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## THE BAB AND BABEEISM.

*Les Religions et les Philosophies de l'Asie Centrale.* Par M. le  
COMTE DE GOBINEAU (Ministre de France à Athènes). 2me  
Edition. 1866. Paris: Didier et Cie.

*Bab et les Babis, ou le Soulèvement Politique et Religieux en Perse  
de 1845 à 1853.* (Mirza Kazem Beg.) Journal Asiatique, 1866.  
Paris: A. Labitte.

THE two works which we have placed at the head of this article present to us a very curious history of a religious and political movement which has taken place of late years in Persia, and the effects of which have not yet passed away. The *Journal Asiatique* gives us only a detailed history of the movement from its first rise in 1845 to its final suppression in 1853. M. Gobineau treats the subject in a wider range. With him the history of Babeeism forms only a portion, though a very large portion of his work, and the remainder is taken up with a most interesting account of the state of religious feeling in Persia, the various sects into which Islamism is broken up, and the progress which free thought is making from the contact of the Oriental mind with Western civilization. M. Gobineau brings peculiar advantages to his work, as he resided for some years as Secretary to the French Embassy in Persia, appears to be thoroughly conversant with Eastern literature and Eastern customs, and is known to the world of letters by various works on the subject. "Trois Ans dans l'Asie" and "Etudes des Ecritures Cunéiformes" are the result of his observation and researches. Into the state of religion and philosophy which he presents to us we do not propose to enter, contenting ourselves with selecting such portions

only as may serve to place the reader in a position to understand how it was possible that such a movement as Babeism could arise, or how it could attain such success. Of course, as in the case of every other speculative and religious movement which has occurred in the world, the ground was in a measure prepared for its development. Its distinctive features might be traced to the character of the man who was looked upon as its religious head; but the opinions which he promulgated, and which were eagerly adopted by his followers, were in accordance with feelings and thoughts which had been in existence long before. To see such a movement take place in the centre of Mohammedanism may cause us some surprise, but the occurrence is by no means uncommon; and Persia, of all Mohammedan countries, is peculiarly susceptible of such changes. This is owing, no doubt, in part, to its geographical position. Placed on the confines of the Eastern world, it has come, from the earliest times, into frequent intercourse as well as collision with the West. But much must also be laid to the account of its past history, and the manner in which the doctrines of the Koran were forced upon the inhabitants of the country. Islamism in Persia has never presented the rigid, strictly monotheistic character which it has in other Mohammedan countries. The Shiite faith, which is the glory of the Persians, and to which, from national as well as religious feelings, they are devotedly attached, admitted a great vagueness and latitude in the interpretation of the doctrines of the Koran, and under cover of this they were enabled to engraft many of the doctrines they had formerly held under the Magian dynasty. We do not propose to weary the reader with a long historical digression, but one word is necessary in explanation of this last statement.

When the Arabs, under the command of Caled, the lieutenant of the first caliph Abubeker, gained the battle of Kadesia, and by their victory laid prostrate for ever the Sassanian dynasty and the Magian faith, they were welcomed by many in Persia as deliverers. The Magi had ruled with a heavy and intolerant hand. Conformity to the creed of Zoroaster had been made compulsory; but the Jews, Christians, and even the descendants of the heathen polytheists still held in secret their ancient faith, and listened gladly to the promises of religious liberty made by the Arabs. With them were joined all who had groaned under the political tyranny of the Sassanian kings, and, for a time, the change was gladly received by all in Persia.

But with the fall of the Magi had departed all the glory and the autonomy of the Persians. The Arabs, who had been so liberal in their first professions, pressed gradually on their subjects with a heavier yoke; and the sense of the present evil made the conquered nation think more favourably of the oppression from which it had

been just delivered. From political\* perhaps more than from religious motives, all were required to submit to the creed of the Koran, and repeat the formula of the Mohammedan faith. Beneath the surface the differences of religion remained, and the old doctrines were uneradicated, if indeed they were not strengthened, as they came to be united to a desire for national independence and a sense of national injury. Many who had formerly had no love for the Magian doctrines of Zoroaster now felt themselves attracted towards them, and it soon became a point of honour to profess at least secret sympathy with the old faith, and to look at everything from a Gheber point of view, which thus became identified with the national aspirations. To cast off the Mohammedan yoke was indeed impossible, for the whole world seemed to have become Mohammedan; and though within the empire various parties were striving with one another for the sovereign power, they would have united at once against any who should dare to despise or cast off the common faith. But it was possible for them to take part in these dissensions, and by inclining the balance in favour of one of the contending parties, to secure a line of independent sovereigns for the throne of Persia. Among the rivals for the caliphate, one family had strong claims for their support and favour. The Abassides were descended† from Hassan, the son of Ali, and from the daughter of Yezdegerd, the last of the Sassanian kings; and in them they seemed to perceive a title to the Persian throne, and a prospect of a revival of the national honour. The Persians lent their support to the descendants of Ali, against their rivals the Ommiades, and the Abassides were firmly seated on the throne of Bagdad. Since then other dynasties have occupied the Persian throne, but the descendants of Ali are still considered to be its only rightful possessors. We shall see that this became an important point in the Babe movement.

But while the Persians had shown a regard to the national line of kings, and expressed a special reverence for the name of Ali, they had not been unmindful of their ancient faith. Taking advantage of their political opposition, they engrafted on their belief in Mahomet various dogmas and doctrines entirely at variance with his teaching. These new doctrines they justified by various traditions and interpretations of the verses of the Koran, borrowed in great part from the ancient religion of the Magi—traditions and interpretations

\* The doctrine of necessity has prevented the Mohammedans from attempting to make proselytes. If Allah, they said, has intended a man to be a true believer, he will become one. If Allah has doomed him to perdition, all the teaching of the Moullahs would be of no avail. The conversion of their conquered subjects was more the result of political wisdom than religious zeal.

† Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" (Smith's Edition), vol. vi. p. 299. Gobineau, p. 275.

which naturally changed very considerably their religious tenets. While Arabia and other Mohammedan countries remained true to the literal interpretation of the Koran, the Persians had departed from it, and received the name of *Shiites*, or *Sectaries*. The distinguishing feature of Shiism has been always considered reverence for Ali, raising him to an equality with the prophet of God. The difference, however, lies deeper; and the Shiite views of the character of God, and his relations with the world, incline more to the teaching of Zoroaster than to that of Mahomet. We give the description of Shiism in the words of M. Gobineau:—

“God is infinite, eternal, and one. He does not act directly on the world. He has established its laws. He has fixed the conditions of perdition and salvation; to Him all shall return. The prophet is invoked rather as a form than in reality. He is the most excellent of created beings, if indeed he be a created being. There is room for doubt, as on many points he is confounded with God. At any rate the Koran is uncreated; it has existed from all eternity in the divine thought. In a word, God, the prophet, and the Koran together, nearly reproduce a comprehensive unity which represents the notion of the Zerwanè-Akerené, or “time without limits,” whence the Parseism of latter days derived all other existences, and by means of which it aspired to satisfy Aramean unitarianism.”—(Gobineau, p. 59.)

We may here trace a marked difference from the doctrines of Mahomet. The prophet taught that there was only one God, without distinction of nature or person, who had created the world, and who was still the active agent in the world; that between Him and his creatures there was no similarity of nature; that they were created by Him, they did not emanate from Him. Islamism had been more anxious for political power than for purity of creed; and while it did not root out any single religious belief that was previously in existence, it has not prevented heresies innumerable, from the earliest periods, from springing up within its bosom. In Persia, where so much scope is given to speculative fancy in the creed of Shiism, they have a soil in which to flourish. There Sufiism has held its place,—a religion of mysticism and dealing with allegorical interpretations; and it has been followed by numerous schools of philosophers versed in the learning of Avicenna, and to whom Spinoza is not unknown. Speculation is carried on with the boldest flights, and deals with subjects few of the freethinkers of Europe would entertain.\*

\* We give the following story from M. Gobineau, p. 113, *seq.*, in illustration of the above remark:—

“A horseman belonging to one of the nomad tribes was entering the town of Zendjan, when he saw an old priest walking along, bent under the weight of years; with one hand he leaned on a stick, with the other he held a book close to his right eye. At the same time he was weeping. [After greeting him, the horseman addressed him thus:—

Within the limits of orthodox Shiism there are to be found at the present day three rival parties. The Akhbarys, the Moushtehedys, and the Sheykhys. The first may be described as the extreme and pure Shiite party. They rely only on tradition and the interpretations of the hadjis, and accept every precept of religion, provided it is sanctioned by the practice of some holy man. They pride themselves as being especially the national party, and boast of having greater loyalty to the faith, and more devoted patriotism towards their country. The second are latitudinarian; men who are content to agree with both sides; occupied in the world, they do not care to enter into minute speculative or theological discussions. The third, the Sheykhys, cling more to the letter of the Koran, but explain it in a mystical sense. Opposing the numerous interpretations put forward by the Moullahs or clergy, they allow only the interpretations which rest on the authority of the twelve Imams. This party was founded by Hadji Sheykh Ahmed, who lived about the beginning of this century. He established a school at Kerbela, where he was succeeded after his death by Sheykh Seyd Kazem, a man equally distinguished with his master. His opinions were widely scattered throughout Persia, and the number of disciples who attended on his teaching was always very great. Among them was to be found the Bab, or, as he was then called, Mirza Ali Mohammed.

This personage, destined to play so important a part in after years, was born at Shiraz. The date of his birth appears to be uncertain, as by the writer in the *Journal Asiatique* it is placed

‘Why, Seyd, do you weep as you walk?’ ‘Ah, my son, it is because I am old, and cannot see out of my left eye.’ ‘Certainly it is a great evil,’ said the horseman, ‘but as you are no longer young, have you not had time to accustom yourself to it? It cannot be for that that you grieve so sorely.’ ‘I weep, doubtless, for another reason,’ answered the Seyd. ‘I am reading at this moment the book of God, and in considering how beautiful and just it is, and how well written, I cannot help shedding tears of emotion.’ ‘You have reason for it,’ answered the horseman; ‘but at your age, doubtless it is not the first time that you have had the Koran in your hand, and being familiar with it your admiration has had time to lose somewhat of its fervour.’ ‘You are right, my son; but you see that in considering more than one passage, it seems plain that if the Apostle of God had listened more attentively to the revelation of the Archangel Gabriel, the very contrary would be commanded from what we now find given.’ ‘You may be right, Seyd, but why grieve for it? If the thing is right in itself, do it without troubling yourself about absurd precepts.’ Here the priest began to sob more violently than before, and exclaimed, ‘If it was only that fool of a prophet! but is it not evident, in more than one place, that Gabriel himself has not understood a word of what the Almighty dictated?’ Then the horseman began to laugh, and was about to make some further observation, when the priest turned a corner, and he could only hear him mutter, ‘That the prophet and the angel Gabriel should not have known what they said would only have been a slight evil, but when it is plain that the other himself——’ He passed out of hearing, and his companion could not clearly make out what he meant to insinuate.”

about 1812; by M. Gobineau twelve years later, about 1824. His father was a dealer in cotton goods, and a man of some property. The family were of no particular rank or distinction, but they claimed to be descended from Ali, and, in common with numbers of others, appropriated therefore the title of Seyd. He received a thoroughly good education, and from his earliest years devoted himself to the study of religious subjects. He conversed often with the Jews, made deep researches into the doctrine of the Ghebers, and read with great eagerness books treating of the occult sciences and the philosophy of numbers. The fame of the school at Kerbela attracted him, and he became a disciple of Sheyhk Seyd Kazem. Though his attendance at the various lectures was irregular, from his ascetic life and somewhat mysterious habits, as well as from the strong force of intellect he displayed, he soon became noted among his fellow-students and drew on himself the attention of his master. As he entered the school, remarks were made on him. "Here he comes, the mysterious being, the sublime youth," was whispered on all sides. His master spoke of him in the highest terms of approbation, and when pressed by his disciples to name a successor, seemed indirectly to point to Ali Mohammed.\* "He is in the midst of you." "You shall look for him, and find him." These words were not much thought of at the time, but were remembered after the death of Sheyhk Kazem. When his disciples were seeking for some one to take the place of their late master, in consequence of these words some of them went to Shiraz, whither Ali Mohammed had returned, and acknowledged him as their head. The title of Bab (a door) is said to have been given him on this occasion by Moullah Houssein, in playful allusion to the place he occupied at the lessons, sitting always near the door, and the other students passing by him to enter into the room. "Thou wert the door in the order of knowledge and spiritual teaching, now thou art the door of spiritual teaching and truth."

