



A.H. 14. the memory of the great general. He also made the bereaved family his special care ; and, the more effectually to discharge the trust, in true Arab fashion, took to wife his widow Selma.

Sad marshals his troops,

The army was marshalled by Sad anew. Companies were formed of ten, each under a selected leader. Warriors of note were appointed to bear the standards. Columns and squadrons were made up by clans and tribes ; and thus by clans and tribes they marched, and also went into the field of battle. Departments also were established for the several duties incident to military service. The chief commands were given to veterans who had fought under the Prophet's banner ; for in this army there were no fewer than 1,400 Companions, of whom ninety-nine had fought at Bedr. Following Mothanna's counsel, confirmed by Omar, Sad marched slowly to Odzeib, still keeping to the border of the desert. There he left the women and children protected by a party of horse, and advanced to Cadesiya, a great plain washed on its farther side by the inland channel of the Euphrates already described, and bounded on the west by the Trench of Sapor (in those days a running stream), with the desert beyond. The plain was traversed by the highway from Arabia, which here crossed the river on a bridge of boats leading to Hira, and thence across the peninsula to Medain. Such was the field of battle which was shortly to settle the fate of Persia. Sad, keeping still to the western bank, fixed his headquarters at Codeis, a small fortress overlooking the stream and a little way below the bridge. Here he encamped and waited patiently the movements of his enemy.

and encamps at Cadesiya, Summer, 14 A.H.

The King, impatient, orders advance.

Rustem would have played the same waiting game as Sad, had not the King become impatient. The Arabs were making continual raids across the river into Mesopotamia. The castles of the nobles were attacked, and their grounds laid waste. A marriage procession was captured near to Hira, and the bride, a satrap's daughter, carried with her maids and trousseau into the Moslem camp. The spring passed away, and the summer came ; but with it no relief. Herds were driven from the pasture-lands, and



frequent forays served at once to furnish the Moslem army with food, and punish their faithless allies. The people grew clamorous; and the great landlords at last made it known that if help were delayed, they must go over to the enemy. Moved by their cries, Yezdegird turned a deaf ear to Rustem, and insisted on immediate advance.

Meanwhile, Sad kept up constant communications with Omar. When asked for a description of the camp,—‘Cadesiya,’ he told the Caliph, ‘lay between the Trench of Sapor and the river; in front was the deep stream, which on the left meandered through a verdant vale downwards from the town of Hira; a canal led in like direction to the lake of Najaf, and on its margin stood the palace of Khawarnac. His right was guarded by an impassable swamp, and his rear rested on the desert.’ Omar, satisfied with the report, enjoined vigilance and patience. But first, he said, Yezdegird must be summoned to embrace the Faith at the peril of his kingdom. With this commission, twenty warriors of commanding mien crossed the plain and presented themselves at the gates of Medain. As they were led to the royal presence, the rabble crowded round, and jeered at the rough habit of the Arabs, clad in striped stuff, and armed with rude weapons of the desert,—contrasting strangely with the courtly splendour of the regal city. ‘Look!’ they cried, mocking, ‘look at the woman’s distaff;’—a Bedouin bow slung over the shoulder,—little thinking of the havoc it was soon to make amongst their crowded ranks. As the Chiefs entered the precincts, the prancing and champing of the beautiful steeds, and the wild bearing of the stalwart riders, struck awe into the heart of the King and effeminate nobles. Yezdegird demanded, through an interpreter, wherefore, thus unprovoked, they dared invade his kingdom. One after another the Arabian spokesmen told him of the Prophet who had wrought a mighty change in their land, and of the blessings and obligations of Islam. ‘Embrace the Faith,’ they said, ‘and thou shalt be even as we; or, if thou wilt, pay tribute, and come under our protection; which things if thou refuse, the days of thy kingdom are numbered.’ The king replied contemptuously:

Sad gives Omar description of field.

Deputation summons Yezdegird to embrace Islam.



A.H. 14. 'Ye are naught, ye are naught! hungry adventurers from a naked land; come, I will give you a morsel, and ye shall depart full and content.' The Arabs replied in strong but modest words. 'Thou speakest truth; we are but poor and hungry; yet will the Lord enrich and satisfy us; hast thou chosen the sword? then between us shall the sword decide.' The King's wrath was kindled. 'If it were not that ye are ambassadors, ye should have been put to death, all of you. Bring hither a clod of earth, and let the mightiest among them bear it as a burden from out the city gates.' The Arabs embraced the happy augury. A stalwart horseman forthwith seized the load, mounted his charger, and bearing it, rode away. Rustem coming up just then, the King told him of the affront he had put upon the simple Arabs. 'Simple!' cried Rustem, 'it is thou that art simple;' and he sent in haste to get the burden back: but the horseman was already out of sight. Hastening to Cadesiya, he cast the clod before his chief, and exclaimed, 'Rejoice, O Sad! for, lo, the Lord hath given thee of the soil of Persia!'

Rustem
with great
army
advances
slowly,

and en-
camps
opposite
Arabs,
ix. 14 A.H.
Oct.,
635 A.D.

Sad re-
strains his
army.

Rustem could no longer delay. Elephants and men had been gathered from every quarter to swell the host, now 120,000 strong. Yet, notwithstanding, he marched slowly and unwillingly. The auguries, we are told, boded some great disaster. But he cherished the hope that the Arabs, pinched in their supplies, would break up suddenly and disappear; or that, wearied with suspense, they might be drawn from their strong position across the river. After great delay upon the road, he crossed the Euphrates below Babylon. Advancing on Hira, he chided the people for siding with the Arabs; but they replied that, deserted by the King, they had no resource but to bow before the invaders. At last, having whiled away many weeks, he came within sight of the Moslem force, and pitched his camp on the opposite bank of the river.

During this long period of inaction, the impatience of the Arabs was checked by the strong hand of Sad, to whom as lieutenant of the Caliph they were bound to yield implicit obedience. Excepting raids and reconnoitring



expeditions nothing was attempted. Some of these, however, were sufficiently exciting. Toleiha, the *quondam* prophet, entered alone the enemy's camp by night, and carried off three horses. Hotly chased, he slew his pursuers one after another; and single-handed carried off the last, who embraced Islam, and thereafter fought faithfully by his captor's side. As the enemy drew near, the Moslem host lay couched like the tiger in its lair, ready for the fatal spring.

A.H. 11.

The armies at last now face to face, Rustem had no more excuse for putting off the decisive day. On the morning after his arrival he rode along the river bank to reconnoitre; and, standing on an eminence by the bridge, sent for the Moslem officer guarding the passage. A colloquy ensued; and Sad consented that three of his captains should go to the Persian camp, and there explain their demands to Rustem. One after another, these presented themselves. Each held the same language: *Islam, Tribute, or the Sword*. Rustem, now contemptuous in his abuse, now cowering under the fierce words of the envoys, and scared by dreams and auguries, demanded time to consider. Three days' grace, they replied, was the limit allowed by their Prophet; and that was given.

Rustem gets three days' truce.

When the term was over, Rustem sent to inquire whether he or they should cross for battle. Strongly pitched, as we have seen, Sad had no thought of moving, and bade the Persian cross as best he might. Rustem advanced, but passage was denied. All night the Arabs watched the bridge. But Rustem had another scheme; he meant to cross the river by a dam. During the night his myrmidons cast fascines and earth into the channel, and morning light discovered a causeway over which it was possible to pass.

Throws dam across river,

At early morn, Rustem, clad in helmet and double suit of mail, leaped gaily on his horse. 'By the morrow we shall have beaten them small,' he cried; but apart with his familiars he confessed that celestial omens were against him. And, indeed, previous mishaps, and the brave bearing of the Arab chiefs, were sufficient, astrology apart, to inspire grave forebodings. Crossing the dam unopposed, he

and crosses to field of battle.



A.H. 14. marshalled his great host on the western bank, with its centre facing the fortress of Codeis. Of thirty war elephants on the field, eighteen supported the centre, the remainder being divided between the wings¹. On a canopied golden throne by the river side, Rustem watched the issue of the day. Messengers, posted within earshot of each other across the plain to Medain, shouted continually the latest news, and kept Yezdegird informed of all that passed.

Sad, disabled by illness, marshalled army from ramparts of Codeis.

As the Persians began to cross, the advanced guard of the Arabs fell back on Codeis, beneath which the main body was drawn up. On its ramparts, Sad, disabled by blains and boils, lay stretched upon a litter; from whence casting down his orders inscribed on scraps of paper, he guided thus the movements of the day. The troops, unused to see their leader in a place of safety, murmured; and verses lampooning him passed round the camp. That he, the archer of renown, the 'first to shed blood in Islam,' should be thus aspersed was insupportable, and Sad had the ringleaders imprisoned in the fortress. He then descended, and discovered to the troops the grievous malady which rendered it impossible for him even to sit upright, much less to mount his horse. They accepted his excuse; for no man could doubt his bravery; but still a certain feeling of discontent survived. Resuming his couch, he harangued the army from the battlements, and then sent his generals, with the orators and poets of the force, along the ranks with stirring words to rouse their martial zeal.

Warlike texts recited before the Moslem host.

At the head of every column was recited the revelation of the thousand angels fighting on the Prophet's side, together with such texts as these:—*Stir up the Faithful unto battle. If there be twenty steadfast among you, they shall put to flight two hundred, and a hundred shall put to flight a thousand. The Lord will cast terror into the hearts of the Infidels. Beware that ye turn not your back in battle; verily he that turneth his back shall draw down upon him*

¹ These were distinct from the riding elephants of the court and nobles, and must all have been imported from India. The elephant was not used by the Assyrians in war. It rarely appears in their mural representations, and only under peaceful associations.



the wrath of God. His abode shall be Hell-fire. The A.H. 14.
mention of the day of *Decision* at Bedr, with the Divine
command to fight, never failed to fire the souls of the
Moslem host; and here we are told, that upon the recital
'the heart of the people was refreshed, and their eyes
lightened, and they realized the divine peace that followeth
thereupon¹.'

The word passed round, that till midday prayer no one
should stir. The Commander-in-Chief would give the first
signal by the Takbir, or war-cry, ALLAH AKBAR, *Great* Battle of
is the Lord! and the host would take up the shout three Cadesiya,
successive times from him. At the second and third shout, ix. 14 A.H.
they were to gird their weapons on and make their horses Nov., 635.
ready. At the fourth, the ranks were to rush in one body First day;
forward with the watch-word, *Our help is from the Lord!* called
The order was deranged by the enemy, who, hearing the *Armath.*
first shout, advanced at once; whereupon impatient warriors
from the Moslem front stepped out, and challenging to single
combat, did prodigies of valour. The heroic feats of Bedr
were re-enacted on the field, and the spoil, stripped from the
fallen champions, was beyond description rich. Thus Amr
ibn Madekerib carried off triumphantly the bracelets and
jewelled girdle of a princely victim. Another, shouting
gaily the praises of his mistress², closed with Hormuz,
'a prince of the Gate,' and bore him with his diadem captive
to Sad. A leader of the Beni Temim, singing like verses,
pursued his adversary through the enemy's ranks; there
he seized a mule-driver, and carried him with his laden
beast to the Moslem lines; it was the king's baker with a
load of royal viands. More remarkable still is the story of Abu
Abu Mihjan. A ringleader in the detraction of Sad, his Mihjan.
offence was aggravated by drunkenness. Bound a prisoner
in the fort, under charge of Selma, the general's wife, he

¹ Same word as *Shechina*, divine influence overshadowing the heart: Suras
viii and xlviii. The practice of reciting such Suras or portions of them before
battle has been handed down to the present day.

² His song, of the ordinary type, ran thus:—

The maid, with hanging tresses, milk-white breast and fingers tapering,
Knoweth full well the hero who will lay the warriors low.



A.H. 14. was seized by an irrepressible ardour to join the battle. At his earnest entreaty, and under pledge of early return, the lady set him free, and mounted him on her husband's white mare. An unknown figure, he dashed now into the enemy's host, and now in circuits round it, performing marvels of bravery. Some thought it might be the chief of the Syrian contingent expected that day. Others opined that it was Al Khizr, precursor of the angelic band. But Sad said, 'If it were not that Abu Mihjan is safe in durance under Selma's care, I could swear it were he, and the mare my own.' According to promise, the hero, satisfied with his exploits, returned to Selma, who reimposed his fetters as before, and shortly after secured his release¹. Now the elephants bore down upon the Bedouin lines. The brunt of the onset fell upon the Beni Bajila. The huge beasts swaying to and fro, 'their *howdas*, manned with warriors and banners, like moving castles,' affrighted the Arab horses, which broke away at the horrid sight. The Beni Asad diverted the attack upon themselves, and in the heroic act left four hundred dead upon the field. Then the elephants attacked the wings, spreading consternation all around; and the enemy, profiting by the confusion, pressed forward. The position was critical; and Sad, as a last resource, bade Asim rid them from the danger at whatever cost. At once that gallant chief chose a band of archers and of agile skirmishers, who, drawing near, picked their riders from off the elephants, and boldly cut the girths. The *howdas* fell, and the great beasts, with none to guide them, fled. Thus relieved, the Arabs regained their ground. But the shades of darkness were falling, and both armies retired for the night.

The elephants.

Sad upbraided by his wife.

The Moslem force was downcast. The uncertain issue

¹ He confessed to Selma that in his cups he had been singing these verses:—

'Bury me when I die by the roots of the vine;

The moisture thereof will distil into my bones;

Bury me not in the open plain, for then I much fear

That no more again shall I taste the flavour of the grape.'

