The Sassanians (New Persia) [1]

By George Rawlinson

Lesson	Titles
SASS001	Chapters 1 to 3
SASS002	Chapters 4 to 6
SASS003	Chapters 7 to 9
SASS004	Chapters 10 to 12
SASS005	Chapters 13 to 16
SASS006	Chapters 17 to 19
SASS007	Chapters 20 and 21
SASS008	Chapters 22 to 24
SASS009	**Chapters 25 and 26**
SASS010	Chapters 27 and 28

25. Kobad II; Shahr-Barz; Purandocht

Siroes, or Kobad the Second, as he is more properly termed, was proclaimed king on the 25th of February, 2 A.D. 628, four days before the murder of his father. According to the Oriental writers, he was very unwilling to put his father to death, and only gave a reluctant consent to his execution on the representations of his nobles that it was a state of necessity. His first care, after this urgent matter had been settled, was to make overtures of peace to Heraclius, who, having safely crossed the Zagros mountains, was wintering at Canzaca. The letter which he addressed to the Roman Emperor on the occasion is partially extant; but the formal and official tone which it breathes renders it a somewhat disappointing document. Kobad begins by addressing Heraclius as his brother, and giving him the epithet of "most clement," thus assuming his pacific disposition. He then declares, that, having been elevated to the throne by the especial favor of God, he has resolved to do his utmost to benefit and serve the entire human race. He has therefore commenced his reign by throwing open the prison doors, and restoring liberty to all who were detained in custody. With the same object in view, he is desirous of living in peace and friendship with the Roman emperor and state as well as with all other neighboring nations and kings. Assuming that his accession will be pleasing to the emperor, he has sent Phaeak, one of his privy councillors, to express the love and friendship that he feels towards his brother, and learn the terms upon which peace will be granted him. The reply of Heraclius is lost; but we are able to gather from a short summary which has been preserved, as well as from the subsequent course of events, that it was complimentary and favorable; that it expressed the willingness of the emperor to bring the war to a close, and suggested terms of accommodation that were moderate and equitable. The exact formulation of the treaty seems to have been left to Eustathius, who, after Heraclius had entertained Phaeak royally for nearly a week, accompanied the ambassador on his return to the Persian court.

The general principle upon which peace was concluded was evidently the _status quo ante bellum_. Persia was to surrender Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Western Mesopotamia, and any other conquests that she might have made from Rome, to recall her troops from them, and to give them back into the possession of the Romans. She was also to surrender all the captives whom she had carried off from the conquered countries; and, above all, she was to give back to the Romans the precious relic which had been taken from Jerusalem, and which was believed on all hands to be the veritable cross whereon Jesus Christ suffered death. As Rome

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had merely made inroads, but not conquests, she did not possess any territory to surrender; but she doubtless set her Persian prisoners free, and she made arrangements for the safe conduct and honorable treatment of the Persians, who evacuated Syria, Egypt, and Asia Minor, on their way to the frontier. The evacuation was at once commenced; and the wood of the cross, which had been carefully preserved by the Persian queen, Shirin, was restored. In the next year, Heraclius made a grand pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and replaced the holy relic in the shrine from which it had been taken.

It is said that princes are always popular on their coronation day. Kobad was certainly no exception to the general rule. His subjects rejoiced at the termination of a war which had always been a serious drain on the population, and which latterly had brought ruin and desolation upon the hearths and homes of thousands. The general emptying of the prisons was an act that cannot be called statesman-like; but it had a specious appearance of liberality, and was probably viewed with favor by the mass of the people. A still more popular measure must have been the complete remission of taxes with which Kobad inaugurated his reign--a remission which, according to one authority, was to have continued for three years, had the generous prince lived so long. In addition to these somewhat questionable proceedings, Kobad adopted also a more legitimate mode of securing the regard of his subjects by a careful administration of justice, and a mild treatment of those who had been the victims of his father's severities. He restored to their former rank the persons whom Chosroes had degraded or imprisoned, and compensated them for their injuries by a liberal donation of money.

Thus far all seemed to promise well for the new reign, which, though it had commenced under unfavorable auspices, bid fair to be tranquil and prosperous. In one quarter only was there any indication of coming troubles. Shahr-Barz, the great general, whose life Chosroes had attempted shortly before his own death, appears to have been dissatisfied with the terms on which Kobad had concluded peace with Rome; and there is even reason to believe that he contrived to impede and delay the full execution of the treaty. He held under Kobad the government of the western provinces and was at the head of an army which numbered sixty thousand men. Kobad treated him with marked favor; but still he occupied a position almost beyond that of a subject, and one which could not fail to render him an object of fear and suspicion. For the present, however, though he may have nurtured ambitious thoughts, he made no movement, but bided his time, remaining quietly in his province, and cultivating friendly relations with the Roman emperor.

Kobad had not been seated on the throne many months when he consented to a deed by which his character for justice and clemency was seriously compromised, if not wholly lost. This was the general massacre of all the other sons of Chosroes II., his own brothers or half-brothers--a numerous body, amounting to forty according to the highest estimate, and to fifteen according to the lowest. We are not told of any circumstances of peril to justify the deed, or even account for it. There have been Oriental dynasties, where such a wholesale murder upon the accession of a sovereign has been a portion of the established system of government, and others where the milder but little less revolting expedient has obtained of blinding all the brothers of the reigning prince; but neither practice was in vogue among the Sassanians; and we look vainly for the reason which caused an act of the kind to be resorted to at this conjuncture. Mirkhond says that Piruz, the chief minister of Kobad, advised the deed; but even he assigns no motive for the massacre, unless a motive is implied in the statement that the brothers of Kobad were "all of them distinguished by their talents and their merit." Politically speaking, the measure might have been harmless, had Kobad

enjoyed a long reign, and left behind him a number of sons. But as it was, the rash act, by almost extinguishing the race of Sassan, produced troubles which greatly helped to bring the empire into a condition of hopeless exhaustion and weakness.

