THE STORY

OF THE

CHURCH OF EGYPT

BEING AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF
THE EGYPTIANS UNDER THEIR SUCCESSIVE MASTERS
FROM THE ROMAN CONQUEST UNTIL NOW

BY

E. L. BUTCHER

AUTHOR OF 'A STRANGE JOURNEY' 'A BLACK JEWEL' ETC.

'Him that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches'

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I

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PREFACE

THE aim which I have set myself in writing the following pages is a very humble one—to collect together in a readable fashion and in moderate compass all that the researches of scholars and historians have yet been able to discover about that remnant of the ancient Egyptian people popularly called the Copts, from the date of their first acceptance of Christianity until the present day. During the whole of that time their history is inextricably interwoven with that of the successive masters—Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Kurd, Circassian, and Turk—who have verily made the land of Egypt a house of bondage for her own children. There are many now who have discovered that the true descendants of the ancient Egyptians are Christians, not Mohammedans, and who would like to know something about them without the laborious search among dictionaries and translations which, to me, has been a labour of love.

These, indeed, are my only qualifications for the task —a love of my subject and a residence of some twenty

years in the land of Egypt, which enables me to go about in the little-known villages where the ancient Christianity of Egypt still holds its own, listening to legends and tales of ancient glories, which were more often than I expected confirmed by search among the scanty records available. I have taken great pains to be accurate, particularly in my dates;[1] but no doubt scholars will find much to criticise. If this book instigates one of them to write the history as it should be written, my attempts will be even more valuable than I have hoped.

I had drawn out for my own guidance a Chronological Table—containing the name of every over-lord, whether Emperor or Kaliph; the name of every Vizier or local Sultan; the name of every Patriarch of the National Church; and the name of every Patriarch of the Greek (or Melkite) Church—in four parallel columns, with the date of their accession to power attached. But it seemed too much in the nature of scaffolding to publish with the book, since many of the names were of no interest whatever to the general reader. I have therefore prefixed only the list of Patriarchs.

Certain periods in the first four centuries of Egyptian history have been exhaustively treated from a theological point of view, which is not mine; but there are many who will be glad to know what even I can tell them

[1] The supposed necessity for placing a date at the head of every page in a book of history has made my work more difficult. Often the events related in the page can rbe accurately dated to a year or two; therefore no date except those in the text must be depended upon.

about the 1900 years which lie between the Ptolemaic Egypt and the political Egypt of to-day.

There is one point to which I should like to call attention. With one imperfect exception, of the seventh century, all the available books on the history of the Church of Egypt, as may be seen by the following list, have been written by men alien in race or hostile in creed —generally both. I would beg my readers to consider how the history of any Western Church would read if the only books upon the subject were written by men of another nationality, openly hostile or indifferent. I have not, to my knowledge, suppressed one disgraceful fact about an Egyptian Pope as recorded by these historians;[1] yet I do not think the record of the Egyptian Church will be found to compare badly with the proudest of her Western sisters. Let us not forget, in our loyalty to our own Church, that the Church Catholic is above and includes all National Churches, all true Christians, irrespective of race or organisation. For as in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, though the distinctions remain; so in Christ there is neither Greek nor Roman, English nor Egyptian, for we have all come into the kingdom of our Father.

It is true that the Church of Egypt has one chronicle of her own, written by several hands and extending over a period of three centuries. It was begun in the latter half of the tenth century by Severus, Bishop of

[1] On the other hand, respect for the decencies of literature has many times compelled me to present an unduly favourable account of the Moslem governors.

Ashmounayn (Hermopolis Magna), and continued by Michael, Bishop of Tanis, and many others down to the year 1243. But, so far as I know, only one perfect copy of this valuable book is in existence, and that is in the library at Paris. It has never been translated or published in any European language.

The following list of authorities has been included for the convenience of those who may wish to study the subject for themselves. It may be observed that, except for one or two works dealing specially with the Copts, no books which have been published during the last fifty years have been included in the list. Most of us have read the more important recent works, and in any case their titles are easily obtained.

My best thanks are due to those who have kindly helped me in the preparation of this book—especially to Marcus Bey Simaika, who has rendered me most valuable assistance; to Professor Vollers, of the Khedivial library; and to my husband, who has helped me through all the difficulties of my undertaking with unwearied patience, and to whom I am entirely indebted for my index.

E. L. BUTCHER.

CHURCH HOUSE, CAIRO:
St. Peter's Day, 1897.

LIST OF AUTHORITIES

CONSULTED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS BOOK

	CENTURY
Eusebius, 'Ecclesiastical History'	4th
Socrates	5th
Sozomen	5th
Theodoret	5th
Evagrius	6th
Cosmas (Indicopleustes), 'Topographie Chrétienne'	6th
John of Nikius's Chronicle	7th
Masoudi, 'Histoire Universelle'	12th
Abu Salih, 'Churches of Egypt'	13th
Makrizi, 'History of the Copts'	14th
Shamse-ed-din, 'Histoire d'Égypte'	16th
Memoirs of M. de Maillet	17th
Yusef Abu Dakn, 'History of the Coptic Church'	17th
Renaudot, 'Historia Patriarcharum Alexandrinorum'	18th
Digeon, 'Histoire Chronologique'	18th
Richard Pococke, 'Observations on Egypt'	18th
Ockley, 'History of the Saracens'	18th
Gibbon, 'Decline and Fall'	18th
Sonnini's Travels	18th
Bruce's Travels	18th
Sharpe, 'History of Egypt,' vol. ii.	19th
Neale, 'Patriarchate of Alexandria'	19th
Stanley, Lectures on Eastern Church	19th
Mommsen, 'History of Rome'	19th
Bright, 'History of the Church, 315–431'	19th
Roberts and Donaldson, 'Ante-Nicene Library'	19th
Marcel, 'Égypte Moderne'	19th
Ryme, 'La Domination Arabe'	19th
'Égypte Française'; and various other Publications of the French Institute, in many volumes	19th

	CENTURY
Amelineau, Translations of ancient Coptic MSS. (in Vatican and Louvre)	19th
Amelineau, 'La Géographie de l'Égypte Copte'	19th
Letronne, 'Mémoires sur l'Égypte'	19th
Quatremère, 'Mémoires sur l'Égypte'	19th
'Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks'	19th
'Chrestomathie Arabe'	19th
Hyvernat, 'Martyrs of Egypt'	19th
Lane, 'Modern Egyptians'	19th
Paton, 'Egyptian Revolution'	19th
Gabbarti, 'History of Egypt'	19th
'Dictionary of Christian Biography'	19th
Malan's Translations	19th
Butler, 'Coptic Churches'	19th
Lord Dufferin's Report, 1883	19th
Lord Cromer's Report, 1896	19th

LIST OF PATRIARCHS OF THE CHURCH OF EGYPT

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48. John IV.	? 776
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50. Jacob	? 819
51. Simon II.	? 836
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53. Michael II.	849
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55. Shenouda I.	859
56. Michael III.	? 869
57. Gabriel I.	910
58. Cosmas III.	921
59. Macarius I.	933
60. Theophanius	953
61. Mennas II.	956
62. Ephraem	975

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63. Philotheus	? 979
64. Zacharias	1004
65. Shenouda II.	1032
66. Christodulos	1047
67. Cyril II.	1078
68. Michael IV.	1092
69. Macarius II.	1102
70. Gabriel II.	1131
71. Michael V.[1]	1145
72. John V.	1146
73. Marcus III.	1166
74. John VI.	1189
75. Cyril III.	1235
76. Athanasius III.	1250
77. Gabriel III.	1269
78. John VII.	1271
79. Theodosius II.	1294
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81. John IX.	1321
82. Benjamin II.	1327
83. Peter V.	1340
84. Marcus IV.	1348
85. John X.	1363
86. Gabriel IV.	1371
87. Matthew I.	1375
88. Gabriel V.	1409
89. John XI.	1427
90. Matthew II.	1453
91. Gabriel VI.	1467
92. Michael VI.	1475
93. John XII.	1481
94. John XIII.	1521
95. Gabriel VII.	1526
96. John XIV.	1570
97. Gabriel VIII.	1585
98. Marcus V.	1602
99. John XV.	1619
100. Matthew III.	1629
101. Marcus VI.	1646
102. Matthew IV.	1660
103. John XVI.	1676
104. Peter VI.	1718
105. John XVII.	1727
106. Marcus VII.	1745
107. John XVIII.	1770
108. Marcus VIII.	1797
109. Peter VII.	1809
110. Cyril IV.	1854
111. Demetrius II.	1862
112. Cyril V. (present Patriarch)	1875

[1] In the most recent list at the Patriarchate, Michael V. is entered as Mikhail I., and all the first four Michaels under the name of Khail. Both names are forms of Michael, though the Copts now use them as separate names. As I have in this list given the English forms of all the names, I thought it more consistent to render both Khail and Mikhail by Michael.

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THE STORY

OF

THE CHURCH OF EGYPT

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF CÆSAR

c. 30 IN the life of a nation which counts its age by centuries and not by years, whose greatest temple, still to be seen in its desolation, took more than two thousand years to build, and near two thousand more to go to ruin, a single century may seem of small account. Yet within the brief compass of a hundred years, Egypt received three visitors whose coming changed the whole course of her national life for many centuries. One of them is honoured through all worlds, another through all Egypt, to this day. Between 30 B.C. and 60 A.D., Egypt witnessed the coming of Cæsar, the coming of Christ, the coming of Mark.

The Cæsar under whom the Roman Empire enclosed in its fatal embrace the ancient land of Egypt, was that same Cæsar Augustus of whom we read in the New Testament that he 'made a decree that all the world should be taxed.' In the year 30 B.C. he laid his iron grip on

Egypt, and called her a Roman Province, though the Romans, unlike the Greeks who had preceded them, were from first to last an alien race in the land; despised and detested, yet feared. Nor, to speak accurately, did Egypt ever become in the true sense a Roman province. It was rather a private appanage of the reigning emperor, and no senator was permitted to enter it. In this chapter a brief sketch will be given of the condition of Egypt at the time of the Roman conquest, and just before the introduction of Christianity.

The inhabitants of the country were divided, roughly speaking, into three classes—Greeks, Jews, and Egyptians; though the latter had still an immense numerical preponderance. *Now* the total number of the Copts, that is, of Egyptians of unmixed blood, in their own country, is less than the number of the Jews who were settled within her borders at the time of the Roman conquest. For the influx of Greeks and Jews during the previous centuries had been so large that they formed, as it were, two distinct foreign nations settled in the country, speaking their own language and living under their own laws.

In spite of having been born and bred for many successive generations on Egyptian soil, the Greeks still regarded themselves as colonists and conquerors, and held their allegiance to their recently acquired Roman emperors very lightly. They had lost the warrior spirit of their ancient race, and their interests were now entirely commercial and intellectual. They lived in their own cities, which in many cases were little more than fortified trading posts, retained their rights as free citizens, laughed at their Roman rulers, and seem generally to have submitted to the yoke because it was the readiest way to

secure ease and wealth. Three Roman legions and nine cohorts were found enough to keep the whole Egyptian kingdom in subjection. The principal city of the Greeks was Alexandria—the Paris of the ancient world; while Ptolemais, the only other city in Egypt which was under Greek laws, was, at the time of the Roman conquest, the largest city in the Thebaid, not much smaller than the purely Egyptian city of Memphis. Heliopolis, the ancient university of Egypt, where the wisest men of ancient Greece had gladly come to study, was already a deserted city; where one or two ruined houses were pointed out as those in which Plato and his compatriots had lived. Babylon, the key of the south, had risen greatly in importance since its foundation in the early days of the Persian conquests, and was enlarged and strongly fortified by the Romans. Naucratis, one of the earliest Greek settlements, still contained a university of some note, whose schools were not finally closed till the end of the second century.

Thebes and Abydos had sunk into the position of villages. Cyrene (Kiruan) a Greek colony, which for more than two hundred years had been subject to Egypt, and reckoned as part of that country, maintained its position as a university and great trading city till the end of the fourth century.

Each of the three nations, Greek, Jew, and Egyptian, still held to their own religion, but the two latter far more strongly than the Greeks, who by this time were practically atheists, and thought as little of their gods as of their emperors. Ptolemy Soter had made an attempt to find a common object of worship for his Greek and Egyptian subjects, and had built the great temple of Serapis in Alexandria, to receive a colossus from Sinope, in Paphly-

gonia, which was recognised by both Greeks and Egyptians as the god of Hades. The Greeks called him Pluto, the Egyptians Asar-Api (Osiris concealed), but before a century had elapsed the god was known only by a contraction of the latter name—Serapis. This, however, was the only common ground between the Greeks and Egyptians, and it was not until after the introduction of Christianity that the worship of Serapis made any way in the country outside Alexandria.

The ancient religion of the Egyptians had long since given place to a mere animal worship; the spiritual and moral elements, which had so deeply influenced the kings and sages of the earlier centuries, had died out of it, or lingered only in forms of the grossest superstition. The beasts and birds, which originally were in all probability only the badges of the different nomes, like the crests of medieval towns and families, were now openly worshipped as gods, and were the causes of[1] fierce rivalries which occasionally broke out in civil war between the different districts. It was this which so greatly contributed to the disintegration of the nation, and rendered it incapable of combination even against a foreign foe. At Memphis the bull Apis reigned supreme, at Ombos the crocodile; at Oxyrynchon a particular Nile fish was worshipped; at Assiut, the wolf; at Cynopolis, the dog; the list is too long to continue. No doubt many of the priests and the upper classes still believed in the one Triune God, Author of all good, of Whom all their deities were but so many manifestations; but they despised the ignorant masses too much to interfere with the jealous championship of beast or bird which had taken the place of religion among them. They had a

[1] *See* Juvenal, Sat. 15, 35.

proverb which showed that some Egyptians, at any rate, still rated the outward observances of their religion as nothing compared to the right faith of a righteous life. 'White linen and a tonsure,' said they, 'will not make a follower of Isis.'

A certain form of spiritualism, which generally seems to accompany a low state of faith, was much practised by the Egyptians. They undertook, either directly or indirectly—and for money—to recall the spirits of the dead and make them answer any questions that might be put to them. Ventriloquism, an art which had always been known in Egypt, was at this time often abused for similar purposes.

The Egyptians had recently been again allowed to coin money, and, for some centuries from the reign of Claudius Cæsar, the series of Egyptian coins is almost unbroken, and of great value to the historian. The porphyry quarries and the emerald mines, which afterwards fell into such total disuse that their very existence was denied, and only rediscovered in our own times, were now in full work, though entirely by slave and convict labour. The Egyptian chemists, dyers, paper, silk, and glass manufacturers were still celebrated throughout the whole civilised world; and their fertile plains, from the first decade of the Roman conquest, were made to supply their foreign masters with enormous yearly shipments of corn. Already eight kinds of paper were made in Egypt, and in the reign of Claudius a ninth kind was produced which was named in his honour. Linen, cotton, and wine were also produced in large quantities, though the quality of the latter was generally considered inferior to the wines of Greece and Italy. A great deal of beer was made and

drunk, and this continues to be the case to the present day, though the vine has gone almost entirely out of cultivation, owing to reasons which will appear in the course of the narrative.

The state of the Soudan, which, under the Pharaohs, and at one time under the Ptolemies, had contained some of the most important provinces of the empire, was now such that no trade came down the Nile to Assouan (Syene); but the products of Southern Africa were brought by coasting vessels to Berenice. The Roman rule was never really acknowledged south of Wady Halfa, and their southern frontier was often far short of that. In the reign of Augustus Cæsar, Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, sent an army of thirty thousand men to invade Egypt, and they overthrew the Roman cohorts at Elephantine, Syene, and Philæ, but were driven back afterwards by Gallus, who made himself temporarily master of the Ethiopian capital, Napata.[1]

It is computed that at the time of the Roman conquest there must have been about a million of Jews in Egypt. A steady stream of emigration from Palestine had been going on for centuries, since the time when John ebn Kareah, in spite of the protests of the prophet Jeremiah, took the remnant of Judah, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah, and brought them into the land of Egypt, to Tahpanhes, and to Migdol, and Noph, and the country of Pathros.[2] In Egypt many troubles came upon them as Jeremiah had foretold, but this did not seem to check their immigration; for, about three hundred years afterwards, when the

[1] Between the third and fourth Cataracts.

[2] Jeremiah xl.–xliv.

ancient Egyptian empire had been taken by the Persians, who in their turn had given place to the Greeks, we find no less than 120,000 given as the number of Jews in Egypt, whom Ptolemy Philadelphus redeemed from slavery at his own cost. These had come into Egypt against their will, many of them being taken in the wars between his father and the king of Syria; but there were great numbers of free settlers who had been attracted by the prosperity and good government of Egypt, so that the 120,000 freed slaves do not by any means represent the whole Jewish population, even in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus.

In the reign of Ptolemy Philometor, Onias, the son of the high priest, took refuge in Egypt, and obtained leave from the king to build the afterwards celebrated temple of Onion 'at Leontopolis, in the nome of Heliopolis, which is named from the country Bubastis.' This temple formed a new and very powerful attraction to the Jews, and at the time of the Roman conquest the great bulk of the Jewish population lived in the nome of Heliopolis, or in the city of Alexandria, where two wards, out of the five into which the city was divided, were entirely given up to them.

These two foreign nations, the Greeks and the Jews, possessed the rights of citizenship which were still denied to the unfortunate Egyptians in their own country. They were allowed their own magistrates and courts of justice, and though, on the occupation of the country by Augustus Cæsar, the Greeks of Alexandria at once petitioned him to take away the rights of citizenship from the Jews and restrict them only to Greeks and Romans, he very properly refused to do so. At the same time he

could not help the low esteem in which the Jews were held by the Greeks and the native Egyptians, nor enforce those rights of the Jews which the Greeks habitually ignored.

In the reign of Caligula, Alexandria was one long scene of riot between the Jews and the Greeks. The latter gratified their hatred of the Jews by taking upon themselves to apply that decree of Caligula, which ordered the erection of his own statue for worship in every temple of the empire, to the Jewish synagogues; and to enforce it by constant fighting. The Roman prefect Flaccus sided with the Greeks, and a fierce persecution of the Jews was the result. The Jewish king Agrippa happened to come to Alexandria at that time, and his earnest representations induced Caligula to recall the prefect, and consent to receive a deputation from both Greeks and Jews. At the head of the Jewish embassy was the celebrated Philo, the most learned man in Alexandria, and at the head of the Greeks, Apion, who ranked as a Greek citizen because of his descent, though he had been born and bred in Egypt. The Greeks had the wit to confine themselves to one charge against the Jews—that they had refused to worship the statue of Caligula—and as the Jews could not deny this, the emperor refused to hear anything that they had to say. Fortunately Caligula died shortly after, and under the rule of Claudius the Greeks and Jews kept a hollow peace.

It must have been galling to the Greeks to feel that the despised Jews had in great measure achieved supremacy over them on their own ground. The chief Alexandrian scholars and writers were Greeks no longer. The schools of Alexandria, though of far less repute than they had been

under the Ptolemies, or than they afterwards became under the Christians, were still renowned throughout the civilised world, but the names of their great philosophers were Hebrew. The chief glory of the Alexandrian school in the first century was the Jewish Philo.

The family of Philo held a very high social and financial position in the city of Alexandria. Philo himself was born shortly after the Roman conquest, in Egypt, and the great firm to which he belonged appears to have attached itself from the first to the fortunes of the victorious emperors. Philo's brother, Alexander, who seems to have been the head of the firm in which Philo himself was probably never more than a sleeping partner, was appointed Alabarch, and entrusted with the affairs of Antonia, the sister-in-law of Tiberius. He lent great sums of money to the Jewish king Agrippa, and eventually married two of his sons to the daughters of that king. Another of his sons, named Tiberius Alexander, forsook the religion of his fathers, and was subsequently made governor of Egypt.

In this busy money-making life Philo took no part. He devoted his whole time to religious, philosophic, and literary labours. When circumstances obliged him for a time to mingle in the politics of the city, and to come forward in the defence of his oppressed countrymen, he did not shrink from his duty, but left on record his regret at being drawn from his beloved studies, and from solitude, into this troublesome sea. In his old age he was apparently in the habit of retiring at intervals to share for a time in the life of that community of Therapeutæ of which he has left so striking a picture in his *De Vita contemplativa.*

The beginning of the degradation of Alexandria dates

from the vicious reigns of the later Ptolemies; but had the Roman emperors reverted to the wise policy of the three first kings of that race, the city would soon have recovered itself, instead of which its downfall was accelerated by the change of masters. Augustus even made a deliberate attempt to ruin the place by building a new capital, called Nicopolis, about three miles to the east; to which he forcibly removed the public sacrifices and the priesthood of Alexandria. But nature and the Greeks were too strong for him, and the new capital was left to go to ruin before it was fairly built. And, in spite of the Roman conquest, Alexandria was still, at the beginning of our era and for some time afterwards, the greatest city in the world, not excepting Rome or Athens. Our modern guide-books have a map which gives a good idea of the extent of the ancient city, as compared with the shrunken town which now bears that celebrated name. The palaces and temples of Alexandria in the year 1, covered a fourth part of its whole space. Its two harbours held more ships than any other port in the world could show; its export trade was reckoned as greater than that of all Italy. The Museum had been rebuilt since the soldiers of Julius Cæsar set fire to it, and in the reign of Claudius Cæsar another was built which was called after his name. A new palace was built by and for the Roman Cæsars, commonly called the Cæsareum, while the great fortress-temple of Serapis held a library which was later reckoned at 700,000 volumes, full of the ancient wisdom of the Egyptians. As the Greeks had their Museum, and the Egyptians their Temple library, so the Jews prided themselves on their great central synagogue, built in the shape of a basilica, an object of pride alike to the Jews of Egypt and of Palestine.

Such, in very brief outline, was the country and the people over whom the Roman emperor came to reign. Little he knew that before his death another King should enter Egypt under whose sway Greek, Roman, Jew, and Egyptian, should alike fall, and whose name should be known in all ages and in all lands where his own power had never penetrated.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF CHRIST

Anno Domini

IN a certain gallery in London there is a celebrated picture, which most of us have seen, called Anno Domini. It represents a not uncommon scene in the Egypt of that year, a gorgeous procession of the Egyptian gods. The singers go before, the minstrels follow after; in the midst are the damsels playing on the timbrels; and in the place of supremest honour is borne the goddess, Isis, with Horus upon her knee. The sick are brought by their friends to the wayside to receive strength and healing as the gods pass. Little images of them are sold as charms to ward off evil from the purchaser. But in the centre of the canvas a very humble cavalcade meets and makes way for the grand procession of the gods: a tired donkey bearing a woman and child, while the peasant husband trudges alongside. Those ancient gods are lost and forgotten, their temples are lonely ruins; but that child's name is honoured now in every quarter of the globe: Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

There is nothing at all improbable in such an incident as we see here represented. Joseph would naturally bring his wife and child from Bethlehem by the route across the desert into Egypt by way of Kantara, and make from thence to Heliopolis on his way to Babylon, where he

seems to have eventually settled for the time during which they remained in Egypt. The great Jewish temple of Onion was still standing, a little to the north-east, but they do not seem to have lingered there—probably Joseph had relations or friends settled in Babylon. In almost every place through which they passed the Egyptian legends tell us of miracles of healing performed by the touch of the unconscious infant. Most of the ancient apocryphal gospels also relate the falling down of the idols of Heliopolis when the child was brought into the temple. A certain spring of pure water is still shown at Matarieh, a village just south of Heliopolis, in which, so a very early tradition tells us, Mary washed her infant's clothes as they rested by the wayside on their last day's journey. Then they pressed on to Babylon, where their long wanderings came to an end for the time.

The Egyptian Babylon has suffered an undeserved eclipse in the shadow of the earlier and better known city of the same name in Asia; so much so that there are even now many cultivated Europeans who have never heard of it, and Dean Farrar, writing not many years ago, could refer to it briefly in a footnote as 'an obscure town in north Africa,' whose claims to a visit from St. Peter did not call for a moment's serious consideration! A careful study of the earlier writers, before the thick darkness of the Mohammedan dominion well-nigh blotted out Egypt from the view of Europe, leads to quite a different conclusion.[1]

[1] It should be noticed that even during the Mohammedan times, whenever a European crusade or war lets sudden light upon Egypt it is always the Sultan of *Babylon* that the chroniclers speak of, and not of Memphis or Cairo.

There are several accounts given of the origin of the Egyptian Babylon. Diodorus refers to it in the reign of Rameses II. (Sesostris), and says that the Babylonians whom he had taken in war, and reduced to slavery, at length rebelled, and occupying the port of Ha-ben-ben,[1] a strong position on the river opposite and slightly north of Memphis, maintained a successful war with the surrounding country till Rameses pardoned them, and turned them into peaceful subjects by permitting them to retain possession of the site on which they were camped, as a colony. Here they built a town, which they called, after the capital of their own country, Babylon.[2]

John of Nikius, writing in the seventh century of our era, says, in speaking of the fortress which Trajan built at Babylon in Egypt:

> An earlier fortress had been built here by Nebuchadnezzar, which he called the fortress of Babylon. It was at the time when he had become king in Egypt, when, after the destruction of Jerusalem, he had exiled the Jews, and they had stoned at Thebes in Egypt the prophet of the Lord; committing sin upon sin. Nebuchadnezzar had then come to Egypt with a numerous army, had conquered the country because the Jews had revolted against him (*sic*), and called the fortress by the name of his own town Babylon.[3]

It was of course this earlier fortress which Strabo mentions, when he describes his visit to Egypt just after the Roman conquest of that country. Trajan's fortress,

[1] Professor Sayce calls the fortress Kri-Ahu—most ancient Egyptian towns had a double name.

[2] The description of the Egyptian Babylon in Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography* is incorrect, *i.e.* it puts Babylon *North* of Fostat.

[3] Jeremiah xlvi. 13–27.

the ruined wall of which is still standing, was built a few hundred yards to the north of the earlier one, about 100–117 A.D.

There are some curious local traditions concerning the ancient settlement of the Jews in Babylon of Egypt. One synagogue still exists whose history goes back through several rebuildings, on the same site, to the time of our Lord. Tradition takes it further back still, to the days of Jeremiah. Makrizi, in his Egyptian archæology, has the following note on this synagogue:

The synagogue of the Syrians is found in the precincts of Kasr el Shamr (*i.e.* the Castle of the Candle, or Beacon, at Old Cairo[1]). It is old; on the door is an ancient wooden carving in Hebrew, stating that it was built in the year 336 of the era of Alexander, that is to say, about 45 years before the second destruction of the sanctuary of Jerusalem by Titus, or about 600 years before the Hegira.[2] In that synagogue you find a copy of the Thoreh, concerning which they all agree that it was written wholly by the prophet Ezra.

Up to fifteen years ago this roll of the law mentioned by Makrizi still remained in a sacred hiding-place in the same synagogue, with a curse on anyone who should presume to disturb it. Through the treachery of some Jew its existence then became known to the Gentiles. In the

[1] Old Cairo is the name which has in modern times been given to the town which sprung up on the ruins of the ancient Babylon after its almost total destruction by fire in the twelfth century. Trajan's wall, and the Christian and Jewish town which it then enclosed and still encloses, are all that remain of Babylon now.

[2] Makrizi doubtless copied the date on the door correctly—336 of Alexander; but it will be seen that his own calculations are very vague. The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus was 69–70 A.D.; the Hegira 622.

absence of its lawful guardians, and in spite of the curses and threats of the woman left in charge, two zealous antiquarians found their way into the synagogue, broke open the sacred hiding-place, and tried to open the roll. But during the ages of its solitude and darkness a serpent —whose empty skin was found—had made its way through a crack in the wood, and nested in the hiding-place. The edges of the roll were all stuck together with the discharge from the serpent, and the two scholars found that without proper appliances they could not open the roll unless they tore it to pieces. They saw enough to satisfy them that it was of extreme antiquity, and departed, intending to return and make an exhaustive examination. But on visiting the synagogue for the third time they found that the guardians of the roll had taken alarm, and removed it into a new and safer hiding-place in Cairo city. They have substituted a comparatively modern copy, which they now show to visitors as the original. Not long afterwards the old synagogue was pulled down, and a new one built on the same site. Through all the changes of the place, however, a certain tomb has been carefully preserved in the body of the synagogue which the Jews declare contains the body of the prophet Jeremiah.

In any case, it is clear from numerous indications that there was a Jewish colony here before and at the time of our Lord's birth; and that the Jews attached special value to this particular site in the Egyptian Babylon. The bulk of the colony became Christian at an early date, and the synagogue was turned into a church. At the time of the split between the Greek and Egyptian Churches in 451 A.D., this church was one of those left in the hands of the Greek or Melkite party. As the power of that party

declined, however, the church fell into disuse and partial ruin. In this state it was suffered to pass into the hands of the Egyptians; and this was the 'ruined Melkite church' in which Michael III. took refuge, when, in the latter half of the ninth century, he was given, by the Mohammedan governor, four months to collect an enormous ransom from his church on penalty of death for himself and persecution for the church.

In the Patriarch's extremity, the Jews of Babylon, who greatly desired the ruined site, saw their opportunity. They offered to buy it of Michael, and the bargain was struck. The money went to swell the required ransom, and the Jews have ever since retained possession of the site and tomb, which, whether it be Jeremiah's or no, they unquestionably regard with great veneration.

Not far from this synagogue, and also within the walls of the Roman fortress, there is a church, which is almost the only one in the country that tourists are taken to see, for the sake of the old tradition connected with it. The church now above ground is dedicated to Anbar[1] or Abu Sergeh, and was not built till after the desertion of the fortress by the Byzantine garrison in the seventh century —probably not till the eighth century. But on the original level of the ground, which has risen very considerably since the fortress was built, is a tiny church of great antiquity, which is now merely a crypt of the upper church. Tradition says that this earlier church was built in the

[1] Anbar is old Egyptian for father. It became Apa in later Coptic, and now the Arabic Abu has generally taken its place. The prefix Mar, still used for Coptic saints, is of Chaldean origin, and means Lord—Mari —my Lord. The church is really dedicated to St. Sergius and St. Bacchus, fellow-soldiers and martyrs. But Bacchus, being the name of a heathen god, is never spoken.

apostolic age to mark the spot where stood the house in which our Lord and his parents dwelt during their sojourn in Babylon. The present coating of the walls, and the tiny pillars which now support the roof, are probably of much later date, but for all that, the spot may fairly claim to be the oldest, and possibly the smallest, church in existence. Both the west and east ends are blocked up, so that its actual length cannot be determined; but the present length is about twenty feet, and the breadth fifteen feet. The baptistery in the south aisle is still used, and the ignorant Copts who now guard this extremely interesting spot occupy the minds of the tourists with ridiculous stories about the sleeping arrangements of Joseph and Mary. The little chapel is dedicated to Sitti Miriam (My Lady Mary [1]).

In the days of our Lord, this spot was almost on the river bank, and the massive wall, now falling into ruins about it, had not yet been built. It was the Jewish quarter of Babylon, and there is no reason to doubt the tradition which brings Joseph and Mary to settle there during the greater part of their stay in Egypt—a period, the length of which is variously estimated by Western and Eastern controversialists. Some reduce it to six months, others extend it from two to four or even six years.

[1] The prefix Saint is not used in Egypt. For female saints the ordinary word for lady, Sitt or Sitti (my lady), is now in common use as a prefix to the name.

CHAPTER III

THE PREACHING OF MARK

A.D. 45 It is admitted on all hands that the founder of the Church of Egypt was the Evangelist St. Mark, though the exact year in which he made his first visit to Egypt cannot be stated with any certainty. He seems to have been accompanied as far as Babylon by St. Peter, whose first General Epistle is dated from that city. Absolute proof, indeed, cannot be given that the Babylon of the Epistle is the Babylon of Egypt, and many attempts have been made by Western writers to prove that the city referred to is the ancient Babylon of Assyria, or else a metaphor signifying Rome. But it is fair to say that the balance of evidence is in favour of the more natural supposition that St. Peter wrote from an important and well-known town, largely inhabited by Jews, in the country where his Master had taken refuge, and not from a deserted city outside the confines of the Roman Empire, in a country with no particular claim on him. Nor is there any ground for the assumption that St. Peter, like the mystical author of the Apocalypse, used Babylon as a synonym for Rome. But, even in the early centuries of Christianity, little was known in the Western Churches of the Egyptian Babylon [1];

[1] Even in so recent and careful a work as Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography* I have found mention made of Babylon without any

in the ecclesiastical world Egypt was represented by the city of Alexandria. So entirely did the ecclesiastical writers of the West lose all knowledge of Babylon, among other cities of Egypt, after the separation in 451, that all notices of the Egyptian Babylon found in earlier Christian writers were referred without hesitation to the Asiatic Babylon; and, on such mistaken references, the very arguments which seem conclusive in favour of the earlier city were sometimes based.

Mark himself, according to Egyptian tradition, was a native of Pentapolis,[1] which, since the days of Ptolemy I., had been an outlying province of Egypt on its extreme north-west frontier. He belonged to a wealthy family, which was ruined by an invasion of nomad tribes, either before Mark's birth or while he was yet a child. His father, Christobulus, who was brother-in-law to Barnabas, migrated to Palestine and settled near Jerusalem. Peter became connected with the family by marriage, and Mark was early instructed in the Christian faith. His first visit to Egypt was probably in the year 45 A.D.,[2] and it

hint given that the Egyptian Babylon was meant. Indeed, I think the writer of the article must himself have been under the impression that Jerome, from whom he quotes, was writing about Babylon in Assyria. Yet a reference to the context in Jerome would have proved beyond question that he was speaking of Babylon in Egypt. He says that Hilarion left Bethlehem with '40 monks who could march without food till sunset. On the fifth day he came to Pelusium, then to the camp (Scenæ Veteranorum) to see Dracontius, and then to Babylon to see Philo.'—*Exiled Bishops.*

[1] This district included five old Greek colonies: Cyrene (Kirwan), Ptolemais (Barca), Arsinoe (Teucheira), Berenice (Hesperides), and Apollonia. The name Pentapolis was given to it in consequence. It remained a province of Egypt for some centuries after the Roman Conquest.

[2] Eusebius gives the second year of Claudius as the date of Mark's

was on this occasion that he may have been accompanied by St. Peter. Like most travellers in that age, they came by the caravan route across the desert from Syria, and through Heliopolis to Babylon. After a sojourn here they separated; and Peter went back into Palestine by the way that he came, sending Mark to Alexandria and Pentapolis. It is not unlikely that a good deal of the Gospel of St. Mark was written during this stay at Babylon with Peter, for the use of Mark in the evangelisation of Egypt.

Tradition says that Mark's first convert in Alexandria was one Annianus,[1] a shoemaker by trade. Those of us who know the Egyptian shoe bazaars—cool, dark interiors, relieved by long festoons of red and yellow shoes, with narrow divans where the picturesque workers chat leisurely with the passers-by—will find no difficulty in imaging the scene of Mark's first preaching, and his subsequent discussions with the shoe merchants. It is said that he wrought a miracle on Annianus—probably cured him of some disease which had been considered hopeless.[2] Annianus, in his gratitude, invited the stranger to stay in his house, and finally embraced Christianity. His example was followed by others, and when Mark returned to Palestine—which must have been before the end of the year 49, probably earlier—he consecrated Annianus as first bishop of the new church, with three priests and seven deacons as assistants.

first visit to Alexandria—*i.e.* about 43 A.D. The *Chronicon Alexandrinum* places it in 40. The year 45, however, seems to fit better with the events recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

[1] The spelling of this name varies in the different authorities.

[2] The Oriental expression of a very simple fact would often give the impression to a credulous person that a miracle had been wrought, without intention to deceive on the part of the narrator.

In the year 50 we find both Peter and Mark in Palestine, on the occasion of the Council at Jerusalem. Some little while after, a new journey was projected by Barnabas and Paul, in which the former wished Mark to join them. The sequel is well known; the two Apostles separated, and Barnabas took his nephew with him to Cyprus. The narrative in the Acts follows them no further, but it is most probable that Mark went thence to Cyrene, and returned through Pentapolis to Alexandria. Incidental allusions in the New Testament favour this view, and the Egyptian tradition states that Mark founded five other churches between his first and second visit to Alexandria, including those of Cyrene and Libya.

Whether Mark ever left Egypt again, we cannot tell, but if he ever were in Rome with Peter it must have been towards the close of that Apostle's life. All the earlier writers speak of Mark as if he had remained in Alexandria from the time of his second arrival there to the time of his death.

During this period the first church in Alexandria is said to have been built at a place called Baucalia near the sea-shore. Baucalia was afterwards the parish of the great heretic Arius, though, considering the constant persecution and destruction which prevailed during the first three centuries in Alexandria, it is not likely that the church of which Arius had charge was that built in the time of St. Mark. Strabo tells us that the suburbs had formerly been occupied by cattle pastures, hence the name Baucalia or Boucalia.

All the dates given for St. Mark's life vary in the early authorities by two or three years, and that of his death is no exception to the rule. The most probable date

seems to be the eighth year of Nero, or early in 62 A.D. The 25th of April was a great feast to Serapis, and in the year 62 this fell on a Sunday. Mark is said to have publicly denounced the approaching festival as idolatrous and impious, and thereby exasperated the pagans of the city, who were already concerned at the rapid spread of Christianity. The excitement ended in a riot on the Saturday, and towards evening the pagans seized Mark, and tying a rope round his neck, dragged him through the principal streets of the city. At nightfall he was thrown into prison, where he was cheered by the vision of an angel strengthening him. On the following day he was again dragged round the city, probably in the triumphal procession of Serapis, till death ended his sufferings. He was buried in the church of Baucalia, and for centuries afterwards the election of the Alexandrian Patriarchs took place at his tomb.

The Church of Egypt, thus founded by St. Mark, differs less from the Church of Egypt of to-day, as far as its constitution and ceremonies are concerned, than almost any Church from the time of its first founder. In it the due succession of the three orders—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons—has continued without a break unto the present day. Unfortunately, like all the Churches, it fell into the snare, some centuries later, of imposing a compulsory celibacy on the Patriarch and the Bishops of its communion; but it never diverged so far from primitive rule as to enforce the same disability on the lower orders of the clergy. The Egyptian priesthood, like the Greek and unlike the Latin, is emphatically a married priesthood.

From the earliest time the Egyptian Church has acknowledged seven sacraments while laying stress only

on two as necessary to salvation—Baptism and Holy Communion. Even baptism was, in the third and fourth centuries, constantly postponed to the close of a man's life. Many of the customs which survive even in our Western Churches to this day were borrowed from the ancient Egyptians in the early days of the Church. Of these we may instance the surplice, the white linen garment of the priests of Isis; the tonsure which was also a distinguishing mark of the Egyptian priesthood; and the use of the ring in the marriage service. The ancient Egyptians before the introduction of coinage used rings of different metals for money. In their marriage contract it was customary for the man to give his wife a ring of gold in token that he thereby endowed her with his wealth. This custom continued among the Egyptians after their conversion to Christianity, and passed from them into the Church at large.

The fasts of the Church have perhaps altered more than anything else, having greatly increased in severity. The primitive use varied considerably, but once in the year, at any rate, all men fasted forty hours between Good Friday and Easter Day, the time which our Lord was thought to have remained in Hades. By the end of the second century the fast of forty days instead of forty hours had become general in many countries. Demetrius, who became Patriarch of Alexandria in 189, is said to have fixed the Lenten Fast of the Egyptian Church at forty days. Now, indeed, the Egyptians fast nearly half the year. Forty days before Christmas; forty-five before Easter (many fast also on the Sundays, and make it fifty) [1]; forty days after Pentecost, called the fast of the

[1] Sozomen, writing about the year 444, mentions that in his day the duration of Lent varied in different localities from two weeks to six or

Apostles; three days in the spring, called the fast of Nineveh; fifteen days in August in honour of the Virgin; and every Friday up to the hour of nones. Moreover Egyptian fasting is a very real thing. Not only is fish and flesh of every kind forbidden, but no milk, eggs, or butter are allowed in the house during the entire period. Nothing is permitted but fruit and vegetables, either raw, or cooked in water or vegetable oil, rice with other farinaceous food, and plain bread. In some houses no food of any description is taken till three o'clock during the fast; in some districts the bread is baked at the beginning of the fast, and becomes so hard that half an hour's soaking in warm milk produces no impression on it. The people become exhausted as the fast goes on, and do as little work as they can possibly help. Sunset brings them no relief, as it does to the Moslem, who obtains so much credit for his fast once a year of twenty-eight days, during which as far as possible he sleeps all day and feasts all night. It does not seem impossible that the increasing frequency and severity of these fasts have contributed to weaken the energy of the Copts; who, for several centuries now, have made no attempt to fight for their freedom and independence.

So far as we can ascertain, there were no *Christian* monks and nuns in the first century of the Church; but in the middle of the second century this custom of embracing a life of fasting, solitude, and prayer, instead of fulfilling the natural duties of life, was also borrowed from

seven. He also says, 'There are several cities and villages in Egypt where, contrary to the usages established elsewhere, the people meet together on Sabbath (Saturday) evenings; and although they have dined previously, partake of the mysteries.'

the religion of the ancient Egyptians, and spread from them over the whole Christian world.

Such is the Church of Egypt founded by St. Mark, and enduring through storm and stress, through persecution and oppression, until the present day. The Western visitors are apt either to ignore her existence, or to sneer as they pass by, and look only on her humiliation and degradation. Yet the ensuing pages will tell a story which may well put to shame the records of more favoured branches of the Church Catholic, whose Head will judge, not with man's judgment, at the last day: 'And they that feared the Lord shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts; in that day when I make up My jewels.'

CHAPTER IV

ONE PATRIARCH AND SEVEN EMPERORS

D. 62 VERY little is known of Annianus beyond the fact that he succeeded St. Mark as Patriarch of Alexandria about the year 62, and governed the see with good report of all men for twenty-two years.[1] During this time no fewer than seven emperors—Nero (who died about six years after Annianus had been elected Patriarch), Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian—successively occupied the Imperial throne. The Prefect of Egypt in the year 62 was Babillius, who had succeeded Tiberius Alexander in the year 56. He apparently took an intelligent interest in the country he was sent to govern, for he wrote a history of Egypt, which is unfortunately lost. He also employed Dionysius, the head of the museum and an author, as his secretary of state. Still he does not seem to have been popular with the Egyptians, and, on the death of Nero, he was recalled by Galba, who appointed Tiberius Julius Alexander, son of the prefect Alexander, and grandson of Philo's brother. He was, therefore, like the Patriarch Annianus, an Alexandrine Jew, but was probably, like his father, a renegade from his

[1] It is true that Annianus was consecrated some years earlier, on the occasion of St. Mark's first departure from Egypt. But his accession as Patriarch is generally dated from the death of Mark.

religion. In the Great Oasis an inscription still remains, recording the decree issued by this prefect to redress the grievances which the Egyptians had suffered under Nero. Among other items the prefect assures his Egyptian subjects that nobody shall be forced in future to act as a provincial taxgatherer, that no sales shall be made void under the pretext of money owing to the imperial revenue, and that no freeman shall be thrown into prison for debt, unless it be a debt due to the royal revenue. The language of this decree, as of all others, was Greek. It is very curious to observe how absolutely untouched Egypt always remained—in spite of her Roman rulers—by the Latin language, or Latin influence of any kind. This was partly owing to the fact that, although the great empire to which they now belonged was called by courtesy 'Roman,' the earlier and truly Roman emperors took little or no interest in Egypt, except as a source of revenue, and before two centuries had elapsed the imperial throne was occupied by a series of successful adventurers of mixed Greek, African, Syrian, or even barbarian blood, who cared nothing for Rome except as the outward and visible sign of their sovereign power. Later we shall see how the change of the imperial capital affected the empire, particularly Egypt and its eastern provinces.

The short reigns of Otho and Vitellius left no mark on Egypt, but when Vespasian, in the midst of his wars in Palestine, determined to make himself Cæsar, he wrote first to Tiberius Alexander, the governor of Egypt, informing him that he had been elected emperor by the army, and desiring to know if he might count on his support and that of the legions in Egypt. Tiberius at once took the necessary steps, and Egypt acknowledged Vespasian

as emperor without a dissentient voice. It is a little curious that the Jews should apparently have been as ready as the Greeks and Egyptians to accept the man who was waging such bloody wars against their own countrymen in Palestine, but we do not hear that any member of the Jewish community in Egypt protested. Their great historian, Flavius Josephus, had already given up the unequal struggle, and being made a prisoner at the taking of Jopata, had attached himself to the fortunes of Vespasian as both friend and subject.

Vespasian maintained himself at Beyrout, and the unhappy country of Palestine enjoyed a few months' respite, till he heard that the general whom he had sent to take possession of Rome in his name had succeeded in his attempt. Then he went, not to Rome, where he evidently depended upon his son Domitian to keep order, but to Alexandria, where he was received by the philosophers of the schools and the magistrates with great pomp and every appearance of a hearty welcome. The three principal philosophers of Alexandria at this time were Euphrates, a Platonist, Dion, surnamed Chrysostome or the golden-mouthed, and that curious personage Apollonius of Tyana, who was afterwards exalted by his biographer Philostratus into a sort of divine prophet. The latter wrote the life of Apollonius, in fact, much on the lines of our own Gospels, and with evident, though indirect, reference to Christianity. He likens him to Pythagoras, and though he does not liken him in so many words to Christ, the inference is sufficiently obvious.

Apollonius attached himself to Vespasian during the whole of his stay in Egypt, and was of great use to him in securing to him the adherence of the Alexandrians. A

curious story is told by Tacitus, which indicates that, even at that time, a belief prevailed in the healing power of the sovereign's touch. Two men, the one blind, and the other crippled in the hand, threw themselves at the feet of Vespasian as he walked in the streets of Alexandria, and entreated him to touch them, that they might be made whole. Vespasian laughed, but finding that the physicians of Alexandria affected to believe in the remedy, he consented to apply it, and it is recorded by the friends of the emperor that the experiment was successful.

Vespasian professed to be much attracted by the religion of the Egyptians, and consulted the god Serapis as to his own future and that of the empire. He lingered in Alexandria for some months, sending his son Titus back to finish the war in Palestine. But he soon began to lose ground in the affections of the fickle Alexandrians. Instead of the *largesse* which they expected from him he increased some of the taxes ; but his crowning offence was that, in a fit of passion at some foolish jest of the townsfolk about a debt of six oboli, of which he had exacted repayment from one of his friends, he imposed this sum as a fine or poll-tax on every man in the city. The imposition was, indeed, immediately remitted at the instance of his more politic son Titus, but good feeling was not restored, and Vespasian sailed for Rome without waiting for the close of the war in Palestine.

In the autumn of that year (70) came the long-expected news that Jerusalem had fallen. Ninety-seven thousand Jews were condemned to slavery, chiefly in the mines of Egypt, and, besides the sad spectacle of this slave army following Titus, hundreds of Jews poured into the country

to take refuge with their more fortunate Egyptian brethren. This influx of wronged and desperate men continued for some time, till the Jews of Alexandria became alarmed for their own safety. For many of the Palestinian Jews openly reproached the Jews in Egypt with their tame submission to the Roman emperor, and called upon them to take up arms in defence of their liberty and their desolate country. Such a Holy War found little favour in the eyes of the rich and cultivated Egyptian Jews, who had everything to lose and, in their opinion, nothing to gain by revolt. They branded these fanatic preachers of a forlorn hope with the name of Sicarii or ruffians, and as the danger seemed to increase, the principal Jews in the city actually called together a general assembly of their countrymen, and demonstrated that their only hope of safety lay in seizing these unfortunate exiles, and delivering them up to the Government, in order to free themselves from any suspicion of complicity in their wild hopes. Six hundred of these outcast patriots were seized at once, and though many escaped into the provinces, most of them were caught and brought back. These were in many cases put to the torture in order to make them swear fealty to Vespasian, but not even the young children among them would consent to do so, and they were all put to death. No wonder that the early Christian writers briefly imply that the episcopate of Annianus was not a time of peace. But no one has left any existing record of the part he took in these troublous days. The flame of rebellion among the Jews spread even to Cyrene, where one Jonathan, a weaver by trade, preached patriotism with some success 'among the poorer sort,' as Josephus describes them. He led out his unarmed army into the desert towards Egypt, promising them supernatural

aid in their undertaking. But the treachery of their richer brethren in Cyrene betrayed them to Catullus, the governor of that province, and he hastily pursued and easily discomfited them. He spared the life of Jonathan, however, on condition that he would give up the names of those Jews who had promised to side with him in the event of his success. Whether Jonathan swore truly, or whether he merely wished to revenge himself on those who had betrayed him, can never now be known; but he gave up the names of many of the richest and most powerful Jews, not only in Cyrene, but in Alexandria and Rome. Those in Cyrene, amounting, according to Josephus, to near three thousand, Catullus slew without more ado, and confiscated their wealth to the public service. Concerning the Jews of Alexandria and Rome, he sent information to the emperor, and the end of it all was a heavy blow to the pride and power of the Egyptian Jews. The decree went forth that the Temple in Egypt was to be closed, and the public worship of the Jews allowed no more.

For three hundred and forty-three years this temple had been the pride and glory of the Egyptian Jews. It was a rival to the older Temple which had just been destroyed at Jerusalem, and thus, at one stroke, the Egyptian Jews were reduced to the same position, from a religious point of view, as the Palestinian Jews whom they had despised. They were not, indeed, legally deprived of their citizenship, but practically they lost this also, and sank to the level of the native Egyptians. The site of the temple of Onion is now reduced to a more desolate condition than it was in the days when Ptolemy Philometor granted Onias leave 'to purge that temple which is fallen down at Leontopolis,' that he might build there. It is

indeed 'a place of heaps'—a deep scar on the face of the fertile earth. The lines of the double enclosure stand bare and high above the plain, and within is a mere bed of broken potsherds, from two to five feet deep. The Mohammedans, in the course of centuries, have taken away all the stones, till there is not one left upon another—only one huge granite block of the older Egyptian building (Rameses III.) and a few scattered fragments of white alabaster were there in 1893. Now, as you approach the desolate Tell across the clover plains, where the crowned hoopoes flit from furrow to furrow, and the white ibis stalks lazily among the rippling green, you meet the creaking carts, which are fast taking the place of the silent camel, laden with the very potsherds on their way to be ground into cement for the foundation of new houses.

The native Egyptians were better off under Vespasian and Titus than they had been for some time. Titus himself went to Memphis in state, to assist at the ceremony of the consecration of a new Apis, or sacred bull; and, in the reign of Vespasian, the great temple of Kneph, at Latopolis,[1] which, like most Egyptian temples, had been the slow growth of centuries, was finished building. It was a building worthy of the best times of Egyptian architecture, and the name of Vespasian was carved in the dedication over the entrance door.

In the reign of Domitian, the Roman poet Juvenal, though now in his old age, was sent in command of a cohort into Egypt, and died there. He disliked this exile, as he considered it, very much, and left an unflattering picture of the provincial Egyptians and their sacred animals.

[1] Esneh.

It was in this reign that Annianus died, and was succeeded in the patriarchate by Abilius.

Nerva, who succeeded Domitian, gained the gratitude of the Jews by remitting the poll-tax, of half a shekel a head, which had been imposed upon them since the time of the Ptolemies. The tax was, however, reimposed by a later emperor. During these reigns the Church of Egypt was at peace, and increased greatly.

CHAPTER V

NILE TOURISTS IN THE SECOND CENTURY

98 IN the earlier years of his reign, Trajan was fully occupied with the affairs of Europe; but two important works were executed at this time in Egypt. The Ptolemaic canal between the Nile and the Red Sea had fallen into disuse and disrepair, and Trajan not merely repaired but added considerably to its length by prolonging it to Babylon, *via* Scenæ Veteranorum and Heliopolis. This canal is substantially the same as the present El Khalig, though it had to be again repaired, and slightly prolonged (owing to the shifting of the river) in Mohammedan times. He also built at Babylon the great fortress which in its present ruinous state is called Kasr-el-Shamma.[1] It now encloses six of the oldest Christian churches in Cairo, but at that time the only one in existence was the present crypt of Abu Sergeh. The site of the older fortress, mentioned by Strabo, lies to the south of the Kasr-el-Shamma, near the present Deyr Bablun.

Everyone knows the celebrated letters of Pliny and Trajan respecting the Christians; and as they appear to have had no bearing on the affairs of Christians in Egypt we shall not quote them here. Trajan's policy towards the

[1] *See*, for account of Kasr-el-Shamma, Butler's *Coptic Churches*, vol. i. chap. 4.

Christians seems to have been tolerant, in the main; but the martyrdom of St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, has left a dark stain upon his name. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Trajan fresh riots began between the Greeks and Jews of Alexandria, and this swelled at length into a general rebellion of the Jews all over Egypt and Cyrene, which the prefect Lupus in vain attempted to suppress.

One Lucuas, of Cyrene, was chosen as the leader of the Jews, and for two years he maintained himself against the Roman rule, while the unhappy country suffered all the horrors of civil war. At length the emperor sent Marcius Turbo with a large army into Egypt, and after an obstinate struggle, and several pitched battles, the Jews were defeated and slain by thousands. They were now legally deprived of their citizenship, and, losing all hope of Jewish dominion, became subsequently Christians in great numbers.

Very soon after the close of this civil war Trajan died, and was succeeded by Hadrian, who, in the fourth year of his reign, set out on a prolonged and personal inspection of the different provinces of his empire.

In due course he came to Egypt, and went up the Nile, accompanied by his favourite Antinous, a European slave of great beauty. The true circumstances of the latter's death will never now be known, but a legendary version makes it a supreme act of self-sacrifice. As the Royal procession of boats came down the Nile, with its fluttering flags and triumphal music—just as similar regal and vice-regal processions have come and gone upon the same old river for five thousand years before the time of Hadrian, and near two thousand more since his day—the soul of the emperor was oppressed with superstitious fear. His

happiness and prosperity had been so great that it must needs rouse the anger of the jealous gods, and some great sacrifice must be made to appease this jealousy, ere ruin overtook him. Antinous, who loved his master above all things, discovered the reason of the cloud which overshadowed him, and delayed not to make his choice. Proudly asserting that, since he knew himself to be his master's dearest possession, it was sweet for him to die in order to insure that master's happiness, he plunged into the Nile and was drowned. Hadrian's extravagant grief is well known; how he decreed divine honours to his dead friend, and founded a city, which was called after him Antinous, near the spot where he had laid down his life. This city became afterwards the capital of the Thebaïd, and to-day its site is occupied by a little Arab village named El Bersheh. The name of Antinous was also given by the Alexandrian poet Pancrates to a new variety of lotus which he presented to the emperor on his return from the Nile. Its rarity consisted in the fact that it was rose-coloured instead of blue or white. Besides the poet Pancrates, other writers of note in Alexandria at the time of Hadrian's first visit were Apollonius Dyscolus, whose writings are almost all lost except part of a collection of Egyptian folk-lore and fairy tales; and Appian, a lawyer, who had spent several years of his life in Rome, and wrote a Roman history after his return to his native country.

In the year 131–2 another Jewish patriot, nicknamed Bar Cochba (the son of a star, or, as some say, the son of a lie), raised the standard of revolt in Palestine with temporary success. An army of Jews marched out of Egypt and Libya to join his forces, but as Tinnius Rufus, the prefect of Judæa, showed himself unequal to the occasion,

Severus was recalled from Britain, and put an end to the rebellion after a bloody struggle which lasted nearly four years.

In the year 131 also, Hadrian paid a second visit to Egypt, and this time he brought his Queen Sabina and a train of ladies with him. They went up the Nile again, Queen Sabina being specially anxious to see and hear the far-famed musical statue of Memnon, one of the great statues on the Theban plain, which we now recognise as those of Amenhotep III., and belonging to a vanished temple of his far-distant reign. When Queen Sabina visited the spot the statue was in a worse state of ruin than it is even now, the upper half lying in fragments on the ground, and no sounds were heard from the broken lips when the merry royal party gathered round it to listen for the wonder, at sunrise. A threat of the emperor's displeasure was enough for the Egyptian priests, and the musical sounds were heard greeting the dawn on the following morning. The Queen's attendants cut their names on the base of the statue, like any tourist of to-day, and one of them, Julia Balbilla (the daughter of that Claudius Balbillus who had been prefect of Egypt in the reign of Nero, and had written an Egyptian history), amused herself by cutting two or three short poems on the foot of the statue, in which she recorded her descent from King Antiochus of Commagene, and her visit to Thebes with the emperor and his wife.

On this occasion Hadrian stayed about four years in Egypt, keeping his court for the most part in Alexandria. Since his first visit to the country in 122, the Patriarch Primus had died, and been succeeded by Justus, of whom it is recorded that he was one of those baptised by St.

Mark. Justus had died the year before Hadrian's second visit to Egypt, and the patriarchal throne was now filled by Eumenes or Hymenæus, of whom little is known.

There is a vague tradition that the Christians of Alexandria suffered persecution under Trajan, and again at this time under Hadrian; but this is not borne out by any of the known facts of history. It is only too probable, however, that many Christians suffered as Jews in the suppression of the rebellions under both these emperors, for they were frequently regarded in the first and second centuries as a particularly dangerous sect of Jews. Moreover, Egypt has always been fertile in the heresies born of restless intellects, and at the time of Hadrian's second residence in Egypt, the Alexandrian Christians were divided into so many different schools that Hadrian may well be excused for the confusion of ideas into which he fell concerning them. Carpocrates, Basilides, and Valentinian were all natives of Egypt, and were then teaching and perfecting their mystic speculations in Alexandria. These men were all branded as heretics after death; but there does not seem to be any evidence that any of them were condemned by the Church in their lifetime. They all believed the fundamental truths of the Christian religion, and seem to have given offence chiefly by their attempt to graft the occult mysteries of Egyptian thought on the simple facts of the Christian religion. The speculations on the nature of the three Persons of the Trinity and the constitution and creation of the world in which they indulged, were certainly best confined, as the Egyptian priesthood had confined them, to those who had been carefully trained in such mental exercises. It must have been this form of Christianity which chiefly came

under Hadrian's notice, as the following letter by him will show:— [1]

Hadrian Augustus to Servianus the Consul—greeting.

As for Egypt, which you were praising to me, dearest Servianus, I have found its people wholly light, wavering, and flying after every breath of a report. Those who worship Serapis are Christians, and those who call themselves bishops [2] of Christ are devoted tó Serapis. There is no ruler of a Jewish synagogue, no Samaritan, no presbyter of the Christians, who is not a mathematician, an augur and a soothsayer. The very Patriarch himself, when he came into Egypt,[3] was said by some to worship Serapis, and by others to worship Christ. As a race of men they are seditious, vain and spiteful; as a body, wealthy and prosperous, of whom nobody lives in idleness. Some blow glass, some make paper, and others linen. There is work for the lame, and work for the blind; even those who have lost the use of their hands do not live in idleness. Their one God is nothing;[4] Christians, Jews, and all nations worship him. I wish this body of men was better behaved, and worthy of their number; as for that they ought to hold the chief place in Egypt. I have granted everything unto them; I have restored their old privileges, and have made them grateful by adding new ones.

Before the close of his life Hadrian became better acquainted with the Christian religion than at the time he wrote this letter. Two of the earliest 'Apologies'

[1] Some deny that this letter was written by the Emperor, and give it a slightly later date.

[2] Except the Patriarch himself, there were no bishops in Egypt, as we understand the office, till the time of Demetrius. Those under the Patriarch were priests and deacons only; but he had in Alexandria a body of priests with special privileges, answering to the Chapter of an English Cathedral.

[3] *I.e.* when he went through Egypt proper, as distinct from the town of Alexandria.

[4] *I.e.* nothing peculiar to their religion.

for the Christian religion were presented to him, one written by Quadratus, and the other by Aristides. The first of these authors can hardly have been living in the time of Hadrian, since he says in his Apology (on the testimony of Eusebius, who had read it) that some of those on whom our Lord's miracles of healing had been worked were still alive. The tract may have been presented to Hadrian by some member of the church either at Athens, Alexandria, or Rome. It is not known to what country Quadratus belonged, since he cannot be identified with the Bishop of Athens of that name in the time of Hadrian. Aristides was a Christian philosopher of Athens, and his Apology, after having been lost for centuries, was found in an Egyptian tomb within the last few years.

We find traces of Gnostic influence even in the coins of Hadrian's reign, which are remarkable both for their number and variety. Every nome or district in the country had its own coinage, some marked with Gnostic emblems, some with Egyptian, and one with the head of the deified Antinous. It has been often said of Hadrian that he built temples without statues towards the end of his reign, intending to dedicate them to Christ; but though the existence of such temples may be accepted, there is no authority in contemporary history for the intended dedication. Three years after his final departure from Egypt the reign of Hadrian and the great Sothic period of 1,460 years came to an end together.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

A.D. 138 IN the reign of Antoninus a new survey was made of all the military roads in Egypt, which is known as the Itinerary of Antoninus. These roads were six in number, two of which ran through Babylon, one from Nubia, which, after leaving Babylon, passed through the districts of the Jews to Klysma, and one from Memphis to Pelusium, which crossed the river at Babylon. Antoninus also caused a hippodrome or race-course to be built in Alexandria, and added the two gates, called the Gate of the Sun, and the Gate of the Moon, to that city. We have evidence also that there was still life left in the old religion of the country, for in this reign a new temple was built to Amon Kneph, in the Great Oasis. In this reign also—probably about the year 151—a tradition, which there is no reason to disbelieve, tells us that St. Fronto or Frontonius, weary of the world, gathered a company of the brethren together and led them into the desert of Nitria (now called Wady Natron), where he founded the first Christian Laura.[1]

[1] A Laura was distinct from a monastery in that it was a collection of separate cells, generally cut out of the rock, under an abbot elected by the ascetics themselves. They lived much more to themselves, and regulated their own self-discipline much more, than the inhabitants of a monastery could do. The community of St. Fronto appears to have died with him. The permanent settlement of Nitria began with Ammon.

In 161 Antoninus died, and was succeeded by his adopted son, Marcus Aurelius. This emperor had been carefully trained by Diognetus, an artist, in the Stoic philosophy, and particularly in a disbelief of all miracles and visions. In his reign 'it was death either to confess Christianity or to accuse another of being a Christian,' so that in the outbursts of persecution against the Christians they were generally arraigned as guilty of abstaining from the worship of the gods, or as atheists. Several Apologies were written in this reign, a second by Justin Martyr, and that known as the Epistle to Diognetus (tutor of Marcus Aurelius) which all critics unite in praising, and many rank next after the canonical epistles of the New Testament. For some centuries this Apology was attributed to Justin Martyr, and only in our own time have the labours of Cureton established the fact that he was a certain Ambrosius, 'a chief man of Greece, who became a Christian, and all his fellow councillors raised a clamour against him.' But the pleadings of Justin and Ambrosius were of no avail. In 166 or 167 Justin himself was martyred at Rome; a few years before St. Polycarp had suffered at Smyrna; and in 177 Blandina and her companions perished at Lyons. It does not seem likely that Justin Martyr had ever paid more than a passing visit to Egypt, but there was no lack of eminent Christian teachers, heretic and otherwise, in Alexandria, and many noble recruits were won from the ranks of paganism. Athenagoras (a native of Athens) filled one of the professorial chairs in the Museum, that stronghold of intellectual paganism in Alexandria. He was much interested, like all the Platonic philosophers of his time, in Christianity, and, desiring to expose its fallacies and

presumptions, he set himself seriously to study its writings. The very natural result was his own conversion to that religion. He still wore the garb of the Philosopher, and did not forsake his former studies; but he became one of the great champions of Christianity. His 'Apology' is addressed to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, and its probable date is 176–177.

Contemporary with Athenagoras was Claudius Ptolemy, the geographer, as he is called, though he was equally famous as an astronomer. He belonged to the mathematical school of Alexandria, and wrote a book, amongst other subjects, on musical harmony. He left a record of a series of observations of eclipses for eight hundred years before his time. Most of them were taken at the Assyrian Babylon, but the later ones, by the latitude and longitudes given, were probably observed at the Egyptian Babylon.

During the peaceful years which had followed the suppression of the last Jewish rebellion in 135 Christianity had increased greatly in Egypt. It was towards the close of this century that the celebrated college, known as the Catechetical School of Alexandria, was founded, but neither the date of its foundation nor the name of its first principal is undisputed. Unfortunately we know hardly anything about the reign of Marcus Aurelius in Egypt, except that in the year 172 there was a rebellion of the 'native' regiments, which, after an obstinate struggle, was put down by Avidus Cassius, at the head of the Roman legions, who afterwards (175) declared himself emperor. But before Marcus Aurelius, at the head of another army, could arrive in Egypt, he was met by the news that the army of occupation in Egypt had slain both Cassius and his son, and returned to their allegiance. Marcus con-

tinued his march, and remained some time in Alexandria, where it is reported that he won golden opinions by his clemency, and his friendly intercourse with the philosophers in Alexandria. It was during this journey, and either at Athens or Alexandria, that Athenagoras presented his Apology to the Emperor, and we hear nothing of persecution in Egypt, though the persecution of Lyons took place in the following year.

In the first year or two of the reign of Commodus we find Pantænus at the head of the Catechetical College. It seems probable that both he and his more celebrated contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, had been pupils of Athenagoras; and both, like most of the early Egyptian Christians, had been well educated in all the learning of the ancients, as well as in the truths of Christianity. At this time Julian was the Patriarch of Alexandria, having succeeded Agrippinus in 179, the last year of Marcus Aurelius. A curious story is told concerning the appointment of his successor. Julian, being at the point of death, was informed by an angel, in a vision or dream, that the man who should on the following day bring him a present of grapes had been chosen by God to succeed him in the Patriarchate. On the morrow the man appeared, and proved to be a young layman, in fact an illiterate Egyptian peasant, or fellah, who was married, and brought of the produce of his vineyard. On being informed of his election to the Patriarchate he earnestly entreated to be spared so great a responsibility, and was, we are told, consecrated by main force. He immediately applied himself, with great diligence, to remedy the defects of his education, and became one of the most learned prelates of his time. His episcopate lasted for forty-three eventful years.

One of his earliest acts was to dispatch Pantænus on a missionary journey to India. He had received an embassy from that country[1] with a request that the Patriarch of Alexandria (then famed as the most learned city in the world) would send them a teacher of the Faith, whose learning should equal his piety. Demetrius carried the request to Pantænus, who willingly consented to go himself, and left Clement in charge of the school till his return. It is recorded that he found in use among the Indians, and regarded by them as their greatest treasure, a copy of St. Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew, which they said had been brought into the country by St. Bartholomew. Jerome states, but does not give his authority, that Pantænus brought this MS. back with him to Alexandria. It is not known how long Pantænus was away, but on his return he resumed the charge of the Theological College until his death. This took place probably in the year 194; for he is stated to have lived into the reign of Severus (193–211), and cannot have lived much longer, since Clement had evidently been some years sole head of the school when the persecution broke out in 203.

The great development of Christian learning stimulated the pagan school to fresh activity. The shelves of the Alexandrian library contained at this time copies of all the ancient authors of Greece and Egypt, and fresh books were continually being added. The writing from dictation of living authors and the multiplication of copies of the works of the dead gave employment to a whole army of scribes in Alexandria. They were divided into two classes—the

[1] It should be remembered that the India of the second century was a very vague geographical name. Still we have every reason to conclude that the India above referred to is India proper.

quick writers and the book-writers—whose different functions are suggested by their names. Three of the most celebrated authors of this time—Athenæus, Julius Pollux, and Cheiron—were all natives of Naucratis. Of the former we still possess one book, called the Deipnosophist, or Table-talk of the Philosophers, which gives an amusing picture of society in Alexandria. Julius Pollux was little more than a verbal critic, but Cheiron wrote a history of the Egyptian kings and priests which is, most unfortunately, lost. Another writer of the reign of Commodus was Lucian, the author of the Dialogues, who was at this time secretary to the prefect of Egypt. One of the philosophers of the pagan schools, Celsus, an Epicurean, wrote an attack on the new religion, which had become already greater than the Jewish or pagan faiths in Egypt; but his writings are chiefly known to us through Origen's reply to his arguments. Many books also, which come under the head of 'pious frauds,'[1] were written during this reign; and many more creditable facts render it evident that Christianity, besides conquering the stronghold of learning in the world, and showing in Alexandria alone such a triad of names as Demetrius, Pantænus, and Clement, was rapidly becoming the dominant religion in Egypt. Up to this reign the Patriarch of Alexandria had been the sole bishop in Egypt, but Demetrius found it necessary to ordain three others for the more distant provinces. Another indication is found in the pathetic lament for the overthrow of the old national religion by the author of Hermes Trismegistus:—

Our land (he writes) is the temple of the world; but as wise men should foresee all things, you should know that a

[1] Many of these writings were not intended as frauds at all, but as fiction, which, in the later uncritical days, were taken for facts.

time is coming when it will seem that the Egyptians have by an unfailing piety served God in vain, and their holy religion will become void; for the divinity will return from earth to Heaven, Egypt will be forsaken, and the land which was the seat of the divinity will be void of religion. For when strangers shall possess this kingdom, religion will be neglected, and laws shall be made against piety and divine worship, with punishment on those who favour it. Then this holy seat will be full of idolatry, idols' temples and dead men's tombs. Oh Egypt, Egypt! there will remain only a feigned show of thy religion, not believed by posterity; and nought but the letters which stand engraven on thy pillars will declare thy pious deeds; and in thee will dwell the Scythians, the Indians, or some other barbarous nation. The divinity will fly to Heaven, and Egypt will be forsaken by God and man. I call upon thee, most holy river, I foretell unto thee what will come to pass. Thy waters and holy streams will be filled with blood and will overflow thy banks, so that the dead will be more numerous than the living; and he that remains alive will be known to be an Egyptian only by his language, while in his deeds he will seem a barbarian.

About this time also, it was found necessary to translate the life of Christ into Egyptian, or, as it is now called, Coptic. This Gospel according to the Egyptians, as it was entitled, has long since been lost, so that we cannot now tell from which of the four Gospels it was translated. Indeed, from the few fragments which remain to us (in Greek), it seems to have been more a compilation than a translation, and to have been so deeply tinged with Egyptian mysticism that Origen and Jerome mention it as an heretical writing. At the time, however, it circulated freely in the country without protest from any section of the learned and tolerant Church whose peace was so soon to be broken by the first recorded persecution of Christians, as such, in Egypt.

CHAPTER VII

ORIGEN

193 IN the beginning of the reign of Severus, Clement of Alexandria, as he is always called to distinguish him from his namesake of Rome, was, as we have said, head of the Catechetical School in Alexandria. The full name of this remarkable man was Titus Flavius Clemens, which points to a connection with the imperial family; but nothing is certainly known of his birth, though he is generally called an Alexandrian. He was converted from Paganism after some years of travel and study, and afterwards became the intimate friend and pupil of Pantænus. During the absence of the latter in India he took charge of the Theological College, and on his death succeeded him as Principal. About this time, also, he was ordained priest; indeed, with the exception of Origen, who was not ordained till after his connection with the school had been severed, the Principal seems generally to have been a clergyman.

Clement was not only great as a teacher, he was a voluminous writer, and five of his books have been preserved to the present day, besides numerous fragments. The great truth, which he was one of the first to proclaim, and which he brings out in many different ways, is that Christianity is the heir of all the past, and the interpreter of the future. Not an isolated fact, nor in opposition to

earlier manifestations, but the fulfilment and exponent of all that had been earlier revealed or rightly taught in the schools of Jew or Gentile, in the philosophies of Greece and Egypt. He quotes expressly and continuously not only from the Old and New Testaments, but from the books of the Apocrypha, and from what may be called the Christian Apocrypha—the Epistles of Barnabas and Clement of Rome, the preaching of Peter, the Pastor of Hermas, and the Gospel according to the Hebrews. The first two of these he regards as having equal weight with the Canonical Epistles.

But these tranquil times in Egypt, this seventy years peace between the rebellions and oppressions of the Jews, and the persecutions of the Christians, during which almost the whole country had become Christian, were now drawing to an end. Since his accession Severus had been occupied with incessant wars against rival claimants to the throne, and had taken little notice of Egypt, while he had shown himself absolutely favourable to the Christians, even employing them as servants for his son. It is not known what made him turn his attention to the suppression and persecution of the only peaceable people in his Empire, so soon as he had reduced the fighting elements to subjection; but about the year 202 he published an edict forbidding future conversions to Judaism or Christianity.

Immediately after the promulgation of this edict he visited Egypt,[1] and travelled up the country as far as Thebes. Apparently he considered the widespread and learned Christianity he found there a danger to the Roman

[1] Severus was born at Leptis Magna, which was then included in the territory of Egypt.

Empire, for coincidently with his arrival the persecution became far more severe, and continued for some time after his departure. The prefect, or viceroy as Eusebius calls him, Lætus, carried out his master's orders *con amore*, dragging his victims from all parts of Egypt. Alexandria itself, as the stronghold of Christianity, suffered most. Demetrius stood firm at his post, but, apparently with his sanction, the school was temporarily closed; the pupils dispersed to their homes, and Clement saved himself by a hasty flight from the country. He lived for some years, and most of his books were published after this time, but no particulars are known of his future life and death.

The muster roll of Egyptian martyrs, even of those whose names have come down to us (an inappreciable fraction of the whole), is so long that, in no persecution will it be possible to do more than give one or two of the principal names among them. Potamiæna has always been remembered for her youth and beauty, for the prolonged torture to which she was subjected in the hope of making her recant, before she was finally committed to the flames with her mother Marcella; and for the fact that her courage and constancy so wrought upon the officer who had charge of her execution, that not long after her death he gave himself up to the authorities as a Christian, and was beheaded. It is curious to observe that, according to all accounts, it was always the women who suffered most cruelly in these persecutions; the men being often beheaded without additional torture. Among these men was Leonides, whose title of honour for all time has been that he was the father of Origen. Beyond this, indeed, little is known about him, though some authorities by no means contemporary, have described him as a

bishop. If so, he must have been one of those recently appointed for the provinces by Demetrius. He had a wife and seven sons, of whom Origen, the eldest, was, at the time of his father's arrest, about 15 or 16. He had already attracted notice in Alexandria as one of the most promising pupils in the college, and bearing also the highest character for good conduct and earnest faith, he was the joy of his parents' hearts. When Leonides was arrested Origen was apparently away from the house, and returned to find his mother and the younger boys in the depths of despair. The poor mother's feelings may be imagined when, on pouring out her sad story to her eldest son, he immediately declared his intention of giving himself up to the authorities and joining his father in a glorious martyrdom. Her passionate tears and entreaties seem to have kept him from immediate action, perhaps it was already too late in the day, and in the night the unhappy woman stole away every fragment of clothing belonging to her son while he slept, and kept him so a prisoner, till he had promised not to forsake her without necessity. From this loving confinement the boy sent a letter to his father in the prison, entreating him not to be influenced by any fear for them or their future. Eusebius, indeed, had made a collection of over a hundred letters written by Origen during his life, but like so much else, they have perished in the burnt libraries of Egypt and Palestine.

At length the news came that Leonides was beheaded, his property confiscated to the imperial treasury; and Origen found himself left penniless, with a mother to support, and six younger brothers to bring up. A certain lady of great wealth and influence, whose name is not

given, exerted all her efforts to protect the Christians during that time of fear and trouble in Alexandria. Both the secrecy which shrouds her, and the immunity which she seems to have enjoyed, make it likely that this lady was not herself an acknowledged Christian; but her purse and house were open not only to the members of the orthodox Church, but also to heretics both from Egypt and Antioch.

The persecution lasted for some years, and during that time Origen owed his immunity in great measure to the fact that he was known as a *protégé* of this lady. For after his father's death he concealed himself no longer, but went boldly to visit the confessors who thronged the prisons, rendering to all such services as were possible, and strengthening their faith. The Patriarch Demetrius took a great interest in the boy, and encouraged him not only to continue his own studies, but found him pupils even in these dangerous times, whose fees were the principal support of the poverty-stricken household. Little by little in fact, though they did not venture to reassemble in the college buildings, the whole school collected round this lad who had so lately been one of its principal scholars. It is difficult to realise the daily life of the Egyptians under these persecutions. They seem to have been generally intermittent; a fierce spasm of fury, when men and women were taken almost at hazard from the Christian population, and many of them tortured and murdered almost at once. Then the rest would be left to languish in the prisons, severely treated or not, as the caprice of the moment might dictate, but often allowed to communicate freely with their friends, and receive comforts from them. The routine of life, the buying and the selling, the amusements and

business of the city, would go on as before; and the Christians went to and fro among their Jewish and Pagan neighbours, none knowing when his turn might come, or what might be the fate of those already in prison. Then the news would be whispered among them, 'Have you heard? So and so has been arrested; they say he will never hold out'; or 'What a terrible loss; can nothing be done?' as another and another disappeared, till the prisons grew too full, or a fresh popular outbreak led to a fresh crowd of executions. And all this time the peasant-born old Patriarch, and the highly educated lad Origen, with many others, went sturdily to and fro on their daily labours, and no one laid hands on them, though often they must have been in imminent danger. No fewer than five of the pupils of the Catechetical School, who continued to come to Origen for instruction, were one after another arrested; and, after weary days of insult and imprisonment, were led out to die for the faith which the brave lads refused to renounce. The first of these five was Plutarch, brother to another pupil Heraclas, who by some means escaped arrest, and lived to be head of the college, and afterwards Patriarch of Alexandria. Origen stayed by his friend to the last, and pressed forward to give him a final kiss of farewell on the place of execution in spite of the howling mob, who shouted for his arrest, and pelted him with stones; yet he escaped. The other pupils were Severus who was burnt to death, Heraclides and Heron who were beheaded, and another Severus who suffered prolonged torture before the sword set him free.

After about two years of this life, Demetrius formally appointed Origen head of the college which had refused to be dispersed, and of which he had had practical charge ever

since the beginning of the persecution. This made Origen a still more conspicuous mark for hatred on the part of the pagan populace, but Demetrius seems to have trusted with good reason to the secret, yet powerful, protection under which Origen lived. His danger, constantly imminent, lay in the chance of being murdered in the streets by the mob, not in the likelihood of arrest by the authorities. Eusebius says that 'the persecution against him daily blazed forth with such virulence that the whole city of Alexandria could no longer contain him as he removed from house to house, driven about in every direction, on account of the great number of those that had been brought over by him to the true faith.' And yet even the mob showed itself at times sensible of the charm of this lad, who daily defied them all, yet not with railing, but with ready wit and even temper. Epiphanius relates that one day the mob seized him in the street and bore him in a tempestuous procession to the great temple of Serapis. Here by main force, but apparently without real violence, they gave him the tonsure,[1] clothed him in the white robe of a priest of the temple, and then brought him out, and held him on the top of the great flight of steps. Here they bade him distribute the palms to the throng of idol worshippers who laughed and applauded below. Origen took the palm branches and offered them to the people, crying aloud as he did so: 'Come and receive the palms, not of idols, but of the Lord Jesus Christ.' It is a pleasant scene to dwell upon in that gloomy and painful time: the great temple fortress, dark against the blue of an Egyptian sky; the court below, full of the laughing, hooting, many-coloured, oriental mob, such as one may see now at the

[1] A mark then of the pagan priesthood; not permitted to Christians.

procession of the Mahmal; the majestic flight of steps swarming with more insistent pagans laden with the graceful branches, and in the midst of them, that one youthful figure with the strong sunlight on his white robe and smiling face, holding up the palm, and striking silence on the crowd with his clear, dauntless call to the worship of Christ.

Up till the time of his formal appointment as head of the school, Origen had taught not only Christianity, but all the branches of learning and science in which he had himself been educated. Before the persecution broke out, he and many other Christian youths had studied not only in the Theological College of the Christians, but in the pagan school of Ammonius Saccus, one of the most learned professors in Alexandria. 'But when,' says Eusebius, 'he saw a greater number of pupils coming, the instruction of them having been committed to him entirely by Demetrius, the bishop of the Church, he thought that to teach literature and philology was inconsistent with the study of Divine truth (in his new position), and without delay he abandoned the school of philosophy as useless and an obstruction to his sacred studies.' This opinion he subsequently saw reason to modify, and returned to his studies in the ancient learning with redoubled diligence; but meanwhile he sold all his old school books and the copies which he had himself written of books in the library to a man who allowed him in return four oboli[1] a day, upon which he lived. Indeed, he seems at this time to have plunged into that passionate enthusiasm of self-denial and self-sacrifice which has always been so striking a

[1] An obol is a small copper coin of uncertain value. Crusé rates it as a penny, Mommsen as a farthing of our money.

characteristic of religious Egyptians, and which denies all lawful scope to the exercise of the reasoning faculties. His real genius, his humility, and may we add, his sense of humour, saved him from that flight to a desert tomb in search of death in life which was the logical consequence for so many Egyptian saints of such premises, and eventually brought him up again into a clearer and healthier atmosphere; but meanwhile he had sorely wasted his powers and branded himself with a disability which no after-repentance could remove. Yet, how touching is the story of those early days, when he strove to fulfil literally every precept in the New Testament, when he refused to own two garments, went barefoot winter and summer, allowed himself only the bread, water, and uncooked green food of the poorest Egyptian peasant, and denied himself even all those literary studies which had been his greatest pleasure. Nor even here did he draw the line in his literal interpretation of Scripture. He was but a youth, with the passions of a youth, and when his duties in these troubled times threw him into constant familiar intercourse with both sexes at all hours, he suffered from temptation, and determined to put himself beyond all possibility of failure and suspicion in the way suggested by a certain verse in the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew.

We can imagine the growing concern and perplexity with which the simple-minded old Patriarch who had thanked God for his wife, and brought the fruits of his vineyard to offer to the Church, must have watched this new development in the character of the brilliant youth whom he loved and honoured. In particular he was aghast at Origen's culminating act of self-sacrifice, not only as an abstract principle, but also for the practical reason that, in

the Patriarch's mind it put an end to all idea of admitting Origen, like his predecessors Clement and Pantænus, to the priesthood. Though up to this time there had been no formal enactment of a canonical law on this subject, the general opinion of the Church was clear and strong. Moreover, by his act Origen had made himself amenable to the civil law of the empire, which reckoned it as murder.[1] By a Canon of Nicea it is enacted that any priest who has mutilated himself in this manner 'should cease from his ministrations.' In later days Origen made a touching confession of his error on this point, by the words of his comment on the passage in question.

