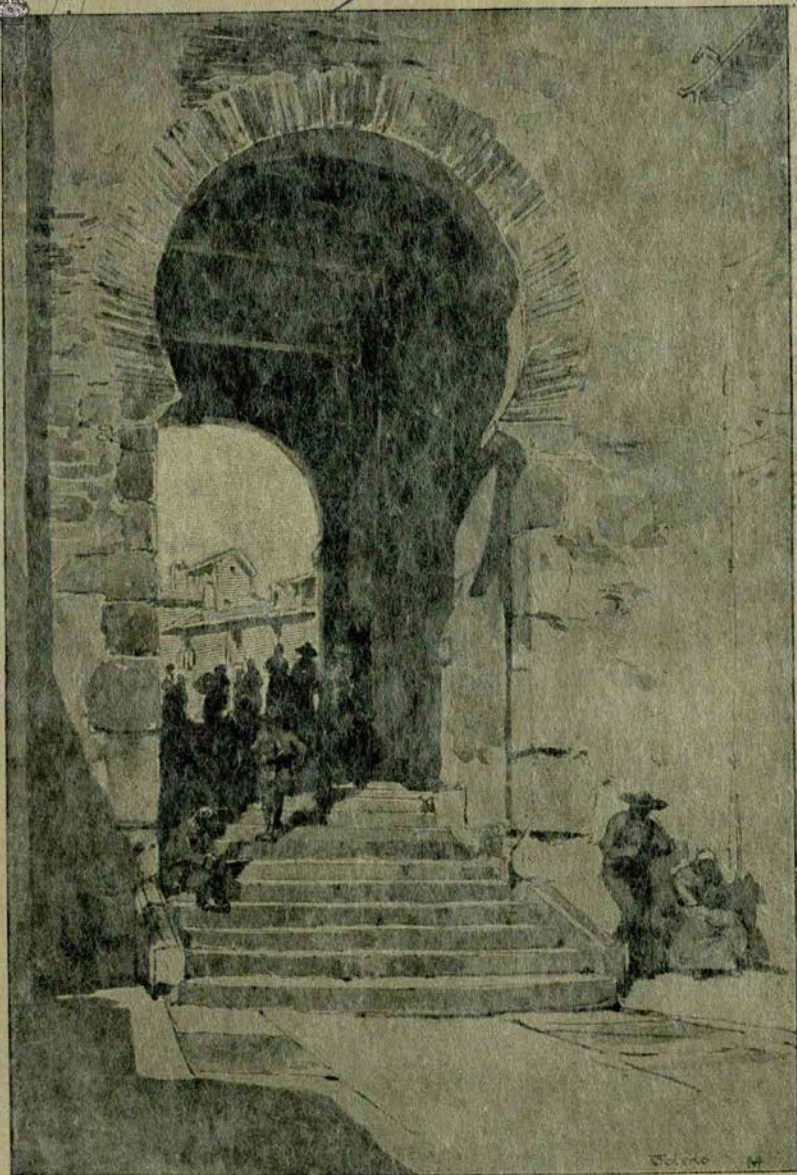




and upwards of 36,000 corpses testified to the grim fury of the relentless Omayyad.

No less than ten years was consumed in these struggles for power; but in the end Abdur Rahman was completely victorious, and thenceforward no one dared cross swords with the all-potent Sovereign of Cordova. The sunset of life, however, was not destined to be bright and unclouded. Deserted by his friends, hated, though dreaded by his enemies, he sat on the throne of alarm and unrest. Fearful of the populace, he did not dare trust himself unguarded in the capital of the empire which he had founded: so 40,000 African soldiers formed a body-guard of a tyrant "suspicious of every one, wrapped in gloomy thoughts, and distracted by bloody memories." Thus it happened that after a reign of thirty-two years he passed away, "a detested tyrant, upheld in his blood-stained throne only by the swords of mercenaries, whose loyalty was purchased by gold."

On the father's death, in A.D. 788, his son Hisham I. succeeded to this heritage of blood. The new ruler was a man of a quite contrary disposition, being peaceable, quiet, and humane. On his accession an astrologer predicted that he had but eight years to live. A fatalist, Hisham became imbued with this idea, and determined that the short period assigned him in this world, should be devoted to a preparation for the next. Numerous were his charities and deeds of pious benevolence: he visited the sick, he relieved the destitute, and many were his acts of kindness and pity. An ardent enthusiast in matters of religion, he by no means neglected affairs of State, and did not shrink from leading his armies against the enemies



THE GATE OF BLOOD, TOLEDO.

From a Drawing by A. H. Hollan Murray.



of his empire. The character of the man may be gathered from the circumstance that, though he was devotedly fond of hunting, yet when he was told by carping critics that the magnificent bridge which he built at Cordova was only created in the interests of his favourite pastime, he vowed, and kept to his vow, that he would never cross it. After a peaceful reign, the great prince passed away in all the odour of sanctity in A.D. 796.

The new Sultan, by name Hakam, was a light-hearted, merry-souled young cavalier, taking life easy and extracting as much enjoyment therefrom as was in his power. Himself indifferent to religion, the religious devotees of the nation and students of Islam again and again stirred up the populace to strife. The rebellion was quenched, but the plague of fanaticism subdued in one place broke out in another. These events carry the narrative to A.D. 806, when the massacre of the nobles of Toledo, who rose in revolt and were killed to a man, kept religious ardour within bounds. The spirit of sedition, however, was not dead, and after an interval of seven years a serious outbreak occurred, directed in some measure against Hakam, who would not pretend to an asceticism which he did not feel, but principally aimed against his body-guard of negroes, who not understanding and being unable to speak Arabic, maintained, of course, an enforced silence, which acquired for them their nickname of "Mutes." A casual street disturbance gave the signal for the rush of a motley but inflamed crowd to the palace of the Sultan. The occasion was alarming, but nothing daunted, the crafty sovereign despatched a force of cavalry to a suburb



of the city, which they set in flames. Thereupon the people rushed in terror to save their homes and families from destruction, but met an army ready to attack them in the front, while troops in the rear added to their discomfiture: the terrible "Mutes" cut them down by hundreds, and the citadel reeked with massacre. The victory was not, however, pressed home, but no less than twenty-five thousand of his subjects had to seek in exile a security which could not be possible for them after they had cast in their lot with rebellion.

Sultan Hakam died A.D. 822 after a troublous reign of twenty-six years, and left the kingdom in comparative tranquillity to his son Abdur Rahman II. The new monarch at once set himself to beautify Cordova in every direction, till at length in magnificence and splendour it rivalled the great city of Baghdad. For no less than thirty years he devoted himself to a life of luxury and pleasure; but, amidst all his gaieties, he had to encounter trouble in a direction where it might least have been expected. Singular as it may seem a spirit of martyrdom rose up amidst the Christian communities throughout the empire, and young men and maidens, old men and children, vied with one another to die the death of the righteous. The decease of the easy-going Abdur Rahman in A.D. 852, and the accession of his austere and bigoted son Muhammad, led to severe measures; however, it was not till the execution of the Monk Eulogius in A.D. 859, that the movement faded into oblivion, and the Christian martyrs ceased to be a danger to the State.

On the death of Muhammad in A.D. 886, his son Mundhir reigned for two years with energy and rigour,



but his assassination in A.D. 888 led to the accession of his brother Abdullah, who had instigated the murder. During the period of twenty-four years that this prince sat on the throne, lawlessness and intrigue stalked unchecked throughout the land, and anarchy and desolation overtook every province of the empire. However, the new Sultan Abdur Rahman III., who succeeded in A.D. 912, was a man of very different calibre from his grandfather Abdullah. Young, energetic, and popular, he let it be understood at the commencement of his reign that there would be no dallying with rebellion, and no trifling with lawlessness. Nevertheless, despite all his vigorous efforts, which were in the long run invariably successful, no less than eighteen years elapsed before the country was restored to a condition of peace and tranquillity.

The Sultan, however, had to contend with most vigorous opposition on the part of the Christians in the south of Spain, who at one time (A.D. 939) became so powerful as to inflict a signal defeat upon the Moorish troops, of whom upwards of 50,000 were said to have been left slain upon the field of battle. Still Abdur Rahman retrieved his position, and at his death in A.D. 961 he left his kingdom in the highest state of prosperity. Cordova, the capital of the empire, was indeed one of the finest cities of the world. To quote the quaint language of an Arab writer, "Cordova is the Bride of Andalusia. To her belong all the beauty and the ornaments that delight the eye or dazzle the sight. Her long line of Sultans form her crown of glory; her necklace is strung with the pearls which her poets have gathered from the ocean of language; her dress is of the banners of



learning, well knit together by her men of science; and the masters of every art and industry are the hem of her garments." In verity her bridges, her public buildings, her private mansions, her mosques 700 in number, dazzle the imagination and fill the mind with astonishment and wonder, while her 900 public baths were a reproach to the mediæval Christians, with whom in those days, and indeed up to the time of Philip II., the husband of our Queen Mary, dirt was typical of sanctity, and cleanliness the mark of infidelity. Yet with all this dazzling splendour, if native historians are to be believed, a paper was found in the handwriting of the Khalif—a title assumed in A.D. 929—in which he had enumerated the days of happiness and freedom from care; the total during a reign of forty-nine years was no more than fourteen! Well may the Arab annalist have moralised in these touching words, "O man of understanding! wonder and observe how small a portion of unclouded happiness the world can give even to the most fortunate."

