

—resourceful, resolute, and daring if need be, but pliant, cautious, and crafty when circumstances demanded—far from scrupulous, moreover, as to the means to be employed in the attainment of his high ambition—he could, without presumption, aspire to all. He possessed to an unequalled degree, energy, and the power of an unswerving pursuit of a fixed idea: the goal once marked, his will became alert, inflexible, and directed to that single object. He made but a humble start in life. When he had completed his studies, he was driven to support himself by opening an office hard by the palace gateway, where he put into writing the requests of those who desired to make petition to the Khalif. Later on he obtained a subordinate post in the tribunal of Cordova, but he was unable to find his way into the good graces of his chief, the Kady. The holder of that office was then the very Ibn as-Sâlim whom Mohammed esteemed so highly—not, indeed, without reason, for he was a learned and upright man, and one of the best Kadies that Cordova had ever had: ¹ he was, however, of a cold and matter-of-fact temperament, and had an innate antipathy to persons of a character unlike his own. His young subordinate's unconventional ideas, and habitual absent-mindedness, displeased the Kady greatly; he wished for nothing better than to be quit of him, and by a singular chance it was the magistrate's aversion which procured for Mohammed that which he longed for most—a place at Court. The Kady complained of his assistant to the Vizier Mus-hafy, and asked him to procure for the young man some other employment. Mus-hafy replied that he would bear the matter in mind, and not long afterwards, when Hakam II was casting about for a steward competent to manage the property of his eldest son 'Abd-er-Rahmân, then five years old, Mohammed ibn Abî 'Âmir was recommended for the post by the Vizier. The appointment to the stewardship did not, however, rest solely with the Khalif; it rested, indeed, mainly with his favourite Sultana, Aurora,² a Basque by birth, who had an immense influence over her lord. Several candidates were presented to her, among them Ibn Abî 'Âmir, who charmed her by his distinguished appearance and polished courtesy. He was preferred to his rivals, and on Saturday, February 23, 967, he was appointed steward of 'Abd-er-Rahmân's property,

¹ He was appointed Kady of Cordova in Dec. 966, in succession to Mundhir ibn-Sa'îd Bollufi, decd. (*Al-hushanî*, p. 352).

² In Arabic, less euphoniously, *Sobh* (the dawn).

with a monthly salary of fifteen pieces of gold. He was then twenty-six years of age. Mohammed spared no pains to ingratiate himself still further with Aurora, and so well did he succeed that she appointed him steward of her personal property, and seven months after gaining a footing at Court he was made Master of the Mint.¹ Thanks to this last office considerable sums of money were always at his command, and he profited by the fact to make friends for himself among the great. Whenever one of the nobles found himself at the end of his resources—a condition to which their style of living often reduced them—he found Mohammed ready to come to the rescue. The story runs, for instance, that Mohammed ibn Aflah, a client of the Khalif's and a court functionary, when deeply in debt by reason of his lavish expenditure on the occasion of his daughter's marriage, brought a bridle adorned with jewels to the Mint, and asked Ibn Abî 'Âmir to advance him some money on the security of this article: it was, he added, the only valuable possession left to him. Scarcely had Ibn Aflah finished speaking before the Master of the Mint ordered an assistant to weigh the piece of harness and to give him its weight in silver pieces. Astounded by such generosity—for the leather and iron-work of the bridle were very heavy—Ibn Aflah could hardly believe his ears, but he was convinced that they had not deceived him when, a few moments later, he was desired to hold up his cloak to catch a very torrent of silver pieces, sufficient not only to pay his debts, but to leave him a considerable balance. After this he was wont to say: "I love Ibn Abî 'Âmir with all my soul, and if he were to bid me rebel against my sovereign, I should not hesitate to obey him."

By such means as these Ibn Abî 'Âmir built up a party devoted to his interests, but he deemed it his first duty to satisfy every caprice of the Sultana and to load her with gifts such as she had never before received. His devices were often highly ingenious. Once, for example, he had the silver model of a palace made, at a great cost, and when the splendid toy was completed, he caused it to be borne by slaves to the Khalif's palace—to the great marvel of the towns-folk, who had never before seen such a magnificent piece of silversmith's work. Aurora was never weary of admiring this costly gift, and henceforth lost no opportunity

¹ His name appears on coins of the period.

of singing the praises of her protégé and advancing his fortunes. The intimacy between them grew, indeed, so close that it provided food for scandal. Ibn Abî 'Âmir, however, did not neglect the other inmates of the harem. They were enraptured by his liberality, the suavity of his speech, and his incomparable distinction of manner. The old Khalif could not understand the situation: "I cannot conceive," he said one day to an intimate friend, "how this young man contrives to gain the hearts of the ladies of my harem. I lavish on them everything they can desire, and yet no gift that does not come from him is to their liking. I scarcely know whether to regard him as an extremely clever servant, or as a potent magician. But I am never quite easy in my mind about the public money which passes through his hands."

