

of his followers, his body remained in the hands of the enemy. The partisans of 'Alī then dispersed, and never again ventured to have recourse to arms.

The Caliph was highly delighted when he heard of the decisive victory gained by 'Isā, but, far from rewarding his valiant cousin, he tried to compel him to renounce his right of succession to the Caliphate, with the view of substituting as heir-presumptive his own son Mohammed. 'Isā at first energetically refused to abandon his rights; but Mansūr did not hesitate at a shameless deception, and produced false witnesses, who swore that 'Isā had waived his claim in favour of Mohammed b. Mansūr. However unwillingly, 'Isā was obliged to yield his priority to Mohammed, but it was understood that, in case of the death of the latter, the succession should return to 'Isā. One of the false witnesses was, it is asserted, Khālid b. Barmak, the head of that celebrated Persian family the Barmecides, which played so important a part in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd. To this Khālid, Mansūr had entrusted the elevated post of minister of finance.

In A.H. 158 (A.D. 774-775), Mansūr, feeling the decline of his powers, resolved to undertake for the last time the pilgrimage to Mecca. At the last station on the route he had a fall from his horse, and died at the gate of the Holy City. He was nearly seventy years of age, and had reigned for twenty-two years. He was buried at Mecca.

3. Mohammed b. Mansūr was at Baghdad when he received the news of his father's death, and hastened to have himself proclaimed Caliph. He then took the title of Mahdī ("the well-directed"). To make his accession welcome to his subjects, he began by granting an amnesty to a great number of persons who had incurred the anger of Mansūr, and had been thrown into prison. Among these was a certain Dāwūd b. Ya'qūb, whom Mahdī afterwards made his prime minister. But, on the other hand, Mahdī did not choose to confirm in their posts the provincial governors in whom his father had placed confidence; he supplied their places by creatures of his own. These changes displeased the people of Khorāsān, who revolted under the leadership of a certain Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm, surnamed Al-Barm. Mahdī sent against him his general Yazīd b. Mazyad, who, after a desperate struggle, defeated Yūsuf, took him prisoner, and brought him in triumph to Baghdad, where he was put to the torture and crucified. Mahdī had been scarcely a year on the throne, when he resolved to accomplish the pilgrimage to Mecca, and at the same time to visit the tomb of his father. Leaving his eldest son Mūsā as governor of Baghdad, he set off, accompanied by his second son Hārūn and a numerous suite. The chroniclers relate that the Caliph had ordered a great number of camels to be laden with snow, and that he reached Mecca without having exhausted this store. Immediately on his arrival in the Holy City, he applied himself, at the request of the inhabitants, to the renewal of the veils which covered the exterior walls of the Ka'ba. For a very long time these veils had been placed one over another, no care having been taken to remove the old covering when a new one was put on; so that the accumulated weight caused uneasiness respecting the stability of the walls. Mahdī caused the temple to be entirely stripped, and covered the walls again with a single veil of great richness. On this occasion he distributed considerable largesses among the Meccans. From Mecca, Mahdī went to Medina, where he caused the mosque to be enlarged. During his stay in that city he formed himself a guard of honour, composed of five hundred descendants of the Anṣār,¹ to whom he assigned lands in 'Irāq to be held in

¹ The first citizens of Medina who embraced Islam were called Anṣār; see above, p. 554.

fief. Struck by the difficulties of every kind which had to be encountered by poor pilgrims who desired to repair to Mecca from Baghdad and its neighbourhood, he resolved to come to their help. His first care was to have the road from Baghdad to Mecca laid out, and its divisions marked by milestones. He next ordered the construction at every stage of a kind of inn, where the poorer travellers might find shelter and food. He also saw to having new wells dug and cisterns built along the whole route.

Whilst he was devoting himself to these pious labours, he was menaced by a dangerous revolt in Khorāsān. Its leader was a sectary called Hākīm, surnamed Al-Mokanna' or the Veiled One, because he never appeared in public without having his face covered with a mask. Al-Mokanna' hoped to gather a great number of adherents around him, and to govern the province as absolutely as Abū Moslim had formerly done. His religious teaching consisted in the assertion that God had several times become incarnate among men, and that his last incarnation was Mokanna' himself. Many Persians were seduced by his words, and still more by the hope of plundering the property of the Moslems, which Mokanna' promised to give up to them. The governor of Khorāsān and several other generals who marched against these sectaries were defeated; but at last the Caliph charged a skilful captain, Sa'īd al-Harashī, with the direction of operations, and Sa'īd, having compelled the impostor to throw himself into the city of Kash, soon reduced him to a choice between surrender and death. Mokanna' preferred the latter alternative, and took poison.