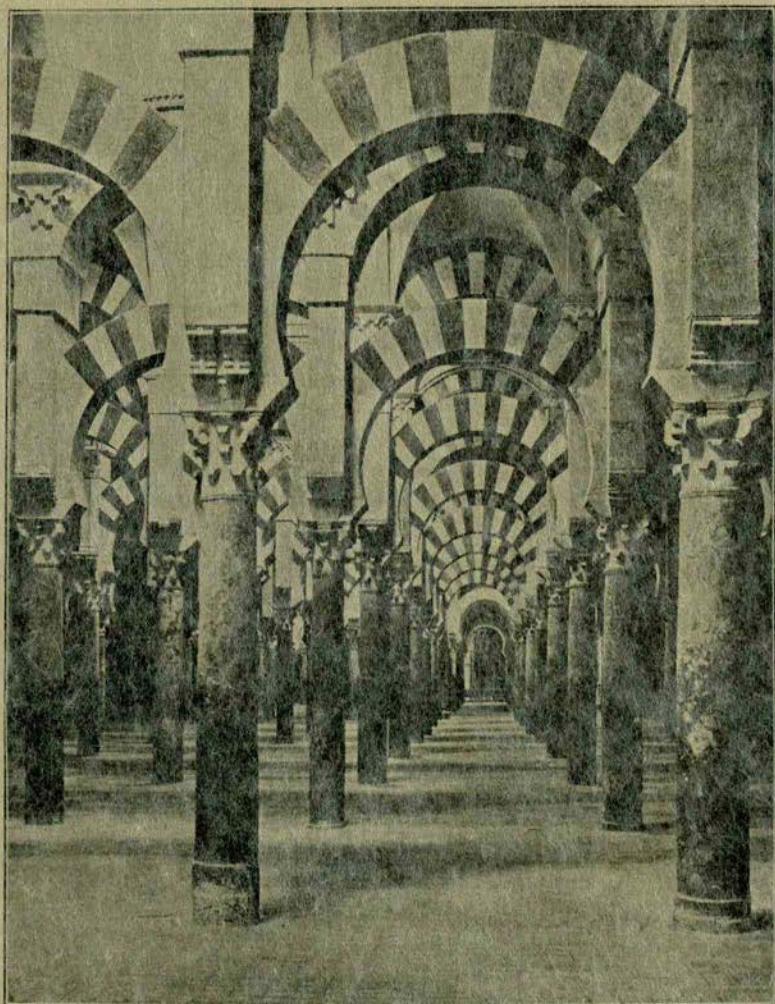
His son and successor Hakam II. (A.D. 961), was peaceful and scholarly, and cared naught for the responsibilities of empire. The one dream of his life was to collect rare manuscripts, and truly may it be said, his efforts made the Library of Cordova one of the marvels of the world. At a time when printing was unknown, he amassed no less than 400,000 volumes, all of which, it is said, though it may be doubted, Hakam himself had read.

Thus passed fourteen years during which the Royal Book Collector sat upon the throne of Empire. On his death in A.D. 976, his son Hisham II., a



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MOSQUE IN CORDOVA.



stripling of tender years, succeeded to the heritage of sovereignty. He followed in the footsteps of his father, but it soon became apparent that monarchy has its duties as well as its pleasures and privileges. It often happens in Eastern lands that when the strong hand of power is lacking, intrigues are fomented amongst the ladies of the Imperial harem. Cordova formed no exception to the rule, and Sultana Aurora, the mother of the young Khalif, by degrees acquired an amount of influence second to no one in the empire. She was seconded by a young man whose rise to fame and power was largely due to her support and patronage. It chanced that a humble student at the University of Cordova—a youth of great capacity and promise—succeeded in securing a trifling post at Court as professional letter writer to the royal servants: while in this position he managed to attract the notice of the Grand Chamberlain, who after a while appointed the lad to an office at Court, which afforded him the opportunity of flattering the ladies with whom he came in contact—amongst the number, Aurora, the royal mother of the Khalif. Aided by the influence and support of the ladies of the Court his advancement was rapid, and his resources soon became plentiful. By this means he ere long contrived by graciousness of manner and prodigality of promise, to make himself the centre of a wealthy and important following. From this time onwards he was a power in the State, till at length in A.D. 978, Ibn Abyamir—such was the name of this extraordinary personage—became Prime Minister, and assumed the title of Al manzur, “The Victorious”—by which he is known in history. His



administration was stern and unscrupulous. Nothing escaped his notice, and no means were ever neglected to further his ends. One example will suffice: a local leader of the army became so popular with his troops as to become a danger in the State. The remedy was simple in the extreme—he was invited by the minister to a banquet, and having drunk “not wisely but too well,” he was assassinated as he staggered home in a state of intoxication. The end of this powerful controller of the destinies of the Muslim Empire in Spain, is quaintly narrated in a single sentence of the Monkish historian, “In 1002, died Al manzur, and was buried in hell.”

With the death of Al manzur tumbled to pieces the edifice he had raised. It is true that his son Muzaffar for a while kept rebellion in check; but like the Israelites of old the people sought a king to rule over them. Accordingly, after thirty years of enforced seclusion as nominal Khalif, the unhappy Hisham II. was dragged from the harem, and charged with the government of the empire (A.D. 1010). Utterly unfitted for rule he was soon forced to abdicate. Then followed a succession of Khalifs for a period of nearly twenty years, not one of whom possessed real power. Hisham III. was, like his predecessor, dethroned and taken from the palace to a dungeon, where, with his little daughter and his tattered wives, he dragged out a miserable existence. From this time (A.D. 1027) the Omayyad dynasty may be said to have passed away. A reign of anarchy, plunder, and destruction now ensued—palace and public buildings were razed to the ground—men, women, and children were ruthlessly slaughtered, and the Andalu-



sian Empire became a veritable hell upon earth. In this sad plight some of the leading personages in the State invited the Berbers from North Africa to cross the water and quiet the country: so it happened that a body of fanatical Muslims, afterwards known to Spain as the Almoravides (A.D. 1086), commenced measures of "pacification," measures which continued with undiminished success till A.D. 1102, by which date nearly the whole of Muhammadan Spain had passed under their rule. These in turn became demoralised by luxury, and were displaced in A.D. 1145 by the Almohades.

Prominent amidst the many persons who in these troublous times rose to high distinction was Rodrigo Diaz of Bivar, generally known by the appellation of "Cid," which his followers gave him. This doughty warrior, who flourished in the latter half of the eleventh century, is the national hero of Spain, possessing, at any rate in the legends of his day, all the virtues which can ennoble and adorn poor fallen humanity. Whether the apotheosis of the famous warrior was well deserved may perhaps be doubted: but the romance which attaches to his name and reputation is more delightful than the perhaps truer but less attractive narrative which seeks to despoil "My Cid the challenger" of the halo of greatness shining forth in every page of the chronicles of the day. He died in July, A.D. 1099, and they left him in the vault "of San Pedro de Cordena," to quote the language of the *Story of the Nations*, from which these pages are summarised, "still upright in the ivory chair, still in his princely robes, with the sword Tizona in his hand—still the great Cam-



peador whose dinted shield and banner of victory hung desolate over his tomb."

The reign of the fanatical Almohades was brief, owing, in no small measure, to the circumstance that they attempted the impossible task of governing Spain from Africa, by sending deputies from Morocco. The Christians were not backward in seizing their opportunities, but at Badajoz (A. D. 1195), they were signally defeated with heavy loss. However, in A. D. 1212, they had their revenge, and the fatal field of Las Navas, where the Moors are said to have lost something like 600,000 men, was a blow to the Almohades from which they never recovered, and in A. D. 1235 they were finally driven out of the Peninsula.

Little now remained to the Moors in Spain save the kingdom of Granada, where an Arab chieftain known as "Ibn al Ahmar," or the "Son of the Red Man," so called from the fairness of his skin and the colour of his hair, founded a dynasty destined to last for no less than two centuries and a half. Great as was the magnificence of Cordova, its fame was equalled, if not eclipsed, by the glories of its rival, Granada, which has been immortalised by the far famed Red Palace of the "Alhambra," thus named from the colour of the soil which surrounds it. Commenced in the thirteenth century, this wonder of the world was completed in the fourteenth century. Its beauties, its famous Court of the Lions, and little less beautiful Court of the Myrtles, its balconies, its terraced roofs, its lofty battlements are familiar to all readers of Washington Irving's well-known work, which describes his visit to the spot at the commencement of the nineteenth century.



The writing, however, was on the wall. About the year 1481 of the Christian era, the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella united the provinces of Aragon and Castile, and gave to the Christians of Spain a power of which their dissensions had for a long period of years deprived them. The Moors were keenly alive to the danger to themselves which this alliance was likely to occasion, and resolved to take the initiative by refusing to pay the accustomed tribute. "Tell your sovereigns," such was the fiery language of the Ruler of Granada, "that the kings of Granada who paid tribute are dead; our mint now coins nothing but sword-blades." Thus it happened that once again the dogs of war were let loose on the land. The result was never really in doubt; for though success at first attended the Moorish arms, they were in the end (A.D. 1492) completely vanquished, their king, Boabdil, the "Unlucky" (more properly Abu Abdullah), was dethroned, and Granada passed into the possession of the Christian monarchs. "The Light of the Alhambra was set for ever."

From this terrible blow the Moors never recovered, though the end was not yet at hand. For no less a period than a century they resisted all the efforts of the Christians to repress and humiliate them. The fiery fury of the militant Cardinal Ximenes, who had been sent to aid in the work of regeneration, added fuel to the flames. The terrible cruelties of Don John of Austria, who ruthlessly butchered every human being who fell into his clutches, indifferent alike to age and sex, wrought sad havoc among the Moorish insurgents, but it failed to quell the spirit of



daring which characterised the descendants of heroes. Their numbers were, however, too much reduced to enable them successfully to cope with their adversaries, and year by year their ranks were thinned by massacre, exposure, and famine. For forty years the depopulation of the Moorish race continued steadily to progress, during which time no less than three millions of souls were driven from the soil their ancestors had conquered, and in A.D. 1610, the final expulsion of the Moors from Spain left that kingdom a prey to the Christianity of the Inquisition, and its terrible myrmidons.