Certainly the young Master of the Mint ran great risks in the direction hinted of by Hakam. He had been very generous to his friends, but it was at the expense of the Treasury, and since his rapid rise had naturally aroused envy, his enemies at length accused him before the Khalif of malversation. He was summoned to appear at the palace without delay in order to render his accounts and deposit the money for which he was answerable. He promised to come, but hastening to his friend the Vizier Ibn Hodair, and frankly explaining to him his awkward and indeed dangerous plight, he begged him to advance the money necessary to make up the deficit. Ibn Hodair instantly handed him the sum required. Forthwith Ibn Abî 'Âmir betook himself to the Khalif, and producing his accounts as well as the money for which they proved him responsible, put his accusers to confusion. In their eagerness to disgrace him, they had, in fact, paved the way to his complete triumph. The Khalif treated them as calumniators, and lavished praises on his able and upright Master of the Mint. The latter was loaded with new dignities. Early in December, 968, Hakam conferred on him the post of trustee of vacant estates, and eleven months later that of Kady of Seville and Niebla. Upon the death of the young 'Abd-er-Rahmân, he was appointed steward to Hishâm, who became heir-presumptive to the throne (July, 970). Nor was this all: in February, 972, Ibn Abî 'Âmir was made commander of the second regiment of the body-guard, whose duty it was to act as the city police. At the age of thirty-one, therefore, he found himself installed in five or six important and lucrative posts.

He henceforth lived in an appropriate style of almost princely luxury. The palace which he built at Rosâfa was of unexampled splendour. There he kept open house: an army of secretaries and assistants selected from the highest ranks of society thronged its halls: the doorway was ever besieged with suitors. Ibn Abî 'Âmir, moreover, missed no opportunity of courting popularity, and with complete success. Praises of his kindness, his courtesy, his liberality, his noble character, were on all men's lips; there were not two opinions on the subject.

But although the student of Torrox had attained to high estate, he would fain mount yet higher, and with this end in view, he held it above all things necessary to make friends among the generals. Affairs in Mauritania gave him the desired opportunity.

The war in this country between the partisans of the Omayyads and those of the Fâtimids had never ceased, but its character had changed. 'Abd-er-Rahmân III had warred with the Fâtimids in order to preserve his country from foreign invasion. But at the epoch of which we now speak that danger no longer threatened. The Fâtimids had turned their arms against Egypt. In 969 they had conquered that country, and three years later their Khalif Mu'izz had quitted Mansûria, the capital of the empire, to take up his residence on the banks of the Nile, after having appointed the Kinhejite prince, Abu 'l-Futûh Yûsuf ibn Zîrî, Viceroy of Ifrikia and Mauritania.

Henceforth Spain had nothing to fear from the claimants of descent from 'Alî, and since his African possessions cost him much more than they yielded, Hakam would perhaps have done well to abandon them. The Khalif deemed, however, that such a course would be a stain upon his honour, and instead of relinquishing these domains, he on the contrary tried to extend their borders, and with this object entered upon a war of conquest against the Edrisid princes, who held the country on behalf of the Fâtimids.

Hasan ibn Kennûn, who reigned over Tangier, Arzila, and other places on the coast, was one of their number. He alternately declared himself on the side of the Omayyads and of the Fâtimids as one or other gained the upper hand; but he had a leaning towards the latter, who seemed to him less dangerous than the Omayyads, whose possessions marched with his own. He was the first to declare for Abu 'l-Futûh when that viceroy entered Mauritania as a

conqueror. Hakam owed Ibn Kennûn a grudge for this defection, and after Abu 'l-Futûh's departure, he ordered his general Ibn 'Tomlos¹ to undertake a punitive expedition against him and bring him to his knees. At the beginning of August, 972, Ibn 'Tomlos embarked with a large force, and having been joined by a great part of the garrison of Ceuta he marched against Tangier. Ibn Kennûn, who commanded there, sallied forth to meet him, but suffered so complete a defeat that he could not even withdraw into the city. Left to itself, Tangier was soon obliged to surrender to the Omayyad admiral, who blockaded the port, while the land forces seized Delûl and Arzilla.

