

It is not necessary for me to add to this sketch of the military diffusion of Mohammedanism, the operations of the Saracens on the Mediterranean Sea, their conquest of Crete and Sicily, their insult to Rome. It will be found, however, that their presence in Sicily and the south of Italy exerted a marked influence on the intellectual development of Europe.

Their insult to Rome! What could be more humiliating than the circumstances under which it took place (A. D. 846)? An insignificant Saracen expedition entered the Tiber and appeared before the walls of the city. Too weak to force an entrance, it insulted and plundered the precincts, sacrilegiously violating the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul. Had the city itself been sacked, the moral effect could not have been greater. From the church of St. Peter its altar of silver was torn away and sent to Africa—St. Peter's altar, the very emblem of Roman Christianity!

Constantinople had already been besieged by the Saracens more than once; its fall was predestined, and only postponed. Rome had received the direst insult, the greatest loss that could be inflicted upon it; the venerable churches of Asia Minor had passed out of existence; no Christian could set his foot in Jerusalem without permission; the Mosque of Omar stood on the site of the Temple of Solomon. Among the ruins of Alexandria the Mosque of Meroy marked the spot where a Saracen general, satiated with massacre, had, in contemptuous compassion, spared the fugitive relics of the enemies of Mohammed; nothing remained of Carthage but her blackened ruins. The most powerful religious empire that the world had ever seen had suddenly come into existence. It stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Chinese Wall, from the shores of the Caspian to

those of the Indian Ocean, and yet, in one sense, it had not reached its culmination. The day was to come when it was to expel the successors of the Cæsars from their capital, and hold the peninsula of Greece in subjection, to dispute with Christianity the empire of Europe in the very centre of that continent, and in Africa to extend its dogmas and faith across burning deserts and through pestilential forests from the Mediterranean to regions southward far beyond the equinoctial line.

But, though Mohammedanism had not reached its culmination, the dominion of the khalifs had. Not the sword of Charles Martel, but the internal dissension of the vast Arabian Empire, was the salvation of Europe. Though the Ommiade khalifs were popular in Syria, elsewhere they were looked upon as intruders or usurpers; the kindred of the apostle was considered to be the rightful representative of his faith. Three parties, distinguished by their colors, tore the khalifate asunder with their disputes, and disgraced it by their atrocities. The color of the Ommiades was white, that of the Fatimites green, that of the Abassides black; the last represented the party of Abbas, the uncle of Mohammed. The result of these discords was a tripartite division of the Mohammedan Empire in the tenth century into the khalifates of Bagdad, of Cairoan, and of Cordova. Unity in Mohammedan political action was at an end, and Christendom found its safeguard, not in supernatural help, but in the quarrels of the rival potentates. To internal animosities foreign pressures were eventually added; and Arabism, which had done so much for the intellectual advancement of the world, came to an end when the Turks and the Berbers attained to power.

The Saracens had become totally regardless of European opposition—they were wholly taken up with their

domestic quarrels. Ockley says with truth, in his history: "The Saracens had scarce a deputy lieutenant or general that would not have thought it the greatest affront, and such as ought to stigmatize him with indelible disgrace, if he should have suffered himself to have been insulted by the united forces of all Europe. And if any one asks why the Greeks did not exert themselves more, in order to the extirpation of these insolent invaders, it is a sufficient answer to any person that is acquainted with the characters of those men to say that Amrou kept his residence at Alexandria, and Moawyah at Damascus."

As to their contempt, this instance may suffice: Nicephorus, the Roman emperor, had sent to the Khalif Haroun-al-Raschid a threatening letter, and this was the reply: "In the name of the most merciful God, Haroun-al-Raschid, commander of the faithful, to Nicephorus, the Roman dog! I have read thy letter, O thou son of an unbelieving mother. Thou shalt not hear, thou shalt behold my reply!" It was written in letters of blood and fire on the plains of Phrygia.