CHAPTER VIII

THE SULTANS OF TURKEY

A.D. 1288—TILL PRESENT TIME

FROM the dim and distant days of antiquity onwards, two races—the Mongols and the Turks—were wont to issue forth in swarming hordes from what is now known as Central Asia, plundering, devastating, and leaving a trail of misery and sorrow in all lands which came in their path. After many decades of internecine struggle, the Turks remained possessors of the regions in Western Asia which border on the shores of the Mediterranean. While the momentous events outlined in these brief sentences were occurring, the hand of time had passed in its course to the meridian of the thirteenth century of the Christian era. It chanced that at the village of Angora a fierce struggle was taking place between the Mongols and the Turks : in the thick of the fight, at an hour when victory was likely to slip from the grasp of the latter, an unknown horseman appeared upon the scene at the head of a small band of doughty warriors. The assistance of this knight errant decided the contest, and so it



happened that Ertoghrol, a member of the Oghuz family of Turks who had been driven out by the Mongols from his lands in Khorassan, secured new possessions in Anatolia as a reward for his services to the Sultan of Iconium. Established in this neighbourhood, the wandering soldier had soon an opportunity of displaying his mettle against a combined attack of Byzantines and Mongols. The brilliant service of Ertoghrol on this occasion led to further rewards from the gratified Sultan, and the city of Dorylæum henceforth famous in the pages of history as Sultanoni—"the king's front"—passed into the possession of the successful adventurer. By degrees Ertoghrol established his power over his turbulent neighbours, and fixed his capital at Sugut, where in A.D. 1258 was born to him a son named Osman—destined in the fulness of time to be the founder of the Turkish Empire of the Osmanlis or Ottomans. Thirty years of comparative peace, during which his father consolidated his power, and added to his territories, were passed by the son in gaining an experience which in after years stood him in good stead. On the death of Ertoghrol in A.D. 1288 Osman naturally succeeded to the heritage of his father, as ruler of Eskishehr, where he built a mosque—a Muslim is seldom lacking in outward and visible signs of piety. Year by year the young chieftain extended his possessions, till at length in A.D. 1299 they reached well-nigh to Brusa and Nicæa, the foremost Byzantine cities in Asia. The Turkish chieftain now removed his capital to Yenishehr. At this time the extinction of the Saljuk dynasty enabled Osman to extend his possessions, while minor attacks upon the Christian



armies extending over a number of years, paved the way for the fall of Brusa, which, in A.D. 1326, being unable to resist the attacks of Osman's son, Orkhan, was incorporated into the Ottoman dominions, as the new capital of the empire. Shortly after these important events, Osman died (A.D. 1326) and was buried at Brusa where his sepulchre remains to the present day. His father left him a petty principality, the son founded an empire which extended to the shores of the Hellespont.

His son and successor, Orkhan, at once devoted his energies to enlarge his possessions, and city after city of the Byzantine Empire succumbed to the prowess of his warriors. After this for a while he rested content with the dominions which now formed the Ottoman Empire. The keystone of his success was, of course, his army, which he now entirely reorganised and placed upon a sound footing. Amongst the many reforms which he introduced, was the corps of "Janissaries." The soldiers who were enrolled in this famous body of troops were Christian youths converted by "*force majeure*" to the religion of Muhammad. Trained in the profession of arms from an early age, their life was one of hardship and strict discipline, but reward was sure, and promotion at times rapid.

At the head of an army to whom plunder and prizes were an irresistible attraction, Orkhan cast longing eyes in the direction of Constantinople; but having married the daughter of the Christian Emperor who sat upon the throne in that capital, he did not, for a while, find an excuse for crossing the Hellespont. Quarrels, however, in the suburbs of the city, in the

end afforded him his chance, and the capture of the Castle of Tzympe gave the Ottomans a footing in Europe; destined ere long to be strengthened by the occupation in A. D. 1358 of the town of Gallipoli, which chancing at that period to have been overthrown by an earthquake, became an easy prey to the Muslim troops.

Orkhan died in A. D. 1360, and was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, Murad I., who was in no way behind his predecessors as regards military ardour and love of conquest. Captures of various cities in Macedonia, Thrace, and kingdoms bordering on the Danube, testified to his martial prowess, while his dominions were further enlarged by the marriage of his son Bayazid with the daughter of the chief of Kermiyan. One circumstance deserves mention. In A. D. 1365, when concluding a treaty with the Republic of Ragusa, Murad—so runs the legend—instead of using a pen smeared some ink upon his hand and rubbed it upon the paper. The official “tughra,” or royal seal of the empire, owes its origin, it is said, to this accidental circumstance. It is also noteworthy that at this time the Greek Emperor became a convert to the Latin Church in order to secure the aid of the Pope of Rome. The Balkan Peninsula, however, though as stated, overrun, was not subdued, and in A. D. 1388 the various races which composed that teeming mass of nationalities joined hand in hand and inflicted a serious defeat upon the Ottoman army in Bosnia. This disaster roused the spirit of Murad I., who thereupon invaded Bulgaria, and added that principality to the Ottoman Empire, which now extended to the banks of the

Danube. Still, the Christians were not prepared to sit tamely as vassals of the Muslim monarch. This time the Servians led the way, and unfurled the banner of rebellion. Murad—nothing loath—took the field in person, accompanied by his two sons, Bayazid and Yakub. The battle of Kosovo (A.D. 1389) which ensued was so fierce and terrible that the native annalists recorded that “the angels in heaven amazed with the hideous noise, for that time forgot the heavenly hymns wherewith they always glorify God.” Victory rested with the Turks, and the slaughter of the Christians was immense. Hardly, however, had the din of battle subsided than a Servian warrior, by name Milosh Kobilovich, under the pretext of communicating important tidings to the Sultan, approached the royal presence and plunged a dagger into the breast of the unsuspecting Murad. The death of the assassin was, of course, the penalty that he paid for his daring, but posterity has been lenient to the treachery, and has rewarded the hero of the deed with a chaplet of fame. From that time onwards, no stranger is allowed to enter the royal presence save accompanied by two attendants, who are responsible for his conduct and actions. Murad, at the time of his death (A.D. 1389), had reigned thirty-one years. He was buried at the Chapel in Brusa by the side of Osman, the founder of the Turkish Empire. Three lances with three*

* “The Tugh,” says Stanley Lane-Poole, “or ensign of the Turkish tribes, was originally the tail of a yak, but when the Ottomans left Central Asia, that of a horse was substituted. Governors of provinces received one, two, or three Tughs, according to their rank: the Sultan alone displayed seven.”



horse-tails attached (the national standard of the empire), gave to the spot a martial air which well harmonised with the military ardour of the warrior whom they commemorated.

Bayazid, who succeeded to the throne—the “Thunderbolt” of the Balkan Campaign—in A. D. 1389, at once put to death his brother Yakub, lest under the rules of royal succession in Turkey, he should succeed to power. From this time onwards, the murder of family rivals has been a recognised custom in the annals of the Ottoman Empire.

Soon after his accession, Bayazid concluded peace with the ruler of Servia, who agreed to supply troops, to pay a yearly tribute, and to give his sister in marriage to the Ottoman conqueror. This latter clause of the agreement became, as it happened, a snare to the Muslim prince, who, taught by his wife, gave way to luxury and effeminate habits; she even persuaded him to drink intoxicating liquors, contrary to the injunctions of the Quran. In spite of the loss of energy which the new mode of life naturally occasioned, Bayazid brought Wallachia into subjection, and by degrees all Asia Minor acknowledged his supremacy. These successes led to his receiving at the hand of the Abbaside Khalif the title of Sultan, which had been previously used by the Ottoman sovereigns, but was now for the first time formally recognised. A danger was, however, at hand. Sigismund of Hungary, a Catholic prince who had been worsted in the war of A. D. 1392, smarting under his defeat, induced the Pope to avenge his cause. The flower of European chivalry leagued together, charged with the duty of crossing the Hellespont and freeing



the Holy Cities of Palestine from the dominion of the hated Muslims. Victory in the end fell to Bayazid, but his losses were enormous. Enraged beyond the limits of endurance at the fearful slaughter which had been inflicted on his troops, he caused upwards of 10,000 Christian prisoners who had fallen into his hands at the final battle of Nicopolis (A.D. 1396) to be ruthlessly slain before his eyes. At length, weary with the indiscriminate destruction of so many thousands of hapless creatures, his officers implored their sovereign to desist, and so the "plague was stayed."

The star of Bayazid's prosperity now shone with undimmed splendour. The whole of the Balkan peninsular as far as the Danube owed him allegiance, and Asia Minor up to the banks of the Euphrates was under his sway. Not content he overran the Peloponnesus, and the famous Acropolis of Athens was forced to adopt the Crescent as a symbol of submission to the mighty ruler of Turkey. Still the lust of conquest was not satisfied, and Bayazid proceeded to demand the surrender of the Imperial city of Constantinople. For ten years the siege continued, and the fate of the town seemed sealed, when the mighty Taimur the Tartar, known as the "Wrath of God," swept over the Turkish dominions with his terrible hordes. Raising the siege of Constantinople, Bayazid at once hastened with his troops to oppose the intruder, whom he met on the fatal field of Angora (A.D. 1402). The Sultan's soldiers, albeit many of them were veterans, were no match for the hordes which so largely outnumbered them, and victory, as is not unusually the



case, fell to the largest battalions. Bayazid was taken prisoner and carried about in fetters to grace the train of the captors. Destiny had terribly avenged the terrible massacre of Nicopolis. The Turkish monarch died about eight months after these events, and the fate of the empire of his ancestors hung in the balance (A.D. 1402).

Taimur now remained master of the situation, and so powerful was he that the Turkish Empire in Asia crumbled to pieces in his hands. In verity the "sick man" was "sick," but as the event showed, not "unto death." It so chanced that a singularly able and sagacious sovereign (Muhammad I.) succeeded to the throne of his father (A.D. 1402), and during the period of eighteen years in which he held the sceptre of power he not only crushed rebellion, but consolidated his dominions. It chanced, too, that the terrible Taimur died about two years after the young Sultan came to the throne, a fortunate circumstance for the latter monarch. Reverses came, it is true, but Muhammad never allowed aught to interfere with the steady efforts to restore his empire to its pristine grandeur. At the time of his death in A.D. 1421, he had largely achieved this ambition, while the transfer of his capital from Brusa in Asia to Adrianople in Europe, paved the way for the eventual seizure of Constantinople. From his reign onwards the Turks were a power to be reckoned with in the politics of Europe.

If Muhammad was largely a man of peace and repose, his son and successor, Murad II. (A.D. 1421), was a spirited warrior, full of fire and fury. Early in his reign, roused by the duplicity of Manuel, the



Byzantine Emperor, the sturdy Sultan laid siege to the Imperial capital. But once again fortune befriended the Christians, for a rebellion in Asia called away Murad to those regions, and the city of Constantinople escaped that capture which would otherwise have been inevitable. At this time new troubles befell the Sultan of Turkey. About A.D. 1427, Hunyady, the famous "White Knight of Wallachia," harassed the Turks whenever they entered his country, and for little less than twenty years he was a thorn in the side of his Muslim foes. In A.D. 1444, however, he and the Christians whom he led received a most crushing defeat at Varna at the hands of the Turkish army.

