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THE
LIFE OF MAHOMET,

FOUNDER OF THE
RELIGION OF ISLAMISM AND OF THE
EMPIRE OF THE SARACENS:

WITH NOTICES OF THE
HISTORY OF ISLAMISM AND OF ARABIA.

NEW EDITION.

BY THE
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PREFACE.

THE present work lays claim to no higher character than that of a compilation. This indeed must necessarily be the character of any work attempted at this day upon the same subject. All the accessible facts in the life and fortunes of the Arabian prophet have long since been given to the world. New theories and speculations, moral and philosophical, founded upon these facts, and many of them richly deserving attention, are frequently propounded to the reflecting, but they add little or nothing to the amount of our information. All therefore that can now be expected is such a selection and arrangement of the leading particulars of his history, as shall convey to the English reader, in a correct and concentrated form, those details which are otherwise diffused through a great number of rare books, in different languages. Prideaux a century since wrote a similar volume; but besides the age of this work, it is disfigured with prejudices greatly diminishing its value. Most of the histories of Arabia also, and of Mahometanism, both in our own and in foreign languages, include sketches of the prophet's life and proceedings, conveying much valuable information; but, as it will be instantly seen, they must generally be

too brief and rapid to afford more than a summary of his chief proceedings. In the following work, brevity has been as much studied as is consistent with a correct and full exhibition of the subject of a memoir; and as no life of Mahomet can be regarded as complete which does not also present some details of the system of religion of which he was the author, and of its early progress, a few chapters have been added on these subjects respectively. It is fancied that such a work, within the reach of all, was a desideratum in our literature, felt more than ever now that oriental studies are likely to increase, and events are transpiring making Mahometanism and Arabia subjects of deep interest to western Europeans. Among these may be reckoned the attempts of Christian missionaries among the followers of the prophet, chiefly in the east; the contest which is renewed on the shores of Africa, between France and the soldiers of the faithful, whose general warns the representative of the French power in the following terms: "Hold yourself prepared to see all Mussulmans commence the holy war against you; hold yourself warned, and reply as you please:" and last, though not least, a late interesting document, bearing the signature of the Sultan of Turkey, which gives to the subjects of that empire, among whom hitherto the Moslem faith only has been tolerated, a liberty of professing without molestation what religion they please. Whether the present sketch meets this demand, readers, rather than the writer, perhaps, must judge. He has aimed to make the most judicious use of the materials before him, and from the whole mass to elicit a candid moral estimate of the character of

the founder of Islamism. In one respect he may venture to assure the reader he will find the plan of the ensuing pages an improvement upon preceding memoirs; and that is in the careful collation of the chapters of the Koran with the events of the narrative. He will probably find the history illustrated to an unexpected extent from this source—a circumstance which, while it serves greatly to authenticate the facts related, imparts a zest also to the tenor of the narrative scarcely to be expected from the nature of the theme.

No revolution recorded in history, if we except that effected by the religion of the gospel, has introduced greater changes into the state of the civilized world, than that which has grown out of the rise, progress, and permanence of Mahometanism. The history and character, therefore, of this religion becomes an object of laudable curiosity with every enlightened mind. Considered merely as a department of the general annals of the world, apart from any connexion with the true religion, it furnishes some of the most interesting records of the human race. But when viewed as a part of the great chain of providential and predicted events, designed to have a direct bearing upon the state of the Christian church, through the whole period of its disastrous prevalence, it urges a new and stronger claim upon our attention. By many distinguished writers, who have deeply studied its origin, genius, and history, the religion of the Koran is confidently regarded rather as a Christian heresy, or the product of a Christian heresy, than as a heathen superstition. "Hence," says the learned and exemplary Mede, "Mahometanism has frequently been accounted a Christian heresy ;

and as it had its origin in Christianity, so to Christ it looks in the end. For, according to the creed of the Mahometans, Jesus is expected to descend to earth, to embrace the religion of Mahomet, to slay Antichrist, and to reign with his saints." The same authority affirms, "that the Mahometans are nearer to Christianity than many of the ancient heretics; the Cerinthians, Gnostics, and Manichees." Consequently its fate is involved in that of all false doctrines which have corrupted the gospel; and as far as the disclosures of prophecy, or the present posture of the nations of the earth, hold out a hope of the speedy downfall of delusion, and of the establishment of the truth, the eye is naturally turned with deepening interest and anxiety to those regions of the globe where this religion has so long prevailed.

But in proportion to the interest inspired in the general subject of Mahometanism, is that which is felt in the life, character, and actions of its founder. That an obscure individual, sprung from the roving tribes of Arabia, following no higher occupation than that of a caravan-trader, possessing no peculiar advantages of mental culture, nor distinguished in the outset by any pre-eminence of power or authority, should yet have been enabled, in spite of numerous obstacles, to found an extensive empire over the minds, as well as persons, of millions of the human race, and that this dominion should have been continued for more than twelve hundred years, presents a phenomenon which increases our wonder the more steadily it is contemplated.

In order to preserve the continuity of the story from being broken by incessant reference to au-

thorities, the following catalogue is submitted, which will present at one view the principal works consulted and employed in preparing the present Life:—Sale's Koran; Universal History, Mod. Series, vol. i.; Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire; Prideaux's Life of Mahomet, that in the Library of Useful Knowledge; Bouldainvillier and Gagnier Vie de Mahomet; Hottinger's *Historia Orientalis*; Abul-Faragii *Historia Dynastarum*, Pocock's Transl.; Morgan's *Mahometanism Explained*, 2 vols.; Forster's *Mahometanism Unveiled*, 2 vols.; D'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale*; Rycaut's Present State of the Ottoman Empire; Ockley's History of the Saracens, 2 vols.; Lee's Translation of the Rev. H. Martyn's Controversial Tracts; Charles Mills's History of Muhammedanism; Rev. W. H. Neale's Mahometan System, &c., with the authorities quoted by them respectively.

On the subject of the Arabic proper names so frequently occurring in this work, it may be useful to the English reader to be informed, that Al is a particle equivalent to our definite article The. Thus Alcoran is composed of two distinct words, signifying The Koran, of which the last only ought to be retained in English. Again, Ebn is the Arabic word for son, as is Bint or Binta for daughter, and with the particle Al after it, according to the Arabic usage, Ebno'l is, the son. So Abu, father, with the article after it, Abu'l, the father. Thus, Said Ebn Obeidah Abu Omri, is, Said, the son of Obeidah, father of Omri; it being usual with the Arabs to take their names of distinction from their sons as well as their fathers. In like manner, Ebno'l Athir, is, the son of Athir;

Abu'l Abbas, the father of Abbas: and as Abd signifies servant, and Allah, God; Abdo'lah or Abdallah is, servant of God; Abdo'l Shems, servant of the sun.

The deciding between the different modes in which the prophet's name is, or ought to be, written, and the adoption of the most eligible, has been a matter of perplexing deliberation. Upon consulting the Greek Byzantine historians, it appears that the same diversity of appellation which now prevails, has obtained for seven centuries. In some of them we meet with Maometis, from which comes our Mahomet, the most popular and familiar title to the English ear; and in others, Machomed. Other varieties among ancient authors might doubtless be specified. It has been thought best on the whole to adopt in the following pages the orthography most familiar to English ears, though if the Arabic usage were followed, doubtless the name would be written Mohammed or Muhammed.

The principal object of the following pages is historical, not religious, so that no lengthened dissertation may be expected on the mysterious subject of the fulfilment of scripture prophecy in the person and proceedings of Mahomet. Still it would be unpardonable not to look at him as an instrument in the hands of divine providence, and no Christian should shrink from repelling the scepticism and infidelity of which a celebrated historian of ancient events has unhappily made his pages the vehicle. The reader may expect such topics to be occasionally adverted to. If he wishes to look at the history of Mahomet in connexion with scripture prophecy, he will do well to consult Faber's Sacred

Calendar of Prophecy, Fry's Second Advent of Christ, Whitaker's Origin of Arianism, White's Bampton Lectures, and such modern travels in Syria, Arabia, and adjacent countries as are intended to throw light on the subject.

A list of names and titles frequently occurring in connexion with the affairs of the East, together with their etymological import, will not be deemed inappropriate to the object of the present work.

MOSLEM, MUSSULMAN, ISLAM, ISLAMISM.—All from the same root, **ASLAM**; signifying to yield up, dedicate, consecrate entirely to the service of religion.

KORAN.—From **KARA**, to read; the reading, legend, or that which ought to be read.

SULTAN.—Originally from the Chaldaic **SOLTAN**; signifying authority, dominion, principality.

VIZIER.—An assistant.

HADJ.—Pilgrimage; **HADJI**; one who makes the pilgrimage to Mecca.

HEJIRA, or HEJRA.—The Flight; applied emphatically to Mahomet's flight from Mecca to Medina. The period from which Arab writers commence their dates.

MUFTI.—The principal head of the Mahometan religion, and the resolver of all doubtful points of the law.—An office of great dignity in the Turkish empire.

IMAM.—A kind of priest attached to the mosques, whose duty it is occasionally to expound a passage of the Koran. They, at the same time, usually follow some more lucrative employment.

MOOLLAH.—The Moollahs form what is called the

Ulema, or body of doctors in theology and jurisprudence, who are entrusted with the guardianship of the laws of the empire, and from whose number the Mufti is chosen.

EMIR.—Lineal descendants of the Prophet himself, distinguished by wearing turbans of deep sea-green, the colour peculiar to all the race of Mahomet. They have special immunities on the score of their descent, and one of them carries the green standard of the Prophet when the Grand Seignior appears in any public solemnity.

PASHA.—The title given to the provincial governors. A Pasha is to a province or pashalic, what the Sultan is to the empire, except that the judicial power is in the hands of the cadis, the provincial magistrates. The tails of a Pasha are the standards which he is allowed to carry; one of three tails is one of three standards, which number gives the power of life and death.

REIS EFFENDI.—This officer may be termed the High Chancellor of the Ottoman empire. He is at the head of a class of attorneys which at this time contains the best informed men of the nation.

SERAGLIO.—This word is derived from Serai, a term of Persian origin, signifying a palace. It is therefore improperly used as synonymous with Harem, the apartments of the women. The Seraglio is, in strictness of speech, the place where the court of the Grand Seignior is held; but it so happens that at Constantinople this building includes the imperial Harem within its walls.

CRESCENT.—The national ensign of the Turks, surmounting the domes and minarets attached to their mosques, as the Cross does the churches of the Roman Catholics in Christian countries. This peculiar and universal use of the Crescent is said to have owed its origin to the fact, that at the time of Mahomet's flight from Mecca to Medina the moon was new. Hence the half moon is commemorative of that event.

SUBLIME PORTE.—This title, which is frequently applied to the court, cabinet, or executive department of the Ottoman empire, is derived, as the words import, from a lofty arched gateway of splendid construction, forming the principal entrance to the Seraglio or palace. It is a phrase equivalent to "Court of St. James," "Court of St. Cloud," &c.

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THE
LIFE OF MAHOMET.

CHAPTER I.

Importance of the Inquiry into the History of the Country of Mahomet.—Imperfect knowledge of it.—Great interest of the events that have occurred in Arabia.—Description of Arabia.—Mecca and Medina.—Manners of the different classes of Inhabitants.—Bedouins.—The Arabs of the Cities.—Commerce of Arabia.—Pride of the Arabs.—Their strifes.—Government.—Independence.—Classification.—Reflections.

IN reviewing the life of Mahomet, one of the most extraordinary of men, it is desirable first to have some account of the country which gave him birth, and of the circumstances which, in all probability, exercised a considerable influence upon his education, mind, and habits.

The physical and moral condition of a country contribute, in no small degree, to form the character of men, and especially of men of an ardent, ambitious, enterprising disposition, and of a gloomy, morose, and superstitious temperament. Perhaps, in some respects, these various elements, widely different as they are, will be found to have existed in the subject of the following pages; and certainly no individual whose life and actions common history records, ever exercised an influence,

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or produced an effect on the condition and destiny of nations at all approaching to that of which Mahomet was the author. . Even down to this day, a large portion of the human family (considerably more than one-eighth) in various countries are familiar with his name, and devotedly follow the doctrines and precepts which he taught—a number nearly as great as that which has professedly embraced the Christian Faith. His system has interwoven with the polity of large and flourishing communities—not of the barbarous and half-civilized of mankind only—but of those from which much of our own refinement and civilization have been derived. It were an affectation, therefore, as great as that which would blot Greece and Rome from the map of the world, that should profess indifference to the history of so remarkable a person, or gratulate itself upon ignorance of the singular country from which he sprung.

Still we must be content with but an imperfect acquaintance with that country. Its physical features are little known; its civil and moral history are still less understood. Perhaps the extravagancies of oriental fable, and the natural and just contempt with which, as a religious system, the dogmas of the prophet and his followers have been regarded in better instructed countries, may have greatly contributed to this ignorance; perhaps it may have resulted partly from the inscrutable dealings of that Providence which permits a people who love error to remain in darkness, and almost decrees that they who will not know God shall themselves be disesteemed and unknown.

Nevertheless, Arabia has been the scene of

events too interesting in the religious history of mankind to be contentedly shrouded in obscurity from these western nations. Here our first parents were planted: here have occurred some of the most memorable of all the dispensations of divine providence that have arrested the attention of mankind, and shed light and counsel over future times. It was in this land that the ark of Noah rested safely, after the awful wonders of the deluge. Here Job was tried—the faith of the Patriarchs was exhibited—Moses, the servant of God, received his divine commission, and the posterity of Abraham wandered for forty years in the wilderness. Had Mahomet never lived, it would have been unphilosophical in the student of national annals to be indifferent to the history of this country; but now that he has secured to his native land so wide a civil as well as religious renown, it will be difficult to find an apology for the general neglect with which, till of late, Arabia has been treated in our educational course. To account for this neglect, something may be said concerning the almost inaccessibility of the language of the country, the worthlessness of much that is opened when this language is overcome, and the unsettled and apparently unsocial character of the institutions and habits of the people—a character with which we have almost nothing in common: but if there be any thing to admire in poetic fiction and imagery—any thing attractive in the noble virtues of unflinching fidelity, ardent gratitude, and generous hospitality, or any thing to repay our toil in innumerable and beautiful illustrations to holy writ, this neglect cannot be suffered to continue. “In order,” says the learned

Michaelis, "to understand properly the writings of the Old Testament, it is absolutely necessary to have an acquaintance with the natural history, as well as the manners of the east." And the intelligent Burckhardt says, to the same effect, that "the sacred historian of the children of Israel will never be thoroughly understood as long as we are not minutely acquainted with every thing relating to the Arabian Bedouins, and the countries in which they move and pasture."*

Arabia, a name derived from a Hebrew word, denoting a wilderness, or a land of deserts and plains, comprehends, as commonly used, a much larger territory than that to which, in the most authentic records, it was first applied. Moses uses it for the western wilderness, which he describes as "over against the Red Sea, between Paran and Tophel, and by the way of Elath and Ezion-gaber." Deut. i. 1, ii. 8. This was the country between the 29° and 31° of north latitude, and the 51° and 53° east longitude, a mountainous land, over which the Israelites journeyed during a considerable part of their wanderings in the wilderness; and here, probably, some of the earliest colonies of men fixed their habitation. The tribes of wandering Ishmaelites would sojourn here, and, as their conquests extended, the name by which their country was distinguished would also extend. From this, or from some other cause not now to be ascertained, the denomination of this compara-

* It must not be understood, however, that Europe has no scholars in Asiatic literature. France has produced many; and England may be justly proud of the proportion she has added to the number. Pococke, and Sale, and Lee, and some others, stand very high in the list.

tively small tract of country usually includes a vast peninsula, extending from the Red Sea on the west, to the Persian Gulf on the east, and from Syria and the Holy Land on the north and north-west, to the straits of Babelmandeb, and the Indian Ocean on the south and south-east. A considerable portion of this territory consists of arid desert, and rocky plain, so as to be incapable of sustaining many inhabitants. The coasts, and chiefly the western, that which borders upon the Red Sea, and the country included in lines drawn through the twenty-third and the thirtieth degrees of north latitude, are the parts chiefly inhabited. The length of the whole region from north to south, that is, from Anah to Aden, is reckoned at nearly 1500 miles; its middle breadth, measuring from Suez to Bussorah, is about 900 miles. Perhaps its base, from Muscat on the Persian Gulf, to Mocha on the Strait of Babelmandeb, is not less than 1200 miles.

Of course the features of so extensive a territory would be exceedingly various; generally it may be described as a table land, sloping gradually towards the east. The south and south-eastern coasts are composed, with but little interruption, of a ridge of dismal, barren, naked rocks, destitute of soil or herbage, and yielding to the mariner, as he passes up the Indian ocean, a picture of the most gloomy and forbidding kind. They rise dark, waste, and wild, to the height of a thousand or fifteen hundred feet; on the land side of them lies that part of the peninsula which is known by the name of Arabia Deserta, a name not bestowed in vain; the whole rock and desert combining as if to keep off all intrusion, and for-

bid all approach to that other part of the peninsula which is as aptly called Arabia Felix, or "Araby the blest." There is another part of this territory to which our predecessors in geographical delineation have given the appropriate name of Arabia Petraea, the two latter being more known for the very obvious reason they are the more habitable.

The aspect of desolation and barrenness so widely pervading Arabia, is occasionally relieved by verdant spots in valleys, along which some perennial stream, or mountain torrent, pursues its way: wells, partly natural, partly artificial, mark the route of the desert wanderers, secure intercourse between their several tribes, and sustain and refresh their numerous cattle and dependants. These cultivated patches, of varying extent, afforded grass for cattle, and corn and fruits for man. In such a country, wells would be a most valuable property, and as it was inhabited chiefly by a pastoral and simple race, it would have but few wants which would not find a supply at these fertile spots. The wealth of such a people would chiefly consist in these possessions, and their contentions most frequently arise out of them. Lot, in making his election of a country to abide in, chooses the "well watered plain;" Abraham and Isaac both have to contend for retaining the wells which they had respectively secured; and which the people of the neighbouring chief Abimelech had unjustly seized; and throughout the scripture, blessings of the utmost importance are represented under the apt emblems of wells and springs.

Barren, however, as a large part of the country, with the exceptions just now mentioned, is, there

are other parts of it exceedingly rich and delightful. "The air is temperate, while the rains and dews are copious. The hills are wooded to the top, or covered with a rich alpine turf. From their sides fall perennial streams, sometimes in beautiful cascades, which run for a considerable extent among cultivated fields, or luxuriant gardens. Fruits of all kinds are delicious and abundant. The fertility of the earth at once invites and rewards the industry of the husbandman, and nature, by lavishing her choicest favours here, seems to have compensated for her want of hospitality everywhere else."

The last of the three divisions mentioned above, Arabia Petraea, is that part of the country which is most frequently mentioned in the sacred writings, comprising the Peninsula of Sinai, and the country of Edom or Idumaea, with the territory anciently inhabited by the tribes to which the names are given of Hivites, Hittites, Midianites, Amalekites, Kedarenes, Hagarenes, and Nabathæans, with others descended from the father of the faithful. No part of the whole country has been so accurately described as this division, which is a vast wilderness composed of naked rocks and craggy precipices, interspersed with narrow defiles and sandy valleys, seldom refreshed with rain, and destitute of vegetation. Here Moses, an exile from Egypt, kept the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, and here Elijah dwelt when he had to conceal himself in Horeb, on account of the persecutions of Ahab and Jezebel. Other memorable circumstances of Scripture history are identified with this land. Mount Seir, a lofty ridge, on the east of Idumaea, and Moab, bounded

this part of the country, from Arabia Deserta. On the west are Wady Ghor, and Wady Arabah, the ancient bed of the Jordan, before the overthrow of the cities of the plain. A recent traveller has described this region as a sea of desolation. "It would seem," he adds, "as if Arabia Petraea had once been an ocean of lava, and that while its waves were running mountains high, it was commanded suddenly to stand still." Of Arabia Deserta but little is known. Arabia Felix, the region of spices, of incense, and if ancient geographers are to be credited, of almost all things precious and valuable, is the most fertile, and consequently the most numerously inhabited district. The Arabs better know it by the name of Yemen, its largest province. It includes the territory on the south-west, bordering upon the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean; but though known by the name indicating fertility, it is by no means free from the curse of sterility. The ancients speak comparatively, when dwelling with romantic extravagance on its costly productions, and on the wealth and number of its inhabitants.

Among its considerable places, were the two cities of Mecca and Medina; the former celebrated as the birth-place of Mahomet, the latter as the place where his ashes repose.

Mecca is the capital of the province of Hejaz, described by D'Auville as of about 750 miles in extent, and almost an absolute desert, consisting of sandy plains towards the shore and rocky hills in the interior. Around the capital, thousands of these hills rise bleak and bare, all of nearly the same height; some of them, especially Safa, Arafat, and Merona, have become celebrated as sta-

tions in the Mahometan pilgrimages. Among them, and especially near the city, are deep and spacious caverns, fit residences for a morbid and gloomy superstition. The vicinity of Medina is somewhat more fertile. Mecca is said to be one of the most ancient cities of the world; the Macoraba of the Greeks, and the Mesha (Gen. x. 30) of scripture.

Besides Hejaz, Arabia contained the provinces of Yemen, the finest and most fertile of all its provinces, Tehama, Hadramant (the Hagarmaveth of holy writ, Gen. x. 26), Oman, Lasha, and Nejed, which last is divided into fourteen smaller compartments or provinces, but little more than nominally known to western writers.

The inhabitants of Arabia, from age to age the same in customs, habits of life, and general characteristics, are commonly divided into two classes, Arabs of the desert, or the dwellers in tents; and Arabs of the cities. The former are roving bands, wandering with their flocks and herds from place to place, and living very much by plunder upon each other, or upon the more peaceful and industrious of their countrymen engaged in trade and commerce. They have been called Bedouins, and the Nomadic tribes. They had but little intercourse with other tribes: their wants were few, and easily supplied, and they regarded their perfect freedom from control as their chief glory. They were a bold, enterprising, and generous race, strong in their attachments, and, like all savages, equally so in their resentments. Their vow, whether of hospitality or of revenge, was seldom violated. The lowly wilderness, and the rugged mountain, were the scenes of their greatest enjoy-

ment, because there they could live without ceremony, and without restraint. They boasted that God had bestowed on them four precious gifts: turbans instead of diadems, tents in place of walls and bulwarks, swords for intrenchments, and poems instead of written laws.

Among these lawless tribes, however, some usages obtained, without which, humanly speaking, they must have become extinct. Among these, they imposed upon themselves the obligation of observing, for the third part of every year, some of the regulations of civilized society. "It was a custom among the ancient Arabs, to observe four months in the year as sacred, during which they held it unlawful to wage war; and took off the heads of their spears; ceasing from incursions and other hostilities. During these months, whoever was in fear of his enemy lived in full security; so that if a man met the murderer of his father or his brother, he durst not offer him any violence." * An impatience of revenge sometimes induced the postponement for a month of this sacred season, but it was not abridged in duration, nor were its rules violated. All during the allotted season lived in peace, though up to its commencement, and from the moment it had passed, they engaged in fiercest conflict. Another of these salutary customs, was their inviolable regard to the rites of hospitality. Bitterest foes, if by any means one became the guest of the other, were perfectly secure from each other's violence. The members of tribes at variance, not infrequently enjoyed the protection of those to whom

* Sale. Prel. Dis. § 7.

they were most relentlessly opposed ; and when that protection could avail them no longer, they have been urged by their adversary to fly, lest he himself should fall upon them. These wanderers of the desert, insecure and destitute of comfort as we should judge their modes of life to be, were so strongly attached to it as never to settle without profound regret, into the more regular habits of the city Arabs. Abulfeda has exhibited this feeling in the instance of a Bedouin princess, married to a caliph of Damascus, and therefore compelled to leave the desert. The pomp and splendour of a court could not make her forget the charms of her lonely wilderness. Her hours were consumed in melancholy musings, her greatest delight was in singing the simple pleasures which that wilderness had afforded her.

Nebassar's queen

Fatigued with Babylon's level plains,
Sighed for her Midian home, where nature's hand
Had scooped the vale, and clothed the mountain side
With many a verdant wood.

Roberts' Judah Restored.

Even at this day Bedouins are seen passing the night in the open air in Cairo, Mecca, and Aleppo, having declined the conveniences of apartments offered to them. They would regard themselves as degraded and fallen from the nobility of their birth, if they could ever bring themselves to the habits of such as they contemptuously describe as "dwellers in houses of clay."

The stationary Arabs, or Arabs of the cities, are an equally remarkable race. Like the Bedouins, they held a certain portion of the year sacred to peace, and were strictly mindful of the rites of

hospitality; but as they were more addicted to agriculture and commerce, their modes of life were somewhat more artificial. The traffic between Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and the wandering tribes of the desert, was carried on through them. Ostrich feathers, coffee, frankincense, and other costly commodities they procured from their wandering neighbours, and exchanged in the fairs and marts of those countries for such articles as were in request in their own land. They carried on their trade by means of caravans of camels, the merchants, like our travelling merchants and pedlars, accompanying their goods, and superintending the transactions of commerce. By them was conducted for many ages, the most lucrative trade between India and Egypt. The Greeks at first purchased these commodities of them. "Tarshish," says Ezekiel, "was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs. Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots. Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making; they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and brodered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. Dan and Javan, going and fro, occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market."* Tyre, of which the prophet speaks, was a principal commercial part of Arabia; and long before this time, another sacred writer alludes to the pearls and rubies, the precious onyx, the sapphire, the coral and the topaz, † so that even from the earliest ages,

* Ezek. chap. xxvii.

† Job. xxvii. 15. 19.

the wealth and luxuries of the farther east flowed through Arabia into more civilized and prosperous parts of the world. Hence, the almost romantic descriptions of the wealth of Arabia. That country, by the earliest historians, is described as abounding with every production that could make life happy. In addition to common productions, the land is said to have yielded balm, cassia, incense, myrrh, and cinnamon. Who has not heard of the rich gums, the fragrant perfumes, the spices of Arabia? Its inhabitants were fabled to be compelled to burn pitch and goats' hair, for the purpose of renewing their cloyed sense of fragrance; their food was cooked with scented woods; they rivalled the magnificence of princes, in the very habits of common life; their houses were decorated with pillars glistening with gold and silver, they opened with doors of ivory, every niche was filled with the most costly vases, and every wall sparkled with jewels. The people themselves, Strabo says, wore bracelets and necklaces made of gold and pellucid gems arranged alternately, and used cups and other domestic utensils of the same precious materials. Gold, he tells us, was so abundant, as to be but thrice the value of brass, and twice that of iron; while silver was ten times more valuable than gold. The most extravagant accounts of the abundance of the precious metal are given by Arrian, Strabo, and Diodorus; after having subtracted duly for these writers' want of information and romance, it must be allowed that this part of Arabia, notwithstanding its present poverty, was a land of great affluence and fertility.

Wealth, in connexion with the love of independence, engendered pride, and nursed those other dispositions which were manifested in the frequent wars of Arab tribes and in their cruelty and rapine. Everywhere they affected a lofty disdain of all other men, and were in the highest degree unsocial and selfish. Wars and domestic broils, not infrequently rendered the Arab perfectly insensible to the voice of law and humanity. Their numerous clans constituted so many separate interests, on behalf of which the most violent and vindictive proceedings were indulged, often originating in trivial causes, and prosecuted with revolting atrocity. A word or an action thought contemptuous, an insult to a woman of a particular clan, would involve multitudes in war, and cost probably the life of hundreds. The quarrels of the clans were hereditary. Wilful offences were never forgiven, and such was their patience of revenge, that providing no convenient opportunity occurred, they would wait months and even years, ere they executed it. Such was their relentless ferocity, that not the offender only, but sometimes many others of his tribe, and among them its principal men, became its victims. Offences were thus multiplied and prolonged, feuds and quarrels were made to endure for ages.

Government among such a people, must have been exceedingly loose and irregular. The want of written records renders it impossible to trace with any hope of accuracy, what it was. It is probable, that the father of each family, as in the case of Noah, Abraham, and Job, united in himself the functions of both civil ruler and priest of

his household. Of this, there are evidences down to the time of Mahomet. Kahtan, the founder of the Arab race—the Joktan of the scripture, is regarded as the first sovereign of Arabia Felix or Yemen. He was succeeded by his son Yarab, from whom some derive the name of the territory, and during a long period of 2,020 years, according to Pococke, this dynasty continued; twenty-nine kings having successively reigned about seventy years each. He gives the names, which are here omitted, as nothing more is known concerning them. The natives of this province were more easily governed than those of other provinces. Mecca and Medina exhibit the form, and something of the substance also of a commonwealth. The grandfather of Mahomet, and his lineal ancestors reigned among their fellow citizens, as Pericles did at Athens, by the opinion held of their wisdom and integrity; their patrimony and their power went together. From the uncles of the prophet, the sceptre descended to a younger branch of the family, so that by the law of succession no power pertained to Mahomet; it belonged to his relatives. Lists of monarchs of other districts, and pertaining to different dynasties, are also preserved by various historians, which for the same reason are passed over. The little that can be ascertained concerning these early times, is emphatically implied in the denomination of “times of ignorance,” by which they are known among Arab writers; still it is evident that the wanderers of the desert have always maintained their freedom from foreign power. Their necks never bent to a yoke. The reason for this, when all other nations were subdued, is to be found partly in the character of the Arab,

partly in the nature of their country. "Surrounded with inhospitable deserts, they could easily elude the vigilance of their enemies, by retiring within those natural barriers of rocks and sands which bade defiance to their persecutors." The historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman empire, questions this historical fact, just as he does every thing else out of which arguments have been drawn in support of revealed religion. Yet it is remarkable, that even his own pages contain evidence of the truth of what he would fain deny.* He says of the tribes, whose independence he nevertheless questions, "When they advance to battle, the hope of victory is in the front; in the rear, the assurance of a retreat. Their horses and camels, who in eight or ten days can perform a march of four or five hundred miles, disappear before the conqueror; the secret waters of the desert elude his search, and his victorious troops are consumed with thirst, hunger, and fatigue, in the pursuit of an invisible foe, who scorns his efforts, and safely reposes in the heart of a burning solitude. Their friendship," he adds, "was venal, their faith inconstant, their enmity capricious: it was an easier task to excite than to disarm these roving barbarians; and in the familiar intercourse of war they learned to see and to despise the splendid weakness both of Rome and Persia." With both these powers, whole tribes of Arabia were occasionally in alliance; they were hired to aid in their wars; but this is widely different from being in subjection and independence, as Gibbon, on that account, would have us believe.

* See note in chap. 50., Vol. 9. p. 232., Edition 1819, in 12 Vols.

All uncivilized nations divide themselves into clans or tribes, and it is by no means uncommon for these tribes to pride themselves respectively on the simplicity and purity of their descent. A similar division occurs also among nations, to which pre-eminent religious distinctions and privileges pertain. Every one has read of the castes of India; and who is ignorant of the pride with which a Jew styled himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Thus the Arabs are classified and divided. There are the old extinct Arabs—the genuine or pure Arabs—and the Most-Arabi, or the mixed and naturalized Arabs. Of the first class we have nothing but tradition and fable, seldom worth recording, except that among them are numbered the very tribes, concerning which inspired prophecy declares that their names should be blotted out for ever.* The pure Arabs trace their origin to Joktan, and divide into families or tribes called after the names of their respective ancestors; the sons of that patriarch or of his immediate descendants, just as the family of Jacob divides into tribes after the names of his sons and two grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh. Such a division was adverse to the consolidation of their power and influence; it contributed however in no small degree to some of those remarkable peculiarities which distinguish the people. Gagnier, and after him, Sale, have enumerated nearly three score tribes of genuine Arabs; the chief and most honoured of whom were the Koreish descendants of Fehr the courageous.

Mahomet sprung from the third class, for which reason we defer saying any thing of them till the next chapter.

* Exod. xvii. 14.

We cannot approach the history of such an individual as the prophet of Arabia was, without one reflection on the perfect facility with which the Most High raises up instruments to punish the idolatry of mankind: for if He rules, as unquestionably he does, over all the nations of the earth, and men are but his instruments, we can have no more doubt that Mahomet was guided by his providence, than that Moses and Joshua were. The guidance they respectively enjoy widely differs; their courses are dissimilar; they are men altogether differing from each other; but they are all instruments in the hand of God of fulfilling his purposes. Moses and Joshua, in remote ages, and in furtherance of true religion, are commissioned to draw the sword against the enemies of God; Mahomet, in comparatively modern times, without any such commission, and in furtherance of a system but little better than those he opposed, employs the same weapon against persons of a similar description. We are wont to refer to the justice and wisdom of the Most High the operations of the former, can we regard those of the latter in an opposite light? Who can read the overthrow of the nations of Canaan by the leaders of Israel, or the victorious progress of the armed prophet and his legions against Arabian idolaters, without feeling that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth; and that though as yet delusion, error, and vice greatly prevail in our world, they will eventually, by one means or other, be uprooted. If for a system that was merely preparatory, as was the Jewish, and if for a system which, false as was one part of it, contained nevertheless the great essential truth of the divine unity,

God with such facility raised up his instruments, and secured to them prosperity, what shall stay his hand when he ariseth to shake terribly the kingdoms of the earth, and to render them the empire of his Son ?

CHAPTER II.

The descent of the Arabs from Ishmael.—Obscurity of their early history, and their care as to genealogical record.—Gibbon's scepticism on their origin.—Argument from their practice of circumcision—from scripture reference to Arab tribes—and from the coincidence of their character and habits with those prophetically attributed to Ishmael.—Mahomet's descent from Arab princes.—Idolatry of the early tribes.

THE tribes inhabiting Arabia, and who are known by the general name of Arabs, trace their descent from Ishmael, the son of the venerable patriarch Abraham. From the same parent in the line of Isaac descended, the yet more wonderful people, whose history is chiefly recorded in the Old Testament scriptures. The Israelites and the Arabs, alike in many particulars, are thus nearly related to each other. Every reader of the Bible will remember the story of Hagar and her son. Sarai, the wife of the patriarch, was barren; and to prevent his being childless, an evil which was then considered the greatest that could occur, especially to a man of wealth and power, Hagar, according to the manners of the times, also becomes his wife. From this marriage Ishmael sprung; but such was the envy and jealousy with which Hagar was regarded, that she was at length compelled to leave the patriarch's house. The birth of Isaac, when Ishmael was about fourteen years of age, led to

this event; and probably the injuries Ishmael and his mother had received from Sarah, had no small influence in determining his future character. God had said, concerning this son of Abraham, "Behold, I have blessed him, and I will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation;" * a declaration which was again and again repeated. † Accordingly, we find in the earliest and most authentic records, that Ishmael was the father of twelve princes, or heads of tribes, named Nebajoth, Kedar, Abdeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hada, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. "These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns and by their castles, twelve princes according to their nations." ‡ Where they respectively settled, whether they continued separate for any number of ages, and to what degree, it is impossible now to ascertain. The remotest history of each of them, if it could be perused, would doubtless illustrate the truth and fulfilment of the divine prediction, "He will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." § It is, perhaps, no matter of astonishment that this remote history is lost in obscurity. Dwelling for many ages in a rocky peninsula, having no intercourse with other nations, and, from their frequent feuds and factions, having but little inclination and leisure to cultivate the arts of the historian and the chronicler, they produced no written documents from

* Gen. xvii. 20.

† Gen. xxi. 13, 18.

‡ Gen. xxv. 13—16.

§ Gen. xvi. 12

whence it may be gathered. As to genealogies, they were particular in retaining them, most probably from a tradition they preserved of certain inspired declarations describing their greatness and prosperity, and from the necessity imposed by their patriarchal government of tracing the most direct descendants of their venerated progenitor. Genealogical tables, however, can preserve only isolated facts; they assist in throwing light upon the descent of particular men, but they leave all that is important in the history of the tribe to which those men belong, and in that of all kindred tribes, in almost entire and impenetrable darkness.

This is exactly what in the present case has happened. Ignorant as we are of the early history of the Arabs, among them there is no question as to their national descent. All early traditions concur in deducing their origin from Joktan, or Kahtan. Two of his sons, perhaps the Jerah and Hadoram mentioned by Moses * among the thirteen planters of this division of the earth, called by the Arabian genealogists Jorham and Yarab, are said to have founded the two kingdoms of Hejaz and Yemen. The posterity of Yarab, from whom most probably the name Arabia was derived, multiplied into innumerable clans. The genealogical tables of Mr. Sale, than whom few men have been more learned in Arabic lore, enumerate some three score tribes of pure Arabs, many of whom, retaining even to this day their original names, were celebrated long before the time of the prophet. † His descent is traced to Jorham,

* Gen. x. 26, 27.

† Sale, Preliminary Discourse to his translation of the Koran.

whose family was of the class called the Most-Arabi, or mixed and naturalized Arabians, the dignity of their connexion with the prophet being accounted sufficient to compensate for the want of perfect purity in descent. Jorham reigned in Hejaz, he was succeeded by Abd-Yalil, Jorsham, Abdolmadan, Nogailah, Abdolmasih, Modad, Amru, and Modad II., a daughter of whom is said to have been married to Ishmael. The sacred history informs us that Hagar took for her son a wife out of the land of Egypt, and probably she was the mother of the twelve heads of tribes already mentioned; but Mussulman historians make no allusion to this alliance. Polygamy was common in that early age, and in that country, so that it is not improbable that Ishmael had more wives than one.

The historian of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, affects to doubt the Ishmaelitish origin of the Arab race. Their derivation however, is too well established to be shaken by the scepticism of a writer, who thinks to invalidate scripture by surrounding its history with the air of fiction. An isolated and independent nation like the Arabs, can of course much more exactly reckon their generations, and trace out their ancestry, than the inhabitants of countries frequently subject to revolutions and conquest can do. Fables may embellish, anachronism may perplex, and fiction multiply the story of their lineage; yet that story is substantially correct. The sturdy tree of the forest may be overgrown and concealed by parasitical plants, whose leaves and flowers make us fancy it only a frail garland of beauty; but remove the parasites—there is the oak. So

whatever the fiction, the embellishments, or even the difficulties which surround the lineage of Arabian tribes: take these away, that lineage remains; the veracity of scripture, and the general interests of history, are in no respects impaired.

The rite of circumcision practised by the Arabians from time immemorial, furnishes no inconsiderable evidence on this subject. This rite, it is well known, was instituted for Abraham and his posterity. Its religious uses we have in this place nothing to do with. The fact of its having been uniformly practised by the Arabians, and that with some circumstances of remarkable difference from the Jewish practiser of the same rite, is at present our only point.

Josephus has a remarkable passage on the origin of circumcision, both among Jews and Arabs; in which, after mentioning the performance of the rite upon the persons of Isaac and Ishmael, he states as a matter of universal and immemorial notoriety, that the Jews and the Arabians severally practised the rite, conformably with the precedents given them, in the persons of their respective fathers. His words are these:—"Now when Sarah had completed her ninetieth, and Abraham his hundredth year, a son (Isaac) is born unto them: whom they forthwith circumcise on the eighth day; and from him the Jews derive their custom of circumcising children after the same interval. But the Arabians administer circumcision at the close of the thirteenth year: for Ishmael the founder of their nation, the son of Abraham by his concubine, was circumcised at that time of life."* Similar to this is the testimony of Origen,

* Ant. Jud. 1. 1. c. 10, § 5.

who wrote in the third century of the Christian era. "The natives of Judea," says he, "generally circumcise their children on the eighth day; but the Ishmaelites who inhabit Arabia, universally practise circumcision in the thirteenth year. For this history tells us concerning them."* This writer, like Josephus, lived near the spot, and had the best opportunities of obtaining correct information respecting the Arabians. So that it is perfectly evident, that at this early period, their derivation from Abraham through Ishmael, was an admitted point of historical record.

To this origin, there are many references in later inspired writers, and particularly in the prophets. Through the long course of sacred history and prophecy, we meet with reiterated allusion to Arabian tribes, as bearing the names of the second sons of Ishmael, among which those of Nebajoth and Kedar usually predominate. Thus the prophet Isaiah, in foretelling the future conversion of the Gentiles, makes mention of "the rams of Nebajoth,"—the eldest, and "all the flocks of Kedar,"—the second, of the sons of Ishmael; that is, of the Arab tribes descended from these brothers; a passage which affords strong proof of their origin. The same prophet, in another part of his predictions, notices "the *cities of the wilderness*, the villages that *Kedar* doth inhabit." And again, when denouncing impending calamity upon the land of Arabia, he foretells how "all the glory of *Kedar* shall fail;" the name of this single tribe being employed as synonymous with that of the entire peninsula. In this connexion the words of

* Orig. Op. tom. ii, p. 16., Ed. Bedred.

the psalmist may be cited:—"Wo is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in *the tents of Kedar*," which are supposed to have been written by David, under the influence of inspiration, as the complaint of the church, labouring and groaning, as it has sometimes done, under the yoke of Mahometan oppression. Jeremiah also mentions Kedar, as "the wealthy nation that dwelleth without care, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone." Ezekiel, moreover, prophesies conjointly of "Arabia and all the princes of *Kedar*." An allusion to Tema, the ninth son of Ishmael, as the name of a warlike people of Arabia, occurs as early as in the book of Job: "The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them." And finally, the tribes sprung from *Jetur* and *Naphish*, the tenth and eleventh sons of Ishmael, are mentioned in the first book of Chronicles, under the name of *Hagarites*, from Hagar, a tolerably plain indication of their descent.

To these proofs moreover, we must add the acknowledged coincidence between the national character of the Arabians in every age, and that of their alleged ancestor. They are a wild race, their hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against him. And to complete the evidence, their own traditions already mentioned, have been constant and unwavering; and these are confirmed by names of countries, and of distinguished individuals, than which there are few landmarks of history more universal, definite, and permanent. It were as reasonable to question the derivation of Hungary from the Huns, France from the Franks, Turkey from the Turks, or Judea from the Jews;

as to doubt whether the several districts of Arabia be in truth denominated after the respective sons of Ishmael.*

To gain for their favourite prophet the greater celebrity, some writers have described him as springing from a low origin, and as left in early life very much without culture. Christian authors for an opposite purpose have repeated these statements. The former will be deemed little worthy of credit, when the Arab chronicles are known to make him the descendant in a direct line of their patriarchal princes, the son of a parent who swayed the sceptre. Still, however, we are liable to some illusion, when from this circumstance, we surround him with pomp, wealth, and power. The Arab princes were not always distinguished in these respects, that people having retained far longer than any other, the simplest form of patriarchal government; so that their chief man or ruler, might be at the same time among the poorest of the tribe. And though it may be granted, that to a very great degree Mahomet was destitute of the advantages of early mental culture; it would admit of question, whether the circumstances of his early history together with a vigorous and reflecting mind, like his, enlarged by travel and observation of mankind, did not greatly tend to supply this deficiency. Upon this question, however, we will not at present enter. Although among the ancient Arabians, the pure doctrines of the patriarchal faith retained considerable power; nay, though perhaps these doctrines were never entirely lost, idolatry and superstition speedily overspread

* See this subject fully discussed in Forster's learned work, *Mahometanism Unveiled*.

the land. Sabaism, the primitive error of those who forsook the worship of the true God, was almost universally practised. One of the fundamental doctrines of this system was the unity of God ; still it permitted divine adoration to be paid to the stars, or to devils, and to intelligences residing in them, and governing the world under the Supreme Deity. The disciples of this system performed many superstitious practices, such as finishing, just as the sun rose, eight adorations, each containing three prostrations, five more exactly at noon, and five at sunset. They offered sacrifices, and went on pilgrimage to several places, among which, according to Mahometan writers, was the very spot still held as peculiarly sacred, where the temple stands at Mecca, and where Ishmael was laid by his mother to die. This temple is said to have been originally consecrated to Saturn, one of the planetary deities of the Ancient Arabians, another built in honour of Venus, occupied the city of Sanaa, the metropolis of Yemen. The Sun, Mercury, and several of the constellations and single stars, as Aldebaran and Sirius, were objects of homage ; and idols representing these and other divinities, received religious adoration. Of these idols, the chief were, All Lattah, All Uzzah, and Manah, female deities mentioned in the Koran. The first had a temple at Naklah, near Taif ; the second was adored by the Koreish, and the third, by the tribes Hodhail and Khozaiah. There are also five other idols specified in the Koran, Wadd, Sawah, Yank, the image of a horse, Narr, that of an eagle, and Taghuth, that of a lion, exceedingly popular in Yemen. On the top of the Kaaba at Mecca, were

placed images of Abraham and Ishmael; and around them, three hundred and sixty inferior deities swarmed, so that in this one city, the Arabs could approach a fresh object of devotion every day in the year. By some tribes, a lump of dough was adored as a divinity; and thus their idolatry symbolized with that of Egypt, where the gods were used at once for worship, and for food. The images which crowded the Arabian pantheon, were innumerable. Every head of a family, every householder, had his tutelary deity, which received when he went abroad his last adieus, and when he returned home, his first salutations. Their children were named after their favourite idols; they gloried in being reckoned the servants and votaries of these deities; and some tribes, as we learn from Porphyry, Procopius, Evagrius, and others, stained their orgies with human blood.*

In later ages, but long previously to Mahomet's birth, many Jews sought an asylum in Arabia, from the troubles afflicting their own country. In Hejaz, they were sufficiently numerous to venture on hostile measures against a viceroy of one of the kings of Yemen, on account of his cruelty. When the monarch came to avenge this insult, the persuasions of the Jews it is said, had such effect upon him, that he not only relinquished the war, but instantly abandoned the absurdities of idol worship, and became a zealous convert to the Mosaic ritual, a change of religion which led to considerable commotions among his subjects. These commotions are said to have been decided in

* Procopius *Bell. Persii*. lib. viii. c. 28. Evagrius lib. vi. c. 21. See also Selden *de Diis Syriis*, and Hyde *Hist. relig. Vet. Pers.* 129.

favour of the Jewish rabbis, in the following manner. In a cavern near his capital, was a subterraneous fire, to which from time immemorial the people had been accustomed to submit all those nice points of difference which could not be decided by ordinary methods—to this in the present case, the appeal was agreed to be carried. The Jewish rabbis entered the cavern, with portions of their holy writings suspended from their necks, and returned untouched by the flames; while the idols, and those by whom they were carried in, were instantly consumed to ashes; an event which of course would be followed with the acknowledgement of the supreme authority of the law of Moses. Who is not aware that Jews can invent fables, in support of the honour of their faith?

Christianity also obtained a footing in several parts of the Arabian peninsula, probably three or four centuries before the birth of Mahomet. Whether the apostle of the Gentiles, or any one of his coadjutors preached there, is uncertain. Some say that Thomas preached in Arabia Felix; and others think that the Christian faith was carried to that country by merchants who had heard Paul during his residence in the kingdom of Gassan, or in their journeys to the fairs of Damascus and Bosra. However introduced, the seeds of truth were widely scattered over these extensive regions, so much so, that in the third century, Origen was invited over from Alexandria by an Arabian prince, and so successful were his preaching and his labours, that by him alone, a whole tribe are said to have been converted.* The persecutions and disorders that

* Euseb. Hist. l. iv. c. 19.

speedily sprung up in the eastern church, obliged great numbers to seek for shelter in Arabia, who probably were deeply tinged with the errors prevalent in the regions they had abandoned. Many embraced their faith ; and so widely did it threaten to prevail, that at length, as the only means of arresting its progress, the advocates of Mosaic institutions, challenged the Christians to a public disputation. This challenge was accepted, and for three days, one Gregentius, bishop of Dhafar, on behalf of the Christians, and one Herbanus on behalf of the Jews, disputed in the open air before the king, the nobility, and great numbers of the people. At length, on the third day, it is said, that Herbanus to end the dispute, demanded that Jesus should appear from heaven in their sight, if he were, as the Christians said he was, actually living, and could hear the prayers of his worshippers : "show us your Christ," said the Jews "and we will become Christians;" whereupon, after a terrible storm of thunder and lightning, he appeared in the air surrounded with rays of glory, walking on a purple cloud, with a diadem of inestimable value on his head, uttering to the astonished assembly these words : " Behold I appear to you in in your sight, I, who was crucified by your fathers ;" after which, he was seen no more. The Christians cried out, *Kyrie Eleeson*, " Lord have mercy ;" the Jews were struck blind, in which condition they remained, till according to their own stipulation, they received Christianity and publicly submitted to its rites.

This story, fabulous as unquestionably it is, shows that Christianity had attracted considerable attention, and, as the event which it records hap-

pened before the birth of Mahomet, and near the very centre of his earliest operations, it is perfectly conceivable that he was not unacquainted with the story. Other events also show that Christianity had, at that time, made considerable progress in Arabia. There were bishops in several places, and, most probably, flourishing churches also, though doubtless they were overrun with the erroneous doctrines and superstitious practices which, even in purer regions, came to be engrafted upon the simple and beautiful system of faith, inculcated by the Son of God. There were Ebionites and Nazarenes, who denied the divinity of Christ; Nestorians, who taught that he not only had two natures, but two persons, and Collyridians, who paid divine honours to the Virgin Mary. The Millenarian, the Manicheean, and the Arian heresies; Eutychians, Gnostics, Montanists, Marcianites, Sabellians, Valentinians, and a host of inferior sects, propagated their respective errors, and contributed to the general corruption.

Political liberty and independence are sure, moreover, to encourage freedom of thought: hence various sects were likely to obtain among the Arabs, who had never submitted either to Judaism or Christianity. Zendicism, a system not very unlike the Sadducee heresy among the Jews, or Deism among ourselves, prevailed chiefly among the Koreish, a sect by no means free from idolatry, but yet setting up for reformers of religion, as well as of language. The Zendicists worshipped but one God—they abjured idols;* yet

* Reland. de Relig. Moham. p. 270; Mill. de Moham. ante Moham. p. 311.

they did not embrace either of the other forms of religious faith prevalent in their country.

If then it be found, as undoubtedly it will be, that the doctrines inculcated and the precepts urged by the founder of the Moslem faith, symbolize to a considerable degree, both with Judaism and Christianity, we are not surprised. This fact, which has occasionally startled less attentive observers, ceases to be wonderful when the religious circumstances of Mahomet's early life are considered.

It seems proper to observe in this place further, that of the arts and accomplishments, on account of which the Arabs mostly prided themselves, eloquence and a perfect skill in their own language was one of the principal. Their fondness for poetry and oratory was excessive. "Fine sentiments," they said, "delivered in prose, were like gems scattered at random, but when confined in poetical measure, they resembled bracelets and strings of pearls." The book of Job in the Old Testament, is probably the most ancient specimen of their art in this department. They paid the greatest attention to its cultivation. Assemblies were held in various districts, where rival poets and orators disputed the palm, like the rival combatants in the Grecian games; and once a-year a general assembly was held at Ocadh,* which lasted for a month, during which time poetical compositions were repeated, and those which were judged to excel were laid up among the royal treasures, with seven celebrated poems, called *Al Modhahebat*, or golden, either from their having

* Poc. Spec. 159.

had the honour of being hung up by public order in the Kaaba, or from their being written on Egyptian silk, in letters of gold.

The language of the pure Arabs, or of the Koreish, is exceedingly copious, flexible, and expressive, so that it admirably adapts itself to such exhibitions. Their periods were full, their expressions elegant, their imagery was chaste and striking, and their proverbial sayings were exceedingly acute. So proud were they of excelling in these arts, that they hardly allowed to any other people an understanding of how to speak in public. The Persians were next to themselves, but greatly inferior. The Koran is written in the Koreish, or classical dialect of the Moslems; but whether this be at all surprising, or calculated to support the pretensions of the prophet to direct intercourse with the Deity, when he belonged to that tribe, and, of course, eagerly cultivated its distinguishing peculiarities, we can be at no loss to determine. This subject, however, will have to be again adverted to. At present, it will be sufficient to remark, that, copious as the language was, its nomenclature was confined, in great measure, to the tablet of memory: its preservation is chiefly owing to the extemporaneous eloquence of an acute, though illiterate people. With all its force and beauty, of which we have no manner of doubt; with its remarkable delicacy, its bold and energetic sublimity, adapted equally to the simple pathos of love, the piquancy of satire, and the loftiest efforts of popular oratory,—it is a singular fact, that its highest elegance and purity were acquired under the tents of wandering shepherds, and by individuals in common life, not at all re-

markable for grammatical skill, and laying no claim to divine inspiration.

CHAPTER III.

Adnan.—The Kaaba, or Temple at Mecca.—Birth of Mahomet.—The Koreish.—Mahomet's most celebrated predecessors.—The prophetic lustre.—Prodigies in connexion with Mahomet's birth and infancy.—Death of his parents.—He is committed by his grandfather to Abu Taleb, his 'uncle.—Boheira or Sergius.—How Mahomet was employed up to his twenty-fifth year.—His marriage with Kadijah.—Account of the mahometan Pilgrimage.

It has been remarked in the former chapter, that the Arab chroniclers trace the descent of their prophet in a direct line from their patriarchal princes, of whom Ishmael is regarded as one of the chief. Who succeeded this son of the faithful patriarch for a few generations—some say forty, others ten, and others a smaller number—there are now no accounts, till we come to Adnan, who is considered to have lived at about 122 years before the Christian era. The story of Arabian writers is, that Abraham, by divine command, built a temple at Mecca, on the spot where his son's life was preserved when apparently perishing with thirst, and that Ishmael was constituted the first high priest of this temple.

As this sacred edifice will have to be frequently mentioned in the following pages, it may be necessary to give a brief account of it.* It was an-

* We are of course compelled, in this description, to take the accounts of the modern temple at Mecca. It is not greatly different, however, from the ancient structure.

ciently called the Kaaba; and, centuries before Mahomet was born, while the Arabs were yet Pagans, this building was held to possess a peculiar sanctity: pilgrimages were made to it from distant regions; and that tribe or family was accounted the most honourable, who were the keepers of its keys. It is an oblong, massive structure, built of large blocks of different sized stones, joined rudely together, and is about eighteen paces in length, fourteen in breadth, and from thirty-five to forty feet in height. It has but one door, on the north side, seven feet above the ground, wholly plated with silver, and embellished with gilt ornaments. From the door's being placed, not in the centre, but near to one corner of the building, it appears not to have been originally designed for a sacred use; but at what time, or for what reasons, it became thus appropriated, it is not possible now to determine. Near the door, in the angle of the wall of the north-east corner of the Kaaba, about seven spans from the ground, is the celebrated "black stone," so devoutly kissed by every pilgrim visiting the sacred city. It is of an oval shape, about seven inches in diameter, composed of about seven small stones, of different sizes and shapes, well joined together with cement, and perfectly smooth; appearing as if the original stone had been broken into many pieces by a violent blow, and then united again, which indeed is reported to have been the fact. A border of some kind of cement, rising a little above the surface of the stone, surrounds it, and both this and the stone are encircled by a silver band.

According to the fabulous legends of the Mussulmans, the "black stone" was brought down

from heaven by Gabriel, at the creation of the world; it was then of a pure white, but it has contracted its present sable hue from the guilt of the sins committed by the sons of men. If a conjecture, however, may be hazarded, we should not hesitate to refer its origin to that peculiar trait in the character of the Ishmaelites, which has ever led them to imitate the Israelites. Scarcely a feature in the religious institutions, usages, or traditions of the Jews, but has its counterpart in those of the seed of Hagar. Jacob's pillar of stone, at Bethel, would of course become celebrated among his descendants. In like manner, from causes now unknown, we may imagine this stone to have received a similar sanctity among the Arabs. This is rendered more probable from the circumstance, that one of the names given to the Kaaba, in the Arabic language, is *Beit-Allah*, *house of God*; a word of the same import and similar sound with Beth-el, from which the Greek term *Baitulia* was frequently applied to sacred stones or memorial pillars, like that of Jacob.

The double roof of the Kaaba is supported within by three octangular pillars of aloes-wood, between which, on a bar of iron, hang a number of silver lamps. The four sides without are covered with a rich black silk stuff hanging down to the ground, and encircled near the top with an embroidered band of gold, which compasses the whole building. This covering, which is renewed every year, was formerly supplied by the Caliphs, afterward by the Sultans of Egypt; but is now sent from Cairo, at the expense of the Grand Seignior, at the time of the Hadj, or pilgrimage, when the old one is cut into small pieces, and sold to the pil-

grims for nearly as much money as the new one costs. This curtain or veil, called *Kesoua*, is blazoned all over with the words, "There is no God but God, and Mahomet is his prophet," in gold letters of great size; and such a sacredness attaches to it, that the camel which transports it to Mecca is ever after exempted from labour. This circumstance of the Kaaba being covered in the manner described, suggests the probability, that the structure was intended as a rude imitation of the Jewish tabernacle, which was also enveloped in embroidered curtains without, while within was a golden candlestick, with seven branches, kept constantly burning.

The Kaaba, at a slight distance, is surrounded with a circular inclosure of thirty-two slender gilt pillars, between every two of which are suspended seven lamps, upon small bars of silver, connecting the pillars towards the top. These lamps are always lighted after sunset. This sacred paling reminds us again of the tabernacle; the court of which, though of an oblong instead of a circular form, was constructed of pillars, and hung with curtains, with only a single place of entrance. Within this inclosure of the Kaaba, and almost contiguous to its base, lies the "white stone," said to be the sepulchre of Ishmael, which receives the rain-water falling off the flat roof of the edifice through a spout, formerly of wood, but now of gold. According to the account of Burckhardt, the effect of the whole scene, the mysterious drapery, the profusion of gold and silver, the blaze of lamps, and the kneeling multitudes, surpasses any thing the imagination could have pictured.

At a small distance from the Kaaba, on the east side, is the station or place of Abraham, whom the Arabs affirm to have been the builder of the temple, where there is another stone much respected by the Moslems, as they pretend that the patriarch stood upon it while employed about the building, and profess to show the prints of his footsteps to this day. Just without the circular court, on its south, north, and west sides, are three buildings designed as oratories, or places of prayer, where the pilgrim worshippers perform their devotions. Besides these, there are several small buildings near to the main structure, in one of which is the famous well of Zemzem, said by the Mussulmans to be the very spring which the angel discovered to Hagar in the wilderness, and whose waters of course possess the most miraculous virtues. They cure all diseases, both of body and spirit, and supply the whole town for drinking and oblation. It is said to be the only sweet water in the whole valley; but Pitts, an English traveller, found it brackish, and says, the pilgrims drink it so inordinately, that "they are not only much purged, but their flesh breaks out all in pimples; and this they called the purging of their spiritual corruption." They not only drink, but have buckets of water poured over them, and then think their sins are washed into the well. One of the miracles of Mecca is, that the water of this well never diminishes; but this is not surprising to the true believers, who regard it as having been miraculously created to save the infant Ishmael when dying of thirst in the wilderness. Burckhardt, however, explains it without a miracle, by supposing that the water flows

through the bottom, being supplied by a subterraneous rivulet. The water, he says, is perfectly sweet, but heavy to the taste, slightly tepid, and sometimes in its colour resembles milk. The pilgrims frequently destroy the ropes, buckets, and other appendages of the well in their eagerness to quaff its holy water.

Surrounding all the objects now described, which occupy the centre of an open space, is the square colonnade or grand piazza, consisting of a quadruple row of columns on one side, and a triple row on the other three sides, united by pointed or Gothic arches, every four of which support a dome, plastered white—the number of these domes amounting to one hundred and fifty-two, and the pillars to four hundred and forty-eight. From the arches of these colonnades are suspended lamps, some of which are lighted every night, and the whole of them during the nights of the Ramadan. The columns are upwards of twenty feet high, and somewhat more than a foot and a half in diameter; some are of a reddish-grey granite, some of red porphyry, and others of white marble. No two capitals or bases are exactly alike; in some cases, by the ignorance of the workmen, the former have been placed upside down on the shafts. The arches, and some parts of the walls are gaudily painted in stripes of yellow, red, and blue, colours peculiar to Mahometanism. At each of the four corners of this immense quadrangular court, towering above the pillared domes, rises a lofty minaret, surmounted with a gilded crescent, the invariable accompaniment of the Moslem temple.

“The high antiquity of the Kaaba,” says Mr.

Forster,* "is undisputed. The permanent character of its rites is certified by our knowledge of the adherence of the Arabs, in every age, to their ancient customs. But, from the uniform consent of Mahometan writers, it farther appears that the statues of Abraham and Ishmael, which from remote antiquity had held a conspicuous place in the Kaaba, and constituted the principal object of its idol worship, remained to the time of Mahomet, and were there found by the Mussulmans after the capture of Mecca. Mahomet, Abulfeda tells us, when he took Mecca in the eighth year of the Hejira, found and destroyed in the Kaaba, on his entering the temple, the image of Abraham holding in his hand seven arrows without heads or feathers, such as the Arabs use in divination, and surrounded with a great number of angels and prophets, as inferior deities, among whom, as Al Janabi and other writers add, was Ishmael with divining arrows also in his hand.

Various external signs, betokening its patriarchal origin, may be traced in the Anti-Mahometan worship of the Kaaba. Among these, one custom is sufficiently remarkable to claim distinct notice in this place, inasmuch as it has been alluded to and censured in the Koran.† The pagan Arabs were used to compass the Kaaba naked, because clothes, they said, were the signs of their disobedience to God. The celebrated black stone of the Kaaba also, the primitive source and object of Arabian idolatry, strongly indicates the origin to which it has been uniformly referred. The Arabs attribute its introduction into the tem-

* Mahom. Unveiled, vol. ii. p. 404.

† Chap. vii.

ple of Mecca to the immediate posterity of Ishmael. The peculiar kind of superstition is just what might be expected to arise from the abuse of an early patriarchal custom—that of setting up stones on particular spots in honour of the true God.*

It is said that at the solemn assemblies at this temple Ishmael continued to preach and offer instructions for half a century to incredulous Arabs; and that he died at the age of one hundred and thirty-seven, just forty-eight years after the death of Abraham. Twenty-seven centuries afterwards, they say, Mahomet was born; or as near as can be ascertained, in the 570th year of the Christian era. His place of birth was Mecca, and his pedigree is traced to the second son of Ishmael, who, by some means had obtained the honour which more properly belonged to his elder brother. The Jorhamites seized and enjoyed, for three centuries, the sovereignty in the sacred city and temple; but having greatly corrupted the true worship, they were at length assailed by the scimitars of the legitimate successors of Ishmael, and by the judgments of heaven, so as to have been finally destroyed; but not before they had committed great indignities against the hallowed spot. The well Zemzem they filled up by throwing into it the treasures and sacred utensils of the temple; the black stone encased in the walls of the building on which Abraham had stood to offer his supplications; the image of the ram, substituted according to sacred story, for Isaac, on Mount Moriah; and various other articles, at once the pro-

* See a description of the pilgrimage to Mecca, at the end of this chapter.

ductions and the objects of superstitious devotion. The descendants of Ishmael for many centuries retained the power they had regained; but who they were, and what the circumstances of their reigns respectively, cannot be recovered. The tenth of Adnan's successors, who, allowing three and thirty years to each, as the average duration of their supremacy, may be supposed to have swayed the sceptre about A.D. 208, was surnamed Koreish the Courageous, on account of his boldness in defending the temple from the daring insults of infidel tribes. In its services, probably some traces of patriarchal worship remained, and hence the epithet Koreish came to distinguish a tribe especially zealous for the purity of the Arab faith, and the honour of the sacred edifice. It was used as a proud distinction of all who thenceforward occupied the seat of supreme dignity in the city of Mecca. Of these there were ten, the last being the father of Mahomet. Their names were Galeb, Lowa, Caab, Morra, Kelab, Kosa, Abdolmenaf, Hashem, Abdol Motalleb, and Abdallah. Hashem is said to have surpassed all his predecessors in grandeur and magnificence. He was of unbounded wealth, and equal generosity, keeping a well-stored table, to which, whether in times of plenty or scarcity, all were equally welcome. His caravans were sent annually to Syria and Yemen to procure provisions, which were distributed with so lavish a bounty as to place the poor on an equal footing with their richer neighbours. The emperor of Rome is said to have sought alliance with him by offering him his daughter in marriage; which, however, the haughty Arab refused, alleging that the pure

blood of the Koreish, the servants and apostles of God, ought not to be mingled with that of the heathen. His son, Abdol Motaleb was equally generous, carrying his profuse bounty to the extravagant pitch of spreading on the tops of the mountains food for beasts and birds. Hospitality, it must be remembered, always ranked in the estimation of Arabs, among the greatest virtues. He is said to have found and restored the lost treasures and sacred utensils of the Kaaba, the gold of which, however, he melted down to gild the walls of the sacred edifice. Abdallah, the father of Mahomet, was a younger son of Abdol Motaleb, from whom, on that account, the prophet would probably have inherited no particular dignity, neither Abdallah nor Mahomet seems to have affected civil rule, this belonged to an elder son of Abdol Motaleb. From Hashem, already mentioned, the appellation of Hashemites is bestowed upon the kindred of the prophet; and even to this day, the chief magistrate, both at Mecca and Medina, who must always be of the race of Mahomet, is invariably styled "the Prince of the Hashemites." The name of Mahomet's mother was Amina, whose parentage was traceable also to a distinguished family of the same tribe. Her lot was envied in gaining the hand of the son of Abdol Motaleb, as the surpassing beauty of his person is said to have ravished the hearts of a hundred maidens of Arabia, who were left, by his choice of Amina, to sigh over the wreck of their fondest hopes.

