; and also the residence of the Prince of Alamut's lieutenant. This branch of the Ismailites, which had settled in Syria, is the one mentioned by the western historians of the Crusades, and to which they have given the name of *Assassin*.

Before proceeding to the etymology of this name, we ought to observe, that Hassan, and the two princes who succeeded him in the sovereignty over the Ismailites of Persia and Syria, although attached to the peculiar tenets of the sect, nevertheless observed all the laws of Islamism; but, under the fourth prince of this dynasty, a great change took place in the religion of the Ismailites. This prince, who was named Hassan, son of Mohammed, pretended that he had received secret orders from the imam, by virtue of which he abolished all the external practices of Musulman worship; permitted his subjects to drink wine, and gave them a dispensation from all the obligations which the law of Mohammed imposes on its followers. He publicly announced, that the knowledge of the allegorical sense of the precepts, dispenses with the observation of the literal sense; and thus gained the Ismailites the name of *Mulahid*, or the *Impious*; a title by which they are most frequently designated by oriental writers. The example of this prince was followed by his son; and, for about fifty years, the Persian and Syrian Ismailites persisted in this doctrine. After this period, the worship was restored and preserved among them, until the entire destruction of their power.

The embassy which the Old Man of the Mountain, of the historians of the Crusades, that is, the sovereign of the Ismailites, sent to Amaury I. King of Jerusalem, falls under the reign of one of the two apostate princes, whom we have just mentioned. It is true, then, as William, Archbishop of Tyre, says, that the prince by whom this embassy was sent, had suppressed all the practices of the Musulman religion, destroyed the mosques, authorized incestuous unions, and allowed the use of wine and pork. When we read the sacred book of the Druses, or the fragments which we possess of those of the Ismailites, we have little hesitation in believing, that this prince, as the same historian asserts, was acquainted with the books of the Christians, and that he had formed a wish not to embrace the Christian religion, but to study more accurately its doctrines and observances.

Let us now pass to the name *Assassin*. This word, as I have already said, has been written in a variety of ways; but to confine myself to those possessing the best authority, I shall state, that it has been pronounced *Assassini*, *Assissini*, and *Heississini*. Joinville has written *Haussaci*. The limits which I have prescribed myself, forbid my entering here into the discussion of the various etymologies of this name, which have been proposed by different learned persons. Suffice it for me to say, that they have all been mistaken, because they had, no doubt, never met with the word in any Arabic author. The Assassins are almost always called by oriental historians, *Ismailites*, *Mulahid* (i. e. *the Impious*), or *Batenites*, signifying *partisans of the allegorical sense*. Only one literary person, in a letter, preserved

by Menage, had a glimpse of the true etymology; but he had erected it on bad foundations, as he had not the slightest suspicion of the motive which led to the Ismailites being designated by this term.

One of the most illustrious, most certainly, of the victims to the fury of the Ismailites, is Saladin. It is true, this great prince escaped their attacks; but he was twice on the point of losing his life by these wretches' daggers, for which he afterwards reaped a striking revenge. It is in perusing the account of these reiterated attempts, in some Arabic authors, contemporaries of Saladin, and ocular witnesses of what they relate, that I have been convinced that the Ismailites, or, at least, the men whom they employed to execute their horrible projects, were called, in Arabic, *Hashishin* in the plural, and *Hashishi* in the singular; and this name, slightly altered by the Latin writers, has been expressed as exactly as possible by several Greek historians, and by the Jew, Benjamin, of Tudela.

As for the origin of the name in question, although I have not gleaned it from any one of the oriental historians that I have consulted, I have no doubt whatever that denomination was given to the Ismailites, on account of their using an intoxicating liquid, or preparation, still known in the east by the name of *Hashish*. Hemp leaves, and some other parts of the same vegetable,³⁰² form the basis of this preparation; which is employed in different ways, either in liquid, or in the form of pastiles, mixed with saccharine substances; or even in fumigation. The intoxication produced by the *hashish*, causes an ecstasy similar to that which the orientals produce by the use of opium; and, from the testimony of a great number of travellers, we may affirm, that those who fall into this state of delirium, imagine they enjoy the ordinary objects of their desires, and taste felicity at a cheap rate; but the too frequent enjoyment changes the animal economy, and produces, first, marasmus, and then, death. Some, even in this state of temporary insanity, losing all knowledge of their debility, commit the most brutal actions, so as to disturb the public peace. It has not been forgotten, that when the French army was in Egypt, the general-in-chief, Napoleon, was obliged to prohibit, under the severest penalties, the sale and use of these pernicious substances; the habit of which has made an imperious want in the inhabitants of Egypt, particularly the lower orders. Those who indulge in this custom, are, to this day, called *Hashishin*; and these two different expressions explain why the Ismailites were called by the historians of the Crusades, sometimes *Assissini*, and sometimes *Assassini*.