Thus far the Omayyad forces had been victorious, but their good fortune was not persistent. Summoning fresh levies to his standard, Ibn Kennûn resumed the offensive and marched against Tangier. Ibn 'Tomlos, who came to meet him, was defeated and found death upon the battlefield. Thereupon all the Edrisid princes raised the standard of revolt, and Hakam's officers, who had retreated to Tangier, sent him word that if reinforcements were not despatched without delay, the Omayyad dominion in Mauritania would be at an end. Realizing the gravity of the danger, Hakam immediately determined to send the flower of his army to Africa, under his best general, the gallant Ghâlib. Summoning him to Cordova, he ordered him to set out forthwith, and added, "Take heed that thou returnest as a victor; know that thou canst only atone for a defeat by dying on the battlefield. Spare no money; scatter it lavishly among the adherents of the rebels; dethrone all the Edrisids, and send them prisoners to Spain."

Ghâlib crossed the Straits with a force of picked Spanish troops. He landed at Kasr-Masmûda, between Ceuta and Tangier, and immediately advanced. Ibn Kennûn tried to check him: no pitched battle, however, took place, but a series of skirmishes which lasted for several days, during which Ghâlib took measures to bribe the leaders of the enemy's army. He succeeded. Seduced by the gold offered to them, and by the splendid garments and swords set with jewels which dazzled their eyes, almost all Ibn Kennûn's officers deserted to the Omayyad standard. The Edrisids had no alternative to throwing themselves into a fortress situated on a mountain ridge not far from Ceuta, bearing

the appropriate name of "The Eagles' Rock."¹ The Khalif received with joy the tidings of this first success; but when he learnt how much money Ghâlib had expended in bribing the Berber chiefs he realized that the general had taken somewhat too literally the advice he had given him. In fact, whether the treasure of the State had been squandered in Mauritania, or stolen, the expenses with which the Khalif was saddled passed all measure. With a view to putting an end to this prodigality, or peculation, Hakam determined to send into Africa, as Comptroller-General of Finance, some man of tried integrity. His choice fell upon Ibn Abî 'Âmir, whom he appointed Chief Justice² of Mauritania, with instructions to keep a watch over the doings of all the generals, and especially over their financial operations. At the same time he sent orders to his officers, both civil and military, to undertake no measures without previously consulting Ibn Abî 'Âmir and ascertaining that he approved of their plans.

For the first time in his life, Ibn Abî 'Âmir found himself in touch with the army and its leaders; but he would doubtless have preferred this to have taken place in different circumstances and under other conditions. The task which confronted him was one of extreme difficulty. Self-interest urged him to ingratiate himself with the generals, and yet he found himself sent into the field to exercise over them a control which could not fail to be more or less unwelcome. Thanks, however, to the marvellous tact of which he alone knew the secret, he was able so to conduct matters as to reconcile his interests and his duty.

He executed his mission to the entire satisfaction of the Khalif, and at the same time controlled the officers with such discretion that far from bearing him a grudge as might have been feared, they never wearied of singing his praises. Neither did he neglect to cultivate friendships with the African princes and the chiefs of the Berber tribes, friendships which afterwards proved of great value to him. He initiated himself in camp life, and gained the affection of the rank and file: a secret instinct perhaps told them that in this Kady there was the making of a soldier.

Ghâlib, having brought all the other Edrisids into subjection, next proceeded to besiege Ibn Kennûn in his

¹ *Ar. hadjar an-nasr.*

² *Ar. Qâdî'l-Qadât.*

every, and since this fortress was, if not impregnable, at all events very difficult to storm, the Khalif sent fresh troops into Mauritania, drawn from the garrisons which protected the northern frontiers of his empire and commanded by the Vizier Yahyâ ibn Mohammed 'Tadjibî, Viceroy of the Northern Marches. These reinforcements arrived in October, 973, and the siege was thereupon carried on so vigorously that Ibn Kennûn was forced to capitulate (towards the end of February, 974). The terms he asked for and obtained were that the lives of his soldiers, his family, and himself should be spared, and that they should not be deprived of their property; but he had to surrender his fortress and betake himself to Cordova.

Mauritania having been thus pacified, Ghâlib once more crossed the Straits, accompanied by all the Edrisid princes. The Khalif and the notables of Cordova came out to meet the victor, and Ghâlib's triumphal entry was one of the most splendid that the capital of the Omayyads had ever witnessed (September 21, 974). The Khalif showed great generosity towards the vanquished, and especially towards Ibn Kennûn. He loaded him with gifts of every kind, and since his men, seven hundred in number, were renowned for their valour, he took them into his service, and enrolled them in the ranks of his army.