Through the whole seven years of this persecution, the Christians of Rome, and particularly the Christian attendants in the palace of the Emperor, seem to have been left unmolested. They were probably, though a numerous, a comparatively uninfluential body; and did not constitute in the opinion of the Emperor the same danger to the State that a rich and learned kingdom like Egypt, keenly conscious of her lost political and present intellectual eminence, might become, if once united by the ties of a common religion. In Carthage, Antioch, and the whole province of Egypt, Christianity must be put down; in the Capital, under the shadow of the Court and Army, it might be despised and tolerated. It was probably during a lull of the persecution in Alexandria that Origen went on his short visit to the sister Church of Rome, and on his return, or perhaps before his departure, Heraclas, who was now in priest's orders, was associated with him in the charge of the school. About this time Origen permitted himself to learn Hebrew in order to fit himself for the

[1] *See* Mommsen, p. 228, vol. ii.

compilation of the Hexapla, which was one of his great works, not published however till years after this time. This was a six-fold Bible arranged in parallel columns, the first giving the Hebrew text, the second the same in Greek characters, the third was the translation of Aquilla,[1] the fourth that of Symmachus, an Ebionite Christian who lived in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, or as some authorities say under Severus. He lived and wrote, it is believed, in Palestine, but Origen must have known the translation of Symmachus well, before he found the copy which long afterwards Palladius describes as having seen endorsed in Origen's handwriting: 'This book I found in the house of Juliana the Virgin in Cæsarea when I was hiding there; who said that she had received it from Symmachus himself, the interpreter of the Jews.' The fifth was the edition known as the Septuagint, and the sixth that of Theodotion, a native of Ephesus, who wrote about the year 180. Irenæus states that he was a convert from paganism to Christianity. His translation was of the Old Testament only, and is believed not to have included the book of Lamentations. It was collated with various anonymous manuscripts which, as Eusebius says, Origen searched up and traced to I know not what ancient lurking places, where they had lain concealed from remote times, and brought them to the light. In which, when it was doubtful to him from what author they came, he only added the remark that he had found this translation at Nicopolis, near Actium, 'but this other translation in such a place.' In the Hexapla indeed of the Psalms, after those four noted editions, he adds not only a fifth, but a sixth and seventh

[1] A native of Pontus, employed in public works at Jerusalem under Hadrian, and converted to Judaism, or as some say to Christianity.

translation, and in one it is remarked that it was discovered at Jericho in a tub in the times of Antonine (Caracalla), the son of Severus.

The Hexapla, as Origen wrote it, perished like so many other precious volumes; but his recension of the Septuagint was constantly copied from the original MSS. preserved at Cæsarea in the time of Eusebius and Pamphilius, and came into common use for public reading. Early in the seventh century Paul, Bishop of Pella, translated this edition of the Septuagint into Syriac, and for more than 1,000 years a copy of this translation was kept in one of the monasteries of the Nitrian desert. It is now in the British Museum, but in an incomplete state.

In the prosecution of such a work as this, and as his fame spread more and more, Origen gradually learned how mistaken had been his earlier self-maiming both of body and mind, and set himself to rectify his error as far as possible. He could not take back that birthright of manhood which he had so recklessly surrendered, but he returned with avidity to his studies in science and literature. Indeed, it afterwards became necessary for him to defend his secular studies against the censure of the narrow-minded and ignorant, and we have still part of the letter in which he did so. He writes:

When I had devoted myself wholly to the word, and my fame went abroad concerning my proficiency; as I was sometimes visited by heretics, sometimes by those who were conversant with the studies of the Greeks, especially those that were pursuing philosophy, I was resolved to examine both the opinions of the heretics and those works of the philosophers who sometimes speak of the truth. This we have also done in imitation of Pantænus, by whom so many have been benefited before us, and who was not meanly furnished with erudition

like this. In this I have also followed the example of Heraclas, who has now a seat in the presbytery of Alexandria, who I have found persevered five years with a teacher of philosophy before I began to attend to these studies.

And one of his most celebrated pupils in later years (Gregory Thaumaturgus) wrote of his master's method:

There was no subject forbidden to us, nothing hidden or inaccessible. We were allowed to become acquainted with every doctrine, barbarian or Greek, on things spiritual or evil, divine and human; traversing with all freedom and investigating the whole circuit of knowledge, and satisfying ourselves with the full enjoyment of all the pleasures of the soul.

Besides the Hexapla, Origen began during this time that long series of commentaries on the books of the Bible, most of which are long since lost to us, though they were well known in the days of Eusebius. As the fame of the great Christian teacher of Alexandria, who seemed to bear a charmed life through all the troubles of that unhappy city, spread more and more through the civilised world, people came or sent to him from all countries. Eusebius mentions three separate expeditions to Arabia. It must be remembered that 'Arabia,' like India, was in these days a name of wide and vague significance. The town of Bostra, Botzra, or Bosrah, is in an oasis of the Syrian desert, now called the Hauran, about four days' journey to the south of Damascus.

The earliest of his expeditions took place during these years (from 203 to 215). On this first occasion it was the Governor of Arabia who sent letters, both to the Prefect of Egypt and the Patriarch of Alexandria, desiring that the man Origen might be sent to him without delay, to explain

to him the doctrines of Christianity. It is extremely improbable that while the persecution continued such a message could have been openly sent from one governor to another. But in 211 Severus died, and the Christians of Egypt once more breathed freely. His son and successor, best known by his nickname of Caracalla, was by his early training and associates rendered favourable to Christianity, and with his accession the persecution came to an end. The date of Origen's first visit to Arabia may therefore be fixed about the year 212-13. He left Heraclas in charge of the school during his absence, which did not last very long. One Beryllus was appointed bishop of Bostra in Arabia, probably consecrated by Demetrius as head of the mission in that country. Origen could not be spared to remain there, even if it were not evident that Demetrius considered him, with all respect for his sanctity and learning, ineligible for admission to the priesthood.

Caracalla was the kind of man whom we should now call, with more signification than strict accuracy perhaps, a Levantine. His father was half Gaul, half African; his mother a Syrian woman, and this mixed origin well accords with the mixture of deceitful cunning, supple cleverness, and outbursts of savagery apparent in his character. In one of these latter he killed his brother, in their mother's presence, the year after they had jointly succeeded to the throne. Incidentally, and desiring only to increase his revenue, he changed the whole status of the Egyptian Christians at one stroke. A certain tax was imposed upon Roman citizens, from which aliens and serfs were free. Caracalla doubled the amount of this tribute, and extended the franchise to all the provinces. Henceforth, the long oppressed Egyptian, Carthaginian or

Syrian could hold up his head on equal terms with the dominant race. If a Christian, though his life might still, at any moment, be declared forfeit to the State, he could no longer, unless actually a slave, be crucified, or thrown to wild beasts. His tortures must be only such as Roman citizens were liable to, and his final death must be by the sword.

It has already been mentioned that to the mocking spirit of the Alexandrians, whether Christian or Pagan, no emperor, living or dead, had any sacredness about him; and many bitter jests and unflattering nicknames had been bestowed in turn upon the different Cæsars. Caracalla had suffered more than any of his predecessors at their tongues, and though he affected to despise their sayings, in reality they sank deep into his heart, and he was but waiting a favourable opportunity for revenge. In 215 he was in Syria, and announced his intention of visiting Alexandria. The inhabitants of that city, grateful for the three years of freedom from persecution which they had enjoyed under this emperor, forgetful of the sharp sayings in which they had signified their disapproval of his murder of his brother and other crimes, and ready enough to show loyalty by festivities, and public spectacles, made all ready to greet him with honour; and crowds flocked into the city to witness the daily fêtes and hail him with acclamations during his visit.

When he announced that, having already a Macedonian phalanx, and a Spartan phalanx, he was about to honour the chief city of Egypt by the formation of an Alexandrian phalanx, the citizens greeted the idea with joyful readiness, and on the appointed day, thousands of young men ranged themselves on the plain outside the city, for the

Emperor's inspection before they were enrolled, and given arms. It was a public holiday, and the friends and relations of the young men crowded out from the city in the bright sunshine to see the show. The regular army was drawn in close ranks round the parade ground, while Caracalla with his guards rode down the lines of volunteers, greeted with loyal acclamations. Then he withdrew, with the expected signal to the callous mercenaries, who well knew what butcher's work was expected of them. They levelled their spears, and charged from all sides upon the defenceless multitude. The shouts of joy and sounds of music were changed to shrieks of rage and despair, as the young men and their friends were butchered in cold blood, or thrust half dead to be drowned in the ditches and canals which led to the sea. It is said that the waters of the Nile flowed red to the sea with the blood of the sufferers. One or two terrified fugitives escaped, and, making their way to the city, struck consternation into all hearts with the news. No one knew what might happen next, and it seemed probable that this might be the first act of a more terrible persecution than any that had yet been known. It was said that the legions would be let loose on the city next, and that the Emperor had specially ordered the dissolution of the academies. All who could do so fled hurriedly from the city, and Eusebius, who does not mention Caracalla by name, but says of this terrible episode that 'a considerable war broke out in the city,' mentions that Origen was among those who made their escape out of Alexandria, and, 'not thinking it would be safe to stay in Egypt, came to Palestine, and took up his abode in Cæsarea.' Demetrius and Heraclas remained, and the Christians soon discovered that the rage

of the Emperor was not specifically directed against them, though his revenge did not end here. He stopped the public games, and the allowance of corn to the citizens; also, to lessen the dangers of rebellion, he built fortifications between the city proper and the great palace quarter called the Bruchium. He encouraged the dying religion of ancient Egypt, and built a temple to Isis in Rome. Caracalla did not stay long in Alexandria, and two years afterwards was assassinated by Macrinus.

Meanwhile Origen had been received with the utmost honour in Cæsarea, so much so, that, in addition to his professorial lectures on week days, he was asked by Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, who had been a fellow pupil of Origen's, and Theocistus, Bishop of Cæsarea, to preach publicly in the churches. When this came to the ears of Demetrius in Alexandria, he wrote to remonstrate with the two bishops for permitting a layman, even though he were Origen, to preach in the church. The bishops wrote back in respectful defence, quoting precedents for the course they had taken; but the stout old Patriarch was not to be moved. He next sent letters by deacons of the Church to Origen himself, exhorting him to cease these irregular practices and return, now that all was quiet again, to his proper work in Alexandria. Origen, with that humility which is one of the most beautiful traits in his character, at once obeyed, and returned to Alexandria.

Macrinus only reigned two months, but during that time he recalled the Prefect of Egypt, and sent Basilianus, a friend of his, with Marcus Secundus as second in command. The latter should be noted as the first senator that had ever held command in Egypt.

Caracalla had left no son, but his mother's sister, Julia Moesa, who was a Phœnician, had two daughters, each of whom had one son. These three women, Julia Moesa, Julia Soëmia, and Julia Mammea, had lived at the Roman Courts during the lifetime of Caracalla, but on his murder they were compelled to take refuge in Syria. Here they formed a successful plot to regain the power which had been lost to their family. Julia Soëmia gave out that Caracalla was the real father of her son. This boy had about six imperial names, but, like his predecessor, is generally known by a nickname. He was called Heliogabalus, or Elagabalus, in reference to his Syrian religion. The Roman legions in Syria readily acknowledged the boy, and received him, with his mother and grandmother, into their camp. A pitched battle between the followers of Macrinus and Heliogabalus decided the sovereignty in favour of the latter. But in Alexandria peace was not restored for some time. Every day the rival parties fought in the streets, till at length Marius Secundus was killed, and the prefect fled the country.

The four years' reign of Heliogabalus were evil days for most of the Roman world, but after the first, they were times of peace in Egypt. Origen continued his teaching and writing labours with renewed zeal; Demetrius, who never seems to have left his post for a single day, applied himself with greater diligence and freedom to the affairs of the Church; and the new pagan school of philosophy, founded by Ammonius Saccas,[1] grew and flourished.

[1] That Ammonius Saccas founded the School of the Alexandrian Platonists, and that not only Plotinus and Longinus, but the Christians, Origen and Heraclas, and others, were his pupils, is generally accepted by all writers. Opinions differ, however, whether Ammonius Saccas was himself at any time of his life a Christian.

About this time Origen made the acquaintance of a man of wealth and position who is called Ambrose 'of Alexandria'; but if he had been a native we should probably have heard of him before the time of Origen's return from Palestine. It seems more likely that he was one of the friends whom Origen made in Palestine. The warm affection which existed between them from this time till the death of Ambrose had an important influence on the life of Origen. Ambrose had belonged to one of the numerous heretical sects before he met Origen, who brought him into the fold of the Church. Many of Origen's principal books were written at the instigation and the cost of Ambrose, who maintained a staff of shorthand-writers and book-writers (some of whom were girls) for this purpose.

In 222 Alexander Severus became sole emperor. This youth was the son of Julia Mammea, who had returned to Rome with her sister Julia Soëmia on the accession of the latter's son Heliogabalus. The soldiery had grown tired of the savagery of their young ruler, and a strong party grew up in favour of his cousin Alexander. It came to open war at last, the two sisters, each with her son, placed themselves at the head of the rival armies, Soëmia and her son were slain, and Mammea's son took the throne.

Alexander Severus was then about 17, and was one of the best of the Roman Emperors. His short reign of eleven years shows a constant struggle with the lawlessness and corruption of the empire, and a brave effort to check the advance of their ancient enemy the Persians, who at this time experienced a wonderful renewal of national life. He protected the Christians, gave judgment in favour of

their competency to own land, and though he did not openly forsake the Syrian worship, in which he had been educated, he regarded Christ as one of the greatest teachers that ever lived, and set up his statue, in company with those of Abraham, Orpheus, Alexander the Great, and Apollonius of Tyana, in his private chapel! By a confusion of names, not unnatural, when we remember that each emperor was known by a different name, or nickname, in almost every province of the empire, Alexander Severus was represented in later times as a persecutor of the Christians; but the evidence, not only of his contemporaries, but of all the historians for more than two centuries after his death, disproves this calumny. In his reign the philosophers at Alexandria, both Christian and Pagan, pursued their labours in peace. Plotinus, who was a native of Lycopolis (Assiout), brought the principles of neo-Platonism to their highest development, and Herodian worked at his history.

Origen appears to have been absent twice from Alexandria during this period, once when he was sent for to Mammea, the mother of the Emperor, and once when he was sent on affairs of the Church to Greece. This second journey was a crisis in his life, and ended in a rupture between him and his old friend and bishop, Demetrius. It is a sad story, and neither of them can be entirely absolved from blame, though much of the bitterness of the dispute was due to the partisanship of their different friends.

It is clear that Demetrius, while respecting the enthusiasm which had led to Origen's mistaken act of self-sacrifice in his youth, had all along regarded it as disqualifying him for the priesthood, which otherwise he was

so well qualified to fill. Origen as evidently desired ordination, but till now had respected the decision of his bishop. Demetrius had again and again shown his confidence in Origen by the whole tenor of his behaviour, and by sending him, layman as he was, on special embassies connected with the affairs of the Church. It is probable that Ambrose and others of Origen's admirers were inclined to resent this exclusion from the divine office of the greatest theologian living, by a patriarch who up to the time of his unexpected elevation had been an illiterate farmer; and they urged him to defy Demetrius, and go to the Palestinian bishops, who were his old schoolfellows, and only too anxious to ordain him. However this may be, Origen, instead of going straight to Greece on the mission entrusted to him, went on his way to Palestine, and was ordained at Cæsarea.

Demetrius was very angry at this flat defiance of his authority. He wrote to those concerned in it in no measured terms, and when, some months afterwards, Origen returned to Alexandria, he soon found that his position had become untenable. He might have felt himself justified in the course which he had taken, but he was much too great both in mind and character not to see clearly that it would be wrong under the circumstances for him to remain in Alexandria. He resigned all connection with the Theological College, and prepared to leave the city altogether. It is difficult to estimate what scandal and disgrace might have been brought upon the Church if Origen's nobility and humility of character had not thus led him frankly to accept the consequences of his own actions, and withdraw into voluntary exile. Unfortunately Demetrius did not show the same magnanimity.

He had a right to refuse to receive into his diocese a priest whom he had always declared ineligible for ordination, and who had received orders from the bishops of another country in defiance of his known opinion. But he did not stop here. Though Origen, in accordance with the decision of the Council of Bishops and Presbyters whom Demetrius called together, resigned his connection with the Catechetical School, and left his native country, Demetrius was angered beyond measure at the kind of triumph with which he was received by his friends the Palestinian bishops, who had probably foreseen what would happen. To judge from the passage in which Eusebius alludes to their action, they seem to have paraded their affectionate admiration for Origen, and their contempt of the opinion of Demetrius, in a way which gave the latter some excuse for indignation. But even this cannot excuse the Patriarch's action. Smarting at the desertion and defiance of the man, who, after all, owed much to him, and whom he had loved from boyhood, he assembled his bishops and formally excommunicated Origen; sending letters to all the churches afterwards to notify them of the fact. Origen felt this excessive harshness keenly, as may be seen from the following extract, written after he was settled at Cæsarea:—

After this we were drawn forth from Egypt, for God rescued us, who led from thence his people. Afterwards when my enemy urged most bitter war against me, by his fresh letters, which were truly at enmity with the gospel, and roused all the winds, reason exhorted me to stand to the contest, and to save the ruling principle within me lest troublous disputes should avail to bring the storm even upon my own soul, rather than to compose the rest of my commentary before my understanding received calm. Further,

the absence of my usual shorthand-writers prevented me from dictating my meditations. But now, since God has quenched the many fiery darts which have been hurled against me, so that their force is spent, and my soul, familiarised with the things which have happened because of the Heavenly Word, is constrained to endure more easily the assaults that have been made upon me; having as it were, obtained some fair weather, I wish to defer no longer the dictation of what remains.

The sentence of excommunication was treated as a dead letter by the Bishops of Arabia, Greece, Cappadocia, and Palestine. Origen exercised in Palestine all the functions of a priest, in addition to his continued labours as a teacher and theologian. He seems, however, to have been troubled sometimes, in his sensitive humility, lest after all he had done wrong. In Jerusalem he read out for his text: 'But unto the wicked, saith God, Why dost thou take my covenant in the mouth, seeing thou hatest to be reformed, and hast cast My words behind Me.' Then, apparently struck by a bitter consciousness that his old friend and bishop would have applied such words to himself, he burst into such a passion of tears, that he was unable to proceed with his sermon; and all the congregation wept with him.

Origen finally settled at Cæsarea, where Ambrose, with his wife and family, at once joined him, and pupils thronged to him. His two schoolfellows who had been his dear friends in Egypt, Heraclas and Dionysius, never slackened in their personal affection for him, but on the actual point in dispute they must have shared the opinion of Demetrius, for though, in Origen's lifetime, they both succeeded to the Patriarchate, they neither of them

offered to recall him to Alexandria. Not long after this melancholy quarrel with his old favourite, Demetrius died, at a great age, having seen no less than six successive emperors ascend the throne. Heraclas succeeded him in the Patriarchate, and Dionysius became head of the Catechetical School.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PERSECUTION OF DECIUS

235 Two years after Origen's departure from his native land, the Emperor Alexander was murdered by Maximinus—a barbarian giant, who owed almost everything to him, even the position in the army which enabled him to become the idol of those fickle soldiers, and organise the conspiracy against his master. As usual, the Senate could do nothing against the choice of the army, and Maximin was acknowledged as emperor. He at once commenced hostilities against the Christians, apparently because they had been specially trusted and favoured by Alexander. The persecution was in Italy and Palestine. Ambrosius and another friend and pupil of Origen at Cæsarea were arrested and carried prisoners to Germany. Origen escaped, and took refuge in Cæsarea of Cappadocia, whose bishop, Firmilianus, was also his warm friend and admirer. Here he lived for some time in the house of a rich and cultivated woman named Juliana. In Egypt Heraclas retired from Alexandria to escape the persecution of Maximin, but several Egyptians, both from Alexandria and the provinces, lost their lives in it.

The tyrannous usurpation did not last very long. Before three years were over a revolt in Mauritania raised the two Gordians, father and son, to the Imperial

throne for three months. On their deaths, the son in battle, the father by his own hand, Maximus and Balbinus were elected, and in the war which followed Maximus was assassinated by his own soldiers. The mob and the army however were not yet content. The Gordian family were the idols of the hour. The two Emperors who had been elected by the Senate were murdered in the palace at Rome, and Gordian the Third, a boy of fifteen, was invested with the Roman purple. On his accession the land had rest from persecution, though not from war. Origen returned from Cappadocia and rejoined Ambrose, whose life was probably saved by the reversal of authority consequent on these revolutions. The six years' reign of Gordian call for no special remark. They were years of peace and apparently of growth on the part of the Christian Church in Egypt, for we are told that Heraclas created several new sees. Some writers have asserted that Heraclas was the first Egyptian Patriarch who was called Pope; but this is a mistake, the title was in use in Egypt from the earliest times, and was originally applied to the priests as well as the bishop. Julius Africanus visited Egypt at this time.

It was probably during the later years of the reign of Gordian that Origen took his second journey into Arabia where Beryllus, Bishop of Bostra, had fallen into heresy, and was teaching that our Lord did not exist before his human birth. Origen had many discussions with him, and finally Beryllus was convinced of his error, so that a fresh schism in the Church was averted. Origen must have heard a good deal during this visit of a certain Philip, a native of Bostra, whose father is called 'a noted robber chief'—in other words, a Bedawi of the desert. This Philip had been made

prætorian prefect, and was already intriguing against his imperial master. All through the reign of Gordian the Persians had been harassing the eastern frontier of the empire, and at last Gordian determined to march against them in person. So little was a defeat expected that Plotinus, the Platonic philosopher of Alexandria, joined the expedition in hopes of learning something of the Persian philosophy. But Philip chose this opportunity to betray his master; Gordian was slain, at the age of twenty-one, and Philip, concluding a hasty peace with the Persians, returned to Rome. Here also came Plotinus, who had escaped with difficulty from the rout of the army, and being joined by others of the learned men of Alexandria, he lived and taught at Rome for the rest of his life.

Eusebius calls Philip a Christian, but as he afterwards himself mentions Constantine as the first Christian emperor, and as Philip undoubtedly persecuted the Christians, at any rate in Egypt, it seems probable that this is a mistake. Just before the persecution began Heraclas died, and was succeeded by Dionysius, who had been head of the Theological College.

Dionysius was a man of good family, who was educated as a pagan. It is said that one day a poor Christian woman lent him the Epistles of St. Paul to read, and they interested him so much that he bought the book and asked if the Christians had any more books of the same kind which he could borrow. She advised him to apply to the priests, who readily lent him other books. He became a Christian and a pupil of Origen. It seems clear that he had been a married man, if his wife were not still alive at the time of his elevation to the Patriarchate. Dionysius was one of the most celebrated men of his time, and many of his

letters are still preserved, some of which will be here inserted, as giving a vivid picture of these troubled times. His successor, as head of the Catechetical School, was Pierus, a learned priest and writer. Pierus was also celebrated for his eloquence, which gained for him the name of the younger Origen. Some say that he suffered martyrdom; if so, it must have been in the persecution of Valerian. The date of his death is nowhere given, but when Theonas became Patriarch, in 282, the head of the School was Theognostus, of whom little is known. The celebrated Pamphilius of Cæsarea received his education at the Alexandrian College under Pierus.

The outbreak of persecution under Philip appears to have been confined to the Egyptian province, and to have been due rather to local bigotry than to any State enactment. Dionysius, writing afterwards to Fabian, Bishop of Antioch, gives an account of it as follows:—

The persecution with us did not begin with the imperial edict, but preceded it a whole year. And a certain prophet and poet, inauspicious to the city whoever he was, excited the mass of the heathen against us, stirring them up to their native superstition. Stimulated by him, and taking full liberty to exercise any kind of wickedness, they considered this the only piety, and the worship of their demons, viz., to slay us. First then, seizing a certain aged man named Metra, they called upon him to utter impious expressions, and as he did not obey, they beat his body with clubs, and pricked his face and eyes; after which they led him away to the suburbs, where they stoned him .... Then, with one accord, all rushed upon the houses of the pious, and whomsoever of their neighbours they knew, they drove thither in all haste, and despoiled and plundered them, setting apart the more valuable of the articles for themselves; but the more common and wooden furniture they threw about and burnt in the roads, presenting

a sight like a city taken by the enemy. But the brethren retired, and gave way, and like those to whom Paul bears witness, they also regarded the plunder of their goods with joy. And I know not whether any besides one, who fell into their hands, has thus far denied the Lord. But they also seized that admirable virgin, Apollonia, then in advanced age, and beating her jaws, they broke out all her teeth, and kindling a fire before the city, threatened to burn her alive, unless she would repeat their impious expressions. She appeared at first to shrink a little, but when suffered to go, she suddenly sprang into the fire and was consumed. They also seized a certain Serapion in his own house, and after torturing him with the severest cruelties, and breaking all his limbs, threw him headlong from an upper storey. But there was no way, no public road, no lane, where we could walk, whether by day or night; as they all, at all times and places, cried out, whoever would refuse to repeat those impious expressions, that he should be immediately dragged forth and burnt. These things continued to prevail for the most part after this manner. But as the sedition and civil war overtook the wretches,[1] their cruelty was diverted from us to one another. We then drew a little breath, whilst their rage against us was a little abated. But, presently, that change from a milder reign was announced to us, and much terror was now threatening us. The decree had arrived,[2] very much like that which was foretold by our Lord, exhibiting the most dreadful aspect; so that, if it were possible, the very elect would stumble. All, indeed, were greatly alarmed, and many of the more eminent immediately gave way to them; others, who were in public offices, were led forth by their very acts; others were brought by their acquaintance, and when called by name, they approached the impure and unholy sacrifices. But, pale and trembling, as if they were not to sacrifice, but themselves to be the victims and the sacrifices to the idols,

[1] This refers to the civil war, which ended in the murder of Philip and accession of Decius.

[2] Of Decius—early in the year 250.

they were jeered by many of the surrounding multitude, and were obviously equally afraid to die and to offer the sacrifice. But some advanced with greater readiness to the altars, and boldly asserted that they had never before been Christians. Concerning whom the declaration of our Lord is most true, that they will hardly (*i.e.* with difficulty) be saved. Of the rest, some followed the one or the other of the preceding; some fled, others were taken, and of these some held out as far as the prison and bonds, and some after a few days' imprisonment abjured (Christianity) before they entered the tribunal. But some, also, after enduring the torture for a time, at last renounced. Others, however, firm and blessed pillars of the Lord, confirmed by the Lord himself, and receiving in themselves strength and power, suited and proportioned to their faith, became admirable witnesses of his kingdom. The first of these was Julian, a man afflicted with the gout, neither able to walk nor stand, who, with two others that carried him, was arraigned. Of these, the one immediately denied, but the other, named Cronion, surnamed Eunus, and the aged Julian himself, having confessed the Lord, were carried on camels throughout the whole city—a very large one, as you know—and in this elevation were scourged, and finally consumed in an immense fire, surrounded by the thronging crowds of spectators.

Here follow accounts of the martyrdom of six men and four women, with whom was a youth named Dioscorus. Some of them were brought in from the provinces, others were citizens of Alexandria.

After scourging the rest (he continues) he also delivered them to the fire. But Dioscorus was dismissed by the judge, who admired the great wisdom of his answers to the questions proposed to him, with the view, as he said, to give him further time for repentance on account of his age. And now this most godly Dioscorus is among us, expecting a longer and a more severe conflict.

This letter was written soon after the renewal of the persecution in the reign of Decius; but the next which we shall insert refers to the earlier period mentioned in the first half of this letter; the outbreak under Philip. Germanus, a bishop in the interior of Egypt, had heard that Dionysius, unlike Demetrius, had withdrawn from Alexandria very soon after this persecution began, and had not returned till the struggle for the empire between Decius and Philip gave the Christians that breathing-space to which Dionysius alludes in the foregoing letter. Supposing this to be the effect of cowardice, Germanus reproached his patriarch, and drew forth the following earnest and dignified defence from Dionysius:—

To Germanus, . . . But I speak before God, and he knows that I lie not; it was never by my own counsel, nor without divine intimation, that I projected my flight. But before the persecution of Decius, Sabinus, at the very hour, sent Frumentarius to search for me. And I, indeed, stayed at home about four days, expecting the arrival of Frumentarius. But he went about examining all places, the roads, the rivers, the fields, where he suspected that I would go, or lie concealed. But he was smitten with blindness, not being able to find the house, for he could not believe that I would remain at home when persecuted. Four days had scarcely elapsed when God ordered me to remove, and opened the way for me in a most remarkable manner. I and my domestics, and many of my brethren, went forth together. And that this happened by the providence of God, was shown by what followed, and in which, perhaps, we were not unprofitable to some. . . . But about sunset, being seized, together with my company, by the soldiers, I was led to Taposiris. But Timothy,[1] by the providence of God, happened not to be present, nor even seized. But coming afterwards, he found the house deserted,

[1] Probably the son of the Patriarch.

and servants guarding it, and us he found reduced to slavery. . . . A certain man of the country met Timothy flying, and much disturbed, and when he was asked the cause of his haste, he declared the truth. When he heard it, he went his way, for he was going to a marriage festival (as it is the custom with them on these occasions to keep the whole night), and when he entered he told it to those that were present at the feast. These, forthwith, with a single impulse, as if by agreement, all arose, and came as quick as possible in a rush upon us, and as they rushed they raised a shout. The soldiers that guarded us immediately took to flight, and they came upon us, lying as we were upon the bare bedsteads. I indeed, as God knows, supposed them at first to be robbers, who had come to plunder and pillage. Remaining, therefore, on my bed, naked as I was, only covered with a linen garment, the rest of my dress I offered them as it lay beside me. But they commanded me to rise and to depart as quick as possible. Then, understanding for what purpose they had come, I began to weep, beseeching and praying them to go away and to let us alone. But if they wished to do us any good, to anticipate those that had led me away, and to cut off my head. When I thus cried out, as my companions and partners in all my distresses well know, they attempted to raise me by force. I then cast myself on my back upon the ground. But they seized me by the hands and feet, and dragged me away, whilst those who were witnesses of all these things, Caius, Faustus, Peter, and Paul, followed on. These also, taking me up, bore me away from the town, and carried me off on an unsaddled ass.

This persecution of Decius was very severe in Palestine also, and this time Origen did not escape. He had recently paid his third visit to Arabia, where certain members of the Church were preaching that the soul died with the body and rose again with it, but not before.[1] Origen was again

[1] The ancient Egyptian belief was that although the body died, the spirit (Ba) and the human soul (Ka) continued to live; the one in

appealed to, and again successful in convincing those whose opinions were opposed to the received doctrine of the Church. On his return into Palestine, Origen was thrown into prison. Eusebius gives us no particulars of his arrest, but after mentioning that both Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, and Babylas, Bishop of Antioch, died in prison after torture, he continues :—

> But the number and greatness of Origen's sufferings there during the persecution . . . under an iron collar and in the deepest recesses of the prison, when for many days he was extended and stretched to the distance of four holes on the rack, besides the threats of fire, and whatever other sufferings inflicted by his enemies, he nobly bore. And finally the issue of these sufferings, when the judge eagerly strove with all his might to protract his life (in order to prolong his sufferings) and what expressions after these he left behind, replete with benefit to those needing consolation; all this the many epistles of the man detail with no less truth than accuracy.

Only two of these many letters have been preserved entire, and neither of them tell us anything about the persecution. The rest are mere fragments. Since almost all of Eusebius' book on Origen has been lost, too, it is strange how vivid an impression of the man's personality stands out against the sombre background of the time. Origen's torture lasted long, and wore out an already enfeebled frame. He was cheered by receiving a letter from Dionysius encouraging and sympathizing with him. This letter has not been preserved.

So many Christians fell away during this persecution

another world, the other in the mummy, prepared to contain it till the Day of Resurrection, when the Ba and the Ka would be again re-united. Hence the importance attached to the preservation of the mummy, as the Ka's resting-place.

and sacrificed when demanded, that it became a serious question in the Church how to treat them when the persecution slackened, and they came to confess their fault and to entreat that they might be received back into the Church. Afterwards a regular system of penance was drawn up by the Church to meet such cases. They must have occurred during every persecution; but this seems to have been the first time that the question became a practical one, and it occasioned a good deal of correspondence between the bishops of the different provinces. Most of them were inclined to show mercy on evidence of repentance, but Novatus, a priest of Rome, whose own record was not very good, and who had procured, from bishops of a distant province by false representation, his own consecration as Bishop of Rome, was so violent in his condemnation of those who had fallen away in time of persecution, that he created a partial schism. He declared that those who had once denied Christ in persecution could never be received into communion again, whatever penance they might perform, as the Church had no power to forgive them. A council of at least sixty bishops, besides priests and deacons, was called at Carthage, under the presidency of Cyprian, to consider the matter, and passed unanimously the following resolution :—

> That Novatus, and those united with him who had determined to adopt the uncharitable and most inhuman opinion of the man, these they considered among those that were alienated from the Church; but that brethren who had incurred any calamity should be treated and healed with the remedy of repentance.

The one thing on which all the parties agreed was in appealing to the Bishop or Pope of Alexandria. Cornelius,

who had recently been elected Bishop of Rome in place of the martyred Fabian—for their irregular consecration of Novatus[1] was never acknowledged except by his own small party—wrote to Dionysius in somewhat heated and extravagant terms of complaint of that 'artful and malicious beast,' as he calls Novatus; and Novatus himself wrote to Dionysius excusing himself for his irregular consecration, and declaring that it had been forced upon him by certain brethren. The violent reproaches of Cornelius and Cyprian seem to have had no effect upon Novatus, but the following letter from Dionysius must surely have touched his heart:—

Dionysius sends greeting to his brother Novatus. If, as you say, you were forced against your will, you will show it by retiring voluntarily. For it was a duty to suffer everything, rather than to afflict the Church of God; and indeed it would not be less glorious to suffer even martyrdom for her sake than for refusing to sacrifice to idols; in my opinion, it would have been a greater glory. For in the one case the individual gives a testimony for the sake of his own soul, in the other for that of the whole Church. And now, if you can persuade or constrain your brethren to return to concord, your well doing will be greater than your fault; but if you have no influence with them and they refuse, save at least your own soul. With the hope that you are desirous of peace in the Lord, I bid you farewell.

Dionysius also wrote to Fabius of Antioch, who seemed inclined to adopt the uncharitable views of Novatus. We give one extract:—

[1] Eusebius and Socrates call him Novatus all through. He is by many authorities called Novatian, to distinguish him from his namesake, contemporary, and friend, Novatus of Carthage. Some writers, indeed, consider Novatian to be the correct form of the name.

But I will give you one example that occurred with us. There was a certain Serapion, an aged believer, who had passed his long life irreproachably, but as he had sacrificed during the persecution, though he frequently begged, no one would listen to him. He was taken sick, and continued three days in succession speechless and senseless. On the fourth day, recovering a little, he called his grandchild to him, and said, 'O son, how long do you detain me? I beseech you hasten, and quickly absolve me. Call one of the presbyters to me.' Saying this, he again became speechless. The boy ran to the presbyter. But it was night, and the presbyter was sick. As I had, however, before issued an injunction, that those at the point of death, if they desired it, and especially if they entreated for it before, should receive absolution, that they might depart from life in comfortable hope, I gave the boy a small portion of the eucharist, telling him to dip it in water, and to drop it into the mouth of the old man. The boy returned with the morsel. When he came near, before he entered, Serapion having again recovered himself, said, 'Thou hast come, my son, but the presbyter could not come. But do thou quickly perform what thou art commanded, and dismiss me.' The boy moistened it, and at the same time dropped it into the old man's mouth. And he, having swallowed a little, immediately expired. Was he not, then, evidently preserved, and did he not continue living until he was absolved, and his sins being wiped away, he could be acknowledged as a believer for the many good acts that he had done?

The story of Paul the hermit belongs to this persecution, though he did not become famous till long afterwards, and Dionysius appears to have known nothing about him. He was a native of the Lower Thebaid, and was left an orphan at the age of fifteen. He inherited a considerable property, and had been well educated. After the death of his parents he lived in the house of a sister, whose husband was

apparently not a Christian, till the outbreak of the Decian persecution, when he retired for safety to a country house belonging to his brother-in-law. Here, not long afterwards, he was warned, probably by his own sister, that his brother-in-law intended to inform against him to the Government, for the sake of acquiring his property. Acting in accordance with the letter of Scripture, Paul at once made over the whole of his possessions to his sister and her husband, and announced his intention to devote himself to a solitary life of communion with God in the desert as St. Frontonius had done before him. He bade farewell to his sister and went forth alone into the desert, which is within a day's walk of the river anywhere south of Memphis. He lived a wandering life there for some time, but one day he discovered by accident a retreat among the hills which suited him so well that he took up his permanent abode there. The entrance was well concealed from the outside, but inside it opened out into a good-sized space, surrounded on all sides by inaccessible rocks, and open only to the blue sky. Here he found strange tools and old metals which had been abandoned for centuries; in fact, as his education soon enabled him to discover, he had stumbled upon an illicit mint which had been used by false coiners in the days of Cleopatra the Great. But, more important for his purposes, a date palm grew in this secluded nook, and a tiny spring of water ran beneath it which lost itself almost immediately in the sand. In this retreat Paul established himself, and here he is said to have lived the hermit's life for ninety years. If so, he must have been about 112 years old when he died, for he was twenty-two when he settled in the cave. The thing is not absolutely incredible, for we know that many of these Egyptian hermits lived to

an enormous age. His sole food at first was dates and water, but as the simple country folk of the nearest inhabited district became aware of the presence of the holy man, they used to bring him offerings of green food and bread, and ask his advice on all important occasions. He preached Christianity to them when they came out to him, and became so great a power that his fame travelled far, and shortly before his death Anthony himself came to see him, and remained to give his body burial.[1]

At the time of Paul's flight from the world he was but one of unknown hundreds who forsook all for Christ's sake in the country of Egypt. But a time of deliverance, though but a short time, was at hand. In October 251 Decius was slain in an expedition against the Goths, who invaded the Roman empire for the first time in 250; and Gallus, his successor, allowed the persecution to drop. Some time afterwards, in writing to Stephen, the new Bishop of Rome, Dionysius congratulated the Church that with the cessation of the persecution the schism of Novatus had also come to an end.

It was during the persecution of Decius that Mercurius, familiarly known as Abu Sefayn, or 'the father of two swords,' suffered martyrdom. The accounts of this saint, one of the most widely known and reverenced in Egypt, are conflicting and obscure; and the legends dwell more on his coming down from heaven to kill Julian the Apostate, than on any detail of his life. Two versions of the Egyptian legend concerning him are given in the second volume of Mr. Butler's book on Coptic Churches.

The death of Decius set Origen free, but not in time to

[1] A full account of the life and death of Paul will be found in Kingsley's 'Hermits.'

save his life. He lingered about a year afterwards, and died at Tyre, early in 253, being sixty-nine years old. Where he died there he was buried, and his tomb was known and honoured till the city was destroyed. A splendid cathedral was built over his tomb, which was visited by many travellers; but by the middle of the sixteenth century the place where Origen lay was only known by tradition. To this day it is said that the natives point out the relic of an ancient church, now covered by their huts, and say that the body of 'Oriunus' lies in a vault underneath.

In a popular history any criticism of the works of this great Egyptian would be out of place. The number of his books is very large; indeed, Epiphanius states that popular report attributed six thousand works to him! This must be a mistake of the copyist for six hundred; but, even so, the amount is extraordinary, considering all the circumstances of the time. Only a limited number have been preserved to our day, and many of these are incomplete. They included lengthy commentaries on almost every book of the Old and New Testaments; replies to Celsus and other heretics, exhortations, homilies, and treatises beyond counting. The most celebrated and characteristic are his book 'On First Principles,' written at Alexandria, when he was about thirty years old; the 'Hexapla,' the 'Reply to Celsus,' and the essay on 'Prayer.'

The story of the Church of Carthage has nothing to do with our subject, yet it is worth while to pause for a moment and contrast briefly the two Churches in Africa, and the characters of the great men whom they both produced about this time. Tertullian, who lived to a decrepit old age, was but lately dead, and Cyprian was at the height of his power and fame. To read the writings of these two,

and compare them with the writings of Clement and Origen, is to wonder whether they could really have been members of the same faith. Nowhere are racial characteristics more sharply contrasted. Both Churches were planted on African soil, but the Church of Alexandria was Egyptian by descent and Greek in language; the Church of Carthage was Phœnician by descent and Latin in language.

If we try the spirits of the two African Churches we are struck by the extraordinary difference in their temper and their teaching. Both held to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, but like the pillar of cloud, which seemed to some a shaft of fire, the Creed was to the Church of Alexandria a radiant beacon; to the Church of Carthage a mystery of clouds and darkness. Tertullian and Origen, Clement, and, in later years, Augustine, recited the same formulas of faith; but to the Carthaginians they conveyed very different views of the Divine Nature from those which the Alexandrians found in them. The ancient religion of the founders of Carthage consisted of fierce rites and bloody sacrifices, and gloried in oaths binding men to lifelong vengeance. Christian precepts dominated this angry spirit, but had not changed it, so the God of Tertullian's theology was a Being exulting in the agonies of His rebellious creatures, and hoarding purposes of vengeance from generation to generation. The fierce denunciations and harsh decisions of Augustine passed into the popular theology of the West, while for centuries the loving genius of Origen was ignored, and the mystical speculations with which he pleased himself were condemned as heresy. It is a fact, full of significance, that we have canonized Augustine and excommunicated Origen.

The fierce Church of Carthage has passed away from the

earth, the Egyptian Church is but a shadow of her former self; but, as a sympathetic student[1] has pointed out, her art, even in its decline, is still honourably distinguished by an absence of ghastly images. Though the Church of Egypt has suffered more from persecution, and the terrible tortures too often consequent thereon, than any other Church in the world, they have not destroyed the tender hopefulness of her religious life. Go where you will in the poverty-stricken Egyptian churches, you will not find one representation of hell or torture, no grinning skull or ghastly skeleton. Her martyrs smile calmly down from the walls, as if the memory of their sufferings were long forgotten. Warrior saints there are, indeed, who slay in fair fight a dragon or a crowned apostate; but their own sufferings are never represented, nor those of any sinner after death. They are content to leave not only themselves, but their enemies and oppressors, to the mercy of God.

[1] Mr. Butler in his 'Coptic Churches.'

CHAPTER IX

THE PERSECUTION OF VALERIAN

A.D. 254 ON the death of Decius there was the usual scramble for the empire. Gallus seized the sovereign power for two years, and with his son Æmilianus established himself for a few months in Pannonia. During this time the persecution of the Christians was dropped, but it seems that the terrible outbreak of diphtheria, which Dionysius alludes to in a following letter, began even before the accession of Gallus.

In July 254, Valerian, a man of good Roman birth, who had filled all the high offices of state, was recognised as Emperor, and his son Gallienus associated with him in the government. The bishops of Rome changed almost as rapidly as the emperors. Since Dionysius had succeeded to the Patriarchate of Alexandria he had known Fabian, Cornelius, Lucius, Stephen, and now we find him writing to Xystus, Bishop of Rome, who had succeeded Stephen, concerning a man who had been baptized with the baptism of heretics and desired to be re-baptized. Apparently the heretics in question were followers of Novatianus, who taught that there was no forgiveness of sins committed after baptism—a doctrine which had fatal effects in causing people to put off their baptism, as in the case of Constantine, till just before death.

At the beginning of his reign, Valerian had shown him-

self favourable to the Christians, and his palace was filled with believers. But he was more inclined himself to the ancient wisdom of the Egyptians, and one of his most trusted councillors was the Prætorian Prefect Macrianus, who was an Egyptian. Dionysius calls him 'the master and chief ruler of the Egyptian magi'; by which he probably meant that Macrianus was an influential member of the ancient priest-royal caste of Egypt. At any rate, he seems to have been devoted to the ancient religion of his country, and was never tired of impressing upon his royal master that the distresses of the empire were due to the neglect of the true gods and the tolerance of this vile superstition of the crucified carpenter. Indeed, the distresses of the empire were greater at that time than they had ever been before. From all sides the barbarians—Goths, Germans, Franks, Burgundians, and Persians—poured, into the different provinces of the empire, ravaging and laying waste the land. City after city was taken by storm, from Tarragona in Spain to Antioch in Syria. And, above all, the plague, which had begun before the death of Decius, grew more and more deadly, especially in Egypt, where it lasted fifteen years. Dionysius lays the whole blame of the renewed persecution on Macrianus; doubtless an ancient enemy of his in the faith, of whom even he can hardly speak with charity.

A letter to Germanus, who had again reproached Dionysius, this time apparently for suspending the public assemblies of the Church, gives an account of his own arrest, and of the confession which they at once made before the prefect. He describes how they were sent prisoners to Cephro:—

But in Cephro a large congregation collected with us,

partly of the brethren that accompanied us from the city, partly of those that joined us from Egypt; and thus God opened a door for the word likewise there. And at first, indeed, we were persecuted, we were stoned; but, at last, not a few of the heathen, abandoning the idols, turned to God, for the word was then first sown among them as they had never before heard it. And thus, as if God had conducted us for this cause to them, after we had fulfilled this ministry, we were again transferred to another part. . . . For Æmilianus designed to transport us, as it seemed, to places more rough, and more replete with Libyan horrors, and he commanded those in the Mareotic district everywhere to collect, appointing them separate villages throughout the country. But our party, together with those that should be first taken, he commanded to be left on the way. For, no doubt, it was among his plans and preparations, that whenever he wished to seize us he might easily take us captive. But when I was first ordered to go away to Cephro, though I knew not the place where it was, having scarcely even heard the name before, yet I nevertheless went away cheerfully and calmly. But when it was told me to remove to the parts of Colluthion, those present know how I was affected. For here I shall accuse myself. At first, indeed, I was afflicted, and bore it hard. For though these places happened to be more known and familiar to me, yet they said that it was a region destitute of brethren and good men, and exposed to the insolence of travellers, and the incursions of robbers. But I received comfort from the brethren, who reminded me that it was nearer to the city. Cephro indeed brought us a great number of brethren promiscuously from Egypt, so that we were able to spread the Church farther; but as the city was nearer there (Colluthion) we should more frequently enjoy the sight of those that were really beloved and most dear to us. For they would come, and would tarry, and as if in the more remote suburbs there would be still meetings in part. And it was so.

Of the priests and deacons mentioned by Dionysius in this letter, Eusebius tells us that Faustus suffered martyrdom in the persecution of Diocletian at a great age; Maximus succeeded Dionysius himself as Patriarch of Alexandria, and Eusebius became subsequently Bishop of Laodicea. Dionysius relates that on his return to Alexandria only three of the deacons, many of whom had remained in hiding in the city to minister to the brethren, were found to have survived—Faustus, Eusebius, and Chœremon; all the others having died of the plague.

The persecution of Valerian only lasted forty-two months. In 260 he was taken alive by the Persians, and lived in captivity till his death. Gallienus, who succeeded him, made Odenathus, king of Palmyra, his colleague in the East, and imposed on him the duty of defending that frontier from the Persians. He also put a stop to the persecution, and Dionysius made a lengthened tour in Egypt among his scattered people, consecrating and ordaining where it was necessary, and striving to comfort them in their afflictions. In the diocese of Arsinoe,[1] he found the beginning of a very promising schism, and it is instructive to see how he dealt with it.

The former bishop of this diocese was one Nepos, a learned man of very high character, whose flock believed in him implicitly. He had taught them to look for a material reign of a thousand years of Christ in person upon the earth, interpreting literally all passages of this nature in the Apocalypse, and had written a book against those who declared the book to be a sacred allegory. While he lived, the people of his diocese were content to accept

[1] In the Fayoum.

his teaching without troubling themselves about the opinion of the rest of the religious world; but after his death, as so often happens, they began to dispute with one another, and finally formed a separate party under the leadership of one Coracion. Fortunately, however, they all agreed in appealing to the patriarch on his arrival, and Dionysius was equal to the occasion. He received them all with equal respect and courtesy, and, calling together the priests and deacons of the diocese, with any of the faithful laity who chose to attend, he proposed that the matter should be quietly and candidly discussed, and the treatise of Nepos read aloud among them, that they might all agree in godly union and concord. The people readily consented, and for three days, from morning till night, the good bishop sat among his people —as we may see the teachers sitting at this day among a crowd of disputants on the floor of the El Azhar, hearing and asking questions. The result shall be given in his own words:—

[1] Then also I was greatly pleased to observe the constancy, the sincerity, the docility and intelligence of the brethren as we proceeded to advance in order; and the moderation of our questions and doubts and mutual concessions. For we studiously avoided in every possible way insisting upon those opinions which were once adopted by us, though they might appear to be correct. Nor did we attempt to make objections, but endeavoured as far as possible to keep to our subject, and to confirm these. Nor ashamed, if reason prevailed, to change opinions, and to acknowledge the truth, but rather received with a good conscience and sincerity, and with single hearts, before God, whatever was established by the proofs and doctrines of the Holy Scriptures. At length Coracion,

[1] From the 'Treatise on the Promises,' by Dionysius.

who was the founder and leader of this doctrine, in the hearing of all the brethren present, confessed and avowed to us, that he would no longer adhere to it nor discuss it, that he would neither mention nor teach it, as he had been fully convinced by the opposite arguments. The other brethren present rejoice also at this conference, and at the conciliatory spirit and unanimity exhibited by all.

At a later period Dionysius found it necessary to refute these opinions in writing, which he did in the 'Treatise on Promises,' from which we give the following extract:—

But they produce a certain work of Nepos, upon which they lay great stress, as if he advanced things that are irrefragable, when he asserts that there will be an earthly reign of Christ. In many other respects I agree with and greatly love Nepos, both on account of his faith and industry, and his great study in the Scriptures; as also for his great attention to psalmody, by which many are still delighted. I greatly reverence the man also, for the manner in which he has departed this life. But the truth is to be loved and honoured before all. It is just, indeed, that we should applaud and approve whatever is said aright, but it is also a duty to examine and correct whatever may not appear to be written with sufficient soundness. If, indeed, he were present, and were advancing his sentiments orally, it would be sufficient to discuss the subject without writing, and to convince and confirm the opponents by question and answer. But as the work is published, and as it appears the same is calculated to convince; as there are some teachers who say that the law and prophets are of no value, and who give up following the Gospels, and who depreciate the Epistles of the Apostles (and who at the same time announced the doctrine of this work as a great and hidden mystery), and who also do not have any sublime and great conception, either of the glorious and truly divine appearance of our Lord, nor of our own resurrection and our being gathered and assimilated to

Him; but they persuade them to expect what is little and perishable, and such a state of things as now exists, in the kingdom of God. It becomes necessary, therefore, for us also to reason with our brother Nepos as if he were present.

In the course of this book he carefully examines the Book of Revelation, and shows that it is impossible it should be understood in the obvious and literal sense. He also states modestly but firmly, and giving good reasons for his own opinion, that the Apocalypse was not written by the Apostle John, though he says he does not deny that it is the work of *a* John, and, moreover, the work of some holy and inspired man. But while clearly showing that the Gospel and Apocalypse could hardly have been written by the same man, he says: 'For my part I would not venture to set this work aside, as there are many brethren that value it much.'

These examples will show the spirit in which Dionysius both met and exercised criticism. But he had not much leisure in his episcopate for such writings. His pastoral epistles he never failed to make time for, though it was often difficult to send them when written. Peace from persecution had hardly been established when civil war again broke out. Macrianus assumed the purple, and did his best to make himself sole master of the empire. But it was not to be expected that Christian Egypt would acquiesce in the reign of a man who, though he might be of their own blood, had shown himself their worst enemy. In Alexandria, therefore, the Prefect Æmilianus was set up in opposition both to Macrianus and to Gallienus, who was living idly at Rome. This man took the name of Alexander, and governed Egypt during his short reign with great vigour. He marched down through the whole

country and drove the southern barbarians back into the Soudan with a courage and quickness to which they had been unaccustomed of late. The tribute sent to Rome was stopped, and Egypt bade fair to regain her independence. But Theodotus, the general of Gallienus, came to the rescue of the Roman domination and attacked Æmilianus in Alexandria. The latter fortified himself in the Bruchium quarter, and Theodotus laid siege to him, occupying the other half of the city. The situation is best described in Dionysius's own words. This letter is addressed to Hierax, another bishop in Egypt:—

But what cause of wonder is there, if it be difficult for me also to address epistles to those that are so very remote, when I am at a loss to consult for my own life, or to reason with myself? For, indeed, I have great need to send epistolary addresses to those who are as my own bowels, my associates and dearest brethren and members of the same Church. But how I shall send these I cannot devise. For it would be more easy for anyone, I would not say to go beyond the limits of the province, but even to travel from east to west, than to go from Alexandria to Alexandria itself. For the very heart of the city is more desolate and impassable than that vast and trackless desert which the Israelites traversed in two generations, and our smooth and tranquil harbours have become like that sea which opened and arose like walls on both sides, enabling them to drive through, and in whose highway the Egyptians were overwhelmed. For often they appear like the Red Sea, from the frequent slaughters committed in them; but the river[1] which washes the city has sometimes appeared more dry than the parched desert, and more exhausting than that in which Israel was so overcome with thirst on their journey that they exclaimed against

[1] This must have been a canal. The Nile did not even then flow immediately by Alexandria.

Moses, and the water flowed for them from the broken rock by the power of Him who alone doeth wondrous works. Sometimes, also, it has so overflowed that it has inundated all the country round; the roads and the fields seeming to threaten that flood of waters which happened in the days of Noah. It also flows always polluted with blood and slaughter, and the constant drowning of men, such as it formerly was when, before Pharaoh, it was changed by Moses into blood and putrid matter. And what other purification could be applied to water, which itself purifies all? Could that vast and impassable ocean ever wash away this bitter sea? or could that great river itself which flowed from Eden, though it poured the four heads into which it was divided into one Gihon, wash away this filth? When will this air, corrupted as it is by the noxious exhalations everywhere rising, become pure and serene? For there are such vapours from the earth, and such storms from the sea-breezes, from the rivers and mists coming from the harbours, that make it appear as if we should have for dew the gore of those dead bodies that are putrefying in all the elements around us.

. . . Wherefore it is that this mighty city no longer cherishes within it such a number of inhabitants, from speechless children to the aged and decrepit, as it formerly had of those firm and vigorous in years. . . . And yet, though they constantly see the human race diminishing and wasting away in the very midst of this increasing destruction, this annihilation, they are not alarmed.

Again he says in his Paschal letter,[1] written probably in the year 264:—

[1] The Paschal letter was a sort of General Epistle issued before every Easter by the Pope of Alexandria, who thus notified to the Church in general, and to his own country in particular, the day on which Easter would fall that year. The great respect in which the astronomical and mathematical science of Egypt was held, made it natural that the decision on such a point should be left to the head of the Church of

To other men, indeed, the present would not appear a fit season for a festival, and neither is this nor any other time a festival for them, not to speak of sorrowful times, but not even that which a cheerful person might especially deem such. But now all things are filled with tears, all are mourning, and by reason of the multitudes already dead, and still dying, groans are daily resounding throughout the city. For as it is written respecting the first-born of Egypt, thus now, also, a great lamentation has arisen, for there is not a house in which there is not one dead. And I wish, indeed, this were all. Many and horrible calamities have preceded this. First, indeed, they drove us away, but solitary and in exile, persecuted and put to death by all, we still celebrated the festival; and every place marked by some particular affliction was still a spot distinguished by our solemnities—the open field, the desert, the ship, the inn, the prison. But the most joyous festival of all was celebrated by those perfect martyrs who are now feasting in the heavens.

After this, war and famine succeeded, which indeed we endured with the heathen, but bore alone those miseries with which they afflicted us, whilst we also experienced the effects of those which they inflicted, and suffered from one another. And again we rejoiced in the peace of Christ, which He gave to us alone, when both we and they obtained a very short respite. Then we were assailed by this pestilence. . . . For neither did it keep aloof from us, although it assailed the heathen most.

Most of our brethren, in their exceeding great love and brotherly affection not sparing themselves, and clinging to one another, were constantly superintending the sick, ministering to their wants without fear and without rest. While healing them in Christ, they have departed most sweetly with them. Though filled with the disease from others, taking it from their neighbours, they voluntarily, by suction, extracted

Egypt. These epistles often began with a kind of sermon addressed to the Church.

their pains.[1] Thus many who had healed and strengthened others, themselves died, transferring their death upon themselves, and exemplifying in fact that trite expression which seemed before only a form of politeness, or an empty compliment; they were in fact, in their death, 'the offscouring of all.' The best of our brethren have departed this life in this way, some presbyters, some deacons, and of the people those that were exceedingly commended. So that this very form of death, with the piety and ardent faith which attended it, appeared to be but little inferior to martyrdom itself. They took up the bodies of the saints with their open hands and on their bosoms, cleaned their eyes and closed their mouths, carried them on their shoulders, and composed their limbs, embraced, clung to them, and prepared them decently with washing and garments, and ere long they themselves shared in receiving the same offices. Those that survived always following those before them. Among the heathen it was the direct reverse. They both repelled those who began to be sick, and avoided their dearest friends. They would cast them out into the roads half-dead, or throw them when dead without burial, shunning any communication and participation in death, which it was impossible to avoid by every precaution and care.

The horrors of this siege were greatly mitigated in other ways by the conduct of the Christian priests, particularly Eusebius and Anatolius, who were afterwards successively appointed to the bishopric of Laodicea. Eusebius the historian, in speaking of Anatolius says :—

They relate innumerable achievements of his at the siege of the Bruchium at Alexandria, as he was honoured by all

[1] This implies that the operation of tracheotomy for diphtheria was known at this time to the Egyptians; for the only way in which suction could be used was, as now, to clear the windpipe after the operation. It is a dangerous proceeding, and more than one English physician has lost his life in consequence.

officials with extraordinary distinction; but, as a specimen, we shall only mention this. When the bread, as they say, failed in the siege, so that they were better able to sustain their enemies from without than the famine within, Anatolius, being present, devised a project like the following. As the other part of the city was in alliance with the Roman army, and therefore happened not to be besieged, he sent to Eusebius, who was among those not besieged (for he was yet there before his removal to Syria, and was very celebrated, and in high repute even with the Roman general), to inform him that they were perishing with famine. On learning this, he begged of the Roman general to grant safety to those who would desert from the enemy as the greatest favour he could grant him. Obtaining his request, he immediately communicated it to Anatolius. The latter, receiving the promise, collected the senate of Alexandria and proposed the resolution, that the whole multitude, whether of men or women, that were not needed for the army should be dismissed from the city, because there would be no hope of safety at all for them, who, at any rate, were about to perish with the famine, if they continued and lingered in the city until the state of affairs was desperate. All the rest of the senate agreeing to this decree, he nearly saved the whole of the besieged; among the first providing that those of the Church, then those of every age in the town, should make their escape, and among these not only those that were included in the decree, but, taking the opportunity, many others, secretly clad in women's clothes, went out of the city by his management at night, and proceeded to the Roman camp. There Eusebius, receiving them all, like a father and physician recovered them, wasted away by a protracted siege, with every kind of attention to their wants.

With the capture and murder of Æmilianus by the Roman general, the wars in Egypt came to an end, though the pestilence still raged in this unhappy country. The

labours of the Patriarch in controversy also were not yet at an end.

Dionysius is no exception to the general rule, that all the greatest and wisest men of the Church have either during their life-time or after their death been accused of heresy. He was fortunate in that the accusation came during his life-time, when he was able to disprove it once for all. And that he was ready to do so is only another instance of his self-mastery and humility. He was, as it may be called, the *doyen* of all the Patriarchs or Popes in the world at this time. The very expressions which gave offence to some of his flock occurred in a letter to the bishops of the district of Pentapolis, written with intent to reconcile some disputed opinions and prevent the rise of a new heresy. The action of the Pentapolitans was absolutely indefensible. Without writing to their own Patriarch, and probably influenced by Roman visitors among them, they actually sent an accusation of heresy against him to Dionysius of Rome, the sixth bishop whom Dionysius of Alexandria had known in that chair since he had been a Patriarch himself, and presumably therefore a young and inexperienced man by comparison. The action of Dionysius of Rome was no less singular. He *first* called a local council, and condemned Dionysius of Alexandria, and *then* wrote to the Pope of Alexandria telling him that he had done so and asking for his defence. But the Christianity of Dionysius of Alexandria was proof even against this insult and injustice. Instead of visiting his insubordinate diocese with just wrath, and refusing the impertinent demand of his namesake of Rome, he at once wrote a careful and dignified answer at some length. He points out in detail how his words had been quoted in so

disjointed and arbitrary a manner that the sense of them had been entirely misrepresented, and mentions in one place that he had refrained from using the disputed term 'consubstantial' because he had not found it in Scripture, but his meaning was the same, as could be seen by those who would read his own words upon the subject in the former letter—of which he regretted that he could not send a copy to Dionysius.

By this temperate and dignified conduct a scandal in the Church was avoided, and the reputation of Dionysius of Alexandria rose higher than before. In the last year of his life he was invited to attend the Council at Antioch, which condemned the well-known Paul of Samosata (whose story does not concern us here), but excused himself on the ground of age and infirmity. He gave them his own opinion, however, on the subjects before them, in a letter. While the deliberations against Paul were proceeding, the great Bishop of Alexandria rested from his manifold labours, and entered into the joy of his Lord.

CHAPTER X

ST. AMMON AND ST. ANTHONY

A.D. 268 IN 268 A.D. Gallienus was killed before Milan in a struggle with a rival pretender. On his death the usual uncertainty who should succeed brought fresh trouble on unhappy Egypt. Claudius took the throne in Europe, and the coins of Alexandria bear his name for parts of three years, but he was very far from reigning there. The Egyptians never submitted willingly to any foreign domination except the Greek, and they seem now to have invited Zenobia, the widow of Odenathus, and the queen whose beauty and fame keep alive the memory of the kingdom of Palmyra, to invade Egypt. She asserted that she was descended from the great Cleopatra, and would make good her claim to the kingdom of her ancestors. She had at her Court many learned men who had been educated in Alexandria, among whom was the celebrated Longinus; but it appears probable that she was of Roman extraction herself, and how the blood of Cleopatra ran in her veins has never been shown. But in beauty, courage, and final misfortune, the two women were not unlike. Her army took possession of Alexandria and marched down the valley of the Nile in triumph, led by an influential Egyptian named Teniagenes, who put himself at the head of the invaders. On their way back they were met by a

Roman general and army, who tried to bar their way at Babylon, but the superior knowledge of the country possessed by Teniagenes enabled him to defeat his enemy, and the Roman general killed himself.

The occupation of Egypt by the Palmyrenes lasted till the reign of Aurelian, who took Zenobia prisoner, and destroyed the city of Palmyra after a double siege. The Egyptians, however, did not submit again to the Roman dominion without a struggle, and, though this period is very obscure,[1] it seems that no less than two other rival emperors in Egypt had to be personally conquered by Aurelian. At length, however, the country was reduced to submission again, and Aurelian went back to Rome, leaving an able lieutenant in the person of Probus.

During the temporary sway of Zenobia in Egypt the Christians had been left in peace as far as their religion was concerned, though they must have shared with their neighbours in the horrors of civil war. The successor of Dionysius in the Patriarchal throne was Maximus, of whom we hear nothing, after his elevation, except in connection with the condemnation of Paul of Samosata.

It was during the Patriarchate of Maximus, however, that two celebrated Egyptian characters took the first steps in a life of absolute though mistaken self-sacrifice. These were St. Anthony and the less-known, but more loveable, St. Ammon, the real founder of the Nitrian

[1] Even Professor Mommsen seems to have fallen into chronological errors here. He himself gives the date of the Palmyrene conquest of Alexandria as 267–8; yet he makes the letter of Dionysius describing the struggle between Æmilianus and the Roman general refer to this period, whereas Dionysius died in 265, or, according to the latest German authorities, in 264.

settlement, though Frontonius had chosen that desert valley for his retreat about a century before.

Anthony was born at Koma, in Upper Egypt, of wealthy Christian parents, but he showed no taste for learning, and, though not so illiterate as some writers have imagined, he never seems to have learnt any language but his own, which was unusual among the upper classes in Egypt. He was deprived of the care of his parents before he was eighteen, and left the sole guardian of his sister. We see in him the same enthusiasm and spirit of self-sacrifice as in Origen; but though it did not spur him to quite such lengths in the beginning, he had neither the reasoning power nor the wise friends which brought Origen safely through his spiritual crisis to a higher level of thought and action.

Anthony six months after his parents' death (about 268 A.D.) heard the lesson read in church where Christ says to the rich young man, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me.'[1] Forthwith he resolved to obey this command literally, reserving only a small portion for his sister. But, on the occasion of his next attendance in church, the words 'Take no thought for the morrow' fell upon his ears as a rebuke for this reservation. He left his sister in charge of a Christian woman in the village, his broad lands to be sold for the poor, and wandered away, barefoot and alone, to live the life at war with himself and every God-implanted instinct, by which in all ages men have so strangely thought to come nearer to God. After one or two vain changes of residence, he shut himself up in a ruined castle on the

[1] Matthew xix. 21.

Nile, and refused to look upon the face of any human being. He would preach, however, to the simple country folk, who readily gave him their superstitious reverence, and came to listen to the impassioned and often incomprehensible utterances of the unseen hermit. They brought him the bread of the country—flat cakes which, once made, will keep for months, and become so hard that it is necessary to moisten them with water before they can be eaten, as the poorer Egyptian labourer may still be seen doing any day. His mode of life naturally gave rise to a thousand rumours, which were afterwards embodied in the extraordinary legends now clustered round his name. Here he lived, unseen, but with ever-growing fame, for twenty years.

The birthplace of Ammon is not certainly known, but it was not far from Alexandria. He also was the child of wealthy parents, and early left an orphan. That he was of pure Egyptian blood is shown by his name; for, though many pure Egyptians took Greek names at their baptism, no Greek, or child of a mixed marriage, being a Christian, ever called his son by the name of an Egyptian god. Being come to the years of early manhood (probably between 265 and 270), he desired to embrace the monastic life, but to this his uncle and guardian refused his consent, declaring it to be necessary that he should contract an alliance with a young lady whose estates presumably went well with his own. Ammon seems to have been still legally under the power of his uncle, for his next step was to appeal to the young lady herself. He soon fired her with his own enthusiasm for a life of self-sacrifice, and the two young people agreed together in what seemed to them the only right course. They married on the mutual understanding that they were

to live together as brother and sister, and for several years the compact was faithfully carried out. Authorities differ whether they at once retired into the desert or no, but it seems more probable that during this time they lived together on their estates, and did their duty by them. But after a time, whether poor Ammon thought that he was happier than he ought to be, or whether he could not any longer trust himself in his self-imposed celibacy, he retired, with the full consent of his wife, to the desert in Nitria, where a great multitude of zealous disciples followed him and his better-known successor, Macarius; so that, about eighty years later, Rufinus mentions some fifty convents in the Nitrian desert. Nor were those early colonists of the Wady Natron, as Nitria is now called, all monks and hermits. The lower valley was not absolutely desert; the salt lakes were ringed round, as now, with a scanty vegetation; and fresh water, for cultivation as well as drinking, could be obtained by digging. But Ammon's attention must have been at once attracted by the natron deposits, and the use which could be made of them in finding work for his men who had followed him; for almost immediately after his settlement there, we find that certain towns and villages on the *rif*, or cultivated land of the Delta, which was from 30 to 35 miles distant from the settlement, formed themselves into a company, which started regular caravans to fetch the natron worked by Ammon and his colony, and dispose of it in the markets of Egypt. It was with one of these trade caravans that the young Macarius came to Nitria, and was fired with holy zeal at the sight of the ascetic and hard-working community. Visions were not wanting to confirm his purpose

of joining their exile; and when he had faithfully performed the business entrusted to him, he returned to Nitria and joined the colony. But the lay element—for Ammon's followers were by no means all monks—and the bustle of commercial activity soon made him feel that Nitria was not strict or solitary enough for him. He left the working colony round the Natron lakes, and retired to the upper valley, which has no oasis to relieve its desert desolation. In the French maps the two valleys—Scetis and Nitria—are confounded in one, but there is a marked division and a difference of elevation between the two, which Mr. Hooker has faithfully recorded in his survey of the year 1896. The upper valley, which trends to the south-east, had no name when Macarius made his solitary dwelling in one of its caves; but from that time it became known as Scetis, from an expression signifying 'the place of disciplined souls.' For Macarius, like Ammon, was soon followed by his disciples, who lived in the cells they hollowed out for themselves, and held aloof from the little world of Nitria. They had far to go for water, and their only industry was basket-making, by which they obtained means to sustain the bare life which seemed to them the highest form of existence. Here Macarius dreamed his life away, while down below him Ammon toiled with his labourers, permitting himself twice a year to tramp the six days' journey across the desert and the Delta, to look upon his wife and assure himself of her welfare. No doubt he made himself pay dearly for the indulgence by many an extra penance in his desert cell, and one can imagine with what bitter heart-sickness of suspense he must have watched and waited for tidings from the outer world

during those terrible years from 303 to 322. Ammon himself did not die till about 345, and during that time he beheld from far off the last desperate struggle of his native country for freedom from the Roman yoke, and the terrible revenge of that Roman emperor who had himself been born a slave.

CHAPTER XI

A STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

A.D. 282 AFTER the murder of Aurelian, Tacitus took the throne for a short time in Europe, while the widow of Aurelian ruled for eight months in Egypt. On the death of Tacitus the regiments stationed in Egypt unanimously elected their beloved general Probus, who shortly afterward left Egypt to secure the European provinces. The Blemmyes, however, who had already invaded Egypt from the south in the interest of the Egyptian-Palmyrene party, took advantage of his absence to seize upon the kingdom of Upper Egypt, and Probus had to return to hard fighting, and to reconquer Coptos and Ptolemais as if they were foreign cities. In spite of constant wars, however, Probus found time to look after public works in Egypt, and treated the unfortunate inhabitants of that country with a kindness and justice to which they had long been strangers. But in 282 Probus was assassinated by his own soldiers, and Carus the Prefect took the throne. He died in 283, on an expedition against the Persians, which was hastily abandoned in consequence. His two sons, Carinus and Numerianus, succeeded him; but, after a year of intrigue and fighting, Diocletian succeeded in making himself master of the empire.

Meanwhile Maximus the Patriarch had died in 282,

and there seem to have been difficulties about the choice of a successor, which kept the see vacant for some months. At length Theonas was elected, and for some few years governed his flock in peace. In this breathing-space between wars and persecution a great church was built at Alexandria and dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the first cathedral of Egypt; for though, of course, many other churches existed before this in different parts of Egypt, this seems to have been the first attempt of the Christians to build a great national temple for their public worship.

Indeed, that the Christians knew of no special reason why they should distrust Diocletian is shown by a letter which the Patriarch wrote to the Christian Lucian, who was appointed to the office of High Chamberlain, or, as we might better translate it, Steward of the Palace, shortly after the accession of the new Emperor:—

The peace (writes Theonas) which the Churches now enjoy is granted to this end: that the good works of Christians may shine out before infidels, and that thence our Father which is in heaven may be glorified. This should be our chief end and aim, if we would be Christians in deed and not in word only. For, if we seek our own glory, we desire a vain and perishable thing; but the glory of the Father and the Son, who for us was nailed to the Cross, saves us with an everlasting redemption, that great expectation of Christians. I neither think therefore, nor wish, my dear Lucian, that you should boast because many in the Court have come by your means to a knowledge of the truth; you should rather give thanks to God, who hath chosen you as a good instrument to a good result, and hath given you favour in the sight of the prince to the end that you should spread abroad the savour of the Christian name, to His glory and to the salvation of many.

Then, after insisting on the extreme care for their duty which ought to distinguish Christian servants in a heathen Court, he particularises one fault to which his countrymen, like all Orientals, seem to have been liable.

God forbid (he says) that you should sell to any the entry of the palace or receive a bribe to suggest what is unseemly to the Emperor's ear. Put away from you all avarice, which maketh idolatry rather than Christian religion. Unworthy gain and duplicity do not befit one who embraces Christ, the poor and simple. Let there be no evil speaking nor immodest language among you. Let all things be done with kindness, courtesy, and justice, that in all things the name of our God and Lord Jesus Christ may be magnified. Fulfil the duties to which you are severally appointed with fear towards God and love towards the Emperor, and with exactness and diligence account that all commands of the prince, which offend not against those of God, proceed from God Himself. Put on patience as a robe ; be filled with virtue and the hope of Christ.

After this general exordium he proceeded to give suggestions in detail for the performance of their several duties. Most of the officials of the palace seem to have been Christians, and, though the office of librarian was not yet filled up, Theonas had good reason to suppose that a Christian would be chosen for the post. As for the keeper of the privy purse, he must keep strict accounts, 'never trusting to memory,' and they must be so managed that the exact position of affairs could be shown at a glance, 'which will be easily done if the receipts themselves, the time, the medium, and the place be written distinctly.' Of the keeper of the robes and ornaments, he directs that he must be punctilious in noting—

What the things are, of what sort, where stored up, when

received, by whose means, with or without flaw, and must often look there, and always know where to find each article, doing all this with humility and cheery patience, so that Christ's name may be praised even in so small a matter.

But it is on the duties of the librarian that Theonas dwells most earnestly, and here also he shows the same wisdom and tact. The librarian must know all the books in his charge, often turn them over, arrange them according to their catalogue, employ the most accomplished copyists for purposes of transcription, etc. He is particularly warned not to think himself above secular studies, especially those which the Emperor himself might show any turn for. He must acquaint himself with the principal orators, poets, and historians of antiquity; yet, as occasion served in his intercourse with the Emperor, he must bring in some judicious mention of the Septuagint as a book that had been so much valued by the famous Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt, that it might be worth the attention of an Emperor of Rome.[1]

There are directions as to the kind of books he should recommend for reading aloud to the Emperor, with a hint that he must be able to cite authorities in their favour. He must not neglect to get old manuscripts repaired and rebound as they need it, etc.; but always to be ready to introduce some mention of the books relating to Christ. Theonas also lays great stress on the necessity for Christian servants to be always clean, neat, 'bright-faced,' and respectful.

[1] Theonas evidently does not conceive that an Emperor of Rome would be so ignorant as never to have heard of Ptolemy Philadelphus. This was probably the fact, however, for even Diocletian's admirers would acknowledge his ignorance of all save practical matters.

Let us now turn our attention to the Emperor from whom the Egyptian Christians hoped so much.

We know him by the Grecian or Roman form of a name which was originally only a nickname derived from the Dalmatian town to which his mother belonged; for Diocletian was born a slave, of slave parents, but at an early age displayed a boundless ambition and a natural genius for success, together with an absolute want of scruple as to the means by which it was to be obtained. Rising rapidly in the army, he was commander of the body guards at the time when Numerian died at Chalcedon on his return from the Persian war. Having by well-planned intrigues secured his election by the generals and tribunes who were then with the army, he began his reign by slaying in cold blood and with his own hand, without trial or even inquiry, the only man whose pretensions were immediately dangerous to his own, and who had been brought before him in chains, accused by popular outcry of the murder of Numerian. Two years afterwards, finding that it was impossible for him single-handed to keep in order an unwieldy empire the different provinces of which were far from submitting easily to his usurpation, he associated with himself in the empire Maximian, an illiterate peasant, who, like himself, had risen to high rank in the army by native talent for commanding men, and gave him the title of Emperor of the West. Six years later he found it necessary to appoint two sub-emperors or Cæsars—Constantius, a man of good family, under Maximian; and Galerius, once a herdsman, under himself. Each of these men was required, as a condition of his elevation, to divorce his wife and marry a daughter of his patron.

There was plenty of work for all these men as defenders of the empire. One province after another refused to acknowledge the son of a barbarian slave as their emperor, and elected some prince of their own to fight once more for their ancient liberties. Britain revolted under a native prince called Carausius; Gaul, under Elianus and Amandus; Carthage, under Julian; and finally Egypt, under Achilleus, took up arms to regain her independence. Considering the duration and importance of this struggle in Egypt, it is curious how little we positively know about the man who for more than nine years successfully defied the Roman power, and whose death in battle deprived his countrymen of their last hope; for it seems probable, though it is nowhere expressly stated, that Achilleus, in spite of his Greek name, was by birth an Egyptian and by religion a Christian. In the last sixty years the Egyptians had been growing more and more intolerant of the government of these barbarian upstarts who called themselves Roman emperors, and claimed the ancient kingdom of Egypt as their private inheritance. Six times already during those sixty years had they risen to arms on the side of anyone who seemed likely to help them to regain their independence; and now, nothing daunted by the constant defeats inevitable when highly disciplined and veteran mercenaries are pitted against a people to whom for centuries the use of arms has been denied, they looked no more to foreign aid, but joined once for all—Greek, Egyptian, Christian, and pagan alike—in one desperate effort for freedom.

But, so far as this world is concerned, the race is always to the swift and the battle to the strong. For four years they enjoyed their liberty in a precarious fashion, and Achilleus ruled in the Thebaid; while Galerius—though,

whenever he could force an actual engagement, demonstrating the superiority of his troops by routing the Egyptians —could not make himself obeyed beyond the limits of his own camp. Then Diocletian came in person with a fresh army, and the long struggle began between learning, Christianity, and weakness on the one hand, and ignorance, infidelity, and strength on the other.

Coptos and Busiris, after prolonged sieges by the Emperor in person, were taken and wholly destroyed. Diocletian marched through the Thebaid, and made a treaty with the Nubians and Ethiopians, by which he ceded to them the district between Assuan and Wady Halfa on condition that they should defend the frontier against the Blemmyes. This treaty was annually ratified by a religious sacrifice, according to the rites of the ancient Egyptian religion, on the Island of Philæ, in which the Roman garrison took part. There are still the remains of the wall which Diocletian built across the valley; and according to some authorities, not venturing to trust entirely to the Nubians to defend the Egyptian frontier, he agreed to pay a yearly tribute both to the Nubians and the Blemmyes.

After this, Diocletian left Egypt; and with his army the Roman rule was again withdrawn. All the Egyptians rallied again round Achilleus, who had escaped Diocletian, and Alexandria welcomed him with open arms. The dates of this reign are very difficult to determine, but, as the independence of Egypt is variously computed to have lasted from six to nine years, it cannot have been immediately that Diocletian returned again to reconquer the country.

When he did so, however, the fate of unhappy Egypt was not left long in suspense. As Achilleus was in Alexandria, Diocletian turned his attention to that city and

entered upon a formal siege. He cut off all the aqueducts which supplied the city with water, and being able himself to receive constant supplies and reinforcements by sea, while he could prevent all communication between Alexandria and Egypt, there could never have been much doubt of the final issue. All the neighbouring nations were fighting for their own lives against one or other of the Roman emperors.

The Blemmyes and the Nubians had been bribed to inaction, and Egypt itself was wasted by Diocletian's former campaign, and deprived of her king, who was shut up in Alexandria. After eight months of brave but hopeless resistance Alexandria was taken by storm and Achilleus put to death. Irritated beyond all self-control at the gallant resistance with which he had met, Diocletian is reported to have sworn that the massacre of the citizens should not cease until their blood flowed to the level of his horse's knee in the streets. Thousands perished; and the slaughter continued till, whether sated with the horrible sight, or seeking from motives of policy for some way of escape from the fulfilment of his hideous vow, Diocletian hailed an opportune stumble of his horse as a sign that the vengeance of Heaven was appeased, and gave orders for the massacre to cease. It is said that the solitary column which now rises from the ruined heaps of ancient Alexandria, and is known by the nickname of Pompey's Pillar, was erected by the citizens or by order of the Emperor in the temple of Serapis to commemorate this event; but until very extensive excavations are made in Alexandria, it is impossible to feel sure of anything in that city. Diocletian knew how to bide his time, and his full revenge on Egypt was not taken till some years later;

but the punishment which immediately followed was heavy enough. Few conspicuous persons in Egypt escaped a sentence of death or exile, the national coinage of Egypt was discontinued, and worse than all was the loss of their ancient scientific books; for Diocletian, with the superstition of ignorance, conceived the idea that the Egyptians were able by means of alchemy to transmute metals into gold, and that only this could account for the lavish sacrifice of wealth which they had made during these years of struggle for their liberty. He therefore ordered all such books to be given up to him, and, in spite of the protests and entreaties of the Egyptians, the edict was carried out; and the records of science, which, fanciful and faulty as it may have been, was yet the best the world had then to offer on chemistry and kindred subjects, were solemnly burnt by the barbarous Emperor.[1]

Soon after these events the Patriarch of Alexandria died—worn out probably with all he must have gone through. The order of the succession to the headship of the Catechetical School is very uncertain during these troubled times. We know the names of the Principals, but not the order in which they succeeded. It seems probable that to Theognostus succeeded Achillas, who was appointed by Theonas. Achillas succeeded at a much later date to the Patriarchate of Alexandria, but meanwhile both Peter and Serapion seem to have successively taken charge of the school. It is most probable therefore that Achillas, as Clement had done at an earlier period, withdrew from Alexandria during these troubled times, and that Peter

[1] The accounts given by Gibbon of these events afford a curious proof how far his prejudice in favour of anyone who oppressed Christianity could distort his judgment.

took charge in his absence. The date of the death of Theonas is given as 300, and he was succeeded by Peter, who seems to have been comparatively a young man with a wife and daughters.

For nearly three years Egypt remained in suspense,[1] and then the storm broke which left the Church half-dead, and inflicted on the Egyptian nation a blow from which it has never recovered.

[1] John of Nikius says that in Egypt the persecution began immediately after the suppression of the revolt. This seems much more probable, and would solve some chronological difficulties relating to the Meletian schism in Egypt. In the case also of the Decian persecution we know that it began in Egypt a full year before the publication of the edict through the empire.

CHAPTER XII

THE ERA OF MARTYRS

A.D. 303 THE persecution which has earned for Diocletian so unenviable an immortality in Egypt was not, of course, confined to that country; it was part of a great organised scheme for stamping out Christianity from the earth; for it had gradually dawned upon Diocletian—and earnest efforts were not wanting on the part of those around him to impress the fact upon him—that the strength of the opposition which he had met with lay in this obstinate religion, which claimed a citizenship other than that of the Roman Empire and allegiance to a Divinity of whom the Roman Emperor was *not* the visible manifestation. In Gaul, in Britain, in North Africa, he found the same underlying cause prompting the struggle for independence as in Egypt. Galerius [1] urged the gravity of the case repeatedly

[1] It must be remembered, in justice to Diocletian, that the persecution called by his name did not reach its full barbarity of procedure till his temporary insanity, and subsequently his forced abdication, left Galerius free to act in his name. The first edict was bad enough; but the second and third, which followed it in a few weeks' time, and decreed firstly the imprisonment of all the clergy, and secondly that they should be compelled by torture to sacrifice, were the result of a fire in the palace, which contemporary writers assert, uncontradicted, to have been kindled by order of Galerius himself, who then laid the blame upon the Christians, and so extorted the consent of Diocletian to fresh measures against them. The fourth edict was published while Diocletian was out of his mind, and the worst of the persecution was after his abdication.

upon him; and the diviners, whom Diocletian repeatedly summoned to forecast the future, declared that it was impossible for them to constrain the spirits to answer while the palace was filled with infidels (Christians), whose presence prevented all manifestations.