But Ali Mohammed was by no means prepared at this time to occupy the position of the head of a sect and to fulfil the functions of a religious teacher. His mind was probably thoroughly unsettled, and his thoughts swaying between the old tenets of Islamism and the new opinions which were forcing themselves upon him. He determined on a journey to Mecca, but the sight of the Caaba and of the holy place, instead of strengthening his Mussulman faith, made him abandon it altogether. The thoughts thus awakened in his breast were confirmed as he stood at Cufa, by the tomb of the murdered Ali. The representation of the circumstances attending

\* *Journal Asiatique*, June, p. 463.



the murder of Ali, as well as the resolute endurance of Hossein\* and Fatima and their tragic end, arouses to this day a frantic enthusiasm in the heart of a Persian audience; and the scene of martyrdom which rose up before the imagination of Ali Mohammed, with the lesson of noble constancy it conveyed, tended to strengthen his wavering thoughts and remove from him all doubt and hesitation. He returned to Shiraz, resolved on his future course, and at once called together some of his former companions who had designated him as the leader of the Sheykhys. To them he communicated his first writings. These consisted in a Journal of his pilgrimage to Mecca, and in a Commentary on the Sourat of the Koran, named Joseph. These works produced an immense sensation in Shiraz. Numbers crowded around him, and listened with breathless interest to his discourses. In public he never attacked the groundwork of the Mussulman faith or the conventional religious customs, but he denounced, in words of bitter indignation, the clergy and their vices. Naturally, the Moullahs were soon in arms against him, and sent the ablest of their body to oppose him; but their defence could not but be weak, and his victory was easy. They were all well known at Shiraz, and, with the Koran in his hand, he needed only to show how completely their lives, their precepts, their doctrines had diverged from the teaching of the Sacred Book, to gain a complete triumph and compel them to silence. Henceforth the number of his followers constantly increased. He was surrounded by them when he taught in public in the mosques and colleges, and in the evening he was followed to his home by a select band, to whom he imparted the more sacred character of his teaching and the objects he had generally in view. Although he had come back from Mecca resolved to attack the existing faith, the articles of his own creed were not yet at this time very accurately defined, and his teaching had very little of a constructive character. He had unsparingly attacked the lives and precepts of the Mohammedan clergy, and in this way had undermined the belief in the Mohammedan faith, but he had not yet ventured to promulgate anything which could take its place. The time he considered was now arrived when it became advisable to take some step which should tend to unite his followers, and give them some decided object of belief. The name of Bab, as we saw, had been given to him half in play. This name he now assumed as his religious title, and announced himself to his followers as the Bab, the door or gate by which alone men could come

\* The history of Ali and Hossein may be found in Gibbon, vol. vi. p. 274—278. Some interesting chapters are devoted by M. Gobineau to an account of the theatre in Persia, with a translation of one of the plays, called "The Marriage of Kassem," which refers to the fate of Hossein and Fatima.

to the knowledge of God. By this title he now became universally known, and from it his followers have been designated as the Babees.

Meanwhile, at Shiraz, the excitement continued to increase. The Moullahs had been beaten, but they had no intention of giving up the contest. With them were now joined the civil authorities of the town, who began to be seriously disquieted at the extent of the movement, and uncertain whither it would tend. Both parties determined to bring the gravity of the crisis before the Court of Teheran—the one from a civil, the other from a religious point of view. The Bab was informed of their purpose, and at once wrote himself to the Court. The letters, with their mutual recriminations, all arrived at the same time, and embarrassed the Government exceedingly by the appeal which was thus suddenly brought before it. The king and his ministers knew very little of the doctrine taught by the Bab. They had no great faith in the virtues of the Moullahs; at the same time they were afraid both of leaving the movement unchecked and of fanning it into a fiercer flame. Being uncertain how to act, as is usually the case with men in similar circumstances, they did nothing. An order was sent to Shiraz, enjoining silence on both parties, and requiring the Bab not to leave his house; and by this means they hoped to hear no further of the matter. The decision, however, was virtually a triumph for the Bab and his party. He himself strictly obeyed the letter of the injunction, and confined himself to his house. His followers loudly proclaimed that silence had been enjoined on both parties because the Moullahs had no argument to oppose to the teaching of their master. This view of the result seemed on the face of it to be very plausible, and conversions continued to increase on every side. At the same time the Bab became more explicit in his dogmatic enunciations. He was probably carried away by the enthusiasm of his followers, and he now declared that he had been mistaken in announcing himself as the Bab, the Gate of Knowledge; he was the Point, the Generator of the Truth, a kind of divine manifestation. In this character he received the title of Hezret-è-Alà, or Sublime Highness; and the title of Bab, which he had abandoned, was no longer confined to one person, but was reserved and apportioned to the most faithful of his followers. These were eighteen in number, and when the sect was regularly constituted, they, together with the Bab, and after the Bab's death with his successors, formed a kind of council or governing body. We shall have occasion to refer to them when we come to speak of the constitution and doctrines of the Babees.