Abdallah, though the son of a rich and princely father, was possessed of but little wealth; and as he died while his son was an infant, or, as some

say, before he was born, it is probable that that little was seized with the characteristic rapacity of the Arabs, and shared among his twelve surviving brothers, the powerful uncles of Mahomet.

According to a tradition universally received among Mahometans, all the lineal ancestors of their prophet were distinguished from collateral tribes by an extraordinary prophetic light resting upon them. This miraculous lustre, they say, was first placed upon Adam, after his repentance, and from him it descended to Seth, Noah, Shem, &c. distinguishing every true prophet. The hallowed radiance at length rested upon the head of Abraham, from whom it was divided into a two-fold emanation, the greater or clearer descending upon Isaac and his seed, the less or obscurer to Ishmael and his posterity. The light in the family of Isaac is represented as having been perpetuated in a constant glow through a long line of inspired messengers and prophets, among the children of Israel. All the progenitors of Mahomet bore this celestial imprint, faint or splendid, according to their respective faith and virtues. It did not, however, always follow the rule of primogeniture; and, as it distinguished all the progenitors of the prophet, it is pretty evident that it was no very trusty index of personal excellence. Many of them, according to whatever rule they are estimated, were individuals of exceedingly questionable character.

To render Mahomet equally marvellous with Moses, the prophet of the Jewish faith, or with Christ, the founder of the Christian, Arabian writers have reported a tissue of astonishing prodigies, said to have occurred in connexion with

his birth. If the reader will receive their statements with the same implicit faith with which they are delivered, he must acknowledge, that at the moment when the favoured infant was ushered into the world, a flood of light burst forth with him and illuminated every part of Syria; that the waters of the lake Sawa were entirely dried up, so that a city was built upon its bottom; that an earthquake threw down fourteen towers of the king of Persia's palace; that the sacred fire of the Persians was extinguished, and all the evil spirits which had inhabited the moon and stars were expelled together from their celestial abodes, nor could they ever after animate idols or deliver oracles on earth. The child, also, if we may trust to the same authorities, discovered the most wonderful presages. He was no sooner born than he fell prostrate, in a posture of humble adoration, praying devoutly to his Creator, and saying, "God is great! there is no God but God, and I am his prophet!" By these and many other supernatural signs, equally astounding, is the prophet's nativity said to have been marked. To some of them it would indeed appear that the earlier Christians gave an honest credence; with this difference, however, between their belief and that of the Mahometans, that while the latter ascribed them, without hesitation, to the hand of God, giving in this manner a gracious attestation to the prophetic character of his servant, the former referred them directly to the agency of the devil, who might naturally be supposed, they thought, to work some special wonders on the present occasion. Upon the narrative of these miraculous phenomena the reader will form his own judgment. They are

mentioned, in the absence of all authentic information, touching the period and the event in question. Until the facts alleged are proved, by competent historical testimony, to have taken place, it is scarcely necessary to call in the aid of divine or diabolical agency to account for them; as it is much easier to imagine that an imposition or illusion may have been practised upon the first reporters, or that the whole catalogue of wonders is a mere fabrication of interested partisans, than that the ordinary course of nature should have been disturbed at this crisis.

The Arabic biographers of the prophet, moreover, inform us that Abdol Motaleb, his grandfather, the seventh day after the birth of the child, gave a great entertainment, to which he invited the principal men of the Koreish, who, after the repast was over, desired him to give the infant a name. Abdol Motaleb immediately replied—"I name this child Mohammed."* The Koreish grandees at once expressed their surprise that he did not call his grandson, according to custom, by a name which had belonged to some one of the family. But he persisted in the selection he had made, saying, "May the Most High glorify in Heaven him whom he has created on earth!" alluding to the name Mohammed,* which signifies *praised* or *glorified*.

Within a short time after the death of Abdallah, the father of Mahomet, his mother also

* Mohammed, the past participle of the verb Hamad, signifying "praised," or most glorious. There is little doubt that this is the true orthography of the name, but throughout this work we have used Mahomet, as somewhat more accustomed to our English ears.

died, so that he was cast a helpless orphan upon the kindness of his relations. He was taken into the house and family of his grandfather, under whose guardian care, however, he remained but two years, when the venerable Motalleb himself was also called to pay the debt of nature. In a dying charge, he confided this tender plant of the ancient stock of the Koreish to the faithful hands of Abu Taleb, the eldest of his sons and the successor of his authority. "My dearest, best beloved son"—thus history or tradition reports the tenor of his instructions—"to thy charge I leave Mahomet, the son of thine own brother, strictly recommended, whose natural father the Lord hath been pleased to take to himself, with the intent that this dear child should become ours by adoption: and much dearer ought he to be unto us than merely an adopted son. Receive him, therefore, at my dying hands, with the same sincere love and tender bowels with which I deliver him to thy care. Honour, love, and cherish him as much, or even more than if he had sprung from thine own loins; for all the honour thou showest unto him shall be trebled unto thee. Be more than ordinarily careful in thy treatment towards him, for it will be repaid thee with interest. Give him the preference before thine own children, for he exceedeth them and all mankind in excellency and perfection. Take notice, that whensoever he calleth upon thee, thou answer him not as an infant, as his tender age may require, but as thou wouldst reply to the most aged and venerable person when he asketh thee any question. Sit not down to thy repasts of any sort soever, either alone or in company, till thy worthy nephew Mahomet

is seated at the table before thee ; neither do thou ever offer to taste of any kind of viands, or even to stretch forth thine hand towards the same, until he hath tasted thereof. If thou observest these my injunctions, thy goods shall always increase, and in nowise be diminished.*

Whether Abu Taleb recognised in the deposit thus solemnly committed to his trust an object of such high destiny and such profound veneration as his father's language would imply, we are not informed ; but there is good evidence that he acted towards his nephew the part of a kind friend and protector, giving him an education, scanty indeed, but equal to that usually received by his countrymen.

Of the infancy, childhood, and youth of the future prophet no authentic details have reached us. The blank has indeed been copiously supplied by the fabulous legends of his votaries, but as they are utterly void of authority, they will not repay the trouble of transcribing. Being destined by his uncle to the profession of a merchant, he was taken, as some affirm, at the age of thirteen, into Syria, with Abu Taleb's trading caravan, in order to his being perfected in the business of his intended vocation. Upon the simple circumstance of this journey, the superstition of his followers has grafted a series of miraculous omens, all portending his future greatness. Among other things, it is said, that upon his arriving at Bozrah, a certain man named Boheira, a Nestorian monk, who is thought by Prideaux to be other-

* Morgan's Mahom. Explained, vol. i. p. 50.

wise called Sergius, advanced through the crowd collected in the market-place, and, seizing him by the hand, exclaimed, "There will be something wonderful in this boy; for when he approached he appeared covered with a cloud." He is said to have affirmed also that the dry trees under which he sat were everywhere instantly covered with green leaves, which served him for a shade; and that the mystic seal of prophecy was impressed between his shoulders, in the form of a small luminous excrescence. According to others, instead of a bright cloud being the criterion by which his subsequent divine mission was indicated, the mark by which Boheira knew him was the prophetic light which shone upon his face.

When Abu Taleb was about to return with his caravan to Mecca, Boheira, it is said, again repeated his solemn premonition, coupled with a charge, respecting the extraordinary youth. "Depart with this child, and take great care that he does not fall into the hands of the Jews; for your nephew will one day become a very wonderful person."

This Boheira is the individual who, according to some writers, instructed Mahomet in the histories and doctrines of the Bible, and also in those corrupted forms of Christian truth and practice then prevailing among the Syrian monks. They go indeed so far, as to intimate, that between the artful monk and his pupil, a concerted plan was formed for creating a new religion, a motley compound of Judaism and Christianity, which was not to be brought to light for some twenty years; when accordingly it came out in some of the earliest chapters of the Koran. They attribute the

production of this work rather to the monk than to Mahomet.

It is scarcely probable however, that a youth of only thirteen years, should have been a party in so vast,—and as to a virtuous mind, it must have seemed—so wicked a design. He might have been of a contemplative, studious, and superstitious turn; the discourses of Sergius might have arrested his attention, and produced a considerable effect upon his subsequent inquiries and meditations; they might have suggested the ideas, which afterwards ripened into the form they take in that celebrated work; and possibly he might afterwards be assisted by instructions from the more artful and designing monk, or from some brother of a similar character, perhaps this can never be ascertained; it is perfectly incredible, that at so early a period of life, a dependent youth could have conceived, or entertained when it was suggested to him, a project so magnificent, and withal so perilous.

The intervening period of Mahomet's life, up to his twenty-fifth year, is wrapped in impenetrable obscurity. Some writers have made him a soldier, and some have described him as engaged in hunting, and in the manly pastimes of the field, while a few have carried him through various voyages and travels all over the east. It is not improbable, that in the first of these capacities, he did render considerable service to his uncle, who, in common with all Arab princes, held an envied and precarious dignity. The Kenan and Hawazan tribes, were rivals to the Koreish; and the statements of some writers, that Abu Taleb employed the talents and courage of his nephew against these tribes, is at least not incredible;

though, as they are not authenticated by well informed Arab writers, we are not inclined to repeat them. In after life Mahomet discovered a skill and prowess which would seem to require, that at some period in his early history, he should have been in a situation to gain the rudiments of military knowledge.

Chiefly employed in mercantile pursuits, as he advanced in years, there is reason to believe that his personal endowments, which were doubtless of a superior order, together with strong native powers of intellect, an acute observation, a ready wit, and pleasing address, combined, to render him both popular and prominent among his associates. Such, at least, is the concurrent testimony of all his biographers, and we have no means of invalidating their statements. It is, however, natural to suppose, that a strong colouring would be put upon every superior quality of a pretended messenger of God, sent to restore the true religion to the world ; and that he, who was by character a prophet, should be represented by his adherents as a paragon of all external perfections. About this period, by the assistance of his uncle, he was entered into the service of a rich trading widow of his native city, who had been twice married, and whose name was Kadijah. In the capacity of factor or agent to this his wealthy employer, he took a second journey of three years into Damascus and the neighbouring regions of Syria, in which he devoted himself so assiduously to the interests of Kadijah, and managed the trust committed to him so entirely to her satisfaction, that upon his return, she rewarded his fidelity with the gift of her hand and her fortune. It may be

imagined, that in entering into this alliance, she was probably influenced by the family connexions and the personal attractions of her suitor. But whatever were her motives, the union subsequently appears to have been one of genuine affection on both sides; Mahomet never forgot the favours he had received from his benefactress, and never made her repent of having placed her person and her fortune at his absolute disposal. Although Kadijah, at the time of her marriage, was forty, and Mahomet not more than twenty-eight, yet till the age of sixty-four, when she died, she enjoyed the undivided affection of her husband; and that too in a country where polygamy was allowed, and very frequently practised. By her he had eight children, of whom Fatima alone, his eldest daughter, survived him. And such was the prophet's respect to the memory of his wife, that after her death he placed her in the rank of the four perfect women.

The nuptials of the prophet and his bride, were celebrated with great festivity, mirth, music, and dancing. Heaven, it is said, was filled with unwonted joy, and the whole earth was intoxicated with delight. Arab writers would have us believe, that a voice from the skies pronounced the union happy; that the boys and girls of Paradise were led out on the joyous occasion in their bridal robes; that the hills and valleys capered for gladness at the sounds of unearthly music; and that fragrance was breathed through all nature. The uncle of Mahomet, who had been the means of introducing him to Kadijah, and the chief men of the Koreish were present at the festival. Abu Taleb paid the dowry

in twenty ounces of gold, or, as some say, in twenty camels; and doubtless the union was regarded by all parties, as exceedingly happy.

It is said indeed, that the father of the bride was unwilling that his wealthy daughter should fall into the hands of a commercial agent, a driver of camels, and a menial servant of her own. There can however, be no reason for such an unwillingness. Mahomet, it must be remembered, was the representative of the most distinguished family, of the most renowned of all the Arab tribes. He was the grandson of the prince of Kadijah's father, —young, handsome, and affectionate. His occupation was no dishonour. The noblest and the bravest engaged in it. Sovereigns reckoned it no indignity to command their own caravans; the passage of which, to and fro, was not merely an affair of merchandize; it was a military expedition, the robbers of the desert, a formidable and well disciplined body, being the foes against whom the caravan had to be defended. The finances of state, and the freedom of trade, were both so intimately connected with the merchandize thus conducted, that to repel all troublesome and rapacious aggressions upon it, was to perform the most important duties. We must not therefore hastily admit what writers, whether Arab or Christian, may have written on this subject. The object of the one was unduly to exalt; of the other, unduly to depress and degrade the celebrated subject of these pages.

Whether Mahomet continued to follow his mercantile pursuits after his marriage, and, if he did, for how long, are questions which we cannot solve, and if we could, no importance would be due to

the solution. He seems to have cherished domestic virtues, and thus contributed to the happiness of his wife. Her wealth restored him to the splendour of his ancestors; he was among the richest men of Mecca; and whether or not his subsequent ambition had already begun to fire his soul, his freedom from all worldly anxieties left him very much at leisure. He could either be retired and studious, or active and employed, as should best suit his inclination. How he did employ himself future chapters will disclose.

ACCOUNT OF THE MAHOMETAN PILGRIMAGE.

In connexion with the account given in the preceding chapter of the Kaaba, the place of the Moslem solemnities, the reader may be interested by the following animated sketch of the Pilgrimage to Mecca, from the Review (in the Quarterly) of Burckhardt's Travels in Arabia.

“At a certain distance from the Holy City, all pilgrims are required to strip themselves naked, throwing away their garments, and put on the *ihram*, or *ehram*, two pieces of linen or cotton cloth, generally white, one of them wrapped round the loins, the other thrown loosely over the neck and shoulders, while the head remains wholly uncovered. Burckhardt at once complied with this custom, which has occasioned the death of many; for when the pilgrimage happens in winter, the assumption of the *ihram* is extremely prejudicial to the most robust constitution,—more especially to that of the northern Mussulmans, who have been accustomed to thick woollen clothes; ‘yet,’ says Burckhardt, ‘the religious zeal of some who visit the Hedjaz is so ardent, that if they arrive

several months previous to the Hadj, they vow, on taking the *ihram*, not to throw it off till after the completion of their pilgrimage to Arafat.' It is said, that Haroun Al Raschid and his wife Zobeyda once performed the pilgrimage on foot from Bagdad to Mecca, clothed only with the *ihram*; but indulged in the luxury of walking on splendid carpets the whole way.

"The ancient Arabs, who reckoned time by lunar months, and intercalated a month every three years, had the pilgrimage fixed to a certain season, for the Hadj is not a Mussulman invention; but but when Mahomet ordained that the same pilgrimage should be continued, in honour of the living God, which for ages before him, had been, in forgetfulness of the original patriarchal faith of the race, performed in honour of senseless idols, he prescribed the ceremony to a particular lunar month; and as the modern Arabs do not intercalate, its periodical returns became irregular, and in thirty-three years shifted through all the months of the year, from the height of summer to the depth of winter.

"On entering Mecca, the temple or mosque must be immediately visited, whether the stranger be pilgrim or not. The prescribed ceremonies are, first; to repeat certain prayers, in different parts of the temple; then to begin the *towaf*, or walk round the Kaaba seven times, kissing the black stone at each circuit; then to proceed to the well of Zemzem, and drink as much water as they wish or can get: The second ceremony which the pilgrim has to perform is, to proceed to the hill of Szafa, and there repeat certain prescribed prayers before he sets out on the holy walk, or *say*, which is along a

level spot, about six hundred paces in length, terminating at a stone platform, called Meroua. This walk, which in certain places must be a run, is to be repeated seven times, the pilgrims reciting prayers uninterruptedly, with a loud voice the whole time. The third ceremony is that of shaving the head and walking to the Omra, about one hour and a half from Mecca, chanting pious ejaculations all the way. The two former ceremonies must, after this, be again repeated. The walk round the Kaaba seven times may be repeated as oft as the pilgrim thinks fit, and the more frequently the more meritorious.

“About seventy thousand persons assembled at Mecca, when Burckhardt made his pilgrimage, and submitted to the performance of these ceremonies. This is the least number which the Mussulmans told Ali Bey there must necessarily be assembled at every pilgrimage, on Mount Arafat; and that in case any deficiency should occur, angels are sent down from heaven to complete the number. Pitts says precisely the same thing. When Ali Bey went through this part of the ceremony, he tells us, an assemblage of eighty thousand men, two thousand women, and one thousand little children, with sixty or seventy thousand camels, asses, and horses, marched through the narrow valley leading from Arafat, in a cloud of dust, carrying a forest of lances, guns, swivels, &c., and yet no accident occurred that he knew of, except to himself,—he received, it seems, a couple of wounds in his leg. One would have thought that Burckhardt's seventy thousand was a prodigious number; yet he tells us, that two only of the five or six regular caravans made their ap-

pearance this year,—the Syrian and the Egyptian. About four thousand pilgrims from Turkey came by sea ; and perhaps half as many from other distant quarters of the Mahometan world. The Syrian was always considered the most numerous. It is stated, that when the mother of Motessem b'illah, the last of the Abassides, performed the pilgrimage in the year of the Hejira 631, her caravan was composed of one hundred and twenty thousand camels,—that in 1814 consisted of not more than four or five thousand persons, and fifteen thousand camels. Barthema states the Cairo caravan, when he was at Mecca, to have amounted to sixty-four thousand camels ;—in 1814 the same caravan consisted mostly of Mahomet Ali's troops, with very few pilgrims. But Burckhardt says, that in 1816, a single grandee of Cairo joined the Hadj with one hundred and ten camels, for the transport of his baggage and retinue, whose travelling expenses alone, he supposes, could not have been less than ten thousand pounds. The tents and equipage of the public women and dancing girls were among the most splendid in this caravan. The Moggrebyn (i. e. *Western*, or *Barbary*) caravan, comprised, of late years, altogether from six to eight thousand men (it has been forty thousand) ; in the year 1814 very few joined it. The Eastern caravan of this year consisted chiefly of a large party of Malays from Java, Sumatra, and the Malabar coast. A solitary Afghan pilgrim, an old man of extraordinary strength, had walked all the way from Cabul to Mecca, and intended to return in the same manner. Vast numbers of Bedouins flock to Mecca at the time of the pilgrimage ; and others from every part of

Arabia. Many of these pilgrims depend entirely for subsistence, both on the journey and at Mecca, on begging; others bring some small productions from their respective countries for sale. ;

“The Moggrebins, for example, bring their red bonnets and woollen cloaks; the European Turks, shoes and slippers, hardware, embroidered stuffs, sweetmeats, amber, trinkets of European manufacture, knit silk purses, &c.; the Turks of Anatolia bring carpets, silks, and Angora shawls; the Persians, Cashmere shawls and large silk handkerchiefs; the Afghans, tooth-brushes made of the spongy boughs of a tree growing in Bokhara, beads of a yellow soapstone, and plain coarse shawls, manufactured in their own country; the Indians, the numerous productions of their rich and extensive region; the people of Yemen, snakes for the Persian pipes, sandals, and various other works in leather; and the Africans bring various articles adapted to the slave trade.

“When all the required ceremonies have been gone through at Mecca, the whole concourse of pilgrims repair together on a certain day to Mount Arafat, some on camels, some on mules, or asses, and the greater number barefooted, this being the most meritorious way of performing a journey of eighteen or twenty miles. ‘We were several hours,’ says Burckhardt, ‘before we could reach the outskirts of the town, so great was the crowd of camels. Of the half-naked Hadjis, all dressed in the white *ihram*—some sat on their camels, mules, or asses, reading the Koran,—some ejaculated loud prayers, while others cursed their drivers, and quarrelled with those near them, who were choking up the passages.’ Having cleared a

narrow pass in the mountains, the plain of Arafat opened out. Here the different caravans began to disperse in search of places to pitch their tents. Hadjis were seen in every direction wandering among the tents in search of their companions, whom they had lost in the confusion along the road; and it was several hours before the noise and clamour had subsided.

“In the morning, Burckhardt ascended the summit of Mount Arafat, from whence he counted about three thousand tents, dispersed over the plain, of which two-thirds belonged to the two Hadj caravans, and to the suite and soldiers of Mahomet Ali; but the greater number of the assembled multitudes ‘were,’ says our traveller, ‘like myself, without tents.’ Those of the wife of Mahomet Ali, the mother of Tousoun and Ibrahim Pasha, were magnificent, the transport of her baggage alone, from Djidda to Mecca, having required five hundred camels.

“‘Her tent was in fact an encampment, consisting of a dozen tents of different sizes, inhabited by her women; the whole inclosed by a wall of linen cloth, eight hundred paces in circuit, the single entrance of which was guarded by eunuchs in splendid dresses. Around this inclosure were pitched the tents of the men who formed her numerous suite. The beautiful embroidery on the exterior of this linen palace, with the various colours displayed in every part of it, constituted an object which reminded me of some descriptions in the Arabian Tales of a Thousand and One Nights.’

“Mr. Burckhardt says, he estimated the number of persons assembled on the plain at seventy thousand; but whether any, or how many of them,

were supplied by 'angels,' he does not say: it is, however, deserving of remark, that he is the *third* traveller who mentions the same number. This enormous mass, after washing and purifying the body according to law, or going through the motions where water was not to be had, now pressed forwards towards the mountain of Arafat, and covered its sides from top to bottom. At the appointed hour, the Cadi of Mecca took his stand on a stone platform on the top of the mountain, and began his sermon, to which the multitude appeared to listen in solemn and respectful silence. At every pause, however, the assembled multitudes waved the skirts of their *ihrams* over their heads, and rent the air with shouts of 'Lebeyk, allahuma lebeyk!'—'Here we are, at thy commands, O God!' 'During the waving of the *ihrams*,' says Burkhardt, 'the side of the mountain, thickly crowded as it was by the people in their white garments, had the appearance of a cataract of water; while the green umbrellas, with which several thousand hadjis, sitting on their camels below, were provided, bore some resemblance to a verdant plain.' The assemblage of such a multitude,—to every outward appearance humbling themselves in prayer and adoration before God,—must be an imposing and impressive spectacle to him who first observes it, whether Mahometan, Christian, Jew, or Pagan. 'It was a sight, indeed,' says Pitts, 'able to pierce one's heart, to behold so many in their garments of humility and mortification, with their naked heads and cheeks watered with tears, and to hear their grievous sighs and sobs, begging earnestly for the remission of their sins.' Burkhardt mentions the first ar-

rival of a black Darfoor pilgrim at the temple, at the time when it was illuminated; and from eight to ten thousand persons in the act of adoration, who was so overawed, that, after remaining prostrate for some time, 'he burst into a flood of tears; and in the height of his emotion, instead of reciting the usual prayers of the visitor, only exclaimed,—“O God! now take my soul, for this is paradise!”

“As the sun descended behind the western mountains, the Cadi shut his book: instantly the crowds rushed down the mountains: the tents were struck, and the whole mass of pilgrims moved forward, across the plain, on their return. Thousands of torches were now lighted; volleys of artillery and of musketry were fired: sky-rockets innumerable were let off; the Pasha's band of music were played till they arrived at a place called Mezdelfê, when every one lay down on the bare ground, where he could find a spot. Here another sermon was preached, commencing with the first dawn, and continuing till the first rays of the sun appear, when the multitude again move forward, with a slow pace, to Wady Muna, about three miles off. This is the scene for the ceremony of 'throwing stones at the devil;' every pilgrim must throw seven little stones at three several spots in the valley of Muna, or twenty-one in the whole; and at each throw repeat the words, 'In the name of God; God is great; we do this to secure ourselves from the devil and his troops.' Joseph Pitts says, 'as I was going to throw the stones, a facetious hadji met me: saith he, “You may save your labour at present, if you please, for I have hit out the devil's eyes already.”' The pilgrims

are here shown a rock, with a deep split in the middle, which was made by the angel turning aside the knife of Abraham, when he was about to sacrifice his son Isaac. Pitts, on being told this, observes, 'it must have been a good stroke indeed.' The pilgrims are taught also to believe, that the custom of 'stoning the devil' is to commemorate the endeavour of his satanic majesty to dissuade Isaac from following his father, and whispering in his ear that he was going to slay him.

"This 'stoning' in the valley of Muna occupies a day or two, after which comes the grand sacrifice of animals, some brought by the several hadjis, others purchased from the Bedouins for the occasion; the throats of which must always be cut with their faces towards the Kaaba. At the pilgrimage in question, the number of sheep thus slaughtered, 'in the name of the most merciful God,' is represented as small, amounting only to between six and eight thousand. The historian Kotobeddyn, quoted by Burckhardt, relates, that when the Caliph Mokteda performed the pilgrimage, in the year of the Hejira 350, he sacrificed on this occasion forty thousand camels and cows, and fifty thousand sheep. Barthema talks of thirty thousand oxen being slain, and their carcasses given to the poor, who appeared to him 'more anxious to have their bellies filled than their sins remitted.' One is at a loss to imagine where, in such a miserable country, all these thousands and tens of thousands of camels, cows, and sheep can possibly be subsisted; the numbers may be exaggerated, but there is no question of their being very great. The feast being ended, all the

pilgrims had their heads shaved, threw off the *ihram*, and resumed their ordinary clothing; a larger fair was now held, the valley blazed all night with illuminations, bonfires, the discharge of artillery, and fireworks; and the hadjis then returned to Mecca. Many of the poorer pilgrims, however, remained to feast on the offals of the slaughtered sheep. At Mecca, the ceremonies of the Kaaba and the Drura were again to be repeated, and then the hadj was truly performed. Burckhardt makes no mention of any females becoming hadjis by a visit to Arafat, though Ali Bey talks of two thousand. There is no absolute prohibition, but from what follows, no great encouragement for the fair sex to go through the ceremonies.

“The Mahometan law prescribes, that no unmarried woman shall perform the pilgrimage; and that even every married woman must be accompanied by her husband, or at least by a very near relation (the Shaffay sect does not even allow the latter). Female hadjis sometimes arrive from Turkey for the hadj; rich old widows, who wish to see Mecca before they die; or women who set out with their husbands, and lose them on the road by disease. In such cases, the female finds at Djidda *delyls* (or, as this class is called, *Muhallil*) ready to facilitate their progress through the sacred territory in the character of husbands. The marriage contract is written out before the *Kadhy*; and the lady, accompanied by her *delyl*, performs the pilgrimage to Mecca, Arafat, and all the sacred places. This, however, is understood to be merely a nominal marriage; and the *delyl* must divorce the woman on his return to Djidda:

if he were to refuse a divorce, the law cannot compel him to it, and the marriage would be considered binding; but he could no longer exercise the lucrative profession of delyl; and my informant could only recollect two examples of the delyl continuing to be the woman's husband. I believe there is not any exaggeration of the number, in stating that there are eight hundred full-grown delyls, besides boys who are learning the profession. Whenever a shop-keeper loses his customers, or a poor man of letters wishes to procure as much money as will purchase an Abyssinian slave, he turns delyl. The profession is one of little repute; but many a prosperous Meccawy has, at some period of his life, been a member of it.'

"Burckhardt remained at Mecca a whole month after the conclusion of the hadj, at which time it appeared like a deserted town.

"Of its brilliant shops one-fourth only remained; and in the streets, where a few weeks before it was necessary to force one's way through the crowd, not a single hadji was seen, except solitary beggars, who raised their plaintive voices towards the windows of the houses which they supposed to be still inhabited. Rubbish and filth covered all the streets, and nobody appeared disposed to remove it. The skirts of the town were crowded with the dead carcasses of camels, the smell from which rendered the air, even in the midst of the town, offensive, and certainly contributed to the many diseases now prevalent.'

"Disease and mortality, which succeed to the fatigues endured on the journey, or are caused by the light covering of the ihram; the unhealthy lodgings at Mecca, the bad fare, and sometimes

absolute want, fill the mosque with dead bodies carried thither to receive the Imam's prayer, or with sick persons, many of whom, when their dissolution approaches, are brought to the colonnades; that they may either be cured by the sight of the Kaaba, or at least to have the satisfaction of expiring within the sacred inclosure. Poor hadjis, worn out with disease and hunger, are seen dragging their emaciated bodies along the columns; and when no longer able to stretch forth their hand to ask the passenger for charity, they place a bowl to receive alms near the mat on which they lay themselves. When they feel their last moments approaching, they cover themselves with their tattered garments; and often a whole day passes before it is discovered that they are dead. For a month subsequent to the conclusion of the hadj, I found, almost every morning, corpses of pilgrims lying in the mosque; myself and a Greek hadji, whom accident had brought to the spot, once closed the eyes of a poor Moggrebyn pilgrim, who had crawled into the neighbourhood of the Kaaba to breathe his last, as the Moslems say, 'in the arms of the prophet and of the guardian angels.' He intimated, by signs, his wish that we should sprinkle Zemzem water over him; and while we were doing so, he expired: half an hour afterward he was buried.

"The situation of Mecca is singularly unhappy, and ill-adapted for the accommodation of the numerous votaries of Islam that flock thither to perform the rites of the pilgrimage. The town is built in a narrow valley, hemmed in by barren mountains; the water of the wells is bitter or brackish; no pastures for cattle are near it; no

land fit for agriculture ; and the only resource from which its inhabitants derive their subsistence is a little traffic, and the visits of the hadjis. Mr. Burckhardt estimates the population of the town and suburbs at twenty-five to thirty thousand stationary inhabitants, to which he adds three or four thousand Abyssinian and black slaves.

“ On the whole, notwithstanding all that Burckhardt records as to certain symptoms of enthusiasm in the course of his hadj, it is sufficiently plain, that even in the original seat of Mahometanism, the religious feelings of the people have cooled down considerably. The educated Moslems, everywhere, are mostly of the sect of Mahomet Ali of Egypt, nor can we have any doubt that all things are thus working together for the re-establishment of the true religion in the regions where man was first civilized, and where the oracles of God were uttered. In the meantime, the decline of the arch-heresy of the east will be regretted by no one who judges of the tree by the fruit. ‘ A long residence,’ says Burckhardt, ‘ among Turks, Syrians, and Egyptians’ (and no man knew them better), ‘ justifies me in declaring that they are wholly deficient in virtue, honour, and justice ; that they have little true piety, and still less charity or forbearance ; and that honesty is only to be found in their paupers or idiots.’ ”

CHAPTER IV.

Mahomet's seclusion—his designs.—Gabriel.—The peculiar tone of the Koran.—Mahomet's first converts.—His attempt with his relatives.—The enmity of the Koreish.—His followers fly from Mecca.—The exercises of his own mind.—His cause strengthens.—League against him and his family.—He is not discouraged.—The burden of his preaching.—His Paradise.—Women not excluded.—His hell—Success.—Challenged to work miracles.—His manner of getting rid of the demand.

BEING now raised by his marriage to an equality with the first citizens of Mecca, Mahomet was enabled to pass the next twelve years of his life in comparative affluence and ease; and, until the age of forty, nothing remarkable distinguished his history. It is probable that he still followed the occupation of a merchant, as Arabian tribes, like the Ishmaelites, have always been addicted to commerce. It was during this interval, however, that he meditated and matured his boldest design. It therefore becomes, in its results, the most important in his whole life; and it is greatly to be regretted, that his policy, and the ravages of time, have deprived us of all sources of information, which might satisfactorily explain the purposes he had in view, and the motives by which he was influenced. The circumstances which first suggested his design, the peculiar train of reflection which went to cherish it, together with the real agencies employed in bringing it forward, are wrapped in impenetrable mystery; yet these are the points on which the inquiring mind, intent upon tracing great events to their primary sources, is most eager for information. At the present day, it is impossible to determine whether Ma-

homet commenced his career as a deluded enthusiast, or a designing impostor. Those who have most profoundly considered the whole subject of Mahometanism in its rise, progress, genius, and effects, are divided in their opinion. Perhaps the point is not of much importance, for when did ever an imposture succeed, whether it were civil or religious, without an admixture of both enthusiasm and cunning. Men who have made any figure, if not entirely formed by circumstances, are yet greatly modified by them; and it will appear in the sequel, that the Arabian adventurer, if at first he were a mere enthusiast, became, through what befel him at the outbreak of his fanaticism, a proud conqueror, whom no victories could satisfy, and whose progress no extent of dominion could stay.

Whatever the religious corruption of the Arabs, it should be borne in mind that the fundamental article of the patriarchal faith among them was never entirely obliterated. Many held it. The presence of so many Jews, together with the reverence in which their Scriptures were held, became its safeguard. In the immediate vicinity of the most celebrated temple of patriarchism, and surrounded by men who gloried in the character of religious reformers, a mind like Mahomet's would naturally be occupied on religious subjects. He would ponder deeply all he had heard, from those into whose way commerce had thrown him. He would read, and meditate, and inquire. The idolatry of the generality of his countrymen would seem to him gross and degrading; and perhaps he would be disgusted with many of the superstitious, or offended with many of the false doctrines which

he found grafted upon the Jewish and the Christian faith. Amidst the darkness which hangs over this period of his life, one thing is known, namely, that he daily retired to a cave, in the vicinity of Mecca, called the cave of Hera, to spend his time in fasting, prayer, and devout meditation. If he contemplated the work of public instruction, he thought at first in all probability of nothing more than raising his voice, and presenting his own example in condemnation of the errors and vices of the times. Some would have us believe, that in the cave he had secret interviews with those accomplices by whose help he composed the Koran; * but it is remarkable that these accomplices were never detected. We have read, indeed, that as soon as his own purposes with one of them, Sergius a monk, were answered, Mahomet procured his murder,—a tale much more likely to be the invention of prejudice, than to have the support of historic testimony. Such an act does not agree with the early character of the prophet.

Mahomet made at first but slow progress in gaining converts. He was the victim of fierce persecution, but it does not appear that either Jews or Christians are ever mixed up with him in the contempt or the sufferings he had to endure.

There was indeed one being with whom in the cave Mahomet pretended that he held frequent and intimate converse. The angel Gabriel often visited him. The revelations which he records in the Koran, purport to be immediate communications from the Most High made to him by this angelic guide and visitor. A few prayers ex-

* Prideaux. Edition 1696—7, page 14.

cepted, that volume throughout is written in the person of the Almighty. Its readers plunge at once into things invested with the most awful sublimity. Remonstrances, instructions, promises, threats, blessings, and curses are all represented as coming directly from God; and though sometimes the strong current of enthusiasm and indignation it pours forth makes its writer apparently forget the source whence his sentences come, he constantly recals himself before the end of the period. [Mahomet had continued his visits to the cave for some four or five years, when, according to the opening of the seventy-fourth chapter of the Koran, he was commanded to "arise and preach, and magnify the Lord."] The voice proceeded of course from his supernatural attendant, who continually waited on him, revealing divine doctrine, urging him to make known what he had received, and promising success to all his undertakings. At length he acquainted his beloved Kadajah with the commission he had received, who probably was prepared to submit to it instantly, partly by the austerities she had engaged in with her husband, and partly by that supreme devotion to him and his interests which she seems on all occasions to have manifested. The best authorities make her receive the news of Mahomet's honour with great joy, swearing by the author of her life, that she regarded him as the prophet of his nation.

A subsequent chapter of the Koran * describes the night on which Mahomet received his commission as the most memorable of all nights. "In the name of the most merciful God. Verily, we

* Chap. xcvi.

sent down the Koran in the night of Al Kadr. And what shall make thee understand how excellent the night of Al Kadr is? This night is better than a thousand months. Therein do the angels descend, and the spirit Gabriel also, by the permission of their Lord, with his decrees concerning every matter. It is peace until the rising of the morn.* On this favoured night, between the 23d and 24th of *Ramadan*, according to the prophet, the angel appeared to him, in glorious form, to communicate the happy tidings of his mission. The light issuing from his body, was too dazzling for mortal eyes to behold; he fainted under the splendour; nor was it till Gabriel had assumed a human form, that he could venture to approach or look upon him. The angel then cried aloud, "O MAHOMET, THOU ART THE APOSTLE OF GOD, AND I AM THE ANGEL GABRIEL!" "Read!" continued the angel; the prophet declared that he was unable to read. "Read!" Gabriel again exclaimed, "read, in the name of thy Lord, who hath created all things; who hath created man of congealed blood. Read, by thy most beneficent Lord, who hath taught the use of the pen; who teacheth man that which he knoweth not."† The prophet, who professed hitherto to have been illiterate, then read the joyful tidings respecting his ministry on earth, when the angel, having accomplished his mission, majestically ascended to heaven, and disappeared from his view.

Kadijah, overjoyed, is said to have immediately imparted what she had heard to one Waraka, her cousin, who is supposed by some to have been in the secret, and who had learned to write in the

* Chap. xcvi.

† Chap. xcvi.

Hebrew character, and was tolerably well versed in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. He unhesitatingly assented to her opinion respecting the divine designation of her husband, and even affirmed, that Mahomet was no other than the great prophet foretold by Moses, the son of Amram. This belief, that both the prophet and his religion were subjects of inspired prediction in the Old Testament Scriptures, is studiously inculcated in the Koran. "Thy Lord is the mighty, the merciful. This book is certainly a revelation from the Lord of all creatures, which the faithful spirit (Gabriel) hath caused to descend upon thy heart, that thou mightest be a preacher to thy people in the perspicuous Arabic tongue; and it is borne witness to in the Scriptures of former ages. Was it not a sign unto them that the wise men among the children of Israel knew it?" *

Having succeeded in gaining over his wife, he persevered in that retired and austere kind of life which tends to beget the reputation of pre-eminence sanctity, and ere long had his servant, Zeid Ebn Hareth, added to the list of proselytes. He rewarded the faith of Zeid by manumitting him from servitude, and it has hence become a standing rule among his followers always to grant freedom to such of their slaves as embrace the religion of the prophet. Ali, the son of Abu Taleb, Mahomet's cousin, was his next convert, but the impetuous youth, disregarding the other two as persons of comparatively little note, used to style himself the first of believers. His fourth and most important convert was Abubeker, a powerful citizen of Mecca, by whose influence a number of

* Chap. xxiii.

persons possessed of rank and authority were induced to profess the religion of Islam. These were Othman, Zobair, Saad, Abdorrahman, and Abu Obeidah, who afterwards became the principal leaders in his armies, and his main instruments in the establishment both of his imposture and of his empire. Four years were spent in the arduous task of winning over these nine individuals to the faith, some of whom were the principal men of the city, and who composed the whole party of his proselytes previously to his beginning to proclaim his mission in public. Mahomet was now forty-four years of age.

Hitherto his mission had been conducted with comparative privacy ; now however, having as he hoped sufficient interest to support him, the prophet made it no longer a secret. God had commanded him, he said, to admonish his near relations, and he obeyed. In order to enable him the more successfully to gain their attention, he directed his cousin Ali to prepare a generous entertainment, and invite to it the sons and descendants of Abdol Motalleb, where, when they were all convened, he would formally divulge to them the solemn fact of his apostolic commission. Some disturbance, occasioned by Abu Laheb, caused the company to break up before he had an opportunity of effecting his purpose, which induced him to give them a second invitation on the ensuing day. About forty of them accordingly assembled around his board, when the prophet arose, and thus addressed his wondering guests :—"I know no man in the whole peninsula of the Arabs who can propose any thing more excellent to his relations than what I now do to you ; I offer you happiness both in this

life and in that which is to come ; God Almighty hath commanded me to call you unto him ; who therefore among you will be my vizier (assistant), and will become my brother and vicegerent?" General astonishment kept the assembly silent ; none accepted the proffered office till the fiery Ali burst forth and declared that he would be the brother and assistant of the prophet. " I," said he, " O prophet of God, will be thy vizier ; I myself will beat out the teeth, pull out the eyes, rip open the bellies, and cut off the legs, of all those who shall dare to oppose thee." The prophet caught the young proselyte in his arms, exclaiming, " This is my brother, my deputy, my successor ; show yourselves obedient unto him." At this apparently extravagant command, the whole company burst into laughter, telling Abu Taleb that he must now pay obedience and submission to his own son ! As words were multiplied, surprise began to give way to indignation, the pretensions of the prophet were seriously resented, and in the issue the assembly broke up in confusion, affording the ardent apostle but slender prospects of success among his kinsmen.

Undeterred by the failure of his first public attempt, Mahomet began to preach still more openly before the people of Mecca. He announced to them that he was commissioned by the Almighty to be his prophet on the earth ; to assert the unity of God ; to denounce the worship of images ; to recall the people to the true and only religion ; to bear the tidings of paradise to the believing ; and to threaten the deaf and unbelieving with terrible vengeance. The bold freedom of his denunciations soon wearied out the patience with which his tribe

at first listened to his pretensions. When he upbraided them with their idolatry, obstinacy, and perverseness, they were highly provoked, declared themselves his enemies, and in all probability would soon have procured his ruin, and that of his whole scheme, but that he enjoyed the powerful protection of his uncle Abu Taleb. This distinguished friend was urged to desert his nephew by every kind of solicitation his adversaries could employ. The Koreish, with their chief at their head, remonstrated, and appealed, and persuaded till at length Abu was prevailed upon, so far as to dissuade his nephew from proceeding further, by representing the great danger which he incurred, both for himself and his friends. It has often been seen that faith and a love of truth, have been proof against friendly efforts, more painful and difficult of resistance, than all the attempts of avowed foes; but not often that mere imposture and superstition have stood firm against them. In this case, however, they were employed in vain. Mahomet's reply to his uncle was worthy of a better cause. "If," said he, "they set the sun against me on the right hand, and the moon on the left, I will not abandon my enterprise; and to Abu's honour it is to be added, that as his nephew was found so firmly resolved to proceed, he declined to employ extremities, indeed he resolved to stand by him as a friend to the very last.

The tribe at whose instance Abu had attempted these persuasions, were not so wise, or so generous. Indignant at the rebukes of Mahomet, and uninfluenced by the ties of relationship, which most probably had restrained the hands of his uncle, they determined at all events to put a stop

to his progress; accordingly, when neither fair words nor menaces could prevail, they had recourse to violence. The followers of the prophet were persecuted; he himself escaped, chiefly because of his high connexions; and speedily this persecution became so fierce, and the threats of their enemies, the idolatrous Koreish, so loud and deep, that they deemed it no longer safe to remain at Mecca, to which place hitherto the fanaticism of Mahomet had been confined. Such of his followers as were without the protection of powerful friends, received permission to fly and seek protection elsewhere; upon which sixteen of them,—twelve men, and four women, one of the latter being a daughter of Mahomet,—fled into the neighbouring country of Ethiopia. Thither also, soon afterwards, others of his followers, to the number, it is said, of eighty-three men, and eighteen women besides children escaped; all of whom were kindly received by the sovereign, who protected them from the demands of their persecutors, and who also, according to Arab writers, received the faith for which they suffered.

It may be supposed, that the mind of the prophet would be greatly perplexed by this continued and bitter opposition. His followers could scarcely escape the worst of evils, and he himself, in his native city, is treated with contumely and scorn. He endured moments of diffidence, the warmth of his spirit was chilled, and the hopes which had lifted him above all his friends and companions around, seemed destined to disappointment, so that he sunk into the depths of disquietude and suspense. It was probably when his mind was in this condition, that the 93rd and 94th chapters of

the Koran were composed. They contain the musings of a mind trembling with apprehension, yet fain to look for some divine interposition in its favour. Sale translates the former :—"By the brightness of the morning; and by the night when it groweth dark; thy Lord hath not forsaken thee, neither doth he hate thee. Verily the life to come, shall be better for thee than this present life. And thy Lord shall give thee a reward, wherewith thou shalt be well pleased. Did he not find thee an orphan, and hath he not taken care of thee? And did he not find thee wandering in error, and hath he not guided thee into the truth? And did he not find thee needy, and hath he not enriched thee? Wherefore oppress not the orphan; neither repulse the beggar; but declare the goodness of thy Lord." The latter is rendered by the same translator: "Have we not opened thy breast, and eased thee of thy burden which galled thy back; and raised thy reputation for thee? Verily a difficulty shall be attended with ease. When thou shalt have ended thy preaching, labour to serve God in return for his favours, and make thy supplication unto the Lord." A more recent version of the former of these two chapters, conceived in poetical numbers, as the original undoubtedly is, assists us in forming some idea, though confessedly a feeble one, of the beauty of the Arabic composition.

No! by the morning's splendour—No! by the frown of night,
 Thy omnipotent defender will not desert the right;
 Tho' present sorrows rend thee, the future brings their balm,
 High destinies attend thee, be thankful and be calm.
 By him hast thou been cherished, an orphan in thy youth,
 An infidel thou'dst perished, had he not taught thee truth.
 His bounteous hand has freed thee from poverty and scorn,
 Then do thou relieve the needy, do thou the thoughtless warn."

Consolatory passages of this kind abound in those chapters of the Koran, which are said to have been revealed to the prophet at Mecca; evidently the effusions of enthusiasm. As yet, however, the prophet's mind does not seem to have conceived those vast designs of ambition, and yielded to those sentiments of ferocious cruelty by which afterwards it was distinguished. Now and then, indeed, in these chapters we catch a glimpse of what the man afterwards became, as in the cxi., where he writes concerning one of his uncles a bitter persecutor. "The hands of Abu Laheb shall perish, and he shall perish. His riches shall not profit him, neither that which he hath gained. He shall go down to be burned into flaming fire, and his wife also bearing wood, having on her neck a cord of twisted fibres of a palm tree." And when maintaining his sacred character to its utmost height, he consoles his animosity with mysterious hints of the future and inevitable retribution, or relieves his passion by the terrific outpourings of a prophet's curse. An instance occurs in the 74th chapter. "Yes, he considered and he plotted—curse him, how he plotted—ay, curse him, how he plotted—then he looked, then he frowned and looked grave—then he turned away in his pride and said, what is this but a charm that is repeated, what is this but the speech of a man." Still it is observable, that in these passages Mahomet rather indicates some mysterious vengeance to be taken on the foes of his religion by the Most High in another world, than any triumph over them which he hoped to gain in this; or if they exhibit indications of his own becoming the instrument of vengeance, as he most certainly did before many years had elapsed, it is by no means

improbable that these indications were foisted into the work after they were justified by the event. Mahomet, in the later periods of his life, was continually adding to the revelations contained in the Koran. These additions were sometimes written separately as an independent chapter, sometimes they were placed in a former chapter to some passage in which he considered them pertinent. It is now impossible therefore, to trace from the volume any thing approaching to an accurate history of the progress of his mind and feelings. It may be observed in general terms, that there is no evidence in his early history of his aspiring to the power he subsequently realized.

Within a short time, notwithstanding the flight of his friends, Mahomet found himself strengthened by the conversion of others, including some of the most powerful men of Mecca, his own relations, Omar, Ebn Al Khattub, and his uncle Hamza, a man of great valour and merit, were of this number. The excellencies of the prophet's conduct, and the purity of his faith, contrasted strongly with those of his foes; and, as in all other cases, persecution did but extend his doctrine and his fame.

At length, in order effectually to destroy his rising interests, the Koreish entered into a covenant, to contract no marriages with his family or relatives; to abstain from all commercial and social transactions; in a word, to suspend all communications with them; and for the greater solemnity, this covenant was reduced to writing, and laid up in their sacred temple. Thus the principal families of Mecca were divided into factions. The Hashemites under Abu Taleb, maintained the

cause of the prophet; the Ommeyans under Abu Sofian, Ebn Harb ranged against him: their disputes were kept up for three years. At length, however, they were terminated by an accident which some writers have made to tell in advancing the prophetic fame of Mahomet, but in which nothing very extraordinary is to be traced. The written covenant lying in the Kaaba, was attacked by the worm, so frequently destructive in almost all the east to books and writings of every kind. Mahomet, who probably had obtained secret information of the fact, told his uncle Abu Taleb, that to manifest his disapprobation against the league of the idolatrous Koreish, God had sent a worm to devour every part of it, except the divine name which it bore. Abu, as soon as he became aware of the fact, communicated it to the opposing parties; offering in case, on examination, his statement proved false, to deliver his nephew up to them; and requiring if it were true, that their animosity should cease, or at least, that every thing the league contained should be annulled. In these terms the parties acquiesced; an examination was immediately set on foot, when to the great surprise and mortification of the Koreish, it was found that Abu's statement was correct; the league was thereupon relinquished, and perhaps even among his foes, a suspicion might begin to prevail, that Mahomet was, as he pretended, a messenger from God; at all events, the circumstances obtained for him considerable credit, and augmented the number of his followers.

The pilgrimages of the Arabs from all parts to their sacred edifice at Mecca, in which both idolaters and the adherents of the prophet joined, afforded to him an excellent opportunity of inculcat-

ing the leading truths of his system. Multitudes listened to his harangues, nor could the jealousy or hatred of the Koreish extinguish his rising popularity. Prohibited from open hostilities during the sacred months, when these assemblies were taking place, the respective parties could hardly be restrained from secret violence. And sometimes in defiance of their most sacred customs the factious met and came to blows. The orations, both of idolators and of Mahomet in the Kaaba, were not unfrequently drowned, amid the din of strife, and the clashing of their scimitars.

No repulses, however rude or rebellious, could deter the prophet from prosecuting his ministry. No injuries or insults, however galling, availed to quench that glow of philanthropy, that earnest solicitude for the salvation of his countrymen, for which his divine revelations plainly give him credit. "Peradventure, thou afflictest thyself unto death, lest the Meccans become not true believers."* "Verily, God will cause to err whom he pleaseth, and will direct whom he pleaseth. Let not thy soul, therefore, be spent in sighs for their sakes on account of their obstinacy; for God well knoweth that which they do."† And it must be acknowledged, that his firmness at this stage of his career, in the midst of bitter opposition, opprobrious taunts, and relentless ridicule, has very much the air of having been prompted by a sincere belief in the truth and rectitude of his cause. The scope of several chapters of the Koran promulgated at this time leads to the same impression,

They were strikingly hortatory and impassioned,

* Koran, ch. xxvi.

† Ch. xxxv.

inculcating the being and perfections of the one only God, the vanity of idols, a future resurrection, a day of judgment, a state of rewards and punishments, and the necessity of works of righteousness. The marks of imposture are much more discernible upon the pages subsequently revealed, in which the prophet had private ends of a sinister nature to accomplish. He contented not himself with merely preaching in public assemblies, and proclaiming in streets and market places, the solemn and awakening burden of his message; but with a zeal worthy of a better cause, he backed his public appeals by private addresses, and put in requisition all the arts of persuasion and proselytism, in which he was so eminently skilled. He applied himself in the most insinuating manner to all classes of people; he was complaisant and liberal to the poor, cultivating their acquaintance and relieving their wants; the rich and noble, he soothed by flattery; affronts he bore and without seeking to avenge them. The effect of this politic management was greatly enhanced by the peculiar character of those inspired promises and threatenings which he brought to enforce his message.

His promises were chiefly of a blissful paradise in another life; and these he studiously aimed to set forth in colours best calculated to work upon the fancies of a sensitive and sensual race, whose minds, in consequence of their national habits, were little susceptible of the images of abstract enjoyment. The notions of a purely intellectual or spiritual happiness pertain to a more cultivated people. The scorching heat of those tropical regions, the aridity of the soil, and the consequent

lack of a verdant vegetation, made it natural to the Arabs, and other oriental nations, to conceive of the most exquisite scenes of pleasure under the images of rivers of water, cooling drinks, flowery gardens, shaded bowers, and luscious fruits. The magnificence also of many of the Eastern buildings, their temples and places, with the sumptuousness of their dresses, the pomp of processions, and the splendour of courts, would all tend to mingle in their ideas of the highest state of enjoyment an abundance of gold and silver and precious stones — treasures for which the East has been famed from time immemorial. Mahomet was well aware that a plenitude of these visible and palpable attractions, to say nothing of grosser sources of pleasure, was an indispensable requisite in a heaven suited to the temperament of his countrymen. Accordingly, he assures the faithful, that they shall enter into delectable gardens, where the rivers flow, some with water, some with wine, some with milk, and some with clarified honey; that there will be fountains and purling streams, whose pebbles are rubies and emeralds, their earth of camphire, their beds of musk, and their sides of saffron. In feasting upon the banks of paradise, at one time the most delicious fruits shall hang dependent from the branches of the trees, under which their couches are spread, so that they have only to reach forth their hands to pluck them: again, they shall be served in dishes of gold filled with every variety of grateful food, and supplied with wine of ambrosial flavour. But the prophet's own glowing pictures of the joys of his promised paradise, will do more justice to the subject. "They shall repose on couches, the linings where-

of shall be of thick silk, interwoven with gold ; and the fruit of the two gardens shall be near at hand to gather. Therein beauteous damsels shall receive them, refraining their eyes from beholding any besides their spouses, having complexions like rubies and pearls. Besides these, there shall be two other gardens that shall be dressed in eternal verdure. In each of them shall be two fountains pouring forth plenty of water. In each of them shall be fruits, and palm trees, and pomegranates. Therein shall be agreeable and beauteous damsels, having fine black eyes, and kept in pavilions from public view, whom no man shall have dishonoured before their predestined spouses, nor any genius." "They shall dwell in gardens of delight, reposing on couches adorned with gold and precious stones ; sitting opposite to one another thereon. Youths, which shall continue in their bloom for ever, shall go round about to attend them, with goblets and beakers, and a cup of flowing wine : their heads shall not ache by drinking the same, neither shall their reason be disturbed." "Upon them shall be garments of fine green silk, and of brocades, and they shall be adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord shall give them to drink of a most pure liquor—a cup of wine mixed with the water of Zenzibil, a fountain in paradise named Salsabil." "But those who believe and do that which is right, we will bring into gardens watered by rivers, therein shall they remain for ever, and therein shall they enjoy wives free from all infirmities ; and we will lead them into perpetual abodes." "For those who fear their Lord will be prepared high apartments in paradise, over which shall be other apartments built ; and rivers shall run be-

neath them." "But for the pious is prepared a place of bliss: gardens planted with trees, and vineyards, and damsels of equal age with themselves, and a full cup."*

Such is the Mahometan paradise, rendered alluring by its gross, carnal, and luxurious character. It cannot indeed be denied, that there are occasional intimations, in the Koran, of some kind of spiritual happiness to be enjoyed by the pious, in addition to their corporeal pleasures. "Their prayer therein shall be, Praise be unto thee, O God! and their salutation therein shall be, Peace! and the end of their prayer shall be, Praise be unto God, the Lord of all creatures."† But it is beyond question, that the main ingredients in the anticipated happiness of the Moslem saints are of a sensual kind, addressed to the inferior principles of our nature, and making their paradise to differ but little from the Elysium of the heathen poets.

The reader of the Koran will meet with repeated declarations subversive of the vulgar opinion, that the religion of Mahomet denies to women the possession of souls, and excludes them from all participation in the joys of paradise. Whatever may have been imagined or affirmed on this point by some of his more ignorant followers, it is certain that Mahomet himself thought too highly of women to inculcate any such doctrine, as the following passages will evince: "Whoso doeth evil, shall be rewarded for it; and shall not find any patron or helper besides God; but whoso doeth good works, whether he be male or female,

* Koran, ch. iii. iv. xxxvi. xxxvii. xliii. xlvii. lxxviii. † Ch. x.

and is a true believer, they shall be admitted into paradise, and shall not in the least be unjustly dealt with.* “The reward of these shall be paradise, gardens of eternal abode, which they shall enter, and whoever shall have acted uprightly, of their fathers, and their wives, and their posterity; and the angels shall go in unto them by every gate, saying, Peace be upon you, because ye have endured with patience; how excellent a reward is paradise!”†

If these vivid representations of the future bliss of the faithful were calculated to work strongly upon the passions of his hearers, his denunciations of the fearful torments reserved for unbelievers, were equally fitted to produce the same effect. The most revolting images of bodily suffering, hunger, thirst, the torture of fire, and the anguish of piercing cold, were summed up by the preacher to alarm the workers of evil, and to call off the worshippers of idols from their impiety. “But for the transgressors is prepared an evil receptacle, namely hell: they shall be cast into the same to be burned, and a wretched couch shall it be.” “And they who believe not, shall have garments of fire fitted unto them: boiling water shall be poured on their heads; their bowels shall be dissolved thereby, and also their skins: and they shall be beaten with maces of iron. So often as they shall endeavour to get out of hell, because of the anguish of their torments, they shall be dragged back into the same; and their tormentors shall say unto them, Taste ye the pain of burning.”‡ “It shall be said unto them, Go ye into the pun-

* Koran, ch. iv.

† Ch. xiii.

‡ Ch. xvii.

ishment which ye denied as a falsehood : go ye into the shadow of the smoke of hell, which shall ascend in three columns, and shall not shade you from the heat, neither shall it be of service against the flame ; but it shall cast forth sparks as big as towers, resembling yellow camels in colour.*

“ Hath the news of the overwhelming day of judgment reached thee ? The countenances of some, on that day, shall be cast down ; labouring and toiling ; they shall be cast into a scorching fire to be broiled : they shall be given to drink of a boiling fountain : they shall have no food but of dry thorns and thistles : which shall not fatten neither shall they satisfy hunger.” “ Is this a better entertainment, or the tree of Al Zaccum ? How different is the tree Al Zaccum from the abode of Eden ! We have planted it for the torment of the wicked. It is a tree which issueth from the bottom of hell : the fruit thereof resembleth the heads of devils ; and the damned shall eat of the same, and shall fill their bellies therewith ; and there shall be given them thereon a mixture of filthy and boiling water to drink : afterwards shall they return into hell.” †

Such was the burden of his exhortations, while he warned the people of the danger of unbelief, and urged them by his eloquence to avoid eternal damnation by putting faith in the apostle of God. In addition to these powerful motives, drawn from another world, he was lavish in the menaces of fearful punishments in this life also, if they hearkened not to his voice. For this purpose, he set before them the calamities which had overtaken

* Koran, ch. lxxviii.

† Ch. xxxvii.

those who, in former times, had refused to listen to the prophets sent among them. "Do they not consider how many generations we have destroyed before them? Other apostles have been laughed to scorn before thee, but the judgments which they made a jest of, encompassed those who laughed them to scorn. Say, Go through the earth, and behold what has been the end of those who accused our prophets of imposture."* "We have already sent messages unto sundry nations before thee, and we afflicted them with trouble and adversity, that they might humble themselves: yet when the affliction which we sent came upon them, they did not humble themselves; but their hearts became hardened, and Satan caused them to find charms in rebellion. And when they had forgotten that concerning which they had been admonished, we suddenly laid hold on them, and behold they were seized with despair; and the utmost part of the people which had acted wickedly was cut off: praise be unto God, the Lord of all creatures!"† He cited the case of the inhabitants of the old world, who perished in the deluge for not giving heed to the preaching of Noah; of Sodom, overwhelmed by fire for not receiving the admonition of Lot; and of the Egyptians, who were buried in the Red Sea for despising Moses. To give still greater effect to his warnings, and ingratiate himself into the favour, as well as to awaken the fears, of his auditors, he took repeated occasions to allege his entire disinterestedness in the work in which he was engaged. He preached because he was commanded to preach, and not because he

* Koran, ch. vi.

† Ch. vi.

intended covertly to make gain of his hearers. He therefore boldly takes them to witness that he demanded no compensation for his services. He looked to a higher source for reward. "But we have brought them their admonition; and they turn aside from their admonition. Dost thou ask of them any maintenance for thy preaching? since the maintenance of thy Lord is better; for he is the most bounteous provider."* "We have sent thee to be no other than a bearer of good tidings, and a denouncer of threats. Say, I ask not of you any reward for this my preaching, besides the conversion of him who shall desire to take the way unto his Lord."† As the prophet therefore disclaimed all sinister views in the execution of his office, as he expressly renounced the expectancy of any earthly advantage whatever, so he was commanded to divest his mind of all undue anxiety as to the result of his labours of love. "O apostle, let not them grieve thee who hasten to infidelity." "Whoso is wilfully blind, the consequence will be to himself. We have not appointed thee a keeper over them: neither art thou a guardian over them." "And be not thou grieved on account of the unbelievers, neither be thou troubled for that which they subtly devise."‡

It is not therefore to be wondered at, that the rousing appeals of the prophet should have taken effect; that one after another should have listened—pondered—wavered—and yielded—especially as the gravity and sanctity of his deportment seem, at this time, to have corresponded with the solemn strain of his expostulations. Such accordingly

* Koran, ch. xxiii.

† Ch. xlii.

‡ Ch. xvi.

was the fact. The number of his followers gradually increased, so that in five years, from the commencement of his mission, his party amounted to about forty persons.

Those who regarded his pretences with incredulity, continually annoyed and disconcerted him with demands to prove the truth of his mission by working miracles. He spoke of Moses and Jesus. "They," said his hearers, "and other prophets, as you tell us, wrought miracles to prove that they were sent of God. If thou be a prophet, and greater than any that were before thee, as thou boastest, let us see a miracle from thee also. Do thou make the dead to rise, the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear; or else cause fountains to spring out of the earth, and make this place a garden adorned with vines and palm trees, and watered with rivers running through it in divers channels; or do thou make thee a house of gold beautified with jewels and costly furniture; or let us see the book which thou allegest to have come down from heaven, or the angel which thou sayest brings it unto thee, and we will believe." This natural and not unreasonable demand, he had several ways of evading, as we learn from the Koran. At one time, he tells them, he is only a man sent to preach to them the rewards of paradise and the punishments of hell. "The infidels say, unless a sign be sent unto him from his Lord, we will not believe. Thou art commissioned to be a preacher only, and not a worker of miracles."* "Answer, Signs are in the power of God alone; and I am no more than a public preacher. Is it not sufficient for

* Ch. xiii.

them that we have sent down unto thee the book of the Koran, to be read unto them?"* "We sent not our messengers otherwise than bearing good tidings and denouncing threats. Say, I say not unto you, The treasures of God are in my power: neither do I say, I know the secrets of God: neither do I say unto you, Verily I am an angel: I follow only that which is revealed unto me."† At another time he reminds them, that their predecessors had despised the miracles of the former prophets, and for this reason God would work no more among them. Again, that those whom God had ordained to believe, should believe without miracles, while the hapless non-elect, to whom he had not decreed the gift of faith, would not believe though ever so many miracles were wrought before them. "And though we had sent down angels unto them, and the dead had spoken unto them, they would not have believed, unless God had so pleased."‡ "If their aversion to thy admonitions be grievous unto thee, if thou canst seek a den whereby thou mayest penetrate into the inward parts of the earth, or a ladder by which thou mayest ascend into heaven, that thou mayest show them a sign, do so, but thy search will be fruitless; for if God pleased he would bring them all to the true direction."§ At a later period, when he was at Medina at the head of an army, he had a more summary way of solving all difficulties arising from this source, for his doctrine then was, that God had formerly sent Moses and Jesus with the power of working miracles, and yet men would not believe, and therefore he had now sent him, a prophet of another order,

* Ch. xiii.

† Chap. vi.

‡ Chap. vi.

§ Ibid.

commissioned to enforce belief by the power of the sword. The sword accordingly was to be the true seal of his apostleship, and the remark of Gibbon is equally just and striking, that "Mahomet with the sword in one hand, and the Koran in the other, erected his throne on the ruins of Christianity and of Rome."

CHAPTER V.

The miracles to which Mahomet laid claim.—Intercourse with Gabriel.—The composition of the Koran.—Mode in which it was revealed.—Specimens of its denunciations on his persecutors.—Miracle of the splitting of the moon.—Mahomet's nocturnal journey.—Affinity of some of its circumstances with Rabbinical fables.—Effect produced by relating it.—Death of Abu Taleb and of Kadijah.—Mahomet's temporary withdrawal from Mecca.—Return and marriage with Ayesha and Sawda.