But he pledged his word to her that he would not again indulge in drinking, nor abuse Ameer. Selma then obtained his release, and he joined his comrades on the last great day.



added point to the invectives against Sad, and, what was still harder for him to bear, the taunts of Selma. During the day, as seated by her lord, they watched from the ramparts the deadly conflict, she exclaimed, 'O for an hour of Mothanna! Alas, alas, there is no Mothanna this day!' Stung by the words, Sad struck her on the face, and pointing to Asim and his band, said, 'What of Mothanna? Was he anything compared with these?' 'Jealousy and cowardice!' cried the high-spirited dame, faithful to her first husband's memory. 'Not so,' said Sad, somewhat softened; 'I swear that no man will this day excuse me if thou dost not, who seest in what plight I lie.' The people sided with the lady; but Sad was no coward, and he lived the contumely down.

The morning was occupied with the wounded and the dead; and the day drew on before fighting recommenced. Just then the first column of the contingent sent back from Syria came in view. It was led by Cacao, who, leaving Hashim to bring up the main body of five thousand on the following day, hurried forward with a thousand men. By skilful disposition Cacao magnified his force, in the eyes both of friend and foe. He arranged his men in squadrons of a hundred, each at a little distance behind the other. Advancing, he saluted Sad and his comrades, and bade them joy of the coming help. Then calling on the rest to follow, he at once rode forth to defy the enemy. The hero of the *Bridge* accepted the challenge. Cacao recognised his foe; and crying out, 'Now will I avenge Abu Obeid and those that perished at the Bridge,' rushed on his man and cut him to the ground. As each squadron came up, it charged with all the appearance of a fresh and independent force across the plain in sight of both armies, and shouted the *Takbir*, which was answered by the same ringing cheer, *Allah Akbar*, from the Moslem line. The spirits of the Arabs rose. They forgot the disasters of yesterday; and by so much the heart of the Persians sank, who saw their heroes slain, one after another, at the hands of Cacao and his fellows. They had no elephants this day, for the gear was not yet repaired. Pressed on all sides,

A.H. 14.

Second day; called *Aghwath*.

Return of first Syrian brigade.



A.H. 14. — their horse gave way, and Rustem was only saved by a desperate rally. But the Persian infantry stood their ground, and the day closed, the issue still trembling in the balance. The fighting was severe and the carnage great. Two thousand Moslems lay dead or wounded on the field, and ten thousand Persians. All night through, the Arabs kept shouting the names and lineage of their several tribes. There was shouting, too, in the Persian camp. And so, encouraging themselves, each side awaited the final struggle.

Third day;
called
Ghimas.

On the third morning, the army was engaged in the mournful task of removing their fallen comrades from the field. The space of a mile between the two lines was strewn with them. The wounded were made over to the women to nurse, if perchance they might survive—or rather, in the language of Islam—‘until the Lord should decide whether to grant, or to withhold, the crown of martyrdom.’ The dead were borne to Odzeib, a valley in the rear, where the women and children hastily dug graves in the sandy soil. The wounded, too, were carried thither. For the suffering sick it was a weary way under the burning sun. A solitary palm-tree stood on the road, and under its welcome shade they were for a moment laid. Its memory is consecrated in such plaintive verse as this :—

‘Hail to the grateful palm waving between Cadesiya and Odzeib.
Around thee grow the wild sprigs of camomile and hyssop.
May the dew and the shower refresh thy leaves for evermore,
And let there never be a palm tree wanting in thy dry and heated plain!’

Fighting
resumed :
Syrian con-
tingent
comes up.

A day and a night of unceasing conflict were still before the combatants. The spirit of the Persians, whose dead lay unburied on the field, flagged at the disasters of the preceding day. But much was looked for from the elephants, which, now refitted, appeared upon the field, each protected by a company of horse and foot. The battle was about to open, when suddenly Hashim came in sight with the main body of his Syrian contingent. Sweeping across the plain, he charged right into the enemy, pierced their ranks, and reaching the river bank, turned and rode triumphantly back, amidst shouts of welcome. The fighting was again severe, and the day balanced by alternate victory



and repulse. Yezdegird, alive to the crisis, sent his body-guard into the field. The elephants were the terror of the Arabs, and again threatened to paralyse their efforts. In this emergency, Sad had recourse to Cacao, who was achieving marvels, and had already slain thirty Persians in single combat; so that the annalists gratefully acknowledge that 'had it not been for what the Lord put it into the heart of Cacao to do, we surely had been that day worsted.' Sad now learned that the eye and trunk were the only vulnerable parts of the elephant: 'Aim at these,' he said, 'and we shall be rid of this calamity.' So Cacao with his brother Asim and a band of followers issued on the perilous enterprise. There were two great elephants, the leaders of the herd. Dismounting, Cacao boldly advanced, and into the eye of one, the 'great White elephant,' he thrust his lance. Smarting at the pain, it shook fearfully its head, threw the mahout to the ground, and swaying its trunk to and fro, hurled Cacao to a distance. The other fared still worse, for they pierced both its eyes, and slashed its trunk. Uttering a shrill scream of agony, the blinded and maddened creature darted forward on the Arab ranks. Shouts and lances drove it back upon the Persians. Thus kept rushing wildly to and fro between the armies, and followed at last by the other elephants, it charged right into the Persian line; and so the whole herd of huge animals,—their trunks aloft, trumpeting as they rushed, and trampling all before them,—plunged into the river and disappeared on the farther shore. For the moment the din of war was hushed as both lines gazed at the portentous sight. But soon the battle was resumed, and they fought on till darkness again closed on the combatants with the issue still in doubt.

The elephants put to flight.

The third night brought rest to neither side. It was a struggle for life. At first there was a pause, as the light faded away; and Sad, fearing lest the vast host should overlap his rear, sent parties to watch the fords. There had as yet been hardly time for even momentary repose when, early in the night, it occurred to some of the Arab leaders to rally their tribes with the view of harassing the enemy. The movement, made at the first without

The Night of Clangour: fight till morning.



A.H. 14. Sad's cognisance, drew on a general engagement in the dark. The screams of the combatants and din of arms made *The Night of Clangour*¹, as it is called, without parallel in the annals of Islam. It could only be compared to 'the clang of a blacksmith's forge.' Sad betook himself to prayer, for no sure tidings reached him all night through. Morning broke on the two hosts, worn and weary. Then arose Cacao, crying out that one more vigorous charge must turn the tide, 'for victory is ever his that persevereth to the end.' Four-and-twenty hours long the Arabs had fought unceasingly. And now they issued with the freshness and alacrity of a new attack. The Persian wings began to waver. A fierce onslaught shook their centre, which opened and laid bare the bank with Rustem on his throne. Tempestuous wind arose, and the canopy, no longer guarded, was blown into the river. The wretched prince had barely time to fly and crouch beneath a sumpter mule. The chance blow of a passer-by brought down the pack and crushed the prince's back. He crawled into the river; but was recognised by a soldier, who drew him out and slew him, and then mounting the throne, loudly proclaimed his end.

Persians
routed and
Rustem
slain.

Destruction of
Persian host.

No sooner was their leader slain, than rout and slaughter of the Persian host began. Some of the columns succeeded in passing the dam; but it was soon cut (probably to prevent pursuit), and swept away with a multitude by the pent-up stream. To the right and left, up the river bank and down, the Mussulmans chased the fugitives relentlessly. The plain, far and wide, was strewn with dead. The fugitive multitude, hunted into the fens and marshes, were everywhere put mercilessly to the sword. But the army was too exhausted to carry the pursuit far off.

Moslem
loss.

The Mussulman loss far exceeded that of any previous engagement. In the final conflict 6,000 fell, besides 2,500

¹ *Harir*. Each day had its name, as given in margin. The first and third have no apparent meaning, perhaps names of places. The second may refer to the 'succour' brought by the Syrian contingent. See C. de Perceval, vol. iii. p. 481. Gibbon (ch. li.) ignores the first day, and names the other three, as *Succour*, *Concussion*, and *Barking*.



previously. No sooner was the battle ended, than the women and children, with clubs and pitchers of water, issued forth on a double mission of mercy and of vengeance. Every fallen Mussulman, still warm and breathing, they gently raised and wetted his lips with water. But towards the wounded Persians they knew no mercy; for them they had another errand—to raise their clubs and give the *coup de grâce*. Thus had Islam extinguished pity, and implanted in the breasts of women, and even of little children, savage and cold-blooded cruelty. A.H. 14.

The spoil was great beyond all parallel, both in amount and costliness. Each soldier had six thousand pieces, besides the special gifts for veterans and such as showed extraordinary valour. The jewels stripped from Rustem's body were worth 70,000 pieces, although its most costly portion, the tiara, had been swept away. The great banner of the empire was captured on the field, made of panthers' skins, and so richly garnished with gems as to be valued at 100,000 pieces. Thus did the needy Arabs revel in the treasures of the East, the preciousness of which exceeded almost their power to comprehend. Vastness
of booty.

For the enemy, the defeat was fateful and decisive. Little more than thirty months had passed since Khalid set foot in Irac; and already that empire, which fifteen years before had humbled the Byzantine arms, ravaged Syria, and encamped triumphantly on the Bosphorus, crumbled under the blows of an enemy whose strength never exceeded thirty or forty thousand Arabs rudely armed. The battle of Cadesiya reveals the secret. On one side there was lukewarm, servile following; on the other, an indomitable spirit, which after long and weary hours of fighting nerved the Moslems for the final charge. The vast host, on which the last efforts of Persia had been lavished, was totally discomfited; and, though broken columns escaped across the river, the military power of the empire never again gathered into formidable and dangerous shape. The country far and wide was terror-struck. The Bedouins on either side of the Euphrates hesitated no longer. Many of them, though Christian, had Importance
of victory.



A.H. 14. fought in the Moslem ranks. These came to Sad and said: 'The tribes which at the first embraced Islam were wiser than we. Now that Rustem hath been slain, we will accept the new belief.' And so, many of them came over and made profession of the faith.

Tidings,
how re-
ceived by
Omar.

The battle had been so long impending, and the preparations on so grand a scale, that the issue was watched all over the country, 'from Odzeib away south to Aden, and from Obolla across to Jerusalem,' as about to decide the fate of Islam. The Caliph used to issue forth alone from the gates of Medina early in the morning, if perchance he might meet some messenger from the field. At last a camel-rider arrived outside the city, who to Omar's question replied shortly, 'The Lord hath discomfited the Persian host.' Unrecognised, Omar followed him on foot, and gleaned the outline of the great battle. Entering Medina, the people crowded round the Caliph, and, saluting, wished him joy of the triumph. The courier, abashed, cried out, 'O Commander of the Faithful, why didst thou not tell me?' 'It is well, my brother,' was the Caliph's simple answer. Such was the unpretending mien of one who at that moment was greater than either the Kaiser or the Chosroes.



CHAPTER XV.

EVENTS FOLLOWING THE BATTLE OF CADESIYA.
CAPTURE OF MEDAIN.

15-16 A.H. 636-7 A.D.

By desire of the Caliph, Sad paused for a while to let the weary troops refit. Fragments of the defeated host escaped in the direction of Babylon, and rallied there. After two months' rest, Sad, now recovered from sickness, advanced to attack them. On the march he re-entered Hira. It was the third time the unfortunate city had been taken. Punishment for the last helpless defection, was the doubling of its tribute. Soon supplanted by Kufa, a few miles distant, the once royal city of Hira speedily dwindled into insignificance. But the neighbouring palace of Khawarnac, beautiful residence of a bygone dynasty, was still left standing by the Lake of Najaf, and was sometimes visited as a country seat by the Caliphs and their court in after days.

The scattered Persian troops rallied first at the Tower of Babel, and then, recrossing the Euphrates, under the great mound of Babylon. Driven from thence, they fell back upon the Tigris. Sad pitched a standing camp at Babylon, from whence he cleared the plain of Dura, fifty miles broad from the Euphrates to the Tigris. The territorial chiefs from all sides now came in, some as converts, some as tributaries; and throughout the tract between the two rivers Moslem rule again became supreme. Several months passed; and at last, in the summer, Sad found

Sad reoccupies Hira, end of 14 A.H. Jan., 636 A.D.

Plain of Dura cleared.



A.H. 15-16.

Medain,
capital of
Persia.

himself able, with the full consent of Omar, now in the second year of his reign, to advance upon Medain.

The royal city was built on both banks of the Tigris, at a sharp double bend of the river, fifteen miles below the modern Baghdad. Seleucia, on the right bank, was the seat of the Alexandrian conquerors. On the opposite shore had grown up Ctesiphon, residence of the Persian monarchs. The combined city had for ages superseded Babylon as the capital of Chaldæa. Repeatedly taken by the Romans, it was now great and prosperous, but helplessly torn by intrigue and enervated by luxury. The main quarter, with its royal palaces, was on the eastern side, where the noble arch, the *Tak i Kesra*, still arrests the traveller's eye as he sails down the Tigris. Sad now directed his march to the suburb on the nearer side. On the way he was attacked by the Queen-mother. Animated by the ancient spirit of her race, and with a great oath that so long as the dynasty survived the empire was invincible, she took the field with an army commanded by a veteran general, 'the lion of Chosroes.' She was utterly discomfited, and her champion slain by the hand of Hashim.

Queen-mother
discomfited.

Sad then marched forward; and, drawing a lesson from the vainglorious boast of the vanquished princess, publicly recited before the assembled troops this passage from the Sacred text:—

'Did ye not swear aforetime that ye would never pass away? Yet ye inhabited the dwellings of a people that had dealt unjustly by their own souls; and ye saw how We dealt with them. We made them a warning and example unto you.'—(*Sura xiv. v. 44.*)

Siege laid
to western
quarter.
Summer.
15 A.H.
636 A.D.

