

over, ignorant and superstitious, and entirely under the control of their priests in matters political as well as religious. It is said, that, before their present troubles, the Maronites had 82 Convents in Lebanon, with about 2,000 monks and nuns in them, living upon a revenue of about \$350,000 a year. Verily, the Druzes have some object in going to war with the Maronites, when such wealth as this tempts them. Any one in coming from Baalbec to Beyrout by way of Zahleh, which was a Maronite stronghold, splendidly situated, and numbering 10,000 souls, but now destroyed by the Druzes, can see the effects of their industry, in the carefully terraced vineyards and finely cultivated acclivities around the place. The plain, too, in the neighbourhood was under the best cultivation anywhere to be seen in all the land, and is an evidence of what all Syria and Palestine might become, if Turkish rapacity and Druze ferocity did not make everything insecure to the Christian.

The Druzes are neither Christians nor Mohammedans, and from the secrecy of their organization it is difficult to tell exactly what they are. It is thought by some that as a body they are more political than religious, ever with the party from which they hope to gain the most advantage. They also inhabit the Lebanon mountains, and number about 80,000. They are fierce, cruel, blood-thirsty and revengeful. Bold and independent, they have ever been a power formidable both to Christians and Moslems; and from their fanatical belief that their religion is to become dominant and universal, one might think that they were now attempting to gain permanent ascendancy in Syria. So far as ascertained, their religion seems to be a sort of Oriental heathenism, consisting in the belief in one God who manifests himself to mankind in the persons of men, "the last of whom was Hakim"—in the belief in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls; that there are five perpetually existing ministers of the Deity of superior dignity and office, who also appear on earth in the persons of men, the chief of whom are Hakim, the founder of the Druzes, and strange to say, our own Lord Christ; that their religion is to be prevalent, and that Hakim is to be lord of all. It is also said that their religious system includes the practice of truth among themselves; mutual aid and protection; rejection of all other religious systems, implying persecution, when necessary; submission to Hakim, their great prophet; and a separation from demons and from all error.

These Druzes originated in Egypt with the fanatical kalif, Hakim, who there propagated his materialistic notions of God. A Persian named Mohammed Ben-Ismael ed Deruzy into Egypt about the year of our Lord 1017, and adopted the belief of Hakim, adding to it the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. His fanaticism was carried to such an extent in Egypt that he was at last banished from the country, and taking refuge in one of the valleys of Mount Hermon, he there taught the Druze doctrines, and thus introduced them among the natives of Syria. Another of their prophets, whom they hold in high esteem, is Haurza, who tried to gain the Christians over to the Druze religion by representing Hakimas the Messiah.