Ghâlib's entry into Cordova marked the last red-letter day in Hakam's life. Not long afterwards, towards December, he experienced a serious attack of apoplexy. Feeling that his end was at hand, he gave himself up to good works. He enfranchised a hundred of his slaves, reduced by one-sixth the royal taxes throughout the Spanish provinces of the empire, and ordained that the rents of the saddlers' shops in Cordova, which belonged to him personally, should be devoted, in perpetuity, to the payment of teachers entrusted with the instruction of poor children. Affairs of State, with which he could but rarely concern himself, he left to the management of the Vizier Mus-hafy, and it soon became manifest that another hand was at the helm. More thrifty than his master, Mus-hafy came to the conclusion that the administration of the African provinces and the maintenance of the Edrisid princes cost the State too much. Accordingly, having made the princes enter into an engagement not to return to Mauritania, he sent them to Tunis, whence they proceeded to Alexandria; then, recalling from Africa the Vizier Yahyâ ibn Mohammed

'Tadjibî, who since Ghâlib's departure had been viceroy of the African possessions, he entrusted the latter to two native princes, Ja'far and Yahyâ, sons of 'Alî ibn Hamdûn. This last measure was dictated to Mus-hafy not merely by a wise economy, but by the fear with which the Christians of the North had inspired him. Emboldened by the Khalif's illness, and by the absence of his best troops, the Christians had recommenced hostilities in the Spring of 975, and, with the aid of Abu 'l-Ahwas Man, of the family of the 'Tadjibites of Zaragoza,¹ they had besieged several Muslim fortresses. Mus-hafy justly considered that in these circumstances his first care should be the defence of the country, and as soon as the gallant Yahyâ ibn Mohammed had returned, he sent him to resume his post as Viceroy of the Northern Marches.

The Khalif during the remaining months of his life devoted his thoughts exclusively to the best means of securing the throne to his son, who was yet an infant. Before his accession to the throne Hakam had not seen his fondest wish realized—that of being a father—and at a somewhat advanced age he had despaired of the event, when in the year 962 Aurora had presented him with a son who received the name of 'Abd-er-Rahmân. Three years later another son, Hishâm, was born. The Khalif was overjoyed at the birth of these two children, and from this period dates the almost limitless influence which Aurora exercised over her husband. But the parents' joy was soon dashed; at an early age the elder son, the hope of their declining years, died. Hishâm alone survived, and the Khalif anxiously debated within himself whether his subjects, instead of recognising the child as their sovereign, would not be more likely to confer the crown upon one of his uncles. This uncertainty was quite natural. Hitherto no monarch had occupied the throne of Cordova during his minority, and a regency was extremely repugnant to Arab notions. Hakam, however, would not for the world have yielded the succession to any other than his son; moreover, had not an early prophecy predicted that the sceptre would depart from the Omayyad dynasty if ever the succession should diverge from the direct line?

To secure the throne to his son, the Khalif considered that the most effectual means would be to cause allegiance

¹ See *Recherches* (1881), pp. 211 sq.

to him to be sworn as soon as possible. For this purpose he convoked a solemn session of the notables of the realm. On the day appointed¹ he announced his intentions to the assembly, and invited all the members to sign an instrument declaring Hishâm heir to the crown. None dared to withhold his signature, and the Khalif further ordered Ibn Abî 'Âmir, and Maisûr, the Secretary of State (one of Aurora's freedmen),² to cause a number of copies of the document to be made and distributed throughout the Spanish and African provinces, with an invitation not only to the notables but to the people at large to append their signatures thereto. This order was immediately complied with, and since awe of the Khalif precluded disobedience, signatures were everywhere forthcoming. Henceforth Hishâm's name was inserted in the public prayers, and Hakam died (October 1, 976),³ in the firm conviction that his son would succeed him, and that if need be, Mus-hafy, with Ibn Abî 'Âmir whom he had appointed Chamberlain, would know how to make the Andalusians keep the oath which they had taken.

¹ Feb. 5, 976.

² Ibn Adhârî calls him *al-Ja'fari*. Ja'far was a nickname given by Hakam to Aurora; hence her freedmen bore the name of Ja'fari. (The Khalifs were fond of designating the ladies of the harem by masculine names.)

³ Ibn dhârî (ii. 269) has *Ramadhân* in error for *Safar*.

[AUTHA RITES: Ibn Adhârî, ii. pp. 249, 251-3, 260-70, 273-6; Ibn al-Khatîb (MS. G.), f. 117; 'Abd al-Wâhid, pp. 17-19, 26; Makkarî, i. 252, 259, 904; ii. 59, 61; Ibn Abî Usaib'a; Ibn al-'Abbâr, pp. 148, 152; *Kartâs*, pp. 56-8; Ibn Khaldûn, *Hist. des Berbers*, ii. 149-152; iii. 215-16 (transl.); Ibn 'Abd al-Malik Marrakushi (Paris MS.), 682 suppl. ar., f. 1017.]