While thus destroying all his brothers, Kobad allowed his sisters to live. Of these there were two, still unmarried, who resided in the palace, and had free access to the monarch. Their names were Purandocht and Azermidocht, Purandocht being the elder. Bitterly grieved at the loss of their kindred, these two princesses rushed into the royal presence, and reproached the king with words that cut him to the soul. "Thy ambition of ruling," they said, "has induced thee to kill thy father and thy brothers. Thou hast accomplished thy purpose within the space of three or four months. Thou hast hoped thereby to preserve thy power forever. Even, however, if thou shouldst live long, thou must die at last. May God deprive thee of the enjoyment of this royalty!" His sisters' words sank deep into the king's mind. He acknowledged their justice, burst into tears, and flung his crown on the ground. After this he fell into a profound melancholy, ceased to care for the exercise of power, and in a short time died. His death is ascribed by the Orientals to his mental sufferings; but the statement of a Christian bishop throws some doubt on this romantic story. Eutychius, Patriarch of Alexandria, tells us that, before Kobad had reigned many months, the plague broke out in his country. Vast numbers of his subjects died of it; and among the victims was the king himself, who perished after a reign which is variously estimated at six, seven, eight, and eighteen months.

There seems to be no doubt that a terrible pestilence did afflict Persia at this period. The Arabian writers are here in agreement with Eutychius of Alexandria, and declare that the malady was of the most aggravated character, carrying off one half, or at any rate one third, of the inhabitants of the provinces which were affected, and diminishing the population of Persia by several hundreds of thousands. Scourges of this kind are of no rare occurrence in the East; and the return of a mixed multitude to Persia, under circumstances involving privation, from the cities of Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine, was well calculated to engender such a calamity.

The reign of Kobad II. appears from his coins to have lasted above a year. He ascended the throne in February, A.D. 628; he probably died about July, A.D. 629. The coins which are attributed to him resemble in their principal features those of Ohosroes II. and Artaxerxes III., but are without wings, and have the legend _Kavat-Firuz_. The bordering of pearls is single on both obverse and reverse, but the king wears a double pearl necklace. The eye is large, and the hair more carefully marked than had been usual since the time of Sapor II.

At the death of Kobad the crown fell to his son, Artaxerxes III., a child of seven, or (according to others) of one year only. The nobles who proclaimed him took care to place him under the direction of a governor or regent, and appointed to the office a certain Mihr-Hasis, who had been the chief purveyor of Kobad. Mihr-Hasis is said to have ruled with justice and discretion; but he was not able to prevent the occurrence of those troubles and disorders which in the East almost invariably accompany the sovereignty of a minor, and render the task of a regent a hard one. Shahr-Barz, who had scarcely condescended to comport himself as a subject under Kobad, saw in the accession of a boy, and in the near extinction of the race of Sassan, an opportunity of gratifying his ambition, and at the same time of avenging the wrong which had been done him by Chosroes. Before committing himself, however, to the perils of rebellion, he negotiated with Heraclius, and secured his alliance and support by the promise of certain advantages. The friends met at Heraclea on the Propontis. Shahr-Barz undertook to complete the evacuation of Egypt, Syria, and

Asia Minor, which he had delayed hitherto, and promised, if he were successful in his enterprise, to pay Heraclius a large sum of money as compensation for the injuries inflicted on Rome during the recent war. Heraclius conferred on Nicetas, the son of Shahr-Barz, the title of "Patrican," consented to a marriage between Shahr-Barz's daughter, Nike, and his own son, Theodosius, and accepted Gregoria, the daughter of Nicetas, and grand-daughter of Shahr-Barz, as a wife for Constantine, the heir to the empire. He also, it is probable, supplied Shahr-Barz with a body of troops, to assist him in his struggle with Artaxerxes and Mihr-Hasis.

Of the details of Sharhr-Barz's expedition we know nothing. He is said to have marched on Ctesiphon with an army of sixty thousand men; to have taken the city, put to death Artaxerxes, Mihr-Hasis, and a number of the nobles, and then seized the throne. We are not told what resistance was made by the monarch in possession, or how it was overcome, or even whether there was a battle. It would seem certain, however, that the contest was brief. The young king was of course powerless; Mihr-Hasis, though well-meaning, must have been weak; Shahr-Barz had all the rude strength of the animal whose name he bore, and had no scruples about using his strength to the utmost. The murder of a child of two, or at the most of eight, who could have done no ill, and was legitimately in possession of the throne, must be pronounced a brutal act, and one which sadly tarnishes the fair fame, previously unsullied, of one of Persia's greatest generals.

It was easy to obtain the crown, under the circumstances of the time; but it was not so easy to keep what had been wrongfully gained. Shahr-Barz enjoyed the royal authority less than two months. During this period he completed the evacuation of the Roman provinces occupied by Chosroes II., restored perhaps some portions of the true cross which had been kept back by Kobad, and sent an expeditionary force against the Khazars who had invaded Armenia, which was completely destroyed by the fierce barbarians. He is said by the Armenians to have married Purandocht, the eldest daughter of Chosroes, for the purpose of strengthening his hold on the crown; but this attempt to conciliate his subjects, if it was really made, proved unsuccessful. Ere he had been king for two months, his troops mutinied, drew their swords upon him, and killed him in the open court before the palace. Having so done, they tied a cord to his feet and dragged his corpse through the streets of Ctesiphon, making proclamation everywhere as follows: "Whoever, not being of the blood-royal, seats himself upon the Persian throne, shall share the fate of Shahr-Barz." They then elevated to the royal dignity the princess Purandocht, the first female who had ever sat in the seat of Cyrus.

The rule of a woman was ill calculated to restrain the turbulent Persian nobles. Two instances had now proved that a mere noble might ascend the throne of the son of Babek; and a fatal fascination was exercised on the grandees of the kingdom by the examples of Bahram-Chobin and Shahr-Barz.

Pretenders sprang up in all quarters, generally asserting some connection, nearer or more remote, with the royal house, but relying on the arms of their partisans, and still more on the weakness of the government. It is uncertain whether Purandocht died a natural death; her sister, Azermidocht, who reigned soon after her, was certainly murdered. The crown passed rapidly from one noble to another, and in the course of the four or five years which immediately succeeded the death of Chosroes II. it was worn by nine or ten different persons. Of these the greater number reigned but a few days or a few months; no actions are ascribed to them; and it seems unnecessary to weary the reader with their obscure names, or with the still more obscure question concerning the order of their succession. It may be suspected that, in some

cases two or more were contemporary, exercising royal functions in different portions of the empire at the same time. Of none does the history or the fate possess any interest; and the modern historical student may well be content with the general knowledge that for four years and a half after the death of Chosroes II. the government was in the highest degree unsettled; anarchy everywhere prevailed; the distracted kingdom was torn in pieces by the struggles of pretenders; and "every province, and almost each city of Persia, was the scene of independence, of discord, and of bloodshed."