In this spirit, they came upon the river; and lo! the famous Iwan, with its great hall of white marble, stood close before them on the opposite shore. 'Good heavens!' exclaimed Sad, dazzled at the sight; '*Allah Akbar!* What is this but the White pavilion of Chosroes! Now hath the Lord fulfilled the promise which He made unto His Prophet.' And each company shouted *Allah Akbar!* 'Great is the Lord!' as it came up and gazed at the palace, almost within their grasp. But the city was too strong to storm, and Sad



sat down before it. Warlike engines were brought up, but they made no impression on ramparts of sunburnt brick. The besieged issued forth in frequent sallies; it was the last occasion on which the warriors of Persia adventured themselves in single combat with the Arabs. The investment was strict, and the inhabitants reduced to great straits. The army lay for several months before the city; but Sad was not inactive in other directions. Bands were despatched wherever the great landholders failed to tender their submission. These ravaged Mesopotamia, and brought in multitudes as prisoners; but, by Omar's command, they were dismissed to their homes. Thus, the country from Tekrit downwards, and from the Tigris to the Syrian desert, was brought entirely and conclusively under Moslem sway.

The siege at last pressed so heavily on the western quarter, that the king sent a messenger with terms. He would give up all dominion west of the Tigris if they would leave him undisturbed on the eastern side. The offer was indignantly refused. Not long after, observing the walls no longer manned, an advance was ordered. They entered unopposed; the Persians had crossed, and carrying the ferry-boats with them, entirely evacuated the western bank. Not a soul was to be seen. But the further capital with the river between, was still defiant and secure. So the army, for some weeks, rested, and, occupying the deserted mansions of the western suburb, enjoyed a foretaste of Persian luxury.

On Medain being threatened, Yezdegird had despatched his family, with the regalia and treasure, to Holwan, in the hilly country to the north: and now he contemplated flight himself in the same direction. The heart of Persia had sunk hopelessly; for otherwise the deep and rapid Tigris still formed ample defence against sudden assault. Indeed, the Arabs thought so themselves; for they were occupied many weeks in search of boats, which had all been removed from the western bank. Unexpectedly, a deserter apprised Sad of a place where the river could be swum or forded. But the stream, always swift, was then upon a rise, and they feared lest the horses should be carried down by the turbid flood. Just then, tidings coming of the intended flight of Yezde-

A.H. 15-16.

Western
quarter
evacuated,
end of
15 A.H.
Jan.,
637 A.D.Capture of
Medain,
ii. 16 A.H.
March,
637 A.D.

A.H. 15-
16.Service of
Victory.

gird, Sad at once resolved upon the enterprise. Gathering his force, he said to them :—‘ We are now at the mercy of the enemy, who, with the river at command, is able to attack us unawares. Now, the Lord hath shown unto one amongst us a vision of the Faithful upon horses, crossing the stream triumphantly. Arise, let us stem the flood !’ The desperate venture was voted by acclamation. Six hundred picked cavalry were drawn up in bands of sixty. The foremost plunged in, and bravely battled with the rapid flood. Down and across, they had already neared the other shore, when a picket dashed into the water, and vainly endeavoured to beat them back. ‘ Raise your lances,’ shouted Asim ; ‘ bear right into their eyes.’ So they drove them back, and safely reached dry land. Sad no sooner saw them safe on shore, than he called on the rest to follow ; and thus, with the cry—‘ Allah ! Triumph to thy people ; Destruction to thine enemies !’—troop after troop leaped into the river, so thick and close, that the water was hidden from view ; and, treading as it had been solid ground, without a single loss, all gained the farther side. The Persians, taken by surprise, fled panic-stricken. The passage afforded time barely to escape. The few remaining, submitted themselves as tributaries. The Moslems pursued the fugitives ; but soon hastened back to share the royal spoil. They wandered over the gorgeous pavilions of a court into which the East had long poured its treasures, and revelled in gardens decked with flowers and laden with fruit. The conqueror established himself in the palace of the Chosroes. But first he was minded to render thanks in a Service of praise. A princely building was turned for this end into a house of prayer ; and there, followed by as many as could be spared, he ascribed the victory to the Lord of Hosts. The lesson was a passage of the Coran which speaks of Pharaoh overwhelmed in the Red Sea ; and also this verse, thought peculiarly appropriate :—

‘ How many Gardens did they leave behind,
And Fields of *shah* Dwelling-places fair,
And pleasant things *shah* they enjoyed !
Even thus We made another people to inherit the same.’

(Sura xliv. v. 35.)



A.H. 15-
16.
—
Spoil of
Medain.

The booty was rich beyond conception. Besides millions of treasure, there was countless store of silver and golden vessels, gorgeous vestments and garniture,—precious things of untold rarity and cost. The lucky capture of some mules disclosed the unexpected freight of tiara, robes, and girdle of the king. The Arabs gazed in wonder at the crown, jewelled swords, and splendour of the throne; and, among other marvels, at a camel of silver, large as life, with rider of gold, and a golden horse, with emeralds for teeth, its neck set with rubies, and trappings of gold. The precious metals lost their value, gold being plentiful as silver. Works of art in sandal-wood and amber were in the hands of every one, hoards of musk and spicy products of the East. Camphor lay about in sacks, and was at first by mistake kneaded with the cakes as salt. The prize agents had a heavy task, for each man's share (and the army now numbered 60,000) was twelve thousand pieces¹, besides special largesses to the more distinguished. The army despatched to Medina, beyond the royal Fifth, such rare and precious things as might stir the wonder of the simple citizens at home. To the Caliph they sent, as fitting gift, the regalia of the empire, and the sword of the Chosroes². But the spectacle of the day was the royal banqueting carpet, seventy cubits long and sixty broad. It represented a garden, the ground wrought in gold, and the walks in silver; meadows of emeralds, and rivulets of pearls; trees, flowers, and fruits of sparkling diamonds, rubies, and other precious stones. When the rest of the spoil had been disposed of, Omar took counsel what should be done with the carpet. The most advised to keep it as a trophy of Islam. But Aly, reflecting on the instability of earthly things, objected; and the Caliph, accepting his advice, had it cut in pieces and distributed

¹ Say £400 or £500 sterling for each soldier; from which (in addition to the Fifth) the entire value of the booty may be gathered. The treasure alone is put at 1500 million pieces, a like sum having been taken away by Rustem for the Cadesiya campaign.

² Four other swords were taken: that of the Kaiser kept by Sad, and of Bahram by Cacao; a third, of the Khaean of the Turks; and a fourth, of the King of Hind.



A.H. 15-16. with the other booty. The part which fell to Aly's lot fetched twenty thousand dirhems.

Medain offering every convenience for the seat of government, Sad established himself there. The palaces and mansions of the fugitive nobles were divided amongst his followers. The royal residence he occupied himself. The grand hall, its garnishing unchanged, was consecrated as a place of prayer, and here, the Friday or cathedral service was first celebrated in Irac.



CHAPTER XVI.

BATTLE OF JALOLA.—REDUCTION OF MESOPOTAMIA.—
KUFA AND BUSSORAH FOUNDED.

16 A. H. 637 A. D.

OMAR was satisfied, as well he might be, with the success achieved. His old spirit of caution revived, and beyond the plain skirted by the hilly range to the east, he strictly forbade a forward movement. Summer of the 16th year of the Hegira was passed in repose at Medain. The king, with his broken troops, had fled into the Persian mountains; and the people on either bank of the Tigris, seeing opposition vain, readily submitted to the conqueror. In the autumn, the Persians, resolving again to try the chance of arms, flocked in great numbers to Yezdegird at Holwan, about 100 miles north of Medain. From thence part of the force advanced to Jalola, a fortress held to be impregnable, defended by a deep trench, and the outlets guarded by *chevaux de frise* and spikes of iron. With Omar's sanction, Sad pushed forward Hashim and Cacaoa at the head of 12,000 men, including the flower of Mecca and Medina; and they sat down in front of the citadel. The garrison, reinforced from time to time by the army at Holwan, attacked the besiegers with desperate bravery. Fresh troops were despatched from Medain, and the siege was prolonged for eighty days. At length, during a vigorous sally, a storm darkened the air; and the Persian columns, losing their way, were pursued to the battlements by Cacaoa,

Battle of
Jalola.Persian
advance.



A.H. 16. who seized one of the gates. Thus cut off, they turned in despair upon the Arabs, and a general engagement ensued, which 'was not surpassed by the *Night of Clangour*, excepting that it was shorter.' Beaten at every point, many Persians in the attempt to flee were caught by the iron spikes. They were pursued, and the country strewn with corpses. Followed by the fragments of his army, Yezdegird fled to Rei, in the direction of the Caspian Sea. Cacao then advanced to Holwan, and defeating the enemy, left that stronghold garrisoned with Arab levies as the farthest Moslem outpost to the north.

Routed and
Jalola
taken.
End of
16 A.H.
Dec.,
637 A.D.

The spoil. The spoil again was rich and plentiful. A multitude of captive women, many of gentle birth, were distributed as a welcome prize, part on the spot and part sent to the troops at Medain. The booty was valued at thirty million dirhems, besides vast numbers of fine Persian horses, which formed a welcome acquisition to the army, nine falling to the lot of every combatant. In charge of the Fifth, Sad despatched a youth named Ziad, of doubtful parentage (of which more hereafter), but of singular readiness and address. In presence of the Caliph, he harangued the citizens, and recounted in glowing words the prize of Persia, rich lands, endless spoil, slave-girls and captive princesses. Omar praised his speech, and declared that the troops of Sad surpassed the traditions even of Arab bravery. But next morning, when distributing the rubies, emeralds, and vast store of precious things, he was seen to weep. 'What!' exclaimed Abd al Rahman; 'a time of joy and thankfulness, and thou shedding tears!' 'Yea,' replied the simple-minded Caliph; 'it is not for this I weep, but I foresee that the riches which the Lord bestoweth on us will be a spring of worldliness and envy, and in the end a calamity to my people.'

Ziad sent
to Medina
with the
Fifth.

Omar re-
fuses an
advance
on Persia.

Ziad was also the bearer of a petition for leave to pursue the fugitives across the border into Khorasan. Omar, content with the present, forbade the enterprise. 'I desire,' he replied, 'that between Mesopotamia and countries beyond, the hills shall be a barrier, so that the Persians shall not be able to get at us, nor we at them. The plain of Irac sufficeth for our wants. I would rather the safety of my people than



thousands of spoil and further conquest.' The thought of a world-wide mission was yet in embryo; obligation to enforce Islam by a universal crusade had not yet dawned upon the Moslem mind; and, in good truth, an empire embracing Syria, Chaldæa, and Arabia, might have satisfied the ambition even of an Assyrian or Babylonian monarch. The equal mind of Omar, far from being unsteadied by the flush and giddiness of victory, cared first to consolidate and secure the prize already gained.

Nothing now threatening on the Persian side, the ambition of Sad and his generals, checked by the Caliph's interdict, was for the present confined to the reduction of Mesopotamia. For this end, troops were sent up the Tigris as far as Tekrit—a stronghold about a hundred miles above Medain, held by a mixed garrison of Greek troops and Christian Bedouins. These bravely resisted attack. After forty days the Byzantines thought to desert their native allies and escape by boat. The Bedouins, on the other hand, gained secretly over by the Moslems, seized the water-gate; and so the Greeks, taken on both sides, were put to the sword. The column, joined by the newly converted allies, pressed forward to Mosul, which surrendered and became tributary. On the Euphrates, the Moslem arms met with equal success. The Bedouin tribes in Mesopotamia urged by the Byzantine court to attack the invaders then threatening Hims, Sad was charged by Omar to draw them off by a diversion from his side. The fortress of Hit on the Euphrates was accordingly besieged; but was too strong to carry by assault. Half of the force being left before the town, the rest marched rapidly up the river to Kirkesia, at its junction with the Khabur, and took it by surprise. The garrison of Hit, when they heard of it, capitulated on condition of being allowed to retire. Thus, the lower half of Mesopotamia, from one river to the other, was reduced, the strongholds garrisoned, and the Bedouins either converted to the faith or brought under subjection.

From the junction of the two rivers also, downwards on either side of the Shat al Arab to the shores of the Persian Gulf, the rule of Islam was now thoroughly established. This

Operations
in Mesopo-
tania.
Hit and
Kirkesia
taken.
Summer,
16 A.H.
637 A.D.



A.H. 16. tract had been exposed, with various fortune, to Arab raids ever since the invasion of Mothanna. Omar saw that, to secure Iraq, it was needful to occupy the head of the Gulf as far as the range of hills on its eastern side. About the period, therefore, of Sad's campaign, he deputed Otba, a Companion of note, with a party from Bahrein, to capture the flourishing seaport of Obolla. The garrison was defeated, and the inhabitants, chiefly Indian merchants, effected their escape by sea. The Persians rallied in force on the eastern bank of the river, and many encounters took place before the Arabs succeeded in securing their position. On one occasion, the women of the Moslem camp turning their veils into flags, and marching in martial array to the battle-field, were mistaken thus for fresh reinforcements, and contributed at a critical moment to the victory. Otba remained at Obolla as governor; and, as we shall see, carried on successful operations, during the next three years against Khuzistan and the Persian border. Meanwhile Obolla gave place to the capital town of Bussorah.

Bussorah
founded,
17 A.H.
638 A.D.,

On the ruins of Obolla when first captured, there had arisen a small town of huts constructed of reeds, with a Mosque of the same material. The settlement grew in size and importance by constant arrivals from Arabia. But the climate was inhospitable. The tide rises close to the level of the alluvial plain, which, irrigated thus with ease, stretches far and wide a sea of verdure. Groves of pomegranate, acacia, and shady trees abound; and a wide belt of the familiar date-palm fringing the river might reconcile the immigrant of the Hejaz to his new abode. But the moisture exhaled by so damp a soil was ill-suited to the Arabian humour; pestilential vapours followed the periodical inundations, and gnats everywhere settled in intolerable swarms¹. Three times the site was changed; at last the pleasant spot of Bussorah, near the river, which supplied a stream of running water, was fixed upon; and here a flourishing city rapidly grew up. It was laid out about the same time, and after the same fashion,

¹ The traveller of to-day still complains of the pest of mosquitoes issuing from the groves of the Delta in gigantic swarms.



as its rival Kufa. But, partly from a better climate, partly from a larger endowment of conquered lands, the sister city took the lead, as well in numbers as in influence and riches. A.H. 18.