Thus worked upon both by superstitious fear and considerations of policy, Diocletian gave orders for the issue of a formal edict against the Christians on February 23—being the day of a pagan festival—in 303. Both Diocletian and Galerius were in Nicomedia at the time, and watched the opening of the nine years' tragedy from the palace. The Prefect, attended in full state by officers and secretaries, with a body of pioneers, went in procession to the principal church of Nicomedia. The doors were broken open, all the sacred books and the fittings of the church were burnt, and then the workmen with axes and crowbars laid the church itself level with the ground. The provisions of this edict, which was published next day in the market-place, were as follows:—

All churches were to be demolished.

All sacred books to be burnt.

All Christians who held any official position were not only to be stripped of their dignities, but to be deprived of civil rights (that they might thereby be rendered liable to torture and other outrages).

All Christians who were not officials were to be reduced to slavery.

It may be imagined how the crowd gathered in the market-place—those who were Christians silently slipping away, as they learned the worst, in the vague hope of concealment and escape; those who were pagans not daring to lift their voices in protest, lest suspicion should fall also

upon them. All at once—so runs the story—a Christian of tougher metal than the rest pushed his way through the market-place to read the proclamation, and then, in the face of the awe-stricken crowd, he deliberately tore down the Imperial edict and flung it away. He was instantly seized, tortured, and finally burnt alive at a slow fire.

Popular tradition has identified this nameless martyr with the great St. George who is now the patron saint of our own country. There is no reason why this should not be true, but this act is not recorded in the Egyptian legend of St. George. In this legend, however, a most curious explanation is incidentally given of the dragon myth, which has led some people to see in the story of St. George and the Dragon only a Christian version of the classical Perseus. *The Dragon* was the Egyptian nickname for Diocletian, and the encounter between them was the prolonged contest between the will and power of the Emperor and the heroic resistance of the martyr! In the oldest form of the legend there is no hint of a material dragon, or indeed of any animal against whom St. George waged war. The Emperor is represented as the ruler of the world, with eighty kings under him; and the legend says that for three years after the publication of the Emperor's edict no one dared to say 'I am a Christian,' so terrible were the tortures with which Diocletian had threatened them. Then, it proceeds to relate, the young officer George, summoned to the city to receive promotion, would not keep silence, but declared openly that he was a Christian; and his martyrdom was prolonged because the Emperor did not desire to lose so good an officer, and at every stage renewed his offer of pardon and promotion if the young man would

yield. As in all cases, fable has overgrown the ancient story, and it is probable that interpolations were deliberately made at a much later date by an Arian editor in order that the Arian St. George should usurp the honours of his earlier namesake, which at one time he succeeded in doing. Now the process is reversed, and since the Arian sect died out of Egypt the two or three churches which had been dedicated to the Arian St. George[1] all claim the earlier martyr as their patron saint, and fill their churches with representations of the mediæval myth, which have almost as little to do with the real history of the one as of the other. St. George on his fiery steed slays the mythical monster which both Greeks and Egyptians call a dragon,[2] and delivers the princess, like Perseus of old. But there is neither monster nor princess in the early Egyptian legend. The dragon was the nickname for the Emperor, whom St. George addresses all through by that name; and the princess was one of the Emperor's 'wives,' who was shut up with the young warrior for a whole night, in order that her seductions might weaken the resolution which torture had only strengthened. But he knelt down immediately in the farthest corner of the room, and continued praying till she bade him impatiently say aloud to her what he was muttering to himself. Then he told her the story of Jesus, and so wrought upon her, that in the morning, when the Imperial officers came to seek them, she declared

[1] It is said that the Greek church of St. George in the fortress of Babylon was originally dedicated to the Arian saint, and there was another at Girgeh.

[2] What the animal was which in prehistoric times originated the dragon myth will probably never be known. In Genesis it is translated 'whale'; in Egypt it is represented sometimes as a crocodile, sometimes as a winged crocodile, sometimes as a great serpent.

herself a Christian, and was forthwith slain by the Emperor's order.[1]

The best answer, however, to those who, beginning with Reynolds in the seventeenth century, have tried to identify St. George of the dragon with the Arian George of Alexandria is a simple statement of fact. George of Alexandria was not murdered till 361; and if churches were ever dedicated to him, it was not till some time afterwards. But churches were dedicated in honour of the great St. George as early as the year 346.

At the present time the process of confusion of two saints one with another is going on in Egypt, and it is to be feared that the comparatively modern and doubtful personality will obliterate the other; for everyone in the West has heard of St. Catherine of Alexandria, whereas few know the name of Sitte Dimiana, the most widely reverenced virgin-martyr of Egypt. Her picture is in every church, and there are few members of the Egyptian Church who cannot tell you her history. If St. Catherine existed at all, which is extremely doubtful, she is probably to be identified with Theodora, who was martyred at Alexandria about the date generally ascribed to St. Catherine. It is argued that Theodora before her conversion may have borne the name of Hecaterina, from the goddess Hecate, in which case she would have changed it at her baptism. But this is pure assumption, and, so far as can be ascertained, the Egyptian Church never heard of St. Catherine till the Roman Catholics brought the fame of

[1] In the Little Oasis (Oasis Parva) there was in the thirteenth century a church of St. George which claimed to possess the body of St. George. The head they acknowledged to be at Lydda, but said that the body was sent to them, long after the martyrdom, for safety.

her to her supposed native country centuries after her legendary martyrdom.

When the European tourists came to see the Egyptian churches and asked for the picture of St. Catherine, the dragoman obligingly pointed out the picture of the only great virgin-martyr whom the priests knew anything about, Sitte Dimiana, with her palm-branch in her hands and surrounded by her forty nuns. Some time ago, happening to be in one of the principal churches in Cairo, I overheard the priest describe the picture of Dimiana as that of Catherine. 'What made you say that?' I asked him. 'Has not that always been a picture of Sitte Dimiana?' 'What can I say?' answered the priest with a deprecatory gesture. 'Your excellency knows that it is Sitte Dimiana, but the tourists know nothing of Sitte Dimiana; and when I tell them, they do not understand. They say it must be St. Catherine; and —what do I know?—it may be that Catherine is the English for Dimiana. So I tell them it is St. Catherine, and they are content.' Since then I find that the picture in this church—almost the only one visited by tourists—is always described as St. Catherine, and only the other day I found in Alexandria a further development. The Roman Catholics have dedicated a church here to their St. Catherine of Alexandria, and the Egyptian Catholics have become aware of her existence. I went into the only surviving Coptic church there, which has been restored of late years, and found a newly painted picture of Dimiana, represented —not with a palm branch, but with a wheel—in the midst of her forty nuns. The name Dimiana was painted on the picture, and I asked them why they had represented her with a wheel, as if she were St. Catherine. 'But the Frangis say she *is* St. Catherine,' they told me. 'Catherine

is the Frangi (European) translation of Dimiana, so we have given Sitte Dimiana a wheel too '!

It may not be amiss to give a brief account of Sitte Dimiana, whose name is the feminine of Dimian, or, as it is generally written in English, Damian. She was one of the martyrs in this persecution, a girl of great beauty, who dedicated herself to the cloister at the age of fifteen. Her father was a native Egyptian, who had been made governor of one of the provinces of Egypt, and he built a nunnery for his daughter about two hours' ride north of Bilkaas, whither she betook herself with her maidens. She became the abbess, in spite of her youth, and the number of her nuns is given at forty when the persecution broke out. Dimiana's father was greatly respected, and the Emperor, unwilling to lose so good a servant in a troublesome country, used his personal influence to persuade the man to sacrifice. It is said that he offered to be content with one outward sign of submission, and in return would permit the governor to control the execution of the edict in his province and save his friends from torture. The governor hesitated; but when Dimiana heard of it she pleaded so powerfully with her father on the other hand that he refused all compromise, and defied the Emperor. Diocletian, enraged at being foiled by a woman, wreaked his vengeance, not on the father, but on the daughter. Dimiana and all her nuns were arrested and commanded to sacrifice. On their refusal they were subjected to the most cruel and prolonged tortures; but, as none of them would yield, they were all beheaded together. The convent where their bones are said to rest still exists near Bilkaas, and it is a curious fact that the native Mohammedans—those, that is, whose ancestors were Egyptian Christians, but at different times

have become apostate—still retain the traditional reverence for Sitte Dimiana, and go with their Christian neighbours on the yearly pilgrimage to her shrine, which is one of the most interesting sights in Egypt.

For three years the persecution continued with a steady, relentless ferocity over the whole empire. The first edict was published in 303; and in 304, while Diocletian was suffering from an attack of insanity, Galerius published the fourth edict. This was more stringent than any of those which had preceded it, and was directed against *all* Christians, without respect of age, sex, or social status. Eusebius of Cæsarea, who visited Alexandria while the horrors of this time were yet fresh in the minds of those who had witnessed them, has left a vivid picture of the sufferings of the Christians in Egypt, where Arrian, himself afterwards a martyr, was conspicuous above all the governors by the zeal with which he carried out the orders of his Imperial masters. It is not perfectly clear from the language of Eusebius whether he was himself in Egypt during the persecution, and it is possible that the sentence in the following letter, in which he speaks of what he had himself seen, may refer to the martyrdoms in Palestine, which enable him to receive without question the similar stories related to him of the persecution in the Thebaid:—

But it would exceed all power of detail to give an idea of the sufferings and tortures which the martyrs of Thebais endured. These had their bodies scraped with shells instead of hooks, and were mangled in this way until they died. Women tied by one foot, and then raised on high in the air by certain machines, with their naked bodies and wholly uncovered, presented this most foul, cruel, and inhuman

spectacle to all beholders; others again perished bound to trees and branches, for, drawing the stoutest of the branches together by machines for this purpose, and binding the limbs of the martyrs to each of these, they then let loose the boughs to resume their natural position, designing thus to produce a violent action to tear asunder the limbs of those whom they thus treated. And all these things were doing not only for a few days or some time, but for a series of whole years. At one time ten or more, at another more than twenty, at another time not less than thirty, and even sixty, and again at another time a hundred men with their wives and little children, were slain in one day, whilst they were condemned to various and varied punishments. We ourselves have observed, when on the spot, many crowded together in one day, some suffering decapitation, some the torments of flames; so that the murderous weapon was completely blunted, and, having lost its edge, broke to pieces; and the executioners themselves, wearied with slaughter, were obliged to relieve one another. Then also we were witnesses to the most admirable ardour of mind and the truly divine energy and alacrity of those that believed in the Christ of God; for as soon as the sentence was pronounced against the first, others rushed forward from other parts to the tribunal before the judge, confessing they were Christians, most indifferent to the dreadful and multiform tortures that awaited them, but declaring themselves fully and in the most undaunted manner of the religion which acknowledges only one supreme God. They received, indeed, the final sentence of death with gladness and exultation, so far as even to sing and send up hymns of praise and thanksgiving until they breathed their last. Admirable, indeed, were these, but eminently wonderful were also those who, though they were distinguished for wealth and noble birth and great reputation, and excelled in philosophy and learning, still regarded all as but secondary to the true religion and faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

One of the most renowned martyrs in Egypt who

suffered under Diocletian was Mennas or Mena, always called Mari Mena. He was born of a good family, in the city of Nikius, and his father was made governor of a province of Africa. Mena was himself an officer in the army when called upon to renounce Christianity. On his refusal he was beheaded, and his body was buried in the district of Mareotis. A church was built on the spot, in his honour, which was afterwards replaced by a larger one in the reign of Arcadius. It seems to have served as a resting-place for pilgrims and travellers on the desert road between Alexandria and the valley of Nitria.

The lives of vast numbers were spared because more workers were wanted in the porphyry quarries and in the emerald mines of Egypt, which were always worked by convict labour, and for many years entirely by Christians, whose religion was their only crime. It was quite enough, however, to condemn them to penal servitude for life whenever persecution broke out and more miners were wanted. Some also, and those principally bishops of the Church, were condemned to work for life in the Imperial camel and horse stables. But these seemed to have purchased their lives by some concession, since Eusebius speaks of them as not having governed their flocks in a lawful and becoming manner, and therefore having fallen under divers displeasure. The names of five Egyptian bishops are given as those who had suffered most excessive torture before their death. The ancient martyrologies give the number of those who suffered death during the nine years of persecution in Egypt as 144,000; and while we are free to assume great exaggeration on their part, the counter-estimate of Gibbon must be rejected as absolutely untrustworthy. No impartial student can fail to conclude that the slaughter

was appalling in Egypt, to say nothing of those who apostatised or managed to conceal themselves. The circumstances which attended the conversion of Arrian, one of the most relentless of the persecutors, have been given in Neale; but as he evidently had an incorrect version before him, we give the more ancient Egyptian account.

Arrian had among his soldiers two men, named Philemon and Apollonius, of whom the former was a singer and the other a flute-player. They were great friends, and keenly desired martyrdom sooner than serve any longer under so terrible an enemy to the faith; but it seems that their musical gifts and perhaps other merits had hitherto caused Arrian to ignore their religion and leave them unmolested. Seeing that he valued Philemon the most, the two friends hit on the following device: Philemon took the flute and the garments of Apollonius, and, thus having disguised himself, intruded upon Arrian's presence and confessed himself a Christian. Arrian, believing him to be Apollonius, and evidently thinking that it would be necessary to make an example of the one to deter the other from following in his footsteps, immediately ordered him to be shot by the archers, which was done. As soon as he was dead, Apollonius came before the governor in the same way, who thus perceived that he had sacrificed that one of the two friends whom he desired to keep alive. In a fit of anger he condemned Apollonius at once to suffer the same death. While the sentence was being carried out, one of the arrows glanced aside and struck the governor in the eye. He endured the greatest suffering, but was cured by a Christian (the legend says that the means used was the blood of the martyred friends). Upon this he declared himself convinced

of the power of Christ and the truth of Christianity, and gave evidence of his good faith by immediately liberating all those who were still awaiting torture and death in the prisons. The news was soon reported to Diocletian, and he sent for Arrian and put him to death.

Though the Governor of Alexandria seems to have been more humane in his interpretation of the edicts than Arrian, the persecution there was also carried on with great severity, and it is reported that Peter, as other Patriarchs had done before him, withdrew into hiding at first.

Diocletian, before his attack of madness, had promised to abdicate on May 1, 305; but on recovering his reason in the May of that year he refused to do so, and attempted to resume the reins of government. This Galerius would not brook, and with much violence forced Diocletian to make the formal abdication which he had promised. However,[1] the death of Constantius in 306 and disturbances of the empire occupied Galerius, so that the persecution in Egypt slackened for a brief space; and as the Easter of 307 drew near, Peter, besides his Paschal letter, busied himself with drawing up Canons of Repentance, or conditions

[1] John of Nikius, writing in Egypt in the seventh century, says that when Diocletian lost his reason, he was banished to an island covered with forests, named Waros, situated in the west. Here, he says, were some believers who had escaped there from the persecution. These had compassion on the fallen Emperor, brought him food daily, and so nursed him that he regained his reason. Then he sent to the army and the senate of Rome, demanding that he should be set at liberty and restored to his throne; but they refused to receive him. On this he fell into a state of melancholia, and passed his time in weeping. His madness increased more and more, he became blind, and so—tended only by those he had condemned to slavery, torture, and death—his life wasted, and he died.

on which those who had lapsed during the persecution might be received again into the Church. We give them in brief, and without the arguments and citations from Scripture used by Peter to support his decision in each case :—

1. Those who at the commencement of the persecution had given way under extreme torture and had shown their repentance during the three years which had elapsed would be received at the coming Easter, after a strict fast of forty days.[1]

2. Those who had endured only the 'trial of imprisonment,' and had given way before actual torture had been applied, must undergo another year's penance before being received into the Church again.

3. Those who endured nothing, but lapsed in sheer terror, must do penance for four years.

4. Not a canon, but a lamentation over the lapsed who had not yet sought readmission.

5. Those who had escaped by feigning epilepsy or other trick must do penance for six months more.

6. Slaves who had been compelled by their masters to

[1] This forty days' fast before Easter was not yet the rule of the Church, but a special penance. The use in primitive days of the Church was forty *hours*. Irenæus says, in writing on this subject to Victor and remonstrating with him on the hard and rigorous line the latter was disposed to draw, 'For not only is the dispute respecting the day [of Easter], but also respecting the manner of fasting. For some think that they ought to fast only one day, some two, some more days; some compute their days as consisting of forty hours night and day; and this diversity, existing among those that observe it, is not a matter that has just sprung up in our own times, but long ago among those before us, who perhaps, not having ruled with sufficient strictness, established the practice that arose from their simplicity and inexperience. And yet withal these maintained peace, and we have maintained peace with one another.'

face the trial instead of the latter, and had lapsed, must show 'works of repentance' for a year.

7. Masters who had thus acted must do penance for three years.

8. Those who had lapsed and then made amends at once by coming forward again and enduring imprisonment and torture may be received into communion without probation or punishment.

9. Those who voluntarily exposed themselves, instead of waiting to be arrested, are not to be commended, but reminded that Christ and the Apostles did not so. And those of them who had lapsed under these conditions, being clergy, and had afterwards returned to the conflict, must nevertheless cease to officiate as clergy, though they may be received into communion.

10. Those who had denounced themselves for the sake of encouraging and ministering to others had done well, and should not be blamed.

11. Those who had openly purchased their immunity with money are not to be censured.

12. Those are not to be blamed who simply escaped by flight.

13. Those who had been compelled by sheer force to handle the sacrifices against their will, and those whom torture had rendered utterly insensible, were to be regarded as confessors; and, if clergy, allowed to return to their ministry.

Long after the separation between the Church of Egypt and the European Churches these Egyptian canons were ratified at the Council in Trullo (692); and thus the ruling of what is called an heretical Church was made part of the Canon Law of the Orthodox branches.

It seems most probable that it was during this momentary lull of the persecution that the schism of Meletius first attracted attention, but the different authorities vary in their conclusions by two or three years. Meletius was Bishop of Lycopolis (Assiut), and two quite different stories are given—the one by his own followers; the other by Athanasius, who wrote on the subject some fifty years later. Probably there are elements of truth in both accounts.

Athanasius states that Meletius had saved himself in the time of the persecution by sacrificing to idols. Peter afterwards convoked a Council at Alexandria, by which Meletius was convicted and deposed. Meletius, instead of submitting, separated from the Church, and took upon himself not only to ordain priests, but to consecrate bishops—it is said, as many as thirty, all of whom asserted their independence of Alexandria. They are also accused of introducing Judaical and ritualistic observances of an unseemly character. In Alexandria his principal friend and supporter was the afterwards celebrated Arius, a native of Libya, who had been ordained deacon by Peter.

The followers of Meletius, on the other hand, declared that the proceedings of Meletius were rendered necessary by the flight of Peter from his post and the imprisonment of so many northern bishops. The points admitted on both sides are—that Meletius did somehow escape imprisonment or any suffering for the faith, though no other bishop in the land seems to have done so; that Meletius did ordain priests and consecrate bishops for other dioceses besides his own, in spite of the written protest—from prison—of four of the bishops who were among the earliest martyrs; that after these bishops had been put to death he went to

Alexandria, and took upon himself to assume the functions of Peter, who was still absent; that he took no notice of Peter's letter of remonstrance, and when on Peter's return Meletius was condemned by the synod, he openly disregarded the sentence and set himself up in opposition to Peter. He did, however, retire to his own country, and Arius was forgiven and received back by Peter.

The renewal of persecution put an end to the controversy for the time, but the country had by no means heard the last either of Meletius or Arius.

In the autumn of 308 Galerius, in conjunction with his nephew Maximin, issued a new and more stringent edict of persecution, and those governors in the different provinces who had been content for the last year to order the loss of an eye and reduction to slavery (generally in the Egyptian mines) for all Christians who refused to renounce their religion were stirred up to fresh zeal. There ensued a reign of terror, not unlike that of the French Revolution, which lasted two full years. We will not dwell upon the new catalogue of horrors; suffice it to say that they exceeded all that had gone before, and that a fresh terror was added by the brutal and unbridled lust of Maximin Daza in Egypt and Maxentius (son of the Emperor Maximian) in the West.

In 311 Galerius was attacked by a frightful disease, and in his agony, finding that neither any physician nor god in whom he trusted could help him, he tried as a forlorn hope to make peace with the God of the Christians, against whom he had pitted the whole strength of his life, and, as he now realised, in vain. The text of his edict of peace with the Christians is given in Eusebius, and is an extraordinary document. But his tardy submission called down no

miracle in his favour. His recantation was published on the last day of April 311, and by the end of May it was known throughout the empire that Galerius was dead.

In spite of the edict of Galerius, however, to which the names of Constantine and Licinius were also appended, the persecution was not yet at an end. Maximin Daza continued his career almost unchecked, and some of the most illustrious of the Egyptian martyrs fell in this last year of the persecution. Among these was the Patriarch himself, who was beheaded suddenly and almost secretly, for fear lest the populace, by whom he was greatly beloved, should rise to rescue him from the clutches of the Government. This last calamity roused even Anthony in the Thebaid from his living death of twenty years. He came forth from his tomb, and made his painful way to Alexandria, to comfort the people thus suddenly deprived of their head; hoping also, so it is said, to receive there the crown of martyrdom, which he had escaped in the Thebaid. In this, however, he was disappointed. Constantine and Licinius had made common cause at last against the infamous Maximin, and his attention was attracted from the persecution of others by need of self-defence. In 312 he was finally defeated, and, after passing several days in a state of intoxication, ended his own life by taking poison.

Thus ended the most terrible ten years that the Christian Church as a whole has ever known. Every nation can tell sorrowful tales of persecution, as fierce even as that of which we have just given a brief outline; nor must we ever forget that it was a Christian king[1] who, some twelve centuries later, solemnly condemned the whole population of another Christian country—man, woman, and

[1] Philip II.

child—to death for their religion; and *sent an army to carry out the sentence.* But never since the accession of the first Christian emperor has there been so world-wide and pitiless a persecution as that from which the Egyptian Christians with pathetic significance still count their years[1]—the Era of Martyrs.

[1] The Era of Martyrs, or Coptic Era, dates not from 303, but from 284 A.D., the first year of Diocletian.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY

D. 312
M. 28 AFTER the death of Maximin, and nearly a year after the martyrdom of Peter, the Egyptians ventured to elect a new Patriarch; and their choice fell upon Achillas, who had formerly been head of the Catechetical School. Anthony now departed from the city, but, instead of returning to the Thebaid, he betook himself to the mountainous region between the Red Sea and the Nile; where, after his death, the monasteries of St. Anthony and St. Paul were built, and still exist on the same site. Here, in order to save his disciples the trouble of coming long distances to bring him food, he cultivated with his own hands sufficient of the waste ground to supply his wants, and also worked at the manufacture of mats. Altogether his life seems to have been a more wholesome one after this date, and, besides teaching the disciples who soon crowded round him, he never again lost his interest in the outer world, of which he had had so brief a glimpse; and wrote more than once to prefect or emperor, as he thought they needed guidance. He had no books, and knew no language but his own; but he seems to have thought much, and taught well. The Life which Athanasius wrote of him has been so much interpolated that many people deny that Athanasius can have had anything to do with it.

Some nineteenth-century critics have gone so far, indeed, as to declare that Anthony never existed, and that the Life was merely a romance. That it should be described as an historical novel, rather than as a biography, most students will admit; but while we deplore the atmosphere of superstition and the marvellous fables which so quickly and naturally gathered round the figure of the recluse, we must in all fairness acknowledge that there is no reasonable ground for denying either the man's existence or the main facts of his life.

Achillas only ruled in Alexandria about a year, and the chief incident recorded of his Patriarchate is that he received Arius, who had been a second time excommunicated by Peter and left under sentence at the latter's death, back into communion on his application, and moreover appointed him to the charge of the church of Baucalis, the oldest in the city, which was said to mark the burial-place of St. Mark. On the death of Achillas, Arius even put himself forward as a candidate for the Patriarchal throne; but the unanimous choice of both clergy and people fell on Alexander, the friend of Achillas.

Alexander was already an elderly man when he became Patriarch, and his favourite pupil Athanasius must have been nearly seventeen. The story therefore which Rufinus tells of the way in which Alexander's attention was first called to Athanasius cannot be true exactly as he gives it; but it is not at all impossible that something of the kind took place before Alexander's elevation to the archbishopric.

Alexander, it is said, was expecting some of the clergy to dine with him, and was sitting in a window which overlooked the shore beneath his house, idly watching some

boys at play by the sea. Observing at last that the boys were evidently imitating Church ceremonies, and thinking that the play was going too far, he called them in from the beach, and had them brought before him in the presence of the other clergymen who had meantime arrived. The affair turned out more serious than he had expected, for on inquiry he found that one of the boys, Athanasius, had actually, with all the proper formula, baptized some of his playfellows who had never been baptized. The assembled clergymen, after consultation among themselves, decided that the baptism must be considered valid, and interested themselves to have Athanasius and one or two of the boys who had acted as his assistants trained for the priesthood.

Whether the story is true or not, there is no doubt that Athanasius was from his boyhood a favourite *protégé* of Alexander, and was appointed secretary to the latter when he became Patriarch. For about five years after Alexander's accession the Church enjoyed a long-needed peace throughout Egypt. Meletius, as we know from subsequent events, persisted in his schism; but Assiut was then many days' journey from Alexandria, and he seems at least to have remained quiet in his own diocese. The people settled down again in their homes, the churches were rebuilt, and though almost every family in the land must have mourned some dear friend or relation, and many of those who remained bore traces, in their scarred limbs and sightless eyes, of the terrible storm they had passed through, the land was even more Christian than before—so many of the heathen had been won over to the cause of Christ by the evidence which they had seen of its truth and power. Yet there was a difference, which was to show itself more

and more, in the character of the Egyptians, as time went on. The best blood of the nation had been sacrificed—on the one hand, in the war for independence under Achilleus; on the other, in the struggle for the existence of Christianity during the last ten years. A very large number of those that were left to re-people the country had saved their lives by cunning, if not by cowardice; and those who, though maimed, were still alive among their own people, and not hopeless labourers in the distant mines, were inclined to be fiercely intolerant of any fancied wrong done to the faith for which they had sacrificed so much. Another decade of years had hardly passed before it became necessary for an unbaptized emperor, the last of the six who had divided the empire on the abdication of Diocletian, to interfere with a strong hand between the quarrelling bishops of the Churches.

The events which led to the Council of Nicea, and the proceedings of the Council itself, are so widely known, and have been already so well described in English by Canon Bright, Dean Stanley, and others, that it is unnecessary to dwell upon them at any length. It was about the year 319 when the increasing murmurs in Alexandria against the heretical teaching of Arius obliged Alexander to take some notice of it. Feeling keenly, as he evidently did, the scandal of dissensions in the Church, especially at such a time, he endeavoured by patient listening and sympathy to win the confidence of the heretical party, as Dionysius had done; but the attempt failed, and the two informal meetings which Alexander called for the discussion of the matter led to no result. Alexander then wrote a pastoral letter to Arius and his followers, exhorting them to forsake their impiety, but still without result. The

point in question, as everyone knows, was the divinity of our Lord; and it must be acknowledged that never before or since has there been a controversy of so much importance in the Church. Even those most desirous of peace must have felt compelled to take sides in the matter. We are inclined to say, indeed, that though Arius made several attempts at different times to express his belief in words which would be accepted by the authorities of the Church, no one who has studied the subject can have any real doubt that he did, in fact, deny the divinity of our Lord. He had been preceded in this by other heretical sects, but never before had such denial been so readily received and so widely spread as now, in the reaction from the fierce strain of spiritual exaltation which had upheld men in the time of persecution.

In 320 Alexander summoned a Council, and Arius was excommunicated for the third time in his life. He left Alexandria and went to Palestine, where he made many influential friends. Eventually Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, who had once been schoolfellow with Arius, strongly espoused his cause, and thus brought the matter at a later time under the notice of the Emperor Constantine, who was the connection and friend of Eusebius.

On his return from Nicomedia into Palestine Arius was permitted by Eusebius of Cæsarea and other bishops to hold religious meetings in the different dioceses. This roused Alexander to take fresh action against him, and he drew up an evangelical letter to the bishops of all the Churches, setting forth the reasons why he had felt compelled to excommunicate Arius, and must refuse to receive him back into communion while he persisted in his present

course. For a short time the attention of the disputants was distracted by the terror of a fresh outbreak of persecution, which did indeed actually commence under Licinius, who put Donatus, Bishop of Thmuis in Egypt (Phileas, his predecessor in the bishopric, had suffered martyrdom some years before), to death, with two of his clergy. For this and other causes Constantine attacked Licinius, and defeated him in two pitched battles in July and September of the year 323. Constantine then proclaimed himself sole emperor of the world, and fixed his residence at Byzantium. To him Eusebius of Nicomedia now appealed in favour of Arius; and the Emperor found time, in the midst of all his Imperial cares and occupations, to write a letter, addressed jointly to Alexander and Arius, which is instinct with the spirit of true Christian charity and courtesy.

But, in spite of the admirable tone of the Emperor's letter, it must be acknowledged that he entirely failed in it to grasp the real significance of the dispute; and Hosius of Cordova, who brought the letter in person to Alexandria, duly reported this fact to his Imperial master on his return from Egypt. Constantine thereupon gave orders for the assemblage of all the bishops of all the Churches at Nicea, that the matter might be settled with due deliberation once for all. The famous Council was held accordingly in 325, and the earliest form of the Nicene Creed[1] was drawn up and signed by all but five of the assembled bishops. It ended with the following anathema, which has happily long since been dropped :—

[1] The creed, as agreed to at the Council of Nicea, ended with 'we believe in the Holy Ghost.' The remaining clauses, among them the Filioque, were added later.

But the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematises those who say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, and that He was not before He was begotten, and that He was made from that which did not exist; or who assert that He is of other substance or essence than the Father, or that He was created, or is susceptible of change.

The Council then anathematised Arius, and pronounced sentence of banishment both against him and the bishops who had refused to subscribe the Creed. The assembled bishops then turned their attention to the schism of Meletius, and the question of the right day on which to keep Easter. We give that paragraph of the epistle written by the Council to the Egyptians which refers to these matters:—

Acting with more clemency towards Meletius, although, strictly speaking, he was wholly undeserving of favour, the Council permitted him to remain in his own city, but decreed that he should exercise no authority either to ordain or nominate for ordination; and that he should appear in no other district or city on this pretence, but simply retain a nominal dignity. That those who had received appointments from him, after having been confirmed by a more legitimate ordination, should be admitted to communion on these conditions: that they should continue to hold their rank and ministry, but regard themselves as inferior in every respect to all those who had been previously ordained and established in each place and church by our most honoured fellow-minister Alexander. They shall have no authority to propose or nominate whom they please, or to do anything at all without the concurrence of some bishop of the Catholic Church who is one of Alexander's suffragans. . . . When it may happen that any of those holding preferments in the Church die, then let such as have been recently admitted into orders be

preferred to the dignity of the deceased, provided that they should appear worthy, and that the people should elect them, the Bishop of Alexandria also ratifying their choice. This privilege is conceded to all the others indeed, but to Meletius personally we by no means grant the same licence, on account of his former disorderly conduct; and because of the rashness and levity of his character he is deprived of all authority and jurisdiction, as a man liable again to create similar disturbances. These are the things which specially affect Egypt and the Most Holy Church of the Alexandrians; and if any other canon or ordinance should be established, our lord and most honoured fellow-minister and brother Alexander, being present with us, will on his return to you enter into more minute details, inasmuch as he is not only a participator in whatever is transacted, but has the principal direction of it. We have also gratifying intelligence to communicate to you relative to unity of judgment on the most holy feast of Easter; for this point also has been happily settled through your prayers; so that all the brethren in the East who have heretofore kept this festival when the Jews did, will henceforth conform to the Romans and to us and to all who from the earliest time have observed our period of celebrating Easter.[1]

Though the Arian controversy might seem to be thus settled, it was in truth but just begun. Alexander died a few months after his return to Egypt, and his place was filled by the young and impetuous Athanasius, who was regarded by Arius as his personal enemy. For the next ten years the matter took the form of a duel between these two eminent men; after the death of Arius it

[1] An attempt was made by a certain section of the Council of Nicea to impose celibacy on the clergy. The proposal was received with indignation, and rejected; the Egyptian Bishop Paphutius, who was a monk, distinguishing himself by an earnest protest against such an interference with Christian liberty.

became a duel between the Emperor and the Pope of Alexandria.[1]

[1] The Council of Nicea passed also this canon: 'Whereas some bow the knee on Sunday and on the days of Pentecost, the holy Council, that everything may everywhere be uniform, decrees that prayers be offered to God in a standing posture.'

CHAPTER XIV

HERESY AND SCHISM

A.D. 326
A.M. 42

CONSTANTINE, believing that he had pacified both the empire and the Church, next turned his attention to the reform of Imperial law and the building of a new Imperial city. His law reforms, since they did not produce any special effect in Egypt, need not detain us; but the transfer of the Imperial power to Byzantium had an important influence on the Egyptian nation. It has already been pointed out that the Egyptians always detested the Roman rule, and regarded the Latins, with some show of reason, as a race of ignorant heathen, whose sole superiority was just that one thing which compelled obedience to them, their military genius. The last few reigns of admittedly barbarian emperors had roused this dislike to frenzy,[1] and instigated the hopeless struggle for freedom under Diocletian. But Constantine, though of Imperial descent, was a native of the country now called Servia, and had no love for Rome. His sympathies were Greek; and the twin cities on either side the Hellespont, Byzantium and Chalcedon, were both old Greek colonies.

[1] Under the Roman emperors an Egyptian was ashamed of himself if he could not show a back covered with stripes before he consented to pay taxes to his hated foreign master. In our own century they showed the same hopeless form of protest against the rule of the Turks as late as the year 1880.

Byzantium was the town he fixed upon as the nucleus of his new city, and by certain very curious enactments he indirectly insured that almost all the settlers who flocked to the new capital should be of Greek and Macedonian descent.[1] The annual tribute of corn sent from Egypt to the Imperial city was henceforth sent to Constantinople and not to Rome. Roughly speaking, we may say that but one word and one ruin remain in Egypt to attest the long-past domination of the once *Roman* empire. The one ruin of any importance is the Roman fortress of Babylon. Even this is not known to the natives as Roman; to them it is, and has been for many centuries, the chief Christian stronghold in Egypt. But the one word which remains is very curious, for it is neither more nor less than the Roman name, though the natives themselves are not aware of it. When Constantine linked the old and new capitals together by calling them Old and New Rome, no one seemed to follow his example, and Byzantium has always been called Constantinople— or Stamboul, as the pronunciation of alien lips has since made it. Yet throughout the Eastern Empire the name of Rome remained, and came to signify, *not* the Romans, but the Greeks or Byzantines. The ancient name of Hellenes passed entirely out of current speech. The Greek nation remained; Greek thought and Greek language once more resumed their sway over the Eastern world, and particularly over Egypt, but under the name of that pagan race which the Egyptians despised as barbarian, and feared as the greatest military power the world had ever seen—the name of Roum. The Egyptian of to-day and for many centuries back translates the word Roum, not as Rome, but as Greece.

[1] The new capital was solemnly consecrated on May 11, 330 A.D.

For him the Greek quarter is the Harat el Roum, and the Greek Patriarch is the Patriarch Roumi.[1]

Not long after the Council of Nicea a terrible domestic tragedy overtook the Roman Emperor, and left him a changed man for the rest of his life. It is impossible to enter here into the vexed questions of the murder of Crispus and Fausta. It seems only too likely that Fausta did falsely accuse her stepson to his father in such a manner that the unfortunate young Cæsar was executed in a fit of frenzy by the Emperor, and that the growing remorse of Constantine found vent in such fearful passion, when he later discovered the truth, that he immediately put to death the accuser, though she had been his wife for many years, and her sons were now, since the murder of their half-brother, his heirs to the throne.

In all the accounts of the remaining years of Constantine's life we see traces of remorse and deterioration of character. He is said to have sought for consolation and absolution from the Church, and it seems not unlikely that the prolonged pilgrimages of Helena, the widespread church-building, and the postponement of the Emperor's baptism, were all parts of the penance by which he sought to atone for these dark pages in his life.

We may note, in passing, that none of the contemporary accounts relate any of the miracles which later writers mention as having taken place during Helena's researches in the Holy City. All agree that Constantine built a church (among others in Jerusalem) on the place where our Lord had been buried, and all speak of the spot

[1] This confusion of Roman with Greek was not, of course, confined to Egypt. The same causes led to the same effect all over the Eastern Empire, and now over the Arab-speaking world.

as being well known to everyone; but it is not even certain that any cross was found there at all. To Helena is also attributed the foundation of many churches in Egypt, particularly those of the Red and White monasteries near Souhag. Many of them were, doubtless, built on the sites of older churches destroyed in the recent persecution.

About this time also the Church of Abyssinia was founded as an offshoot of the Egyptian Church, under whose spiritual authority it has ever since remained. Before this, Christianity had never taken root in that country, though the people claimed a far-off connection with the Jews, and practised many Jewish rites.[1] Athanasius was sitting in synod with some of his bishops when word was brought in that a stranger who had just arrived from Abyssinia desired an audience. The man was invited to enter, and told his story to the assembled prelates, giving his name as Frumentius.

Several years before, he told them, his guardian, a philosopher of Tyre, named Meropius, had set out on what we should now call a yachting expedition to India, taking with him his two young relations, Frumentius and a younger brother who was named Edesius. On their return voyage they had touched at a port of Abyssinia to obtain water, and here the natives, to revenge themselves

[1] There is a very curious Coptic legend, which gives in great detail the circumstances of the visit of the Queen of Sheba (Eastern Ethiopia or Abyssinia) to Solomon, and of the subsequent visit of her son by him to his father's Court. On this occasion he is said, with the king's secret connivance and with the help of four priests whom he bribed, to have stolen the sacred Ark, and carried it into Ethiopia. 'This,' ends the narrator, 'is the way in which the Ark was taken into the kingdom of Abyssinia, and it remained there till the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

for injuries committed by the crew of another ship, had fallen upon them and massacred all but the two boys, who were sold as slaves to the king. One was made the royal cup-bearer, and Frumentius private secretary to the king, who on his death-bed enfranchised them. His widow entreated them still to remain in the country and help her with the education of the young princes. By degrees almost the whole government of Abyssinia passed into their hands, and they used all their influence to promote Christianity in the land. Now the young king had come of age, Frumentius and his brother were on their way home; indeed, Edesius had already hurried on to Tyre, but Frumentius had turned aside to report what had been done to the Pope (for it was the Bishop of Alexandria, and not the Bishop of Rome, who was in the East regarded as *the* Pope), and entreat that a bishop might be sent to carry on the mission.[1]

Athanasius, after consultation with the bishops, urged Frumentius himself to return and undertake the work. He was shortly after consecrated, and sent back to Ethiopia, where he passed the rest of his life. He is reverenced by the Abyssinians under the name of Abu Salama, the Father of Peace.[2]

We also have a detailed account of a pastoral visitation made by Athanasius during this peaceful time as far as Assuan, in the course of which he paid a visit to Tabenna. Here Pachomius, a celebrated hermit, who is

[1] The Egyptian legend before referred to states that St. Mark preached Christianity in Ethopia as well as in Egypt. The narrative of Frumentius certainly implies that he had found traces of Christianity in the land.

[2] Rufinus states that he wrote this narrative, not from hearsay, but from the lips of Edesius himself, who was then a priest at Tyre.

the author of the earliest 'Rule of Monastic Life,' had attached himself—an enthusiastic convert, who left the army to become a Christian—to an earlier hermit, named Palæmon, of great sanctity in that neighbourhood. The two had supported themselves by the manufacture of the shaggy tunics so much worn in Egypt, and in course of years a vast multitude of celibates had settled round them, who now came out in procession to meet the Patriarch, chanting psalms.

But neither Meletius nor Arius were inclined to submit to the ruling of the Council of Nicea, and fresh dissensions soon made themselves felt in Egypt. The schismatic bishop and the heretical priest seem to have made common cause against their Patriarch, so that the names of Meletian and Arian were in Egypt indiscriminately applied to their followers. Taking advantage of the fact that Constantine was falling more and more under the influence of Arian priests, they induced him to write to Athanasius and desire that Arius might now be received back into the Church. This Athanasius refused, on the ground that Arius still persisted in his heresy. His refusal, on which the Arian party must have calculated, so irritated the Emperor against him that he was quite ready to listen to the charges which Eusebius of Nicomedia and his followers proceeded to formulate against Athanasius. These were that he had taken upon himself to impose a tax upon Egypt to provide surplices ('linen garments') for the clergy, and that he had supplied a conspirator with money. These two charges were easily disproved, and never seriously pressed against him; but the third, being that half-truth which is proverbially difficult to meet, gave him more trouble.

Some years before, a priest of Alexandria, named

Colluthus, had taken upon himself to separate from the Church—it is not certainly known on what ground—and to ordain laymen as priests. As he was only a priest himself, he was condemned at a Council of Alexandria, and those whom he had ordained were declared to be simple laymen. One of these men, named Ischyras, disregarded the decision of the Council; but, instead of attempting to officiate in the city, he withdrew to his native hamlet in the Mareotis. Here there was no church, and he used to gather a very small congregation in a room. It seems almost a pity that Athanasius, who became aware of these facts in the course of a visitation (about 329), should not have himself ordained this early Dissenting minister, and encouraged him to build a church.

But Athanasius, great as he was, had not the breadth of mind and sympathy which distinguished the Patriarch Dionysius. It must be mentioned, too, that some writers represent Ischyras as a man of bad character; and this, if true, entirely explains the conduct of Athanasius. He sent a priest named Macarius to summon Ischyras and to remonstrate with his father. Ischyras was ill in bed, but his father promised that he should abstain in future from his irregular proceedings. Ischyras on this joined the Meletians, and became a tool in their hands. The charge against Athanasius was that he, or Macarius by his orders, had violently wrecked the whole church, burnt the books, and broken the chalice. Athanasius proved that there was no church; that nothing had been destroyed; and that, so far from Ischyras having been found there at service, he had been ill in bed at the time of the visit of Macarius. At a later time Ischyras himself came forward, and in a

written document signed by thirteen of the clergy of Alexandria and Mareotis confessed that he had sworn falsely. 'God is witness,' he stated, 'that I know nothing of your having done any of the things they state. No cup was broken, no holy table overturned. They goaded me by force into these assertions.' But, as Athanasius refused to grant him immediate absolution, Ischyras afterwards recanted this recantation.

Athanasius was next accused of sorcery—a most dangerous accusation in almost any age but our own since the fourth century. It was publicly stated that he had poisoned a Meletian bishop named Arsenius, and used his body for unholy purposes of witchcraft. It is an instance of the deterioration of national character since the persecution that such a story could be readily and widely believed. The hand of a mummy was shown as the dismembered hand of Arsenius. Athanasius finding, to his surprise, that his non-denial of the statement was regarded as suspicious, sent a deacon into the Thebaid to inquire into the matter.

The deacon soon discovered that the missing bishop was living in the monastery of Ptemencyrcis, but before he could reach the place Pinnes (the abbot) hastily sent Arsenius off to Tyre. However, the deacon made his way to the monastery, arrested Pinnes and a monk named Helias, who had accompanied Arsenius part of the way, and brought them before the governor of the district, where they confessed what they had done.[1]

The deacon promptly went off to Tyre to look for

[1] Pinnes wrote a curious letter to John Arcaph, warning him that this accusation could no longer be preferred against Athanasius, as it was known through all Egypt that Arsenius was alive.

Arsenius, but for some time was unable to find him. At length one of the servants of the consular officer of the district came to tell him that, happening to overhear some one in a tavern say that Arsenius was hidden in one of the houses in the city, he had followed the speaker and could now guide the deacon to the hiding-place. Arsenius was discovered, and at first denied his own identity, but was recognised by Paul, the Bishop of Tyre. Arsenius thereupon wrote to Athanasius, whom he calls 'his blessed Pope,' expressing his sorrow for what he had done and entreating to be forgiven and received back into communion.

In spite of this complete vindication, Eusebius of Nicomedia persuaded the Emperor that the charges against Athanasius should be publicly investigated at a Church Council. One was, in fact, convened at Cæsarea by Eusebius the historian, who was bishop of that city; but Athanasius, though repeatedly cited to appear, took no notice of it. He continued to busy himself with the affairs of his own province, and no doubt hoped that the whole thing would blow over without any more folly or scandal.

In 335, however, another Council was summoned at Tyre, and now Athanasius received a positive command from the Emperor to attend, which he at once obeyed, but went in some state, attended by forty-eight of his bishops. He was received with such studied discourtesy by the assembled bishops, who were mostly Arians, that Potammon, one of his bishops, indignantly cried shame upon the bishop of the city, Eusebius.

'Do *you* sit there to judge Athanasius?' he asked. 'You and I were once in prison together for the faith. I lost an eye. How came you to get off scatheless?'

Eusebius rebuked the ancient confessor for his vehemence, and the trial went on, but the animus of the judges was plainly apparent. Athanasius was again accused of the murder of Arsenius.

'Did anyone here know Arsenius?' asked Athanasius.

Several answered that they had known him. Athanasius then brought forward a man whose head up to this moment had been muffled, and bade him look the Council in the face. It was Arsenius. Athanasius put back one side of his cloak, and showed that Arsenius's right hand was whole and in its place. Then with great deliberation he exposed the other, and in the silence which followed remarked calmly: 'You see, he has two hands. Where is the other which I cut off? God has created man with two hands only.'

A scene of uproar and confusion followed, during which Arcaph, the man chiefly responsible for the lying accusation, managed to make his escape, but not before he had instigated the cry that this was a fresh proof of the sorcery of Athanasius, and thereby directed such a storm of fury against the unfortunate Patriarch who had just proved his innocence that Count Dionysius, who had been sent by the Emperor to see fair play, with difficulty saved his life.

The case of Ischyras still remained, however, and six commissioners who were notoriously Arians, and therefore enemies to Athanasius, were sent to Egypt to inquire into the matter. Macarius was retained in prison at Tyre, and Athanasius resolved to appeal to the Emperor in person. In company with five of his bishops, he took the first ship that left Tyre for Constantinople, and suddenly appeared before the Emperor one day as he was out riding. At

first Constantine did not recognise him, and, when Athanasius declared himself, refused to hear him, on the ground apparently that the matters in question were already under consideration of a Council. But Athanasius stood his ground.

'Either summon a lawful (*i.e.* ecumenical) Council, or give me an opportunity of meeting my accusers in your presence,' he said. The Emperor at length consented, and wrote a letter summoning the Council to Constantinople. Many of them in alarm hastily returned to their dioceses, instead of obeying; but Eusebius of Nicomedia and other Arian bishops repaired to the Court, and, to the astonishment of Athanasius, did not even mention Arsenius or Ischyras, but preferred a perfectly new charge against him —that he was intending to stop the sailing of the corn ships for Constantinople, an act equivalent to a declaration of war against the Emperor.

Athanasius totally denied the charge, but it had been well chosen. The Emperor, already no doubt inclined to be jealous of his most powerful subject, cut short his defence, and ended the whole business by summarily banishing Athanasius to the Court of his eldest son, Constantine, at Treves. Here he remained two years and a half, in a country unlike anything that he had ever seen, and to his Egyptian eyes Northern Germany was 'like the ends of the earth.' He had with him one or two of his Egyptian friends, and wrote constantly to his distracted flock; for the years of his banishment were by no means peaceful ones in Egypt. Arius, who at the Council of Dedication in Jerusalem had again explained away his former statement and been readmitted there into the Church, was sent back to Alexandria, but was the cause of

so much disturbance in the divided city that he was afterwards recalled. The patriotic feeling of the Egyptians resented also the removal of their ancient memorials and stately obelisks to beautify Constantine's new city, and the pagan element of the population still more resented the transfer of the sacred Nilometer from the temple of Serapis to one of the Christian churches. The yearly festival of the rising of the Nile was henceforward celebrated by the Christian clergy instead of by the priests of the ancient religion. Anthony, who had recently left his cell at the entreaty of Athanasius to preach in Alexandria against the Arian heresy, wrote to the Emperor to intercede for Athanasius, but in vain. Finally, Eusebius of Nicomedia persuaded the Emperor to allow Arius to be publicly received into the Church at Constantinople, on a particular Sunday, with a sort of triumphal procession from the Imperial palace to the Church of the Apostles. Alexander, the Bishop of Constantinople, protested in vain, and all arrangements were made for the ceremony, which was destined never to take place; for, on the Saturday before that Sunday, Arius with a crowd of his adherents left the Imperial palace and proceeded through all the principal streets of the city, anticipating his triumph of the morrow, and attracting the notice of the people wherever he went. As he approached the Forum of Constantine he was seized with a violent illness, which reads like an attack of cholera in its most aggravated form. He retired to the back of the Forum, and the crowd waited for him with growing misgiving. Before long the rumour of his sudden death ran from lip to lip, and was confirmed by the one or two horror-struck witnesses of the ghastly scene which had taken place.

So died Arius—the forerunner of those who call themselves no longer Arians, but Unitarians—a man of good moral character, and yet one who, owing to the circumstances of the time, was able to do more lasting harm to the cause of Christianity than any wicked man could have done. His followers also have the unenviable distinction of being the first Christian persecutors.

In 337 Constantine completed and dedicated the great Church of the Holy Apostles, in which he intended to be buried. Almost immediately afterwards his health gave way, and, having received baptism from Eusebius of Nicomedia, he died on Whit-Sunday of the same year. Before his death he had created no fewer than five Cæsars under him—his three sons and his two nephews. To Constantine, his eldest son, he had committed the care of Britain, Spain, and Gaul; to Constantius, Asia, Syria, and Egypt; to Constans, Italy and Africa; to Dalmatius, Illyricum; to Hanniballian, Armenia and Pontus.[1]

Immediately on the death of his father, Constantius, the second son, hurried to Constantinople, and he cannot be acquitted of complicity in the events that followed. The armies declared that they would have none but the sons of Constantine to reign over them, and shortly afterwards there was a general massacre of the descendants of Constantius the First and his second wife Theodora. Dalmatius and Hanniballian, with five other nephews of Constantine, were killed, besides two of his half-brothers, his unpopular minister Ablavius, and one or two others. The only two members of the Imperial family saved alive, besides the sons of the Emperor, were the two sons of his

[1] Strictly speaking, Hanniballian was given the title of *king*, and not of Cæsar.

half-brother Julius Constantius—Gallus, who was then supposed to be dying; and the baby Julian, who was saved by a Christian bishop.

The three brothers then met at Sirmium, and re-divided the empire. Constantine II. took the West, Constans the central provinces, and Constantius II. became Emperor of Egypt and the East.

Constantine II. at once invited Athanasius to return to his see; and after another meeting of the three Emperors at Viminacium, to which Athanasius accompanied Constantine, the Egyptian Patriarch arrived at Alexandria in November 338, and was received with great national demonstrations of joy and thanksgiving. He was not long left in peace, however. Besides other charges which he was immediately able to disprove, the Arian bishops outside Egypt represented to Constantius, who was himself an Arian and had forced Eusebius of Nicomedia[1] on the reluctant people of Constantinople as their Patriarch, that Athanasius had offended against all ecclesiastical principles by returning to his see without the formal permission of another General Council of the Church. They therefore represented that the see of Alexandria was canonically vacant, and intrigued to secure the election of a man called Pistus, who was one of the priests excommunicated by the Patriarch Alexander with Arius for heresy. They seem to have thought that by inducing the Bishop of Rome, to whom Pistus was a stranger, to interfere, they would strengthen their cause; and accordingly three priests were sent as their envoys to Rome.

[1] Eusebius had been twice translated—from Beyrout to Nicomedia, and from Nicomedia to Constantinople—though translation was regarded as uncanonical at that time.

Pope Julius, however, very properly wrote for information to Athanasius, who sent his own legates, charged with such evidence concerning Pistus that the attempt to consecrate him Patriarch of Alexandria was at once dropped, even by his own friends. The legates also brought with them a synodal epistle from the Church of Egypt, signed by nearly one hundred Egyptian bishops, in which they set forth the innocence of Athanasius, and declared that the real aim of the Eusebians was to establish the Arian heresy in Egypt. Julius of Rome proposed that a Council should be called to settle the question, and this proposal was apparently adopted by both parties. But early in 340 Constantine II., who had been the protector of Athanasius, was killed in a skirmish; and almost immediately afterwards the Church of Alexandria was electrified by the announcement, in a formal edict of the Prefect Philagrius, that not Pistus but a man named Gregory was coming from the Court of Constantius to be installed as Patriarch of Alexandria in the room of Athanasius.

Gregory was a native of Cappadocia, but he had been educated in the Alexandrian college, and had received kindness from Athanasius. He had not himself been excommunicated for Arianism, but his secretary Ammon had been, like Pistus, deposed on that ground by Alexander. His appointment was the signal for popular riots in Alexandria. A great meeting, among many others, being held to protest against this treatment of Athanasius, in the church of St. Quirinus,[1] Philagrius, who was a countryman and friend of Gregory, encouraged a mob of the lowest rabble of the heathen populace (some say he

[1] This saint was probably Quirinus, Bishop of Siscia, in Illyricum, who was one of the martyrs under Diocletian.

headed them himself) to attack the church. The mob swarmed into the most holy places, burned the church books, drove out the congregation with brutal insult, and pillaged the church stores. Some of the monks were slain in defending the property of the church.

Athanasius was then living in the precincts of the church of St. Theonas; but knowing that he was specially aimed at, and fearing danger to the church from his presence there, he withdrew from the city, and left Gregory four days later to make his entry into the city unopposed. This all happened during the season of Lent, and the unfortunate Alexandrians suffered actual persecution at the hands of the intruding bishop. The clergy of Alexandria were forbidden to baptize or visit the sick, and on Good Friday itself a fresh outrage took place. As Gregory made his public entry into the church he was hooted and insulted by the indignant populace. Gregory appealed to his friend the prefect, who at his desire seized and scourged no fewer than thirty-four of those present, among whom were some men of rank, but the majority of whom were defenceless women. Another indictment was drawn up, signed only by heathens and Arians, accusing Athanasius of capital crimes. That unfortunate Patriarch decided to go to Rome, in the hopes that the promised Church Council would shortly be held there. Julius received him with much kindness, and sent off two priests with the invitations to the Council, which he fixed for the December in that year. Meanwhile he courteously entreated Athanasius to remain with him, and the latter, probably feeling that his presence in Alexandria under the circumstances could do no good and might do harm, readily consented, and strove to turn away his thoughts as much as possible from the evil which

he could not avert. He says of himself at this time: 'When I had laid my case before the Church, for this was my one subject of anxiety, I spent my time in the Church services.' Two Egyptians had accompanied him, Ammonius (a monk from Nitria) and Isidore; but it is to be feared that this sojourn in the far-famed city was rather wasted on the former, since it is recorded of him that he showed no interest in any Roman buildings except the church of SS. Peter and Paul.[1] This sojourn of 'Pope Athanasius' in Rome had a lasting effect on the Latin Church. His accounts of the monastic system in Egypt were eagerly listened to, and an enormous impetus was given to the practice of celibacy in the West. Indeed, Gibbon states that 'Athanasius introduced into Rome the knowledge and practice of the monastic life;' but it is difficult to imagine that this is literally true, and that there were no monks in Rome before the coming of Athanasius. In this manner Athanasius waited 'the Lord's leisure' for eighteen months.

[1] This Ammonius was the eldest of the Tall Brothers, of whom we hear so much under Theophilus.

CHAPTER XV

GREGORY AND GEORGE OF CAPPADOCIA

D. 340 M. 56 ABOUT the same time as the Emperor Constantine II. (probably a few months earlier), died one of the most celebrated men of his age, to whose labours we owe almost all that we know of the first three centuries of the Christian Church—Eusebius of Cæsarea, the historian. He had been at first inclined to take the side of Arius in the unhappy controversy which we have briefly sketched, but had given his assent to the decision of the Council of Nicea, and had faithfully abided by it. He was the most trusted friend of Constantine the Great, whom he idolised, and had been employed by him of late years in literary labours. It is particularly noted that the Alexandrian book-writers made for the Emperor, by the order of Eusebius, fifty copies of the Scriptures for use in the principal churches which Constantine had rebuilt and dedicated. Not one of these precious copies has survived to our day, so far as we know, though there is always the hope that some Egyptian tomb or long-forgotten hiding-place may one day restore to us one of these early texts.

The pagan authors of Egypt were not idle during this time. We still possess some of the works of Alypius[1] and Iamblicus, who were the principal teachers of the Neo-

[1] Only one work—on music—remains by this author.

Platonic philosophy in Alexandria. Achilles Tatius wrote a book on astronomy, that ever-favourite science of the Egyptians, besides a romance of doubtful character. He subsequently became a Christian, and, it is said, was made a bishop. Another writer on the kindred science of astrology was Hephæstion of Thebes, who wrote a treatise to explain the influences of the several signs of the zodiac on mankind. His division of the zodiac is the same as that on the ceiling of the temple of Dendera.

Meanwhile Gregory continued his evil doings in Alexandria. He persecuted the aunt of Athanasius, and, when she died, endeavoured to deprive her of Christian burial. He is accused of seizing 'the doles of widows.'[1] When he left Alexandria, on a visitation throughout Egypt, matters grew even worse. Those bishops who refused to acknowledge his authority were treated with the utmost cruelty. Potammon, who has been mentioned as the friend of Athanasius at Tyre, who was also one of the three hundred and eighteen at Nicea, and had been mutilated in the persecution of Diocletian, was now, in his old age, so cruelly scourged by a man calling himself a Christian bishop that he died a few days after, and is reckoned among the martyrs. St. Anthony wrote from his mountain cell to remonstrate with Gregory, but his letter was treated with insult.

December passed, and still no Council assembled at Rome. At length, in January, the two priests sent by Julius returned with a letter from the Arian bishops, so offensive that the Bishop of Rome, in the true spirit of Christian charity, forbore to show it, and still waited,

[1] The same accusation is brought against Athanasius, so that it is worth little.

in the hope that some of the bishops at least would come. Instead of this, the Arian party took advantage of a great festival for the approaching dedication of a new cathedral in Antioch to hold a Council there. Ninety-seven bishops came, and, besides some formal business, re-affirmed the condemnation and degradation of Athanasius. On the other hand, in the November of the same year, Julius called a Council of over fifty bishops at Rome, by which Athanasius, after formal investigation of all the charges against him, was declared innocent. Neither Council took any notice of the proceedings of the other. Athanasius still remained in Rome, not wishing to create fresh scandal by returning to Alexandria while Gregory was there. At length, in 343, he received the welcome news that the Emperor Constans had resolved to summon a true Council of the East and West. He had an interview with Constans at Milan, and then went to meet the venerable Hosius of Cordova. The Council met at Sardica at the end of 343, and, after much wrangling, the Arian bishops withdrew, refusing even to state their case. The principal canon passed on this occasion was the memorable one which provided for a reference in certain circumstances to the Roman see, which thus laid the foundation of the priority which Rome afterwards claimed over all other sees —a claim never allowed by the Patriarchates (afterwards the Churches) of Constantinople and Alexandria.

Constantius, irritated at the failure of his own party in the Church, so far from accepting the decision of the Council, only advised fresh severities in Egypt. The Alexandrian magistrates received orders to behead Athanasius if he ventured to return to his see; five of his clergy were banished, and many fled into the desert to escape the

persecution of the Arian party. At length, in 344, the discovery of a vile plot on the part of the Arian Patriarch of Antioch against an inoffensive priest gave Constantius a revulsion of feeling against them, and he made overtures to Athanasius. In February 345 Gregory died in Alexandria, and the way was now made open for Athanasius; but, distrustful of Constantius, he hesitated longer than we should have expected. It was not till October in 346 that Athanasius at length returned to his native country. Gregory of Nazianzen has left a wonderful account of his reception by the whole populace—the many-coloured crowd pouring out of the city to meet him, climbing every convenient edifice to get a glimpse of him, the air fragrant with incense, and at night the city illuminated in his honour. His Paschal letter for 347 begins with a thanksgiving for having been brought back from distant lands, and ends with information concerning bishops whom he had recently consecrated.

Three years of peace for Athanasius and Egypt followed. He found much to be done in his distracted province. Besides the new bishops whom it was his first care to consecrate, it was apparently about this time that he appointed Didymus to the headship of the Catechetical School. This remarkable man had lost his sight from disease (probably acute ophthalmia) when he was about four, and in consequence was not taught as a child even the ordinary rudiments of learning. But his desire for knowledge was so keen that neither his great misfortune nor his neglected education could daunt him. He cultivated his memory till it became a marvellous faculty. He had the letters of the alphabet engraved on wooden tablets, and taught himself to read by feeling them. Socrates

tells us that in this way he taught himself grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, logic, arithmetic, and music; and this so thoroughly that he was able to hold his own in discussions with those who had learnt the same sciences from ordinary books. Already his fame was so great that the hermit Anthony had sought him out on his recent visit to Alexandria, and is reported to have addressed him in the following words: 'Didymus, let not the loss of your bodily eyes distress you; for although you are deprived of such organs as confer a faculty of perception common to mosquitoes and flies, you should rather rejoice that you have eyes such as angels see with, by which the Deity Himself is discerned and His light comprehended.' Socrates further notes that Didymus, even before his appointment to the charge of the college, was regarded as the great bulwark of the true faith and the most powerful antagonist of the Arians. He wrote many books, of which four are still in existence. Already it was becoming a recognised opinion in the Church that the great Origen was a dangerous teacher, little better than a heretic—another instance of the sad change in the general temper of the Church since the great persecution—and Didymus published a commentary on Origen's book 'Of Principles,' showing that the objections were shallow, and that those who denounced him 'were destitute of sufficient penetration to comprehend the profound wisdom of that extraordinary man.' This book, however, is not one of those that remain to us. Pupils again thronged to Alexandria from all parts of the civilised world, and many years later Rufinus and Jerome, both of them then in middle age, came to sit at the feet of the 'blind seer' of Alexandria.

This season of rest did not last long. In February 350

Constans was killed during the revolt of Magnentius, and Constantius was left sole emperor. Athanasius had good reason to fear the action of the latter; but it was not till May 353 that he thought it advisable, his calumniators being again hard at work, to send an embassy of five bishops and three priests to justify himself before the Emperor. One of these bishops was Serapion of Thmuis,[1] an important city in the Delta. This is the same man whom some authorities make one of the presidents of the Catechetical School, either before or after Peter; but, if so, he must have been extraordinarily old when he died. Still, it is not impossible that very young men took temporary charge of the school in times of persecution, as we know that Origen did. Serapion was a man of learning, an author, and a constant friend and correspondent of Athanasius. But this embassy had little or no effect. Constantius first tried by stratagem to entice the powerful Patriarch into Europe again, and, failing in that, convened a Council at Arles, the decisions of which were inimical to Athanasius. Indeed, no less than ten Church Councils were held in the reign of Constantius, not counting the Synods of Rimini and Selucia, all chiefly concerned with unbecoming disputes between the Athanasian and the Arian parties. Constantius considered himself the Head of the Church in spiritual as well as temporal matters, and arrogated to himself an authority over the Popes and bishops of the empire which his greater father never attempted to exercise. The pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus says of this emperor :—

[1] It must not be forgotten that there were two cities of this name in Egypt, and some indications would lead us to suppose that both were bishoprics at one time.

The Christian religion is plain and simple, but Constantius confounded it with senile superstition. He roused many differences by curious inquiries, instead of reconciling them by his authority; and when these had spread in all directions, he propagated them by verbal disputes. He utterly ruined the postal service by allowing the use of the horses to troops of bishops, who were constantly galloping hither and thither to the various synods, as they call them, in the endeavour to enforce uniformity for their own opinions.

During the Lent of 354 the Alexandria churches became so overcrowded that the people suffered great inconvenience. Athanasius was therefore entreated by the citizens to hold the Easter services in the great church of the Cæsareum, which was a barely finished building, and as yet undedicated. Athanasius hesitated, well knowing that, if he consented, it would give his enemies a fresh handle against him; for the church of the Cæsareum occupied the site of the palace called the Cæsareum, the old palace of the Roman emperors, and was still the private property of the Emperor, since it had not yet been formally handed over to the Church. It would be therefore a manifest act of discourtesy to his sovereign to appropriate the church before it was given; moreover, to hold the Easter services in an undedicated building was an ecclesiastical irregularity. In the end Athanasius allowed himself to be over-persuaded, against his better judgment; the church was used, and the offence was given. In 355 Athanasius was again condemned by a Council at Milan after some stormy scenes between four bishops, who stood up for Athanasius,[1] and the Emperor, who was furious to find that his authority to punish a bishop by his personal

[1] From the sees of Vercellæ, Calaris, Milan, and Naples. Liberius of Rome and Hosius of Cordova were not either at Arles or at Milan.

decree was denied. The bishops bluntly told him that they were not there to avenge his private wrongs. 'As a bishop,' they said, 'Athanasius must be judged by bishops, not by the Emperor. Do not confuse the canons with Imperial decrees.'

'Canons!' exclaimed the indignant Emperor. 'What I wish, *that* is a canon!'

In August of the same year one of the Imperial notaries came to Alexandria, and tried unofficially to get Athanasius out of the city, without success. In January 356, Syrianus, a Byzantine general, and another notary named Hilarius, arrived with a summons to Athanasius, but still without any written authority. Athanasius, supported by the whole body of clergy and laity, refused to surrender himself without the written warrant of the Emperor, and Syrianus swore by the life of the Emperor, in the presence of the Prefect of Egypt and the Provost of Alexandria, that he would take no further steps against Athanasius until the warrant arrived.

Three weeks afterward, while the Patriarch, in the church of St. Theonas, was assisting at one of those midnight services which have always been a conspicuous feature in the Egyptian Church, alarm was given that soldiers were approaching, headed by Syrianus, Hilarius, and Gorgonius, the head of the police force. Athanasius at once addressed the congregation in the hope of preventing panic flight, or active resistance.

'I sat down,' he wrote afterwards, 'on my throne,[1] and desired the deacon to read the Psalm [136th], and the

[1] The bishop's throne was always behind the altar, and facing the people, in the Egyptian Church; it is generally a recess in the wall, like the *kiblah* of a mosque, with stone seat raised high enough for its occupant to be seen by the congregation.

people to respond "For His mercy endureth for ever," and then all to depart home.'

In the darkness outside the soldiers battered at the doors[1] while the deacon read through the poem of thanksgiving, which must have fallen so strangely on the ears of the expectant congregation. Then, even as the response went up 'For His mercy endureth for ever,' the doors were forced, and the Byzantine soldiery poured in with a fierce yell of exultation, their naked swords flashing in the light of the church lamps. They rushed up the church towards the Patriarch, who stood up and called to the people to escape while they could. Some, however, tried to bar the passage of the soldiers, and were slain and trampled upon as the fierce struggle went on up the nave. The clergy urged Athanasius to escape, but he refused, knowing well that so long as he was in sight his intending murderers would make for him, and let alone all those who did not attempt to interfere with them.

> I said I would not do so (he writes) until they had all got away safe. So I stood up, and called for prayer, and desired all to go out before me. . . . And when the greater part were gone, the monks who were there and certain of the clergy came up and carried me away.

By this time the frightful crush had reached to such a pitch that Athanasius fainted as he was borne out, and in the dim light they dragged him out unobserved of the yelling soldiers, who were still pressing up to the now empty throne in the sanctuary. Athanasius was hurried into concealment before his enemies perceived that he had vanished, 'no one knew whither, in the darkness of the night.'

[1] Almost all Egyptian churches are also strongholds; they have never been free from the necessity.

For six years the persecuted Patriarch remained in hiding, passing from one place to another as the officers of the Emperor sought for him throughout the country. His adventures and his hairbreadth escapes read like those of a young hero of romance; but Athanasius never forgot the Patriarch in the fugitive. He ate the hard unleavened bread of the country, and drank water from the Nile; he sat on a rush mat, and thought himself happy when he could do this in the light of day, among the simple hermits of Nitria or the Thebaid, instead of hiding for his life in a dark cistern, or in some forsaken Egyptian tomb. Every cave and glen was known to the monks, and there was no *laura*, monastery, or village that did not think itself honoured by the presence of this dangerous guest. But nothing shows the greatness of the man so clearly as the use that, in spite of this perpetual atmosphere of unrest and hardship, he made of these six years. He never lost touch with his church for a day. Though invisible, except to his guardians for the time being, he never ceased to correspond with his bishops, despatching letters and orders which were received as loyally as if he were actually ruling from the Alexandrian throne. He carried on an enormous correspondence, consoling the faithful, advising the perplexed; and, besides all this, he utilised this period of comparative inaction for literary labour of a most substantial kind. He was sixty years old, he had no reasonable prospect of ever returning to safety and civilisation, he heard only grievous news from the outer world, yet he seems always to have remained cheerful; and it is certain that during this time he wrote the Apology[1] to Con-

[1] It is hardly necessary to point out that the word 'apology' is used in its technical sense, not in its popular modern one. These were elaborate treatises, not merely letters of self-defence and excuse.

stantius, the Apology for his flight, the Letter to the Monks, the Letter to Serapion (his friend the Bishop of Thmuis), and his great work, the Orations against the Arians.

At first he had contemplated an appeal in person to the Emperor Constantius, but was convinced of the futility of this course. Almost immediately after the attempt to murder Athanasius in the church of St. Theonas tidings came to Alexandria that another Arian bishop, also a native of Cappadocia, was coming to assume the government of the Church of Egypt in his room. This man's name was George;[1] and it is said that, before his admission to the priesthood, he had been a fraudulent contractor at Constantinople. He was, however, a man of learning. As before, Lent was chosen for the arrival of the usurper, and persecution commenced almost immediately afterwards. Athanasius gives the names of seventeen bishops and two priests who were sent into exile, and treated so harshly by those in charge of them that some died on their way and some soon after they arrived at their destination. Altogether, he says that more than thirty Egyptian bishops were got rid of. Speaking of what George did in Alexandria, Athanasius says:

When Easter week was past, the virgins were cast into prison, the bishops led in chains by the military, and the dwellings even of orphans and widows forcibly entered and pillaged. Christians were interred by night, houses were marked, and the relatives of the clergy were endangered on their account. Even these outrages were dreadful, but the persecutors soon proceeded to such as were still more so;

[1] The similarity of name between Gregory and George (Gregorius, Georgius), and the fact that they were both of Cappadocia, has led to a good deal of confusion between them. The narrative in the text was written after very careful study of all the available authorities.

for in the week after the Holy Pentecost the people, having fasted, went forth to a cemetery to pray, because all were averse to communion with George. That brutal persecutor, being informed of this, instigated against them Sebastian, an officer who was a Manichean. At the head of a body of troops armed with drawn swords, bows, and darts, he marched out to attack the people, although it was the Lord's Day. Finding but few at prayers, as the most part had retired because of the lateness of the hour, he performed such exploits as might be expected from savage barbarians. Having kindled a fire, he set the virgins near it, in order to compel them to say that they were of the Arian faith; but seeing they were not to be overcome, and that they despised the fire, he then stript them, and so beat them on the face that for a long time afterwards they could scarcely be recognised. Seizing also about forty men, he flogged them in an extraordinary manner, for he so lacerated their backs with rods fresh cut from the palm-trees, which still had their thorns on, that some were obliged to procure surgical aid in order to have the thorns extracted from their flesh, while others, unable to bear the agony, died under its infliction. All the survivors, with one virgin, he banished to the Great Oasis. The bodies of the dead were not at first suffered to be claimed by their relatives, but, being denied the rites of sepulture, were concealed as the authors of these barbarities thought fit, that the evidences of their cruelty might not appear. Such was the blindness with which those madmen acted; for while the friends of the deceased rejoiced on account of their confession, but mourned because of their bodies being uninterred, the impious inhumanity of these acts became more distinctly conspicuous.

As the years passed on, each brought some fresh tidings of sorrow to the fugitive Patriarch. In 357 his venerable friend, Hosius of Cordova, worn out with constant persecution, and grown almost imbecile with age, signed an Arian creed. The light of his intellect flamed

up again before his death, and he at once recanted what he had done; but it must have been a sore blow to Athanasius, especially as it was followed in 358 by the desertion of Liberius of Rome. In 358, 359, and 360, Arian Councils were held, on which Athanasius commented—with patience, forbearance, and tact—in his Letter on the Councils of Ariminum and Selucia. Next came news of the death of the hermit Anthony, always the firm friend and supporter of Athanasius. And in 361 came tidings which at first must have seemed worst of all. Once more a pagan was at the head of the civilised world. Constantius was dead, and the throne had fallen to Julian the Apostate.

Julian had never been a Christian, though he had been educated in that faith. The blame for his apostacy lies far less with him than with those who were responsible for the distracted and un-Christian state of the Church. It was a Christian emperor, his own cousin, who had begun his reign with a general massacre of all their common relations, and it was no fault of his that Julian had survived to reign after him. Julian, though made Cæsar in 355, at the age of twenty-four, and Augustus by a popular demonstration of the soldiery (not acknowledged by Constantius) in 360, had been allowed little real power, and had been for most of his life a sort of State prisoner. It was an open secret that for some years he had renounced Christianity, and just before his cousin's death he had thrown off the mask and professed himself openly, with private lustrations and public sacrifices, a pagan. His favourite city was Paris, which now appears for the first time in history. He was a widower and childless. Julian succeeded to the empire in November, and was at first absorbed in needful

arrangements in Constantinople. On Christmas Eve there was a fierce riot in Alexandria, directed by the now exultant pagans against the three most unpopular men in the place—George, Diodorus, and Dracontius. For some time the feeling on the part of the pagan populace had been growing against these three men. Diodorus was a Christian of wealth and station in Alexandria and a Count of the Roman Empire, so that he was probably of Greek extraction, though he seems to have been a native of Egypt. He was carrying on the still unfinished works of the great church of the Cæsareum, but he had wounded the feeling of the Egyptians by cutting off (presumably using his authority to enforce it on the Alexandrian students) the long lock of hair hanging down at the side, which in the early ages of the Egyptian Empire had been the mark of a king's son or daughter; under the Ptolemies, the mark of high rank; and now worn by all who were proud of their true Egyptian descent. Dracontius was the prefect of the Alexandrian mint, and had given great offence by the removal of a pagan altar which he found in the building. Against the Patriarch George the charges were of a far more serious nature. Besides the deliberate oppression of all the orthodox Christians, he had alienated all parties by his greed and tyranny. He had exasperated the Alexandrians by suggesting to the Emperor that a house tax should be imposed on the whole city; he had secured for himself the monopoly of the nitre and salt works; he had procured the banishment of Zeno, a celebrated pagan physician in Alexandria; he brought Artemius,[1] the Prefect of Egypt, with an armed force into the very stronghold of

[1] For this and other high-handed proceedings Artemius was beheaded by Julian.

paganism, the great temple of Serapis, which he plundered of its statues and ornaments; he even attempted to secure to himself the monopoly of what we should now call the undertaker's trade, 'so that it was not safe even to bury a corpse without employing those who let out biers under his direction.' Already in August 358 the Alexandrian populace had made an attack on the church of St. Dionysius, in the precincts of which George was living, and, though the Imperial soldiery were quickly summoned to his aid, it was only after hard fighting that they succeeded in rescuing him. In the October of the same year he was obliged to leave the city, as his life was no longer safe there, and he did not return until after the Councils of Rimini and Selucia,[1] probably in November 359. Ammianus, the pagan historian, records his threat that he would make many a man suffer for his exile. Another year passed. George was at the height of his power, and took occasion deliberately to insult the pagan community in the following manner. There was a place in the city, long abandoned to neglect and filth, which had once been a pagan temple, where human sacrifices had been offered to Mithras. Constantius had granted the useless site to the Alexandrian Church, and George proposed to build a church upon it; but, to do this, it was necessary to clear away the rubbish. In the course of the work an *adytum* of great depth was discovered, in which skulls and many other remains revealed the disgraceful nature of the heathenish rites which had been perpetrated there. George saw in this an opportunity for a great demonstration against the pagans. He organised a solemn procession of Christians, which went about

[1] By a majority at the latter he, with several other bishops, was deposed from his see, but the sentence took no effect.

the city, publicly exposing the skulls and heathen symbols which had been found. The tumult grew as the riotous classes of the city poured out into the streets to see what was going on; the better classes of pagans, wounded to the quick, made no effort to restrain them, and the situation was critical enough already, when suddenly word was brought that a ship had arrived with tidings of the death of the Emperor Constantius and the accession of Julian the Apostate. The news must have run through the excited city like fire, and the smouldering passion of the pagan population broke out instantly. They flung themselves upon the Christian procession. 'Away with George!' went up in a unanimous shout; he was seized, with Diodorus and Dracontius, and probably would have been murdered on the spot, if some of the more law-abiding citizens had not interfered, and the wretched man was thrown with his companions into prison. But their fate was only delayed for a time. The news of Julian's accession arrived on or about November 30, 361; and for a week or two the Patriarch George, with the two other men, against whom no crimes are recorded, remained in prison, since apparently the accession of a new emperor increased the delays of the law. But the growing strength of pagan feeling could no longer be restrained, and on Christmas Eve it broke out into open riot. The prison was forced by a howling mob, the three men dragged out, beaten with sticks, kicked, and, as Julian himself describes it, 'the people actually tore a man in pieces, as if they had been dogs.' The mangled body of George was flung upon the back of a camel, the two other corpses were dragged along with ropes, and so carried about the city in hideous mockery of the former procession. At last they burnt the bodies on the sea-shore,

and cast the ashes into the sea—the extremity of insult that an Egyptian could offer to the dead.

So died that George of Alexandria whom Gibbon tried, some fourteen centuries later, to identify with St. George of England, the Great Martyr of the East. We have shown in an earlier chapter that this identification is not only improbable, but impossible. Nevertheless, it seems probable that this later George was afterwards honoured by the Arians, and churches dedicated to him.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RETURN AND DEATH OF ATHANASIUS

A.D. 361
A.M. 77

ON hearing of the murder of George, Julian wrote a very curious letter to the pagan community of Alexandria, ostensibly to blame them for the crime they had committed, but ending with the following clause, instead of imposing any punishment upon them :—

> It is fortunate for you, ye Alexandrians, that such an atrocity has been perpetrated in our reign, who by reason of our reverence for the gods, and on account of our grandfather and uncle whose name we bear, and who governed Egypt and your city, still retain a fraternal affection for you. Assuredly that power which will not suffer itself to be disrespected, and such a government as is possessed of a vigorous and healthy constitution, could not connive at such unbridled licentiousness in its subjects, but would unsparingly purge out the dangerous distemper by the application of sufficiently strong remedies. We shall, however, in your case, for the reasons already assigned, restrict ourselves to the more mild and gentle medicine of remonstrance and exhortation ; to the which mode of treatment we are persuaded ye will the more readily submit, inasmuch as we understand ye are not only Greeks by original descent, but still preserve in your memory and character the traces of the glory of your ancestors. Let this be published to our citizens of Alexandria.

There can be no doubt that Julian's was an ascetic and deeply religious temperament, and that his zeal for the

older faith would have led him to open persecution of the Christians, if he had not clearly perceived that any such attempt would unite all the different Christian parties against him, and that such a combination would be now strong enough to cost him his life and his crown. He contented himself therefore with issuing a series of oppressive edicts, principally relating to education, which sorely crippled the work of the Church; and struck a blow at the more powerful Arian party by a decree allowing all bishops exiled by Constantius to return to their sees, and commanding that their confiscated property should be restored to them. Thus the first effect of the accession of a pagan emperor was to restore Athanasius, among others, to his place and power. It was in February 362 that Athanasius returned, and with him the Western Bishops of Vercellæ and Calaris, who had been banished into the Thebaid. Lucifer of Calaris hurried on to Antioch, but Eusebius of Vercellæ remained in Alexandria to take part in a Council which Athanasius at once summoned. Only twenty bishops apparently remained to attend this Council of the great number which Athanasius had under him in the early days of his Patriarchate. At this Council it was agreed to re-admit all to communion who were ready to accept the Nicene faith, without stirring up old animosities by any further discussion. But the Patriarch was not long left in peace. Julian soon recognised that Athanasius was not a foe to be despised, and that the pagan religion had no chance to make way against the faith of Christ in Egypt while Athanasius remained in Alexandria.[1] Julian's

[1] Julian writes to the Prefect of Alexandria: 'Though you neglect to write to me on any other subject, at least it is your duty to inform me of your conduct towards Athanasius, the enemy of the gods. My

anger rose to its height when he heard that very soon after his return Athanasius had dared to receive and baptize some Greek ladies as converts from paganism. He sent peremptory orders that Athanasius should leave Alexandria at once, as the Imperial amnesty had not been intended to apply to him.

This order reached Athanasius in October 362. He consoled his weeping friends, and then hastily embarked to go up the Nile. Before he had gone very far intimation was in some manner conveyed to him that he was pursued by Government agents, who were close behind, though out of sight owing to a bend in the river. With great presence of mind Athanasius ordered his boat to be turned, and went quietly to meet the Government boat, the men in which shouted as they passed to know if they had seen Athanasius. 'He is not far off,' answered the Patriarch, and in another moment the boat was out of sight. Athanasius pressed on to Chæru, where he landed and made his way by land to Memphis, whence he wrote his Festal letter, and then once more took refuge in the Thebaid. Near Hermopolis he was met by Theodore, abbot of the monastery of Tabennesi,[1] who came out to meet him with a torchlight triumphal procession, as of a returning conqueror instead of an exiled Patriarch. Athanasius stayed some time in Hermopolis and Antinoe, preaching and

intentions have been long since communicated to you. I swear, by the great Serapis, that unless on the calends of December Athanasius has departed from Alexandria—nay, from Egypt—the officers of your Government shall pay a fine of 100 pounds of gold. I am slow to condemn, but I am still slower to forgive.'