At length, in June, A.D. 632, an end was put to the internal commotions by the election of a young prince, believed to be of the true blood of Sassan, in whose rule the whole nation acquiesced without much difficulty. Yezdigerd (or Isdigerd) the Third was the son of Shahriar and the grandson of Chosroes II. He had been early banished from the Court, and had been brought up in obscurity, his royal birth being perhaps concealed, since if known it might have caused his destruction. The place of his residence was Istakr, the ancient capital of Persia, but at this time a city of no great importance. Here he had lived unnoticed to the age of fifteen, when his royal rank having somehow been discovered, and no other scion of the stock of Chosroes being known to exist, he was drawn forth from his retirement and invested with the sovereignty.

But the appointment of a sovereign in whose rule all could acquiesce came too late. While Rome and Persia, engaged in deadly struggle, had no thought for anything but how most to injure each other, a power began to grow up in an adjacent country, which had for long ages been despised and thought incapable of doing any harm to its neighbors. Mohammed, half impostor, half enthusiast, enunciated a doctrine, and by degrees worked out a religion, which proved capable of uniting in one the scattered tribes of the Arabian desert, while at the same time it inspired them with a confidence, a contempt for death, and a fanatic valor, that rendered them irresistible by the surrounding nations. Mohammed's career as prophet began while Heraclius and Chosroes II. were flying at each other's throats; by the year of the death of Chosroes (A.D. 628) he had acquired a strength greater than that of any other Arab chief; two years later he challenged Rome to the combat by sending a hostile expedition into Syria; and before his death (A.D. 632) he was able to take the field at the head of 30,000 men. During the time of internal trouble in Persia he procured the submission of the Persian governor of the Yemen; as well as that of Al Mondar, or Alamundarus, King of Bahrein, on the west coast of the Persian Gulf. Isdigerd, upon his accession, found himself menaced by a power which had already stretched out one arm towards the lower Euphrates, while with the other it was seeking to grasp Syria and Palestine. The danger was imminent; the means of meeting it insufficient, for Persia was exhausted by foreign war and internal contention; the monarch himself was but ill able to cope with the Arab chiefs, being youthful and inexperienced; we shall find, however, that he made a strenuous resistance. Though continually defeated, he prolonged the fight for nearly a score of years, and only succumbed finally when, to the hostility of open foes, was added the treachery of pretended friends and allies.

26. Death of Mohammed; Collapse of Mohammedanism

The power which Mohammed had so rapidly built up fell to pieces at his decease. Isdigerd can scarcely have been well settled upon this throne when the welcome tidings must have reached him that the Prophet was dead, that the Arabs generally were in revolt, that Al Mondar had renounced Islamism and resumed a position of independence. For the time Mohammedanism was struck down. It remained to be seen whether the movement had derived its strength solely from the genius of the Prophet, or whether minds of inferior calibre would suffice to renew and

sustain the impulse which had proceeded from him, and which under him had proved of such wonderful force and efficacy.

The companions of Mohammed lost no time in appointing his successor. Their choice fell upon Abu-bekr, his friend and father-in-law, who was a person of an energetic character, brave, chaste, and temperate. Abu-bekr proved himself quite equal to the difficulties of the situation. Being unfit for war himself, as he was above sixty years of age, he employed able generals, and within a few months of his accession struck such a series of blows that rebellion collapsed everywhere, and in a short time the whole Arab nation, except the tribe of Gassan, acknowledged themselves his subjects. Among the rivals against whom he measured himself, the most important was Moseilama. Moseilama, who affected the prophetic character, had a numerous following, and was able to fight a pitched battle with the forces of Abu-bekr, which numbered 40,000 men. At the first encounter he even succeeded in repulsing this considerable army, which lost 1200 warriors; but in a second engagement the Mohammedans were victorious--Moseilama was slain--and Kaled, "the Sword of God," carried back to Medina the news of his own triumph, and the spoils of the defeated enemy. Soon after the fall of Moseilama, the tribes still in rebellion submitted themselves, and the first of the Caliphs found himself at liberty to enter upon schemes of foreign conquest.

Distracted between the temptations offered to his arms by the East and by the West, Abu-bekr in his first year (A.D. 633) sent expeditions in both directions, against Syria, and against Hira, where Iyas, the Persian feudatory, who had succeeded Noman, son of Al Mondar, held his court, on the western branch of the Euphrates. For this latter expedition the commander selected was the irresistible Kaled, who marched a body of 2000 men across the desert to the branch stream,s which he reached in about latitude 30 deg.. Assisted by Al Mothanna, chief of the Beni Sheiban, who had been a subject of Iyas, but had revolted and placed himself under the protection of Abu-bekr, Kaled rapidly reduced the kingdom of Hira, took successively Banikiya, Barasuilia, and El Lis, descended the river to the capital, and there fought an important battle with the combined Persian and Arab forces, the first trial of arms between the followers of Mohammed and those of Zoroaster. The Persian force consisted entirely of horse, and was commanded by a general whom the Arab writers call Asadsubeh. Their number is not mentioned, but was probably small. Charged furiously by Al Mothanna, they immediately broke and fled; Hira was left with no other protection than its walls; and Iyas, yielding to necessity, made his submission to the conqueror, and consented to pay a tribute of 290,000 dirhems.

The splendid success of his pioneer induced Abu-bekr to support the war in this quarter with vigor. Reinforcements joined Kaled from every side, and in a short time he found himself at the head of an army of 18,000 men. With this force he proceeded southwards bent on reducing the entire tract between the desert and the Eastern or real Euphrates. The most important city of the southern region was at the time Obolla which was situated on a canal or backwater derived from the Euphrates, not far from the modern Busrah. It was the great emporium for the Indian trade, and was known as the _limes Indorum_ or "frontier city towards India." The Persian governor was a certain Hormuz or Hormisdas who held the post with 20,000 men. Kaled fought his second great battle with this antagonist, and was once more completely victorious, killing Hormuz, according to the Arabian accounts, with his own hands. Obolla surrendered; a vast booty was taken; and, after liberally rewarding his soldiers Kaled sent the fifth part of the spoils, together with a captured elephant, to Abu-bekr at Medina. The strange animal astonished the simple natives, who asked one another wonderingly

"Is this indeed one of God's works, or did human art make it."