CHAPTER VII

ACCESSION OF HISHÂM II

HAKAM breathed his last in the arms of his two chief eunuchs, Fâyik and Jaudhar. They alone knew that the end had come, and they resolved not to announce his death until they had determined on the line of action most advantageous to themselves.

Although slaves, these two eunuchs—one of whom held the office of Keeper of the Wardrobe and the other that of Grand Falconer—were exalted personages, and possessed no trifling power. They had in their pay, and at their beck and call, a large number of armed attendants who were neither eunuchs nor slaves. Besides these, they had under their orders a body of a thousand Slav eunuchs, who, though slaves of the Khalif, were men of substance, owning mansions and broad domains. The members of this corps, which was looked upon as the chief ornament of the Court, enjoyed unbounded privileges. They victimised and maltreated the Cordovans in a thousand ways, and the Khalif, despite his love of justice, had always shut his eyes to their misdoings and even to their crimes. To any who drew his attention to the acts of violence committed by the Slavs he had one unvarying reply: "These men are the guardians of my harem; they possess my full confidence, and I cannot be for ever reprimanding them; but I feel convinced that if my subjects will treat them with the courtesy and respect which is their right, they will find no cause for complaint." Thus unduly pampered, these Slavs grew vain and arrogant. They came to regard themselves as the most influential body in the State, and their leaders, Fâyik and Jaudhar, really imagined that the choice of a new Khalif rested with themselves alone. Neither of them had relished the idea of Hishâm's succession. If he ascended the throne during his minority, the minister Mus-hafy, between whom and themselves no love was lost, would be the actual ruler, and their influence would decline. The nation had, it is true, already sworn allegiance to Hishâm; but the two eunuchs

appraised a political oath at its real value, and were well aware that the majority of those who had taken it had done so reluctantly: they were equally well aware that public opinion was averse to a regency, and that the people would ill brook a temporal and spiritual ruler who had not yet attained his twelfth year. On the other hand, they hoped easily to repair their gravely damaged popularity, if, in response to a general demand, they conferred the crown on a prince of maturer age. To these considerations there was to be added another, namely, that such a prince would be under deep obligations to those to whom he owed his accession, and that therefore they might look forward to governing in his name. The eunuchs therefore speedily resolved to set Hishâm aside, and further agreed to offer the throne to his uncle Mughîra, then twenty-seven years old, on the condition, however, that he would nominate his nephew as his successor—for they were unwilling to appear ready to disregard wholly their late master's wishes.

"And now that our plan of action is resolved upon," said Jaudhar, "let us straightway summon Mus-hafy to our presence, behead him, and then proceed to carry out our project." But Fâyik, who was less far-sighted, but more humane, than his colleague, shuddered at the idea of murder. "Wouldst thou, my brother, slay our master's Minister," he cried, "though he hath done nothing worthy of death? Let us not begin by shedding innocent blood! In my opinion Mus-hafy is not to be feared, and will not hinder our designs." Jaudhar did not share this belief, but since Fâyik was his official superior, he was constrained to yield the point. The two eunuchs thereupon decided to win over Mus-hafy by soft words, and summoned him to the palace. On his arrival they informed him of the Khalif's death, and having unfolded their scheme, requested his co-operation. The eunuchs' design was altogether hateful to the Minister, but knowing the men, and what they were capable of, he feigned approval. "Your project," said he, "is certainly the wisest possible. Proceed with it, and my friends and I will help you to the extent of our power. You will do well, however, to secure the assent of the chief men of the realm: this will be the best means of preventing a revolt. As for me, my duty is plain: I will guard the gateway of the palace, and await your orders."

Having thus succeeded in inspiring the eunuchs with a false sense of security, Mus-hafy called some of his friends

together, including his nephew Hishâm, Ibn Abî 'Âmir, Ziyâd ibn Aflah (a client of Hakam II), Kâsim ibn Mohammed (son of the general Ibn Tomlos who had been slain in Africa while fighting against Ibn Kennûn), and other persons of influence. He summoned also the captains of the Spanish troops, and the officers of the African regiment on which he felt most reliance—that of the Beni Birzel. Having mustered all his partisans, he informed them of the Khalif's death and of the eunuchs' scheme, and then went on to say: "If Hishâm ascends the throne we shall have naught to fear and we can act as we will; but if Mughîra supplants him we shall lose our offices, and perhaps our lives, for that prince hates us."