[1] The monastery of Ta-ben-isi (the city of Isis; or, as the Greeks called it, Aphroditopolis) was probably that now known as the White Monastery—Deyr el Abieth.

openly performing his duties, as if on an ordinary visitation tour; but at midsummer he received fresh warning that he was in danger, and Theodore came again with another abbot to entreat him to conceal himself in Tabenna. He embarked in a covered boat with the two monks; but the wind was against them, and it became necessary to tow the boat with painful slowness. Athanasius was for some time absorbed in prayer, and did not observe the faces of his two companions. At length he turned to them and began 'If I am killed'—but broke off as a curious smile passed between the two monks, who thereupon informed him that even while he prayed they had received a supernatural intimation that Julian was no more. Julian was, in fact, slain on the field of battle on June 26, 363. It is not certainly known how he was killed, but at the time the pagan historians did not scruple to assert that he had been treacherously slain by one of his Christian soldiers, who, being a fanatic, had persuaded himself that he was called upon to slay the enemy of the Lord. But there is no evidence in support of this statement. Callistus, one of his body-guard, declared that he had been killed by a demon; and the Christians declared that he had died by the visitation of God. It is remarkable that several people in different parts of the empire are said to have received supernatural intimation of his death at the moment of its occurrence. We have mentioned the vision of Theodore in the boat, which put an end to the hasty flight of Athanasius; and of Didymus, the blind professor of Alexandria, a similar instance is recorded. In deep distress at the state of the Church and the triumph of the pagans, the old man had passed a whole day in fasting and prayer, and towards midnight he fell asleep in his chair. At one o'clock he was

roused by hearing a voice say distinctly, 'Julian is dead; rise, eat, and send tidings to Athanasius.' Didymus carefully noted the day and hour, and found that Julian had indeed died at that moment from his wounds.

The best-known vision on the subject, however, and the most commonly told in Egypt, is that of Basil, afterwards Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia. Before Julian's apostacy Basil, who was then a cultivated and deeply religious layman, had been a personal friend of his, and on the accession of the former to the throne he sent to Basil to come and reside at Court. Basil was about to accept the invitation, when he became aware of the Emperor's public declaration of his apostacy, and at once refused. Julian, stung to the quick, retaliated by a persecution of Cæsarea, where Basil had recently been ordained a priest; and wrote a letter to Basil to demand a thousand pounds in gold towards the expenses of his Persian expedition, threatening in the event of the money not being forthcoming to raze the city of Cæsarea to the ground. Basil was overcome by despair and perplexity at this demand; but in the night he had a dream. In his dream he saw the heavens opened, and heard Jesus Christ command His servant Mercurius to go forth and kill Julian, the enemy of His anointed. Mercurius, clad in shining armour, disappeared twice. Returning the third time, he said: 'I have killed the Emperor Julian, as Thou hast commanded me, O Lord, and he is dead.' Basil awoke in terror, and went to the church, where the priests and the faithful were gathered for the prayer of the night. To them he recounted his dream, and they entreated him to keep silence until the event should be certain; but, on the contrary, he published his dream everywhere. And afterwards came the news

that it was true, and the people rejoiced.[1] In all the Egyptian pictures of St. Mercurius he is represented holding two swords crossed above his head, with the crowned and prostrate figure of Julian underneath his horse's hoofs.

On the death of Julian, the chief of the imperial body-guard was hastily elected in his stead by the soldiers in camp. Jovian was, like many of the 'Roman' emperors, a Servian by nationality, and of good family. He was a Christian of the orthodox faith, and his short reign was one of peace for the Church. The greater part of the army returned at once to their former faith, and all over the empire the public rejoicing and speedy desertion of the pagan temples showed how superficial the heathen reaction had been. Jovian issued an edict [2] in which he proclaimed perfect liberty of conscience to all his subjects, forbidding only the practice of magic. He wrote to Athanasius a letter of warm sympathy and admiration, and begged him to draw up a statement of the Catholic faith. This Athanasius did in the form of a synodal letter, and then sailed for Antioch, where he met with an enthusiastic reception.

Meanwhile the Arians in Alexandria were not idle. One of their number, Lucius, who had been ordained priest by George before his death, was persuaded to go to the new emperor to seek that appointment at his hands which they knew it was hopeless to expect to obtain by regular methods in Alexandria. The little band of Arians presented themselves with their petition before Jovian at one of the

[1] I have given the story as told by John of Nikius, who supposes, however, that Basil was at this time Bishop of Cæsarea.

[2] *See* oration of Themistius, in 364.

gates of Antioch as he rode out. On being asked their business, they said they were Christians from Alexandria, and wanted a bishop. The Emperor told them that he had already written the order for Athanasius to return. They answered that Athanasius had been for years a condemned and exiled man, and that it was not his return which they desired. Here a soldier interrupted them by telling the Emperor that these men were only 'the refuse of that unhallowed George,' and Jovian rode on without paying any further attention to their petition. They persisted, however, in their efforts to obtain a hearing against Athanasius, and followed the Emperor about till he swore at the sailors who had *not* taken the opportunity of throwing Lucius into the sea on his voyage from Alexandria.

Athanasius returned to Alexandria in February 364, and a few days later the Egyptians were struck with consternation on hearing that Jovian, from whom they hoped so much, was dead. He had ordered a brazier of charcoal to be brought in to a bitterly cold room where he intended to sleep, and in the morning he was found dead in his bed.

His immediate successor was Valentinian I., but, as far as Egypt was concerned, Valens, to whom his brother assigned the government of the East. Valens was, in so far as he was a Christian at all, an Arian, and therefore, as history almost justifies us in saying, a persecutor.

In 365 he issued an order for the expulsion of all the Catholic bishops who had been recalled by Julian. When the news reached Alexandria, in May, there was so strong a demonstration in favour of Athanasius that the prefect did not venture then to carry out the order.

In October Athanasius was living in the precincts of St. Dionysius's Church, whence he hastily took his flight on receiving a warning that the prefect intended to take action against him. That same night the Imperial troops broke into the building, and searched it even to the roof; but in vain.

Socrates says that Athanasius concealed himself for four months 'in his father's tomb.' Finding, however, that Egypt refused to be pacified, the Emperor yielded the point for the time, and Athanasius was allowed to return to his government. For nearly two years Egypt remained at peace in the exercise of the Christian religion under their own bishop. During this time, however, a pagan riot in Alexandria is recorded on July 1, 366, in the course of which the great church of the Cæsareum, which had only been finished in 361, was burnt.

In 367 Lucius, having obtained an irregular consecration out of Egypt, made a sort of piratical raid on Alexandria, with some hope of obtaining the coveted Patriarchate by force, and evidently with the sanction of the Emperor. He went straight to the house of his mother, who still lived; but, the news of his arrival becoming known, the house was surrounded by a threatening crowd, and, when the prefect sent officers to order him to leave the country, they reported that to insist on his leaving the house would insure his being murdered by the infuriated mob, which seems to have been largely composed of pagans. The prefect then sent a strong guard to bring him out through the shouts and execrations of the populace, and the next day he was put on board a ship, and sent out of the country to save his life.

In 368 Athanasius began to rebuild the Cæsareum, and

the next year laid the foundations of another church, which was called after his name. About this time the people of two towns in Pentapolis, desiring to have a bishop of their own, persuaded the aged bishop of the diocese to which they belonged to consecrate a young layman named Siderius. Athanasius gently rebuked the irregularity, but rectified it himself; and afterwards, finding Siderius worthy, promoted him to a more important see. Later, Athanasius excommunicated a cruel and licentious governor in Libya, and sent circular letters to the heads of the different Churches saying that he had done so, and giving his reasons. The last five years of his life were spent in the peaceful performance of his duties and active correspondence with the bishops of other Churches, especially with Basil of Cæsarea in Cappadocia. Most of these were concerning different heresies, and more particularly those of Apollinaris and of Marcellus of Ancyra.

In 373 the long and laborious life of the great Patriarch came to an end. He passed away peacefully, after nominating Peter as his successor, having governed the Church of Egypt for forty-six years.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SUICIDE OF THE EGYPTIAN NATION

A.D. 373
A.M. 89

WE have pointed out in a former chapter the melancholy results of the war of independence, and of the terrible persecution with which the fourth century opened, on the character of the Egyptian nation. We have now to record what it is hardly too strong a figure of speech to call the suicide of the nation. It is true that a fraction—we are thankful to note, an increasing fraction—remains with us even to this day in the land of Egypt. There is something very touching in the way that the Copts—as, owing to the inability of the Arab to pronounce the word Egyptian, they are now called—never speak of their community as a Church, but always as 'the Nation.' But as the war of independence had decimated the brave and patriotic among the Egyptians, as the Era of Martyrs had swept away in fiery chariots of torture the best and most purely religious spirits which were left to her, so, later, the Arian triumph filled her noblest and most intellectual souls with despair of this present world and a conviction that, since Anti-Christ—for so Arius seemed to many of them—had come, the end of the world must be near. This led them to rush by thousands into monasteries and desert cells, leaving only those who cared not whether Christ were God

or man, whether Egypt were bound or free, so long as they might till their land or ply their trades in peace.

It is not, of course, intended for one moment to imply that all those who between the years 320 and 390 covered the land with monasteries or honeycombed the barren fields with cells were actuated by the highest motives, or were the best men to be found in Egypt. There were always a faithful few, like the great Athanasius himself, and many others whose names are now lost, who remained true to their posts and to the natural duties of life. But what does need to be pointed out is the fact that both of those who became monks and nuns, and of those again who, like Athanasius, without deserting their duty, yet thought it good for the present distress to refrain from marriage, it was only the best and purest who kept their vows inviolate and left no children to fight for their country or maintain the glory of their ancient name. The importance of this fact can hardly be over-estimated in tracing the course of Egyptian history. It should be remembered, too, that the process had been going on, though slowly, for a long time; indeed, that at first it had been rather checked than otherwise by the introduction of Christianity. For some centuries before that time a certain proportion of the pagan Egyptians had become monks, though—understanding that physical qualities were often hereditary, while not realising that the same laws applied to intellectual and moral characteristics—their monks were often, it seems, chosen from the deformed and helpless. Also cleanliness at least was strictly required of the ancient Egyptian monks. They washed three times a day —before the prayers of sunrise, noon, and sunset. They fasted constantly from animal food, and gave their lives to

study. But when, in the second century, the Christian Egyptian began to follow the customs of his forefathers in his new religion, he too often aimed at reducing his despised body below the level of a beast. Ammon, the founder of the Nitrian settlement, thought it wrong for a religious man to see himself unclothed; and even Athanasius is said to have considered bathing an immodest custom! A condition of body which would disgrace the lowest street-boy in England was by these mistaken celibates counted to them for righteousness. In proportion as the Egyptian loved personal cleanliness—and it is in evidence that he generally did—it became a luxury which he must sternly deny himself. Some of them even denied themselves study, though for some centuries—till all the inherited intellect of the nation had been killed out of it by the monastic system—many of the monasteries were retreats of learning, or at least of diligence in copying the manuscripts of the earlier generations.

The causes which led a large number of the worst as well as the best among the Egyptians to embrace vows, which the latter kept and the former broke, with equally disastrous consequences to the nation at large, were complicated and numerous. The law of Constantine which in 320 freed celibates and childless persons from taxation must have given a great impetus to selfish and money-loving people to refrain from marriage—for foundlings, by another law, could be reared at the expense of the State. Also all monks were exempt during the reign of Constantine from military service. But that which contributed more than anything else to the suicide of the Egyptian nation was a profound and national despair.

They had sacrificed their lives and their treasures year

after year in the struggle for freedom under Achilleus, and in vain. The iron grip of the detested Roman was closer upon them than ever. Later, though hopeless for their country, they had risen to the call and poured out their blood like water for their faith; and in vain. For so it must have seemed to them when, after some ten brief years of peace and slow recovery, the Arian heresy triumphed in high places, and the Church of Egypt was persecuted and oppressed by Christians who knew not Christ. Nor had they any hope that the evil days might be only an interlude, for all men knew that the heir to the throne was a pagan embittered against all forms of Christianity. Little wonder if they thought, as men have been apt to think in all ages of storm and perplexity, that the end of the world was at hand. So the worser souls among them grew restless, saying, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' And these multiplied, and the land became filled with their descendants,[1] while the purer souls fled from this evil world, so soon to be destroyed, and waited, instant in prayer and daily self-martyrdom, for the coming of the Lord.

For the folly and faithlessness shown alike by good and bad in that fourth century Egypt has suffered ever since. The extent to which the population became monks and nuns could hardly be believed if it were not attested by contemporary writers, who travelled to Egypt to see this strange thing for themselves. In the same year in which Athanasius died, a little group of Italians who had been

[1] The morals of the non-monastic classes became so bad, however, that the population decreased in consequence of their debauchery; while riches were so much more gained by fraud than honest industry that it was taken for granted a rich man must have been either a rogue or the heir to a rogue.

living together a semi-monastic life at Aquileia broke up their society and travelled in different directions. The two best-known of these young men are Rufinus and Jerome, who had been friends from boyhood. Well known to them all, and apparently the queen of their little society, was a young married lady named Melania, who was of Spanish extraction. Although she was only twenty-two, she had already three children, when great misfortunes overtook her. Her husband and two of her children died, probably swept away by some infectious disease. The poor lady seems to have regarded this as a judgment on her happy married life, and from that time she not only lived a life of ascetic self-denial herself, but preached a sort of crusade against marriage. Finding that Rufinus, who was then about seven-and-twenty, intended to go and study monastic life in Egypt, she left her only remaining son under guardianship in Italy, and came with Rufinus to Alexandria. Here she remained, while Rufinus with two or three other men travelled up the Nile, visiting all the places of interest, and particularly all the monasteries and hermits.

At Oxyrhynchus, where formerly the fish had been worshipped, he found the whole population of the town under monastic vows. Most of the males had apparently withdrawn from the city into more secluded monasteries and cells, but the bishop told Rufinus that there were ten thousand monks and twenty thousand nuns in the city. The great temples in which the pagan gods had been worshipped were now monasteries, and there were twelve churches in the town besides. In the Arsinoite nome they also found the whole population under monastic vows; but these all worked in the fields, and sent up the produce of

their common land regularly to Alexandria. This was also the case round the cities of Memphis and Babylon.

At Tabennesi three thousand *silent* monks lived under the government of Ammon, who had succeeded Theodorus as abbot, and had been consecrated bishop by Athanasius. He had been oppressed and banished by George of Cappadocia. Apollonius, the head of the monastery near Hermopolis, which contained 500 monks, had in like manner been made a bishop by Athanasius and persecuted by George of Cappadocia. He had been a monk since he was fifteen, but must have been of good blood, for, so far from neglecting his education, he became one of the most cultivated men of his day, and was able not only to give Rufinus much information about the present state of Christianity in Egypt, but to explain to him the old religion and ceremonies of the ancient Egyptians, and the true significance in former times of the 'sacred' animals. *His* monks were never allowed to neglect the ordinary decencies of life; 'their garments were as clean as their hearts were pure.' When Rufinus and his friends left this favoured monastery, the courteous Superior sent with them three interpreters as guides. The friends were taken to see several monasteries in towns of which they could not remember the names, as well as a great many of the most celebrated solitaries in their cells.

One of these was high up on the barren mountains behind the town of Antinous, approached only by a path so rugged and narrow that no one not familiar with the place could hope to discover it. In this awful and desolate solitude lived Elias alone in a great cavern; and here he had lived alone, so the travellers were told, for more than seventy years. He was now, they were assured, 110 years

of age, and his ancient limbs trembled with palsy. No one in the neighbourhood could remember when Elias had not been living in that cavern, and he was said to have effected many cures. His diet, they were told, was three ounces of bread daily, and three olives in the evening. The young men gazed awestruck at the silent figure, and then made their toilsome way down again to the haunts of men. They visited also the cell of Theon, a monk who was renowned as being learned, not only in Greek and Egyptian, but in Latin.

But the most celebrated of all these solitaries was John of Lycopolis (Assiut), who lived in a cell at the top of a steep rock, and whose wisdom was so highly respected that he was consulted on matters of policy both by the Roman general stationed at Assouan, and later by the Emperor Theodosius. He acted also as the almoner for the district. The whole population, by agreement among themselves, brought him the tenth of their produce, which he distributed to the poor. The plan was found to work so well that it spread all over Egypt, and from Egypt to the rest of Christendom. Indeed, Selden traces the origin of Christian tithes to the monk of Lycopolis. At a later date the tithes were divided into three portions—one of which was devoted to the support of the clergy, one to the fabric of the church, and one to the poor. To this day, in the Egyptian cathedral, three alms-dishes are carried round the church, during service, by three men following one another, who offer each his plate to every worshipper, as each is expected to make the threefold offering—one for the clergy, one for the church expenses, and one for the poor.

There were three kinds of monks in Egypt—Cænobites,

who lived in monasteries together; the Anchorites, who lived in solitary cells; and the Remoboths, who dwelt by two or three together in cities.

Having finished their long pilgrimage up the Nile, Rufinus and his friends next made their way to Nitria. Here they found more than fifty monasteries, containing altogether about five thousand monks, who, like the monks of Hermopolis, were mostly superior to the common run. Ammon, their first founder, had died about 345, and was succeeded in the government by Macarius. There were two great Egyptian saints of this name, who were contemporary, and were called, to distinguish them, Macarius of Alexandria, and Macarius of Egypt. Even so, it is very difficult to know what acts to attribute to one, and which to the other, to say nothing of the fact that there were several more of the name. The Macarius who plays a prominent part in the life of Athanasius, as one of his priests and constant companions, should not probably be identified with either of the Saints Macarius. Saint Macarius of Egypt had been the companion of Anthony, and both he and Macarius of Alexandria lived in Nitria and in Scetis, which is a day's journey from Nitria, though generally confounded with it. It seems most probable also that Macarius of Egypt was the same as the Macarius Magnus of the fourth century, whose writings in answer to pagan attacks on Christianity were almost forgotten till Nicephorus in the eighth century, with great expense and trouble, procured a copy. The internal evidence of the writings themselves points to this identification, and there is nothing to render it improbable. Here, in Nitria, also were the four monks known as the Tall Brothers, the eldest of whom, Ammonius, had accompanied Athanasius

when he went for eighteen months to Rome. These four seem to have been brothers in blood as well as in religion, and to have been famous for their great stature as well as for their inconsiderate zeal. Two parties were already growing up in this great colony of monks—the more ignorant among them insisting on an anthropomorphic view of God, the others clinging to the spiritual and mystical views of Origen. At the time of the visit of Rufinus they were still living in peace and harmony, and he intended to remain some time among them; but the clouds of religious and political trouble were again gathering over the unhappy land of Egypt.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LAST ARIAN BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA

A.D. 373
A.M. 89

THE death of Athanasius was the signal for fresh attempts on the part of the Arians and the pagans to overthrow the Church of Egypt. The same scenes were repeated which had marked the intrusion of George of Cappadocia. The Emperor Valens was an Arian, and was indignant that the Egyptians had presumed to elect their own Patriarch. Once more the church of Theonas, which seems to have been the Patriarchal church, with residence attached, was stormed during service by the pagan prefect Palladius at the head of a troop of soldiers. Once more the pagan and Jewish rabble took advantage of the opportunity to profane the altars and insult the Christians. Peter, as Athanasius had done, escaped and went into hiding. He wrote an encyclical letter, which is still preserved, giving an account of the recent events. A messenger who had just arrived from the Roman Pope, Damasus, with letters of greeting to the new Pope of Alexandria, was seized and sent a prisoner to the mines. Peter eventually escaped to Rome, and remained in exile there five years.[1]

Meanwhile Lucius made his triumphant entry into

[1] The same scandalous struggles between rival parties of Christians were going on both in Rome and Constantinople. Damasus had made good his own election by force.

Alexandria, escorted by the principal pagans of the city, and inaugurated his rule by a fresh persecution of the Egyptian Church. He directed his fury particularly against the monasteries and the monks, and we are told that he went in person with the Imperial troops to Nitria to wage war on all those who refused to deny the Godhead of the Son.[1] But finding that the monks defended themselves with great courage, and were more likely to prevail in battle than to deny their faith, Lucius recommended the military chief of the expedition to send the abbots of Nitria and Scetis—Macarius of Alexandria and Macarius of Egypt—into exile; so that, deprived of their heads, the monks might be more easily overcome. The two Saints Macarius therefore were sent up the Nile to Philæ, which was still an entirely pagan island, with a celebrated idol temple upon it, whose priest was revered by the surrounding inhabitants almost as a god. The arrival of the exiled monks caused great excitement and alarm in the island. The priest's daughter, in particular, behaved like one distraught, and rushed down to the shore where the holy men were landing, crying out: 'Why are you come here to cast us out? We had trusted to be safe from you in this unknown spot—here we abode in peace—here we hurt none! But if you claim this island also, take it; we cannot resist you.'

With these words the girl fell to the ground in a fit.

[1] Gibbon says that this armed expedition, 3,000 strong, against the monks of Nitria was to compel the young and able-bodied among them to serve in the army. It may be so, but his only authority appears to be two French historians, who quote the *Theodosian* code to show that the monks were liable to military service. All contemporary writers agree that it was an attempt to force the Arian doctrine on the great religious stronghold of Egypt.

Then the two abbots, one of whom was a renowned physician, soothed her and cured her, and in the end they converted the whole island. When Lucius heard this, he gave private orders for the release of the abbots.

Eleven bishops were sent into exile by Lucius, who was supported all through by the Imperial power. One of these bishops was Melas, the Bishop of Rhinocolura,[1] a frontier town. When the military party sent to take him reached his church, towards evening, they found a young man engaged in preparing the lamps for service. They asked for the bishop, and Melas—for it was he—answered that he was at hand, and should shortly be told of their arrival. Meanwhile he took them into his own house, set supper before them, and waited upon them himself. When they had finished he told them who he was, and, touched by his behaviour, they offered to let him escape, but he preferred to share in the misfortunes of his brethren.

Rufinus was among those who were seized at Nitria, imprisoned, and finally banished from the country. Melania, who had been living all this time in Alexandria (about six months), went to Diocæsarea, in Palestine, with a large body of banished bishops, priests, and hermits. Here she waited for some time, receiving with the greatest kindness all the Egyptian exiles who made their way to her, and supporting them at her own expense. At length Rufinus managed to join her, but as soon as possible he went back to Egypt, and remained there for six years, chiefly in the society of the monks.

One of the most celebrated hermits of that time was Moses, who lived in a cell in the desert between Egypt and Palestine, and was reverenced for his great sanctity

[1] The present el-'Arîsh.

by all the wandering tribes of Bedouin—or Saracens, as they were then called.[1]

At this time the Saracens were ruled by a Queen Mavia, whose husband had once been an ally of the Romans. Since his death the tribes had plunged into war again, and had ravaged all the countries of the East. Valens, who was already so much harassed by the Goths in Europe that the persecution in Egypt had been allowed to drop, could not hold the frontier against them, and sent to ask for terms of peace. The chief condition made by Queen Mavia, though she does not seem to have been before this a Christian, was that Moses should be given to her as bishop of her nation. Valens consented with delighted alacrity, and gave immediate directions that Moses should be seized and brought, whether he would or no, to Alexandria to be consecrated. Moses came quietly enough; but when he perceived that he was to be consecrated by Lucius, he flatly refused.

'I count myself, indeed, unworthy of the sacred office,' he said; 'but if the exigencies of the State require me to bear it, it shall not be by Lucius laying his hand upon me, for it has been filled with blood.'

Lucius in vain urged that Moses had been sent to him, not to reproach him, but to be instructed by him in the principles of religion. The sturdy old hermit rejoined that this was no question of religious dogma, but simply that he refused to be consecrated by a persecutor like Lucius; and he was proceeding to give instances of cruelty which his 'own eyes' had beheld, when Lucius hastily dismissed him. Eventually his guard took him to the

[1] 'Saracens' was the general name given to all the Arabian tribes living between the coast of the Red Sea and the Euphrates.

mountains in search of some of the exiled bishops, by whom he was consecrated. Thus about the same time the Christian religion became widely spread among the Saracens and in the Soudan, which by the reign of Justinian had become entirely Christian.

In the spring of 378, finding that Valens was now occupied with the Goths, and that Lucius had lost all real power in Egypt, Peter ventured to return from Rome, and the people with one accord rose against Lucius and expelled him from the city. Lucius appealed to Valens, who was not at all in a condition to support him, and who was killed in battle in the same year.

His successor in the East was Theodosius, a Spaniard, and son of that elder Theodosius who, after rendering signal service to the empire as one of its bravest generals, fell a victim to the superstition of Valens. The practice of 'spiritualism' and table-rapping was widely prevalent in the empire at that time, and at a *séance* which had been carefully got up, by some of his partisans, in favour of a man named Theodorus, the table, on being asked to give the first four letters of the name of the man who should succeed Valens in the empire, rapped out the Greek letters Θ-ε-ο-δ. On this coming to the Emperor's ears, he promptly put Theodorus to death, and sought pretexts for murdering any other prominent person whose name might happen to begin with Θ-ε-ο-δ. Among these was the brave Theodosius; and his son, who bore the same name, thought it prudent to hide himself on the family estates in Spain.

On the death of Valens, Gratian, who conjointly with an infant brother had already succeeded to his father Valentinian in 375, found the Byzantine empire also on

his hands. He was not yet twenty, and very wisely sent for Theodosius, who was about thirteen years his elder, and appointed him Emperor of the East. Both Gratian and Theodosius were of the orthodox faith, and in February 380 Theodosius published a solemn declaration of faith to the people of Constantinople, where the state of religious affairs was even worse than at Alexandria or Rome. In the previous year Peter of Alexandria had been asked to interfere, in the hope of rendering the state of affairs a little less intolerable and disgraceful; and ever since his return from Rome he had been occupied with the affairs of Constantinople.

Gregory of Nazianzen is one of the few great and lovable souls which shine out from the dark days of the latter half of the fourth century; and though he has nothing to do with the history of Egypt, his connection with the Pope of Alexandria renders some brief mention of him necessary. He was the son of the Bishop (also Gregory) of Nazianzen in Cappadocia, and was educated at Athens in the same college with Julian the Apostate and Basil of Cæsarea. His desire was to be a monk, but he could not desert his aged parents, so he lived the strict life of an ascetic under their roof, and became, as it were, his father's steward. Against his will his father compelled him to receive ordination in his thirty-sixth year, since as a layman he could not be of nearly so much use to the bishop. Later, in 372, his father and Basil of Cæsarea determined to make him Bishop of Sasima, a little town of Cappadocia, which was claimed by the prelate of Tyana as being already in his diocese. For this and other reasons Gregory the younger refused, and though he was consecrated bishop he never would take up the see. He still acted as his father's

assistant till, in 374, the elder Gregory died, at the great age of one hundred years. His wife, who, like all his family, was perfectly devoted to him, followed him shortly after, being called away from earth as she knelt at the Lord's table. Gregory's brother and sister were already dead, and he was alone in the world. He remained for two years doing the work of the see, till a successor should be appointed; but finding that so long as he remained in charge no one would believe his earnest desire to be relieved from the burden, he suddenly disappeared, and for the next three years remained in strict retirement in a monastery at Seleucia.

In 379 he was urgently petitioned by all the orthodox Christians of Constantinople, backed by the signatures of several bishops and by the formal approval of the Pope of Alexandria, to go to the Imperial city and do what he could to help them. Besides the Arians, Constantinople was distracted by the disputes of no less than six different religious parties, all condemned as heretical, of which the only important sects were the Manicheans and the Novatians. Gregory responded to the appeal, and, establishing himself in a private house, took up the long-neglected work of teaching personal holiness and the danger of empty theological discussions. A church was built for him, called the Church of the Resurrection; and here he lived for more than a year, hard at work.

At this time Constantinople was visited by Maximus, an Alexandrian adventurer with a curious history. He was at once a baptized Christian and a Cynic philosopher; he claimed to be a confessor for the orthodox faith, and his enemies said that he had indeed been scourged and banished, but it was for his misdeeds. He must have been

clever, for he managed to obtain the most extraordinary influence over both Peter in Alexandria and Gregory in Constantinople. He is described as a handsome fellow, with long yellow curls floating far over his shoulders. He professed the most unbounded admiration for Gregory, who returned with sincere affection his hypocritical professions; and all the time Maximus was intriguing with the Pope of Alexandria—who had the same blind confidence in him—to oust Gregory from his position and to obtain for himself the Primacy of Constantinople.

He represented to Peter that he had made a serious mistake in sanctioning the informal appointment of Gregory to Constantinople, that his translation from Sasima (which he had never accepted) was uncanonical, that his manners were rustic, and that the polished society of the capital was getting weary of him. Peter actually listened to these charges, and was prevailed upon to send some bishops to Constantinople with orders to consecrate Maximus in the room of Gregory.

Gregory was ill at the time; but even so, he was too well-beloved for Maximus to assert himself openly. He repaired with the Alexandrian envoys to the church by night, and there they began the ceremony of consecration. But the wonderful curls of Maximus had to be cut off before he could receive the tonsure (which, not so many years before, Athanasius had preached against in his charge as the mark of a pagan, and not of a Christian priest), and before this process was half accomplished the sun rose, and the city woke up to the consciousness of what was being done. The mob rushed in, and drove the intruders from the church. The hair-cutting was finished in a flute-player's shop; and then Maximus, not daring to remain in

Constantinople, fled to the new Emperor Theodosius at Thessalonica to entreat his support. Theodosius refused to recognise him, and he then returned to Alexandria, and called upon Peter to use his authority in his favour. But Peter, whose eyes had been opened at last to the real character of his *protégé*, refused to listen to him, and the prefect banished him from Alexandria. Very soon after this—in February 380—Peter died.

Theodosius made his formal entry into Constantinople in November 380, and in May 381 he summoned a General Council in a fresh endeavour to give peace to the Church, and particularly to settle the vexed question of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Gregory was again elected, but amid so much dissension that he retired, before the sittings of the Council were ended, in the hope to promote peace; and finally went back to the same informal charge of Nazianzen until 383, when a new bishop, at his own earnest request, was appointed, and he retired to spend the last six months of his life in literary labour. Good and learned as he was, it is to be feared that during these later years his influence, like that of Ambrose in the West and Theophilus in Egypt, encouraged instead of restraining the growing disposition of Theodosius towards intolerance. Peter of Alexandria had been succeeded by his brother Timothy, surnamed 'the Poor,' because he had given up all his worldly possessions. He came to the Council of Constantinople, and took part in the deliberations which led to the resignation of Gregory, and in the expansion of the Nicene Creed into the form in which we now possess it, always excepting the Filioque clause, which has never been sanctioned by any General Council.

But when the Council proceeded to the delicate task

of assigning a recognised precedence to the different Patriarchal sees, all harmony was at an end. For the first two centuries the five sees of the first rank had been Alexandria, Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Cæsarea; and of these, Alexandria was generally reckoned the first.[1] Rome had always shown some jealousy of the precedence of Alexandria, and the gentler Popes of the latter city had generally been ready to yield the point. But the real leadership, and the encyclical letter which yearly fixed the date of Easter, came from Alexandria. When Constantine became a Christian, his new Imperial city at once took rank with the earlier Patriarchates. At the Council of Nicea the first blow was given to the prestige of Alexandria by the adoption of the Western date for the celebration of Easter. Ever since that time the ecclesiastical power of Rome had been increasing, while Alexandria and Constantinople had been weakened by constant troubles. Rome owed much to the fact that the Arian emperors did not consider her of so much importance as Alexandria, and turned their strength against the Egyptian Pope. At the Council of Sardica, in 343 (not acknowledged as ecumenical), Rome had succeeded in getting a canon passed which provided for an appeal to the Pope of Rome as a referee in certain disputed cases; and she now, at the Council of Constantinople, determined to insist on a formal recognition of her claim, not to supremacy—for that was never allowed—but to priority. Gratian and his father had both been ~~strong~~ in the West, and claimed superiority over the Eastern Empire; so that the moment was exceptionally favourable

[1] By a canon of Nicea Jerusalem (Elia) was ranked second. The real question of supremacy, however, lay between Alexandria and Rome.

to the pretensions of Rome. Theodosius owed his crown to the favour of the Western Emperor, and could not afford to dispute the claim; but he was anxious at least that his own Imperial city should rank second. A canon was therefore passed at this Council, which gave Rome the primacy, Constantinople the second place, and degraded Alexandria to the third rank among the Papal sees. Timothy of Alexandria was out-voted, whereupon he indignantly left the Council, and returned with his bishops to Egypt. Here he passed the rest of his life in quiet performance of his duties, writing biographies of several Egyptian saints, and issuing, among other things, a series of instructions to his bishops and clergy for their guidance in difficult cases. One of these directs a priest to take upon himself the responsibility of refusing to perform an uncanonical marriage—*e.g.* with a deceased wife's sister; another says that, unless it is clearly shown that a suicide was of unsound mind, the prayers are not to be said for him; another, in answer to a question, declares that 'those who may have thoughtlessly broken their fast before communicating are not to refrain from the sacrament in consequence, since, if Satan finds so easy a way of preventing men from its reception, it will greatly strengthen his hands.'

Tradition assigns the building of several churches in Alexandria to this Patriarch. The Egyptians have a St. Timothy in their calendar, but Neale thinks it impossible that this can be the Patriarch, since the Egyptian saint was unquestionably married. Still, as the early Alexandrian Patriarchs were not infrequently married, this fact proves nothing for or against the identification.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FALL OF SERAPIS

A.D. 385
A.M. 101

ON the death of Timothy the Poor, Theophilus was elected to the Patriarchal throne. He had been secretary to Athanasius, and John of Nikius[1] gives us the following details of his youth: 'Now they tell us of Theophilus,' he says, 'that he was born of Christian parents at Memphis.' He was left an orphan in infancy, together with a little sister. Their nurse was an Ethiopic slave who had belonged to their parents. One night, at break of day, she took the two children with her into the temple of the false gods Artemis and Apollo, intending to worship after the manner of the pagans. But when the children entered the temple the idols fell to the earth and were broken.[2] Then the slave, fearing the vengeance of the pagan priests, took flight and brought the children to Nikius. But having reason to fear that the people of Nikius would deliver them up to the idolatrous priests, she took the children and came to Alexandria. Led by an impulse of the Divine Spirit, she one day took them into church, that she might understand better what were the practices of the Christians. As they entered and took up a position

[1] Page 436.

[2] John's account is vague, but probably the children in a fit of mischief threw down and smashed the statues.

near the pulpit they attracted the attention of Athanasius the Patriarch, who gave an order that these three persons were to be retained until the conclusion of the service. Afterward they brought the children and the slave before him, and he reproached the latter for having taken the children of Christian parents into a heathen temple—pointing out to her that the gods without understanding, so far from being able to help her, had been broken before the children. 'From this time forward,' he added, 'these children shall belong to me.'

The astonished slave, seeing that her secret was known, and not daring to deny what she had done, threw herself at his feet, and begged that she might receive the baptism of the Christians, which Athanasius gladly accorded to all three. He placed the little girl in a convent, where she remained until her marriage. She was given in marriage to a man of Mohalla, a town in the north of Egypt, 'formerly called Didoüseyä' (the place of Dido). Here was born St. Cyril, 'that sublime star who by the grace of God became Patriarch after Theophilus, his maternal uncle.'

With regard to Theophilus, after his baptism they gave him the tonsure, and received him into the number of the readers. 'He grew up in the fear of God, learned in the Holy Scriptures, and obeying their rules. He was elevated to the rank of deacon, then to priest's orders, and finally was elected to the Patriarchal throne, when he illuminated the whole city with the light of his faith. He succeeded in rooting out the worship of idols from every town in Egypt, so that no one was left to adore the works of sculpture, according as it had been foretold of him by St. Athanasius.'

No one certainly can question the zeal of Theophilus, but from all we know of him he seems to have been deficient both in wisdom and humility. It might have been better for him perhaps if he had not been treated with such entire confidence and entrusted with almost unlimited power by the Emperor Theodosius. During the earlier years of his rule, however, we have but little to deplore in his actions.

The first imperial duty imposed upon him was to settle the question of Easter, which had again fallen into confusion—so much so, that in the year 387 there was a discrepancy of five weeks between the Alexandrian and the Roman reckoning. Accordingly the Patriarch drew up a Paschal cycle of 418 years, and made a table of the days on which Easter should fall for 100 years from the year 380. The prologue to this table of Easters is still extant, and in it Theophilus asserts that our Saviour was crucified on the 15th, not the 14th of Nisan; and gives the rule that, if the fourteenth moon falls on a Sunday, Easter must be deferred for a week. The story of his having sent a priest named Isidore, at the time of the struggle between Theodosius and Maximus, with letters of congratulation which he was to deliver to the successful party, rests on doubtful evidence, and need not be believed, though at the same time it cannot be definitely pronounced untrue.

About the year 389 Theophilus obtained from the Emperor a grant of the site of a deserted temple to Bacchus in Alexandria, on which he proposed to build a church. In clearing the ground for the foundations various crypts were discovered, in which were certain figures connected with the abominable Phallic rites. As in the former case, when George had disturbed the temple of Mithra,

Theophilus gave great offence by the way in which he treated these relics, and the streets of Alexandria were again the scene of perpetual riots between the Christians and the pagans. The latter were now losing ground daily, and were becoming reckless and desperate. In the reign of Constantine the pagan religion had been treated better than, considering the events of the previous twelve years, they had any reason to expect. He had certainly abolished the heathen sacrifices, particularly those celebrated at night, as being inseparably connected with immorality and crime. Constantius went further, and punished infringement of this law with death and confiscation of goods. But both these emperors had too much feeling for art and reverence for the works of antiquity to permit any wanton destruction of temples or statues. The temples were indeed closed, and no sacrifice permitted to be offered in them, but they were preserved as public monuments, and caretakers were appointed, at the public expense, who showed visitors over them. When Julian visited the site of ancient Troy, he not only found the temples still preserved, but the caretaker was the bishop himself!

In the reign of Theodosius all this was changed. The spirit of intolerance and persecution which had been brought into the Church by the Arians was too often shared now by the orthodox Christians. The monks were the worst sinners in this respect. Deteriorating yearly more and more, they were now everywhere, but particularly in Egypt, an irregular, barefooted army, animated by much the same spirit and characterised by much the same ignorance as Cromwell's Puritan followers. They were even more dangerous, for they were without natural ties,

and they obeyed no man except their own abbots. They began to destroy the pagan statues and temples all over the empire, in the teeth of Imperial edicts to the contrary; and when Theodosius proposed to interfere with a strong hand to put down this wanton destruction, he was, we regret to say, effectually frightened from his purpose by Ambrose of Milan. He did in 393 issue an edict to protect the Jewish synagogues; but the far more beautiful heathen temples were left to their fate. The vestal college at Rome and the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus were saved, in spite of Ambrose, during the lifetime of Theodosius, but destroyed in the reign of his son. In Egypt, however, the greatest act of destruction was carried out with deliberate solemnity, by order of Theodosius himself, on the request of Theophilus. The great temple of Serapis, which was one of the architectural glories of Alexandria, was levelled to the ground.

If the intolerance of Theophilus had been a primary cause of all the troubles, it must be yet admitted that the pagans themselves brought about their own downfall in the end. In the course of the riots between the two parties several Christians were killed; and the pagan community, hastily electing Olympius, the chief priest of Serapis, as their leader, retired into the precincts of the great temple, and fortified themselves against the rest of the city. The buildings served excellently as a fortress. The temple was raised on a terrace of enormous height; it was square in form, with a central court; its massive walls were of excellent masonry and overlaid with plates of copper; underneath was a network of secret passages and communications, and round about were the buildings for the use of the priests, attendants, and guests, and for the

accommodation of the great library, which rivalled that of the museum. Here all the principal pagans and their fighting men defied the Emperor and the Patriarch alike, and constituted a serious menace to the public peace. Not content with assuming a defensive position, they made sallies into the town and carried off Christians, whom they tortured before their altars to compel them to sacrifice.

Naturally this state of things could not be permitted to continue. Evagrius, the prefect, rode down himself with his soldiers to parley with the rebels, representing to them the madness of their attempt to defy the whole Roman power, and the punishment which must inevitably ensue. But on the conclusion of his speech Olympius harangued his followers on the other side, exhorting them to suffer any extremity sooner than abandon the gods of their ancestors. The Egyptians, with heroic courage worthy of a better cause, refused to listen to any terms proposed by the Roman governor.

As the place was absolutely inaccessible except by actual siege and storm, the prefect left them in quiet possession while he wrote to the Emperor for instructions. Theodosius replied that the Christians who had perished were to be regarded as martyrs, and their murderers must therefore be freely forgiven. At the same time he decreed that all the temples in Alexandria, as being the cause of this outbreak, should be demolished.

When it became known that the decree of the Emperor had arrived, and was to be read in public, an immense crowd, pagan as well as Christian, assembled to hear it. At the close of the reading the Christians gave a shout of exultation, while the pagans fled in consternation. That

evening, under cover of the dark, Olympius and his followers left the great temple to its fate, and sought refuge in concealment. It is said that in the dead of night a Christian passing by, and finding the place empty and deserted, had the curiosity to wander through the doomed buildings. As he approached the shrine he heard from within the closed doors, 'no person being there,' the chant of Hallelujah break the solemn stillness of the night.

The next day the population of Alexandria was early astir, and the excitement increased every moment. At length the procession appeared, the Patriarch and the prefect riding side by side in state, followed by the chanting priests and sternly silent soldiers, with the weapons of destruction in their hands. People had been reminding each other of an ancient prophecy which foretold that when the idol should be destroyed, the earth would perish, the heavens fall in, and chaos return. Many even of the Christians were superstitious enough to dread the results of the work they had in hand. Almost in silence the procession went up the great flight of one hundred steps which led to the temple, on the top of which the youthful Origen had stood alone, in instant danger of his life, to witness for that Crucified One whose servant now came in pomp of Papal power and backed by the soldiers of the world-wide empire to cast down the representative of the ancient religion. Most of the Christians who thronged in after their Pope and prefect, with mingled feelings of terror and exultation, had never even seen the great god, who, coming already old to Egypt, had ruled the land from his mysterious shrine for six hundred years. For a moment they gazed in awed silence, and the hopes of those

pagans who had mingled in the crowd began to rise. Probably among them was the father of the hapless Hypatia, afterwards the forlorn hope and the martyr of the dying religion. Nay, Hypatia herself—since, however beautiful, she was not in reality a young woman at the time of her death—may have gazed with mingled wrath and scorn on that strange scene, and remembered long afterwards the insolent triumph, the fanatical violence, of those who worshipped the Son of the carpenter.

There, with its hands stretching from wall to wall, was the huge seated statue of Serapis, constructed of various metals, now dusky with age, and inlaid with various precious stones. The image was that of an old man with a bushel on his head, the emblem of productiveness and plenty. By his side was a figure with the heads of a lion, a dog, and a wolf. On one of his arms was a serpent, the emblem of eternity. The successor of Athanasius gazed with feelings which can well be imagined on this visible concentration of the power of Egyptian idolatry, no doubt the symbol to many Alexandrians of the principle of life and of the powers that ruled the under-world. It was a supreme moment. At last, he would feel, the hour and the man were come ; the Church had her foot on the neck of her foe.[1]

Vague mutterings began to make themselves heard in the crowd. The Pope felt that further delay would be dangerous. He turned to one of the axe-bearing soldiers, and commanded him to strike. The soldier lifted up his axe and struck, while a cry of terror broke from the watching crowd. Another blow, and the shout of fear was changed to inextinguishable laughter as the head of the god rolled on the ground, and out of his hollow trunk

[1] This description of the statue is copied from Canon Bright's *History of the Church*, 315–431.

leapt a colony of frightened mice, scattering in all directions. Fear was flung to the winds, and the work of destruction went merrily on. Every statue in the temple was broken, and the foundations levelled with the ground, though the surrounding buildings were left standing, and used afterwards as the Patriarchal residence, or, as we should call it in England, the archbishop's palace.[1]

The principal pagans who had been concerned in the late outrages against the Christians hastily made their escape from Alexandria. Not one of them was touched by the Christians in their hour of triumph, though Helladius, the priest of Jupiter, openly boasted that he had sacrificed nine victims with his own hand at the shrine of the heathen gods. Concerning the temple of Serapis, Socrates afterwards wrote:—

When the temple of Serapis was torn down and laid bare, there were found in it, engraven on stones, certain characters, which they called hieroglyphics, having the form of crosses. Both the Christians and pagans, on seeing them, thought they had reference to their respective religions; for the Christians, who affirm that the cross is the sign of Christ's saving passion, claimed this character as peculiarly theirs, but the pagans alleged that it might appertain to Christ and Serapis in common, 'for,' said they, 'it symbolises one thing to Christians and another to heathens.' While this point was disputed amongst them some of the heathen converts to Christianity who were conversant with these hieroglyphic characters interpreted that in the form of a cross to signify 'the life to come.' This the Christians exultingly laid hold of as decidedly favourable to their religion. But after other hieroglyphics

[1] John of Nikius says that the church which was built on the site of the temple of Serapis was called after Honorius, the son of the Emperor, but that it was the same which was called in his day (seventh century) the Church of St. Cosmos and St. Damian.

had been deciphered containing a prediction that *when* (the character in the form of a cross, representing) *the life to come should appear, the temple of Serapis would be destroyed*, a very great number of the pagans embraced Christianity, and, confessing their sins, were baptized.

The storm of iconoclastic fury swept over the whole of Egypt, and more mischief was done in the fourth century to the antiquities of the country than at any previous time since the Persian conquest, or at any subsequent time until the Mohammedans began that piecemeal destruction of temples and rifling of dead men's tombs for treasure which has been continued to the present day, and to which a fresh impetus has been given by ignorant and careless tourists. In Canopus and Alexandria every temple was razed to the ground, all metal images melted into pots and other things needed for the use of the Church, and all stone images broken to pieces except one ape-headed figure which Theophilus set up in a public place, that all men might see what sort of gods their forefathers had worshipped. This gave particular offence to Ammonius, one of the most learned of the pagan professors, since he complained, not without reason, that the ancient religion was thereby grossly misrepresented. In other parts of Egypt the temples were left standing, or only partly demolished; but the statues of the gods, many of which must have been beautiful works of art, if we may judge by the one or two fortunately carried away to Rome before this time, were almost all destroyed. The story of Pœmen and his brothers gives an instance in point.

Pœmen and Anuph were the two best-known of a family of six—or, as some say, seven—brothers, who all became monks together about this time, some of them being very

young. They had been driven, in the first place, from their homes by an invasion of the Blemmyes, and we are led to suppose that their father was killed and their property ruined. The brothers escaped with their lives, and wandered about for some time in a desolate condition. Finally, they took refuge in a deserted temple; but Anuph, who seems to have been the elder, was much concerned at their constant complaints of their hard lot. He had found, lying on the ground in the temple, a beautiful statue of the god which had been worshipped there; and he chose this as good material for an object-lesson to his brothers. He bade his brothers keep silence for a week, and not even to ask for any explanation of his actions. Then every morning, in their presence, he deliberately smashed the statue with stones, and then knelt to it and prayed for pardon. At the end of a week they clamoured for an explanation, and he then replied that as the statue, however insulted, had never complained of man's treatment, so ought man to submit without a word to the dispensation of God!

Years afterwards their aged mother discovered that her sons were living as monks in Nitria, and sought them; but already that terrible life had killed the human nature in Pœmen, and he refused even to see her. His sister's son was under sentence of death, and the governor of the province offered to release him, if Pœmen, whose reputation for sanctity was great, would intercede for him; but Pœmen listened to his sister's entreaties unmoved. 'If the youth has deserved death,' he said, 'let him suffer it. If not, let the governor release him.'

Since the time of the early Ptolemies a peculiarly sacred Nile gauge had been kept in the temple of Serapis. In the reign of Constantine it had been taken thence, and

placed in the great church of the Cæsareum, but had been restored to the Serapeum by Julian the Apostate. Now it was solemnly carried back to the church, and the pagans prophesied that the god would avenge himself by withholding the annual inundation. It was, in fact, delayed; and the lower classes, pagan and Christian alike, believed that the god was indeed punishing them. The anxiety and discontent increased day by day, and the temper of the people became so dangerous that the prefect wrote to ask if it would not be as well to yield to popular prejudice and avert the rising storm by giving back the Nile gauge to the custody of the heathen priests. Theodosius answered shortly and sternly, 'If the Nile will not rise except by means of enchantments or sacrifices, let Egypt remain unwatered.'

Hardly had the decision been given, when the scene changed. The Nile began to rise with such rapidity that now a flood was feared; but this danger also was averted, and the Christians were comforted and strengthened.

CHAPTER XX

THE TALL BROTHERS

A.D. 395 M. 111 In 394 Theophilus went to attend another Council, called to settle more of the unhappy disputes between various bishops, at Constantinople. At this time he assisted at the consecration of a grand church built in honour of St. Peter and St. Paul, which the prefect had erected in a suburb of Chalcedon, called the Oak. It must have been in this year also that Arsenius, the celebrated tutor of the two young Augusti, one of the most learned and best-bred men of his time, resigned his position and became a hermit in Egypt. Very probably he accompanied Theophilus on his return to Egypt.

In 395 Theodosius died, and the empire was divided between his two sons—Arcadius in the East, and Honorius in the West. In 398 Theophilus was again at Constantinople to consecrate John Chrysostom as Patriarch of that see. We are told that he did so very unwillingly, as the recent elevation of Constantinople in honorary rank above Alexandria was as distasteful to him as it had been to his predecessor Timothy; and he had hoped to put in a nominee of his own, instead of so celebrated a man as Chrysostom.[1]

[1] It is said that the Prime Minister sent for Theophilus, and gave him his choice between consecrating Chrysostom or standing an inquiry into certain of his own high-handed proceedings.

Up to this time Theophilus had lived on good terms with the monastic army of Egypt, particularly with the camp of Nitria, the nearest great settlement of the kind to Alexandria. They had helped him in the destruction of the temples, and he praised their zeal and promoted many of them to bishoprics as vacancies occurred. Dioscurus, one of the Tall Brothers, was made Bishop of Hermopolis Parva; and Eusebius and Euthymius, the two younger, he persuaded to leave Nitria and become stewards of the Alexandrian Church. In 399, after a long correspondence between Theophilus and Jerome, in which the former tried to bring about a reconciliation between Jerome and John, Bishop of Jerusalem, who had formerly been a monk of Nitria, Jerome said to the Pope of Alexandria, 'You do not know what it is to encounter enmity; you are accustomed to be met by the spontaneous affection of monks, who are loyal to you because you are not their tyrant.' [1]

Many instances are recorded in contemporary writers showing the Patriarch's preference for monks, and he followed the precedent which had unfortunately been set by Athanasius in choosing his bishops from among the monks instead of from among the married clergy. Considering all things, it is not wonderful that the ignorance and arrogance of the monastic population became more marked every year. When the gentle and high-born courtier Arsenius presented himself as a poor stranger

[1] Jerome, who was now the head of a monastery in Bethlehem, seems to have had a singular aptitude for quarrelling. He was already on bad terms with his old friend Rufinus, who had been living with Melania on the Mount of Olives since he left Egypt till 397, when he returned to Rome. Jerome had before quarrelled with Theophilus about an Egyptian bishop, whom the latter had synodically deposed, and whom Jerome had received with honour.

before the Abbot John in the desert of Scetis, and begged to be received among them, they went to their meal and left him standing while they sat.[1] One of them tossed him a biscuit, as if he were a dog, and he knelt down to eat it. 'He will make a monk,' said the abbot, and he was allowed to remain amongst them till he had learnt the monastic rules, when he took up a cell by himself in the Mokattam Hills, and lived as a hermit for forty years. Arcadius, his old pupil, would have promoted him to great honour in his self-chosen exile, and proposed to grant him 'the tribute of all Egypt' for the relief of the poor and for the monasteries. Arsenius replied that one who was dead to the world could have no concern with the distribution of money. But he did not altogether lay aside his native shrewdness nor his kindness of heart. His strict observance of monastic rule made him often appear rude and churlish in the anecdotes related of him; but we are told that he took a monk of persistently thievish habits into his own cell to live with him, in the hope of reclaiming him. A book called the Exhortation to Monks, which is ascribed to him, shows a keen appreciation of the peculiar temptations of the monastic life, and gives much practical counsel on the subject.

When Theophilus came to see him, Arsenius said he had but one request to make of him, and that was that he should go away; and he was positively brutal to a well-born Roman lady—probably an old friend—who came all the way to Nitria to see him. When the poor lady complained to Theophilus, the Pope reminded her that she was 'a woman,' and therefore could expect nothing else from a saint.

[1] This studied discourtesy to an applicant afterwards became part of the monastic rule in the West.

The arrogance of the monks might have been borne with, but their increasing ignorance seemed to Theophilus a greater danger; and in his Paschal letter for 399 he found fault with them, in no measured terms, for their material and debased conceptions of God—pointing out that God was a Spirit and not a mere glorified man with parts and passions like their own.

He brought such a storm of monastic wrath upon his head as he had little expected. A whole army of them left Nitria at once, and, hurrying through the desert, stormed the Patriarch in his palace with wild cries and threats of instant death, if he did not take back his words.

Theophilus, helpless and astonished, shrank before the sea of angry faces which surrounded him. 'In seeing you, I see God's face,' he is reported to have cried. This was not enough; the mob of monks clamoured that he should anathematise Origen, from whom they considered that he had derived his heresy, and would not disperse till the Patriarch had promised to do so. The Tall Brothers, disgusted with their Pope's conduct, left him and returned to Nitria; but the dispute was by no means settled, and other reasons, it is to be feared, inclined Theophilus to conciliate and make use of the anthropomorphic monks besides his fear of their violence.[1]

[1] The monks did not all take their Pope's letter of remonstrance in this way. One of the ignorant monks who had always worshipped God as a deified man was an old man named Serapion, who was held in great respect in Scetis. He was convinced, after long and patient argument by the abbot of Scetis and a learned deacon from Cappadocia, who happened to be visiting Scetis at this time, that the passages of Scripture which he had taken literally were meant to be interpreted in a spiritual sense. The poor old man found it after this almost impossible to pray, and, bursting into tears, he exclaimed: 'They have taken away my God, and I know not what to worship.'

Isidore, the treasurer of the Alexandrian Church, who had for many years been one of his closest friends, was just now on bad terms with the Patriarch, and, as he sided warmly with the party who had adopted the Origenistic (or spiritual) view of God, Theophilus seems to have thought that by siding with the anthropomorphic monks, whom he had before condemned, he would be more easily able to get rid of Isidore. Many different accounts are given of the origin of the quarrel, but the most probable seems to be that it was a dispute about money.

All offerings given by the faithful to the Church were in Alexandria supposed to be at the disposal of the Patriarch, just as in other sees it was the bishop who administered with other officials the public funds of the Church. But Theophilus had a passion for building, and spent almost all that came to him in raising magnificent churches. A rich Alexandrian lady wished to spend one thousand pieces of gold in clothes for poor women, but, being afraid that if the Patriarch heard of it he would require her to give him the money towards the erection of a new church instead, she made the hospitaller swear to her that he would manage the affair himself for her, and say nothing about the money to the Patriarch. Spies brought the matter to the ears of Theophilus, who said nothing about it for some time, but, on fresh occasion of offence arising, taxed Isidore with his failure in duty, and, as some say, raked up older charges against him which were absolutely unfounded. Isidore defended himself in the matter of the clothes, bluntly telling the Pope—for Theophilus seemed always to have used this form of his title—that it was better to spend money on curing the bodies of the sick, which were more properly God's temples, than on building walls.

In the beginning of the next year Theophilus held a Council, in which, according to his promise, he condemned 'Origenism;'[1] and in his Paschal letter for 401 he makes a deliberate attack on Origen, exposing all his errors, or what he considered his errors, and condemning him generally as a heretic. In the same year, Isidore having taken refuge among the monks in Nitria, Theophilus wrote to the bishops of the neighbouring dioceses, ordering them to send into banishment the principal monks and sympathisers with Origen. A deputation of the monks, headed by Ammonius, the eldest of the Tall Brothers, came to Alexandria to remonstrate with the Pope, and to urge that they ought not to be treated as heretics because they were opposed to the degrading literalism of the anthropomorphic party. On a former occasion Theophilus had yielded to the violent threats of the mob on the other side, and his conduct to this temperate and orderly deputation seems to have been equally blamable. It is said that he actually struck Ammonius on the mouth, calling him a heretic because he refused to anathematise Origen. Five of the Nitrian monks, who are described as 'men unworthy even to be doorkeepers,' thought to curry favour with the Pope by bringing accusations against three of their chief brethren, who were accordingly excommunicated.

The deputation went sadly back to Nitria, but Theophilus did not leave them in peace. No doubt he really thought that the increasing and irresponsible power of the monastic communities was becoming a serious danger to Egypt; and this was true. But nothing can justify

[1] Anastasius, Pope of Rome, also pronounced against Origen at this time, but acknowledged afterwards that he did not know who Origen was, or what language he had used.

his behaviour all through this unhappy period of his Patriarchate.

The settlement at Nitria had subsided into its usual occupations, many of the monks, we are told, being weavers and confectioners as well as physicians and students;[1] services went on peacefully in 'the great church with the three palm-trees beside it,' and no further controversy seems to have been expected. But Theophilus had appealed to the Imperial prefect to support his authority, and one night the stillness of the desert community was rudely broken by the advancing tramp of Byzantine soldiers.

The alarm was hastily given that the Pope and the army were coming to arrest all the followers of Origen, and a wild scene followed. Three of the Brothers were hastily concealed in a well; Dioscorus, the fourth, took shelter in the church, but was dragged out by 'Ethiopians flushed with wine.' The soldiers, very likely in spite of Theophilus, seem to have regarded the community as a city to be taken by storm. Cells were plundered and set on fire, and it is said by an eye-witness that one boy was burned to death in the night attack.

The dawn of day, and, let us hope, the exertions of Theophilus and the better-disposed monks, at length put an end to the horrors of the scene. The soldiery were restrained, the monks called upon to listen peaceably instead of fighting, and Theophilus says that he called a sort of assembly. Here, 'in the presence of many Fathers who came together from nearly the whole of Egypt, some of Origen's treatises were read.' He then relates at much length many of the mystical speculations of Origen (which should not be considered as part of his creed), and pointed out the heresies contained in them to the monks.

[1] There was a large secular town connected with the natron works.

The adherents of Origen (he says) were therefore condemned, but they took possession of the church of Nitria, and closed it against the bishops and abbots, holding in their hands clubs wrapped in palm leaves. The orthodox majority prevented further outrage, and the service was at last duly performed.

The four Brothers took refuge in Palestine, and for a short time lived in peace on the slopes of Mount Gilboa, pursuing the Egyptian trade of 'affass'-making.[1] But others of the refugees followed them; their numbers attracted attention, and, as they were known to have been condemned and banished by their own Pope, the faithful in Palestine looked coldly upon them. Some of the bishops, indeed, showed them kindness, but promptly received letters of rebuke and warning not to repeat an offence which could only be overlooked on the score of ignorance of the circumstances. At length the banished monks, now about fifty in number, determined to appeal to Chrysostom of Constantinople.

It was towards the close of 401 when this group of elderly and travel-worn monks were shown into the presence of the Byzantine Patriarch. He was moved even to tears by the sight of their condition, and asked what he could do for them. They begged his help against the injustice of their Pope.

If out of regard to him you will not act (ended their spokesman), we shall be obliged to appeal to the Emperor. But we beg you to induce Theophilus to let us live in our own country, for we have not offended against him or against the law of our Saviour.

[1] *'Affass* or *khaffas*, an industry like basket-making. The material used is the ribs of palm leaves.

Chrysostom promised to do his best on condition that they should not appeal to the civil power nor make trouble in the town. 'Until I have written to my brother Theophilus,' he concluded, 'keep silence about your affairs.

He showed them every kindness, and lodged them in the precincts of the church of the Anastasis. Meanwhile he took counsel with some Alexandrian clergy who had been sent to the Imperial Court on other business, and asked their opinion on the matter. They admitted that the Nitrian monks had been hardly treated, but evidently thought their appeal to the Byzantine Patriarch was not likely to do them any good. They advised him not to admit the monks at once to communion, 'lest you annoy the Pope,' but to show them kindness in other ways.

Chrysostom took their advice, and wrote to Theophilus, endeavouring to make peace. But Theophilus, on hearing that the Tall Brothers had gone to Constantinople, sent the same kind of letters that he had already written to Palestine against them, with a fresh accusation added. He declared that the monks were guilty of sorcery[1] as well as of heresy; and this terrible accusation turned all the Byzantine populace against the Brothers, so that they were hooted in the streets. Most of the monks were themselves alarmed, knowing well what the consequences might be of such a charge, and sent intercessors to Theophilus; but the four Brothers and their more intimate friends appear to have treated the charge with contempt,

[1] It is quite possible that this additional charge was made in good faith. Ignorance was spreading so rapidly in the once civilised Egyptian nation that anyone who still knew and practised some forms of science was liable at any time to be accused of magic and sorcery; nor was learning in any better condition in the rest of the empire.

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and presented a formal complaint against their Pope to Chrysostom.

Chrysostom wrote again to Theophilus, regretting that they had taken this step, and saying that he had tried to induce them to leave Constantinople. Theophilus replied in an extremely angry letter :—

> If (he said) you do not know the Nicene canons, which forbid a bishop to judge cases that arise beyond his own bounds, be so good as to inform yourself, and keep clear of indictments against me. If I am to be tried, it shall be by Egyptian bishops, and not by you, who live at a distance of seventy-five days' journey.

Chrysostom kept this letter to himself, and again endeavoured to persuade the Tall Brothers and their friends to let the matter drop. Instead of this, they appealed personally to Eudoxia, and entreated her to order a formal hearing of the case. Her influence over her husband Arcadius was very great, and on this appeal she persuaded him to order Theophilus to be summoned to Constantinople, that the whole matter might be examined into by Chrysostom. This was a rash proceeding, for Theophilus, as Pope of Alexandria, was almost equal in power to Arcadius himself in Egypt, since the whole Egyptian nation regarded their own Patriarch as a king, and cared little for their distant emperors. Theophilus did not openly refuse to obey the summons, but he delayed so long that the case was proceeded with in his absence. The charges against the Nitrian monks were examined, and pronounced baseless. The five monks whom Theophilus had sent to accuse them were thrown into prison, where some of them died. Theophilus had meanwhile written to Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, to go to Constantinople

with the decree of a provincial synod which had recently condemned 'the Origenist heresy,' and present it for Chrysostom's signature. Chrysostom refused, saying the matter was one for the decision of a General Council.

In 403 Theophilus set forth on his journey to Constantinople, giving out as he went that he was going 'to depose John'[1] for his recent action. He went with a splendid retinue of Egyptian and Abyssinian bishops, and all the pomp of a monarch. When, in the warm brightness of a June day, his ship cast anchor in the beautiful waters of the Bosphorus, he was greeted with ringing cheers by the crews of the Egyptian corn fleet; but no procession of Byzantine clergy came to meet him. He landed, not at Constantinople, but at Chalcedon, where the bishop, Cyrenius, was an Egyptian and received him warmly. He then, with magnificent audacity, summoned Chrysostom to appear before the Council and defend himself against a long list of charges which his enemies were only too ready to furnish. Most of them were openly frivolous and vexatious, but the two on which Theophilus chiefly relied were well chosen. Chrysostom was accused of having called the Empress Jezebel and of uttering treasonable words against her. It cannot be denied that he had referred to her as Jezebel in a public sermon. He was also accused of invading the jurisdiction of other prelates —a half-truth which was, as usual, worse than a lie. Incidentally, and while waiting for Chrysostom, who steadily refused to submit himself to their jurisdiction,

[1] Chrysostom, as doubtless every reader knows, was only the nickname of the Byzantine Patriarch. There had been an earlier Chrysostom (golden-mouthed) in Alexandria, who was a celebrated pagan philosopher.

Theophilus took up the almost forgotten question of the Nitrian Brothers. Dioscorus had recently died, and Ammonius was brought in a dying condition to Chalcedon. On seeing him thus, Theophilus burst into tears, and the reconciliation seems to have been effected in five minutes of personal intercourse. Meanwhile the Empress, who was furiously angry with Chrysostom for his insult to herself, had a message sent from the Imperial Court, during the twelfth sitting of the synod of Chalcedon, desiring them to come to a decision without further delay.

Chrysostom was forthwith deposed by the synod, and sentence of banishment immediately afterwards passed against him by the Court. But Theophilus had not reckoned on the personal popularity of the Byzantine Patriarch. For two or three days it was impossible to arrest him, as a great crowd collected, and, relieving each other, kept watch in a determined but orderly manner before his residence and the doors of the great church, so that to arrest him would have plunged the city into the horrors of civil war. Indeed, it was only the exhortations poured forth from the pulpit by Chrysostom himself which prevented an insurrection. On the third day, at the hour of noon, when the vigilance of his voluntary guard had relaxed, Chrysostom slipped out unperceived by a side door, and surrendered himself quietly to the Imperial officers. By them he was hurried on board a ship, and despatched to Bithynia.

On the next day Theophilus entered the city in procession, and went to the cathedral in order to carry out the installation of a successor to Chrysostom; but his preacher, by a bitter invective against John, aroused all the people to fresh indignation. Loud outcries arose; the

church had to be cleared by main force and a liberal use of sticks. A wild mob surged through the streets, crying out 'Give us back our bishop!' Perhaps even yet Theophilus, supported by the Empress, would have conquered, but that night an earthquake shook the town and roused the terrified Empress from sleep. She called upon her husband to restore Chrysostom, since the Heavens had declared themselves on his side, and Arcadius was nothing loth. Theophilus, hearing what had happened, and seeing that the popular feeling was likely to be directed against him, hastily left the city and returned to Alexandria. Very soon afterwards a Council of about sixty bishops reassembled, which annulled the whole proceedings of the former one, and declared that Chrysostom was still Bishop of Constantinople. Theophilus wrote to inform Pope Innocent of Rome that he had deposed the Bishop of Constantinople, and Innocent, not unnaturally, wrote to ask on what grounds, assuring his brother Theophilus that for his part he was still in communion with both John and himself.

In the end, however, the Pope of Alexandria prevailed in this most unseemly strife. He did not go again to Constantinople, alleging that he was too much occupied with the duties of his own province to do so; but he sent agents, and took part through them in the proceedings which finally drove Chrysostom from his see by command of the Emperor and Empress. They sent a troop of soldiers, who attacked the cathedral during the midnight service on Easter eve, when no less than 3,000 catechumens are said to have been present for baptism. These were thrust out from the baptisteries at the point of the sword, and the whole congregation driven out of the cathedral. With great courage some

of the clergy reassembled their catechumens in regular order in the streets outside, and marched them to the Baths of Constantine. Here they hastily blessed the water, and began to finish the work of baptizing the candidates, when the soldiers, hearing what had happened, came and drove them also from thence. The final banishment of Chrysostom took place two months later, in June, 404. He died in exile in the autumn of 407.

CHAPTER XXI

SYNESIUS OF CYRENE

A.D. 365 M. 181 TOWARDS the close of his Patriarchate, Theophilus was brought into close relations with Synesius of Cyrene, a remarkable man who is chiefly known to English readers by the incidental notices in Kingsley's 'Hypatia.' He was born about the year 365 at Cyrene, being indeed a descendant of one of the old Greek colonists of that city, and owning considerable estates in the province of Pentapolis. He had spent some of his earlier years in the army, but while still a young man resigned his commission, and devoted himself to the study of philosophy.

The once celebrated schools of Cyrene existed no longer, and Synesius, like everybody else, went to Alexandria. But the pagan schools were here, though still existent, at a low ebb. Hypatia had indeed begun to teach, and her great beauty and wonderful talent made a lifelong impression on the rough soldier, who even after his conversion to Christianity remained always her loyal friend and admirer. She had not yet, however, achieved that wonderful revival of pagan philosophy in its most attractive form which later she opposed to the rapidly deteriorating Christianity of Alexandria; and Synesius, who thought much of his Greek descent, could not be content without a visit to the schools of Athens.

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I shall at least get one advantage by going there (he said in answer to the remonstrances of one of his friends). I shall no longer have to look with reverence on those persons who have no advantage over us in the knowledge of Plato and Aristotle, yet, because they have seen the Academy and the Lyceum, treat us as if they were demi-gods and we but demi-asses.

His disillusionment was rapid and complete. Athens, he declared, was like an animal of which only the skin remained to show what it once had been. Its chief distinction was the manufacture of honey, and Synesius declared that the most eminent professors in Athens attracted pupils, not by the excellence of their teaching, but by presents of honey from Hymettus.

After studying for some time in Alexandria and Athens, Synesius returned to Egypt and settled down on his estates in Pentapolis. He had a brother, Evoptius, to whom he was devotedly attached, and with whom he corresponded frequently. Many of his letters have been preserved, and give a pleasant picture of the life of a country gentleman in Egypt in the latter end of the fourth century :[1]—

We are wakened in the morning by the neighing of horses, the roaring of bulls, the bleating of sheep and goats. . . . Our meetings are extremely social ; we help one another in agriculture, in flocks, in shepherds, and in hunting, of which the country affords a great variety. . . . We feed upon barley meal, which is pleasant to eat and pleasant to drink, such as Hecamede mixed for Nestor. After severe labour this drink

[1] The translation of these letters, and one or two passages of this chapter shown by inverted commas, are taken from the very able article on Synesius, in Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, by the late Rev. T. Holcombe.

is a protection against the effect of the summer heat. We have also wheaten bread and excellent fruits, and honeycomb and the milk of goats, for it is not customary with us to milk cows. Our best supply for the table comes from the chase. . . . Our music (he adds with gentle irony) is pre-eminently national. We have a small rustic pipe of masculine tone, not unworthy of being used in training the boys of Plato's republic; for it does not admit of any modulations, neither will it harmonise with every voice. The singers adapt themselves to the simplicity of the music. Then we have capital songs—no effeminate subjects, but the praises of the dog who does not fear the hyenas and dashes at the wolf's throat; of the ewe which bears twins, of the fig-tree, and of the vine. But nothing is so common in our songs as thanksgivings and prayers for blessings on the men, the plants, and the herbs. About the king [1] and the king's friends there is naturally hardly a word. There *is* a king; that, I may say, they know well. We are reminded of that every year by the taxgatherers. But who he is, that is not so clear. Some among us think that Agamemnon, son of Atreus, who was so distinguished at Troy, is still reigning—for this has been transmitted to us in our childhood as a name for a king. And the good herdsman speaks of his friend Ulysses, a bald-headed man, but clever in finding his way out of difficulties. . . . They often ask me about ships and sails, and the sea. Though they may accept what I tell them about ships, they steadily refuse to believe that any food fit for men can come out of the sea. That, they think, is the special prerogative of Mother Earth. Once, when they would not believe what I told them about fishes, I took a jar, opened it with a stone, and showed them some preserved fish from Egypt. But the men said these were poisonous serpents, jumped up and ran away, believing the bones would be as poisonous as the teeth. One very old man who was considered the cleverest among them said he certainly could

[1] The emperor. In the Coptic stories and histories he is always called the king.

not believe that anything good to eat could come out of salt water, when good tanks of drinkable water only produced frogs and leeches, which no madman even would think of eating.

These labourers were mostly slaves—or, rather, serfs—whose grandfathers had belonged to the ancestors of Synesius; natives of the country, who lived on the estate in patriarchal fashion, much as if they had been the children of the owner.

In the year 397 Synesius was asked to undertake the management of some affairs connected with his native city, which obliged him to go to Court. He remained in Constantinople three years; for it was some time, in the distracted state of affairs there, before he could get any attention paid to his business. But by the influence of a friend at Court (Aurelian), the country squire—or rustic philosopher, as he was called—was appointed to pronounce an oration before Arcadius and his Court. Synesius, who had been profoundly disgusted with the state of affairs in Constantinople, had the audacity to take for his subject 'The Nature and Duties of the Kingly Office;' and if he really delivered the speech as it has come down to us, it shows that Arcadius cannot have been without magnanimity, for Synesius was listened to patiently, and his fierce denunciation of the Byzantine conception of royalty did him no harm. In one passage he says:—

The fear that if you are often seen, you will be reduced to the level of mere men, makes you State prisoners. You see nothing, you hear nothing, which can give you any practical wisdom. Your only pleasures are the most sensual pleasures of the body. Your life is the life of a sea anemone.

Synesius published while he was in Constantinople a

curious political pamphlet, in which, under the transparent veil of an Egyptian myth, he describes the intrigues of Gainas against Aurelian and the empire. In the end, however, Aurelian was able to obtain for Synesius the boon which he had asked for his native city, and the latter returned thankfully to his country life, having considerably enlarged the number of his correspondents.

Not long after his return began that series of inroads from the nomad tribes of the Libyan hills which reduced the province of Pentapolis almost to a desert. There were no troops to oppose them in Cyrene, and the natives of the country were almost all serfs to the descendants of Greek colonists, and had entirely lost their fighting instincts. Only the Christian inhabitants, with their priests and deacons, rose to the defence of their native land, and this seems first to have attracted Synesius to Christianity, of which, indeed, he had seen little reason to judge favourably in Constantinople.

Blessings on the priests of the Auxiditæ (he writes), who, when the soldiers hid themselves in the caves, called the people together, and after divine service took the offensive against the enemy. Now Myrsinitis is a long deep ravine, thickly wooded; but as the barbarians had hitherto met with no opposition they were not alarmed at the badness of the ground. They encountered a hero, however, in the Deacon Faustus. Though unarmed, he attacked a man who was fully armed, and struck him a blow with a stone on the head; not throwing the stone, but rushing on the man and striking him like a boxer. Then he took the arms of the fallen man and killed several others. For my part I should like to give triumphal crowns to all who took part in the fray, and make a public proclamation in their honour; for they are the first who have done a gallant deed, and have shown that these

invaders are not corybantes or demons such as wait on Rhea, but men who can be killed and wounded like ourselves.

But the heroic resistance of a few unarmed Christians could not do much to stem the increasing force of the barbarian invasions. Later Synesius writes:—

They have burnt the barns and devastated the land, and carried off the women as slaves. The males they never spare. Formerly they used to take young boys alive; now, I suppose, they feel they are too few in number to leave many guards with the booty and still have men enough to resist attacks. Yet none of us are indignant. We sit at home, hoping in vain for the soldiers. Shall we not cease our folly? Shall we not march against these men in behalf of our children, our wives, our country? For my part I have dictated this letter almost on horseback, for I have levied a troop among our neighbours. When we begin our march and it is known that I have a force of young men with us, I hope that many will join me.

The supply of arms was the chief difficulty. Also, on hearing of his proceedings, the brother of Synesius wrote to him in great alarm, pointing out that he was laying himself open to a charge of treason in thus taking upon himself to levy troops in the country.

You are a pleasant person (wrote Synesius in reply), hindering us from taking up arms when the enemy are at hand, plundering everywhere and every day slaughtering whole villages, and where there are no soldiers to defend us—at least, none to be seen. Will you say after this that it is not lawful for private persons to bear arms, and that they may be put to death; that the State may be angry with anyone who attempts to save himself? I would gladly die at once if my country could regain her former aspect.

Later, he writes to Hypatia:—

Even if, as Homer says, 'The dead forget in Hades,' yet

even there will I remember the beloved Hypatia. I am surrounded by the misfortunes of my country, and mourn for her each day, as I see the enemy in arms and men slaughtered like sheep. The air I breathe is tainted by putrefying corpses, and I expect as bad a fate myself, for who can be hopeful when the very sky is darkened by clouds of carnivorous birds? Still I cling to my country. How can I do otherwise—I who am a Libyan, born in the country, and who have before my eyes the honoured tombs of my ancestors? For your sake alone I think I would leave my country and change my abode, if I am ever again free from anxiety.

At length the hardly hoped-for time came. The desert tribes were driven back, and Pentapolis breathed freely. Synesius gladly redeemed his promise, and went to visit the beautiful philosopher in Alexandria. But here a strange thing happened to him. He fell in love with a Christian lady, and persuaded her to marry him. Nay, Theophilus himself performed the ceremony—glad, no doubt, to establish relations in such a manner with one of Hypatia's most intimate friends and valued pupils; for Hypatia seems to have been as much the rival at this time of Pope Theophilus as she was afterwards of his successor Cyril.

Synesius did not then become a Christian and he never swerved from his loyal devotion to Hypatia. It seems not impossible that his wife was one of her Christian friends. But in the next four years the process of conversion was gradually taking place in a heart and mind well qualified to receive the best form of Christianity.

His marriage took place in 403, and he remained nearly two years in Alexandria. Before he left he had nearly completed a treatise on dreams, and another on the points of difference between his views and those generally

prevalent at that time among Christians. Synesius attached a curious importance to dreams, and declared that his own had always been to him a source of guidance. The other treatise was written to defend himself against the criticisms of both pagan philosophers and Christian monks; for the increasing tendency to exalt the ascetic and celibate life as the most perfect expression of Christianity seems to have held Synesius back more than anything else from his final acceptance of the Christian religion. Both these treatises were sent to Hypatia for criticism, and seem to have been regarded as satisfactory by her. Yet the sequel shows that at some time during the three years which followed his return to his home in Pentapolis he must have become a Christian. His baptism is supposed to have taken place about five years after his marriage.

Synesius was a poet as well as an author, and the change of his religious views first becomes evident in his poems and hymns. He was not long, however, allowed to enjoy his domestic happiness or his peaceful pursuits. On his return to Pentapolis in 404 he found a new and still more incapable governor, under whose rule the barbaric inroads soon assumed once more the proportions of a regular invasion. Again the letters of Synesius to his friends in Alexandria are full of accounts of burnt harvests, stolen flocks, and every village living in a state of preparation for attack.

Synesius was called upon to undertake the defence of Ptolemais, now the capital of Pentapolis, for the governor had basely deserted his post. The following are extracts from his letters:—

When Cerealis (the governor) saw the danger, he embarked his money, and is now at anchor in the bay. He sends us

orders by a boat that we are to keep within the walls, and not attack these invincible men ; otherwise, he protests, he is not to blame for the consequences. Besides we are to set four watches at night ; as if our hopes depended on our not going to sleep.

I have no time for letters. I am occupied in devising a machine which shall hurl large stones a considerable distance from the walls.

At break of day I ride out as far as possible to gain tidings of these brigands ; I will not call them enemies, but robbers and murderers, since they do nothing but plunder and kill the helpless. At night with a body of young men I make circuits round the hills, that the women may sleep without fear. I have some soldiers with me, of the company of the Balagratæ, who before Cerealis was governor were mounted archers, but he has sold their horses. Still, they do for me without horses, for we need archers to guard the wells and river, as we have no water within the walls. I want a few men who do not belie the name of men. If I get them, with the help of God I am confident of success. But if I must die, there is this benefit in philosophy, that I should not shrink from leaving this little bag of flesh. But that I shall shed no tear at the thought of my wife and child, that I cannot pledge myself to do.

The efforts of Synesius were at length crowned with success. Cerealis was got rid of, a really capable governor was sent, the invaders were beaten back, and Synesius returned to his country home, and to his philosophic and scientific studies. In these he had but little sympathy from the other country gentlemen of Pentapolis.

I never hear in Libya the sound of philosophy except the echo of my own voice. Yet, if no one else is my witness, assuredly God is, for the mind of man is the seed of God ; and I think the stars look down with favour on me as the

only scientific observer of their movements visible to them in this vast continent.

Synesius had vainly urged the enrolment of a national militia in Pentapolis; but it was no part of the Byzantine policy to allow its unwilling subjects in Egypt the use of arms. Another of his proposals was that the appointment of their governor should rest with the Governor of Egypt, instead of with the Court of Byzantium. Experience had shown him that the appointments of the latter were almost invariably bad. Probably the post of governor in a remote province of Egypt, subject to perpetual invasion from savage tribes, attracted no one but men whose one idea was to make as much money as they could in a short tenure of office. Synesius declares that one governor of Pentapolis had made his fortune by keeping a house of ill-fame, and enumerates several other cases scarcely less disgraceful. Complaints to Constantinople bore no fruit, and could rarely be made at all, owing to the infrequency and difficulty of communication with that distant city, whereas almost all the great families of Pentapolis had friends and relations in Alexandria, and they were in constant communication with their capital.

No notice whatever was taken of these communications by the Court, and not very long afterwards a series of disgraceful intrigues ended in the recall of the military governor who had enforced peace, and the appointment of a man whose bad character was well known in the province. A storm of popular indignation swept over the country and manifested itself in an unexpected way.

Ever since the time of Constantine, the real government of Egypt had been passing slowly but steadily from the hands of the Emperor and his governors to those of the

Patriarch and his bishops.[1] The Roman rule was always detested, and of late years it was hardly even feared. So long as they paid their yearly taxes—even this only after they had made their futile protest by submitting to the lash of the taxgatherer—and sent the yearly tribute of corn to Constantinople, the Court did not trouble itself about Egypt, though always jealous of the Pope and his increasing temporal as well as spiritual power. But the transference of power from prefect to Pope was going on all over the kingdom in the same way from local governor to local bishop. The governor knew nothing about the country, and cared less; his relations with it were purely mercenary. The bishop was always an Egyptian, generally a native of his own diocese; his people looked to him for everything, and yielded a willing obedience to his authority. Those who were monks, promoted by Athanasius and Theophilus, were not, of course, so much in touch with the people; but even these had generally been the pride of the district for their sanctity and for those fragments of forgotten Egyptian science which rendered them such wonder-workers in the eyes of the common people. It not infrequently happened, especially when the Byzantine official was more than usually grasping and incompetent, that the people of a district spontaneously fixed on the man

[1] Egypt under the Byzantine emperors was at first divided into six provinces, each under an Imperial prefect, who took his orders from Constantinople, and had no superior in Egypt. The taxgatherers were also under orders from Constantinople, and not responsible to the prefect. Later the country was divided into eight governments, viz. the Upper Thebaid, with eleven cities; the Lower Thebaid, with ten cities (including the Great Oasis and part of the Heptanomis); Upper Libya or Cyrene; Lower Libya or Pareatonium; Arcadia (after Arcadius); Egyptiaca—the western half of the Delta; Augustamica I., or the Eastern Delta; Augustamica II., from Bubastis to the Red Sea.

they desired to rule over them, and entreated the Patriarch to consecrate him as their bishop. Sometimes the see was not even vacant, but the diocese was so large that certain towns on the outskirts made up their minds to have a bishop of their own, chose their man, and persuaded both bishop and Patriarch to consent to the creation of a new see for him, or appoint him as suffragan.