ALTHOUGH by these artifices Mahomet succeeded in satisfying his friends, that the demand for miracles in support of his pretensions, was an unreasonable one, and would not be gratified, nothing could prevent or conceal his mortification that it was so repeatedly urged. He probably felt that it was both natural and just; and hence, though he could not invent the wonders for which his enemies were so urgent, he had recourse to miraculous agency of another kind, as supporting his claims. His converse with the angel Gabriel was of this character—a miracle which he affected to consider sufficient to convince gainsayers; and the composition of the Koran he continually urges as a most complete proof of his divine mission. Its original, or archetype, he taught, was laid up from

everlasting in the archives of heaven, being written on what he termed the preserved table, near to the throne of God, from which the series of chapters communicated by Gabriel were a transcript. "If," he says, "ye be in doubt concerning the revelation which we have sent down unto our servant, produce a chapter like unto it, and call upon your witnesses, besides God, if ye say the truth."* "Say, verily, if men and genii were purposely assembled, that they might produce a book like this Koran, they could not produce one like it, although the one of them assisted the other."† "Will they say, he hath forged the Koran? Bring, therefore, ten chapters like unto it, forged by yourselves, and call on whomsoever ye may to assist you."‡ The infatuation of the Meccans in rejecting this inestimable "admonition," stamped as it was with the evident impress of the divinity, he hesitates not to ascribe to the effect of a fearful judicial obstinacy, such as the Jewish prophets frequently threaten against the perverse nation of Israel. "If we had revealed the Koran in a foreign language, they had surely said, Unless the signs thereof be distinctly explained, we will not receive the same: Answer, It is unto those who believe a sure guide and a remedy; but unto those who believe not, it is a thickness of hearing in their ears, and it is a darkness which covereth them."§ "As for the unbelievers, it will be equal unto them whether thou admonish them or do not admonish them; they will not believe. God hath sealed up their hearts and their hearing; a dimness covereth their sight, and they shall suffer a

* Ch. ii.

† Ch. xvii.

‡ Ch. xi.

§ Ch. xli.

grievous punishment." "There is of them who hearkeneth unto thee when thou readest the Koran; but we have cast veils over their hearts, that they should not understand it, and a deafness in their ears; and though they should see all kinds of signs, they will not believe therein; and their infidelity will arrive to that height, that they will even come unto thee to dispute with thee."

The master-stroke of Mahomet's policy, in regard to this volume, is seen in the manner of its revelation. It was made known gradually and by piecemeal. "The unbelievers say, unless the Koran be sent down to him entire at once, we will not believe. But in this manner have we revealed it, that we might confirm thy heart thereby, and we have dictated it gradually by distinct parcels." Had the whole volume been published at once, so that a rigid examination could have been instituted into its contents as a whole, and the different parts brought into comparison with each other, glaring inconsistencies would have been easily detected, and objections urged which it would probably have been found impossible to answer. But by pretending to receive his oracles in separate portions, at different times, according as his own exigencies or those of his followers required, he had a ready way of silencing all cavils, and extricating himself with credit, from every difficulty, as nothing forbade the message or mandate of to-day being modified or abrogated by that of tomorrow. In this manner, twenty-three years elapsed before the whole chain of revelations was completed, though the prophet informed his disciples, that he had the consolation of seeing the entire Koran, bound in silk and adorned with gold

and gems of Paradise, once a-year, till, in the last year of his life, he was favoured with the vision twice. The first part of these spurious oracles were published at Mecca, the remainder at Medina. The particular mode of publication is said to have been this: When a new chapter had been communicated to the prophet, and was about to be promulgated for the benefit of the world, he first dictated it to his secretary, and then delivered the written paper to his followers, to be read and repeated till it had become firmly imprinted upon their memories, when the paper was again returned to the prophet, who carefully deposited it in a chest, called by him "the chest of his apostleship." The hint of this sacred coffer was doubtless taken from the Ark of the Covenant, the holy chest of the Jewish tabernacle, in which the authentic copy of the law was laid up and preserved. This chest Mahomet left at his death in the care of one of his wives; and from its contents the volume of the Koran was afterward compiled. The first collection and arrangement of these prophetic relics, more precious than the scattered leaves of the Sybils, was made by Abubeker, but the whole was afterward revised and new-modelled by Othman, who left the entire volume of the Koran in the order in which we now have it.

The reader will be amused by the insertion of a few out of the scores of allusions with which this volume abounds, to the profane and contemptuous treatment shown towards the prophet at this time. "The Meccans say, O thou, to whom the admonition (the Koran) hath been sent down, thou art certainly possessed with a devil: wouldst not thou

have come unto us with an attendance of angels, if thou hadst spoken the truth? Answer, We send not down the angels but on a just occasion.* “Verily I have permitted these Meccans and their fathers to live in prosperity, till the truth should come unto them, and a manifest apostle: but now the truth is come unto them, they say, this is a piece of sorcery; and we believe not therein. And they say, Had this Koran been sent down unto some great man in either of the two cities, we would have received it.”† “The time of giving up their account draweth nigh unto the people of Mecca. No admonition cometh unto them from their Lord, but when they hear it they turn it, to sport. They say, The Koran is a confused heap of dreams; nay, he hath forged it.”‡ “And the unbelievers say, this Koran is no other than a forgery which he hath contrived; and other people have assisted him therein: but they utter an unjust thing and a falsehood. They also say, These are fables of the ancients, which he hath caused to be written down; and they are dictated unto him morning and evening. Say, He hath revealed it who knoweth the secrets in heaven and earth. And they say, What kind of apostle is this? He eateth food, and walketh in the streets as we do. The ungodly also say, Ye follow no other than a man who is distracted.”§ “When our evident signs are rehearsed unto them, the unbelievers say of the truth, This is a manifest piece of sorcery. Will they say, Mahomet hath forged it? Answer, If I have forged it, verily, ye will not obtain for me any favour from God: he well

* Ch. vi. † Ch. xliii. ‡ Ch. xxi. § Ch. xxv.

knoweth the injurious language which ye utter concerning it.—I follow no other than what is revealed unto me; neither am I any more than a public warner.”*

But these stiff-necked idolaters were plainly taught that they were not to promise themselves impunity in thus pouring contempt upon the testimony of an authorized legate of heaven. The Most High himself was brought in confirming by an oath the truth of his prophet's mission. “I swear by that which ye see and that which ye see not, that this is the discourse of an honourable apostle, and not the discourse of a poet: how little do ye believe! Neither is it the discourse of a soothsayer: how little are ye admonished! It is a revelation from the Lord of all creatures. If Mahomet had forged any part of these discourses concerning us, verily we had taken him by the right hand, and had cut in sunder the vein of his heart; neither would we have withheld any of you from chastising him. And verily, this book is an admonition unto the pious; and we well know there are some of you who charge the same with imposture: but it shall surely be an occasion of grievous sighing unto the infidels; for it is the truth of a certainty.”* “Because he is an adversary to our signs, I will afflict him with grievous calamities; for he hath devised contumelious expressions to ridicule the Koran. May he be cursed! I will cast him to be burned in hell. And what shall make thee understand what hell is? It leaveth not any thing unconsumed, neither doth it suffer any thing to escape; it searcheth men's

* Ch. xlvi.

† Ch. lxix.

flesh; over the same are nineteen angels appointed. We have appointed none but angels to preside over hell-fire."* "Verily we have prepared for the unbelievers chains, and collars, and burning fire."† "Verily those who disbelieve our signs we will surely cast out to be broiled in hell-fire: and when their skins shall be well burned, we will give them other skins in exchange, that they may taste the sharper torment."‡

Still all his efforts were in vain either to silence the demand for more obvious indications of miraculous power, or to allay the disquietude which it awakened in his own mind. Accordingly, he pretended that he did perform such miracles as his adversaries called for, though, unlike the miracles of scripture, they are avouched only by friends, or were performed in secret. Among these, tradition reports, that trees went forth to meet him; that water flowed from between his fingers; that the stones saluted him; that a beam out of a wall groaned at him; that a camel complained to him with an audible voice; and that a shoulder of mutton, of which he was about to partake, informed him of its being poisoned. It ought, however, in justice to be remarked, that Mahomet himself does not appear to have claimed the credit of these prodigies; they are attributed to him by some of his followers, perhaps with no other reason than their own credulity.

The miracle of the splitting, as it has been called, is considered, perhaps with better reason, to have been asserted by himself; nevertheless, it may be doubted whether the only passage in the

* Ch. lxxiv.

† Ch. xi.

‡ Ch. iv.

Koran, quoted as authority, does not refer rather to a stupendous sign, ushering in the day of judgment, than to any event which had taken place. It is found at the commencement of the liv. chapter, and some others: "The hour of judgment approacheth, and the moon hath been split in sunder; but if the unbelievers see a sign, they turn aside, saying, this is a powerful charm."

Gagnier has preserved the story. It is, in brief, that on being pressed by the Koreish to confirm his mission by miracles, Mahomet accepted a challenge to bring the moon from heaven, in presence of the whole assembly. He uttered his command, when that luminary, full orb'd, though but five days old, leaped from the firmament, and, bounding through the air, alighted on the top of the Kaaba, after having encircled it by seven distinct evolutions. She is said to have paid reverence to the prophet, addressing him in elegant Arabic, in set phrase of encomium, and concluding with the formula of the Moslem faith. This done, the moon is said to have descended from the Kaaba; to have entered the right sleeve of Mahomet's mantle, and made its exit by the left. After having traversed every part of his flowing robe, the planet is said to have separated into two parts, as it mounted to the air. Then these parts re-united in one round and luminous orb, as before.

This story is sufficiently ridiculous: on reading it, we are compelled to hesitate, whether, most to wonder at the effrontery that could invent and propagate it, or the credulity that could yield it belief. Perhaps, the principle explaining this credulity, is shown in the inspired testimony concerning other victims of falsehood and imposture. "God

shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie."

Another story of a miracle equally absurd, perhaps more so, is however dwelt upon by Moslem writers, in a manner sufficiently indicative of their anxiety, to have their faith sustained by miraculous evidence. Mahomet unquestionably gives the authority of the Koran for this tale. "Praise be unto him," he writes at the beginning of the xvii. chapter, "who transported his servant by night, from the sacred temple of Mecca, to the farther temple of Jerusalem, the circuit of which we have blessed, that we might show him some of our signs." For the particulars of this wonderful journey, we are indebted chiefly to the Moslem writers after his time.

Abulfeda, in his life of the prophet, has detailed it at length. They dispute however, whether the journey were literal, or a dream, or vision; but into this dispute we are not at all inclined to enter. In either case, it must be regarded as an indication of bold effrontery in Mahomet, to suppose that such an extravagant relation could ever have been received by his countrymen, in evidence of his high pretensions; its being believed by any, affords us but a gloomy and painful idea of either the strength, or the independence of their understandings.

At the time this wonderful excursion commenced, Mahomet is represented as sleeping soundly between two of the hills in the vicinity of Mecca. The night was calm but dark. The angel Gabriel approached and awoke him, and at once apprised him of his intended journey. He was furnished with an animal which they call

Borak, a word signifying lightning; it was the animal they say, on which prophets were wont to ride—a nondescript—of a nature partly ass and partly mule, with a human face, and the body of a horse. Its colour was a milky white, its mane was of the finest pearls, its ears emeralds, and its eyes sparkling hyacinths; its whole body, the wings with which it was furnished, and its flowing tail, bristled with the richest jewellery. Of its prodigious swiftness, nothing need be said, this will sufficiently appear by the tale.

Immediately that the prophet had mounted, they were on the summit of Sinai, where the print of Borak's hoof is still shewn by devout Arabs. On this sacred spot prayers were offered; and the next instant they were at the holy city, where again devotional services were performed. Mahomet met with sundry adventures; among them, he was respectfully accosted by all the ancient prophets, and by many departed saints of the Mosaic economy, who acknowledged his mission and readily did him honour. Borak was left tied to a ring at the gate of the temple at Jerusalem, while the travellers, Mahomet and Gabriel, ascended by a ladder of light to the first heaven, the distance of which is said to be ordinarily five hundred years travel from the earth. This heaven is described as a subtle vapour, with a roof of silver pendent with stars, the chains of which were massive gold. On the announcement of Mahomet's name, the gate was immediately opened, and the travellers entered, receiving the salutations of Adam, represented as a decrepit old man, who immediately embraced him, gave God thanks for so great and highly favoured a descendant, and then besought

his supplications on his behalf, before the throne of the Eternal. In this first heaven, angels swarmed, all busily occupied in their several avocations, —some watering the clouds, some chanting hymns, others discharging duties of no less importance. They were of all conceivable shapes; for as the guardianship of the several orders of terrestrial beings was assigned to them, each appeared in the shape of the creatures, of which he was constituted the protector and patron. The most conspicuous of these, was an enormous cock of milky whiteness, whose head touched the second heaven, a distance from the first, equal to the space between the first and the earth. To him it pertained to give the signal for angelic matins, and on his crowing, it was said all the cocks of the universe caught and prolonged the sound.

To the second heaven the travellers ascended, by means similar to those by which they had reached the first. This was of pure gold, and contained a number of angels, double that of the preceding mansion. Here the prophet is introduced to Noah, who intreats his prayers as Adam had done before. Of the marvellous things of this portion of heaven, Mahomet was not permitted to take particular notice. The third heaven which they visited, is described as of precious stones, more crowded than the second with inhabitants. David and Solomon greeted the travellers here, and here they saw an immense angel called the 'faithful of God,' who had a multitude of others under his command. In the fourth heaven, Mahomet received the felicitations of Enoch, and Joseph; and here they met with an angel of terrible aspect, whose eyes were distant from each

other, some seventy thousand days' journey, and whose mouth and throat were of such dimensions, that he could as easily have swallowed seven heavens, and seven earths, with all their contents, as we can a common pea. No wonder that his aspect was terrible. A large table stood continually before him, at which he constantly wrote; inserting the names of all who were born, computing the length of their lives, and blotting them from his register, the moment they respectively filled up the allotted period. This angel was named Azrael, or the angel of death. No smile ever lighted up his dark and frowning visage, for to him it pertained to make lamentations and weeping for the sins and calamities of men.

The fifth heaven, at the entrance of which was a gate of massive silver inscribed with the Mahometan creed, was the storehouse of the wrath of God. They were congratulated on their arrival at this awful point in their journey, by Aaron the ancient High Priest of the wilderness. The region was presided over by an angel of most hideous deformity, whose look, Mahometan writers describe, as enough to blast the material universe. He had rolling flames set for eyes, in a face of copperas, which was disfigured with wens and excrescences; around him were darts and chains of fire, in constant preparation for rebellious sinners, and especially for Arabs who submitted not to the prophet. In the sixth heaven, the travellers beheld an aged man of venerable aspect, with shaggy hair, clothed in a woollen garment, and leaning on a staff. This was Moses, who saluted Mahomet cordially as his brother prophet, not however without weeping

profusely at the thought that he had induced fewer of the descendants of Isaac, to acknowledge the true God, and inherit the bliss of paradise, than this 'Arabian boy' would of the race of Ishmael. In this stage of their journey, the travellers met with a prodigy before inconceivable; an angel of prodigious size, half fire, half snow; neither of these discordant elements being subdued by the other.

The most marvellous part of their journey, however, was yet to be performed. The presiding angel of the seventh heaven, was endowed with seventy thousand heads, each head having seventy thousand faces, every face as many mouths, seventy thousand tongues in every mouth, each tongue uttering seventy thousand languages, and every language being incessantly employed, in praise and adoration. Such is the magnificent hyperbole, by which Arabs describe the worship offered to Deity. This heaven was composed of pure substantial light, far above the brilliancy of the sun, a fitting abode for the very highest and best of all God's creatures. Here was Abraham. Here also dwelt Jesus Christ, whom it may not be improper to observe, Mahomet regarded as a created messenger of the Most High of great dignity and excellence, and here also Mahomet in all probability expected to dwell. He is represented as having been treated by the distinguished inhabitants of this loftiest of the heavenly spheres, as on an equality with the greatest of all the prophets.

At the extremity of this seventh heaven, the Sedra or lotus-tree was placed, which is the utmost limit of angelic knowledge. Gabriel had

here to take leave of his fellow-traveller, commending him to the protection of superior spirits during the remainder of his journey.

Mahomet pursued his way alone, through hosts of glorified cherubim, across two seas, one of light, the other of darkness, passing seventy thousand veils of separation, each five hundred years journey in thickness, with an equal distance between them. These veils are described as of darkness, light, water, fire, snow, ether, chaos; and having finally passed the veils of beauty, perfection, omnipotence, singularity, immensity, and unity, the prophet found himself in presence of the eternal God; before whose throne, surrounded by a light of dazzling brightness, seventy thousand spirits were prostrate, and on whose will and power all the marvels which he had seen were dependent. Mahomet heard the voice of God bidding him approach, and accordingly he advanced to within a few feet of the person of the Almighty. As a mark of his favour, God placed his hand on the prophet's shoulder, when a thrill of intense cold passed over his whole frame, which, however, was immediately succeeded by a sensation of inexpressible sweetness. A long and familiar conversation then followed between the Most High and his servant, in the course of which many hidden mysteries were revealed. Mahomet was instructed in the knowledge of the divine law, and many other extraordinary privileges were conferred upon him. Among the instructions he received was one commanding every Mussulman to offer fifty daily prayers, a number afterwards reduced to five, in consideration of human weakness and infirmity.

From this glorious region Mahomet returned to the lotus-tree, where he had left the angel Gabriel, whom he found waiting for him. They passed together through all the regions into which the prophet had been introduced, till they arrived at the temple of Jerusalem, where the faithful and convenient Borak was waiting, and by its aid Mahomet was reconveyed to the vicinity of Mecca, after an absence of no more than a very few hours.

To attempt the refutation of a fiction so grossly puerile and absurd, would be almost to emulate the folly of the writers who gravely represent it as a fact. It may be proper to observe, that the narration we have given differs a little from that of some Arabic writers, who also differ among themselves: we have not thought it necessary to examine on what grounds. The reader who is skilled in Hebrew lore will trace in the account given of the several heavens, a pretty close affinity to Rabbinical fables, especially in the story of the cock, and the enormous size of the presiding angels. The Talmud also speaks of seven paradisaical houses or dwellings, each house twelve times ten thousand miles long, and of equal width, and of limits beyond which no inhabitant of either heaven may pass. The points of coincidence are numerous and somewhat striking, affording, to say the least, some shadow of evidence in support of a generally received notion, that Mahomet was indebted for some of his reveries to the aid of a Jewish Rabbi.

All devout Mussulmen regard this journey, whether a vision or literal, as a most convincing proof of the inspiration of their prophet. To doubt it, is an error as damnable as to reject the

Koran. That it was the design of the fiction to produce this idea of its author there can be no question. It was invented at the time when his inspiration was most doubted. It was intended to stop the reasonable outcry of his enemies for miracles in support of his pretensions; and most likely, also, Mahomet thought by it to sustain the minds of his friends, by the assurance, that he to whom they adhered was indeed an especial favourite God. Hitherto he had been the messenger, merely through whom divine revelations were given to the people—the hand, so to speak, through which Gabriel presented to them the Koran: now he appears as himself, the inspired servant of God, more favoured than even Gabriel, the disbelief and rejection of whose testimony, therefore, was tantamount to the rejection of God himself.

The people, to whom next morning this marvellous story was related, are said to have received it with marks of general contempt and ridicule; such was its effect, that had not Abubeker, the sworn friend of the prophet, come forward and vouched the truth of all he had said, it is probable that both he and his religion would have sunk into deserved scorn. To the testimony of his friend, Mahomet had the dexterity to add that of the Most High. Thus in chap. liii. of the Koran, he is made to say that, in this communication, “Mahomet erred not, nor was he led astray.” “The heart of Mahomet did not falsely represent what he saw;” and somewhat frequently, as if aware of the vast importance of the claim set up for the prophet by this stupendous miracle, it is urged, in this book, as a verity not to be questioned.

The death of his generous uncle, Abu Taleb, had deprived the prophet of the powerful protection which had hitherto kept him safe, though in the very midst of his enemies. What could have induced that chief to shield his nephew for so long a time, it is, perhaps, impossible for us now to ascertain. Probably it was in obedience to that custom of inviolable fidelity which has been already referred to as universal among the Arabs. Perhaps it was the expression of personal regard. To something of this kind it must be attributed, since Abu Taleb never received the faith which Mahomet promulgated: the stern inflexibility of the prophet may be inferred from his ceasing to pour forth supplications for this beloved relative, on ascertaining that he died an unbeliever. Mahomet had attended his death-bed, and unsuccessfully urged him, in his last hours, to profess Islamism, adding, that he would not cease to pray for him so long as God should permit him the privilege of thus expressing his filial affection and duty. This, however, was forbidden in the following passage: "It is not allowed unto the prophet, nor those who are true believers, that they pray for idolaters, although they be of kin, after it has become known to them that they are inhabitants of hell."* And Mahomet instantly obeyed. He continued, however, to cherish a most grateful sense of the kindness of his early benefactor.

Soon after this affliction, Mahomet met with another still more severe in the death of his beloved Kadijah, the wife of his youth—the creator

* Ch. ix.

of his fortune, and his counsellor in difficulties. He had been exceedingly fond of her; had maintained his fidelity to her inviolate,—a somewhat unusual thing for men of that country and age; and was inconsolable at her loss. His subsequent wife, an extremely beautiful and youthful daughter of his friend and ally, Abubeker, reproached him one day with his excessive grief on account of Kadijah. “Was she not old,” said Ayesha, with the insolence of blooming beauty; “has not God given you a younger, a better, and a more beautiful wife in her place.” “More beautiful, truly,” said the prophet, “and younger, but not better. There cannot be a better: she believed in me when men despised me—she relieved my wants when I was poor and persecuted.” After her death, he placed her among the four perfect women.

This twofold affliction of the prophet, in the loss of his uncle and his wife on the same year, induced him ever afterwards to call this “The Year of Mourning,” by which name it is known among his followers.

The unprotected apostle was now left completely exposed to the attacks of his enemies, and they failed not to improve their advantage. They redoubled their efforts to crush the pestilent heresy, with its author and abettors; and some of his followers and friends, seeing the symptoms of a fiercer storm of persecution gathering, forsook the standard of their leader. In this extremity, Mahomet perceived, that his only chance of safety was in a temporary retreat from the scene of conflict. He accordingly withdrew to Tayef, a village situated sixty miles to the east

of Mecca, where he had an uncle named Abbas, whose hospitality afforded him a seasonable shelter. Here, however, his stay was short, and his prophetic labours unavailing. He returned to Mecca, and boldly taking his stand in the precincts of the Kaaba, among the crowds of pilgrims who resorted annually to this ancient shrine, he preached the gospel of Islam to the numerous assemblies. New proselytes again rewarded his labours; and, among the accessions now made to his party from these pilgrim hordes, were six of the inhabitants of Medina, then called Yatreb, who, on their return home, began at once to relate to their fellow-citizens the story of their conversion, and to extol, in no measured terms, their new religion and its apostle. This circumstance gave eclat to Mahomet in the city of Medina, and paved the way to a train of events which tended more than any thing else to promote his final success.

His marrying the daughter of Abubeker had strengthened his interest in Mecca; and, about the same time, or perhaps somewhat earlier, he also married the daughter of another powerful man in that city; so that his foes had the mortification of seeing the place of his friend and patron, Abu Taleb, supplied by his two fathers-in-law, both of them men of great power and influence.

CHAPTER VI.

Council of the Koreish against Mahomet.—He conceals himself.—Converts from Medina bind themselves by an oath of fidelity to him and his cause.—Mahomet's escape from his foes in the cave of Thor.—His flight and reception at Medina.—Gathers his converts in that city together.—How he was regarded by some professed Christians.—By Jews.—Unites his followers.—And inspires them with martial courage.—Observations on his wars, as compared with the scripture account of the wars against the Canaanites.

DEPRIVED of the domestic repose and comfort to which he had been accustomed, and abandoned, by the death of his generous protector and uncle, to the cruelty and power of his foes, Mahomet was now likely to suffer, in his own person, what his less protected followers had already suffered. The chief of his adversaries, Abu Sofian, a mortal foe of the Hashemites, had succeeded to the principality in Mecca, and very soon an assembly of the enemies of Mahomet was called to decide his fate. They were weary of the disorders which had so long prevailed in their city, and alarmed at the hostile feeling of the surrounding country. How could they best get rid of both? To imprison the prophet would be to excite his own enthusiasm, so that he would utter more bitter and awful maledictions than he had hitherto poured upon his enemies; nor was it quite safe that the common people, awakened to sympathy and compassion by the sufferings of their favourite, should listen to these effusions. To banish him from the city would be to send an eloquent and popular fanatic throughout the provinces of Arabia, the effect of whose harangues might endanger the

already threatened power of his adversaries, and probably arouse innumerable hosts against them. They determined to put him to death. The time, the place, the manner of executing their purpose, were settled. It was agreed that a man should be chosen out of each of the confederated tribes for the execution of the project, and that each man should have a blow at him with his sword, in order to divide the guilt of the deed, and to baffle the vengeance of the Hashemites; as it was supposed, that with their inferior strength they would not dare, in the face of this powerful union, to attempt to avenge their kinsman's blood. The prophet declared that the angel Gabriel had revealed to him the atrocious conspiracy, to which he thus alludes some time afterwards: "And call to mind when the unbelievers plotted against thee, that they might either detain thee in bonds, or put thee to death, or expel thee the city; and they plotted against thee; but God laid a plot against them; and God is the best layer of plots."* The heavenly minister, however, who disclosed the plot, pointed out no way of defeating it but by a speedy flight. Even this chance of safety had like to have been cut off through the vigilance of his enemies. He was indebted for his escape to the devoted zeal of Ali, who wrapped himself in the green mantle of the prophet, and, lying down upon his bed, deceived the assassins who had besieged the house of his friend. The Koreish respected the piety of the heroic youth, so that he escaped. A few verses of his own, describing the feelings of this fearful hour, give an

* Koran, ch. viii.

interesting picture of his anxiety, his tenderness, and his religious confidence. Could they have moderated their animosity, Mahomet, abused and incensed as he was, would still have been reluctant to leave the city of his birth—the place of his warmest affection, and in whose venerable temple he, in all probability, begun to anticipate the eventual triumph of his faith. He might have continued tolerated by some and revered by others, till the spirit of his party—perhaps till his own spirit—burnt feebly and faintly to a close. Persecution is always unfortunate—defeating its own purposes, and giving strength and consistency to what it seeks to destroy.

For a considerable time Mahomet had to conceal himself as best he could. He first retired to Tayef, or Taif, a small town, about sixty miles eastwards of Mecca, where he was received in a manner far from cordial. The higher class of the inhabitants treated him with a measure of respect, but the inferior classes rose against him, and expelled him from their town, so that he was again obliged to return to Mecca, at the imminent hazard of his life.

During this period of his difficulty and danger, the fame of Mahomet continued to spread through the towns and cities of Arabia. At the close of the last chapter, it was mentioned that his cause had gained converts among the pilgrims to the Kaaba, from the city of Yatreb or Medina. This place, about seventy miles northward of Mecca, and therefore nearer to the countries in which Christianity had obtained a footing, had been distinguished by the early introduction of letters, arts, and science; and its inhabitants, composed of

pagan Arabs, heretical Christians, and Jews, were frequently designated as the people of the book. The two principal tribes which now had possession of the city were the Karejites and the Awsites, between whom a hereditary feud had, long subsisted, and the disturbances occasioned by the rivalry of these two tribes were enhanced by the disputes of the religious factions, Jewish and Christian, which distracted all classes of citizens.

The converts of Mahomet from this place had not been slothful in their propagation of their new sentiments. That they were both sincere and successful disciples of the prophet may be inferred from the fact, that in this year, the twelfth of the mission, called the accepted year, twelve men came to Mecca, and took an oath of fidelity to Mahomet at Al Akaba, a hill on the north of that city. The amount of this oath was : "That they should renounce all idolatry ; that they should not steal nor commit fornication, nor kill their children, as the pagan Arabs used to do when they apprehended they should not be able to maintain them ; nor forge calumnies ; and that they should obey the prophet in every thing that was reasonable." When they had solemnly bound themselves to the conditions of the oath, Mahomet sent one of his disciples, named Masab Ebn Omair, to instruct them fully in the principles and practices of the new religion. Masab's mission was eminently successful. Among the proselytes were Osaid Ebn Hodeira, a chief man of the city, and Saad Ebn Moadh, prince of the tribe of Aws ; and there was scarcely a house in the city that did not number one or more converts.

The next year, the thirteenth of the mission,

Masab returned to Mecca accompanied by seventy-three men and two women, who had professed Islamism, besides several who were as yet unbelievers. The object of this deputation was to proffer to the apostle an asylum, or any assistance in their power, as they had learned that, from the the strength and malice of his adversaries, he stood in special need of auxiliaries. It was in fact a political association which was proposed to be entered into, "in which we may perceive," says Gibbon, "the first vital spark of the empire of the Saracens." In this secret conference with the prophet, his kinsmen, and his disciples, vows of fealty and of mutual fidelity were pledged by the parties. The deputies from Medina promised, in the name of the city, that if he should be banished, they would "receive him as a confederate, obey him as a leader, and defend him to the last extremity, like their wives and children." "But if you are recalled to your country," they asked, "will you not abandon your new allies?" "All things," replied Mahomet, "are now common between us; your blood is as my blood; your ruin as my ruin. We are bound to each other by the ties of honour and interest. I am your friend and the enemy of your foes." "But if we are killed in your service, what will be our reward?" "PARADISE!" replied the confident apostle. The treaty was then ratified, and they separated, Mahomet having first chosen twelve out of their number, who were to have the same authority among them, as the twelve apostles of Christ had among the disciples.

From this time, the Medianian converts looked impatiently for the arrival of Mahomet among them, influenced perhaps, partly by political mo-

tives. Mecca had become great and wealthy, from the number of pilgrims who resorted thither, on account of its being the seat of the ancient temple of their faith. Mahomet's preaching and writings were beginning to make a considerable impression; and the city that offered him an asylum, might become equally great as the seat and centre of a new faith. He had had repeatedly to fly for his life from his native town, from the schemes of the Koreish; and now again he fled. At the dead of night, the prophet left a place, where hourly he expected assassination, and concealed himself for some time in the caves in the neighbourhood of the city. Abubeker accompanied him. In a cave about a league from Mecca, called the cave of Thor, they remained for three days, sustained by the kind and generous devotion of the children of the prophet's companion, who brought them food and intelligence of what their adversaries were doing. Every haunt was explored by the diligence of the Koreish, who are said to have come at last to the mouth of the prophet's place of concealment, but to have been diverted from their design of entering, by an artful contrivance of a pigeon's nest, and a spider's web, so placed by the fugitives, as to induce the suppositions that the cave was empty. "We are only two," said the trembling Abubeker. "There is a third," replied the prophet.—"It is God himself," and truly it does appear, as if the providence of the Most High at this critical period, interposed for the protection of a man whose genius and power were destined to produce an extensive change in the history of the world.

As soon as the pursuit of the Koreish had

somewhat abated, Mahomet and his companion issued from the cave, on the road to Medina; but while urging their flight, they were overtaken by their pursuers, from whose hands they with difficulty redeemed themselves by prayers and promises; and in sixteen days after leaving Mecca, they approached in safety the place which was destined to be the future home of Mahomet and his faith. The escapes he had just experienced, had the effect of strengthening his confidence in God, even in the entire destitution of human resources. "If ye assist not the prophet, verily God will assist him, as he assisted him formerly, when the unbelievers drove him out of Mecca, the second of two when they were both in the cave; when he said unto his companion, be not grieved, for God is with us. And God sent down his security upon him and strengthened him with armies which ye saw not."*

Having halted at Koba, two miles from Medina, he was met by five hundred of the citizens who had gone forth for the purpose, and by whom his arrival was greeted with a cordial welcome. The prophet, having mounted a camel, with an umbrella spread over his head, and a turban unfurled instead of a banner, made his public and solemn entry into the city, which was hereafter to be sanctified as the place of his throne. This flight of the apostle of Islamism, called in the Arabic tongue the HEJIRA, or more properly the HEJRA, has become the grand era of all the Mahometan nations, being employed by them for the same purposes as the year of our Saviour's birth is throughout the

* Koran, ch. ix.

nations of Christendom. It took place A. D. 622, in the fifty-third year of the prophet's age.

The waiting adherents of the messenger of truth, composed of those of his friends who had by his orders fled from Mecca a short time before him, and the proselytes of Medina whom he had never seen, now flocked obsequiously about his person, and the distinction became henceforth established among his followers, of the Mohajerin, or the companions of his flight, and the Ansars, or helpers; familiar appellations for the fugitives of Mecca, and the auxiliaries of Medina. "As for the leaders and the first of the Mohajerin and the Ansars, and those who have followed them in well doing; God is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased in him; and he hath prepared them gardens watered by rivers; they shall remain therein for ever; this shall be great felicity."*

The first care of Mahomet was to gather his scattered followers into one body, and have them under his immediate influence. The treatment he had met with at Mecca, and the expectation which he entertained, that his foes would follow him anywhere, had probably made him think of other means of protection, than threats of future punishment and a prophet's curse. The thirty-sixth chapter of the Koran, revealed at Mecca, a short time previously to his departure, is charged deep with his resentment. He reminds the Meccans of heavy calamities endured by the inhabitants of other cities, for rejecting messengers of the Most High, and intimates that they might expect similar calamities. The twenty-third chapter pertaining

* Koran, ch. ix.

to the same period, pointed still more distinctly to the manner in which unbelief was to be punished. "Thou certainly invitest them to the right way, and they who believe not in the life to come, do surely deviate from that way. If we had had compassion on them, and had taken off from them the calamity which had befallen them, they would surely have more obstinately persisted in their error, wandering in confusion. We formerly chastised them with a punishment; yet they did not humble themselves before their Lord, neither did they make supplications unto him, until we have opened upon them a door from which a severe punishment hath issued, behold they are driven to despair thereat." The prophet himself is greatly exasperated, every thing he says and does is calculated to exasperate his followers, and make them familiar with an approaching struggle. His doctrines had been unavailingly preached for some years, but were now to be maintained and diffused by other means. His followers therefore, must have a rallying point. Accordingly, almost immediately a piece of ground was procured, on which the delighted citizens soon beheld a mosque rising, which however humble its pretensions, they fondly imagined would rival the black temple of Mecca, together with a house for the prophet's residence, near to which another was added for his beautiful wife Ayesha; and subsequently others for the numerous wives whom cupidity, lust, or ambition, perhaps all combined, led the prophet to take. To expedite the completion of the Mosque, Mahomet laboured at its erection with his own hands, as well as encouraged the builders with his powerful exhortations, and in a short time the wish of his heart

was gratified. He had a temple in which to harangue his followers, and to serve as a centre around which they might at any moment be assembled ; nor can we help admiring the sagacity which had dictated this proceeding. Not only would he turn the tide of pilgrimage which annually flowed in the direction of Mecca, towards his own adopted abode, and give an air of permanence to his undertaking, in which it was previously utterly wanting ; but he would infuse into the breasts of his followers, the ardour and courage of men, who if they fought maintained a religious war. Who fight so desperately, who are so valiant as they who contend not for liberty or life merely, but for their religion ; their hearths and their altars being involved in one common peril.

Prejudice has accused the prophet of despoiling two hapless orphans of their property, to obtain the ground on which to plant this symbol of the union of his followers ; conduct of which he was too politic to be guilty, if even he had been influenced by no higher motives : and as may be supposed, this tale like many others, turns out on investigation to be a pure invention of malignity. It is said, and not without considerable likelihood, that the ground on which to erect the mosque, was offered to him as a gift. He was urged to accept it, and doubtless had he been rapacious or cruel, he would have done so, but he insisted on paying for its utmost value. " Il lui disent," says his biographer, Gagnier, " O apotre de Dieu nous vous le cedons en pur don. Le Prophete voulut absolument, l'acheter et Abu Becre, le paya de ses propres deniers."

It has been said that certain persons at Medina

usually ranked among the Christians, united in inviting Mahomet to that city, nor is it at all improbable. Heresies symbolizing, in many particulars, with modern Unitarianism, or, as more properly designated, with Socinianism, were exceedingly rife among the nominal Christians of that day; and Mahomet, in his views of Christ, coincided with them. As the discussions awakened by opposing views on these points ran high, and sometimes issued in violence, it is likely that they regarded the rising prophet as a powerful coadjutor. From a passage in the third chapter of the Koran it has been inferred that the Christians of this class were active in securing the reception he met with, and that they were among the most ready to embrace his cause. Had the Jews generally regarded him, as some of their number were disposed to do, as their expected Messiah, it is probable that this honour would have belonged to them; but they were prevented from this, equally, by his own explicit declarations, and by his conduct towards them. He had treated them with respect, but some circumstances, which cannot now, perhaps, be accurately ascertained, led to a change in this part of his conduct. He says, "Thou shalt surely find the most violent of all men in enmity against the true believers, to be the Jews and idolaters, and thou shalt surely find those among them to be the most inclinable to entertain friendship for the true believers, who say, 'We are Christians.' This cometh to pass, because there are priests, among them, and monks, and because they are not elated with pride; and when they hear that which has been sent down unto the apostle read unto them, thou shalt see their

eyes overflow with tears because of the truth which they perceive therein ; saying, O Lord, we believe ; write us down, therefore, with those who bear witness to the truth : and what should hinder us from believing in God, and the truth which hath come unto us, and from earnestly desiring that our Lord would introduce us into paradise with the righteous people ?”

This unbelief of the Jews has been attributed to the prophet's altering a permission which he had given, that in prayer, men might direct their faces, as the Jews were wont to do, towards Jerusalem. So long as this permission lasted, he was supposed to be favourable to their faith, but this illusion vanished, when on account of the clamour of his followers, whose rooted attachment to the ancient edifice at Mecca, could not be readily subdued, he pretended that a new revelation was given, directing that the Kaaba, and not the temple at Jerusalem, should be the Kebla or point towards which to direct the face in prayer. An earlier cause for the prophet's dislike of the Jews may be assigned. Many of them had gone to Mecca during the efforts of the Koreish against him ; and had offered to unite in their confederacy. They also were among the most urgent in the demand for some miraculous proof of his mission ; a demand in which they felt they were strengthened by the recollections of their own prophets ; nor is it at all unlikely, that Mahomet's pretended miracles altogether failed to satisfy them. They were not of the right kind to have this effect. “ They might probably expect,” says Mr. Sale, “ that a prophet who came to restore God's true religion, should rekindle for them the sacred fire,”

which had consumed their ancient sacrifices; but which had been extinguished ever since the captivity of their tribes in Babylon, nor would they receive any pretensions which could not claim the support arising from conferring this favour upon them." The objections which they urged to Mahomet's mission, were furnished by a religion which he acknowledged to have come from God, whom he claimed as the author of his own, and were therefore extremely difficult to deal with. The prophet was compelled to denounce where he could not argue, and to hate, and in his turn persecute where he could not reason, or cajole into conformity with his views.

The state of society, in almost every part of Arabia, divided into small independent tribes, and easily excited on religious questions, rendered it comparatively facile for Mahomet to assume a kind of sovereignty over a people so devoted to his interests as his Median converts were. In religious affairs, he was their acknowledged instructor, and from hints which he began to pour forth, in his pretended revelations, it seemed likely that their temporal interests would be advanced by acknowledging him as their leader. Still he did not always succeed in obtaining implicit deference to his mandates. The tribes most powerful in Medina regarded each other with a hatred which frequently broke forth into more than words and gestures; and the distinguishing epithets designating those who were most forward in supporting his cause, were likely to occasion considerable jarring. The Ansars or Helpers was the more honourable designation; the Mohajerin or Refugees, was that of dependent protected parties. These he sought

to bind together by a brotherly league, not only to dwell in peace and concord, but to cherish one another with a fraternal affection and tenderness. The prophet, moreover, knowing how ineffectual mere promises and leagues were, as an additional tie joined them in pairs, associating together one of each class. This device was effectual; the brotherhood cemented by a holy devotion to the same cause, because indissolubly close and strong; they respected their mutual obligations, and maintained their fidelity to each other. It is recorded that on one occasion only was this affectionate union interrupted; and then so stern was the fidelity by which the respective parties were animated, that the believing son offered to lay the head of his idolatrous and offending parent at the prophet's feet.

Such provisions as these, and Mahomet's care to secure the fidelity of his followers, interpreted as they are by subsequent events indicated approaching conflict. They were like the first blast of the trumpet of war, and were followed by louder and more portentous blasts in the oracular revelations which he received from above. The confidence of the prophet was excited, and his hope of success was strengthened by the perpetually increasing multitudes who flocked to his standard. He did not long remain the leader of a band contemptible on account of their numbers. Hundreds yielded to his sway, and upon their fidelity, almost any dependence might be placed. What therefore he had previously only whispered in accents of almost desponding fanaticism began to assume the tone of certainty. The incredulity of enemies is denounced as most unreasonable and criminal;

they had raised his resentment, and the prospect of revenge began to open ; “ God propoundeth unto men,” he said, “ examples,” probably referring to the wars undertaken by divine command against the ancient idolaters of Canaan. “ When ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads until ye have made a great slaughter among them, and bind them in bonds ; and either give them a free dismissal afterwards, or exact a ransom ; until the war shall have laid down its arms. This shall ye do. Verily, if God pleased, he could take vengeance on them without your assistance ; but he commandeth you to fight his battles, that he may prove the one of you by the other.” Cowardice, or reluctance to engage, were denounced as among the greatest crimes—courage as the highest virtue. “ As for those who fight in defence of God’s true religion, God will not suffer their works to perish ; he will guide them, and will dispose their heart aright ; and he will lead them into paradise, of which he hath told them.”* Innumerable passages of a similar kind might be quoted from the chapters revealed at Medina, nor is it to be questioned, that they succeeded in raising the martial spirit of his hearers to the highest pitch. “ The sword,” says the prophet, “ is the key of heaven and of hell : a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months’ fasting or prayer. Who-soever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven ; at the day of judgment, his wounds shall be resplendent as vermillion, and odoriferous as musk ; and the loss of limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim.”

* Chap. xlvii.

We are aware of the difficulty of assigning precisely the date of these effusions, but if, as is most probable, they were poured forth previously to his drawing the sword they must have been designed, as unquestionably they were adapted, to fire the Arabs with enthusiasm and intrepidity; nor was the hope of considerable booty wanting, still further to produce this effect, since the wealthy caravans, of their more southern countrymen, were continually passing the deserts of Medina, and sometimes they were but poorly guarded.

It has been insinuated that Mahomet first took up arms in his own defence, and by more than one historian, he has been justified in seeking to repel, or prevent the hostilities of his enemies, and to exact a reasonable measure of retaliation. "The choice of an independent people," says Gibbon, "had exalted the fugitive of Mecca to the rank of a sovereign, and he was invested with the just prerogative of forming alliances, and of waging offensive or defensive war."* That such a sentiment was entertained by a Mahometan does not at all surprise us, nor is it marvellous that it should be justified by an infidel; if it be true, war needs nothing to render it laudable, but the pretext of former injuries, and the possession of power. The defence set up for Mahomet, is equally availing for every sanguinary and revengeful tyrant; and men, instead of being bound together by the ties of clemency and mutual forgiveness of injuries, are transformed into fiends, watching for the opportunity of destroying each other.

The same learned and eloquent historian, with

* Decline and Fall, chap. 1.

characteristic malignity against revealed religion, associates Mahomet with Moses and the judges and kings of Israel. "The military laws," he says, "of the Hebrews are still more rigorous than those of the Arabian legislator," an allegation which we apprehend he would find it difficult to maintain: but if it were so, in the one case there was divine authority for the proceeding, which was wanting in the other. Unless the fanatical, unconnected, and rabid enthusiasm of the Koran be entitled to equal respect with the sober, chastened, and sanctifying revelations of the Bible, we must take away from the former that solemn sanction, that explicit direction which distinguished the latter. Moses, Joshua, and the prophets, demonstrated their commission, Mahomet affirmed, but could never give proof of his. It will not be denied, that there is some similarity in the proceedings taken in the two cases; but it must be observed, that the wars of Mahomet were professedly in support of his religion; those of the Israelites never contemplated making converts: the one were general, against all unbelievers, admitting of no exception; the other, under divine direction, contemplated the punishment and overthrow of particular nations only: to the one, men were incited by every appeal that could be made to their cupidity, their revenge, or their lust; to the other, the incentive was simply obedience to the divine command. The wars in which the Israelites engaged, were as obviously a punishment upon certain idolatrous and guilty nations, as the various plagues had been upon the Egyptians, or the destruction of the Pentapolis upon their ill-fated inhabitants; and none will dispute the right

of the author of our being to punish crimes against himself in such manner as to him may seem best. An observation of Dr. Paley on the Israelitish wars is exceedingly philosophical and just. "In reading the Old Testament account of the Jewish wars and conquests in Canaan, and the terrible destruction brought upon the inhabitants thereof, we are constantly to bear in our minds that we are reading the execution of a dreadful but just sentence, pronounced by God against the intolerable and incorrigible crimes of these nations; that they were intended to be made an example to the whole world of God's avenging wrath against sins of this magnitude and this kind,—sins which, if they had been suffered to continue, might have polluted the whole ancient world, and which could only be checked by the signal and public overthrow of nations notoriously addicted to them, and so addicted as to have incorporated them even into their religion and their public institutions; that the miseries inflicted upon the nations by the invasion of the Jews, were expressly declared to be inflicted on account of their abominable sins: that God had borne with them long: that God did not proceed to execute his judgments till their wickedness was full: that the Israelites were mere instruments in the hands of a righteous Providence, for effectuating the extermination of a people of whom it was necessary to make a public example to the rest of mankind: that this extermination, which might have been accomplished by a pestilence, by fire, by earthquakes, was appointed to be done by the hands of the Israelites, as being the clearest and most intelligible method of displaying the power and righteousness of the

God of Israel—his power over the pretended gods of other nations, and his righteous hatred of the crimes into which they were fallen.*

Similar arguments cannot be urged in favour of the wars undertaken by Mahomet, whose history shows that he sanctioned fraud, perfidy, cruelty, and injustice, for the propagation of his faith, whose character was stained by the deliberate murder of fugitives not yielding the required submission, and whose numerous other vices are by no means compensated by those personal and social virtues which he deemed necessary to maintain the reputation of a prophet, among his followers and friends.

CHAPTER VII.

Mahomet draws the sword contrary to his early professions—Proclaims war against the Koreish.—Battle of Bedr.—Victory attributed to God.—Policy as well as piety of this.—Caravan surprised and taken at Nejed.—Dispute about spoils.—Reverse of Ohod.—War of the ditch or nations.—Mahomet guilty of cold-blooded murder.—His wars against the Jews of the families of Kainoka, Nadir, and Khoraida.—Reduction of Khaibar.—Motives inducing these wars.

HITHERTO Mahomet had confined himself to a war of words. At Mecca he had used only the milder forms of persuasion and argument in propagating his religion. "Warn thy people," had been the direction given to him, "for thou art a warner only, thou art not empowered to act with authority over them." † Up to the period of his

* Paley's Sermons ; Serm. 29.

† Koran, ch. 88.

flight, he had utterly disclaimed the use of any species of coercion in propagating, or of violence in defending, the principles of his holy faith. In numerous passages of the Koran, published at Mecca, he expressly declares that his business was only to preach and admonish; that he had no authority to compel any one to embrace his religion; and that whether people believed or disbelieved was no concern of his, but a matter that belonged solely to God. "We have also spoken unto thee, O Mahomet, by revelation, saying, Follow the religion of Abraham, who was orthodox, and was no idolater. Invite men unto the way of thy Lord by wisdom and mild exhortation; and dispute with them in the most condescending manner: for thy Lord well knoweth him who strayeth from his path, and he well knoweth those who are rightly directed. Wherefore do thou bear opposition with patience; but thy patience shall not be practicable, unless with God's assistance. And be not thou grieved on account of the unbelievers."* "Let there be no violence in religion."† Indeed, so far was he from allowing his followers to resort to violence, that he exhorted them to bear with meekness the injuries offered them on account of their faith; and when persecuted himself, chose rather, as we have seen, to quit the place of his birth, and retire to a distant village than make resistance. He pursued this moderate course for twelve years, that is, so long as his cause was weak. The revelations which he said were made to him at Medina, spoke, as it has been shown, in another tone. They said, "War is enjoined you against

* Koran, ch. xvi.

† ch. ii.

the infidels."* "Fight, therefore, against the friends of Satan, for the stratagem of Satan is weak."† "O true believers, take your necessary precaution against your enemies, and either go forth to war in separate parties, or go forth all together in a body."‡ And when the months wherein ye shall not be allowed to attack them shall be past, kill the idolaters wherever ye shall find them, and take them prisoners, and besiege them, and lay wait for them in every convenient place."§ "Verily God hath purchased of the true believers their souls, and their substance, promising them the enjoyment of paradise on condition that they fight for the cause of God: whether they slay or be slain, the promise for the same is assuredly due by the law, and the gospel, and the Koran."|| And faithfully were these precepts obeyed. Within one year after the prophet's settlement at Medina, he proclaimed a holy war against the Koreish, in prosecuting which various ambuscades were stationed in the desert to annoy their commerce, and to seize their caravans as they slowly pursued their way through the defiles and mountain passes; but for some months his success was small. At length the prophet himself headed a small band of his followers on the plain of Bedr, about forty miles from Mecca, which was waiting to seize a caravan of that city on its return from Syria, richly laden with grain, fruit, and other costly merchandize. It was escorted by a few armed men, perhaps thirty or forty, under command of his old adversary Abu Sofian, the chief magistrate of Mecca. A similar attempt under his uncle Hamza had

* Koran, ch. ii. † ch. iv. ‡ Ibid. § ch. ix. || ch. ix.

been unsuccessful, because of the numbers who escorted the caravan, but here they were too few to threaten much resistance or danger. Sofian, who was aware of his danger, had secured previously to the attack a large reinforcement from the city; the prophet, however, went boldly forward. Abu Beker, and probably the flower of his disciples it is said, to the number of three hundred men, accompanied him. They were but poorly furnished for battle, and still worse for retreat; two horses and seventy camels being all the beasts they could boast to bear them to the charge, or carry them beyond reach of their enemies should flight be necessary. Both parties rushed fiercely to the charge. The idolaters were three to one in number, and much the better equipped, and in a short time it seemed as if the victory would be decided in their favour. The prophet, seated in a wooden hut or sanctuary, erected for his safety, and fixing his eagle-eye upon the field of battle, most fervently addressed God on their behalf. "Courage!" he exclaimed to his soldiers; "courage, my children, and fight like men! close your ranks, discharge your arrows, and the day is your own! O God, execute what thou hast promised!"—a prayer which had respect to angelic assistance in the conflict, which he had taught his followers to expect. His anxiety was evidently very great, and his pleadings with the Most High exceedingly earnest, till most probably because his little army was observed to be beginning to give way, he started as from a trance, and exclaimed aloud, "Triumph, Abu Beker, triumph; behold the squadrons of heaven flying to our aid!" and rushing forth on his horse, he placed himself at the head of his men,

announcing, in a few verses of the Koran, the arrival of the anticipated aid, and led them on with all the confidence of success. He was politic enough to perceive that such a movement involved his only chance of success, and the result fully justified his anticipations. His own friends were inflamed with renewed ardour. The Koreish, who probably begun to suspect there was something supernatural about him, were thrown into the utmost alarm and confusion; the slain and the captives of their number affording substantial proof of the victory of the Moslems.

To this victory Mahomet in his next revelation refers with indications of deep humility and gratitude. "Ye have had," he says, "a miracle shown you in two armies which attacked each other; one army fought for God's true religion, but the other were infidels; they saw the faithful twice as many as themselves in their eye-sight, for God strengtheneth with his help whom he pleaseth."* "O God, who possessest the kingdom; thou givest the kingdom unto whom thou wilt, and thou takest away the kingdom from whom thou wilt. Thou exaltest whom thou wilt, and thou humblest whom thou wilt."† Nor can we wonder that with his turn of mind such should be his feeling and language; for inconsiderable as this action may seem to us, it was of great importance to the prophet's cause. It laid the foundation of his future power and success, so that it has become famous in Arab annals, and is especially vaunted in their sacred volume. During the action, Mahomet is said to have taken a handful of gravel at

* Koran, ch. iii.

† Ibid.

the instigation of Gabriel, and thrown it towards his advancing foes. "Ye slew not," says the Koran, "those who were slain at Bedr yourselves, but God slew them. Neither didst thou, O Mahomet, cast the gravel into their eyes when thou didst seem to cast it; but God cast it, that he might prove the true believers by a gracious trial from himself." An illusion is said to have come over the eyes of the Koreish, so that Mahomet's forces appeared to be double the number they actually were; nothing perhaps very unnatural or surprising; and to make the affair the more miraculous, one thousand, some say three thousand, and others three times that number, of the heavenly host were despatched to his assistance, who really did the execution which the Mahometan troops seemed to do.

It must not, however, be supposed that Mahomet's piety alone is concerned in attributing this success to God. His policy has a great deal to do with the language he held. The enthusiasm of his little band must be inflamed—they must have something to compensate for the loss of their companions, for fourteen of their number fell, and to re-assure them in the prospect—which now, perhaps, increased in probability—that they also might fall in battle; and what so effectually would accomplish these purposes as the assurance that God was their coadjutor, and, that if they fell, to adopt the modern phrase, they fell gloriously, to inherit, as their reward, a blessedness which no hand but His could give. The promises of Mahomet surpass by far the semi-pagan promises, made in some Christian harangues to men about to join in mortal strife; and they are

the more consistent. A God who employed such means of extending the triumphs of his religion in the world, would of course be bound to reward a zeal and fidelity which should lead forth his servants to die in his cause.

This success was followed by similar exploits; for though the Meccan merchants, to avoid the annoyance and losses inflicted upon them by their Mussulman adversaries, chose a different route to Syria from that usually taken, they could not escape. The banks of the Euphrates and the shores of the Red Sea were equally hazardous. A wealthy caravan was surprised by Zaid, a faithful follower of the prophet, who had five hundred cavalry under his command, and totally routed. The plunder, on both occasions, was very large.

Adventurers and plunderers, whether of the desert or of more civilized regions, have generally fallen out with each other when their booty has increased; and such threatened to be the result of the robberies committed by the successful followers of the prophet. Those who fought and those who staid "by the stuff," as in the time of David,* disputed how the spoils should be divided: the former insisted that they should have the whole; the latter contended for a share. The dispute was referred to the prophet, who has a revelation on the subject. Some would make this revelation to have come at an exceedingly convenient season. One of Mahomet's friends had taken great umbrage at being denied a particular sword which he claimed, having himself slain its original possessor. "It is not mine," said the prophet, "to

* 1 Sam. xxx.

give away: place it with the other spoils." To calm the indignation of this friend, Mahomet receives permission to divide among his followers what had been taken. "You asked of me," he said to his disappointed friend, "this sword when I had no power to dispose of it; but now I have received from God authority to distribute the spoils, you may take it." "Know," said the oracle to Mahomet, "that whenever ye gain any spoils, a fifth part thereof belongeth unto God, and to the apostle, and his kindred, and the orphans, and the poor, and the traveller;"† a law which is subsequently repealed, except that to Mahomet is reserved the right of granting to his military companions and followers such proportion as he pleased. In the portion reserved for distribution among the poor, especial consideration is had of the Mohajerin, who, for the sake of the faith, had left all they possessed in Mecca, and had become fugitives and orphans. These different laws of distribution relate, however, it is said, to the spoils taken in different expeditions. Under the first, so great was the booty taken, that Mahomet's share of the money alone amounted to from twenty to twenty-five thousand drachms.

The success of the Moslems in their predatory warfare was not, however, uniform. At Bedr and Nejed they had been victorious: the battle of Ohod turned the tide of success in favour of their adversaries.

The resentment of Abu Sofian and the citizens of Mecca, for the loss and the disgrace sustained in the conflicts of the preceding year, stimulated

† Ch. viii, Kor.

them to undertake a new expedition against the warlike apostle. The Koreish accordingly assembled an army of three thousand men, under the command of Sofian, and proceeded to besiege their enemy in the city of Medina. Mahomet, being greatly inferior in numbers to the invading army, determined at first to await and receive their attack within the walls of the city. But the ardour of his men, enkindled by the recollection of their former success, could not brook restraint; they clamorously demanded to be led out to battle; and he unwisely yielded to their request. Impelled also himself by the same spirit of rash confidence, he unwarily promised them certain victory. The prophetic powers of the apostle were to be estimated by the event. Mahomet, in every encounter, seems to have manifested, in a high degree, the talents of a general. In the present instance his army, consisting of about one thousand men, was advantageously posted on the declivity of the mountain Ohod, four miles to the north of Medina. Three standards were confided each one to a separate tribe, while the great standard was carried before the prophet, and a chosen band of fifty archers were stationed in the rear, with peremptory orders to remain there till commanded to the attack by Mahomet himself. The Koreish advanced in the form of a crescent: Kaled, the fiercest of the Arabian warriors, led the right wing of the cavalry; while Hinda, the wife of Abu Sofian, accompanied by fifteen matrons of Mecca, incessantly sounded timbrels to animate the troops to the approaching conflict. The action commenced by the Moslems charging down the hill, and breaking through the enemy's

ranks. Victory or paradise was the reward promised by Mahomet to his soldiers, and they strove with frantic enthusiasm to gain the expected recompense. The line of the enemy was quickly disordered, and an easy victory seemed about to crown the spirit and valour of the Moslem troops. At this moment, the archers in the rear, impelled by the hope of plunder, deserted their station, and scattered themselves over the field. The intrepid Kaled, seizing the favourable opportunity, wheeled his cavalry on their flank and rear, and exclaiming aloud, "Mahomet is slain!" charged with such fury upon the disordered ranks of the Moslems, as speedily to turn the fate of the day. The flying report of the death of their leader so dispirited the faithful, that they gave way in every direction, and the rout soon became general. Mahomet endeavoured in vain to rally his broken troops; he fought with desperate valour; exposing his person where the danger appeared greatest: he was wounded in the face by a javelin, had two of his teeth shattered by a stone, was thrown from his horse, and would, in all probability, have been slain, but for the determined bravery of a few chosen adherents, who rescued their leader from the throng, and bore him away to a place of safety. The day was utterly lost; seventy of his soldiers were slain, among whom was his uncle Hamza; and his reputation as a prophet and apostle was in imminent peril. His followers murmured at the disastrous issue of the conflict, and had the hardihood to affirm that the prophet had deceived them; that the will of the Lord had not been revealed to him, since his confident prediction of success had been followed by a signal defeat. The prophet,

on the other hand, threw the blame on the sins of the people ; the anger of the Lord had fallen upon them in consequence of an overweening conceit of their security, and because he had determined to make trial of their sincerity. "After a misfortune hath befallen you at Ohod, do ye say, Whence cometh this? Answer, This is from yourselves : for God is almighty ; and what happened unto you was certainly by the permission of God, that he might know the faithful and that he might know the ungodly.—And we cause these days of different success interchangeably to succeed each other among men, that God might prove those who believe, and might destroy the infidels. Did ye imagine that ye should enter paradise, when as yet God knew not those among you who fought strenuously in his cause ; nor knew those who persevered with patience? Verily, they among you who turned their backs on the day whereon the two armies met each other at Ohod, Satan caused them to slip for some crime which they had committed."* In order to stifle the murmurs of those who were overwhelmed with grief at the loss of their friends and relatives, he represented to them, that the time of every man's death is distinctly fixed by the divine decree, and that those who fell in battle could not have avoided their predetermined fate even if they had staid at home ; whereas now they had obtained the glorious privilege of dying martyrs for the faith, and were, consequently, translated to the bliss of paradise. "O true believers, be not as they who believe not, and said of their brethren

* Koran, ch. iii.

when they had journeyed in the land, or had been at war, If they had been with us, those had not died, nor had these been slain : whereas, what befel them was so ordained. No soul can die unless by the permission of God, according to what is written in the book containing the determination of things. Thou shalt in nowise reckon those who have been slain at Ohod, in the cause of God, dead : nay, they are sustained alive with their Lord, rejoicing for what God of his favour hath granted them.* With these miserable evasions did he excuse the falsehood of his prediction, and conceal the ignominy of his defeat. This doctrine of fatalism, however, took a deep root among his followers; and to this day the Mahometans are among its most strenuous and determined advocates. "No accident," saith the Koran, "happeneth in the earth, nor in your persons, but the same was entered in the book of our decrees, before we created it."†

* Kor. ch. iii.

† "We had at the same time the following striking instance of the frivolous appeals to the Deity among the Mahometans. A man went round the caravan, crying with a loud voice, 'In the name of God, the just, the merciful. My cup is gone from me : it disappeared while I prayed at sunset (and may God grant my evening prayer). To whoever may find the same, may God lengthen out his life ; may God augment his pleasures, and may God bring down affairs of business on his head !' This pompous appeal to heaven, and prayers for good fortune to the finder of the missing utensil, were all powerless, however, in their effect. The lost cup was not found ; and the consolation then assumed was, 'God knows where it is gone ; but it was written in heaven from of old.'—*Buckingham's Travels in Mesopotamia*, vol. i. p. 281, Lond. 1827.

"While this was going on, the author of our calamity [a vessel had been run aground] was pacing the deck, the picture of terror and indecision, calling aloud on Mahomet to assist us out

Abu Sofian, for reasons now inexplicable, did not pursue the advantages he had gained on this occasion. He merely gave the prophet a challenge to meet him again in the field on the ensuing year, which was readily accepted, although somewhat more than a year elapsed before the actual renewal of hostilities.

In the fifth year of the Hejira occurred the war of the ditch, or, as it is otherwise termed, the war of the nations; which, but for peculiar circumstances, would probably have resulted in the entire overthrow of the prophet. The Koreish, in conjunction with a number of the neighbouring tribes or nations, many of whom were Jews, assembled an army of ten thousand men, and making common cause against the grand adversary of their ancient religion, advanced to the seige of Medina. On their approach, Mahomet, by the advice of Soliman, or Salman, the Persian, whose tomb is still shown, and whose memory is still cherished with profound respect, ordered a deep ditch, or intrenchment, to be dug around the city for its security, behind which he remained fortified for near a month. During this period, no other acts of hostility occurred than a few ineffectual attempts to

of the danger. His fears were not much lessened by the threats thrown out by each passing tar. 'I say, Jack,' said one of them, 'we'll string you up for this;' making his observation intelligible, by pointing with one hand to the yard-arm, and with the other to the neck of his auditor, at the same time imitating the convulsive guggle of strangulation. When called to account for his obstinacy, the pilot gave us an answer in the true spirit of (Mahometan) predestination—'*If it is God's pleasure that the ship should go ashore, what business is it of mine?*'"—*Keppel's Journey from India to England, in 1824, p. 33.*

annoy each other by shooting arrows and slinging stones. In the mean time, tradition says, the prophet was busily employed by his arts and emissaries, in corrupting and bringing over to his interest the leading men among the enemy, a course which men who deem themselves more honourable warriors, do not scruple to pursue. Having succeeded with several, he employed them in sowing dissensions among the rest; so that at length the camp of the confederate was torn to pieces with divisions, and one party breaking off after another, nearly the whole army was finally dissipated, and the little remnant that remained, was thrown into confusion and made powerless by the direct visitation of an angry God. While they lay encamped about the city, a remarkable tempest, supernaturally excited, benumbed the limbs of the besiegers, blew dust in their faces, extinguished their fires, overturned their tents, and put their horses in disorder. The angels, moreover, co-operated with the elements in discomfiting the enemy, and by crying "ALLAH ACBAR!" GOD IS GREAT! as their invisible legions surrounded the camp, struck them with such a panic, that they were glad to escape with their lives.

The prophet was not insensible to the marks of the divine favour vouchsafed him in these illustrious prodigies, nor did he fail to hold them up to the consolation of his followers on subsequent occasions. "O true believers, remember the favour of God towards you, when armies of infidels came against you, and we sent against them a wind, and hosts of angels which ye saw not."* But to what-

* Koran, ch. xxxiii.

ever it were owing, whether to human or heavenly agency, it is certain that from this time the Koreish gave up all hopes of putting an end to the growing power and spreading conquests of Mahomet. They henceforth undertook no more expeditions against him.

It is scarcely to be supposed that any man, even though of lower pretensions than the prophet, could pass through scenes of conflict like those which have been described without having his hands stained by deeds which his friends must deplore. It is not given even to great minds, to maintain their magnanimity unsullied through a career of success, much less when that success gives way to adversity. Many a man who has braved an armed band, has quailed and lost his self possession, where exposed to attacks of another kind. This was the case with Mahomet;—Kaab, a son of Al Ashraf, a Jew, indulged his satirical powers at his expense, nor was he content with venting his effusions among the men of Mecca. Having a genius for poetry, and being inveterately opposed to Mahomet, he went to Mecca after the battle of Bedr, and with a view to excite the Koreish to revenge, deplored in touching verses, the unhappy fate of those of their brethren, who had fallen while valiantly resisting a renegade prophet, with his band of marauders. He afterwards returned to Medina, and had the hardihood to recite his poems to the people within the walls of that city. The prophet was so exceedingly provoked by the audacity of the poet, who must, indeed, have been possessed of the highest phrenzy of his tribe, to promise himself impunity in these circumstances, that he exclaimed, “who will deliver me from the

son of Al Ashraf?" A certain namesake of Mahomet, the son of Mosalama, a ready tool of his master, replied, "I, O prophet of Ged, will rid you of him." Kaab was soon after murdered, while entertaining one of the apostle's followers.