The founding of Kufa was on this wise. The Arabs had been in occupation of Medain for some months, when a deputation visited Medina. The Caliph, startled by their sallow and unwholesome look, asked the cause. They replied that the city air did not suit the Arab temperament. Whereupon, he ordered enquiry for some more healthy and congenial spot; such as, approaching nearer the desert air, and well supplied with wholesome water, would not be cut off from ready help in any time of need. After diligent search along the desert outskirts, they found no place answering so well as the plain of Kufa, not far from Hira, on the banks of the western branch of the Euphrates. Omar confirmed the choice, and left it open for each man either to remain at Medain, or transfer his habitation thither. The new capital suited the Arabs well, and to it accordingly they migrated in great numbers. The dwellings, as at Bussorah, were made at first of reeds. But fires were frequent; and after a disastrous conflagration, the Caliph gave permission that both cities might be built of brick. 'The flitting camp,' he wrote, 'is the warrior's proper place. But if ye must have permanent abode, be it so; only let no man have more houses than three for wives and children, nor exceed the modest exemplar of the Prophet's dwelling-place.' So the city was rebuilt, and the streets laid out in regular lines. The centre was kept an open square, in which was erected a Mosque with a portico for shade, and for ornament pillars of marble brought away from Hira. Sad built himself a spacious edifice, and reared in front of it a gateway, to prevent intrusion from the market-place hard by. The rumour of 'the Castle of Sad' troubled the simple-minded Caliph, and he sent a Companion, ibn Maslama, with a rescript commanding that the gateway should be pulled down. Arrived at Kufa, the envoy, invited by Sad to enter his mansion as a guest, declined. Sad came forth, and received this letter at his hands:—'It hath been re-

x. 18 A.H.
Oct.,
638 A.D.

Omar bids
Sad pull
down the
gateway of
his palace.



A.H. 16. — ported to me that thou hast builded for thyself a palace, and people call it *The Castle of Sad*; moreover thou hast reared a gateway betwixt thee and the people. It is not thy castle; rather is it the castle of perdition. What is needful for the treasury, that thou mayest guard and lock; but the gateway which shutteth out the people from thee, that thou shalt break down.' Sad obeyed the order; but he protested that his object in building the portal had been falsely reported, and Omar accepted the excuse.

The Sawād
settled
with the
Feliabeen.

The settlement of the land was the next concern. The *Sawād*, or rich plain of Chaldæa, having been taken, with some few exceptions, by force of arms, was claimed by the Arab soldiery as prize of war. The judgment and equity of Omar is conspicuous in the abatement of this demand. After counsel held with his advisers at Medina, the Caliph ordered that cultivators who had fled during the operations in Irac, as well as those who had kept to their holdings throughout, should be treated as *Zimmies*, or protected subjects, and confirmed in possession on moderate tribute. Royal forests and domains, lands of the nobles and of those who had opposed the Moslem arms, and endowments of Fire-temples, were confiscated; but the demand for their division as ordinary prize was denied. Equitable distribution was impossible, and the attempt would but breed bad blood amongst the people. The necessities also of the great system of canals, and of the postal and other services, as first charge upon the revenues, demanded that the public lands should be kept intact. Such were the ostensible reasons. But a cause more weighty underlay the order. Omar would maintain the martial spirit of his followers at any cost, and render it perpetual. With him it was of first necessity that the Arabs should not settle anywhere but in the field, or other place of arms; nor engage at all in husbandry, lest becoming fixed to the soil, the temper militant should wane. The people of Arabia must in every land be men of arms, ready at a moment's notice for the field, a race distinct and dominant. Therefore, much to the army's discontent, not only were the confiscated lands held undivided, but, from the border of the Syrian desert to



the mountain range of Persia, the sale of any portion of the soil, whether confiscated or not, was forbidden. Thus there arose a double protection to the native tenantry, who under no pretext could be evicted from their lands. The country also, remaining in the hands of its own cultivators, was nursed, and became a rich and permanent source of revenue. A.H. 16.

The confiscated lands scattered over the province were administered by crown agents, and the profits shared between the captors and the State. The prize domains of Kufa—conquered by the armies of Khalid and of Sad—were much more extensive than those of Bussorah. Shortly after its foundation, the inhabitants of Bussorah sent representatives to urge that their endowments should be increased, and income made more adequate to their responsibilities. 'Kufa,' said their spokesman, 'is a well-watered garden which yieldeth in season its harvest of dates, while ours is brackish land. Part bordereth on the desert, and part upon the sea, which laveth it with briny flood. Compared with Kufa, our poor are many, our rich are few. Grant us, therefore, of thy bounty.' Recognising the justice of the plea, Omar made substantial addition to their endowments from the Crown lands of the Chosroes. But, although Kufa was richer, it had heavier obligations to discharge than the sister city. Its government had a wider range; and the charge of garrisons at various points, as Holwan, Mosul, and Kirkesia, had to be provided from the resources at the command of Sad.

Kufa and Bussorah, unique in their origin, had a singular influence on the destinies of the Caliphate and of Islam at large. The vast majority of the population were of pure Arabian blood. The tribes which, scenting from afar the prey of Chaldæa and Persia, kept streaming into Chaldæa from every corner of Arabia, settled chiefly there. At Kufa the races from the south of the peninsula predominated; at Bussorah, from the north. Rapidly they grew into two great and luxurious capitals, with an Arab population each of from 150,000 to 200,000 souls. On the literature, theology, and politics of Islam, the two cities had

Crown
lands and
endow-
ments of
Kufa and
Bussorah.

Influence
of the two
cities on
the future
of Islam.



- A.H. 16. — a greater influence than the whole Moslem world besides. Service in the field was desultory and intermittent. The intervals were spent in idleness. Excepting when enlivened by the fruits of some new victory, secluded harems afforded their lords little variety of recreation or amusement. Otherwise the time was whiled away in the converse of social knots; and in these, while they discussed the problems of the day, they loved still more to live in the past, to recall the marvellous story of their Faith, and fight their battles over again. Hence tradition, and the two great schools of Bussorah and Kufa. But the debates and gossip of these clubs too often degenerated into tribal rivalry and domestic scandal. The people grew petulant and factious; and both cities became hotbeds of turbulence and sedition. The Bedouin element, conscious of its strength, was jealous of the Coreish, and impatient at whatever checked its own capricious humour. Thus factions sprang up which, controlled by the strong and wise arm of Omar, broke loose under weaker Caliphs, rent the unity of Islam, and brought on disastrous days, that, but for its marvellous vitality, must have proved fatal to the Faith.



CHAPTER XVII.

CAMPAIGN IN NORTHERN SYRIA.

15 A.H. 636 A.D.

To recover the thread of Syrian warfare we must go back to the great victory on the banks of the Jordan. At the close of the 14th year of the Hegira, Abu Obeida, leaving Amru to follow up the success in Palestine, and Yezid as governor of Damascus, marched with the rest of his forces northward upon Hims, the ancient Emessa, where the emperor watched the progress of his enemies. Dzul Kelaa, who with his Himyar column had been ever since covering Damascus from attack on the north, now joined his chief. They had advanced but a little way, when they were stopped by two columns. Theodore, who commanded one of these, seeing Damascus no longer guarded, thought to make a sudden dash upon it. But Yezid, issuing with his garrison, assailed him in front; and Khalid's flying column was immediately in pursuit. Taken thus before and behind, Theodore's army was cut to pieces. The other column was put to flight by Abu Obeida. Meeting no further opposition, the Arabs continued their march, storming Balbek by the way.

Abu Obeida advanced straight upon Hims, and closely invested it. Heraclius, on the defeat of Theodore, retired hastily on Roha (Edessa), where he endeavoured to raise the Bedouins of Mesopotamia, and thus effect a diversion. The effort (as we have seen) was defeated by Sad, who,

Abu
Obeida's
advance on
Northern
Syria,
14 A.H.
635 A.D.

Hims
besieged.
End of
14 A.H.
Jan.,
636 A.D.



A.H. 15. making an inroad on Kirkesia, recalled the tribes to the defence of their desert homes. The siege of Hims, prosecuted with vigour, was bravely resisted. But the expectation of succour died away; the severity of winter failed to make the Arabs retire, the sallies of the beleaguered garrison became less frequent, and their spirits fell. When the siege had been protracted many weeks, an earthquake breached the battlements. The governor, finding the position no longer tenable, offered to capitulate; and the Moslems, unaware of the full extent of mischief, readily gave the same terms as to Damascus. In answer to the despatch announcing the capture, Omar bade Abu Obeida press boldly forward; and promising further reinforcements, counselled him to gain the powerful tribes on the border, and strengthen thus his army.

Capitu-
lates.
Spring,
15 A.H.
636 A.D.

March
northward.
Antioch
taken.

Leaving a garrison in Hims, Abu Obeida resumed his northward march. Hama, and other towns of inferior note, tendered submission. The fortified city of Laodicea alone showed an obstinate front; but the Arabs made a feint to withdraw, and then darting back in early morning through an open portal, seized the defences, and overpowered the garrison. Advancing still to the north, Khalid, with great slaughter, defeated the Greeks near Kinnisrin (Chalcis), which was seized and dismantled. Aleppo next fell, after a brief resistance; and then Abu Obeida turned his arms westward upon Antioch. In this famous emporium of merchandise, art, and luxury, the broken troops of the Empire rallied. And here, at length, within the great lines of circumvallation which ran along the surrounding heights, we might have expected Heraclius to make a bold stand. But no effort befitting the crisis seems even to have been thought of. A heavy battle, indeed, was fought on the wooded plain outside the walls; but the garrison was driven back, and the city, surrounded on all sides, capitulated. Such are the details, comprised within the space of a few lines, which tell us whatever we know of the loss of Northern Syria, from Damascus to the hilly range of Asia Minor.

Northern
Syria
reduced.

Eastward, the Greeks made a last but feeble attempt to regain their footing. They were again hopelessly beaten,



their leader slain, and great numbers taken prisoner. The arm of the Empire was for the moment paralysed, and Syria, from the Euphrates to the sea-shore, brought under the sway of Islam. The nomad tribes, as well as the settled inhabitants, became tributary and bound by engagements to keep the conquerors informed of any movements by the enemy. Before long time, the Bedouins, who have ever sat loose to the trammels of religion, went for the most part over to the Moslem faith. But the urban population, as a whole, resisted the inducements to abandon Christianity; and, although reduced, as the Coran demands, to an humbled and degraded state, were yet treated with moderation, their churches spared and their worship respected. They either reconciled themselves to their unhappy fate, or retired unmolested into Byzantine territory.

A.H. 15.

Christian population.

When Heraclius beheld his armies, one after another, defeated, and his efforts to rally the Bedouin tribes end only in secession and hostile risings throughout Mesopotamia, he gave up Syria as lost, and fell back upon Samsat. But he was in peril even there. For, after reducing Membij and other fortresses within the Syrian frontier, Khalid made a dash into Cilicia, and ravaged Marash and the surrounding country. The Emperor, alarmed at his line of retreat thus threatened, retired altogether from the scene; and, relinquishing to the enemy the fairest and best loved provinces of his realm, resolved to recross the Bosphorus. Wending his sad way westward, Heraclius (so the Arabian annalists tell us) ascended an eminence whence might be had a last glimpse of the wooded hills and sunny plains of Syria, now vanishing in the southern horizon. He turned to gaze: 'Peace be with thee, Holy and Blessed land!' he said, 'Syria, fare thee well! There is for me no more returning unto thee; neither shall any Roman visit thee for ever, but in fear and trembling, until the accursed Antichrist shall come.' It was but ten years before, that the same Emperor, performing on foot a pilgrimage to Jerusalem through the same lovely province, to commemorate the recovery of the 'true Cross,' and his own signal victories in the East, had cast aside a rude missive from the Arabian Prophet

Heraclius retires to Constantinople.



A.H. 15. Jabala, the Ghassanide Prince.

demanding submission to Islam. What seemed then the wild phantasy of a maniac was now an accomplished fact¹.

A similar despatch from Mahomet had been at the same time received by Jabala, last Prince of the Ghassanide dynasty; who thereupon had asked the Emperor's leave to chastise the insolent Arab, but was bidden instead to swell the imperial train at Jerusalem. And now Jabala was to share his master's fate. At the head of the Ghassan, he had fought loyally on the Byzantine side, till now, disheartened by the flight of Heraclius, he turned to Abu Obeida, and embraced Islam. Thereafter, splendidly clad, and with a pompous following, he visited Medina, where the people, familiar with the illustrious name, received him with peculiar honours. Thence he accompanied the Caliph on pilgrimage to Mecca. There a Bedouin chancing to tread upon his flowing robe, caused him to stumble and fall. The haughty prince struck the offender on the face. To his amazement he was summoned before the Caliph, who ordered, under the law of retaliation, that the Bedouin should have his satisfaction by returning the blow. 'What!' cried Jabala; 'I, the Prince of the Ghassan, and he a common Bedouin of the desert!' 'Yea,' replied Omar; 'for in Islam all are equal.' Stung by the affront, Jabala retired at once to Constantinople; when, returning to the Christian faith, he was hospitably entertained at the Byzantine court. The tale has been garnished by touches of romance such as that, pining after his old haunts, he offered again to embrace Islam, if Omar would give him one of his daughters to wife; but so much is certain that he died in exile, and left behind him at Constantinople a colony of Arab followers.