These disturbances did not suffice to turn Mahdī's thoughts from the hereditary enemy of the Caliphate. Every summer he sent expeditions into Asia Minor against the Greeks; but these were not successful, and the Caliph decided on leading his army in person. Having levied in Khorāsān a large number of those mountaineers who had always distinguished themselves by their valour, he assembled his army in the plains of Baradān, on the banks of the Tigris, and commenced his march A.H. 163, taking with him his second son Hārūn, and leaving his eldest son Mūsā as governor of Baghdad. The latter was also designated as his successor in the Caliphate, 'Isā b. Mūsā having definitively renounced the throne. Mahdī traversed Mesopotamia and Syria, entered Cilicia, and established himself on the banks of the Jaihān (Pyramus). Thence he despatched an expeditionary force, at the head of which his son Hārūn was nominally placed. In reality, that prince being too young to direct military operations, the chief command was exercised by his tutor, the Barmecide Yahyā b. Khālid. Hārūn took the fortress of Samālū after a siege of thirty-eight days. In consequence of this feat of arms, Mahdī made Hārūn governor of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Two years later war broke out afresh between the Moslems and the Greeks. Leo IV., Emperor of Constantinople, had recently died, leaving the crown to Constantine Porphyrogenitus. This prince was then only ten years old, and would have been incapable of governing. His mother Irene took the regency on herself. By her orders an army of 90,000 men, under the command of Michael Lachonodracon, entered Asia Minor. The Moslems, on their side, invaded Cilicia under the orders of 'Abd al-Kabīr, but were defeated by the Greeks. Mahdī then recalled his son Hārūn, and enjoined on him to avenge the failure of the arms of Islam. Hārūn assembled an army of nearly 100,000 men, and conceived the project of carrying the war to the very gates of Constantinople. The patrician Nicetas, who sought to oppose his march, was defeated by Hārūn's general, Yazīd b. Mazyad, and forced to take refuge at Nicomedia. Hārūn marched through Asia Minor, and

pitched his camp on the shores of the Bosphorus. Irene took alarm, sued for peace, and obtained it, but on humiliating conditions. This brilliant success increased Mahdī's affection for Hārūn to such an extent that he resolved, a few years later, to declare him his successor instead of Mūsā. It was necessary first to obtain from Mūsā a renunciation of his rights; and for this purpose his father recalled him from Jorjān, where he was then engaged on an expedition against the rebels of Tabaristān. Mūsā, who had had information of his father's intentions, refused to obey this order. Mahdī determined to march in person against his rebellious son (A.H. 169), and set out, accompanied by Hārūn. But, after his arrival at Māsabadhān, a place in Persian 'Irāq or Jabal, the Caliph died suddenly, at the age of only forty-three. There are two versions of the cause of his death: some attribute it to an accident met with in hunting; others believe him to have been poisoned. If this was really the case, although we have no proofs against Mūsā, we may reasonably suspect him of having been privy to the sudden death of his father.

4. Mahdī having died before he could carry out his plan for assuring the throne to Hārūn, the succession naturally fell to Mūsā, and he was proclaimed Caliph at Baghdad in the year of his father's death. He took the title of Hādī (He who directs). Hārūn made no opposition to the accession of his brother, and the army which had accompanied Mahdī returned peacefully from Jabal to Baghdad.

The accession of a new Caliph doubtless appeared to the partisans of the house of 'Alī a favourable opportunity for a rising. Hosain b. 'Alī, a descendant of that Hasan who had formerly renounced his pretensions to the Caliphate through fear of Mo'āwiya I., raised an insurrection at Medina with the support of numerous adherents, and had himself proclaimed Caliph. But having unfortunately conceived the idea of going on pilgrimage to Mecca, he was attacked at Fakh by a party of 'Abbāsids, and perished in the combat. His cousin Idrīs b. 'Abdallāh succeeded in escaping and fled to Egypt, whence he passed into Morocco; and there, at a later period, his son founded the Idrisite dynasty.

Hādī, as may be supposed, had never been able to forget that he had narrowly escaped being supplanted by his brother. He formed a plan for excluding Hārūn from the Caliphate, and transmitting the succession to his own son Ja'far. He neglected no possible means of attaining this object, and obtained the assent of his ministers, and of the principal chiefs of his army, who took the oath of allegiance to Ja'far. Only Yahyā b. Khālid the Barmecide, Hārūn's former tutor, absolutely refused to betray the interests of his pupil. In a discussion which took place between him and the Caliph on this subject, Yahyā showed such firmness and boldness that Hādī resolved on his death, and Harthama b. A'yan, one of the bravest generals of the empire, had already received the order to go and take his head, when the Caliph died suddenly. One of those terrible domestic dramas had been acted of which so many were afterwards seen in the palace of the Caliphs. The mother of Hādī and Hārūn was Khaizorān, a haughty and intriguing woman, whose aim it was to get the direction of affairs into her own hands, leaving Hādī only the shadow of power. Her influence over all matters of government was so well understood that her door was beset all day by a crowd of petitioners, who neglected the Caliph and preferred to address their requests to her. Hādī soon became indignant at the subordinate part which his mother wished him to play, and after a dispute on the matter, he attempted to poison her. Khaizorān, hoping to find a more submissive instrument of her will in her second son, and wishing to protect herself against fresh

attempts at murder, caused Hādī to be taken unawares and smothered with cushions by two young slaves whom she had presented to him. (Rabī' I., A.H. 170, Sept. A.D. 786.)

5. We have now reached the most celebrated name among the Arabian Caliphs, celebrated not only in the East, but in the West as well, where the stories of the Thousand and One Nights have made us familiar with that world which the narrators have been pleased to represent to us in such brilliant colours.

