

Egypt, Syria, and North Africa were wrested from the Byzantine Empire about the middle of the 7th century A. D. (p. 150, and map, p. 154). Spain was conquered from the Visigoths at the opening of the 8th century. Toward the east the Mohammedan conquests reached into India.

The rulers of the Mohammedan world were called Caliphs. They combined spiritual and temporal authority till the middle of the 10th century, when they lost their temporal power.

The first four successors of Mohammed were Abu Bekr and Omar, his fathers-in-law, and Othman and Ali, sons-in-law of the prophet. The sons of Ali, who were murdered, were conceived by some to be the next legal successors—hence a sect called the Shiites (to which the Persians have always belonged) denying the authority of the later Caliphs.

The Ommaiads.—The orthodox Mohammedans or Sunnites, whose leading modern representatives are the Turks, acknowledged as next Caliph, in 661, Moawiyah, founder of the line of the Ommaiads; seat at Damascus.

The Abbasides.—The Ommaiads were overthrown, in 750, by Abbas, founder of the Abbaside Caliphs; seat at Bagdad. An Ommaiad named Abderrhman, who escaped to Spain, founded there, in 756, an independent power—the Caliphate of Cordova (map, p. 154).

Various independent dynasties rose soon after in various parts of the Mohammedan world, paying more or less homage to the Bagdad Caliphs, till these were overthrown by the Mongols in 1258 (see contemporary accounts of the Mongols in Russian History).

The Arab Civilization had reached its highest pitch in the centuries after Mohammed. Through the culture and literature of East-Rome, of which three provinces—Syria, Egypt and North Africa—were in Arab hands, they rivaled that heir of ancient Rome in material civilization and in knowledge.

The Turks.—In the time of Arabian decay which preceded the Mongol desolation of western Asia, the Turkish tribes of the steppes east of the Caspian, who were converts to Mohammedanism, became first the military defenders and then the rulers of the Mohammedan countries. It was the oppres-



The Mosque of Omar, Jerusalem.
(Originally a Christian Church of the 4th Cent.)