The victories of Kaled Over Asadsubeh and Hormuz were followed by a number of other successes, the entire result being that the whole of the fertile region on the right bank of the Euphrates from Hit to the Persian Gulf, was for the time reduced, made a portion of Ahu-bekr's dominions, and parcelled out among Mohammedan governors. Persia was deprived of the protection which a dependent Arab kingdom to the west of the river had hitherto afforded her, and was brought into direct contact with the great Mohammedan monarchy along almost the whole of her western frontier. Henceforth she was open to attack on this side for a distance of above four hundred miles, with no better barrier than a couple of rivers interposed between her enemy and her capital.

Soon after his conquest of the kingdom of Hira, Kaled was recalled from the Euphrates to the Syrian war, and was employed in the siege of Damascus, while Persia enjoyed a breathing-space. Advantage was taken of this interval to stir up disaffection in the newly-conquered province. Rustam appointed to the command against the Arabs by Isdigerd sent emissaries to the various towns of the Sawad, urging them to rise in revolt and promising to support such a movement with a Persian army. The situation was critical; and if the Mohammedans had been less tenacious, or the Persians more skilfully handled, the whole of the Sawad might have been recovered. But Rustam allowed his troops to be defeated in detail. Al Mothanna and Abu Obediah, in three separate engagements, at Namarik, Sakatiya, and Barusma, overcame the Persian leaders, Jaban, Narses, and Jalenus, and drove their shattered armies back on the Tigris. The Mohammedan authority was completely re-established in the tract between the desert and the Euphrates; it was even extended across the Euphrates into the tract watered by the Shat-el-Hie; and it soon became a question whether Persia would be able to hold the Mesopotamian region, or whether the irrepressible Arabs would not very shortly wrest it from her grasp. But at this point in the history the Arabs experienced a severe reverse. On learning the defeat of his lieutenants, Rustam sent an army to watch the enemy, under the command of Bahman-Dsul-hadjib, or "Bahman the beetle-browed," which encamped upon the Western Euphrates at Kossen-natek, not far from the site of Kufa. At the same time, to raise the courage of the soldiers, he entrusted to this leader the sacred standard of Persia, the famous _durufsh-kawani_, or leathern apron of the blacksmith Kawah, which was richly adorned with silk and gems, and is said to have measured, eighteen feet long by twelve feet broad. Bahman had with him, according to the Persian tradition, 30,000 men and thirty elephants; the Arabs under Abu Obediah numbered no more than 9000, or at the most 10,000. Bahman is reported to have given his adversary the alternative of passing the Euphrates or allowing the Persians to cross it. Abu Obediah preferred the bolder course, and, in spite of the dissuasions of his chief officers, threw a bridge of boats across the stream, and so conveyed his troops to the left bank. Here he found the Persian horse-archers covered with their scale armor, and drawn up in a solid line behind their elephants. Galled severely by the successive flights of arrows, the Arab cavalry sought to come to close quarters; but their horses, terrified by the unwonted sight of the huge animals, and further alarmed by the tinkling of the bells hung round their necks, refused to advance. It was found necessary to dismount, and assail the Persian line on foot. A considerable impression had been made, and it was thought that the Persians would take to flight, when Abu Obediah, in attacking the most conspicuous of the elephants, was seized by the infuriated animal and trampled under his feet. Inspirited by this success, the Persians rushed upon their enemies, who, disheartened by the loss of their commander,

began a retrograde movement, falling back upon their newly-made bridge. This, however, was found to have been broken, either by the enemy, or by a rash Arab who thought, by making retreat impossible, to give his own side the courage of despair. Before the damage done could be repaired, the retreating host suffered severely. The Persians pressed closely upon them, slew many, and drove others into the stream, where they were drowned. Out of the 9000 or 10,000 who originally passed the river, only 5000 returned, and of these 2000 at once dispersed to their homes. Besides Abu Obediah, the veteran Salit was slain; and Al Mothanna, who succeeded to the command on Abu Obediah's death, was severely wounded. The last remnant of the defeated army might easily have been destroyed, had not a dissension arisen among the Persians, which induced Bahman to return to Otesiphon.

The Arabs, upon this repulse, retired to El Lis; and Al Mothanna sent to Omar for reinforcements, which speedily arrived under the command of Jarir, son of Abdallah. Al Mothanna was preparing to resume the offensive when the Persians anticipated him. A body of picked troops, led by Mihran a general of reputation, crossed the Euphrates, and made a dash at Hira. Hastily collecting his men, who were widely dispersed, Al Mothanna gave the assailants battle on the canal El Boweib, in the near vicinity of the threatened town, and though the Persians fought with desperation from noon to sunset, succeeded in defeating them and in killing their commander. The beaten army recrossed the Euphrates, and returned to Otesiphon without suffering further losses, since the Arabs were content to have baffled their attack, and did not pursue them many miles from the field of battle. All Mesopotamia, however, was by this defeat laid open to the invaders, whose ravages soon extended to the Tigris and the near vicinity of the capital.

The year A.D. 636 now arrived, and the Persians resolved upon an extraordinary effort. An army of 120,000 men was enrolled, and Rustam, reckoned the best general of the day, was placed at its head. The Euphrates was once more crossed, the Sawad entered, its inhabitants invited to revolt, and the Arab force, which had been concentrated at Cadesia (Kadisiyeh), where it rested upon a fortified town, was sought out and challenged to the combat. The Caliph Omar had by great efforts contrived to raise his troops in the Sawad to the number of 30,000, and had entrusted the command of them to Sa'ad, the son of Wakas, since Al Mothanna had died of his wound. Sa'ad stood wholly on the defensive. His camp was pitched outside the walls of Cadesia, in a position protected on either side by a canal, or branch stream, derived from the Euphrates, and flowing to the south-east out of the Sea of Nedjef. He himself, prevented by boils from sitting on his horse, looked down on his troops, and sent them directions from the Oadesian citadel. Rustam, in order to come to blows, was obliged to fill up the more eastern of the branch streams (El Atik), with reeds and earth, and in this way to cross the channel. The Arabs made no attempt to hinder the operation; and the Persian general, having brought his vast army directly opposite to the enemy, proceeded to array his troops as he thought most expedient. Dividing his army into a centre and two wings, he took himself the position of honor in, the mid-line with nineteen elephants and three fifths of his forces, while he gave the command of the right wing to Jalenus, and of the left to Bendsuwan; each of whom we may suppose to have had 24,000 troops and seven elephants. The Arabs, on their side, made no such division. Kaled, son of Orfuta, was the sole leader in the fight, though Sa'ad from his watch-tower observed the battle and gave his orders. The engagement began at mid-day and continued till sunset. At the signal of _Allah akbar_, "God is great," shouted by Sa'ad from his tower, the Arabs rushed to the