This was the way in which the people of Pentapolis met the appointment of Andronicus as their governor. The see of Ptolemais, which exercised a kind of Metropolitan jurisdiction over the other sees of Pentapolis, was vacant, and the inhabitants immediately elected Synesius to be their bishop and rule over them. No doubts seem to have been felt about the view which the Pope might take of their request to him to consecrate Synesius. Indeed, Theophilus was evidently a great deal more willing to accede to their wishes than Synesius himself. He wrote a long letter, ostensibly to his brother, who was then living in Alexandria, but intended to be shown to Theophilus. In this, after warmly expressing his sense of the honour which the citizens of Ptolemais had done him, and his own sincere conviction that he was not fit to be a bishop, he goes on to particularise some of the reasons which influence him to decline :—

I now divide my time (he writes) between amusements and study. When I am engaged in study, especially religious studies, I keep entirely to myself ; in my amusements I am thoroughly sociable. But the bishop must be godly, and therefore, like God, have nothing to do with amusements ; and a thousand eyes watch to see that he observes this duty. In religious matters, on the other hand, he cannot seclude himself, but must be thoroughly sociable, as he is both a

teacher and preacher of the law. Single-handed he has to do the work of everybody or bear the blame of everybody. Surely, then, it needs a man of the strongest character to support such a burden of cares without allowing the mind to be overwhelmed, or the divine particle in the soul to be quenched, when he is distracted by such an infinite variety of employments.

Besides these considerations Synesius had two far stronger reasons for holding back, concerning which he would admit no compromise. It has been pointed out that in the last forty years it had become more and more the fashion to choose monks for bishops, and to regard a married clergyman as self-barred from promotion. Synesius enters his manly protest against this state of things in straightforward and emphatic words:—

God and the law and the sacred hand of Theophilus (he writes) gave me my wife. I therefore declare openly to all, and testify that I will not separate entirely from her, or visit her secretly like an adulterer. The one course would be contrary to piety, the other to law. I shall wish and pray to have a large number of virtuous children.

The other difficulty concerned his religious opinions. He had not long been a Christian, and his whole training had been in pagan philosophy. His opinions on many points were still in a transition state, and though he could honestly promise to keep silence on abstruse theological questions to his people ('for what has the multitude to do with philosophy? The truth of divine mysteries is not a thing to be talked about'), he desired that there should be no misunderstanding between himself and the Patriarch.

If I am called to the episcopate, I do not think it right to pretend to hold opinions which I do not hold. I call God

and man as witness to this. Truth is the property of God, before whom I wish to be entirely blameless. Though I am fond of amusement—from my childhood I have been accused of being mad after arms and horses—still I will consent to give them up, though I shall regret to see my darling dogs no longer allowed to hunt, and my bows moth-eaten. Still I will submit to this, if it be God's will. And though I hate all cares and troubles, I will endure these petty matters of business as rendering my appointed service to God, grievous as it will be. But I will have no deceit about dogmas, nor shall there be variance between my thoughts and my tongue. . . . It shall never be said of me that I got myself consecrated without my opinions being known. But let Father Theophilus, dearly beloved by God, decide for me, with full knowledge of the circumstances of the case, and let him tell me his opinion clearly. Then he will either leave me in private life to philosophise quietly by myself, or else he will have no opening left for afterwards judging me and removing me from the episcopal body.

Theophilus appears to have acted with more wisdom and charity than we should have expected from him, after his conduct in the matter of the monks and Chrysostom. The great Pope, with all his faults, was statesman enough to see the importance of enlisting Synesius under his banner, and set himself to remove his scruples; which, however much they might clash with the prevailing opinion of the time, were by no means inconsistent with Holy Scripture. With regard to his wife, Theophilus yielded altogether—the more readily, perhaps, that the last ten years must have shown him the growing dangers of monasticism. Before the question was finally settled Synesius paid a visit to Alexandria to consult Theophilus in person, and popular feeling ran so high on the subject in Pentapolis that Synesius felt that if he refused

their request he could not return to live amongst them again.

At length the matter was arranged, and Synesius was consecrated Bishop of Ptolemais in the year 410. The following extract is from the letter which he wrote on the occasion to the priests of the diocese of Ptolemais:—

Since God has laid upon me, not what I sought, but what He willed, I pray that He who has assigned me this life will guide me through the life He has assigned me. How shall I, who have spent my youth in philosophical leisure and contemplation—I who have only meddled with the cares of life so far as was necessary for me to discharge my duties as a private citizen—how shall I be able to bear the continued pressure of anxiety? how shall I, while devoting myself to a multitude of affairs, still turn my thoughts to those intellectual beauties which are only enjoyed in happy leisure, without which life is no life to me and such as I am? But to God, they say, all things are possible—even the impossible. Do you, then, lift up your hands in prayer for me to God, and exhort the people in the city, and those who frequent the churches in the villages and the country, to pray both in public and private for me. If I am not abandoned by God, I shall realise that the episcopacy is not a descent from philosophy, but an ascent to a higher form of it.

The three years of his episcopate were the most troubled of his life. On his return from consecration he found Ptolemais like 'a city taken by storm.' It seems difficult to believe that the list of atrocities recorded against Andronicus could have been perpetrated with impunity on the inhabitants of even so distant an Imperial province as this outlying borderland of Egypt. There was no excuse of rebellion or difference of religious belief to excuse his persecution. Citizens were tortured and

imprisoned with the sole and avowed object of extorting money for the private purse of the governor.

'Nothing was to be heard in the public places but the groans of men, the screams of women, and the cries of boys.' The bishop's palace was immediately beset by crowds demanding redress and protection; Synesius remonstrated with the governor, to no purpose. While he tried by every possible means to restrain Andronicus without openly resisting the Imperial officer, the people murmured that Synesius, in whom they had trusted, had forsaken them. His own child died, his prayers seemed to remain unheard; in his despair Synesius seems even to have thought of suicide. He had already written the strongest protests to Constantinople, but the sufferings of the people forbade him to wait any longer for the answer.

He called a solemn meeting in the cathedral, and publicly excommunicated Andronicus. After setting forth in his sermon the crimes of the latter which compelled him to do so, he ended as follows:—

Therefore the Church of Ptolemais communicates this decree to her sisters throughout the world:

Let no temple of God be open to Andronicus and his family, to Thoas and his family.[1] Let every sacred building and precinct be closed against them. The devil has no part in Paradise; if he enters by stealth, he must be driven out. I therefore exhort all men, whether private individuals or rulers, neither to dwell under the same roof nor to sit at the same table with them; especially I exhort the bishops neither to speak to them while living nor bury them while dead. But if anyone despises our Church as the Church of a

[1] Thoas had been the willing instrument of Andronicus in his most atrocious crimes.

small city, and receives those whom she casts out on the ground that it is not necessary to obey such a poor Church, let him know that he has divided the Church, which Christ wishes to be one. Such a person, whether a Levite, a presbyter, or a bishop, will be treated by us like Andronicus. We will neither take him by the hand, nor eat at the same table with him; far shall it be from us to share the ineffable mystery with those who take part with Andronicus and Thoas.

On hearing this sentence, and before it could be sent off to the other bishops of Pentapolis, Andronicus hastened to profess penitence and promise amendment, if only Synesius would revoke it. Synesius did not trust the man, but he consented to suspend the publication of the sentence for a time, whereupon Andronicus, evidently believing that he had 'got round the bishop,' resumed his evil practices.

Synesius at once put the sentence of excommunication in force; and it was so effectual that a little later we find Synesius writing to Theophilus to recommend the disgraced outcast to his charity.

Having thus freed his people from their tyrant, Synesius went on a visitation tour throughout the province. In the course of his journey he came to Palæbisca and Hydrax, two villages on the extreme edge of the Libyan desert, which had, it will be remembered, elected a young and active bishop of their own to defend them in the reign of Valens, and persuaded Athanasius to consecrate him. A small see had been created for him out of the diocese to which they properly belonged; but the bishop of this smaller diocese was now dead, and Theophilus had asked Synesius to go that way

and preside over the election and consecration of his successor.

But the occupant of the parent see of Erython happened at this time to be a man beloved by the whole district, and the two towns declared that they wanted no bishop of their own now; their one desire was to remain under Paul of Erython. When Synesius called them together, and desired them to nominate their successor, a most curious scene followed :—

> The people threw themselves upon the ground as suppliants, invoking the mercy of Theophilus, as if he were present and could hear their cries. All was confusion. No arguments could be listened to. Nothing was heard but the groaning of the men, the screams of the women, the weeping of the children. In vain Synesius had the most disorderly removed. The men were bad enough; but the women, 'always most difficult to deal with,' holding their infants in their outstretched arms, and closing their eyes that they might not see the bishop's seat unoccupied by their beloved ruler, continued weeping, till Synesius himself was inclined to weep in sympathy with them. He dismissed the people, and ordered them to reassemble on the fourth day. As the same scene was then repeated, he ultimately consented to send an account of all that had happened to Theophilus, leaving him to decide whether any further steps should be taken.

'The next case which was brought before Synesius may perhaps explain what were the episcopal qualities which the people so much admired in the most religious Paulus. Like Siderius of happy memory, he was obviously an active man, one who could help his friends and injure his enemies.

'Near the village of Hydrax, on the summit of a precipitous hill, stood the ruins of an old castle. Part of its

walls had been thrown down by an earthquake, but they could be so easily repaired, and the position was naturally so strong, that it was a place of great importance to the neighbouring villages in such troubled times. In those days of war and devastation it was a great advantage to the people to have a fortress close at hand, to which they could retire with their cattle, and from which they could easily repel the attacks of the barbarians. Unfortunately for the people of Hydrax, the hill was the property of Dioscorus, bishop of the neighbouring town of Dardanus. Failing to obtain it by any other means, Paulus broke into the place by force, a table was brought and set up as an altar in a small outbuilding at the extremity of the hill, and then Paulus consecrated the building as a church. If this consecration held good, the building by law ceased to be private property, and as it was in the diocese of Erython it would remain in the hands of Paulus. Moreover, as it could only be reached by a path which traversed the whole crest of the hill, the rest of the property would become almost valueless to any other owner. The question had been referred to the bishop (Metropolitan ?) of the province, who strongly disapproved of what had been done, but hesitated to declare the act of consecration void. Synesius had no such scruples. He urged that the mere fact of celebrating the divine rites in a place could not make that place for ever sacred; otherwise all castles in time of war would become churches.'

Besides (he said) I distinguish between religion and superstition, a vice which wears the mask of virtue and is considered by philosophy the third form of atheism. I consider that nothing is holy or sacred which is not done in conformity

with justice and piety. It is not the Christian belief that the divine presence must necessarily follow certain mystic rites and words, as if they had a magical power of attracting it, which might be the case with an earth spirit. The divine presence comes to those souls which are free from passion and devoted to God. Where wrath and anger and the spirit of contention rule, how can the Holy Spirit enter?—for were He already dwelling there, He would depart when these vices came.

Paulus at once yielded to the decision of Synesius, with such sorrow and repentance that all hearts were melted. Dioscorus, not to be outdone in generosity, offered to do anything in his power to effect an amicable settlement. Eventually Paulus bought the hill and castle in dispute from Dioscorus, and all parties were content.

Not long afterwards the general who had recently and successfully been operating against the barbarian tribes was recalled to make way for a wholly incompetent successor, and the devastating inroads began again.

I have read of a country (writes Synesius) where only the women and children were left, the sign of its desolation. Things are still worse with us. There is no booty the Ansurians so much value as women and children—the women to bear fresh children to them, the children to swell their ranks. These children will return one day to their native land, but they will return as enemies. The young man will devastate the fields which he cultivated as a boy by his father's side. Yet if we had had good generals, it would have been easy enough to take vengeance on this sacrilegious and contemptuous enemy. What holy places have the barbarians spared? Have they not devastated the very tombs upon the plain of Barca? Have they not burned and ruined the churches of Ampolis? Have they not defiled the holy tables,

and used them for their feasts? Have not the sacred vessels of our public worship been carried off to be used for the worship of demons? It is useless to speak of the forts they have demolished, the cattle they have seized in the caves of the mountains, the goods they have carried off. Pentapolis is ruined, is extinguished, has perished. I have no longer a country to fly to. Alas for Cyrene! where the public records trace my descent from Hercules. Alas for the tombs where I shall not be laid! the tombs of the Dorians. Alas for Pentapolis! of which I am the last bishop. But the calamity is too near me. I can say no more; tears check my tongue. I am overwhelmed at the thought of abandoning the house and the services of God. I must sail away to some island; but when I am summoned to the ship, I shall pray them to leave me a little longer here. First I shall go to God's temple. I shall embrace the altar, I shall wet with my tears the precious pavement. I will not leave until I have kissed the well-known door, the well-known seat (throne?). How often shall I call on God for help! How often shall I turn! How often clasp the altar-screen! I would I could refresh my eyes with sleep, unbroken by the trumpet's sound! How long am I to be stationed on the battlements? How long am I to mount guard upon the wall? I am weary of setting the watches, guarding and being guarded in turn. I, who used to spend whole nights in observing the movements of the stars, am worn out by looking night after night for the movements of the enemy. Our time for sleep is measured by the water-clock, and often it is broken by the alarm-bell; and if I do doze a little, what frightful dreams I have! In my dreams I fly, I am taken prisoner, I am wounded, I am fettered, I am sold as a slave. How often have I started from my sleep with joy because I escape from my tyrant! How often have I awoke panting, bathed in perspiration! for the end of my sleep was the end of my flight from the soldier who pursued me. . . . If the islands are free from such troubles as these, I will certainly set sail when the storm is abated. But I fear

the calamity will overtake us before we can escape. The day for the assault draws near. When the peril of the city is extreme, then will be especially the time for the bishop to hasten to God's temple. I will stay in my country, in my church. I will place before me the sacred vessels of holy water. I will cling to the sacred pillars which raise the holy table from the ground. There will I remain while living, there will I lie when dead. I am God's minister, appointed to present the offerings (Korbân ?) to Him ; it is perhaps His will that I should present the offering of my life. Surely God will not look with indifference on His altar stained for the first time with blood, the blood of His bishop.

Within the year Synesius lost his little son, and never recovered from this last blow. His wife and two other children had died earlier.

As for me (he writes in his last letter to Hypatia), my bodily sickness comes from sickness of the mind. The recollection of the children who are gone is slowly killing me. Would to God I could either cease to live, or cease to think of my children's graves !

Synesius has been well described as 'a soldier, a statesman, an orator, a poet, a sophist, a philosopher, a bishop; and in all these characters had acted as a man who deserved to be admired and, still more, to be loved.'

About the same time, probably within a year, died Theophilus, one of the most powerful Popes that Egypt has ever known. He consolidated the Egyptian nation under the name of 'the Church,' and his two successors were men of the same calibre, and carried on the same policy until they had made their country independent in all but name. It was only by an accusation of heresy that the Imperial Government was able to break a power which the Emperor had good cause to dread.

Theophilus added several 'canons,' one of which relates to the ordination of the clergy, and provides that the candidates are to be 'selected by the clergy, examined by the bishop, and ordained publicly, with the express assent of the clergy, and after the bishop has asked whether the laity also can testify to them.'

The last days of Theophilus were in strange contrast to his turbulent career, for we are told that he fell 'into a lethargic state,' in which he passed away on October 15, 412.

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CHAPTER XXII

SHENOUDA OF AKHMIN, AND OTHERS

A.D. 412
A.M. 128

WHILE Synesius fought and prayed on the north-western frontier of Egypt, another remarkable man, better known and far more admired in his own day, but fallen into more complete oblivion now, was fasting and praying in the south. Shenouda[1] was born in a little village which is said still to exist a mile or two north-west of the well-known town of Akhmin.[2] His father was a wealthy farmer, owning large flocks of sheep, and as a boy Shenouda was employed to assist one of the shepherds. But he used to spend whole nights in prayer, and eventually the shepherd recommended his employer to take the boy away from out-door labour. He was sent to the neighbouring monastery, of which his maternal uncle was the head, and brought up by him as a monk—the only career, indeed, open to an Egyptian of brains and ambition in those days. Yet, though he became one of the most famous saints of his day, and ruled

[1] The name Shenouda has been, incorrectly perhaps, identified with the Latin Sanutius. It is said to mean 'the Son of God' in Egyptian. In 1833 Mr. Curzon visited the monastery of St. Shenouda, and writes in his book: 'Who the great Abu Shenoud had the honour to be, and what he had done to be canonised, I could meet with no one to tell me. He was, I believe, a *Mohammedan* saint (!), and this Coptic monastery had been in some sort placed under the shadow of his protection, in the hope of saving it from the persecutions of the faithful.'

[2] Panopolis in Greek, and probably Khemmis in the ancient Egyptian Empire.

an ever-growing community of monks, we have no such record of labour for the good of others in the life of the saint Shenouda as we have in that of the married philosopher and fighting bishop Synesius. As in the case of all the famous hermits, it is difficult to disentangle the real life of the man from the mists of fable that surround him. Probably the life of training that they led did really develop in these hermit saints abnormal powers to some extent; but it is difficult to believe that Shenouda, at any rate, did not deliberately use his natural gifts to impress his simple monks, and that he was not infrequently guilty of 'pious frauds.' Still, he dispensed justice in an autocratic fashion through all the surrounding districts, and no one ever seems to have dreamt of disputing his decision.

On one occasion a man came to confess to him that he had followed a traveller, and killed him, because he carried a purse which his assailant believed to be full of gold, and in which, he naïvely adds, 'I only found a single piece.' He asked what penance he should do, that his sin might be forgiven.

Shenouda desired him to go at once to the town of Akhmin, where the 'duke' of the province was about to judge some housebreakers, and to mingle himself with the prisoners. 'If they ask whether you were one of them,' coolly directed the saint, 'say, "Yes." Then you will be put to death with them, and so God will receive you into eternal life.' And immediately the man went as he was bidden, and was condemned and executed with the thieves.

He was constantly appealed to by people who had been robbed, and generally seems to have detected the thieves and compelled restitution.

Great people came from far-distant towns to consult him,

and were received with the greatest mystery. The brethren were generally given to understand that it was Elijah, or Ezekiel, or some other of the Prophets who sought an interview with their holy Father, and who must not on any account be spoken to by anyone else.

A Roman general, who was on his way to defend the southern frontier against a fresh inroad of the Blemmyes, turned aside to the monastery of Anba Shenouda to ask his blessing and counsel.[1] But Anba Shenouda had withdrawn alone into the desert for solitary meditation and prayer, to avert a threatened calamity (it was feared that the Nile would not rise that year), and the Father had given strict orders that no one was to disturb him on any pretext whatever. So the monks told the Roman general that they dare not disturb the holy Father till his week was fulfilled, and the general, declaring that he should not leave the monastery, encamped in the neighbourhood with his soldiers. But after three days of this, during which it is implied that the whole force had to be fed at the cost of the monastery, the monks could stand it no longer, and sent off Visa, Shenouda's favourite scribe, to entreat their Father to come to their rescue. Shenouda was very humanly angry at being disobeyed, but on calm reflection decided that the matter was sufficiently urgent to excuse his followers. He had a long interview with the general, and to advice and information of genuine importance he added, at the earnest request of the general, one of his own girdles, to wear when he was fighting against the barbarians. It is recorded that when the hour of battle actually arrived, the general forgot all about the girdle; and it was not till his troops had been

[1] This incident did not happen till 450, when Shenouda was nearly a century old.

driven back two days following, that he remembered to gird himself with it, so that on the third day he obtained an easy victory!

Shenouda was a great foe to paganism, which still lingered in isolated districts in that part of Egypt, and would go with a troop of monks to destroy the houses of a pagan village and spoil their goods on any complaint against them by the Christians whom he had taken under his protection. One complaint was that the Christian serfs of some wealthy pagan wine-growers were cheated out of their wages, and obliged to pay an enormous price for wine which had gone bad and could not otherwise be disposed of. Shenouda promptly called out his troops of monks, and destroyed entirely the houses and goods of the offenders.

A very rich man named Peter came one day from one of the neighbouring towns to ask Shenouda's blessing, and to offer gifts. Shenouda met him with stern rebuke, because he had married his niece, the daughter of his sister. In vain the man pleaded established custom. 'Her goods and inheritance were mixed up with mine,' he said; 'I was obliged therefore to marry her, lest they should pass into another family.'

'Have you never heard the words of the Evangelist?' answered Shenouda sternly: '"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"'

'Oh, my Father,' said the trembling citizen, 'is there no repentance possible for me?'[1] And the prophet answered 'Yes.' Then the man arose and went quickly to his home,

[1] The sect of the Novatians, and sterner individuals even in the Church, declared that no repentance could save those who had fallen into deadly sin after baptism.

and returned with 500 pieces, which he offered to Shenouda, entreating him to bestow it in alms for the good of his soul.

'I cannot take it,' answered Shenouda; 'but if you will, go to the *laura* of Father Aflou, and ask him to find you some one who will take it in trust.' So Peter hastened to the place indicated, and found there Father Paul, the head of the *laura* of Bouet (in the *moudirieh* of Beni Souef), who received it with much pleasure. After this, Peter went back to his wife and said to her, 'Are you aware, my sister, that we have been living in continual sin without knowing it?' Then he resigned all his property to his wife, and became himself one of Shenouda's monks.[1]

Not far from Shenouda there was still living another celebrated man, though he was now very old—St. John of Lycopolis, as he is called now; 'John the Carpenter,' as he is described in the old manuscripts, from his trade before he became a monk. He also was reverenced far and near, and had given counsel to emperors. Shenouda is described as going to visit him on his solitary mountain above Assiout; but he died about 394, being then ninety years old. Palladius also, the historian of the fourth-century monasticism, was living and travelling in the Thebaid for some years at this time. In 399 his health failed, and he was sent down to consult the Alexandrian physicians. By their advice he left Egypt for Palestine, and was afterwards consecrated Bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia. He attached himself warmly to Chrysostom, and when that prelate was sent into exile in 404 he was, with other bishops who clung to Chrysostom, imprisoned, ill-treated, and finally, about 405, exiled to Assuan or Syene,

[1] There are still ten churches dedicated to Anba Shenouda in the Thebaid and one in the Roman fortress of Babylon.

when he must again have passed through Akhmin and Assiout. On the death of the Patriarch Theophilus, he was allowed to leave Assuan, but not to return to his see; and he spent about four years in the neighbourhood of Antinoupolis in the Thebaid. Here he began his history, which was finished about the year 420. Shenouda long outlived both John and Palladius,[1] and became an intimate friend and adviser of the Patriarch Cyril.[2]

Another celebrated character in quite a different district of Egypt was Isidore of Pelusium, which, as everyone knows, was the chief military stronghold on the north-east frontier.

His surroundings were very different from the simple peasantry and devoted monks who in the Thebaid worshipped Shenouda almost as if he were a god. He lived a hermit life in a rich and fashionable town, and spent most of his time in rebukes and denunciation of worldliness in high places. The enormous power which had fallen into the hands of the bishops, in consequence of

[1] The author of a very curious treatise on 'The Nations of India and the Brahmans' has been identified with Palladius, but the similarity of name seems to be the only ground for the identification. This Palladius set out on a journey to India to study the philosophy of that country, and persuaded the Bishop of Adulé, a port of the Red Sea, to go with him. They met with so many difficulties that at last they returned to Egypt, having spent but a very short time in India. Another man, a merchant in the Indian trade, had made the same attempt in company with a priest, but they never got farther than Taprobane (Ceylon), where they were taken prisoners, and lived for six years in slavery before they were able to escape.

[2] Akhmin gave birth to other great men, besides hermits, in this century. It was here that the Egyptian poet Cyrus was born, who was the friend of Eudocia, wife to the Emperor Theodosius II. Cyrus was given high civil appointments by the Emperor, and Evagrius says that he was appointed to the command of the forces in the West (North Africa); but he afterwards took holy orders, and was made Bishop of Cotyæum.

the weakness or wickedness of most of the Byzantine officials, was naturally a very great temptation, to which many succumbed. The process of deterioration on the part of the Egyptian nation was steadily going on. If a man were courageous, religious, ambitious, and patriotic, there was but one course open to him—to become a monk, that he might afterwards become an abbot or bishop; and the purer his motives and the more exalted his character, the more certain it was, in these circumstances, that he would leave no offspring behind him. Many of the bishops were already assuming the manners and dignity of kings in their respective districts; and though their rule was the best and the most greatly desired by the Egyptians, it was far from being altogether good for the Church. Isidore did not even approve of the beautiful churches which were being built all over the land. 'It was not for the sake of walls,' he writes, 'but for the sake of souls, that the King of Heaven came to visit us. Could I have chosen, I would rather have lived in Apostolic times, when church buildings were not thus adorned, but the Church was decked with grace, than in these days, when the buildings are ornamented with all kinds of marble, and the Church is bare and void of spiritual gifts.' The office of a bishop, he points out on another occasion, 'is a work, not a relaxation; a solicitude, not a luxury; a responsible ministration, not an irresponsible dominion; a fatherly supervision, not a tyrannical autocracy.' But he does allow that 'there are bishops who take pains to live up to the Apostolic standard; if you say very few, I do not deny it.' He complains of the inhospitality, 'the gluttony,' and 'pugnacity' of the monks. But in estimating his censures at their true worth, it is necessary to remember Isidore's

point of view. A hermit of that age considered the most temperate indulgence in ordinary and well-cooked food as gluttony. Were not bread, water, dates, and raw vegetables enough for the body?[1] A hermit would not own a cloak, unless it were so old and worthless that he 'could throw it out by the wayside and leave it for three days without anyone caring to appropriate it.' Some of them were so humble that they avoided the eager service of their disciples; and to them, of course, the possession of a servant was a reprehensible luxury. One monk relates: 'In my youth I lived with Abbot Cronius. Old and trembling as he was, he would never bid me do anything; he would rise himself and hand the *goolla*[2] to me and to the rest. And Abbot Theodore of Pherinè, with whom also I lived, would set out the table by himself, and say "Brother, if thou wilt, come and eat." I said, "Father, I came to thee to profit; why dost thou not bid me do somewhat?" He answered never a word; but when the old men asked him the same thing, he broke out with: "Am I Cœnobiarch, that I should command him? If he like, what he sees me doing, he will himself do." Thenceforward I forestalled the old man's purposes. And I had learned the lesson of "doing in silence."' We must not, therefore, conclude that the bishops and monks who aroused the wrath of Isidore were really evil-livers or bad Christians. Self-willed and domineering they too often became, but they were for the most part a set of honest, hardworking, temperate-living men, who naturally found that they could not fulfil the duties of their position on the meagre fare

[1] It is only in the recent years of this nineteenth century that the Egyptian monks have been permitted to eat meat once a week—on Sunday—instead of once a month.

[2] Water-jar.

and under the stern rules of a hermit. An interesting light is thrown on this subject when we are told of one bishop who was regarded as a great transgressor.[1]

Socrates allows that he was well instructed in logic, in philosophy, and particularly in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, besides being remarkably eloquent. But, our historian complains, 'He was not simple in his diet, for although he practised the strictest moderation, yet his table was always sumptuously furnished. His habits were soft and delicate, being accustomed to clothe himself in white garments, and to bathe twice a day in the public baths. And when some one asked him why he, who was a bishop, bathed twice a day, he replied: "Because it is inconvenient to bathe thrice." Going one day to visit the Bishop Arsacius, he was asked by one of the friends of that prelate why he wore a garment so unsuitable for a bishop, and where it was written that an ecclesiastic should be clothed in white. "Do you tell me first," he said, "where it is written that a bishop should wear black;" and, when he that made the inquiry knew not what to reply to this counter-query, "You cannot show," rejoined Sisinnius, "that a priest should be clothed in black. But Solomon is my authority, whose exhortation is 'Let your garments be white.' And our Saviour in the Gospels appears clothed in white raiment; moreover, he showed Moses and Elias to the Apostles clad in white garments."' Socrates allows that the bishop's promptness extorted the admiration of all present.

Isidore of Pelusium was a devoted admirer of Chrysostom, and wrote bitterly of his own Pope in the following words: 'Theophilus, who had a mania for building and

[1] Sisinnius, a bishop of the Novatians.

worshipped gold, and who had a spite against my namesake' (Isidore of Alexandria), 'was put forward by Egypt to persecute that pious man and true theologian.' Isidore afterwards influenced Cyril to treat the memory of Chrysostom with respect, and to restore his name to the diptychs. Still, Isidore was not always a pessimist; in one place he observes that the study of Church history should relieve despondency as to existing evils, and that even the present state of the Church should remove distrust as to the future. By this time the adoration of saints and martyrs had begun to obtain that prominent place in all the Churches which continues in the Latin Church, and to a less extent in the Greek and Egyptian Churches, to this day. It became the custom to store relics of saints in every new church that was built; and as in the other parts of the empire the supply was hardly equal to the demand, a great many mummies of the innumerable Egyptian saints and martyrs were dug up and sent to Constantinople and other places.

Pilgrimages also became common to those shrines which were left undisturbed, and some of these are still performed every year by the faithful in Egypt; others are still performed to the same places, though Mohammedan saints have now usurped the honours of their Christian predecessors in many cases, as at Tanta.

Another custom, too, the converted pagan Egyptians brought with them into Christianity was that of having sacred trees. The favourite was the Persea, which they declared now to be sacred to Jesus, because it was under a Persea that Jesus and His parents rested when they passed through the Matarieh. These trees, which were of foreign extraction, were dying out all over the country; and

in spite of a law passed by Arcadius that no Persea should be cut down in Egypt, and that anyone guilty of buying or selling one should forfeit five pounds in gold, they rapidly became extinct. It is not even known for certain now what tree is meant by the Persea. Some say they were peach-trees; others identify it with the *Balanites ægyptiaca*; others declare it to have been the sensitive variety of the genus Mimosa.[1] A great deal of copying and translating was still done by the more learned communities of monks. At least three translations were made of the New Testament into the three dialects of Egyptian and Coptic—the Sahidic of the district beyond Assiout (still called Sayeed or Said), the Bashmuric or Beschymeric, and the Coptic proper of Memphis and the Delta. Many Lives of the saints and martyrs were at this time translated into Coptic, and also many works of the Fathers. Some curious Gnostic writings also belong to the fourth century. Most important of all, the four celebrated manuscripts of the New Testament which are now the pride of the Vatican, Paris, St. Petersburg, and the British Museum respectively, were written in Egypt about the middle of the fourth century. The one in London had once a superscription on it saying that it had been written by Thecla, an Egyptian lady of high rank, soon after the Council of Nicea. All the oldest manuscripts known show their origin by the Egyptian form of spelling some of the words. About the beginning of the fifth century churches began to be built in the Byzantine garrison towns to the Arian bishop George, who had been murdered in a pagan riot in Alexandria, and was regarded by the Byzan-

[1] The sacred tree now of the Latins at Matarieh is a sycamore fig. It is probably about 200 years old.

tines as a martyr, and who was, moreover, particularly obnoxious to the Egyptians. The Byzantines added insult to injury by representing him riding triumphantly on horse-back, like his great predecessor St. George, and slaying a dragon, which, they were careful to explain, signified the Athanasian error, which he had trampled under foot. One of these churches still exists within the walls of the Roman fortress of Babylon; it is called after him Girghis, and is still in the possession of the Greek (Byzantine) Church, but they have long since forgotten the Arian St. George, and believe their church to be dedicated to the earlier martyr.

Another church was built to his honour in the garrison town of Ptolemais (Thebaid), and the name of the Arian saint prevailed over the Greek name of the town. The fragments of the town that remain in our day are called Girgeh. Timber was now extensively used for roofing churches, instead of the flat stones of the pagan period.

Between 390 and 403 John Cassianus was also in Egypt, for the express purpose, like so many other travellers of that date, of studying this land of monks and monasteries. He was much struck by the voluntary hardships which they all endured, and spoke admiringly of those who lived so far from water that they had to carry all they wanted on their shoulders for a distance of three or four miles. He wrote in Latin, however, and had to communicate with the Egyptians through an interpreter. He caused the 'Rule' of three or four of the most celebrated of the Egyptian ascetics to be translated into Latin for the benefit of the Western monks.

Another visitor to Egypt about this time was Moses of Khorene, one of the most celebrated writers of Armenia.

He was sent with several companions at the public expense by his country to study both in the pagan and Christian schools of Alexandria, and they made good use of their time. They translated several of the most important Alexandrian manuscripts into Armenian, and centuries afterwards Europe reaped the benefit of their labours. Many valuable books of antiquity have come to us, from the Armenian convent at Venice, which owe their existence to the labours of Moses and his companions. In the latter half of the fourth century, in fact, and the beginning of the fifth, Egypt was once more—what she had long ago been under the early Ptolemies and the early Pharaohs—the dispenser of learning, and to a less degree of the material products of civilisation, to the whole world.

Yet all through this century the slow process of self-destruction and deterioration went steadily on, and in its closing years Alexandria lost the distinctive glory of her Church, that Catechetical School in which so many of her greatest saints and scholars had been trained. We know nothing of the reasons which led Rhodon, who had succeeded the blind Didymus in its presidency, to transfer the college to a town called Side in Pamphylia; but we do not find that Theophilus exerted himself in any way to prevent a step so fatal to the Christian learning of Alexandria and the very existence of the college, which did not long survive its transference. Henceforth the way was left clear for Hypatia and that passionate revival of pagan philosophy, which was met, not by a deeper learning and a more perfect scheme of life, but by riot and murder. Those reigns of Cyril and Dioscorus, during which the power of Christian Egypt appeared to reach its highest development, did but accelerate her rapid decline.

CHAPTER XXIII

CYRIL THE GREAT

A.D. 412 A.M. 128 CYRIL, who succeeded his maternal uncle Theophilus on the Papal throne of Alexandria, was at the time a young man, and headstrong to a degree which brought him into trouble more than once during the early years of his episcopate. He had been trained for five years among the monks of Nitria before his ordination, but Isidore of Pelusium had even then found fault with him for occupying himself with worldly thoughts and interests. Against his moral character no word was ever breathed. The contrast between the Popes of Alexandria and the Popes of Rome in this respect is very striking; for even when, as in the case of Athanasius and other Popes accused of heresy, attempts have been made to blacken the moral character of the Egyptians, they have invariably failed in proof: in most instances they have been triumphantly refuted. But Cyril had the faults of his office—he could brook no rival; and as at this time the Emperor of the East was only twelve or thirteen, the Patriarch was practically independent in Egypt. He had a standing army of some five thousand monks in Nitria alone; and the Egyptian monks of that day, unarmed as they were, made very good soldiers, and were capable of a successful resistance, even against the Imperial troops, as they had already shown.

Cyril's succession to the throne was not undisputed. The Archdeacon of Alexandria, whose name was Timotheus, was strongly supported, and it is to be feared that there was something very like actual fighting between the rival candidates before the matter was settled in favour of Cyril.

Cyril began his reign by a sharp persecution of the Novatians, who had become more powerful than he thought right, and had a bishop of their own in Egypt, called Theopemptus. Him Cyril deprived of all his property, as well as of the 'treasure' of his Church. But the early years of Cyril's government I shall pass over in as few lines as possible—not for lack of material, but because the story of those first few years has already been told, far better than I can tell it, in Kingsley's wonderful sketch of Cyril and Hypatia. If anyone who cares about Egypt has not read that book, let him do so forthwith, and he will get a much more vivid picture of the Alexandria of those days than any that I can draw for him. There are doubtless some minor inaccuracies (for instance, Kingsley seems really to have been under the impression that Scetis was on or near the Nile; and though Hypatia may have been quite as beautiful, she can hardly have been as young as she is there represented), but the bitter rivalry between Hypatia and Cyril, the weakness and effeminacy of the nominal governor Orestes, the torture of Hierax, the attempted massacre of the Christians by the Jews, the prompt way in which Cyril called out his army of monks and expelled the whole Jewish population of Alexandria in return—all this and more may be read in the pages of 'Hypatia.' Orestes wrote complaints to Constantinople, but no one ventured to

interfere with the despotic proceedings of the Egyptian Pope.

Acting, not on orders from the Imperial Court, but on the advice of his own people, Cyril had an interview with Orestes after he had driven out the Jews, and endeavoured to make peace, tendering him in solemn appeal a copy of the Gospels. But though Orestes would doubtless have been glad to keep on good terms with the real ruler of Egypt, Cyril could not control his monks, except when he was actually present in command of them. Thus they met Orestes in the street at a critical time, and had well-nigh murdered him before they were called off. One of their number was taken prisoner on this occasion, and tortured to death by the prefect in revenge, which so roused the indignation of Cyril that he did a thing which he must afterwards have sincerely repented—gave the remains of the unfortunate monk a grand Church funeral, and declared that he was to be regarded as a martyr. But the most terrible tragedy of his reign was the murder of Hypatia by the same monastic army. This also should be read in Kingsley's book, but we will here transcribe the brief account in Socrates :—

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and returned with 500 pieces, which he offered to Shenouda, entreating him to bestow it in alms for the good of his soul.

'I cannot take it,' answered Shenouda; 'but if you will, go to the *laura* of Father Aflou, and ask him to find you some one who will take it in trust.' So Peter hastened to the place indicated, and found there Father Paul, the head of the *laura* of Bouet (in the *moudirieh* of Beni Souef), who received it with much pleasure. After this, Peter went back to his wife and said to her, 'Are you aware, my sister, that we have been living in continual sin without knowing it?' Then he resigned all his property to his wife, and became himself one of Shenouda's monks.[1]

Not far from Shenouda there was still living another celebrated man, though he was now very old—St. John of Lycopolis, as he is called now; 'John the Carpenter,' as he is described in the old manuscripts, from his trade before he became a monk. He also was reverenced far and near, and had given counsel to emperors. Shenouda is described as going to visit him on his solitary mountain above Assiout; but he died about 394, being then ninety years old. Palladius also, the historian of the fourth-century monasticism, was living and travelling in the Thebaid for some years at this time. In 399 his health failed, and he was sent down to consult the Alexandrian physicians. By their advice he left Egypt for Palestine, and was afterwards consecrated Bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia. He attached himself warmly to Chrysostom, and when that prelate was sent into exile in 404 he was, with other bishops who clung to Chrysostom, imprisoned, ill-treated, and finally, about 405, exiled to Assuan or Syene,

[1] There are still ten churches dedicated to Anba Shenouda in the Thebaid and one in the Roman fortress of Babylon.

when he must again have passed through Akhmin and Assiout. On the death of the Patriarch Theophilus, he was allowed to leave Assuan, but not to return to his see; and he spent about four years in the neighbourhood of Antinoupolis in the Thebaid. Here he began his history, which was finished about the year 420. Shenouda long outlived both John and Palladius,[1] and became an intimate friend and adviser of the Patriarch Cyril.[2]

Another celebrated character in quite a different district of Egypt was Isidore of Pelusium, which, as everyone knows, was the chief military stronghold on the north-east frontier.

His surroundings were very different from the simple peasantry and devoted monks who in the Thebaid worshipped Shenouda almost as if he were a god. He lived a hermit life in a rich and fashionable town, and spent most of his time in rebukes and denunciation of worldliness in high places. The enormous power which had fallen into the hands of the bishops, in consequence of

[1] The author of a very curious treatise on 'The Nations of India and the Brahmans' has been identified with Palladius, but the similarity of name seems to be the only ground for the identification. This Palladius set out on a journey to India to study the philosophy of that country, and persuaded the Bishop of Adulé, a port of the Red Sea, to go with him. They met with so many difficulties that at last they returned to Egypt, having spent but a very short time in India. Another man, a merchant in the Indian trade, had made the same attempt in company with a priest, but they never got farther than Taprobane (Ceylon), where they were taken prisoners, and lived for six years in slavery before they were able to escape.

[2] Akhmin gave birth to other great men, besides hermits, in this century. It was here that the Egyptian poet Cyrus was born, who was the friend of Eudocia, wife to the Emperor Theodosius II. Cyrus was given high civil appointments by the Emperor, and Evagrius says that he was appointed to the command of the forces in the West (North Africa); but he afterwards took holy orders, and was made Bishop of Cotyæum.

the weakness or wickedness of most of the Byzantine officials, was naturally a very great temptation, to which many succumbed. The process of deterioration on the part of the Egyptian nation was steadily going on. If a man were courageous, religious, ambitious, and patriotic, there was but one course open to him—to become a monk, that he might afterwards become an abbot or bishop; and the purer his motives and the more exalted his character, the more certain it was, in these circumstances, that he would leave no offspring behind him. Many of the bishops were already assuming the manners and dignity of kings in their respective districts; and though their rule was the best and the most greatly desired by the Egyptians, it was far from being altogether good for the Church. Isidore did not even approve of the beautiful churches which were being built all over the land. 'It was not for the sake of walls,' he writes, 'but for the sake of souls, that the King of Heaven came to visit us. Could I have chosen, I would rather have lived in Apostolic times, when church buildings were not thus adorned, but the Church was decked with grace, than in these days, when the buildings are ornamented with all kinds of marble, and the Church is bare and void of spiritual gifts.' The office of a bishop, he points out on another occasion, 'is a work, not a relaxation; a solicitude, not a luxury; a responsible ministration, not an irresponsible dominion; a fatherly supervision, not a tyrannical autocracy.' But he does allow that 'there are bishops who take pains to live up to the Apostolic standard; if you say very few, I do not deny it.' He complains of the inhospitality, 'the gluttony,' and 'pugnacity' of the monks. But in estimating his censures at their true worth, it is necessary to remember Isidore's

leading the way, went forth in a vast procession, chanting as they went, and gathering the whole population after them, to demand an interview with the Emperor. The immense crowd surrounded the palace, the monks still chanting; but their abbots shortly came out from the presence of the Emperor—who had good reason to dread a monastic army loose in the streets—and told the monks to go down to the church of Mocius, and wait there. Through the streets again went the barefooted regiments, still with measured chant, and lighting tapers as the evening darkened. Eventually Dalmatius came to them, and, mounting the pulpit of the church, publicly announced that the Emperor had given a favourable answer.

Instructions were, in fact, sent to Ephesus, and Nestorius was thus deposed by command of the Emperor (October 431) and a man called Maximian elected in his stead. Nestorius was at first sent back to his monastery near Antioch; but four years later John, bishop of that place, entreated that he might be sent where his personal influence could do no harm, and he was banished to the Great Oasis in the Thebaid—a populous, and at that time a prosperous, Christian community.

During most of this summer all three bishops—Nestorius, Cyril, and Memnon—having been deposed by rival meetings of the Council, were considered as being under arrest, and guards slept at the doors of their chambers. After the Council had accepted the Imperial decision against Nestorius, Cyril and his bishops were allowed to return home, in October 431.

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Among the partisans of Cyril on this occasion was the Abbot Eutyches, who, twenty years later, was himself to be excommunicated for heresy. Another ascetic whose spiritual power Cyril enlisted on his side was Dalmatius, once a soldier in the guards, now a solitary who had not quitted his cell for forty-eight years. His fame was great in the dominions of the Byzantine Pope, and Cyril was not slow to perceive what an effect on the popular imagination a demonstration in his favour on the part of the holy recluse would produce. He had bribed half the Byzantine Court so lavishly as to strain seriously the finances of the Egyptian Church, and now he played his grand stroke. On receiving his earnest appeal Dalmatius called together the monks of all the monasteries of Constantinople, with their abbots at their head, and, himself

leading the way, went forth in a vast procession, chanting as they went, and gathering the whole population after them, to demand an interview with the Emperor. The immense crowd surrounded the palace, the monks still chanting; but their abbots shortly came out from the presence of the Emperor—who had good reason to dread a monastic army loose in the streets—and told the monks to go down to the church of Mocius, and wait there. Through the streets again went the barefooted regiments, still with measured chant, and lighting tapers as the evening darkened. Eventually Dalmatius came to them, and, mounting the pulpit of the church, publicly announced that the Emperor had given a favourable answer.

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to this day. In his zeal against the heresy of Nestorius, Cyril went to the opposite extreme, and laid the foundation of what was called afterwards the Monophysite heresy.[1]

The Nestorians emigrated in great numbers to Persia and the adjacent countries, where almost all the native Christians still hold this form of religion. In other respects they maintained the primitive customs of the Church, and especially condemned in synod the practice of compulsory clerical celibacy. Nestorius himself never again left Egypt. He suffered much in an invasion of the Blemmyes, who overran the Oasis, destroyed its property, and took Nestorius among others prisoner. Being released by them, he reported himself to the governor of the Thebaid, and was immediately re-arrested. It is said that he finally died from the effects of the ill-treatment he had received, but the year of his death is not known; it must have taken place between the years 439 and 451.

Cyril himself died in the year 444, having ruled Egypt nearly thirty years. He was succeeded by his archdeacon, Dioscorus, a man as able, as energetic, and more unscrupulous than himself. So much stands out clear; but with regard to the moral character of Dioscorus, we have a body of absolutely opposing evidence, according to the religious party of the critic.

[1] This is always denied or explained away by the Greek and Roman Churches, but there seems little doubt that at one time of his life Cyril held the same views for which Dioscorus was afterwards condemned, declaring at the time that his faith and that of his predecessor Cyril were one and the same. Cyril said, writing in defence of his reconciliation with John of Antioch, 'While conceiving of the elements which constitute the One Son and Lord we say that two natures are united; *but after the union, since the separation into two is now removed, we believe that the nature of the Word is one*, as of One made man and incarnate.'

CHAPTER XXIV

RIVAL POPES

A.D. 444
M. 160

At the time of the accession of Dioscorus the relations between the three great ecclesiastical thrones of Alexandria,[1] Rome, and Byzantium were becoming yearly more strained. Pope Celestine had been succeeded in Rome by Leo the Great, a man bent on converting that 'primacy of honour' which had been accorded as a matter of courtesy, at the second General Council, to the Roman see, into a real supremacy over all the other Patriarchal sees. The Patriarch of Constantinople, though the Imperial see and second in rank of precedence according to the authority of the same General Council, had never been quite so powerful as the other two, and constantly appealed to one against the other. No Pope of Alexandria had ever been deposed by the joint action of Rome and Constantinople, and except Honorius (in the sixth, seventh, and eighth General Councils) no Roman Pope has ever been formally condemned for heresy; but several Patriarchs of Constantinople, including so celebrated a man as Chrysostom, had been deposed virtually, though not always openly, by the combined action of Rome and Alexandria, or

[1] It is curious to observe that in the Egyptian manuscripts of this period Alexandria is still called by its ancient Egyptian name. Both Cyril and Dioscorus are called 'of Rakotis'—not 'of Alexandria.'

Cyril's succession to the throne was not undisputed. The Archdeacon of Alexandria, whose name was Timotheus, was strongly supported, and it is to be feared that there was something very like actual fighting between the rival candidates before the matter was settled in favour of Cyril.

Cyril began his reign by a sharp persecution of the Novatians, who had become more powerful than he thought right, and had a bishop of their own in Egypt, called Theopemptus. Him Cyril deprived of all his property, as well as of the 'treasure' of his Church. But the early years of Cyril's government I shall pass over in as few lines as possible—not for lack of material, but because the story of those first few years has already been told, far better than I can tell it, in Kingsley's wonderful sketch of Cyril and Hypatia. If anyone who cares about Egypt has not read that book, let him do so forthwith, and he will get a much more vivid picture of the Alexandria of those days than any that I can draw for him. There are doubtless some minor inaccuracies (for instance, Kingsley seems really to have been under the impression that Scetis was on or near the Nile; and though Hypatia may have been quite as beautiful, she can hardly have been as young as she is there represented), but the bitter rivalry between Hypatia and Cyril, the weakness and effeminacy of the nominal governor Orestes, the torture of Hierax, the attempted massacre of the Christians by the Jews, the prompt way in which Cyril called out his army of monks and expelled the whole Jewish population of Alexandria in return—all this and more may be read in the pages of 'Hypatia.' Orestes wrote complaints to Constantinople, but no one ventured to

interfere with the despotic proceedings of the Egyptian Pope.

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Gospels were laid. Nestorius, coming to this room, and very probably not observing the significance of the book, removed it to take the reserved place. Shenouda sprang from his seat, and, picking up the Gospels, hurled them at Nestorius with bitter reviling. Surely an odd way of asserting the peculiar sanctity of the book! Nestorius asked who his discourteous assailant was, and, on being told, desired to know what he was doing in the synod, since he was no bishop, nor even an archimandrite, but only a monk.

'I am he,' replied the sturdy hermit, 'whom God hath sent to unmask thy wickedness and proclaim thy punishment'; and immediately—so says the chronicle of the Bishop of Nikius—Nestorius fell down in a fit in the midst of the assembly. Other writers do not speak of this fit, but all agree that Cyril at once proceeded to invest Shenouda with the dignity of archimandrite, that he might be qualified to remain in the council-room.

Among the partisans of Cyril on this occasion was the Abbot Eutyches, who, twenty years later, was himself to be excommunicated for heresy. Another ascetic whose spiritual power Cyril enlisted on his side was Dalmatius, once a soldier in the guards, now a solitary who had not quitted his cell for forty-eight years. His fame was great in the dominions of the Byzantine Pope, and Cyril was not slow to perceive what an effect on the popular imagination a demonstration in his favour on the part of the holy recluse would produce. He had bribed half the Byzantine Court so lavishly as to strain seriously the finances of the Egyptian Church, and now he played his grand stroke. On receiving his earnest appeal Dalmatius called together the monks of all the monasteries of Constantinople, with their abbots at their head, and, himself

leading the way, went forth in a vast procession, chanting as they went, and gathering the whole population after them, to demand an interview with the Emperor. The immense crowd surrounded the palace, the monks still chanting; but their abbots shortly came out from the presence of the Emperor—who had good reason to dread a monastic army loose in the streets—and told the monks to go down to the church of Mocius, and wait there. Through the streets again went the barefooted regiments, still with measured chant, and lighting tapers as the evening darkened. Eventually Dalmatius came to them, and, mounting the pulpit of the church, publicly announced that the Emperor had given a favourable answer.

Instructions were, in fact, sent to Ephesus, and Nestorius was thus deposed by command of the Emperor (October 431) and a man called Maximian elected in his stead. Nestorius was at first sent back to his monastery near Antioch; but four years later John, bishop of that place, entreated that he might be sent where his personal influence could do no harm, and he was banished to the Great Oasis in the Thebaid—a populous, and at that time a prosperous, Christian community.

During most of this summer all three bishops—Nestorius, Cyril, and Memnon—having been deposed by rival meetings of the Council, were considered as being under arrest, and guards slept at the doors of their chambers. After the Council had accepted the Imperial decision against Nestorius, Cyril and his bishops were allowed to return home, in October 431.

The controversy was by no means at an end, and for some years absorbed much of Cyril's attention. Nestorius had a strong party in the Byzantine Empire, which exists

to this day. In his zeal against the heresy of Nestorius, Cyril went to the opposite extreme, and laid the foundation of what was called afterwards the Monophysite heresy.[1]

The Nestorians emigrated in great numbers to Persia and the adjacent countries, where almost all the native Christians still hold this form of religion. In other respects they maintained the primitive customs of the Church, and especially condemned in synod the practice of compulsory clerical celibacy. Nestorius himself never again left Egypt. He suffered much in an invasion of the Blemmyes, who overran the Oasis, destroyed its property, and took Nestorius among others prisoner. Being released by them, he reported himself to the governor of the Thebaid, and was immediately re-arrested. It is said that he finally died from the effects of the ill-treatment he had received, but the year of his death is not known; it must have taken place between the years 439 and 451.

Cyril himself died in the year 444, having ruled Egypt nearly thirty years. He was succeeded by his archdeacon, Dioscorus, a man as able, as energetic, and more unscrupulous than himself. So much stands out clear; but with regard to the moral character of Dioscorus, we have a body of absolutely opposing evidence, according to the religious party of the critic.

[1] This is always denied or explained away by the Greek and Roman Churches, but there seems little doubt that at one time of his life Cyril held the same views for which Dioscorus was afterwards condemned, declaring at the time that his faith and that of his predecessor Cyril were one and the same. Cyril said, writing in defence of his reconciliation with John of Antioch, 'While conceiving of the elements which constitute the One Son and Lord we say that two natures are united; *but after the union, since the separation into two is now removed, we believe that the nature of the Word is one,* as of One made man and incarnate.'

CHAPTER XXIV

RIVAL POPES

D. 444
M. 160 AT the time of the accession of Dioscorus the relations between the three great ecclesiastical thrones of Alexandria,[1] Rome, and Byzantium were becoming yearly more strained. Pope Celestine had been succeeded in Rome by Leo the Great, a man bent on converting that 'primacy of honour' which had been accorded as a matter of courtesy, at the second General Council, to the Roman see, into a real supremacy over all the other Patriarchal sees. The Patriarch of Constantinople, though the Imperial see and second in rank of precedence according to the authority of the same General Council, had never been quite so powerful as the other two, and constantly appealed to one against the other. No Pope of Alexandria had ever been deposed by the joint action of Rome and Constantinople, and except Honorius (in the sixth, seventh, and eighth General Councils) no Roman Pope has ever been formally condemned for heresy; but several Patriarchs of Constantinople, including so celebrated a man as Chrysostom, had been deposed virtually, though not always openly, by the combined action of Rome and Alexandria, or

[1] It is curious to observe that in the Egyptian manuscripts of this period Alexandria is still called by its ancient Egyptian name. Both Cyril and Dioscorus are called 'of Rakotis'—not 'of Alexandria.'

by Alexandria alone. It is clear from Leo's letter to Dioscorus, in June 445, that he intended to take advantage of the fact that two comparatively unknown men had succeeded to the other Patriarchal sees to assume a right of interference; and it is easy to see that in the case of Dioscorus he entirely mistook his man.

In trying to get at the truth about Dioscorus through the clouds of calumny which so soon surrounded him, we find one thing clear, which certainly tells in his favour —all the worst charges against him date from *after* the time when he was accused of heresy, and are much the same as those brought against Athanasius and other great men in like circumstances, which we dismiss as absolutely untrue. Dioscorus had never the same opportunity of publicly clearing himself from these imputations as Athanasius, but there is no good ground for supposing that he could not have done so. Canon Venables describes Dioscorus as a 'violent, rapacious, unscrupulous, and scandalously immoral man.' This, it is true, is the language habitually held about him by the writers of the Churches which condemned him, and from whom most English Churchmen have gathered their opinions; but it is not borne out by any real evidence so far as the rapacity and immorality are concerned. Violence unfortunately was a characteristic of all theological disputants in those days; and he was certainly unscrupulous where the honour and dignity of his own country, or what he believed to be the truth in matters of religion, was at stake.

The most probable explanation of all that has been said about him on the score of immorality is that he had been secretly married, and concealed the fact, lest it should stand in the way of his ambition. This may certainly be

called immoral, but it implies no breach of the Seventh Commandment, nor was such ever proved against him. John of Nikius and all the other Egyptian historians speak of him with respect and affection. But a more important testimony in his favour is that of Theodoret of Cyrrhos, a man whom Dioscorus considered a heretic, and treated with violence and injustice accordingly, and who therefore cannot be accused of partiality for the Patriarch, though it may be suggested that he wished to propitiate him.

Theodoret, indeed, was one of the first men with whom Dioscorus quarrelled, accusing him of Nestorianism,[1] and treating Theodoret's own Patriarch (of Antioch) with but scant courtesy. It became evident both to Leo of Rome and Flavian of Constantinople that the new Pope of Alexandria was not inclined to abate the pretensions of his see in any way; and when by his espousal of the cause of Eutyches he gave them a handle against him, they were not slow to use it, though with not exactly the results they had hoped for.

Eutyches, an archimandrite of Constantinople, who had been one of the most zealous opponents of Nestorius, was accused in 448 of an opposite heresy. His

[1] How far this was from the truth may be seen from the following solemn declaration of Theodoret, which might have been written by the most pronounced Monophysite: 'Whoso denies the Holy Virgin to be Theotokos, or calls our Lord Jesus Christ mere man, or divides the one only begotten, the firstborn of every creature, into two Sons, may he be driven from all hope in Christ, and let all the people say Amen.' Dioscorus and his successors, if not Eutyches himself, would have expressed their faith in exactly the same words. Yet these men were ranged on opposite sides in the melancholy controversy which followed. In truth, the quarrel was not really a religious one, though it assumed that form, but a struggle for supremacy between Leo and Dioscorus.

prosecutor was Eusebius of Dorylæum, whose unprovoked attack upon an aged man who only asked to be left in peace in his cloister was very properly discouraged by Flavian. Eusebius, at a Council of bishops who were sitting in synod at Constantinople on November 8, presented a memorial against Eutyches, in which he characterised the poor old man as a 'frenzied blasphemer.' Flavian, after hearing the paper read, remarked that such an accusation against one so respected was simply astonishing. But Flavian, unlike the arrogant and overbearing Popes of Alexandria and Rome, had hardly firmness enough for his position. Against his better judgment and his personal recommendation, he yielded to the violence of Eusebius, and consented that Eutyches should be summoned before the Council, which was adjourned to the 12th. Eutyches did not appear, and the members of the Council busied themselves in declaring their own faith in the words of Flavian, carefully chosen to offend neither party: 'That Christ was perfect God and perfect man, consubstantial with the Father as to godhead, with Mary as to manhood; that from the two natures, united after the Incarnation in one Person, there resulted one Christ.' The only dissentient was Basil of Seleucia, who amended his conclusion as follows: 'I adore one Christ, acknowledged in *two* natures after the Incarnation.'

Then the Council adjourned to the 15th, by which time the messengers who had been sent to summon Eutyches returned, saying that he could not come, since he had vowed long ago never to leave his monastery. He objected to Eusebius as his personal enemy. For his faith he confessed that he believed Christ to be perfect man, but not that His flesh was consubstantial with ours,

nor could he speak of *two* natures after the union. A third summons at length dragged the old abbot from his cloister, and he was voluntarily attended by a crowd of officers, soldiers, and monks. By Imperial order a patrician was also sent to protect him.

Eutyches reiterated his assertion that he must abide by the authority of Cyril and Athanasius.[1] With them he acknowledged two natures in Christ before the union, but afterwards of one—perfect God and perfect man. He was, however, condemned, deposed, and excommunicated on the ground that it was heresy to speak of One nature *after* the union (or incarnation).

Eutyches appealed to the Popes both of Rome and Alexandria, and Dioscorus at once warmly espoused his cause. Before Leo of Rome could reply to the letter written to him by Eutyches, which was unaccountably delayed on the journey, he received information from the Emperor Theodosius II.—to whom Dioscorus had written —to say that the matter had been referred to a General Council, convened at Ephesus, over which he had appointed the Pope of Alexandria to preside.

This aroused the jealousy of the Roman Pope, and secured his lasting hostility to Dioscorus and his *protégé* Eutyches. He did indeed send legates to the Council and the doctrinal letter to Flavian which was afterwards known as the 'Tome of Leo,' but he did not go himself to Ephesus. Indeed, he afterwards stigmatised it as the Robbers' Council, in indignant condemnation of the methods employed by its promoters and the shocking

[1] The passage in Athanasius on which both Cyril and Eutyches relied has been rejected as spurious. Both these men, however, honestly believed that it was genuine.

violence of its scenes. It must be confessed, however, that others of the Councils of the Church have been accompanied by scenes of brutal violence, and this has not generally been held to invalidate their acts.

In one of the Coptic manuscripts of the Vatican there is a description, purporting to be taken down from the mouth of Dioscorus in his exile, of the voyage to Ephesus. It is in the form of a panegyric on Macarius, one of the Egyptian ascetics of that day, who was afterwards made bishop of a place called Tkoou. The holy man, it appears, was found at Alexandria with a solitary attendant, proposing to walk the whole way to the Council of Ephesus. The two ships which had been chartered for the conveyance of Dioscorus and his bishops were just starting; and the Imperial officer who had been sent to escort the party gently represented to the old man the impossibility of his undertaking, but he refused to go with the Imperial officer. 'I did not come here for repose,' said the old man sturdily. 'I will walk the whole way on my own feet.' And on further entreaty he said: 'God bless thee, my son. I have no money, not so much as half a piece.' 'If that is the case,' said the Imperial officer, 'you cannot come in the ship with me, but you can go in the other with the Patriarch.' And when the old man heard that he was accounted worthy to go up with the man of God he rejoiced greatly, but took his seat modestly in the back of the vessel. Then Dioscorus came to bring him forward and to welcome him, but found that the old hermit could speak nothing except the dialect of his distant province, so had to call an interpreter. And when one of his deacons sneered at the old man, asking what they were to do with an ignorant creature who could

not even speak to them, Dioscorus rebuked him sternly and made him ask the old man's forgiveness. But Macarius, not understanding why the deacon should fall at his feet and beg his pardon, hastened to raise him up and take all the blame to himself. 'In truth,' said Dioscorus, 'he shall have pardon from thee, or he shall be excommunicate.' Then Macarius said, 'God forgive thee thy sins, my son.'

The old man became an object of love and reverence to them all during the voyage, and Pinoution, his attendant, was eagerly questioned to know if his master could not work miracles, as it was reported that all these holy hermits could do. But Pinoution was disappointingly matter of fact, and the greatest wonder he could relate to them was the story of an expedition which Macarius had undertaken against a city and temple of the pagans because it was told him that they had stolen Christian children for sacrifice. He had started at once with but three men, whose courage failed them when they came in sight of the great temple with its propylon manned by the heathen with their swords and lances. They cried out forbidding the Christian priest to come farther, 'for what hast thou to do with us?'

'If I have nothing to do with you,' rejoined the undaunted Macarius, 'what had you to do with those Christian children whom you sacrificed to your idols?'

But they answered him and said, 'It is not true.'

'If it is not true,' answered Macarius, 'let me enter, that I may see your temple.'

And they said to him, 'Come.' But the two priests who had guided us were afraid; they would not enter. And as we entered, twenty men came at us to kill us; and we

were only four. They said to us, 'This day your lives have come to an end;' and they seized my Father (Macarius), and would have sacrificed him upon the altar.

Some, however, represented that the chief priest, whose name was Homer, must be called for the sacrifice, and there was a delay while he was sent for. 'And I,' said Pinoution, 'who was chained to my Father, said to him: "Will you not pray, my Father? For, behold! we are at the point of death." And he said, "Courage, my son; Christ will deliver us." And even as we spoke we heard the voice of Visa at the door.'

Visa, hearing that they were gone, had started to follow Macarius with eleven men. They broke open the door and rescued Macarius and his attendants, seized the chief priest Homer as he approached the temple, and burnt him alive with his gods. They destroyed every idol in the village, and struck such terror into the inhabitants that a great number of them received baptism!

The Alexandrian priests and bishops listened eagerly to these stories of very carnal warfare in those little-known districts of the south, and Macarius was more than ever a hero among them. Discussion of heresy was forgotten for the time, and the writer lingers reluctantly over the story of the peaceful voyage which bore them to a scene notorious to this day for its unseemly strife between the followers of Christ.

CHAPTER XXV

THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON

D. 449 A. 165 THE Council met in the church of St. Mary at Ephesus—the same which had witnessed the condemnation of Nestorius—on August 8, 449. Dioscorus presided, and though he caused that letter of Leo which his legates brought to be formally accepted by the Council, he made various excuses to prevent its being read aloud in the assembly. Most unfortunately, Theodosius had appointed a certain Syrian archimandrite named Barsumas to represent all the Eastern archimandrites in the Council. This man was, as all Eastern monks were fast becoming, an ignorant and bigoted fanatic, and was hotly prejudiced in favour of Eutyches. Barsumas came to the Council, not alone, but at the head of his monastic regiment—1,000 strong, it is stated. These encamped round the church, far outnumbering the Imperial guards, who were there presumably for the purpose of maintaining order.

At first the proceedings, though noisy, were fairly unanimous. Probably the only person who seriously desired the condemnation of Eutyches was his personal enemy, Eusebius. The Acts of the Council of Constantinople, which ended by condemning him, however, were read with acclamation and approval until they came to the amendment which Basil of Seleucia had appended on his own

account to Flavian's statement of the faith: 'I adore one Christ, acknowledged in *two* natures after the Incarnation.'

On these words being read, a furious storm broke out in the meeting. It degenerated into a mere shouting match, in which Dioscorus and his party came off victors. Basil was understood to deny or take back the obnoxious words. Juvenal of Jerusalem asked him if his words had been correctly reported, and he answered that he did not recollect. Finally, Dioscorus put the question 'Did the Council condemn Eutyches or no?' The prelates, speaking one after another, declared in his favour, and he was absolved and reinstated.[1]

If the matter had ended there, the heresy of Eutyches would probably have been speedily forgotten, and the whole after-course of events in Egypt would have been different. But Dioscorus, flushed with victory and ready to humiliate his rival, brought forward a sentence of deposition, not only against Eusebius, which would have been a serious mistake, but against Flavian himself, which struck horror and consternation into the whole assembly. The Roman legate shouted 'Contradicitur,' the Byzantine Patriarch simply remarked that he disclaimed the jurisdiction of the Council; but their protests were lost in the scene of uproar and confusion which followed.

Several of the bishops flung themselves at the feet of the president, imploring him to forbear. 'If he deserves

[1] There seems no ground for supposing that the bishops acquitted Eutyches 'against their consciences.' The terrorism was exercised later, concerning Flavian, where everyone felt that Dioscorus was wholly and inexcusably in the wrong.

rebuke,' cried one of them, 'rebuke him; but do not condemn a bishop for the sake of a presbyter.' Dioscorus rose from his throne, mounted a footstool, and by a gesture obtained a momentary hearing. 'Look you,' he cried, 'he that will not sign the sentence has to deal with me. If my tongue were to be cut out for it, I would say, "Depose Flavian." Are you making a sedition? Where are the Counts?'

At this point in the proceedings those outside, hearing the uproar from within, could no longer be restrained. They burst madly into the church, a confused mob of soldiers, monks, and *parabolani*; and there ensued that scene of riot which ended in actual fighting and earned for the second Council of Ephesus its sad notoriety for evil conduct. The monks of Barsumas were the ringleaders. Flavian was kicked, knocked down, and trampled on, while Barsumas himself called upon his followers to stab the helpless Patriarch. In terror of their lives, the assembled bishops agreed to everything required of them. They signed a blank paper, on which the sentence of deposition was afterwards to be written; the Roman legate only managed to escape from the church without doing so. Flavian died three days afterwards of the injuries he had received.

Dioscorus had triumphed, and returned to Egypt more powerful than ever, to Leo's bitter indignation. For a year the Pope of Alexandria reigned supreme in the East, while the Pope of Rome left no stone unturned in his efforts to crush his rival. He wrote to Theodosius, and declared that the Christian faith would be ruined unless the decision of the late Council were reversed. He wrote to Pulcheria, the sister of the Emperor, who was righteously

indignant at the deposition of Flavian. He wrote to Flavian, who had passed away from the Church militant to the Church at rest, and he wrote to Constantinople exhorting the Church there to disregard the decisions of the Council. He appealed to his own Emperor, Valentinian, and entreated him to write to Theodosius on behalf of Flavian, and to desire that a General Council might be held in Italy.

Valentinian wrote accordingly, but without effect. Theodosius wrote back that he adhered to his hereditary faith, that he considered the recent Council orthodox, and that Flavian had only received his due. Moreover, while Valentinian had written of Leo as the supreme Pope, Theodosius in his answer speaks of him pointedly as 'the most reverend *patriarch* and archbishop.' This correspondence took place early in the year 450, but in the July of that year Theodosius died.

It is a disputed question whether it was before or after the death of Theodosius II. that Dioscorus took the bold step of excommunicating Leo himself—'for trying to reverse the decision of a legitimate Council.' It seems more likely that he should have done this at the height of his triumph, just after the Emperor had made it evident that he intended to support the Alexandrian Pope, who at least was one of his own subjects, against the Roman Pope, who had not even taken the trouble to come in person to the Council, and had angered Theodosius by his pretensions to jurisdiction in the Eastern Empire. But some historians think that Dioscorus took this step when the bishops assembled at Nicea in 451. Not more than ten bishops are said to have signed the sentence, which makes it more probable that it was issued in Egypt, just

before the death of Theodosius changed the whole complexion of affairs.

Theodosius was succeeded by his sister Pulcheria, who at once chose a distinguished senator, Marcian, as her husband and colleague. Pulcheria had not only been attached to Flavian, but she saw more clearly than her brother the political aspect of the affair. Between the rival Popes she and her husband held an even course, not allowing any right of interference from the Western potentate, but aware that the growing power of the Egyptian Pope was the more immediate danger to the Eastern Empire, and threatened to lose them their most fertile province. Pulcheria herself took a real interest in the theological question, and both saw that an accusation of heresy was their surest weapon against the ascendency of Dioscorus. They began by compelling Anatolius,[1] whom Dioscorus had consecrated in the room of Flavian, to subscribe the 'Tome of Leo,' and to anathematise both Eutyches and Nestorius in formal Council. Marcian also intimated to Leo that he was perfectly willing to grant another Council, and that Leo was welcome to preside, if he chose to come himself to the East; but that, if such a journey should be inconvenient to him, Marcian would take charge of the whole matter.

Leo at once wrote (April 451) to urge on Marcian that the question before the Council should be, not whether Eutyches were wrong in faith, or Dioscorus had 'decided perversely'—since these points were already settled—but simply on what conditions pardon should be granted to those bishops who had yielded to Dioscorus at

[1] Anatolius, before his consecration as Patriarch, had been the *apocrisarius* (commissary of Dioscorus at Constantinople.

the recent Council. Marcian, however, would not hear of the Council being held in Italy, nor would he admit that the doctrinal question was decided. He desired all the bishops at once to assemble for a General Council at Nicea. On this Leo decided not to attend, but appointed four legates to represent him in the Council. It is said by some that they 'presided' in his name, and this is true in so far that they sat above the other Popes and bishops as representing Leo, and were considered the ecclesiastical presidents. Marcian appointed nineteen of the highest civil dignitaries to preside in his name over the Council.

The Council, however, did not meet at Nicea, though over five hundred of the bishops assembled there before, at the Emperor's command, they were desired to proceed to Chalcedon, as being more convenient to himself. On October 8, therefore, the proceedings were opened in the church of St. Euphemia at that place.[1]

The Roman legates began by demanding that Dioscorus should be told to withdraw from the Council. Being asked for a specific charge against him in support of their request, they at length said that he had 'presumed to hold a Council without leave of the Apostolic See.' The Imperial commissioners, however, did not take the same view, and Dioscorus was allowed to remain, though not in his usual place. The case for the prosecution was then opened by Eusebius of Dorylænum. Dioscorus answered with great self-command that the Council in question had been held by the Emperor's order, and asked that its Acts should be read. The arrival of Theodoret, however, caused such a tumult in the assembly that for some time

[1] Evagrius gives a description of the church of St. Euphemia and its beautiful surroundings.

no business could be proceeded with. As at Ephesus, the different parties lost all self-control and shouted bitter accusations against one another, without any attempt at argument or relevancy. The Council would probably have broken up in actual riot, like its predecessor, had it not been for the presence of the Imperial commissioners, who at length succeeded in restoring order, and gravely rebuked the assembly:—

'These outcries do not befit bishops, nor help either side. Allow everything to be done in due order. Let the Acts be read.'

The Acts were read accordingly, but the reading was constantly interrupted by violent outcries from either side. Dioscorus himself behaved well on this occasion. He refrained from joining in the unseemly clamour, and, when opportunity was given him, made a careful statement of his faith, disclaiming all notions of a 'confusion or commixture' of godhead or manhood in Christ.

He also said in self-defence: 'The reason why Flavian was condemned was plainly this, that he asserted two natures after the Incarnation. I have passages from the Fathers Athanasius, Gregory, and Cyril,[1] to the effect that after the Incarnation there were not two natures, but one incarnate nature of the Word. If I am to be expelled, the Fathers will be expelled with me. I am defending their doctrine; I do not deviate from them at all. I have not got these extracts carelessly; I have verified them.'

The Roman legates complained of the freedom of speech which Dioscorus was permitted, and asked if Flavian had been so treated at Ephesus.

[1] Both parties agreed in appealing to Cyril, whereas the fact was that Cyril, like the New Testament, could be quoted on either side.

'No,' answered the president, 'but *this* synod is being conducted according to the principles of justice.'

Evidence was then given as to the violence of Dioscorus at Ephesus. On *this* ground the commissioners proposed his deposition and that of five other bishops, including Juvenal of Jerusalem, who had conspicuously disgraced themselves by their behaviour at that Council. Shouts of applause greeted this proposition, but no formal voting was then taken. The 'Tome of Leo' was received by most of the assembled bishops with acclamation. Doubts were expressed, however, by some of them whether the statement of duality in Christ were not carried too far. One of them, Atticus of Nicopolis, requested more time for consideration of the Tome, and also objected to the suppression of Cyril's third letter to Nestorius. The commissioners therefore adjourned the Council, and appointed it to meet again in five days.

The Roman party, however, persuaded the Council to meet again in three days, in order that they might be free from the interference of the Imperial commissioners. As these were not present, Dioscorus refused to attend also, not acknowledging the legality of the meeting, and declaring that he had nothing more to say. In his absence, and unrestrained by the representatives of the law, every sort of reckless accusation was brought against Dioscorus, as in earlier days against Athanasius, and readily accepted by the Roman legates. By an overwhelming majority the deposition and excommunication of Dioscorus were carried. A formal notification was sent to him, to those of his Church with him at Chalcedon, to Marcian, to Pulcheria, to Valentinian, and to the dioceses of Constantinople and Chalcedon.

On October 17 the Council met again in full session, and in the course of its proceedings the Imperial commissioners complained that the deposition of the Egyptian Pope had been carried out in their absence and without the knowledge of the Emperor. The deposition of Dioscorus, though permitted to take effect, since it had been suggested in Session I. by the Imperial commissioners, was never formally sanctioned by the Council in full session. The five bishops whom the Court had proposed to include in the sentence were forgiven on condition that they should subscribe the 'Tome of Leo,' and were permitted to resume their places.

Thirteen Egyptian bishops were then summoned to the Council, and ordered to anathematise Eutyches and to subscribe the 'Tome of Leo.' With great reluctance they consented to the former; the latter, though with almost abject expressions of respect for the Council, they refused to do except by order of their own Pope. They declared that if they were to be guilty of such disloyalty to him they would certainly be murdered by the indignant Egyptians on their return to their own country. The Imperial commissioners interfered to protect them, and ordered that they should remain in Constantinople, and should not be required to subscribe anything until a new Patriarch of Alexandria had been elected.

The subsequent proceedings of the Council are well known, and do not need to be recapitulated, as the Egyptians, with whom we have to do, took no part in them.

By his overweening arrogance and violence Dioscorus had certainly brought his fate upon himself; but he

submitted with a certain dignity, worthy of a dethroned sovereign. He made no attempt to return to his own country, and lived quietly at Gangra, to which place he was banished. But the people of Egypt did not submit so easily, and the Church of Egypt to this day refuses to accept the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE VALUE OF A GREEK PREPOSITION

A.D. 451
A.M. 167

WHEN the news that their Pope had been deposed and excommunicated reached Egypt, the indignation of the nation knew no bounds. With one voice the inhabitants refused to acknowledge the decision of the Council. If their Pope was excommunicate, they were content to remain excommunicate with him; what he declared to be the true faith, that was enough for them, whatever a Byzantine Emperor or Roman Pope might decree. To them it was a question of national freedom, and the doctrinal question a mere difference of expression, except in so far as the formula which their own Pope had sanctioned became to them a national watchword. The line between the Byzantine residents in Egypt and the native Egyptians became more sharply marked than ever. Those who were proud of their pure Greek descent sided with the Byzantine Church, but the vast majority were still Egyptian in feeling as well as in blood. It became a point of honour, as a true patriot, to reject the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon.

The return of the four bishops who had been charged with the Imperial mandate for the election of a new Patriarch was the signal for a general outbreak. Dioscorus was their Patriarch, their ruler; so long as he lived they would acknowledge no other. Still, there was a powerful

Greek element in the Church, more particularly in Alexandria, and at length a candidate was agreed upon among the bishops whom it was hoped might be acceptable to all parties. This was Proterius, Archpriest of Alexandria, who had been appointed by Dioscorus himself to take charge of the Church in his absence, but who professed himself ready to accept the decision of the Council of Chalcedon and—on the further demand being made upon him by the Roman Pope[1]— the 'Tome of Leo.'

On the consent of the Egyptian bishops to consecrate Proterius the indignation of the people knew no bounds, and showed itself in a popular insurrection. In their eyes Proterius was a traitor, false alike to his country and his Church. The soldiers were called out to subdue the rising, but were fairly defeated, and driven to take refuge in the precincts of the deserted and ruinous Serapeum. In the

[1] That Pope was by no means entirely satisfied with the results of the Council of Chalcedon. He had succeeded in crushing his most formidable rival, it was true, but neither the Emperor nor the Council had yielded the claim which he had most at heart—the supremacy of the Roman Pope over all the Churches. So far from this, they had even, in spite of the protest of his legates, enacted a canon (28th) especially intended to safeguard the Eastern Church against such unfounded claims. Leo was not satisfied, either, with the wording of the decree which deposed Dioscorus, and although his legates had been permitted to prefix to it the words 'The archbishop of the great and elder Rome, through us and through the holy synod now present,' he changed this, before issuing it to his own bishops, into a form which spoke of himself as the 'head of the universal Church,' condemning Dioscorus 'by us his vicars with the consent of the synod.' Nor did he find either of the new Patriarchs—Anatolius of Constantinople or Proterius of Alexandria—so amenable as he had hoped. Indeed, the latter, on Leo's questioning the accuracy of his decision, soon after his accession, about the time of Easter, gave the Roman Pope clearly to understand that the Paschal cycle of the Egyptian Church, 'the mother of such laborious investigations,' was unquestionably accurate, and that Egypt and the East would keep Easter in conformity with it in the coming year (455).

tumult the place caught fire or was fired, and the unhappy soldiers were burnt to death.

Florus, the Byzantine prefect and commander-in-chief, took prompt measures of reprisal. He stopped the public dole of bread and closed the baths and all public exhibitions, besides sending for reinforcements to Constantinople. The Emperor at once despatched 2,000 men, who made the passage in six days. But they were new recruits for the most part, and by their insubordination and licentious conduct they only intensified the evils they had come to suppress. Florus and the people were compelled to come to terms with each other. A mass meeting was held in the hippodrome, at which Florus promised to cancel his restrictive measures, and an outward show of peace was restored. But the Egyptians would never recognise 'the Emperor's bishop,' as he was called; nor did Proterius ever consider himself safe without a military guard. The clergy also were for the most part in opposition to the intruded Patriarch, and only fourteen of the bishops stood by him. One of the priestly circle even in Alexandria, where his adherents were most numerous, refused to communicate with Proterius, on the ground that he omitted the name of Dioscorus from the diptychs and commemorated the Council of Chalcedon. This man was Timothy, afterwards nicknamed Ælurus.[1] He was excommunicated, together with his deacon Peter (Mongus), and banished to Libya with four or five bishops and some Alexandrian monks who refused to acknowledge the new Patriarch while Dioscorus was yet alive.

In 454 Dioscorus died, but the Egyptians, though still refusing to acknowledge Proterius, did not venture to elect

[1] *I.e.* the cat. The origin of this nickname is matter of conjecture.

his successor till three years later, when the Emperor Marcian died also. On the news of this, Timothy Ælurus returned to Alexandria, and was consecrated by those bishops who had consistently refused to acknowledge Proterius. It is stated that Timothy played the ghost at night outside the cells of monks, and resorted to unworthy stratagems in order to secure his own election; also that he was irregularly consecrated. The first statement is probably true; the second is equally true both of Proterius and Timothy, since in neither case were the conditions required by the Egyptian Church for the election and consecration of their Patriarch fulfilled. The duke or Imperial officer of the province was absent from Alexandria at the time, but on his return he unwisely took upon himself to expel Timothy from Alexandria. This was the signal for a fresh popular outbreak, which directed itself against the unfortunate Proterius. A frantic mob rushed to his house, but he succeeded in escaping into the neighbouring church of Quirinus. For some time they surged and howled round the church, waiting for him to appear; then their fury could restrain itself no longer, and they poured into the sacred building. Proterius and some of his clergy retreated inside the narthex or baptistery, but they were instantly pursued and slain. Six of the priests lost their lives in defending him. Then the mob dragged the body with wild cries through the town, where it suffered terrible indignities from the frantic populace, and was finally burnt—the third of those fanatical murders which disgrace the record of Alexandria: George the Arian, Hypatia the pagan, and now Proterius the Greek.

Timothy was absent from the city at the time, and had nothing to do with this shocking murder, but, like his far

greater predecessor Cyril and for the same reasons, he was powerless to punish the murderers. On his return he visited his displeasure on those of the clergy and bishops who had given their adherence to Proterius; formally declared that the Egyptian Church renounced communion with those of Rome, Constantinople, and Antioch; and did all he could to widen the schism instead of healing it.

The fourteen bishops who now found themselves in their turn deposed and excommunicated presented petitions to the Emperor and the Patriarch of Constantinople. Timothy also sent a petition on his side by a deputation of bishops and clergy, of which only a fragment remains, so that the only contemporaneous accounts we have of these proceedings are all written by the Chalcedonians, as the adherents of this Council and Proterius were called in Egypt.[1]

The new Emperor, Leo, puzzled by the conflicting appeals which reached him from Alexandria, from the Pope of Rome, from his own Patriarch, and from a strong party in Constantinople who objected to the Chalcedonian decrees, wrote to all the Metropolitans throughout the world, commanding them to assemble their provincial Councils and send him their synodical opinion whether the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon must be upheld, and whether the election of Timothy Ælurus was to be accepted. Only two bishops (according to John of Nikius) ventured to

[1] John of Nikius, who lived in the seventh century, says that Timothy's life had been spent piously as a monk in the convent of Kalamoun (in the Fayoum) until he was made one of the presbyters of Alexandria, and then, after the death of Dioscorus, his successor. He invariably speaks of Timothy with great respect, and regards him as contending for the true faith against the Chalcedonians, 'who troubled the whole world.'

stand up for Timothy, or to advise against the acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon. Some of the bishops guarded themselves, in the case of Timothy, by stating that his election was only to be considered null and void, 'if the statements of his enemies were true;' but most indulged in unmeasured abuse of the Alexandrian Pope.

The Emperor, however, seems to have thought it his best policy to let the Egyptians alone; and the whole controversy would probably have died a natural death, if the persistent intrigues of the Roman Pope had not at length persuaded the Emperor, in 460, to send orders to Stilas, the military commander at Alexandria, to expel Timothy from Alexandria and preside over the election of an orthodox Patriarch.

Timothy, who appears to have thought that 'Paris was well worth a mass,' and who evidently considered the point in question important only from a political and not a religious standpoint,[1] professed himself ready to give in his adherence to the Council of Chalcedon if desired; but Pope Leo prevailed with the Emperor Leo not to accept his submission, and Timothy Ælurus was accordingly banished to Gangra and afterwards to the Chersonese.