An excuse for this deed may perhaps be found partly in the predominant features of the Arab character, and partly in the effect which poetry has been found in all ages capable of producing, and especially among the inflammable minds of orientals. Modern times have not been without similar circumstances, in some who have the reputation of being better men than Mahomet.

Another act of blood stains this part of his history. Being informed that Sofian, the son of Kaled, was collecting men for the purpose of attacking him, he ordered Abdallah, the son Onais, surnamed Dhul-Malldhrat, that is, a man ready to undertake any thing, to assassinate his designing foe. Abdallah obeyed the prophet's command, and murdered Sofian in the valley of Orsa. He immediately returned to Mahomet, who, upon hearing the success of the enterprise, gave him, as a token of his friendship, the cane with which he usually walked.

The disputes occasioned between the Jews and Moslems, by the change of the Kebla, referred to in last chapter, were less readily settled than Mahomet had been accustomed to settle matters of controversy among his own followers alone. He had pretended to revelations on the subject; but, either, because they were mutually contradictory, or because the Jews in general had little or no faith in the prophet, they still contended for their ancient practice of praying with their faces to-

wards Jerusalem. The odium theologicum has often been found to augment as the parties approached each other. Arabs and Jews had many things in religion in common; perhaps, this will account for their mutual intolerance. The one people were obstinate, the other unflinching in their demands. Mahomet frequently took occasion to speak of the Jews in the most severe and contemptuous manner in the Koran, and to accuse them of crimes, such as, with all their wickedness, they were never accused of by Jesus and his apostles. They were charged with having corrupted the oracles of truth committed to them, by altering some passages, and expunging or stifling others; charges but illconceived to conceal the deep rooted hatred with which, on other accounts the prophet regarded them. A considerable number of that people, denominated the tribe of Kainoka, dwelt at Medina, and carried on trade there, under protection of the authorities of the city; an accidental tumult arose, in which they were conspicuous, and Mahomet seized the occasion it offered to demand their unconditional submission to his religion, or to contend with him in battle. "Alas!" they replied, "we are ignorant of the use of arms, but we persevere in the faith and worship of our fathers, why wilt thou reduce us to the necessity of a just defence." For several days the city was disturbed by the unequal conflict, till at length, the importunity of certain friends of the prophet obtained for the Jews the very doubtful benefit of escaping without arms or treasure, to implore refuge on the confines of Syria. Another family, or tribe, possessing a castle about three miles from Mecca, were also

attacked, but their bravery obtained for them an honourable capitulation, and they were permitted to march forth with all the honours of war. Others were less fortunate. As soon as Mahomet was relieved from his apprehensions on account of the war of the ditch, having ascertained that many Jews joined with his adversaries, he marched without putting his armour aside, even for a brief repose, against the family of Khoraida, a race who had become especially obnoxious to his wrath, with the determination to extirpate them at once. The intercessions of friends were in vain; their own submission to the clemency of the prophet was equally unavailing. They appealed to the judgment of a venerable elder, but he pronounced the sentence of death upon them; and says Gibbon, "seven hundred Jews were dragged to the market-place of the city; they descended alive into the grave prepared for their execution and burial, and the prophet beheld, with an inflexible eye, the slaughter of his helpless enemies. Their sheep and camels were inherited by the Mussulmans; three hundred cuirasses, five hundred pikes, a thousand lances, composed the most useful portion of the spoil."

The prophet's successful troops were next directed against the city of Khaibar, where a considerable number of the people who had become victims of his especial hatred dwelt. It was a strong place, and was likely to stand out successfully against all his efforts to reduce it. At length Mahomet revived the spirits of his weary and discouraged men, and by the commendations he bestowed upon the impetuous Ali, who is said to have performed at this place prodigies of valour, he aroused

their courage and emulation. The castles of the place, and soon afterwards, the town itself, were reduced; torture was employed to obtain a confession that might lead to the detection of concealed treasure, and when at length Mahomet could gain nothing more from the unfortunate inhabitants, they obtained from him a precarious toleration, and the opportunity of following their respective occupations, on condition of paying a heavy tribute to enrich his treasury.

It must not be supposed that these wars were all undertaken from religious considerations alone. In part undoubtedly they were, but there were other passions in the mind of Mahomet, inducing them. Among these, it has already appeared that revenge was by no means inconsiderable in its influence. He and his followers, moreover, were needy, and in each of these instances, a considerable booty might be anticipated as the reward of their exertions. They were little more, in fact, than marauding expeditions, undertaken without scruple, and conducted without pity. The habits of the people, and the grudge owed by the prophet to his ancient adversaries, united to render his deeds honourable, at least to Arab minds; and probably, he was anxious to inure his followers to toil, to establish their confidence of success, and to sharpen their appetite for spoil, ere he engaged them in more important conflicts. It were too much for even Mahomet's romantic enthusiasm to suppose that he anticipated for his doctrine the extensive influence and the lasting hold which it has acquired; but, unquestionably, he did begin to harbour the thought of a dominion far wider than that which belonged to him as the successful pro-

phet of Medina : Mecca must also submit. Arabia, and the neighbouring provinces must acknowledge his sovereignty.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Koran.—Its style.—Coincidences with the sacred writings.—Design.—Fundamental doctrines.—The unity and providence of God.—The mission of Mahomet.—Angels.—The devil.—Genii.—The inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments.—The resurrection and final judgment.—Predestination or fate.—Prayer.—Alms.—Fasting.—Pilgrimage.—Minor precepts.—Reflections.

SOME idea may be formed of the Koran as a system of religion from extracts already copied, but it will be expedient to give a more detailed and connected view of its leading contents.

It may be proper at the outset to remark, that the language in which it is written is the purest Arabic, that of the tribe from which Mahomet sprung. It resembled the Hebrew in many respects, and is accounted by competent judges the richest, and most energetic, and copious language in the world, the classical language of India, Sanscrit, only excepted. The Koran is mostly written in prose, interspersed with occasional poetry and rhyme. As to manner, it is exceedingly unconnected and desultory, which may have been partly the effect of design, and partly that of the difference of time and circumstances under which its several parts were composed. The Arabic fable concerning it is, that the original existed entire in a volume in some part of the heavenly world. Its place at first was near the throne of the Most High,

from whence it was removed to the lowest heaven for the purpose of being revealed by Gabriel to Mahomet as occasion required ; the prophet having the consolation of seeing it once every year entire, bound in silk and adorned with gold and precious stones, except in the last year of his life, when he saw it twice. (It bears abundant marks of its author's acquaintance with both the Jewish and Christian scriptures, the facts and doctrines of which, intermingled with rabbinical fables, and with the superstitions common among Jewish and oriental professors of the faith of Christ of the fifth and sixth centuries, are constantly referred to. Some assert that in framing his book Mahomet was aided by Abdia ben Salen, a Jew, and by the Christian monk whose name has already been mentioned, Sergius or Bahira, as he is called in the western and eastern churches respectively. Professor Lee traces in it many coincidences with the writings of Ephrem, a Syrian, who lived in the fourth century, and was greatly esteemed on account of the sanctity of his conversation and manners, and the many excellent writings in which he contended for various points of Christian doctrine, explained the scriptures, and unfolded the duties and obligations of Christians. His works were publicly read in their assemblies in Syria. It is probable, therefore, that Mahomet had access to them during the journeys to that country which he was accustomed to make in early life. However this may be, it is beyond doubt that the Koran owes every thing to scripture, except its spirit, its manifest contradictions, its puerile follies, and its superstition. The reader will observe, as this

chapter proceeds, the particulars in which this obligation is apparent.

Mr. Sale, whose translation of the Koran into English is the most popular, and the best, reckons its number of chapters at 114, of unequal lengths, some revealed entire at each of the two cities in which Mahomet made his abode; the remainder partly at one city, and partly at the other. To an English reader their titles seem whimsical. The Cow, the Bee, the Ant, the Spider, the Wrapped up; the Fig, Congealed blood, the Elephant, &c., are specimens; but their titles are taken respectively from the passage in the chapter where the word occurs for the first time, it having been, it was said, the first that was revealed. Every chapter, except the ninth, which is wholly war-like, and exhorts the believers not to keep truce with an enemy, begins in the auspicious form; "In the name of the most merciful God." Learned Arabian doctors have not determined whether this commencement be divine in the same sense as other parts of the chapter, or not. "The general design of the Koran,"* to use the words of the learned Golius, "seems to be this: To unite the professors of the three different religions then followed in the populous country of Arabia, who for the most part lived promiscuously, and wandered without guides, the far greater number being idolaters, and the rest Jews and Christians, mostly of erroneous and heterodox belief in the knowledge and worship of one eternal invisible God, by whose power all things were made, and

* Sale's Prel. 45.

those which are not may be; the Supreme Governor, Judge, and absolute Lord of the creation, established under the sanction of certain laws, and the outward signs of certain ceremonies, partly of ancient, and partly of novel institution, and enforced by setting before them rewards and punishments, both temporal and eternal; and to bring them all to the obedience of Mahomet as the prophet and ambassador of God, who, after the repeated admonitions, promises, and threats of former ages, was at last to establish and propagate God's religion on earth by force of arms, and to be acknowledged chief pontiff in spiritual matters, as well as supreme prince in temporal." For better achieving this design, two fundamental doctrines were necessary, and accordingly we find them at the basis of the Moslem faith. One is the unity of God, and the other that Mahomet was the apostle or prophet of God; his decisions were therefore final, and his word was law. The first of these doctrines is inculcated in almost every page of the Koran, in contradistinction from the pagan polytheists, and from the scripture doctrine of the Trinity believed by both Jews and Christians. Idolatry and creature worship is discarded on the simple principle "that whatever rises must set, whatever is born must die, and whatever is corruptible must decay and perish." On this argument the Koran borrows a story from the Jewish Talmud. "When the night overshadowed Abraham, he saw a star, and he said, this is my Lord; but when it set, he said, I like not gods which set. And when he saw the moon rising, he said, this is my Lord; but when he saw it set, he said, verily if my Lord direct me not, I shall

become one of the people who go astray. And when he saw the sun rising, he said, this is my Lord, this is the greatest; but when it set, he said, O my people, verily I am clear of that which ye associate with God: I direct my face unto him who hath created the heavens and the earth. I am orthodox, and not one of the idolaters.* "Say, God is one, the eternal God, he begetteth not, neither is he begotten, and there is not any one like unto him." † This doctrine of the divine unity includes that of the attributes of Deity, together with the all-presiding care and bounty of a wise and omnipresent providence. "O men of Mecca," we read in the second chapter, "serve your Lord who hath created you, and those who have been before you: peradventure ye will fear him who hath spread the earth as a bed for you, and the heaven as a covering; and hath caused water to descend from heaven, and thereby produced fruits for your sustenance. Set not up therefore any equals unto God, against your own knowledge. To God belongeth the east and the west, he directeth whom he pleaseth into the right way. God knoweth that which ye do. Whatever is in heaven and on earth is God's; and whether ye manifest that which is in your minds, or conceal it, God will call you to account for it, and will forgive whom he pleaseth, and will punish whom he pleaseth; for God is almighty. Your God is one God, there is no God but he; the most merciful. Now in the creation of heaven and earth, and the vicissitude of night and day, and in the ship which saileth in the sea, loaden

* Koran, ch. vi.

† Koran, ch. cxii.

with what is profitable for mankind, and in the rain water which God sendeth from heaven, quickening thereby the dead earth, and replenishing the same with all sorts of cattle, and in the change of winds and the clouds that are compelled to do service between heaven and earth are signs to people of understanding; yet some men take idols beside God, and love them as with the love due to God; but the true believers are more fervent in love towards God." *

One of the sublimest uninspired descriptions of the Most High has often been quoted from the sacred chapter by writers on Mahometan matters, "God! there is no God but he, the living, the self-subsisting; neither slumber nor sleep seizeth him; to him belongeth whatsoever is in heaven and on earth. Who is he that can intercede with him, but through his good pleasure. He knoweth that which is past, and that which is to come unto them, and they shall not comprehend any thing of his knowledge, but so far as he pleaseth. His throne is extended over heaven and earth, and the preservation of both, is no burthen unto him. He is the high and mighty." The reader of the sacred oracles cannot fail to be reminded of certain passages in them, of which this is no feeble imitation,† and will be convinced, that he who could thus write, had imbibed no small share of the poetic fire and spirit of the inspired prophets, as well as copied the sublime truths they inculcate.

It would extend this volume beyond due limits, were quotations of this kind to multiply as they

* Koran, ch. ii.

† Job xxiii. 3—7. Ps. cxxi., and Isa. xl. 25—28.

might easily do. These will be sufficient to show how the Koran taught the fundamental truth of the divine unity. What Moses declared to the Israelites, Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah, is the leading doctrine of Islamism, written in every page of the Koran; inscribed on every altar of their devotion, and confessed by every Mussulman, almost with each returning hour.

On his own mission, as the apostle of God, Mahomet speaks, with equal decision and clearness. Indeed the faith of his followers everywhere is expressed in the compendious formula. "There is no God but God, and Mahomet is his prophet;" both parts of which are held in equal veneration. It has been already seen, how anxious the Koran is to establish this point, and to what pretended miracles recourse was had in support of it. Once fully established, it prepared for the reception of any dogma, and for submission to any deity it might inculcate; for wherein could a divinely inspired prophet err?

Other articles of the Mahometan creed will remind the reader of articles taught in the Book of God. Thus, angels both good and bad, are often affirmed to exist. Their names, their abodes and offices may be regarded either as rabbinical, or as the creations of a bold Asiatic fancy. To Gabriel, it belonged to communicate revelations. Michael was the protecting angel of the Jews, Azrael, and Israfil, the one the angel of death, and the other the trumpeter at the general resurrection, are repeatedly introduced; besides these, Mahomet assigns to other angelic spirits, functions and offices, of great importance, in directing the affairs of men. Some are employed in taking an account of good

and evil actions ; others watch in the chambers of death, and investigate the faith of such as have descended into the invisible state ; while to others it pertains either to reward or punish, as the decision on each case may require. The four angels first mentioned, are spoken of as most eminently the favourites of God, and on them chiefly he is said to lay the cares and honours of government. Of inferior spirits, every man is attended by two, whose business it is to take account of his actions ; they are changed every day, and are therefore denominated Moakibat, or the angels who continually succeed one another.

To the devil, Mahomet gives a name signifying despair, describing him as once filling an honourable station near to the throne of God, from which he was expelled without hope of recovery, for refusing to pay homage to Adam at the divine command. To his machinations, the Koran attributes Adam's loss of Paradise. "Satan caused them to forfeit Paradise, and turned them out of the state of happiness wherein they had been ; whereupon we [that is God] said, get ye down, the one of you an enemy unto the other, and there shall be a dwelling place for you on earth, and a provision for a season. And Adam learned the words of prayer from his Lord, and God turned unto him, for he is easy to be reconciled and merciful."*

An intermediate order of beings, neither angels nor devils, is admitted into the Mahometan creed ; perhaps its doctrine concerning them was borrowed from the Persian or Magi. We may find

* Kor. ch. ii.

traces of this class of beings in all the writings of the East. They are said to have been the inhabitants of the world previously to the creation of Adam, the greater part of whom, falling into general corruption, were driven into confinement in a remote part of the earth, under the vigilant guardianship of Eblis, or the devil. Some remained in their ancient habitations till they were driven by a king of Persia into the famous mountain of Kaf. These beings are of grosser material than angels, they eat and drink, and multiply and die just as men; they are distinguished by their moral character as men are; occupy a similar state of probation, and are as capable of future rewards and punishments. They are called Gîn, or Genii by Mahometans, and are the Peri, fairies, Dio, Giants, Facwiris, or fates, of other oriental writers.

As to the inspired writings of the Old and New Testament, Mahomet acknowledges the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Gospel. The Koran is often affirmed to be in accordance with them, and a supplementary revelation. Mahomet pretended that they contained prophecies concerning himself, claiming especially, to be the paraclete or comforter, whom our Lord promised to send to his followers after his ascension. "Jesus, the Son of Mary, said, O children of Israel, verily, I am the apostle of God sent unto you, confirming the law which was delivered before me, and bringing good tidings of an apostle that shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmed."* And still further, to support these

* Koran, ch. lxi.

preposterous claims, he does not scruple to charge both Jews and Christians with mutilating their respective parts of the word of God. By this means he contrives to render nugatory whatever the Bible contains, not supported by the Koran. Prophets, and heavenly instructors, he said, had been sent from God to mankind in abundance. His followers say there were two hundred and twenty-four thousand previously to Mahomet, of whom Jesus is regarded as among the greatest; but Mahomet is greater than them all. Everywhere the Koran abounds with expressions of contempt at the belief of those Christians who represented Christ as the Son of God, divine in his nature, and entitled to the worship of mankind; and it is observable, that it contains nothing equivalent or akin to the great Christian doctrine of atonement, except a few vague principles expressed in loose and unsatisfactory terms. Mahomet seems to have regarded Christianity only in the very imperfect and corrupted form in which it was represented by the ancient Arians, and from these, he separated some acknowledged notions, approaching to orthodoxy, as unworthy of notice.

The doctrine of the resurrection, and the day of judgment, are part of the faith of the Koran. "Abraham said, O Lord, shew me how thou wilt raise the dead. God said, Dost thou not yet believe? He answered, yea; but I ask this, that my heart may remain at ease. God said, Take, therefore, four birds and divide them, then lay a part of them on every mountain, then call them, and they shall come swiftly unto thee, and know that God is mighty and wise.* O men, if ye be in doubt

* Koran, ch. ii.

concerning the resurrection, consider that we first created you of the dust of the ground, we cause that which we please to rest in the wombs, until the appointed time of delivery. Then we bring you forth infants, and afterwards, we permit you to attain your age of full strength, and one of you dieth in his youth, and another of you is postponed to decrepit age, so that he forgetteth whatever he knew. Thou seest the earth sometimes dried up and barren; but when we send down rain thereon, it is put in motion, and swelleth, and produceth every kind of luxuriant vegetables. This showeth that God is the truth, and that he raiseth the dead to life, and that he is Almighty, and that the hour of judgment will surely come; there is no doubt thereof, and that God will raise again those who are in their graves.**

On the final judgment, with the respective adjudications of men, according to their character we meet with language equally explicit. "On a certain day we will call all men to judgment, with their respective leader: and whoever shall have this book given him in his right hand, they shall read their book with joy and satisfaction."† "One blast shall sound the trumpet, and the earth shall be moved from its place, and the mountains also, and shall be dashed in pieces at one stroke; on that day, the inevitable hour of judgment shall surely come, and the heavens shall cleave in sunder, and shall fall in pieces at that day, and the angels shall beat the sides thereof, and eight shall bear the throne of thy Lord on that day. On that day he shall be presented before the judg-

* Koran, ch. xxii.

† ch. xvii.

ment seat of God, and none of your secret actions shall be hidden.* He, whose balance shall be heavy with good works, shall lead a pleasing life; but as to him whose balance is light, his dwelling shall be in the pit of hell.† The Mahometan paradise for the righteous, and hell for the wicked, have been already described.‡

One other doctrine deserves to be mentioned. It is that of the fixed unalterable predetermination of all things. The fifth, sixth, and seventeenth chapters of the Koran, furnish abundant and decisive evidence, that this doctrine was prominent in the instructions of the prophet. In the fifty-seventh also we read, "No accident happeneth on the earth or on your persons, but the same was entered into the book of our decrees before we created it: verily, this is easy with God: and this is written, lest ye immoderately grieve for the good which escapeth you, or rejoice for that which happeneth unto you." Indeed, one of the highest excellencies in the character of a true believer, is a perfect superiority, on account of this "fixed fate, foreknowledge absolute," to all the ills and blessings of life. The one must not depress, the other must not elate. By this doctrine, chiefly, he incited his followers to war. Nothing was left to chance, so that there was no room for danger or dismay. The same inevitable destiny that might have ordained them to perish in their beds, would not overtake them a moment sooner on the field of death, or render their persons more insecure amidst the arrows of the enemy. The lot of all was determined by a fixed and resistless determi-

* Koran, lxi.

† ch. ci.

‡ See ch. iv.

nation, with this only difference—the man of peace departed in inglorious obscurity, the warrior fell amidst the commendation of angels, with the crown of martyrdom, and the joys of paradise, in their highest degree, before his eyes. Down to the present day, this doctrine of blind absolute fate, renders the Mahometan, of whatever country, reckless of danger, and a passive instrument of the will of his superior.

To these doctrines Mahomet added, not all at once, but as occasion required, certain precepts regulating the religious practices of his followers. Among these, the most prominent is that of prayer. The prophet himself used to call prayer “the pillar of religion, and the key of paradise,” and to say that there could be no good in that religion which dispensed with it. He therefore prescribed to his followers five stated seasons in the space of twenty-four hours for the performance of their devotions. 1. In the morning, between daybreak and sunrise. 2. Just after noon, when the sun begins to decline from the meridian. 3. At the middle hour between noon and sunset. 4. Between sunset and dark. 5. An hour and a half after night has fully closed in. At these times, of which public notice is given by the muezzins, or criers, from the galleries of the minarets attached to the mosques—for Mahometans use no bells—every conscientious Moslem engages in this solemn duty, either in a mosque, or by spreading his handkerchief, and kneeling in any clean place upon the ground. Such extreme sacredness do they attach to this part of worship, and with such intensity of spirit do they hold themselves bound to attend upon it, that the most pressing emergency,

the bursting out of a fire in their chamber, or the sudden irruption of an armed enemy into their gates or camps is not considered a sufficient warrant for abruptly breaking off their prayers. Nay, the very act of coughing, spitting, sneezing, or rubbing their skin in consequence of a fly-bite, in the midst of their prayers, renders all the past null and void, and obliges them to begin anew. In their devotions, they make use of a great variety of postures and gestures, such as putting their hands one on the other before them, bending the body, kneeling, touching the ground with their foreheads, moving the head from side to side, and several others, among which it is impossible to distinguish those enjoined by Mahomet himself from those which were common among the ancient Arab tribes before he arose. Still it is affirmed by travellers, that, notwithstanding the scrupulous preciseness of the Moslem devotions, no people are more deeply tinctured with the spirit of ostentation, or love better to pray in the market-places, and in the corners of the street, that they may be seen of men, and obtain their praise. The Turks especially, wherever they find the greatest concourse of spectators, and particularly of Christians, are ever sure to spread their handkerchiefs, whatever inconveniences may attend the location, and begin their adorations. In these petitions, a prominent object of request is, that God would grant the blessing of dissensions, wars, and tumults to be enkindled among Christians; and the rumours of such events are hailed as tokens of his gracious answer.

The first or introductory chapter of the Koran, is a form of adoration and prayer, in as frequent

use among Mahometans, as the Lord's prayer is among Christians. "Praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures; the most Merciful, the King of the day of judgment. Thee do we worship, and of thee do we beg assistance. Direct us in the right way, in the way of those to whom thou hast been gracious; not of those against whom thou art incensed, nor of those who go astray." Certain ablutions and purifications, in imitation of the Jewish rabbis, are prescribed as necessary to the right performance of this duty. "O true believers, when ye prepare yourselves to pray, wash your faces and your hands unto the elbows, and rub your heads and your feet up to the ancles;"* and though, as we have seen, there were at first disputes, and afterwards indulgencies, as to the point towards which the face of the worshipper was to be directed, in the second year of the Hegira all Mahometans were ordered to pray with their faces towards Mecca. "Turn thy face towards the holy temple of Mecca, and wherever ye be, turn your faces towards that place. They to whom the Scripture hath been given, know this to be truth, from their Lord."† Accordingly, every devout Mussulman, in whatever part of the globe he may reside, ascertains, as exactly as possible, the place of the Kebla, and offers his devotions accordingly.

(Alms, fasting, and pilgrimage to their holy city, are the remaining duties of practical piety enjoined by Mahomet upon all good Mussulmans. Of the first he had given beautiful examples in early life; and subsequently he collected and di-

* Koran, ch. v.

† ch. ii.

vided, with his own hands, what was given by his followers, in obedience to his precepts, always taking care of his poor relations and followers, and of those who had served in his wars, and were disabled in what he termed the maintenance of the cause of God. "They will ask thee," it is said in chapter ii. of the Koran, "what they shall bestow in alms: Answer, The good which ye bestow let it be given to parents, and kindred, and orphans, and the poor, and the stranger: whatsoever good ye do, God knows it. Oh, true believers, bestow alms of the good things which ye have gained, and of that which ye have produced for you out of the earth, and choose not the bad thereof to give in alms, such as ye would not accept yourselves, otherwise than by connivance; and know that God is rich, and worthy to be praised! If ye make your alms to appear, it is well; but if ye conceal them and give them to the poor, this will be better for you, and atone for your sins." A tenth of the revenue of every Mussulman is thus to be disposed of; and "if his conscience accuse him of fraud and extortion, the tenth, under the idea of restitution, must be enlarged to a fifth."* To this may be added, the precepts of the Koran respecting the forgiveness of injuries and the returning of good for evil, among his followers, to each other. A familiar story, illustrative of these precepts, is told of Hazza, a son of Ali, the devoted friend of the prophet. A slave, while serving at table, inadvertently overthrew a dish of scalding broth on his master; on perceiving what he had done, the slave

* Gibbon.

immediately fell prostrate at his master's feet, supplicating clemency. "Paradise," said he, repeating a verse from the Koran, "is for those who command their anger." "I am not angry," was the reply. "And for those who pardon offences," resumed the slave. "I pardon your offence," said the astonished master. "And for those who return good for evil." "I give you your liberty, and four hundred pieces of silver." Towards those of another faith, it will have been seen, Mahomet inculcates no such clemency. His disciples are to love each other, and to minister to each other's necessities: they are to hate implacably all the world beside. "Kill the idolaters wheresoever ye shall find them, and take them prisoners, and besiege them, and lay wait for them in every convenient place."*

Of the fasts enjoined by Mahomet, the most holy was that of Ramadan, or Ramagan, so called from its being continued through the month of that name, which is the ninth in the order of the months of the Arabic year. Of this duty, Mahomet used to say, it was "the gate of religion," and that "the odour of the mouth of him who fasted, is more grateful to God than that of musk." An acceptable fast, according to the Moslem doctrine, includes abstinence from food, the restraining all the senses and members from their accustomed gratifications, and the withdrawal of the thoughts from every thing but God. The institution is thus announced in the Koran: "O true believers, a fast is ordained you, as it was ordained unto those before you, that ye may fear

* Ch. ix

God. **A** certain number of days shall ye fast ; but he among you who shall be sick, or on a journey, shall fast an equal number of other days. And those who can keep it, and do not, must redeem their neglect by maintaining a poor man. But if ye fast, it will be better for you, if ye knew it. The month of Ramadan shall ye fast, in which the Koran was sent down from heaven, a direction unto men.* By the law of their religion, therefore, the disciples of Islam are required to fast, while the sun is above the horizon, during the entire month of Ramadan, from the time the new moon first appears, till the appearance of the next new moon. Throughout that period they abstain wholly from the pleasures of the table, the pipe, and the harem ; they neither eat, drink, nor receive any thing into their mouths during the day, till the evening lamps, hung around the minarets, are lighted by the Imam, or priest of the mosque, when they are released. They then give themselves, without restraint, to the pleasures of the palate, and compensate, in full measure, for the penance of the day by the indulgence of the night. This is continued, according to the law of the prophet, "till they can plainly distinguish a white thread from a black thread by the day-break."† when the season of self-denial commences again for the ensuing day. As most of the Mahometans, however, are not too scrupulous to quell the annoyance of appetite by sleeping away the hours of the day, the observance of the fast of Ramadan is little more than turning day into night, and night into day. As the Arabic year is

* Ch. ii.

† Ibid.

lunar, each month in a period of thirty-three years, falls into all the different seasons of the solar year; and, consequently, the observance of the fast, when the month of Ramadan occurs in summer, is rendered, by the length and heat of the days, extremely rigorous and trying; especially as the poor are still compelled to labour during the day; and yet are forbidden, upon pain of death, to assuage their thirst by a drop of water.

Other fasts are practised by Moslems, recommended by either the example or approbation of their prophet; some of them copied from the practice of the Jews, and some being only perpetuations of ceremonies observed by the Arabs before his law was propounded. They need not here be particularized.

Of the pilgrimage to Mecca, though, of course, this could not be enjoined till after the period of Mahomet's life, with which the last chapter closed, it may be expedient to say a few words, in this place, that our view of his system may be complete. The sacred edifice distinguishing that city has been already described.* All the buildings surrounding it, together with the ground on which the whole city stands, was deemed sacred. Every Mahometan, whose health and means were sufficient, was obliged to travel thither once at least in his life. From this duty women are not exempted. "Proclaim," says the solemn voice, from whence the Koran proceeded, "proclaim unto the people a solemn pilgrimage: let them come unto thee on foot and on every lean camel, arriving from every distant road: let them pay their vows, and com-

* Chap. iii.

pass the ancient house.* Certain ceremonies were to be observed in the pilgrimage. The Kaaba was to be compassed a certain number of times, and in different paces, the pilgrim observing to run between two specified mountains, and to throw stones into a particular valley. He was to be clothed in a vestment, described by some Arabian writers with great minuteness: life was on no account to be destroyed, except in certain cases which are mentioned: the pilgrims must have a constant guard over their words and actions: they must avoid all quarrelling or ill language—all intercourse with women and obscene discourse; and their whole attention must be employed in the good work in which they were engaged.

The object of these pages is rather history than moral and religious discussion; yet it is impossible to take even this cursory glance at a system of religion, in which, though it acknowledged God, the distinguishing doctrines of revealed truth are rejected, without receiving an additional illustration of the weakness and perversity of the human mind, whenever it abandons, or attempts to improve upon the instructions he vouchsafes. "The world by wisdom knew not God," is the testimony of an inspired apostle; nor can we consider either the highest flights of the heathen philosophy, or the wisest and best of the instructions of men, who, though they owed much to revelation, neither understood nor revered it without feeling how true is this decision. Some have affected that the Koran may compete with the Scriptures. The idea is utterly ridiculous. "In

* Chap xxii.

the spirit of enthusiasm or vanity," says Gibbon, "the prophet rests the truth of his mission on the merit of his book, audaciously challenges both men and angels to imitate the beauty of a single page, and presumes to assert that God alone could dictate this incomparable performance. This argument is most powerfully addressed to a devout Arabian, whose mind is attuned to faith and rapture, whose ear is delighted by the music of sounds, and whose ignorance is incapable of comparing the productions of human genius. The harmony and copiousness of style will not reach, in a version, the European infidel; he will peruse with impatience the endless, incoherent rhapsody of fable, and precept and declamation, which seldom excites a sentiment or idea, which sometimes crawls in the dust, and is sometimes lost in the clouds. The divine attributes exalt the fancy of the Arabian missionary; but his loftiest strains must yield to the sublime simplicity of the book of Job, composed in a remote age, in the same country and in the same language."

"Islamism appears," says a historian of the Mahometan faith, "to most advantage when viewed distinct from Christianity; the nearer they approximate, the more glaring its defects become. Estimated as a system of deism, propagated at a very benighted period and time of apostacy, comprising the existence of a Supreme Being, the obligations of natural religion and a future state, it shines with some advantage over the wretched schemes of paganism, however modified. The abolition of infanticide, the encouragement given to alms and charitable deeds, must be mentioned with high approbation. The Koran also may lay claim to

elegance of style, but it is not an equable performance: it is disfigured by frequent absurdities, contradictions, anachronisms. Yet, after all, beauty of style, conceded to the utmost extent, would of itself be no proof of a divine original. The meretricious ornaments of language are rather calculated to mislead the judgment and excite suspicion, being artifices which truth seeks not, and if they come, arise unsought and unsolicited. The Koran carries within itself decided marks of fallacy, and may be refuted out of its own mouth; but in examining those far more ancient writings, from which Mahomet has so largely borrowed yet endeavours still to depreciate, it may be justly affirmed, that the materials of which they are composed, the divine enthusiasm, simplicity, grandeur of sentiment and figure, the moral lessons, doctrines, and prophetic predictions, proclaim aloud.

“‘ The hand that made us, is divine.’ ”*

CHAPTER IX.

The Koran.—Its civil and judicial precepts.—Infanticide.—Laws relating to marriage.—Inheritance.—Usury, debts, and contracts.—Criminal code.—Murder.—Theft.—Laws of evidence.—Oaths.—Civil and sacred functionaries.—Value of the system.—Its success as compared with that of Christianity.

WE cannot have a complete view of the Koran, nor of the character of its author without reference to its civil and judicial precepts, as well as to its religion. A few pages must therefore be devoted

* Neale's History of Mahometanism, p. 131.

to a consideration of these. In one point of view they illustrate the genius and character of Mahomet even more than his religious doctrine—they exhibit more of his perspicacity and courage. His religion must commend itself to esteem and confidence—its claim of a divine origin was adapted to arouse attention and to strike with awe; but unless it was seen to restrain the vices which had been freely indulged and to cherish the opposite virtues, it would not be likely to obtain permanent influence. Mahomet foresaw this—and as soon therefore, as he had audiences prepared to listen to his instructions he began to unfold moral precepts, imperfect indeed, and some of them, when compared with the morality of the Scriptures extremely corrupt and detestable, yet a vast improvement upon every thing his countrymen had hitherto acknowledged. And here we mark his moral courage. He could not but be aware that the restraints he imposed, and the practices he enjoined would be somewhat unwelcome to a people of hitherto unbridled passions. They might hazard the success of his enterprise, they might awaken against him hosts of adversaries—still he urges them. He promulges his laws under the highest and holiest sanction, and directed the thunder of his eloquence against the most common practices. Perhaps this courage is the more remarkable from the fact that his precepts are mostly prohibitory. They wear the form as well as involve the substance of attack upon evils indulged by his countrymen.

One of the most important of these negative precepts related to an inhuman practice which all historical writers attribute to the pagan Arabs,

The birth of daughters they reckoned a great misfortune—their death as a great happiness; and often to free themselves from the expense of maintaining them, or to avoid the disgrace of their being reduced to captivity, and subjected to the unbridled lust of a foe, they consigned them in infancy or childhood alive to the grave. In this horrid custom they were not singular—affording illustrations of the truth of the inspired testimony. “The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” Many a revolting spectacle of this kind had been presented in the mountains near the city of Mecca, in one of which, Abu Dalamar, the Koreish were accustomed to consign their female offspring to destruction. It is to Mahomet’s honour that he absolutely forbids this practice. Several passages may be quoted in proof. “Kill not your children for fear of being brought to want, we will provide for them, and for you,—verily the killing them is a great sin.* When any of them is told the news of the birth of a female, his face becometh black, and he is deeply afflicted; he hideth himself from the people because of the ill-tidings which have been told him, considering within himself whether he shall keep it with disgrace, or bury it in the dust. Do they not make an ill judgment.† In like manner have their companions induced many of the idolaters to slay their children that they might bring them [that is the idolaters] to perdition.‡ When the sun shall be folded up and when the stars shall fall, when the mountains shall be made to pass away, when the seas shall boil, and when the

* Koran, ch. xvii.

† Ch. xvi.

‡ Ch. vi.

souls shall be joined again to their bodies; and when the girl who hath been buried alive shall be asked for what crime she was put to death, and when the books shall be laid open, and when the heaven shall be removed, and when hell shall burn fiercely, and when Paradise shall be brought near, every soul shall know what it hath wrought."*

It is not necessary to prove that his legislation on this subject was altogether original to sustain the commendation of humanity, which we have bestowed upon it. To his countrymen the prohibition was new,—it might be taken from the book of God, to which, though they were unacquainted with it, Mahomet was not a stranger;—still it was a courageous thing for him to enforce it, when by leaving the subject, or inculcating an opposite doctrine he might have secured to himself immediate popularity. It must be borne in mind that his denunciation of idolatrous practices, and this among them, excited the first expressions of the hatred of the Koreish; still with the collected authority of the moralist, the legislator, and the divine, he commands the preservation of all the children that may be born. Solon is on all hands deemed a wise legislator, but he permitted the practice of infanticide. Seneca, a philosopher ranking high among ancient sages even to the present day, speaks of the destruction of deformed and imperfect children among the proper sacrifices, and the greatest moralist of antiquity commends the act. Romans committed it without shame; heathens blush not at its perpetration. Mahomet destroyed it with one stroke of his pen:

* Koran, ch. lxxxi.

can we refuse him the commendation of a magnanimous and humane disposition ?

Such commendation cannot be bestowed upon other parts of his civil code. The laws for instance relating to marriage, will scarcely bear examination. We shall wrong him, however, by judging of these laws under the influence and direction of Christianity. They should be compared not with what now prevails in civilized and Christian communities, but with the practices and laws previously observed among his countrymen. Some judging from the practice among a few of his followers, and especially among the rich and influential, fancy that the prophet indulged unlimited polygamy. His own practice is in favour of such a supposition, but the precepts of the Koran are clear and decisive. No man was to have more than four women, wives or concubines, and if from this number inconvenience was apprehended, advice is added, that one only should be taken, which advice is generally followed by the inferior and middling classes of Moslems. Mahomet certainly grants indulgence to such of his followers as might adopt it, their female slaves within the prescribed number being placed at their disposal. In pronouncing upon Mahomet's allowed polygamy, however, it behoves us to remember that the ancient patriarchs of the Bible indulged it; nor does it appear to be forbidden, nay, it is by implication allowed, in the Mosaic law. The Koran is particular in specifying the degrees of relationship within which persons might not marry, and in this particular it comes near to the law which Christian canons prescribe. The Mosaic institutions direct that younger brothers

should unite with the widows of elder brothers, in case there were no children; the Koran contains no similar provision, most probably because Mahomet's acute and observing mind saw that this was a requirement originating in a state of things as to inheritance, to which the Arabs could lay no claim. "Marry not women," says the prophet in chapter the fourth, "whom your fathers have had to wife. Ye are forbidden to marry your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your aunts, both on your father's and your mother's side, and your brother's daughters, and your sister's daughters, and your mothers-in-law, and your foster sisters, and your wives' mothers, and your daughters-in-law, and the wives of your sons, and you are also forbidden to take to wife two sisters."

Fosterage and kindred are here placed upon the same footing, and generally among Musulmans this doctrine is carried so far, that if two children are nursed by the same foster parent, though they belong by birth to different families, they are thenceforth regarded as brother and sister; matrimonial connexion between them is forbidden.

Husbands are permitted by the Koran to divorce their wives; nor is the occasion on which this is to be done always of great importance. The laws of Mahomet, in this particular, assimilate very much to those of Moses—perhaps they were borrowed and repeated second hand. There is one particular, however, in which they differ. Moses permitted no man to take back a wife whom he had divorced, and whom another man had married. Mahomet, to check the frequency of the practice, ordained, that a wife divorced for

three successive times, should not be taken back a third time by her husband, till she had been married to another man, and divorced by him. The dowry of a divorced wife was to be given her entire for her future maintenance.

Infidelity in the female sex, whether married or otherwise, was subject to severe punishment. The guilty person was to be imprisoned till death released her, or till "God afforded her a way to escape;" but the proof of guilt was rendered extremely difficult: it must be testified by four witnesses. This punishment as to unmarried females was commuted by the sonna, or traditional law of the Mahometans: they were punished with a hundred stripes, or a year's banishment. By the same law unfaithful wives were stoned.

Mahomet's laws as to inheritance were among the best he devised. He had suffered, in early life, from the barbarous custom of depriving orphans of the property of their parents. His uncles had shared Abdallah's possessions among them, and left him dependent on a precarious charity. It was likely, therefore, that a mind like his would seek to prevent the recurrence of similar oppression. "Surely they who devour the possessions of orphans unjustly, shall swallow down nothing but fire into their bellies, and shall broil in raging flames. God hath thus commanded you concerning your children. A male shall have as much as the share of two females; but if they be females only, and above two in number, they shall have two third parts of what the deceased shall leave; and if there be but one, she shall have the half. And the parents of the deceased shall have, each of them, a sixth part of what he shall

leave, if he have a child ; but if he have no child, and his parents be his heirs, then his mother shall have a third part. And if he have brethren, his mother shall have a sixth part, after the legacies which he shall bequeath and his debts be paid. Ye know not whether your parents or your children be of greater use unto you. This is an ordinance from God, and God is knowing and wise. Moreover, you may claim half of what your wives shall leave, if they have no issue ; but if they have issue, then ye shall have the fourth part of what they shall leave, after the legacies which they shall bequeath and the debts be paid. They also shall have the fourth part of what ye shall leave, in case ye have no issue ; but if ye have issue, then they shall have the eighth part of what ye shall leave, after the legacies which ye shall bequeath and your debts be paid. And if a man or woman's substance be inherited by a distant relation, and he or she have a brother or sister, each of them two shall have a sixth part of the estate : but if there be more than this number, they shall be equal sharers in a third part, after payment of the legacies which shall be bequeathed, and the debts, without prejudice to the heirs. This is an ordinance of God, and God is knowing and gracious. These are the statutes of God.*

Before the days of Mahomet, the property of a deceased Arab was divided between such of his relations as were able to bear arms—the share of the widow and orphan was unjustly seized and taken from them ; so that these appointments fur-

* Chap. iv.

nish another instance, where, in defence of what was humane and right, he had the magnanimity to set himself against the cupidity and oppressions practised by his countrymen. It may be observed in passing, that the law we have quoted on this subject is an improvement upon what the Koran at first promulged; and that among the children to whom the inheritance was to descend, those of slaves and concubines were on an equality with the children of wives. The Arab law knew nothing of illegitimacy, except as to the offspring of common prostitutes.

On the subject of usury the Koran is positive and peremptory. "They who devour usury shall not arise from the dead, but as he ariseth whom Satan hath infected by a touch. Whoever returneth to usury, they shall be the companions of hell fire—they shall continue therein for ever."* "Whatever ye shall give in usury to be an increase of men's substance, shall not be increased by the blessing of God; but for whatever ye shall give in alms, for God's sake, ye shall receive a twofold reward."† Towards such as borrowed and paid not again, Mahomet was exceedingly severe. Every crime might be expiated by killing infidels except debt and hypocrisy; and those who left this world without a sufficiency to pay their just and reasonable obligations, were denied the benefit of his intercessions.

The commentators of Mahometan law will not allow the plea of indigence in any man who follows an art or calling. He must satisfy his creditor by working, if he cannot otherwise pay him.

* Chap. ii.

† Chap. xxx.

Mahomet's laws on contracts, also, are explicit; and they require that all such engagements should be punctually performed. They must be made in writing, and duly attested. In cases of obligation, the party obliged is to dictate to the scribe employed the terms of the engagement—doubtless to avoid extortion: and his short and beautiful precept, applicable to all cases, is, "O believers, perform your contracts. If one of you trust the other, let him who is trusted return what he is trusted with, and fear God his Lord: and conceal not the testimony; for he who concealeth it hath surely a wicked heart. God knoweth that which ye do."*

The criminal code of the prophet lies within a narrow compass. Reference has already been made to infanticide and adultery. The provision against murder has been said to reflect little praise upon Mahomet. † The crime must have been frequent among a people whose thirst for revenge was among the strongest of their passions; it may be conceived that to have repressed it, Mahomet ought to have legislated for a judicial inquiry, terminating in such punishment as would have been a salutary restraint upon its recurrence. Instead of abolishing the practice of private revenge, he subjected it to a slight regulation. "Whosoever shall be slain unjustly, we have given his heir power to demand satisfaction; but let him not exceed the bounds of moderation in putting to death the murderer in too cruel a manner, or by revenging his friend's blood on any other than the person who killed him." ‡ This right of revenge

* Koran, chaps. v. and ii.

† Mills's History of Mahometanism.

‡ Chap. xvii.

in other passages Mahomet recommends to be commuted for a fine. "O true believers, the law of retaliation is ordained you for the slain: the free shall die for the free, and the servant for the servant, and a woman for a woman; but he whom his brother shall forgive may be prosecuted and obliged to make satisfaction, according to what is just, and a fine shall be set on him with humanity. This is indulgence from your Lord, and mercy."* Doubtless this provision was intended to check the horrible slaughter which often followed in avenging a single murder. It deserves commendation for its clemency, especially when the state of society on this particular is duly considered. Its wisdom is open to exception. Ought not Mahomet to have foreseen the results? His recommendation has never been observed, the acceptance of a sum of money in compensation for the life of a friend or relative being in opposition to Arabian maxims of honour, besides which this provision would make the crime light and easy to a wealthy offender. In the pentateuch, which he evidently makes his model, he might have found a juster law.

On theft the law of the Koran is more severe. "If a man or woman steal, cut off their hands in retribution for what they have committed."† Why so severe a punishment should have been decreed we cannot now ascertain. In this case, however, as well as in every other, our remarks upon Mahometan law must take their complexion not from what prevails in communities in which the refinements of modern civilization prevail. It is to be

* Mills's History of Mahometanism, chap. ii. † Chap. v.

judged of rather by the practices of communities of the same date with itself. Justinian's law, enacted in the same century with Mahomet's, forbidding the thief to be maimed, was far more reasonable. The traditional law in force among Mahometans in general, limits the severe enactment of the prophet to those cases in which the thing stolen is of considerable value. Our present inquiry, however, has not to do with the modifications which juster views may have imposed upon the institutions of the Koran, but with those institutions themselves. In executing this barbarous punishment for the first offence, the right hand of the thief was struck off at the wrist; for the second his left foot at the ankle; for the third his left hand; and for the fourth his right foot. Robbery and murder are deemed punishable with crucifixion or death in some other way, with or without amputation, at the discretion of the judge, a passage of the Koran which must be acknowledged capable of another interpretation, being understood to enact such a punishment.

The laws of evidence are of the highest moment in every juridical system. The principle laid down in holy writ, and acknowledged by most nations, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every thing shall be established," seems to have been adopted by the Mahometan code. Two were sufficient in any case, except that of a charge of adultery, where four are indispensable to the proof of the fact. Their moral character was to be regarded; and every reader of the Koran must have observed how frequent and solemn are the appeals made in favour of truth and righteousness to the omnipresent, all-seeing eye of God.

“Whether ye wrest your evidence, or decline giving it, God is well acquainted with what ye do. O true believers, observe justice when ye appear as witnesses before God, and let not hatred towards any induce you to do wrong. Fear God, for God knoweth the innermost parts of the breasts of men.”* Oaths are numerous in that volume. It swears by the heavens, by the earth, by every thing, though God is the speaker, an indecency of which Mahomet seems to be utterly insensible. It however cautions against swearing by him: “Make not God the object of your oaths, that ye will deal justly and be devout, and make peace among men.”† What the oath confirming testimony was, we have no means of ascertaining. Doubtless it was in perfect harmony with a system which, like the divinely inspired oracles, taught the omniscience of God, and the existence of future rewards and punishments.

To this brief account of the religious and civil institutions of Mahomet, a word may be added as to the respective functionaries by whom they were to be carried into effect. A priesthood or clergy is not provided by the Koran. It is doubtful whether the necessity or expediency of appointing such an order ever entered the mind of Mahomet. Islamism is not burdened with sacrifices: its ceremonies are comparatively few and simple, designed to be performed by every individual for himself. The prophet was the public instructor at his own mosque, and probably if he thought of other mosques arising in different places, his utmost hope was that individuals would easily be found

* Mills's History of Mahometanism, chap. iv. v. † Ch. ii.

to read and expound his revelations in them. Such in all probability, was the simple practice in his time, both in the synagogue and the Christian temple. Of magistrates he makes no mention: tradition, however, attributes to him a saying which indicates that he contemplated their appointment. "Whoever is appointed Cadi, suffers the same torture as an animal whose throat is mangled, instead of being cut with a sharp knife." The saying refers to the difficulties and responsibility of the office. This officer sits openly in the mosque to hear and adjudicate causes; he must be at all times accessible: justice is to be impartially administered; and, as a preventive of bribery, he must accept of no presents, and comply with no invitation to join in private parties. These, however, are requirements more modern than the Koran, having no other connexion with the subject of the present work than as tradition sanctions them by Mahomet's venerable name.

That there was much in the Mahometan system that was commendable will scarcely need to be said, after the sketch which has been given. As compared with the Paganism prevailing among the Arabs previously, it was a religion of justice and mercy; its doctrines were pure, and its precepts righteous: but when compared with Christianity, many of whose features it attempted to borrow, it sinks to a level with other false systems; and, but for its wide prevalence, would be beneath contempt. There was one feature distinguishing it, in common with some other false systems of religion, that will never fail to secure for it the detestation of every upright mind. It was inexorably persecuting. While in its in-

fancy—its author commanding but little respect, an exile and a wanderer from his native home—this feature could not be developed; but no sooner did it rise to power, than it required religious unity, at the expense of justice, truth, and humanity. Innumerable passages from the Koran might be quoted in support of this charge. Mahomet's charity was confined to Moslems. His demeanor was haughty and stern to all who questioned his inspiration: his followers are cut off from intercourse with all other people, against whom, if they continued infidels, a war of extermination was decreed as the ordinance of heaven. To promote the cause he had at heart, intrigue, falsehood, cunning, every art of deceit was sanctioned. Force was his paramount law, under direction of which, revenge and every bad passion of the heart are unavoidably cherished. The state of society under Mahometan rule, and especially during the first few years after the death of the prophet, accorded with this representation. "Lordly pride, savageness, and ferocity, must be the strong and prominent features of the character of men who are influenced by a religion which breathes war and persecution. The stamp of divinity and eternity which Islamism fixes on every institution, has preserved the principles of Asiatic despotism; and the evils consequent on such a state of society, are sufficiently numerous and dreadful to prevent, or at least to check, the practice of morality, however pure and beautiful such morality may be."*

By those persons who consider success a sure

* Mills, p. 369.

indication of divine favour, Mahomet and his system have sometimes been looked upon doubtfully; as if, notwithstanding glaring proofs of imposture, there were something divine about the prophet and the truths he taught: and infidels have not been wanting, who affect to regard the success of Mahometanism as a parallel, or almost a parallel, with that of Christianity. A moment's consideration will be sufficient to dispel such an illusion.

The principles and practices taught by Jesus Christ were totally unlike every system of religion existing when it was introduced. Mahometanism studiously copied Judaism and Christianity. The Saviour's doctrines acquired their influence without adequate and powerful instrumentality: Mahomet's were the creation of a man of powerful connexions, who eagerly and successfully sought the support of the mighty and influential among the people he sought to gain. Determined and universal opposition was unremittingly offered to the advance of Christian truth: Mahomet's system was opposed, but the enmity was partial, and its effects were prevented by his enjoying the friendship and protection of men more powerful than his foes. Christianity set itself against the very principles and propensities of human nature. It proposed to annihilate selfishness, and to induce a noble superiority to the world upon all its disciples: it rejected those in whom this effect was not apparent. Mahometanism indulges these principles and propensities; it furnishes present and promises future gratification to them. Christianity, by abrogating Mosaic institutions, rendered itself hateful to Jews; by its assimilation to the Old Testament faith, it equally became an

object of hatred to Gentiles. Mahometanism had not these prejudices to contend against to any great degree; and where it had, it pared down, and conceded, and did every thing to disarm and conciliate. The Arabs, to whom Mahomet addressed himself, were a wild, untutored people, having, for the most part, but little stake in any established modes of worship. Christ and his disciples addressed the devout Jew, and the highly civilized and superstitious Greek and Roman: Mahomet employed worldly policy, courted civil power, and everywhere wielded a sword of terrible severity. Christianity refused all alliance with civil power, and unhesitatingly declared, that those who used the sword should perish with the sword. Her weapons were not carnal, but spiritual: resistance to wrong she discountenanced; and upon revenge she frowned;—meekness, submission, and forgiveness, were the only means of withstanding evil which she prescribed. Granting that the success of Mahomet and his system was surprising—and this we will concede—it may be accounted for without the direct and favouring intervention of divine power. Christianity, in its success, commands much more surprise, and presents the very case to which the rule of the poet applies—

“Nec Deus intersit nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit.”

The one is the success of a bold and skilful innovator; the other is manifestly the operation of the Most High.

As a religionist, Mahomet could only either frame a new system, or graft all that was peculiar to him on old systems already possessed of weight

and credibility. He chose the latter alternative. "Had he formed a new plan, comprising the unity of the Deity, probably we should not have heard of him at this day, otherwise than as the leader of an obscure sect; but he had materials at hand far superior to what Lycurgus or others possessed, and penetration and sagacity to employ them in the way best calculated to promote his wicked and ambitious designs. The claims of Christianity and Judaism were recognised to a far greater extent than mere superstition ever influenced; he chose higher ground, therefore, and wielded weapons more formidable than had ever been tried by mortal hands before: by transfusing a certain portion of Christianity into the Koran, he cast, as it were, a vivifying principle into the otherwise dull, inert mass, giving it a plausibility and consistence sufficient to pass at a dark, benighted period, before printing was discovered, while knowledge was at a low ebb, and access to sources of information difficult. The aid thus obtained, proved a passport and introduction into many places where some knowledge of Christianity and Judaism had previously entered. The natural discernment of Mahomet comprehended the full extent and superior efficacy of such a plan; and, in addition to the superstition of his countrymen, he enlisted the most powerful auxiliaries that could be employed in any cause. By this deep and politic mode of procedure he laid the foundation of a dominion, composed indeed of heterogeneous materials, but kept together by the power of the sword, and likely to continue so, till the superior force of truth, slow, yet sure in its progress,

should overthrow and reduce the motley fabric to its original insignificance.*

CHAPTER X.

Mahomet thinks of gaining possession of Mecca.—His pilgrimage thither.—Opposition of its inhabitants.—His truce with them.—He violates it, and conquers the city.—Other tribes of Arabs subdued.—The prophet meditates the conquest of Syria.—A rival prophet, and his fate.—Mahomet's life attempted by poison.—His illness.—The prodigious increase of his cause.—Mahomet's death.

BEFORE reducing the Jewish tribes mentioned in a preceding chapter, Mahomet began to turn his attention more undividedly to the object of his supreme solicitude, the possession of the city of Mecca, and its ancient temple. The Koreish had felt in many battles his increasing power; they beheld with dismay his numerous conquests—and listened, perhaps, with affected contempt, but with real terror to his rising pretensions. He sought civil as well as religious supremacy.

In the sixth year of the Hejira, with fourteen hundred men, he undertook what he declared to be a peaceful pilgrimage to the holy temple of Mecca. The inhabitants were jealous of his intentions, as they had abundant reason to be. What he chose to describe as purely a religious visit, was in all probability a hostile demonstration. Their own conduct towards him and his followers in times past, they must have regarded as entitling him to vengeance, if it could be exacted; so

* Neale's History of Mahometanism, p. 63.

that while he halted at Hodeibiya, to despatch an emissary to the city to announce his intention, the Koreish came to a determination to refuse him admittance, and sent him word, that if he entered, it must be by forcing his way at the point of the sword. Upon this intelligence, the warlike pilgrim called his men together, and it was resolved to attack the city. The Meccans, in the mean time, having more accurately measured their strength, or estimated their policy, and having been, besides, somewhat wrought upon by an unexpected act of clemency on the part of Mahomet, in pardoning and dismissing eighty prisoners of their fellow-citizens, who had fallen into his hands, altered their purpose of resistance, and sent an ambassador to his camp to confer upon terms of peace. Some umbrage was given to the Moslems by the facility with which their leader waived the title of Apostle of God,* but the result was the concluding of a truce of ten years, in which it was stipulated, that the prophet and his followers should have free access to the city and temple whenever they pleased, provided they came unarmed as befitted pilgrims, and remained not above three days at a time. In the 48th chapter of the Koran, en-

* "In wording the treaty, when the prophet ordered Ali to begin with the form, In the name of the most merciful God, the Meccans objected to it, and insisted that he should begin with this, In thy name, O God; which Mahomet submitted to, and proceeded to dictate; These are the conditions on which Mahomet, the apostle of God, has made peace with those of Mecca. To this Sohail again objected, saying, If we had acknowledged thee to be the apostle of God, we had not given thee any opposition. Whereupon Mahomet ordered Ali to write as Sohail desired, These are the conditions which Mahomet, the son of Abdallah," &c.—*Sale's Koran*, vol. ii. p. 384, note.

titled "The Victory," the prophet thus alludes to the events of this expedition; "If the unbelieving Meccans had fought against you, verily they had turned their backs; and they would not have found a patron or protector; according to the ordinance of God, which hath been put in execution heretofore against the opposers of the prophets. It was he who restrained their hands from you, and your hands from them, in the valley of Mecca." The entrance into the sacred city on this occasion is vaunted of by Mahomet as the fulfilment of a prophetic dream. "Now hath God in truth verified unto his apostle the vision, wherein he said, Ye shall surely enter the holy temple of Mecca, if God please, in full security."

This event tended greatly to confirm the power of Mahomet, and not long after, he was solemnly inaugurated and invested with the authority of a king by his principal men. With the royal dignity he associated that of supreme pontiff of his religion, and thus became at once the king and priest of his Moslem followers, whose numbers had by this time swelled to a large amount. So intense had their devotion to their leader become, that even the hairs that dropped from his head, and the water in which he washed himself, were carefully collected and preserved, as partaking of superhuman virtue. A deputy, sent from another city of Arabia to Medina to treat with him, beheld with astonishment the blind and unbounded veneration of his votaries. "I have seen," said he, "the Chosroes of Persia, and the Cæsar of Rome, but never did I behold a king among his subjects like Mahomet among his companions."

With this new addition to his nominal authority,

he began to assume more of the pomp and parade due to his rank. After the erection of the mosque at Medina, in which the prophet himself officiated as leader of the worship, he had for a long time no other convenience in the way of stand, desk, or pulpit, than the trunk of a palm-tree fixed perpendicularly in the ground, on the top of which he was accustomed to lean while preaching. This was now become too mean, and by the advice of one of his wives he caused a pulpit to be constructed, with a seat and two steps attached to it, which he henceforth made use of instead of the palm-trunk called the "beam." The beam, however, was loath to be deprived of its honour, and the dealers in the marvellous among his followers say, that it gave an audible groan of regret when the prophet left it. Othman Ebn Affan, one of Mahomet's successors, hung this pulpit with tapestry, and Moawiyah, another, raised it to a greater height by adding six steps more, in imitation, perhaps, of the ivory throne of Solomon, and in this form it is said to be preserved and shown at the present day, as a holy relic, in the mosque of Medina.

It ill-suited the prophet's idea of himself as the special delegate of the Most High, and was, moreover, but an imperfect proof of his power, and unsatisfactory to his followers, that he could enter Mecca only by sufferance of its powerful inhabitants. Within a short time therefore, during which his cause had steadily advanced by the addition of thousands to his standard he sought occasion of quarrel against the Koreish. Two years of the ten had scarcely elapsed when he accused them of violating the truce, and made

their alleged breach of faith a pretence for summoning an army of ten thousand men with a design to make himself master of the city. He was now strong, and his enemies were weak. His superstitious reverence for the city of his birth, and the temple it contained, served to influence his determination for war. The time since the concluding of the truce had been skilfully employed in seducing the adherents of the Koreish, and converting to his religion, or enticing under his standard, the chief citizens of Mecca. By forced marches he urged his large army forward, and so unexpectedly was the place invested by the Moslem troops, that its inhabitants had scarcely time to put themselves in a posture of defence before they were driven to such extremities, that the surrender of the city at discretion, or its total destruction, seemed to be the only alternative. In these circumstances the former step was resolved upon humiliating as it was, and Abu Sofian, the former inveterate enemy of Mahomet and his religion, accompanied by Al Abbas, an uncle of the prophet, came forth and presented to him the keys of the city. Nor was this all: they both crowned their submission by bowing to the prophetic claims of their new master, and acknowledging him as the apostle of God. This we may suppose was a constrained admission, made under the uplifted scimitar of the furious Omar, and yielded as the price of life. Mahomet, though a conqueror and a fanatic, was not habitually cruel; his anger was directed rather against the gods of his country, than its inhabitants. The chiefs of the Koreish prostrated themselves before him, and earnestly demanded mercy at his hands. "What mercy

can you expect from the man you have wronged?" exclaimed the prophet. "We confide in the generosity of our kinsman." "You shall not confide in vain," was the generous or politic reply. "Be gone; you are safe; you are free." They were thenceforth left unmolested, and places of honour and trust were still confided to them. On his entry into the city, of which he had now made himself absolute master with the sacrifice of only three men and two women, whom he ordered to be executed, he proceeded to purge the Kaaba of its three hundred and sixty idols, and to consecrate that temple anew to the purposes of his religion. The apostle again fulfilled the duties of a pilgrim, and a perpetual law was enacted, that no unbeliever should dare to set his foot on the territory of the holy city. On the day on which Mahomet entered Mecca in triumph, he ordered Belal, his crier, to mount to the top of the temple at noon, and from thence to call the people to prayer for the first time under the new institution. This custom has been religiously observed in Mahometan countries from that day to the present; the crier, who is called Muezzin, still giving the people notice of the hour of prayer from the minarets of their mosques.

When the news of the conquest of Mecca reached the neighbouring tribes of Arabs, the Hawazins, Takifians, and others, hastily assembled a force amounting to about four thousand men, with the design of crushing the usurper before his dangerous power had attained greater height. Mahomet, appointing a temporary governor of the city, marched out with an army of no less than twelve thousand, and met the enemy in the valley

of Honein, three miles from Mecca, on the way to Tayef. The Moslems, seeing themselves so vastly superior in point of numbers, were inspired with a presumptuous confidence of victory, which had nearly resulted in their ruin. In the first encounter, the confederates rushed upon the faithful with such desperate valour, that they put nearly the whole army to flight, many of them retreating back to the walls of Mecca itself. Mahomet mounted on a white mule, with a few of his faithful followers at his side, boldly maintained his ground; and such was his ardour, that it was by main force that one of his uncles and a cousin, laying hold of his bridle and stirrup, restrained him from rushing alone into the midst of the enemy. "O my brethren," he exclaimed, "I am the son of Abdallah! I am the apostle of truth! O men, stand fast in the faith! O God, send down thy succour!" His uncle Abbas, who possessed a stentorian voice, exerting the utmost strength of his lungs, recalled the flying troops, and gradually rallied them again around the holy standard; on which the prophet, observing with pleasure "that the furnace was rekindled," charged with new vigour the ranks of the infidels and idolaters, and finally succeeded in obtaining a complete victory, though not, as appears from the Koran, without the special assistance of angels. The giving way in the first instance was a mark of the Divine displeasure against the Moslems for their overweening confidence in their superior numbers. "Now hath God assisted you in many engagements, and particularly at the battle of Honein; when ye pleased yourselves in your multitudes, but it was no manner of advantage unto you; the earth seemed

to be too narrow in your precipitate flight: then did ye retreat and turn your backs. Afterward God sent down his security upon his apostle and upon the faithful, and troops of angels which ye saw not."*

The remaining part of the year was spent in demolishing the temples and idols of the subject Arabs. Saad, Kaled, and others of the Moslem chieftains were despatched in various directions over the conquered provinces with orders to wage a war of extermination against the idols of the ancient superstition. This work was crowned with the conversion of many idolaters, as well as with the destruction of the lying vanities of their worship, and it is not strange that they should admit the doctrine of the divine unity, when the destroying sword of the apostle had cut off all gods but one.