The whole assembly were of his mind, and further resolved to frustrate the eunuchs' project by putting Mughîra to death before he learned his brother's decease. Mus-hafy acquiesced in this design; but when he proceeded to inquire who was prepared to carry it out, he met with no response. No one seemed willing to dishonour himself by such a deed.

Ibn Abî 'Âmir thereupon addressed the assemblage: "Failure in our policy," said he, "is not to be thought of. We are determined to support our leader: his orders must be obeyed; and since none of you appears willing to carry the matter through, I myself will undertake it, with our chief's permission. Have no fear, but put your trust in me." These words excited general surprise. It was not expected that a civilian official would take upon himself an assassination which warriors familiar with bloodshed shrank from. His offer was, however, eagerly accepted; it was moreover agreed on all hands that Ibn Abî 'Âmir was the very man to give effect to the policy determined on! Had he not the honour of being admitted to the intimacy of the Khalif Hishâm and of enjoying the esteem of many other members of the royal family? Who, then, could be better fitted for carrying out so delicate a task?

Ibn Abî 'Âmir forthwith mounted his horse, and, accompanied by the General Bedr,¹ a body-guard of a hundred men, and some Spanish squadrons, he proceeded to Mughîra's palace. Upon reaching it he posted the body-guard at the gateway, formed a cordon round the palace with the other troops, and entering unattended the apartments of the prince, informed him that the Khalif was no

¹ A client of 'Abd-er-Rahmân III.

more and that Hishâm had succeeded him. "Nevertheless," he added, "the Viziers fear that the latter circumstance may not meet with your approval, and they have sent me to inquire your feelings on the matter."

The prince turned pale at these words. He knew their import only too well, and seeing the sword hanging over his head, he replied in a trembling voice: "Words fail me to tell thee how much my brother's death grieveth me, but I rejoice to hear that my nephew hath succeeded him. May his reign be long and prosperous! Be so good as to inform those who sent thee that I will obey them in all things, and that I shall keep the oath of allegiance to Hishâm which I have already taken. Exact from me what pledges thou wilt; but, if thou hast come for another purpose, I entreat thee to have pity on me. Ah! I conjure thee by the Eternal to weigh well thy intentions and to spare my life!"

Ibn Abî 'Âmir was stirred with compassion for the young prince, and, won over by his candour, believed in the sincerity of his protestations. He had not blenched at the idea of murder when he deemed it essential for the welfare of the State and his own self-interest, but he had no desire to imbrue his hands in the blood of a man from whom he believed nothing was to be feared. He accordingly despatched a note to Mus-hafy to the effect that the prince was unfeignedly well-disposed, and need cause no misgivings, and on these grounds he asked to be authorized to spare Mug'îra's life. The soldier whom he sent with this missive to Mus-hafy soon brought the reply. It ended with these words: "Your scruples will ruin all, and I begin to suspect you are playing us false. Do your duty, or we put another in your place."

Ibn Abî 'Âmir showed this letter to the prince, whose sentence of death it was; then, unwilling to be witness of the dreadful deed about to be done, he quitted the room and bade the soldiers enter it. They knew full well what was expected of them. Having strangled their victim they hung his body in an adjoining chamber, and informed the domestics that Mug'hira had hanged himself upon their insisting on his rendering homage to his nephew. Soon afterwards they received orders from Ibn Abî 'Âmir to bury the corpse in the hall and to wall up the doorways.

His task accomplished, Ibn Abî 'Âmir returned to the Minister and informed him that his orders had been carried

out. Mus-hafy thanked him warmly, and in evidence of his gratitude bade him sit by his side.

Fâ'yik and Jaudhar speedily discovered that Mus-hafy had over-reached them and had baffled their scheme. Both of them were enraged, but especially Jaudhar. "Now you will admit," cried he to his colleague, "that I was right when I urged that the removal of Mus-hafy should have been our first step—but you would not heed me." They were, however, constrained to put a good face on the matter, and, seeking an audience with the Minister, made their excuses, admitting that their hasty proposal was injudicious, and that his own policy was far preferable. Mus-hafy, although he hated the eunuchs with a hatred which was fully reciprocated, did not see his way to punishing them at the moment; he therefore ostensibly accepted their apology and, to all appearance, peace was restored.

On the following morning,¹ the inhabitants of Cordova were summoned by proclamation to present themselves at the palace. Upon their arrival they found the young prince already in the throne-room. Near him stood Mus-hafy, with Fâ'yik and Jaudhar on either hand. The other dignitaries were also in attendance. The Kady Ibn as-Sâlim administered the oath, first to the uncles and cousins of the monarch, and then to the Viziers, the court officials, the chief Kurashites and the notables of the city. When this had been done Ibn Abî 'Âmir was intrusted with the administration of the oath to the rest of the assembly. This was no easy task, for some present were recalcitrant. Thanks, however, to his eloquence and persuasive power, Ibn Abî 'Âmir met with such success that not more than two or three persons persisted in their refusal. Everyone had a word of praise for the tact and ability displayed on this occasion by the Master of the Mint.