attack. Their cavalry charged; but the Persians advanced against them their line of elephants, repeating with excellent effect the tactics of the famous "Battle of the Bridge." The Arab horse fled; the foot alone remained firm; victory seemed inclining to the Persians, who were especially successful on either wing; Toleicha, with his "lions" failed to re-establish the balance; and all would have been lost, had not Assem, at the command of Sa'ad, sent a body of archers and other footmen to close with the elephants, gall them with missiles, cut their girths, and so precipitate their riders to the ground. Relieved from this danger, the Arab horse succeeded in repulsing the Persians, who as evening approached retired in good order to their camp. The chief loss on this, the "day of concussion," was suffered by the Arabs, who admit that they had 500 killed, and must have had a proportional number of wounded.

On the morning of the second day the site of the battle was somewhat changed, the Persians having retired a little during the night. Reinforcements from Syria kept reaching the Arab camp through most of the day; and hence it is known to the Arab writers as the "day of succors." The engagement seems for some time not to have been general, the Arabs waiting for more troops to reach them, while the Persians abstained because they had not yet repaired the furniture of their elephants. Thus the morning passed in light skirmishes and single combats between the champions of either host, who went out singly before the lines and challenged each other to the encounter. The result of the duels was adverse to the Persians, who lost in the course of them two of their best generals, Bendsuwan and Bahman-Dsulhadjib. After a time the Arabs, regarding themselves as sufficiently reinforced, attacked the Persians along their whole line, partly with horse, and partly with camels, dressed up to resemble elephants. The effect on the Persian cavalry was the same as had on the preceding day been produced by the real elephants on the horse of the Arabs; it was driven off the field and dispersed, suffering considerable losses. But the infantry stood firm, and after a while the cavalry rallied; Rustam, who had been in danger of suffering capture, was saved; and night closing in, defeat was avoided, though the advantage of the day rested clearly with the Arabs. The Persians had lost 10,000 in killed and wounded, the Arabs no more than 2000.

In the night which followed "the day of succors" great efforts were made by the Persians to re-equip their elephants, and when morning dawned they were enabled once more to bring the unwieldy beasts into line. But the Arabs and their horses had now grown more familiar with the strange animals; they no longer shrank from meeting them; and some Persian deserters gave the useful information that, in order to disable the brutes it was only necessary to wound them on the proboscis or in the eye. Thus instructed, the Arabs made the elephants the main object of their attack, and, having wounded the two which were accustomed to lead the rest, caused the whole body on a sudden to take to flight, cross the canal El Atik, and proceed at full speed to Ctesiphon. The armies then came to close quarters; and the foot and horse contended through the day with swords and spears, neither side being able to make any serious impression upon the other. As night closed in, however, the Persians once more fell back, crossing the canal El Atik, and so placing that barrier between themselves and their adversaries.

Their object in this manoeuvre was probably to obtain the rest which they must have greatly needed. The Persians were altogether of a frame less robust, and of a constitution less hardy, than the Arabs. Their army at Kadisiyeh was, moreover, composed to a large extent of raw recruits; and three consecutive days of severe fighting must have sorely tried its endurance. The Persian generals hoped, it would seem, by crossing the Atik to refresh their troops with a quiet

night before renewing the combat on the morrow. But the indefatigable Arabs, perhaps guessing their intention, determined to frustrate it, and prevented the tired host from enjoying a moment's respite. The "day of embittered war," as it was called, was followed by the "night of snarling"--a time of horrid noise and tumult, during which the discordant cries of the troops on either side were thought to resemble the yells and barks of dogs and jackals. Two of the bravest of the Arabs, Toleicha and Amr, crossed the Atik with small bodies of troops, and under cover of the darkness entered the Persian camp, slew numbers, and caused the greatest confusion. By degrees a general engagement was brought on, which continued into the succeeding day, so that the "night of snarling" can scarcely be separated from the "day of cormorants"--the last of the four days' Kadisiyeh fight.

It would seem that the Persians must on the fourth day have had for a time the advantage, since we find them once more fighting upon the old ground, in the tract between the two canals, with the Atik in their rear. About noon, however, a wind arose from the west, bringing with it clouds of sand, which were blown into the faces and eyes of the Persians, while the Arabs, having their backs to the storm, suffered but little from its fury. Under these circumstances the Moslems made fresh efforts, and after a while a part of the Persian army was forced to give ground. Hormuzan, satrap of Susiana, and Firuzan, the general who afterwards commanded at Nehavend, fell back. The line of battle was dislocated; the person of the commander became exposed to danger; and about the same time a sudden violent gust tore away the awning that shaded his seat, and blew it into the Atik, which was not far off. Rustam sought a refuge from the violence of the storm among his baggage mules, and was probably meditating flight, when the Arabs were upon him. Hillal, son of Alkama, intent upon plunder, began to cut the cords of the baggage and strew it upon the ground. A bag falling severely injured Rustam, who threw himself into the Atik and attempted to swim across. Hillal, however, rushed after him, drew him to shore, and slew him; after which he mounted the vacant throne, and shouted as loudly as he could, "By the lord of the Kaaba, I have killed Rustam." The words created a general panic. Everywhere the Persian courage fell; the most part despaired wholly, and at once took to flight; a few cohorts alone stood firm and were cut to pieces; the greater number of the men rushed hastily to the Atik; some swam the stream others crossed where it had been filled up; but as many as 30,000 perished in the waves. Ten thousand had fallen on the field of battle in the course of the preceding night and day, while of the Mohammedans as many as 6000 had been slain. Thus the last day of the Kadisiyeh fight was stoutly contested; and the Persian defeat was occasioned by no deficiency of courage, but by the occurrence of a sand-storm and by the almost accidental death of the commander. Among the Persian losses in the battle that of the national standard, the _durufsh-kawani_ was reckoned the most serious.