The prophet having now become in fact the sovereign of Arabia, began, in the ninth year of the Hejira, to meditate the conquest of Syria. He did not live to accomplish this design, which was executed by his successors; but he entered upon it, and notwithstanding the expedition was undertaken in the heat of the summer, when the scarcity of water subjected his men to almost intolerable sufferings, it was ultimately successful. The battle of Muta well nigh decided the fate of Greece. It was the first conflict in which the Moslems tried their swords against a disciplined army. An ambassador was previously sent to Bosra to offer salvation to its chief, in case he renounced Christianity for belief in the Koran, but by an act

* Koran, p. 141.

of treachery he was assassinated by the governor of Muta, a small town on the borders of Syria; a cruel insult which a successful warrior was not likely to endure. An army consisting of three thousand men was urged across the burning desert under the command of the faithful Zeid, who, when they arrived, found a body of Greeks and auxiliary Arabs, of not less than ten thousand collected against them. Should they immediately give battle, or wait for reinforcements? "Friends," said Zeid, "let us cut our way to paradise through the ranks of the enemy. We have no alternative but martyrdom or victory." They accordingly rushed forward: the contest was long and bloody, Zeid fell among the foremost, and the standard was transferred to Jafar, Ali's brother, whose valour was equal to that of the fallen general. His right-hand was struck off while grasping the sacred banner, and afterwards his left, when he seized it between his bleeding stumps, and held it to his breast, though wounded and bleeding in every part, till his head was cleft in twain by a Roman sabre. Abdallah the third in command also fell, upon perceiving which the Mussulmans, thinking the day was lost, turned their backs for inglorious flight. At this crisis the intrepid Kaled who had only a short time before embraced the faith of the prophet, seized the fallen standard, rallied the fugitives, and led them on with redoubled fury to the charge. This onset directed to the centre of the Greek army, threw them into confusion, and but for the friendly intervention of night the carnage must have been tremendous. Kaled remained with his troops all night in the field. A false apprehension as to the number of his men,

produced by the skilful manner in which he had arranged them, induced the vanquished Greeks to fly with precipitation, leaving their camp, baggage, and spoil in possession of the victors. This brilliant achievement obtained for Kaled the highest honour. The grateful apostle surnamed him 'the sword of God.' His science and personal courage as well as his signal success, pointed him out as the leader of the forces of the faithful. The result of this victory upon adjacent territories may be easily conceived; their princes yielded to the destiny which accompanied the arms of Mahomet wherever they were turned, and they were henceforth enrolled among his tributaries, and the fame of his power had now become so extensive and imposing, that distant tribes were awed into submission, and sent their emissaries to tender to him the voluntary acknowledgment of their homage and fealty. The numerous deputations which for this and other purposes, waited upon Mahomet this year, induced him to call it "The Year of Embassies."

Its close was distinguished by the prophet's last pilgrimage to Mecca, called, from its being the last, "The Pilgrimage of Valediction." An idea of the amazing increase of his followers since he last visited that city may be formed from the fact, that on this occasion he is said to have been accompanied by one hundred and fourteen thousand Moslems!

Signal success in any enterprise seldom fails to call forth imitators and rivals. Mahomet had now become too powerful to be resisted by force, but not too exalted to be troubled by competition. His own example in assuming a sacred character, and

the brilliant success which had attended him, gave a hint to others of the probable means of advancing themselves to a similar pitch of dignity and dominion. A formidable fellow-prophet appeared in the person of Moseilama, called to this day by the followers of Islam, "the lying Moseilama," a descendant of the tribe of Honeifa, and a principal personage in the province of Yemen. This man headed an embassy sent by his tribe to Mahomet, in the ninth year of the Hejira, and then professed himself a Moslem; but on his return home, pondering on the nature of the new religion and the character and fortunes of its founder, the suggestion occurred to him, that by skilful management he might share with his countryman in the glory of a divine mission; and accordingly, in the ensuing year, he began to put his project in execution. He gave out that he also was a prophet sent of God, having a joint commission with Mahomet to recall mankind from idolatry to the true worship. He moreover imitated his model so closely as to publish written revelations like the Koran, pretending to derive them from the same source. Having succeeded in gaining a considerable party from the tribe of Honeifa, he at length began to put himself still more nearly upon a level with the prophet of Medina, and even went so far as to propose a partnership in his spiritual supremacy. His letter commenced thus: "From Moseilama, the apostle of God, to Mahomet, the apostle of God. Now let the earth be half mine and half thine." But the latter, feeling himself too firmly established to stand in need of an associate, deigned to return him only the following reply: "From Mahomet, the apostle of God, to

Moseilama, the liar. The earth is God's: he giveth the same for inheritance unto such of his servants as he pleaseth; and the happy issue shall attend those who fear him." For a few months Moseilama continued, on the whole, to gain ground, and became at length so formidable, as to occasion extreme anxiety to the prophet, now rapidly sinking under the effects of disease. An expedition under the command of Kaled, "the Sword of God," was ordered out to suppress the sect which he headed, and the bewildered imagination of Mahomet, in his moments of delirium, was frequently picturing to itself the results of the engagement between his faithful Moslems and these daring apostates. With the result he did not live long enough to be acquainted.

The army of Kaled returned victorious. Moseilama himself, and ten thousand of his followers, were left dead on the field; while the rest, convinced by the shining evidence of truth that gleamed from the swords of the conquerors, renounced their errors, and fell quietly back into Mahometanism. Several other insurgents of similar pretences, but of minor consequence, were crushed in like manner in the early stages of their defection.

Reference has been made to a disease which had begun to prey upon the vigorous constitution of the prophet, and to threaten his life. It originated in the desperate attempt of a female to poison him at the house in which he remained for a short time at Khaibar, after the overthrow of that city by his arms. Mahomet took up his quarters at the house of Hareth, one of the principal inhabitants. Zeinab, the daughter of Hareth, while preparing a

meal for the conqueror and his attendants, inserted a quantity of poison into a shoulder of mutton which was served up at the table. Bashar, a companion of Mahomet, had scarcely begun to eat of it, before he was seized with convulsions, and died upon the spot. The prophet, by spitting out the greatest part of what he had taken into his mouth, escaped immediate death, but the effects of the fatal drug had entered his system, and, resisting every effort of medicine to expel or counteract it, in somewhat more than three years afterwards it brought him to his end. If, as the reporters of Mahomet's miracles affirm, the shoulder of mutton informed him of its being poisoned, the intelligence came too late. The seeds of death were henceforth effectually sown in his constitution; and his own decline ever after kept pace with his growing power. When Zeinab was asked how she had dared to perpetrate a deed of such unparalleled enormity, she is said to have answered, "that she was determined to make trial of his powers: if he were a true prophet," said she, "he would know that the meat was poisoned; if not, it would be a favour to the world to rid it of such a tyrant." It is not agreed among the Mahometan writers what was the punishment inflicted upon her, or whether she suffered any. Some affirm that she was pardoned; others that she was put to death.

At first the effect of this attempt upon Mahomet's life was productive of but little inconvenience. His vigorous efforts to extend his conquests, were continued without intermission. He proceeded against the Jews of the cities of Beder, Watiba, and Selalima; places which he brought

under subjection, permitting their inhabitants to retain possession on condition of paying him one half the product of their date-trees as an annual tribute. On these terms they remained undisturbed in their towns and villages during the lifetime of the prophet; till at length, in the reign of Omar, who pretended that Mahomet in his last sickness had given him a charge not to permit two religions to coexist in Arabia, they were all expelled.

At length, however, the prodigious labours and fatigues, together with the restraints and self-denial he endured, made it apparent that he could not continue long among his admiring followers. Weakness and infirmity invaded his person, while his cause acquired strength and influence with every returning month. The conquest of Mecca and of the Koreish, was the signal for the submission of the rest of Arabia; and though several of the petty tribes offered, for a time, the show of resistance to his arms, they were all eventually subdued. Between the taking of Mecca and Mahomet's death, somewhat more than three years elapsed, in which short period he destroyed the idols of Arabia; extended his conquests to the borders of the Greek and Persian empires; rendered his name formidable to those once mighty kingdoms; tried his arms against the disciplined troops of the former, and defeated them in the desperate encounter at Muta, which has been described. His throne was now firmly established; and an impulse was given to the Arabian nations, which induced them to invade, and enabled them to conquer a large portion of the globe. India, Persia, the Greek empire, the whole of Asia

Minor, Egypt, Barbary, and Spain, were reduced by their victorious arms. Mahomet himself did not live to see these mighty conquests achieved, but he commenced the train which resulted in this wide-spread dominion, and before his death which established over the whole of Arabia, and in some parts of Asia, the religion he had devised.

And now, having arrived at the sixty-third year of his age, and the tenth of the Hejira, A.D. 632, the fatal effects of the poison, which had been so long rankling in his veins, began to discover themselves more and more sensibly, and to operate with alarming virulence. These effects were accelerated by an attack of bilious fever. Day by day he visibly declined, and it was evident that his life was hastening to a close. For some time previous to the event, he was conscious of its approach, and is said to have viewed and awaited it with characteristic firmness. The third day before his dissolution, he ordered himself to be carried to the mosque, that he might, for the last time, address his followers, and bestow upon them his parting prayers and benedictions. Being assisted to mount the pulpit, he edified his brethren by the pious tenor of his dying counsels, and in his own example taught a lesson of humility and penitence, such as we shall scarcely find inculcated in the precepts of the Koran, "If there be any man," said the apostle, "whom I have unjustly scourged, I submit my own back to the lash of retaliation. Have I aspersed the reputation of any Mussulman? let him proclaim my faults in the face of the congregation. Has any one been despoiled of his goods? the little that I possess shall compensate the principal and the interest of the debt."—

“Yes,” replied a voice from the crowd, “thou owest me three drachms of silver.” Mahomet heard the complaint, satisfied the demand, and thanked his creditor, that he had accused him in this world rather than at the day of judgment. He then set his slaves at liberty, seventeen men, and eleven women; directed the order of his funeral; strove to allay the lamentations of his weeping friends, and waited the approach of death. His death was hastened by the force of a burning fever, which deprived him at times of the use of reason. In one of these paroxysms of delirium, he demanded pen and paper, that he might compose or dictate a divine book. Omar, who was watching at his side, refused his request, lest the expiring prophet might dictate something which should supersede the Koran. Others, however, expressed a great desire that the book might be written; and so warm a dispute arose in the chamber of the apostle, that he was forced to reprove their unbecoming vehemence. The writing was not performed, and many of his followers have mourned the loss of the sublime revelations which his dying visions might have bequeathed to them. His favourite wife Ayesha hung over her husband in his last moments, sustaining his drooping head upon her knee, as he lay stretched upon the carpet, watching with trembling anxiety his changing countenance, and listening to the last broken sounds of his voice. His disease, as it drew towards its termination, was attended at intervals with most excruciating pains, which he constantly ascribed to the fatal morsel taken at Khaibar; and as the mother of Bashar, the companion who had died upon the spot from the same

cause, stood by his side, he exclaimed, "O mother of Bashar, the cords of my heart are now breaking of the food which I ate with your son at Khaibar." In his conversation with those around him, he mentioned it as a special prerogative granted to him, that the angel of death was not allowed to take his soul till he had respectfully asked his permission, which he condescendingly granted. Recovering from a swoon into which the violence of his pains had thrown him, he raised his eyes towards the roof of the house, and with faltering accents exclaimed, "O God! pardon my sins. Yes, I come among my fellow-labourers on high!" His face was then sprinkled with water, and that by his own feeble hand, when he shortly after expired.

The city, and more especially the house, of the prophet, became at once a scene of sorrowful, but confused, lamentation. Some of his followers could not believe that he was dead. "How can he be dead, our witness, our intercessor, our mediator with God? He is not dead. Like Moses and Jesus, he is wrapped in a holy trance, and speedily will return to his faithful people." The evidence of sense was disregarded, and Omar, brandishing his scimitar, threatened to strike off the heads of the infidels who should affirm that the prophet was no more. The tumult was at length appeased by the moderation of Abubeker. "Is it Mahomet," said he, "or the God of Mahomet, whom ye worship? The God of Mahomet liveth for ever, but the apostle was a mortal like ourselves, and, according to his own pre-

diction, he hath experienced the common fate of mortality.”*

The prophet's remains were deposited at Medina, in the very room in which he breathed his last, the floor being removed to make way for his sepulchre, and a simple and unadorned monument some time after erected over them. The house itself has long since mouldered or been demolished, but the place of the prophet's interment is still exhibited to the superstitious reverence of his disciples. The story of his relics being suspended in the air, by the power of loadstone, in an iron coffin, at Mecca, is an idle fabrication; as his tomb at Medina has been resorted to by millions of pilgrims, and from the authentic accounts of travellers who have visited both these holy cities in disguise, we learn that it is constructed of plain mason work, fixed without elevation upon the surface of the ground.

The precious relics of the prophet have rendered Medina sacred in the eyes of all Moslem nations, they regard it as the second among the cities of the earth. The pious pilgrim, on his way to Mecca, increases the worth of his pilgrimage, if he can turn aside to visit also the city which contains the ashes of Mahomet.

* “Mahomet is no more than an apostle: the other apostles have already deceased before him: if he die, therefore, or be slain, will ye turn back on your heels?”—Koran, ch. iii.

“Verily, thou, O Mahomet, shalt die, and they shall die; and ye shall debate the matter [idolatry] with one another before your Lord at the day of resurrection.”—Ibid. ch. xxxix.

CHAPTER XI.

Mahomet's wives.—Sawda.—Ayesha.—Hafsa.—Zeinab.—Sayfa.—Allowance of the Koran to Mahomet as to marriage.—Sketch of the prophet's character.—Career.—Description of his person.—Gibbon's remarks on his character.

As the subject of women occupies a prominent place in the Koran, so in a history of the prophet's life, his numerous wives form a topic of too much interest to be omitted.

During the lifetime of Kadijah, it does not appear that she was ever pained with the sight or suspicion of a rival. After her death, when at length Mahomet's reputation as a prophet had become established, and his authority too firmly rooted to be shaken, the restraints which policy had imposed upon passion were gradually thrown off, and the utmost license marked his subsequent conduct.

The Koran, in one of its later chapters, restricted his followers. "If ye fear that ye shall not act with equity towards orphans of the female sex, take in marriage of such other women as please you, two, or three, or four, and not more."* From the terms of a subsequent chapter, it appears that Mahomet was exempted from this law. "O prophet, we have allowed thee thy wives, unto whom thou hast given their dower, and also the slaves which thy right hand possesseth, of the booty which God hath granted thee, and the daughters of thy uncle, and the daughters of thy aunts, both on thy fa-

* Koran, ch. iv.

ther's side, and on thy mother's side, who have fled with thee from Mecca, and any other believing woman, if she give herself unto the prophet, in case the prophet desireth to take her to wife. This is a peculiar privilege granted unto thee, above the rest of the true believers.* That he availed himself of this liberty is well known, marrying chiefly the daughters of powerful men at the head of tribes; or princes in their respective localities, consulting at once his political interests, and his unbridled lusts.

Sawda has been mentioned, but of her little only is known. His third and best beloved wife was Ayesha, the daughter of Abubeker. Vague rumours of conjugal infidelity have cast a stain upon the character of Ayesha not entirely effaced, even at the present day. They were not believed, however, by the prophet, and the divine acquittal in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Koran, has done much towards shielding her fame from reproach. "As to the party among you, who have published the falsehood concerning Ayesha; every man of them shall be punished according to the injustice of which he hath been guilty; and he among them who hath undertaken to aggravate the same shall suffer a grievous punishment. Did not the faithful men, and the faithful women, say, This is a manifest falsehood? Have they produced four witnesses thereof? Wherefore, since they have not produced the witnesses, they are surely liars in the sight of God. Had it not been for the indulgence of God towards you, and his mercy in this world, and in that which is to come,

* Koran, ch. xxxiii.

verily a grievous punishment had been inflicted on you for the calumny which ye have spread ; when ye published that with your tongues, and spoke that with your mouths, of which ye had no knowledge ; and esteemed it to be light, whereas it was a matter of importance in the sight of God.*

Ayesha was married—such is the surprising physical precocity peculiar to an eastern climate—at the early age of nine ; and survived her husband forty-eight years. Her memory is held in great veneration by the Moslems, who have bestowed upon her the title of Prophetess, and Mother of the Faithful, probably from the circumstance of her being much resorted to after her husband's death, as an expositor of the doubtful points of the law ; an office which she performed by giving the sense which she had heard the prophet affix to them in his lifetime. Her expositions, together with those of Mahomet's first ten converts, form what is called the *Sonnah*, or the *Authentic Traditions*, of the professors of Islam, they bear a striking resemblance to the traditions of the Jews. Ayesha was the inveterate enemy of Ali, the rival candidate with Abubeker to the honour of being the prophet's successor ; and when at last he attained to that dignity, she appeared in arms against him. Her expedition was unsuccessful, yet she found means, some time after, to excite a defection among Ali's followers, which finally resulted in the ruin of himself and his house.

Hafsa, the daughter of Omar, was next in favour with the prophet. To her, as being the

* Koran, ch. xiv.

eldest of his wives, he committed the chest of his apostleship, containing the original copies of his pretended revelations, from which the volume of the Koran was composed after his death, by Abubeker. She died at the age of sixty-six.

Zeinab, was originally the wife of his servant Zeid; upon whom, as we learn from the Koran, God had bestowed the grace to become one of the earliest converts to the true faith. The circumstances which led to her becoming the wife of the prophet, form a story worth relating. Mahomet, having occasion one day, to call at the house of Zeid upon some matter of business, and not finding him at home, accidentally cast his eyes on Zeinab his wife. Being a woman of distinguished beauty, he was so smitten with her charms at first sight, that he could not forbear exclaiming, "Praised be God, who turneth the hearts of men as he pleaseth!" and thenceforth became violently in love with her. Zeid, when made acquainted with the circumstance, was thrown into great perplexity. His affection for his wife, and his wish to retain her, were counterbalanced by his sense of obligation to his master, who had not only freed him from servitude, but had also publicly adopted him as his son and heir, by a religious ceremony at the black stone of the Kaaba. Upon mature reflection, he determined to part with Zeinab in favour of his benefactor, whom he privately acquainted with his intention, at the same time giving out in public that he no longer retained any affection for her, in order to pave the way for a divorce. Mahomet aware of the scandal that would ensue among his people, from his taking to his bed one who stood to him in the relation of a

daughter, made a feint of dissuading him from his purpose, and endeavoured to suppress the violence of his passion. But finding the flame which consumed him unconquerable, a chapter of the Koran came seasonably to his relief, which at once removed all impediments in the way of a union. "And remember, when thou saidst to him unto whom God had been gracious, and on whom thou also hadst conferred favours, keep thy wife to thyself, and fear God; and thou didst conceal that in thy mind which God had determined to discover, and didst fear men; whereas it was more just that thou shouldst fear God. But when Zeid had determined the matter concerning her, and had resolved to divorce her, we joined her in marriage unto thee, lest a crime should be charged on the true believers in marrying the wives of their adopted sons: and the command of God is to be performed. No crime is to be charged on the prophet as to what God hath allowed him."* Here the Most High is represented not only as sanctioning the marriage, but as conveying a gentle rebuke to the prophet, that he should so long have abstained from the enjoyment of this favour out of regard to public sentiment, as though he feared men rather than God! Zeinab hereupon became the wife of this most favoured of mortals, and lived with him in great affection to the time of his death; always glorying over her associates, that whereas they had been married to Mahomet by their parents and kindred, she had been united to him by God himself, who dwells above the seven heavens!

* Koran, ch. xxxiii.

Another of his wives, Safya, was a Jewess. Of her nothing remarkable is related, except that she once complained to her husband of being thus reproached by her companions: "O thou Jewess, the daughter of a Jew and of a Jewess." To which the prophet answered, "Canst thou not say, Aaron is my father, Moses is my uncle, and Mahomet is my husband?" But to the authors of these insulting taunts, an admonition was conveyed to the offenders from a higher source. "O true believers, let not men laugh other men to scorn, who peradventure may be better than themselves; neither let women laugh other women to scorn, who may possibly be better than themselves. Neither defame one another, nor call one another by opprobrious appellations."*

In addition to his wives, the harem of the prophet contained a number of concubines, among whom Mary, the Egyptian, was his favourite. By her he had a son, Ibrahim, who died in infancy, to the unspeakable grief of the prophet and his disciples. He had no children by any of the rest of his wives except Kadijah, who was the mother of eight—four sons and four daughters; but most of these died in early life, none of them surviving their father except Fatima, the wife of Ali, and she only sixty days.

The following passages from the Koran evince, that not the prophet only was an object of the divine care, beneficence, and guidance, but that his wives also shared in the same kind providence, and that whatever instructions or admonitions their frailties might require, were graciously bestowed

* Chap. xlix.

upon them. From an infirmity not uncommon to the sex, they had become, it appears, more devoted to the decoration of their persons than was creditable for the wives of a holy prophet, and had demanded of him a larger allowance on the score of dress than he deemed it prudent to grant. They are thus rebuked: "O prophet, say unto thy wives, If ye seek this present life and the pomp thereof, come, I will make a handsome provision for you, and I will dismiss you with an honourable dismissal: but if ye seek God and his apostle, and the life to come, verily God hath prepared for such of you as work righteousness a great reward."* "O wives of the prophet, ye are not as other women: if ye fear God, be not too complaisant in speech, lest he should covet in whose heart is a disease of incontinence; but speak the speech which is convenient. And sit still in your houses; and set not out yourselves with the ostentation of the former time of ignorance, and observe the appointed times of prayer, and give alms; and obey God and his apostle; for God desireth only to remove from you the abomination of vanity, since ye are the household of the prophet, and to purify you by a perfect purification."†

The prophet interdicted to all his wives the privilege of marrying again after his death, and though some of them were then young, they scrupulously obeyed his command, delivered to them, like every thing else in the Koran, in the form of a mandate of heaven, and lived and died in widowhood. The passage in which this severe edict

* Chap. xxxiii.

† Ibid.

is found is a curiosity, and will doubtless lead the reader to suspect that it was prompted by a spirit of jealousy, the effects of which Mahomet aimed to perpetuate when he was no more. It is prefaced by some wholesome cautions to his followers respecting the etiquette to be observed in their intercourse with the prophet and his household.

“O true believers, enter not into the houses of the prophet, unless it be permitted you to eat meat with him, without waiting his convenient time; but when ye are invited, then enter. And when ye shall have eaten, disperse yourselves; and stay not to enter into familiar discourse; for this incommodeth the prophet. He is ashamed to bid you depart, but God is not ashamed of the truth. And when ye ask of the prophet's wives what ye may have occasion for, ask it of them behind a curtain. This will be more pure for your hearts and their hearts. Neither is it fit for you to give any uneasiness to the apostle of God, or to marry his wives after him for ever; for this would be a grievous thing in the sight of God.”

Of the character of Mahomet little needs to be said, after the sketch of his life and history which have been given: indeed, the task of delineating it would be sufficiently difficult after the lapse of thirteen centuries, though religious prejudice had never intermingled with the accounts handed down of him by both friendly and opposing biographers. As matters are, the task is almost impossible. Moslem writers are unbounded in their eulogy; Christian, whether pertaining to Papal or to Protestant churches, are almost as unbounded in their censure. Many of the former explain his great excellence by a ridiculous legend, which, it

is just to say, others reject with merited contempt. It is, that when he was a child, he was taken by two angels, who laid open his body with a knife, took out his heart, and pressed and wrung it till its original corruptions oozed out in the form of large black fetid drops, when it was replaced, purified and perfect, in his bosom, and the wound miraculously healed. But here the history of his life and the pages of the Koran will enable us to make those abatements from the general account of his moral worth which ought to be made. His followers extol his piety, veracity, justice, liberality, humility, and self-denial, in all which they do not scruple to propose him as a perfect pattern. His charity, in particular, they say, was so conspicuous, that he seldom had any money in his house, keeping no more than was sufficient to maintain his family, and frequently sparing even a part of his own provisions to supply the necessities of the poor. All this may have been so; but in forming our judgment of the exhibition of these moral traits, we cannot forget that he had private ends to answer; and we thus find it impossible to distinguish between the generous impulses of a kind and noble heart, and the actings of an interested policy. It is no unusual thing for a strong ruling passion to bring every other passion, even the most opposite and discordant, into harmony and subserviency to its dictates. Ambition will sometimes control avarice, and the love of pleasure not unfrequently govern both. A man may afford to be just and generous, and to act the part of a saint, when he has no other motive than to gain the character of a prophet and the power of a monarch. If Mahomet really

evinced the virtues of a prophet, he doubtless had his eye upon a prophet's reward. But we must not be harsh in our judgment of his moral qualities. We think it by no means improbable, that his disposition was naturally free, open, noble, engaging, perhaps magnanimous. We doubt not injustice may have been done by Christian writers to the man, in their unmeasured detestation of the impostor. But as long as we admit the truth of history, as it relates to Islamism and its founder, it is plain, that if he were originally possessed of praiseworthy attributes, they ceased to distinguish him as he advanced in life ; for his personal degeneracy kept pace with his success, and his delinquencies became more numerous, gross, and glaring, the longer he lived.

Of his intellectual endowments his followers speak in the same strain of high panegyric. His genius, soaring above the need of culture, unaided by the lights of learning, despising books, bore him by its innate strength into the kindred sublimities of prophecy and poetry, and enabled him in the Koran, without models or masters, to speak with an eloquence unparalleled in any human production. But here it has escaped them, that they praise the prophet at the expense of his oracles ; that whatever credit, on the score of authorship, they give to him, so much they detract from the evidence of its inspiration ; since Mahomet himself constantly appeals to his revelations as carrying, in their style, the clearest evidence of being, not a human, but a divine composition. On the point, however, of the literary merits of the Koran, and of the mental endowments of its author, the reader will judge for

himself. We can more readily assent to the statements of these writers, when they inform us, that his intellect was acute and sagacious, his memory retentive, his knowledge of human nature, improved as it was by travel and extended intercourse, profound and accurate; and that in the arts of insinuation and address he was without a rival. Neither are we able to gainsay their accounts, when they represent him as having been affable, rather than loquacious; of an even cheerful temper; pleasant and familiar in conversation; and possessing the art, in a surprising degree, of attaching his friends and adherents to his person.

On the whole, from a candid survey of his life and actions, we may safely pronounce Mahomet to have been a man of a superior cast of character, and very considerably in advance of the age in which he lived. But that age was rude and barbarous; and the standard which would determine him great among the roving tribes of Arabia, might have left him little more than a common man in the cultivated climes of Europe. Men's characters are moulded as much by their circumstances and fortunes as by their native genius and bias. Under another combination of accidents, the founder of the Moslem faith and of the empire of the Saracens might have sunk to oblivion with the anonymous millions of his race, as the drops of rain are absorbed into the sands of his native deserts. His whole history makes it evident, that fanaticism, ambition, and lust, were his master-passions; of which the former appears to have been gradually eradicated by the growing strength of the two last. An enthusiast by na-

ture, he became a hypocrite by policy; and as the violence of his corrupt propensities increased, he scrupled not to gratify them at the expense of truth, justice, friendship, and humanity. It is right, indeed, in forming our estimate of his conduct in its most repulsive respects, that we should make allowance for the ignorance, the prejudices, the manners, and the laws of the people among whom he lived. A heathen people cannot be fairly judged by the rules of christian morality. In the mere circumstance of multiplying his wives, he followed the example of his countrymen, with whom polygamy had been, from the earliest ages, a prevailing practice. And so, though we cannot justify, yet we may in some measure palliate, the murder of Kaab and Sofian, if we supposed the prophet to have viewed them as enemies, from whom his own life was in jeopardy; for in this no violence was done to the common sentiments of the Arab race. Even at the present day, among the prophet's disciples all over the east, no trait is more common or more revolting than recklessness of life, which is doubtless to be ascribed as much to national habits as to a native cruelty or ferocity of disposition. We must, indeed, think but little of the morality of such a people, and must behold with indignation a pretended prophet, while professing to purify the moral code of his countrymen, continuing still in the practice of some of the worst of its tenets. Here, in fact, our heaviest condemnation falls upon Mahomet. No excuse can be offered for him. He abused his claims as a prophet, to screen the guilty excesses of his private life, and under the pretence of a special revelation, dispensing him from the laws imposed by

his own religion, had the female sex abandoned without reserve to his desires.

Respect to decorum forbids our entering into details relative to this part of Mahomet's conduct and character. But from what has been already adduced, the reader cannot have failed to perceive how completely his imposture was made an engine for promoting the gratification of sensual passion. One of the grossest instances of his unhallowed abuse of the claims to which he pretended occurs in the history of his intercourse with Mary, an Egyptian slave. The knowledge of his illicit amours with this "possession of his right hand" having come to the ears, or rather to the eyes of one of his lawful wives, who, thereupon, reproached him most bitterly for his infidelity, he went so far, in order to pacify her, as to promise, with an oath, never to be guilty of a repetition of the offence. But the infirmity of nature having not long after triumphed over the strength of his resolution, he had recourse to his revelations to cover the scandal of his shameless lapse. The expedient now resorted to, forms one of the blackest stains upon the pages of the Koran, and upon the character of its author. It absolved the prophet from the obligation of his oath. "O prophet, why holdest thou that to be prohibited which God hath allowed thee, seeking to please thy wives; since God is inclined to forgive, and merciful? God hath allowed you the dissolution of your oaths, and God is your Master."* Here is an alleged dispensation legalizing perjury on the part of a professed messenger of truth; one too who thus in-

* Koran, ch. lxvi.

structs his followers: "Perform your covenant with God, when ye enter into covenant with him, and violate not your oaths after the ratification thereof; since ye have made God a witness over you. Verily, God knoweth that which ye do. And be not like unto her who undoeth that which she hath spun, untwisting it after she hath twisted it strongly." "Therefore take not your oaths between you deceitfully, lest your foot slip after it hath been steadfastly fixed, and ye taste evil in this life, and suffer a grievous punishment in the life to come."* This is but too fair a specimen of the general character of the Koran. By far the greater part of its contents were fabricated to answer particular purposes, which he could effect in no other way; this expedient never failed. If any new enterprise was to be undertaken, any new objections answered, any difficulty to be solved, any disturbance among his followers to be hushed, or any offence to be removed, immediate recourse was had to Gabriel, and a new revelation, precisely adapted to meet the necessities of the case, was granted. As an inevitable consequence, a vast number of variations and contradictions, too palpable to be denied, occur in the course of the book. His commentators and disciples acknowledge the fact, but account for it by saying, that whenever a subsequent revelation plainly contradicts a former, the former is to be considered as having been revoked or repealed by the latter; and above a hundred and fifty verses are enumerated as having been thus set aside by after-discoveries of the divine will. In this they

* Koran, ch. xvi.

are countenanced by the words of the prophet himself. "Whatever verse we shall abrogate, or cause thee to forget, we will bring a better than it, or one like unto it."* "When we substitute in the Koran an abrogating verse in lieu of a verse abrogated (and God best knoweth the fitness of that which he revealeth), the infidels say, Thou art only a forger of these verses; but the greater part of them know not the truth from falsehood."† When this feature of their religion is objected to modern Mahometans, as it was by Henry Martyn in his controversy with them, they reply, that "this objection is altogether futile; for the precepts of God are always delivered with a special regard to the necessities of his servants. And there can be no doubt that these must vary with the varying exigencies of the times in which they are delivered. The divine Lawgiver may here be considered as the spiritual physician of his people; who, like a temporal physician, prescribes such regimen and medicines as are most likely to suit the wants of his patient."‡ The pupil here is certainly worthy of the master, when they both agree in teaching, that the grand principles of morality are not eternal and immutable, growing out of the very nature of the relation subsisting between the Creator and his creatures, but are mere arbitrary rules, subject to be relaxed, modified, or dispensed with, as circumstances may dictate. Seeing that this pitiful device of feigning dispensations and abrogations of particular duties subjects the immutable counsels of the Almighty to the

* Koran, ch. ii.

† Ch. xvi.

‡ Lee's Translation of H. Martyn's Controversial Tracts.

charge of weakness and fickleness, it is surprising that his disciples should have been blinded by so flimsy a disguise; yet such is the fact. And it adds another proof of the truth of the remark, that as there is no error or absurdity in religion too monstrous to be conceived or broached, so there is none too gross to be imposed upon the credulity of others.

That his career was one of the most extraordinary occurring in the annals of any nation, or age, will not be questioned. By force of a vast ambition, giving direction to native talents of a superior order, he had risen from small beginnings to the pinnacle of power among the Arab nation, and before his death, had commenced one of the greatest revolutions known in the history of man. He laid the foundation of an empire, which, in the short space of eighty years, extended its sway over more kingdoms and countries than Rome had mastered in eight hundred. And when we pass from the political to the religious ascendancy which he gained, and consider the rapid growth, the wide diffusion, and the enduring permanence of the Mahometan imposture, we are still more astonished. Indeed, in this, as in every other instance where the fortunes of an individual are entirely disproportioned to the means employed, and surpass all reasonable calculation, we are forced to resolve the problem into the special providence of God. Nothing short of this could have secured the achievement of such mighty results; and we must, doubtless, look upon Mahometanism at the present day, as a standing monument of the mysterious wisdom of Jehovah, designed to

compass ends which are beyond the grasp of human minds.

As to person, Mahomet, according to his Arabic biographers, was of a middling stature, and of a florid complexion. His head was large and well formed; his hair smooth, and of a glossy black; his eye of the same colour; and so uncommonly vigorous and robust was his frame, that at the time of his death, scarcely any of the marks or infirmities of age had appeared upon him. His features were large, yet regular; his cheeks full; his forehead prominent; his eyebrows long and smooth, mutually approaching each other, yet not so as to meet; and between them was a vein, of which the pulse was quicker and higher than usual whenever he was angry. He had an aquiline nose and a large mouth, with teeth of singular brilliancy and somewhat singular form, as they were pointed like the teeth of a saw, and placed at some distance from each other, though still in beautiful order. When he laughed he discovered them, and they appeared, if tradition may be credited, like hail-stones, or little white pearls. Even his laughter is said to have been full of majesty, and in his smile there was such a peculiar contraction of the muscles of the mouth and cheeks, and such an expression given to the countenance, as rendered it irresistibly attractive. In his later years he became corpulent; but he had always a free open air, a majestic port, and a most engaging address.

Of the eloquent account of the prophet, given by the historian of the 'Decline and Fall,' the following passage is selected as especially discrimi-

nating and just. "Charity may believe that the original motives of Mahomet were those of pure and genuine benevolence, but a human missionary is incapable of cherishing the obstinate unbelievers who reject his claims, despise his arguments, and persecute his life; he might forgive his personal adversaries, he may lawfully hate the enemies of God; the stern passions of pride and revenge were kindled in the bosom of Mahomet, and he sighed like the prophet of Nineveh for the destruction of the rebels whom he had condemned. The injustice of Mecca, and the choice of Medina, transformed the citizen into a prince, the humble preacher into a leader of armies; but his sword was consecrated by the example of the saints; and the same God who afflicts a sinful world with pestilence and earthquakes, might inspire for their conversion or chastisement the valour of his servants. In the exercise of political government, he was compelled to abate the stern rigour of fanaticism, to comply, in some measure, with the prejudices and passions of his followers, and to employ even the vices of mankind as the instruments of their salvation. The use of fraud and perfidy, of cruelty and injustice, were often subservient to the propagation of the faith; and Mahomet commanded or approved the assassination of the Jews and idolaters who had escaped from the field of battle. By the repetition of such acts, the character of Mahomet must have been gradually stained; and the influence of such pernicious habits, would be poorly compensated by the practice of the personal and social virtues which are necessary to maintain the reputation of a prophet among his sectaries and friends. Of his late years,

ambition was his ruling passion, and a politician will suspect that he secretly smiled (the victorious impostor!) at the enthusiasm of his youth, and the credulity of his proselytes. A philosopher would observe, that their cruelty, and his success would tend more strongly to fortify the assurance of his divine mission; that his interest and religion were inseparably connected, and that his conscience would be soothed by the persuasion, that he alone was absolved by the Deity from the obligation of positive and moral laws."*

CHAPTER XII.

The rise of the Arabian empire.—Disputes about the succession to Mahomet's power.—Abubeker appointed.—He assumes the title of Caliph.—Troubles at the commencement of his reign.—He calls the followers of the prophet to war for the spread of their religion.—Ardour of the Arab troops.—Success against the Greek army.—Fall of Bozra.—Battle of Aiznadin.—Fall of Damascus.—Death of Abubeker.—Omar declared his successor.—Continuation of the Syrian campaign.—Omar's journey to Jerusalem.—Fall of that city.—Of Aleppo.—Of Antioch.—The plague breaks out in the Arab army.—Death of its generals.—Kaled's disgrace.—Amrou leads the army into Egypt.—Pelusium—Memphis.—Alexandria, successively taken.—Medina supplied with corn from Egypt.—Entrance of the Arabs into Persia.—Victories gained in that empire.—Omar and the Persian satrap.—Review of Omar's reign.—His assassination.—Character.

THE death of Mahomet without nominating a successor, led, as might be expected, to disputes as to who should be invested with this high ho-

* Gibbon, ch. 1.

nour. The claimants were principally two, Ali, the early friend and first disciple, as he called himself, of the prophet, and Abubeker, who had on all occasions been distinguished by zeal and courage in his service. Ali was the husband of Mahomet's only child Fatima; Abubeker was the father of the prophet's favourite wife Ayesha. The dispute was carried on with considerable fierceness and obstinacy for some time, and threatened the extinction of the rising empire. Neither of the claimants would yield. Both pleaded the sanction of the prophet's preference. The zealous Ali, the poet, the soldier, and the saint, had been appointed by Mahomet at a very early period as his chief minister, and obedience had been claimed for him from all the faithful. The prophet had often fondled his sons on his lap, and exhibited them in his pulpit as the hope of his age, and the chief of the youth of his paradise. Abubeker had been charged by Mahomet during his brief illness, with the duty of officiating in his mosque at Medina, and to the artful Ayesha it is not improbable intimations had been given by the prophet on his death-bed, which she had sufficient address to urge in her father's favour. The dispute was increased by the respective parties of the Moslems, the fugitives and the auxiliaries claiming the right of making the appointment. Each nominated its candidate, Abu Obeidah and Omar. At length Abubeker pretended to relinquish his own claims, and attempted to overrule those of his opponent, by advising the people to appoint Omar, who was in high repute among both parties. This counsel was likely to prevail; and somewhat appeased the tumult; but when Omar was on the

point of gaining the suffrages of the multitude, he suddenly declared his inability to sustain the mighty office, renounced his pretensions, stretched out his hand to Abubeker as his first subject; and called upon the assembled people to follow his example. Probably the wily candidate was prepared for such a result, and from this time Omar zealously supported his cause. The whole assembly shouted their acknowledgments of the wisdom of the choice, and hastened to salute the venerable father-in-law of the prophet as their supreme lord and judge. Ali, with a few adherents of the Hashemite family, refuses their concurrence: but no great or long continued mischief arose from this source; they were not powerful, though formerly they had been so; and Omar's threat to destroy the house of Ali, and to plunge his sword into the heart of every one of his supporters, if they did not yield to the people's choice, combined with the mild but more powerful remonstrances of Abubeker, produced silence and submission.

Abubeker, on the establishment of his power, expressed his real or affected contempt of the usual accompaniments of royalty. In person and habits he was simple and unassuming; the only designation he would accept was that of caliph,* or deputy of the prophet, a course dictated both by the customs of a people yet in great degree uncivilized, and by the enthusiastic reverence in which all parties held the name of Mahomet. He found his throne no easy seat. The empire was but in its

* Caliph, or properly Khalifah, an Arabic word signifying a deputy, lieutenant, or vicegerent. This title has since been used for Mahometan sovereigns, as the caliphs of Spain, of Africa, and Egypt, and the caliphs of Bagdad.

infancy, it was weak and wayward: all his prudence, therefore, and the mild virtues of his character, as well as the skill and courage of the generals who had acquired renown in the prophet's time, were requisite for its support, guidance, and consolidation.

The overthrow of Moseilama, the rival prophet, whose progress was the first cause of anxiety and alarm for the empire of the Saracens, * has already been mentioned. The suppression of this revolt was not his only care. Mahomet had done little more than kindle a blaze of fanaticism, which was likely to expire quickly; and scarcely was Abubeker seated on his throne, when he was overwhelmed with reports of revolt, apostasy, and imposture from almost all quarters. But few were willing subjects. Mahomet had suppressed the idolatry of Mecca, not rooted it out: he had reduced Christians to the payment of tribute, but a precarious token of subjection; and the Jews, on whom he had imposed his faith, with characteristic obstinacy watched for the opportunity of returning to the ritual of Moses. Nothing appeared to be stable. The prompt display of military force, however, speedily put down the spirit of insurrection, and revived the loyalty of the faithful. Kaled, whose valour extinguished Moseilama and his formidable sect, pursued a victorious career.

* Saracens. This title is supposed to be a corruption of the Arabic word Saracini, a pastoral people: it is said to be used on that account. The Arabians emphatically sustained this character. Others think the name taken from a word signifying a desert, and that it was at first, perhaps, somewhat contemptuously applied to them by Europeans; "Hordes of the desert." Western writers generally employ it to describe the empire founded by Mahomet.

The wavering Koreish were established by the eloquent appeal of Abubeker. "Ye men of Mecca, will ye be the last to embrace, and the first to abandon, the religion of Islam?" and the idolaters of the desert, who, having reluctantly submitted to the yoke of Mahomet, were now about to throw it off, were again subdued by the fierce and untiring general who, as if to maintain his reputation as 'the sword of God,' had sworn especial enmity to apostates.

Princes whose power has been endangered by divisions and factions among their subjects, have frequently resorted to foreign warfare as a means of security. Abubeker did this, incited probably by the fanaticism which had guided the proceedings of the later periods of Mahomet's life, and by the necessity of gratifying the military ardour and enthusiasm of his subjects. He had inculcated the duty of fighting for the spread of the truth, and it was said that on his death-bed he had charged his followers never to lay down the sword till Islamism became the universal faith. Abubeker accordingly wrote to the Arab tribes a circular to the following effect: "In the name of the most merciful God; to the rest of the true believers, health and happiness, and the blessing of God, be upon you. I praise the most high God, and I pray for his prophet Mahomet. This is to acquaint you that I intend to send the true believers into Syria to take it out of the hands of the Infidels. And I would have you know that the fighting for religion is an act of obedience to God." The prize their sovereign had offered was a rich one, enough at any time to excite the cupidity of desert tribes; and now that they had so recently

tasted of the fruits of victory, its influence was irresistible, so that a large army was speedily gathered around Medina, and placed under the command of Yezid Ebn Abu Sofian. At the commencement of their march they were accompanied by Abubeker, who proceeded with them on foot, an indication of humility in which the officers would fain have joined with him, but that he forbade them, saying that they who walked, and they who rode were equally meritorious in the sight of God. On leaving them at the close of their first day's march, he addressed the general as follows: "Be sure you do not oppress your own people, nor make them uneasy, but advise with them in all your affairs, and take care to do that which is just and right, for those that do otherwise shall not prosper. When you meet your enemies, quit yourselves like men, and do not turn your backs; and if you get the victory, kill no little children, nor old men, nor women. Destroy no palm-trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit-trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill for the necessary purpose of subsistence. When you make any covenant or article, stand to it, and be as good as your word. As you go on, you will find some religious persons that live retired in monasteries, who propose to themselves to serve God that way. Let them alone, and neither kill them, nor destroy their monasteries. And you will find another sort of people that belong to the synagogues of Satan, who have shaven crowns; be sure you cleave their skulls, and give them no quarter, till they either turn Mahometans or pay tribute."

The ardour of the troops may be inferred from

an incident which a learned historian of the Saracen empire records. * The mother and sister of an Arabian youth accompanied him to the Syrian war. Previously to a combat in which he fell, he embraced his family and said, "It is not the delicacies of Syria, or the fading delights of this world, that have prompted me to devote my life in the cause of religion. But I seek the favour of God and his apostle, and I have heard from one of the companions of the prophet, that the spirits of the martyrs will be lodged in the crops of green birds, who shall taste the fruits and drink of the rivers of paradise. Farewell, we shall meet again among the groves and fountains which God has promised to his elect."

The emperor Heraclius, who at that time occupied the throne which controlled the destinies of Syria, and all the adjacent territories, in vain appealed to the pride and courage of his subjects against the insults of a contemptible people. Their progress was not to be resisted. In the first conflict the Christian army lost their general and 1200 men, and day after day tidings announced to the caliph fresh successes of his soldiers. There was no difficulty, therefore, in raising reinforcements, and especially as the spoils sent to Abu according to the law of the Koran, indicated that they were likely to enrich themselves at the expense of the conquered. A second army was despatched under command of Amrou. The intrepid Kaled, whose claims to that honourable distinction were the stronger, declaring with great apparent disinterestedness and devotion that he cared not who had the com-

* Ockley.

mand, so that he was but permitted under any circumstances to fight for the spread of religion. For some cause, not now ascertainable, Obeidah had superseded Sofian in the command of the forces which had hitherto been so successful, and the determination was taken to subdue the whole of Palestine. The two generals, however, were less successful than suited the ardent expectations of their prince; he therefore sent Kaled to supersede them both, and under his command the whole aspect of the campaign was changed. Bozra, which, as its name imports, was a place of great strength, and which Heraclius had rendered almost impregnable, was rashly attacked by a force under Serjabil, in obedience to the orders of Obeidah, which was repulsed with loss. Kaled met the flying troops: "See the villains come," exclaimed he, as from the opened gates of the fortress the emperor's soldiers poured into the plain, "they know we are weary, but let us go on, and the blessing of God will go with us." Shouts of "Allah Akbar, Alhamlah, Aljannah," God is great—fight—paradise, inflamed the courage of the Arab troops, their impetuous valour threw the Syrian ranks into confusion, and with a loss of not more than 230 men, Kaled remained master of the field, having driven the enemy back to the fortress. Bozra, nevertheless, in all probability would have held out, but that its governor traitorously gave it up to the Arabs, professing himself a convert to their faith, his object most probably was to save his own wealth and life.

Damascus was the next city against which the arms of Kaled were directed. In accordance with the custom of the times, that intrepid general

twice tried his strength and valour, in single combat, with the Christian leader, in presence of the legions on both sides, each of whom became his prisoner. From Antioch the emperor had sent 5000 men to the assistance of the Damascenes; but as they found themselves inferior to the foe in every sally, it was resolved to reduce their city to a closer defence. At length, a valuable booty was offered to Kaled by the disheartened citizens, if he would raise the siege. "No," said the unmoved veteran, "no peace: either become tributaries or Mahometans. Your armies do not affright us: we are promised victory by our prophet Mahomet, and we reject with scorn your proffered vests, turbans, and money. We like war better than peace; and however poorly you may think of us, we reckon you no better than dogs." Means had been found of sending to the emperor an account of the condition of the city, upon which he despatched another force, intended to relieve it, consisting of not less than 100,000 men, with Werdan, a celebrated Roman general, at their head. On the arrival of news of this approaching succour, the joy of the citizens was tumultuous, Kaled suspected the cause, and determined to intercept the march of the Romans.* "You behold," he cried to his soldiers, as they were approaching this numerous army, "the collected force of the Romans. You cannot hope to escape; but if you are conquerors, all Syria will be sub-

* The Christian soldiers, in these wars, are called indifferently Greeks, Syrians, or Romans. They have the first name from the seat of the empire; the second, because Syria was their country, or because it was the largest province of their empire; the last is their name of honour.

jected to you: therefore fight in good earnest—take religion's part; and be sure you do not turn your backs, and so deserve and obtain damnation." He had issued orders to all the Arab commanders, with their forces, to join him in this decisive conflict; and by some fortunate chance, which the Arab writers piously ascribe to the intervention of divine providence, they all met in the plain of Aiznadin on the same day, in the eleventh year of the Hejira, the 13th July, 633. The Damascenes obtained some advantage against part of the Arab force while withdrawing, according to this arrangement, which, however, Kaled amply retrieved. Not more than 100 men, out of some 16,000, who had gained this temporary victory, were allowed to return to the city.

On the field of Aiznadin, about 45,000 Moslems were assembled. Among them was a squadron of female troops, whom enthusiasm had led to the holy war. To them Kaled addressed his exhortation—"Noble girls, be assured that what you do is very acceptable to God and to his apostle. You will hereby purchase a lasting memorial, and the gates of paradise will be open to you." To all his troops Kaled addressed similar exhortations; while on his side Werdan endeavoured to excite the courage of his somewhat dispirited troops by representing to them the shame and misery of defeat. Nothing, however, that he could say, overcame their fears; they had to encounter an army that had almost never known defeat;—a general who could not fly: and it is said that, on the eve of battle, an offer was made to Kaled of a turban, a robe, and a piece of gold for every soldier, with ten robes and a hundred

pieces for their leaders, and ten times the amount to be sent to the caliph, as the price of peace. "Ye Christian dogs," said the Saracen general, "ye know your option—the Koran, the tribute, or the sword. As for your proffer of vests, turbans, and money, we shall, in a short time, be masters of them all."

The event justified this insolent prophecy. Both sides maintained the conflict with the utmost vigour and firmness; but, in a short time, the Greek troops were forced to give way before the tremendous and irresistible charges of the Saracens. The carnage was fearful, and the spoil immense. Crosses of gold and silver, and armour of inestimable costliness, adorned the persons of the conquerors. News of this victory was immediately transmitted to the caliph, who is said to have rejoiced that, by the arms of his intrepid warriors, fifty thousand souls were sent to hell; while by those of their foes, paradise was made to reap a harvest of four hundred and seventy of the faithful.

After this victory there was nothing to obstruct the march of the Arabs upon Damascus, which city was accordingly invested. Amrou, with nine thousand of the victorious foe, presented himself on one side; Obeidah, with a second force of equal magnitude, took up a second position; while a third was occupied by the fiery Kaled and the largest part of the Saracen army. Ignorant as they were in military tactics, the siege lasted for a long time: several unsuccessful sallies were made from the city; and Thomas, an excellent soldier, son-in-law to the emperor, performed feats of valour that might have inspirited his party, but

that the Saracen arms seemed destined to carry every thing before them. As a last means of saving their lives, the citizens sent a deputation, consisting of some hundred clergy, to Obeidah, whose mildness and urbanity gave them some hope of success. They were courteously received: a written promise was given them that hostilities should cease; that as many of them as chose might depart from the city, with their families and such effects as they could carry away: and that all who remained might, on paying tribute, retain their lands and houses, and also the use of seven churches, with liberty of worship. A capitulation was agreed to on these terms, and the general and his men were accordingly admitted into the city.

Of these transactions Kaled either was, or pretended to be, entirely ignorant. He occupied the opposite side; and was storming the walls when the terms were being concluded between the clergy and Obeidah. Treachery enabled him to effect an entrance, and the horrid war-cry of the desert now arose within the walls of the affrighted Damascenes. The word "no quarter" was given, and the scimitars of the soldiers of Kaled were used with tremendous effect. At length, the sanguinary chief reached the church of St. Mary, where he beheld, with astonishment and wrath, Obeidah and his troops with their swords sheathed, and surrounded by a large number of the men "belonging to the synagogues of Satan, who have shaven crowns." An angry dispute immediately arose between the generals; one insisting on the observance of the treaty, the other urging his right to put every unbeliever to the sword. Gladly

would the Arabs have ranged themselves on the fiercer side of the question; but at length it was determined, that that part of the city which had surrendered should enjoy the benefit of the capitulation, the question between the generals being referred for decision to the caliph. Under the guidance of Thomas, a large number of the citizens, who disdained to pay tribute to a haughty foe, for the liberty of worshipping according to the dictates of their conscience, accordingly left the city in mournful procession, "to seek," says Mr. Mills, "in pride and anguish, some more tranquil spot in the heart of the empire. Three days of truce were allowed them; but on the fourth the sanguinary Kaled commenced the pursuit; his cavalry overtook the Christians, already overcome by sorrow and fatigue, and one individual alone of the wretched band escaped the lances and scimitars of the Saracens."

On the day that Damascus fell,* Abubeker died, after a brief reign of two years and three months. He had lived with great simplicity and frugality; his manners were austere; the utmost attention was given, by his direction, to the whole of his expenditure, that the state should suffer no loss through him. All he claimed, was a stipend of three pieces of gold, three drachms; with sufficient maintenance for one camel and one slave. All beyond this, over which he had control was distributed to the soldiers, and the most deserving; and next to them, to the most indigent of his people.

By a testamentary document, Abubeker pre-

* Aug. 3, 634.

vented the renewal of the disputes which had accompanied his own accession to the throne. He devolved the honour on Omar, who had given way to him. At first, Omar would fain have refused the dignity. "I have no occasion for the place," said he; "but," said his dying friend, "the place has need of you;" and thus his scruples were overcome. His deposition of Kaled from the command of Syrian armies and appointment of Obeidah, gave promise of justice, and less sanguinary proceedings than had filled the former reign. The intelligence of the victory at Aiznadin, and of the fall of Damascus had not reached Medina, when the order for their changes in the command of the army was dispatched. Obeidah thought the reception of that intelligence would cause Omar to rescind his appointment, and waited, therefore, till further tidings from home reached him, ere he assumed his command. The caliph however was inflexible, and certainly it is impossible not to admire the loyalty, implicit obedience, and patriotism of the disgraced general; he could not have resisted without hazard to the empire he had bound himself to serve. "I know," he said, "that Omar loves me not, but he is my master, and I submit to his decrees. My zeal shall suffer no abatement, and whenever he chooses to employ me, I will give every possible proof of zeal and devotion to our holy cause." It has sometimes been said that truth only can inspire genuine self-denial; but if so, how shall we explain this part of the conduct of the intrepid warrior?

Narratives like those which have been given, might fill the remaining pages of this volume,

did it design to follow the victorious Arabs through all their campaigns. It will be enough to say, that the cities of Emesa and Balbec had to follow the bitter example of Bozra and Damascus. Upon the banks of a small stream, which falls into the lake of Tiberias, the last unavailing struggle was made by the Greeks for their falling dominion in Syria previously to the commencement of which, Obeidah resigned, and Kaled once more took possession of the supreme command. "Paradise" he said to his soldiers in an oration of tremendous brevity; "Paradise is before you, the devil and hell fire are behind you." For a time the Romans were likely to prevail; but Arabian women, forming the last line of the Saracen army drove their flying husbands and brethren back to the conflict. Here as at Aiznadin, the Syrian soldiers were slain or scattered; and in his dispatch to the caliph, the Saracen general congratulated him on the slaughter of thousands of the infidels. "The Yermou," said he, the stream on which the battle was fought, "has drowned a number known only to God; the fugitives into the deserts and mountains have been destroyed; their wives, their children, and their country have fallen into the hands of the faithful."

The immense disproportion between the slain on the respective sides in their battles, fills us with surprise; and after allowing for Arabic exaggeration, it can be accounted for only by the terror that the name of Kaled, and the horrid *tecbir*, or war cry of the Arabs raised. It was but for the Saracens to strike, the Greeks, disciplined as they

were, fell by hundreds and thousands; while of their own forces, units only were slain; the effect would be an unwavering confidence in the goodness of their cause, and of the constant and powerful protection over them of the God of battles; and thus flushed with self complacency and hope, their progress presents no difficult problem. Every thing seemed to be in their favour.

The last victory left Jerusalem, Aleppo, and Antioch almost without defence, open whensoever it might please the victorious army to advance. To the first, their march was speedily directed. By sending forward a detachment of five thousand men an ineffectual attempt was made to surprise the garrison; and afterwards the city was closely invested with the whole army. The alternative of tribute or conversion was offered by Obeidah to the inhabitants. He wrote to the chief commanders of the city, and to the inhabitants generally. "Health and happiness to every one that follows the right way, and believes in God, and his apostle. We require of you to testify, that there is but one God, and that Mahomet is his apostle; and when you have borne witness to this, it is unlawful for us, either to shed your blood, or meddle with your substance and children. If you refuse this, consent to pay tribute, and be under us forthwith, otherwise I shall bring men against you, who love death better than you do the drinking of wine, or the eating of hogs' flesh. Nor will I ever stir from you, if it please God, till I have destroyed those that fight for you, and made slaves of your children."

Four months did this city, which had suffered

so much in former time, sustain the siege of the Saracens, at the end of which time, the patriarch Sophronius offered to capitulate. Obeidah never reluctant to listen to overtures that might issue in comparative mercy, was ready to treat with him. He accordingly proposed to surrender the city, only insisting upon the strange condition that the caliph himself should enter within their venerable walls, and that from his own hands they should receive the articles of their protection and security. They might fancy that as much as this was due to a place which had been the abode of God himself, or, as is more probable, they imagined that the request could not but be gratifying to the successor of a prophet who had invariably professed to honour the religion which was so intimately connected with the destinies of their city.

Whatever might occasion the demand, after a council held upon it in the mosque at Medina, Omar determined that it should be acceded to. He yielded, perhaps, quite as much to the wish of refreshing and encouraging his own troops by the sight of their venerated caliph, as to his desire of seeing and treading the ground of that sacred spot. His progress was a remarkable contrast to the gaudy pageantry and pomp of eastern monarchs generally. Ockley thus describes it, "When the caliph had said his prayers in the mosque, and paid his respects at Mahomet's tomb, he substituted Ali in his place, and set forward with some attendants; the greatest part of which, having kept him company a little way, returned back to Medina. He rode upon a red camel with a couple of sacks, in one of which he carried that sort of provisions which the Arabs call sawick, which

is either barley, rice, or wheat, sodden and unhusked; the other was full of fruits. Before him he carried a great leathern bottle (very necessary in those desert countries to put water in), behind him a large wooden dish. Thus furnished and equipped, the caliph travelled, and when he came to any place where he was to rest all night, he never went from it till he had said the morning prayer. After which, turning himself about to those that were with him, he said, "Praise be to God, who has strengthened us with the true religion, and given us his prophet, and led us out of error, and united us (who were at variance) in the confession of the truth, and given us the victory over our enemies, and the possession of his country. O, ye servants of God! Praise him for these abundant favours; for God gives increase to those that ask it, and are desirous of those things that are with him, and fulfils his grace upon those that are thankful." Then filling his platter with the sawick, he very liberally entertained his fellow travellers, who did, without any distinction, eat with him out of the same dish."

On the way he redressed the wrongs of the tributaries who appealed to him, and reproved the luxury of the Arabs, many of whom he found clothed in the rich vestments acquired with their spoils at Damascus and Yermouk. As he approached Jerusalem, his followers persuaded him to assume a somewhat more imposing appearance, in order, as they said, to excite in the minds of his newly conquered subjects an idea of his greatness more befitting the expectations they had formed. He accordingly attired himself in white robes, and exchanged the camel hitherto shared

with his slave for a horse, but the equipment did not suit him, and he returned to the simplicity—the almost barbarous guise of former times. Thus he entered the camp before Jerusalem, exclaiming against the absurdity of forsaking established usages for the gratification of vanity and pride, or for the indulgence of a foolish caprice.

The simplicity of his appearance increased rather than diminished those sentiments of terror and respect which his name had inspired. “Resistance to these men,” said the patriarch, “without miraculous assistance from heaven will be in vain. Their prophet enjoined them to exercise the virtues of humility, modesty, and submission, and these qualities lead to greatness. Their laws will soon become absolute over all other laws, and their empire will extend from the east to the west.”

While such sentiments pervaded the Christian leaders, there was no great difficulty in agreeing upon terms of capitulation. The lives, fortunes, churches, and religion, of the conquered were henceforth to be held on condition of paying a heavy tribute. The sovereignty of the city, and of all the adjacent territory was ceded to the caliph; Mahometans were to be admitted at all times into the churches of Christians, they were to be entertained gratuitously at any time for the space of three days—their names, dress, and forms of salutation were never to be used by any others than themselves. “Neither should the Christians,” proceeds the treaty, “ride upon saddles, nor bear any sort of arms, nor use the Arabic tongue in the inscriptions of their seals, nor sell any wine. They shall be obliged to wear the same sort of habit wherever they go, and always wear girdles

upon their waists. They shall set no crosses upon their churches, nor show the crosses in their books, openly in the streets of the Mussulmans. They shall not ring, but only toll their bells; nor take any servant that had once belonged to the Mussulmans." "Upon these terms," observes Ockley, "the Christians had liberty of conscience; and Jerusalem, once the glory of the east, was forced to submit to a heavier yoke than ever she had borne before. For though the number of the slain, and the calamities of the besieged, were greater when it was taken by the Romans, yet the servitude of those that survived was nothing comparable to this, either in respect of the circumstances or duration. Now it fell, as it were once for all, into the hands of the most mortal enemies of the Christian religion, in which it has continued ever since, excepting only that interval of near ninety years, in which it was possessed by the Christians in the Holy War."

These terms which form the basis of all future treaties assented to by the Mahometans are sufficiently humbling, but the Greek empire was too much weakened to resist them; and from that time to the present, wherever they have been conquerors, similar degradation as been inflicted upon all of a different faith. Omar ordered the ground on which the temple of Solomon had stood to be cleared of its rubbish, and a splendid mosque was immediately founded, which still bears his name. His stay at Jerusalem was confined to ten days, during which time he regulated the plans of future conquest to be pursued by his subjects.

Aleppo—the Berea of the Greeks, next fell under the Moslem arms; not so easily, however,

as other cities had fallen. It was defended by a strong castle, before which during a tedious siege of five months thousands of the Arabs were slain. Their generals applied to the caliph for permission to seek an easier conquest, but he would by no means permit them to abandon the siege, and stratagem at last effected what power could not.

Damas, a volunteer, who had recently arrived in the Saracen army, engaged to capture the city with the aid of thirty companions, and the army was ordered to withdraw for the purpose of beguiling the citizens into security by the show of a retreat. The scheme was successful; Damas soon learned that the garrison was sunk into supineness, and immediately creeping forth with his associates from behind the eminence which concealed them from observation, he approached the castle with silence and caution. He was a man of immense strength. Stooping down he allowed seven of the strongest of his companions to place themselves successively on his shoulders; the foremost leaped upon the battlements, and immediately the drowsy sentinels were put to the sword, or thrown into the fosse. His thirty associates were drawn up the walls of the castle, and entered, headed by himself, repeating their accustomed prayer, "O apostle of God, help and deliver us." In one of the chambers which he traversed alone, Damas discovered the general of the Greek forces and made him prisoner. The intrepid band maintained their ground till daylight discovered to Kaled what had been effected, upon which he hastened with his army to their relief. They were instantly admitted, and the castle which they had found more disastrous to

them than any other in the campaign was in their hands.

Antioch now remained the only considerable place in Syria over which the Mahometan standard did not wave; a distinction which it preserved but a few weeks. The general whom Damas found in the castle at Aleppo had turned Mussulman; and by him the Arabs were conducted so as to become masters, with comparative ease, of the strong castle of Arzuz, and of the iron bridge over the Orontes, which were the principal defences of that city against the approaching army. Here the emperor of the Greeks was holding his court, and in the days of the Cæsars the city was adorned with the titles of free, holy, and inviolate, but now its glory was about to fade. The emperor yielding to considerations of prudence and personal safety meditated a dishonourable flight. The bishops and principal men of the place assembled in one of the churches to bewail the unhappy fate of the empire, ascribing it to the sins of the people. Heraclius ascended a hill in the vicinity, surveyed with a sorrowful heart his beloved city, and the fruitful valley in which it was situate, and with tears took leave of both for ever. It is said that he inquired of one of the Moslem captives who was brought before him, as to the person and dignity of the sovereign of Arabia, the answers he received, filled him as much with terror as surprise. "What sort of a palace," said the emperor, "has your caliph?" "Of mud," was the reply. "And who are his attendants?" "Beggars and poor people." "What tapestry does he sit upon?" "Justice and uprightness." "And what is his

throne?" "Abstinence and wisdom." "And what is his treasure?" "Trust in God." "And who are his guards?" "The bravest of all the worshippers of our God."

At the intelligence of this victory Omar is said to have fallen upon the ground to weep tears of joy, and to give thanks to God and the prophet. Obeidah had removed his soldiers from the enervating luxuries of the city, to the hard and stern discipline of the camp, a course which his prudence dictated. The caliph, however, mildly reprimanded him for it. "God," he said in his letter, "did not forbid the use of the good things of this life to faithful men, and such as performed good works: wherefore the lieutenant should have given them leave to rest themselves, and partake freely of those good things which the country afforded: that if any of the Saracens had no family in Arabia, they might marry in Syria; and whoever among them wanted any female slaves, he might purchase as many as he had occasion for."

This year proved a disastrous one to the Arab troops, notwithstanding their successes. The plague broke out among them, and twenty-four thousand, including their general and some others who had been companions of Mahomet, became its victims. The Arabs accordingly distinguish this year as the year of destruction.

After these exploits, but little was left to complete the conquest of Syria. Many of its towns surrendered without resistance. Tripoli and Tyre were betrayed. A fleet, destined for Cyprus and Crete, fell into the hands of the Arabs, and yielded them a welcome supply of arms and pro-

visions, and within six years from their first expedition this fertile region was completely under their power.

Kaled, whose name has so frequently been mentioned in connexion with these events, was in the right when he said, Omar loved him not. The death of Obeidah and other officers by the plague, had removed every obstacle to his advancement; but a charge of appropriating to his own use the public treasure, was preferred against him, and encouraged by the caliph. His liberal dower to a beautiful widow, whom he married while his hands were yet reeking with the blood of her husband murdered by himself, gave probability to the accusation. He was ordered home and examined, some say with the indignity of his turban fastened round his neck, the ends being held by the common crier. He submitted to this disgrace with exemplary moderation, declaring, that nothing should induce him to resist the will of his superiors, and was condemned to heavy fines, in punishment of his supposed guilt. At length, however, he sunk under the accumulated weight of suffering, poverty, and dishonour; and when his horse, his armour, and one slave, were found to constitute all his wealth, Omar wept over his grave at the injustice done him. His history furnishes one illustration, in addition to many more, of the ingratitude of ancient nations to their bravest soldiers, and of the utter emptiness of the honour and applause which military prowess is universally regarded as securing. His last moments were embittered by the reflection, that after having sought the glory of martyrdom in many a bloody field, and felt the weapons of the enemy in

every limb, he should descend to the grave, wronged and dishonoured, among the common herd of ordinary mortals.