On the unexpected death of Hādī, the generals and ministers who had declared against Hārūn, perceiving that popular favour did not incline to the son of the late Caliph, hastened to rally round the son of Khaizorān; and Hārūn, surnamed Al-Rashīd (The Upright), ascended the throne without opposition. His first act was to choose as prime minister his former tutor, the faithful Yahyā b. Khālid, and to confide important posts to the two sons of Yahyā, Fadl and Ja'far; the former of whom was also his own foster-brother. The Barmecide family were ended in the highest degree with those qualities of generosity and liberality which the Arabs prized so highly. Thus the chroniclers are never wearied in their praises of the Barmecides. Loaded with all the burdens of government, Yahyā brought the most distinguished abilities to the exercise of his office. He put the frontiers in a state of defence, and supplied all that was wanting for their security. He filled the public treasury, and carried the splendour of the throne to the highest point. The following anecdote will show what an amount of earnest affection the Barmecide family succeeded in winning:—

After Hārūn, as we shall relate farther on, had ruined the Barmecides of whose influence he was jealous, he forbade the poets to compose elegies on the disgrace of the family, and commanded that all who disobeyed this order should be punished. One day, as one of the soldiers of the Caliph's guard was passing near a ruined building, he perceived a man holding a paper in his hand, and reciting aloud, and with many tears, a lament over the ruin of the palace of the Barmecides. The soldier arrested the man and led him to the palace of the Caliph, who ordered the culprit to be brought before him, and asked him why he had infringed his orders. "Prince," replied the man, "let me relate my history to thee; when thou hast heard it, do with me as thou wilt. I was an inferior clerk under Yahyā b. Khālid. He said to me one day: 'Thou must invite me to thy house.' My lord," I replied, "I am quite unworthy of such an honour, and my house is not fit to receive thee." "No," said Yahyā, "thou must absolutely do what I require of thee." "In that case," answered I, "grant me some little delay that I may make suitable arrangements." Yahyā granted me some months. As soon as I informed him that I was ready, he repaired to my abode, accompanied by his two sons, Fadl and Ja'far, and by some of his most intimate friends. Scarcely had he dismounted from his horse when he begged me to give him something to eat. I offered him some roasted chickens. When he had eaten his fill, he went over the whole of my house, and having seen it all, he asked me to show him the buildings attached to it. "My lord," said I, "thou hast seen everything." "No," said he, "thou hast another house." In vain I assured him that I had but one; he persisted in his assertion, and, sending for a mason, ordered him to make an opening in the wall. "My lord," said I, "may I venture thus to make my way into my neighbour's house?" "It matters not," replied he. When a doorway had been opened, he passed through it, followed by his two sons, and I went after him. We entered a delightful garden, well planted and watered by fountains. In this garden stood a beautiful house with pavilions adorned with furniture and carpets, and filled with slaves of both sexes, all of perfect beauty. "All this is mine," said Yahyā to me. I kissed his hands and poured out my thanks to him; and then I learned that on the very day when he had spoken to me of inviting him he had bought the land adjoining to my house, and had had it laid out for me without my ever suspecting it. I had certainly noticed that building was going on, but I was far from imagining that all this was intended for me. Yahyā next addressed himself to Ja'far and said: "Here are certainly a house and servants, but who will provide for their support?" "I," replied Ja'far, "will give him a farm and its dependencies, and will send him the deed of gift." "Very well," continued Yahyā; "but how is he to live until he shall receive the revenue of his property?" "I owe him a thousand pieces of gold," said Fadl, "and I will send them to his

house.' Thanks to these magnificent gifts, I afterwards gained great wealth,—wealth which I still enjoy. Since that day, I have never lost any opportunity of singing the praises of that noble family. And now, Prince, slay me if thou wilt; I am ready to die." Hárún, affected by this tale, let the man depart, and in future forbade a man to weep for the tragical end of the sons of Barmak. (*El-Fachrî*, ed. Ahlwardt, p. 237.)

Although the administration of Hárún's states was committed to skilful hands, yet the first years of his long reign were not free from troubles. Towards the year 176 (A.D. 792-793), a member of the house of 'Alî, named Yahyá b. 'Abdalláh, who had taken refuge at Dailam on the shores of the Caspian Sea, succeeded in forming a powerful party, and publicly announced his pretensions to the Caliphate. Hárún immediately sent an army of 50,000 men against the rebel, under the command of Fadl. Reluctant, however, to fight against a descendant of the Prophet, Fadl first attempted to induce him to submit, by promising him safety for his life and a brilliant position at the court of Baghdád. Yahyá accepted these conditions, but he required that the Caliph should send him letters of pardon countersigned by the highest legal authorities and the principal personages of the empire. Hárún consented to do so, and Yahyá, furnished with the Caliph's safe-conduct, repaired to Baghdád, where he met with a splendid reception. At the end of some months, however, he was calumniously accused of conspiracy, and the Caliph, seizing this opportunity of ridding himself of a rival who might prove dangerous, threw him into prison, where he was soon after put to death. Dreading fresh insurrections, Hárún thought it well to secure the person of another descendant of 'Alî, Músá b. Ja'far, who was resident at Medina, where he enjoyed the highest consideration. The unfortunate man was sent to Baghdád, and there died by poison.