Murad II. died in A.D. 1451, after a reign of thirty years, during which, in the quaint language of Knolles the great historian of the Ottoman Empire, "by the spoils of so many mighty kings and princes, and by the conquest of so many proud and warlike nations, he again restored and embellished the Turks' kingdom, before by Tamerlane and the Tartars in a manner clean defaced."

He was succeeded by his son Muhammad II., surnamed the Conqueror, because, during his reign, Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks after a desperate siege of fifty-three days, commencing on 6th April, A.D. 1453, and terminating on the memorable 29th of May in the same year. Gibbon the historian has told in language of immortality, how Constantine Palæologus, the last of his line, fought manfully in defence of his capital; how "amidst the tumult, he fell by an unknown hand, and his body was buried under a monument of the slain," and how, by



command of the conqueror, "the Metropolis of the Eastern Church was transformed into a mosque; the rich and portable instruments of superstition had been removed; the crosses were thrown down low; and the walls, which were covered with images and mosaics, were washed and purified, and restored to a state of naked simplicity. On the same day, or on the ensuing Friday, the muezzin, or crier, ascended the most lofty turret, and proclaimed the azan, or public invitation in the name of God and His Prophet, the Imam preached, and Muhammad II. performed the *namaz* thanksgiving on the first altar, where the Christian mysteries had so lately been celebrated before the last of the Cæsars. From St Sophia he proceeded to the august but desolate mansion of one hundred successors of the great Constantine, but which, in a few hours, had been stripped of the pomp of royalty. A melancholy reflection on the vicissitudes of human greatness forced itself upon his mind, and he repeated an elegant distich of Persian poetry:

"'Now the spider draws the curtain in the Cæsar's palace hall,
And the owl proclaims the watch beneath Afrasiab's vaulted
dome.'"

After a short interval Muhammad conquered Wallachia and annexed Servia and Bosnia; but he was severely repulsed at Belgrade (A.D. 1456) owing chiefly to the heroism of Hunyady, nobly seconded by the valiant monk, St John Capistran. In Epirus, too, he failed to reduce to submission the well-known national hero Skanderbeg. Ottoman arms were thereupon pushed westward in the direction of Venice, while



the famous Rhodes became the scene of a prolonged but unsuccessful siege on the part of the Turks, whose failure in this direction was compensated by their success in storming the Castle of Otranto near Brindisi (A.D. 1480). In A.D. 1481 Muhammad issued orders to prepare a colossal expedition. Whither bound, and for what purpose, must ever remain undisclosed, for the death of the ambitious Muslim sovereign hid his purposes from view, and the capital of the Byzantine Empire which might have been the aim and object of these gigantic preparations remained secure from the foreign invader. Thus in A.D. 1481 ended the glorious reign of the glorious Muhammad II.

Now came a swing of the pendulum. The new Sultan, Bayazid II., a prince the exact antithesis of his father, was indolent, and utterly unfitted to fill a throne which demanded energy and vigour of mind, no less than of body. His long reign of thirty-one years was almost entirely consumed with family troubles and dissensions. It is only necessary on this occasion to allude to the extraordinary incidents which centre round the hapless Prince Jamshid, generally called and known to fame as "Prince Jem," a brother of the reigning monarch. It may well be supposed that, as this young man was possessed of great force of character, he might at any moment become a dangerous candidate for power, and possibly monarchy. So D'Aubusson, the Grand Master of Rhodes, conceived the strange idea of seizing Prince Jem, and incarcerating him in one of the dungeons of the Order, receiving from the Sultan a large hire for this villainy and rascality. Years rolled on and the

unprincipled head of the Christian brotherhood received during the time large sums of money from different directions, inasmuch as many in high places wished to obtain possession of the captive prince, and were willing to pay handsomely for a prize which could be turned to good account. At length, instigated by Charles VIII. of France, the Pope of Rome appeared on the scene, and in the most generous manner Innocent VIII. agreed to become the jailor of the unfortunate captive. On the death (A.D. 1492) of this benevolent occupant of the Pontifical chair, his successor, the celebrated Alexander Borgia, conceived a grand policy, and entered upon negotiations at Constantinople, the aim and object of which were that Prince Jem should be assassinated in return for the payment to the magnanimous captor of no less a sum than 300,000 ducats, which the successor of St Peter graciously consented to accept. How death came to the captive is not known for certain, but "the balance of probability, however," says Mr Stanley Lane-Poole in the volume "Turkey" which he contributed to the *Story of Nations* series (a work largely used in this brief summary of Ottoman history), "inclines towards poison, and Alexander Borgia has so many crimes on the place where his conscience should have been, that it can do him no harm to bear one murder more. The curious conclusion one draws from the whole melancholy tale is that there was not apparently a single honest prince in Christendom to take compassion upon the captive; nor one to reprobate the ungenerous and venal intrigues of the Grand Master, the Pope, and Charles VIII. Each contended with the other for the prize of perfidy and shame.



Bayazid may be excused for his desire to see his brother in safe keeping; but what can be said for the head of the Christian Church, and the leader of an Order of religious knights, who eagerly betrayed a helpless refugee for the sake of the infidel's gold. When we come to read of the heroism of the knights of Rhodes and Malta, it may be well to recall the history of Prince Jem, and to weigh well the chivalry that could fatten upon such treason."

In A.D. 1512 the feeble Bayazid was deposed by his son Selim I., known in after years as "Selim the Grim," who commenced his reign by cruelly butchering the numerous members of the royal family who were likely to prove dangerous. Not content with giving the order for their death, he himself watched the gruesome scene from an adjoining room. This inhuman tyrant soon found an opportunity for gratifying his thirst for blood on a more lavish scale than the murder of a handful of helpless youths and children. It happened in this wise. By a long series of conquests, Shah Ismail, the Safavi Monarch of Persia, had wrested province after province from the hands of the various petty chiefs who held possession of the territories under the sway of Hulaku Khan, and at a later date of Taimur, and had extended his dominions until they became conterminous in parts with the limits of the Ottoman Empire. The Persians were, as a nation, members of the unorthodox Shia sect of Muhammadans: this circumstance afforded the "orthodox" Selim a pretext for suddenly sweeping down upon the "heretics" of whom it is said no less than 40,000 were either massacred in cold blood or



imprisoned. War with the monarch of Persia ensued, and the victory of the Turks at Chaldiran (A.D. 1514) was followed by the annexation of the Persian provinces of Kurdistan and Diarbekir which thenceforth formed part of the Ottoman Empire. A series of successes against the Mamluk Sultans of Egypt (A.D. 1516-1517) gave to the Turks authority over Mecca and Madina, the sacred cities of Arabia. The prestige and importance thus gained were materially enhanced by the action of the last of the Abbaside Khalifs, who, in A.D. 1518, made over to the victorious monarch who sat upon the throne of majesty at Constantinople, the spiritual powers which attached to the Khalifat, and added to the coveted heritage, as outward and visible tokens, the standard and cloak of the Prophet of Arabia. Thenceforth, in spite of the objection—in theory fatal, but in practice more or less immaterial—that the Sultan of Turkey is not descended from the Quraish tribe of Arabia, the Ottoman ruler has been the supreme head of Islam and Commander of the Faithful.

Selim the Grim died on 22nd September, A.D. 1520, after a brief but glorious reign of eight years, during which time the empire over which he ruled was enlarged by the inclusion of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia. Albeit a bloodthirsty and cruel tyrant he was admittedly a great sovereign. But his glory was eclipsed and the splendour of his reign dwarfed by the deeds of his son and successor Sulaiman, the Magnificent, who controlled the destinies of the Turkish Empire for the long period of forty-six years. Gracious in manner, firm in his administration, of



indomitable energy, quick to punish wrong, and ever ready to reward right, he was at once loved and feared by his subjects. With such a monarch at the head of the State, it needed but an able minister at the helm to bring about a combination which could defy the world in arms. Destiny gave this boon to the empire in the person of the Grand Vizier Ibrahim. The son of a humble seaman, he passed as a slave into the hands of Sulaiman, and step by step climbed the ladder of success, till in the year 1523 of the Christian era, he rose to be the first minister of his sovereign, the Lord of Constantinople, and materially helped to increase the power of the powerful Sultan, whose prowess had already added Belgrade (A.D. 1521), and Rhodes (A.D. 1522), to the Turkish Empire, and reduced Venice to the position of a vassal in the same year.

The effect of this union of great men and great minds was at once manifest in the campaign of Mohacs (A.D. 1526), which placed Hungary under the heel of the Ottoman conqueror: and for little less than a century and a half the Turkish "Horsetails" floated over the possessions thus gained. However, after an interval of three years, dissensions in the same region, amongst the candidates for the nominal kingship of Hungary, led Sulaiman to turn his steps once again to that region. Overtures were made to the offended Sultan, but they interceded in vain, and they were bid to meet him either at Mohacs or Pesth, failing which His Majesty intimated that he would "breakfast" with them at Vienna. The happy meal was destined, however, to remain unconsumed, for in spite of the appearance on the



scene of a Turkish army of upwards of 250,000 men, and notwithstanding the devastation wrought by the implacable Janissaries, seconded by the no less terrible irregular troops, the Imperial city resisted all the efforts of the besiegers. On the memorable 14th October, A.D. 1529, the Turkish troops were withdrawn as it had not been necessary—so ran the royal decree—"to clear out the fortress or purify, improve, or put it in repair." After an interval of three years the attack was again renewed; but shortly afterwards was abandoned on the conclusion of peace with Hungary in A.D. 1533. For no less a period than thirty-three years after these events Sulaiman carried on war in various parts of South-Eastern Europe, and died on the 6th September, A.D. 1566, in the midst of the din of battle, leaving a memory as the greatest sovereign that ever sat upon the throne of the Turkish Empire, which at his death covered a large area of the most splendid regions in the world. Almost the only blots upon his character were the murder (A.D. 1536) of his Prime Minister Ibrahim in a fit of jealousy, and the execution of the royal first-born son, Mustafa, a deed of cruelty instigated by his Russian wife, Roxelana, who wished by this means to secure the succession to her son Salim.