The retreat of the defeated army was conducted by Jalenus. Sa'ad, anxious to complete his victory, sent three bodies of troops across the Atik, to press upon the flying foe. One of these, commanded by Sohra, came up with the Persian rear-guard under Jalenus at Harrar, and slaughtered it, together with its leader. The other two seem to have returned without effecting much. The bulk of the fugitives traversed Mesopotamia in safety, and found a shelter behind the walls of Ctesiphon.

By the defeat of Kadisiyeh all hope of recovering the territory on the right bank of the Euphrates was lost; but Persia did not as yet despair of maintaining her independence. It was evident, indeed, that the permanent maintenance of the capital was henceforth precarious; and a wise forethought would have suggested the removal of the Court from so exposed a situation and its transference to

some other position, either to Istakr, the ancient metropolis of Persia Proper, or to Hamadan, the capital city of Media. But probably it was considered that to retire voluntarily from the Tigris would be a confession of weakness, as fatal to the stability of the empire as to be driven back by the Arabs; and perhaps it may have been hoped that the restless nomads would be content with their existing conquests, or that they might receive a check at the hands of Rome which would put a stop to their aggressions elsewhere. It is remarkable that, during the pause of a year and a half which intervened between the battle of Kadisiyeh and the resumption of hostilities by the Arabs, nothing seems to have been done by Persia in the way of preparation against her terrible assailants.

In the year A.D. 637 the Arabs again took the offensive. They had employed the intervening year and a half in the foundation of Busrah and Kufam and in the general consolidation of their sway on the right bank of the Euphrates. They were now prepared for a further movement. The conduct of the war was once more entrusted to Sa'ad. Having collected an army of 20,000 men, this general proceeded from Kufa to Anbar (or Perisabor), where he crossed the Euphrates, and entered on the Mesopotamian region. Isdigerd. learning that he had put his forces in motion, and was bent upon attacking Ctesiphon, called a council of war, and asked its advice as to the best course to be pursued under the circumstances. It was generally agreed that the capital must be evacuated, and a stronger situation in the more mountainous part of the country occupied; but Isdigerd was so unwilling to remove that he waited till the Arabian general, with a force now raised to 60,000, had reached Sabat, which was only a day's march from the capital, before he could be induced to commence his retreat. He then abandoned the town hastily, without carrying off more than a small portion of the treasures which his ancestors had during four centuries accumulated at the main seat of their power, and retired to Holwan, a strong place in the Zagros mountain-range. Sa'ad, on learning his movement, sent a body of troops in pursuit, which came up with the rear-guard of the Persians, and cut it in pieces, but effected nothing really important. Isdigerd made good his retreat, and in a short time concentrated at Holwan an army of above 100,000 men. Sa'ad, instead of pushing forward and engaging this force, was irresistibly attracted by the reputed wealth of the Great Ctesiphon, and, marching thither, entered the unresisting city, with his troops, in the sixteenth year of the Hegira, the four hundred and eleventh from the foundation of the Sassanian kingdom by Artaxerxes, son of Babek.

Ctesiphon was, undoubtedly, a rich prize. Its palaces and its gardens, its opulent houses and its pleasant fields, its fountains and its flowers, are celebrated by the Arabian writers, who are never weary of rehearsing the beauty of its site, the elegance of the buildings, the magnificence and luxury of their furniture, or the amount of the treasures which were contained in them. The royal palace, now known as the Takht-i-Khosru, especially provoked their admiration. It was built of polished stone, and had in front of it a portico of twelve marble pillars, each 150 feet high. The length of the edifice was 450 feet, its breadth 180, its height 150. In the centre was the hall of audience, a noble apartment, 115 feet long and 85 high, with a magnificent vaulted roof, bedecked with golden stars, so arranged as to represent the motions of the planets among the twelve signs of the Zodiac, where the monarch was accustomed to sit on a golden throne, hearing causes and dispensing justice to his subjects. The treasury and the various apartments were full of gold and silver, of costly robes and precious stones, of jewelled arms and dainty carpets. The glass vases of the spice magazine contained an abundance of musk, camphor, amber, gums, drugs, and delicious perfumes. In one apartment was found a carpet of white brocade, 450 feet long and 90 broad, with a

border worked in precious stones of various hues, to represent a garden of all kinds of beautiful flowers. The leaves were formed of emeralds, the blossoms and buds of pearls, rubies, sapphires, and other gems of immense value. Among the objects found in the treasury were a horse made entirely of gold, bearing a silver saddle set with a countless multitude of jewels, and a camel made of silver, accompanied by a foal of which the material was gold. A coffer belonging to Isdigerd was captured at the bridge over the Nahrwan canal as its guardians were endeavoring to carry it off. Among its contents were a robe of state embroidered with rubies and pearls, several garments made of tissue of gold, the crown and seal of Chosroes (Anushirwan?), and ten pieces of silk brocade. The armory of Chosroes also fell into the conqueror's hands. It contained his helmet, breastplate, greaves, and arm-pieces, all of solid gold adorned with pearls, six "cuirasses of Solomon," and ten costly scimitars. The works of art, and a fifth part of the entire booty, were set apart for the Caliph Omar, and sent by trusty messengers to Medina; the value of the remainder was so enormous that when Sa'ad divided it among his 60,000 soldiers the share of each amounted to 12,000 dirhems (L312.).

It is said that Sa'ad, after capturing Ctesiphon, was anxious to set out in pursuit of Isdigerd, but was restrained by dispatches received from Omar, which commanded him to remain at the Persian capital, and to employ his brother Hashem, and the experienced general, El Kakaa, in the further prosecution of the war. Hashem was, therefore, sent with 12,000 men, against the fugitive monarch, whose forces, said to have exceeded 100,000 men, and commanded by a Mihran, were drawn up at Jalula, not far from Holwan. The disparity of numbers forced Hashem to condescend to maneuvering; and it was six months before he ventured on a general engagement with his antagonist. Again the Mohammedans proved victorious; and this time the carnage was excessive; 100,000 Persians are said to have lain dead on the battle-field; the commander was himself among the slain. Jalula at once surrendered; and fresh treasures were obtained. Among other precious articles, a figure of a camel, with its rider, in solid gold, was found in one of the tents. Altogether the booty is reckoned at about four millions of our money--the share of each soldier engaged being 10,000 dirhems, or about L260. sterling.