Meanwhile Hárún did not forget the hereditary enemy against whom he had already fought. Under his reign all the strong places of Syria were formed into a special province, which received the name of 'Awásim. The charge of fortifying the city of Tarsus was committed to Faraj, the chief of the Turkish soldiers, whom the Caliphs were beginning to employ, and who were at a later period to become their masters. The ancient Anazarbus was rebuilt, and garrisoned with a military colony from Khorásán. Thanks to these measures, the Moslem armies were able to advance boldly into Asia Minor. Ishák b. Solaimán entered Phrygia and defeated the Greek governor of that province. A Moslem fleet destroyed that of the Greeks in the Gulf of Satalia. Hárún in 181 invaded Asia Minor in the year 181 (A.D. 797-798), and during the following years his generals gained continual victories over the Byzantines, so that Irene was compelled to sue for peace. An attack by the Khazars called the Caliph's attention from his successes in Asia Minor. That people had made an irruption into Armenia, and their attack had been so sudden that the Moslems were unable to defend themselves, and a hundred thousand of them had been reduced to captivity. Two valiant generals, Khozaima b. Kházim and Yazíd b. Mazyad, marched against the Khazars and drove them out of Armenia.

In the midst of the cares of war, Hárún did not forget his religious duties, and few years passed without his making the pilgrimage. In one of these pilgrimages, A.H. 186 (A.D. 802), he was accompanied by his two eldest sons, Mohammed and 'Abdalláh, and having determined to fix the order of succession in so formal a manner as to take away all pretext for future contentions, he executed a deed by which he appointed Mohammed his immediate heir; after him 'Abdalláh, and after 'Abdalláh a third of his sons, named Kásim. Mohammed received the surname of Al-Amin (The Sure), 'Abdalláh that of Al-Ma'mún (He

in whom men trust), and Kásim that of Mo'tamin billáh (He who trusts in God). Hárún further stipulated that Ma'mún should have as his share, during the lifetime of his brother, the government of the eastern part of the empire. Each of the parties concerned swore to observe faithfully every part of this deed, which the Caliph caused to be hung up in the Ka'ba, imagining that it would be thus guaranteed against all violation on the part of men. These precautions were to be rendered vain by the perfidy of Amin. We shall see hereafter how he kept his oath, and how he expiated his treachery by death.

It was in the following year, at the very moment when the Barmecides thought their position most secure, that Hárún brought sudden ruin upon them. The causes of their disgrace have been differently stated by the annalists. Some relate that the Caliph, preferring to all other society that of his sister 'Abbása and of Ja'far b. Yahyá, resolved to unite them in marriage, in order to be able to bring them together in his presence without a breach of etiquette. He meant, however, that Ja'far should continue to be only the nominal husband of his sister. Ja'far accepted this condition, but it was not long before he forgot it, and the Caliph learned that his sister had given birth to a son. This, it is said, was the cause of Ja'far's disgrace, which involved his father and his brother. This story may be true; but the principal cause of the fall of the Barmecides appears to have consisted in the abuses of power of which they had been guilty, and in the sovereign influence which they exercised on those around them. The Barmecides lived in a magnificent palace opposite to that of the Caliph. Seeing one day an extraordinary crowd around the dwelling of his first minister, Hárún was moved to say: "Verily Yahyá has taken all business into his own hands; he it is who really exercises supreme power; as for me, I am Caliph only in name." This secret dissatisfaction was increased by a new act of disobedience on the part of Ja'far. Hárún had ordered him to put to death secretly a member of the house of 'Alî, whose intrigues he dreaded. Ja'far allowed the victim to escape, and afterwards swore to the Caliph that his orders had been executed. Soon after, however, information against him was given to Hárún, who, after compelling Ja'far to acknowledge the truth, had his head struck off and brought to him by Masrúr, the chief of his eunuchs. On the very next day Yahyá, his son Fadl, and all the other Barmecides, were arrested and imprisoned; all their property was confiscated; and Hárún chose as his prime minister Fadl b. Rabf, who had been his chamberlain.

In the same year, a revolution broke out at Constantinople, which overthrew the Empress Irene, and raised Nicephorus to power. The new emperor had scarcely ascended the throne, when he thought himself strong enough to refuse the payment of tribute, and wrote an insulting letter to Hárún, who contented himself with replying: "Thou shalt not hear; but see, my answer." He then assembled an army, entered Asia Minor, and took Heraclea, plundering and burning along his whole line of march, till Nicephorus, in his alarm, sued for peace. Scarcely had the Caliph returned into winter quarters, when Nicephorus broke the treaty. Notwithstanding the rigour of the season, Hárún retraced his steps, and this time Nicephorus was compelled to observe his engagements. The year after, A.H. 189 (A.D. 804-805), disturbances arose in Khorásán. They were caused by the malversations of the governor of that province, 'Alî b. 'Isá, and the Caliph went in person to Merv to judge of the reality of the complaints which had reached him. 'Alî b. 'Isá hastened to meet the Caliph on his arrival at Ray. He brought with him a great quantity of presents, which he distributed with such profusion

among the courtiers that every one found a thousand reasons for excusing his conduct. Hárún confirmed him in his post and returned to Baghdád, through which, however, he only passed, and went on to Rakka on the Euphrates, a city which became his habitual residence. He did not long enjoy the repose which he went there to seek, for Nicephorus again broke the treaty of peace, and the Caliph was obliged to take the field anew. Once more Nicephorus was beaten, and so completely that he was obliged to submit to the very harsh conditions which the victor imposed on him.