Among these eighteen were to be found several who had been fellow-students with Ali Mohammed at Kerbela, had acquired there a deep veneration for his character, and who, after the death of

Sheyhk Seyd Kazem, when the school of the Sheyhk was without a head, had been the first to ask him to fill the place of their late master. After his return from Mecca, when Ali Mohammed took a more decided and independent position, they attached themselves more closely to his person, and became the most zealous propagators of his doctrines. All of them became distinguished in the annals of Babeism, but to none of them did the cause owe more than to Moullah Houssein Boushrewy.\* He was the first, as we have seen, who had suggested the name of Bab; and it was probably owing in great measure to his influence that Ali Mohammed was led to take so decided a part in Shiraz. Moullah Houssein became the first missionary or emissary of the Babe sect. He was a native of Khorassan, a man of extensive learning and great strength of character; and when the Bab was forbidden to leave his house, he was commissioned to go to Khorassan, and there preach and explain the doctrines of the Bab. It had become necessary to take some step of this kind, for the Babe movement had excited great interest; their teaching had become known throughout the whole of Persia, and everywhere men were anxiously inquiring after its nature and character. Moullah Houssein therefore started at once, taking with him as his credentials the "Journal of the Pilgrimage to Mecca," and the "Commentary of the Sourat of Joseph," the only works which the Bab had then written. He first directed his steps towards Ispahan, one of the principal cities of the kingdom, with a population of between 80,000 and 90,000 inhabitants. Among them he laboured with great zeal, preaching constantly to large crowds; reading to them from the writings of the Bab; pointing out the beauty of their style, and giving details of various miracles which had taken place. An immense sensation was produced, and many became converts to the new opinions; among their number was Moullah Mohammed Taghy, who afterwards became one of the principal leaders of the sect. Even the governor of the city, Menoutjehr Khan, a man known for his talents, but noted also for his cruel disposition, was favourably impressed with the doctrines of the new sect. Flushed with the success which had resulted from his teaching at Ispahan, Moullah Houssein passed on to Kashan, where he laboured for some time much in the same way. A few converts were made, but on the whole his efforts in this city were not attended with the same success, and he soon left it for Teheran. The presence of the Court seems to have caused some restraint on his freedom of action, and instead of preaching in public, as had been his wont, he only received in private those who were curious to see him, or anxious to inquire

\* We have followed the *Journal Asiatique* in this account of Moullah Houssein. M. Gobineau makes him to have become first acquainted with the writings of the Bab at Khorassan, and to have come to Shiraz afterwards.

into the doctrines he was promulgating. Notwithstanding his seclusion, his arrival was soon known throughout the city, and among those who sought an interview with him were the king, Mohammed Shah, and his prime minister, Hadji Mirza Aghassy. Moullah Houssein did his best to bring them round to his own views. He set before them the character of the new doctrines, showed how widely they had spread in Persia, pointed out how well they agreed with the new ideas which were being introduced from Europe,\* and concluded by picturing the glory which would accrue to the king if he would put himself at the head of the movement, and help to establish it in his dominions. The words were spoken to men who were little likely to be influenced by them. Men of the world, they did not care to pursue what to them appeared a chimerical object; men fond of ease, they were not willing to undergo the labour and trouble it would necessarily involve. As long as the new doctrines appeared to them only as the curious speculations of an enthusiastic young man, they listened to them with interest and curiosity. As soon as they assumed the character of a religious revolution, the king and his minister began to be alarmed, and determined to free themselves from their embarrassing position. No restriction was laid upon the emissary of the Bab, but he was recommended, in a way which left no doubt of the consequences of a refusal, to leave Teheran as soon as possible. Thus repulsed by the Court of the Shah, the labours of Moullah Houssein would have come to an abrupt termination, if news had not just then reached him of the success of Babeism in other parts of the kingdom.

Soon after the departure of Moullah Houssein Boushrewy the Bab had sent out, or rather authorized, two other emissaries to act in his name in the north and in the west. Mohammed Ali Balfouroushy, a native of Mazenderan, had already laboured in the cause of Babeism; but he was now charged with a special mission to his own province, where he pursued his labours with considerable success. The west fell to the lot of a woman, a native of Kazwyn. This woman played a very conspicuous part in the Babe movement, and is remarkable, not only for the successes she achieved, but also for her total disregard of all Eastern notions on the character and position of women. Her real name was Zerryn Tadj, or the Crown of Gold; but she became better known under her surname of Gourretoul-Ayn, or the Consolation of the Eyes. Among the Babees, by whom her memory is held in the highest veneration, she was called Hezret-è-Taheerêh, or Her Pure Highness, and at times also Nokteh, or the Point, that is to say, the highest degree of the spirit of pro-

\* The argument of Moullah Houssein in this respect was well suited to influence Mohammed Shah, who had been particularly anxious to imitate European customs, and introduce European ideas into his dominions.

phesy made manifest in human form. Zerryn Tadj, or Gourret-oul-Ayn, as we shall continue to call her, was born at Kazwyn, a town famous for its learned men, who were principally inclined to the doctrines of the Sheykhys. Her family belonged to a class of priests. She was the daughter of Hadji Mohammed Saleh, a Moudjtehid,\* and at an early age was married to her cousin, Moullah Mohammed. Living then in the midst of a town where learned and religious subjects were eagerly debated, she often heard matters of interest discussed within the family circle, and was soon able to take part in them, astonishing her father and uncle by her acute perception and varied learning. From them she first heard of the doctrines of the Bab, and pleased with what she had heard, put herself in communication with him, and soon became a convert to his teaching. Her conversion was no empty name. She professed her faith publicly, inveighed against polygamy and the use of the veil, and showed herself in public without that usual covering of women in the East, to the great scandal both of her relations and of all the devout Mussulmen. The former used all their influence and persuasion to bring her back to orthodox ways, but in vain; and at length her father-in-law, enraged at her obstinacy, cursed in public the Bab and his doctrines. He paid dearly for his words; having been overheard by some Babees, they resolved to be revenged, and three of them lay in wait for him, and assassinated him on his way to the mosque. It was the first bloodshed occasioned by the new doctrine; and Gourret-oul-Ayn has not escaped suspicion of having instigated the murder of her father-in-law. There, however, does not appear to be any sufficient ground on which to rest this accusation. Weary at length of the importunities of her friends, she left them, and devoted her life to the mission which the Bab had given her. The spectacle of a woman thus disregarding all former prejudices and national customs may, no doubt, astonish us; but the very scandal she created only serves to show how unusual an event it was, and it needs to be classed as one of the extraordinary results of the new Babeë doctrines. For some time she laboured in Kazwyn, and met with as great success as Mohammed Ali Balfouroushy had done in Mazenderan. With these two Moullah Houssein consulted on his future course of action, when compelled to leave the capital. To carry things there with a high hand, and under Government favour, was now impossible; to remain at Teheran and resist the Government would have been impolitic; and they were compelled to recur to the slower, though perhaps surer, way of gaining support from the people. The west, the north, and the south had been traversed, and a certain footing gained there for Babeëism. Moullah Houssein