Exchange of gifts between Empress and Omar's wife.

It is interesting to be told that friendly relations subsisted at times between the Caliph and the Byzantine Court. Omar's wife sent to the Empress a royal gift of frankincense, and precious things fit for the toilet of a lady; and the Empress in return sent her a beautiful necklace. Omar doubted

¹ *Life of Mahomet*, p. 383. The reader is again reminded that the history of the Byzantine war is taken exclusively from Arabian sources, and these fragmentary and brief.



whether the gift should be accepted, or whether it should not rather be held public property. Some said, 'The Empress is not a subject; she hath sent a present for Omm Kolthum; let her keep it;' others said, 'It is but a gift in return for a gift.' But Omar replied: 'It was an embassy at the cost of the Moslems, and they have got this in return.' So it was made over to the treasury; but he gave his wife the value of it from his privy purse. A.H. 15.

In this campaign, the conduct and chivalry of Khalid made such an impression upon Omar that he received him back into favour, and appointed him to the government of Kinnisrin. 'Verily,' he said, 'Khalid hath proved himself a prince among men. Blessed be the memory of Abu Bekr, for verily he knew mankind better than I.' The reconciliation, however, was not of long duration. Omar
reconciled
to Khalid.



CHAPTER XVIII.

CONQUEST OF PALESTINE.

15 A.H. 636 A.D.

Territorial
division of
Palestine.

PALESTINE, according to the Arabs, is the tract that lies west of the Dead Sea. A line drawn from that sea to Mount Carmel, would be its northern boundary. North of that, again, the country, with the valley watered by the river, is the province of the *Jordan*. Still farther north is *Syria* (*Shâm*), and to the east of Jordan, again, is the *Hauran*.

Palestine
invaded.

The first inroads of the Arabs were, as we have seen, on the Hauran. Issuing from Arabia, their northward course had been along the highway to Damascus, the pilgrim route of the present day, east of the Dead Sea. The base of operations throughout the Syrian campaign was at Jabia, a town on the high land to the east of the Sea of Galilee; from whence columns could be forwarded, by the great military roads, either to Damascus and the north, or westward to Tiberias, the Jordan, and Palestine. Soon after the siege of Damascus and battle of Fihl, the greater part of the province of Jordan fell rapidly under the arms of Amru and Shorahbil. In Palestine proper, with Egypt in its rear and Cæsarea open to the sea, the Byzantine power was still unbroken. Gaza, Ramleh, and Jerusalem, were heavily garrisoned. The Patrician Artabun, commanding in Palestine, guarded Jerusalem with part of his army. With the rest, taking his stand at Ajnadein, some distance to the west, he sought to hold the invaders advancing from Beisan in check. This



foolhardy general invited Amru to a conference, having laid an ambush on the way to slay him. But he was outwitted by the wily Arab, and, before long, cut off from his communications, was defeated in a decisive engagement, which took place at Ajnadein. Of the details we know little, and are simply told that 'the battle of Ajnadein was fierce and bloody as that of Wacusa.' After great slaughter, Artabun was driven back on Jerusalem. Amru encamped on the battle-field, his way being now clear to the holy city. But he took the precaution first to secure his rear, still bristling with garrisons. One after another, Gaza, Lydda, Joppa, and other places, fell before his arms. Jerusalem and Ramleh alone held out.

A.H. 15.
Battle of
Ajnadein.
Spring,
15 A.H.
636 A.D.

Towards Jerusalem, full of associations sacred to the Moslems, Amru first directed his steps. On his approach, Artabun retired with his army into Egypt. The Patriarch sued for peace. One condition he made, that Omar should himself come to the Holy City, and there in person settle the capitulation. The Caliph, braving the objections of his court, at once set out, journeying direct for Jabia. It was a memorable occasion, the first progress of a Caliph beyond the limits of Arabia. Abu Obeida, Yezid, and Khalid hastened from the North to welcome him. A brilliant cavalcade, dressed in rich Syrian stuff, and gaily mounted, they rode forth to meet their Master on the border of Arabia. At sight of all their finery, Omar's spirit was stirred within him. He stooped down, and, gathering a handful of gravel,— 'Avaunt!' he cried, 'is it thus attired ye come out to meet me, changed in two short years! Verily, had it been two hundred, ye would have deserved this;' as he flung the gravel at them. 'Commander of the Faithful!' they replied; 'this that thou seest is but the outside; beneath it' (and they drew aside their robes) 'behold our armour.' 'Enough,' said Omar, still displeased; 'Go forward.' So journeying onwards, they alighted at Jabia. Shortly after, the camp was startled by the appearance of a strange troop of horse. It was a deputation from the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Terms were soon settled, and the treaty, duly witnessed, carried by the envoys back to their master;

Jerusalem
capitulates.
End of
15 A.H.,
and of
636 A.D.

Omar's
journey to
Jabia



A.H. 15. — whereupon the gates of Jerusalem, and of Ramleh, were thrown open to the invading force. Amru and Shorahbil, thus relieved, left their camp and presented themselves at Jabia. Omar rode forth to meet them; they kissed his stirrup, while he, dismounting, affectionately embraced them both.

and Jerusalem.

Dismissing the other generals to their respective commands, the Caliph, with Amru and Shorahbil, crossed the Jordan below the Lake of Tiberias, and journeyed onward to Jerusalem. They gave him a palfrey to ride on, which pranced with jingling bells after the Syrian fashion. He disliked the motion. 'What aileth the animal?' he said; 'I know not who hath taught it this strange gait.' So he dismounted and rode upon his own horse again. Arrived at Jerusalem, Omar received the Patriarch and citizens with kindness and condescension. He granted the same privileges as to the most favoured cities; imposed an easy tribute, and confirmed possession of all the shrines and churches. Jerusalem was to the Moslem an object of intense veneration, not only as the cradle of Judaism and Christianity, but as the first *Kibla* of Islam, or sacred spot to which the Faithful turn in prayer; and also the shrine at which Mahomet alighted on the heavenly journey which he performed by night. At the crest of the sacred mount is a stony projection, which tradition marked as Jacob's pillow. The Moslems fondly fancy this to be the spot in the 'Farther Temple,' from which the winged steed of Mahomet took its upward flight; and the eye of faith still traces an outline of the Prophet's foot imprinted on the rock as he sprang into his airy saddle. It was here that Omar laid the foundation of the Mosque which, to this day, bears his name¹.

9
¹ Ali Bey, the traveller, tells us that when Mahomet stood upon it, the rock, 'sensible of the happiness of bearing the holy burden, depressed itself, and becoming soft like wax, received the print of his holy foot upon the upper part. . . . This print is now covered with a large sort of cage of gilt metal wire, worked in such a manner that the print cannot be seen on account of the darkness within, but it may be touched with the hand through a hole made on purpose. The believers, after having touched the print, proceed to sanctify themselves by passing the hand over the face and beard.' (*Travels of Ali Bey*, vol. ii. p. 220.)

The heavenly journey is thus referred to in the Coran: 'Praise be to Him,



Mahometan tradition gives no further detail respecting this memorable visit. But Christian writers say that Omar accompanied the Patriarch over the city, visited the various places of pilgrimage, and graciously inquired into their history. At the appointed hour, the Patriarch bade the Caliph perform his orisons in the church of the Resurrection, where they chanced to be. But he declined to pray either there, or in the church of Constantine where a carpet had been spread for him, saying kindly that if he did so his followers would take possession of the church for ever, as a place where Moslem prayer had once been offered up. Omar also visited Bethlehem; and having prayed in the church of the Nativity, left a rescript with the Patriarch, who accompanied him on the pious errand, securing the Christians in possession of the building, with the condition that not more than one Mussulman should ever enter at a time. The stipulation was disregarded, and a mosque was eventually erected there, as well as on the site of the church of Constantine.

A. H. 15.
Christian tradition regarding the visit.

Whatever the truth in these traditions, Omar did not prolong his stay in Jerusalem. Having settled the matter for which he came, the only other duty he performed was to divide Palestine into two provinces; one he attached to Jerusalem, and the other to Ramleh. He then returned by the way he came back again to Medina.

Omar returns to Medina.

Thus was Syria, from the farthest north to the border of Egypt, within the space of three years, lost to Christen-

Causes facilitating conquest of Syria.

who carried His servant by night to the FARTHER TEMPLE, the environs of which we have made blessed.' *Sura xvii.* (The 'Farther Temple,' in contradistinction to the 'Nearer Temple,' i.e. the Kaaba.) Jerusalem was the Kibla of Mahomet and his followers, up to the time of his flight from Mecca. In the second year after settling at Medina, he was suddenly instructed while at prayer to turn instead towards Mecca, and ever since, the Kaaba, and not Jerusalem, has been the Kibla of the Moslems.

The *Haram* is the sacred inclosure on the S.E. corner of Mount Zion. The *Kubbet al Sakhra*, or 'Dome of the Stone,' has been built polygonal, to meet the shape of the 'Stone,' or Rock referred to in the text, which gives its name to the Mosque. This rock rises to a height of six or seven feet from a base, according to Ali Bey, 33 feet in diameter, or, according to others, 57 feet long and 43 wide. The architecture is Byzantine, and Greek builders were no doubt engaged in its construction. There is probably little, if anything, of Christian remains in the present Haram.



A.H. 15. dom. One reflects with wonder at the feeble resistance of the Byzantine power, military and naval, and of its renowned strongholds, to this sudden inroad. The affinity of the Syrian Bedouins to the Arabian nation no doubt facilitated the conquest. There was also an element of weakness in the settled population; luxurious living had made the race effeminate, and unable to resist the onset of wild and fanatic invaders. Still worse, they had no heart to fight. What patriotic vigour might have still survived, was lost in religious strife; and rival sects rejoiced each in the humiliation of its neighbour. Loyalty was smothered by bitter jealousies, and there are not wanting instances of active assistance rendered by Jews and Christians to the enemy. There may have been even a sense of relief in the equal though contemptuous licence which the haughty conquerors conceded to all alike. But there was a deeper cause, the decrepitude of the Roman empire. The virtue and vigour to repel the shock of barbarian invasion were gone. And while northern hordes gradually amalgamated with the nations which they overran, the exclusive faith and intolerant teaching of Islam kept the Arabs a race distinct and dominant.

The Arabs do not settle in Syria as in Chaldaea. The conquerors did not spread themselves abroad in Syria, as in Chaldaea. They founded no such Arabian towns and military settlements as Bussorah and Kufa. The country and climate were less congenial; though a land of brooks of water, of vines and fig-trees, of oil-olive and honey, yet it offered fewer attractions to the Arabian than the hot and sandy plains of Irac, with its familiar garb of tamarisk and date. The Arabs came to Syria as conquerors; and as conquerors they settled largely, particularly the southern tribes, in Damascus, Hims, and other centres of administration. But the body of native Syrians, urban and rural, remained after the conquest substantially the same as before; and through long centuries of degradation they clung, as the surviving remnant still cling, to their ancestral faith.

We read in later days of the 'Ordinance of Omar,' regulating the conditions of Christian communities through-



out Islam. But it would be a libel on that tolerant Ruler to credit him with the greater part of these observances. It is true that the stamp of inferiority—according to divine injunction,—*Fight against the people of the Book, Jews and Christians, until they pay tribute with their hands and are humbled*¹—was branded on them from the first; but the worst disabilities of the intolerant ‘Ordinance’ were not imposed till a later period. Introduced gradually, these became, by use and habit, the law of the land. At first the exactions of the conquerors, besides the universal tribute, were limited to the demand of a yearly supply of oil-olive and other food, and the obligation to entertain for three days Moslem travellers. But when the Caliphate was established at Damascus and at Baghdad, its pride could no longer brook even the semblance of equality, and hence the badge of inferiority at every step;—the dress of both sexes and their slaves must be distinguished by stripes of yellow; forbidden to appear on horseback, if they rode on mule or ass, the stirrups and knobs of the saddle must be of wood; their graves level with the ground, and the mark of the devil on the lintel of their doors; the children prohibited from being taught by Moslem masters; and the race, however able or well qualified, proscribed from aspiring to any office of emolument or trust; besides the existing churches spared at the conquest, no new building to be erected for the purposes of worship; free entry into all the holy places allowed at pleasure to any Moslem; no cross to remain outside, nor any church bell rung. They were debarred from holding processions in the street at Easter and other solemn seasons; in short, they must abstain from everything, whether by outward symbol, word, or deed, in rivalry or derogation of the royal faith. Such was the so-called *Code of Omar*. Gradually infringing the just rights of Jews and Christians, and enforced with more or less stringency in different lands and under various dynasties, it was, and still remains, the law of Islam. One must admire the rare tenacity of the subject faith, which, with but scanty light and hope, held its ground through

A.H. 15.

Humilia-
tion of
Jews and
Christians.‘Ordinance
of Omar,’
the growth
of time.¹ Sura ix. 30.



A.H. 15. weary ages of insult and depression, and still survives to see the dawning of a brighter day.

East cut off
from the
West.

I have spoken of the loss of Syria as the dismemberment of a limb from the Byzantine empire. In one respect it was something more. For their own safety, the Greeks dismantled a broad belt on the border of hostile and now barbarous Syria. The towns and fortresses within this tract were razed, and the inhabitants withdrawn. And so the neutral zone became a barrier against travel to and fro. For all purposes, social, religious, and commercial, the road was for generations closed. Pilgrimage, it is true, and commerce, from the West, were maintained by sea; but in respect of communication by land, the East was severed from the West.

Silence of
Byzantine
annalists.

'The abomination of desolation stood in the Holy place.' The cradle of Christianity, Zion, the joy of the whole earth, was trodden under foot, and utterly cut off from the sight of its votaries. And all is told by the Byzantine writers in a few short lines. The pen of the Christian annalist might well refuse to write the story of cowardice and shame.