Let us hasten to meet an objection, which cannot fail to be made against the motive on which we found the origin of the denomination of Assassins, as applied to the Ismailites. If the use of intoxicating substances, prepared from hemp leaves, is able to disturb the reason; if it throws a man into a sort of delirium, and makes him take dreams to be realities; how could it be proper for people who had need of all their *sang-froid* and mental calmness, in order to execute the murders with which they were charged, and who were seen to proceed to countries most remote from their own residence, to watch many days for an opportunity favourable to the execution of their designs; to mix among the soldiers of the prince whom they were about to immolate to the will of their chieftain; to fight under his colours, and skilfully to seize the instant which fortune offered for their purpose? This, certainly, is not the conduct of delirious beings, nor of madmen, carried away by a fury which they are no longer able to control; such as travellers describe those who *ran a muck*, so much dreaded among the Malays and Indians. One word will suffice, in answer to this objection; and with this, Marco Polo's account will supply us. This traveller, whose veracity is now generally acknowledged, informs us, that the Old Man of the Mountain educated young men, selected from the most robust inhabitants of the places under his sway, in order to make them the executioners of his barbarous decrees. The whole object of their education went to convince them, that, by blindly obeying the orders of their chief, they insured to themselves, after death, the enjoyment of every pleasure that can flatter the senses. For this purpose, the prince had delightful gardens laid out near his palace; there, in pavilions, decorated with every

thing rich and brilliant that Asiatic luxury can devise, dwelt young beauties, dedicated solely to the pleasures of those for whom these enchanting regions were destined. Thither, from time to time, the princes of the Ismailites caused the young people, whom they wished to make the blind instruments of their will, to be transported. After administering to them a beverage which threw them into a deep sleep, and deprived them, for some time, of the use of their faculties, they were carried into those pavilions, which were fully worthy of the gardens of Armida; on their awaking, every thing which met their eyes, or struck their ears, threw them into a rapture, which deprived reason of all control over their minds; and uncertain whether they were still on earth, or whether they had already entered upon the enjoyment of that felicity, the picture of which had so often been presented to their imagination, they yielded in transport to all the kinds of seduction, by which they were surrounded. After they had passed some days in these gardens, the same means which had been adopted to introduce them, without their being conscious of it, were again made use of to remove them. Advantage was carefully taken of the first moments of an awakening, which had broken the charm of so much enjoyment, to make them relate to their young companions, the wonders of which they had been the witnesses; and they remained themselves convinced, that the happiness which they had experienced in the few days which had so soon elapsed, was but the prelude, and, as it were, the foretaste of that of which they might secure the eternal possession, by their submission to the orders of their prince.

Although some exaggeration might be supposed to exist in the Venetian traveller's recital; and although, instead of crediting the existence of these enchanted gardens, which is, however, attested by many other writers, we should still reduce all the wonders of that magnificent abode to a phantom, produced by the exalted imagination of the young men who were intoxicated with the *hashish*, and who, from their infancy, had been nursed with the idea of this happiness; it would not be the less true, that we here find the use of a liquor, destined to deaden the senses, and in which we cannot overlook, that its employment, or rather abuse, is spread throughout a great part of Asia and Africa. At the epoch of the Ismailitic power, these intoxicating preparations were not yet known in the Moslem countries. It was only at a later period, the knowledge of it was brought from the most eastern regions, probably even from India into the Persian provinces. Thence it was communicated to the Musulmans of Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt. No doubt, the Ismailites, whose doctrines had several points of resemblance with those of the Indians, had acquired this knowledge earlier, and preserved it as a precious secret, and as one of the principal springs of their power. This conjecture is supported by the fact, that one of the most celebrated Arabian writers attributes the introduction amongst the Egyptians, of an electuary prepared from hemp, to a Persian Ismailite.