\* The Moudjtehids are very few in number, and all of them have great influence in spiritual matters in Persia.

therefore determined to turn his steps towards the east, the original ground selected for his mission and labour in Khorassan.

The spread of Babeë doctrines had hitherto proceeded very peaceably. They had been carried to the various cities and provinces of Persia by earnest disciples of the Bab, or by teachers whom he had regularly authorized. Babeëism had been promulgated in the places of public instruction; it had been taught in private conferences; many had been influenced and converted; but nowhere had the movement assumed a revolutionary character, nor, except in the instance mentioned above at Kazwyn, had it resulted in any violence. This arose from the politic conduct of the Babees. While they attacked unsparingly the Moullahs, they took care not to compromise themselves with the civil Government; and the heads of the Government, so long as they considered themselves safe, enjoyed the discomfiture of the clergy. About the middle of A.D. 1848 there was a change; and in the east of Persia, where Moullah Houssein was now preaching, the first collision took place between the Babees and their opponents. In stating this we must allow that it was not entirely due to Babeë aggression, but must be attributed in great part to the disturbed political state of the country. We shall see this as we follow the fortunes of Moullah Houssein. On leaving Teheran he first went to Nishapoor, where he made some converts, and then proceeded to Meshhed. Here he met with a most determined resistance from the clergy. Alarmed at the accounts that had reached them of the Babees, they determined to crush them at once, if possible, and for this purpose sent a deputation to Hamze Mirza, who was then commanding the troops on the frontier in an expedition against the Turcomans, to ask for his assistance. After much difficulty he was prevailed on to issue an order for the apprehension of Moullah Houssein, who was accordingly brought into the camp and closely guarded. At the same time some of his converts were compelled to renounce their faith in the Bab; others were expelled from the town. Just at this time a revolt arose in the province, occasioned by the maladministration of Hamze Mirza, and the secret intrigues of a man named Salar. In the confusion that ensued Moullah Houssein effected his escape, and in the first place went to the leader of the insurgents to ask for his protection; but he only met with a cold reception. Salar did not care to add to his difficulties by a quarrel with the clergy of Meshhed, and he required the leader of the Babees and his adherents to leave the city. Surrounded on all sides by difficulties, denounced by both parties, the country swarming with armed bands, Moullah Houssein deemed it his safest course to arm his followers. After maintaining himself as long as possible in the neighbourhood of the cities of Subsewar and Miami, and gaining many recruits, he finally advanced towards Shahroud.

On entering the city he began, as he was wont, to preach the Babeer doctrine. The chief men at once opposed him, and a conflict was imminent, when a messenger arrived with the news that the king, Mohammed Shah, was dead. This event took place September 5th, A.D. 1848.

Nothing could have happened more propitious for the Babees. In Persia the death of the king always brings the laws into abeyance, and delivers the country for a time into a state of anarchy. All the forces which could have been brought against them were at once paralysed; no chief would undertake any decided action until the views of the new Government were known, while, on the other hand, the Babees, with a united band and a definite object in view, were free to act at once. Moullah Houssein took advantage at once of the propitious circumstances. Khorassan had not been favourable to him, and he determined to leave the province and march at once into Mazenderan, where the ground had been already prepared, and he was sure of finding co-operation. The wisdom of this measure was proved by the result. At Bedesht, a small village on the frontier of the two provinces, he was met by the two other principal leaders of the Babees, Mohammed Ali Balfouroushy, and Gourret-oul-Ayn, and some other zealous partisans of the sect. With these we must not omit to mention the name of one who was destined afterwards to play an important part in the movement, and to succeed the Bab himself, Mirza Jahya, then a boy of fifteen years old. Then was held the first council or general meeting of the sect. The Babees were dispersed in the country round about, occupying the houses or gardens of the peasants. Lest their enthusiasm should evaporate, Gourret-oul-Ayn determined to rekindle their zeal by a discourse or sermon. The description of the scene may perhaps best be given in the words of M. Gobineau.

“In a small plain near the village they raised in haste a sort of throne on planks, covered with cloths and carpets. Gourret-oul-Ayn having appeared according to her custom without a veil, sat down on the throne with her legs crossed, whilst the soldiers placed themselves round her according to the Persian manner. It was not quite in this way that conventicles of the Presbyterians were held on the moors of Scotland. It was neither the same sky, nor the same scenery, nor the same attitude in the preacher and in the hearers, nor was the doctrine the same; but if the form varied the reality was alike. Around Gourret-oul-Ayn there was a true conventicle, a passionate faith, an enthusiasm without bounds, a devotion ready for anything.”\*

The whole account of the proceedings of the Babees bears indeed a considerable resemblance to some of the scenes depicted by Sir Walter Scott in “*Old Mortality*.” The words of Gourret-oul-Ayn produced the desired effect, and if there was not the deep hum of approbation which would have arisen in the camp of the Covenanters,

\* Gobineau, p. 181.

the emotions produced were as truly expressed in Oriental fashion. The hearers crowded around the speaker, beating their breasts, and with tears and loud voices declared their deep devotion to the cause. In the night the leaders of the sect consulted together. The unsettled state of the country pending the new king's accession, left the Babees free to do almost what they liked. After some deliberation they determined to scatter themselves through Mazenderan, to make proselytes, if possible to win over the whole province to the cause of the Bab, and thus gain a firm footing for themselves. To carry out these views Gourret-oul-Ayn remained where she was to carry on an active propaganda. Mohammed Ali returned to Balfouroush, and Moullah Houssein went into the country parts to beat up recruits.