Two years later, new disturbances broke out in Khorásán, where a certain Ráfí b. Laith had revolted. Hárún set out again for that province, accompanied by his son Ma'mún. It was to be his last journey. He was attacked by a tumour in the abdomen, and struggled in vain against this malady, which carried him off a year after his departure, A.H. 193 (A.D. 808-809), just on his arrival at the city of Túis, the birthplace of the great epic poet of Persia, Firdausí. Hárún was only forty-seven years of age.

6. On the death of Hárún, his minister Fadl b. Rabf hastened to call together all the troops of the late Caliph, and to lead them back to Baghdád, in order to place them in the hands of the new sovereign, Amin. He even led back the corps which was intended to occupy Khorásán, and which ought to have fallen to the share of Ma'mún, according to the testament of Hárún. Fadl b. Rabf thus committed a serious violation of the rights of Ma'mún; but he cared little for this, being chiefly desirous of winning the confidence of the new Caliph. He was quite aware, however, that in thus acting he was making Ma'mún his irreconcilable enemy; and he therefore purposed to use every endeavour to arouse against him the enmity of his brother Amin. He advised him to exclude Ma'mún from the succession, and the Caliph was weak enough to listen to him. Receiving the order to resign his government of Khorásán and to repair to Baghdád, Ma'mún was greatly perplexed; but his tutor and vizier, Fadl b. Sahl, reanimated his courage, and pointed out to him that, if he obeyed the orders of the Caliph, certain death awaited him at Baghdád. Ma'mún resolved to hold out against Amin, and found pretexts for eluding the orders of his brother and remaining in Khorásán. Amin, in his anger, caused the testament of his father, which, as we have seen, was preserved in the Ka'ba, to be destroyed, declared, on his own authority, the rights of Ma'mún to the Caliphate to be forfeited, and caused the army to swear allegiance to his own son Músá, a child five years of age, on whom he bestowed the title of Nátik bil-Hakk, "He who speaks according to truth" (A.H. 194, A.D. 809-810). On hearing the news, Ma'mún, strong in the rightfulness of his claim, retaliated by suppressing the Caliph's name in all public acts. Amin immediately despatched to Khorásán an army of fifty thousand men, under the command of 'Alî b. 'Isá. Ma'mún, on his side, raised troops among his faithful people of Khorásán, and entrusted their command to Táhir b. Hosain, who displayed remarkable abilities in the war that ensued. In the following year, the two armies met under the walls of Ray, and victory declared for Táhir. Ma'mún now no longer hesitated to take the title of Caliph. The year after, Amin placed in the field two new armies, commanded respectively by Ahmed b. Mazyad and 'Abdalláh b. Homaid b. Kahtaba. The skilful Táhir b. Hosain succeeded in creating divisions among the troops of his adversaries, and obtained possession, without striking a blow, of the city of Holwán, an advantage which placed him at the very gates of Baghdád. Ma'mún immediately sent Táhir reinforcements under the orders of Harthama b. A'yan, which enabled him to maintain a firm hold on all the conquered territory, and to continue his victorious

march to the capital. Reverses naturally lead to fresh reverses. One after the other the provinces fell away from Amin, and he soon found himself in possession of Baghdád alone, which was speedily invested by the troops of Táhir and Harthama. That unfortunate capital, though blockaded on every side, made a desperate defence for two years. Ultimately the eastern part of the city fell into the hands of Táhir, and Amin, deserted by his followers, was compelled to surrender. He resolved to treat with Harthama, as he hated Táhir; but this step caused his ruin. Táhir learned by his spies that Harthama was to receive the Caliph in person, and gave orders to a body of horsemen to arrest Amin as he issued from Baghdád under cover of the night. On the banks of the Tigris, Harthama awaited Amin with a boat, but scarcely had the Caliph set foot in it, when the agents of Táhir poured on it a storm of arrows and stones. The boat sank, and the Caliph had to make his escape by swimming. But he was closely followed up, and had scarcely left the river when he fell into the hands of his enemies, who shut him up in a hut and went to inform Táhir of the capture. The victorious general immediately ordered him to be put to death, and the order was carried out. The head of the unfortunate Amin was cut off and sent to Ma'mún, A.H. 198. It was presented to him by his vizier, Fadl b. Sahl, surnamed Dhú 'l-Riyásatáin, or "the man with two governments," because his master had committed to him both the ministry of war and the general administration. Ma'mún, on seeing the head, hid his joy beneath a feigned display of sorrow.