CHAPTER XIX.

RISING IN NORTHERN SYRIA.

17 A.H. 638 A.D.

IN the sixth year of Omar's Caliphate, a desperate effort was made by the Greeks, at one moment not without some prospect of success, to shake off the Moslem yoke and recover possession of Northern Syria. Rising in Northern Syria.

The movement is attributed to an appeal from the Christian tribes of Upper Mesopotamia, who besought the Emperor to save them from falling under the adversary's sway. Although the strongholds of Mesopotamia had fallen into the hands of Sad, yet these had little control over the wandering Bedouins, and many of the Christian tribes still looked for support to the Persian or Byzantine rule. The maritime power of the West was yet untouched. Cæsarea with its naval supports remained proof against landward attack; and the whole sea coast was kept unsettled by the fear, or by the hope that a fleet might at any time appear. The Emperor now promised the dwellers in Mesopotamia to second their efforts by way of the sea. An expedition was directed from Alexandria on Antioch, while the Bedouins gathered in great hordes around Hims. Thus seriously threatened, Abu Obeida called in his outlying garrisons. But finding the enemy too strong to be dispersed by the force at his disposal, he sent an urgent summons for assistance to Medina. Thereupon Omar ordered Sad immediately to despatch a strong column from Kufa under Cacao for the relief of Hims; and likewise to effect a Greeks support Bedouin rising. 17 A.H. 638 A.D.



A.H. 17. diversion in Upper Mesopotamia. Meanwhile the Greeks landed from their ships. Antioch threw open her gates to them; and Kinnisrin, Aleppo, and other towns in the north, were in full revolt. A council of war was called. Khalid was for giving battle, but Abu Obeida, feeling too weak to cope with the now combined forces of the Bedouins and Greeks, retired to Hims, and there hemmed in by enemies, awaited the succour advancing from Kufa. So grave did Omar himself regard the crisis, that, quitting Medina for the second time, he journeyed to Jabia, intending to march in person with the reinforcements northwards. But while on his journey, a change had already come over the scene. The vigorous diversion in Mesopotamia so alarmed the Bedouins for the safety of their desert homes, that they began to forsake the Emperor's cause. Seeing now his opportunity, Abu Obeida issued from the fortress, and after a severe engagement routed the enemy, who fled in confusion, and before the arrival of Cacia were already totally dispersed. Omar returned to Medina, delighted at the result. He specially commended the alacrity of the Kufa column;—'The Lord reward them,' he wrote to Sad, 'for their ready gathering and speedy march to the succour of their beleagured brethren.'

Abu
Obeida
puts enemy
to flight.

Campaign
in Northern
Mesopotamia,
17 A.H.
638 A.D.

It was the last effort of Constantinople to expel the invader from Syria, and the yoke was now plainly not to be shaken off. The diversion undertaken in Mesopotamia had also the effect of reducing that province to its farthest limits. Not content with this, the infant faith, becoming conscious of its giant strength, began to stretch itself still farther north. Success in Mesopotamia was followed up by a campaign in Asia Minor; and the name of Iyadh, under whom even Khalid did not disdain to serve, begins to figure as one of terror in the brief Byzantine record. Nisibin, Roha, and other strong places on the frontier were taken or recaptured, and part even of Armenia overrun.

Christian
tribes,
Beni Iyadh.

Most of the Bedouin tribes in Mesopotamia embraced Islam. There were exceptions, and the story of the Beni Iyadh is singular. They migrated to the north, and found an asylum in Byzantine territory. But Omar, nettled at



their disappearance, and fearing lest they should remain a thorn in his side, demanded their extradition, on pain of expelling all Christian tribes living under his protection. The Emperor, unwilling to expose these to ill-treatment, complied with the demand. Equally remarkable is the tale of the Beni Taghlib. They tendered submission to Welid, who, solicitous for the adhesion to Islam of this famous race, pressed them with some rigour to abjure their ancient faith. Omar was displeased;—‘Leave them,’ he wrote, ‘in the profession of the Gospel. It is only within the Arabian peninsula, where are the Holy places, that none but a Moslem tribe is to remain.’ Welid was removed from his command; and it was enjoined on his successor to stipulate only that the usual tribute should be paid, that no member should be hindered from embracing Islam, and that children should not be educated in the Christian faith. The tribe, deeming in its pride the payment of ‘tribute’ an indignity, sent a deputation to the Caliph:—They were willing, they said, to pay the tax, if only it were levied under the same name as that taken from the Moslems. The liberality of Omar allowed the concession; and the Beni Taghlib enjoyed the singular privilege of being assessed as Christians at a ‘double *Tithe*,’ instead of paying the obnoxious badge of subjugation.

Beni
Taghlib
allowed
to pay
tithe.

The last place to hold out in Syria was Cæsarea. It fell in the fifth year of Omar’s Caliphate. Amru had sat long before it. But, being open to the sea, and the battlements landward strong and well manned, it resisted his efforts; and although Yezid sent his brother Muavia with reinforcements from Damascus, the siege was prolonged for several years. Sallies persistently made by the garrison, were driven back with equal constancy: but in the end, the treachery of a Jew discovered a weak point in the defences, and the city was carried by storm, and with prodigious carnage. Four thousand prisoners of either sex were despatched with the royal booty to Medina, and there sold into slavery¹.

Fall of
Cæsarea,
17 A. H.
638 A. D.

¹ The Jew betrayed the town by showing the Arabs an aqueduct, through which they effected an entrance. The population was mixed; 70,000 Greeks;



A.H. 17. The unfortunate Khalid again incurred Omar's displeasure. He came back from the campaign in the north to his seat of government, greatly enriched with the spoils of war. In hopes of his bounty, many old friends flocked to him at Kinnisrin. Amongst them was Ashath, the Kinda chieftain, to whom he gave the princely largess of one thousand pieces of gold. Again, at Amida, Khalid had indulged in the luxury of a bath mingled with wine, the odour whereof as he came forth still clung about his person. On both charges he was arraigned. About the second, there could be no question; the use of wine, even in a bath, was a forbidden thing, and Khalid now forswore the indulgence. The other offence was graver in the Caliph's eyes. Either the gift was booty of the army; or, if Khalid's own to give away, he was guilty of culpable extravagance. Whichever it was, he deserved to be deposed from his command. In such terms a rescript was addressed to Abu Obeida, and sent by the hands of a courier charged to see that the command was fully carried out. Khalid was to be accused publicly; his helmet taken off; his hands bound with his head-kerchief; and so arraigned he was to declare the truth.

Arraigned
for malver-
sation be-
fore Abu
Obeida.

Abu Obeida had an ungracious task, seeing that to the degraded warrior he was beholden for his victories in Syria. But Omar's word was law. And so he summoned Khalid from Kinnisrin, proclaimed an assembly in the Mosque of Hims, and, standing in the pulpit, placed Khalid in the midst. Then the courier put the Caliph's question—From whence the money given to Ashath came? Khalid, confounded at the unexpected charge, made no reply. Pressed by his friends, still he remained silent. Abu Obeida himself embarrassed, a painful pause ensued. At last Bilal, privileged as the Muedzzin of the Prophet, stepped forth, and with stentorian voice cried, *Thus and*

30,000 Samaritans; and 200,000 (!) Jews. It was a sad fate that of the captives. Multitudes of Greeks, men and women, pined miserably in strange lands in hopeless servitude. Amongst these must have been many women of gentle birth degraded now to menial office, or if young and fair to look upon, reserved for a worse fate—liable, when their masters tired of them, to be sold into other hands. No wonder that Al Kindy in his Apology inveighs, with scathing denunciation, against the proceedings of the Moslems in these early wars.



thus hath the Commander of the Faithful said, and it is incumbent on us to obey; so saying, he unwound the kerchief from the head of Khalid, bound his hands therewith, and took his helmet off. The great warrior, to whom Islam owed its conquests, stood as a felon before the congregation. Bilal repeated the question, and Khalid at length replied, 'The money was my own.' At once Bilal unbound his hands, and, replacing the helmet on his head, wound round the kerchief as before, and said, 'We honour thee still, even as we did honour thee before, one of our chiefest captains.' But Abu Obeida was silent; and Khalid, stunned by the disgrace, stood speechless and bewildered. Abu Obeida had not the heart to proclaim his deposition; but still spoke kindly to him as one who had his confidence. Omar, informed of what had passed, made allowance for Abu Obeida's delicacy, and summoned Khalid to Medina. Prompt to obey, though sore at heart, Khalid first returned to his seat of government; and both there and at Hims, bidding adieu to his friends and people, complained of the ingratitude of the Caliph, who scrupled not to use him in times of difficulty, but cast him aside when, through his aid, he had reached the summit of his power. Arrived in the Caliph's presence, he broke out in bitter reproach:—'I swear that thou hast treated despitefully a faithful servant to whom thou owest much. I appeal from thee to the whole body of the Faithful.' 'Whence came that money?' was Omar's only answer. The question was repeated day by day; till at last, galled by the charge, Khalid made answer: 'I have naught but the spoil which the Lord hath given me in the days of Abu Bekr, as well as in thine own. Whatever thou findest over 60,000 pieces, hath been gained in thy Caliphate; take it if thou wilt.' So his effects were valued, and the estimate reaching 80,000, Omar confiscated the difference. But he still affected to hold the great general in honour and regard. Accordingly, he sent a rescript to the various provinces, and announcing that he had deposed Khalid from his govern-
deposed.
ment, not because of tyranny or fraud, but because he deemed it needful to remove a stumbling-block out of the way of the people, who were tempted to put their trust in //

A.H. 17.

Summoned
to Medina.



A.H. 17. an arm of flesh, instead of looking alone to the Giver of all victory.

Dies in
penury and
neglect,
21 A.H.
642 A.D.

So closed the career of Khalid. The first beginning of Omar's alienation was the affair of Malik ibn Noweira, followed by acts of tyranny in Chaldæa, which grated on his sense of clemency and justice. But these acts had long since been condoned; and therefore his conduct now was both ungenerous and unjust. He used the 'Sword of God' so long as he had the need, and when victory was gained, he cast the same ungratefully away. Khalid retired to Hims, and did not long survive. His manner of life when in the full tide of prosperity, may be gathered from the brief notice that in the Plague, from which he fled with his family to the desert, forty sons were carried off. Soon after, in the eighth year of Omar's caliphate, he died. In his last illness he kept showing the scars which covered his body, marks of bravery and unflinching prowess. 'And now,' he said, 'I die even as a coward dieth, or as the camel breatheth its last breath.' His end illustrates forcibly the instability of this world's fame. The hero who had borne Islam aloft to the crest of victory and glory, ended his days in penury and neglect.



CHAPTER XX.

EXPULSION OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS FROM ARABIA.—
REGISTER OF ARAB TRIBES.—CIVIL AND MILITARY
ADMINISTRATION.—THE CORAN.

14-15 A.H. 635-6 A.D.

WE must now revert to one or two matters of domestic interest.

Arabia, as the nursery of legions devoted to fight for Islam, must be purged of strange religions. So soon therefore as victory was secured in Syria and Chaldæa, Omar proceeded to execute an act of harshness, if not of questionable equity.

Domestic events,
14-15 A.H.
Expulsion
of Jews and
Christians
from
Arabia.

In the centre of Arabia lies the province of Najran, inhabited from of old by a Christian people. Mahomet concluded a treaty with their chiefs and bishops, which on payment of a settled tribute secured them in the undisturbed profession of their ancestral faith. Throughout the rebellion they remained loyal to their engagements, and Abu Bekr renewed the treaty. Worthy descendants of a persecuted race, they resisted the blandishments of Islam; and as a penalty they must now quit their native soil, consecrated by the ashes of their martyred forefathers¹. They were ordered to depart and take land in exchange elsewhere. Some migrated to Syria; but the greater part

Christian
inhabitants
removed
from
Najran,

¹ For the story of persecution and martyrdom, under the tyrant Dzu Nawas, a century before Islam, see *Life of Mahomet*, p. v. For the treaty of Mahomet, p. 158.



A.H. 14—

15.

and Jews
from
Kheibar.

settled in the vicinity of Kufa, where the colony of Najrania long maintained the memory of their expatriation. The rights conferred by the Prophet, so far as the altered circumstances might admit, were respected by successive rulers; and the tribute, with decreasing numbers, lightened from time to time. Some years after, the Jews of Kheibar, a rich vale two or three days north of Medina, met a similar fate. Their claim was not so strong; for, conquered by Mahomet, they had been left on sufferance with their fields at a rent of half the produce. In lieu of this partial right, they received a money payment, and were sent away to Syria. Various pretexts are urged for the expatriation in either case. But underlying is the dogma, founded on the supposed dying behest of Mahomet,—*In Arabia there shall be no faith but the faith of Islam*. The recruiting field of Islam must be sacred ground¹.

Arabs
share in
spoil of
war and
revenues of
conquered
lands.

The Arabian nation was the champion of Islam; and to fight its battles every Arab was jealously reserved. He must be soldier, and nothing else. He might not settle down in any conquered lands as owner of the soil; while for merchandise or other labour, a warlike life offered little leisure. Neither was there any need. The Arabs lived on the fat of conquered provinces, and subject peoples served them. Of booty taken in war, four parts were distributed to the army on the field, the fifth reserved for the State; and even that, after public obligations were discharged, shared among the Arabian people. In the reign of Abu Bekr this was a simple matter. But under Omar the spoil of Syria and of Persia in ever-increasing volume poured into the treasury of Medina, where it was distributed almost as soon as received. What was easy in small beginnings, by equal sharing or discretionary preference, became now a heavy task. And there arose, also, new sources of revenue in the land assessment and the poll-tax of conquered countries, the surplus of which, after defraying civil and military charges, became equally with spoil of war, patrimony of the Arab nation.