Amrou, the equal of Kaled in war, and greatly his superior in counsel, succeeded to the command; and the subjugation of Egypt to the Mahometan power, was the next enterprise to which the fanaticism and courage of the army were directed. Omar hesitated, however, as to whom he should entrust with the responsibilities and the glory of this enterprise. He wrote to Amrou—"Should this letter reach you while you are in Syria, return; but if you are entered into Egypt when the messenger arrives, advance, with the blessing of God; and assure yourself, that if you want any supplies I will take care to send them." The general was on his march when the letter arrived. He had not left Syria; but bent on attempting the conquest, he immediately pushed on to Arish, a town at the extremity of Syria, and near the confines of Egypt. Here he made known to his officers the command of the caliph; but either because his presence was deemed necessary to the success of the army, or because he could describe himself as having passed the limits beyond which the recal was not intended to apply, he did not return. His army speedily obtained Pelusium, the key of Egypt; and reduced Memphis, after a siege of seven months. The Greek emperors had tyrannized over the native Egyptians, so that they hailed the approach of the Moslems as affording them hope of deliverance from a hated power; and this "basest of the nations" almost universally fell beneath the Arab yoke. Alexandria, to which the Greeks of Egypt fled,

offered a long and desperate resistance to the Mahometan troops, twenty-three thousand of whom obtained the crown of martyrdom beneath its walls. At length, however, it yielded, and Amrou wrote to the caliph—"I have taken the great city of the west. It is impossible for me to enumerate the variety of its riches and beauty; and I shall content myself with observing, that it contains four thousand palaces, four thousand baths, four hundred theatres or places of amusement, twelve thousand shops for the sale of vegetable food, and forty thousand tributary Jews. The town has been subdued by force of arms, without treaty or capitulation, and the Moslems are impatient to seize the fruits of their victory." Omar, in reply, commanded that private property should be respected, and that the public stores should be employed in the pious work of furnishing means for extending still further the religion of the prophet. He regulated also the tribute to be paid, as the price of safety, distinguishing between the poor and the wealthier inhabitants; as if he were not entirely lost to the sense of justice and compassion, by the occasional display of which he sought to alleviate the terrors awakened by the Arab name.

This conquest enabled Amrou to relieve the distresses of a famine in the land from whence he had come. The corn of Egypt, as in ancient time, was transferred, on the backs of camels, to a people who, like the family of Jacob, were in a state of famine; and probably this supply suggested to the prudent and munificent Omar the desirableness of a canal between the Nile and the Red Sea. His means were adequate; the under-

taking, therefore, was accomplished by the soldiers of Amrou. As long as the seat of the Arab government was continued at Medina, this means of commercial intercourse was kept open, and yielded immense advantage to its subjects.

Persia, an empire of long standing, which had experienced, moreover, numerous changes, became the next object of Arab cupidity, its wealth much more than its idolatry inciting the attempt to subjugate it. It had felt in one of its provinces, westward of Babylon and near the Euphrates, the power of these insatiable, unconquered foes; but for some time the war in Syria had diverted them from this ancient empire. It had been overrun by the soldiers of Heraclius, whose ravages were succeeded by the accumulated evils of famine and anarchy. Its nobles were not united, its sovereigns were feeble; little more than the splendid pageants of faction. When Syria and Egypt had yielded to the Moslem arms, there was nothing to divert the attention of the wanderers of the desert from a conquest which they had so long meditated. The empire was governed by the feeble hand of a woman; but on the approach of the formidable troops of Medina she was compelled to resign a dignity to which her sex was deemed unequal, and a youth of fifteen, a descendant of the ancient sovereigns of the empire, was chosen to fill her place. One of his first acts was to reply insultingly to a deputation of Arab chiefs who had been despatched to the head quarters of the Persian army. "We have always," he said, "held you in the lowest estimation. Arabs hitherto have been known in Persia only in two characters; as merchants and as beggars. Your food is green lizards; your drink,

salt-water; your covering, garments made of coarse hair. But of late you have come in numbers to Persia; you have eaten of good food; you have drunk of sweet waters; and have enjoyed the luxury of soft raiment. You have reported these enjoyments to your brethren, and they are flocking to partake of them. You appear to me like the fox in our fable, who went into a garden where he found plenty of grapes: the generous gardener would not disturb him, and thought the produce of his vineyard would not be diminished by a poor hungry fox enjoying himself. But the animal, not content with his good fortune, went and informed all his tribe. The garden was filled with foxes, and its indulgent master was forced to bar the gates, and kill all the intruders to save himself from ruin. However, as I am satisfied that you have been compelled to this conduct by absolute want, I will not only pardon you, but load your camels with wheat and dates, that when you return to your native land you may feast your countrymen. But be assured, if you are insensible to my generosity, and still remain in Persia, you shall not escape my just vengeance."

To this ebullition of vanity and weakness the Arab messengers listened unmoved, and without attempting to reply to the insults it offered to their country and themselves, they briefly laid before the youthful emperor the dreadful alternative—conversion, tribute, or the sword. The terms were rejected, and the war commenced. The feeble and foolish emperor knew not the kind of power he had to deal with. An army of one hundred and twenty thousand, including many who rather incumbered than aided its operations, was assembled to repel

it. The first battle was fought in the plains of Cadesia, and ended in victory on the side of the invaders. Other battles followed with similar success. The monarch disheartened, resigned his crown and fled to drag out a miserable existence, under the protection of Scythian shepherds; but still the nation maintained the conflict for independence, till the victory of victories at Nehavend in 649, annexed Persia to the dominions of the caliph.

The usual offer of conversion or tribute was changed, since the Persians were deemed idolaters, and they had to choose between death and acknowledging the faith of Mahomet. A few only escaped to maintain in the solitude of their distant mountains the ancient worship of their fathers.

It would be tedious to detail the events of this war, which was uniformly successful to the Arab arms, and which enriched them with large and valuable booty. During its progress a fallen satrap or Persian governor was sent to Medina. When he arrived the caliph was reposing among a crowd of paupers, and the satrap not at all expecting to meet with royalty connected with so much simplicity, demanded to be conducted to Omar. The caliph awakened by the noise, gave orders that the prisoner should be led to the mosque, in a chamber of which after being first stripped of his gorgeous robes, he was questioned. "Dost thou know," said Omar, "the judgments of God and the rewards of infidelity and obedience?" "Alas!" replied the satrap, "I feel them too deeply. In the days of our common ignorance, we fought with the weapons of the flesh, and my nation was superior; God was then neuter: since he has es-

poused your quarrel, you have subverted our kingdom and religion." The Persian complained of thirst, and wished to drink in the presence of his conqueror, since, according to the custom of the orientals, that circumstance would have entitled the prisoner to the privileges of his friendship. "Why do you ask for water?" demanded the caliph. "My thirst is intolerable," answered the satrap, "and I ask for water for the preservation of my life." "Your life is not in danger till you have drank the water," said the caliph. The crafty Persian dashed the vase to the ground. Though a promise of perpetual safety was far from being the meaning of Omar, yet the calls of mercy and the sacred solemnity of justice forbade the Caliph from recalling his unguarded language.

These conquests chiefly have given renown to the reign of Omar. Not entirely so; for an Arab, and a zealous Mahometan, he was a prince of justice and humanity; and he has been held in veneration through all succeeding ages for the attention which he bestowed upon the Koran. By his orders its detached parts laid up in the sacred chest, or scattered among the followers of Mahomet, were brought together and made to form one volume. Of all other literature he will never cease to be known as the relentless foe. The Alexandrian library was sacrificed to his wretched fanaticism. "If," said he, when a proposal was made to save that collection of sound and classical learning, "if what be written in those books agree with the Koran, they are not necessary—the Koran is enough without them, if they do not, it is fit that they should be destroyed;" a sophism before which the literary stores collected from all

parts of the world by the pride or learning of the Ptolemies at once perished.

At length Omar fell by the hand of an assassin, a Persian slave, who thought, perhaps, by this means to avenge the wrongs of his miserable country. Watching his opportunity when the caliph was at morning prayers the murderer rushed into the mosque, and with a small dagger inflicted six wounds upon his person, ere he had left the pulpit. One of these proved mortal, and the reign of Omar terminated after ten years of prosperity. His piety, justice, abstinence, and simplicity have procured him more reverence among good Mussulmans than the grandeur of any of his successors could command. "His walking stick," says Alwakide, "struck more terror into those who were present, than another man's sword." His diet was dates, or coarse barley-bread dipped in salt; his drink water; and sometimes, by way of penance, he would eat his bread without salt. Of religious duties he was a punctual observer, and, during his brief caliphate, had performed nine pilgrimages to Mecca. He preached in a tattered cotton gown, torn in twelve places; and a Persian satrap, when he paid homage to the conqueror of his nation, found him lying asleep among the beggars on the steps of the mosque at Medina. During the ten years of his administration, 4000 churches were destroyed, and 1400 mosques erected on their ruins. Abubeker had styled himself the caliph or deputy of Mahomet. Omar if he adopted a similar style would have been caliph of the caliph of the prophet; but as such a title was deemed tautological and might have increased to an inconvenient length, he took that of Emir el

Muemenin or emperor of the faithful, a designation which continued till the word caliph came to be almost synonymous with emperor. They are now used almost interchangeably.

CHAPTER XIII.

The progress of the Arabian empire.—Death of Omar, and elevation of Othman.—Alexandria dismantled.—Africa entered by the Saracen troops.—Battle near Tripoli, and fall of that city.—Disaffection against Othman.—His assassination.—Ali becomes caliph.—Ayesha's opposition to him.—Battle of Basora.—Rebellion of Moawiyah.—Ali's murder.—Hassan his son made caliph.—Resigns in favour of Moawiyah.—New dynasty.—Ayesha's death.—Yezid.—Hosein's fate.—Arab factions.—Dynasty of Abbas.—Africa conquered.—Spain.—Conquests in the East.—Samarcand and Tartary.—China.—Siege of Constantinople.—Reverse of the Arab arms.—Charles Martel.—Greeks subdued.—Mediterranean islands.—Rome.

THE death of Omar renewed the contests for the caliphate. The claims of his own son were passed over, and probably distrusting his judgment in a matter of so much importance, and equally doubtful of the merits of any one of the few remaining companions of Mahomet, he left it to a committee of six to choose his successor. They rejected the claims of Ali, "the first of the disciples," and elected Othman, who was deemed the fitter for the office, on account of the fierceness of his counsels, and the sincerity of his devotion. His reign lasted ten years, during which the empire of the Saracens was extended beyond the Tigris, over large districts of Armenia and Mesopotamia. His lieutenants subdued the cities of Balk, Herat, Thous, and Nichabour, and pushed their conquests as far

as to the rapid Oxus, the western boundary of a part of the vast empire of Tartary.

Othman's imprudent desire to elevate his own family nearly lost to the empire one of its richest conquests. Amrou had secured the confidence and affection of the inhabitants of Egypt by the clemency, the justice and wisdom with which he conducted the government of their country. Othman recalled him, and Alexandria was immediately besieged by the Greeks. The danger led to a reinstatement of the deposed governor, and the opposing fleet and army speedily disappeared.

Another attempt was made during a second absence of the victorious general and governor, and enraged at this repetition of hostilities, Amrou declared that if God should give him the victory over the Syrians, he would raze the walls of the town, and make it as accessible as was the house of a courtesan. He did gain the victory, and Alexandria was accordingly dismantled. A terrible carnage of Egyptians and Greeks was being carried on, till under some impulse of mercy the Saracen general ordered it to cease, and a mosque dedicated to that virtue, and called by its name, commemorated for ages the spot on which the scimitar of destruction was sheathed.

Abdallah, the general, entrusted with command by Othman, was directed when the conquest of Egypt was secured, to turn the Arab arms towards Africa and the unknown regions of the west. On what provocation, except that of the ambitious and fanatical desire to render the religion and the empire of Mahometans universal, it would be difficult to conjecture. A painful march brought his troops to the walls of Tripoli, then and still a

considerable city, capital of a district of Barbary bearing its name; but the appearance of Gregory the Greek general with a large force, amounting to one hundred and twenty thousand, suspended the siege. The issue of the expedition was made to depend upon the result of a general engagement, which accordingly took place in the sandy plains not far distant from the city. For several days victory was doubtful; both sides fought with the most obstinate valour. At length by stratagem, as was usual with the Mussulmans, the question was decided in their favour. The Greek general was slain, thousands of his army were left dead upon the field, the rest fled to Sufetala, and Tripoli yielded on the first attack of the victorious Saracens. So great was the spoil of this victory, that every foot soldier of the Arabs is said to have gained for his share one thousand pieces of gold; each mounted soldier received twice as much; the officers and the caliph in proportion. A daughter of the Greek general, of incomparable beauty, had fought by his side; her courage and exhortations had animated the soldiers of her country, till she was at length taken prisoner, and led into the presence of Abdallah. According to the laws of Saracen war, she was the prize of him whose ingenuity and courage had ensured the victory. "Why do you not claim the rich reward of your conquest," said Abdallah. "I fight not," was the reply, "for ignoble motives, but for glory and religion." The prize, however, was forced upon him, and, what he valued much more, the office of communicating to the caliph the splendid success of the Saracen arms.

The Moslems were much less attached and obe-

dient to Othman than to their former caliphs. They accused him of an undue partiality to his family, of appropriating the public money to the use of his friends, and of presumption in occupying the seat of Mahomet in the pulpit, whereas Abubeker and Omar sat, one on the second, and the other on the third step below it. The provinces loudly complained of injustice, and the danger threatening his power was apparent in an assembling of a large body of insurgents, who encamped about a league from Medina, and despatched a haughty mandate to Othman, requiring him to execute justice or to vacate his throne.

Ayesha still lived to foment these quarrels, most probably because she wished some partisan of her own to be acknowledged as the successor of her revered husband. Though Othman yielded all the demands of the insurgents, they were not satisfied. False allegations were employed against him, when those which might have been proved were found to fail, and the unhappy caliph was besieged in his palace. For a short time the sons of Ali, and some lingering of regard for the sacred person of the prophet's successor protected him; but at length the palace was forced by the rebels, and Othman, while engaged in the study of the Koran, fell pierced with the daggers of his assailants.

This event occurred twenty-two years after Mahomet's death, as if to discover the internal weakness of an empire which had sprung up with such incredible celerity. Ali now ascended the throne, notwithstanding Ayesha's opposition, which most probably had kept him from it on each of the three former occasions; and as if a simple garb

and humble manners were considered the chief qualifications in their sovereign, the Arabs were invited to behold him proceed to the mosque in a thin cotton dress, without ornament, with a coarse turban on his head, his slippers in one hand, and his bow, instead of a walking staff, in the other. Here he received the salutations, and the right hand of fealty and subjection from the representatives of the empire, to which he was recommended by his talents as an orator, and his intrepidity as a warrior. Arabia still deemed courage a virtue, and eloquence wisdom.

It was not likely, however, that Ali should be allowed peacefully to retain a throne, the two former possessors of which had fallen under the hand of faction. His accession was the signal for commencing those convulsions which ultimately rent the creed of Moslem in twain, and divided the empire. Ali was suspected of encouraging the murder of the late caliph; and Ayesha, though she was the more guilty, countenanced the suspicion as aiding her intrigues against him. Telha and Zobeir became the instruments of her faction, and the standard of revolt was raised in an encampment of insurgents near Bassora. Their first movements promised success, but in the battle which ensued, both their generals were slain; their army was totally routed, and the widow of the prophet, who had not been ashamed to join them, was carried captive into Ali's presence. He received her courteously,—he could not do otherwise, since she was regarded as the 'mother of the faithful.' Still she was reproved, and urged to return to her duties at Medina, a course much more befitting her character and sex, than fomenting the

flame of rebellion, and following the standard of revolt.

Having gained by the battle of Bassora, or Day of the camel, as it has been fancifully denominated, the allegiance of Irak, Egypt, Persia, Khorasan, and other parts of Arabia, yielded to the caliph, but the repose he enjoyed was not tranquil nor of long duration. Moawiyah, a new leader of the insurgents, took up the cause, put himself at their head, and was acknowledged caliph by a body of eighty thousand Arabs and allies in the plains of Siffia, on the western bank of the Euphrates. To strengthen their cause, the mosques resounded with cries of vengeance against the suspected murderer of Othman, and his bloody shirt was carried at the head of their troops. Ali raised a large army to suppress this formidable insurrection; and for nearly three months the respective parties, with various success, were perpetually skirmishing. Neither of them seemed disposed to hazard a general battle.

Ali's orders to his troops were always on the side of humanity; still a great multitude fell in the course of this irregular war. At length victory was declaring on his side, when cunning, so often resorted to with success in the conflicts of this people, turned the scale against him. Amrou, the conqueror of Egypt, who took part with the insurgents, advised that the Koran should be elevated on the point of their lances, and that the dispute should be referred to its dictates for decision. The sight of this venerable book suspended the fierceness of conflict. Ali's soldiers would not fight; a long negotiation ensued between the parties, which served only to extend the flame of

revolt among the followers of the lawful caliph ; till at length a sect of religious and political zealots called Charegites, or revolters, from their having with especial zeal thrown off their allegiance to the chosen successor of the apostle, conceived that unity would not be restored to the faith nor peace to the empire, so long as Ali, Moawiyah, or Amrou lived ; they therefore determined on the murder of each. Against the first the murderers were successful. Moawiyah escaped with a severe wound, and the secretary of Amrou received the fatal stroke destined for his master. In death Ali was generous, and commanded his son to inflict no useless torture upon his murderer. "He was," says Abulfeda, "an example of a brave and good prince, than whom the Mahometan empire never had a better, and who without impropriety may be compared with the philosophic monarch Antoninus. He sank beneath adversity, and the violence of an ambitious woman, strengthened by the rebellious daggers of a disaffected people. In battle he was always victorious, yet he never acted otherwise than as if he had been the vanquished ; and when he was escaping the wretched arts of Moawiyah's cunning, he still refused to enrich himself at the expense of his conquered foes. In the conflict between him and the insurgent leaders, valour on his part confronted low artifice, and virtue combated with vice."

The fall of Ali led to the elevation of his eldest son, Hassan, to the vacant dignity by some of the Moslems ; others, especially in the provinces of Egypt and Syria, ranged under the banner of the wounded Moawiyah. Hassan was endowed with his father's piety, but deficient in courage : in

firmness and determination he was altogether unfit to rule a turbulent people. Soon he discovered this unfitness; and, as his followers seemed fickle and unfaithful, he began to disrelish the trappings of royalty. He offered to resign his honours to Moawiyah, on condition of receiving part of the revenues of the empire, and that no successor should be appointed during his life. A sum equal to £150,000 per annum was accordingly assigned him, the whole of which he expended in deeds of charity, and Moawiyah ascended the throne. Hassan, however, did not escape the dire effects of envy and jealousy; his wife was induced to put an end to his existence by rubbing him, while warm, with a linen cloth, strongly impregnated with poison.

With Moawiyah the sceptre of Arabia passed into a new dynasty. He was the first of the Ommiade princes, a son of Abu Sofian, a nephew of Hashem, and, consequently, but a collateral branch of the noble tribe of the Koreish. Ayesha, the cause of so many calamities, intrigued still; and the new caliph was insulted in a personal interview, by the refusal of her allegiance; but he found means of removing this cause of disquietude. The mother of the faithful was invited to an entertainment; beneath the spot upon which she was to sit a deep well was sunk, artfully covered with leaves and twigs. The unsuspecting guest proceeded to the treacherous spot; but the moment she placed herself at the table she sunk, say the Persian authors, "to everlasting night." Moawiyah did not long survive her; but, previously to his death, he succeeded in changing the government of the empire from an elective to a

hereditary monarchy. His son Yezid was accordingly nominated in his room, not, however, with the concurrence of the chief cities of Medina and Mecca, which still claimed the continuance of their privilege of electing the new caliph. Hosein, the remaining son of Ali, was their candidate; and, as may be supposed, a considerable part of the reign of Yezid was occupied in subduing the refractory spirits of the partisans of this direct descendant of Mahomet.

The fate of Hosein was melancholy. He attempted to cross from Mecca to Irak, attended only by a small band of devoted followers; because in that province it was said there were 140,000 Mussulmans ready to defend his claims: but the lieutenants of Yezid obtained information of his route, and he was speedily surrounded by their cavalry. His proposition to the enemy when he found himself in this condition was peaceful. "Give me," he said, "an opportunity of retiring to Medina, a safe conduct into the presence of your prince, or a station in a frontier garrison against the Turks." This was met by the alternative of captivity or death, from the lieutenant, who felt that he could enforce his demands. Hosein was resigned and tranquil: a sister who accompanied him was loud and frequent in her lamentations. His followers would not attempt to fly; his own exhortations were encouraging and animating. On all sides, except in front, they secured themselves from attack, by digging a deep trench, which the cavalry could not pass; and their friend and leader, with the Koran in his hand, incited them to await calmly the approach

of the foe. One of their princes, Hanno, with thirty followers, deserted to Hosein, rather than incur the guilt of sharing in the destruction of the grandson of the prophet : but nothing could save him. The battle commenced : one after another of the friends of the unfortunate child of Fatima fell under the arrows of their assailants ; nor did it terminate till the last of his companions, the sharer of his own tent only excepted, was slain. When the fatal blow was about to be struck at Hosein himself, his sister rushed forward, and entreated that the legitimate representative of their holy prophet might be spared : the murderer wept, and the soldiers who accompanied him fell back, as the dying hero threw himself among them. Shamar, a name held in detestation by the Mussulmans, reproached a feeling which he could not distinguish from cowardice, and Hosein fell, pierced with three-and-thirty wounds, inflicted by the soldiers, yet writhing under the sting of these reproaches. His body was treated with every indignity, though there were some who lamented his fate. "Alas!" said an aged Mussulman, "on these lips have I seen the lips of the apostle of God." His sister and children were led in chains to the court of Yezid, at Damascus, who was advised to destroy them all, and extirpate the race ; but he was merciful, and honourably dismissed the mourning family, with leave to proceed to their kindred at Medina ; and, by a decree, the whole race were excluded for ever from the caliphate. They have been held in honour, nevertheless, in every Mahometan country ; and very generally, especially in Turkey, a green turban

distinguishes them from other disciples of the Moslem faith.*

The dynasty of the Ommiades, which had thus succeeded to the throne of Arabia, possessed that dignity for nearly a century; but none of its princes merit attention in a brief record like the present. Insurrection, revolt, and civil war, filled up almost the whole period. The white and black factions—the respective supporters of Abdallah, Moktar, Marvan, and a host of other candidates for sovereignty, some of the house of Ali, others of that of Moawiyah, convulsed the empire, and filled it with torrents of blood. It is said of one governor of Irak only, whose authority continued for twenty years, or thereabouts, that a hundred and twenty thousand persons of rank fell under his sword; and at his death, the prisons under his jurisdiction were found to contain fifty thousand captives, nearly one half of whom were women.

To this dynasty succeeded that which, from its founder, Abbas, has received the name of Abasides, in the early days of which, the empire, no longer united, as in the time of Abubeker and Omar, was weakened by the acknowledgment of three caliphs: the first, the caliph of Spain, the second, the caliph of Africa and Egypt, and the third, the caliph of Bagdad. A brief reference

* The descendants of Mahomet are everywhere exceedingly numerous: whole villages in Arabia are full of them; and in Turkey they constitute almost a thirtieth part of the population. They are called Scherifs and Seids—names taken from their respective occupations, whether war or commerce. The former appellation sometimes denotes the descendants of Hussein: Seids, those of Hassan. The green turban is not confined exclusively to Mahomet's posterity.

to these respectively shall be reserved for an ensuing chapter. The reigns of the first four successors of Mahomet are distinguished in Arabic history with the title of the perfect caliphate, perhaps with some reference to their exemption from the scenes of civil confusion and war which have been referred to ; or more likely from the election having been confined to the citizens, who were deemed the earliest and best followers of the prophet, and, therefore, the most capable of determining who should occupy his pulpit and his throne. Their successors are known as imperfect caliphs. The Omniade dynasty is sometimes spoken of as the caliphs of Syria, Damascus being the place of their court. The Abassides fixed the seat of government at Haschemiah, on the Euphrates ; till, in 760, about ten years after their accession, Almansor, their second prince, built Bagdad, where the monarchs of that race continued to reside.

The conquest of Syria, Egypt, and Persia, in addition to that of all the wandering tribes of Arabia, has already been detailed. A large part of Africa, namely, that which composed the Roman provinces, between the Red Sea and the Atlantic, next acknowledged the sovereignty of the Saracens. The inhabitants were oppressed with taxes to support the sinking empire of the Romans, and had other causes of complaint against the government. Their murmurs were loud and deep, and soon reached the court of Damascus, where a resolution was taken to extend to them the supposed benefits of the Saracen rule. Carthage was destroyed ; and the whole coast between Tripoli and Tangiers was quickly conquered. The

similarity of character and habits between the Bedouins and the tribes inhabiting the interior of Africa, contributed to the facility of conquest among them; and having adopted the religion of the Arabs, they would have no difficulty in adopting their name and language also. Akbar, a general of the caliph Moawiyah, is said to have crossed the wilderness in which are now standing the cities of Fex and Morocco; and having arrived at the Atlantic Ocean, he spurred his horse into it, exclaiming, "Great God! were not my course stopped by this sea, I would still go on to the unknown kingdoms of the west, preaching the unity of thy holy name, and putting to the sword the rebellious nations who worship any other God but thee."

The conquest of Spain, which had already been repeatedly subdued by the Carthaginians, the Romans, and the Goths, was now again to be effected by Moslem arms. Internal revolt and disquietude, added to the proverbial wealth and indolence of the Spaniards, invited the approach of the wandering hordes: their progress was facilitated by treachery; and, having gained possession of their dependencies in Africa, a descent was made upon Spain, in the reign of Walid, the sixth prince of the Ommiade destiny. This was effected by five hundred Arabs and Africans, and seems to have been rather to acquire information, than to effect any thing considerable by way of conquest. In the following spring, an army of seven thousand followed, under command of the Saracen general, Tarik. The Goths hastened to the relief of the threatened kingdom, and a force of one hundred thousand was quickly raised to oppose the progress

of the dreaded Arab army. Their efforts were unavailing. Emulating the simplicity, fanaticism, and eloquence of his predecessors, Tarik addressed his soldiers, who, by reinforcements, now amounted to twenty thousand. "My friends, the enemy is before you—the sea is behind: whither would you fly? Follow your general: I am resolved either to lose my life, or trample on the prostrate king of the Goths."

The terror inspired by their name, not less than their military courage and resolution, contributed to secure the victory, and the enemy fled. Their prince in vain attempted to recal his flying squadrons, till at length his own courage forsook him, and on one of his fleetest horses, he also sought safety in flight; but he perished in his attempt to pass the waters of the Bætis or Guadalquivir.

There was now nothing to impede the progress of Tarik, and in a few months, having subjugated Cordova, Grenada, Malaga, and Tadmir, he made himself master of the whole country, from Gibraltar to the shores of the Bay of Biscay. In this triumphant march he was greatly assisted by the Jews, of whom Spain contained considerable numbers, though it had always subjected them to great oppressions and persecutions.

Tarik's conquests fired the jealousy of Mousa, the lieutenant of the caliph in Africa; and he accordingly directed his attention to parts of Spain which that conqueror had not subdued. Seville, Merida, and other towns fell under his arms, and either the insolence of authority, or the envy of the ungrateful lieutenant, perhaps both, led him to subject Tarik to indignity. Soliman, who oc-

cupied the throne at Damascus, when the quarrel came before him, acknowledged the merits of the insulted general, and imposed a heavy fine upon Mousa. Severer punishments were also inflicted upon him, and probably this quarrel between the caliph's generals, saved the western world at this time, from the desolating scourge of the Arab arms. A plan of conquest, including France, Germany, Hungary, Servia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, through Constantinople to Antioch had been determined upon; but the caliph supposing the governments in these countries stronger than they really were, rejected it as impracticable and visionary: upon such small circumstances, sometimes, do the destinies of nations turn. Who can calculate what might have been the result to Europe generally, had Mousa and Tarik, the framers of this magnificent plan, remained in harmony?

While the Saracen arms were thus victorious in the West, the East also was made to feel their invincible power. The banks of the Indus, and even the frozen regions of Tartary were compelled to receive the doctrines of the Koran. The Oxus was crossed; the Turkish territories were repeatedly invaded; and in the reign of Walid, Samarcand opened its gates to his lieutenants. This city, from time immemorial, had been the resting place for caravans from China to the Western parts of Asia and Europe; it was, therefore, of great commercial importance. The command of it ensured the means of regulating the commerce of the greatest part of the known world. All the neighbouring territory yielded to the Saracen arms; the rude idols of the Tartars were committed to the flames, or their worship purchased by payment

of a heavy tribute to the successors of the prophet ; his faith was preached with great zeal, and many a Scythian shepherd pronounced the formula. "There is no God but God ; and Mahomet is his prophet."

To the palace of the emperors to whom China yielded homage, and which was situated in a country then comparatively unknown to military adventure, the messengers of the Arab chief penetrated. That monarch alarmed at the threats employed by the ambassador, and filled with dismay at the accounts he was perpetually hearing of the progress of the Saracen arms, yielded to the required terms, and retained his empire and his religion, as the price of vast sums paid to the insatiable foe.

During the turbulent caliphate of Moawiyah, when Syria, Persia, Egypt, and Arabia, constituted the empire over which his power extended, siege was laid to Constantinople. For several years it effectually resisted the Saracen arms ; and so powerful was the Roman empire, though in its decline, that instead of yielding, ambassadors from the capital demanded and received tribute from the Arab prince. Abdalmalek, Walid, and Soliman, caliphs of the Abassidan dynasty, refused this tribute, and were compelled to sustain their resistance by force. Constantinople was again invested, and during a thirteen months siege, in the last of these reigns, thousands of the Mahometan forces were slain before its walls, by the dreadful composition which the Greeks have ever since used, especially in naval wars. Modern foes have trembled at their fireships.

This disaster of the Saracens was followed with defeat in another direction. They were over-

running the beautiful provinces of France, and had begun seriously to threaten Christendom with destruction when the celebrated Charles Martel, mayor of the palace of that kingdom and principal minister collected the forces of his country, and sought the enemy in its very centre. In the encounter, the orientals maintained the advantage in slight and irregular contests for six successive days; but on the seventh, when auxiliaries had been sent from all quarters to the intrepid Frenchman, a general battle ensued, which at the close of the day was suspended, the advantage evidently lying on the side of the Europeans. During the night the various tribes composing the Arab army, turned their weapons against each other; their host was suddenly dissolved, and every emir consulted his safety by a hasty and separate retreat. To this victory, France was indebted for the integrity of her dominions and her freedom from the Moslem yoke.

During the reign of the princes of the house of Abbas, the war against the Greeks was renewed with great fury, and was at length successful. Their fairest provinces were wrested from them; for the rest, Constantinople included, a disgraceful stipulation of tribute was consented to by the empress Irene. Her successor, Nicephorus, renewed the struggle for liberty in vain, and though the caliphs were becoming too weak long to enforce their demands, he was at length obliged to yield to the stipulation, paying an immense tribute for his power, and his faith.

Over the principal islands of the Mediterranean sea, the Mahometan arms triumphed. Cyprus was subdued in 647, and for nearly three centuries it

remained in their hands. Crete was also subdued. Corsica, by the united power of arms and eloquence, was induced to drive away the Greeks, and to embrace the Moslem faith, which prevailed there for nearly one hundred and fifty years. Sardinia, though for a short time it admitted the yoke, freed itself by securing the powerful protection of France, afterwards, about the commencement of the tenth century, it became a Moslem province, in which condition it remained for nearly a hundred years. Sicily also submitted to the Moors from Spain and Africa, after enormous cruelties and exactions.

Rome at length was made to hear the war cry of the desolating Arabs. When Sicily was in their possession, the passage up the Tiber was easy, and soon the affrighted citizens of that ancient capital beheld a Saracen encampment before their walls. In a battle occasioned by the approach of the emperor Lothaire, to the relief of the city, the Saracens were victorious, as they had been in other similar engagements; and the valour of a pope, with the bad conduct of the invaders themselves, saved Rome from destruction. "Ils revinrent bientôt apres avec une armee formidable,"* says Voltaire, "qui semblait devoir détruire l'Italie et faire une bourgade Mahométane de la capitale du Christianisme. Le Pape Léon IV., prenant dans ce danger une autorité que les généraux de l'Empereur Lothaire semblaient abandonner, se montra digne, en defendant Rome, d'y commander en souverain. Il avait employé les richesses de l'église à réparer les murailles à élever des tours,

* Essai sur l'histoire Generale, tom. I., ch. xviii., Ed. 1756.

à tendre des chaînes sur le Tibre. Il arma les milices a ses dépens engagea les habitans de Naples et de Gayette à venir défendre les côtes, et le port d'Ostie, sans manquer à la sage précaution de prendre d'eux des ôtages, sachant bien que ceux qui sont assez puissans pour nous secourir, le sont assez pour nous nuire. Il visita lui meme tous les postes, et reçut les Sarasins à leur descente, non pas en équipage de Guerrier, ainsi qu'en avoit usé Goslin. Evêque de Paris, dans une occasion encore plus pressante, mais comme un Pontif qui exhortait un peuple Chrétien et comme un roi qui veillait à la sûreté des ses sujets. Il était né Romain. Le courage des premiers âges de la république revivait en lui dans un temps de lâcheté et de corruption, tel qu'un des beaux monumens de l'ancienne Rome, qu'on trouve quelquefois dans les ruines de la nouvelle. Son courage et ses soins furent secondés. On reçut les Sarasins courageusement à leur descente ; et la tempête ayant dissipé la moitié de leurs vaisseaux, une partie de ces conquérans, échappés au naufrage, fut mise a la chaîne. Le Pape rendit sa victoire utile, en faisant travailler aux fortifications de Rome, et a ses embellissemens, les memes mains qui devaient les détruire."

CHAPTER XIV.

The decline of Mahometan power.—Extent of the Arabian empire.—Causes which led to that extent.—Continuance of Mahometanism.—Decay of the empire.—What led to it.—Spain revolts and sets up a separate caliph.—Africa.—Egypt.—Bagdad.—Fall of the house of the Abbassides.—Sects of Mahometans.—Orthodox.—Heretical.—The intolerance of Mahometanism.

THE first battle in which the Arabs tried their power against the disciplined forces of the Roman empire was the battle of Muta. Though on that occasion they were successful, it can hardly be supposed that the most sanguine would have ventured to predict that before the close of a century their empire would become more extensive than any former kingdom. It overthrew the power of the Romans, and rendered the successors of the prophet the mightiest and most absolute sovereigns on earth. Yet such was the fact.

Under the last monarch of the Ommiade house the Arabian dominion, except only a part of Africa not much known, and of but little account, included a compact dominion of six months' march of a caravan in length, and four in breadth, with innumerable tributary and dependent states. In the exercise of their prerogative the caliphs were unfettered by popular rights, by the votes of a senate, or by the laws of a free constitution; the Koran was their professed rule of action, but they alone were its interpreters, so that their will was law. The loss of Spain from the empire was more than made up by conquests in India, Tartary, and European Turkey. Samarcand and Timbuctoo studied with equal devotion the language and re-

ligion of the Koran, and at the temple of Mecca the Moor and the Indian met as brother pilgrims. Throughout the countries west of the Tigris the language of Arabia became the vehicle of popular intercourse, and though in Persia, Tartary, and Hindostan the native dialects continued in common use, the Arabic was the sacred language. The forms of worship and religion enjoined by Mahomet, were all but universal.

Before we advert to the decline of the Arabian empire a few sentences may be introduced as to the causes contributing to its unparalleled prosperity.

One of them has already been mentioned in the observations in chapter the second, on the condition of the Christian church in Syria, and the neighbouring countries at the time Mahomet commenced his career. The leading article of his faith, the unity of God, harmonized with what Jews and Christians universally contended for. He propounded this doctrine so as by excluding the Deity of Jesus Christ to fall in with the views of the greater number of the Christian sectaries. Mahomet, moreover, enjoined practices which in the then corrupting state of piety were beginning widely to prevail. To the untutored mind of a desert wanderer, his doctrine would have all the attractiveness which he might have heard of, as pertaining to Christianity; besides that having appeared to originate in his own land it would secure from him the greater attention. Systems in which truth and error have been combined are by no means unwillingly received, especially by those portions of mankind who are already superstitious and fanatical, and such we have seen was the

Arabian character. Mahomet's religious, moral, and juridical system was in general accordance with Asiatic opinions, it provided a paradise exactly adapted to the imagination and character of an Oriental—and as the superstitious are always rather worshippers of what awakens apprehension and appeals to fear, than what enkindles hope, his hell contributed more than his heaven to multiply disciples.

Still had no appeal been made to arms, the Mahometan faith in all probability would have been confined to the deserts of Arabia. The whole of Asia was in a state of unprecedented military inactivity. Opportunity was thus afforded for the success of his enterprise. Empires were proverbially tottering and powerless in the seventh century, political wisdom almost disappeared, and to military talents and courage, all except the Arabs, were strangers. Previous contentions, as for instance those between the Persian and Byzantine empires, had entirely destroyed what little remains of internal vigour the governments might otherwise have had. Civil revolts, tyranny, and extortion, sensuality, and sloth, annihilated the ambition of universal rule, which the Greek and Roman empires had cherished; and their provinces neglected or oppressed, became an easy prey to the Moslem yoke.

The more easily was this yoke imposed on the nations, when to the indomitable courage and ferocity of the desert wanderer, the Saracens added those other features which make up a warlike character. They despised death, were self-denying and energetic to a degree far beyond the soldiers of civilized countries, while they were al-

most equally familiar with military art. The lieutenants of the caliphs soon vied with Roman generals in skill, and it is not difficult to explain their almost uniform superiority, when we bear in mind the character of the armies they respectively commanded. Terror moreover, is epidemic; a successful force commonly finds its victorious progress aided by the prevailing notion of its prowess. Who has not witnessed in the wars of more disciplined troops the tremendous effect of a name?

It may be added to these remarks that the Saracen success is greatly attributable to that glowing and impetuous spirit of religious enthusiasm with which they fought. They deemed their cause the cause of God—heaven was engaged on their behalf, every one who fell in their wars was a martyr, cowardice was tantamount to apostasy.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries and onwards the crusaders were enthusiastically resolved on extirpating Mahometanism, but their religious ardour did not exceed, if even it equalled that of the Arab troops, by whom that system had been originally propagated. Whatever secular principles and ambition influenced them, they took credit for fighting in support of truth and virtue. The sword and the Koran were equally the companions and instruments of their war. “The circumstance,” says Paley in his admirable exhibition of the Evidences of Christianity,* “that Mahomet’s conquests should carry his religion along with them will excite little surprise, when we know the conditions which he proposed to the vanquished: death or conversion was the only choice offered to idolaters. To the

* Vol. ii. § 3.

Jews and Christians was left the somewhat milder alternative of subjection and tribute, if they persisted in their own religion, or of an equal participation of the rights and liberties, the honours and privileges of the faithful, if they embraced the religion of their conquerors."

Literature was as little regarded in the days of Mahomet, as was pure and practical Christianity. His followers everywhere met with an ignorant, and easily deluded people. The monuments of science, and the means of freedom to the mind of man had been abolished by the barbarians of the north. Philosophy and the liberal arts found no patrons amongst indolent and luxurious emperors and nobility. Superstition, therefore, naturally took possession of the mind, and as neither fears nor hopes were moderated by knowledge, idle, unnecessary, and uncommanded ceremonies easily obtained currency. Mahomet only changed one set of ceremonies for another, and in this there was no difficulty, when in the almost universal darkness of mankind, terror and credulity prevailed.

The continuance of the religion of Mahomet in countries over which the Arab dominion ceased, may with equal ease be accounted for. "Every thing in Asia is a matter of regulation, and freedom of opinion being but little permitted or encouraged in the despotic government of the east, Mahometanism when once received became stationary. The human code is mingled with the divine, and the ideas of change and profanation are inseparable. As the unsettling of the political and social fabric might ensue from a change of modes of faith, all classes of men are interested

in preserving the national religion."* Besides this, in their own nature religious doctrines are more permanent in their hold, than forms of civil government; it may be questioned whether, whatever changes in civil respects Scotland, for instance, may undergo, presbyterianism will ever cease to be the prevalent faith of its inhabitants. A people may with the overthrow of usurped civil power return to their ancient religion, whatever it is; but when once a religion has become so to speak indigenous, it is likely to become permanent. Such is the doctrine of the Koran, both in Asia and Africa.

The elements of weakness and decay in the chief seat of the Saracen empire were referred to in the last chapter. Perhaps, in the earliest days of the caliphate, after the accession of the Om-miade dynasty, the princes of Damascus were chiefly regarded as heads of the Moslem religion; the governors of Arabia in succession obtained as to civil rule, their independence. To this the wide and extensive wars in which the caliphs were engaged might contribute. Other provinces followed the example, and as the empire enlarged, the degeneracy and remoteness of the Syrian court, encouraged the governors to assume every thing, except the name of kings, and to render their dignities hereditary; all the provinces were nominally connected with the empire by the payment of tribute, but means were easily found of detaining this under pretence of prosecuting the wars of the caliph, but really to strengthen against him his rebellious deputies. If in this represen-

* Mills, p. 179.

tation, politicians detect the want of an efficient system of government, as well as of warfare, we need not be surprised. The Macedonian hero, and the Roman conquerors, were equally defective; and, perhaps after all, this deficiency may be attributed to a wise and kind arrangement of divine Providence, which in order that oppression may never become universal, does not permit one empire for any long time to hold dominion over countries independent of each other, and dissimilar in their habits and character.

To the establishment of these separate dominions, the luxury and effeminacy of the court at Damascus in no small degree contributed. During the perfect caliphate, simplicity and charity chiefly distinguished the supreme rulers; but, as the wealth and power of the Saracens increased, they imitated the splendour and magnificence of the monarchs of Persia and Greece. Abulfeda says of the court of the year 917—"The caliph Mochtadi's whole army, both horse and foot, were under arms, which, together, made a body of one hundred and sixty thousand men. His state officers stood near him in the most splendid apparel, their belts shining with gold and gems. Near them were seven thousand black and white eunuchs. The porters or door-keepers were in number seven hundred. Barges and boats, with the most superb decorations, were swimming on the Tigris. Nor was the palace itself less splendid, in which were hung thirty-eight thousand pieces of tapestry, twelve thousand five hundred of which were of silk, embroidered with gold. The carpets on the floor were twenty-two thousand. An hundred lions were brought out; with a keeper

to each lion. Among the other spectacles of rare and stupendous luxury, was a tree of gold and silver, which opened itself into eighteen larger branches, upon which, and the other less branches, sat birds of every sort, made also of gold and silver. The tree glittered with leaves of the same metals; and while its branches, through machinery, appeared to move of themselves, the several birds upon them warbled their natural notes."

When, moreover, decline had commenced, its progress was accelerated by the means taken to arrest it. The caliphs, for the defence of their person and government, formed militias, when the regular troops had been corrupted by faction; but these, not unfrequently foreigners, soon governed with military despotism, like the Janissaries of Turkey, the Mameluks of Egypt, or the prætorian guards of Rome: and, in addition to these causes of decay, a rife and rampant sectarianism tore asunder the very strength and heart of the empire. The colossal power of the successors of Mahomet, suddenly towering to its awful height, almost as suddenly fell, as if to yield more perfect confirmation of the truth, that all earthly things are destined to pass away, while the word of the living God abideth for ever.

Spain was the first distant province of the Arab empire which succeeded in dismembering itself, and setting up a separate and independent caliph. This country had always been attached to the Omniade dynasty: the accession of the house of Abbas was the signal for its revolt. A fugitive of the fallen house sought refuge among its inhabitants, who pledged themselves to support his fortunes. The throne was offered him,

and he accepted it. During a successful reign of thirty years he founded an empire, over which, for three centuries, his own descendants were permitted to rule. There were Gothic nobles, however, in Spain, who disdained submission to the Moorish yoke; and these, in a few years, so increased, as to secure the establishment of a Christian kingdom at Oviedo. Charlemagne was lord of a considerable part of the territory. Centuries of war, and rivers of blood shed on both sides, at length issued in the reduction of the Mahometan to the Christian power: and at last intermarriage, legal succession, and conquest, brought the whole of the divided kingdom under one dominion. Most happy would the historian feel, could he add, that the establishment of the Christian power secured the triumph of truth, justice, and clemency; but fidelity will not allow him this satisfaction. The bigotry of the Christians of Spain was as inimical to the welfare of mankind as was the fanaticism of the Mahometans or Moors. The furious zealot, Ximenes, archbishop of Toledo, sanctioned the shameful violation of a promise of toleration given to the Mahometans, and thousands of them were put to the sword, while others were intimidated into a profession of Christianity. The memory of Charles the Fifth is disgraced by similar violations of faith; and, in despite of the frugality, temperance, and industry of the Moors, together with the great prosperity which their numbers, skill, and commercial enterprise secured, a decree was obtained from one of his imbecile successors to expel them from the kingdom. This decree was at length successful—the Mahometan power was annihilated,

the Catholic bigots rejoiced, but a blow was inflicted on the nation, from which it has not yet recovered. Religious persecution has never made a people great.

Spain had been brought under the Moslem yoke by means chiefly furnished from the northern states of Africa: its independence, therefore, would be likely to produce some corresponding effect upon those states. They were governed in the name of the Bagdad caliphs; but for nearly a century they had been growing into independence, under governors usually known from the name of their progenitor, as the Aglabite dynasty. Early in the ninth century, the throne of Mauritania, Massylia, and Carthage, was seized by Obeidollah, whose successors assumed the title of Mihidi, or directors of the faithful. The districts of Fez and Tangiers, which had been already wrested from the princes of Bagdad by the real or pretended posterity of Ali, were soon brought under his dominion; and, before the end of the tenth century, all acknowledgment of the Abassidan rule was obliterated, by the suppression of the public prayers for princes of that race. Various kingdoms and fleeting dynasties distracted and ravaged the country for some five centuries afterwards: but about the year 1516, the descendants of Mahomet were raised to the throne of Morocco, which they have transmitted, without interruption, to its present possessors. It is not a little interesting to the student of the progress of Mahometan power, to contemplate the events which are now taking place between the Moslems of Algiers and the French. A recent declaration of the general of the former, menaces the rising power

of the latter on these shores with annihilation. What is to be the issue of the approaching contest? Moez, the last of the African princes of the house of Obeidollah, who seems to have depended more for his dominion on his prowess than on his supposed descent from Mahomet,* transferred his court to Grand Cairo, a city which he had built in Egypt, after his conquest of that country. Africa was to be held as a fief of this new empire. Large tracts of Syria and the whole of Palestine acknowledged the sovereignty of his descendants, commonly known as Fatimites, from their supposed relationship to Ali and Fatima, the prophet's daughter. They possessed the sovereignty of the holy land; against them, therefore, the crusades of Europe were chiefly directed. Under these formidable wars the caliphs of Egypt sought assistance from those of Bagdad; and Nouredin, a prince of that empire, protected them from the power of their western spoliators. The weakness of Egypt, however, came thus to be known to the crafty and powerful Mahometans pertaining to the caliphate of Bagdad; and, in a short time, its Asiatic dominions were seized upon by Nouredin and Saladin, the auxiliary generals. In the mosque of Cairo, as Adhed, the last caliph of Egypt, was dying, they proclaimed the supremacy, civil and ecclesiastical, of Mort-hadi, the thirty-third caliph of their own city. Saladin, whose name, from his activity, courage, and success against the crusaders, is more known

* When it was demanded of Moez from what branch of Mahomet's family he drew his title, "This," said he, showing his scimitar, "is my pedigree; and these," throwing gold among his soldiers, "are my children."

to the readers of European history than that of almost any other Mahometan prince, soon made himself master of Egypt: but his successors could not maintain the power he had acquired. His brothers disputed the succession to the throne, and Egypt was for ever torn from the Fatimite caliphs. The country is now governed by a viceroy of the Turkish emperor; but of late it has been attempting, with various success, to regain its independence.

The caliphs of the house of Abbas, to whom repeated reference has been made, having built the city of Bagdad soon after they had obtained the throne, transferred thither their court and their power. For five centuries they reigned with various degrees of authority, but when foreign wars and domestic revolts had gradually dissolved the empire, their dominion passed away. Radhi, the twentieth caliph of the race, was "the last," says Abulfeda, "who harangued the people from the pulpit, who passed the cheerful hour of leisure with men of learning and taste; whose expenses, resources, and treasures, whose table or magnificence had any resemblance to those of the ancient caliphs." "During the next three centuries," says a modern historian of the Arabian empire, "the successors of Mahomet swayed a feeble sceptre. Sometimes their state was so degraded, that they were confined in their palaces like prisoners, and occasionally were almost reduced to the want of corporeal subsistence. The tragic scenes of fallen royalty at length were closed, for towards the middle of the seventh century of the Hejira, the metropolis of Islamism fell into the hands of Houlagou Khan, the grandson of Zingis Khan,

and emperor of the Moguls and Tartars, who reigned at that period with absolute and unmixed despotism over every nation of the east. The caliph Mostasem, the thirty-seventh of his house, was murdered under circumstances of peculiar barbarity, and the caliphate of Bagdad expired. Though the dignity and sovereignty of the caliphs were lost by this fatal event, and the soul which animated the form had fled, yet the name existed for three centuries longer in the eighteen descendants of Mostanser Billah, a son, or pretended son, of Daker, the last but one of this race of princes.

Mostanser Billah, and his successors, to the number of eighteen, were called the second dynasty of the Abassides, and were spiritual chiefs of the Mahometan religion, but without the slightest vestige of temporal authority. When Selim, emperor of the Turks, conquered Egypt, and destroyed the power of the Mamlouks, he carried the caliph, whom he found there a prisoner, to Constantinople, and accepted from him a renunciation of his ecclesiastical supremacy. On the death of the caliph, the family of the Abassides, once so illustrious, and which had borne the title of caliph for almost eight hundred years, sunk with him from obscurity into oblivion.*

It must not be supposed that because the terms of the Mahometan profession were few and simple, the followers of the prophet approached to uniformity of faith and practice. In the leading articles included in their well known formulary, there is indeed no difference among them, but

* Mill's History, 160.

there are a thousand matters of a subordinate kind on which every diversity of opinion prevails.

We have not room now to describe their several sects, nor is it necessary. Mr. Sale divides the orthodox Mahometans, or the Sonnites, that is those who receive not only the Koran, but also the traditionary law which has been handed down from the prophet into four distinct parties. (1) The Hanefites, so called from their founder, a man who rather than serve as Kadi or magistrate in the city of Bagdad, ended his days in prison. They are called the followers of reason, probably from their questioning some of the interpretations put upon the prophet's decisions, and abound most among the Turks and Tartars. (2) The followers of Malec Ebn Ans, who is said to have wept that he ever pronounced his own opinion upon any question, the traditions handed down from Mahomet, being, a sufficient guide in every matter of belief and practice. This sect chiefly prevails in Barbary and Africa. (3) The Shafeites, or followers of Shafei, who first reduced the jurisprudence of Mahometans to a method. Shafei was a great enemy to the scholastic interpretations of Mahometan divinity, which had begun to be put forth; and it is related of him that he never confirmed a statement by an oath, deeming it unlawful to swear. A sentiment very much approaching a great practical truth of Christianity is also attributed to him. "Whoever pretends to love the world and its creator at the same time, is a liar."* (4) The followers of Ahmed Ebn

* 1 John ii. 15.

Hanbal, who was greatly esteemed on account of his virtue and knowledge. It is said that he could repeat nearly a million of the traditions of Mahomet. He maintained that the Koran was uncreated, an eternal essence, subsisting in the very essence of God, for which opinion he was severely scourged and imprisoned by the caliph Motassem. Severe persecutions were instituted at Bagdad against his followers, but the sect could not be extinguished. They have never been numerous.

Of heretical Mahometans the same authority numbers also four leading sects: the Motagalites, the Sefatians, the Kharegites, and the Shiites.

The first denied that God was possessed of eternal attributes, they denied also that his word was uncreated, a doctrine maintained by some of the Mahometans. God himself, they said, was eternal, but he existed without attributes. They denied the doctrines of absolute predestination, and of the safety of every one who has received the faith, whether he continue therein or not. They said also that God can never be seen, even in paradise itself, by the corporeal eye. This sect is subdivided into ten smaller sects. A second heretical sect held the opposite opinions concerning God. He was, in their view, eternal, and all his attributes and operations were also eternal. These also Mr. Sale subdivides into five smaller parties.

The Kharegites have been already mentioned as revolters or rebels. They were so called because they did not adhere to the house of Mahomet when in the person of Ali and his sons it was raised to regal authority. Some of them were remarkably strict in their morals. The Shiites were the opposites of the Kharegites. In their

opinion, regal and ecclesiastical power belonged exclusively to the descendants of the founder of the Moslem faith and dominion. Some of them held peculiar and somewhat loose opinions concerning the future state. Their heaven or paradise was only the pleasures to be enjoyed in this present life; their hell consisted exclusively of its pains, and hence not unfrequently their conduct was grossly immoral. That was right according to them which contributed most to present enjoyment.

If the object of these pages were to give a perfect history of Mahometanism, other more modern sects must be added, and a detail of persecution given, which would furnish illustrations in addition to the many we are already familiar with, of the folly of anticipating a uniformity of religious belief, or practice, and condemning, by its results, in no measured terms, the absurdity of inflicting pains and penalties for differences of opinion. Persecution is invariably the result either of ignorance or tyranny.

Some have represented Mahomet as greatly superior to the age in which he lived; and as far surpassing his countrymen in the liberality of his views. In some respects this representation is true, and despite of persecution and ignominy he nobly persevered, as we have seen, in a cause which he deemed sacred; but that he was tolerant, or that, as has been said, "he was distinguished by clemency in the full career of conquest," cannot be admitted. A few passages in the Koran may indeed make bigotry blush. While Mahomet was an humble preacher and reformer, he granted liberty of conscience; but

what ruler, what pretended prophet ever breathed fiercer language of persecution than he. No wars in any age of the world have been so desolating as those which have been conducted under the authority of the Koran ; they were all religious wars and as was to be expected, when but little foreign conquest remained to be achieved, the fierce spirits of his followers fell upon each other ; nor has the Christian world been subjected, among all its horrors, to one half of the bloodshed and war ; or marked by a tithe of the implacable animosity which controversies among Mahometans have occasioned. We are not ignorant of the mischiefs, —the miseries which a political Christianity has produced in almost every civilized nation, but on comparing them with the miseries inflicted, directly or indirectly, by Islamism, we are compelled utterly to repudiate the infidel allegation, that the religion of Jesus Christ has occasioned more cruelty and war in our world than any other cause whatsoever. The history of every age of the Hegira, teems with details of horror. In its prosperity, Mahometanism was the scourge of the nations ; and its decline, the representative of its various sects emulated each other in mutual detestation and hatred ; they agreed only in a principle of discord ; and but that in mercy the Sovereign ruler of the universe restrained its fury, and limited its power, ere now it had rendered the world one vast Aceldama, or field of blood.

CHAPTER XV.

Literature and science of the Arabs.—Their facilities for literary and scientific pursuits.—Patronage of literature by the princes of the house of Abbas.—Almamoun—Arabian schools. Eloquence.—Poetry.—The Arabian tales.—History.—Geography.—Speculative sciences.—Astrology.—Mathematical knowledge of the Arabs.—Astronomy.—Architecture.—The fine arts.—Agriculture.—Medicine.—Chemistry.—Our obligations to Arab literature.

HITHERTO the followers of the Arabian prophet have been considered only as enthusiastic military adventurers, subduing in their wide and rapid progress most of the nations of the then known world. The lust of power, and successful military enterprise, are commonly unfavourable to the cultivation of liberal arts, so that a conquering people usually exhibit a literary character not much above that of the savage. The Goths and the Huns, for instance, are everywhere known as among the most implacable foes of knowledge. Nor did the early Arabs regard it with more favour. Mahomet found his countrymen sunk in the deepest barbarism; he was incapable of any direct effort to raise them, and as has already appeared from the ruthless destruction of the Alexandrian library by Omar, one of his earliest successors, they were not in a much better condition after the close than at the commencement of his eventful career.

Their settlement in the countries they had subdued, the unlimited resources which their wide and general conquests placed within their reach, and probably the leisure which their almost universal dominion afforded, led speedily to a change in their character in relation to literary pursuits, of

which we of the more enlightened west are still reaping the advantage. It was about the middle of the seventh century that Omar committed the famous collection at Alexandria to the flames: before the end of the eighth, literature began to enjoy the munificent patronage of the caliphs of the Abassidan race, who induced upon the stern fanaticism of the followers of the prophet the softening influence of learning; and by an anomaly in the history of mankind, the most valuable lessons in science and arts were received from the very people who pursued, with relentless hostility, the religion and liberties of every other nation.

The Greeks were the early patrons of literature and science. Among them philosophy found its earliest home, and arts and systems are commonly supposed to have sprung up chiefly under their fostering care: but, as recent researches have shown, very much of their knowledge was derived from still more ancient sources. Their philosophers did but little beyond copying and improving upon the mysteries of Egyptian hierophants, and Persian magi. Their system of the universe, which made the nearest approach to the more correct discoveries of modern times, was previously known to the learned Hindus; and it may admit of question whether their whole mythology, allowing only for the additions which a chastened and philosophic, as well as vivid imagination would make to it, has not its prototype in some Asiatic religio-philosophical system. A learned author on the Philosophy of the Asiatics, says, that the whole of the theology and part of the philosophy of modern scientific research, may be found in the

Hindu Vedas. He adds, "That most subtile spirit which our own Newton suspected to pervade natural bodies, and to lie concealed in them so as to cause attraction and repulsion, the emission, reflection, and refraction of light, electricity, calcification, sensation, and muscular motion, is described by the Hindus as a fifth element, endued with those very powers, and the Vedas abound with allusions to a force universally attractive, which they chiefly attribute to the sun." The extension, therefore, of the Arabian victories over the eastern world, as well as their entire command, after the overthrow of the Greek empire, of the resources possessed by that people, gave them access to all the literary stores then in existence.

It has been said, and probably not without good reason, that Mahomet himself saw and felt the importance of literary distinction. Among the sayings attributed to him, the following have been taken as an evidence of his sense of the value of learning, "A mind without erudition, is like a body without a soul. Glory consists not in wealth, but in knowledge;" and, as the Koran affords abundant proof, he was by no means unmindful of that mental cultivation, the means of which were within his reach. His followers, absorbed with the ideas of conquest and conversion, despised equally the religion and the learning of the nations they subdued; but when the age of rapine and violence yielded to comparative security and peace, and the fair and splendid city of the oriental caliphs arose, the muses were courted from their ancient temples, and by the milder and more graceful achievements of science and literature,

strenuous attempts were made to expiate the guilt of former conquest, and to shed lustre over the Mahometan name.

Almansor, the second of the dynasty of the Abassides, whose reign commenced A.D. 754, and lasted twenty-one years, was among the first of the Arab princes who fostered the arts of science. Jurisprudence and astronomy were the principal subjects of his study, which, however, through the assistance of a Greek physician introduced into his court, he extended to the art of healing, and probably those other arts with which in all ages and countries medical science has been connected. What progress he himself made, or what was made by the subjects of his government, we cannot now ascertain. His two successors are not greatly signalized as treading in his steps, though it is exceedingly probable they did not destroy what he had done, for the next caliph, Haroun al Raschid, is renowned as one of the most munificent patrons that literature in these early ages enjoyed. He was fond of poetry and music: he is said to have constantly surrounded himself with a great number of learned men, and the Arabs were deeply indebted to him for the progress in knowledge which they were enabled to acquire. Every mosque in his dominions had a school attached to it, by his order; and as if his love of learning was even superior to his hereditary faith, he readily tolerated men of science who had not yielded to the bold pretensions of the prophet. A Nestorian Christian presided over his schools, and directed the academical studies of his subjects. His successor imitated his wise and generous course, and probably to this circumstance chiefly was owing

the knowledge which extended from the capital to the most distant extremities of the empire.

But it was during the supremacy of Almamoun, the seventh of the Abassidan princes, A.D. 813—833, that literature flourished most among the Arabs. Learned men, professors of the Christian faith, had multiplied at Bagdad under the tolerant reign of his predecessors, and now they were liberally encouraged to unfold the ample stores of knowledge in their possession. The copious language of Arabia was employed to repeat whatever that of the Greeks had hitherto concealed, though with a barbarism for which it is difficult to account, many of the original works were destroyed as soon as these translations were made. Almamoun in his youth had associated with the most eminent scholars of Greece, Persia, and Chaldea; he invited them afterwards to his court. Bagdad was resorted to by poets, philosophers, and mathematicians, from every country, and of every creed. Armenia, Syria, and Egypt were searched by his ambassadors for literary treasures, which were amassed with infinite care, and presented at the foot of the throne as the richest and most acceptable tribute conquered provinces could render. Camels, hitherto employed exclusively in commerce, were seen entering the royal city, laden with Hebrew, Persian, and Grecian literature. The court assumed the appearance rather of an academy, than of a council guiding the affairs of a luxurious and warlike government, and all classes were encouraged to acquaint themselves with whatever with these advantages could be studied. "I chose," said Almamoun, when remonstrated with on the appointment of a learned Christian to an

office of considerable influence over the mental pursuits of his people, "I chose this learned man, not to be my guide in religious affairs, but to be my teacher of science, and it is well known that the wisest men are to be found among the Jews and Christians." *

Under such favourable auspices, it is not to be wondered at that the Saracens became a literary people. The caliphs of the west, and of Africa, imitated their brethren of the east. "At one period six thousand professors and pupils cultivated liberal studies in the college of Bagdad. Twenty schools made Grand Cairo a chief seat of letters, and the talents of the students were exercised in the perusal of the royal library, which consisted of one hundred thousand manuscripts. The African writers dwell with pride and satisfaction on the literary institutions which adorned the towns on the northern coast of their sandy plain. The sun of science arose even in Africa, and the manners of the Moorish savage were softened by philosophy. Their brethren in Europe amassed numerous and magnificent collections; two hundred and eighty thousand volumes were in Cordova, and more than seventy libraries were open to public curiosity in the kingdom of Andalusia."

We know but little of the internal government of the Arabian schools, or of the studies actually pursued. Aristotle, no doubt, was the great master, to whom in philosophy all deference was paid. The prophet had prescribed their religion. The schools were of two kinds, or rather classes,—one comprehending the inferior institutions in which

* Abulferage, p. 160.

elementary branches of instruction, such as reading, writing, and religious doctrine were chiefly attended to,—the other called *Madras*, mostly connected with the mosques, as were all schools of the former class, included those institutions in which the higher departments of knowledge were explored. Here grammar, logic, theology, and jurisprudence were studied. The management of each school was confided to a rector of known ability, not always a Mahometan. The professors lectured on books, obtained as has already been mentioned, and esteemed text books in the several sciences; and the pupils, if not of every department of knowledge, of which there is some doubt, certainly all medical pupils, were publicly examined, the result of which was intimated wherever it was satisfactory, in a testimonial or diploma given under the hand of the chief physician.

Of elegant composition, the Koran is universally esteemed the model. Hence it is studied with the most diligent care by all who seek to distinguish themselves in the art of eloquence, one of the grand leading arts of Arab scholars. Subordinate to this divine composition, their schools of oratory boast of models scarcely inferior to the celebrated orators of antiquity. Malek and Sharaif, the one for pathos, the other for brilliancy, are the chief of these. Horaiai is esteemed as the compeer of Demosthenes and Cicero. Bedreddin, of Grenada, is their torch of eloquence, and Sekaki has obtained the honourable designation of the Arabian Quintilian.

To poetry there was considerable tendency in the ancient Arabs. The wild, romantic scenery of the land they inhabited, the sacred recollections of

their earliest history, the life they led, every thing around them, would contribute to poetic inspiration. After the revival of letters, this art was cultivated with enthusiasm. The heroic verses of Ferdousi, the didactic strains of Sadi, and the lyre of Hafiz, even through the dark medium of imperfect and almost tasteless versions, discover animated descriptions, bold metaphors, and strong expressions, far surpassing all that in our inhospitable regions has ever been attempted. In splendour, if not in strength, the poets of the courts of Haroun and Almamoun, or those of the Ommiades of Spain, have in no age been excelled. In this art, as among other people, so among the Arabs, the fair sex have distinguished themselves. Valadata, Aysha, Labana, Safia, and others have obtained the highest encomiums.