A nation may recover the confiscation of its provinces, the confiscation of its wealth; it may survive the imposition of enormous war-fines; but it never can recover from that most frightful of all war-acts, the confiscation of its women. When Abou Obeidah sent to Omar news of his capture of Antioch, Omar gently upbraided him that he had not let the troops have the women. "If they want to marry in Syria, let them; and let them have as many female slaves as they have occasion for." It was the institution of polygamy, based upon the confiscation of the women in the vanquished countries, that secured forever the Mohammedan rule. The children of these unions gloried in their descent

from their conquering fathers. No better proof can be given of the efficacy of this policy than that which is furnished by North Africa. The irresistible effect of polygamy in consolidating the new order of things was very striking. In little more than a single generation, the khalif was informed by his officers that the tribute must cease, for all the children born in that region were Mohammedans, and all spoke Arabic.

Mohammedanism, as left by its founder, was an anthropomorphic religion. Its God was only a gigantic man, its heaven a mansion of carnal pleasures. From these imperfect ideas its more intelligent classes very soon freed themselves, substituting for them others more philosophical, more correct. Eventually they attained to an accordance with those that have been pronounced in our own times by the Vatican Council as orthodox. Thus Al-Gazzali says: "A knowledge of God cannot be obtained by means of the knowledge a man has of himself, or of his own soul. The attributes of God cannot be determined from the attributes of man. His sovereignty and government can neither be compared nor measured."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESTORATION OF SCIENCE IN THE SOUTH.

By the influence of the Nestorians and Jews, the Arabians are turned to the cultivation of Science.—They modify their views as to the destiny of man, and obtain true conceptions respecting the structure of the world.—They ascertain the size of the earth, and determine its shape.—Their khalifs collect great libraries, patronize every department of science and literature, establish astronomical observatories.—They develop the mathematical sciences, invent algebra, and improve geometry and trigonometry.—They collect and translate the old Greek mathematical and astronomical works, and adopt the inductive method of Aristotle.—They establish many colleges, and, with the aid of the Nestorians, organize a public-school system.—They introduce the Arabic numerals and arithmetic, and catalogue and give names to the stars.—They lay the foundation of modern astronomy, chemistry, and physics, and introduce great improvements in agriculture and manufactures.

“In the course of my long life,” said the Khalif Ali, “I have often observed that men are more like the times they live in than they are like their fathers.” This profoundly philosophical remark of the son-in-law of Mohammed is strictly true; for, though the personal, the bodily lineaments of a man may indicate his parentage, the constitution of his mind, and therefore the direction of his thoughts, is determined by the environment in which he lives.

When Amrou, the lieutenant of the Khalif Omar, conquered Egypt, and annexed it to the Saracenic Em-

pire, he found in Alexandria a Greek grammarian, John surnamed Philoponus, or the Labor-lover. Presuming on the friendship which had arisen between them, the Greek solicited as a gift the remnant of the great library—a remnant which war and time and bigotry had spared. Amrou, therefore, sent to the khalif to ascertain his pleasure. “If,” replied the khalif, “the books agree with the Koran, the Word of God, they are useless, and need not be preserved; if they disagree with it, they are pernicious. Let them be destroyed.” Accordingly, they were distributed among the baths of Alexandria, and it is said that six months were barely sufficient to consume them.

Although the fact has been denied, there can be little doubt that Omar gave this order. The khalif was an illiterate man; his environment was an environment of fanaticism and ignorance. Omar’s act was an illustration of Ali’s remark.

But it must not be supposed that the books which John the Labor-lover coveted were those which constituted the great library of the Ptolemies, and that of Eumenes, King of Pergamus. Nearly a thousand years had elapsed since Philadelphus began his collection. Julius Cæsar had burnt more than half; the Patriarchs of Alexandria had not only permitted but superintended the dispersion of almost all the rest. Orosius expressly states that he saw the empty cases or shelves of the library twenty years after Theophilus, the uncle of St. Cyril, had procured from the Emperor Theodosius a rescript for its destruction. Even had this once noble collection never endured such acts of violence, the mere wear and tear, and perhaps, I may add, the pilfering of a thousand years, would have diminished it sadly. Though John, as the surname he received indicates, might rejoice in