At length, in the second or third year of his Caliphate,

¹ *Life of Mahomet*, p. 503.



Omar determined that the distribution should be regulated A.H. 14-15.
on a fixed and systematic scale. The income of the Com-
monwealth was to be divided, as heretofore, amongst the
Faithful as their heritage, but upon rules of precedence New rule
of distribu-
tion.
befitting the military and theocratic groundwork of Islam.
For this end three points were considered:—priority of
conversion, relationship to the Prophet, and military service.
The widows of Mahomet, ‘Mothers of the Faithful,’ took
precedence with an annual allowance of 10,000 pieces
each¹; and so also all his kinsmen on a scale corresponding
with their affinity. The famous Three hundred of Bedr
had 5,000 each; presence at Hodeibia and the *Pledge of
the Tree*² gave a claim to 4,000; those engaged in quelling
the Rebellion had 3,000; those who had fought in the great
battles of Syria and Chaldaa, and also sons of the men of
Bedr, had 2,000; and such as took the field after the actions
of Cadesiya and the Yermuk, 1,000. Warriors of distinction
received an extra grant of 500. And so they graduated
downwards to 200 pieces for the latest levies. Nor were the
households forgotten. Women had the tenth of a man’s
share. Wives, widows, and children had each their proper
stipend; and in the register, every new-born infant had a
title to be entered with an allowance of ten pieces, rising
with its age. Even Arab slaves (so long as any of the
blood remained in slavery) had their portion.

Thus every soul was rated at its worth. But the privilege All other
races form
a lower
caste.
was confined to those of Arab blood. A very few excep-
tions there were of distinguished Persian chiefs; but their
mention only proves the stringency of the rule. The whole
nation, man, woman, and child of the militant Arab race,
was subsidised. In theory, the rights of all believers of
what blood soever are the same. ‘Ye are one brotherhood,’
said Mahomet at the Farewell pilgrimage; and as he
spoke placed two fingers of one hand upon the other, to
enforce the absolute equality ruling in Islam. But in point

¹ Ayesha was allotted 2,000 extra, ‘for the love the Prophet bore her,’ but
some say she declined it. Mahomet’s two slave-concubines were at first rated
only at 6,000; but at the desire of the other widows were placed on an equality
with them. The grandsons had 5,000 each.

² *Life of Mahomet*, p. 368.



A.H. 14-15. of fact, the equality was limited to the Arab nation. The right of any brother of alien race was but a dole of food sufficient for subsistence, and no more.

Omar's rule dis-arms Arab jealousies.

A people dividing amongst them the whole revenues, spoil, and conquests of the state, on the basis of an equal brotherhood, is a spectacle probably without parallel in the world. The distinction also of early conversion was well conceived. In no other way could the susceptibilities of tribal rivalry have been reconciled. The proud chiefs of the Coreish, who did not join the Prophet till after the fall of Mecca, refused any allowance but the highest: 'We know of none nobler than ourselves,' they said; 'and less than other we will not take.' 'Not so,' answered Omar; 'I give it by priority of faith, and not for noble birth.' 'It is well,' they replied; and no reason but this would have satisfied them. There were two farther sources of danger: first, the rivalry between the Bedouin tribes and the 'Companions' or men of Mecca and Medina; and, second, the jealousies that sprang up between the house of Hashim (the Prophet's kinsmen) on the one hand, and the Omeyyads and other branches of the Coreish on the other;—jealousies which by-and-by developed into large proportions, and threatened the very existence of the Caliphate; but which, held in check by Omar, were now for a time allayed by assuming an acknowledged test as the ground of precedence.

Arabs the aristocracy of the Moslem world.

The blue blood of Arabia was universally recognised as the aristocracy of the Moslem world. Rank and stipend now assigned, and even rewards for special gallantry in the field, descended by inheritance. Implied in this inheritance was the continuing obligation to fight for the Faith: by it their martial genius was maintained, and employment perpetuated as the standing army of the Caliphate. A nation thus of ennobled soldiery, pampered, factious and turbulent, formed too often a dangerous element of sedition and intrigue. But, nevertheless, they were the real backbone of Islam, the secret of conquest, the stay of the Caliphate. Crowded harems multiplied the race with marvellous rapidity. The progeny of the Arab sire (whatever the mother) was kept sedulously distinct, so as never to mingle



with the conquered races. Wherever Arabs went they formed a class apart and dominant,—the nobles and rulers of the land. Subject peoples, even if they embraced Islam, were of a lower caste; they could aspire to nothing higher than, as 'clients' of some Arab chief or tribe, to court their patronage and protection. Thus the Arabians were set apart as a nation militant for the sacred task of propagating Islam. Even after the new-born zeal of the Faith had evaporated, the chivalry of the Arabs as a race wholly devoted to arms was, owing mainly to Omar's foresight, maintained in full activity for two centuries and a half. The nation was, and continued, an army mobilised; the camp and not the city, their home; their business, war;—a people whose calling it was to be ready for warlike expedition at a moment's notice.

A.H. 14-15.

To carry out this vast design, a Register was kept of every man, woman, and child, entitled to a stipend from the State—in other words, of the whole Arab race employed in the interests of Islam. This was easy enough for the upper ranks, but a herculean task for the hundreds of thousands of ordinary families which kept streaming forth to war from the Peninsula, and which, by free indulgence in polygamy, were multiplying rapidly. The task, however, was simplified by the strictly tribal disposition of the forces. Men of a tribe fought together; and the several corps and brigades being thus territorially arranged in clans, the Register assumed the same form. Every soul was entered under the tribe and clan whose lineage it claimed. And to this exhaustive classification we owe the elaborate and to some extent artificial genealogies and tribal traditions of Arabia before Islam.

Register of all Arabs entitled to stipend.

The Roll itself, as well as the office for its maintenance and for pensionary account, was called the *Dewan* or Exchequer. The State had by this time an income swollen by tribute of conquered cities, poll-tax of subjugated peoples, land assessments, spoil of war, and tithes. The first charge was for the revenue and civil administration; the next for military requirements, which soon assumed a sustained and permanent form; the surplus was for the support of the nation. The whole revenues

The *Dewan* of Omar.



A.H. 14-
15.

of Islam were thus expended as soon almost as received ; and Omar took special pride in seeing the treasury emptied to the last dirhem. The accounts of the various provinces were at the first kept by natives of the country in the character to which they were accustomed—in Syria by Greeks, and in Chaldæa by Persians. At Kufa this lasted till the time of Hajjaj, when, an Arab assistant having learned the art, the Arabic system of record and notation was introduced.

Vastness
of Arab
exodus.

We are not told the number enrolled on the Dewan of Omar, but the population of Kufa and Bussorah may give us some idea of the vast exodus in progress from Arabia, and the rapid strides by which the crowded harems multiplied the race. Arab ladies, as a rule, married only Arab husbands ; but the other sex, besides unlimited concubinage with slave-girls, were free to contract marriage with the women of conquered lands, whether converts or 'People of the Book.' And although wives of Arab blood took precedence in virtue of rank and birth, the children of every Arab father, whether the mother were slave or free, Moslem, Jew, or Christian, were equal in legitimacy. And so the nation multiplied. Looking also to the further drain upon Arabia to meet continuing war, we shall not greatly err if we assume that before Omar's death the Arabs beyond the limits of Arabia proper, numbered half a million, and before long doubled, perhaps quadrupled.

Provincial
administra-
tion.

Civil administration followed close on conquest. In Chaldæa, the great network of canals was early taken in hand. The long-neglected embankments of the Tigris and Euphrates were placed under special officers. Syria and Irac were measured field by field ; and the assessment established on a uniform basis. In Irac, the agency of the great landholders was taken advantage of, as under the previous dynasty, for the maintenance of order and collection of the revenue. In addition to the armies in the field, a reserve of cavalry was maintained at the headquarters of the several provinces, ready for emergency. The corps at Kufa numbered 4,000 lances, and there were eight such centres. Reserves for forage were also set apart.

Reserves of
cavalry.



The cost of these measures formed a first charge upon provincial revenue. A.H. 14-15.

The 'Collection' of the Coran, that is, the gathering into one volume of the various 'Revelations' of Mahomet, belongs to the early years of this reign. It had been begun by Abu Bekr, at the instance of Omar himself, who seeing that many of the 'Readers,' or those who had the Coran by heart, perished at the 'Garden of Death,' feared that otherwise 'much of the Sacred text might be lost.' The duty was assigned to Zeid who, as well as others, had from time to time, taken down portions at Mahomet's dictation. Many such Suras, or chapters, were already used, as well in private as for the public services, in a complete and settled form. In addition, Zeid now sought out from every possible quarter, whatever had at any time emanated from the Prophet, in the way of revelation, from the earliest period of his ministry—'whether inscribed on date-leaves, shreds of leather, shoulder-blades, stony tablets, or the hearts of men.' Having gathered together exhaustively the diverse, and often fugitive materials, he carefully and with reverent hand dove-tailed them, as they were found, in continuous form. A certain regard to time and subject was no doubt observed in the pious task; but still evidently with a good deal of haphazard collocation; and to this may be ascribed much of the obscurity and incoherence that pervade the volume. The original manuscript was committed to Haphsa, Omar's daughter, one of the Prophet's widows; and continued to be the standard text until the time of Othman.



CHAPTER XXI.

FAMINE AND PLAGUE.

18 A.H. 639 A.D.

*The Year
of Ashes,
18 A.H.
639 A.D.*

THE fifth year of Omar's Caliphate was darkened by the double calamity of pestilence and famine. It is called 'The Year of Ashes,' for the dry air of the Hejaz was so charged with unslaked dust from the parched and sandy soil as to obscure the light by a thick and sultry haze.

*Famine in
Arabia.*

In the northern half of the Peninsula the drought was so severe that Nature languished. Wild and timid creatures of the desert, tamed by want, came seeking food at the hand of man. Flocks and herds died of starvation, or became too attenuated for human food. Markets were deserted, and the people suffered extremities like those of a garrison long besieged. Crowds of Bedouins, driven by hunger, flocked to Medina, and aggravated the distress. Omar, with characteristic self-denial, refused any indulgence not shared with those about him. He swore that he would taste neither meat nor butter, nor even milk, until the people had food enough and to spare. On one occasion his servant obtained at great price a skin of milk, and another of butter. Omar sent both away in alms. 'I will not eat,' he said, 'of that which costeth much; for how then should I know the trouble of my people, if I suffer not even as they?' From coarse fare and oil-olive instead of milk and butter, the Caliph's countenance, naturally fresh and bright, became sallow and haggard.

Every effort was made to alleviate distress, and effective aid at last came from abroad. Abu Obeida brought 4,000



beasts of burden laden with corn from Syria, which he distributed himself amongst the famished people. Amru despatched food from Palestine by camels, and also by shipping from the port of Ayla. Supplies came likewise from Chaldæa. The beasts that bore the burden were slain by twenties daily, and served, together with their freight, to feed the citizens of Medina. After nine months of sore trial, a solemn assembly was called by Omar; and in answer (we are told) to a prayer offered up by Abbas, the Prophet's aged uncle, the heavens were overcast and rain descending in heavy showers drenched the land. Grass sprang rapidly, the Bedouins were sent back to their pasture lands, and plenty again prevailed. Out of the calamity there grew a permanent traffic with the north, and the markets of the Hejaz continued long to be supplied from Syria, and eventually by sea from Egypt.

A.H. 18.
Grain imported from Syria and elsewhere.

The famine was followed, but in a different region, by an evil of still greater magnitude. The plague broke out in Syria; and, attacking with special virulence the Arabs at Hims and Damascus, devastated the whole province. Crossing the desert, it spread even as far as Bussorah. Consternation seized every rank. High and low fell equally before the scourge. Men were struck down and died as by a sudden blow. Omar's first impulse was to summon Abu Obeida to Medina for the time, lest he too should fall a victim to the fell disease. Knowing his chivalrous spirit, Omar veiled the purpose, and simply ordered him to come 'on an urgent affair.' Abu Obeida divined the cause, and, choosing rather to share the danger with his people, begged to be excused. Omar, as he read the answer, burst into tears. 'Is Abu Obeida dead?' they asked. 'No, he is not dead,' said Omar, 'but it is as if he were.' The Caliph then set out himself for Syria, but was met on the confines by Abu Obeida and others from the scene of the disaster. A council was called, and Omar yielded to the wish of the majority that he should return home again. 'What,' cried some of his courtiers, 'and flee from the decree of God?' 'Yea,' replied the Caliph, wiser than they,—'if we flee, it is but from the decree of God unto the

Plague in Syria.

Omar holds Council on Syrian border.



A.H. 18. — decree of God.' He then commanded Abu Obeida to carry the Arab population in a body out of the infected cities into the desert; and himself wended his way back to Medina¹.

Arabs fly
to Hauran.

Death of
Abu
Obeida.

Acting on the Caliph's wish, Abu Obeida lost no time in making the people fly to the high lands of the Hauran. He had reached as far as Jabia, when he too was struck down, and with his son fell a victim to the pestilence. Moadz, designated to succeed, died almost immediately after; and it was left for Amru to lead the panic-stricken folks to the hill country, where the pestilence abated. Not less than five-and-twenty thousand perished in the visitation. Of a single family which had emigrated seventy in number from Medina, but four were left. Such was the deadliness of the scourge.

Omar's
journey
to Syria,
autumn,
18 A.H.
639 A.D.