But little remains to be written, after this date, in regard to the Sultans of Turkey: most of them were besotted sensualists, addicted to the vices and pleasures of the harem. It is true that now and again, as is the case of Murad IV., A.D. 1623-1640—who conquered Baghdad—a brilliant warrior came to the throne: but such monarchs were the exception rather than the rule, and the interests of the empire



in reality passed into the hands of the Viziers. Such a state of affairs of necessity meant ruin, and it can occasion no surprise that by degrees the Ottoman Empire in Europe was diminished to little more than half its original extent. "Henceforward the Ottoman Empire ceased to hold the position of a dangerous military power," so writes Mr Stanley Lane-Poole; "its armies were never again a menace to Christendom. Its prestige was gone: instead of perpetually threatening its neighbours on the north, it had to exert its utmost strength and diplomatic ingenuity to restrain the aggrandising policy of Austria and Russia. Turkey was now to become important only from a diplomatic point of view. Other powers would fight over her, and the business of the Porte would be less to fight itself, though she can still do it well, than to secure allies whose interests compelled them to do battle for it. In the hundred and seventy years of Turkish history which remain to be recorded, the chief external interest centres in the aggression of Russia, and the efforts of English diplomacy and English arms to restrain her."

Such was the rise and such the fall of the Ottoman Empire. For six centuries Turkey has played an important and at times a glorious rôle in the annals of the world, and even in the later days of his degeneracy the "sick man" may perchance continue in his sickness, but not as a "very sick man" (to use the language of the Emperor Nicholas of Russia, spoken in A.D. 1844). So long at least as the question remains unanswered, "Who is to hold Constantinople?" the "Golden Horn" may yet be



destined to be pregnant with the fate of Empires, and the Sublime Porte—so-called from the Imperial Gate which guards the entrance of the Royal Palace at Constantinople—a factor in the history of the world.



CHAPTER IX

THE TWELVE IMAMS, OR SPIRITUAL HEADS OF ISLAM

I.—ALL. A.D. 656-661

THE narrative now reverts to the events which occurred on the murder of Osman (A.D. 656). The death of the Khalif caused no little stir amongst the Saracens, who were divided in their wishes as to the election of a successor. In the confusion which ensued several persons came to Ali, the spouse of the Prophet's daughter Fatima, and desired of him that he would accept the government. To these solicitations he rejoined that personally he did not wish for the honour, but would readily bow to the choice of any person upon whom they might agree. They still insisted that no one was so well qualified as himself, whether as regarded his personal accomplishments, or his near relationship to the Prophet of Arabia. But the "Hand of God" (as Arabian historians delight to call him) was inexorable, and ultimately it was agreed that the matter should be referred to the chief inhabitants of Madina; these latter came to Ali with an appeal to his piety. "We adjurè thee by God!"



such was the forcible language of the religious enthusiasts of Islam. "Dost thou not consider in what condition we are? Dost thou not consider the religion? Dost thou not consider the distraction of the people? Dost thou not fear God?" Moved with these expostulations, and it may well be supposed secretly overjoyed at the prospect before him, Ali consented to comply with the wishes of his fellow-countrymen; but aware that his enemies were neither few in number nor inconsiderable in influence, he prudently insisted that the allegiance of his subjects should be publicly tendered in the mosque, rather than in private at his own house. Accordingly, clad in a thin cotton gown, tied about him with a girdle, having a coarse turban upon his head, his slippers in one hand, and a bow in the other instead of a staff, the son-in-law of Muhammad repaired to the sacred edifice, with the view of receiving the homage of the citizens, who had elected him to the dignity of Khalif. This occurred in A.D. 656.

As soon as Ali was publicly acknowledged at Madina as successor to the throne, he inconsiderately resolved to take away the high appointments held by those persons who had been nominated by Osman, his predecessor. In vain did faithful friends remonstrate against the needless folly and perilous danger of raising up a host of enemies, ere he was well secure at his capital; in vain did they point out that it behoved him not only to be a man of courage—this could never be questioned—but a "man of conduct." Ali was deaf to all representations, and the fiat went forth; murmurs of discontent followed the rash resolve, and a body of malcontents

was speedily formed; these, at the instigation of two men of influence by name Talha and Zubair, inflamed by the malignant counsels of Ayisha, the favourite wife of the Prophet, but the bitterest and most implacable enemy of his daughter's husband, betook themselves into Syria, whither they carried Osman's blood-stained shirt. This latter they sometimes spread upon the pulpit, and at others raised on high in the face of the army. While, more effectually to inflame the feelings of the people, his wife's fingers, which were cut off at the time when the venerable Khalif was murdered, were pinned upon the shirt. The people of Syria, aroused at the piteous sight, vowed vengeance against a tyrant whom they supposed to have planned the murder of their sovereign, and whom they knew to have decreed the recall of their governor. This last-mentioned personage, the well-known Muawiya, so famous in the annals of after years, finding that feelings of revenge and animosity were deeply implanted in the hearts of the people under his charge, did not vouchsafe to give a reply to the messenger whom Ali had sent to Syria. At length, however, after an interval of about three months had elapsed, the proud and aspiring recusant bethought himself that he would send an answer to the son-in-law of the Prophet. He selected an attendant, and delivering him a letter, sealed with the superscription "From Muawiya to Ali," he bade him return with the envoy from Madina. Entering the town in the evening when people were strolling in the cool, the emissaries carried the packet aloft upon a staff; they were soon surrounded by a band of inquirers, anxious to ascertain the reply of the governor of Syria,



whom they knew to be disaffected towards Ali. On reaching their destination, Ali seized the letter with evident tokens of anxiety, but great was his astonishment to find the missive a blank sheet of paper—not a single word of writing was visible. Rightly understanding this token of contempt and disdain, he asked the messenger what news he had to convey; whereupon the man replied that 60,000 men were in arms under the standard of Osman's shirt. The die was now cast, and destiny decreed that Ali's reign should be inaugurated with a war against the Syrians, whose animosity he had courted, and whose allegiance he had estranged. While these events, so pregnant with importance, were transpiring at Madina, a crier was parading the streets of Mecca proclaiming that "the Mother of the Faithful and Talha and Zubair are going in person to Bussora—whosoever therefore is desirous of strengthening the religion and fighting voluntarily to avenge the death of Osman if he hath any convenience of riding let him come." The people of the sacred city flocked eagerly to the standard of revolt, and upwards of 3000 warriors surrounded the litter of Ayisha, as, mounted upon a camel and animated with a spirit of unquenchable hatred to the house of Ali, she turned her steps towards Bussora. The city, rent with factions, and divided in allegiance, offered no material resistance; and after a skirmish, in which forty of his men were slain, the governor submitted to the Amazon leader. The implacable matron at first ordered that death should be the punishment for resistance; but the entreaties of her companions mitigated the severity of such a bloodthirsty decree, and the hapless suppliant was

allowed to depart with his life; at the same time, however, he was disgraced and humiliated with the loss of his beard and eyebrows, both of which were plucked out by the roots to appease the irritated Mother of the Faithful.

But to return to Madina. Though Ali was exceedingly popular, and though it was well known that he was fairly elected, yet all his eloquence—and he was allowed to be the best orator of his age—was not sufficient to stir up the people in his behalf. At length, however, one of the leaders in the town stepping forth proclaimed his readiness to unsheath his sword in Ali's behalf; his example was soon followed by another zealous warrior, and history proclaims that a woman in the crowd, struck by the contagion of enthusiasm, offered the services of her cousin-german whom she considered as dearer to her than her own life. The ardour of these patriots inflamed the hearts of their fellow citizens, and Ali was enabled to march forth from the city at the head of 900 men to confront the disturbers of his kingdom, now esconced at Bussora under the command of his sworn foe Ayisha. His son Hasan, seeing the hopelessness of the enterprise, endeavoured to dissuade his father from the perilous attempt, and advised him to "sit still at home." The reply was typical of the resolute warrior whose brow had been graced by destiny with a crown: "Would you have me lurk in a hole like a wild beast till she is digged out. If I do not myself look after what concerns me in this affair, and provide for my necessary defence, who will look after it? Therefore, son, hold you your tongue!" So Ali and his party proceeded on their way.



When they had journeyed some days, he halted and despatched two messengers to Kufa, bearing a letter to his friends in that city, informing them "how much he preferred them to all the rest of the provinces, and what confidence he reposed in them in the time of his extremity," and adding "that they should keep the religion of God, and repair to him in order to make use of such means as might be proper for the reconciling of this divided people, and making them brethren again." The messengers, on arrival at the town, were surrounded with a crowd of the populace, but none demanded whence they came, or what they required: the silence was ominous. In the end some of the "hajis," or pilgrims who had visited Mecca, came to the governor, by name Ali Musa, and inquired as to his views about going out to assist Ali. The answer would have reflected no discredit on the Oracle of Delphi: "My opinion to-day is different from what it was yesterday. What you despised in time past hath drawn upon you what you see now. The going out and sitting still at home are two things. Sitting still at home is the heavenly way; the going out is the way of the world. Therefore take your choice." Again there ensued a deep silence, broken only by the angry and reproachful exclamations of the messengers. Thereupon Ali Musa, waxing warm at the insults thus hurled against him, bade the men tell their master that the people of Kufa would have no dealings with a person round whose neck hung the murder of Osman.

All this while Ali was employing his time at the camp in haranguing and encouraging his people, who



at his solicitation had been plentifully supplied from Madina with horses, arms, and all the necessaries of war. "Keep close to your religion," so spake the head of the Muslim faith, "and be directed in the right way; for it is the direction of your prophet. What is too hard for you let alone, till you bring it to the test of the Quran; and what the Quran approveth stand to, and what it disapproveth reject. Delight in God for your Lord, and in Islam for your religion, and in Muhammad for your Prophet, and in the Quran for your Guide and Director." The party was now joined by the ex-governor of Bussora, who came to wait upon Ali; the beardless face of the hapless pilgrim betokened the sufferings he had undergone, and raised at once the compassion and the ire of his generous-minded master, who unable to restrain his indignation at the perfidy of Talha and Zubair, in that "their tongues were not according to their hearts," exclaimed in tones of wrath, "My God! they shall both know that I am not one jot inferior to any of my predecessors."

Full of anxiety as to the fate of his appeal to the people of Kufa, Ali received with trembling heart the message returned by Ali Musa to the overtures of reconciliation which had been addressed to him. The answer of the governor was fatal to the resolve of his master, who could scarcely proceed against Bussora, unless assured of the assistance of the inhabitants of Kufa, so he determined once again to try and appease the storm which was gathering around him: but his efforts were fruitless. Last of all he despatched his eldest son Hasan, who was received with the respect due to his dignity and birth.