Isdigerd, on learning the result of the battle of Jalula, quitted Holwan, and retired to Rei, a large town near the Caspian sea, at a short distance from the modern Teheran, thus placing the entire Zagros range between himself and his irresistible foes. A general named Khosru-sum was left behind with a large body of troops, and was bidden to defend Holwan to the last extremity. Instead of remaining, however, within the walls of the stronghold, Khosru-sum rashly led his force to meet that of El Kakaa, who defeated him at Kasr-i-Shirin and entirely dispersed his army. Holwan, being left without protection, surrendered; the conquest of Shirwan, Mahsabadan, and Tekrit followed; and by the close of the year A.D. 637 the banner of the Prophet waved over the whole tract west of Zagros, from Nineveh almost to Susa, or from the Kurnib to the Kuran river.

Another short pause in the Arabian aggressions upon Persia now occurred; but in the year A.D. 639 their attacks were resumed, and the Persians had to submit to further losses. Otba, governor of Busrah, sent an expedition across the Shat-el-Arab into. Susiana, and, supported by the Arab population of the province, which deserted the Persian side, engaged Horrmuzan, the satrap, in two battles, defeated him, and forced him to cede a portion of his territory, including the important city of Ahwaz. Soon afterwards, Ala, governor of Bahrein, conducted in person an expedition into Persia Proper, crossing the Gulf in the rude vessels of the time, and attacking Shehrek, the Persian satrap, who acknowledged the

authority of Isdigerd. Here, the Arabs were for once unsuccessful. Shehrek collected a force which Ala was afraid to encounter; the Arab chief retreated to the coast, but found his fleet engulfed by the waves; and it was only with great difficulty that he made his escape by land from the country which he had ventured to invade. He owed his escape to Otba, who sent troops from Busrah to his aid, defeated Shehrek, and rescued his fellow governor from the peril which threatened, him.

In the next year (A.D. 640) Hormuzan, incited by Isdigerd, made a desperate attempt to recover the territory which he had been compelled to cede. Assisted by Shehrek, governor of Persia Proper, he attacked the Arabs unawares, but was speedily met, driven from Ram-Hormuz to Shuster, and there besieged for the space of six months. As many as eighty engagements are said to have taken place before the walls, with no decided advantage to either side. At length Al-Bera, son of Malik, one of the companions of the Prophet, and believed by many to possess the prophetic spirit, announced that victory was about to incline to the Moslems, but that he himself would be slain. A chance arrow having fulfilled one-half of the prediction, the Arabs felt an assurance that the other half would follow, and fought with such fanatic ardor that their expectations were soon fulfilled. The town was won; but Hormuzan retired into the citadel, and there successfully maintained himself, till Abu-Sabra, the Mohammedan general, consented to spare his life, and send him to Medina, where his fate should be determined by the Caliph. Hormuzan, on obtaining an audience, pretended thirst and asked for a cup of water, which was given him: he then looked suspiciously around, as if he expected to be stabbed while drinking. "Fear nothing," said Omar; "your life is safe till you have drunk the water." The crafty Persian flung the cup to the ground, and Omar felt that he had been outwitted, but that he must keep his word. Hormuzan became an Arab pensionary, and shortly afterwards embraced Islamism. His territories were occupied by the Moslems, whose dominions were thereby extended from the Kuran to the Tab river.

The Arab conquests on the side of Persia had hitherto been effected and maintained by the presiding genius of one of the ablest of the Mohammedan commanders, the victor of Kadi-siyeh, Sa'ad Ibn Abi Wakas. From Kufa, where he built himself a magnificent palace, which Omar however caused to be destroyed, this great general and skilful administrator directed the movements of armies, arranged the divisions of provinces, apportioned the sums to be paid to the revenue, dealt out justice, and generally superintended affairs throughout the entire region conquered by the Arabs to the east of the desert. A man in such a position necessarily made himself enemies; and complaints were frequently carried to Omar of his lieutenant's pride, luxury, and injustice. What foundation there may have been for these charges is uncertain; but it seems that Omar was persuaded, towards the close of A.D. 640, or very early in A.D. 641, that they were of sufficient weight to make it necessary that they should be investigated. He accordingly recalled Sa'ad from his government to Medina, and replaced him at Kufa by Ammar Ibn Yaser.

The news of this change was carried to Isdigerd at Rei, and caused him to conceive hopes of recovering his lost territory. The event shows that he attributed too much to the personal ability of his great antagonist; but the mistake was not unnatural; and it was a noble impulse which led him to seize the first promising occasion, in order to renew the struggle and make a last desperate effort to save his empire and repulse the barbarous nomads. The facts are not as the Arabian historians represent them. There was no intention on the part of the Mohammedans to be content with the conquests which they made, or to remain within the boundary line of the mountains that separate the Mesopotaraian region from the high plateau

of Iran. Mohammedanism had an insatiable ambition, and was certain to spread itself in all directions until its forces were expended, or a bound was set to it by resistance which it could not overcome. Isdigerd, by remaining quiet, might perhaps have prolonged the precarious existence of Persia for half a dozen years, though even this is uncertain, and it is perhaps as probable that the tide of conquest would have flowed eastward in A.D. 641 or 642, even had he attempted nothing. What alone we can be sure of his, that no acquiescence on his part, no abstention from warlike enterprise, no submission short of the acceptance of Islamism, would have availed to save his country for more than a very brief space from the tramp of the hordes that were bent on enriching themselves with the plunder of the whole civilized world, and imposing on all the nations of the earth their dominion and their religion.