I shall conclude this memoir by observing, that it is not impossible that hemp, or some parts of that vegetable, mixed with other substances unknown to us, may have been sometimes employed to produce a state of phrenzy and violent madness. We know that opium, the effects of which are, in general, analogous to those of intoxicating preparations made with hemp, is, nevertheless, the means made use of by the Malays, to throw themselves into that state of fury, during which, being no longer masters of themselves, they murder every one they meet, and blindly precipitate themselves into the midst of swords and lances. The means employed thus to alter the effects of opium is, if travellers are to be believed, mixing it with citron juice, and to allow the two substances to incorporate for a few days.

Note E.

Paris, December, 23, 1809.

Sir,

You were kind enough to insert in your 210th number, of the 29th of July last, the memoir on the dynasty of the Assassins, and on the origin of their name; which I read at the public sitting of the Institute, on the 7th of the same month. That memoir has occasioned a letter, dated from Marseilles, the 16th of September, 1809, and signed “M. R., Old Residents in the Levant;” to be likewise inserted in your 269th number, of the 26th of September.

I do not know whether I am mistaken in suspecting, that the signature of that letter disguises a justly celebrated name, whose authority might have added great weight to the objections contained in the letter, had the writer of it been inclined to make himself known. However, as the author, or authors, of that letter, in attacking (although in the most gentlemanly manner, and with the most obliging expressions) the etymology of the word *Assassins*, which I have proposed, display no common knowledge of the Arabic language, I think it becomes me to justify my opinion, and reply to their objections; the more so, as the paper which I read at the public sitting of the 1st of July, was but a very brief extract from a much more extended memoir; and that this memoir, as well as all the others that I have submitted to the judgment of the Ancient History and Literature Class of the Institute, will, perhaps, not be published during my life-time, owing to the caprice of circumstances, which neither I myself, nor that class of the Institute, have power to control.

The origin which I attributed to the word *Assassin*, appears, to the authors of the letter in question, to be *too far fetched*; consequently, they propose another; and affirm, that the name of the Assassins is nothing more than the plural of *Hassas*, “a word which,” they add, “is employed by the people of Syria, and even of Lower Egypt, to designate a thief of the night—a robber.”

These gentlemen might have supported their opinion by most respectable authorities; for their etymology is not new; and I did not fail to make mention of it, as well as of a host of others, which were, perhaps, unknown to them, in my memoir, read at the private sitting. This discussion was not admissible in a reading destined for a public meeting; I have, therefore, suppressed it entirely. Permit me to transcribe a few lines here:—

“Thomas Hyde, I remarked, who had, no doubt, never encountered the true denomination of the *Assassins*, in any Arabic writer, believed, that it must be the Arabic word *Hassas*, derived from the root *Hassa*, which signifies, amongst other things, to *kill*, to *exterminate*. This opinion has been adopted by Menage and the learned Falconet. M. Volney has likewise admitted it, but without citing any authority.”

I then discussed the various etymologies proposed by M. de Caseneuve, the prelate, J. S. Assemani, M. Falconet, the celebrated Reiske, M. Court de Gebelin, the Abbé S. Assemani, of Padua, and lastly, Le Moyne; and I showed that none of these writers had given the true etymology of the name, with the exception of Le Moyne, who had, indeed, perceived, that the denomination of *Assassins* or *Assissins*, was derived from the Arabic word *Haschisch* (Hashish). “But,” I add, “M. Le Moyne did not know why the Ismailites bore the designation of *Haschischin* (*Hashishin*), and he has given a very bad

reason, which has caused the proscription of his etymology.”

Messrs. M. R. assuredly imagine, that it is merely conjecturally that I have maintained that the Ismailites were designated by the name of *Haschischin* (*Hashishin*), by the Arabs: for they express themselves thus: “The oldest Italian and French authors commonly write *Assassini*, sometimes *Heissessini*, and *Assissini*; Joinville wrote it *Haussaci*. On these grounds, M. de Sacy doubts not, that the Arabic which has served as the type, was *Haschisch* (*Hashish*), signifying *herb*, in general, and in one particular meaning, *hemp*. Now, because the Arabs have long known how to prepare a beverage from hemp, which intoxicates and maddens like opium; and because this beverage has sometimes been made use of to stimulate fanatics to the deed, which the Musulmans call *the holy war*, namely, *premeditated murder*, M. de Sacy will have it, that the whole sect of the Ismailites, which supplied many of this kind of fanatics, was called *Hachichi* or *Haschichi* (*Hashishi*); that is, the *herb people*, but, in order to establish this, it is necessary, in the first place, to prove, that the use of this beverage was habitual and general among this sect; so much so, as to distinguish them from all other Arabs, who used it, but without becoming murderers like them. History teaches us nothing similar. It even appears, that this artificial means could only have been employed when their primitive zeal began to cool; but, moreover, the word *haschisch* (*hashish*), differs too strongly from the words *Assassin*, *Heissessin*, and *Haussaci*, to have served as their original root.”