Still Ali Musa persisted in his opposition : words ran high, and no small tumult arose, some wishing to march to the assistance of Ali, others preferring to remain true to their allegiance to the "Mother of the Faithful." When at length the debate passed the bounds of moderation, and feelings were at their highest, Hasan rose up and bid the people "hearken to the request of your Emperor, and help us in this calamity which is befallen both you and us. Thus saith the Emperor of the Faithful, Either I do injury myself, or else I suffer injury. If I suffer injury God will help me, if I do injury He will take vengeance upon me. By God, Talha and Zubair were the first that inaugurated me, and the first that prevaricated. Have I discovered any covetous inclination, or prevented justice? Wherefore come on, and command that which is good and refuse that which is evil." This appeal touched the audience to the quick, and upwards of 9000 citizens of Kufa joined the camp of Ali; the latter received them with honour as "men of distinguished valour" who had "conquered the kings of Persia, and dispersed their forces!"

The army of Ali now consisted of not less than 30,000 men, and the heart of Ayisha sank within her as she beheld in battle array round Bussora a host of fighting men, not materially inferior in point of numbers to those who supported her cause, led by a commander whose prowess in battle had earned for him an appellation so endeared to the consciences of Muslim historians—the "Lion of God." Nothing daunted, however, the resolute Amazon mounted her camel, and, riding in a litter shaped as a cage, was carried up and down the ranks to inspire the soldiers



with somewhat of the zeal and impetuosity which filled the breast of the most heroic, the most implacable heroine of which the annals of Islam can boast. So the "day of the camel" commenced; the contest was conducted with ungovernable fury on both sides, and for a long while the issue was doubtful. At this juncture Talha was pierced in the leg by an arrow; unable to control his horse he soon stretched his length on the field of battle, the faithfulness of his servant alone enabling his master to reach the town safe from the weapons of his enemies; but his end was approaching, and impending fate, so pious Muslims would have it believed, convinced the traitor of his sin, and on his deathbed he renewed the oath of fidelity which he had so recently and shamelessly violated. Ali, with a generous consideration for his enemy's want of faith, avowed that "God would not call him to heaven till he had blotted out the first breach of his word by this last protestation of fidelity." Thus one stumbling-block was removed from Ali's path. The traitor's comrade in guilt, Zubair, too, having qualms of conscience withdrew himself from the battle, and took the road towards Mecca. He was followed by an adherent from Ali's camp, who, overtaking him, and worming himself into the dispirited intriguer's confidence, treacherously cut off the head of his unsuspecting victim as the hapless Arab was prostrating himself at evening prayers. When the Lion of God saw the blood-stained skull of his foe he denounced the latter as a denizen of hell, an illiberality of sentiment which so shocked the susceptibilities of the assassin that, repentant of his sin, he ran his own body through



with a sword, and fell a corpse at the feet of his astonished master. The principal conspirators were now removed from the scene; but the struggle was not ended, and there still remained Ayisha, ever to be seen where the battle raged hottest and most severe; the centre of attraction alike for friend and foe, her litter bristled, as it were the back of a porcupine, with the arrows which were launched at the intrepid leader of her troops, and no less than three score and ten hands which lay severed on the plain, beneath the feet of the beast which bore her, betokened at once the zeal of those who held her bridle, and the fury of the contest of which she was the very life and existence. Thus the day advanced till at length her camel was hamstrung, and no longer able to take part in the fray, she remained at the mercy of her victorious enemy. Ali, however, more considerate to his defeated rival than she had been wont to be to those whom *she* hated and disliked, dismissed her handsomely, with a goodly equipage, and sent her in company with his two sons, Hasan and Husain, to Madina, enjoining her at the same time not to intermeddle any more with affairs of State.

After this eventful day Ali encountered no further opposition, and marching into Kufa, established in that city the seat of his government. These important events occurred in A.D. 656.

There now remained but one region where the standard of rebellion yet floated: in Syria, Muawiya still headed a people disaffected towards Ali, and eager to revenge the blood of Osman. A messenger was sent to him bidding him pay allegiance to



his sovereign; but he refused to listen to any one save Amru, the conqueror of Egypt, who was accordingly despatched, but finding on his arrival the position of affairs, the warrior linked his fortunes with the governor of Syria, and amidst the acclamations of the people, this traitor to his trust took the oath of allegiance to his new Lord.

When Ali was apprised of these proceedings he at first adopted gentle means to reduce the rebels to a sense of their duty, but, perceiving that his efforts were fruitless, he marched at the head of an army of 90,000 men towards the confines of Syria. Halting at Saffain, a full month (June-July, A.D. 657) was consumed in abortive efforts to settle the matter amicably; but all his attempts were fruitless, and at the end of that interval the war began, not in the usual way of a pitched battle, but rather with a series of desultory onslaughts: indeed, scarce a day passed without an engagement of some sort, and it is said that no less than ninety skirmishes took place, in which Ali lost upwards of five-and-twenty thousand of his troops, while the slain amongst the army of Muawiya amounted to little short of five-and-forty thousand. This irritating and unsatisfactory method of warfare was ill in accord with the ardent spirit of the warrior of Islam, who called out to his antagonist, "How long shall the people lose their lives between us? Come hither. I challenge you to appeal to the decision of God, and whichever of us two kills his man has all entire to himself." But Muawiya refused, alleging with truth, that no man had ever come forth against Ali, and lived to tell the tale. So the slaughter continued, and the Syrians



were sore pushed ; the crisis was serious, and it was reserved to Amru to extricate his followers from a danger which threatened destruction. This crafty leader, seeing the impending discomfiture of his soldiers, bade them hoist the Quran upon the points of their lances, and advance into battle exclaiming "This is the book that ought to decide all our differences : this is the book of God between us and you." The effect was magical — eager warriors, whose ardour no human power could restrain, at once threw down their arms, and appeared before Ali : "Will you not answer to the book of God?" was the zealous inquiry of these zealous bigots. In vain was it pointed out that the whole affair was trickery and a deceit—the men were inexorable, and at the moment when victory was in his grasp, the "Lion of God" was compelled to sound a retreat. After much discussion it was determined that the difference should be settled by arbitration, and two persons were chosen to represent the contending factions. For eight months the armies remained listless and inactive ; at the expiration of which time the decision was announced, in the sight of all the people, from a tribunal erected for the purpose on the plain. It had been agreed between the umpires that both competitors for the throne should be deposed, and the choice of a successor left to the nation at large : accordingly mounting the rostrum the arbitrator selected to represent the interests of Ali proclaimed that both the "Lion of God" and Muawiya should be set aside, and, suiting his action to his words, he drew the ring from off his finger, and cast it aside, to betoken that the Khalifat had

been taken from the disputants. On the other hand his companion, departing from the agreement, proclaimed that the governor of Syria should be the successor of Osman, "after the same manner as I put this ring on my finger"; a decision in which neither of the arbitrators agreed, settled nothing, and the armies separated leaving matters just as they were when the war began. But the action of Ali in referring to the judgment of man what ought to have been determined by God alone—such was the language of his opponents—gave great offence to some of his adherents, and there arose a body of irreconcilables known as the separatists, who held aloof from his interests, and established themselves in the vicinity of Baghdad, whither all the malcontents flocked, till at length their number was swelled to five-and-twenty thousand men. It was impossible to leave such a formidable array of opponents as a standing menace to his authority and power, and Ali had no alternative but to reduce them to submission; so he presented himself before them at the head of a considerable army. Ere, however, giving the order for the attack, he planted a standard without the camp, and made proclamation with sound of trumpet, that whosoever would come under it should have quarter; while if any of them desired to retire to Kufa they should find there a sanctuary. The stratagem was completely successful, and no more than 4000 men remained true to the cause of rebellion. This handful of desperadoes, none the less, resolved to attack Ali's army; but their presumption was greater than their success, for they were cut to pieces, and but nine of them



escaped to repent of their rashness. This victory, which was gained in the year of grace 658, united all the Arabians under the government of Ali, and it only remained to reduce the Syrians to obedience. For upwards of two years attempts were made to subdue the refractory Muawiya, but the efforts were spasmodic and productive of no practical results; it was not so much a matter of the sword as of intrigue, and the poisoned bowl and the forged letter not infrequently did a work which the armed hand failed to accomplish. The state of things was indeed wearisome and unsatisfactory; at one time Ali's lieutenants secured a victory over their opponents, while it occasionally happened that one of his generals, less fortunate than his master, was routed, and his dead body tied up in that of an ass and burned to ashes. In these circumstances three of the separatists met together at Mecca, and discoursing over the troubles of their nation and country, came to the conclusion that all the ills which had befallen the people of Islam were due to Ali, Muawiya, and Amru: so they resolved that they would rid the world of such fertile springs of discord, and restore to the Muslim nation that peace and unity of which there seemed no prospect in any other direction. Poisoning their swords the three conspirators separated; the first to Kufa, the second to Damascus, and the third to Egypt.

As regards Muawiya, he was struck by the assassin, but the wound was not mortal, while Amru on the day selected for his murder chanced to be unwell, a fortunate circumstance, to which he owed his life; a substitute who had filled his place at the



mosque fell dead beneath the blow which had been intended for the conqueror of Egypt. "I designed Amru, but God designeth another" was the calm and unconcerned exclamation with which the cold-blooded assassin withdrew his sword from the innocent victim of his hate.

The third conspirator, by name Abdur Rahman, met with better success in his deadly mission. On arriving at Kufa he happened to take up his lodgings in the abode of a woman, whose nearest relation had been slain in the battle, and who for that reason retained in her heart a strong desire to be revenged upon the author of her misfortunes. Ingratiating himself with this fiendish-minded companion, the designing villain even went so far as to offer her his hand in marriage; she in turn, eager for the blood of her enemy, readily consented, and joining with fervent ardour in the murderous plan of her pretended lover, merely stipulated that her dowry should be "3000 drachms of silver, a slave, a maid, and Ali's head." The better to carry out her deadly purpose, and to guard against the risk of failure, she associated with her newly-arrived lover, two other men, named Wardan and Shabib. The three associates repaired to the mosque, and pretending to quarrel amongst themselves, drew their swords; but hardly were their weapons unsheathed than they all fell upon the hapless Ali, who soon lay at their feet, struck down with a mortal wound; he lingered for a few days, and died on the 22nd January, A.D. 661, having previously given directions that the assassin Abdur Rahman should be detained in custody, to await the result of his murderous attack; if the blow should prove fatal,



the generous Ali stipulated that one stroke should deprive the murderer of a life justly forfeited.