Thus far all had gone smoothly for Mus-hafy and his adherents, and the horizon seemed cloudless. The populace, to judge by their calm and submissive attitude, had become reconciled to the idea of a regency, though lately it had inspired them with aversion and dismay. But appearances were deceitful; fires yet smouldered beneath the ashen crust. In privacy curses were invoked on the greedy and ambitious magnates who had seized the supremacy and had inaugurated their reign by the murder of the luckless

¹ Monday, Oct. 2.

Mughira. The eunuchs took care to foment disaffection among the inhabitants of Cordova, and before long the spirit of discontent became so strong that at any moment it might flame into revolt. Ibn Abî 'Âmir, who was under no illusion with regard to popular sentiment, advised Mus-hafy to over-awe the crowd by a display of military force, to arouse their deep-seated loyalty by showing them their youthful Khalif, and to conciliate them by the abolition of some impost. The Minister approved of these measures, and it was decided that the young Khalif should be presented to the people on Saturday, October 7. On the morning of that day, Mus-hafy, who hitherto had borne only the title of Vizier, was promoted—or rather, promoted himself—to the office of *Hâjib*, or Prime Minister, while Ibn Abî 'Âmir, by the expressed wish of Aurora, was advanced to the dignity of Vizier, and entrusted with the government of the State jointly with Mus-hafy. Hishâm II then rode on horseback through the streets of the Capital, escorted by a large body of troops and accompanied by Ibn Abî 'Âmir. At the same time a decree was promulgated abolishing the duty on oil, one of the most odious of the taxes, because pressing most heavily on the lower classes. These measures, especially the last, produced the predicted effect, and since Ibn Abî 'Âmir had been careful to noise it abroad, through his friends, that it was he who had suggested the abolition of the oil-tax, the humbler townsmen, amongst whom riots generally originated, acclaimed him the true friend of the

poor. The eunuchs nevertheless continued to hatch conspiracies, and Mus-hafy was informed by his spies that persons strongly suspected of acting as intermediaries between the eunuchs and their friends outside the palace were forever passing and repassing through the Iron Gate. To facilitate vigilance the Prime Minister caused this portal to be walled up, so that the only entrance to the palace was by way of the *Sodda Gate*. He further adjured Ibn Abî 'Âmir to use his best endeavours to entice from their allegiance to Fâyik and Jaudhar those of their armed attendants who were neither eunuchs nor slaves. This Ibn Abî 'Âmir undertook to do, and thanks to bribes and promises he succeeded so well that five hundred men quitted the service of the two eunuchs for his own. Since he could in addition reckon on the support of the African regiment of the Beni Birzel, his forces were now far superior to those of his opponents. Jaudhar was

well aware of this, and in high dudgeon at the turn matters had taken, he tendered his resignation as Grand Falconer and sought permission to quit the Khalif's palace. This step was, however, merely a ruse. In the belief that his services were indispensable, he felt sure that his request would be refused, and that he would then have the opportunity of dictating to his adversaries the terms on which he would retain his office. But his hopes were dashed: his resignation was accepted. Jaudhar's adherents were greatly exasperated, and launched out into threats and invectives against Mus-hafy and Ibn Abî 'Âmir. One of their chief men, Dorri, the sub-chamberlain, made himself conspicuous by the violence of his language. Mus-hafy accordingly urged Ibn Abî 'Âmir to find some means of getting rid of this man. The means lay ready at hand. Dorri was lord of Baeza, and the inhabitants of that district had suffered much through the tyranny and greed of their master's agents. Ibn Abî 'Âmir seized his opportunity. He privately assured the people of Baeza that if they wished to lodge a complaint against their lord and his deputies they might feel confident that the Government would decide in their favour. They took the hint, and Dorri was summoned, under an order from the Khalif, to appear at the Vizier's palace in order to be brought to account before his subjects. He obeyed, but on reaching the palace and finding himself confronted by a strong military force, he feared for his life, and would fain have retraced his steps. Ibn Abî 'Âmir, thereupon, seizing him by the throat, detained him. In the scuffle which ensued Dorri clutched his adversary by the beard. Ibn Abî 'Âmir instantly called the soldiers to his assistance. The Spanish troops did not stir: they held the lord of Baeza too much in awe to lay hands upon him. But the Beni Birzel had no such scruples: they rushed forward, seized Dorri, and began to maltreat him. A blow from the flat of a sword laid him senseless on the ground. He was carried to his residence, where during the night he was despatched.