These gentlemen will allow me to observe, that if they had read with attention my printed Memoir, and the report made by my esteemed colleague, M. Ginguené, of the labours of the Ancient History and Literature Class, since the 1st of July, 1808, they would have found that there was no conjecture in it at all on my part. In fact, it was in quoting different passages of Arabic authors, relating to the enterprises undertaken at different periods by the Syrian Ismailites against Saladin, that I proved to demonstration, that those writers employed indifferently, in the same work, the names *Ismailites*, *Batenites*, and *Haschischin* (*Hashishin*), as synonymous; and that the chief of this horde of ruffians, was called the Possessor of the *Haschischa* (*Hashisha*). I even took occasion to observe, that the Byzantine writers called the Assassins *Chasisioi*; and that the Jew, Benjamin of Tudela, names them in Hebrew, *Haschischin* (*Hashishin*).

These facts being incontestable, I had to inquire what was this *Haschisch* or *Haschischa* (*Hashish* or *Hashisha*), possessed by the chief of the Ismailites, from which these latter derived their name of *Haschischin* (*Hashishin*); and, certainly, it needed no great stretch of imagination, to discover the *hashiseha* of the Ismailites in that of the Syrians and Egyptians of the present day. I afterwards showed, by very positive historical testimony, that, at the period when the Assassins signalized themselves by their atrocities and murders, the use of intoxicating preparations made with hemp had not yet been introduced among the Musulmans; lastly, I proved by a host of facts, and the testimony of Marco Polo, that the *hashish* was not used among the Ismailites for the purpose of throwing those to whom it was administered, into a state of madness and frenzy, during the continuance of which they performed the most barbarous actions, almost consciously; but, that it was a secret known only to the chief of the sect, and which he employed, to deprive for a time of the use of their reason, those young men, whom he wished, by means of every kind of seduction, which could inflame the imagination and exalt the sense, to inspire with blind obedience to his behests.

The chief reason why the authors of the letter which I am controverting, have a difficulty in admitting that the word *Assassins*, or *Assissins*, is actually derived from *Haschischin*, is, that they cannot believe that western writers could have substituted the articulation of the Arabic *Sin*, that is, of an *s*, for that of *Schin* (*Shin*), which answers to our *ch* (*sh*. Eng.); but they have perhaps forgotten, that, at the epoch of

the Crusades, the Latin language was the common idiom of writers throughout Europe; and that, in that language, the sound of the Arabic *Shin*, cannot be expressed. We must also add, the Arabic *Shin* is not in general pronounced so strongly as our *ch*, (*sh*, Eng.); and that the Arabians themselves have often used it for the Greek sigma, and the Latin *S*, of Latin names; such as Pontus, Orosius, Philippus, Busiris, &c., and lastly, that the Moors in Spain, in writing the Castilian in Arabic characters, made use of the *Shin* to express *s*; for example, in the words *los cielos y las tierras*. (See Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits, tome IV. page 631 & 642.) Perhaps, we have an example of the substitution of our *s*, for the Arabic *shin*, in the word *Sarrasins* (*Saracens*).