So great is the number of Arabian poets, that Abul Abbas, a son of Motassem, who wrote an abridgment of their lives in the ninth century, numbers one hundred and thirty. Other authors have found enough to occupy; one twenty-four, one thirty, and another no less than fifty volumes, in recording their history.

The Arabs, however, are entirely without epic poetry, so important a part of classical writing; nor have they any thing that may be properly ranked as dramatic composition. Sophocles, Euripides, Terence, and Seneca, the classic models of Greece and Rome, they despised as timid, constrained, and cold, and under whatever obligation to these ancient nations the Arabs may be in other departments of literature, they owe them nothing, or next to nothing, in this. Their poetry was original and local; their figures and compari-

sons were preeminently their own. To understand and properly appreciate them, we must have a knowledge of the productions of their country, and of the manners and peculiarities of its inhabitants. The classic muse delights in illustrations and figures borrowed from pastoral life, that of Judea revels among the roses of Sharon, the verdant slopes of Carmel, and the glory of Lebanon. The Arab muse selects for its ornaments the pearls of Omar, the musk of Hadramaut, the groves and nightingales of Aden, and the spicy odours of Yemen. If these ornaments seem fantastic, it must be remembered that they are borrowed from scenes of which we know but little.

Who is not acquainted with the *Alif lita wa lilin*, or the thousand and one tales, commonly known as the Arabian Nights' Entertainment? Some have doubted whether they are an original work, or a translation from some Indian or Persian original, made in the Augustan period of Arab literature, a doubt certainly not warranted by any deficiency of exactness in their description of Arabian life and manners. They seem to have been at first the legends of itinerant story-tellers, a class of persons still very numerous in every part of the Mahometan world. The scenes they unfold—true to nature—the simplicity displayed in their characters, their beauty and moral instruction, have won a gradual way to the bosom of the multitude; while the learned cede to them the honour of more perfectly describing the manners of the singular people they have sprung from, than the works of any traveller, however accomplished and indefatigable. They are replete with oriental information, illustrating the feelings and customs

prevalent in those interesting regions, and so well acclimated to the places they depict, as to leave it by no means an easy task to improve them.

Of history the ancient Arabs were greatly negligent; but by the more modern, this department of knowledge has been cultivated with more success and care. Annals, chronicles, and memoirs, almost numberless, are extant among them: kingdoms, provinces, and towns are described, and their history is narrated in volumes, a bare catalogue of which would extend to a wearisome length. They abound, however, more in the fanciful than in the substantial and correct. Of this the titles of some of the most approved among them may be taken as a specimen. A Chronology of Caliphs of Spain and Africa is denominated, "A Silken Vest, embroidered with the Needle;" a History of Grenada, "A Specimen of the Full Moon;" Ibu Abbas and Abu Bakri are authors of historical collections, entitled respectively, "Mines of Silver" and "Pearls and picked up Flowers." Yet some of their writers, as Ibn Katib, are chiefly remarkable for the extent and accuracy of their historical-knowledge: and the works they composed, in some cases, are exceedingly voluminous. A full history of Spain occupied six authors in succession, and cost the labour of one hundred and fifteen years to complete. Their biography was not confined to men. Ibn Zaid and Abul Mondar wrote a genealogical history of distinguished horses; and Alasuco and Abdolmalec performed the same service for camels worthy of being had in renown. Encyclopædias and gazetteers, with dictionaries of sciences and other similar works, occupied Arabian pens ere

they came into vogue among the modern literati. Every species of composition, indeed, and almost every subject, in one age or other, have engaged the attention of learned Mahometans.

Geography they did not so well understand, their means being exceedingly limited. Yet their public libraries could boast of globes, voyages, and itineraries, the productions of men who travelled in order to increase their geographical knowledge, loaded their shelves. With statistics and political economy also they had not much acquaintance; yet so early as the reign of Omar II. we find a work devoted to these subjects, giving an account of the provinces and cities of Spain, with their rivers, ports, and harbours; the climate, the soil, the mountains, plants, and minerals of that country, with its imports, and the way in which its several productions, natural and artificial, might be manufactured and applied to the best advantage. Money, weights, and measures, with whatever else political economy may be understood to include, were also subjects employing their ingenious industry, and, in some cases, their laborious pen.

It scarcely needs to be added, that the speculative sciences, almost as much as polite literature, flourished among the Arabs. What superstitious, enthusiastic people has ever neglected them? Their ardour, in the more dignified of these pursuits, was ill-regulated, subtleties were preferred to important practical truths; and frequently the more ingenious the sophism, constructed after the rules of Aristotle, the more welcome it was to men who rendered to that philosopher a homage almost divine. The later Arabs, and the Turks of the pre-

sent day, pay considerable attention to astrology, although it is strongly prohibited by their prophet. This science had been universally employed by the idolaters, against whom his denunciations are scarcely less inveterate than are those of the inspired volume: and doubtless he suspected, that its prevalence would hazard the purity, if not the very existence of his own system of religion. For many ages, therefore, it was discountenanced; but, at length, the habit of consulting the stars, on important public occasions, became frequent, and was attended with as much anxiety and as many ceremonies as disgraced the nations of antiquity. Among the modern Mahometans no dignity of state is conferred—no public edifice is founded except at a time recommended by astrologers. These pretenders to knowledge are supported by personages of rank; and in vain do the more enlightened part of a community exclaim that astrology is a false science. “Do not think,” said a prime minister, who had been consulting a soothsayer as to the time for putting on a new dress, “that I am such a fool as to put faith in all this nonsense; but I must not make my family unhappy by refusing to comply with forms which some of them deem of consequence.”

After these references to the polite literature of the Arabs, it will not be surprising that they should have paid considerable attention to the natural sciences. They were not discoverers and inventors, but they did considerably improve upon what they acquired in their extensive intercourse with other nations; and, as forming the link which unites ancient and modern letters, they are entitled to our respect and gratitude. We derive

our mathematics from them; and to them, also, we owe much of our astronomical knowledge. Almamoun, by a liberal reward, sought to engage in his service a famous mathematician of Constantinople; and Ibn Korrah enriched the stores of his country, in this department, with the translations of Archimedes and the conics of Apollonius. Some have said, that, on the revival of European literature in the fifteenth century, mathematical science was found nearly in the state in which it had been left by Euclid; and the justly celebrated Brücker contends, that the Arabs made no progress whatever in this most important branch of knowledge: later writers, however, and particularly Montucla, the author of the *Histoire des Mathematiques*, have done ample justice to their researches. Numerical characters, without which our study of the exact sciences were almost in vain, beyond all doubt come to us from the Arabs: not that they invented them,—it is probable they were originally words, perhaps Hindu words, expressing the quantities they respectively represent, but abbreviated and brought to their present convenient form by the followers of the prophet. Trigonometry and algebra both acknowledge obligations to their genius. The sines of the one of these sciences instead of the more ancient chord, and the representatives of quantities in the other descend through Arabs to us, if they did not at first invent them. Original works on spherical trigonometry are among the productions of Ibn Musa and Geber, the former of whom is accounted the inventor of the solution of equations of the second degree. The university of Leyden still retains a manuscript treatise on the algebra

of cubic equations, by Omar ibn Ibrahim, and Casiri, who preserved and classed 1851 manuscripts, even after a fire had destroyed the magnificent collection of the Escorial, informs us, that the principles and praises of algebraic science were sung in an elaborate poem, by Alcassem, a native of Grenada. These departments of knowledge were studied by the Arabs as early as the eighth and ninth centuries.

Astronomy, the science of a pastoral people, and eminently so in regions of an almost cloudless sky, like the east, was studied with great eagerness by Arabian philosophers. Almamoun, who has been repeatedly mentioned, was devoted to it: at his cost the necessary instruments of observation were provided, and a complete digest of the science was made. The land where, many ages before, this science had been successfully studied by the Chaldeans, was in his power, and upon its ample plains a degree of the earth's circle was repeatedly measured, so as to determine the whole circumference of the globe to be twenty-four thousand miles. The obliquity of the ecliptic they settled at twenty-three degrees and a-half: the annual movement of the equinoxes and the duration of the tropical year were brought to within a very little of the correct observations of modern times, the slight error they admitted resulting from the preference they gave to the system of Ptolemy. Albathani, or, as his name has been latinized, Albatenius, in the ninth century, after forty years' observation, drew up tables, known as the Sabian tables, which, though not now in very high repute, because of more accurate calculations, were for a long time justly

esteemed. Other Arabian astronomers have rendered considerable service. Mahometanism did not, like ancient Paganism, adore the stars; but its disciples studied them with a diligence, without which, perhaps, our own Newton, Flamstead, and Halley, had observed and examined almost in vain.

Architecture was an art in which the Arabs greatly excelled; their wide extension gave them command of whatever was worthy of observation, and their vast revenues afforded the most abundant means of indulging a taste thus called into exercise. The history of Arabian architecture comprises a period of about eight centuries, including its rise, progress, and decay: their building materials were mostly obtained from the ruined structures and cities that fell into their hands; and if no one particular style has been followed, it is because they successfully studied most of the styles then known. On their mansions but little external art was bestowed; all their pains were exhausted on the interior, where no expense was spared that could promote luxurious ease and personal comfort. Their walls and ceilings were highly embellished, and the light was mostly admitted in such manner, as, by excluding all external objects, to confine the admiration of spectators to the beauties produced within. With the art of preserving their buildings from decay they must have had an adequate acquaintance. Their stucco composition may still be found hard as stone, without a crack or flaw: the floors and ceilings of Alhambra, the ancient suburb of Grenada, have been comparatively uninjured by the neglect and dilapidation of nearly seven centuries;

and their paint retains its colour so bright and so rich as to be occasionally mistaken for mother-of-pearl. Sir Christopher Wren derives the Gothic architecture from Mahometans: and the crescent arch, a symbol of one of the deities anciently worshipped throughout the heathen world, was first adopted by the Arabs of Syria, and invariably used in all the edifices erected during the supremacy of the Ommiades. The succeeding dynasty declined following this model; but during the reign of the house of Moawiyah, in Spain, it was imitated from the Atlantic to the Pyrennees.

The fine arts, painting, and sculpture, were not so much cultivated among the early Mahometans: they were thought to involve a breach of the divine law. In this respect they agreed with Jews. Subsequently, however, these scruples were, by degrees, overcome: that style of embellishment denominated the Arabesque, which rejects figures of men and animals, being first adopted, and afterwards sculpture, more nearly resembling that of modern times. The Alhambra, or palace of that suburb, had its lions, its ornamented tiles, and paintings. Abdalrahman III. placed a statue of his favourite mistress over the palace he erected for her abode. Music was ardently cultivated. At first, in the desert, its strains were rude and natural; subsequently the professors of the art were cherished, honoured, and rewarded, as poets also were in the courts of Arab sovereigns. Many are celebrated for their skill in this divine art, especially Isaac Almouseli. It is said that Hawun al Raschid, having quarrelled with his mistress; Almouseli, by performing a song composed for the occasion with great pathos, so wrought upon

this monarch, that, full of grief, he rushed into the presence of the injured and inconsolable fair one, imploring her to forgive his indiscretion, and to bury their unhappy discords in eternal oblivion. Al Farabi has been denominated the Arabian Orpheus : by his astonishing command of the lute, he could produce laughter, or tears, or sleep in his auditors at pleasure. He wrote a considerable work on music, preserved in the Escorial. Abul Faragi is also a famous writer among Mahometans on this subject. To them we are indebted for the invention of the lute, which they accounted more beautiful than any other instrument ; and among them the use of many of the instruments we also use, as the organ, flute, harp, tabor, and mandoline, was common. Some say that the national instrument of the Scottish highlander is taken from them.

In many of the useful arts of modern days, the Arabs were proficient ; as agriculture, gardening, metallurgy, and the preparing of leather. The names Morocco and Cordovan are still applied, in this last art, to leather prepared after the Arabian mode. They manufactured and dyed silk and cotton, made paper, were acquainted with the use of gunpowder, and are best entitled to the honour of inventing the mariner's compass. But perhaps there is no art in which their knowledge is so much a subject of curious inquiry as medicine. Their country was salubrious, their habits were simple, and their indulgences few ; so that many opportunities of practically studying the art, at least among the Arabs of earlier date, would not occur. Anatomy, except that of the brute creation, was shut up from their study, by the

prejudices of their creed; yet they excelled in medical skill. Hareth ibn Kaldar, an eminent practitioner, settled at Mecca, was honoured with the conversation and applause of Mahomet. Hoinain was an eminent Arab physician of the middle of the sixth century: Messue, the celebrated preceptor of Almamoun, belonged to this profession; and a host of others adorn the early annals of the Saracens. Al Rhagi, or Rhages, as commonly called, and Abdallah ibn Sina, or Avicenna, are names to which, for centuries, deference was paid by professors of the healing art throughout Europe, though it would not be difficult to show, that his doctrines and practice must have been, beyond measure, absurd. He administers gold, and silver, and precious stones, to purify the blood.

Of chemistry, so far as it relates to medicine, the Arabs may be considered as the inventors; and botany, in the same connexion, they cultivated with great success. Geber, in the eighth century, is known as their principal chemical writer; he is said to have composed five hundred volumes, almost every one of which is lost. The early nomenclature of the science, indicates how much it owes to this people. Alcohol, alembic, alkali, aludel, and other similar terms, are evidently of Arab origin; nor should it be forgotten, that the characters used for drugs, essences, extracts, and medicines, the import of which is now almost entirely unknown, and invested, therefore, in vulgar estimate, with occult powers, are all to be traced to the same source.

It may be impossible now to estimate accurately the obligations under which we are laid to Ara-

bian literature. An empire so widely diffused, must, if it encouraged letters at all, have had a beneficial influence on almost every country. Europeans, whether subject to their sway, or only contemplating it from a distance, copied or emulated their acquirements. Gerbert, who subsequently occupied the papal chair as Silvester II., acquired the Arabic method of computation in his travels in Spain, previously to his elevation; but others were permitted to profit but little from his discovery. Leonardo, a Pisan merchant, acquired the same art in his intercourse with Mahometans on the coast of Africa, and by him it was introduced into his own native republic, from whence it was soon communicated to the western world. In the city of Salernum, a port of Italy, Mussulmans and Christians so intermixed as to communicate insensibly the literature of the Saracens to the Italians, and in the schools of that city, students were collected from every quarter of Europe. Arabic books, by command of Charlemagne, were translated into Latin for the use of learned men throughout his vast empire, and without exaggerating the merits of the followers of the prophet, it may be acknowledged, that we are indebted to them for the revival of the exact and physical sciences, and for many of those useful arts and inventions that have totally changed the aspect of European literature; and are still contributing to the civilization, the freedom, and the best interests of man.

CHAPTER XVI.

The present condition of Mahometanism.—In Turkey.—The doctrines believed there.—Their forms of devotion.—Lustrations.—Prayer.—Mahometan Sabbath.—Fast of Ramadan.—Meccan Pilgrimage.—Proselytism.—Mahometan hierarchy.—Islamism in Tartary.—In Hindustan.—In China.—In Persia.—In Africa.—In the Indian Archipelago.—The Sooffees.—The Wahabees.

THE present condition of the Mahometan faith with some account of the standing it maintains in the world will not be deemed an inappropriate subject for the closing pages of this volume. Its votaries have long ceased to spread alarm through the nations by their victorious and devastating progress; the fire of its fanaticism is almost extinct, nevertheless its doctrines prevail over a larger number of mankind than any other system of false religion: they are professed in nations and countries remote from each other, and having no other mutual resemblance than that involved in their common superstition. In Spain, indeed, Christianity has triumphed over Islamism; and in the inhospitable regions of Siberia, a part of the ancient Tartary, its advance has been somewhat checked, but in middle and lower Asia, and in Africa, the number of Mahomet's followers has increased. We cannot state with accuracy the number of either Mahometans, or of nominal Christians; but looking at religion geographically, while Christianity has almost entire dominion in Europe; in Asia, Islamism is the dominant faith; in America, the cross is rapidly becoming the symbol of faith

throughout both its vast continents; but in Africa, the crescent waves to the almost entire exclusion of all other emblems.

It is in Turkey that Mahometanism exists at the present day in its most perfect form. To this country, therefore, both on this account, and because it is nearer to our own than any other under the Moslem power, our attention shall be first directed.

The attempts upon Constantinople, and the conquest by Saracen arms, of almost the whole of those countries over which the emperors residing in that city, anciently called Byzantium, had reigned, have been already recorded. The powerful caliphs of Bagdad made themselves masters of these regions, while those of Spain and the west were endeavouring to push their conquests over the fairest parts of Europe. The situation of Constantinople and the surrounding empire, lay especially open to the eastern Mahometans, whose warlike incursions were incessant. Tartars from Asia overran the empire. Othman, in the early part of the thirteenth century, laid the foundation of Turkish greatness. Orchan, Amurath, and Bajazet, his successors, amidst both foreign and domestic wars greatly contributed to its establishment and increase. The children of the last of these conquerors, threw the empire into a frightful state of commotion by their unnatural quarrels, till, at last, the youngest of them, named after the prophet, restored its unity, and established something like domestic tranquillity. Under a grandson of his, Mahomet II., whom Bayle describes as one of the greatest men recorded in history, the Morea was subjugated, and the Greek empire, so

long shaken by internal dissensions, and tottering to dissolution by its luxury, was trampled in the dust by Moslem conquerors. Constantinople at last yielded to their power, and a palace for the conqueror was erected on the very spot where Constantine had chosen his magnificent abode.

From this time to that of Solyman the magnificent, to whom the Turks owe their laws and police, the empire continued to prosper, but immediately afterwards its fall commenced. Letters and science have advanced less among that people, than among Europeans, and their Sultans possessed none of the martial enterprise and energy of their predecessors. Still the faith of Mahomet maintained, and down to this day continues to maintain, a hold which it enjoys in almost no other country.

The Turks generally repose the most implicit faith in the two leading articles of the Mahometan creed; and since, in the opinion of Moslems, a simple assent to these doctrines comprises all that is valuable in religion, and will be followed by the possession of heaven, either immediately, or remotely, it is readily conceivable that infidelity will be exceedingly rare. In religious matters the heart opposes not so much what is to be believed, as what is to be done.

Minor points of their theology have been from time to time disputed, but generally these may now be regarded as settled. Predestination is one of the chief on which the faith of the Turk is fixed, on a basis equally firm, with that which sustains the most momentous article in his creed. Fatalism was the great engine employed by Mahomet in establishing his religion. Since his time,

this doctrine has been affirmed to have no relation to the present, moral, civil, and political state of man; but among the Turks it is received as regulating their destiny, controlling their events, and limiting the results of every individual's exertion; and, as may be supposed, this doctrine unnerves the soul for generous and manly enterprize, and casts a lethargy on the whole nation. In every thing the exertions of reason are checked, and even wait for the sensible operations of Deity. According to the creed of the Turks, not only is every thing foreknown to God, every thing is predetermined, and brought about by his positive agency.

The Turk is keen and wise in his ordinary transactions; in promoting his own interests, he knows how to exercise the powers of his mind, but when difficulty or doubt overtakes him, he makes no effort. The thick cloud of his misfortunes is suffered to remain; it is yielded to with sullen indifference,—he considers it impious to oppose the determinations of the Most High. To all improvement such a doctrine is a decided and invincible foe; in some circumstances, however, it appears to have its advantages. Does a Mahometan suffer by calamity? Is he plundered or ruined? He does not fruitlessly bewail his lot. His answers to all murmuring suggestions is, 'It was written,' and to the most unexpected transition from opulence to poverty, he submits without a sigh. The approach of death does not destroy his tranquillity; he makes his ablution, repeats his prayers, professes his belief in God and his prophet, and in a last calm appeal to the aid of affection, he says to his child, "turn my head towards Mecca," and dies in peace.

A people's religion is traced in their established and common forms of devotion, and none are more regardful of these forms than the Turks. To neglect any ceremony which their religion prescribes, is deemed a mark of inferior understanding, or of depraved character. Public decorum is everywhere observed, and though both moral and religious precepts are violated with impunity, and without remorse, they are always spoken of with great respect. A Mahometan is never ashamed to defend his faith, and of his sincerity and firmness, his earnest vindication of it may be taken as satisfactory proof; indeed, he not infrequently interrupts the progress of conversation by repeating the formula of his faith. Travellers in Turkish towns are incessantly met with the cry Allah Ackbar, and by Mussulmans, who would be esteemed pious, the divine name is as familiarly used as if reverent and proper thoughts of him whom it represents were habitually uppermost in their minds.

Purifications are constantly, and with great strictness performed by the Mussulmans of every country, but especially by those of Turkey. Their professed object is to render the body fit for the decorous performance of religious duties; no act being praiseworthy or accepted, unless the person of the performer be in a condition of purity. Some have thought, but without good grounds, that these external purifications are intended to supersede an inward cleansing of the heart. Fountains placed round their mosques, and baths multiplied in every city, enable the devout to perform their five prayers daily, during which, if they chance to receive pollution from any thing accidentally falling upon

them, their devotion is suspended till the offensive inconvenience is removed by water or other means.

At the appointed hour, the Maazeens or criers, with their faces towards the holy city, their eyes closed, and their hands upraised, pace the little gallery of the minarets, and proclaim in Arabic, the Moslem language for devotion, that the season for prayer has arrived. Immediately every one, whatever his rank or employment, gives himself up to it. State ministers suspend the most important affairs and prostrate themselves on the floor; the tradesman forgets his dealings, and transforms his shop into a mosque, and the student lays aside his books to go through the accustomed devotions. "Never to fail in his prayers," is the highest commendation a Turk can receive; and so prejudicial is the suspicion of irreligion, that even libertines dare not disregard the notices of the Maazeen. The mosques, like chapels in catholic countries, are always open, and two or three times every day the prayers are offered within their hallowed walls. It has often been remarked, with great propriety, that the devotions of Christians might acquire something valuable from the gravity, decorum, and the apparently intense occupation of mind in Turkish worship. The Jews trod their holy place barefoot; the Turks, on the contrary, keep on their boots and shoes. Christians uncover their heads to pray; Moslems seldom lay aside their turbans; but for hours they will remain prostrate, or standing in one position, as if absorbed in the most intense, spirit-stirring engagements: they make no light matter of communion with heaven. They have neither altars, pictures, nor statues in

their places of public worship. Verses of the Koran, the names and personal descriptions of their prophet, of Ali and his two sons, Hassan and Hosein, with other Moslem saints, are sometimes inscribed in letters of gold on their sacred walls. All distinctions of rank and acquirement are forgotten when they pray. Persons of every class, on the first sound of the accustomed cry, cast themselves on the floor, and thus declare their belief in the equality of mankind in the sight of the great Father of all.

The Mahometans of Turkey have a Sabbath, though neither the Jewish nor the Christian has served for any more than the model for this observance. Friday is their day of rest, which commences on the preceding evening, when the illuminated minarets and colonnades of the mosques, give their cities the appearance of a festival. At noon, on Friday, all business is suspended, the temples are filled, and prayers of especial importance and solemnity are read by the appointed officers, accompanied by the prostrations and genuflexions of the people. Discourses are also frequently delivered on some practical point in their theology, or in the warmth of sincerity and zeal, sometimes political corruption and courtly depravity are fiercely declaimed against. A voluptuous sultan has been known, as the result of these discourses, to tear himself from his harem, and from the soft indulgences of his court, to lead his martial subjects to war and victory on the plains of their inveterate foes. As soon as this public service is concluded, all return to their ordinary pursuits; the day, however, is observed in the manner prescribed by law by all classes, it being a

received maxim, that he who without legitimate cause absents himself from public devotion on three successive fridays, abjures his religion. It is worthy of observation, that the prayers in general use among the Turks are chiefly acts of adoration: confessions of the divine attributes, of the nothingness of man, and of the homage and gratitude due to the Eternal Majesty. A Turk must not pray for the blessings of this frail and perishable life; the health of the sultan, the prosperity of his country, and divisions and wars among Christians only excepted; the legitimate object of prayer they hold to be spiritual gifts, and the blessings of eternal felicity.

To the fast of Ramadan reference has already been made in a former chapter: no sacred observance is more strictly regarded by the Turks. He who violates it is reckoned at once an infidel or an apostate; and if two witnesses establish his offence, he is deemed to have incurred the severest penalty of the law. Abstinence from food, and even from the refreshment of perfumes, from sunrise to sunset is enjoined; the rich pass the hours in meditation and prayer, the grandees sleep away their time; but the mechanic, pursuing his daily toil, most heavily feels its rigour. "When the month of Ramadan happens in the extremities of the seasons, the prescribed abstinence is almost intolerable, and is more severe than the practice of any moral duty, even to the most vicious and depraved of mankind." Traffic during the day is suspended, but in the evening, and till late at night, it is carried on in streets, shops, and bazaars, most splendidly illuminated. From sunset to sunrise, revelry and excess are indulged in.

Every night is an appointed feast among the great officers of court: the Turkish reserve is laid aside, and friends and relations cement their union by mutual intercourse. Sumptuous banquets, agreeable converse, and convivial hilarity, are universal, and were not women everywhere excluded from the tables of the men, the pleasure of the festivals would amply compensate the rigorous self-denial of their fasts.

The pilgrimage to Mecca, which has been already described, is with the Turks more an affair of form than reality. Its importance as a part of the Moslem ritual is admitted, and apparently felt, but the number of pilgrims annually decreases. The sultan, having dominion over the country through which the pilgrims must pass, preserves the public ways leading to the sacred city; the best soldiers of his empire are charged with the business of protecting the caravans, which are sometimes numerous; but of his own subjects, properly so called, few comparatively accompany them; they are made up of devotees from a greater distance. The sultan, moreover, thus facilitates the pilgrimage as much on commercial as on religious accounts. The Koran has determined it to be very proper to intermingle commerce and religion: "It shall be no crime in you," it says, "if ye seek an increase from your Lord by trading during the pilgrimage." Accordingly, articles easiest of carriage, and of readiest sale, are transported by pilgrims from every country. The productions and manufactures of India find their way into other parts of Asia and throughout Africa. The muslins and chintzes of Bengal and the Decan, the shawls of Cashmere, the pepper of Mala-

bar, the diamonds of Golconda, the pearls of Kilkau, the cinnamons of Ceylon, and the spices of the Moluccas, are made to yield advantage to the Othman, or Ottoman empire, and the luxury of its subjects is sustained by contributions from the most distant nations.

Mahometans of the present day, at least those of Turkey, are less anxious about proselytism than were those of a former age. Those of India and Africa may, to some extent, still coincide in the sentiment, that to convert infidels was an ordinance of God, and must be waged by the faithful in all ages; but in Turkey little desire is felt for converting the adherents of another faith, chiefly because by a refinement in uncharitableness it is conceived that converting the world is unworthy of their endeavours. Now and then a pious Moslem, instigated by zeal or personal attachment, may pray in regard to a Jew or a Christian, "Great God, enlighten this infidel, and graciously dispose his heart to embrace thy holy religion;" and perhaps to a youth esteemed for his talents or knowledge, the language of persuasion may occasionally be addressed with an air of gentleness and urbanity, but commonly the zeal of the missionary is subject to what are conceived the rules of good breeding, and a vague reply or silence is regarded as an indication that the subject ought not to be continued. A Mussulman may pray for the conversion of infidels, but till they are converted, no blessing may be supplicated on their behalf. "Their death is eternal, why pray for them?" is the language of the Mahometan creed; do not "defile your feet by passing over the graves of men who are enemies of God and of his prophet." "Thus," says David Hume, "do

the Mahometans of the present day deal out damnation, though not fire and faggot, to every other sect."

Of the Mahometan hierarchy, some idea may be obtained from the form it takes in Turkey. The Koran is the treasure of divine and human laws, and the caliphs are the depositaries of this treasure; so that they are at once the pontiffs, legislators, and judges of the people: their office combines all authority, whether sacerdotal, regal, or judicial. To the grand sultan, titles are given which import that he is the vicar or the shadow of God. The several powers which pertain to him in this awful capacity, are delegated to a body of learned men, called the Oulema. In this body, three descriptions of officers are included; the ministers of religion, called the Imams; the expounders of the law, called the Muftis, and the ministers of justice, called the Cadis. The ministers of religion are chief and inferior, the former of whom only belong to the Oulema. Both classes are made up of Sheiks, or ordinary preachers, the Khatibs, readers or deacons; the Imams, a title comprising those who perform the service of the mosque on ordinary days, and those to whom pertain the ceremonies of circumcision, marriage, and burial; the Maazeens, or criers, who announce the hours of prayer; and the Cayuns, or common attendants of the mosque. The idea of this classification was, perhaps, taken from the Mosaic priesthood; the Khatib being the Aaron, and the next four the several orders of the Levites, with their servants or helpers. The imperial temples have one Sheik, one Khatib, from two to four Imams, twelve Maazeens, and twenty Cayims, among

whom, except in a few of the chief mosques of Constantinople, the Khatibs have the pre-eminence. All these ministers are under the authority of the civil magistrate, who is looked upon as a sort of diocesan, and who may perform at any time all the sacerdotal functions. The clergy are not distinguishable from other citizens, they mix in the same society, engage in similar pursuits, and affect no greater austerity than marks the behaviour of Mussulmans in common. Their influence is entirely dependent on their reputation for learning and talents, or gravity and moral conduct; their employment for the most part is simple, chanting aloud the public service, and performing offices which every master of a family also may discharge. As Mahometanism knows nothing of sacrifices, it appoints no priests; the duties discharged by the ministers of religion, seem devolved on them, rather as a matter of convenience than from any sacredness attaching to their order.

The vast territory to which the general name of Tartary has been given, is that from whence Mahometanism has gone forth to the east, and the west, and the south. In Thibet, the Grand Lama, and the various national idols hold divided empire with the prophet, and in the inhospitable regions of Siberia, the churches of Greece and Russia have successfully promulgated the Christian doctrine: the Circassians with some other Tartar races are almost without religion. In the Crimea, the people are Mussulmans, as rigid and devoted as the Turks, and over the vast tract called by modern geographers Independent Tartary, the crescent triumphantly waves. From these regions sprung, in the earlier ages of Ma-

hometan conquest, those vast empires, which, in the east, comprise so large a number of the professors of the faith of Islam. The first sovereign of this country, to whom the title of sultan was awarded early in the tenth century, conducted several expeditions into Hindustan, and secured the homage of many of the cities in that distant country. The ancient Indian superstition, was in great measure overturned by his victorious arms. Long and fierce contests ensued: the princes of subdued provinces often throwing off their forced allegiance, and endeavouring to regain their independence, and re-establish their ancient faith, till at length, the great Tamerlane having overrun the country with his legions, received at Agra the title of emperor of Hindustan. Scarcely, however, had two centuries and a half rolled by, when his successors fell in their turn under the Persian power; and the empire he established was weakened, and ultimately destroyed. As the result of these conquests, Mahometanism much prevailed, more nominally than really, among the millions of India; it was the religion of the court and government; but either from indifference or timidity in the Moslem conquerors, the ancient idols still held extensive influence, and were at length gradually restored. In the twelfth century, Benares, the ancient seat of Brahminical learning, and the chief city of Hindu idolatry, fell into the hands of the conqueror, who destroyed its numerous idols of popular adoration. Yet soon afterwards, the sanctity of the place was restored, and the destroyed idols were replaced by others as eagerly resorted to as their predecessors had been. To this consecrated metropolis, a pilgrimage was re-

garded by the millions of India as imperative and advantageous, as a visit to Mecca by the Mahometans; and the weakness or the policy of its Moslem conquerors did not long withhold from them this valued privilege, its government was reserved to the nations, and though they were subdued, their conquerors, in the plenitude of their bigotry, pride, and power, never thought of suffering their magistrates to exercise control within its walls. Mahometanism is the religion, not of the ancient inhabitants of India, but of the descendants of the millions of Tartars, Persians, and Arabians, who, at various periods have quitted their native seats, to enjoy the riches of these far famed plains. The north and north-western parts are filled with them, from whence they have wandered over the whole of that vast continent. Perhaps their numbers may now amount to near twenty millions, among whom, however, though they are mostly of foreign extraction, there are many converts from Hinduism. They form separate communities, amalgamating in some parts of the country, and living as socially with Hindus as the differences in their respective faiths will permit. Hindu princes have sometimes paid their devotions at Mahometan shrines, and observed their feasts; while Mahometans have relaxed somewhat the strictness of their practice, and have manifested a desire to conform, as far as possible, to their Hindu neighbours. Some five centuries since, the Bohrahs, a people who once filled the kingdom of Guzerat, were converted, en masse, to Islamism. The Arab traders, to the coasts of Malabar, have always been exceedingly earnest in their endeavours to

Convert the natives, in which they have been greatly aided by the facility with which they have been allowed to purchase the children of the poorer classes to educate in the principles of their faith, and also, by the frequency with which the inhabitants of such a district lose caste. This badge of the Hindu faith can scarcely be retained by a people mixing with those of other countries, and when it is lost, the people easily become Moslems.

It has been sometimes maintained that the native population of India, are absolutely unchangeable in their sacred, domestic, and political institutions, and it may be acknowledged, that at first sight, there is much to warrant such an opinion; but the history of many of them, and especially of the Sikhs, who inhabit the provinces of Panjab, between the rivers Jumna and Indus, may be alleged as proofs against its validity. It is not without exception. In the religion of the Sikhs, Mahometan fable and Hindu absurdity are mixed; their founder having desired to unite both these prevalent systems in the religion he determined to countenance. He had been educated in a part of the country where these religions appeared to touch each other, if not to commingle, and he was no stranger to the violent rancour and animosity which the respective parties indulged; fanatic as he was, he was benevolent, he sought therefore to blend the jarring elements of both in peaceful union. The Hindu was to abandon his idols, and to worship the one Supreme Deity, whom his religion acknowledged; the Mahometan was to abstain from those practices, especially the slaughter of cows, which were offensive to the

Hindu superstition. This plan, so far prevailed, as that the Sikhs became more Mahometans, without acknowledging the prophet, than Hindus; the institutions of Brahma are not admitted among them; they insult and persecute true Moslems, however, in a manner more fierce and cruel than any other people. They compel them to eat what their law condemns. Animals, which they account unclean, are frequently cast into their places of public assembly, and they are prohibited from proclaiming the hour of prayer to the faithful.

China has been already mentioned in an early chapter of this work, as one of those regions to which Mahometanism was carried by the hordes of Tartary. It is difficult, from the scrupulous jealousy with which this vast empire is guarded from observation, to say to what extent Mahometanism, or indeed any other faith, prevails among its numberless inhabitants, but, without question, it is tolerated. It is, indeed, an ancient faith of the country comprising, as it does, so large a part of the Tartarian empire.

The irruption of the Saracens into China under Walid, can scarcely be termed a conquest. Subsequently, the successors of Zenghis Khan acquired the throne of Peking, by whom the country was opened to an intercourse with all other lands. The commercial Arabs had carried on a correspondence with the ports and cities in the south of China; now that access to the capital was unrestrained, multitudes of them repaired thither. They acquired the language, and adopted the dress and manners of the people, to whom also they rendered valuable aid in adjusting their chrono-

logy, and making the necessary calculations for their calendar. Intercourse with the Chinese, made the Mahometans desirous of effecting their conversion, the means adopted for which, were, however, wise and humane. Deserted children were taken under their protection, and educated in Islamism, and in other ways they sought to commend themselves to confidence, and their religion to respect, by alleviating the wretchedness induced by a cruel superstition. Mahometans in China seem to partake in the mild and peaceable character of the inhabitants generally,—they are therefore tolerated; but there are some exceptions to this encomium. About sixty years since, they were found instrumental in promoting an unsuccessful rebellion, and within a few months, the Emperor Kien Long, after suppressing it, ordered one hundred thousand to be put to death.

Persia, from an early period, has been almost generally a Mahometan country. On its conquest by the Saracens, the religion of Zoroaster, which, till then had prevailed, was nearly destroyed. Those who retained it were obliged to flee to the mountains, or to the western parts of India, where still their old forms of worship linger; but the faith of Mahomet is perpetually making inroads upon them. In the disputes as to the caliphate, which ensued on the death of Mahomet, the Persians espoused the cause of Ali, the prophet's son-in-law, and to his memory they are still most decidedly attached. "May this arrow go to the heart of Omar," was a frequent expression among them on drawing a bow; and not long since, when our countryman, Malcolm, in his ravel, in Persia, was praising Omar, the oppo-

ment of Ali, as the greatest of the caliphs, a Persian overcome by the justice of his observation, yet adhering to his rooted prejudices, replied, "This is all very true, but he was a dog after all."

Here Mahometanism exists in less rigorous forms than in Turkey. Its ceremonies are observed by rulers, whose natural disposition nevertheless regulates them in practising or neglecting its moral code: they say their prayers at the appointed seasons, they make a show of devotion to prevent their being suspected of irreligion, but the mass of the population are little concerned on the subject of the pilgrimage, and on some other matters on which, in the Koran, much stress is laid. They resort rather, to the tomb of Ali, and to that of his son Hosein, whose name is revered among them with a feeling almost approaching to adoration.

In Africa, Mahometanism has very widely prevailed. Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, all the northern territory acknowledges its sway. From Arabia and Egypt it spread to the eastern and southern parts of that continent, nearly to the great rivers, it is the established religion of Morocco, and in Western Barbary, and in several kingdoms of the interior, the Arabic language is spoken, the Koran is believed, and the prophet is almost adored. The Senegal up to the small Moorish state of Gedumah, is the line of division between the Mahometans and the Negroes: from thence the line passes eastward of north, through Nigritia and Nubia to the Nile. As yet, however, it is but indistinctly marked, it being doubtful whether Timbuctoo be a Mahometan or Negro town. The courts of Bournou and Cassina are Mahometan,

but the majority of their subjects are Pagans. Islamism, in these vast territories, is in an exceedingly degenerate condition, when compared with either its first development in the Arabian desert, or with what obtains now in Turkey. It is said that but little more than its exclusive, persecuting spirit remains. The oriental lustrations are almost unknown, Mahometan temperance is neglected, and the great doctrine of its faith, the unity of God, is confounded with or resigned for the polytheism of the original inhabitants. The mussulman is more depraved than the Pagan; travellers are fond of dwelling upon the hospitality they have been wont to receive from the latter, while, by the former, they were constantly insulted and annoyed on account of their religion. In no quarter of the world, does the faith of the prophet wear so frightful an aspect as it does in Africa.

The region whence Mahometanism at first sprung, has not remained in all respects faithful to the precepts of the prophet. In Mecca and Medina, indeed, his name and system are held in profoundest veneration; and no wonder, both these cities are mainly supported by the superstitious practices enjoined in the Koran; but the Bedouins are as licentious in their religion, as in their habits and politics. On the Turkish frontiers they keep up the appearance of respect for the name of the prophet and his doctrines; but in answer to all reproaches for their unfaithfulness, they say, in words worthy of a better taught and more civilized race, "The religion of Mahomet could never have been intended for us. We have no water in the deserts, how then can we make the

prescribed ablutions? We have no money, how then can we give alms? The fast of Ramadan is a useless command to persons who fast all the year round; and if God be everywhere, why should we go to Mecca to adore him?"

From the southernmost part of Hindustan, Mahometanism made its way to the Malayan peninsula; to Sumatra, Java, Borneo, the Manillas and the Celebes; one of the spice islands, Goram, is its eastern boundary. In the interior of these islands, it prevails less than on the shores, Christianity, and most other systems of religion having obtained a footing. To these remote regions Islamism has been carried, more by the commercial than by the military enterprise of its votaries. What its present condition is, it is difficult, perhaps impossible to accurately ascertain. In Java, it was the established religion, and when the Dutch settled there early in the seventeenth century, all the natives, a few only residing in the interior and in mountainous tracts excepted, were converted. Little respect is paid by the Javans of the present day, either to their ancient paganism, or to Mahometanism which took its place; some of the forms of the latter are still in force, and its institutions are said to be gaining ground.

The reader of Mahometan history will meet with the terms Sooffee and Wahabee, as describing certain divisions of the disciples of the religion of the prophet. It will not, therefore, be inappropriate to close with a brief account of these respective divisions.

Sooffee is a term originating in Persia, and describing enthusiasts or mystics, distinguished by sentiments of great sublimity, and by a devotion

almost angelical. The object of the Sooffee is to attain a divine beatitude, which he describes as consisting in absorption into the essence of Deity. The soul, according to his doctrine, is an emanation from God, partaking of his nature; just as the rays of light are emanations from the sun, and of the same nature with him. The creature and the Creator are of one substance. None can become a Sooffee without strictly conforming to the established religion, and practising every social virtue; and when by this means he has gained a habit of devotion, he may exchange what they call practical for spiritual worship, and abandon the observance of all religious forms and ceremonies. He at length becomes inspired, arrives at the truth, drops his corporeal veil, and mixes again with that glorious essence from which he has been partially and for a time separated. The life of the Sooffees of Persia, though generally austere, is not rendered miserable, like that of the visionary devotees of Hinduism, by the practice of dreadful severities; their most celebrated teachers have been famed for knowledge and piety. The Persians are a poetic people, and the very genius of Sooffeeism is poetry. Its raptures are the raptures of inspiration; its hopes are those of a highly sensitive and excited imagination; its writers in the sweetest strains celebrate the divine love, which pervades all nature: every thing, from the very highest to the lowest, seeking and tending towards union with Deity as its object of supreme desire. They inculcate forbearance, abstemiousness, and universal benevolence. They are unqualified predestinarians. The emanating principle proceeding from God or the soul, they say can do nothing

without his will, nor refuse any thing that he investigates. Some of them consequently deny the existence of evil, and the doctrine of rewards and punishments is superseded by their idea of re-absorption into the divine essence. The free opinions of this class of enthusiasts subvert the doctrines of Islamism, yet they pay an outward respect to them; they unsettle the existing belief, without providing an intelligible substitute; they admit the divine mission of the prophet, but explain away the dogmas he uttered; and while they affect to yield him honour as a person raised up by God, to induce moral order in the world, they boast their own direct and familiar intercourse with deity, and claim on that account unqualified obedience in all that relates to spiritual interests.

The similarity of Sooffeeism to the ancient Pythagorean and Platonic doctrines will occur to every one at all acquainted with the religion and philosophy of antiquity. It as closely resembles some of the distinguishing tenets of the Brahminical faith. In fact it seems as if designed, in conjunction with the refined theology of ancient, and the sublime visions of modern idolaters, to teach us that without divine guidance the loftiest human conceptions on subjects connected with God and religion invariably err; the ignorant and the instructed are equally wrong; "the world by wisdom knows not God."

The Wahabees are a modern sect of Mahometan reformers, whose efforts have considerably changed the aspect of the religion of the prophet. Perhaps to them may be owing much of that rigid adherence to Mahometan doctrine and practice which prevails in those parts where their influence has

been felt. They are the followers of Abdol Wahab, who commenced his career in the region where, during the life-time of the prophet, Moseilama had threatened a considerable division among his followers. Wahab was an ambitious fanatic, who aimed, nevertheless, at reforming the national religion. He was aided by powerful princes of the province of Nejed; and within a short time, the tenets he maintained spread throughout the peninsula. His fundamental principle, like that of Mahomet, was the unity of the Deity. The Koran he regarded as divine, rejecting all the glosses which ignorance and infatuation had put upon it, and holding in utter contempt all the traditions and tales concerning its author, which the devout of every generation had eagerly received. The reverence, approaching to adoration, which Arabs were wont to pay to the name of Mahomet, all visits to his tomb, and all regard to the tombs and relics of Arab saints he denounced; the costly ornaments with which a mistaken piety had enriched these sacred spots, he thought might be appropriated to common purposes. Wahab would not suffer the common oath by Mahomet or Ali to be used among his followers; on the very rational ground that an oath is an appeal to a witness of our secret thoughts, and who can know these but God? The title of Lord, generally given to the prophet by his followers, Wahab rejected as impious. He was commonly mentioned by this zealous reformer and his adherents, by his simple name, without the addition of "our Lord, the prophet of God." All who deviated in any degree from the plain sense of the Koran, either in their belief or practice, were infidels in their esteem,

upon whom, therefore, according to its dictates, war might be made. Thus was the martial spirit of the early Saracens called again into exercise, and with the ardour that characterized the days of the immediate successors of the prophet, they were prepared at once to assail the consciences and the property of men not exactly of their own faith.

At the call of their leader, they assembled, first in the plain of Draaiya, some 400 miles east of Medina, armed and provided at their own expense for war; Bagdad and Mecca in vain attempted to extinguish them; the seraglio itself was filled with their formidable war-cry; the sultan trembled on his throne, and the caravans from Syria suspended their usual journeys. The imperial city suffered from their ravages in its usual supplies of coffee, and the terror of their name was greatly spreading among devout Mahometans of every country, for they had violated the shrines of saints, and levelled to the ground the chapels at Mecca, which devotion had consecrated to the memory of the prophet and his family. At the commencement of the present century, however, Mecca was recaptured from them by the Turkish arms, and a plague, with the small-pox breaking out just at this time among the followers of Wahab, probably saved the mighty fabric of Islamism. These reverses did not quench the ardour of the Wahabees; their leader had been assassinated, but his son, already distinguished for his prudence and valour, succeeded him in the command. Medina fell beneath his power, and from thence to the Persian gulph he seemed likely to reign lord paramount. In 1805, he was able to impose a heavy tax on the caravan of pilgrims from Damascus to

the holy city, and declared that thenceforth it should consist of pilgrims alone, without the pride and pomp of a religious procession. Soon afterwards they again entered Mècca, and immediately threatened with destruction every sacred relic, but they did not put their threats into execution. Various conflicts between them and the orthodox Mahometans have since ensued, the general result of which has been to break the martial and fanatical spirit of the Wahabees, and to re-establish the power of the grand sultan in cities and districts where it had been placed in jeopardy. They are still, indeed, dreaded as plunderers, but no great national convulsion has resulted from their efforts.

Some writers regret the suppression of this once powerful class of Mahometans, believing that if continued they would have been mainly instrumental in overthrowing the Moslem faith, and making way for a purer religion; for ourselves, we see little occasion for these regrets. The Wahabees must not be supposed more favourable to a pure faith than are those by whom they have been overthrown. If they must be regarded as reformers, they only attempted to improve a few absurd and scandalous practices,—the impious and abominable dogmas of the Koran they left untouched; or if they touched them, it was only to enforce their observance with greater rigour. Their creed was even more sanguinary and intolerant than that of the ancient Mahometans, and probably the continuance of their power would have been nothing more than the continuance of injustice, cruelty, and persecution. We do not look for the overthrow of Mahometanism by such means. One system of error may sometimes destroy another,

but the pure faith, which blesses a miserable world, and directs men in the path of safety, knowledge, and happiness, will extend only as the sacred volume is diffused, and as that holy influence from God accompanies it, by which the understanding is illuminated, and the heart is renewed. Fana-ticism is no auxiliary of the religion of the bible, it neither prepares its way, nor accelerates its progress. Violence and war are utterly rejected by this divine system, as alien from its spirit and character. "My kingdom," says its founder, "is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, but now is my kingdom not from hence."

APPENDIX.

NO. I.—THE FULFILMENT OF SCRIPTURE PROPHECY IN THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF MAHOMETANISM.

A FEW observations tracing the fulfilment of prophecy in the rise and progress of Mahometanism have been reserved for an Appendix to the preceding chapters, Faber's Calendar of Prophecy, Foster's Mahometanism Unveiled, Fry's Second advent of Christ, with one or two other works of a similar kind, have been made to contribute the materials of the following pages, which it is hoped may render some assistance in exhibiting one very important part of the evidences of revealed religion. The prophecy and the fulfilment will be placed together for the convenience of comparison.

PROPHECY.—Dan. vii. 8—26.

(THE VISION.)

8. The he-goat waxed very great : and when he was strong, the great horn was broken ; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great toward the south and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great even to the host of heaven ; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the Prince of the host, and by him was the daily sacrifice taken away, and the place

12. of his sanctuary was cast down. And a host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression; and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised
13. and prospered. Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

(THE INTERPRETATION.)

21. And the rough goat is the king (kingdom) of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king
22. (kingdom). Now that being broken, whereas four stood up, for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. And in the latter time of their
23. kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding (*Heb.* making to understand, teaching) dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but
24. he shall be broken without hand. And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true; wherefore shut thou up the vision: for it shall be for many days.—Dan. vii. 8—26.

The prophecy of Daniel contains a prospective view of the providential history of the world, including the four great empires of antiquity, together with the powers which should succeed them to the end of time, and consummation of all things. It is reasonable therefore to expect, that a system of predictions upon the history of the world thus large, would not omit a revolution of such magnitude and prominence as that occasioned by Mahomet and Mahometanism. No event, moreover, has had a more direct and powerful bearing upon

the state of the church than the establishment of this vast imposture ; and as the preceding chapter contains a full and exact portraiture of the Papal tyranny which was to arise and prevail in the western portion of Christendom, so the present is very generally admitted to contain a prediction of that great apostasy which was destined to grow up and overwhelm the church in the East. The reasons of this opinion we now proceed to state.

The theatre of this prophecy is the Macedonian empire, founded by Alexander ; from one of the four dismembered kingdoms of which the little horn of the vision was to spring up. In the vision, the prophet saw the first great horn of the he-goat, or the kingdom of Alexander, "broken;" indicating that that kingdom was no longer to have a place as a kingdom in the eye of prophecy. The dominions of Alexander at his death were divided between four of his generals : Macedon and Greece in the west were assigned to Cassander ; Thrace and Bithynia in the north to Lysimachus ; Egypt in the south to Ptolemy ; and Syria with the eastern provinces to Seleucus.

Ver. 9. And out of one of them came forth a little horn.—A "horn," in the symbolical language of prophecy, represents a civil or ecclesiastical kingdom. The little horn here mentioned was to come forth out of one of the four notable horns or members of the subdivided kingdom of Alexander. The question has been much agitated whether Alexander seized and retained any portion of the Arabian peninsula : the fact of his having done so may be seen in any map of the Macedonian empire. "The empire of Alexander," observes M. Rollin, "was distributed into four kingdoms ; of

which Ptolemy had Egypt, Libya, Arabia, Cœlosyria, and Palestine." The district occupied was indeed no more than an outskirt, but that outskirt comprised part of the province of Hejaz; that is to say, part of that very district which gave birth to Mahomet and his religion.—As the horn in the vision was a little one, so Mahometanism in its first rise perfectly corresponded with the symbol. It originated with an obscure inhabitant of a desert corner of Asia, whose earliest converts were his wife, his servant, his pupil, and his friend; and whose party at the end of three years scarcely numbered a dozen persons.

Which waxed exceeding great toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land.—Mahometanism accordingly, in its primitive course of conquest, did presently wax exceedingly great; and that in the very line marked out by the prophecy. Its conquests extended southward over the large peninsula of Arabia, over Egypt, and over a considerable portion of central Africa; eastward, over Persia, Bokhara, and Hindustan; and northward, over Palestine, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Tartary, the countries now forming the Turkish empire. "The pleasant land," or, literally, "the beauty," "the ornament," is an appellation bestowed upon the land of Judah, from its being in a peculiar manner the residence of the divine glory, the seat of worship, containing the city of Jerusalem and the temple, which were "a crown of beauty and a diadem of glory" to the nation of Israel. The original word here employed is found in a parallel sense in Ezek. xx. 6, 15; "a land flowing with milk and honey, which is the

glory of all lands." Jerusalem was captured by the Saracens A. D. 637, after a siege of four months.

Ver. 10. And it waxed great even to the host of heaven.—The "host of heaven" is but another name for the multitude of stars in the firmament. But stars, in the idiom of prophecy, are a standing emblem of ecclesiastical officers. The word "host" accordingly is not only applied to the priests and Levites performing the service of the sanctuary (Num. iv. 3), but to the nation of Israel as a great organized ecclesiastical body, or kingdom of priests. Ex. xii. 41. And when Christ says (Rev. i. 20), "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches," his meaning undoubtedly is, that these stars are symbols of the spiritual rulers of the churches. The grand scope, therefore, of the present prophecy is, to point out a spiritual desolation, achieved by a hostile power suddenly attaining great strength, and forcibly thrusting itself into the body of true worshippers, with a view to their discomfiture and dispersion.

And it cast down some of the host, and (i. e. even) of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.—As in the figurative language of prophecy the stars denote the spiritual pastors of God's church, so the violent dejection of such stars from heaven to earth signifies a compulsory apostatizing from their religion. Mahometanism strikingly fulfilled this prophecy from the date of its first promulgation, when it stood up against the allegorical host, or the degenerate pastors of the Christian church. Such of them as lay within the territories of the Greek empire were especially given into the hand of this persecuting superstition; but by its inroads

into Africa, and Spain, and France, and Italy, it waxed great against the whole host. Of the eastern clergy, it cast some to the ground, or compelled them altogether to renounce the Christian faith. And as for those who still adhered to the form of their religion, it stamped them, as it were, under its feet with all the tyranny of brutal fanaticism.

Ver. 11. Yea, he magnified himself even to the Prince of the host.—If the starry host be the pastors of the church, the prince of that host must obviously be the Messiah. Mahometanism has most clearly verified this prediction by magnifying its founder to a pitch of dignity and honour equal to that of Christ. In fact, it has set up Mahomet above Christ. The Arabian impostor allowed Jesus to be a prophet; but he maintained that he himself was a greater prophet, and that the Koran was destined to supersede the gospel. Thus did Mahometanism magnify itself “even to” the Prince of the host.

And by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.—The term rendered “daily sacrifice,” or, literally, “the daily,” “the continual,” is a term frequently used respecting the daily repeated sacrifices of the Jewish temple, typifying the death of Christ till he should come. Now, what this continual burnt-offering was with respect to Christ’s first coming, are the daily offerings of prayer and praise, and all the solemnities of the Christian church, as administered by a divinely appointed order of men. When, therefore, the Saracens and Turks by their victories and oppressions broke up and dispersed the churches of the East, and abolished the daily

spiritual worship of God, then did the "little horn" take away the "continual offering" established by the Prince of the host. But the predicted desolation was to extend yet farther. The place of God's sanctuary was to be razed to its foundation, and both the sanctuary and the host for a long course of ages to be trodden under foot. Accordingly, Mahometanism began this appointed work by the subversion of the Christian churches and altars in every stage of its progress against the Greek empire; and has continued the desolation during nearly twelve hundred years, until it has all but completed the extinction of Eastern Christianity. Gibbon observes, that upon the taking of Jerusalem, "by the command of Omar, the ground of the temple of Solomon was prepared for the foundation of the mosque."* And it is worthy of notice, that whereas the original word used by Daniel for "sanctuary" is *Kodsh*, the same historian remarks, that the epithet *Al Kods* is used now, and was then among the Arabs as the proper appellation of the Holy City, of which the sanctuary or temple was the distinguishing ornament and glory.

Ver. 12. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression: and it cast down the truth to the ground: and it practised and prospered.—From this it would appear, that power was to be given to the little horn, not merely for the subversion of the true religion, but also for the permanent substitution of another faith. "Host," we may naturally suppose, means in this place the same as when it was used in a

* Decline and Fall, chap. li.

former verse,—“a host of stars,” symbolical of the several orders of Christian pastors and ministers. “An host,” then, to be given to the little horn, implies that he too should have his orders of teachers, and a regular system of religious worship, and that by means of this new and spurious ecclesiastical polity, the Christian ministry should be opposed and superseded, and “the truth cast to the ground.” The prediction, thus interpreted, according to the natural force of the language and construction, is applicable to no other known power; but as applied to the heresy of Mahomet, its fulfilment appears perfect. For the religion of Islam permanently overthrew the Christian priesthood and altars, by the permanent erection of other altars and of another priesthood in their room. Everywhere throughout its vast domains the mosques replaced the Christian temples; and the Imams and the Maazzin were substituted for the appointed ministry of Christ. In a more enlarged view, the Saracens and Turks themselves composed the antagonist host or priesthood. For in Mahometanism, the sword being the grand engine of conversion, the whole Mussulman people became virtually a priesthood; and each individual Saracen and Turkish soldier a missionary and maker of proselytes.

Ver. 23. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance and understanding (teaching) dark sentences shall stand up.—We are here furnished with a chronological clue to the period of the commencement of this disastrous power.—The first three empires, forming a part of the symbolic image which appeared in vision to

Nebuchadnezzar, were indeed stripped of their dominions by the conquests of the fourth, or Roman empire; but still, in the view of prophecy, their lives are considered as being nevertheless prolonged; Dan. vii. 12. Hence it is an indisputable fact that the little horn of Mahometanism rose up in the latter time of the Greek empire.— Another striking note of the time of the rise of this power is contained in the words, “When the transgressors are come to the full,” or, “when the apostasy shall be completed.” By the transgressors or apostates here mentioned, we must understand the corrupt Christian church, with its degenerate pastors, the smitten ecclesiastical stars, spoken of in a former verse. We learn both from the civil and sacred history of the time when Mahomet arose, that the Christian church had then arrived at the height of those corruptions in doctrine and practice, which had been so clearly foretold by the apostle Paul in his prediction of the Man of Sin. The extraordinary success of the Mahometan imposture was permitted as a punishment of this great defection. The allegorical host, by reason of their apostasy from the truth, were subjected to the tyranny of the little horn. But this apostasy, which had long previously infected both the East and the West, was completed, or had reached its highest point, about the commencement of the seventh century, when the prophet of Islam first appeared. Gibbon, the historian, introduces his account of Mahometanism by observing, that “the Christians of the seventh century had insensibly relapsed into a semblance of paganism.” From this time, therefore, the stars were given into the hand of the little horn, as the appointed

rod of God's anger: they were penally consigned to its tyranny by reason of their previous apostasy into the idolatrous superstitions of the Gentiles. Again, as far as the aspect of Mahometanism is concerned, that wonderful ecclesiastical domination may well be described as a "kingdom of fierce countenance," when the avowed maxim of its founder was to employ the sword as the grand engine of conversion. Of this ferocious spirit its proselytes have in all ages largely partaken. Some, however, suppose the words should be translated "of a firm countenance," denoting the bold effrontery of the barefaced, impudent liar; and such were Mahomet and his successors: their religion is, in truth, the most glaring imposition that was ever palmed upon the credulity of mankind.—As to the remaining character of this desolating power—that he should "understand dark sentences"—the expression, "dark sentences," is equivalent to the familiar scriptural phrases, "dark sayings," and "dark sayings of old." These phrases, in the language of the sacred writers, will be found uniformly to convey a spiritual signification. Thus the Psalmist "I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old." It seems probable, therefore, that the equivalent expression, "dark sentences," relates, in one shape or other, to religion; and the "understanding dark sentences," to real or pretended skill in the interpretation of things spiritual. The Koran, so celebrated in the Mahometan religion, the book containing their spiritual mysteries, exactly answers to this description. And it is not a little remarkable, that the author of the Koran should have

been unconsciously led to appropriate the language of this very prediction to himself. "O Lord, thou hast given me a part of the kingdom, and hast taught me the interpretation of dark sayings. We taught him the interpretation of dark sayings, but the greater part of them men do not understand. This is a secret history which we reveal unto thee, O Mahomet." As the fabricator, therefore, of the Koran, Mahomet has himself confirmed his claim to the prophetic distinction of "understanding dark sentences;" for it is the declared object of this pretended revelation to revive the traditions of ancient times concerning God and religion; and it professes farther to unfold the history of futurity, and the secrets of the invisible world.

Ver. 24. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power.—Of this language a two-fold interpretation may be suggested, either of which is satisfactory, though it be not easy to decide which of them is the true one. By "his power being mighty, but not by his own power," may be meant, that the temporal power of Mahomet and his successors was to owe its greatness and perpetuity to his spiritual dominion; or, in other words, that the empire which he founded was to be upheld by the imposture which he established. To this purpose the following passage from Demetrius Cantemir, the historian of the Ottoman empire, will be found very striking. "The Turks," says he, "ascribe the fortunate successes of the empire, not so much to human prudence, policy, and valour, as that their first emperors waged war, not through ambition and a desire of dominion, but through the zeal of propa-

gating the Mahometan religion ; and by that means they procured the divine assistance to their undertakings." The temporal power of Mahometanism, accordingly, has repeatedly risen and declined ; the Mahometan world has again and again changed masters, but its spiritual tyranny has subsisted in undiminished vigour ; it has lived and reigned unaltered, through the whole of its period thus far fulfilled. It is mighty, therefore, by the power of the host given unto it. According to another interpretation, the passage may be simply designed to teach, that the remarkable success of the Mahometan power is to be referred directly to the special providence of God, that the results attained were so entirely to transcend all that could be anticipated from the ordinary operation of human causes, that the hand of God was to be clearly recognised in every stage of its progress. Viewed in this light, the language of the Most High respecting Nebuchadnezzar may afford a commentary of most striking pertinency upon this prediction : " O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so ; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, by the strength of mine hand I have done it, and by my wisdom ; for I am prudent. Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith ? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it ? as if the rod should shake itself against

them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself as if it were no wood.*

And he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.—It should be borne in mind that the verses we are now considering contain the angel's interpretation of the symbolic actions performed by the little horn in the vision. Of these the principal was his rudely invading the emblematic "host," or the hierarchy, violently casting them to the ground, and stamping upon them with his feet. The language before us is unquestionably exegetical of this figurative scenery, and the phrases, "shall destroy wonderfully," and "shall destroy the mighty and the holy people," are equivalent to saying, he shall succeed to a surprising degree in causing multitudes to apostatize from the Christian profession. This was to be done by spreading the poison of a false religion. For the original word rendered "destroy" is a term implying not merely physical destruction, but moral corruption, or the vitiating influence of false doctrines and principles upon human conduct. It is the term employed in the following passages:— "For all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth;" "Take ye, therefore, good heed unto yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, &c.;" "They are corrupt; they have done abominable works." In allusion to these expressions, it is said in the annunciation of divine judgments in the Apocalypse, "Thy wrath is come, that thou shouldst destroy them

* Isaiah, ch. x. 5—15.

that destroy the earth ;" i. e. those that corrupt the earth. In affixing this sense to the destruction to be achieved by the little horn, or the Mahometan power, it is not necessary to exclude the idea of the bloodshed and desolation which have marked the progress of the Saracen and Turkish arms in planting and defending their dominion. Yet we think the sense of a moral depravation, brought about by the introduction of a spurious and pestilent faith, and accomplishing a sad defection among the professors of the true religion, answers better to the nature of the symbol employed, and is equally accordant with the truth of history.

Ver. 25. And through his policy also, he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand : and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many : he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes.—The institution of the religion of the Koran with its "host," or orders of teachers, and its system of worship, was Mahomet's masterpiece of "policy." It was by this means that his followers supplanted the preachers of the gospel, and converted to the faith multitudes of those over whom the temporal authority had been extended by the power of the sword. "Policy" here is probably to be understood in the sense of unprincipled shrewdness, the working of a keen but depraved intellect, laying its plans with a serpentine subtlety, and executing them with an entire recklessness of the moral character of the means employed. In this manner success has crowned the Mahometan power; their vile arts, their "craft," their perfidy, have strangely prospered. . No more striking cha-

racteristic of the founder or the followers of Islam could be designated. "In the exercise of political government," says Gibbon, "Mahomet was compelled to abate of the stern rigour of fanaticism, to comply, in some measure, with the prejudices and passions of his followers, and to employ even the vices of mankind as the instrument of their salvation. The use of fraud and perfidy, of cruelty and injustice, was often subservient to the propagation of the faith." "In the support of truth, the arts of fraud and fiction may be deemed less criminal; and he would have started at the foulness of the means, had he not been satisfied of the importance and justice of the end." The recent Travels in the East of Mr. Madden, an English gentleman, furnish some very graphic sketches of Mahometan character, which may be adduced to fill up the prophetic portraiture we are now considering. "His (the Turk's) inherent hostility to Christianity is the first principle of his law; and the perfidy it is supposed to enjoin is the most prominent feature in his character." * "The most striking qualities of the Moslem are his profound ignorance, his insuperable arrogance, his habitual indolence, and the perfidy which directs his policy in the divan, and regulates his ferocity in the field."† "As to the outward man, the Turks are, physically speaking, the finest animals, and, indeed, excel all Europeans in bodily vigour as well as beauty. As to their moral qualities, I found them charitable to the poor, attentive to the sick, and kind to their domes-

* Madden's Travels, vol. i. p. 18.