Another Timothy was consecrated in his place, who is distinguished by the surnames of Surus or Salofaciolus. This man, unlike his namesake, was evidently a Christian first and a patriot afterwards, and the beauty of his character won for him the respect and admiration of all parties. For sixteen years he ruled Egypt in peace,

[1] This is evident from the fact that at a time when his party was triumphant he spoke in the same strain to a body of Eutychian monks who were anxious to obtain his sanction for their extreme views, telling them that, like Dioscorus, he stood by the faith of Cyril, and believed our Saviour to be consubstantial according to the flesh.

showing kindness and justice to all parties alike; and, to his honour be it spoken, at the risk of offending both the Leos, he reinserted the name of Dioscorus in the Church diptychs—an act the significance of which can hardly be appreciated except by one familiar with all the ecclesiastical struggles of this unhappy fifth century.

Even those extreme partisans who refused to acknowledge 'the Emperor's bishop' greeted him with plaudits in the streets, saying, 'Even if we do not communicate with thee, yet we love thee;' and he showed his real wisdom by politely but consistently disregarding all recommendations on the part of the Emperor to greater strictness with heretics. Perhaps it might have been more difficult for him to preserve peace and charity in his kingdom if the Roman Pope, Leo, had not died almost immediately after writing to congratulate Timothy Surus on his election. He was succeeded by Hilary, who had enough to do in his own dominions, without carrying out that policy of systematic interference with the concerns of the Eastern Patriarchates which detracts from the otherwise deservedly great reputation of Leo I.

In 471 the Patriarch of Constantinople died, and was succeeded by Acacius; and in 474 the Emperor died, and was succeeded by Zeno, who, however, the next year fled for his life from Basiliscus, who assumed the purple.

Basiliscus was known to favour the Eutychian party, and an embassy from Alexandria was at once sent to beg that their rightful Patriarch, Timothy Ælurus, should be restored to them. To this the usurping Emperor at once consented, and with the true Christianity which shines out in every action of the other Timothy's life he at once retired to his monastery near Canopus. Timothy

Ælurus therefore returned in peace; but, instead of learning from the example of his namesake, his first proceeding was to persuade the Emperor to issue a circular letter condemning the Council of Chalcedon, and to require its subscription by all Patriarchs and bishops. Acacius of Constantinople refused, whereupon a Council was held at Ephesus in 477, at which Acacius was (nominally) deposed. Timothy Ælurus's triumph, however, did not last long. In 477 Zeno regained possession of his throne, and only the Christian forbearance of one Timothy and the extreme old age of the other saved the latter from a fresh banishment. In fact, Timothy Ælurus died in the same year. Timothy Salofaciolus,[1] hearing that the extreme party intended to oppose his return to Alexandria, thought it better to remain in his monastery; and Peter Mongus, who had been the constant friend and companion of Timothy Ælurus, was chosen Patriarch in his place. There are the same conflicting statements by the different parties about the manner of his election; and it seems clear that the majority of the bishops took no part in it, though, on the other hand, there seems no reason to believe, as Neale does, that only one bishop was present at the ceremony.[2] Most of them probably feared the Emperor, who had intended himself to nominate the Egyptian Patriarch, though such a proceeding was against all the laws and customs of that Church. Their fears were justified; for as soon as Zeno heard of the consecration, he

[1] From a Coptic and Latin word meaning 'wearer of white headgear.'

[2] The number of Egyptian bishops who accepted the Council of Chalcedon, and constituted the hierarchy of the future Byzantine Church in Egypt, was only fourteen. The total number of Egyptian bishops at that time was over 100.

issued a decree for Peter's banishment. Peter, however, does not appear to have left the country, but to have remained concealed in Alexandria during the five following years of peace which Egypt enjoyed under the gentle Timothy Salofaciolus.

It was the great desire of Timothy, and of all good Egyptian Christians and patriots, that some arrangement should be come to on his death which might put an end to the scandal of rival Popes or Patriarchs existing at the same time in Egypt. A special embassy was therefore sent to the Emperor from Alexandria, entreating that the election of the next Patriarch might be left, as from time immemorial, to the Egyptians themselves, and undertaking, on their part, that the man chosen should accept the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon. The man at the head of this embassy was John Talaia (probably so-called from a village of that name in Egypt), who had been the constant companion of Timothy Salofaciolus, and was also a great friend of Illus, a Byzantine official. This last connection, however, on which the Alexandrians doubtless relied, was in fact a disadvantage to him, for Illus had already fallen under suspicion at the Court, though he was not publicly disgraced till later. According to contemporary historians, the Emperor had good reason to believe that John himself hoped to be chosen Patriarch of Alexandria, and did not consider him a safe man for such a position. He therefore granted the petition of the Alexandrians, but first made John take an oath that he would never himself aspire to the see of Alexandria. This oath John broke, and thus the chance of a peaceful solution to the difficulties of the Church on the death of Timothy Salofaciolus in 482 was lost. John Talaia was

chosen Patriarch and accepted the nomination. This in itself was sufficient to exasperate the Emperor, and John's next proceeding rendered a breach inevitable. He wrote the usual synodical letters to the chief bishops of Christendom to announce his succession; but while his letter to Pope Simplicius of Rome was sent direct, the letters for the Emperor and for Acacius of Constantinople were sent under cover to his friend Illus, with (it is suggested) bribes to be employed in securing his purpose. But Illus, already in disgrace, was at Antioch; therefore the version which reached the Emperor was that John had not only seized upon the Patriarchal throne in defiance of his oath, but that he had written to put himself under the protection of the Pope of Rome, and had not even paid his sovereign or the Patriarch of Constantinople the ordinary compliment of writing to them. Not unnaturally indignant, Zeno wrote to Simplicius to warn him that John would not be recognised as Patriarch of Alexandria, and that it was proposed to make peace by accepting Peter Mongus, whom the Egyptian party desired, on his giving satisfactory assurances of orthodoxy. Simplicius wrote back much in the style of Pope Leo, assuming a right of interference, and saying that, though he was ready to suspend his judgment about John, he could not possibly accept Peter.

This only irritated Zeno and Acacius still further, and the Emperor immediately sent orders to Alexandria that Peter Mongus should be enthroned, on condition that he subscribed a document sent for that purpose by Pergamus, the new Procurator of Egypt. This celebrated document was in the form of a letter addressed by the Emperor, with the sanction of the Byzantine Patriarch—by whom,

indeed, some say it was dictated—'to the most reverend bishops and clergy, and to the monks and laity throughout Alexandria, Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis.' It is called the Henoticon, or instrument of Union, and was carefully drawn up to reconcile all parties of the Church. It would probably have succeeded in doing so, had it not been for the strenuous opposition of Simplicius and his successor, who objected to the fact that it ignored the Council of Chalcedon. These Popes succeeded, not only in perpetuating the schism at Alexandria, but in creating another, between East and West, which lasted for nearly forty years. The character of Peter Mongus also, who readily accepted the Henoticon and read it publicly in church, did not help the cause of true Christianity. Making all allowance for the bitter calumnies of his party opponents, and putting aside as without good evidence all the worst charges against him, it seems clear that he was an able and unscrupulous man, who was chiefly bent on retaining his throne. Though not himself exaggerating the point at issue, and therefore being justified in his readiness to agree with everybody, the inexcusable action clearly proved against him is that, holding such opinions, he did certainly oppress and exile some of the Egyptian bishops and monks who held to the Chalcedonian faith, as it was called in Egypt, in order to force upon their acceptance the Emperor's Henoticon. John Talaia never returned to Egypt, though he made an attempt to appeal to Zeno's successor, Anastasius, whom he had known in Egypt. Fortunately for the peace of Egypt, Anastasius would not listen to him, but exerted his influence to get him made Bishop of Nola, in Campania, where he lived quietly for many years.

Peter Mongus only occupied the Patriarchal throne eight years, and died in October 490. Acacius had died in 489, Zeno died in April 491, and Felix of Rome, who had broken off all communion with the Eastern Churches, in February 492. Thus the way was left clear for a new century to begin, under happier auspices, by the death of all those who had taken part in the last and saddest of the many sad controversies which disgraced the record of the Church in the fifth century, and left her no longer one. Perhaps the best comment on the point of doctrine, which was made the excuse for so much political strife and jealousy, is that written by Evagrius, himself an orthodox member of the Byzantine Church, who regards the controversy as a suggestion of the devil to sow discord in the Christian Church, and says of the difference between ἐν and ἐκ (*in* or *of* two natures) :—

Such was the device of the envious and God-hating demon in the change of a single letter, that, while in reality the one expression was completely inductive of the notion of the other, still with the generality the discrepancy between them was held to be considerable, and the ideas conveyed by them to be clearly in diametric opposition, and exclusive of each other; whereas he who confesses Christ in two natures clearly affirms Him to be from two, inasmuch as by confessing Christ at once in godhead and manhood he asserts His consistence from godhead and manhood; and, on the other hand, the position of one who affirms His origin from two natures is completely inclusive of His existence in two, inasmuch as he who affirms Christ to be from godhead and manhood, confesses His existence in godhead and manhood, since there is no conversion of the flesh into godhead, nor a transition of the godhead into flesh, from which substances arise the ineffable union. So that in this case by the expression, 'from two natures,' is aptly suggested the thought of the expression 'in

two,' and conversely; nor can there be a severance of the terms, this being an instance where a representation of the whole is afforded, not merely by its origin from component parts, but, as a further and distinct means, by its existence in them. Yet, nevertheless, persons have so taken up the idea of the marked distinction of the terms, either from a habit of thought respecting the glory of God, or by the inclination forestalling the judgment, as to be reckless of death in any shape, rather than acknowledge the real state of the case; and hence arose the occurrences which I have described.

From that time to this the Byzantine—or, as we now call it, the Greek—Church has occupied much the same position in Egypt as the Church of Rome did in the last century, if not to this day, in England. It was an alien Church, less divided by doctrine from the National Church, but with the far deeper gulf between them of different nationality and different hopes. The Greek Patriarchs of Alexandria were at first imposed on that Church in Egypt by the arbitrary nomination of the Emperor; if left to themselves, the Egyptians generally abstained from electing one at all, as for sixty years between 482–589, and for more than seventy years after the Moslem conquest. The numerical strength of this Church at the present time in Egypt is about 6,000; whereas the National Church still numbers about a tenth of the whole population among her adherents.

CHAPTER XXVII

A REIGN OF PEACE

A.D. 491
A.M. 201

THE new Emperor, Anastasius, who succeeded Zeno and married his widow Ariadne, was well acquainted with Egypt, where indeed he had been exiled by the late Emperor. He had lived in the district of Menouf,[1] where he made many friends. On one occasion some of the principal inhabitants of the towns of Menouf and Hezena [2] proposed to Anastasius that it might help his cause to make a pilgrimage to a certain hermit, Jeremiah, who lived in the district and was widely reverenced. Accordingly a deputation went with Anastasius to implore the blessing and prayers of the holy man. Father Jeremiah listened to all they said, and blessed them in departing; but he spoke no special word to Anastasius; and after they had left the presence of the hermit, his friends found Anastasius greatly concerned at this slight, and full of forebodings that the man of God, seeing into his heart, had deemed him unworthy to receive a blessing. His Egyptian friends endeavoured to console him; and some of them, turning back, went again to Father Jeremiah, and told him that Anastasius, for whom they had specially desired

[1] Professor Amelineau inclines to think that by Menouf is here signified Memphis. But the narrative in John of Nikius would fit better with the present town of Menouf.

[2] This name has not been identified.

his favour, was very unhappy. Father Jeremiah desired them to recall Anastasius to his presence, and taking him aside with Amonius of Hezena, and one or two of those who were in his confidence, declared that the only reason why he had abstained from giving Anastasius an old man's blessing was because he had seen in a vision the hand of God laid in blessing upon the head of Anastasius. 'God Himself,' added the hermit solemnly, 'has chosen thee from among millions to be His anointed. Thou shalt be His lieutenant upon earth, for the protection of His people. Only, when my prophecy is realised and my words come back to thee, do thou fulfil also the command that I lay upon thee this day: Commit no sin; undertake nothing against the religion of Jesus Christ; and acknowledge not the faith of Chalcedon, which offends God.'

Afterwards, when Anastasius became emperor, he sent to beg that some of the disciples of Father Jeremiah would come and visit him. Among those who accepted the invitation was Father Varydnos, who was a relation of Father Jeremiah; but, much to the disappointment of the Emperor, they came under a prohibition from their Superior to accept anything, except some incense and any sacred offering the Emperor chose to make for the Church. However, Anastasius built in the place of his exile a magnificent church, where formerly had been but a small one, dedicated to Saint Irai.[1] He sent also the sacred vessels for it of gold and silver, and precious stuffs for the service of the church. He sent large presents to his Egyptian friends, and made some of them magistrates. He also, according to John of Nikius, built many other things for the good of Egypt; among them, a citadel on the shore

[1] A female saint (Iras).

of the Red Sea. He restored the celebrated lighthouse at Alexandria, which was almost in ruins.

Indeed, no Byzantine emperor had ever been so popular in Egypt, and they were equally happy in their new Patriarch, who bore the honoured name of Athanasius, and had been unanimously elected in the orthodox manner on the death of Peter Mongus. Both the Emperor and the Egyptian Patriarch did their best to restore peace and charity to the distracted East. Anastasius desired that the whole controversy should be buried in oblivion, and that in each diocese the people should use what formulæ their bishop approved, so long as those bishops refrained from condemning and persecuting those who did not agree with them. Evagrius says that: 'In consideration of these circumstances' (the perpetual differences among the bishops, and their refusals to admit one another to communion) 'the Emperor Anastasius removed those bishops who were promoters of change wherever he detected anyone *either proclaiming or anathematising the synod of Chalcedon in opposition to the practice of the neighbourhood.* Only the Popes of Rome remained stubbornly intolerant, and refused to re-enter communion with the Churches of the East on any other terms than the explicit acknowledgment of the decisions of Chalcedon, and the anathematising of Nestorius, Eutyches, Dioscorus, Peter Mongus, and Acacius, equally by name. The other four great sees—Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Jerusalem—were now in communion with each other, though not with Rome.

Even the pagans of Alexandria shared the blessings of the new reign of peace. Hierocles, who earlier in the century had been oppressed and publicly scourged in Con-

stantinople—it is said, on account of his opinions—now lived the rest of his days in peace in his native city. He was one of those philosophers who strove to reconcile the old and the new, to read the higher meanings once more into the old Egyptian beliefs, and to reconcile them with the teaching of the new morality. Some of his writings still remain to us, and are worth studying. The other writers in Egypt at this time are of little importance. Some have thought that Aetius, a celebrated Egyptian physician,[1] flourished at this time, but the latest authorities put him a whole century earlier. The record of his adventurous life—whether as pagan, Christian, or heretic—is not very creditable; but he has left a lengthy work which gives an interesting account of the state of Egyptian medical science in his time. Aetius is a great believer in the virtue of Nile water, and not wholly sceptical about the merits of a green jasper set in a ring.

Athanasius only held the Patriarchate seven years, but his successor John (Hemula) was a man of the same charity and wisdom, and the country continued in peace. In other parts of the empire there were disturbances and trouble; the Emperor himself was mobbed in Constantinople at one time, and only quieted the populace by a threat of immediate abdication—but, for the greater part of the reign of Anastasius, Egypt was free from war or tumult. There was, indeed, a curious outbreak of disease, which is described as a madness seizing upon people of all ages and sex, causing them to run about barking like dogs, and to lose the use of human speech. Whether this was due to hydrophobia—a disease supposed to be unknown till lately

[1] Aetius was born at Antioch, but lived mostly at Alexandria. He was an extreme Arian.

in Egypt—or some curious form of contagious hysteria, cannot now be determined.

To John succeeded another John, called, from his birthplace, John Nikiota (of Nikius). He had lived a hermit's life for some years in or near the monastery of El Far, which was in the district of Belbeis. In his Patriarchate began the interchange of synodical letters between Alexandria and Antioch which has lasted till the present day. The Patriarch of Antioch was Severus, whose name is held in high honour by all the Monophysites, as those who rejected the Council of Chalcedon were called. Severus had lived in Alexandria before he was appointed by Anastasius to Antioch. The Emperor must afterwards have bitterly regretted this, as Severus proved himself one of those to whom toleration was impossible, and persecuted those who would not accept the Henoticon.

In Abyssinia also the Church remained faithful to Egypt, rejecting with her the Council of Chalcedon and the intruding Patriarchs which the Byzantine emperors endeavoured to force upon her. The Metropolitan of Abyssinia always came for consecration to the Egyptian Patriarch, and refused to acknowledge any other.

About 501 Egypt suffered from an invasion of Persian troops, who overran the Delta up to the very walls of Alexandria. The Byzantine troops defeated them in several battles, and finally drove them out of the country, but meanwhile the whole harvest of the year had been destroyed and the people suffered greatly from famine. A Christian Jew of Alexandria began a public distribution of food to the starving poor of Alexandria, but on Easter Sunday the press of the multitude round the appointed

church to receive his alms was so great that it is said no less than three hundred persons were squeezed to death in the crowd.

Egypt furnished in this reign one of the poets whose epigrams are contained in the fifth book of the Greek Anthology, published soon after at Constantinople. His name was Christodorus, and he was a native of Thebes. The scribes were still hard at work on their labour of copying and illuminating the manuscripts for which all the world still sent to Egypt. A copy of the work of Dioscorides on plants, which is still preserved in the library at Vienna, was made for one of the Byzantine princesses in this reign, and is beautifully illustrated. In the same library there is a copy of the Book of Genesis, written in Egypt about this date, which has no less than eighty-eight small paintings of historical subjects.

When John Nikiota died, the Emperor desired Dioscorus, a cousin of Timothy Ælurus, to be elected. But though Dioscorus himself was acceptable to the people, they bitterly resented the attempt of the Emperor to dictate to them in the matter of their Patriarch, and the popular feeling ran so high that Dioscorus pacified them by disregarding the Emperor's nomination and submitting himself to be properly elected—or rejected—by the canonical authorities. They were too wise not to accept him at once, and all the canonical ceremonies were duly complied with in the church of St. Mark, after which he went in solemn procession through the streets, and celebrated the Holy Communion in the church of St. John. But the baser sort of the Alexandrians, having been once roused, were not so easily quieted, and the rioting went on fitfully the whole day, till by an unhappy chance

Theodosius, the son of a Byzantine official of high rank, was killed. The murderer was promptly punished by the Alexandrian authorities; but when the day's proceedings came to the Emperor's ears he was so much offended that, fearing what might follow, the Alexandrians entreated their new Patriarch to go and plead for them at Constantinople. This he did, and succeeded in gaining a free pardon for the city. It is honourably recorded of him that, though the Chalcedonian party of Byzantium insulted him in the streets, he behaved with perfect good-temper all through his visit, and abstained from saying anything which could raise fresh troubles.

Unfortunately he died very soon after the Emperor Anastasius, just when his wisdom and charity were most wanted in his own city. For Justin, who succeeded Anastasius, was an illiterate soldier of Slav origin, and by no means inclined to follow the wise and tolerant policy of Anastasius. He was himself a supporter of the Council of Chalcedon, and as Severus was the most zealous of the Patriarchs against it, he gave orders for his arrest, also, as some say, that his tongue should be cut out. Severus escaped to Alexandria, where he did a great deal of harm in stirring up religious strife, and would have done more if it had not been that Timothy III., the successor of Dioscorus II., refused to break off communion with either party in the Church, though his personal convictions were, like those of Severus, against the Council of Chalcedon.

On the whole, however, Egypt remained at peace through the short reign of Justin I. and until Justinian, having spent the first few years of his reign in establishing his kingdom in the West as well as in the East, and in the

negotiations which led to the reconciliation of the Greek and Roman Churches, turned his attention to the Egyptian heretics, for he was a firm supporter of the Council of Chalcedon. He sent a peremptory summons to the Patriarch of Egypt to appear before him, and Timothy was preparing to obey when he fell ill and died.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

JUSTINIAN came to the throne in 527, but, so far as can be ascertained, he did not concern himself much with Egyptian affairs for some years. Though he himself supported the Council of Chalcedon, his wife Theodora held the Egyptian form of belief, so that he was not inclined to push matters to extremity on either hand. The only exception to the continued peace in Egypt during the reign of Timothy III. is one concerning which all the writers who speak of it are hopelessly at variance. It seems clear that on one occasion Justinian did send a man named Apollinaris with troops to enforce compliance, on the part of the Egyptians, to the Imperial faith, which occasioned much blood-shedding and had no effect at all in securing the adherence of the Egyptians. It is also clear that in the year 550 he appointed a Patriarch of Alexandria named Apollinaris. But whether these two were the same, whether the scandalous scenes which are reported by all as having taken place on the entry of Apollinaris refer to the events of Timothy's Patriarchate or to the year 550, or whether they refer to a prefect and not at all to a Patriarch of that name, it seems impossible now to decide. John of Nikius, in the extremely imperfect translation in which we possess his chronicle, cannot be

quoted as an authority on disputed points, but in this case there is one strong reason for accepting his version of the affair—that it is entirely against his own prejudices. He was a strong Monophysite partisan, and if the disgraceful scenes which are described really took place on the entry of an Imperial and Chalcedonian Patriarch he would have been only too ready to say so. Instead of this, he speaks of the affair as a purely military attempt on the part of the Emperor to enforce the decrees of Chalcedon on Alexandria, and says that the Patriarch Timothy sent a deputation of monks and hermits to entreat Justinian to rescind the order for a general massacre, and to permit his subjects to live peaceably in the faith of their fathers. The deputation, through the intercession of the Empress Theodora, was successful, and Justinian sent an order to his army to withdraw from Alexandria into the North African provinces. Later on, John of Nikius speaks of the Patriarch Apollinaris, Chalcedonian and Imperialist though he was, as a man gentle and pious, living in harmony with both parties, and says that he had been a reader in the convent of Salama at Alexandria.

It seems probable, therefore, that no attempt was made by Justinian to intrude a Byzantine Patriarch on the Egyptians till after the death of Timothy; and we have some grounds for supposing that he might have refrained even then, had the Egyptians been able to agree among themselves. But, on the death of Timothy, a fresh schism broke out in the Church between two parties, of which the one asserted that the body of Jesus was consubstantial with us according to the flesh, and therefore, like ours, corruptible; the other that it was incorruptible—an appearance, as some said, and not a reality. The bulk

of the people desired Theodosius, who belonged to the former party and had been the principal secretary of Timothy III.; but the other party desired a man called Gainas.

A custom had grown up in the Egyptian Church that the nominated successor should watch all night by the dead body of a deceased Patriarch. Theodosius was keeping this vigil when a tumultuous mob burst into the church with Gainas. Theodosius, in fear of his life, escaped out of the city, and Gainas, for two or three days, seemed likely to be accepted as Patriarch. But Justinian was prompt to seize the opportunity for interference; and as soon as possible his officers appeared in Alexandria, and Theodosius was recalled and established in the Patriarchate. This did not recommend him to the Egyptians, however, and he had a hard matter to maintain order in the city and kingdom, or to persuade his people that the assistance he had accepted from the Emperor did not signify his acknowledgment of Imperial rights of interference or agreement with the Emperor's faith. The Emperor himself appears to have shared the popular impression, and not long afterwards he called on Theodosius to give public adherence to the Chalcedonian faith. Large bribes of privilege and power indeed were offered him on the occasion, which he refused indignantly.

Justinian, finding Theodosius impracticable, looked about him for some more suitable tool, and the intrigues of the Roman legate influenced him to choose a man named Paul, who was not even a native of Egypt.[1] Without even a pretence of consulting the Egyptians, Justinian

[1] Unless we accept the statement of Makrizi, who, instead of Tarsus, calls him of *Tunis*.

had him consecrated Patriarch of Alexandria, and sent him to that city under a strong military guard. This was in the year 541, nearly sixty years after the banishment of John Talaia, the last Melkite Patriarch. Paul's Patriarchate, as far as the Egyptians were concerned, was a dead letter. No one would acknowledge or communicate with him; he was nicknamed the New Judas; and Theodosius, from his place of exile, was obeyed as the true Patriarch. As Paul, by the aid of his troops, kept possession of the great church of the Cæsareum and several other of the principal churches, the Egyptians built some for themselves, particularly the Angelium, which was a sort of rival to the Cæsareum.

Not only the Egyptians, but even many of the Byzantine officials in Egypt, refused to acknowledge Paul's authority, and Paul proceeded to take measures accordingly. He had been invested by the Emperor with extraordinary powers, and he determined to remove Elias, the military commander of Lower Egypt, from his post. Elias was absent from Alexandria at the time, and Psoius, a friend of the commander and deacon of the Cæsareum, sent him secret warning of the conspiracy against him. This letter, however, fell into the hands of one of Paul's agents, and Paul immediately caused the deacon to be arrested on a pretended charge of neglect of the church accounts. He was given into the custody of Rhodon, the Prefect of Egypt, by whom he was tortured and eventually murdered. His relations appealed to the Emperor, who degraded Rhodon, and named Liberius Prefect of Egypt, with orders to make a thorough inquiry. Rhodon defended himself by declaring that he had the Emperor's own orders to obey Paul. Paul, on the other

hand, contended that he had given no orders for the death of Psoius, and disowned those which Rhodon believed himself to have received from Paul through a citizen named Arsenius. Rhodon and Arsenius were both put to death, and Paul was banished to Gaza, where, in a provincial Council summoned by the Roman legate and the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem, he was deposed, and a man named Zoilus consecrated in his place for the throne of St. Mark.

The Egyptians treated his appointment with the same absolute disregard as that of his predecessor. Theodosius was the Patriarch of Egypt, though he was still banished from Alexandria.[1] From his time until the date of the Arab conquest there were two Patriarchs in Egypt—the nominal one, who held possession of the episcopal palace and most of the richer churches in Alexandria, but whose authority was openly and habitually disregarded by almost the entire nation (the exceptions being chiefly in the garrison towns of Egypt); and the real one, who generally lived in the great monastic settlement of Nitria, and from thence governed his people by his simple word.

The Egyptian Church was disendowed as well as disestablished, for from this time till the Arab conquest the payment of the whole revenue arising from her ancient endowments, equivalent in our money to about eighty thousand pounds a year, was enforced by the State officials to the Patriarch, who was the Emperor's nominee in Alexandria. From this time also the use of the Greek language became confined to the State Church, thus established by the Emperor for the Imperial officials, and was no longer in Egypt, with these exceptions, the

[1] He was imprisoned for some time at Constantinople.

language of society or of religion. The National Church, on the other hand, translated its liturgies into the national language, now known as 'Coptic.' With poverty and the decline of Greek learning came an increase of superstition in the country, and growth of trivial legends. Thus we are told by one traveller in Egypt about this period that when he asked why one of the doors in the great temple of Ptah (at that time a Christian church) was always kept shut, he was told that it had been rudely shut against the infant Jesus five hundred years before, and that ever since no mortal strength had been able to open it!

By the command of Justinian, but probably with ecclesiastical money, three convent fortresses were built for purposes of defence in Egypt, and garrisoned by monks. One of these is the convent of Mount Sinai; the other two are the monasteries of St. Anthony and St. Paul on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea. It is not intended to state, of course, that these celebrated monastic settlements date only from the time of Justinian, but that they were rebuilt and fortified in his reign. That of St. Anthony at least has probably existed on the same spot ever since the great hermit's death. But the earlier settlements had doubtless remained faithful to the Egyptian Church, and the monastic garrisons of Justinian must have been Imperialists, though these convents have now for many centuries again belonged to the National Church.

Year by year the breach between the small Byzantine population with its alien Church, and the mass of the Egyptian people under their canonically elected ruler, deepened and widened, till, a century later, the very

Moslems were welcomed by the Egyptians as their deliverers from their Christian oppressors. Deep, indeed, was the guilt of those who thus betrayed their country to the Infidel, and tremendous has been their punishment; but great also was their provocation. Their principal churches were taken from them and the revenues given to the Emperor's nominee; their own Patriarch could not leave his desert retreat except by stealth. The colours of two opposite parties of chariot-racing in the circus became the colours of the rival political parties all over the empire, and particularly in Egypt. The Byzantine party were called the Blues; the native or Egyptian party, the Greens. Gibbon gives a lively picture of the demoralisation of the State, owing to the rivalries and feuds between the Blues and the Greens; and the Egyptian historians are full of similar stories.

A large party, both in Egypt and Palestine, were still further alienated by Justinian's edict condemning the errors of the great Egyptian Father Origen, and anathematising his soul. Next came the famous controversy of the Three Chapters, as they were called—the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia; the treatise of Theodoret against Cyril and his twelve articles; and the letter of Ibbas, Bishop of Edessa, to the Persian bishop, Maris. Justinian issued, in the year 545, his edict condemning these writers on the ground of heresy, and desired all the bishops of the empire to subscribe this condemnation. This edict was an indirect attack on the Council of Chalcedon, which had approved these men. The Egyptian Church therefore would have had no scruples in accepting the edict, except on the ground—which the bishops of North Africa actually took—that it could not be right to anathematise

dead men, though their errors were to be rejected. But the Egyptian Patriarch does not seem to have been asked to do anything in the matter. Zoilus, the Emperor's Patriarch, was required to sign, and did so; but afterwards recanted, and was promptly banished by the Emperor, who appointed Apollinarius in his stead. Justinian, who was Emperor both of East and West, also sent for Vigilius, the Pope of Rome, and commanded him to subscribe the edict. After much prevarication Vigilius did so in 548; but when, in 551, Justinian issued a second and still more stringent edict of the same kind, Pope Vigilius summoned up courage to refuse. He took refuge in the church of St. Peter, at Constantinople, and it is said that the pillars of the altar were nearly pulled down in the efforts of the Imperial officers to drag the Roman Pope from sanctuary. He afterwards escaped to Chalcedon; but eventually the Emperor gave him a safe-conduct, as he wished him to attend a General Council which he had summoned to meet in Constantinople in 553. Apollinaris of Alexandria sat in this Council, but the Egyptian Church was not represented, and took no notice of the decisions of the Council.

Other troubles were not wanting besides those of civil and religious strife. Terrible earthquakes took place all over the East. John of Nikius says that the shocks continued at intervals in Egypt for a whole year, but he does not say in which year of Justinian's reign. Pestilence and famine succeeded, and the whole of the Delta seems to have been in a miserable condition. In the Thebaid, where the authority of the Emperor was hardly felt, things were better, and Christianity was steadily progressing through the Nubian kingdoms, till in the fifth and sixth

centuries it had become the dominant religion from Alexandria to the furthest confines of Ethiopia or Abyssinia. Idol-worship lingered longest in the island of Philæ, but it is recorded to have ceased even there in the reign of Justinian. Theodosius sent fresh missionaries into the interior, and religious strife in the north became religious zeal in the south, where no one troubled himself about the Byzantine Court, and where the mass of the population had probably never heard of the Emperor's Patriarch.

In 566 Justinian died, and in 567 Theodosius, the Egyptian Patriarch, died also. It is said that Apollinaris, believing that his claim to the Patriarchal throne would now be undisputed, gave a grand banquet to celebrate the occasion in Alexandria, but he was quickly undeceived. The Egyptians only delayed because they could not make up their mind between the rival candidates for the office. Eventually their choice fell upon Peter, a man of profound learning and greatly respected throughout all Egypt.

It was during the short reign of Peter that Jacobus or James Baradæus came to Alexandria. This remarkable man was born at Tela, a town about fifty-five miles east of Edessa, in the later years of the preceding century, and was now very old. In 541 he was called from his monastery near Constantinople and ordained by Theodosius, Patriarch of Alexandria, and some other Egyptian bishops who were detained there by Justinian. He was made bishop, with the nominal title of Edessa, but was in reality a missionary bishop for all the scattered congregations in the Byzantine dominions outside Egypt, which were one in faith with the Church of Egypt and rejected the Council

of Chalcedon. For the rest of his life he was untiring in his efforts, often in danger from the Byzantine officials and ecclesiastics, unwearied in his journeys to and fro. He is said to have ordained eighty-nine bishops and many thousand priests. It is probable that the nickname Jacobite, which was certainly at a later date applied to the Monophysites, came from the name of their great missionary bishop. But to call the Egyptian or Coptic Church the 'Jacobite sect,' as Neale and other ecclesiastical historians have done, is as unmeaning and incorrect as it would be for the Greek Church now to describe the Church of England as 'the Hussite sect.' The term Melkite, on the contrary, which after the Arab conquest was always used to describe the remnant of the Byzantine Church which remained in Egypt, had a real significance, and was readily adopted by the Church in question. It is derived from Melek, the Arabic for 'king,' and signified 'king's men,' or those who still remained faithful to the Byzantine Emperor.

The occasion of his visit to Egypt was to try and make peace between the Churches of Egypt and Syria. Paul, who had been consecrated some time before by Jacobus as Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, had under persecution consented to acknowledge the Council of Chalcedon and all that it involved. For this he had been excommunicated by Jacobus; but, having made good his escape from Constantinople, Paul recanted his submission to the Emperor and expressed great penitence for his treason, as in the eyes of Jacobus and his own eyes his act had seemed. Jacobus not only received him back into communion, but reinstated him as Patriarch of Antioch. This gave great offence in Egypt, and, according to John of Ephesus, Peter formally deposed the erring Paul. Jacobus came to

Alexandria to remonstrate, but, instead of convincing Peter, was apparently convinced by him—it is hinted that things were known to the discredit of Paul in Alexandria, which was his native city—and Jacobus gave his formal assent to the deposition of Paul, only stipulating that, as he had repented, he should be restored to communion. But Paul had a considerable party of adherents in Syria, who refused to accept the joint decision of the Patriarch of Alexandria and their own Metropolitan; so the only effect was to create a fresh schism in Syria, which lasted for some years. At length Jacobus determined to go again to Alexandria, where Damian had by this time succeeded to Peter; but he was taken ill at a monastery on the Egyptian frontier. Damian, on hearing of his illness, hastily went in person to the succour of the venerable bishop, but arrived too late.

This visit from Jacobus Baradæus is almost all we know of the Patriarchate of Peter III., who died about two years after his accession, and was succeeded by his *syncellus*, Damian, who maintained the excellent traditions of his immediate predecessors, and, withdrawing from all party strife, was content to govern his people from the desert monasteries of Nitria. Apollinaris himself died in 569, and was succeeded by John, a retired general in the Byzantine army, who was consecrated at Constantinople, and sent over to take possession of the ecclesiastical revenues. He showed himself, however, according to the testimony of the Monophysite, John of Nikius, a man of peace, who was content to glorify God in his own Church, and forced no one to abandon his belief.

The disaffection in Egypt was increasing so much that the old rule which forbade any native Egyptian to be enrolled in the Imperial troops was more stringently en-

forced than ever; certainly a politic rule, since it was precisely this want of military discipline and experience which caused all the Egyptian revolts to fail. The trade of Egypt, though decreasing, was still very great. Egyptian corn-ships still sailed for England every year to trade for tin, though the Roman occupation of that country had long been given up. It was in this reign that Cosmas the navigator made his celebrated voyages to the Persian Gulf, India, and Ceylon. He was not only a trader, but a keen observer of nature and men, who took great interest in the lands where his business led him. He was an Egyptian, and when he retired from business he wrote several books descriptive of the countries which he had visited. Unfortunately, only one of these works, and that probably the least valuable, has survived to our day. It is called 'Christian Topography,' and was written chiefly 'to confute the impious heresy of those who maintain that the earth is a globe, and not a flat oblong table, as is represented in the Scriptures'!

In spite of the absurdities of his system, however, the book gives a great deal of valuable information about India and Ceylon; not only concerning the state of Christianity in those lands, but concerning their natural products and principal articles of commerce.

This book of Cosmas also preserves two important historical inscriptions, which he copied from a monument then existing at Adulé, an Ethiopian port on the Red Sea. The monument was 'a wedge-shaped block of basanite or touchstone, standing behind a white marble chair, dedicated to Mars, and ornamented with the figures of Hercules and Mercury. One of the inscriptions was engraved on the block, the other on the chair. The former relates to Ptolemy

Euergetes (B.C. 247–222); and the latter, of later date, to the conquests of an un-named king of the Auxumitæ.

Not only was the trade and the learning of Alexandria decreasing, but the city itself was going out of fashion as a residence for the principal Byzantine officials. They mostly lived at Taposiris, a town about a day's journey west of Alexandria, the site of which is still marked by the ruins of some of the palaces and baths which they built there. Still, however, learned men came to Alexandria to correct their copies of ancient manuscripts, and still Egyptian physicians and Egyptian science were renowned throughout the world. But through the reign of Justinian and those of his successors, Justin II. and Tiberius II., the process of disaffection and degradation went steadily on.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE REVOLT OF THE BROTHERS

D. 582 M. 298 IN the early years of the reign of Maurice, who succeeded Tiberius II., a fresh revolt broke out in the North of Egypt. It was headed by three brothers—named Abaskiron, Menas, and James—who took up arms against the Blue or Imperial party. They seized and pillaged the towns of Bana and Bousir,[1] and killed a great many people. Eventually they set fire to Bousir, and burnt the public bath among other buildings. The local prefect managed to make his escape under cover of the night, and fled to Constantinople, where he represented the serious nature of the rebellion. Maurice sent indignant orders to John, the Governor of Alexandria, to see that it was speedily put down. But the rebels had not only established themselves firmly in the Delta, they menaced Alexandria itself, and seized the corn boats on their way to that city. This produced an actual famine, and the mob rose against the governor, John, who had originally been a personal friend of the three brothers now at the head of the rebellion, and attempted to murder him. He was only saved by the devotion of some of the principal Egyptians belonging to the National Church, who stood by him and brought him off in safety.

[1] These towns were so near together that they are now confounded under the name of Abousir-Bana, near Samanhoud.

John's friendly relations with the Egyptians, however, did him no good at Court, and Maurice dismissed him from his office, and appointed a man named Paul in his place. Meanwhile the revolt gained ground daily in Egypt, and the Byzantine power seemed ready to fall. Isaac, son of the eldest of the three brothers, by a brilliant dash made himself master of several vessels, and cruised along the coasts, even to Cyprus, making war on all Byzantine ships. In this extremity the Byzantine Patriarch was sent to treat with the insurgents, and the place of meeting was fixed at Aykelah, the native city of the three brothers.

Eulogius had succeeded John about the year 579 A.D., and was the first Byzantine Patriarch who had won in some degree the confidence of the Egyptians. He was neither Greek nor Egyptian, but a native of Antioch, and had been consecrated at Constantinople to rule over the handful of aliens which the Emperor at Constantinople and the Pope of Rome persisted in regarding as the true Egyptian Church. Eulogius was indeed a personal friend of Gregory the Great, who shortly afterwards succeeded Pelagius in the see of Rome, and maintained a correspondence with him all his life.[1] But Eulogius, though no Egyptian, was a true Christian, and by his piety and learning did much to save the Greek Church from absolute extinction and degradation in Egypt. Eulogius readily consented to treat with the insurgents

[1] In 598 Gregory wrote a letter to Eulogius of Egypt, which must interest all Englishmen. After congratulating the Patriarch on his success in reviving the Byzantine Church in Egypt, he tells him of the efforts which he on his part is making for the conversion of the Angles. He tells Eulogius all about the mission of St. Augustine to England, and relates with joy that at the last Christmas no less than ten thousand pagans had received Holy Baptism.

on behalf of the Emperor, and went to Aykelah with his deacon Ailas. The Blues and Greens assembled in great force, and long discussions took place, but without result, since the insurgents would only accept pardon on condition that John, the dismissed prefect, should be returned to them. 'This John fears no one,' the spokesman is reported to have said; 'he is an enemy to all tyranny, and treats us as we desire to be treated.'

The Emperor evidently thought it expedient to yield, for the insurgents were now masters of the whole of Northern Egypt, and all taxes were paid to them instead of being remitted to the Byzantine Government. John was sent back to Alexandria, and a man named Theodore, who knew Egypt well and was the son of a well-known general, took the field against the insurgents.

It appears that one of the original complaints of the Egyptians was that two of their nation whom they greatly respected had been arrested and imprisoned. The names of these men are given as Cosmas, son of Samuel, and Banon, son of Ammon; but the reason of their arrest by the Byzantine Government is nowhere stated. Theodore insisted that these two men should not only be set at liberty, but that they should accompany his army, in order that the insurgents should see for themselves that they were free. His demand was at once acceded to by the Government; not only Cosmas and Banon, but three other men who had been arrested with them, were delivered to Theodore, who thereupon marched in search of the Egyptian insurgents. He camped immediately opposite to them, on the other bank of the river, and brought out Cosmas and Banon in full view of their compatriots. At his desire, though whether by persuasion or threats we are

not told, Cosmas and Banon addressed the insurgents from across the river, entreating them to return to their allegiance, assuring them that the Roman Empire was not yet enfeebled or conquered, and that their ultimate success was impossible.

The appeal was successful. Little by little the insurgent camp broke up, and its members passed over the river to Cosmas and Banon with the Imperial troops. The three brothers were left alone with their immediate adherents, but they boldly endeavoured to stand their ground, and met the attack of the Byzantine army with desperate courage. They fought till night fell, and then fled from the field to Abu San. Here they made a brief halt, but with daylight discovered that they were pursued by the Byzantine army. The gallant little band retreated fighting towards Alexandria, but they were at length overpowered, and all three brothers, with Isaac, were taken prisoners.

They were placed on camels and paraded about the streets of Alexandria, that all men might know the revolt had come to an end. Then they were thrown into prison; but the prefect, John, stood their friend as much as he dared, and no further steps were taken against them till long afterwards, by a new prefect, who succeeded John. This man cut off the heads of the three brothers, and sent Isaac into exile. The same prefect, probably acting under orders from the Emperor, who had evidently neither forgotten nor forgiven the revolt, though he had not dared to use harshness at the time, confiscated the goods of the chief men who had taken part in it, and delivered the towns of Aykelah [1] and Abu San to the flames.

[1] The town which rose upon the ruins of Aykelah was called Zawiet Professor Amelineau identifies it with the present Zawiet-Sakr.

So ended the revolt of the three brothers, but it was not the only one in Egypt during the reign of Maurice and his successors. Again and again, in different parts of the country, the smouldering flame of discontent broke out. In the canton of Akhmin the insurgents were at length driven by the Byzantine army into the barren hills, and there surrounded and starved to death. Under Phocas a fresh attempt broke out in the district of five towns—Kharbeta, San, Basta, Balqua, and Sanhour—the suppression of which was accompanied by circumstances of the utmost barbarity. It was because the Egyptians had learnt by repeated disappointment and failure that they could not alone shake off the yoke, which since 451 had become yearly more distasteful to them, that in the early years of the seventh century they looked in despair for help to the victorious Arabs, and by this treason to their faith brought upon themselves the far heavier yoke under which they have groaned during twelve centuries of persecution and degradation.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PERSIAN CONQUEST

A.D. 603 A.M. 319 WHILE the Byzantine rule was tottering to its fall in Egypt, the national party was gaining strength every year. The Patriarch Damian had been succeeded in 603 (or 607) by Anastasius, who had the true martyr spirit, and, notwithstanding that he left Nitria at the risk of his life, constantly travelled through his country, and even held ordinations in Alexandria itself. He built another church in that city, the stronghold of Imperialism, which he dedicated to the Archangel Michael.[1] In his time the Nile rose so rapidly in one night that the whole of the town of Esneh was flooded, many houses were overthrown by the water, and a great number of the inhabitants perished.

[1] In Egypt the Archangel Michael had taken the place of one of the pagan gods, to whom they were greatly devoted. In the fourth century Pope Alexander solemnly broke the brazen image of this idol in Alexandria, and altered the temple into a church. But he only won the consent of the people by promising them that they should find the patronage of Michael, to whom he dedicated the church, far better for them than that of the idol, and that nothing should be changed in the yearly feast which they had been wont to celebrate, save only that it should be held in honour of Michael instead of the idol. This ancient heathen feast has been kept in Michael's honour ever since. The Egyptians have a legend that on one day in the year the mouth of the pit of purifying fire is opened, and that it is Michael's privilege to plunge into it and bring up as many souls into Paradise as he can carry on his wings.

The Egyptians, as might be expected, joined eagerly in the general revolt against the Emperor Phocas. Three thousand Byzantine soldiers supplemented by a great number of irregular native troops were sent through Pentapolis by the elder Heraclius, Exarch of Africa, to secure Egypt for his son, who was engaged in making himself master of Constantinople. Bonakis, who commanded this contingent, effected a junction with the troops of the Prefect of Mareotis without opposition, and turned against Alexandria. The governor came out to meet them at the head of such troops as remained faithful to Phocas. He was hopelessly outnumbered from the first, and the insurgent commander sent to say that if he would even remain neutral his life should be spared; but he indignantly refused the offer, and fell fighting. His head was cut off and exposed on the gates of Alexandria. The Byzantine Patriarch, Theodore, who had about two years before been nominated by Phocas on the death of Eulogius, took refuge in the church of Athanasius, for the whole city gladly welcomed the general of Heraclius, and his life was in danger.

The inhabitants of Nikius, headed by their bishop, hastened to acknowledge Heraclius, and their example was quickly followed by almost all the cities of Egypt. Only one Egyptian of any standing, the same Cosmas who had stopped the revolt of the three brothers against Maurice, declared for Phocas, and very few even of the Byzantine officials. Two of these, however—Paul, Prefect of Samanhoud, and Marcian, Prefect of Athribis[1]—with a lady named Christodora, who seems to have been a person of great influence,

[1] Athribis is ruined, and its place taken by the modern town of Benha.

endeavoured to make a stand for Phocas, especially as they had just received news that his general, Bonose, had arrived with an army at Pelusium. Two native armies (one under Theodore and Plato, accompanied by Theodore of Nikius and Menas, the chancellor of his diocese; and the other under Cosmas and Paul, accompanied by Christodora) now menaced each other in the district of Menouf; but both sides waited for the Byzantine troops. On the same day Bonose (for Phocas) arrived at Athribis, and Bonakis (for Heraclius) at Nikius, and pushed on hastily to join their native allies. The fight took place a little to the east of the town of Menouf, and victory declared for Bonose. Bonakis was killed, and Plato and Theodore, seeing that the day was lost, fled to Atfis, and took refuge in the convent. Theodore of Nikius and his chancellor came to the tent of Bonose, carrying the Gospels and asking for mercy. Bonose seemed at first inclined to spare them, and took them with him to Nikius. But Marcian and Christodora represented to him that it was by the bishop's orders that the statues of Phocas had been thrown down from the gates of Nikius, and that he was too dangerous to be allowed to live.

The bishop was therefore beheaded in his own city, and Menas was subjected to so severe an application of the bastinado that, though he had paid three thousand pieces of gold for his ransom, he died two or three days after he was set at liberty. The inhabitants of the surrounding country were struck with terror, and the monks of Atris thought to purchase their safety by delivering the fellow-countrymen who had sought refuge with them to the victorious general. Not only Plato and Theodore, but the principal inhabitants of Menouf, who had fled to

the convent—among them three old men who were greatly respected—were brought in chains by the monks to Bonose at Nikius. They were all publicly scourged, and then beheaded on the same spot where the bishop had been put to death.

This, however, was only a passing success for the adherents of Phocas. All the principal inhabitants of Egypt, all the members of the 'Green' party, all the strength of the National Church, were for Heraclius. Reinforcements of all kinds poured into Alexandria, where Nicetas, the lieutenant of Heraclius, had arrived. Paul of Samanhoud made a feeble demonstration against the city, but was driven off with stones which sank his boats in the canal. A hermit of great sanctity and renown, named Theophilus, who had lived forty years on the top of a pillar by the river, on being consulted by Nicetas (who knew what an effect his words would have on the Egyptians), promised victory to Nicetas and the speedy accession of Heraclius. On this, Nicetas sallied out of Alexandria and gave battle to Bonose. His victory was complete; Bonose fled to Nikius, and all the Blues joined Nicetas. Bonose next sent a soldier to assassinate Nicetas under pretext of a message of surrender, but one of his own men warned Nicetas. The herald was searched and killed with the dagger found concealed upon him for the purpose. Eventually, after some more desultory fighting, the adherents of Phocas were finally crushed. Bonose and Theodore the Byzantine Patriarch were both killed in the final struggles; Paul of Samanhoud and Cosmas were both made prisoners, but were treated with leniency. Nicetas devoted himself to the task of restoring order throughout Egypt, for many members of the Green (or

National) party were inclined to take advantage of the confusion to plunder the defeated Blues in all directions. Many of the Byzantines left Egypt altogether, and some renounced their Christianity and returned to the old pagan religion. Nicetas by a judicious mixture of severity and clemency—he remitted all taxes for three years—succeeding in re-establishing peace.

But peace could not endure long in Egypt. Barely four years afterwards Syria was overrun by the Persian troops of Chosroes, and Egypt was threatened. The Christians of Syria took refuge in Egypt in vast numbers, and both John, the Byzantine Patriarch (who had been nominated by Heraclius to succeed Theodore), and Anastasius, the National Patriarch, vied with each other in relieving the necessities of their fellow-Christians. John, of course, was by far the richer, as all the ancient endowments of the National Church were by command of the Emperor confiscated to the support of the Byzantine Church in Egypt; and the deprived Monophysites were only gradually making fresh provision for the support of their own Patriarch and clergy. John had four thousand pounds waiting for him in the Church treasury when he landed, and, besides his official income, enormous sums were sent him for the relief of the Syrian refugees. The Patriarch of Antioch himself took refuge in Egypt, but he went to the National Patriarch, Anastasius, who received him with open arms and as much splendour of reception as the times allowed; for again famine had followed in the track of strife, and the Nile had not risen to the requisite height. St. John the Almoner, as the Byzantine Patriarch was afterwards called, in affectionate memory of his generosity, had shown more liberality than prudence

in the distribution of the funds entrusted to him. He had not only established hospitals for the sick, and relieved the fugitives, but alms were given daily to all who applied at his gates. When the men who were charged with the distribution represented to John that some of those who applied for daily alms wore gold ornaments, he rebuked them for an officious and inquisitive spirit, declaring that if the whole world came to ask alms at Alexandria they could not exhaust the riches of God's goodness.

As a natural consequence, the money ran short before the need was over, and John was in sore distress. In this juncture a rich citizen of Alexandria, who greatly desired to be made a deacon (the first step to the high dignity of a Patriarch), but who had been twice married, and was therefore canonically incapacitated, offered John an immense supply of corn and a hundred and eight pounds of gold, if he would break the canon law and admit the donor to the diaconate. John was sorely tempted,[1] and even sent for the man, but finally told him that, although he could not deny that the gift was sorely needed, yet, the motive being impure, the offering must be declined. 'God,' he is reported to have said, 'who supported the poor before either of us were born, can find the means of supporting them now. He who blessed the five loaves and multiplied them can bless and multiply the two measures of corn which remain in my granary.'

The citizen, foiled in his ambition, departed, and

[1] John himself was a widower, a native of Cyprus, and had never been either a monk or a deacon; therefore on all counts his elevation to the Patriarchate of Egypt was uncanonical. But, for the Imperial party in Egypt, the Emperor's nomination overrode all ecclesiastical laws.

almost at the same moment a message came that two of the Church ships had returned from Sicily with a large cargo of corn. The Patriarch John fell on his face in mingled humiliation and gratitude, thanking God that he had not been permitted to sell the gift of the Holy Ghost for money.

Though he received all the ecclesiastical revenues, John, like all the other Byzantine Patriarchs, had little authority outside Alexandria and the two or three cities which were garrisoned by Byzantine troops. But by his personal virtues he endeared himself to the Alexandrians; and, though all the endowments of the Church were at his disposal, he lived with the same simplicity as the National Patriarch—with whom indeed, as became his character, he maintained friendly relations. When Anastasius, who was universally loved and respected, died, his successor Andronicus was permitted to live openly in Alexandria, and peace was maintained between the rival Churches. The Egyptians readily acknowledged the piety of the Emperor's bishop, and, though they would yield obedience to no Patriarch but their own, they equally with the Imperial Church commemorated John as a saint after his death.

A yearly sum of Church money was devoted by John to the ransom of Christian captives. Discovering that the men who were entrusted with this duty were in the habit of taking bribes from the friends of the captives, to determine which should first be ransomed, he called them before him and forbade them ever to receive such money in future. At the same time he increased their salaries, to spare them the temptation. It is said that some were so much touched by his forgive-

ness and generosity that they voluntarily declined the increase of pay which he offered. One curious incident is recorded of the way in which he managed his congregation. Already, as in all Churches where a fasting communion is made obligatory, a very large proportion of the congregations belonging both to the Imperial and National Churches had given up communicating altogether. But in the Imperial churches of Alexandria a further innovation had lately grown up. Many of the fashionable members of the congregation did not even remain to 'assist' at the celebration of the Eucharist, but left the church at the conclusion of the Gospel. On two occasions the Patriarch solemnly followed his congregation out of the church, and left the service unfinished. On their expressing astonishment and inquiry, he calmly told them that 'Where the sheep are, there the shepherd ought to be. It is for your sakes,' he added, 'that I go to the church; for my own part, I could celebrate the office at home.' The congregation took the hint, and remained in church till the service was over.

But though his virtues were undoubted, John had not the kind of courage which leads to martyrdom. There had been a brief respite; but now that the Persians were firmly established in Syria, they advanced into Egypt, and were welcomed as deliverers by the National party, who hailed every chance of throwing off the hated Byzantine yoke. The whole of the Delta was in their hands, and they laid siege to Alexandria. Nicetas, the general who had so successfully contended against native levies of undisciplined Egyptians, evidently considered resistance hopeless. He persuaded the Emperor's bishop to accompany him, and the two fled from Alexandria, which was immediately

occupied by the Persians in 620. The whole of Egypt submitted to them up to the borders of Ethiopia, and for nearly ten years Egypt was once more a Persian province. Heraclius had enough to do in defending his own capital from the victorious Persians, and made no attempt for some time to recover Egypt. Nor did he nominate another Patriarch for the State Church in Egypt, though John died in the same year of his flight. Probably he would have found no one to accept the office from him at this juncture. About a year afterwards Andronicus died, so that both the Churches in Egypt were without a head. But when the National Church proceeded to the election of a new Patriarch, the small but rich State Establishment appears to have taken alarm. If there were but one Patriarch in the country, it was clear that all the revenues, which so far they had kept in their own hands, were liable to be reclaimed by him; and refusal on their part would be dangerous. It was determined to wait the Emperor's pleasure no longer, and the Byzantine Church proceeded to elect a man named George, of whom little to his credit is known, but who probably served their immediate purpose as well as another.

The National Church elected Benjamin, a man of wealthy parentage, whom after-events have made famous. He had been a monk in the monastery of Deyr Kirios (Cyrus), and was distinguished for his austerities and his devotion to prayer. He had been, for some years before his election, in Alexandria with the Patriarch Andronicus, whom he succeeded.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ACT OF UNION

A.D. 629
A.M. 345

IN the year 629 Heraclius, having waged successful war against the Persians in other parts of the empire, turned his attention to the recovery of Egypt. Experience, however, had taught him that he could not retain his hold in that country without conciliating the National Church, and in so doing the bulk of the population. He therefore on his way back from a victorious campaign consulted Athanasius of Antioch (the same who had taken refuge in Egypt some years before); Sergius of Constantinople; and Cyrus, Bishop of Phasis, who represented three different shades of religious opinion, as to the best means of doing so. After much discussion it was decided not to mention the Council of Chalcedon, since openly to accept or reject that Council would inevitably offend one of two parties beyond retrieval; but it was determined to draw up an Act of Union, which should affirm one *Will* in our Lord instead of one Nature. This compromise was accepted by the three bishops above named, of whom one was a Monophysite and the other a 'Chalcedonian' Patriarch, and the Emperor promptly appointed the third of them (Cyrus) Patriarch of Alexandria, and sent him off to that city with full powers to effect the hoped-for reconciliation. What became of the unfortunate George, whom

the Græco-Egyptians had chosen for themselves, cannot be ascertained. Makrizi does not know of his existence; and Eutychius, a Melkite historian of the tenth century, declares that George fled from Egypt 'for fear of the Saracens.' But as Cyrus was appointed Patriarch of Alexandria in 630, and as Amr did not invade Egypt till 639–40, his memory may be held clear from this accusation. It is most probable that Heraclius simply ignored the action of the State Church in having set up a Patriarch for themselves, and that George did not venture to assert himself against the Emperor's nominee, but retired into private life on the arrival of Cyrus.

Cyrus found no difficulty in his task as far as the Egyptian laity and many of the clergy were concerned. One Will signified to them one Nature, and they readily agreed to accept the Act of Union, and to communicate with the State Church in doing so, declaring that the Byzantine Church had come over to their views. Indeed, the principal members of the Byzantine party thought the same, and received the Emperor's decree with consternation. At the Council which Cyrus called in Alexandria to discuss the matter, Sophronius, an intimate friend of St. John the Almoner, and a man of great weight in the Church, remonstrated with the most urgent entreaties. He declared that the Emperor had but evolved a new heresy—indeed, it has ever since been called the Monothelite heresy—and implored Cyrus not to publish the Act of Union. Cyrus paid no attention to these remonstrances, but was dismayed to find that the National Patriarch coldly refused to discuss the matter, or to accept any theological decision from the Emperor. Cyrus knew that the reconciliation would be of little political value without the sanction of

the Patriarch, and he attempted to carry his point by force. The lives of the principal Egyptians who stood by their Patriarch were in danger, and they retreated from Alexandria. Benjamin was banished to a small monastery in the Upper Thebaid,[1] and Sophronius on the other hand retired into Syria, where he was afterwards elected Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Heraclius appears to have been well content with the measure of success which his agent had attained, and felt sufficiently secure to go on pilgrimage in the following year to Jerusalem. It was on this occasion that the events happened which are commemorated in the so-called Fast of Heraclius—a fast still kept in Egypt and throughout the East every year.[2]

Heraclius had given his word to the Jews of Syria for their safety, in consideration of costly presents which he had received from them. But when he came on pilgrimage to Jerusalem he was indignant and horrified to find what havoc had been wrought there, not so much by the Persians as by the Jews, who had profited by the occasion to indulge their deep hatred of the Christian religion. The Syrian Christians appealed to the Emperor for vengeance on the Jews.

Then (says Makrizi) Heraclius told them he could not massacre the Jews, as he had pledged to them his word for

[1] It is said that Benjamin was cheered in his flight by the vision of a celestial messenger, who foretold to him that within ten years the Lord would deliver the Egyptians by the advent of a nation circumcised like themselves, and that by them the Byzantine yoke should be broken for ever.

[2] It is curious that almost the only lasting result of the attempted Union of Heraclius in Egypt has been to impose the observance of this fast on both Churches alike.

their safety, and had sworn it to them. Then the Christian monks, Patriarchs, and presbyters gave him as a reason that he need not be hindered by that from slaughtering them, inasmuch as they had dealt with him by craft so far as to make him give them his word for their safety, without his being aware of the real state of their case; and that they would undertake for him, in expiation of his [breach of] faith, to bind themselves and the Christians to a fast of a week every year for ever.

Heraclius inclined to their terms, and made a shameful onslaught upon the Jews, whom he massacred until none were left in the kingdoms of Rome, Egypt, and Syria, but those who had fled and hidden themselves. The Patriarch [of Jerusalem] and the bishops then wrote unto all the cities, to constrain the Christians to keep this fast for seven days in the year, which is known among them as the 'Week of Heraclius.'

The days of Byzantine rule in Egypt were numbered. The Persians had been driven back, and the Byzantine garrisons re-established in the Delta; but it seems probable that no troops were stationed south of the Fayoum, and Upper Egypt appears to have been left practically to itself, or later to that celebrated yet shadowy person known as the Makaukas. From the deserts of the Arabian peninsula a new and more formidable enemy rose up to defy the Roman Empire, viz., the recently created Saracen power, animated by the irresistible fervour of a new religion. Mohammed their prophet was dead, but his successor Omar was pushing his conquests in every direction. Early in the year 640,[1] having overrun Syria, one of their ablest generals, Amr or Amru ebn Aas, turned his eyes upon the far more valuable prize of Egypt, and by

[1] This date used to be given as 638, but modern researches have established it two years later.

a stratagem obtained consent from the Kaliph Omar to the expedition.[1]

[1] Omar's reply was to the effect that if Amr were already on Egyptian soil, he might go forward; if not, he must return. Amr, having reason to guess what was in the letter, refused to open it until he had camped within the frontier of Egypt.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE ARAB CONQUEST

A.D. 640
A.M. 356
A.H. 18

IT has been already pointed out that at the time of the Arab invasion of Egypt the greater part of that country was in a state of passive opposition to the recently re-established Byzantine occupation. For the last ten years many of the officials had systematically kept back the dues which the Byzantine Government was powerless to collect, and two or three of them seemed to have lived like petty kings in Egypt, paying to the Persians as little as they could help, and practically independent of either Persian or Byzantine control. When in 630 Heraclius drove out the Persians and re-established his garrisons in Egypt, he was too well aware of the insecurity of his tenure to proceed rashly, and waited for his religious concessions to the Egyptian party to take effect. Still the governors of the different provinces, some of whom were native Egyptians, knew that the time of reckoning could not long be put off; and all of them had personal as well as political cause to dread the re-establishment of the Byzantine power.

If, however, the Act of Union, otherwise called the Ekthesis, had been accepted by the Patriarch Benjamin, these men would have been powerless. But Heraclius, through his agent Cyrus, whom he had appointed Patriarch

of the Byzantine (or State) Church in Egypt, made the fatal mistake of undervaluing the power of the Egyptian Patriarch. When the bulk of the Egyptian nation, as it seemed to Cyrus, gladly accepted his terms, he did not hesitate to persecute and banish the Patriarch for refusing. But this only made the refusal and disapproval of Benjamin patent to all Egypt, and from that day the Act of Union was doomed. Whatever their faults, the Egyptian nation had never yet failed in loyalty to their Patriarch. The concessions of the Emperor might seem all that they desired, but, if the Patriarch was not satisfied, the true Egyptian would have none of them. Slowly the inert mass of public opinion swung back from the Emperor, and Cyrus began to perceive that he had failed. The dishonest officials breathed more freely; the day of reckoning seemed far off.

One of these officials stands out from all the others in a disgraceful pre-eminence. Most people have at least heard of the Makaukas, for his name, his functions, his very existence even, have been made the subject of many controversies. Quite recently, however, the translation of the papyri in the collection of the Archduke Rainer has enabled us to clear up some at least of the difficulties attending this subject.

Most scholars have long agreed that Makaukas is not a proper name, but have been puzzled to decide whether it was a nickname or an official title. The fact seems to be that it is neither. The man in question was a pagarch (loosely rendered as prefect in most histories), and his name was George, son of Menas Parkubios.[1] The pagarch

[1] Menas, or Mena, was such a common name in Egypt that a surname, usually Greek, was often attached to those who bore it. (The 'e' is pronounced short, as in 'hen.')

was the civil governor of an Egyptian province, the whole administration of which was confided to him. He was responsible for the public security and order, and for the collection and remittance of the imperial Imposts. Also all highways, dams, canals, bridges—in short, all the public works of the district—were in his charge, even to the coinage, measures, and weights. Only the army (represented in most provinces by little more than a single garrison) and the clergy (a much more important exception) were exempt from his control. The number of subordinate officials who looked no higher than their pagarch for orders was consequently very great. Recent researches have revealed to us the names and districts of the three principal pagarchs in Egypt at the time of the Arab conquest.

The official language of Egypt was Greek, and the complimentary title given to these pagarchs was a word which signifies in English 'the most glorious,' just as our ambassadors always have the prefix 'his excellency.' The Arabs took this word *μεγαυχής* for part of the actual name of the pagarch who treated with Amr for the surrender of the country; and thus George the Traitor has been known for centuries by a title which he has little right to bear - Makaukas ('the most glorious').

The Prefect (or Pagarch) of ~~Lower~~ Egypt was Ammon Menas, 'a man full of pretension, but quite ignorant, who detested exceedingly the Egyptians, and was continued in his office after the conquest of the country by the Arabs.'[1] The Pagarch of Middle Egypt—whose province on one bank of the Nile appears to have included the districts of

[1] John of Nikius.

Heracleopolis Magna, Arsinoë, and Oxyrhynchus—was Cyrus, of whom we know little, except that he joined in delivering the country to the Mohammedans. The Pagarch of Upper Egypt—or Babylon, as it is called in the papyri —was that George (Girghis) whom we call the Makaukas. These were the three important provinces, in each of which there were also a *dux* (or military governor) and a garrison. Besides these there were, either then existing or added immediately after the Arab conquest, two lesser pagarchs —Philoxenos, of the Fayoum; and Shenouda, of the Rif Province.

Three out of these five men were by the indisputable witness of their names Egyptians,[1] but they could not have belonged to the National Church, because that would have disqualified them for their official position. Those writers who speak of the Makaukas as a Copt are perfectly correct; but the inference which some have drawn, that he belonged to the National—or, as it is now called, the Coptic (Egyptian[2])—Church, is false. He might in his heart incline to the Church of his fathers, but he could not have done so openly. He was a Byzantine official and an Egyptian; and he was false alike to his emperor, to his Church, and to his country.

He had been long in office at the time of the invasion, and was the most powerful of all the pagarchs. This was

[1] It was not uncommon for Egyptians of the Imperialist party to take Greek names, but no instance is known of a Byzantine taking an Egyptian name.

[2] The ancient religious name for Memphis was Ha ka ptah. Of this the Greeks made Αἴγυπτος, and applied it to the whole country. When the Arabs came, they called it Agupta (hard *g*), and the inhabitants Agupti. In course of time it became Gupt and Gupti, which the English mispronounce Copt and Coptic.

partly owing to the fact that Babylon, the capital of his province, was on its northernmost boundary, and that for twenty years or more the dwellers in the valley of the Nile had looked to him alone as their ruler. The ravages of the Persians taught them that Byzantium was powerless; and since the Persians had gone, though Babylon itself had been re-occupied by Byzantine soldiers, and small garrisons were also stationed in Arsinoë and the Fayoum, the whole country lying south of Babylon had been practically unaffected by their return. Whether the soldiers of the distant garrisons wore Persian or Byzantine dress mattered little to the population. They paid their taxes all the same to the pagarch, and left him to settle to whom the money was due. For many years the powerful George of Babylon had settled it in the simplest manner, by keeping everything himself that was not returned in salaries or public works to the province. But when Heraclius, believing that by his Act of Union he had conciliated the whole country, began to press for a real re-establishment of his government and a repayment of the Egyptian revenues, George saw ruin staring him in the face. Already, from motives of far-seeing policy, he had sent a complimentary embassy to the rising power, with gifts of honey and slaves to their leader Mohammed. Now Mohammed was dead, and the conquests of Heraclius filled him with dismay. If the moribund empire were to rise again, and sweep the Arabs away, as its troops had already swept the Persians, he would be the first to be called to account. Already the troops of Heraclius and of Omar, Mohammed's successor, faced each other in Palestine; and George knew well that whichever power proved victorious there was the future master of Egypt. The late successes of Heraclius inclined

him to think that this would be the winning side, after all, and he hastened to act accordingly.

He had a beautiful daughter called Armenosa, and he conceived the brilliant project of marrying her to Constantine, the widowed son and heir of the Emperor, with so large a dowry that the latter might think it expedient to waive the question of arrears of tribute. Constantine was then at Cæsarea, and seems to have favourably entertained the proposal. Accordingly, late in the year 639, a gorgeous marriage procession left the city of Babylon to escort the Egyptian bride to her royal husband. Her guard of honour amounted, we are told, to the number of two thousand cavaliers, besides slaves, and a long caravan laden with treasure.[1]

On approaching the Egyptian frontier, and evidently intending to pass by Kantara to El Arish, Armenosa heard that the Arabs had been victorious and were now closely besieging Cæsarea and preparing to invade Egypt. The young Egyptian acted with a courage and promptitude worthy of her remote ancestors. She retired herself to Belbeis, and prepared for defence; but she at once despatched her regiment of Egyptian guards to hold Pelusium in case the enemy came by that way, as seemed most probable. She sent warning to her father, but remained herself in Belbeis, encouraging the inhabitants to make a stand for the defence of their country against the infidels.

Amr, the Moslem general, avoiding Pelusium, marched straight for Belbeis, and laid siege to that city. For one month the brave girl held the Arabs at bay with her scanty and undisciplined forces. After several obstinate

[1] The story of Armenosa is taken from El Wakedi, and not from the papyri or from the chronicle, which is here imperfect.

fights and great loss of life Amr at length took the city by storm, and Armenosa, with all her treasures, fell into his hands. Either the warrior respected the maiden for her gallant attempt at resistance, or he realised the importance of doing nothing to offend the powerful Pagarch of Babylon. He sent Armenosa back to her father with all honour, and the Pagarch's difficulty was solved. From henceforth there could be little doubt as to which of the rival powers was the 'rising sun.'

He did not venture, however, openly to avow himself the friend of the invaders. Babylon was strongly fortified and well garrisoned by the Imperial troops. It must be remembered that the Nile ran farther to the east than it does now, and that the city of Babylon was connected with the island of Rhoda—also strongly fortified—by a bridge of boats. Another bridge of boats connected Rhoda with the west bank of the Nile, where Gizeh now lies. This town has existed under a more ancient name from remote times, but it was little more than a northern suburb of Memphis. Memphis, though still rich in beautiful relics of pagan times, was already a defenceless and half-ruined city. Babylon once taken, both she and all the other rich cities of the south must fall an easy prey to the conqueror. The policy of the Pagarch George was to aid Amr in the capture of Babylon, but he still remained outwardly the servant of the Emperor and the friend of the commander of the garrison.

Meanwhile Heraclius, hearing of the invasion of Egypt, and knowing well the weakness of his own hold over that country, sent his confidential agent, the Patriarch Cyrus, to treat with Amr and offer him money to withdraw from the country. Amr was already

encamped before Babylon, and had begun the famous siege of that almost impregnable fortress. It is said that Cyrus went so far as to offer not only tribute, but the Emperor's daughter Eudocia, or some other member of the royal family, in marriage to the Caliph Omar. The negotiations fell through; Amr already understood that the Pagarch George was far more powerful than the Patriarch Cyrus, and the latter only succeeded in displeasing his own master Heraclius, who summoned him to Constantinople and overwhelmed him with reproaches for his presumption in the matter of Eudocia. Indeed, Cyrus would have paid for his proposals with his life, had not the fall of Babylon and the danger of Alexandria made his presence necessary in the latter city, where his influence was very great.

Amr was too wise to keep the whole of his army idle before Babylon during those seven months. He sent to Omar for reinforcements, and as soon as they came he despatched troops with all secrecy to the Fayoum, apparently to cut off possible reinforcements from the Imperial armies in that direction. However, the Arabs found the Byzantine troops ready to oppose them on the other side when they proposed to cross the river, and retreated, but managed to carry off a great number of sheep and goats. By this time the Byzantine generals in the Delta, Theodosius and Anastasius, had effected a junction with the troops at Babylon, by which the garrison was considerably strengthened. They also sent reinforcements to the Fayoum, but under command of one Leontius, who is described as being fat, lazy, and without practical experience of war. He left half his troops with the general who had succeeded to the command in the Fayoum (one had already fallen in fight with the

Moslems), and returned with the rest 'to report the condition of affairs' to his superiors.

For seven months Amr spent himself in unsuccessful attacks upon Babylon and in a fruitless siege. He posted his troops in three divisions—one at On or Heliopolis, to cut off reinforcements from the north; one on the north-east or landward side of Babylon; and one at Tendounyas (Greek: Tiantônios), a fort on the bank of the river to the south-west of Babylon, of which nothing remains but some ruined foundations, now at some distance from the river-bank.

Egypt looked on passively while her fate was thus decided by a combat between the armies of two alien nations in her midst. Side with the Imperial troops they would not; yet their consciences forbade the Egyptians openly to espouse the cause of the infidels. They left the issue, as their own historian implies, to the judgment of God.

That Babylon fell at last by fraud or stratagem, and not by assault or capitulation, is agreed on all hands; but it is hard to reconcile the conflicting statements of various writers, and say with certainty what did happen. The popular story is that George (the Makaukas) 'persuaded' the garrison to retire from the fortress to the island of Rhoda, and that the Arabs, having timely notice from the pagarch, at once occupied the fortress. That George would have done so if he could, and that he did give secret information to the Arabs of all the intended movements of the Byzantine general, there is no reason to doubt. But a study of the field of operations on the spot renders it impossible to believe that any Byzantine general could have been deluded into thinking the island of Rhoda a

better position for his garrison than the citadel of Babylon; and the undoubted evidence we possess of the loyalty of the Imperial troops renders it equally impossible to believe that they were willing agents in a treacherous desertion of their post. It seems better to reject the popular tradition and to accept instead the far more credible account given by John of Nikius.

His version is that by a feint Amr drew the greater part of the garrison out in an attack upon his troops. When the Imperial soldiers believed themselves to have driven off the besieging army, another body of Arab troops cut off their retreat from behind and surrounded them on all sides. A terrible battle took place, in which the Byzantines sold their lives dearly. Eventually a remnant of them broke through the ranks of the Moslems, and succeeded in reaching the bridge of boats and making good their retreat on the island of Rhoda. Only 300 soldiers were left in Babylon, and they hastily entrenched themselves in the citadel, leaving the town perforce to be occupied by the Arabs. Here they held out for some time longer; but at length, seeing the hopelessness of their position, they agreed to abandon all their war material and to withdraw from the citadel on condition that they were allowed to join the remnant of the army in Rhoda and to retreat to the north unmolested.

The pagarch had already made terms with Amr, which included all the non-Byzantine inhabitants of Egypt. He stipulated that the Egyptians should be left absolutely free as far as their religion was concerned, on condition of paying tribute and making no resistance to the occupation of the country by the Arabs. Amr swore to observe the proposed conditions, on the one

hand with the pagarch and the Egyptians, on the other with the general and the Byzantine troops.

On hearing of the fall of Babylon, Domentianus,[1] the general commanding in the Fayoum, left the chief city of that province with all his troops by night, and abandoned the whole district to the Arabs. They struck the river apparently at some point north of Gizeh, and fled towards Alexandria without any attempt to join forces with the Babylonian troops, whose idea appears to have been to retreat on Nikius,[2] and there concentrate their forces for a final stand. This, however, Amr gave them no time to do. He did, it seems, allow them to begin their retreat northwards without molestation, but no sooner were they well away than he started with a division of his army to follow and cut them off.

He first came up with the troops which had fled from the Fayoum under Domentianus, who showed no fight at all. Their general, hearing of the approach of the Moslems, flung himself into a small boat, and, setting sail for Alexandria, abandoned his soldiers to their fate. They were not slow to follow his example. They flung down their arms on the bank and scrambled for the boats. But the boatmen, sharing the panic, took flight also, and made the best of their way back to their native province. The Byzantine soldiers were left to the mercy of the Arabs, who surrounded them on the river and massacred them in

[1] This name is probably corrupt.

[2] Nikius is the Greek name not only of a city, but of a district called the Isle of Nikius, lying between two branches of the river. Both the district, which was a diocese, and the city had but one name also in Egyptian—Pshati. This older name is still preserved, but given to a comparatively modern hamlet in the same district—Ibshadi.

cold blood. It is said that only one man, Zacharias, who was 'a gallant warrior,' escaped to tell the tale.

On the other hand, the retreat of the Babylonian garrison deserves to be more widely celebrated than it is. They could only have been a few hundred men at most, and for three weeks they fought their way back to liberty against an enemy greatly superior in numbers and well mounted, through a population at the best indifferent and for the most part openly hostile. The militia, or irregular troops belonging to the Green and Blue factions, equally and openly refused to fight against the invaders. It must be remembered that little or nothing was known of the newcomers by the common folk, except the fact that, unlike the Byzantine oppressors, for whom hatred had become an hereditary passion in the breast of every Egyptian, they were a circumcised nation, who believed in one God and claimed to be religious reformers. Even without the treason of the pagarch the Egyptians were ready to welcome the Arabs, though before six months were over they began to realise how great their mistake had been. Meanwhile they held aloof, and remained passive spectators as the retreating Byzantines were pushed back inch by inch, as it were, fighting every day, and each day with diminished numbers, but without a thought of flight or surrender. At Khereu[1] they formed once more against the Arabs, and fought a pitched battle with the same ill-success. But they made good their retreat into Alexandria, and prepared to defend that city to the end.

Egypt was now, as John of Nikius expresses it, a prey

[1] Khereu, now El Kerioum, about twenty miles from Alexandria, whence it used to be considered the first halting-place.

to Satan. The Moslems spread over the delta, plundering, burning, and massacring wherever they went. The rival Egyptian nobles—Menas, chief of the Greens, and Cosmas, chief of the Blues—carried on, like Ishmaelites, a kind of guerilla warfare with Moslems, Byzantines, and each other; with anyone, in short, who came in their way. Amr, however, was gradually concentrating all his forces upon Alexandria. He left a sufficient garrison in Babylon, but broke up the great camp there [1] and moved the bulk of his army northwards. On his way he took the city of Nikius, with terrible slaughter, though no attempt was made at resistance. They put to the sword everyone they met, 'in the streets and in the churches, men, women, and children alike, sparing none.'

Heraclius had hastily despatched Cyrus to Alexandria to assist in the defence of that city, and by this time not only all the Byzantine troops in Egypt, but all the civilians of that nationality who could do so, forsaking their houses and goods, had collected within her walls for safety. There was little hope of safety, however; for Alexandria, like the rest of Egypt, was torn by internal dissensions, and unity of action was impossible.

The general in command was Theodore, and the only other Byzantine general remaining appears to have been the cowardly Domentianus. Among the civilians who had

[1] Then occurred—so runs the graceful legend which shines out from a background of treachery and bloodshed like a gleam of sunshine on a day of storm—a curious incident. When the order was given to strike the tents of the Moslem camp, some one told Amr that a pair of doves had built their nest on the roof of his tent, and that the young ones were not yet fledged. Amr at once gave orders that they should not be disturbed, and that his tent should be left standing as it was until his return from Alexandria.

taken refuge in Alexandria were two of high official rank; one of whom was a Monothelite Egyptian, named Menas, and the other a brother to the late Byzantine Patriarch George, whose name was Philiades, and who was probably of Greek extraction. Domentianus was at feud with both these men, and also with the Patriarch Cyrus, his own brother-in-law. Theodore was so greatly disgusted with the conduct of Domentianus that he refused to espouse his quarrel even against the Egyptian Menas. Domentianus therefore recruited on his own account all the Blues he could find in Alexandria for his protection, and Menas followed suit by enrolling all the Greens in the city under his private standard. Naturally it was not long before the two parties were at open war in the streets. It was with the greatest difficulty that Theodore suppressed the riots, and degraded Domentianus from his rank of general. Meanwhile the Arabs were closing round them on all sides, and in the autumn of the year 640 the siege had begun.

Though supplies were cut off by land, the sea was always open to the Alexandrians, and this accounts for the fact that, in spite of all her internal weakness, Alexandria held out against the Moslems for more than a year. At first they confidently expected succour from Constantinople, but the state of affairs there was not favourable to so costly and difficult an enterprise as the reconquest of Egypt. Heraclius was already stricken for death, and breathed his last in February 641. His eldest son Constantine was a hopeless invalid; and the incestuous marriage of Heraclius with his niece Martina, whose infant son he desired to share the throne with Constantine, had turned the whole power of the Church against him.

When the news of his death reached Alexandria, Theodore felt that all hope was gone. What his personal feelings about the succession were, we do not know; but Domentianus, Menas, and the Patriarch Cyrus agreed in desiring peace with the Moslems, and their united influence with the principal men of the city was too strong for him. Surrender became a question of time and terms.

The one opportunity that fate had put into their hands had been thrown away. On one occasion, we are told, Amr himself, with his second in command and his freedman, was taken prisoner by the Byzantines in a brilliant sally, and brought before Theodore. No one knew the name and rank of their prisoner; and when Amr by his haughty bearing was in danger of revealing himself, he was saved by the presence of mind of his freedman, who pressed forward and struck him on the mouth, bidding him hold his peace before his betters. Amr's second in command then took the conversation on himself, and contrived to persuade Theodore and Cyrus to send them 'back to Amr' with proposals for a truce. It was only the tumultuous rejoicings of the Moslem army at the unexpected return of their leaders which revealed to the Alexandrians the opportunity they had lost.

A desperate attack which left the Arabs for a short time masters of the city brought matters to a crisis. The Byzantines did, indeed, succeed in dislodging them again, owing to the rashness of the Moslem general, but it was felt vain to continue the struggle any longer. Cyrus was empowered to treat with Amr for the surrender of the city and the withdrawal of the Byzantines from Egypt.

The terms, if we may take them from John of Nikius, were as good as they could have expected. Eleven months'

cessation of hostilities was granted to allow all Byzantines living in Egypt, who desired to do so, to leave the country. A large sum of money was demanded as their ransom, and it was agreed that those who preferred to remain in the country should pay tribute in common with the native Egyptians to the Moslems. All the Byzantine troops were to withdraw with the honours of war, taking with them that which belonged to them. A solemn undertaking was given that they should never attempt to re-enter the country, and one hundred hostages—fifty from the army, and fifty civilians—were to be given till the engagement should be carried out.

On their part the Moslems promised that they would observe the same terms with the Byzantine Christians as they had already promised to the Egyptians; that they would take no church from them, nor attempt to interfere in their religious affairs. Curiously enough, the last clause of this treaty stipulated that the Jews should be allowed to live in peace in Alexandria. Probably the community had undertaken, on this condition, to find the greater part of the money which was paid to the Moslems.

Cyrus returned to the city and laid the proposed agreement before Theodore and the other chief men of the various parties; but there was some demur, and eventually they proposed to send an express to Constantinople and ask Constantine's sanction before concluding the agreement. It thus happened that the Moslem general and his army entered the town to receive the promised ransom before the surrender had been publicly announced. The population flew to oppose their entry, and a troop of soldiers was hastily despatched to restrain the mob and assure them that peace had been made by the Patriarch

Cyrus. On this the fury of the mob turned itself against Cyrus, and they clamoured for his life. Cyrus, who had plenty of courage, came out and faced the howling mob, who, instead of falling upon him, gradually quieted down to hear what he had to say. Then he made them an address which so worked upon their feelings that they were covered with shame, and offered willingly to bring their gold towards the payment of the ransom.

Thus, in the December of the year 641, Egypt passed under the Moslem yoke, from which—whether under Arab, Circassian, or Turk—she has never since been able to free herself, and which slowly but surely has crushed out her art, her civilisation, her learning, her religion, and well-nigh her very life; for of the four millions who make up the present population of Egypt[1] there are barely seven hundred thousand who can claim beyond dispute to be the true descendants of the ancient Egyptians and the enduring witnesses through centuries of persecution for the faith of Christ.