7. On the day following that on which Amin had Ma'mún perished so miserably, Táhir caused Ma'mún to be proclaimed at Baghdád. The accession of this prince appeared likely to put an end to the evils of civil war, and to restore to the empire the order necessary for its prosperity. It was not so, however. The reign of Ma'mún—that reign on which art, science, and letters, under the patronage of the Caliph, threw so brilliant a lustre—had a very stormy beginning. Ma'mún was in no haste to remove to Baghdád, but continued to make Merv his temporary residence. In his gratitude to the two men to whom he owed his throne, he conferred on Táhir the government of Mesopotamia and Syria, and chose as prime minister of the empire Fadl b. Sahl, who had been already his vizier in the government of Khorásán. The adherents of 'Alî seized on the elevation of Ma'mún to power as a pretext for fresh revolts at Mecca, at Medina, and in 'Irák. At Cufa a certain Ibn Tabátábá also broke out into open rebellion, and placed an army in the field under one of his partisans, Abú 'l-Saráyá. Hasan b. Sahl, brother of Ma'mún's prime minister, who had been made governor of all the provinces conquered by Táhir, immediately sent troops against Cufa. They were defeated, and Abú 'l-Saráyá, encouraged by this first success, and no longer finding a secondary part sufficient for his ambition, poisoned his chief Ibn Tabátábá, and put in his place another of the family of 'Alî, Mohammed b. Mohammed, whom, on account of his extreme youth, he hoped to govern at his will. Fresh troops sent against Abú 'l-Saráyá fared no better than the first, and several cities of 'Irák, as Basra, Wásit, and Madáin, fell into the hands of the rebels. Abú 'l-Saráyá was already marching against Baghdád, when Hasan b. Sahl, in great alarm, hastily recalled Harthama b. A'yan, one of the heroes of the civil war, who was already on his way back to Merv. As soon as this general had returned from Khorásán, the face of affairs changed. The adherents of 'Alî were everywhere driven back, and the whole of 'Irák fell again into the hands of the 'Abbásids. Cufa was taken by assault, and both Abú 'l-Saráyá and Mohammed b. Mohammed were

made prisoners. The former had his head struck off; the latter was sent to Khorásán. The revolt in Arabia was also quickly stifled, and it might have been supposed that peace was about to be re-established. This, however, was by no means the case. The civil war had caused a swarm of vagabonds to spring, as it were, from underground at Baghdád. They proceeded to treat the capital as a conquered city; and such was their audacity that they plundered houses and carried off women and children at mid-day. It became necessary for all good citizens to organize themselves into a regular militia, in order to master these ruffians. Meanwhile, at Merv, Ma'mún was adopting a decision which fell like a thunderbolt on the Abbásids. In A.H. 201 (A.D. 816-817), under pretence of putting an end to the continual revolts of the partisans of 'Alí, and acting on the advice of his prime minister, Faql, he publicly designated as his successor in the Caliphate 'Alí b. Músá, a direct descendant of Hósein the son of 'Alí, and proscribed black, the colour of the Abbásids, in favour of that of the house of 'Alí, green. This step was well calculated to delight the followers of 'Alí, but it naturally could not fail to exasperate the Abbásids and their partisans. The people of Baghdád refused to take the oath to 'Alí b. Músá as heir-presumptive, declared Ma'mún deposed, and elected his uncle Ibráhm, son of Mahdí, to the Caliphate.¹ The news reached the Caliph only indirectly, for his minister Faql, desiring to leave Ma'mún only the shadow of power, kept all important events carefully from his knowledge. The eyes of the Caliph were opened, and he now perceived that Faql had been treating him as a puppet. His anger knew no bounds. Faql was one day found murdered, and 'Alí b. Músá died suddenly. The historians bring no open accusation against Ma'mún of having got rid of these two personages; but it seems clear that it was not chance that did him such a seasonable service. Ma'mún of course affected the profoundest grief, and, in order to disarm suspicion, appointed as his prime minister the brother of Faql, Hasan b. Sahl, whose daughter Búrán he also afterwards married. But on the other hand, in order to quiet the people of Baghdád, he wrote to them: "The cause of your dissatisfaction in the business of 'Alí b. Músá no longer exists; since he who was the object of your resentment has just died." From that moment the pseudo-caliph Ibráhm found himself deserted, and was obliged to seek safety in concealment. His precarious reign had, however, lasted nearly two years. Ma'mún now decided on making a public entry into Baghdád, but to show that he came as a master, he still displayed for several days the green flag of the house of 'Alí, though at last, at the entreaty of his courtiers, he consented to resume the black. From this time the real reign of Ma'mún began, freed as he now was from the guardianship of Faql. His general Táhir alone continued to excite his suspicions. Under the pretence that he could no longer endure the sight of the murderer of his brother, he removed Táhir to a distance by appointing him governor of Khorásán. Like most of the great Moslem generals, Táhir, it is said, conceived the project of creating an independent kingdom for himself. His death, A.H. 207, prevented its realization; but as his descendants succeeded him one after the other in the post of governor, he may be said to have really founded a dynasty in Khorásán. When, two years later, the impostor Bábak set up a communistic sect in Armenia and Azerbaijan, it was a son of Táhir, 'Abdalláh, who was commissioned by Ma'mún to put him down. Notwithstanding his ability, 'Abdalláh could not accomplish the task, and it

¹ On this event, see a remarkable essay by Barbier de Meynard, in the *Journal asiatique* for March-April, 1869.

was only under Ma'mún's successor that Bábak was taken and put to death.