Thus died Ali, after a troublous reign of a little more than five years.

Among the surnames or honourable titles which the Muslims bestow upon Muhammad's son-in-law is that of "legatee" or "heir,"—that is, of the Prophet. His second title is "Beloved by, or acceptable to God." He is also known as the great "Curer," and sometimes as the "Pardoner." His undaunted courage and unconquerable skill in battle also gained for him the appellation, "the victorious Lion of God"; but he is more commonly known as "the Lion." The Persians for a similar reason call him "the Lion of God," and not unfrequent mention of him is made as the "Hand of God," the "King of men," the "distributor of Lights and Graces," or the "Commander of the Faithful."

Ali was buried at Najaf, near Kufa; for many decades the site of his tomb was unmarked, but in the year A. D. 977, a sumptuous monument, which the Persians generally call "the dome of the distributor of Lights," was erected to mark the spot which contains the ashes of a man beloved by his friends and feared by his enemies—a warrior who delighted in battle, but hated diplomacy—a chieftain who, possessing unlimited and unrestrained power, was endowed with a meekness and humility, which found expression in the inscription which he placed on the seal of the empire: "The Kingdom belongs to the only mighty God."

II.—HASAN. A.D. 661. ABDICATED SAME
YEAR. DIED A.D. 670

When Ali had received his mortal wound, and it was perceived that life was ebbing away, those around him inquired whom he would nominate for his successor. The son-in-law of the Prophet replied that he intended in this matter to follow the example of the Apostle of God, who died without selecting a ruler of the Faithful, and that if it pleased God to favour them, He would, undoubtedly, unite their judgments in making a good choice. In these circumstances it was deemed fit, since Ali had passed away, that the mantle of the father should fall upon his elder son, Hasan, who, however, inherited more of Ali's piety than his courage, while being naturally of a peaceable disposition, he was ill-fitted to rule over a monarchy which needed a firm hand, and a stout heart. When the Imam had drawn his last breath, Hasan stood up and said to the people: "You have killed a man on that same night in which the Quran came down from Heaven, and Isa (Jesus), upon whom be peace, was lifted up to Heaven, and in which Joshua the son of Nun was killed; by God! none of his predecessors exceeded him, nor will any of his successors ever be equal to him." After this harangue the speaker was inaugurated as Commander of the Faithful. "Stretch out your hand," such was the formulary observed, "as a token that you will stand by the Book of God, and the Tradition of the Apostle, and make war against all opposers." "As to the Book of God and the Tradition of the Apostle, they will stand," was the pious rejoinder of the saintly Hasan. The people



then made obeisance, and agreed that they would be subject and obedient to him, and remain at peace with his friends, and at war with his enemies. Some, however—the recollection of the Syrian war, with all its wearisome contests and indecisive battles, filling their hearts with misgivings—hesitated as to this latter condition, and exclaimed: “This man will never serve you for a master, we are not for fighting.” But upwards of 40,000 warriors had, in days of yore, bound themselves to stand by Ali in the matter of his dispute with the Syrians, and Hasan was persuaded, contrary to his own inclination, to put himself at the head of this body, with the view of reducing to obedience the rebel Muawiya, who, even before his rival was killed, had proclaimed himself Khalif, and who now refused to acknowledge the claims of Hasan, whom he charged with having been an accomplice in the murder of Osman. The contending forces met at a place called Madain, but a tumult in his army—on which occasion he was not only treated with discourtesy, but received a wound—revealed to Hasan the alarming circumstance that his authority was precarious, and his power slight. So, weary at heart he wrote to Muawiya, resigning to the latter a sovereignty so beset with difficulties, and so fraught with danger. In the meanwhile, the governor of Syria, judging from the position of affairs, that Hasan might not impossibly be disposed to listen to terms, sent him a sheet of paper completely blank, save in so far as it was signed at the bottom, and bade the timid-minded Imam write therein what conditions he pleased, which it was promised should be punctually and scrupulously performed. Hasan thereupon altered in his own favour the terms which he had previously



proposed for Muawiya's acceptance; but his adversary, not unnaturally, preferred to adhere to the first letter, which he said truly was Hasan's own proposal.

Ultimately it was arranged that (1) Muawiya should give up all the money in the treasury at Kufa; (2) that Hasan should receive a vast estate in Persia; and (3) that Muawiya should make no reproachful reflection upon Ali, at least in the presence of the son of the latter. These conditions being settled, Hasan and Muawiya repaired together to Kufa, where the former made a formal abdication of his rights. "O people," such was the language of the Imam, "God, whose name be magnified and glorified, directed you the right way by the help of the first of our family, and hath prevented the effusion of your blood by the means of the last of us. Muawiya contended with me concerning a matter to which I had a better pretension than he; but I chose rather to restrain the people from fighting, and surrender it to him. But even this affair also hath a time prefixed for its duration, and the world is liable to changes." So Hasan, in company with his brother Husain, retired to Madina in the enjoyment of the magnificent income of upwards of £150,000 a year, most of which he spent in deeds of charity. But he was so little attached to the things of this world, that twice in his lifetime he deprived himself of well-nigh all that he possessed, and on three other occasions he divided half of his substance amongst the poor.

Thus passed the first half of the year 661 of the Christian era. Authorities differ as to the precise duration of Hasan's reign, but it is generally considered to have lasted about six months.



Upon his coming to Madina he was blamed by his friends for having so tamely and easily resigned; but he answered that he was weary of the world, while the people of Kufa were, in his opinion, such a faithless and fickle nation that he could place no reliance upon their allegiance or assistance, seeing that no man ever reposed confidence in them but he was a sufferer for his rashness and folly; while never two of them concurred in their opinions and wishes; in short, they had no regard either to good or evil. So he turned away in disgust from a people whom he could neither trust nor admire.

While he was settled at Madina, it happened that the "separatists," who had occasioned his father so much trouble, raised an insurrection against Muawiya, and the latter thereupon wrote to Hasan, enjoining him to go forth against them. But he desired to be excused, on the plea that he had quitted public affairs; and that, if he had cared for fighting at all, he should have himself entered the lists with him against whom the rebellion was raised.

Though successful in his schemes, ill-feelings lurked in the bosom of the newly elected Khalif, who was anxious to secure the succession for his son Yazid, and he resolved to rid himself of an enemy whose near relationship to the Prophet attached the people to his person, while the meekness and gentleness of his disposition made amends for the absence of those traits of boldness and vigour which were so highly esteemed in a land where every one was a warrior from his youth, and where the sword and the bow graced alike the stripling of a few summers, as the venerable elder with snow-white locks.



Sad to relate, Muawiya found an instrument to secure the accomplishment of his treacherous design in the sanctuary of the domestic circle; and the person selected to rid the world of an inoffensive and unsuspecting victim, was no other than the wife of Hasan's bosom, who, lured with the dazzling prospect of an ultimate union with Yazid, and tempted with the promise of a sum of 50,000 dirhams (somewhat over £1000), readily consented to sacrifice the life of her lord and master. The method which she adopted for its accomplishment was not less remarkable than the consummate perfidy of the design. While yet warm from her embraces, she rubbed the body of her husband with a napkin which she had previously impregnated with poison. The deadly preparation quickly pervaded the frame of her hapless spouse, who soon lay stretched on the bed a stiffened and distorted corpse.

When the time of his death drew near, his brother Husain begged of him to say who it was that had poisoned him, and swore that judgment should overtake the murderer. But the noble-hearted Hasan refused to disclose the secret. "O brother! the life of this world is made up of nights which vanish away. Let him alone till he and I meet together before God," was the only response which passed the lips of the murdered saint; but the expression indicated a consciousness that, in his opinion, his wife, though the instrument, was not the instigator of his death.

When Muawiya heard the glad tidings of his enemy's murder, that ambitious and unprincipled intriguer fell down on his knees with affected humility, and worshipped the Lord of Heaven, who had



removed from his path the sole opponent whom he dreaded in his heart, and hated in his soul. It is at least satisfactory in the midst of this black record of treachery and guilt to find that Yazid, more prudent perhaps than honourable, refused to fulfil the promise made in his name and on his behalf. So the murderess, whose memory is to this day bitterly execrated, remained a widow, while the paltry sum of money which she received as the price of a husband's blood was but an insignificant reward for an act of villainy which has few parallels in the annals of infamy and crime.

Thus (March, A.D. 670) died the ex-Khalif, familiarly known as "The Pious," which name he derived from the many actions by which he was distinguished. Before his death, Hasan had expressed a wish that he might be interred at Madina by the side of the Prophet of Islam; but the jealousy of the implacable Ayisha prevented compliance with this desire, and an ordinary cemetery in the city afforded the grandson of Muhammad that peace and rest in the grave of death which the implacable malignity of his foes denied him when alive.

III.—HUSAIN. A.D. 680—AFTER AN INTERVAL OF TEN YEARS

It had been part of the agreement between Muawiya and Hasan that, after the decease of the former the government should revert to the family of the latter: but as years rolled on, the usurper was by no means willing that the reins of power should pass



from his own branch, and he took steps to make the succession hereditary. He was successful in his efforts, and on his death (A.D. 680) his son Yazid succeeded to the throne of his father; not only so, indeed, but, as previously related, for fourteen generations the Khalifat remained in the Omayyad branch to which Muawiya had belonged. But the whole of these successors of the Prophet are regarded by the followers of Ali as usurpers.

As soon as Yazid succeeded to the government, he sent a letter to the governor of Madina, bidding him hold Husain and others "close to the inauguration, without any remission or relaxation." But the grandson of the Prophet managed, with various excuses, to put off the evil day when he would have had to bow down to a sovereign whose succession he disputed, and whose authority he ignored; moreover, during this interval he managed to steal away secretly and escape to Mecca, taking with him the whole of his family except one brother.