The country was disabled, and fears were entertained of an attack from the Roman armies. The terrible extent of the calamity showed itself in another way. A vast amount of property was left by the dead, and the gaps amongst the survivors caused much embarrassment in the claims of succession. The difficulty grew so serious, that to settle this and other matters, Omar resolved on making a progress through his dominions. At first he thought of visiting Chaldæa, and thence through Mesopotamia, entering Syria from the north; but he abandoned the larger project, and confining his resolution to Syria, took the usual route. The way lay through the Christian town of Ayla, at the head of the Gulf of Acaba; and his visit here brings out well the simplicity and kindly feeling which he evinced toward his Christian subjects. He rode on a camel with small pomp and following; and, minded to enter the village unrecognised, changed places with his servant, putting him in front.

Visits the
Bishop of
Ayla.

¹ During the discussion Abd al Rahman quoted a saying of Mahomet:—'If pestilence break out in a land, go not thither; if thou art there, flee not from it.' Omar's views were more reasonable, and he justified them by this illustration: 'Suppose that ye alight in a valley, whereof one side is green with pasture, and the other bare and barren, whichever side ye let loose your camels upon, it would be by the decree of God; but ye would choose the brow that was green.' And so he judged that in removing the people from the scene of danger into a healthier locality, he was making no attempt to flee from the decree of God.



'Where is the Ameer?' cried the eager citizens, streaming forth to witness the Caliph's advent. 'He is *before* you,' replied Omar, with double meaning, as the camel moved slowly on. So the crowd hurried forward, thinking that the great Ruler was still beyond, and left Omar to alight unobserved at the house of the bishop, with whom he lodged during the heat of the day. His coat, rent upon the journey, was given to his host to mend. This the bishop not only did, but had a lighter garment made for him, more suited to the oppressive travel of the season. Omar, however, preferred to wear his own.

Proceeding onwards, the Caliph made the circuit of Syria. He visited the chief Moslem settlements, gave instructions for the disposal of the estates of the multitudes swept away by the plague, and himself decided doubtful claims. As both Abu Obeida and Yezid had perished in the pestilence, Omar now appointed Muavia, another son of Abu Sofian, to the chief command in Syria, and thus laid the foundation of the Omeyyad dynasty. Muavia was a man of unbounded ambition, but wise and able withal; and he turned to good account his new position. The factions which glorified the claims of Aly and Abbas, and spurned the Omeyyad blood of Muavia, were yet unknown. Both Aly and Abbas had hitherto remained inactive at Medina. The latter, always weak and wavering, was now enfeebled by age. The former, honoured, indeed, as the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, and also for his wit and wisdom, was amongst the trusted counsellors of the Caliph, but possessed no special power or influence, nor any apparent ambition beyond a life of quiet indulgence in the charms of a harem, varied ever and anon by fresh arrivals. Neither is there any reason to suppose that the by-gone opposition to Islam of Abu Sofian and Hind, parents of Muavia, was now remembered against them. Sins preceding conversion, if followed by a consistent profession, left no stain upon the believer. It was not till the fires of civil strife burst forth that abuse was heaped upon the Omeyyad race for ancient misdeeds and enmity towards the Prophet, and political capital made of them. The accession, therefore, of

Omar in Syria:

Appoints Muavia governor.



A.H. 18. — Muavia at the present time to the chief command in Syria excited no jealousy or opposition. It passed, indeed, as a thing of course, without remark.

Bilal performs office of Muedzzin.

As Omar prepared to take final leave of Syria, a scene occurred which stirred to their depths the hearts of the Faithful. It was the voice of Bilal, the Muedzzin of the Prophet, proclaiming the hour of prayer. The stentorian call of the aged African had not been heard since the death of Mahomet; for he refused to perform the duty for any other. He followed the army to Syria, and there, honoured for the office he had so long discharged at Medina, lived in retirement. The chief men now petitioned Omar that on this last occasion, Bilal should be asked once more to perform the Call to prayer. The aged man consented, and as from the top of the Great mosque the well-known voice arose clear and loud with the accustomed cry, the whole assembly, recalling vividly the Prophet at daily prayers, was melted into tears, and strong warriors, with Omar at their head, lifted up their voices and sobbed aloud. Bilal died two years after¹.

Pilgrimage,
xii. 18 A.H.
Dec.,
639 A.D.

On returning to Medina, Omar set out on the annual Pilgrimage to Mecca, at which he presided every year of his Caliphate. But this was the last journey which he made beyond the limits of Arabia.

¹ For Bilal and his office of Muedzzin, see *Life of Mahomet*, p. 204.



CHAPTER XXII.

CONQUEST OF EGYPT.

19, 20 A.H. 640-641 A.D.

THE year following was one of comparative repose. ^{19 A.H.} Islam continued to push its way now steadily into Persia. ^{640 A.D.} Reserving the advance in that direction, we shall first narrate the conquest of Egypt.

The project is due to Amru. After the fall of Cæsarea, Amru casts an eye on Egypt. he chafed at a life of inaction in Palestine. On the Caliph's visit to Syria, he urged a descent upon Egypt, at once to enfeeble the enemy's power and augment the Moslem. The advice was good; for Egypt, once the granary of Rome, now fed Constantinople with corn. Alexandria, though inhabited largely by natives, drew its population from every quarter. It was the second city in the empire, the seat of commerce, luxury, and letters. Romans and Greeks, Arabs and Copts, Christians, Jews, and Gentiles mingled on common ground. But the life was essentially Byzantine. The vast population was provided, in unexampled profusion, with theatres, baths, and places of amusement¹. A forest of ships congregated in its safe and spacious harbour, from whence communication was maintained with all the sea-ports of the realm. Alexandria was a European, rather than an Egyptian, city.

¹ The male population alone is given at 600,000. There were 70,000 (according to others 40,000) male Jews of an age to pay the poll-tax, and 200,000 Greeks, of whom 30,000 effected their escape by sea before the siege: 4,000 baths, 400 theatres, and 12,000 vessels of various size.



A.H. 19-20.

Egypt disaffected towards Byzantine rule.

It was otherwise with the rich valley beyond. Emerging from the luxurious city, the traveller dropped at once from the pinnacle of civilisation to the depths of poverty and squalor. Egypt was then, as ever, the servant of nations. The overflowing produce of well-watered fields served but to feed the great cities of the empire. And the people of the soil, ground down by exaction and oppression, were ever ready to rise against their rulers. Hatred was embittered here, as elsewhere, by the never-ceasing endeavour of the Court to convert the inhabitants to orthodoxy, while the Copts held tenaciously by the Monophysite creed¹. Chronic disaffection pervaded the land, and the people courted deliverance from Byzantine rule. There were in Egypt no Bedouin tribes with Arabian sympathies; but elements of even greater danger had long been here at work.

Amru invades Egypt, 19 or 20 A.H. 640-1 A.D.

It was in the 19th or 20th year of the Hegira that Amru, having obtained the hesitating consent of the Caliph, set out from Palestine for Egypt. His army, even with bands of Bedouins, lured on the way by hope of plunder, did not exceed 4000. Soon after he had left, Omar, concerned at the smallness of his force, would have recalled him; but finding that he was already too far gone, sent Zobeir with heavy reinforcements after him. The army of Amru was thus swelled to an imposing array of some 15,000, many of them veterans and warriors of renown.

Reduces Upper Egypt.

Amru entered Egypt by Arish, and then turning to the left, passed onward through the desert, and so reached the easternmost estuary of the Nile. Along this branch of the river he marched towards Upper Egypt, where Mucucus, the Copt, was governor,—the same who sent Mary the Egyptian slave-girl and her sister as a gift to Mahomet². On the way he routed several columns attempting to arrest the inroad; amongst them one commanded by his Syrian antagonist Artabun, who was slain in the encounter. Marching along the vale of the Nile, with channels from the swelling river, verdant fields, and groves of the fig tree and acacia, Amru reached at last the obelisks and ruined temples of Ain

¹ See Palmer's *Origines Liturgicæ*, vol. i. p. 82.

² See *Life of Mahomet*, p. 385.



Shems (Heliopolis). There the bishop procured for Mucucus a truce of four days. At its close, an action took place, in which the Egyptians, driven back into their city, were there besieged. The opposition was at one time warm, for the Yemen troops gave way. Reproached for their cowardice, one replied, 'We are but men, not iron or stone.' 'Be quiet, thou yelping dog!' cried Amru. 'If we are dogs,' answered the angry Arab, 'then what art thou but the Commander of dogs?' Amru made no reply, but called on a column of veterans to step forth; and before their fiery onset the Egyptians fled. 'What chance,' said the Copts one to another, 'have we against men that have beaten both the Chosroes and the Kaiser?' And, in truth, they deemed it little loss to be rid of the Byzantine yoke. The siege was of no long duration. In a general assault Zobeir, with desperate valour, had already scaled the walls, when a deputation from Mucucus obtained terms from Amru. A capitation tax was fixed of two dinars on every male adult, with other impositions similar to those of Syria. Many prisoners had been taken; and a fifth part of these and of the spoil was sent to Medina. The same conditions were given to the Greek and Nubian settlers in Upper Egypt. But the Greeks, fallen now to the level of those over whom they used to domineer, and hated by them, were glad to make their escape to the sea-coast.

Amru lost no time in marching on Alexandria, so as to reach it before the Greek troops could rally for its defence. On the way he put to flight several columns which sought to hinder his advance; and at last presented himself before the city walls, which, offering on the land side a narrow and well-fortified front, was capable of obstinate resistance. Towards the sea also it was open to succour at the pleasure of the Byzantine court. But during the siege Heraclius died, and the opportunity slipped away. Some of the outworks on the narrow isthmus were taken by storm; and, there appearing no prospect of succour, the spirit of the garrison began to flag. The Greeks took to their ships, and pusillanimously deserted the beleaguered city. At last Mucucus, who had retired to Alexandria, finding the place

A.H. 19-20.

Marches
on Alex-
andria,



A.H. 19-20.

which
capitulates,
20 A.H.
641 A.D.

too weak for prolonged defence, offered to capitulate, on the terms given to Upper Egypt, and on condition that the prisoners taken throughout the campaign were set free. The Caliph was referred to, and readily agreed. 'Tribute,' he replied, 'is better than booty; for it continueth, whereas spoil soon vanisheth as if it had not been. Touching the captives, such as remain, saving those taken in battle, shall be restored.' And so the city escaped sack, and the people became tributary to the conquerors.

Fostat.

Amru wished to fix his seat of government at Alexandria, but Omar would not allow him to remain so far away from his camp. So he returned to Upper Egypt. A body of the Arabs crossed the Nile and settled in Ghizeh, on the western bank—a movement which Omar permitted on condition that a strong fortress was constructed there to prevent the possibility of surprise. The headquarters of the army were pitched near Memphis. Around them grew up a military station, called from its origin *Fostat*, or 'the Encampment.' It expanded rapidly into the capital of Egypt, the modern Cairo. And there Amru laid the foundations of a great mosque that still bears his name¹.

Soil left
with the
cultivators.

Zobeir urged Amru to enforce the right of conquest, and divide the land among his followers. Amru refused; and the Caliph confirmed the judgment. 'Leave it,' was his wise reply, 'in the people's hands to nurse and fructify.' As elsewhere, Omar would not allow the Arabs to become proprietors of a single acre. Even Amru was refused ground whereon to build a mansion for himself. He had a dwelling-place, the Caliph reminded him, at Medina, and that should suffice. So the land of Egypt, left in the hands of its ancestral occupants, became a rich granary for Arabia, even as in bygone times it had been the granary of the Roman empire.

Suez Canal

A memorable work, set on foot by Amru after his return

¹ An interesting history of the mosque with illustrations appears in the *Asiatic Journal* for October, 1890, p. 759. Amru (Amr) is there described, from a tradition of Makrizi, as 'a short thick-set man with a large head and black eyes, and a good-humoured expression.' The tradition adds a sermon given by Amru in this mosque, which of course is mere fiction.



to Fostat, facilitated the transport of corn from Egypt to the Hejaz. It was nothing less than the reopening of the ancient communication between the waters of the Nile in Upper Egypt and those of the Red Sea at Suez¹. The channel left the eastern branch of the river at Belbeis, then turned to the right, and, striking the salt lakes near Timseh, reached the Red Sea by what is now the lower portion of the Suez canal. Long disused, the bed was choked with silt; but the obstructions could not have been very formidable, for within a year navigation was restored, and the Caliph, at Yenbo (port of Medina), witnessed vessels discharge their burdens which had been freighted under the very shadow of the Pyramids. The Canal remained navigable for some eighty years, when, choked with sand, it was again abandoned.

A.H. 19-20.
reopened,
21 A.H.
642 A.D.

Finding that the Egyptians, used to delicate and luxurious living, looked down upon the Arabs for their frugal fare, Amru, famed for mother wit, chose a singular expedient to disabuse them. First he had a feast prepared of slaughtered camels, after the Bedouin fashion; and the Egyptians looked on with wonder while the army satisfied their hunger with the rude repast. Next day a sumptuous banquet was set out, with all the dainties of the Egyptian table; here again the warriors fell to with equal zest. On the third day the troops were paraded in battle array, when Amru thus addressed the crowds who flocked to the spectacle:—'The first day's entertainment was to let you see the simple manner of our life at home; the second to show that we can enjoy the good things of the conquered lands, and yet retain, as ye see this day, our martial vigour notwithstanding.' The Copts retired, saying one to the other, 'See ye not that the Arabs have but to raise their heel upon us, and it is enough!' Omar was delighted at his lieutenant's device,

Amru would teach Egyptians to respect the Arabs.

¹ The attempt was first made by Pharaoh Nechos, and subsequently by Darius, who opened communication from Bubastis, on the eastern estuary of the Nile, to the head of the Red Sea. A second canal was made by the Ptolemies at Tel Fakhus, nearer to the Mediterranean. This took the line of lagoons (the modern fresh-water canal) to the Red Sea, and was too shallow to be of much use, excepting in high flood. One of these lines eventually, deepened by Trajan, remained navigable to the end of the third century of our era. It was the same canal, no doubt, now cleared out and deepened by Amru.