[1] Since the above was written, a new census has been taken (in 1897). The figures are not yet published, but it is currently reported that the total population is now over eight millions, of which about nine hundred thousand are acknowledged Christians of the National Church of Egypt

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE NEW MASTERS

. 642 IT was thirty years before the commencement of our present
. 358
[. 20 era that Egypt exchanged the yoke of the Ptolemies for that of the Romans. It was in the year 642 A.D. that the treason of a renegade native delivered her into the hands of the Arabs. Though Egypt had been more or less Christian since the preaching of St. Mark, her faith had been at variance with that of her masters during the greater part of these six centuries.

Until 323 the State religion of Egypt was pagan; from about 340 to 380 it was generally Arian; and after 451 it became, to give it the name used by Egyptian historians, Chalcedonian. The National Church of Egypt, whether right or wrong in her rejection of Chalcedon, fairly claims that she has remained ever the same—rejecting all later creeds than that of Nicea, and refusing to acknowledge any Pope but her own. Since the conquest of the country by the Arabs the State religion has always been Moslem, and has gradually absorbed into itself the greater part of the Egyptian nation. Still there are—not seven thousand, but more than seven hundred thousand, who have not bowed

the knee to Baal; and with a pathetic pride those who have remained faithful call themselves, not the Church, but the nation.

It has been a popular notion for some centuries that Europe owes to the Arabs her science and much of her learning. In one sense this is partly true, for what they were able to assimilate in course of time from the ancient civilisations which they destroyed they passed on in a more or less imperfect form to Europe; but a careful study of history shows us that they originated nothing of value. The 'Arabs' who in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries invented the Arab art and architecture which spread through the Saracen world were Greek, Armenian, and Circassian rulers who employed Egyptian architects and developed existing styles. The very names which used to be quoted as proof of an Arabic origin are found by modern research to be Greek or Egyptian, pronounced or written as if they were Arabic. (For instance, 'alchemy' is of 'El Khemi' or Egypt.) In Egypt their physicians, their architects, their engineers, and their artisans were all natives of the country, and for some centuries Christians as well. Even now any place of trust, or any post where superior intelligence is needed, is filled by a Copt, and generally by a Christian Copt. This may appear a startling assertion to make, but it will be borne out by anyone who will take the trouble to study the history of Egypt under the Moslems, and who will put aside popular prejudice in examining her condition at this day. The Arabs, and after them the Turks, were splendid soldiers, and had some virtues which the Egyptians would have done well to emulate; but at heart they were, and have remained, barbarian. Their idea of government is

personal aggrandisement, and their idea of civilisation personal luxury.[1]

In the outset of their career the Arabs, however, were far superior to personal luxury. Their food was of the simplest, their couch of the roughest, and they despised the refinements which they afterwards so coarsely imitated. Amr was almost aghast at the wealth and splendour of Alexandria, and wrote to Omar in extravagant terms of his conquest. But though he writes much of the baths and the shops, he says nothing of the books or the works of art which still adorned that city, and everyone knows the story of the library. Gibbon throws doubt upon its destruction, but his only good argument against it is the silence of the contemporary writers, and this is by no means conclusive. It was not till they had lived among the Egyptians for a century or two that the Arabs realised what they had done. At the time it must have seemed to them a most trifling incident. One of the most learned of the Alexandrian scholars of that day—one hesitates to call him John Philopompus, because it seems almost impossible that he can have lived so long—sought an interview with the barbarian conqueror, and entreated that the books of the Alexandrian library should not be dispersed or destroyed, but might be delivered to his guardianship. Amr, we learn, was inclined to grant his request, but inquired with curiosity what he could possibly want with the musty old parchments. The scholar replied indignantly, but incautiously, that some of them were worth all the riches of Alexandria put together. Amr replied that, if so, he was

[1] The pure-bred Arab in Egypt, represented by the present Bedouin tribes, is still superior to personal luxury; but the reigning Arabs of the eighth to the eleventh century degenerated almost as quickly as their Turkish successors.

not empowered to give them to the first man who asked for them, and referred the question to Omar.

The Kaliph's decision was simple. 'If these books contain nothing more than that which is written in the book of God (*el Koran*), they are useless; if they contain anything contrary to the sacred book, they are pernicious; in either case, burn them.'

It is written that the books sufficed for six months' fuel for the public baths of Alexandria.[1]

While engaged in arranging the affairs of Alexandria the Moslem general received a strange embassy. The monks of Nitria and Scetis had mixed but little with politics for some time, and we do not hear of their taking part in any of the petty civil wars and futile rebellions of the sixth century. But the tidings that the Byzantines had been driven out of the land by a new power, whose very name was unknown to them, but who—so the rumour ran—was favourable to the Egyptians and to their National Church, drew them once more from their desert retreat. In solemn procession they came, barefoot and roughly clad, but with all the dignity of an independent state, to treat with the new conqueror. They demanded a guarantee of their safety and liberties, and the return of their rightful Patriarch, Benjamin, to Alexandria. Amr must by this time have been well aware of the importance of conciliating the National Church. He at once gave the monks the charter they desired—which Makrizi says that he saw still preserved in one of their monasteries eight hundred years afterwards—and wrote a letter to the Patriarch Benjamin to assure him that he was henceforth free to

[1] It is true that the ancient library of Alexandria was burnt by Julius Cæsar, but it was shortly after replaced by the rival library of Pergamus.

show himself as openly as he pleased. Benjamin lost no time in returning to Alexandria, where he was received with great joy. The Byzantine Patriarch, Cyrus, did not long survive the downfall of all his hopes. He was taken ill on Palm Sunday, and died in three days. A man named Peter was elected—whether by the Court or by the bishops of the Byzantine Church in Egypt is not stated—in his place; but, finding that Benjamin was recognised as the only true Patriarch by Amr, he quietly abandoned his post, and withdrew to Constantinople with the Byzantine refugees. For sixty years after his death no attempt was made to set up a Greek Patriarch in Egypt.

From Alexandria Amr sent an expedition into Pentapolis, but did not attempt to occupy the country, which, since the Arab conquest, has practically ceased to form part of the Egyptian dominions. He contented himself with carrying off an enormous booty, consisting chiefly of cattle, and a great number of captives, who were reduced to slavery. After this he returned to Babylon, and began to build a new town for himself and his followers, a little to the north of the older city. For, barbarian as he was, the recorded actions of Amr show him to have been not merely a successful soldier, but a statesman; and he fully realised the importance of keeping his army separate from the inhabitants of Babylon and Memphis. He exacted enormous sums from the conquered people, but for the rest he let them alone, and governed them through men of their own nation. In his time the promise which he had given of religious liberty was strictly kept; justice, even if it strongly resembled tyranny, was dealt alike to Melkite and Monophysite, and the native Egyptians were ready to acknowledge that they were better off under the infidel

than they had been under 'the Chalcedonians.' Amr had the Nilometers from Philæ to Rhoda put into sorely needed repair, and gave orders that Trajan's Canal, since then known as El Khalig,[1] should be cleared out and prolonged. He regulated and simplified the administration of justice, but permitted the Egyptians to be judged by their own compatriots, and the decisions of the Moslem cadi were only binding on the army of occupation. He built the first mosque in Egypt on the site where the present mosque of Amr, though more than once rebuilt, still stands; but all the columns needed for it were brought at a later date from the churches of Memphis—a precedent which has been followed ever since, the Arabs having no faculty for stone-carving, though in time they learned how to cut a plain shaft with a mere block for base and capital.

While Amr was thus usefully employed in Egypt, the Caliph Omar was assassinated, and one of the first acts of his successor, Osman, was to recall Amr from the scene of his successes, and nominate his brother (the same Abdallah who, according to some authorities, had served in Egypt, and was the first to enter Nubia) Viceroy of Egypt. Abdallah was appointed in 647 (A.H. 25), but cared little to enter on his new duties. He increased the tribute payable by the Egyptians, but thought more of extending the Arab conquests than of governing well the countries which had submitted to him. One expedition had already been sent into Nubia, or the country south of Assuan, and the first thought of the new governor when he went to Egypt was to avenge its comparative failure.

[1] This ancient canal is now being filled up (1897) by order of the English sanitary authorities. It is not known yet whether the Pharaonic festival of the Nile will be discontinued in consequence.

CHAPTER II

THE SOUDAN EXPEDITION

A.D. 653 M. 369 H. 31 THOUGH the Roman or Byzantine rulers of Egypt had never really established themselves for any length of time beyond the limit of Philæ, the bloodless conquest of paganism by Christianity in all these southern countries had been going on steadily for centuries. The Christian religion at the time of the Arab invasion was professed not only in the valley of the Nile, but far down to the southern frontier of Abyssinia, on the eastern side of the African continent. All these countries acknowledged the head of the National Church of Egypt as their Pope. There were a number of politically independent Christian kingdoms between Assuan and Abyssinia, which, it must be confessed, fought a good deal among themselves; but on the whole, as even Mohammedan historians acknowledge, this part of Africa was never so well settled, well governed, and well cultivated as at this time. Not even Egypt herself has suffered so terribly and her civilisation been so effectually destroyed by the Arab and Turkish invasions as these kingdoms, which under the influence of Christianity had but just begun to emerge from the chaotic condition which we have learnt to regard as the normal state of the African interior.

Opinions differ as to whether Amr marched in person

against Nubia in 643 (A.H. 21) or sent an army under the command of one of his Emirs. In the 'Book of the Conquests,' by Ahmed el Koufi, the author writes as follows:—

> Amru ebn Aas was in Egypt when he received a letter from Omar, commanding him to march on Nubia and conquer this country, the country of the Berbers; of Barkah; of Tripoli in the west; and all the provinces belonging to them —Tandjah, Afrahenjah, until Sous el Aksa.

Amr, the writer adds, had intended to send the sum of ten thousand dinars, which he had just received as tribute from the Alexandrians, to Omar; but on receiving these orders he divided them instead among the soldiers of his army, and after making the necessary preparations sent Abdallah ebn Said into Nubia with 20,000 (?) men.

Abdallah allowed his soldiers unbridled licence; they spread themselves over the country, murdering and pillaging on all sides. After the first surprise, however, the Nubians gathered together for the defence of their country to the number of 100,000 (?), and attacked the Moslems with so much courage that, says their historian, 'they had never experienced so terrible a shock.' One of the principal Moslem warriors told the writer afterwards that he had 'never seen men aim their arrows with such skill and precision as these Nubians.' He declared that during the war it was not uncommon for a Nubian to shout to a Moslem to know in which particular member he preferred to be struck; and if the Arab mockingly answered the challenge and mentioned any particular part of his person, he instantly received an arrow in the place indicated, without fail. But 'they preferred to aim at the eyes of their enemies.'

In the end the victory remained with the Arabs, but they gained little by their success at first, not even a single prisoner, since the Nubians fought to the death. The Moslems judged it expedient to retreat across the frontier, and it might have been long before they ventured again into a country where they had met with so stubborn a resistance, had it not been for the rashness of the Nubians themselves, who in the following years made more than one expedition into Egypt, and did much damage. The Arabs after the death of Omar were greatly hindered by internal dissensions, and Amr was recalled from Egypt by the new Kaliph, while the new governor, Abdallah ebn Said, did not go near the place for some time. Had the Egyptians combined with the Nubians to expel the invaders at this juncture, there is little doubt that they could have succeeded with ease. But the Heaven-sent leader of men, so greatly needed, did not appear, and the opportunity was lost. The Nubians exhausted themselves in objectless raids, and in the year 653 (A.H. 31) Abdallah, who had now taken over the government of Egypt, marched again into Nubia with the resolute purpose of subduing that troublesome country.

He penetrated as far as Dongola (the Dongola of the seventh century was nearly a hundred miles south of the present town) and laid siege to that city. He constructed a stone-throwing machine, the like of which had never been seen among the Nubians, and directed it, either by accident or design, against the principal church of the city, to such good purpose that in a short time it lay in ruins.

The fall of their great church seems to have intimidated the Nubians as nothing else could have done, and their king (whose name is variously given as Kalidourat, Bali-

daroub, and Kalidourdat—none of which versions are likely to be correct) opened negotiations for peace.

Eventually a formal treaty was concluded between the Arabs and the Nubians, in which the former agreed not to invade Nubia, and to give aid, if called upon, in the wars of the latter. In return the Nubians were to allow a mosque to be built in Dongola for those Arabs who might desire to settle there, and to see that no harm was done to it, and no Moslem annoyed or hindered in the exercise of his religion. They were even to hold themselves responsible for the cleaning and lighting of this mosque. Moslems were to be allowed free entry into the country, but no fugitive slave from the Arabs in Egypt was to be given shelter.

The worst feature of the treaty was the clause which laid the foundation of the *Arab* slave trade—so different an affair from the domestic servitude which has existed from time immemorial in Oriental countries. Three hundred and sixty slaves from the interior, of both sexes, among whom should be found no old man or old woman or child below the age of puberty, were to be brought every year to the Governor of Assuan, for the Iman. As may be imagined, it was not long before forty slaves were required as a backsheesh for the Governor of Egypt in addition to the three hundred and sixty forwarded to the reigning Iman. Presents of wine, wheat, barley, and fine robes for the king were to be sent in exchange; but occasionally the Mohammedan governor for the time being had scruples about the wine. Another question of conscience subsequently arose—whether, so long as the tribute of slaves was duly paid, it was just to take slaves from Nubia beyond the stipulated

number. The Mohammedan judges to whom the question was referred made no difficulties in deciding that all slaves taken in the wars which constantly prevailed in these countries—which, indeed, were bound to prevail for the purpose of obtaining slaves for the tribute—and all those who had been reduced to a condition of slavery in their own country, were legitimate trade.

It is also recorded by Moslem authorities that one of the principal inhabitants of Nubia presented a *mumba*, or pulpit, to the new mosque of Amr at Fostat, and sent Victor, his own carpenter, who was a native of Denderah, to fix it in its place.

The Egyptians were not slow to feel the difference between the government of Amr and that of Abdallah, and in the year 657 they showed unmistakable signs of preparing for a general rebellion. Abdallah left the country to consult the Kaliph Osman; but a conspiracy had already been formed by the Arabs themselves against Osman, and Abdallah was hardly out of Egypt before that country was taken possession of by one of the principal conspirators, whom the army of occupation appear to have readily received. Osman hastily promised all that was demanded of him by the Arab rebels, and in particular the request of the Egyptian party—that Abdallah should no longer be their governor. But secret instructions having been found on one of Osman's messengers that the new Governor of Egypt, Mohammed ebn Bekr, was to be assassinated as soon as he reached the country, the indignant Arabs appear to have made common cause with the Egyptians against the Kaliph. They marched upon Medina, killed Osman, and elected Ali in his place (A.H. 36). In the commotions which followed, Egypt was left without

a governor; two were named, but were dismissed or died without entering the country, and the appointment of Mohammed ebn Bekr was finally confirmed in A.H. 37.

The Moslems, however, were still disunited. Ali reigned in Persia, Arabia, and Egypt; but Syria was in the hands of Moawiyah, and Amr was on his side. In the year 660 (A.H. 41) the assassination of Ali and his son Hussein, with the abdication of his elder son Hassan, left Moawiyah sole master of the Moslem world.

CHAPTER III

ABD EL AZIZ

A.D. 660
A.M. 456
A.H. 41

MOAWIYAH is the first Kaliph of the dynasty of the Ommyades, so called after Ommyah, the great-grandfather of Moawiyah. Egypt had reason to rejoice in his accession, for he at once restored the governor whom they had respected as well as feared—Amr ebn Aas. He died, however, about a year afterwards, and Moawiyah sent one of his younger brothers, Atbah, to govern Egypt. Atbah dying within the year, another man was appointed and speedily dismissed; so that Egypt had three successive governors within as many years. Finally, in 664 (A.H. 45) Mosleima was appointed Governor of Egypt, and remained there till his death in 681 (A.H. 62). During these seventeen years and the three years of his successor, Said ebn Zezid, Egypt remained in comparative peace, though in all other parts of the Saracen Empire there were constant dissensions and civil wars, owing to the struggles of the different Moslem leaders for supreme power.

About a year before the accession of Moawiyah, Benjamin, the National Patriarch of Egypt, died at a ripe age. He had laboured unremittingly to encourage and strengthen the members of the National Church, to refound the monasteries which had been pillaged and destroyed in the recent commotions, and to reform the

morals of his people. He had sent a new Metropolitan to Abyssinia, and with him a monk named Tekla Haimanot, of great sanctity, who is held in reverence there to this day, and credited with being the first founder of monasticism in that country. Benjamin's last act was to consecrate a new church to St. Macarius in the desert settlement of Nitria.

His successor was a man named Agatho, who had for some time acted as his coadjutor, and who reigned alone eighteen years. He suffered a good deal from the oppressions of a certain Theodosius, who belonged to the Greek Church—as the remains of the Orthodox Byzantine Church must from this time be called in Egypt—and used the power which he had obtained from the Moslem authorities to levy heavy contributions from the Egyptian Church. At one time, indeed, it is said that Theodosius gave orders that if the Patriarch showed himself beyond the precincts of his own house in Alexandria he should be stoned. There must have been some personal enmity between the two, for on the death of Agatho, Theodosius, without apparently any show of legal right, affixed seals to everything in the Patriarchal residence; so that the household was in actual distress, and compelled to appeal to the Moslem authorities, who immediately redressed their grievance.

Theodosius died soon afterwards, but the feud did not die with him. The new Patriarch was John of Sebennytos (Samanhoud), and not long after his accession he gave offence to the Emir of Egypt by omitting to send him compliments and presents on his entry into the province. It is recorded that, so far from intentional rudeness, John was busy with the affairs of his people, and had not even heard of the governor's arrival; but a brother-in-law of

Theodosius took occasion to suggest that John was rich, and could well afford a fine.

The Emir, whose name is given differently by different writers, but who was probably Said ebn Yezid, sent for the Patriarch and demanded a fine of one hundred thousand pieces of gold. In vain the Patriarch protested that he had not so much as a hundred drachmæ of his own. He refused to save himself by yielding up the Church funds entrusted to him, and was delivered to the torture, his feet being placed in a vessel of hot coals. He remained steadfast, and was only saved by the sudden illness of the Emir's wife, which struck the Emir with superstitious terror. Still the Patriarch was kept in prison, until the Egyptians promised a ransom of ten thousand pieces of gold for the liberty of their Patriarch, and he was set free. It is recorded of him that the day on which he was let out of prison, being Maundy Thursday, he went straight to the cathedral to take part in the ceremony of washing the beggars' feet, and celebrated the Holy Communion before returning to his house.

It was either during the reign of this Patriarch or that of his predecessor that the great church of St. Mark was rebuilt in Alexandria. Probably both took part in the work, as both are credited with the restoration. Except in the case of the Patriarch himself, whose sufferings have just been related, the Egyptian Church does not seem to have been oppressed during this time: but the country suffered from a grievous famine for three years, which taxed its resources heavily.

In the year 683 (A.H. 64) the Kaliph Yezid died, and his son, Moawiyah II., only reigned six weeks after him. There were two claimants for the Kaliphate—Abdallah

ebn Zobeir and Merwan ebn el Hakim, who had been proclaimed at Damascus. Zobeir sent his agent, Abd-er-Rahman, to seize upon Egypt, always the most important province of the Eastern Empire, whether Saracen or Byzantine. The Governor of Egypt who held for the Ommyades was expelled; but hardly had Abd-er-Rahman established himself in Egypt, when he received news that Merwan himself had invaded the country to enforce his claims. Abd-er-Rahman hastily surrounded the new city of Fostat with a deep fosse, and then marched out to give battle. The two armies met at Ein el Shamsȣ (Heliopolis), and after an obstinate struggle victory declared for Merwan. Abd-er-Rahman sought safety in flight.

Merwan took possession of the Moslem capital (Fostat) and nominated his son, Abd el Aziz, Governor of Egypt. On the day of his entry the son of the great conqueror Amr ebn Aas died in his house at Fostat. He had lived a retired life, taking no part in politics, but so disturbed was the state of affairs in the city that the Arabs dared not give his father's son a public funeral. His body was hastily interred within the precincts of his own house.

Merwan left Egypt in the same year, and had hardly reached Syria before he died suddenly of the plague. The struggle continued for ten years between the rivals for the Kaliphate; but Abd el Aziz held Egypt for his brother, Abd el Melek, and kept the country in subjection during his lifetime. On the whole his government was good, but, though he treated the people with more or less justice, he systematically oppressed the National Church, rightly recognising that in this organisation and its head, the Egyptian Patriarch, he had to reckon with his only formidable rival. When the Patriarch John died, he sent peremptory orders

that the election of his successor should take place in Babylon, which now formed the southern suburb of Fostat, instead of at Alexandria.[1]

The man chosen was Isaac, a monk of the convent of St. Macarius. Shortly after his accession, Isaac received messengers sent from one of the kingdoms of Southern Nubia, or the Soudan, detailing a grievous state of things in their country. They had hardly any bishops left, they said, and greatly needed them; but the king of the northern kingdom (though nominally a Christian) had allied himself with the Saracens, and made constant war on his southern neighbour —probably to collect slaves for the yearly tribute. Indeed, the writers feared that even if bishops were sent to them, they would not be allowed to pass in safety.

Isaac wrote at once to the king of the northern kingdom, entreating him to give a safe-conduct for the desired bishops, and pointing out to him that he must answer for it before God, if by his fault the Churches of the southern kingdom remained deserted. What expressions he may have used about the Moslems in this letter we know not, but it was represented to Abd el Aziz that Isaac was intriguing with the southern kingdom against the Moslem yoke, and the Emir promptly arrested the Patriarch and condemned him to be beheaded. Abd el Aziz was persuaded, however, to delay the execution of the sentence till the messengers could be brought back and the incriminating letters shown to him. The friends of Isaac in this emergency adroitly substituted other letters of the same tenor, but

[1] After this date the election of the Patriarch generally took place at Babylon, but the consecration was always performed in the Church of the Angels at Alexandria until the end of the eleventh century. The Patriarch-elect promised to pay from his official revenues an annual sum to the clergy of Alexandria for the maintenance of their churches.

couched in language absolutely void of offence to the most jealous Moslem, for those which the messengers had in their charge; and by this device the life of the Patriarch was saved.

Shortly afterwards a malignant epidemic broke out at Fostat, and the Emir hastily removed from the town. He went to Helwan (not the modern town of that name, which under the patronage of a later Moslem ruler has grown up round the sulphur baths, but an earlier Helwan by the river), where he fixed his residence, and changed a small country village into a handsomely built town. Here he built mosques and planted palm-trees, and even granted permission to the Christians to adorn his town with two churches for the sake of their architectural beauty. Much of his material he probably brought across the river from Memphis, which was already almost deserted. Towards the end of his reign Abd el Aziz built himself also a palace at Fostat; indeed, in reference to his passion for building he is called by the Eastern historians a second Pharaoh.

In 688 (A.H. 69–70) the Patriarch Isaac died, and the first choice of the Egyptians fell upon John, Abbot of Nitria, who was therefore brought by the bishops and a large number of the most influential Egyptians to Abd el Aziz, in order that the latter might confirm the election, since it was clearly understood now by the Egyptians that, unless this compliment were duly paid to the Moslem authorities on the election of a Patriarch, fine or persecution would be the result.

Among the followers of John was a monk named Simon, who was a Syrian by birth and greatly respected by the Nitrian community, where he dwelt. One of the bishops was overheard to remark that he was the right

man for the Patriarchate, and the Emir seized on this pretext to declare that the election was not unanimous, while at the same time he tauntingly asked if there were no Egyptian in the country of sufficient merit to be elected to the Patriarchate. The Egyptians present respectfully intimated that they had chosen an Egyptian, but that the will of God and the Emir's pleasure must decide the matter. Abd el Aziz naturally preferred the Syrian, and, in spite of the protest of Simon himself, he was elected Patriarch instead of John, who appears to have yielded with alacrity in favour of his attendant. The episode was creditable to both, for Simon's first act was to appoint John his coadjutor, and, during the three years which he lived, to follow his advice in all matters.

Simon is reverenced by the Egyptian Church as a saint, and they even attribute to him the power of working miracles. He kept his monastic rule as strictly as if he were still in his convent, and never tasted flesh. He was zealous for the purity of the national religion, and appointed a superintendent of the Egyptian monasteries to reform the abuses which had crept in among them. The man to whom this important office was entrusted was John of Nikius, whose zeal was beyond question, and who is also known as a historian. Unfortunately his original history has long been lost, and all our knowledge of it is derived from an Ethiopic translation, manifestly full of errors, which was made, according to the very precise note of the translator, an Egyptian monk living in Abyssinia, 'in the year of the world 7594, in the year of Alexander 1947, in the year of our Lord 1594, in the year of the Martyrs 1318, in the year of the Hegira 980, or 1010 by their lunar computation.'

This Ethiopic translation, moreover, is not made from the original work, which was written by John partly in Greek and partly in Egyptian (Coptic), but from an Arabic abridgment of unknown date. Allowing, however, for all these drawbacks, that part of John's chronicle which deals with the events of his own century must always have a certain value, in spite of the *lacunæ* which are found in the most important parts of the narrative. Nikius, of which island John was bishop, is situated in the Delta, between two branches of the Nile, in the district of Menouf. Its Egyptian name was Pshati ; the Arabs call the district Benon Nasr, which is their translation of the Greek name Nikius. The Egyptian name Pshati still survives in one small hamlet called by the Arabs Ibshadi.[1]

It is not recorded how long John held his post of inspector of the monasteries, but his zeal eventually brought him into trouble. A monk convicted of adultery was so severely scourged by the bishop's orders that he died on the tenth day, and on this occasion the smouldering discontent broke into open revolt. The bishops made a formal complaint to the Patriarch of the cruelty with which John

[1] Professor Amelineau supposes that this hamlet marks the site of the ancient city of Nikius or Pshati, but has been misled by the name. The present Ibshadi is an entirely modern village, as I convinced myself by personal inspection. There is not a mound near, not even a scar upon the earth like those which the most entirely destroyed towns of Egypt leave upon the face of the earth, far less any fragment of antiquity remaining. A Coptic priest of the district told me that the ancient site of Nikius was marked by the modern town of Zawiet-Razin, and some years afterwards I was able to make an expedition to the place. Zawiet-Razin is certainly within the limits of the area of the ancient Isle of Nikius, and as certainly is the site of an ancient city. I found the remains of a Pharaonic temple, and the remains of pillars, etc., which had belonged to a Christian church. More than that I had not time to see.

discharged his office, and he was accordingly deprived; it seems probable that he was deposed from his bishopric as well. He was already in advanced age, and did not survive his disgrace many years.

During the reign of this Patriarch a question arose in the Egyptian Church about divorce. A large party had become infected by the lax standard prevailing amongst the Mohammedans, and declared, like them, that it was lawful to divorce a wife at pleasure. On being excommunicated by their bishops the members of this party appealed to the Mohammedan Emir. Instead, however, of espousing their cause, as they had confidently expected, Abd el Aziz sent for all the bishops, not only of the Egyptian Church, but of every sect in Egypt, and desired them to hold a Church Council, and settle the matter formally among themselves.

To the credit of Egyptian Christianity it is recorded that sixty-four bishops—of whom the greater part belonged to the National Church, but among whom were found Gaianites and Barsanuphians, as well as Chalcedonians or Melkite bishops—met together at Babylon in 695, and discussed their common affairs without any outbreak of ill-feeling between the different parties. But even while the Council was sitting, news arrived which had a melancholy effect on the fortunes of the Egyptian Church. A revolution had occurred in Constantinople, Justinian had been deposed, and a successful general named Leontius had made himself master of the Imperial throne. Believing the power of the Greek Empire to be seriously lessened by this, the Moslem governor was not so careful to conciliate the Churches in Egypt, and the Christian annalists complain of persecution, which seems, however, to have been

confined to isolated acts of oppression and confiscation. The Patriarch, of course, was always a mark for suspicion and extortion, and it was not long before Simon fell under the displeasure of the authorities.

A priest arrived from India to request Simon to consecrate a bishop for his country, who would return with him. This India was probably India proper, as, though Ethiopia and Abyssinia were both often called by that name, the request was not likely to come from them. It was barely twelve years since Isaac had sent a supply of bishops to the Soudanese kingdoms, and this applicant seems to have come from another and more distant community. But Abyssinia never sent for her *bishops* to the Mother Church of Egypt, only for her Metropolitan, who then ordained in Abyssinia his own bishops. It is probable therefore that the priest was sent from some Christian community in Malabar or other part of India proper.

Simon told the priest that it would be necessary to obtain first the consent of the Emir, and undertook to do so. But meanwhile Theodore, the Gaianite bishop, who perhaps regarded Simon's caution as unworthy truckling, and was not sorry to advance the interests of his own sect, obtained the confidence of the Indian priest, and took upon himself to ordain a bishop for India, who departed, taking with him two priests besides the Indian. They had accomplished twenty days' journey, when they were arrested as spies, and, though the Indian managed to escape, the others were taken before the Kaliph himself, Abd el Melek, who reigned at Damascus. Abd el Melek, regarding their journey as evidence of a conspiracy between the Christians of Egypt and India against the Moslem dominion, condemned the unhappy Egyptians to lose their hands and

feet. He then sent them back to their own country with a letter blaming his brother for allowing these spies to leave the country, and ordered that the Patriarch of Egypt should receive two hundred lashes for his presumption in despatching them without leave, and should, moreover, pay a heavy fine.

Simon protested his innocence in vain, but succeeded in obtaining a respite of three days for the production of his witness, the Indian priest. On learning of the Patriarch's danger, this man, with considerable courage, came forward to give evidence in his favour. Simon was pardoned, but the Indian was thrown into prison, and the unhappy Theodore was crucified. The Christian writers assert that several attempts were made by the Moslems to poison Simon, which at length succeeded, after he had reigned over the Church fourteen years. The bishops did not venture immediately to name a successor, and for some time the affairs of the Church were administered by Gregory, Bishop of Kais.[1] In 703 (A.H. 84) they elected Alexander, who was also a monk from the Natron valley. At the time of his accession the government of the country was left almost entirely in the hands of Asabah, eldest son of Abd el Aziz, who used his power to oppress the Christians sorely. One of his principal intimates was Benjamin, a man who had been a deacon in the Church, but was now an apostate. From him Asabah learned how best to oppress and reduce to impotence the Christian population. One of his measures was to impose a poll-tax of a gold piece on every monk in the country, and to order a census to be taken of their number. At the same time he issued a

[1] A town of great antiquity, called Cynopolis by the Greeks. It still exists under the name of El Kais, in the province of Minieh.

decree that no one in future was to take the monastic vows upon himself without leave from the Moslem governor, and he imposed an extra tax of two thousand gold pieces on the bishops.

The Egyptian writers see in the circumstances of his death a special manifestation of the wrath of God. He had entered one of the churches at Helwan while the bishop was there, and, seeing a picture of the Virgin and Child, asked the bishop what it was intended to represent. On receiving the explanation he spat upon the picture, swearing that when his time came he would exterminate Christianity from the country. The same night he was troubled by a terrible dream of judgment, which he related the next day to his father, Abd el Aziz. Almost immediately he was attacked by a violent fever, and died after a few hours' illness. His father did not long survive him. He had governed Egypt more than twenty years, during which time the country had at least been free from the horrors of war; and the care of the bridges and canals, so necessary to her prosperity, had not been neglected.

CHAPTER IV

THE TYRANNY OF TWELVE EMIRS

A.D. 705
A.M. 421
A.H. 86

ABD EL AZIZ was succeeded by a son of the Kaliph, named Abdallah. During this man's reign the Christians, who had hoped for relief on the appointment of a new Emir, found themselves worse off than ever. He invented new tortures for them, and it is said that one of his amusements was to invite a Christian to dinner and then cause his head to be struck off as he sat down. The Patriarch Alexander, desiring to give no just cause of offence, went to pay him the usual complimentary visit on his accession, and was immediately thrown into prison, while three thousand pieces of gold were demanded as his ransom. The Christians who were employed at Court—for their illiterate rulers, however much they may have hated them, have always found it impossible to dispense altogether with their services—used all their influence to obtain some abatement of the sum demanded, but in vain. The most they could do was to procure his release on bail. A deacon named George (Girghis) gave a bond to produce him again in two months, with the money required for his ransom. The unfortunate Patriarch was compelled to set out on a begging tour throughout the Delta; but his people made up the sum, and, apparently regarding this as a proof that the Christians were better off than he had

thought, Abdallah trebled the tribute to be paid by them for that year. The persecution became general all over Egypt, and many Christians in despair professed Islam. Others readily offered themselves to suffer for the faith, but not even the dead among them were allowed to be buried till a special burial fee had been paid to the Government. Churches were destroyed, many who could afford to do so left the country, and many died of starvation.

Abdallah died, but Korah ebn Sherik, who succeeded him, continued the persecution of the Christians as fiercely as his predecessor. He demanded from the Patriarch the same backsheesh as he had given Abdallah—three thousand pieces of gold. Alexander protested his poverty, declaring that the former sum had only been raised by begging, and that more was not forthcoming. Korah contemptuously told him that he might go and collect it in Upper Egypt this time, if he liked, but the money must be forthcoming. Alexander went to Upper Egypt, accompanied by his treasurer and his secretary. The people everywhere received him with great joy, and gave what they could. Alexander left his two attendants in the Thebaid to collect money while he himself made his way southward to the Nubian frontier.

It happened that one of the recluses, of whom the Thebaid was full, had lately desired two of his disciples to prepare him a new cell in another place. In digging the foundations for this cell the monks discovered a buried treasure, consisting of no less than five chests full of old Greek coins. Temptation proved too much for the disciples, and they agreed to keep one for themselves, showing the four to their master as the whole of their find. The recluse looked upon it as a direct gift of God to the sore need of His Church, and commanded that the money should

at once be sent to the Patriarch. As he had not yet returned from the south country, the four chests were delivered for him to his treasurer and secretary. Instead of keeping it for their Patriarch these two men concealed the fact of its arrival from him, and applied the money to their own uses. Their styles of living, however, and perhaps the archaic character of some of the coin they passed, at length aroused the suspicion of the Moslem authorities. One of them was arrested, and put to the torture till he confessed the theft and pointed out the hiding-place of the four chests.

By this means the money, instead of helping the Patriarch out of his difficulty, only brought him into fresh trouble. The governor refused to believe the story of the treasure trove concealed by the monks, and made a raid on the great church and the bishop's palace in Alexandria in search of the riches which he insisted the Patriarch must really possess. The Patriarch was arrested and brought in chains before the governor, who upbraided him with perjury when he had sworn to his poverty, and threatened him with death. Finally, he let him go again with renewed injunctions to procure the money, but two years of effort only procured a third part of the sum. Moreover, Korah declared that there must be a private mint [1] at the Patriarchate, and sent a band of soldiers to search the premises. Though they could find nothing of the sort, they took the opportunity to scourge the unfortunate Patriarch till the blood flowed. Incidentally we learn that all the plate used in the churches had been taken; for when the Alexandrian ecclesiastics asked for a sum of

[1] It was only in the preceding reign of Abd el Melek that the Arabs had begun to coin money of their own.

money usually paid them by the Patriarch at Easter, he represented to them that while he was reduced to celebrate the holy mysteries on glass and wood he could not be supposed to have any money left. Some slight relief, however, was afforded to the unhappy Church by the appointment of a Copt to collect the tribute demanded from them, and a short period of comparative peace followed, of which Alexander took advantage to make a regular pastoral visitation.

It was not long, however, before Korah resumed his persecution, and, finding that thousands were endeavouring to escape by emigration, he appointed an officer for the express purpose of preventing this, and putting to death those who were taken in the act. A pestilence broke out in the country, which added to the misery of the population, but at least it removed Korah, since he shortly caught it and died.

His successor was only in power three months, and even during this short respite we learn that many of the churches in Alexandria were ruined by the forcible removal of their pillars of porphyry and precious marbles, which were coveted by the Moslems for the ornamentation of their mosques.[1] The next governor was Asama ebn

[1] It is a common remark of the modern tourist that the Christians had done the same in their time, and stolen the pillars from the pagan temples for their churches. It is superfluous to assure anyone who has studied the history of Christian Egypt that this remark is untrue. The early Christians of Egypt were particularly careful to use nothing that had served for the worship of the old Egyptian gods. Even when necessity drove them to build their churches inside the strong walls of a deserted temple, they covered the hieroglyphs with plaster, and set up their own pillars in the enclosure. The only instance known to me where pillars from a pagan temple have been used in the construction of a church is at Luxor, where *in the present century* some old pillars from one of the ruins were presented by a governor to the modern Coptic church. Ancient inscribed stones are occasionally found built into the

Yezid, who carried on the relentless persecution of the Christian Egyptians. Especially he disapproved of monks, and, to ensure their payment of the extra tax imposed upon them, he directed that each monk, on paying his tribute money, should be given as receipt an iron ring, on which the name of his convent and the year of the Hegira in which he had paid the money were engraved. This ring or fetter he was always to wear on his right hand; any monk found without it, either in or outside his convent, was put to death by beheading or by the bastinado. Christians were freely mutilated, blinded, and tortured, and the Emir declared himself the heir of all who were put to death for their religion. The emigration of the Christians, in spite of the penalties attached to it, increased to such an extent that at last Asama issued an order that no Egyptian should travel, even from one part of the country to another, without a passport, for which each person had to pay ten dinars.[1] Anyone found travelling without this might be arrested and both ~~their~~ hands amputated. A poor widow who had managed to obtain the necessary passport for herself and her son endeavoured to escape with him along the Nile. The son had charge of both passports, and one day as he went down to the river-brink for water an unseen crocodile rose up, seized, and devoured the lad before his mother's eyes. The unhappy woman was left in a strange district, childless, penniless, and passportless. She had to sell her clothes and beg the rest of the money necessary to procure a new passport at once, in order to save her hands.

walls of churches, but so placed that it is evident the builders did not know their significance.

[1] A dinar seems to have been then worth about 12*s.* of our money.

Egypt was on the point of a general revolt against the Arabs, when news arrived that the Kaliph was dead, and that the first act of his successor, Omar, had been to throw the detested Emir of Egypt into prison, where he afterwards perished miserably. This was in the year 717 (A.H. 99); but the respite from persecution only lasted the length of his reign, which was barely two years. Omar's successor, Yezid, who was a son of Abd el Melek, at once dismissed Ayoub from the government of Egypt, and sent orders with the new governor that every Christian in Egypt should embrace the faith of Islam or leave the country. The unhappy Christians considered themselves fortunate to have even this alternative left them, and took advantage of it in such large numbers that whole districts became deserted. The churches were pulled down, or, if their fabric was saved, at least their pictures and crosses were destroyed; and in many cases the building was turned into a mosque. Emir after Emir succeeded each other in rapid succession according to the caprice of the Kaliphs. Their names will be found, with those of the Kaliphs, in the chronological table, but it is useless to encumber the text with a string of names when there is but one and the same fact to record of each of them—that they despoiled and persecuted the Christians. The subordinate officials generally improved upon the Emir's orders, and one Obeid Allah, who was appointed farmer of taxes under Hassan ebn Yusef, filled up the measure of oppression.

Once more the unhappy Egyptians rose in defence of their lives and liberties, but they had no chance against a well-appointed army of men who had done nothing all their lives but fight and plunder. The Christians

gathered together in the eastern half of the Delta in 725 (A.H. 107), and made a gallant stand against the Arab troops, but, unarmed and undrilled as they were, the battle soon became a massacre. The Egyptians did not run away, but were cut down as they stood. The Moslem historian who frankly records the atrocities we have mentioned complacently remarks that the Arabs 'slaughtered a great number.'

Having crushed the rebellion, the Emir summoned the Patriarch to appear before him. Alexander, well knowing what to expect, fled to the coast with Hamoul, Bishop of Wissim, intending to escape by sea. But on arriving at a place called Pariout he was seized with mortal sickness and thankfully rendered up his life of suffering, lamented by the Christians of all denominations. The delay was fatal to the escape of the Bishop of Wissim, who was arrested and dragged before the Emir. The Emir demanded a thousand pieces of gold as his ransom. Being unable to pay, he was scourged through the streets of Fostat and Babylon as far as the church of St. George (Mari Girghi). Here he was hung up before the great doors, and the scourging continued until the Christians had hastily collected among them 300 pieces of gold, when, almost at the point of death, the unfortunate bishop was released.

The rebellion, however, had the effect of calling the attention of the Kaliph to the state of things existing in Egypt. He dismissed the Emir, and during the short Patriarchate of Cosmas, the successor of Alexander, that unhappy country enjoyed a precarious respite from actual persecution, though the Christians were never free from oppression. But it is recorded as a great cause of thanksgiving that they obtained permission from the new Emir

to rebuild the church of Mari Mena (My Lord Mena), still existing in Fostat.[1] Even this slight concession to the Christians gave rise to a popular insurrection among the Moslems. Famine and pestilence, however, broke out just as the unfortunate country began to breathe freely, and the people died by thousands. Moreover, though persecution was no longer expressly ordered by the Emir, a tribe of newly arrived Arabs, to the number of thirty thousand, were allowed to establish themselves in the mountains east of Fostat and to ravage the country at their pleasure. Very soon also the new Emir died, and was succeeded by a man who had once before been Emir of Egypt and one of their most violent persecutors—Khandala ebn Sefayn. He did not dare to show his hatred of the Christians quite so openly this time, but he increased their taxes and branded every Christian with the mark of a beast.

During these events the Patriarch Theodore, who had succeeded Cosmas, died, and—owing to a dispute between the priestly college of Alexandria and the bishops of Egypt proper—his successor was not immediately elected.

At this juncture the Melkite Church, understanding that the Kaliph himself was favourably disposed towards the Christians, determined to make an effort to save their own Church from utter extinction and to regain some share of those revenues, such as they now were, which had been resumed by the National Church since the flight of Peter, sixty years before. The degradation of their communion may be inferred from the fact—recorded by

[1] Fostat and the fragmentary remains of Babylon are now called by a somewhat ludicrous mistake, which has passed into common language, 'Old Cairo.'

their own historian—that the best man they could find for the office of Patriarch was a needle-maker who could neither read nor write, named Cosmas.[1] As soon as possible after his consecration he was sent on an embassy to the Kaliph 'to explain the fraud' which had been practised by the Monophysites on the Arabs at the time of the conquest in representing themselves as the National Church! Though the loss of their possessions and the prestige of the Melkite Church was clearly due to the flight of their Patriarch Peter, they represented that Benjamin and his successors had robbed them of everything, and entreated Hashem to order that everything should be restored to them. Doubtless the Kaliph, whose attention had been called to the need of interference in Egypt by the recent rebellion, had been glad to find that there was a rival body of Christians who could be played off against the more powerful body whose Patriarch had sanctioned the revolt. He therefore treated Cosmas with honour, and wrote to the Governor of Egypt that the Christian churches, with all that belonged to them, were to be given back to Cosmas. Of course, this unreasonable and comprehensive order could not be fully carried out, but it was made a fresh pretext for oppressing the National Church, and many of the principal churches were forcibly taken from her and given to the handful of Melkites

[1] The date of the election of the Melkite Patriarch Cosmas cannot be given with certainty; the different authorities vary by as much as fifteen years; but all agree that it was under the Kaliphate of Hashem, and it seems probable that the Melkites would choose the time when persecution had ceased and the Patriarchal throne of the National Church was vacant. During these sixty years all their bishops had died, and they had lately been dependent on the occasional visits of a Monothelite prelate from Syria. The Peter who at the Council of Constantinople in 680 had signed as Bishop of Alexandria was not a bishop at all.

which remained. Among these were not only the Cæsareum, but the great Church of the Angels, which the Monophysites had built specially for themselves after they had been turned out of the Cæsareum by the Melkites. The vacancy of the National Patriarchate was also prolonged by the Mohammedan governor, who refused to grant his *congé d'élire* without a sum which it was quite impossible to pay.

Hashem, however, again interfered to restrain the violence of his Emirs, and sent the obnoxious Khandala ebn Sefayn to Mauritiana, where he also caused a rebellion soon afterwards. A man named Hafiz was appointed to Egypt, and the bishops were permitted to meet at Babylon for the election of the Patriarch. Still the Alexandrian party and the bishops were unable to agree, and at length they proposed to refer to an old and greatly respected bishop who had excused himself from attending on the score of illness—Moses of Wissim.

CHAPTER V

REVOLT OF THE COPTS AND FALL OF THE OMMYIAD DYNASTY

743 459 124 WISSIM was a cathedral city of much importance for some centuries in Egypt, but, like many of her towns, it has been so overshadowed by the darkness of the Moslem dominion that in the beginning of the nineteenth century it was spoken of by one of her historians as a place which had entirely disappeared and 'the situation of which is unknown.' Wissim, however, has never ceased to exist, and may be found to this day by anyone who takes the trouble to ride out about two hours into the Delta, from the Embabeh bridge over the Nile. In the days of paganism it boasted two great temples, one to the north and one in the midst of the city. These were pulled down by order of Constantine, and churches were built in their stead. Abu Salih declares that at one time Wissim contained three hundred and sixty-six churches;[1] but this is probably a great exaggeration, though it was evidently a place of great ecclesiastical importance for centuries. A very cursory inspection of the modern village reveals traces of fallen churches and temples; though the present Coptic

[1] If for churches we read altars, the statement would not seem improbable. There were three in each church, and sometimes a separate chapel with a fourth.

church, like almost all others in the land, has been rebuilt and modernised since the English occupation enabled the Egyptians to restore their churches with impunity, and it is one of the poorest specimens to be found in the country. Just outside the village, on a high mound, is a low crumbling wall of stones which they call a mosque. This wall surrounds the pavement and pillars of an old Christian church, the pillars (which are of stone with carved capitals) standing for the most part in their places. Outside, on one of the rough foundation stones, a cross is deeply cut. Lower down, on an older foundation still, there is a cartouche and fragments of hieroglyphic writing. High mounds show where digging might possibly bring to light fresh remains. Not far from the town was a monastery which had been built forty years before the reign of Diocletian by an African merchant who settled in the town. This monastery existed on the same site for more than a thousand years.

In the reign of the Kaliph Hashem, Wissim was still at the height of its prosperity, and had for its bishop Moses, a man respected for his wisdom and sanctity throughout all Egypt. He was too ill to ride when the messengers came from Babylon to entreat his counsel, but he was borne on a litter through the fragrant fields which lie between Wissim and Babylon, and his couch was carried into the church—probably the Moallaka—where the election of the Patriarch was proceeding. The Alexandrian party appear to have insisted on a candidate whom the rest of the country were unable to accept, and refused to listen to any other nomination that was made. Moses did his best to persuade them to hear reason, but in vain; and they became so abusive that the indignant old bishop

suddenly rose from his litter, and, laying about him with his staff, drove them out of the church.

That night Moses and his deacon, who shared his chamber, employed themselves in trying to think of a perfectly new candidate who might be acceptable to everyone, and the deacon suggested at last a monk from the convent of Macarius, named Michael, who was not even in Babylon at the time, but whom all knew and respected. The next day, when the quarrelling seemed likely to recommence, Moses proposed Michael; and the whole party, weary of the dispute, and, let us hope, a little ashamed of themselves, received the nomination with an unanimous shout of applause. The Emir's consent was speedily obtained, and a deputation started for Wady Natron to fetch Michael. On their way they met a procession of monks from that very convent, coming to protest against some illegal exactions of the late governor, and among these monks was Michael. The joyful news was given them that the late governor was disgraced and banished, and the consecration of Michael was at once proceeded with.

The peace, however, was of short duration. Hashem died, and his successor immediately dismissed the Governor of Egypt and appointed another, who recommenced the work of oppressing and persecuting the Christians with zeal. Within the next four years there were four successive Kaliphs and as many different governors appointed in Egypt, all of whom persecuted and oppressed the Christians. Some, after selling all their goods and cattle to discharge the exactions laid upon them, beheld their very children sold into slavery to satisfy the rapacity of the Moslem Government. Many bishops forsook their

sees, and concealed themselves in the convents. The unfortunate people became apostates in great numbers, being specially tempted to do so at this time by the offer that if they would only nominally accept the faith of Islam they might remain in truth Christians. The children of such people, of course, became real Moslems.

Twenty-four thousand are recorded to have renounced their Christianity during this time of persecution. Moses of Wissim was foremost in his efforts to encourage and help the sufferers, and was the right hand of the Patriarch Michael through these troubled times. At length Merwan, who successfully rebelled against the reigning Kaliph, made himself master of the Saracen Empire. As a matter of course, he sent a new governor into Egypt, which gave the Christians a short respite. The new governor, Hassan ebn Sohail,[1] showed himself friendly to the Christians, and Michael was now occupied in receiving back, on terms of penance, many of those who had apostatised in the recent persecutions.

Cosmas, the Melkite Patriarch, had kept very quiet during the dark days; but now that the Christians were in favour again, he resumed his efforts to annoy and despoil the National Church. This time he appealed to the Moslem governor to give him the church and endowments of Mari Mena, in the Mareotis, one of the most celebrated in Egypt. It was situated in a town which had grown up around it and bore the same name, in the desert between Alexandria and Nitria. It has long been

[1] All these Kaliphs and Emirs have two, if not three, different names and surnames; and as the historians often call them indifferently by one or the other, it is a work of some time and difficulty to identify them. The name given in the text is in each case the one which appears to be most generally known.

destroyed, but its ruins may still exist on that now deserted road. The following description of what could be seen some time after its destruction is translated by Quatremère from an Arab manuscript:—

Mina [1] includes three deserted towns, situated in the midst of a desert of sand, but many of its buildings still remain standing. The Arabs often use them as hiding-places in which to lay an ambuscade for travellers. There are still well-built palaces enclosed within a wall. Most of these buildings are constructed on vaulted arcades, and some of them are inhabited by monks. The supply of water is good, but scanty.

The church of St. Mena is a vast building, decorated with statues and pictures of great beauty. Candles are kept burning in it day and night. At one end of this church there is a great tomb, and two camels sculptured in marble. The marble statue of a man stands upright with one foot on each camel; one hand is open, the other shut. This statue, they say, represents St. Mena. In the same church are statues of John, Zacharias, and Jesus carved in a great marble pillar; to the right of the entrance before these figures is a door (? grille) which is kept shut. Also there is a statue of the Virgin Mary behind two curtains, and statues of the Prophets. Outside the church are statues (? bas-reliefs) representing all sorts of animals, and men of all professions. Among others is a slave merchant who holds in his hand a purse upside down.

In the midst of the church there is a building in the form of a dome, under which are eight statues, which, if what they tell me is true, represent angels.

By the side of the church is a mosque of which the *mih'rab* is turned towards the south, where the Mohammedans

[1] Mina is spelt with an 'i' in all Western writers to this day, but the true sound to be represented is probably that of the 'e' in 'hen.' It should certainly be written in English with an 'e.'

come to make their prayers. All the surrounding land is planted with a great number of fruit trees, but, above all, almond and locust trees; the fruit is very good, and is used for making syrups.

There are also a great many vines, from which wine is made.

The revenues of this church were computed, even in the ruined state of the town, at more than a thousand dinars a year; so we can understand the anxiety of the Melkites to possess it, though there is no evidence that it had at any time belonged to their party. The governor asked both Cosmas and Michael to draw up a statement of their respective claims, and after some time adjudged that the Melkites had not made good their claim, and that the building must remain with the National Church. Cosmas, however, had managed to amass a considerable treasure by this time, and, in spite of the smallness of his following, appears to have had more command of money than Michael. The latter must have been of a forgiving temper, for, notwithstanding this action on the part of Cosmas, we find both Patriarchs acting in concert later in a vain effort to save their country.

For though during the dynasty of the Ommyades the Saracenic Empire attained its greatest splendour—had overrun Africa, Syracuse, Asia Minor, Carthage, and made good their footing in Spain—the internal divisions had been growing more and more constant, and no really good or settled government had been established anywhere. Merwan, the last Kaliph of the line, was only a successful usurper; moreover, the battle of Tours had lately given a fatal blow to the prestige of the Arabs and a final check to their victorious career. They were driven back into

Spain; and though they maintained their footing in that corner of Europe for centuries, they were never able to advance beyond. Beaten back in the West, Merwan now found himself confronted by a new enemy of his own faith in the East—Abdallah Abbas—who, from his cruelty, afterwards received the name of 'the Shedder of Blood.'

While Merwan was fully occupied in the struggle with his rival, Abd-el-Melek, the governor who had succeeded Hassam in Egypt, recommenced the persecution which his predecessor had abolished. Michael and Moses of Wissim, with more than 300 Christians of both sexes, were thrown into 'a dark dungeon,' where the Patriarch and the bishop did their best to console and strengthen the unfortunate prisoners. While they were expecting the worst, news arrived of unexpected succour from Nubia.

Nubia, though indirectly much the worse for the Arab conquest of Egypt, on account of the necessity for obtaining sufficient slaves to make up the yearly tribute, had not suffered from invasion or persecution, and her state might now compare favourably with the distracted land of Egypt. Her late king, Mercurius, had been much beloved and respected, so that he had received from his subjects the nickname of the Second Constantine.[1] His son Zacharius, on the death of his father, would not himself accept the kingdom; and after two short reigns of Ibrahim and Mark, who were successively assassinated by each other's partisans, the throne fell to a man whose name is given as Kiriakous (Cyriacus), who was renowned for courage and virtue.

Nubia had at this time several causes of complaint against the Moslem masters of Egypt, besides the standing grievance of the enforced slave trade. The Mohammedans

[1] This account is taken from the translation in Quatremère.

had carried off in their raids a great number of Nubians over and above the stipulated tribute, whom they sold into slavery in Egypt. When Kiriakous heard that civil war prevailed between Merwan and Abu-l-Abbas, and that the Governor of Egypt had begun to persecute the Christians on his own responsibility, he determined to interfere. He sent 'Abrekkes,' one of the principal noblemen of his kingdom, to demand that the Patriarch Michael should be set at liberty. Abd-el-Melek, thinking that he could afford to despise the King of Nubia, promptly arrested Abrekkes, and threw him also into prison. To his dismay, however, he soon learned that Kiriakous had entered Egypt with a numerous army on horses and camels. 'Eye-witnesses have assured me,' wrote the deacon John, who composed a history afterwards of his master the Patriarch Michael, 'that these horses were not bigger than asses, but that in battle they seconded their masters, fighting both with their fore and hind feet.' All the Christian population, who were still far more numerous than the Moslems, welcomed the arms of Kiriakous with joy, and the invaders swept up the country and threatened Fostat. In this emergency Abd-el-Melek hastily liberated Abrekkes on a solemn oath that he would persuade his master to retire, and sent him to make terms with Kiriakous. This prince, on receiving a letter from the Patriarch Michael to say that he had been set at liberty and was now well treated, consented to retire to his own country, taking with him considerable booty from the Moslem inhabitants.

Promises of this kind, however, are rarely kept when the compulsion is removed. The tyrannous exactions of Abd-el-Melek soon drove the Christians to fresh thoughts of revolt. The two Patriarchs sank their religious

differences, and, making common cause against the infidel, put themselves jointly at the head of the national movement. This gave it a strength and a measure of success never before attained. The scene of the revolt was this time in Upper Egypt, and no doubt hopes were entertained of help from the Nubians. Abd-el-Melek marched with his Arab troops against the native insurgents, and was defeated with great loss. The Egyptians drew together in a strong position, and not only held their camp against the enemy, but obtained constant advantages in the open field. Even the arrival of Merwan in person with fresh troops did not dismay them; indeed, Merwan was himself retreating before the victorious armies of his rival Abdallah Abbas. He found that the rebellion had spread all over Egypt, and gained ground daily. The Copts, in fact, were in a state of semi-independence under their Patriarchs for several years before the death of Merwan. A man called John of Samanhoud was their leader in Lower Egypt, and though Merwan's soldiers ravaged the country, pillaging and sacking all that came in their way, he could not reduce them so long as their leaders remained at their head. Masr[1] itself was set on fire, and all the Christian quarters burnt by the Moslems.

Still Egypt held out, till apparently in one year (about 750) all her men in whom she trusted were taken from her. John of Samanhoud fell in a pitched battle, and most of his men lost their lives with him. In Upper Egypt, in a chance skirmish, both the Patriarchs were taken prisoners, and fell into the hands of Merwan.

[1] Masr, the Semitic name of Egypt, was used by the Arabs to designate the combined cities of Fostat and Babylon, and is in the same manner now applied by them to all the four cities built successively to the north of each other—Babylon, Fostat, Masr, and Cairo.

Cosmas ransomed his life by the payment of a thousand pieces of gold, and he appears to have fled the country, since we do not hear of him again, except an incidental mention in connection with the iconoclastic controversy which some five years later was convulsing the remains of the Byzantine Empire. Michael had no money, so he was scourged, and the order was already given for his execution, when Merwan thought he might be useful in treating with the insurgents, so he was remanded to prison.

Meanwhile the Moslems burnt the crops, pillaged the monasteries, and dragged the nuns to be dealt with at Merwan's pleasure. One of these, Febronia, a woman of such great beauty that she was set apart for Merwan, saved herself from dishonour by a curious expedient. She showed the leader of the party some ointment which she pretended would make a man proof against steel if rubbed upon him, and as an earnest of her good faith she offered to make trial of it upon herself on condition that if she gave him this secret he would respect the chastity of herself and her companions. She rubbed her neck with the ointment, and, stretching forth her head, bade the man smite hard. He did so, and her head rolled upon the floor. *Then*, says Abu Salih, 'they repented, and were exceedingly sad, and did no injury henceforth to any of those virgins, but let them go.'

In 751 Abdallah Abbas entered Egypt with his victorious army, determined to wrest this last and most important province from Merwan. The Egyptians, deprived of their leaders and hopeless of a successful contention with two armies at once, made terms with the Abbasidæ. The rival Kaliphs encamped in sight of each other on opposite sides of the Nile. But the Patriarch

Michael and Moses of Wissim were still in the hands of Merwan; and Merwan, to revenge himself on the insurgents for joining his enemy, tortured the two men whom they most loved, on the river-bank, in sight of those across the stream. Yet the courage of the two prelates did not fail them for a moment, and, as Merwan could get nothing out of them, he sent them back to their prison for the night, promising them a prolonged death by torture in the same place on the next day.

The day dawned, and all attempts to rescue the beloved bishops had failed. All the Christian clergy in Merwan's hands were brought together on the river-bank, to the number of eleven, and the various instruments of torture were made ready. The clergy embraced each other, and Moses of Wissim asked the Patriarch to pronounce the absolution over them. A breathless hush fell upon the crowded banks—on the one side the frantic shouts and lamentations of the Christians were stilled, on the other the savage troops of Merwan paused in wonder—while the voice of the Patriarch rose unfaltering over the kneeling group in the prayer of absolution: 'O Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son, the Word of God the Father, Who by Thy salutary and life-giving Passion hast burst asunder all the chains of our sins; Who didst breathe on the faces of Thine Holy Apostles, saying unto them "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins soever ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whose sins soever ye retain they are retained;" Thou hast also, O Lord, made choice by the same, Thine Apostles, of them that should always discharge the office of the priesthood in Thy Holy Church, to the end that they may remit sins upon the earth, and loose and relax all the bonds of iniquity. We

pray and beseech Thy Goodness, O Thou lover of men, for Thy servants our fathers, our brethren, and our own infirmity, who now bow down our heads before Thy Holy Glory, show us Thy loving kindness, and burst all the chains of our sins. And if we have offended against Thee by knowledge or ignorance, or by hardness of heart, by word, by deed, or by our weakness, do Thou, O Lord, Which knowest the frailty of man, Which art gracious and the lover of men, give unto us the remission of our sins, bless us and purify us, absolve us and all Thy people, fill us with Thy fear, and direct us into Thy Holy and gracious Will; for Thou art our God, and to Thee, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory is now and evermore to be ascribed. Thy servants who this day have the office of the ministry, the priests, the deacons, and clergy, all the people, and my own weakness, are absolved by the mouth of the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—and from the mouth of the one, only, holy Catholic and Apostolic Church; by the mouth of the Twelve Apostles, and by the mouth of the wise Mark, Apostle and Martyr; by the mouth also of the Patriarch St. Severus, and of our holy Doctor Dioscorus, of St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril, St. Basil, St. Gregory, of the three hundred also that met at Nicea, of the hundred and fifty at Constantinople, of the hundred at Ephesus, and by the mouth of my humility, who am a sinner; for blessed and full of glory is Thy Holy Name—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—now and ever, world without end. Amen.'[1]

As the prayer ended, Merwan's son advanced from the

[1] This prayer is preserved in the Life of Michael, by John the Deacon, who was with his master on this occasion.

ranks, and flung himself at his father's feet, entreating him to spare the lives of the prisoners. Knowing probably that motives of mercy would have no influence, he appealed to those of policy. He pointed out that to conciliate the Christian Egyptians was their one chance of safety; that they would always follow their Patriarch; but that if he were now slain in such a manner, every Egyptian who had not yet joined in the insurrection would hasten to the standard of the Abbasidæ, in order to avenge on the Ommiadæ the death of their Patriarch. Merwan, on whom perhaps the scene may also have made some impression, at length yielded to his son's entreaties, and the clergy were remanded to prison. Moses of Wissim revived their drooping spirits by his exhortations and predictions, and in the convents prayers were offered day and night by the monks for their safety.

At length the crossing of the Nile was accomplished by Abd Allah's army, and the two Kaliphs met at Abusir Kuridis, in the province of Beni-Souef. Merwan was killed, and his army totally defeated.

Abd Allah, the son of Merwan, took refuge in Nubia with the remnant of his followers, and threw himself on the mercy of the King of Nubia. After three days he was informed that the king proposed to visit his camp in person, and hear what he had to say. Abd Allah, who felt his situation to be desperate, spread a carpet, and prepared to receive the Christian monarch with all respect. But when the king arrived, he would not come upon the carpet, but sat on the ground, excusing himself by saying that it was the special duty of a king to humble himself before God, to Whom he owed his greatness.

He then opened the conversation by asking why the

followers of Abd Allah drank wine, as he had observed, when it was forbidden by the book which they professed to consider sacred. Abd Allah replied that it was only his slaves and some of his officers who sinned in this way.

'Why,' asked the king again, 'do you permit your soldiers to tread down the harvest under their horses' feet, when such conduct is forbidden in your sacred book?'

Abd Allah made the same excuse, that he had been unable to restrain some of the officers and their slaves from this offence. But the king asked a third time:

'Why are you all wearing robes of silk and gold in defiance of the laws of your religion?'

'Because,' answered Abd Allah, 'power has departed from us, and we have been compelled to call in strangers to help us, who, though they have adopted our religion, insist on wearing such garments as you see, in spite of our objections.'

The king lowered his head, and remained in deep thought for some moments. He was heard to murmur: 'Our slaves, our officers, the strangers who have adopted our religion!' Then, raising his head, he cried:

'The thing is not as you have said! No, it is your family who have offended against God. You have broken His laws, in using power to exercise tyranny. For this cause God has taken the authority from you, and for your own crimes has covered you with shame. Who shall tell the day of His vengeance? And if His wrath break upon you while you are in my kingdom, my country will suffer for your sins. The rights of hospitality must prevail for three days; take provisions and whatever else is necessary for your journey, and then depart out of my kingdom.

Abd Allah was powerless to fight, and had no choice

but to obey the order. He fell into the hands of the Abbasidæ, and was kept in prison for the rest of his days. El Mansur sent for him one day, to hear his own account of his expulsion from Nubia, which he gave, according to Masudi, in the words which are translated above.

Egypt thus passed under the power of the Abbasidæ, the Patriarch Michael was set at liberty, and the Christians were left in peace and freedom for about four years.

CHAPTER VI

THE OPPRESSION OF THE ABBASIDE DYNASTY

A.D. 751
A.M. 467
A.H. 133

DURING the next fifty-four years no less than forty-five different governors were appointed in Egypt, under five successive Kaliphs. The cumbrous and uninteresting names of these governors will be found in the chronological table, but without good reason for distinction they will all be referred to in the text as the Emir or prince. Those who ruled during the four years of peace which followed the conquest of the country by the Abbasidæ were tolerant, and sometimes were friendly to the Christians.

Not long after the death of Merwan an incident occurred which was regarded at the time as a miracle. The Nile had only risen fourteen cubits when it should have risen sixteen, and great fear was entertained of a famine. The bishops, who were then at Babylon for the autumn synod, agreed to hold a special service of intercessory prayer, an account of which was written by John the Deacon in his Life of this Patriarch :—

> When the 17th of Tut[1] came, which is the festival of the most glorious Cross, the clergy of Gizeh and of distant places assembled, with most of the laity of Fostat, old and young, and walked in procession, carrying the Gospels and censers with incense. Then we entered the great cathedral church of St. Peter, the foundations of which lie in the river ; but

[1] September 26.

the church could not contain the people on account of their multitude, so that they stood in the outlying places. Then the Patriarch raised the cross, while Anbar Mennas, Bishop of Memphis, stood by him with the Holy Gospel, and led us all forth, bearing crosses and books of the Gospel, until we stood on the banks of the river; and this was before sunrise. And the Patriarch prayed, and Anbar Mennas the bishop prayed, and the laity did not cease crying '*Kyrie, eleison*' until the third hour of the day; so that all the Jews and Moslems and others heard our cries to the Most High God. And He heard us, praise be to His glorious name, for the river rose and increased in height by one cubit, and every man glorified God and gave thanks to Him. And when Nârun heard of this matter he was filled with wonder and fear, both he and all his troops.

It is further recorded that the Emir, being unwilling that this miracle should be considered as due to the prayers of the Christians, ordered the Moslems to take the same place the next day and by *their* prayers secure another cubit. But, on the contrary, as the Moslems prayed, the water sank a cubit, according to the record of the Nilometer! Then the Emir indignantly ordered that neither Christians nor Moslems should be permitted to pray, and the water remained at fourteen cubits; till, in despair, the Emir ordered the Christians again to try what they could do, and forthwith the river rose to seventeen cubits, and all fear of famine vanished. It is said that this miracle contributed more than anything else to the relief which the Christians enjoyed from oppression during those four years.

Michael employed some time in a thorough visitation of the kingdom, and his biographer describes the discovery of a settlement of the descendants of the Meletian heretics,

to the number of three thousand, living in caves of the rocks and in monasteries. Apparently their very existence had been forgotten in the terrible troubles of the recent centuries; so they were probably in some distant oasis. Michael received them with the charity and wisdom which we should have expected from him, and they became absorbed into the National Church.

The peace was eventually disturbed by the misdoings of a Bishop of Harran, named Isaac, who had won the favour of the Kaliph Abd Allah. The Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch having died, the Kaliph sent orders to the bishops of that country that they should elect Isaac. But, as translations were forbidden by the Oriental canons, the bishops refused to elect the Kaliph's nominee. Isaac therefore, availing himself of the civil powers conferred upon him by Abd Allah, caused the two Metropolitans, who were his principal opponents, to be put to death. Having by this simple expedient secured a majority for his election, he sent the usual synodal letters to Michael of Egypt requesting his communion. The Kaliph at the same time sent orders to the Emir then in possession that, if Michael refused, he was to be arrested and sent to him in Syria.

Michael called a Council of all the bishops of Upper and Lower Egypt at Babylon, and put the case before them. All were well aware that a refusal would probably be followed by a renewal of the terrible oppression from which they had enjoyed so brief a respite, certainly by the torture and death of Michael himself. The temptation was sore to yield the point, and if it had been only one of canon law they would have done so; but it was impossible to clear Isaac from the murder of the two bishops. After nearly a

month of delay and deliberation the assembly asked the Patriarch to decide on his own responsibility. Michael immediately announced that neither sword, fire, wild beast, nor exile should compel him to yield to such a demand.

The messengers from Antioch thereupon promptly demanded the arrest of Michael; but the Emir, who liked and respected the Patriarch, declared that there was no hurry, and that Michael must have time to make his preparations. He delayed the start as long as he dared, but at length was compelled to give the order. Moses of Wissim declared his intention of accompanying his master and friend, and John the Deacon also cast in his lot with them. As the three brave men were on the point of setting out for their martyrdom, news was brought of the death of Isaac, and the Emir gladly decided that in that case Michael's presence in Syria could not be required.

The Patriarch lived nearly eleven years after this, and ended his troubled life in peace about the year 767. The Kaliph then upon the throne was the one commonly known as El Mansur (Almansor), who fixed his throne at Baghdad and was the first of the Kaliphs who showed any appreciation of literature and learning, though his character was as little to be admired as any of the rest of them since Omar. The reigning Emir at the time of Michael's death was Yezid ebn Hatem.

Michael's successor was a man called Mena, also from the convent of St. Macarius. The Church had been at peace for eleven years, and continued so still for a while, when the wickedness of one of her own members brought fresh trouble upon her. This was a deacon of Alexandria named Peter, who had asked Mena to make him a bishop, and been refused. Disappointed in his ambition, he went

is said to have burnt the granaries and deliberately caused a famine, in order to starve out the invaders. He also tried to interfere with the election of Mark's successor; and when the Egyptians absolutely refused to accept his nominee, he swore to put all the bishops to death and destroy all the churches that were left standing, if the new Patriarch Jacob did not immediately give himself up. Jacob did not hesitate, and was on his way to what must have seemed inevitable torture and martyrdom, when a violent death overtook Abd el Aziz and saved Jacob's life.

At length El Mamoun, having established himself firmly in the Kaliphate, came to Egypt in person to restore order. The Spanish Moslems were driven out, Abd Allah ebn Tahir was bribed with a large sum of money to retire peaceably, and the Kaliph appointed his brother El Mutasem governor of both Syria and Egypt.

We learn from the chronicle of Gregory Bar Hebræus (Abu 'l faraj) that Denys, the Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, visited Egypt twice during the reign of the Patriarch—or, as Gregory calls him, the Pope—Jacob. The first time he came by sea to Tennis, and all the Christians of the town, in number about thirty thousand, poured out to welcome him, while the Pope and several of his bishops hastened to greet their illustrious guest. Denys must have been somewhat of a pedant, for he records the fact that in welcoming him Pope Jacob inadvertently described his visit as the first which any Patriarch of Antioch had made to Egypt since the days of the great Severus. 'Whereupon,' says Denys, 'we reminded him of the visit of Athanasius when he came to heal the breach which had before taken place between Peter of Antioch and Damian

of Alexandria; and we gave him to understand that a neglect of reading leaves one very imperfectly acquainted with history.' Denys had come to protest against the evil doings of Abd Allah ebn Tahir's brother in Edessa, and obtained a letter from the Emir forbidding the destruction of any more churches in that city. He came the second time with the Kaliph el Mamoun, who sent him in company with Pope Jacob to endeavour to put an end to the revolt of the Copts. Denys says of the Pope and bishops of Egypt that he found them 'deeply religious, humble, rich in the love of God. They treated us with all distinction, giving us the same honours all the time we were in Egypt as to their own Pope.' But he deplores two things —that they did not read enough in the sacred books, and that consecration fees to the amount of two or three hundred pieces of silver were always paid by a new bishop; also that they were accustomed to defer baptism until the thirtieth or even till the fortieth day after birth. Denys took great interest in the antiquities of Egypt, and on his return to Syria wrote a description of what he had seen.

But the united entreaties of both Patriarchs were powerless to prevent the Christian Egyptians from making another desperate attempt to throw off the Moslem yoke. Jacob had before attempted to restrain them by letter, pointing out that final success was an impossibility; and that therefore it was better to submit, as the Christians of the Apostolic age were told to do, to 'the powers that be,' and not to risk a useless effusion of Egyptian blood with the certainty of after-persecution. These letters had been sent to the leaders of the insurgent army by bishops, who added their exhortations to submission. But for once the

a new name—by which we conclude that he now openly apostatised—and sent him back to Egypt with full power to revenge himself on Mena and the Church of Egypt. The Christians were preparing for another revolt, when news came of the death of the Kaliph, and Peter found himself alike powerless and detested. He threw himself on the mercy of those very bishops whose destruction he had been trying to compass, and applied to be received 'to penitence,' but one and all refused, probably because they did not believe in his repentance—for instances of such refusal in the Egyptian Church are very rare.

Mena did not long survive his release, and nearly a year elapsed before his successor was consecrated. There appears to have been again a difficulty in deciding whom they should elect; but instead of quarrelling over their respective candidates they arranged a solemn ceremonial of casting lots, which ever afterwards was practised on all occasions when there was no candidate unanimously accepted. It was called the 'heikelia' or 'heikeliet'—from *heikal*, the 'sanctuary,' because the matter was entrusted to the decision of God Himself within the sanctuary.

One hundred monks were first chosen.[1] These, to be eligible for the Patriarchate, must be free-born, of free parents, and the child of their mother's first marriage, since the Egyptian Church, though it allows second marriages to the laity, does not thoroughly approve of them. Widows and widowers are not allowed the crown in marriage, therefore it is said that the Patriarch must be the son of a crowned mother. But the law, as usual, was more indulgent to the man than to the woman. The son of an

[1] In the primitive Egyptian Church the Patriarchs were not monks and some of them were married.

uncrowned (twice-married) father might be chosen as Patriarch, though not the son of an uncrowned mother. A candidate for the Patriarchate must also be sound in all his members, of good health, unmarried, and not less than fifty years old. He must never have shed the blood of man or beast; he must either be a native of Egypt or familiar with the language; he must be well educated, must not be already a bishop, must be of good character and undoubted orthodoxy. Finally, it was declared that the Moslem authorities must be allowed no influence in the selection, and that a candidate recommended by the ruling Emir would be inadmissible.

By a process of selection and voting, the hundred candidates were thus reduced to fifty, to twenty-five, to ten, and finally to three. When but three were left, a unanimous shout in favour of one of the three would decide the election; but should no such manifestation take place, the election proceeded as follows: Four pieces of parchment were prepared; on three of them were written the names of the three candidates, on the fourth the name of Jesus the Son of God. These were deposited in an urn, and the urn itself was placed under the altar. The Holy Communion was then celebrated, and prayers offered—apparently for at least a day and a night, sometimes longer.

After this a young child was called forward and directed to go and take one of the parchment scrolls from the urn. If it bore the name of one of the candidates, he was forthwith elected; if the name of Jesus were brought out, it was taken as a sign that none of the offered three were acceptable to God, and the whole process had to be gone through again.

On this first occasion of election by the heikelia the lot fell on a monk called John, the fourth Patriarch of that name, who reigned twenty-four years. About the same time Cosmas, the Melkite Patriarch, died; but whether in Egypt or not, or who was his successor, is not clearly known. Cosmas had taken part in the iconoclastic controversy which was then raging in Europe and Syria, but which does not appear to have affected the National Church of Egypt at all. Image-worship has never been a fault of hers. Those churches of Egypt which contained statues were generally, though not always, Melkite; and now both branches of the Church in Egypt agree in condemning their use, though both allow pictures.

John employed himself in rebuilding some of the churches which had been destroyed in the late persecutions. He seems to have possessed some private means of his own, though it is difficult to understand how a monk can have done so. Among other churches, he rebuilt the great church of the Archangel Michael at Alexandria. A Melkite Christian observed that the new buildings occupied more ground than the old, and immediately informed against the Patriarch to the Mohammedan authorities, declaring that he had encroached on land belonging to the Kaliph. This, of course, was made an excuse for imposing on the Patriarch a heavy fine, which, however, he was able to pay without suspending his building operations. In his time also a terrible famine oppressed Egypt, and the Patriarch reduced himself to extreme poverty in trying to help and provide for the sufferers. These famines became more and more frequent during the succeeding centuries, owing to the careless and dishonest rule of the successive Mohammedan dynasties. The canals were not

regularly cleaned out, and in a very few years became choked and unable to conduct the life-giving water from the Nile. A low Nile therefore did not spread at all, and a famine was the inevitable consequence; for under these rulers the Egyptians were never able to lay up for a bad year. All the poorer people were thus killed off at intervals; the Emirs would order a temporary cleaning of the canals by forced labour; and the process of neglect, famine, and death from the resultant plague was gone through again.

About the beginning of the ninth century we have the first history of Egypt written by a Moslem, who is known as Ibn Abd el Hakam. It is chiefly concerned with the conquest of Egypt by the Moslems, and still exists in manuscript. It was continued by one of his followers and brought down to the third century of the Hegira. El Hakam himself was probably a Copt by nationality, since El Kindi, who wrote at the end of the ninth century of our era, is called the first Arab historian. El Kindi's work was also continued and brought down to the end of the tenth century A. D.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST GREAT REVOLT OF THE COPTS (831)

A.D. 785
A.M. 581
A.H. 168–9

In 785 (A.H. 168–9) El Mahdi ebn Mansur died, and, his eldest son following him in a few months, the Kaliphate fell to his second son, the celebrated Haroun el Raschid. Haroun had already distinguished himself in battle against the Greeks, as the subjects of the Byzantine Empire are commonly called, and had imposed upon Constantinople an annual tribute of 70,000 dinars. He was a man of more education than his predecessors, equally sensual in his tastes, but less coarse in their display; and he seems to have had a glimmering idea that power brought with it some sort of responsibility for the well-being of others. Still, he could not trust any man to govern the great kingdom of Egypt without fearing that he might try and make himself independent, so, as his father had done, he changed the Viceroys of Egypt almost every year, and rendered any settled system of good government impossible. Actual persecution of the Christians was not allowed during his reign; but the National Church, with its powerful Patriarch, was jealously watched, and when an excuse offered for oppression it was eagerly taken advantage of.

In 795 Abdallah ebn Mahadi, the brother of the Kaliph, was appointed Emir of Egypt, and sent his brother a present of a very beautiful Egyptian as a slave. This

girl obtained great influence over the Kaliph, and when shortly afterwards she fell ill he was in despair. The girl assured him that only an Egyptian physician would have skill enough to cure her, and Haroun el Raschid had himself experienced how superior was their knowledge in this science to that of all other nations. He sent orders that the most skilful physician in Egypt should be sent to him at once. This on inquiry proved to be no less a person than the Melkite Patriarch, Politian, who was forthwith despatched to Baghdad to cure the Kaliph's concubine. This he succeeded in doing, and, being told to name his reward, he asked that certain churches should be taken from the National Patriarch John and given to him, which was accordingly done.

In 799 John died, and two years later the Melkite Patriarch died also. The latter was succeeded by a linen manufacturer named Eustathius, who, having dug up a treasure—probably from some old tomb—had become a monk, and devoted his riches to the Byzantine Church. The National Church elected Mark, a man of great ability and sincere religion. In his time another of the many sects which had existed in Egypt since the fourth century signified to the Patriarch, through their bishop, that they desired to be received into the National Church in a body. Mark received the bishop with courteous welcome, and expressed great joy at the proposed reconciliation; but, in order to test their sincerity, informed their delegate that he could not recognise an irregular consecration, and that if the bishop entered the Church it must be as a simple cleric. He readily agreed to this stipulation, and the whole body were received into the Church, their places of worship re-consecrated, and their liturgy revised to bring it into

harmony with that of the National Church. After a year or two of probation the Patriarch consecrated the pseudo-bishop to one of his own sees.

In 808 (A.H. 193) Haroun el Raschid died, and civil war at once broke out between his two sons, El Amin and El Mamoun, which lasted with varying fortunes for five years, when El Amin was killed and El Mamoun was recognised as Kaliph. During these five years there was no responsible governor in Egypt, though Shamse el Din gives a list of eight who were appointed. Whether any of them ever went near the country, it is difficult to discover, but they were certainly of no practical use there. The Moslem accounts of this period are hopelessly obscure, but it is clear that a foreign enemy took advantage of the anarchy in Egypt to invade the country from the north-west, and it seems probable that the invaders were the Spanish Moslems, who had now set up a Kaliph of their own, and owed no allegiance to Baghdad.

They landed and ravaged the country, but the Abbaside Moslem troops had hastily reinforced Alexandria, and the Patriarch Mark also went to look after his own people. The Melkite Patriarch Christopher, who had succeeded Eustathius, is not mentioned during this time of trouble; but, as we know that he was a paralytic old man, he was probably unable to do much. Mark cared for all Christians, without distinction of Monophysite or Melkite, and had the courage to seek out the leader of the invaders and offer to ransom all the prisoners he had made in Egypt and intended to export as slaves. It is recorded that in this way he redeemed no less than six thousand Egyptians—men, women, and children. To each of these he presented a deed of freedom, and provided them with necessaries for

their return to the homes from which they had been torn. Some who had lost all, and did not care to seek the far-off ruins of their happiness, he provided for in Alexandria. As usual, however, many of the Egyptians joined the invaders, seeking always for greater freedom at the hands of a new conqueror. The Spanish (?) Moslems by their means made themselves masters of Alexandria, but were in their turn surprised by the Egyptian Moslems, and eight hundred of them massacred. They returned, however, to the fight; a second time Alexandria fell into their hands, and was then given up to indiscriminate pillage and massacre. The great church of St. Saviour, which had only recently been restored, was plundered and burnt; and finally the whole city was fired in several places at once. Mark escaped with some of his friends, and lay hid for some time in one of the desert monasteries. He still, though in disguise and at the risk of his life, continued to discharge the duties of his office, and after about five years the then Emir of Egypt gave him a safe conduct, and permitted him to reside openly in the Wady Natron (Nitria). After a short respite, however, the struggles between the Moslems who had but one subject of agreement—to plunder the Christians—broke out again.

A man named Abd Allah ebn Tahir (Zahir?) for a short time acquired the ascendency in Egypt, and his troops overran the country, sacking the monasteries and burning the churches. The news of this fresh calamity threw the Patriarch into a fever, of which he died. The invading Arabs were still occupying Alexandria and the northern country; Abd Allah ebn Tahir had established himself at Fostat; but another man, Abd el Aziz, had apparently more real power in the country than anyone. He

is said to have burnt the granaries and deliberately caused a famine, in order to starve out the invaders. He also tried to interfere with the election of Mark's successor; and when the Egyptians absolutely refused to accept his nominee, he swore to put all the bishops to death and destroy all the churches that were left standing, if the new Patriarch Jacob did not immediately give himself up. Jacob did not hesitate, and was on his way to what must have seemed inevitable torture and martyrdom, when a violent death overtook Abd el Aziz and saved Jacob's life.

At length El Mamoun, having established himself firmly in the Kaliphate, came to Egypt in person to restore order. The Spanish Moslems were driven out, Abd Allah ebn Tahir was bribed with a large sum of money to retire peaceably, and the Kaliph appointed his brother El Mutasem governor of both Syria and Egypt.