From the citadel of Rei, Isdigerd, in A.D. 641, sounded the call to battle with no uncertain note. His envoys spread themselves through Media, Azerbijan, Khorassan, Gurgan, Tabaristan, Merv, Bactria, Seistan, Kerman, and Farsistan (or Persia Proper), demanding contingents of troops, and appointing, as the place of rendezvous, the small town of Nehavend, which is in the mountain region, about fifty miles south of Hamadan. The call was responded to with zeal; and in a short time there was gathered together at the place named an army of 150,000 men. Firuzan, one of the nobles who had commanded at Kadisiyeh, was made general-in-chief. The design was entertained of descending on Holwan, and thence upon the lowland region, of re-taking Ctesiphon, crossing the great rivers, and destroying the rising cities of Kufa and Busrah. But the Arabs were upon the alert, and anticipated the intended invasion. Noman, son of Mokarrin, who commanded at Ahwaz, was hastily commissioned by Omar to collect the Arab troops stationed in Irak, Khuzistan, and the Sawad, to put himself at their head, and to prevent the outbreak by marching at once on Nehavend. He succeeded in uniting under his standard about 30,000 soldiers, and with this moderate force entered the mountain tract, passed Holwan and Merj, and encamped at Tur, where he expected the attack of the enemy. But Firuzan had now resolved to maintain the defensive. He had entrenched himself strongly in front of Nehavend and was bent on wearing out the patience of the Arabs by a prolonged resistance. Noman, finding himself unmolested, advanced from Tur to the immediate neighborhood of Nehavend, and endeavored to provoke his adversary to give battle, but without effect. For two months the two hosts faced each other without fighting. At last, the stores of the Arabs, as well as their patience, began to fail; and it was necessary to employ some device, or to give up the war altogether. Hereupon, Noman, by the advice of two of his captains, had recourse to a stratagem. He spread a report that Omar was dead, and breaking up from from his camp began a hasty retreat. The plan succeeded. Firuzan quitted his entrenchments, and led his army on the traces of the flying foe. It was two days before he reached them, and on the third day the battle began. Noman, having addressed his soldiers and made arrangements concerning the command in case of his own death, mounted a milk-white steed, and gave the signal for the fight by thrice shouting the famous tehbir, or battle-cry, "_Allah akbar_." The Arabs charged with fury, and for a while, amid the clouds of dust which rose beneath their feet, nothing was heard but the clash of steel. At length the Persians gave way; but, as Noman advanced his standard and led the pursuit, a volley of arrows from the flying foe checked his movement, and at the same time terminated his career. A shaft had struck him in a vital part, and he fell at the moment of victory. For his men, maddened by the loss of their commander, pressed on more furiously than before; the Persians were unable to rally; and a promiscuous flight began. Then followed a dreadful slaughter. The numbers of the Persians must have impeded their retreat;

and in the defiles of the mountains a rapid flight was impossible. Firuzan himself, who, instead of falling back on Nehavend, took the road leading north to Hamadan, was overtaken by El Kakaa in a narrow pass, and put to the sword. More than 100,000 Persians are said to have perished.128 The victors, pressing onwards, easily took Nehavend. Hamadan surrendered to them shortly afterwards.120

The defeat of Nehavend terminated the Sassanian power. Isdigerd indeed, escaping from Rei, and flying continually from place to place, prolonged an inglorious existence for the space of ten more years--from A.D. 641 to A.D. 651; but he had no longer a kingdom. Persia fell to pieces on the occasion of "the victory of victories," and made no other united effort against the Arabs. Province after province was occupied by the fierce invaders; and, at length, in A.D. 651, their arms penetrated to Merv, where the last scion of the house of Babek had for some years found a refuge. It is said that during this interval he had made efforts to engage the Khan of the Turks and the Emperor of the Chinese to embrace his cause; but, if this were so, it was without success. Though they may have lent him some encouragement, no real effort was made by either potentate on his behalf. Isdigerd, at Merv, during his later years, experienced the usual fate of sovereigns who have lost their kingdoms. He was alternately flattered and coerced by pretended friends among his own people--induced to cherish vain hopes, and driven to despair, by the fluctuating counsels of the monarchs of neighboring nations. At last he was murdered by a subject for the sake of his clothes, when he was flying from a combined attack of treacherous subjects and offended foreigners.

It is difficult to form a decided opinion as to the character of Isdigerd III. He was but fifteen years of age at his accession, twenty-four at the time of the battle of Nehavend, and thirty-four at his decease, A.D. 651. It is in his favor that "history lays no crimes to his charge;" for this can be said of very few Sassanian sovereigns. It is also to his credit that he persevered so long in struggling against his fate, and in endeavoring to maintain, or restore, the independence of his nation. But, on the other hand, it must be confessed that there is little to be admired in the measures which he took to meet the perils of the time, and that personally he appears to have been weak and of luxurious habits. During the whole of his long struggle with the Arabs he seems never once to have placed himself at the head of his troops, much less to have crossed swords with the enemy. He intrusted the defence of Persia to generals, and did not even seek to inspire his soldiers with enthusiasm by his own presence in their camp. Always occupying some secure fortress far in the rear of his army, he fled from each as the enemy made a step in advance, quitting Ctesiphon for Holwan, Holwan for Rei, and Rei for Merv, never venturing upon a stand, never making an appeal to the loyalty which was amongst the best qualities of the Persians, and which would have caused them to fight with desperation in defence of a present king. Carrying with him in all his wanderings the miserable pageant of an Oriental court, he suffered his movements to be hampered and his resources crippled by a throng of 4000 useless retainers, whom he could not bring himself to dismiss. Instead of donning the armor which befitted one who was struggling for his crown, he wore to the last the silken robes, the jewelled belt, the rings and bracelets that were only suited for the quiet inmate of a palace, and by this incongruous and misplaced splendor he provoked, and, perhaps we may say, deserved his fate. A monarch who loses his crown for the most part awakens interest and sympathy; but no historian has a word of commiseration for the last of the Sassanidae, who is reproached with feebleness, cowardice, and effeminacy. It must certainly be allowed that he was no hero; but considering his extreme youth when his perils began, the efforts which he made to

meet them, and the impossibility of an effective resistance in the effete and exhausted condition of the Persian nation, history is scarcely justified in passing upon the unfortunate prince a severe judgment.

The coins assigned to Isdigerd III. are neither numerous nor very remarkable. The head is in general very similar to that of Artaxerxes III. The pearl bordering around it is single, and in the margin are the usual stars and crescents of the later Sassanian kings. The margin, however, shows also in some instances a peculiar device behind the crown, and also a legend, which has been read, but very doubtfully, as "Ormazd." The king's name is given as Iskart or Iskarti. Among the regnal years marked on the reverse have been found the numbers "nineteen" and "twenty." Among the mint-marks are Azer-bijan, Abiverd, and Merv.