For some weeks they carried out their plans without meeting with any opposition, but at length the Moullahs became seriously alarmed, and sensible that if they did not wish the whole ground to slip away from under their feet they must at once take some decided measures. They first applied to Khanler Mirza, the governor of the province, but as he was uncertain what would be his fate under the new reign, he did nothing. They then turned to Abbas Kouly Khan, the governor of Laredjan. He was the head of one of the tribes, and belonged to the country, and having a direct interest in its welfare determined actively to interfere. A force of 300 men was sent to Balfouroush, and he soon followed them himself with large reinforcements. Moullah Houssein had hastened to the relief of his colleagues; but their united forces were far outnumbered, and after an indecisive struggle they deemed it expedient to come to terms, and promised to leave Mazenderan. "His Highness the Bab," Moullah Houssein said, "had commissioned him and his colleagues to preach everywhere the doctrine of the new sect, and more especially to do so in Mazenderan; but if the inhabitants really did not wish to make any change in their religion, he had no wish to force them; other fields of labour were open to him, and thither he would retire." He was allowed to retire from Balfouroush unmolested, on condition of his leaving Mazenderan, but an attack from some country people on his baggage for the sake of plunder gave him an excuse for not fulfilling his word. Instead of leaving the province he plunged with his followers into the mountains, and amidst their wild fastnesses determined to carry on a desultory warfare. No part of the country was better suited for a protracted resistance. It was a wild and mountainous district, with no means of communication between one part and another; the mountains were densely wooded, and amongst them were many places which could be fortified and defended with great advantage. One of these was chosen by Moullah Houssein near a spot known by the name of the Tomb of the Sheik Tebersi. Here he directed his followers to raise a tower, and com-



elled the countrymen whom he could find to assist them in their work. The construction at best was very rude, but in a country where the art of fortifications was unknown, and where the entire absence of artillery afforded no means of breaking the walls, the place presented in time a sufficiently formidable appearance. It consisted of a wall some thirty feet high, and mounted on the top with a wooden construction furnished with loopholes. The whole was surrounded by a deep ditch. Within the circumference of the walls they dug wells of water, and excavated chambers which might either serve as places of refuge, or be used as magazines. Within this enclosure Moullah Houssein now entrenched himself with 2,000 of his followers, and all, feeling more confident from the strength of the position they occupied, became more decided in their action and bolder in their language; the latter also changed somewhat of its tone. Formerly the Babe teachers had only spoken of religion, and impressed upon their hearers the fulfilment of their respective duties; they had spoken of the nature of God and of the soul; now they gave a more political turn to their teaching, and sought to gain adherents by various promises and threatenings. They announced that all who wished to live happily in this world, while awaiting the next, had but a short time left in which to make up their minds. One year more and his highness the Bab, who was sent by God, would take possession of all the kingdoms of the world; flight would be an impossibility, resistance would be folly: all who were Babees would possess the world; all who continued to be disbelievers would remain in the position of servants.\* In these words we found the same promises and threatenings with which Mahomet and his followers pressed the adoption of the creed of the Koran on the reluctant minds of the conquered nations, the same with which every false prophet has sought to gain adherents to his cause. In this case the preaching was followed by the same result. Numbers flocked to the castle of the Babees, and dwelt in the woods around. They spent the time in eager anticipation; an eternity of happiness seemed to open before them, untold wealth was to be their future portion; some passed the hours in eating and drinking, in laughing and talking; others gave vent to their emotions, and gathered eagerly round the preachers to listen to the promises which were lavishly bestowed. Among the leaders Mohammed Ali might perhaps claim the precedence from his rank as moudjtehid, but Moullah Houssein was the soul of the whole undertaking, and both enjoyed equally the respect and veneration of their followers. Whenever they appeared in public they were received with every mark of devotion and respect, the crowd standing up as they walked along; if any wished to speak with them, he did so only after prostrating himself in the dust.

\* Gobineau, p. 191.

A step on which they ventured at this time roused the enthusiasm of their followers to the highest pitch. Among the most cherished articles of the Shiite faith is the belief in the twelve Imams, the lineal descendants of Ali, through Hassan and Houssein.\* The last of the twelve surpassed all the others in the sanctity of his life, and as the time and place of his death are unknown, it is believed that he will one day reappear, when the consummation of all things will take place, and the happiness of believers be established; and his return is as eagerly looked for by the Persians as was ever the advent of the Messiah by the Jews. In adhering to the traditions of these Imams *as well as* to the words of the Prophet in the Koran, the Shiites are specially distinguished from the Sunnites. In adhering to the traditions of the Imams *only* as against the traditions of numberless hadjis and holy men, the Sheykhys are separated from the other sectaries of the Shiite faith. When Sheykh Ahmed promulgated the doctrines of the Sheykhys, he took advantage of this general reverence for the twelve Imams, and represented them as being not only twelve men, but as being the personification of the twelve highest attributes of God. This, of course, was not in strict accordance with the orthodox Shiite faith, but the secret inclination of the Persians for any doctrine which admits a belief in an incarnation or an emanation found for it great favour.† Views somewhat similar to these, as we shall see, became part of the Babees doctrines. They were already familiar to those who had been trained in the school of Kerbela, and Moullah Houssein determined to turn them to account. Already, when preaching in Ispahan, he had proclaimed the Bab to be the twelfth Imam, the Imam Mehdy.‡ He now went further, and declared that not only had the Imam Mehdy reappeared, but that among his followers were the representatives of the other eleven, whose names he took and distributed them to his most faithful adherents. We know how men will continue to reverence the name of some holy person with which they are familiar long after the associations connected with it have passed away. We have examples of it in the superstitious reverence for the names of saints in England before the Reformation, in Spain in the present day. This remains when all other belief is gone. It was the same in Persia. The actual precepts of the Mohammedan faith had little influence on the lives of the multitudes, but the names of their holy men who were dead and gone exercised a wondrous spell. A pilgrimage to their shrines was looked upon as an atonement for sin; a prayer for their intercession was considered the means to obtain some desired end. And now the crowd of Babees beheld the representatives of these men, or, as they fancied, the Imams themselves in bodily person

\* Gibbon, vol. vi. p. 280.