We learn from the chronicle of Gregory Bar Hebræus (Abu 'l faraj) that Denys, the Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, visited Egypt twice during the reign of the Patriarch—or, as Gregory calls him, the Pope—Jacob. The first time he came by sea to Tennis, and all the Christians of the town, in number about thirty thousand, poured out to welcome him, while the Pope and several of his bishops hastened to greet their illustrious guest. Denys must have been somewhat of a pedant, for he records the fact that in welcoming him Pope Jacob inadvertently described his visit as the first which any Patriarch of Antioch had made to Egypt since the days of the great Severus. 'Whereupon,' says Denys, 'we reminded him of the visit of Athanasius when he came to heal the breach which had before taken place between Peter of Antioch and Damian

of Alexandria; and we gave him to understand that a neglect of reading leaves one very imperfectly acquainted with history.' Denys had come to protest against the evil doings of Abd Allah ebn Tahir's brother in Edessa, and obtained a letter from the Emir forbidding the destruction of any more churches in that city. He came the second time with the Kaliph el Mamoun, who sent him in company with Pope Jacob to endeavour to put an end to the revolt of the Copts. Denys says of the Pope and bishops of Egypt that he found them 'deeply religious, humble, rich in the love of God. They treated us with all distinction, giving us the same honours all the time we were in Egypt as to their own Pope.' But he deplores two things —that they did not read enough in the sacred books, and that consecration fees to the amount of two or three hundred pieces of silver were always paid by a new bishop; also that they were accustomed to defer baptism until the thirtieth or even till the fortieth day after birth. Denys took great interest in the antiquities of Egypt, and on his return to Syria wrote a description of what he had seen.

But the united entreaties of both Patriarchs were powerless to prevent the Christian Egyptians from making another desperate attempt to throw off the Moslem yoke. Jacob had before attempted to restrain them by letter, pointing out that final success was an impossibility; and that therefore it was better to submit, as the Christians of the Apostolic age were told to do, to 'the powers that be,' and not to risk a useless effusion of Egyptian blood with the certainty of after-persecution. These letters had been sent to the leaders of the insurgent army by bishops, who added their exhortations to submission. But for once the

authority of the Patriarch had been defied. The insurgents taunted him and his bishops with cowardice, and announced their intention to die fighting, rather than live as slaves.

They obtained a sufficient measure of success to alarm the Kaliph thoroughly. He sent large reinforcements to the Moslem troops already in Egypt; and finally came in person to reconquer the country, bringing Denys of Antioch with him as a sort of hostage. The two Patriarchs, Denys and Jacob, were sent as ambassadors in the Kaliph's name to treat with the insurgents, offering them a general amnesty if they would now lay down their arms and return home. The Copts, flushed with victory and distrustful of the Kaliph's good faith, refused to listen, and the two Patriarchs[1] returned with the news of their failure to the Kaliph.

El Mamoun, fearing the total loss of one of the richest provinces of the Saracenic Empire, then concentrated all his resources of men and treasure on the subjugation of the insurgents. The latter, fighting desperately, were driven back point by point. They made their way in good order to Babylon, where they entrenched themselves in 'the citadel'[2] and stood a protracted siege. Eventually, however, the place was carried by storm, every male was put to the sword, and all the women and children carried as slaves to Baghdad.

[1] That is, Denys and Jacob. The Patriarch of the Melkite (or Greek) Church in Egypt at this time was a man named Christopher, who was incapacitated soon after his election by a paralytic stroke, and of whom therefore we hear almost nothing, except the fact that he bore the title from 817 to 848 A.D.

[2] The only place referred to in Egyptian history as 'the citadel' before the building of the present one above Cairo is the citadel of Babylon, now in ruins; so we are led to conclude that the Egyptians made their last stand in Babylon.

Then the conquerors revenged themselves with pitiless ferocity throughout the length and breadth of Egypt. Many were slain, many were carried away and sold as slaves in other countries, and many of the baser sort saved themselves by apostasy; so that the Christians were left for the first time in a minority in the land. Hitherto the Moslems had only been found in the army and among the residents in the principal towns of Egypt: from this time forth the country population began to fall away from the faith, while the Arabs settled in many of the villages and began to cultivate land.

Some time later the Patriarch had occasion, after repeated remonstrances, to depose the bishops of Tanis and Babylon for maladministration. The two prelates, out of revenge, sought the Emir Afshin, who had been employed to crush the recent rebellion and was now in command of the army. They informed him that the Patriarch Jacob, though he had pretended an attempt to avert and suppress the rising, had been in fact its author. Afshin, without inquiring into the truth of the story, sent soldiers at once to the church where the Patriarch was intending to officiate that day, with orders to fall upon him and kill him. But the Patriarch was warned in time, and, instead of going to the church, he went boldly to the Emir and proved the falsity of the accusation. Afshin then turned his anger against the traitorous bishops, but the Patriarch again interposed and entreated for their pardon.

Such forgiveness was incomprehensible to the Emir, who related the whole story to the Kaliph. The latter, desiring to show some signal mark of favour to Jacob, issued an edict forbidding any appeal on the part of a

Christian from the judgment of his Patriarch. For the short remainder of his life Jacob was protected, though his heart must have been wrung with grief at the desolation of his people, and he did not long survive the rebellion.

El Mamoun, unlike most Moslem rulers of Egypt, endeavoured to acquire some knowledge of the ancient literature and civilisation which his forefathers had done their best to destroy. He caused many important works to be translated from Egyptian, Hebrew, Syriac, and Greek—some of which the European world afterwards received as Arab originals. Unfortunately, however, his scientific and literary studies gave great offence to the stricter Moslems, the orthodox view being that traditionally taken by Omar when he ordered the burning of the Alexandrian library. El Mamoun was not wholly free from intolerance himself. He persecuted those Mohammedans who held the tenet that the Koran was divine and uncreated, and even went so far as to declare by public edict that the Koran ranked third in the list of creatures—after Mohammed and Ali!

The exact date of El Mamoun's death is uncertain, but he was succeeded by his brother, El Mutasem, whom he had made governor of Syria and Egypt. This Kaliph, though son to Haroun el Raschid and brother to El Mamoun, is said to have been an Arab of the old type—illiterate, unable even to read or write, passionate, sensual, but a great warrior and careless of bodily privation or fatigue. At that time all the Saracenic Empire was full of slaves, taken for the most part in battle, or drawn as tribute from the unhappy countries which produced them. Among these slaves were a great quantity of Turks, who were exclusively employed in fighting, since, like their

Arab masters, that was their strong point. They were not even, like the Arabs, capable of assimilating to a certain degree the civilisation of the older world. The Arabs, though originating nothing, have sometimes produced men of great learning and cultivation; the Turks hardly ever, except with so strong an admixture of foreign blood that the original Turk is almost lost in their composition. El Mutasem in particular valued his Turkish slaves highly, and equipped a special regiment of them. These favoured troops eventually abused their privileges to such an extent that the Kaliph dared not continue to live with his Turkish guards in Baghdad. One of these slaves was a man named Touloun, whose son afterwards played an important part in Egypt.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EMBASSY OF GEORGE OF NUBIA

A.D. 831
A.M. 547
A.H. 216

DURING the terrible reprisals which followed on the last attempt of the unhappy Egyptians to throw off the yoke of their Moslem oppressors, the Patriarch Jacob died sorrowing, and was succeeded by a man named Simon, who only survived him a few months. On the death of Simon there was a strong party in favour of choosing a married man as Patriarch, and the feeling on both sides ran so high that the Patriarchal throne remained vacant more than a year. Zachary, Bishop of Wissim, and Theodore of Babylon, desired Isaac—a man who was rich and of noble birth, but whose marriage rendered him canonically ineligible. Unfortunately none of the bishops seem to have been aware, any more than the Copts of the present day, that in primitive times their bishops and Patriarchs had been married men; so the only precedent to which the reform party could appeal was that of Demetrius, about whom the legend had by this time grown that his continence in the married state had been proved by a miracle. On the other hand, Michael of Pelusium and John of Bana, the two bishops who headed the conservative party, had a good deal to say on their side. According to canons which had now been in force for some centuries, marriage clearly incapacitated a man from being made

Patriarch; to violate them would be to give a handle to the Melkite Church, which its members would not be slow to use, and a cause of needless offence to the Church of Antioch and others in communion with them. The conservatives ultimately prevailed: Isaac was rejected, and a man named Joseph, the abbot of the monastery of St. Macarius, was chosen. But the petty tyrant who acted as the Emir's deputy in Lower Egypt wished Isaac to succeed, because a rich man irregularly chosen would have been a mine of wealth to him; so he refused to allow Joseph to be enthroned unless he were given a bribe of a thousand pieces of gold. Fortunately this man's authority did not extend to Babylon, so the bishops on this occasion were able to set the official at defiance by removing to that city for the consecration.

For some time the Christian kingdoms of Nubia and the Soudan had been increasing in importance, and either during the Kaliphate of Mamoun or of Mutasem—for there is the same confusion of dates among the historians about this event as about the Coptic war—they determined not to continue the slave tribute which had been imposed upon them by the Moslems, and which kept them in a constant state of war with their neighbours, besides being a reproach to their Christianity.

These arguments were strongly insisted upon by the heir to the northern throne, George (or Girghis,[1] as the name is spoken in the East); and while the war with the Copts kept the Moslems fully occupied, his father, Zacharias, listened readily enough and stopped the tribute. But when news came of the terrible vengeance which had fallen upon the Christian Egyptians, it became a serious question

[1] Quatremère, by an odd corruption of Girghis, calls this man Kirky.

whether they could continue to defy the Moslem power. George was urgent to do so, but his father shrank from the responsibility. Eventually he determined to send George on an embassy to the Kaliph, that he might see for himself the condi+' n of the Saracen Empire. He was to observe particularly the state of the country, the condition of the army and the fortified towns, the evidence of wealth or poverty; in short, he was to report fully to his father. If there seemed any reasonable chance of success, Zacharias promised to take up arms against the Moslems immediately on his son's safe return; but if he judged the case hopeless, he was to present himself before the Kaliph as a suppliant vassal, and promise the continuation of the tribute.

He was provided with a cause of appeal to the Kaliph in the latter case: King Zacharias was much troubled by the fact that great numbers of Moslems were settling in his country; and doing so, not by violence, which he would have prevented, but by purchase. The Nubian Christians —tempted by large offers, and becoming more and more unsettled themselves, owing to the petty wars which the slave tribute rendered necessary—sold large tracts of the richest land in Nubia to the Moslems from Assuan, and these foreign settlers were becoming, as Zacharias felt, a serious danger to the country. Whether the argument which he put forward to the Kaliph against it was a just one, or merely a pretext to avoid speech which might offend Moslem ears, is not stated; but it amounted to this —that such sales were invalid because the vendors were 'serfs' of the Nubian king, and had no right to alienate the land, only to cultivate it on condition of paying their taxes.

The news of this appeal seems to have filled the Moslem

syndicate of Assuan with dismay. By bribes and entreaties they persuaded the Nubian Christians who had sold them the lands to deny absolutely, when the case came on for trial, that they had owned their lands on any such conditions, or that they could in any sense be called the serfs of their king. The judge, who was a Mohammedan, at once decided, against the king, that the sales were legal, and that the land should remain in the possession of the Moslems.

The case of these lands went with the general question of rebellion or submission, and George saw enough on his long journey to Baghdad to convince him reluctantly that Nubia had no chance of defying, single-handed, the whole force of the Saracen Empire. The Kaliph, moreover, guessed pretty well how affairs stood, and considered it well worth his while to conciliate Nubia. George was received with the greatest honour and loaded with presents. The excuse that the country of Egypt had been too much disturbed of late years for the Nubians to send their tribute was at once accepted, no arrears were demanded, and the concession was even made that the slave tribute should only be sent once in three years instead of every year to the Kaliph. He even granted George the boon of freedom for 'all the prisoners'—presumably all those Christians taken in the late war, to whom the King of Nubia could make out a claim. Among other presents the Kaliph gave George a house at Gizeh and another at Fostat 'in the quarter of Benou-Wail.'

George found the houses useful, for he remained some time in Egypt on his return journey, as he had many things to settle with the Patriarch Joseph. Among other things he requested the Patriarch to consecrate a

portable wooden altar, which could follow the King of Nubia in his constant journeys—the ordinary altars of the Egyptian Church being solid and immovable erections. The Patriarch accompanied George for some distance on his return to Nubia, and the project of rebellion against the Moslems was definitely abandoned.

During the Patriarchate of Joseph, the Metropolitan of Abyssinia, who had not long been sent to that country, returned to Joseph as a fugitive. He had in some way incurred the displeasure of the queen, who was acting apparently as regent in the absence of her husband on a military expedition. The queen caused an attempt to be made on the archbishop's life, and he fled the country, returning to his monastery in Egypt. When, however, the King of Abyssinia returned defeated to his country, and discovered what had been done in his absence, he blamed his queen severely. He at once despatched a messenger to the Patriarch with earnest apologies and an entreaty that the archbishop might come back to them. Both the Patriarch and the archbishop were ready to forgive, and the latter returned to his diocese; but, though well received by the king, he never seems to have succeeded in winning the affections of the Abyssinians.

Joseph was evidently a man of great power, and imbued with the spirit of true Christianity. For his sake the Kaliph had ceased at length his terrible reprisals on the Christians; his influence had composed the quarrels of Abyssinia; he had won the strong personal friendship of the Melkite Patriarch, Sophronius; and now he occupied himself in creating new sees in the remote parts of his diocese outside Egypt proper, and strengthening the Church after its recent heavy trials.

He did not altogether escape persecution, however, and it was the misconduct of one of his own priests that brought it upon him. This was a man named Theodore, who had been the right-hand man of Isaac, Bishop of Wissim, and who had set his heart on succeeding Isaac in the bishopric. The Patriarch, however, refused his application, on the ground that the Christians of the diocese greatly desired some one else. Theodore thereupon appealed to the Emir; and the Emir, seeing a chance of plunder, issued a mandate to the Patriarch to consecrate Theodore. Joseph refused, and the Emir at once issued an order for the destruction of all the churches in Fostat and Babylon. They began with those in the ruined fortress of Babylon called by the Arabs Kasr el Shamma,[1] and had already done considerable damage when, unable to resist the entreaties of his people to spare them this persecution, Joseph consented to consecrate Theodore. The Emir further demanded a sum of three thousand pieces of gold, which was subscribed by the wealthiest among the Christians, and the persecution was stopped.

Another ecclesiastic, the Bishop of Babylon, behaved very badly. He wished to raise his bishopric—always one of the most important—to the rank of a Metropolitan see, which should owe no allegiance to the Patriarch of Alexandria,[2] and asserted his claims in the Mohammedan

[1] In all probability this was originally Kasr el Khemi ('Castle of Egypt').

[2] About this time the Melkite Patriarch had, in fact, raised four of his few bishoprics to the rank of Metropolitans; and of these four, Babylon was one. The object of this was probably to give precedence to the Melkite bishops over those of the more important National Church in the principal cities of Egypt. As Babylon, from its nearness to Fostat, the seat of the Mohammedan government, was the most important see in the eyes of the Moslems, it is easy to understand why the Bishop of

court of law. Fortunately Joseph, instead of pleading Christian tradition, was able to produce an authority which no Mohammedan could deny—the decree of the late Kaliph that no Christian in Egypt was exempt from the authority of the National Patriarch. Incidentally we learn that Joseph could not speak Arabic, and was compelled to give his evidence through an interpreter.

The second son of El Mutasem, El Mutiwakeel, was now Kaliph, and had appointed his own son, El Montaser, Governor (or Emir) of Egypt. Both the Kaliph and his son detested the Christians, and though they were constantly obliged to employ them as architects, as physicians, as accountants—in any capacity, in short, which needed learning or probity—they lost no opportunity of insulting and oppressing them. Unfortunately many of the Christians whom they did so employ, in serving their masters well, forgot the prior obligations they owed to their God and their country. They tried to serve God and Mammon, in fact; and Mammon got the best of it. A Melkite architect, named Eleazar, came into Egypt with authority from the Kaliph to confiscate from the National churches whatever marbles and columns he needed for some building operation. The marbles of the church of St. Mina in the Mareotis, which has been previously described, were the most beautiful in Egypt; and notwithstanding the earnest entreaties of the Patriarch Joseph—Sophronius, who was the architect's own Patriarch, being apparently too timid to interfere—Eleazar removed all the marble pillars from this church. Joseph did what he could to save the church from consequent destruction by substituting other

Babylon (National Church) desired to take equal rank with his rival, though the means he employed were indefensible.

supports, probably piers of masonry; and it is recorded that long afterwards Eleazar bitterly repented of his action, and sent a large sum of money to the Egyptian Patriarch's successor as compensation for the mischief he had done.

El Montaser did not stay long in Egypt, but the deputy whom he appointed cherished a particular spite against the National Patriarch, and during the closing years of the latter's life he suffered much. When the Patriarch of Antioch died, his successor sent the usual synodal letter of information and greeting to the National Church of Egypt, and Joseph came to Alexandria from Masr to receive the legates with due honour. But the Emir chose this moment to arrest him on a false charge, and without trial to have him publicly scourged before the prelates of Antioch. If this were intended, however, to lower Joseph in their eyes, it did not succeed, for they recorded their admiration of the patience with which he had borne the cruel injustice.

The Emir, however, did not stop here. He insulted the Patriarch by entering his room with some of his concubines and polluting the very oratory with their debauchery. Finally, he accused Joseph of a treasonable correspondence with the Byzantines, and on this perfectly unfounded charge threw him into a prison so narrow that he could not sleep, and caused him to be scourged daily. The Christians understood that, as usual, money was the Emir's object, and hastily collected a thousand pieces of gold, which the Emir accepted as ransom. But the Patriarch was now an old man, and his recent sufferings had been too much for him. He died about three weeks afterwards, 849 A.D., thanking God that he had been able to accomplish three things on which his heart had been set: That he had

renewed communion with the Church of Antioch ; that he had been able to reform and strengthen the Church of Egypt; and that he had preserved peace and regulated the ecclesiastical affairs of Abyssinia and Nubia. The Emir who had tortured him preceded him to the grave by several days.

CHAPTER IX

AHMED EBN TOULOUN

D. 849
M. 565
H. 235

JOSEPH'S successor was Michael II., from whom so large a backsheesh was demanded by the Moslem authorities on his accession that he had to sell some of the Church plate before he could make up the sum. And as he died in little over a year, the unfortunate Church of Egypt had hardly paid for one Patriarch before it was called upon to pay for another. This was also a monk of the convent of St. Macarius, named Cosmas, who reigned about seven years. The persecution which had begun before the death of Joseph grew yearly more severe. The Kaliph Mutiwakil issued edict after edict against the Christians, not only in Egypt, where persecution hardly ever ceased entirely, but in all other parts of his dominions as well. Some of these decrees were merely vexatious, and seem to the modern reader to involve no great hardship, but it is evident that they were in some way marks of special humiliation. It was the custom, for instance, that no man should wear a girdle and that no woman should be seen without, the girdle or zone being a special mark of feminine modesty. Therefore all Christian women were forbidden to wear girdles, and all male Christians were commanded to appear in them. No Christian was to use any stirrup but one of wood, nor any bridle save a rope. No beast might be ridden by them save

an ass or a mule, and even their saddles were to bear a distinguishing mark. Every Christian was to wear a patch, not less than four inches long, sewn on his dress, of a different colour; and his sleeves, no matter what the colour of his dress, were to be honey-coloured. The women were also to wear honey-coloured veils;[1] though it was only to pass in the street undistinguished from Mohammedan women, and therefore safe from insult, that the Christian women had adopted the use of veils at all. Every Christian was to place over his door the wooden figure of an ape, a dog, or a devil. No lights or processions were allowed to them, the use of the cross in their churches and services was forbidden, and no Christians might light a fire without doors—a common practice for cooking purposes among the poorer classes of the East.

The Egyptian bishops did their best to persuade the people to obey these vexatious rules cheerfully, and give no unnecessary offence to their Moslem rulers. They had most difficulty about the girdle, which seems to have been regarded as a peculiarly shameful humiliation. The bishops therefore exhausted their ingenuity in finding symbolic and honourable meanings in the girdle, and ordained that it should be worn even at prayer. Doubtless, too, they reminded the men that our Saviour had ridden upon an ass, and that horses were associated with pomp and war. But other edicts were productive of very real suffering, not to be explained away, such as wholesale dismissal of all the Christians employed in Government offices. This measure was often adopted in times of persecution, but though it

[1] I infer, from various indications, that the yellow or honey-coloured veil was the garment worn by prostitutes, but have not been able to ascertain.

entailed a great amount of misery to the individual Christians thus suddenly deprived of employment, it never remained in force many years, for the simple reason that no Moslem Government found itself able to get on without the Christians.

All churches recently erected (the limit of time is not stated, it may have been since the rebellion) were pulled down, and all Christian tombs throughout the country were razed to the ground. The Christians were a prey to the lawlessness and spite of their Moslem neighbours throughout the country, and their condition seemed sufficiently miserable; but the limit was not yet reached. Whether by order of the Kaliph himself, or of the local Emir, a decree was issued which it was hoped would destroy Christianity entirely in Egypt. No funeral service was allowed to the Christian dead, no public prayer to be offered in any church or any place at all throughout the land of Egypt. In order to give full effect to this last prohibition, the growing of grapes and the buying and selling of wine throughout Egypt were forbidden, and the law was carried out so strictly that wine became for the time absolutely unprocurable. In this extremity, since not even the fear of slavery or death could prevent the clergy from celebrating the Holy Communion, they imported grapes, and made a kind of wine in secrecy as it was wanted. By the time the grapes arrived in Egypt they were so dry as to deserve the name of raisins; but they were pressed in water, and the liquid thus obtained either did not, or was not allowed time to ferment. This custom, which a similar persecution about a hundred and fifty years later renewed and caused to endure for some centuries, gave rise to the statement in

some modern writers that the Copts made use always of unfermented wine in the administration of the Sacrament. It is true that they did so, on compulsion, for long periods of time; but so far from recommending the practice, they always acknowledged that only necessity could excuse it, and some ecclesiastics doubted whether the validity of such a Sacrament could be maintained. About this time (852 A.D.) the Byzantines made an attempt to regain possession of Egypt, and did occupy Damietta for a time; but instead of helping the Egyptian Christians, this unsuccessful expedition only served to irritate the Moslems yet more, and the laws against Christianity were still more stringently enforced. In the midst of these miseries Cosmas II. died, and was succeeded by Shenouda I. (Sanutius). There had been much discussion about a successor, but finally all the bishops agreed to send for Shenouda as a candidate. It so happened that he entered the Church where they were in session while the service was going on and the words 'He' ('it'—there is no neuter gender) 'is meet and worthy' were being sung. This was taken as a sign that he was the candidate approved of Heaven.

The Emir seized the occasion to exact more money from the Christians, and ordered Shenouda to be arrested; but the newly elected Patriarch escaped, and made a visitation of the monasteries in the remoter parts of his diocese, so that the Moslems could not discover his whereabouts. The goods of the clergy were seized, and the churches of Babylon and Fostat with one exception remained closed. It was probably the news that his clergy were suffering for his sake which determined Shenouda, when at length he heard of it, to return and give himself up. About four thousand pieces of gold

were exacted from the Church, and the same amount was to be paid annually to this Emir.

Not long afterwards the Kaliph Mutiwakil was murdered by his son Montazer, who only reigned six months on the throne which he had gained by parricide. On his death a state of great confusion prevailed in the Saracenic Empire. His two sons Moustain and Mutazzi took up arms against each other, while the Turkish guard, which like such bodies in all ages now began to arrogate to itself the privilege of making Kings and Kaliphs at its pleasure, was in favour of Mutasem's grandson. During the short Kaliphate of Moustain, however, the Egyptian Christians experienced a wonderful reverse of fortune. Two of the principal men among them, after solemnly asking the sanction and blessing of their Patriarch, set out for Baghdad to represent the condition to which the recent Emirs had reduced Egypt and to entreat the new Kaliph to do them justice. They succeeded beyond their wildest hopes. Moustain, who was shortly afterwards imprisoned and murdered by his successful brother, saw the importance of conciliating the Egyptian Christians at this juncture, and gave them a deed by which the lands, churches, monasteries, and Church plate which had been taken from them in the recent persecution should be restored to them. This mandate they brought to Shenouda, and he caused copies of it to be despatched to every bishop, from one end of the country to the other, with a letter of consolation and congratulation. 'Thus from Farma to Assuan,' says Severus, 'the churches were rebuilt and religion re-established.' Nor did Egypt suffer from the anarchy which prevailed in other parts of the Empire after the

imprisonment of Moustain. A Turk named Muzahem was nominated by Mutazzi, who soon made himself too powerful to be interfered with. He brought with him a large army of Turkish troops, who despised the Arab Moslems almost as much as the latter despised the Christians; and under Muzahem therefore a certain rough justice was meted out to Christian and Mohammedan alike, brigandage was put down, and industry protected. Shenouda profited by this time of peace to carry out much-needed repairs all over the country; but the principal action by which he is remembered is the gift of a good water-supply to the inhabitants of Alexandria. He built an aqueduct, had cisterns constructed in the town, and pipes laid down by which the water was brought into the houses.

Muzahem unfortunately only lived two years, and his son, who took over his duties in Egypt, was soon recalled. A Turk named Babbak was named Governor of Egypt (868), but, instead of going himself, he appointed a financial administrator and a military commander in that country. The latter was Ahmed ebn Touloun, though some historians have doubted whether he were the real or only the adopted son of Touloun. He seems in any case, however, to have been a Turk, and had all the military qualities of the Turk, with a much better education than is usual among men of his nationality. His ambition was unbounded, and he began by depriving his financial coadjutor of his military guard, that it might be quite clear with whom the real power in Egypt should remain. He seems to have restrained the exactions of the financial administrator, whose name was also Ahmed, and who in the short time by which he had preceded Ebn

Touloun to Egypt had managed to make himself universally detested. He had doubled the taxes for both Christian and Mohammedan alike—for the first time since the coming of the Moslems putting them on any sort of equality—and had made the sale of natron and the fishery of the country into Government monopolies.

Ahmed ebn Touloun had not been long in Egypt before the Kaliph Mastadi, who had succeeded Mutazzi barely a year before, was murdered, like his predecessor. A son of Mutiwakil, named Mutamid, was then chosen Kaliph by the Turkish troops. The Governor of Syria, however, refused to acknowledge the new Kaliph, who sent orders to Ahmed ebn Touloun to reduce him to submission. Considering that the Syrian Emir openly announced his intention of forming Syria, Armenia, and Egypt into an independent kingdom under himself, and that Ahmed ebn Touloun had similar ambitious views in his own breast, he was very ready to try conclusions with his rival. He left most of his own Turkish troops to garrison Egypt, and brought an army of slaves—negroes, Abyssinians, and *Greeks*—with whom he marched into Syria. But finding that the Kaliph had already sent another governor into Syria, who was driving the recalcitrant Emir before him without any difficulty, Ahmed concluded that Syria could wait, and returned after two months' absence to Egypt. Finding the palace and barracks too small to contain his Turkish followers, he determined to build a new city to the north of Fostat, which should be as much the peculiar habitation of the Turks as Fostat of the Arabs, and Babylon of the Copts. It is this city of Ahmed ebn Touloun which is the only true 'Masr Antika,' though that name is used by the mediæval and

modern Egyptians to include the ruins of Fostat and Babylon. Before Touloun's time there was, properly speaking, no city of Masr, though the name was sometimes applied by the Arabs to Babylon and Fostat collectively. Masr was the Semitic name for Egypt, but Babylon was the name still best known to Europe.[1] The Sultan of Egypt was known to the Franks as the Sultan of Babylon, even after that city had been reduced to the charred heaps among which the old fortress now stands alone.

Ahmed proceeded much on the same plan as the Khedive Ismaïl when he built the recent addition to the modern city known as the Ismaïlieh. He first selected all the sites he was likely to want for his own and Government buildings, and then parcelled out the waste ground into lots, which he gave to his principal retainers on condition that they built and inhabited houses of a sufficient value. He chose a spot farther from the river than Fostat and to the north-west of that city, under the Mokattam hills. Apparently this district had been for centuries the burial-place of the Jews, and more recently of the Christians; but this presented no obstacle to Ahmed ebn Touloun. He gave orders that all tombs were to be demolished, and the material was used in his own constructions. He surrounded the new town with walls and gates, and built himself a magnificent palace by the side of a great meidan.[2]

The fame of Ahmed's proceedings reached the court

[1] Ahmed's new city was also called El Katai. There was already a quarter on the site occupied by soldiers, and called El Askar.

[2] This word is always translated by the French as *manège*, or riding-school. Very likely that is the true rendering of the word meidan, but in the vulgar Arabic of to-day it means only a public place or square.

of the Kaliph, and excited some suspicion there. Intrigues were not wanting on the part of Ahmed, the financial administrator, who had been an enemy of his great military colleague from the first; and, in the midst of his building, Ahmed received a peremptory order to quit Egypt and come to Samarrah, where the Kaliph now resided. Ahmed knew himself strong enough in Egypt to defy the Kaliph, if necessary, and did not obey the order, but he sent his secretary with a rich present and bribes in his stead. The embassy was so successful that Ahmed was not only confirmed in his irregular government—Babbak being all this time the nominal ruler of Egypt—but Ahmed's wife and children, who had been detained for nearly two years at Samarrah, were allowed to join him in Egypt. The next year the nominal appointment was taken from Babbak and given to Barkuk, another freed slave, who was Ahmed ebn Touloun's father-in-law, and the financial administrator was dismissed. No one was appointed in his place, and the Emir who under Babbak had ruled in Alexandria and the sea-coast provinces being also dismissed, Ahmed found himself absolute master of Egypt, though still his official title was the deputy of the Governor Barkuk.

His first care was to regulate and lessen the enormous burden of taxes under which the country groaned. This task entailed the greater sacrifice because Ahmed meted out a rough justice to Christian and Mohammedan alike for the most part, though for very obvious political reasons he favoured the Turk among Moslems and the Melkite among Christians. In the Patriarch of the National Church he saw his only formidable rival, and he took every possible occasion of exacting money from that Church

in order to keep it in a state of impotent poverty; but he did this in the shape of arbitrary demands upon the Patriarch, and not so much by special taxes upon the Christians. In the first year alone he remitted taxation to the extent of one hundred thousand dinars, so that his secretary remonstrated with him on this sacrifice of revenue when money was so much needed for his building and other projects. Ebn Touloun was encouraged, it is said, by a dream in which a holy man whom he had known at Tarsus (where he had been educated) appeared to him and assured him that when a prince abandoned his rights (?) for the good of his people, God would send a recompense.

Shortly after, so runs the tale, Ebn Touloun was riding across a desert towards Upper Egypt, when the horse of one of his attendant slaves stumbled and fell with him. He had put his foot into a hole, and the shock of the fall caused the ground to cave in, and disclosed a subterranean excavation—probably a tomb of Pharaonic times. On exploring the place, they found treasure which was valued at a million dinars (about 600,000*l.*).

The news of this marvellous discovery spread quickly through the East, and Ebn Touloun found it necessary to write and ask the Kaliph's permission—which he was not in a position to refuse—to retain the money in Egypt and expend it on public works. Naturally the finding of one such treasure set the Moslems digging for more, and one man in particular, it is said, demolished a considerable part of the abandoned city of Heliopolis in search of treasure, but he found nothing, though Ebn Touloun, who also continued to dig in likely places, afterwards found another treasure of even greater value than the first.

Ebn Touloun made a liberal distribution to the poor,

and spent the rest on his new town. He built a mosque on an elevated spur of the Mokattam, and others, besides a hospital, in the town. He devoted much care to the water-supply of his new city, which, considering its position, must have presented some difficulties. There was but one spring, which was known by the name of 'the Fountain of Abu Kaled.' When Ebn Touloun built his reservoir he was advised to fill it from the source of Abu Kaled, but refused, on the ground that if he did so the reservoir would always keep the old name of Abu Kaled, whereas he intended it to bear his own, and be a perpetual memorial to posterity of himself.

The architects and mathematicians of Egypt have always been Copts, and Ebn Touloun's workmen were no exception to the rule. His principal architect was a Christian of great renown for his talents in that line, and to him Ebn Touloun committed the task of bringing water into the new city in a form which should be at once beautiful, substantial, and lasting. The Christian sank a shaft to a great depth in the Southern Desert, and brought the water in on a lofty aqueduct of innumerable arches, much like the one which, in later times, Saladin constructed to bring water to his citadel. Both aqueducts exist to this day; the later one is known to every Egyptian tourist, the earlier one is rarely visited. It crosses the desert to the east of Masr, Fostat, and Babylon, and could be seen, by those who knew where to look, from the old line of the Helwan railway.

This aqueduct was considered one of the greatest wonders of its day, and when it was finished Ebn Touloun rode out in state to see it and compliment the builder. But one of the workmen had carelessly left a heap of loose

building material in the wrong place; the Emir's horse stumbled and fell with him. Ebn Touloun does not seem to have been hurt, but the circumstance was a very bad omen for him, and he was proportionately angry. Instead of paying the Christian the sum agreed upon, Ebn Touloun had him immediately arrested and thrown into prison, where he remained some time.

Ebn Touloun had the canal of Alexandria cleaned out and repaired, and constructed additional cisterns in that town, besides rebuilding the upper part of the great light-house. He had previously repaired the Nilometer in the island of Rhoda; he built a hospital in Fostat, and public baths; and himself inspected these establishments to see that they were carried on properly. On one occasion one of the madmen confined in the hospital attempted his life, but this did not deter him from his regular visits. In short, Egypt had not been so well cared for since the Arab conquest; but though the ordinary population rejoiced in him, the National Patriarch and the semi-military bands of Moslems who under different leaders had plundered and oppressed the country at their pleasure for generations had both reason—though very different reason—to complain.

CHAPTER X

THE ADVENTURES OF EL OMARI

A.D. 878
A.M. 594
A.H. 264

ONE of these Mohammedan adventurers stands out from the rest by reason of his greater talent and the mischief that he wrought in Nubia. Makrizi traces his descent from the Kaliph Omar, and gives his name as Abu Abderrahman el Omari el Edoui el Karshi,[1] but he is better known by his nickname of El Omari. This man was born and brought up at Medina, but had studied at Fostat. He had fought under Ibrahim, another of the robber chiefs who gave Ebn Touloun so much trouble, and received from him a large sum of money, with which he returned to Fostat. In the course of conversation with Egyptians who had preserved some knowledge of their ancient country, he heard them speak of the gold mines in the south which used in old times to yield so great a revenue. El Omari at once determined to go in search of these gold mines and appropriate them. He kept his design, of course, a profound secret, and gave out that he was about to undertake a great trading expedition to the south. He bought slaves, with whom he intended to work the mine, and travelled first to Assuan, where he managed to obtain trustworthy information concerning the whereabouts of the ancient mines.

[1] Another writer calls him Abd el Hamid el Omari.

At last he reached the place where one of them was said to be, but found a tribe of Arabs encamped there. There had been some trouble between them and the Arabs of Rebiah, owing to the murder of one of the former; but the matter was amicably arranged, and peace was sworn between the two tribes. This did not suit Omari at all, and he persuaded the tribe of Modar, notwithstanding their agreement, to fall on the Arabs of Rebiah. The battle, however, went against El Omari and his allies, and he was obliged to leave the place, but made his way south to another mine. This was much farther from the Nile, and his followers suffered greatly from thirst. They do not seem to have known at first in what direction to seek the Nile, but a flight of birds showed them the way, and El Omari despatched some men to bring water.

He was now, however, well within the Christian kingdom of Nubia, and it may be imagined that the Nubians looked with hostile eyes upon his invasion of their territories. They retained his men as prisoners, and though El Omari came in person to negotiate with them, they positively refused—by the simple expedient of withholding the water-supply, and killing those who persisted in coming for it—to allow him to settle himself in their neighbourhood. El Omari had no intention of giving up his plans, and calling his men together he marched from the desert into Nubia.

He struck the Nile at a place which Quatremère called 'Shenkir,' to the south of Dongola, took the Nubians by surprise, and gained a complete victory, killing great numbers of them and taking a quantity of prisoners, to be sold as slaves. Makrizi says: 'So great was the number that when one of the conquerors wanted his head shaved, he would pay the barber by the gift of a slave.'

The Nubians who succeeded in escaping took to their boats, and, taking their goods with them, crossed the Nile. El Omari had no boats, so they fancied themselves secure; but their enemy was a man of resource. He caused the leathern waterskins of his company to be inflated with air, and a picked body of men were told off to cross the Nile on these under cover of the night, and to capture all the boats of the Nubians. In this enterprise they were entirely successful. It is recorded that when the passage of the river was successfully achieved, one of Omari's men whispered to his nearest companions to draw him out of the water, as he was helpless. A crocodile had bitten off his foot as they crossed the Nile, but he had restrained himself from uttering a cry, for fear of giving the Nubians notice of their approach.

By this time the King of Nubia had heard of El Omari's proceedings, and sent an army to drive the Moslem adventurer out of his country. The reigning king was the same George, son of Zacharias, who had given up the idea of repudiating the slave tribute after his journey to Baghdad. He was now an old man, and seems to have been much respected in his kingdom. His picture was long preserved in the ancient church of 'Dermes,'[1] a town on the Nile, which also enclosed a splendid temple, still in good preservation in the time of Abu Selah. This picture represented King George at the age of eighty years, seated upon a throne of ebony, inlaid with ivory and covered with plates of gold. The royal crown is on his head, enriched with precious stones and surmounted by a golden cross.

Niouti, the general whom King George sent against

[1] Otherwise spelt Darmus or Termus; it was a cathedral city.

El Omari, was his son-in-law and at the same time apparently his nephew. Several fights took place between El Omari and Niouti, without either side obtaining much advantage. At length Niouti turned traitor, and, making a treaty with El Omari, turned his arms against his king. George then despatched his eldest son with fresh troops, but he was defeated in the unequal combat with El Omari and Niouti, and, not daring to return to his father, fled to the southern kingdom (also Christian) of Alouah, and sought refuge at that court.

The unhappy George of Nubia had a younger son named Zacharias, who now offered to rid the country of both the Moslem Omari and the traitor Niouti, if he were allowed a free hand. The king gave him the necessary powers and a third army.

Zacharias began by opening negotiations with El Omari, to such good purpose that the latter agreed to remain neutral while Zacharias punished his traitorous brother-in-law. Zacharias then attacked Niouti, but after a hard struggle was defeated, his army scattered, and he himself sought refuge in flight. He went straight to Omari, representing himself as an ambassador from Zacharias, who wished for a personal interview with him, and demanded a safe-conduct for that purpose, assuring him that Zacharias had full powers from the king, and was ready to make favourable terms. Having obtained the safe-conduct, he revealed his identity, and, says the Moslem historian, El Omari 'was filled with esteem for a prince at once so young and so prudent'!

Zacharias remained with El Omari till he had entirely won his confidence and lulled his suspicions. He betrayed to this Moslem invader the secrets of the tombs which

the Christian descendants of the old Egyptians had till then preserved inviolate, and allowed El Omari to plunder them at his will. When he had acquired complete ascendency over El Omari, he unfolded to him a part of his further plan. Niouti, he suggested, was their joint enemy; if he were only disposed of, El Omari and himself could share the kingdom. Niouti's widow, who was sister to Zacharias, should be given to El Omari to wife, which would win him favour in the eyes of the Nubians.

El Omari objected that Niouti was a good general, and that his army was the larger and better. Zacharias assured him that he had no notion of fighting; but would manage it by a stratagem. El Omari, who had evidently unbounded confidence in the young rascal's power of intrigue, bade him do as he liked, and put four of his best and bravest officers under his orders.

Zacharias embarked on the Nile in a small boat, and gave his companions their instructions on the way, which they promised faithfully to carry out. They left him bound and helpless, on an island opposite Niouti's camp; and then rowed within speaking distance of the enemy on the bank, calling out that they desired to speak with the general. Niouti came to the shore, and the four officers, saluting him in the name of El Omari, informed him that they had brought Zacharias according to his desire (for Niouti appears to have written to El Omari, asking him to deliver his enemy Zacharias into his hands), and were ready to give him up in return for money and slaves.

After some bargaining, a large sum was agreed upon, but Niouti stipulated that he should see Zacharias, and be satisfied of his identity before paying anything. The officers had expected this, and readily agreed, but when

Niouti began to embark with a large number of his followers they objected. They pointed out that they were only four, and that they did not choose to run the risk of his murdering them, and making off with their prisoner without paying the ransom. Niouti thereupon commanded his followers to remain behind, and rowed to the island with only two or three attendants. Carpets had been spread, and a throne prepared for him, and when he had taken his place, Zacharias was dragged before him, having before instructed the four officers that when he gave the signal by bursting into tears, they were to kill Niouti.

Niouti certainly rushed upon his fate. He began by striking his bound and helpless young relative, and pouring out a volley of abuse; Zacharias affected to plead with him for some time, and then burst into tears. The four officers promptly fell upon Niouti and killed him. Then Zacharias was hastily unbound, and, with some courage, went at once with his small following across the river, and called upon the soldiers of Niouti's camp to return to their allegiance; promising them an amnesty for the past. Being joyfully welcomed, he summoned a secret council of the principal officers, and confided to them what he intended to do. In public, on the contrary, he affected still to be a friend of El Omari's, and ordered that the four Arab officers should be treated with all honour.

He wrote to El Omari, telling him of his complete success, and begging him to prepare for the reception of the splendid troops he was about to bring him. Having sent off this message he threw off his mask, and put to death the four Arab officers who had accompanied him, and gave the word for a march upon El Omari.

He crossed the river close to the camp of El Omari, and

marched on in such guise, that one of El Omari's companions began to feel suspicious. 'This Infidel,' he pointed out, was entering their very camp, and that at the head of a larger army than their own. El Omari assured him there was nothing to fear, but the next moment Zacharias gave the signal, and his army fell upon the Moslems. A great number were killed; but El Omari himself, with some of his troops, hastily took refuge in the boats and went down the river. However, Zacharias had foreseen this move, and posted one of his subjects whom he could depend upon, a well-known river pilot, with instructions what to do. As he expected, this man was impressed by El Omari, with the promise of a large sum if he took them safely down the cataracts. The pilot ordered them to tie all their boats together, and took his place in the first. Then he guided them into a perfectly impracticable passage; and when the fatal moment came, flung himself into the water and saved himself by swimming. Every boat in the flotilla was whirled down and smashed to atoms; and no man of the soldiers who had embarked in them was left alive. El Omari himself, however, had not embarked with this first contingent of his army; and though much weakened by so heavy a loss, he managed to maintain his position in Nubia for nearly a year longer. Little by little Zacharias, by bribes and intrigues, managed to detach from him some of the Bedouin tribes who had joined El Omari, and finally marched against him with a large army. El Omari did not venture to meet him, and retreated towards Egypt, but about a day's journey from Assuan, he found himself confronted by a new enemy.

One of the powerful robber chiefs who had tyrannised over Egypt for so long was a man called Ibrahim Soufi,

who had made himself master of Esneh, where he devastated the whole district, and put to death anyone who ventured to dispute his authority. The first expedition that Ahmed ebn Touloun sent against him, he defeated, but Ebn Touloun hastened to send a stronger force, which routed Ibrahim entirely, near Akmim. Ibrahim himself escaped, and took refuge with the remnant of his followers in the Oasis. Here he had gathered strength, probably from the remains of the robber bands who were one after another being dispersed, and now, like Omari, he proposed to conquer a fresh stronghold for himself in the fertile country of Nubia. Meeting El Omari in retreat from Zacharias, he at once attacked him; but El Omari, driven to desperation, fought so well that he defeated Ibrahim, who fled to Assuan, where he fell into the hands of a third Moslem army, commanded by Shabah el Babeki; whom Ahmed ebn Touloun had sent to recall El Omari, and put a stop to his proceedings in Nubia. The remains of Ibrahim's army deserted him, and seemed to have joined the standard of El Omari, against whom Shabah el Babeki next marched. El Omari, after endeavouring in vain to treat with him, joined battle, and drove him back into Egypt, following him as far as Edfou, and fighting another battle north of Assuan with the troops of Ahmed ebn Touloun.

Zacharias rejoiced to be thus rid of his enemy, but he reckoned without his host. Egypt, under Ahmed ebn Touloun, was less safe for a robber chief than Nubia, and next year we find El Omari again trying to establish himself at the Mines in spite of the Bedouin tribes, who were not much more anxious for his presence. After a long series of bloody fights, one of the principal sheikhs of the

tribe of Modar swore to rid the country of the fellow, laid a trap for him, and murdered him.

Two of El Omari's slaves thought to make money by their master's death, and, cutting off his head, took it to Ahmed ebn Touloun, declaring that they had killed him. Ebn Touloun, after satisfying himself that it was really the head of El Omari, asked the slaves if their master had treated them badly, and what was their cause of complaint. They answered that they had none, but desired to gain the favour of the Emir. Ahmed ebn Touloun assured them that, on the contrary, their crime had justly aroused the wrath of God and of himself. He then ordered El Omari's murderers to be scourged and crucified, '*after which their heads were cut off!*'

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW CITY AND MOSQUE OF EBN TOULOUN

A.D. 880
A.M. 596
A.H. 266

BESIDES the Moslem robber chiefs of Egypt, Shenouda, th Patriarch of the National Church, was regarded with suspicion, as a possible rival, if allowed to become formidable, by Ahmed ebn Touloun. He did not at first openly persecute the Church, but on a false charge of embezzling money being brought by an unworthy deacon against the Patriarch, he immediately seized on a pretext for extortion. Not only Shenouda, but all his prelates, were arrested and dragged to Masr. They were stripped of their bishops' robes, set upon asses without saddles, and dragged in a ribald procession through the streets of the Moslem city, a mark for every insult. Shenouda himself was kept for thirty days in prison, suffering severely from gout at the time; but when brought at length to trial, he clearly proved the falsity of the accusation against him. The indignation of the Christian population against his slanderer was so great that the unhappy man threw himself on the mercy of the very man whom he had just endeavoured to ruin. Shenouda not only forgave him, but gave him money enough to reach Sais, his native place, besides a beast of burden and three changes of raiment, though his secretary remonstrated with him on his leniency. Indeed, he seems to have been justified in the remonstrance, for

some time afterwards the deacon again attempted to get money by falsely accusing Christians to the Moslem authorities, but was arrested by the Emir's order in Sais, and scourged so severely that he nearly died of the effects. From this time it was not an uncommon thing for renegade or nominal Christians to curry favour with the Mohammedan Emirs by falsely accusing their countrymen, and giving the authorities the pretext they wanted for extortion.

Shenouda was a great collector of old manuscripts. On one occasion, when the usual accusation of amassing treasure was made against him, and Ebn Touloun sent to examine his chests, they were found full of these manuscripts. He is also accused by the Moslems, and probably with truth, of making converts from them to the Christian religion, in spite of the fact that fresh orders had been received from the Kaliph 'to exterminate the Christian religion in Egypt.' This order does not seem to have been immediately followed by an increase of persecution, and not long after Ahmed ebn Touloun openly rebelled against the nominal authority of the Kaliph, and proclaimed himself Sultan of Egypt and Syria.

Expecting the invasion of an army sent by the Kaliph to punish him, he hastily strengthened the defences of Fostat, and built a new fortress in the Island of Rodah to command the river, which was also defended by a line of a hundred armed galleys. Signal stations were established, and carrier pigeons were kept in readiness to give the earliest intelligence. The export of grain was prohibited, and the citadel which Ahmed had been constructing for the defence of his new city was completed in a marvellously short space of time by men working in relays, day and night.

Fortunately for Egypt, his power was not put to the expected test. The troops sent against him mutinied against their commander, and broke up in disorder before ever they reached the frontier of Egypt, and Ebn Touloun was left in undisputed possession of the country. He won popularity with his people by distributing great largesse on this occasion, and paid liberally for the overtime of his workmen; so that Moslem writers compute the total cost of these defensive preparations against an invasion which never took place at more than 80,000 dinars.

Being now firmly established on the throne of Egypt, Ebn Touloun determined to build a mosque for his new city, which should surpass in size and magnificence all others in Egypt. It had not yet become the fashion to copy the domes and minarets[1] of the Christian churches, though we know that the Moslems already admired them, since we learn that Abd el Aziz gave the Patriarch leave to build two churches in his city of Helwan, on the ground that such buildings would be an ornament. The mosque of the first few centuries of the Moslem era was a plain unroofed court, which, though rich materials were sometimes used in the construction, had no pretensions to architectural beauty. They soon, however, began to build cloisters round them with pillars taken by force from the Christian churches, which no Arab was capable of carving for himself. There are Saracenic pillars of late date now existing, but it is not difficult to tell the difference. There is a fine mosque of early date in Mohalleh el Kebir, which contains about one hundred columns, not less than seventy-

[1] The first to build a mosque with minarets like a church was a governor of Egypt, who ruled from 668 to 682 A.D.; but it was not usual till much later.

four of which have manifestly been taken from Christian churches. It is the same with almost all of the columns of El Azhar, and with every mosque of any age throughout the country. If, in visiting Egyptian villages known to have possessed fine churches in the early centuries, you find no church still occupying the ancient site, you have only to look into the village mosque, and you will find the pillars of its nave looking sadly out of place, and very often upside down.

Ebn Touloun, however, desired his mosque to be accepted as a thankoffering and a sin offering by Allah; it was, therefore, necessary that it should be in strict accordance with the rules laid down in the Koran. The Koran was solemnly brought and read before the Sultan that there might be no mistake. But when the command was read which absolutely forbade any stolen material whatever to be used in the construction of a mosque, Ebn Touloun rent his clothes and cried out that the thing was impossible. Did anyone ever hear of a beautiful mosque being built without the pillars for its colonnade being taken from the Christians? Where else was it possible to obtain them—this one infraction of the law must needs be forgiven.

The news of the Sultan's perplexity soon spread, and, doubtless, the Christians feared that a Moslem authority would soon be found to persuade him that spoliation of the infidels was not theft, and might safely be indulged in. But the famous Christian architect,[1] who had languished in prison ever since the Sultan's horse had stumbled over his workman's rubbish, was quick to seize the opportunity.

[1] The name of this architect was probably Ibn Katib el Farghani. If so, he was a martyr in a later persecution.

He sent to assure the Sultan that, if the latter would release him, he would undertake to build a larger mosque, with a finer colonnade than any before seen, and yet to observe faithfully the right condition that no stolen material should be used. Ebn Touloun liberated him on trial, and the architect, by the simple expedient which apparently had occurred to no one else, of building piers instead of stealing pillars, produced the desired effect. The mosque exists to this day, with comparatively little alteration, though it has often been restored,[1] and was partly rebuilt by Sultan Khamil. In Ismail's time it was used as a temporary prison for the incurables, who had before begged in the streets, but were not to be allowed to do so during the visit of the Empress Eugenie. The chief peculiarity about the mosque is the shape of its arches, which are believed to be the earliest pointed ones known. They also give the earliest example of the inward curve above the capital which later developed into the 'horse-shoe' arch. The design of the minaret is said to have been furnished by Ahmed himself, and the anecdote of its conception is known even to the Cairo dragoman. All the primitive churches in Egypt had the fountain for ablutions which has now become pre-eminently the characteristic of a mosque, and, in addition to the exterior basin, Ebn Touloun's architect constructed a beautiful fountain with a mosaic pavement in the midst of the great court of the mosque. The inscriptions which were placed on the arcade giving an account of the building of the mosque still exist; or did so a few years ago. New government offices were constructed on one side of the mosque, and a public school, where once a week the Moolla appointed to

[1] Since this passage was written the mosque has been again restored.

that post explained the 'traditions' of the Moslems—not an alarming amount of education, though it seems to have been unusual among Turkish families to learn even so much. Ahmed enforced the regular attendance of his own sons and the sons of his courtiers. The new mosque was solemnly dedicated with great ceremony; and the architect, instead of being sent back to prison on some fresh trivial pretext, was clothed with a robe of honour, paid the full sum due to him, and a pension besides assigned to him for the rest of his natural life.[1]

Having finished the building of his city, Ebn Touloun next proclaimed a holy war against the Greeks, as the subjects of the Byzantine Empire were called.[2] He marched through Syria, receiving the submission of the governor of that country on his way, and began a career of conquest in Asia Minor. Antioch, Mopsuestia, Adana, and Tarsus had already fallen when he received news that his eldest son Abbas, whom he had left his deputy in Egypt, had revolted against him and declared himself independent.

Ebn Touloun finished the work he had immediately on hand, and then, leaving the greater part of his forces in Asia Minor under Loulu, he marched to punish his son. Abbas, on the approach of his father, left Fostat and took

[1] There is good reason to believe that he was beheaded a few years later, on his refusal to renounce his faith and become a Mohammedan.

[2] We must again point out that the actual word used in Arabic for the subjects of the Byzantine Empire is Roumi, *i.e.* Roman. But they always translate it into European languages by the word 'Greek,' and the Byzantines are commonly called Greeks by the medieval and later writers. Strictly speaking, to translate Roumi by 'Greek' is even more inaccurate than to translate Agupti by 'Copt.' To talk of Romans and Egyptians, however, would but unnecessarily confuse the ordinary reader in such a connection.

refuge in Gizeh, taking with him, however, all the money in the treasury, about 2,000,000 dinars, and Ahmed el Wasati, whom his father had left him as assistant. El Wasati had refused to join in the rebellion and was loaded with chains to prevent his escape.

Ebn Touloun wrote letters of affectionate remonstrance to his son, desiring him to return to his allegiance; but the Turks who had at first persuaded Abbas to rebel now withheld him from accepting his father's offer of pardon, well knowing that it would not be extended to themselves. The rebel party retreated towards the north, and took refuge in Leptis Magna, as the Governor of Kirouan (the ancient Cyrene) had refused to receive them. After many losses Abbas fell into the hands of his father in the autumn of the year 881, and was brought a prisoner to Fostat.

Three months afterwards Ebn Touloun brought his son out of prison, and, confronting him with his companions in rebellion, desired him to cut off their hands and feet with his own hand. Abbas obeyed, whereupon Ebn Touloun overwhelmed him with reproaches for such mean and unworthy compliance, and such ready desertion of his friends. Abbas was severely scourged and returned to prison.

Ahmed ebn Touloun soon conceived vaster and more ambitious projects still, but he wanted money, for his rebellious son had emptied the treasury, and he had not lately found any rich tombs to yield him treasure. In this difficulty he turned to the usual resource of plundering the Christians; and again it must be confessed that a renegade from their own number suggested the way.

The Patriarch Shenouda had died during Ahmed's war

against his son, and apparently his successor Michael had not yet been called upon to pay the usual fine. While Ahmed's attention had been distracted from the Christians they had also begun again to build churches, and among them the Patriarch was called to preside at the consecration of one to St. Ptolemy at Denuschar, a town in the diocese of Xois (modern name Saka, in the northern Delta). The Patriarch, with several bishops and a large body of the principal laymen of the diocese, arrived at the time appointed and found no Bishop of Xois to receive them. They gathered in the church and waited some time, but the bishop did not appear, and at length a messenger was despatched to his house to make inquiries. The reply came back that the bishop had not yet finished breakfast, at which he was entertaining a large party of his friends.[1] Indignant at the discourtesy, the assembled bishops begged the Patriarch to begin the service without him, and after some hesitation Michael did so. The service was more than half way through when the Bishop of Xois entered and furiously demanded why, in his own diocese, another prelate had dared to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. Advancing to the altar, he seized the offered, although not consecrated, bread, flung it to the ground, and went out. The Patriarch again going through the office of Oblation with another Host, finished the Liturgy and distributed the Communion to the people.[2]

On the following day, before dispersing, the Patriarch and the bishops who had witnessed this disgraceful scene

[1] This incident shows that even at this time fasting communion was not a rule absolute, since no one present appears to have advanced the argument that the bishop had thus disqualified himself from taking his proper part in the service.

[2] Michael of Tanis, as quoted by Neale.

held a synod, in which the Bishop of Xois was unanimously condemned. He was at once deposed and another consecrated in his place. The unworthy bishop, furiously angry, went straight to Masr and complained of the Patriarch to Ahmed ebn Touloun, who received him—and the pretext which he had so anxiously sought against the Church—with great satisfaction. Michael was summoned, and the Sultan demanded that everything used in the service of all the churches except the vestments—everything, that is, capable of being turned into coin—should be given up to him throughout the land. Michael refused, and was at once thrown into prison.

Here he remained for a year, till Ahmed ebn Touloun was reluctantly compelled to recognise that neither imprisonment nor the fear of death would make the Patriarch yield to such a demand. The Christian officials of the Court were, as usual, earnest with the Sultan in behalf of their Patriarch, and at length the following compromise was arrived at. John, the chief secretary of the Sultan, with his son Macarius, gave bail for the Patriarch to the amount of 20,000 pieces of gold, which the unhappy Michael promised to collect, hoping thus to save the country from the miseries of a fresh persecution. Half of the sum was to be paid within one month, the remaining moiety within four months.

Michael began by selling some of the houses belonging to the Church, and some land outside Fostat, which seems to have been formerly occupied by a colony of Abyssinians. Seeing his difficulties, the Jews of Babylon thought it a favourable time to bargain with him for a ruined Melkite church, now in the hands of the National Church, but apparently unused, which was to the Jews the most sacred

spot in Babylon, as they claimed, and declare to this day, that it contains the tomb of the Prophet Jeremiah. It was certainly the site of an ancient Jewish synagogue built in pre-Christian times, and had apparently become a Christian church through the conversion of the old Jewish colony in the first century of our era. Hidden there, in a place the secret of which was known only to the Jews, and transmitted by them from one generation to another, was an ancient roll of the Law, which they claim to have been written by Ezra, and which was never to be opened even by themselves, so terrible was the curse laid upon anyone who should tamper with it.[1] Michael, tempted by his sore need, and probably attaching but little sanctity to a ruined Melkite site, sold the long-coveted spot to the Jews, in whose hands it has remained ever since.

The bishops met in synod, and determined that each one should in his diocese levy a small contribution on every member of his flock, but still the amount collected was very far from enough; the month was passing swiftly, and Michael was almost in despair. He had shown that he was ready to meet torture and death himself; but he knew what the result would be to John, Macarius, and the whole Church if he failed to meet his bond.

In this extremity Michael took a step which he bitterly regretted all his life, and which has covered his name with obloquy. During the year of his imprisonment no less than ten bishoprics had fallen vacant which must now be filled up. In spite of being the first to suffer in times of

[1] A Scotchman and an American, by means which I do not justify, saw and handled this roll in its hiding-place about eighteen years ago. The alarm was given, and it has since disappeared. Its real age and history can only be guessed.

persecution, the office of a bishop was still greatly desired by the Egyptians; presumably, for the sake of the great power which they possessed over their own countrymen, since it is impossible to discover any other inducement, except to such sincere and zealous Christians as were not likely to accept Michael's terms. These were that each bishop elect should pay a heavy contribution on his consecration towards the sum due to the Sultan. Ten such men were readily found and the money paid down. Michael thus earned for himself the reproach of being the first Patriarch who practised simony. Without attempting to justify his conduct, it yet seems fair to point out that he had far more excuse than is usually allowed by ecclesiastical historians, and also that our English Church is hardly in a position to condemn the Egyptian. No one has ever accused Michael of consecrating unworthy bishops for the sake of the money they could offer, or of applying the money so obtained to his personal uses, any more than our own authorities allow any consideration of money to influence their choice, or pocket the ordination fees paid to the officials. Still, it should be remembered that the Egyptian bishops paid heavy fees to make up the ransom demanded by a Moslem for the safety of their Church; while English bishops, in profound peace under a Christian ruler, to this day pay fees to officials of the Crown and the archbishop, amounting in many cases to nearly 300*l.*, on their consecration.

Even this strong measure proving insufficient, Michael next invented the system of 'pew rents.' Monks who had been always in the habit of occupying the same seats in the parish churches, were now made to pay a certain sum for the use of them to the Patriarch, the money so obtained

being paid over like the rest to the Mohammedan authorities. Still the sum was not sufficient, and, as a last resource, Michael went to the collegiate body, or Chapter, of Alexandria, and asked that the ornaments of the Alexandrian churches might be sold to avert the threatened persecution.

The Alexandrian clergy positively refused at first, but in the end agreed to raise the rest of the sum on condition that Michael should bind not only himself, but his successors, to pay an annual sum of 1,000 pieces of gold to the Alexandrian Church. By these expedients the 10,000 pieces of gold were raised within the month, and paid to Ahmed ebn Touloun.

But in the height of his successes Ahmed's career was ended by his death in the prime of life. He was pushing his victories in Asia Minor when he fell seriously ill, owing, it is said, to his having drunk an enormous quantity of buffalo's milk. The Christian physician, Said Theophilus, who accompanied him, in vain assured him that the strictest regimen was necessary for his restoration to health. Ahmed absolutely refused to obey orders, and in consequence became so ill that he determined to return to Egypt, leaving the conduct of the war to one of his generals. He was carried through Syria in a litter, and was brought by water through Egypt to Fostat. Finding that he grew rapidly worse instead of better, he called before him all the doctors of the town, and threatened them with death if they did not cure him. By his orders, a solemn litany of supplication was performed in his behalf, in which all the religions of the country joined. First a great company of Moslems bearing the Koran ; then the Jews with the Pentateuch and the Psalms ; then the Christian bishops and clergy bearing

the Gospels, followed by the school-masters of the town at the head of their pupils, passed out of the town, and took their way to the heights of the Mokattam in solemn procession, appealing to the one God whom they all acknowledged for the recovery of their ruler. Abundant alms were given to the Moslem poor, and in all the mosques prayers were offered without ceasing night and day. At length, finding that he grew worse instead of better, and that the end drew near, Ahmed ordered the liberation of a man whom he had unjustly confined, and made his peace with God, dying with the Moslem confession of faith upon his lips.

CHAPTER XII

THE DYNASTY OF EL IKSHID

D. 884 M. 600 H. 270 AHMED EBN TOULOUN left thirty living children behind him, of whom Khamarayeh, the second son, succeeded him; Abbas, the eldest, having forfeited his natural rights by his rebellion. It is said that his father forgave him before his death and released him from prison, though confirming the succession to his second son. It is certain, however, that Abbas was put to death almost immediately after, but most authorities agree that the warrant for his death was extorted with great difficulty from Khamarayeh by his councillors. The new Sultan immediately conciliated the National Church by remitting the 10,000 gold pieces still due of the sum demanded from Michael, and returning to him the bond. Khamarayeh paid a regular tribute to the Kaliph, but was absolutely independent master of Egypt, Syria, and a great part of Asia Minor during his reign, which lasted barely twelve years. He built a second palace for himself in the new town commenced by his father, the Arab accounts of which surpass all belief. Among other wonders they relate that statues of the Sultan and his wives were placed in the gardens of the palace, and that a basin of nearly twenty-nine metres in diameter was filled with a lake of quicksilver. The first point is noteworthy because up to this time no Christian architect had been allowed to

introduce statues or paintings of human beings in the buildings which they erected for their Moslem masters.

A few years afterwards the Kaliph Mutamid died, and the Sultan of Egypt thought to strengthen his alliance with the new Kaliph, who might prove a less feeble man, by offering his daughter in marriage to the Kaliph's son. The Kaliph (Mutadid) accepted the offer for himself, and the bride was brought to Damascus by her father with the greatest pomp and ceremony. But shortly after the wedding, and while Khamarayeh was still at Damascus, a conspiracy in his hareem, of which different accounts are given by the Christian and Moslem writers, brought about his assassination in the thirty-first year of his life.[1] He was succeeded by two sons, Geysh and Haroun, in rapid succession, the latter of whom maintained a precarious independence in Egypt until late in the year 904 (A.H. 292), when a new Kaliph (Muktazi) sent an army into Egypt under Mohammed ebn Sulieman to recover control of the country. Haroun died on the field of battle; his uncle Sinan or Shaban, as he is indifferently called, made a last attempt to retrieve the fortunes of his family, but was assassinated by his own people within the month. All the descendants of Ahmed ebn Touloun were arrested, their property confiscated, and ten of the principal members of his family were sent in chains to Baghdad. A man named Issa el Nushari was appointed Governor of Egypt, but the country suffered much during this process of change, and both the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Churches seem to

[1] Khamarayeh was favourable to the Christians, and it is said that he used to spend hours in silent adoration before the picture in the Melkite church of El Kosseir. He was on the most friendly terms with the monks there, and built a loggia in their precincts that he might enjoy the scenery on his visits to them.

have perished during these troubles. Nor did either Church venture to elect a successor for some years. The great confusion of the annals of the country at this time prevents any positive statement being made, but it seems probable that the Egyptian Patriarchate remained vacant about fourteen years, and the Greek eleven. Of the Greek Patriarch Michael nothing is known during his reign of thirty-seven years, which covered the rise and fall of the Toulounide dynasty, save a letter in which he congratulated Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, on his reinstatement. This Patriarch had been condemned and deposed by the eighth Ecumenical Council, but was now restored by another Council at Constantinople, to which both Rome and the Greek Church in Egypt sent legates. It is in this letter that we find mention of the newly created Metropolitans of that Church: Zachary of Tamianthus (Damietta), James of Babylon, Stephen of Thebes (Luxor), and Theophilus of Bari.

The Greek Church, however, was the first to receive a new Patriarch, under Mekni, the Emir who succeeded Issa el Nushari. This Patriarch, like so many of his predecessors and successors, was a foreigner imposed upon the Egyptians from without. He was a native of Aleppo, and was elected and consecrated Patriarch for Egypt by the Patriarch of Jerusalem in 907. On his arrival in Egypt the Melkites indignantly refused to acknowledge him unless he would go through the forms of re-election and consecration at their hands, to which he readily agreed. His name was Christodulos, but he seems to have been more generally known in Egypt by the Arabic equivalent —Abd-el-Messiah.

A year or two later, probably in 910, Gabriel, a monk

of the monastery of Macarius, was elected Patriarch of the National Church. He was a devout and tolerant, but not a very energetic man, and continued the practice, which Michael had begun, of imposing consecration fees upon the elected bishops in order to raise funds for the yearly payment to Alexandria to which his predecessor had committed himself in his difficulties. Nor was the tax which had been levied on all members of the Church to meet the exorbitant demands of Ahmed ebn Touloun remitted by Gabriel.

Shortly after his accession fresh troubles came upon the unhappy land. In the year 893 (A.H. 280) a strong body of Arabs, known as the Fatimite party because their head claimed descent from Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed, had made themselves masters of Pentapolis and the surrounding districts, and sixteen years later their leader assumed the title of Kaliph in opposition to the Ommyad Kaliph in Spain, and the Abbaside Kaliph at Baghdad. The Fatimite Kaliph fixed his capital at Cyrene, or Kerwan as it was pronounced by the Arabs. The ancient city of Cyrene had been destroyed by the Moslems in their first invasion of Pentapolis (A.H. 46), and the Arab city, though called by the same name, was built at some little distance from the ruins of the ancient city, which probably served the Arabs as a quarry.

Having consolidated his power, the Fatimite Kaliph determined to conquer Egypt, always the richest prize of the Oriental world. In the year 913 (A.H. 300) he marched into that country at the head of 40,000 men, seized Alexandria, and laid siege to Fostat. He was, however, driven back from the interior with great loss, and, though he held possession of Alexandria for some

time, he was ultimately forced to retire to his own country. The Christians suffered, as usual, and the great church of the Cæsareum in Alexandria was burnt down. Some years later the Fatimites made a second expedition into Egypt and contrived to make good their footing both in Alexandria and in the Fayoum.

In 921 Gabriel died and was succeeded by Cosmas III. The constant troubles and wars of the last century had broken off all communication between Egypt and her daughter Church of Abyssinia for nearly one hundred years. It seems probable that the functions of the Metropolitan of Abyssinia had been exercised by the kings of that country during this time. Abu Salih expressly tells us that they considered themselves invested with the supreme power in the Church as well as in the State, and that on solemn occasions they celebrated the Holy Communion. But during the reign of Cosmas in Egypt, an embassy arrived from Abyssinia requesting that a new Abuna or Archbishop might be sent them. The king, it seems, was old and in ill-health, his two sons were not of an age to govern, and the fittest guardian for them would be found in reviving the suspended archbishopric. Cosmas, in answer to this appeal, consecrated a man called Peter, who was received with great honour in Abyssinia, and on the death of the king was appointed regent of the kingdom, with charge of the two young princes. On his death-bed the king had solemnly charged Peter not to regard the accident of birth, but to crown as his successor that one of his two sons who should prove most fitted to govern the kingdom. As the youths grew to manhood the younger showed himself far superior to his brother, and Peter consequently caused him to be proclaimed king. The elder

brother acquiesced in the decision and lived happily in private life, until a melancholy incident plunged the country into civil war. Two wandering monks, or begging friars as they would have been called later in the West, arrived in Abyssinia, and applied to the Abuna for money. Whether he had some foreknowledge of their character or no we cannot tell, as only the fact of his refusal is recorded. These two monks, therefore, Menas and Victor, concocted a plot to revenge themselves and make their fortunes.

Menas began by forging letters purporting to be from the Patriarch Cosmas, to the effect that he was grieved to hear that an impostor named Peter, professing to have been ordained by him and sent as Metropolitan to Abyssinia, had succeeded in deceiving the late Emperor and establishing himself in that office. The letter went on to say that the said Peter was neither ordained by, nor in communion with, him; that Menas, the bearer of the epistle, was the true Archbishop sent by him, and all good sons of the Church were exhorted to expel both intruders, the impostor Peter and the new Emperor whom, contrary to every principle of justice, Peter had raised up in opposition to his elder brother, the rightful heir.

This letter Menas delivered to the elder prince, who was not slow to accept the excuse for asserting his own claims at the expense of a civil war. In a battle between the two brothers the younger was taken prisoner and kept in close confinement. Menas was proclaimed Abuna or Archbishop, and Peter was driven into exile. Victor, who up to this time appears to have acquiesced in the crimes of his companion Menas, found himself in danger, but managed to escape from the country, and, returning to Egypt, laid the whole matter before the Patriarch Cosmas.

Cosmas at once pronounced sentence of excommunication against Menas, and the new Emperor made his peace with the Patriarch by putting the impostor to death. He gave orders for the recall of Peter, but the latter had already perished in exile, and a disciple of his who had accompanied him was summoned to Axum in his stead. Instead of sending to Cosmas for a new Archbishop the Emperor announced to the late Peter's chaplain that he was elected Abuna of Abyssinia, and requested him at once to take over the duties of his office. The man, whose name is not given, entreated permission to go to Egypt to obtain confirmation and consecration from Cosmas; but this the Emperor absolutely refused to allow. The unfortunate Abuna seems to have been kept as a sort of state prisoner, allowed to exercise all the functions of the office to which he had been thus arbitrarily appointed, but compelled to acknowledge no superior except the new Emperor, who perhaps feared that Cosmas, before consecrating the Abuna, would insist on the kingdom being given up to his younger brother. This state of things continued for about seventy years in Abyssinia, during which we do not find that any Metropolitan was sent them by the Mother Church of Alexandria. Cosmas died in 933 (A.H. 321), and was succeeded by a man named Macarius, who does not seem to have been a monk. He was living at Alexandria up to the time of his election; but forsook that city as soon as he became Patriarch, and would never live there again. He was devoted to his mother, and is said to have been most carefully trained and educated by her. She was still alive at his accession, and, thinking to give her pleasure, he made a visit in some state to his native village, accompanied by several of his suffragan bishops, to greet her.

On his arrival, however, his mother burst into tears, declaring that she would rather have seen him in his grave than thus apparelled and surrounded, for in his former state he would be required to answer only for his own sins; as Patriarch, he must answer for all the errors of his people.

In 935 (A.H. 323), on the accession of a new Abbaside Kaliph at Baghdad, the Emir of Egypt, a man named Ahmed ebn Kylag, was, as generally happened, deposed to make room for the new Kaliph's nominee—Abu Bekr Mohammed, commonly called El Ikshid. Ahmed ebn Kylag fiercely resented his recall, and went to the Fatimite Kaliph at Baghdad, whom he urged to invade Egypt. Nothing loth, the latter lost no time in doing so; again Egypt was overrun, Alexandria was seized, and a great part of Said was held by the Fatimites. Abu Bekr, however, though taken by surprise, successfully repelled the intruders, though he was never able to dislodge them from Alexandria. He would, however, no longer consent to pay allegiance to the helpless Kaliph of Baghdad, and in the year 936 (A.H. 324) he declared himself the independent Sultan of Egypt. His reign, which lasted till 946, was a perpetual succession of campaigns against other Moslem adventurers for the possession of Syria and Asia Minor; and the hapless Christians of Egypt were heavily taxed on various pretexts to obtain money for these expeditions. El Ikshid was also an indefatigable treasure-hunter among the ancient tombs of Egypt; for the fortune of Ahmed ebn Touloun in this respect fired the emulation of most of his successors. Masoudi says of him that he dug deeply all over the country for treasure among the tombs. In one place he found several tombs together, which were vast halls magnificently painted, and in them statues of old men and young men,

of women and children, of marvellous workmanship; their eyes were of precious stones, and their faces of gold or silver.

Two celebrated writers lived in Egypt during the reign of El Ikshid—Masoudi the Moslem historian, and Eutychius the Christian annalist. The latter was also a learned doctor of medicine, a science the knowledge and practice of which was still almost confined to Christians or Jews, but pre-eminently to Egyptian Christians. The father of Eutychius was named Patrick, and his son's real name was Said or Seith, but he preferred to be known by the Greek Eutychius, which has the same signification of blessed, or fortunate. He wrote other books besides his 'Annals of Alexandrian History,' one a medical work, and another on gems. He was born in Cairo in the year 876; and in the year 933 (A.M. 549 and A.H. 321) he was elected to succeed Abd-el-Messiah as Patriarch of the Greek (or Melkite) Church in Egypt, being the first man of any distinction who had occupied that post since the Arab conquest. He only held the office seven years and a half, during which time both the Churches suffered much at the hands of the Moslems. In particular the city of Tanis, for some reason not given, appears to have incurred the enmity of El Ikshid. Twice within a recent period the Moslems had pulled down the Melkite church there, but both times the Christians succeeded in rebuilding it. Not long afterwards El Ikshid sent one of his officers and a company of soldiers to Tanis, with orders to close the Melkite churches and bring to him all the gold and silver vessels to be found in them. The Bishop of Tanis, by great exertions and the sale of some of the property belonging to his Church, raised 5,000 dinars, with which he bribed the

Sultan to desist from his purpose. After the death of Eutychius the Greek Church in Egypt sank into complete insignificance. For the next 500 years, though the names of her Patriarchs are preserved, little else is known of them, and even the dates given for their accession are hopelessly contradictory.

The town of Mansoura, now one of the most important in the Delta, was founded during the reign of El Ikshid, but before it was finished the Sultan died, leaving no heir but an infant, whom he entrusted to the guardianship of a freed slave. This man, who is known as Kafur, was a Soudani of great ability and high character. He brought the young prince Abu-el-Kasim from Damascus, where his father had died, to Egypt, and at once began the much needed work of organisation and reform. But he was speedily recalled to fight for the possession of Damascus and Syria with Seyf-el-Doulah, El Ikshid's old enemy; notwithstanding the fact that a solemn peace had been made before the death of the latter, and his daughter given in marriage to Seyf-el-Doulah. Kafur suppressed the rebellion in Syria, but hardly had he returned again to Egypt when war broke out in the south. Immediately after the death of El Ikshid the King of Nubia had seized the Great Oasis and taken away a number of prisoners, and the Nubians were a standing menace to the Moslem power in Egypt all through the regency and reign of Kafur.

In 953 Macarius died, and was succeeded by a man called Theophanius, who was already old. The annual tribute of 1,000 pieces of gold which the unfortunate Michael III. had bound himself and his successors to pay for ever to the Church and Chapter of Alexandria, weighed more and more heavily on the Egyptian Patriarchate.

The majority of the Egyptian population had been Moslem since the failure of the last rebellion in 832 (A.H. 216) and the terrible reprisals which had followed it; and the Christian minority was yearly becoming smaller. Upon them, however, fell by far the larger share of the Government exactions, even when no actual persecution was going on; and the additional tax which was necessary to furnish the annual subsidy to the Alexandrian Church was felt as a grievous addition to their burdens. The Alexandrian Church had by this time received back tenfold their original loan to the Patriarch Michael, and Theophanius, observing that this exaction, more than any other, was felt by the members of the Church and caused many of the lukewarm to fall away from Christianity, determined on making an appeal in person to the Chapter of Alexandria. Alexandria was already in the possession of the Fatimite Arabs, and there was probably some risk in the expedition of Theophanius, but he reached Alexandria in safety and called a general meeting of the Alexandrian clergy, to whom he set forth his case, and entreated them either to cancel the bond and remit this tribute, or at least, if this were too great a sacrifice, to lower the yearly sum. The Alexandrian Church has always occupied a unique position in the Church of Egypt, and though nominally under the Patriarch, the College or Chapter lost no opportunity of asserting their dignity and insisting on their special rights and privileges. In the present case their behaviour was a disgrace to the religion they professed. They insolently refused even to consider the proposals of the Patriarch, and stood by the letter of their bond.

Theophanius, already the victim of unsuspected brain disease, rebuked their greed and disloyalty in no measured

terms. A painful scene ensued, and some of the Alexandrian clergy were insolent enough to say to their Patriarch that he had no right to take upon himself to rebuke those who were his equals in all except the Patriarchal vestments, which he owed to no merit of his own, but to the votes of those who had elected him.

In his passion Theophanius tore the Patriarchal robes from his shoulders and flung them at the feet of the Alexandrians. The shock was too much for his reason, and in the same moment he was seized with raving madness. The Alexandrians fell back in horror and affright, his clergy tried to restrain him, but for his own safety it became necessary to bind him. A synod of bishops was hastily convened in Alexandria to determine what could be done in this emergency. It was agreed to take him for medical treatment to Babylon by water as the safest and easiest route. A ship was chartered and the unfortunate Patriarch was conveyed on board in chains, accompanied by several of his clergy and one or two bishops. It was hoped that the quiet of the voyage would soothe him, but storms came on and the Patriarch grew worse and worse. Then, as so often happens, his malady took a different form, compelling him to utter the most terrible blasphemies against all that was most sacred to him. And when he began to revile and deny Christ his escort could bear it no longer. To them he was evidently possessed of devils, and lest his terrible ravings should be overheard, they thrust him down into the hold. Evening drew on, and the clergy, sitting sadly about the vessel, heard the ravings grow more and more furious. In the silence of the night his words were heard all over the ship, and the bishops could bear it no longer. One of them descended alone into the hold

where the madman was confined. What passed between them was never accurately known; probably Theophanius in his madness tried to murder the bishop, who never seems to have been called to account for his deed; but whether in self-defence or in some attempt to exorcise the devil, the bishop killed the Patriarch that night. So strong was the feeling of horror which the blasphemies of the poor madman had excited, that they did not dare even to give him Christian burial, but his dead body was thrown overboard like a dog's.

He had occupied the Patriarchal throne barely three years; and several months, some say two or three years, elapsed before a successor was chosen. One aged monk was elected, but refused to undertake so great a responsibility, and recommended a man named Mena, who, however, was objected to by the more rigid observers of canon rule on the ground that, though he was now a widower, he had been married. It was not difficult to persuade them that Mena, in this respect, was on the same level as Demetrius (in the second century), and he was eventually consecrated Patriarch as Mena II.

During the eleven years of his Patriarchate, the state of things in Egypt went from bad to worse. One son of El Ikshid died and was succeeded by another, but the real power was in the hands of Kafur, whose strong personality alone retarded the collapse of the short-lived dynasty of El Ikshid. The Turkish and Arab elements bitterly resented his dominion, both Moslem and Christian were in a state of disaffection throughout the country. The Christians looked towards Nubia, the Moslems to Kerwan, where a new Kaliph of much greater ability, and bearing the variously spelt name of Moez, Muaz,

and Muazzi, besides several others, had recently succeeded to the throne. He, or rather a Greek whom he had bought as a slave, and whose intelligence, courage, and probity had won for him in course of time freedom and the supreme command of all the military forces of Moez, had pushed his conquests far and wide, till now the whole of Northern Africa, excepting Egypt, acknowledged his dominion. In Egypt his subjects occupied Alexandria, part of the Fayoum and part of Said, and Moez intended from the first to make himself master of the whole of Egypt. The known ability of Kafur, however, and the entreaties of the mother of Moez, who had been well received and loaded with presents by the politic Kafur when she passed through Fostat on her way to Mecca, induced Moez to postpone his invasion for a time. He continued his preparation, however, and in particular caused wells to be dug at camping intervals all along the desert route between Kerwan and Egypt.

In 956 (A.H. 344-5) the King of Nubia again invaded Egypt proper, and seized Assouan, which was pillaged by his soldiers. Kafur, however, no longer hampered by a war in Syria, sent at once to check the further advance of the Christian king. One division was sent up the Nile, another was sent speedily and secretly by the Red Sea with orders to cut off the retreat of the Nubians from behind. This plan succeeded so well that though the main body of the Nubian army fought their way back to their own country, they did so with great loss, and were compelled to abandon to the Moslems their own fortress of Deyr Ibrim,[1] about

[1] Till recent years—perhaps to this day, though I have been unable to obtain exact information—there existed a church at Deyr Ibrim, dating from the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century Deyr Ibrim is now a postal station for steamers on the Nile.

fifty leagues south of Assouan. The general of Kafur brought back to Fostat 150 prisoners and '*many heads*.' Again in 967 (A.H. 357) the Nubians invaded Egypt, recovered all they had lost, and overran the country as far as Akmim.

In 963 (A.H. 352) Egypt was afflicted with a terrible famine which lasted for seven, or as some say for nine, years. The Nile scarcely rose, and subsided quickly, year by year; a plague of rats destroyed the scanty crops which had withstood the drought; and a terrible pestilence, as usual, followed in the wake of famine. Many Egyptians fled the country, and those who remained were reduced to the most abject poverty. The Moslem historians record that 600,000 persons perished in Fostat and the neighbouring towns of Babylon and Masr alone, 'not counting the corpses which were thrown into the river.' The Christians relate that several episcopal sees remained vacant or ceased to exist, because all the Christians in the villages and towns of their dioceses were dead. Mena took refuge on the country estate of a wealthy lady of his communion whose name was Dinah, and who lived at Mohalleh-Daniel, in Lower Egypt. In this village he remained all through the invasion of the Fatimites and change of suzerainty from the Black Kaliphs to the White.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME

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