Conscious that by this murder they had declared war against the Slavs, the two ministers instantly took decisive measures. Fâyik and his friends received an order from the Khalif to quit the palace without delay: they were then indicted upon a charge of malversation, and mulcted in heavy penalties, which by impoverishing them effectually prevented them from henceforth injuring the ministers.

to set them more bitterly at variance. He took steps accordingly. Whilst he assured Mus-hafy of his whole-hearted devotion to his interests, he expatiated to Aurora on Ghâlib's brilliant abilities: he ceased not to urge that the services of that general could not be dispensed with, and that they must be secured by granting him a higher title than that which he already enjoyed. Nor was his perfidious advice fruitless. By Aurora's influence Ghâlib was promoted to the dignity of *Dhu'l-Wizâratâin*¹ (chief civil and military administrator) and Generalissimo of the Army of the Frontier. Mus-hafy, for his part, far from opposing this promotion, approved it, for Ibn Abî 'Âmir had assured him that it was the first step towards a reconciliation.

On May 23rd, only a month after his return to Cordova, Ibn Abî 'Âmir, who had just been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Capital, set forth on his second expedition. At Madrid he had an interview with Ghâlib, to whom he showed the greatest deference, and whose heart he won by declaring that he considered Mus-hafy quite unworthy of his high office. A firm alliance soon sprang up between the two generals, who agreed to work together to overthrow the Prime Minister. Then, crossing the frontier, they stormed the fortress of Mola,² where they captured much booty and many prisoners. The campaign at an end, the two generals took leave of one another, but at parting Ghâlib said to his new friend: "The expedition has been crowned with success: it will redound greatly to your fame, and the Court in the midst of its rejoicings will not trouble itself about your ulterior motives. Profit by this: do not leave the palace till you have been appointed Prefect of the Capital in the place of Mus-hafy's son." Ibn Abî 'Âmir, promising to bear this counsel in mind, retraced his steps to Cordova, while Ghâlib returned to his Government.

The honours of the campaign really rested with Ghâlib: by him it had been planned and carried out in every detail, and Ibn Abî 'Âmir, who had scarcely served his apprenticeship in the field, had been most careful not to oppose in any particular an experienced general who had grown old in the profession of arms. But Ghâlib, wishing to advance his young ally, presented the facts in quite a different light. He made haste to inform the Khalif that his colleague in the field had done wonders—that to him alone credit for the successes

obtained was due—and that he deserved a splendid reward. This despatch reached Cordova before Ibn Abî 'Âmir's return, and greatly disposed the Court in his favour. He accordingly found no difficulty in superseding Mus-hafy's son as Prefect of the Capital. What, indeed, could be refused to a general who for the second time returned as a victor, and whose abilities and valour were extolled by the greatest soldier of the day? Moreover, Mus-hafy's son was held in low esteem; he had owed his promotion solely to his father's influence, and, far from justifying it by his own conduct, he had proved quite unworthy of his office. So inordinate was his greed, that a trifling bribe would induce him to shut his eyes even to the most abominable crimes. It was declared, and justly, that law and order were at an end in Cordova: that brigands of high and low degree ran riot in her midst, that honest folk feared to sleep at night lest they should be robbed or murdered in their own homes—in short, that the inhabitants of a frontier town ran less risk than those of the Khalif's Capital.

Armed with his commission as Prefect, and clad in the robe of honour which had been conferred upon him, Ibn Abî 'Âmir presented himself forthwith at the palace of the Prefecture. There, finding Mohammed Mus-hafy seated amidst all the pomp pertaining to his rank, his successor showed him the Khalif's mandate and informed him that he might withdraw. With a sigh he obeyed.

The new Prefect was scarcely installed in his post before he took the most drastic measures to restore security to the Capital. He informed the agents of police that it was his determination to proceed against wrong-doers without respect of persons, and he threatened them with condign punishment if they suffered themselves to be bribed. Cowed by his firmness and knowing that the eye of their master was ever upon them, the agents henceforth did their duty. The result was immediately manifest in Cordova. Robberies and murders became more and more infrequent. Order and security once more reigned: honest folk could sleep in peace while the law kept watch and ward. The Prefect moreover gave signal proof that he was sincere in his declaration that he would spare no man. His own son having transgressed, and fallen into the hands of the police, he caused the young man to be beaten with so many stripes that he died soon afterwards.

Mus-hafy's eyes were at last opened. The dismissal

¹ *Lit.* "holder of two vizierships." See Ibn Khallikân (Slane's transl.), iii. 130.

² Site unknown.