† Journal Asiatique, June, p. 459.

‡ Gobineau, p. 159.

among them. It seemed the realization of all their dreams, as if the promises of the Babe teachers were to be fulfilled, and the spiritual power of the Bab to be indeed universally established. The enthusiasm of the troops was raised to the highest pitch. They looked forward with confidence to the future. Mazenderan was to be conquered; there was to be a glorious march on Rey, followed by a battle, and in a mountain near Teheran, a large and deep trench would be dug to hold the bodies of the ten thousand Mussulmen slain in the day of triumph.

Their courage and constancy were soon to be put to the test. The first act of Nasreddin Shah on ascending the throne was to appoint as his prime minister Mirza Taghy Khan, a man possessed of great energy and determination, and of a very different stamp from his predecessor in the previous reign. The lax rule of Mirza Aghassy had allowed troubles and disorders to spring up on all sides. In the capital, organized bands of robbers and assassins, under the name of Loutis, infested the streets. In the province of Khorassan, the revolt of the troops under Salar had not been suppressed, in Mazenderan the Babees had defied all the regular authorities. Mirza Taghy Khan determined to restore order and act with a high hand. He seized upon the leaders of the robbers in Teheran and put them to death without mercy. He dispatched troops against the insurgents in Khorassan, and he resolved to crush the Babees. While these latter had been building and fortifying their castle in Mazenderan, the chief men of the province had been absent at court to pay their respects to the new occupant of the throne. On their taking leave to return to their homes, they were ordered to take measures to suppress the Babe disorders, and they promised to do their best. They assured the king that the Babees were only a handful, and that the local forces would be quite able to cope with them without any assistance from the royal troops. Accordingly on their return, Hadji Moustafa Khan, Abbas Kouly Khan, and others, summoned their followers together, to the number of some 750 men. These were placed under the command of Aga Abdoullah, a brother of Moustafa Khan, and advanced to the attack of the Babe position. The result showed how completely they had miscalculated its strength and underrated the resolute courage of the Babees themselves. Favoured by the darkness of the night, these latter issued out of their gates under the command of Moullah Houssein, fell on the camp of their enemies and completely routed them; Aga Abdoullah was slain and the village of Ferra or Ferrahill, where the fugitives had taken refuge, was burned to the ground.

The prime minister was exceedingly wroth when he heard of this repulse. Satisfied that the troops of the province were not sufficient

for the work, a large force of royal troops was despatched under the command of Mehdi Kouly Mirza, a prince of the blood royal. With these the prince entered Mazenderan and established his headquarters at Vassek, or, as it is also called, Daskes, a small village not far from Sheik Tebersi, where he awaited some troops from Laredjan. For a long time the Babees made no attempt to molest them, but at length hearing that the Laredjan troops were expected, they issued quietly out of their fortress one night and turned the enemies' position. A few horsemen were then sent on by Moullah Houssein, who, advancing from a direction opposite to the Babees' fortress, and representing themselves as the expected reinforcement, were allowed to proceed without opposition to the very centre of the village. Then they suddenly raised the cry that Mehdi Kouly Mirza had been assassinated. In the darkness there was no possibility of ascertaining the truth or falsehood of the intelligence, and a panic fell on the troops. The sudden appearance of the Babees' forces added to the confusion, and the whole royal army fled in the utmost disorder. In the fight Mohammed Ali had received a slight wound in the face, but altogether the Babees' loss was small, and Moullah Houssein returned in triumph to Sheik Tebersi.

After a while the expected reinforcement arrived from Laredjan under the command of Abbas Kouly Khan, who, for the present, undertook the direction of the attack against the Babees. But he was fated to be as unlucky as his predecessors. Disdaining even the most ordinary measures of precaution or means of defence through contempt of the foe, he was liable to be attacked at any time, and a night surprise, conducted by Moullah Houssein, amidst a storm of snow and rain, was completely successful. The troops of Abbas Kouly Khan were routed, and fled in every direction. The victory, however, on this occasion was dearly purchased by the Babees. In the combat which took place Moullah Houssein was struck by a bullet on the breast. In spite of his wound he rallied his men, and having succeeded in gaining his object as far as it could be attained, gave the signal for retreat. He continued to have sufficient strength to remain on horseback until he reached the gate of the castle, when, faint from loss of blood, he fell from his horse, and was carried dying to his bed. His last moments were spent in exhorting his followers to remain firm in the doctrines they professed, and to render obedience to their chiefs. As for himself, he said he could not really die; death was only apparent; in fourteen days he would rise again, and meanwhile he charged them to bury his body in secret, and to let none know where it had been placed. This last injunction was probably given to prevent its suffering any outrage at the hands of his enemies. To the Babees at Sheik Tebersi the loss of Moullah Houssein was irreparable, but the whole body had cause to mourn his

death. No one had done so much to give to Bábéism life, and unity, and energy. His influence on the Bab had probably led him to take more decided measures than he would ever have ventured on by himself. More than any other man he had been active in promulgating the Bábé doctrines, and gaining for them a firm footing in the various provinces of the kingdom. By his resolution and daring he had enabled his small band to cope with success against the troops of the province and of the empire, and made them win for themselves the admiration of all, and the sympathy of many who dared not join them. With him the day of victory passed away.