Ever since Ma'mún's entry into Baghdád, the pseudo-caliph Ibráhm had led a wandering life. He was arrested one night in Baghdád, under the disguise of a woman, and brought before Ma'mún. The latter generously pardoned him, and also granted an amnesty to the former minister of Amín, Faql b. Rabí, although he had been the chief promoter of the terrible civil war which had so lately shaken the empire. After that time, Ibráhm the son of Mahdí lived peacefully at the court, cultivating the arts of singing and music, in which he excelled.

Tranquillity being now everywhere re-established, Ma'mún gave himself up, without hindrance, to his scientific and literary tastes. He caused works on mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and philosophy, to be translated from the Greek. It was also by his orders that two learned mathematicians undertook the measurement of a degree of the earth's circumference. Ma'mún interested himself, too, in questions of religious dogma. Shocked at the opinion which had spread among the Moslem doctors, that the Koran was the uncreated word of God, he published an edict commanding them to renounce this error. Several distinguished doctors, and, among others, the celebrated Ibn Hanbal, founder of one of the four orthodox Moslem sects, were obliged to appear before an inquisitorial tribunal; and as they persisted in their belief respecting the Koran, they were thrown into prison. Meanwhile, war having broken out between the Greeks and the Moslems, Ma'mún set out for Asia Minor, to put himself at the head of his army. On his arrival at Tarsus, he received from the governor of Baghdád the report of the tribunal of inquisition, and ordered that the culprits should be sent off to him. Happily for these unfortunate doctors, they had scarcely started on the road to the frontiers, when news of the Caliph's death reached Baghdád. Ma'mún having bathed in the Podendon, a burning fever was the result, which brought him to the grave in A.H. 218 (A.D. 833). Before his death, he designated as his successor his brother Mo'tasim billáh, (He who seeks defence in God), whom he had for a long time preferred to Mo'tamin.

8. The accession of the new Caliph Mo'tasim met at first with active opposition in the army, where a powerful party had been formed in favour of 'Abbás, the son of Ma'mún. Thanks, however, to the disinterested conduct of that prince, civil war was averted. 'Abbás publicly renounced all pretension to the Caliphate, and took the oath of allegiance to his uncle. Mo'tamin, the son of Hárún, imitated the conduct of 'Abbás, and the whole army accepted Mo'tasim, who made his public entry into Baghdád in the month of Ramadan 218.

The new Caliph, far from putting a stop to the persecution which had been directed against the orthodox doctors, took up and carried out the views of Ma'mún. The doctor Ibn Hanbal was beaten with rods and thrown into prison, together with several of his companions, and was not restored to liberty till the Caliphate of Motawakkil. This persecution had already prejudiced the people against Mo'tasim, and their discontent became more marked when the Caliph created a new body of troops, specially intended to watch over his person. This new guard was composed of Turks, an unbridled and undisciplined body of soldiery, who, moreover, held in open contempt the religious precepts of Islam. Tired of the excesses of every kind committed by the Turks, the people of Baghdád rose in insurrection, and Mo'tasim, not daring to act with severity either against his guard or the citizens, took the course of quitting the city. Leaving the government of the capital in the hands of his son Wáthik billáh (He who trusts in

God), he established himself with his guard at Sámarra, a small place situated a few leagues above Baghdád, and changed its name to Sorra-man-ra'a (He rejoices who sees it). This resolution of Mo'tasim was destined to prove fatal to his dynasty; for it placed the Caliphs at the mercy of their Prætorians. In fact, from the time of Mo'tasim, the Caliphate became the plaything of the Turkish guard, and its decline was continuous. Some glorious feats of arms, however, were still performed under Mo'tasim. The sectary Bábak was at last taken by Afshín, a Turkish general of the Caliph, in the year 223 (A.D. 837-838). Bábak was carried to Baghdád, led through the city on the back of an elephant, and then delivered to the executioners, who cut off his arms and his legs. Afshín, however, was very ill rewarded for his services, for shortly afterwards the Caliph had him put to death on a charge of heresy.