Here, again, I am at variance with the authors of the letter, who reject the etymologies which have been hitherto proposed, of the name of the *Sarrasins* (*Saracens*), in order to derive it from *Sarrag* or *Sarradj*, a word, meaning, according to them, a *saddle-man*, and, consequently, a *horse-man*. These gentlemen will not take it ill, if I deny the consequence, and if I remark, that *sarradj*, or, as it is otherwise pronounced, *sarrag*, never did, and never could, according to the analogy of the Arabic language, signify any thing but *a man who makes or sells saddles for horses, or a stable-boy who takes care of these animals' harness*. As I do not wish to be believed on my word alone, I shall quote Golius, who has not omitted the word *Sarrag*, as is asserted in the postscript to the letter, and who translates it thus: *Qui confecit ephippia et ea quæ ad equi et currus apparatus spectans* (one who makes saddles, and every thing belonging to the harness of horses and carriages). Menins, who translates it into Latin, by *Ephippiarius, qui Ephippia et quæ ad ea spectant conficit—qui curam equorum et apparatus eorum ephippii et phalerarum habet*, in Italian, by *sellaro, palfreniere*; and in French, by *sellier, palfrenier*. Germanus de Silesia, who makes it correspond with the Italian *sellaro*: lastly, Father F. Cannes, who, in his Spanish and Arabic Dictionary, makes use of the Spanish word *Sillero*, to translate it. The objections which Messrs. M. R. make against one of the etymologies of the word *Sarrasins* (*Saracens*), which several learned men have derived from the word *Sarikin*, robbers, are destitute of weight. It is not true, that we cannot admit this etymology, without, at the same time, supposing that the Arabs called themselves *robbers*; because, in fact, the Arabs known to the Greeks and Latins by the denomination of *Sarrasins* (*Saracens*), did not give themselves that name at all, but received it from the neighbouring tribes, who may very well have termed them *brigands*. This objection has no more force against those who derive the name of *Sarrasins*, *Saracens*, *Saraceni*, from *sharki*, or *sharaki*, that is, *eastern*. If this latter be the true origin of the name, it is beyond a doubt that it was first given to some Arabs, by nations inhabiting a more western country, and that it might afterwards have been applied to the greater part of the nation. As, according to either hypothesis, the word *Sarrasins* (*Saracens*), will have an Arabian origin, there will be some probability in supposing, that this denomination, which succeeded that of the *Scenites*, was first given to the Nomade Arabs by the civilized tribes settled in the north-east of Arabia, and who recognised the Roman authority. In either case, if these etymologies appear too forced, I should prefer confessing, that we are ignorant of the origin of the word, than deriving it from an expression which is in no respect proper to characterize the Arabian nation.

I shall conclude, by observing, as I did in my Memoir, that, perhaps, the word *Hashishin*, or *Hashashin*, for both are used, did not properly designate all the Ismailites, but was peculiarly applied to those who were destined to the Assassin service, and who were also known by the name of Fedawi (or *devoted*). “I have not, up to this day,” I said, at the conclusion of my Memoir, “met with a sufficient number of passages in which this word is employed, to hazard a decided opinion on the subject; but I am led to believe, that among the Ismailites, those only were termed *Hashishin*, who were specially educated to commit murder, and who were, by the use of the *Hashish*, disposed to an absolute resignation to the will of their chief; this, however, may not have prevented the denomination from

being applied to Ismailites collectively, especially among the Occidentals.”

Accept, &c. &c.

Sylvestre de Sacy.

THE END.

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1. Annales des Voyages, cahier XLII. p.13 of the article, and 283 of the collection.
 2. Two khalifs; one of Bagdad, the other of Egypt; Herbelot, art. Bathania. Tapares, Sultan of Khorassan, Ann.: Comnen. Alexiad. Book VI. A king of Mossul and Seljukide prince; Extracts from the History of Abulfeda, by Deguignes. The celebrated Vizier Nisam-ol-mulk, Herbelot, art. Melekshah:—without reckoning many other assassinations recounted by Abulfaradj, in different parts of his ninth dynasty.
 3. Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, tom XVII. p. 168. Falconet; Dissertation sur les Assassins Peuple d'Asie, 2e partie.
 4. The following is an extract from a late work on Botany, published by Professor Burnett, of King's College, which is strongly confirmatory of De Sacy's views; the same is likewise stated by Dr. Ainslie. T.

“In India, hemp is cultivated as a luxury, and used solely as an excitant. It possesses several peculiar intoxicating powers, and produces luxurious dreams and trances. The leaves are sometimes chewed, and sometimes smoked as tobacco. A stupifying liquor is also prepared from them; and they enter with opium, betel nut, sugar, &c. into various narcotic preparations. Prepared hemp is called by the Arabs hashish, &c. &c.”—Burnett's Botany, p. 560.
 5. Vol. XLI. No. 359, Monday, 25th December, 1809.
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Revision #4

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Updated 25 August 2019 14:20:33 by Textpedia