Mohammed Ali Balfaroushy now became the acknowledged head of the Bábés, and at once took measures for continuing the struggle. He was able to do this at his leisure, for the troops of Laredjan had been so terrified by the nocturnal surprise, that Abbas Kouly Khan was obliged to raise the siege, after having buried his own men who had fallen, and horribly mutilated the dead bodies of the enemy he found on the field of battle. After his retreat, when the Bábés came out from their fortress and saw the bodies of their late comrades thus maltreated, they were filled with a desire for revenge, and at once made reprisals. The bodies that had been buried were dug up, their heads exposed on poles, and their other members left to be devoured by hyænas and other wild animals.

In the meantime Abbas Kouly Khan had rejoined his superior officer, Mehdi Kouly Mirza, and a council of war was held. To retreat was not to be thought of; they would thus have delivered the whole province of Mazenderan into the power of the Bábés; to crush them by a *coup de main* was found to be impossible. It was finally determined to act with every precaution, to lay a regular siege to the castle, and if it could not be taken by assault, to starve the Bábés into a surrender. Mehdi Kouly Mirza, therefore, once more advanced with all his forces to Sheik Tebersi, and drew his lines round the castle for the purpose of a strict blockade. At the same time attempts were made to breach the walls, and if the means employed are not to be found in any modern treatise of war, they were in strict accordance with classical precedents. Towers were raised to a level with the walls of the castle, and from their summits a constant discharge of musketry was kept up against the defendants, and inflammable missiles were thrown into the castle, which soon destroyed all the wood-work within the walls. The Bábés were in consequence compelled to retire within the chamber they had made in the ground. But their courage was in no ways diminished. Seizing a favourable opportunity, they once again made a sally by night; and attacking one of the towers whence the fire had been the most galling, they destroyed it to the ground, with a loss to themselves of only two killed and four wounded. This disastrous event damped the ardour

of the assailants, and for some weeks they contented themselves with a blockade.

Four months had now elapsed (May, 1849) since Mehdi Kouly Mirza had been sent into Mazenderan and operations had been begun against the Babees, and the Court of Teheran, instead of receiving the news of their total extermination, had only heard of a succession of repulses. The king began to be exasperated, and threatened to turn his wrath against all the inhabitants of the province whom he suspected of treachery, if the Babees were not put down. It was necessary to bring the matter to a speedy termination if the whole kingdom was not to be in a state of insurrection, for already the Babees had raised the standard of revolt in other parts. A change in the command was now made, and Souleyman Khan, one of the best generals in the Persian service, was placed at the head of affairs. He was nominally under the orders of Mehdi Kouly Mirza, who, as one of the princes of the blood royal, could not be deposed, but in reality he was to have the sole direction of the siege. He took with him some field-pieces, and on his arrival the troops recommenced siege operations with renewed vigour and hope. The cannon soon made a breach in the walls, but brought the Babees no nearer to submission. As best they could they rebuilt the walls, and found protection for themselves in pits which they made amidst the ruins, and whence they continued to return the enemy's fire. The troops were led to the assault, but only to be repulsed. On one occasion a position of great importance was nearly won by the courage of an officer, Kerim Khan, when by some mistake the retreat was sounded and the advantage again lost.

After the assault in which the event occurred, Soulyman Khan did not care immediately to renew the attack, as he knew the Babees were suffering from hunger, and he hoped that they would yield of their own accord. Secret information to this effect had been brought him by a few men who, discouraged by the evident hopelessness of the struggle, had deserted to the royal camp, and had been received there with favour and promises of pardon, though kept under a strict guard. Others at the same time managed to break through the lines and escaped into the mountains. The Babees were, indeed, at this time reduced to the greatest extremities. All the regular provisions had long before been consumed. Some supported themselves on the grass which they were able to collect, others on the flesh of the dead horses, or by grinding their bones into a kind of flour. Even the horse which had carried Moullah Houssein, and which had died a short time before, in spite of the veneration of which it was the object, was dug up, and its remains distributed among the defenders of the fortress. Yet in spite of all this they showed no sign of submission, and at length Soulyman Khan, weary of the delay, ordered an

attack. This was more successful than any of the preceding ones, for the royal troops gained a footing, and established themselves amidst a portion of the ruins of the fortress. The Babees perceived that further resistance was hopeless, and consulted as to their future course. Some were anxious to sell their lives as dearly as possible, and perish among the ruins they had so gloriously defended; others were desirous to capitulate on honourable terms. Among these latter was Mohammed Ali Balfouroushy. No one had been more faithful to the cause of Babeism, but he now felt that further resistance was useless, and a martyr's death, however glorious, would in no way advance the reforms he wished to see introduced both in religion and in the civil government. If his life was prolonged he might have other opportunities of endeavouring to carry out his views. Rumours had already reached him of a Babees rising in Zendjan, and he hoped to be able to join it, and at another time, and on another stage, to carry on the struggle, if not more gloriously, to a more successful issue. His voice was therefore given in favour of a capitulation, and with the consent of the other Babees he agreed to the honourable terms which were accorded them by Mehdi Kouly Mirza. The gates were then thrown open, and the remnant of the Babees force came out; a small band of 214 men, with some few women, destitute of everything, and attenuated by want and privation. They were at first received kindly, shelter in the tents was given to them, and food was abundantly provided, and for a time the Babees felt perfectly reassured as to their future fate. But this honourable reception had only been given to put them off their guard.

While Mehdi Kouly Mirza was agreeing to the terms of the capitulation, he had already determined not to keep to them, and seizing on a pretext afforded by some rash words spoken by the Babees, he ordered his soldiers to make prisoners of the whole band. The chiefs were reserved for future punishment, but all the others were put to death under circumstances of great cruelty, and the like fate befell the deserters. Even the women and children were not spared. Of the whole number of Babees in Mazenderan, none remained but Mohammed Ali and a few others of the leaders, whom the commander-in-chief intended to take to Teheran; but, instigated by the Moullahs, who were afraid lest any of their enemies should be spared, the prisoners were conducted to Balfouroush, the principal town of the province, where they were publicly executed. For some weeks afterwards a search was made after any who might profess Babees doctrines, but it did not last long. The Moullahs found that the number of sympathizers with the late struggle might be greater than they would care to acknowledge, and they determined to let the matter rest as much as possible.

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*(To be continued.)*