Never were people more overjoyed than were the inhabitants of Iraq at the death of Muawiya, whom they detested as a tyrant and usurper, while they sighed for the government of Husain, who belonged to a family which they considered as almost divine; added to which his wife was the daughter of the last Sassanide King of Persia. The Kufans, in particular, were so impatient, that they sent message after message to Ali's son, assuring him that if he would but make his appearance amongst them, he should not only be secure as to his own person, but that, in consideration of the esteem which they had for his father and family, they would render him homage,



and acknowledge him as the only lawful and true Khalif. Though lending a ready ear to these solicitations and importunities, he, nevertheless, deemed it prudent to despatch a messenger to feel the pulse of the people, whose humour he somewhat mistrusted. Muslim, the person selected for this delicate and important office, at first met with great encouragement, and no less than 18,000 men flocked to the standard of his master Husain. However, the lieutenant of Yazid soon found means to turn the tide of popular favour, and the hapless envoy was eventually forced to flee for his life: being ere long seized at the house of an old woman, and taken back to the city, he was afterwards carried to the top of the castle, where he was decapitated, and his head and mangled body cast down on the plain beneath; which done, the former was picked up and sent as a present to Yazid.

When the messenger did not return, it should have been evident to Husain that something was amiss, and he might well have paused ere committing himself to the mercies of such a fickle and inconstant people: but he still persisted in his intention. To no effect did his friends represent to him the madness of embarking in such a desperate undertaking, suggesting that he should keep himself retired till a sufficient body of supporters was raised to ensure success. Husain was not to be moved from his resolution: so, at length, finding all their protestations of no effect, they earnestly pressed him at least not to take the wives and children of his household, lest evil should befall them. One zealous counsellor, in his eager efforts to avert a destruction which he foresaw, swore "By that



God, beside whom there is no other, if I knew that my taking you by the hair of the head till they came in and parted us, would be a means to detain you at Mecca, I would do it." To use the quaint words of the Arabian author who has chronicled these events, "No advice took place with Husain," who, on the morning of the 10th September, A.D. 680, set out from Mecca with a small retinue of followers. This little cavalcade had not proceeded far on their road, when they fell in with a body of a thousand horse, under the command of a chieftain named Al Hurr, a man well affected to the family of Ali. To him Husain explained the object of the expedition which had been taken at the invitation of the people of Kufa. Charged with the commission to bring before Obaidullah, the governor of Bussora, as a prisoner the very man who now stood before him powerless to resist, Al Hurr was moved with compassion, and bade the grandson of the Prophet choose his own road: "Perhaps it may please God I may meet with something that may bring me off without my being enforced to any extremity upon your account," was the pious ejaculation of a warrior who dreaded that the blood of so near a descendant of the Apostle of God should be laid to his account. So, wheeling his charger, he departed out of the way, leaving Husain to pursue his journey unmolested. Scarce a few hours elapsed when four horsemen appeared in sight bringing the news that the nobility of the fickle city whither Husain was wending his steps, were opposed to him to a man, while as for the rest "their hearts are with you, but to-morrow their swords will be drawn against you." He now, too, learned for the first time



the fate of the messenger who had been despatched to the town: the murder of this man affected him deeply, but did not deter him from continuing his march. Another faded blossom was added to the chaplet of destruction. In the still solitude of night he saw in a vision a horseman who said, "Men travel by night, and their destinies travel by night towards them"; from this he knew that the hand of death was upon him, but onward he went till they came to the fatal plain of Karbala, where a large force was drawn up commanded by Amr, a general acting in the interests of Obaidullah, the governor of Bussora. A conference now took place between the two armies, but it was productive of no material results. After it became evident that it was not possible to accommodate matters in this fashion, Obaidullah sent one Shimar to the commander of the forces with orders that if Husain and his followers would surrender themselves they should be received, but if not that he should fall upon them, and trample them under foot.

This offer of mercy reached Husain as he was sitting at the door of his tent, just at the close of evening prayer; whereupon he begged that he might be allowed till morn to consider as to the answer he would return. In the night his sister came up to her brother with tears in her eyes from a foreboding of evil. "Alas for the desolation of my family!" such were her piteous cries. "I wish I had died yesterday rather than have lived till to-day: my mother Fatima is dead, and my father Ali, and my brother Hasan. Alas for the destruction that is past, and the dregs of it that remain behind." Husain looking upon the



frail creature at his side began to chide her, saying, "Sister, do not let the devil take away your temper." Unable to influence him, or deter him from the fatal course upon which he had embarked, the hapless maiden, beating her face, and tearing open her bosom, fell at his feet motionless in a swoon. Hastily sprinkling his sister with cold water, till she had somewhat recovered, Husain counselled her "Put thy trust in God, and depend upon the comfort that comes from Him: and know that the people of the earth shall die, and the people of the Heavens shall not remain: and every thing shall perish but the presence of God, who created all things by His power, and shall make them return, and they shall return to Him alone. My father was better than I, and my mother was better than I, and my brother was better than I, and I, and they, and every Musulman has an example in the Apostle of God." Leading away the terrified girl to her own apartments he commanded his men to cord the tents close together so that the enemy might not be able to pass between them: he also caused a trench to be dugged at the end of the line of tents, into which they threw a large quantity of wood, so that when set on fire it would be impossible for their foes to encompass them from that direction. The rest of the night was spent in prayer and supplication, and as the morn began to dawn, both sides prepared for battle; but the disproportion of the contending parties left no room for doubt as to the issue of the day; for while Amr was at the head of upwards of 4000 men, Husain's band could muster no more than two-and-thirty horse-soldiers, and forty men on foot—a total of



seventy-two devoted adherents. So soon as it became evident that the struggle was imminent, Husain went into his tent, and, as is customary amongst the Arabs when about to engage in dangerous and forlorn enterprises, perfumed his body with musk, an example followed by the leading men of his party. The reason of this quaint proceeding showed at once the desperate nature of the adventure in which the martyrs of Islam were about to hazard their lives, and their firm belief in the future of the cause for which they were ready to fight. "Alas!" such was the explanation which one of their number vouchsafed to an inquiring comrade, "there is nothing between us and the black-eyed girls (of Paradise) but only that these people come down upon us and kill us." Then Husain mounted his horse, and, Quran in hand, invited the people to the performance of their duty; adding "O God! Thou art my confidence in every trouble, and my hope in all adversity." He next reminded them of his virtues, the nobility of his birth, the greatness of his power, and his high descent, bidding them consider "whether or no such a man as I am is not better for you: I, who am the son of your Prophet's daughter, beside whom there is no other upon the face of the earth."

While this exhortation was going on in front of the tent, a party of thirty horse wheeled round, as if to commence the attack. They were commanded by Al Hurr, who had resolved to throw in his lot with the grandson of the Prophet. So, drawing rein before the master whom he had elected to serve, he placed at the disposal of the latter the band which had come forth with the apparent design of hurling destruction



upon their adversaries. His submission accepted, Al Hurr turned his charger towards the tents of his former friends, whom he reproached most bitterly for their treachery and perfidy. "Alas for you! you invited him till he came, and then deceived him; and this did not satisfy you, but you are come out to fight against him. Nay, you have hindered him, and his wives, and his family, from the waters of the Euphrates, where Jews, and Christians, and Sabians drink, and hogs, and dogs, sport themselves, and he is like a prisoner in your hands incapable of doing himself either good or hurt." An arrow from the bow of Shimar put a summary end to all controversy, and the battle began in good earnest. Two warriors now stepped forth from the ranks of the Kufian army, and challenged their adversaries to single combat; but their bodies soon lay prostrate in the dust at the feet of a victorious champion from amidst Husain's little band, who slew them both in the presence of the two armies. Nor was the next who offered himself more fortunate: coming up close to the grandson of the Prophet, he muttered in the ear of the latter, words of bitterness and gall. "You are first at hell," said the arrogant Kufian warrior. "By no means," was the rejoinder; "alas for thee, I go to a merciful Lord full of forgiveness, easy to be obeyed, but thou art more worthy of hell." The Syrian soldier turned about, but at this instant his horse became unmanageable, and he fell off, leaving his foot hanging in the stirrup: seeing his plight, one of Husain's party stepped forth and lopped off the cavalier's right leg. Powerless and mutilated the poor wretch was dragged along the stones and



his head dashed to pieces ere his friends could stop the horse in its mad career. Emboldened by these successes, the Imam's champions fought with redoubled energy, and of all the warriors of Kufa who stepped into the arena to contend in single combat with the heroes of Karbala not one lived to return. In these circumstances, orders were given for a general onslaught on the desperate knot of followers who had placed their swords and their lives at the disposal of the son of the "Lion of God." The fight raged thick and furious, but still Husain's party, whose superiority in courage made, in some degree, amends for their inferiority in numbers, managed to repulse the enemy at all points. Seeing this, the commander of their adversaries ordered 500 archers to the front, and in a few minutes such a rain of arrows poured down upon Husain's camp, that not a man of them could remain in the saddle. So leaping down, the martyrs fought sword in hand with a valour which nothing could resist, and with an impetuosity which no living soul could oppose.

Amr perceiving that, thanks to timely precautions, the Meccans were inaccessible save in the front, commanded his men to pull down the tents; but the soldiers told off for the duty were killed to a man. This so enraged the desperate Shimar, that, indifferent to all the rules of warfare, he struck his javelin into the tent which gave shelter to the women of Husain's household, and then, calling for a brand, proceeded to set fire to the slender house with its helpless and delicate inmates. The Apostle's grandson, hearing the shrieks of the terrified females, and seeing at a glance what had occasioned



their distress, was bitterly enraged. "What!" said he, "would'st thou burn my family? God burn thee in hell fire!"

It was now noon, and the time of prayer; and in the midst of his troubles and danger Husain was not unmindful of the duties which his religion imposed upon every true son of Islam. Calling together the remnant of his shattered company, the Imam poured forth to the God of heaven a petition for succour and aid, adding to the office the "Prayer of Fear," which is never used but in cases of extremity. After the devotions were finished, the fight was renewed with redoubled energy on both sides. Fatima's son soon found himself surrounded by his foes, but the prodigious valour of his adherents, one alone of whom slew ten men as they pressed around him, kept the enemy for a while at bay; still as soldier after soldier fell fighting like a hero, there was in the end no one left to fill the gaps. The little party was now almost exterminated, while Husain's eldest son lay mangled at his feet, surrounded by the lifeless and quivering frames of many a stalwart warrior who, faithful even unto death, had "done and dared" all that mortal man could do. The Imam himself had throughout the day been in the thickest of the fight; arrows had poured round him on every side; swords had clashed before his eyes, and javelins had pierced the heart of many of his followers at his very feet; but the Martyr of Karbala seemed to possess a charmed life, and he stood on the field of battle as yet unharmed and unhurt. At length, however, the spell was broken, and the blow of a sabre clove his skull, so that his headpiece became