

Professor Bruun, who (be it said) is a pattern of candour in controversy. But much else that the Professor alleges is interesting and striking. The fact that Azerbaijan and the adjoining regions were known as "the East" is patent to the readers of this book in many a page, where the Khan and his Mongols in occupation of that region are styled by Polo *Lord of the LEVANT, Tartars of the LEVANT (i.e. of the East)*, even when the speaker's standpoint is in far Cathay.* The mention of *Ani* as identical with the Ecbatana of which Otto had heard is a remarkable circumstance which I think even Oppert has overlooked. That this Georgian hero *was* a Christian and that his name *was* John are considerable facts. Oppert's conversion of Korkhan into Yokhanan or John is anything but satisfactory. The identification proposed again makes it quite intelligible how the so-called Prester John should have talked about coming to the aid of the Crusaders; a point so difficult to explain on Oppert's theory, that he has been obliged to introduce a duplicate John in the person of a Greek Emperor to solve that knot; another of the weaker links in his argument. In fact, Professor Bruun's thesis seems to me more than fairly successful in *paving the way* for the introduction of a Caucasian Prester John; the barriers are removed, the carpets are spread, the trumpets sound royally—but the conquering hero comes not!

He does very nearly come. The almost royal power and splendour of the Orbelians at this time is on record: "They held the office of *Sbasalar* or Generalissimo of all Georgia. All the officers of the King's Palace were under their authority. Besides that they had 12 standards of their own, and under each standard 1000 warriors mustered. As the custom was for the King's flag to be white and the pennon over it red, it was ruled that the Orpelian flag should be red and the pennon white. . . . At banquets they alone had the right to couches whilst other princes had cushions only. Their food was served on silver; and to them it belonged to crown the kings."† Orpel Ivané, *i.e.* John Orbelian, Grand *Sbasalar*, was for years the pride of Georgia and the hammer of the Turks. In 1123-1124 he wrested from them Tiflis and the whole country up to the Araxes, including *Ani*, as we have said. His King David, the Restorer, bestowed on him large additional domains from the new conquests; and the like brilliant service and career of conquest was continued under David's sons and successors, Demetrius and George; his later achievements, however, and some of the most brilliant, occurring after the date of the Bishop of Gabala's visit to Rome. But still we hear of no actual conflict with the chief princes of the Seljukian house, and of no event in his history so important as to account for his being made to play the part of Presbyter Johannes in the story of the Bishop of Gabala. Professor Bruun's most forcible observation in reference to this rather serious difficulty is that the historians have transmitted to us extremely little detail concerning the reign of Demetrius II., and do not even agree as to its duration. *Carebat vate sacro*: "It was," says Brosset, "long and glorious, but it lacked a commemorator." If new facts can be alleged, the identity may still be proved. But meantime the conquests of the Gur-Khan and his defeat of Sanjar, just at a time which suits the story, are indubitable, and this great advantage Oppert's thesis retains. As regards the claim to the title of *Presbyter* nothing worth mentioning is alleged on either side.

When the Mongol Conquests threw Asia open to Frank travellers in the middle of the 13th century, their minds were full of Prester John; they sought in vain for an adequate representative, but it was not in the nature of things but they should find *some* representative. In fact they found *several*. Apparently no real tradition existed among the Eastern Christians of any such personage, but the persistent demand produced a supply, and the honour of identification with Prester John, after hovering over one head and another, settled finally upon that of the King of the Keraites, whom we find to play the part in our text.

Thus in Plano Carpini's single mention of Prester John as the King of the

* *E.g.* ii. 42

† *St. Martin, Mém. sur l'Arménie, II. 77.*