The death of Ma'mún had for the moment suspended hostilities with Constantinople; under Mo'tasim the war was rekindled. A valiant Greek general, Manuel, who had incurred the displeasure of the Emperor Theophilus, took refuge with the Caliph, who eagerly welcomed him and gave him a command. Manuel began by reducing Khorásán, which had risen in revolt, and Mo'tasim was so well satisfied with him that he thought of employing him against his own countrymen. This was precisely what Theophilus dreaded, and he took measures accordingly to bring back the banished general to his side. He sent an ambassador to Mo'tasim, under pretence of ransoming some Greek prisoners; but the real object of his mission, which he contrived to communicate to Manuel, was the recall of that general. Manuel, feigning great animosity against his country, himself asked to be allowed to lead a Moslem army into Cappadocia. The Caliph granted his request, and sent with him his own son Wáthik billáh. But, as soon as they reached the frontiers of Cappadocia, Manuel confessed to the young prince that his intention was to return to Constantinople, and quitted the army. Theophilus, taking advantage of the confusion into which the departure of Manuel had thrown the Moslems, made an incursion into Syria, laid waste that province as far as Zabatra, and returned loaded with booty. At the news of this disaster, Mo'tasim assembled a formidable army, estimated at more than two hundred thousand men, penetrated into Asia Minor, beat the Greeks, and took the city of Amorium, which he ordered to be razed to the ground. A revolt which broke out at Baghdád in favour of his nephew 'Abbás, the son of Ma'mún, compelled the Caliph to turn back. Mo'tasim had the unfortunate 'Abbás arrested, and he was soon after found dead in his prison. Mo'tasim survived him only four years. He died at Sorra-man-ra'a, in A.H. 227 (A.D. 841-842).

9. His son Wáthik, who succeeded him, showed himself no less intolerant on the doctrinal question of the uncreated Koran. He carried his zeal to such a point that, on the occasion of an exchange of Greek against Moslem prisoners, in the year 231 (A.D. 845-846), he ordered that all the Moslem captives who would not declare their belief that the Koran was a human work, should be left in the hands of the enemy. The reign of Wáthik billáh was not otherwise marked by any very striking events. He died in 232 (A.D. 846-847), after a reign of five years. As he had appointed no successor before his death, the principal personages of the state at first cast their eyes on his son Mohammed; but they had scarcely saluted him with the title of Caliph, when they changed their purpose, and offered the supreme power to Motawakkil 'ala 'lláh (He who trusts to God), brother of Wáthik. This prince was therefore elected in the same year in which Wáthik died.

10. The first act of Motawakkil was an atrocious cruelty. He seized Mohammed b. 'Abd al-Melik, his brother's vizier, who had always been his enemy, and ordered him to be placed in a furnace bristling within with iron points, which was then raised to a red heat. The Caliph looked on at the agonies of his victim, incessantly repeating: "Pity is a weakness." This had been the favourite maxim of the unfortunate vizier. An impostor named Mohammed b. Faraj had set himself up as a prophet, giving out that he was Moses risen from the dead. By means of this gross fabrication, he had contrived to attract twenty-seven followers. The Caliph had him seized, and condemned him to perpetual imprisonment; but first he compelled each of the followers of Mohammed to give the pretended prophet ten blows on the head with his fist; and the poor wretch expired under the hands of his own disciples. (A.H. 235, A.D. 849-850.)

In the year of his elevation to the Caliphate, Motawakkil had regulated the succession to the empire in his own family, by designating as future Caliphs his three sons, Montasir billáh (He who seeks help in God), Mo'tazz billáh (Strong through God), and Mowayyad billáh (Assisted by God). In acting thus, his object was to protect against the tendency of his predecessors to favour the house of 'Alí, and to guard against the attainment of the Caliphate by any member of that house. Motawakkil displayed the most extreme hatred for the descendants of the Prophet. He even went so far as to destroy the chapel erected over the tomb of Hósein at Kerbelá, and forbade the Sh'ites to visit the spot. Not content with attacking the liberty and the property of the descendants of 'Alí, he insulted their belief, by taking buffoons into his pay, whose business it was to turn the person of 'Alí into mockery. He also persecuted the Christians and the Jews; excluding them from all public employments, and obliging them to send their children to Moslem schools. In the year 237, a revolt broke out in Armenia. The Caliph sent the Turk Bugha, against the rebels; but they met him with a vigorous resistance, and it was four years before peace was restored to the province. During that time the Greeks effected a descent on Egypt, and Damietta was taken and burned. Motawakkil caused Damietta to be fortified, and transferred his own residence to Damascus, doubtless that he might be able to keep a closer watch on the proceedings of the Byzantines. He soon thought himself strong enough to take the offensive, and poured his Turkish soldiery into Asia Minor, where they encountered the same Manuel who had been formerly received at the court of Mo'tasim. After an alternation of successes and reverses, both Moslems and Greeks retired from the conflict. Motawakkil then returned to his residence at Sorra-man-ra'a, and there caused a magnificent quarter to be built, which he called Ja'fariyya.¹ There he gave himself up to debaucheries; till at last, during one of his orgies, he was murdered by a Turkish soldier named Wasíf, who had been bribed to the deed by his own son Montasir billáh (A.H. 247, A.D. 861-862).

11. On the very night of his father's assassination Montasir had himself proclaimed Caliph. The conspirators among the Turkish soldiery compelled him to deprive his two brothers, Mo'tazz and Mowayyad, who were not agreeable to them, of their rights of succession. Montasir did not long enjoy the fruits of his crime. He died five months after, by poison, it is said.

12. The Turkish soldiery, which now arrogated to itself the mastery over the Caliphate, chose in succession to Montasir his cousin Ahmed, who took the title of Mosta'ín

¹ That is, "City of Ja'far." Ja'far was Motawakkil's own proper name.