† *Ib.* p. 19.

tics ; but I also found them perfidious to their friends, treacherous to their enemies, and thankless to their benefactors.* “ I never found a Turk who kept his word when it was his interest to break it.”†

As to the expression, “ by peace he shall destroy many,” it has been interpreted by some, as implying that the kingdom represented by the little horn should destroy many by wasting invasions, while their victims were slumbering in a state of negligent security ; a peculiarity said to have been exemplified in the whole progress of the Saracen arms. Such may have been the case ; but we incline to attribute another import to the words. Adhering to the sense before given to word “ destroy,” as implying the same as to corrupt, seduce, lead into destructive error, we suppose the allusion to be to the fact, that thousands during the victorious progress of the Moslem arms accepted of life, safety, and “ peace,” on condition of their embracing the foul imposture of the conquerors. Thus it was “ by peace he destroyed many ;” i. e. he corrupted them by the terms on which he granted peace. It is notorious that these were “ death, tribute, or the Koran,” and where the subject nations escaped the point of the sword, they were destroyed by the corrupting and deadly influence of the superstition which they embraced.

But he shall be broken without hand.—That is to say, not by human hands, or by the instrumentality of man, as empires are usually overthrown ;

* Madden's Travels, vol. i. p. 29.

† Ib p. 31.

but this spiritual dominion is to meet its fate when the stone cut out "without hands" is dashed against the image, and reduces all the power of despotism and delusion to the dust. Expositors of prophecy are many of them confident, in the belief that the Mahometan imposture will begin to be broken, without hand, at the time when the great antichristian confederacy of the Roman beast is destroyed; and at the epoch when the Millennium is on the point of commencing. At this period the gospel will begin to be successfully preached throughout the whole world; and the issue, it is supposed, will be the universal gathering of the gentiles into the pale of the Christian church. During this period, the Mahometan will be converted to the true faith; and when their conversion shall have become general, the spiritual kingdom of the Eastern little horn will, no doubt, be broken. But in that case, it will plainly have been broken without hand; for it will not have been broken by the sword of violence, in the hand of an earthly conqueror; but by the invisible agency of the Holy Spirit, inclining the hearts of its long-deluded votaries to renounce their errors, and to embrace the faith of the true Prophet of God.

Thus we have seen, that the little horn of the symbolical he-goat answers in every important particular, however circumstantial, which has hitherto been accomplished, to the successful imposture of Mahomet. The result, therefore, of the whole inquiry must be, that by the little horn, described in this chapter of Daniel, is symbolized the spiritual kingdom of Mahometanism.

Another parallel prophecy is now to be traced in the Apocalypse of John, who has confirmed and illustrated the most important predictions of Daniel.

REVELATION, CH. IX. 1—19.

1. And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.
2. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.
3. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.
4. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.
5. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns, like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings were as the sound of chariots of many horses, running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions; and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit; whose name, in the Hebrew tongue, is Abaddon; but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.
6. One woe is past; and behold there come two more woes hereafter.
7. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is be-

14. fore God; saying to the sixth angel, which had the trumpet, loose the four angels which are bound in the river
15. Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed which were prepared for an hour and a day, and a month and a year;
16. for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand; and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and jacinth, and brimstone; and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouth is issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed; by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out
19. of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

“In the prediction of Daniel,” observes Mr. Faber, “Mahometanism alone is spoken of: its two principal supporters, the Saracens and the Turks, are not discriminated from each other: a general history of the superstition from its commencement to its termination is given, without descending to particularize the nations by which it should be successively patronised. In the Revelation of John, this deficiency is supplied; and we are furnished with two distinct and accurate paintings, both of the Saracenic locusts under their exterminating leader, and of the Euphratean horsemen of the four Turkish Sultanies.” These two departments of the prophecy we shall now endeavour to explain in their minute particulars.

Ver. 1. And I saw a star fall (Gr. “having fallen”) from heaven unto the earth; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace: and the sun and the air were

darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.—Commentators at the present day are almost universally agreed, in regarding the fifth trumpet as symbolizing and predicting the appearance of the Arabian impostor, his spurious religion, and his Saracen followers. But, as it is by no means evident, how Mahomet himself can properly be represented as a “star falling from heaven,” the usual symbol of an apostate Christian teacher, or of a number of them, we apprehend the design of the Holy Spirit in this imagery to be, to teach us, that Mahometanism is to be considered as the fruit or product of a Christian heresy. The star had fallen before the time of the false prophet, in the person of Arius, and other gross heretics; and as the consequence of their apostasy from the truth, the providence of God so ordered it, that the desolating delusion of Mahometanism should arise and overspread some of the fairest portions of the church. This view of the arch imposture of Islamism has been taken by some very able writers of modern times; particularly by Mr. Whittaker in his “Origin of Arianism.” The grand heresies, therefore, of the Christian church, previous to the time of Mahomet, seem to be here personified in the fallen star, and represented as being instrumental in introducing this master-plague of error and superstition into the world. The poetical machinery of the vision is supposed to be taken from the sacred oracular caves of the ancient Pagans, which were often thought to communicate with the sea, or the great abyss, and which were specially valued, when (like that at Delphi) they emitted an intoxicating vapour: it is used, therefore, with singular propriety in fore-

telling the rise of a religious imposture. There may possibly be an allusion also to the cave of Hera; whither the prophet was wont to retire for the purpose of excoagulating his system, and from which it really emanated. The opening of the bottomless pit, therefore, and the letting out the vapour and smoke of the infernal regions, aptly represents the wicked and diabolical system of religion, the dense and noxious fumes of the corrupt theology which he broached, and by means of which so large a portion of Christendom was finally obscured and involved in darkness. The preternatural darkening of the sun foreshows the eclipse of the true religion; and that of the air prefigures the uncontrolled dominion of the powers of darkness. As a striking coincidence with the signs here predicted, it is worthy of note, that a remarkable comet immediately preceded the birth of Mahomet; and that an eclipse of the sun, of extraordinary degree and duration, attended the first announcement of his pretended mission.

Ver. 2. And there came out of the pit locusts upon the earth.—Arabia has long been noted for giving birth to prodigious swarms of locusts, which often overspread and lay waste the neighbouring countries; and it is remarkable, that in a genuine Arabian romance, the locust is introduced as the national emblem of the Ishmaelites. The symbol, therefore, of the locusts issuing out of the smoke strikingly represent the armies of the Saracens, the martial followers of the prophet, first engendered, as it were, amid the fumes of his religion, and then marching forth, at his command, to conquer and to proselyte the world. The pages

of history must be consulted to learn the devastations of those hosts of destructive Saracens, which, under the guidance of Mahomet and his successors, alighted upon and wasted the apocalyptic earth. Yet, notwithstanding the phantasms that came forth from the pit of the abyss, bore a general resemblance to locusts, they were marked by several peculiarities, by which they were more perfectly adapted to typify the people designed to be thus shadowed out. These we shall consider as we proceed.

Ver. 4. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

—By the command that they should not hurt the grass, nor the trees, but men only, it is evident that these were not natural, but symbolical locusts; and also that they were under providential control. The same thing appears from other attributes assigned them, which plainly belong to the objects signified, and not to the sign; as the human face, the woman's hair, the golden crowns, the iron breastplates. But it is very common in the symbolic diction of prophecy, to find the literal and the allegorical sense intermixed, and that even in the same passage. We are thus furnished with a clew to the real meaning of the symbols. By the precept here given, the emblematic locusts were required to act in a manner perfectly dissimilar to the ravages of natural locusts: and yet how faithfully the command was obeyed, may be inferred from the remarkable injunction of the caliph Abubeker to Yezid, upon setting out on the expedition against Syria, the first undertaking

of the Saracens in the way of foreign conquest, recorded in chap. xii. of this volume.* It has accordingly been noticed, that those parts of the Roman empire which were left untouched by these Saracen hordes, were those in which it appears from history the remnant of the true church of God was still found residing: they were only to hurt the men who had not the mark of God on their foreheads.

Ver. 5. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months; and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.— Mr. Gibbon's undesigned commentary on these words will show how the commission was fulfilled. "The fair option of friendship or submission, or battle was proposed to the enemies of Mahomet. If they professed the creed of Islam, they were admitted to all the [temporal and spiritual benefits of his primitive disciples, and marched under the same banners, to extend the religion they had embraced. The clemency of the prophet was decided by his interests; yet he seldom trampled on a prostrate enemy, and he seemed to promise, that on payment of a tribute, the least guilty of his unbelieving subjects might be indulged in their worship."—The period assigned for the power of the locusts, in this prediction, is "five months." Prophecy has its peculiar mode of computing time. A day for the most part stands for a year. Five months, therefore, of thirty days each, amount, in the computation of prophecy, to

* See page 228.

one hundred and fifty years. As five literal months is the utmost term of the duration of the natural plague of the locusts, so the prophetic five months actually denote the period of the main conquests of the Saracen empire, computing from the appearance of Mahomet to the foundation of Bagdad. "Read," says Bishop Newton, "the history of the Saracens, and you will find, that their greatest conquests made, within the space of five prophetic months, or one hundred and fifty years,—between the year 612, when Mahomet opened the bottomless pit, and began publicly to teach and propagate his imposture; and the year 762, when Almansor built Bagdad, and called it the city of peace." The comparison of the locusts' torments to that of the scorpion will be considered subsequently.

Ver. 6. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, but death shall flee from them.—This prediction has usually been considered as awfully expressive of the hopeless sufferings and despair of eastern Christendom, under the lawless insults, violences, and oppressions systematically practised by their Saracen masters. We would not deny that this may have been alluded to; yet, as it would seem that men desirous of escaping suffering by death, might easily, in a thousand ways, have accomplished their object, it may be suggested, whether the Saracens themselves are not the persons here referred to, as coveting death in battle, from a view to the honour, and the rewards of such a decease. The following passage from the Koran, is worthy of special note in this connection. "Moreover, ye did sometimes wish for

death, before that ye met it.* On these words Sale remarks, in a note, "that several of Mahomet's followers, who were not present at Beder, wished for an opportunity of obtaining, in another action, the like honour as those had gained who fell martyrs in that event." The import of the language, therefore, may be, that God should give to the Moslem hosts such an uninterrupted tide of conquests, they should so uniformly come off victorious in their engagements, and that with such inconsiderable losses, that numbers in the height of their enthusiasm, should pant in vain for the glorious privilege of dying in the field of battle.

Ver. 7. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle.—"Arabia," says Gibbon, "is, in the opinion of naturalists, the native country of the horse." The horsemanship of the Arabs has ever been an object of admiration. "The martial youth, under the banner of the Emir, is ever on horseback and in the field, to practise the exercise of the bow, the javelin, and the scimitar." In correspondence, therefore, with the hieroglyphic of the prophet, the strength of the Saracens consisted very much in the numerous cavalry, and the unrivalled speed of the Arabian coursers forms the most striking possible emblem of the rapid career of the Saracen armies.

And on their heads were, as it were, crowns of gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.—"Make a point," says a precept of Mahomet "of wearing turbans; because it is the way of

* Koran, ch. iii.

angels." The turban, accordingly, has ever been the distinctive head-dress of the Arabs, and their boast has been, that they wore, as their common attire, those ornaments, which, among other people, are the peculiar badges of royalty. The notice of the "faces of men" seems to be intended merely to afford a clew to the meaning of the emblem; to intimate, that no natural locusts, but human beings, were depicted under this symbol.

Ver. 8. And they had hair, as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.—The Arabs, as Pliny testifies, wore their beards, or rather mustachios, as men, while their hair, like that of women, was flowing or plaited. The "teeth like those of lions," has reference to the weapons and implements of war; and the "breastplates of iron" to the armour made use of by the Saracen troops in their expeditions. The "sound of their wings as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle," is but a part of the same expressive imagery denoting warlike scenes and preparations.

Ver. 10. And they had tails like unto scorpions: and there were stings in their tails.—The interpretation of the symbols of the Apocalypse must be sought for in the Old Testament. From the following words of Isaiah (ch. ix. 14, 15) it appears that the tail of a beast denotes the false doctrines or the superstition which he maintains: "Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail." The emblem, therefore, strikingly represents the infliction of

spiritual wounds by the propagation of poisonous and deadly errors and heresies. And nothing is more evident from the page of history than that the Moslem followers of Mahomet have scattered, like scorpions, the venom of their doctrines behind them; and whether conquering or conquered, have succeeded in palming a new creed upon those with whom they have had to do. By this symbol, then, we are plainly taught, that the plague of the allegorical locusts consisted not only in the ravages of war, but in the successful propagation of a false religion, of which the doctrines should be as deleterious in a spiritual point of view, as the sting of a scorpion in a natural. In like manner, when it is said (ch. xii. 3, 4) of the "great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, that his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth," the explication is, that antichristian power, shadowed out by this formidable monster should be permitted to instil the most pernicious errors into the minds of the professed ministers of the truth, and thus bring about their entire defection from Christianity.

Ver. 11. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.—Both these terms signify destroyer. Since the locusts are at once secular conquerors and the propagators of a false religion, their king must stand to them in the double relation of a temporal and spiritual head. Such accordingly were Mahomet and the caliphs his successors, who must be viewed as jointly constituting the locust-king Abaddon; for in the usual language of prophecy, a king denotes, not any single

individual, but a dynasty or kingdom. The chief of the locusts, when they first issued from the pit of the abyss, was Mahomet himself; but during the allotted period of the woe which they occasioned, the reigning destroyer was of course the reigning caliph. If, therefore, we were to suppose the genius of Mahometanism under the caliphs to be personified, and this symbolical personage to be designated by the most appropriate title, Abaddon, the destroyer would be the appellation.

As the portion of the prophecy thus far considered has reference to the origin of Mahomet's imposture, and to the rise, progress, and conquests of the Saracens, its earliest abettors and propagators, so the remaining part announces the commencement and career of the Turkish power, the principal of its later supporters.

Ver. 13. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in (rather at, by, in the vicinity of) the great river Euphrates, and the four angels were loosed.—It is impossible, from the train of events, and from the quarter of the world in which we are directed to look for the irruption of these prodigious multitudes of horsemen, to mistake to whom the prophecy refers. The four angels who are described as bound in the regions bordering on the river Euphrates, not in the river itself, are the four contemporary sultanies or dynasties, into which the empire of the Seljukian Turks was divided towards the close of the eleventh century: PERSIA, KERMAN, SYRIA, and RHOUM. These sultanies, from different causes, were long re-

strained from extending their conquests beyond what may be geographically termed the Euphratean regions, but towards the close of the thirteenth century, the four angels on the river Euphrates were loosed in the persons of their existing representatives, the united Ottoman and Seljukian Turks. The historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire must of necessity be the guide to any English commentator on this part of the prophetic history. The following is his testimony as to the immense number of the Turkish cavalry. "As the subject nations marched under the standard of the Turks, their cavalry, both men and horses, were proudly computed by millions." "On this occasion, the myriads of the Turkish horse overspread a frontier of six hundred miles, from Taurus to Erzeroum."

Ver. 17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone.—These prophetic characteristics of the Euphratean warriors accord in the most perfect manner with the description which history gives of the Turks. They brought immense armies into the field, chiefly composed of horse, and from their first appearance on the great political stage of nations their costume has been peculiarly distinguished by the colours of scarlet, blue, and yellow, which are here denoted by the terms "fire," "jacinth," and "brimstone." Rycaut's "Present State of the Ottoman Empire," published towards the close of the seventeenth century, will satisfy the reader on this point.

And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke

and brimstone.—We have here a symbol which is not elsewhere to be met with in the Scriptures. The prophetic horses are represented as vomiting out of their mouths “fire, and smoke, and brimstone,” by which it is added, “the third part of men was killed.” Mede, Newton, Faber, and most other eminent expositors of the Revelation, agree in supposing that the flashes of fire attended by smoke and brimstone, which seemed to proceed from the mouths of the horses, were in reality the flashes of artillery. The Turks were among the first who turned to account the European invention of gunpowder in carrying on their wars. Cannon, the most deadly engine of modern warfare, were employed by Mahomet II. in his wars against the Greek empire; and it is said that he was indebted to his heavy ordnance for the reduction of Constantinople. The prophet, therefore, is to be considered as depicting in vision the scene of a field of battle, in which the cavalry and artillery are so mingled together, that while flashes of fire and dense clouds of smoke issued from the cannon, the horses’ heads alone would be dimly discerned through the sulphureous mist, and would seem to the eye of the spectator to belch forth the smoky flames from their own mouths. As the design of this striking imagery is to describe the appearances rather than the reality of things, the prophet employs an expression, * “in the vision,” or rather “in vision,” i. e. apparently, as it seemed, which evidently conveys the idea that the phantasm of a battle scene was presented to the imagination. We may now see how far

* *Ἐν ὁράσει.*

history confirms this interpretation. "Among the implements of destruction," says Mr. Gibbon, "he (Mahomet II.) studied with peculiar care the recent and tremendous discovery of the Latins; and his artillery surpassed whatever had yet appeared in the world." "The Ottoman artillery thundered on all sides, and the camp and city, the Greeks and Turks, were involved in a cloud of smoke, which could only be dispelled by the final deliverance or destruction of the Roman empire." The great cannon of Mahomet has been separately an important and visible object in the history of the times. But that enormous engine, which required, it is said, seventy yoke of oxen and two thousand men to draw it, was flanked by two fellows almost of equal magnitude: the long order of Turkish artillery was pointed against the wall; fourteen batteries thundered at once on the most accessible places; and of one of these it is ambiguously expressed, that it was mounted with a hundred and thirty guns, or that it discharged a hundred and thirty bullets.

Ver. 19. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails; for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.—The emblematic import of the tail of a beast we have already considered. The imagery in the present symbol is slightly different from that of the Saracen locusts, which had the tails of scorpions; but the import is the same. Here the tails of the horses terminated in a serpent's head; and it is not a little remarkable, that the Turks have been in the habit, from the earliest periods of their history, of tying a knot in the extremity of the long flowing tails of their horses, when preparing

for war; so that their resemblance to serpents with swelling heads must have been singularly striking. Striking too is the fact, that so slight a circumstance should have been adverted to by the historian so often quoted, who thought as little of being an organ to illustrate the predictions of Scripture, as the Turks themselves did of being the agents to fulfil them. Speaking of Alp Arslan, the first Turkish invader of the Roman empire, he says, "With his own hands he tied up his horse's tail, and declared that if he were vanquished, that spot should be the place of his burial." The scope of the hieroglyphic here employed is to predict the propagation of a deadly imposture by the instrumentality of the same warlike power which should achieve such prodigious conquests. The event has corresponded with the prophecy. Like the Saracens of the first woe, the Turks were not merely secular conquerors. They were animated with all the wild fanaticism of a false religion; they professed and propagated the same theological system as their Arabian predecessors; they injured by their doctrines no less than by their conquests; and wherever they established their dominion, the Koran triumphed over the gospel. Thus writes Mr. Gibbon: "The whole body of the nation embraced the religion of Mahomet." "Twenty-five years after the death of Basil, his successors were suddenly assaulted by an unknown race of barbarians, who united the Scythian valour with the fanaticism of new converts."

Sufficient proof has now been afforded, if we mistake not, that the appearance of the Arabian prophet in the world, and the rise, progress, and results of his imposture, are clearly foretold in the

sacred volume. Indeed, it would not be easy to specify any admitted subject of prophecy, upon which history and Providence have thrown a stronger or clearer light. Interpreters have been justly struck at the surprising exactness of the delineations, and their perfect accordance with the details of history. "The prophetic truths," says Dr. Zouch, "comprised in the ninth chapter of the Apocalypse are, of themselves, sufficient to stamp the mark of divinity upon that book. When I compare them with the page of history, I am filled with amazement. The Saracens, a people which did not exist in the time of John, and the Turks, a nation then utterly unknown, are there described in language the most appropriate and distinct." If then the considerations commonly adduced to account for the rise, progress, and reign of Mahometanism appear to be inadequate,—if the human causes usually quoted to explain the astonishing success of Mahometan imposture still seem to us to leave many of the phenomena inexplicable, and the greatest revolution in the world connected with the history of the Church stands forth an unsolved problem,—why should we hesitate to ascribe it directly to the determinate will and counsel of the Most High, and thus find a clew to all the mysteries connected with it? Why should we be anxious to escape the recognition of a divine interference in the rise of this arch-heresy? If we have been correct in our interpretation of the preceding predictions of Daniel and John, the Mahometan delusion is as real and as prominent a subject of prophecy as any in the whole compass of the Bible. Now, to insist upon the operation of merely human causes

in the production of an event which is truly a subject of prophecy, is in fact to take the government of the world out of the hands of God. And this principle pushed to the extreme will inevitably lower and impugn the sure word of prophecy; for it makes God the predictor of events over which, at the same time, he has no special superintendence or control. Such a principle cannot stand the least examination. When Daniel foretels the fortunes of the four great empires; or when Isaiah speaks of Cyrus by name, as one who should accomplish certain great purposes of the infinite mind, is it to be supposed, that the events predicted were to happen exclusive of providential agency? As easily and as justly then may we acknowledge a special pre-ordination in the case of Mahomet, whose still more formidable dominion and more lasting and more fatal agency in the affairs of men, are equally the theme of unquestionable predictions. No admission of this nature militates with the free agency of man, or at all affects the moral character of his actions. The mere fact that an event is foreknown or foretold by the Deity, neither takes away nor weakens the accountability of the agents concerned. Of this, the whole Scripture is full of proofs. But the reflecting reader will desire no farther confirmation of so plain a position.

NO. II.—THE MAHOMETAN CONFESSION OF FAITH;
TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC.

(From Morgan's Mahometanism Explained.)

The articles of our faith which every good Mus-
sulman is bound to believe and to receive with an
entire assurance are thirteen in number, whereof
the first and principal is,

I.—*Of God's Existence.*

To believe from the heart, to confess with the
tongue, and with a voluntary and steadfast mind
to affirm, that there is but one only God, Lord
and Governor of the universe, who produced all
things from nothing, in whom there is neither
image nor resemblance, who never begot any
person whatsoever, as he himself was begotten
by none; who, as he never was a son, so he
never hath been a father. It is this Lord and
Sovereign Arbiter of all things whom we Mussul-
mans are bound to serve and adore; so that none
among us may deviate from this article, but every
one must imprint it deeply in his heart; for it is
unquestionable.

II.—*Of the Prophet Mahomet and the Koran.*

We must believe from our hearts and confess
with our mouths that the Most High God, after
having revealed himself to mankind by his ancient
prophets, sent us at length his elected, the blessed
Mahomet, with the sacred and divine law, which

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through his grace he had created, the which is contained in the venerable Koran, that hath been from him remitted unto us. By this holy law it is that God hath abolished all the preceding ones, and hath withdrawn from their doubts and errors all nations and people in order to guide them to a firm and lasting state of happiness. Wherefore we are obliged exactly to follow the precepts, rites, and ceremonies thereof, and to abandon every other sect or religion whatsoever, whether instituted before or since this final revelation. By this article we are distinguished and separated from all sorts of idolatry, lying rhapsodies, and false prophecies, and from all those sects, societies, and religions different from ours, which are either erroneous, abrogated, or exaggerated, void of faith, and without truth.

III.—*Of Providence and Predestination.*

We must firmly believe and hold as a certainty that, except God himself who always was and always shall be, every thing shall one day be annihilated, and that the angel of death shall take to himself the souls of mortals destined to a total and universal extinction,* by the command of God, our powerful Lord and Master, who was able and hath vouchsafed to produce out of nothing, and in fine to set in form this universal world, with all things therein contained, both good and evil, sweet and bitter; and hath been pleased to appoint two angels, the one on the right, and

* Notwithstanding this annihilation, it is taught in the Koran, that all intelligent creatures will be reproduced again at the resurrection.

the other on the left, to register the actions of every one of us, as well the good as the bad, to the end that judicial cognizance may be taken thereof, and sentence pronounced thereupon, at the great day of judgment. It is therefore necessary to believe predestination: but it is not permitted to discourse thereof to any whomsoever, till after being perfectly well versed in the study of our written law, viz. the Koran, and of our Sonnab, which is our oral law. Seeing then all things are to have an end, let us do good works, and deport ourselves so that we may live for ever.

IV.—*Of the Interrogation in the Grave.*

We must truly and firmly believe and hold as certain and assured, the interrogation of the sepulchre which will after death be administered to every one of us by two angels upon these four important questions:—1. Who was our Lord and our God? 2. Who was our prophet? 3. Which was our religion? 4. On what side was our Kebablah? He who shall be in a condition to make answer, that God was his only Lord, and Mahomet his prophet, shall find a great illumination in his tomb, and shall himself rest in glory. But he who shall not make a proper answer to these questions shall be involved in darkness until the day of judgment.

V.—*Of the Future Dissolution.*

We must heartily believe and hold as certain, that not only shall all things one day perish and

be annihilated, viz. angels, men, and devils, but likewise this shall come to pass at the end of the world, when the angel Israfil shall blow the trumpet in such sort that except the Sovereign God none of the universal creation shall remain alive immediately after the dreadful noise, which shall cause the mountains to tremble, the earth to sink, and the sea to be changed to the colour of blood. In this total extinction, the last who shall die will be Azrael, the angel of death; and the power of the Most High God will be evidently manifested.

VI.—*Of the Future Resurrection.*

We are obliged cordially to believe and to hold for certain, that the first before all others whom God shall revive in heaven shall be the angel of death; and that he will at that time recall all the souls in general, and reunite them to the respective bodies to which each belonged; some of which shall be destined to glory, and others to torment. But upon earth, the first whom God will raise shall be our blessed prophet Mahomet. As for the earth itself, it shall open on all sides, and shall be changed in a moment; and by God's command fire shall be kindled in every part thereof, which shall be extended to its utmost extremities. God will then prepare a vast plain, perfectly level, and of sufficient extent to contain all creatures summoned to give an account of their past conduct. May this solemn, definite, and irrevocable judgment awaken us from our security; for to nothing that hath been created shall favour be shown.

Every soul shall be judged there by the same rule, and without exception of persons.

VII.—*Of the Day of Judgment.*

We must believe from our hearts and hold for certain, that there shall be a day of judgment, whereon God shall ordain all nations to appear in a place appointed for this great trial, of sufficient vastness that His Majesty may there be evident in splendour. It is in this magnificent and spacious station that the universal assembly of all creatures shall be made, about the middle of the day, and in the brightness of noon: and then it is, that accompanied by his prophet (Mahomet), and in the presence of all mankind, God shall with justice and equity judge all the nations of the earth in general, and every person in particular. To this effect, every one of us shall have a book or catalogue of our actions delivered to us; that of the good in such wise that it shall be received and held in the right hand; that of the wicked, so that it shall be received and held in the left hand. As to the duration of that day, it shall be as long as the continuance of the present age. This shall be a day of sighs and griefs, a day of tribulation and anguish, when the cup of sorrow and misery must be drunk up, even the very dregs thereof. But this is what shall be particularly experienced by the ungodly and the perverse; every thing shall present to them ideas of sorrow and affliction. To them every thing shall become aloes and bitterness. They shall not obtain one moment of repose. They shall behold nothing that is agreeable, nor hear one voice that shall delight them: their eyes shall

see nothing but the torments of hell; their ears shall hear nothing but the cries and howlings of devils; and their terrified imaginations shall represent unto them nothing but spectres and tortures.

VIII.—*Of Mahomet's Intercession.*

We are bound to believe, and hold as certain, that our venerable prophet Mahomet shall with success intercede for his people at the great day of examination. This will be the first intercession; but at the second, God will be entirely relented, and all the faithful Mussulmans shall be transported into a state of glory, while not one excuse or supplication in behalf of other nations shall be accepted. As to the greatness of pain which those among us are to undergo, who have been offenders by transgressing the precepts of the Koran, it is known to God alone, as there is none but He who exactly knoweth how long the same is to continue, whether its duration shall be more or less than that of the examination or judgment. But to us it belongeth to shorten its continuance by good works, by our charity, and by all the endeavours we are capable of.

IX.—*Of the future Compensation at the last Judgment.*

We must sincerely believe, and hold as a certainty, that we must every one of us give up our accounts before God, concerning the good and evil we have transacted in this world. All who have been followers of Mahomet shall be before all others summoned to this examination, because

they it will be who shall bear witness against all other strange nations. It shall come to pass on that day, that God will take away out of the balance of him who has slandered his brother some of the good works, and put them unto that of him who hath been slandered; and if the slanderer is found to have no good works, he will then deduct from the punishment of the slandered, to include them in the list of those of the slanderer, inso-much that his great justice will be fully manifest. At least, then, that we not run the hazard of this terrible compensation, let us not think of wronging others, or of diminishing their substance, their honour, or their good name.

X.—*Of the Balance, and of Purgatory.*

We must believe from the heart, and confess with the mouth, that all our actions, good and bad, shall one day be weighed in the balance, the one against the other, insomuch that those whose good works outweigh their bad, shall enter into paradise; and that, on the contrary, they whose bad works shall outweigh their good, shall be condemned to the flames of hell. And for those whose scales shall be equally poised, because the good they have done is equivalent to the evil, they shall be detained in a station situate in the middle, between paradise and hell, where consideration will be made both of their merits and of their demerits, since besides their being confined in that place, they shall have no punishment inflicted on them, nor shall they enjoy any part of the glory ordained for the beatified righteous. It is true that all those among that number who are Mussul-

mans shall be at length released from their captivity, and shall be introduced into paradise at the second intercession of our blessed prophet Mahomet, whose great compassion will be signalized by his engaging, in order to our redemption, to supplicate the power and the mercy of the Most High, as well as his justice, already satisfied by the long captivity of the criminals. Wherefore let us from henceforward weigh our good works, to the end that we may assiduously strive to increase their weight, and that they may have the advantage over the bad.

XI.—*Of the Sharp-edged Bridge, and the unavoidable passage thereof.*

We are obliged to believe from our hearts and to hold as assured, that all mankind in the world must pass one day over the Sharp-edged Bridge, whose length shall be equal to that of this world, whose breadth shall not exceed that of one single thread of a spider's web, and whose height shall be proportionable to its extent. The righteous shall pass over it swifter than a flash of lightning; but the impious and the ungodly shall not, in as much time as the present age shall endure, be able to surmount the difficulties thereof, and that through the want of good works. For which reason, they shall fall and precipitate themselves into hell-fire, in company with the infidels and blasphemers, with those of little faith and bad conscience, who have done few deeds of charity, because they were void of virtue. There shall be some among the good, notwithstanding, whose passage shall be lighter and swifter than that of

many others, who shall therein meet with temptations and obstructions from every precept which they shall have ill-observed in this life. Good God! how dreadful to our sight will this formidable bridge appear! What virtue, what secret grace from the Most High shall we not need to be enabled to pass over it?

XII.—*Of Paradise.*

We are to believe and to hold for a certainty that God did create a paradise which he prepared for the blessed, from among the number of the faithful, by which are meant the followers of the true religion, and of our holy prophet, Mahomet; where with him they shall be placed in perpetual light, and in the enjoyment of heavenly delights; for ever beautiful in the vigour of their age, and brighter than the sun; and where they shall be found worthy to contemplate and adore the face of the Most High God. As for those who shall be detained in the tortures of hell, to wit, the sinners and transgressors who have nevertheless believed in one only God, they shall be released at the second intercession of the prophet, by whom they shall immediately be washed in the sacred laver, from whence being come forth whiter than snow, and more refulgent than the sun, they shall, with the rest of the blessed, behold themselves seated in paradise, there to enjoy all the glory they can desire. This is what shall befall the body composed of clay; and what then shall be the state of our souls? To the which it shall be granted eternally to behold the light and brightness of the divine majesty. Let us then endea-

your to do works of such a character, that we may have no cause to fear hell-fire. Let us, I say, chiefly apply ourselves to good works, let us not refuse to exert our utmost strength in the exact observation thereof, and of the fast of our venerable month of Ramadan, and of the prayers and ceremonies which are ordained; and let us not defraud the poor of a tenth of all our goods.

XIII.—*Of Hell.*

We must sincerely believe and hold for certain, that there is a hell prepared for the unrighteous, the refractory transgressors of the divine law, accursed of God for their evil works, and for whom it would have been better had they never have been born, and to have never seen the light of day. It is for such as those that a place of torment is appointed, or rather a fire which burneth without touching them, a fire of ice and north winds, where there shall be nothing but snakes and serpents, with other venomous and ravenous creatures, which shall bite them without destroying them, and shall cause them to feel grievous pains. That place shall be the abode of the impious and of the devils, where these shall, with all sorts of cruelty and rage, incessantly torture those; and lest the sense of their pain should cause them to relent, a new skin shall continually succeed in the stead of that which has been burned or mortified. It is for us Mussulmans to conceive and entertain a just horror of this detestable place; such reflections are the duty of all God's servants. As for those others who have declared war against our religion, they shall one day feel the torments of

hell. Let us all dread this punishment and these frightful terrors. Let us confirm our faith by the sentiments of our hearts, and by the confession of our tongues, and let us engrave it in the bottom of our souls.

NO. III.—STYLE OF THE KORAN.

Most of the extracts from the Koran, given in the former parts of this work, are connected with some doctrine or practice taught by that singular production. Our design will be scarcely completed without giving a more perfect specimen of its style. We select, therefore, an entire chapter, the third, which perhaps is the best adapted for this purpose. It will be at once perceived, that whatever merits the Koran has, that of originality does not belong to it. Its stories are mostly borrowed in a corrupted form from the sacred page. Its grandest passages, magnificently describing the Almighty sitting on the eternal throne, encompassed with clouds and darkness, and giving laws to the universe, instantly remind us of the hallowed manner, the ideas, and even the language of the Hebrew prophets. Its account of the attributes of Deity, whether natural or moral, exhibits nothing new to the reader of the inspired volume, the expressions of which are but reechoed and feebly imitated; and from the same source it borrows the severe invectives, the fearful punishments which it denounces on those who rob the Almighty of the honour due exclusively to him, by associating others with him as equals or

partakers of his majesty and glory. The religious practices for which the Koran provides were taken, as in some instances has been already seen, from the fanciful and superstitious ceremonies with which the pagan Arabs had adored their imaginary deities, and in its rewards and penalties the Koran is almost equally indebted to divine revelation and heathen mythology. Even those passages which at first view appear most captivating by their novelty, and in which Mahomet has most indulged a luxuriant imagination, and expatiated in the boundless regions of fancy, will be found on examination to contain as little really new, as they do of valuable information. His future world, whether of happiness or misery, is derived from the Jewish Rabbins, whose writings are an exhaustless store of marvellous and improbable fiction. And the precepts he enjoins, many of them good, as was to be expected, though many are ridiculous and immoral, are obviously drawn from the same sources. Every duty which Mahomet inculcates, every precept which he enforces, may be traced up to the divine original contained in the sacred volume, though its native beauty is greatly marred, and though it is strongly marked with the impure and corrupt channel through which it has passed. Thus, when he summons his followers in a tone of authority, to the practice of charity,—when he commands them to give alms, to relieve the distressed, to forgive injuries,—the principle on which he places the practice of these duties is base and narrow, when compared with the expansive charities of the gospel. The Koran pretends, indeed, to be the grand close and consummation of divine revelations, but instead of improving on the

law and the gospel, it is a gross corruption and perversion of both. These observations, however, and others of a similar character that might be made, are all sustained by the following chapter from the Koran.

CHAP. III.—Entitled the family of Imran, a name given to the father of the Virgin Mary, the Arabic form of Amram, or Amran; the father of Moses and Aaron. Some think that Mahomet preserved alive the Miriam of Aaron's family till the time of Christ, that she might become his mother.

“In the name of the most merciful God. A. L. M.,” that is “God is gracious, and to be glorified;” or as God is the speaker, “To me belongs all perfection, from me proceeds all good.”

There is no God but God, the living, the self-subsisting: He hath sent down unto thee the book of the Koran with truth, confirming that which was revealed before it; for he had formerly sent down the law, and the gospel, a direction unto men; and he had also sent down the distinction between good and evil. Verily those who believe not the signs of God, shall suffer a grievous punishment; for God is mighty, able to revenge. Surely nothing is hidden from God, of that which is on earth, or in heaven: it is he who formeth you in the wombs, as he pleaseth; there is no God but he, the mighty, the wise. It is he who hath sent down unto thee the book, wherein are some verses clear to be understood; they are

the foundation of the book ; and others are parabolical. But they whose hearts are perverse will follow that which is parabolical within, out of love of schism, and a desire of the interpretation thereof ; yet none knoweth the interpretation thereof ; except God. But they who are well grounded in knowledge say, We believe therein, the whole is from our Lord ; and none will consider except the prudent. O Lord, cause not our hearts to swerve from truth, after thou hast directed us : and give us from thee mercy, for thou art he who giveth. O Lord, thou shalt surely gather mankind together unto a day of resurrection : there is no doubt of it, for God will not be contrary to the promise. As for the infidels, their wealth shall not profit them anything, nor their children against God : they shall be the fuel of hell-fire. According to the wont of the people of Pharaoh, and of those who went before them, they charged our signs with a lie ; but God caught them in their wickedness, and God is severe in punishing. Say unto those who believe not, Ye shall be overcome, and thrown together into hell : an unhappy couch shall it be. Ye have already had a miracle shown you in two armies, which attacked each other ; one army fought for God's true religion, but the other were infidels ; they saw the faithful twice as many as themselves in their eye-sight ; for God strengtheneth with his help whom he pleaseth. Surely herein was an example unto men of understanding.* The love and eager desire of wives, and children, and sums heaped up of gold and silver, and excellent horses, and cattle, and land,

* The allusion in this passage is to the battle of Bedr, described in page 131, of this work.

is prepared for men : this is the provision of the present life : but unto God shall be the most excellent return. Say, Shall I declare unto you better things than this ? For those who are devout are prepared with their Lord, gardens through which rivers flow ; therein shall they continue for ever : and they shall enjoy wives free from impurity, and the favour of God ; for God regardeth his servants ; who say, O Lord, we do sincerely believe ; forgive us therefore our sins, and deliver us from the pain of hell-fire : the patient, and the lovers of truth, and the devout, and the almsgivers, and those who ask pardon early in the morning. God hath borne witness that there is no God but he ; and the angels, and those who are endowed with wisdom, profess the same ; who executeth righteousness ; there is no God but he : the mighty, the wise. Verily the true religion, in the sight of God, is Islam ; and they who had received the Scriptures dissented not therefrom, until after the knowledge of God's unity had come unto them, out of envy among themselves : but whosoever believeth not in the signs of God, verily God will be swift in bringing him to account. If they dispute with thee, say, I have resigned myself unto God, and he who followeth me doth the same : and say unto them who have received the Scriptures, and to the ignorant, Do ye profess the religion of Islam ? Now, if they embrace Islam, they are surely directed ; but if they turn their backs, verily unto thee belongeth preaching only ; for God regardeth his servants. And unto those who believe not in the signs of God, and slay the prophets without a cause, and put those men to death who teach justice ; denounce unto them a

painful punishment. These are they whose works perish in this world, and in that which is to come; and they shall have none to help them. Hast thou not observed those unto whom part of the Scripture was given? They were called unto the book of God, that it might judge between them; then some of them turned their backs and retired afar off. This they did because they said, The fire of hell shall by no means touch us, but for a certain number of days: and that which they had falsely devised, hath deceived them in their religion. How then will it be with them, when we shall gather them together at the day of judgment, of which there is no doubt; and every soul shall be paid that which it hath gained, neither shall they be treated unjustly? Say, O God, who possessest the kingdom; thou givest the kingdom unto whom thou wilt, and thou takest away the kingdom from whom thou wilt: Thou exaltest whom thou wilt, and thou humblest whom thou wilt. In thy hand is good, for thou art almighty. Thou makest the night to succeed the day; thou bringest forth the living out of the dead, and thou bringest forth the dead out of the living; and providest food for whom thou wilt, without measure. Let not the faithful take the infidels for their protectors, rather than the faithful: he who doth this, shall not be protected of God at all; unless ye fear any danger from them: but God warneth you to beware of himself; for unto God must ye return. Say, Whether ye conceal that which is in your breasts, or whether ye declare it, God knoweth it; for he knoweth whatever is in heaven, and whatever is on earth; God is almighty. On the last day every soul shall find

the good which it hath wrought, present ; and the evil which it hath wrought, it shall wish that between itself and that were a wide distance : but God warneth you to beware of himself ; for God is gracious unto his servants. Say, If ye love God, follow me : then God shall love you and forgive you your sins ; for God is gracious and merciful. Say, Obey God, and his apostle : but if ye go back, verily God loveth not the unbelievers. God hath surely chosen Adam and Noah, and the family of Abraham, and the family of Imran, above the rest of the world ; a race descending the one from the other ; God is he who heareth and knoweth. Remember when the wife of Imran said, Lord, verily I have vowed unto thee that which is in my womb, to be dedicated to thy service : accept it therefore of me ; for thou art he who heareth and knoweth. And when she was delivered of it, she said, Lord, verily I have brought forth a female, (and God well knew what she had brought forth,) and a male is not as a female ; I have called her Mary ; and I commend her to thy protection, and also her issue, against Satan driven away with stones. Therefore the Lord accepted her with a gracious acceptance, and caused her to bear an excellent offspring. And Zacharias took care of the child. Whenever Zacharias went into the chamber to her, he found provisions with her ; and he said, O Mary, whence hadst thou this ? She answered, This is from God : for God provideth for whom he pleaseth without measure. There Zacharias called on his Lord, and said, Lord, give me from thee a good offspring, for thou art the hearer of prayer. And the angels called to him, while he stood praying in the chamber,

saying, Verily God promiseth thee a son named John, who shall bear witness to the Word which cometh from God; an honourable person, chaste, and one of the righteous prophets. He answered, Lord, how shall I have a son, when old age hath overtaken me, and my wife is barren? The angel said, So God doth that which he pleaseth. Zacharias, answered, Lord, give me a sign. The angel said, Thy sign shall be, that thou shalt speak unto no man for three days, otherwise than by gesture: remember thy Lord often, and praise him evening and morning. And then the angels said, O Mary, verily God hath chosen thee, and hath purified thee, and hath chosen thee above all the women of the world. O Mary, be devout towards thy Lord, and worship, and bow down with those who bow down. This is a secret history: we reveal it unto thee, although thou wast not present with them when they threw in their rods to cast lots which of them should have the education of Mary; neither wast thou with them, when they strove among themselves. When the angels said, O Mary, verily God sendeth thee good tidings, that thou shalt bear the Word, proceeding from himself; his name shall be Christ Jesus the son of Mary, honourable in this world and in the world to come, and one of those who approach near to the presence of God; and he shall speak unto men in the cradle, and when he is grown up; and he shall be one of the righteous; she answered, Lord, how shall I have a son, since a man hath not touched me? The angel said, So God createth that which he pleaseth; when he decreeth a thing, he only saith unto it, Be, and it is: God shall teach him the Scripture, and

wisdom, and the law, and the gospel; and shall appoint him his apostle to the children of Israel; and he shall say, Verily I come unto you with a sign from your Lord; for I will make before you, of clay, as it were the figure of a bird; then I will breathe thereon, and it shall become a bird, by the permission of God: and I will heal him that hath been blind from his birth; and the leper: and I will raise the dead by the permission of God: and I will prophesy unto you what ye eat, and what ye lay up for store in your houses. Verily herein will be a sign unto you, if ye believe. And I come to confirm the Law which was revealed before me, and to allow unto you, as lawful, part of that which hath been forbidden you: and I come unto you with a sign from your Lord; therefore fear God, and obey me. Verily God is my Lord, and your Lord: therefore serve him. This is the right way. But when Jesus perceived their unbelief, he said, Who will be my helpers towards God? The apostles answered, We will be the helpers of God; we believe in God, and do thou bear witness that we are true believers. O Lord, we believe in that which thou hast sent down, and we have followed thy apostle; write us down therefore with those who bear witness of him. And the Jews devised a stratagem against him; but God devised a stratagem against them; and God is the best deviser of stratagems. When God said, O Jesus, verily I will cause thee to die, and I will take thee up unto me, and I will deliver thee from the unbelievers; and I will place those who follow thee above the unbelievers until the day of resurrection: then unto me shall ye return, and I will judge between you of that

concerning which ye disagree. Moreover as for the infidels, I will punish them with a grievous punishment in this world, and in that which is to come; and there shall be none to help them. But they who believe, and do that which is right, he shall give them their reward; for God loveth not the wicked doers. These signs and this prudent admonition do we rehearse unto thee. Verily the likeness of Jesus, in the sight of God, is as the likeness of Adam: he created him out of the dust, and then said unto him, Be; and he was. This is the truth from thy Lord; be not therefore one of those who doubt: and whoever shall dispute with thee concerning him, after the knowledge which hath been given thee, say unto them, Come, let us call together our sons, and your sons, and our wives, and your wives, and ourselves, and yourselves: then let us make imprecations, and lay the curse of God on those who lie. Verily this is a true history: and there is no God, but God; and God is most mighty and wise. If they turn back, God well knoweth the evil-doers. Say, O ye who have received the Scripture, come to a just determination between us and you; that we worship not any except God, and associate no creature with him; and that the one of us take not the other for lords, beside God. But, if they turn back, say, Bear witness that we are true believers. O ye to whom the Scriptures have been given, why do ye dispute concerning Abraham, since the Law and the Gospel were not sent down until after him? Do ye not therefore understand? Behold ye are they who dispute concerning that which ye have some knowledge in; why therefore do ye dispute concerning that which ye have

no knowledge of? God knoweth, but ye know not. Abraham was neither a Jew, nor a Christian; but he was of the true religion, one resigned unto God, and was not of the number of the idolaters. Verily the men who are the nearest of kin unto Abraham, are they who follow him; and this prophet, and they who believe on him: God is the patron of the faithful. Some of those who have received the Scriptures desire to seduce you; but they seduce themselves only, and they perceive it not. O ye who have received the Scriptures, why do ye not believe in the signs of God, since ye are witnesses of them? O ye who have received the Scriptures, why do ye clothe truth with vanity, and knowingly hide the truth? And some of those to whom the Scriptures were given, say, Believe in that which hath been sent down unto those who believe, in the beginning of the day; and deny it in the end thereof: that they may go back from their faith: and believe him only who followeth your religion. Say, Verily the true direction is the direction of God, that there may be given unto some other a revelation like unto what hath been given unto you. Will they dispute with you before your Lord? Say, Surely excellence is in the hand of God; he giveth it unto whom he pleaseth; God is bounteous and wise; he will confer peculiar mercy on whom he pleaseth; for God is indued with great beneficence. There is of those who have received the Scriptures, unto whom if thou trust a talent, he will restore it unto thee; and there is also of them, unto whom if thou trust a dinâr, he will not restore it unto thee, unless thou stand over him continually with great urgency. This they

do because they say, We are not obliged to observe justice with the heathen : but they utter a lie against God knowingly. Yea, whoso, keepeth his covenant, and feareth God, God surely loveth those who fear him. But they who make merchandise of God's covenant, and of their oaths, for a small price, shall have no portion in the next life ; neither shall God speak to them, or regard them, on the day of resurrection ; nor shall he cleanse them ; but they shall suffer a grievous punishment. And there are certainly some of them who read the Scriptures perversely, that ye may think what they read to be really in the Scriptures, yet it is not in the Scripture ; and they say, This is from God ; but it is not from God : and they speak that which is false concerning God, against their own knowledge. It is not fit for a man, that God should give him a book of revelations, and wisdom, and prophecy ; and then he should say unto men, Be ye worshippers of me, besides God ; but he ought to say, Be ye perfect in knowledge, and in works, since ye know the Scriptures, and exercise yourselves therein. God hath not commanded you to take the angels and the prophets for your Lords : Will he command you to become infidels, after ye have been true believers ? And remember when God accepted the covenant of the prophets, saying, This verily is the Scripture and the wisdom which I have given you : hereafter shall an apostle come unto you, confirming the truth of that Scripture which is with you ; ye shall surely believe on him, and ye shall assist him. God said, Are ye firmly resolved, and do ye accept my covenant on this condition ? They answered, We are firmly resolved.

God said, Be ye therefore witnesses; and I also bear witness with you: and whosoever turneth back after this, they are surely the transgressors. Do they therefore seek any other religion but God's? since to him is resigned whosoever is in heaven or on earth, voluntarily, or of force: and to him shall they return. Say, We believe in God, and that which hath been sent down unto us, and that which was sent down unto Abraham, and Ismael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which was delivered to Moses, and Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them; and to him are we resigned. Whoever followeth any other religion than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him: and in the next life he shall be of those who perish. How shall God direct men who have become infidels after they had believed, and borne witness that the apostle was true, and manifest declarations of the divine will had come unto them? for God directeth not the ungodly people. Their reward shall be, that on them shall fall the curse of God and of angels, and of all mankind: they shall remain under the same for ever: their torment shall not be mitigated, neither shall they be regarded; except those who repent after this, and amend: for God is gracious and merciful. Moreover they who become infidels after they have believed, and yet increase in infidelity, their repentance shall in no wise be accepted; and they are those who go astray. Verily they who believe not, and die in their unbelief, the world full of gold shall in no wise be accepted from any of them, even though he should give it for his ransom: they shall suffer a grievous punishment, and they

shall have none to help them. Ye will never attain unto righteousness, until ye give in alms of that which ye love: and whatever ye give, God knoweth it. All food was permitted unto the children of Israel, except what Israel forbade unto himself, before the Pentateuch was sent down. Say unto the Jews, Bring hither the Pentateuch, and read it, if ye speak truth. Whoever therefore contriveth a lie against God after this, they will be evil-doers. Say, God is true; follow ye therefore the religion of Abraham the orthodox; for he was no idolater. Verily the first house appointed unto men to worship in was that which is in Mecca; blessed, and a direction to all creatures. Therein are manifest signs: the place where Abraham stood; and whoever entereth therein, shall be safe. And it is a duty towards God, incumbent on those who are able to go thither, to visit this house: but whosoever disbelieveth, verily God needeth not the service of any creature. Say, O ye who have received the Scriptures, why do ye not believe in the signs of God? Say, O ye who have received the Scriptures, why do ye keep back, from the way of God, him who believeth? Ye seek to make it crooked, and yet are witnesses that it is the right: but God will not be unmindful of what ye do. O true believers, if ye obey some of those who have received the Scripture, they will render you infidels, after ye have believed: and how can ye be infidels, when the signs of God are read unto you, and his apostle is among you? But he who cleaveth firmly unto God, is already directed into the right way. O believers, fear God with his true fear; and die not, unless ye also be true believers. And cleave all of you

unto the covenant of God, and depart not from it : and remember the favour of God towards you : since ye were enemies, and he reconciled your hearts, and ye became companions and brethren by his favour : and ye were on the brink of a pit of fire, and he delivered you thence. Thus God declareth unto you his signs, that ye may be directed. Let there be people among you, who invite to the best religion ; and command that which is just, and forbid that which is evil ; and they shall be happy. And be not as they who are divided, and disagree in matters of religion, after manifest proofs have been brought unto them ; they shall suffer a great torment. On the day of resurrection some faces shall become white, and other faces shall become black. And unto them whose faces shall become black, God will say, Have ye returned unto your unbelief, after ye had believed ? therefore taste the punishment, for that ye have been unbelievers : but they whose faces shall become white, shall be in the mercy of God ; therein shall they remain for ever. These are the signs of God ; we recite them unto thee with truth. God will not deal unjustly with his creatures. And to God belongeth whatever is in heaven and on earth ; and to God shall all things return. Ye are the best nation that hath been raised up unto mankind, ye command that which is just, and ye forbid that which is unjust, and ye believe in God. And, if they who have received the Scriptures had believed, it had surely been the better for them ; there are believers among them, but the greater part of them are transgressors. They shall not hurt you, unless with a slight hurt ; and, if they fight against you, they shall turn their

backs to you ; and they shall not be helped. They are smitten with vileness, wheresoever they are found, unless they obtain security by entering into a treaty with God, and a treaty with men ; and they draw on themselves indignation from God, and they are afflicted with poverty. This they suffer, because they disbelieved the signs of God, and slew the prophets unjustly ; this, because they were rebellious and transgressed. Yet they are not all alike : there are of those who have received the Scriptures, upright people ; they meditate on the signs of God in the night season, and worship ; they believe in God, and the last day ; and command that which is just, and forbid that which is unjust, and zealously strive to excel in good works : these are of the righteous. And ye shall not be denied the reward of the good which ye do ; for God knoweth the pious. As for the unbelievers, their wealth shall not profit them at all, neither their children, against God ; they shall be the companions of hell-fire ; they shall continue therein for ever. The likeness of that which they lay out in this present life, is as a wind wherein there is a scorching cold ; it falleth on the standing corn of those men who have injured their own souls, and destroyeth it. And God dealeth not unjustly with them ; but they injure their own souls. O true believers, contract not an intimate friendship with any besides yourselves : they will not fail to corrupt you. They wish for that which may cause you to perish : their hatred hath already appeared from out of their mouths ; but what their breasts conceal is yet more inveterate. We have already shown you signs of their ill-will towards you, if ye understand. Behold,

ye love them, and they do not love you : ye believe in all the Scriptures ; and when they meet you, they say, We believe ; but, when they assemble privately together, they bite their fingers' ends out of wrath against you. Say unto them, Die in your wrath : verily God knoweth the innermost part of your breasts. If good happen unto you, it grieveth them ; and if evil befall you, they rejoice at it. But if ye be patient and fear God, their subtlety shall not hurt you at all ; for God comprehendeth whatever they do. Call to mind when thou wentest forth early from thy family, that thou mightest prepare the faithful a camp for war ; and God heard and knew it ; when two companies of you were anxiously thoughtful, so that ye became faint-hearted ; but God was the supporter of them both ; and in God let the faithful trust. And God had already given you the victory of Bedr, when ye were inferior in number ; therefore fear God, that ye may be thankful. When thou saidst unto the faithful, Is it not enough for you, that your Lord should assist you with three thousand angels, sent down from heaven ? Verily if ye persevere, and fear God, and your enemies come upon you suddenly, your Lord will assist you with five thousand angels, distinguished by horses and attire. And this God designed only as good tidings for you, that your hearts might rest secure : for victory is from God alone, the mighty, the wise. That he should cut off the uttermost part of the unbelievers, or cast them down, or that they should be overthrown and unsuccessful, is nothing to thee. It is no business of thine, whether God be turned unto them, or whether he punish them ; they are

surely unjust doers. To God belongeth whatsoever is in heaven and on earth; he spareth whom he pleaseth, and he punisheth whom he pleaseth; for God is merciful. O true believers, devour not usury, doubling it twofold; but fear God, that ye may prosper; and fear the fire which is prepared for the unbelievers; and obey God, and his apostle, that ye may obtain mercy. And run with emulation to obtain remission from your Lord, and paradise, whose breadth equalleth the heavens and the earth, which is prepared for the godly; who give alms in prosperity and adversity; who bridle their anger, and forgive men: for God loveth the beneficent. And who, after they have committed a crime, or dealt unjustly with their own souls, remember God, and ask pardon for their sins, (for who forgiveth sins except God?) and persevere not in what they have done knowingly: their reward shall be pardon from their Lord, and gardens wherein rivers flow, they shall remain therein for ever: and how excellent is the reward of those who labour! There have already been before you examples of punishment of infidels, therefore go through the earth, and behold what hath been the end of those who accuse God's apostles of imposture. This book is a declaration unto men, and a direction, and an admonition to the pious. And be not dismayed, neither be ye grieved; for ye shall be superior to the unbelievers, if ye believe. If a wound hath happened unto you in war,* a like wound hath already happened unto the unbelieving people: and we cause these days of different success interchangeably to succeed

* This passage is an allusion to the reverse at Ohod, for which see page 137.

each other among men ; that God may know those who believe, and may have martyrs from among you ; (God loveth not the workers of iniquity;) and that God might prove those who believe, and destroy the infidels. Did ye imagine that ye should enter paradise, when as yet God knew not those among you who fought strenuously in his cause ; nor knew those who persevered with patience ? Moreover ye did sometime wish for death before that ye met it ; but ye have now seen it, and ye looked on, but retreated from it. Mahomet is no more than an apostle ; the other apostles have already deceased before him : if he die therefore, or be slain, will ye turn back on your heels ! But he who turneth back on his heels, will not hurt God at all ; and God will surely reward the thankful. No soul can die unless by the permission of God, according to what is written in the book containing the determinations of things. And whoso chooseth the reward of this world, we will give him thereof : but whoso chooseth the reward of the world to come, we will give him thereof ; and we will surely reward the thankful. How many prophets have encountered those who had many myriads of troops ! and yet they desponded not in their mind for what had befallen them in fighting for the religion of God ; and were not weakened, neither behaved themselves in an abject manner : God loveth those who persevere patiently. And their speech was no other than that they said, Our Lord, forgive us our offences, and our transgressions in our business ; and confirm our feet, and help us against the unbelieving people. And God gave them the reward of this world, and a glorious reward in the

life to come ; for God loveth the well-doers. O ye who believe, if ye obey the infidels, they will cause you to turn back on your heels, and ye will be turned back and perish : but God is your Lord ; and he is the best helper. We will surely cast a dread into the hearts of the unbelievers, because they have associated with God that concerning which he sent them down no power : their dwelling shall be the fire of hell : and the receptacle of the wicked shall be miserable. God had already made good unto you his promise, when ye destroyed them by his permission, until ye became faint-hearted, and disputed concerning the command of the apostle, and were rebellious ; after God had shown you what ye desired. Some of you chose this present world, and others of you chose the world to come. Then he turned you to flight from before them, that he might make trial of you ; (but he hath now pardoned you ; for God is indued with beneficence towards the faithful ;) when ye went up as ye fled, and looked not back on any : while the apostle called you, in the uttermost part of you. Therefore God rewarded you with affliction on affliction, that ye be not grieved hereafter for the spoils which ye fail of, nor for that which befalleth you ; for God is well acquainted with whatever ye do. Then he sent down upon you, after affliction, security ; a soft sleep, which fell on some part of you ; but other part was troubled by their own souls ; falsely thinking of God a foolish imagination, saying, Will anything of the matter happen unto us ? Say, Verily the matter belongeth wholly unto God. They concealed in their minds what they declared not unto thee ; saying, If anything of the matter

had happened unto us, we had not been slain here. Answer, If ye had been in your houses, verily they would have gone forth to fight, whose slaughter was decreed, to the places where they died : and this came to pass, that God might try what was in your breasts, and might discern what was in your hearts ; for God knoweth the innermost parts of the breasts of men. Verily they among you who turned their backs on the day whereon the two armies met each other at Ohod, Satan caused them to slip, for some crime which they had committed ; but now hath God forgiven them ; for God is gracious and merciful. O true believers, be not as they who believed not, and said of their brethren, when they had journeyed in the land, or had been at war, If they had been with us, those had not died, nor had these been slain : whereas what befel them was so ordained that God might make it matter of sighing in their hearts. God giveth life, and causeth to die : and God seeth that which ye do. Moreover, if ye be slain, or die in defence of the religion of God ; verily pardon from God, and mercy, is better than what they heap together of worldly riches. And if ye die, or be slain, verily unto God shall ye be gathered. And as to the mercy granted unto the disobedient from God, thou, O Mahomet ! hast been mild towards them ; but if thou hadst been severe, and hard-hearted, they had surely separated themselves from about thee. Therefore forgive them, and ask pardon for them : and consult them in the affair of war ; and, after thou hast deliberated, trust in God ; for God loveth those that trust in him. If God help you, none shall conquer you ; but if he desert you, who is it that will

help you after him? Therefore in God let the faithful trust. It is not the part of a prophet to defraud; for he who defraudeth, shall bring with him what he hath defrauded any one of on the day of the resurrection. Then shall every soul be paid what he hath gained; and they shall not be treated unjustly. Shall he therefore who followeth that which is well-pleasing unto God, be as he who bringeth on himself wrath from God, and whose receptacle is hell? an evil journey shall it be thither. There shall be degrees of rewards and punishments with God, for God seeth what they do. Now hath God been gracious unto the believers when he raised up among them an apostle of their own nation, who should recite his signs unto them and purify them, and teach them the book of the Koran and wisdom; whereas they were before in manifest error. After a misfortune hath befallen you at Ohod, (ye had already obtained two equal advantages,) do ye say, Whence cometh this? Answer, This is from yourselves; for God is almighty. And what happened unto you, on the day whereon the two armies met, was certainly by the permission of God; and that he might know the faithful, and that he might know the ungodly. It was said unto them, Come, fight for the religion of God, or drive back the enemy: they answered, If we had known ye went out to fight, we had certainly followed you. They were on that day nearer unto unbelief, than they were to faith; they spake with their mouths, what was not in their hearts: but God perfectly knew what they concealed; who said of their brethren, while themselves staid at home, If they had obeyed us, they had not been slain. Say, Then keep back

death from yourselves, if ye say truth. Thou shalt in no wise reckon those who have been slain at Ohod in the cause of God, dead; nay, they are sustained alive with their Lord, rejoicing for what God of his favour hath granted them; and being glad for those, who, coming after them, have not as yet overtaken them; because there shall no fear come on them, neither shall they be grieved. They are filled with joy for the favour which they have received from God, and his bounty; and for that God suffereth not the reward of the faithful to perish. They who hearkened unto God and his apostle, after a wound had befallen them at Ohod, such of them as do good works, and fear God, shall have a great reward; unto whom certain men said, Verily the men of Mecca have already gathered forces against you, be ye therefore afraid of them; but this increased their faith, and they said, God is our support, and the most excellent patron. Wherefore they returned with favour from God, and advantage; no evil befel them: and they followed what was well-pleasing unto God; for God is endowed with great liberality. Verily that devil would cause you to fear his friends: but be ye not afraid of them; but fear me, if ye be true believers. They shall not grieve thee, who emulously hasten unto infidelity; for they shall never hurt God at all. God will not give them a part in the next life, and they shall suffer a great punishment. Surely those who purchase infidelity with faith, shall by no means hurt God at all, but they shall suffer a grievous punishment. And let not the unbelievers think, because we grant them lives long and prosperous, that it is better for their souls: we grant them long and

prosperous lives only that their iniquity may be increased; and they shall suffer an ignominious punishment. God is not disposed to leave the faithful in the condition which ye are now in, until he sever the wicked from the good; nor is God disposed to make you acquainted with what is a hidden secret; but God chooseth such of his apostles as he pleaseth, to reveal his mind unto: believe therefore in God, and his apostles: and if ye believe, and fear God, ye shall receive a great reward. And let not those who are covetous of what God of his bounty hath granted them, imagine that their avarice is better for them. nay, rather it is worse for them. That which they have covetously reserved shall be bound as a collar about their neck, on the day of the resurrection: unto God belongeth the inheritance of heaven and earth; and God is well acquainted with what ye do. God hath already heard the saying of those who said, Verily God is poor, and we are rich: we will surely write down what they have said, and the slaughter which they have made of the prophets without a cause; and will say unto them, Taste ye the pain of burning. This shall they suffer for the evil which their hands have sent before them, and because God is not unjust towards mankind: who also say, Surely God hath commanded us, that we should not give credit to any apostle, until one should come unto us with a sacrifice, which should be consumed by fire. Say, Apostles have already come unto you before me, with plain proofs, and with the miracle which ye mention: why therefore have ye slain them, if ye speak truth? If they accuse thee of imposture, the apostles before thee have also been accounted imposters, who brought evident demon-

strations, and the Scriptures, and the book which enlighteneth the understanding. Every soul shall taste of death, and ye shall have your rewards on the day of resurrection; and he who shall be far removed from hell-fire, and shall be admitted into paradise, shall be happy: but the present life is only a deceitful provision. Ye shall surely be proved in your possessions, and in your persons; and ye shall hear from those unto whom the Scripture was delivered before you, and from the idolaters, much hurt: but if ye be patient, and fear God, this is a matter that is absolutely determined. And when God accepted the covenant of those to whom the book of the law was given, saying, Ye shall surely publish it unto mankind, ye shall not hide it: yet they threw it behind their backs, and sold it for a small price; but woeful is the price for which they have sold it. Think not that they who rejoice at what they have done, and expect to be praised for what they have not done; think not, O prophet, that they shall escape from punishment, for they shall suffer a painful punishment; and unto God belongeth the kingdom of heaven and earth: God is almighty. Now in the creation of heaven and earth, and the vicissitudes of night and day, are signs unto those who are indued with understanding; who remember God standing, and sitting, and lying on their sides; and meditate on the creation of heaven and earth, saying, O Lord, thou hast not created this in vain; far be it from thee: therefore deliver us from the torment of hell-fire: O Lord, surely whom thou shalt throw into the fire, thou wilt also cover with shame: nor shall the ungodly have any to help them. O Lord, we have heard a preacher inviting us to the faith, and saying, Believe in your

Lord : and we believed. O Lord, forgive us therefore our sins, and expiate our evil deeds from us, and make us to die with the righteous. O Lord, give us also the reward which thou hast promised by thy apostles ; and cover us not with shame on the day of resurrection : for thou art not contrary to the promise. Their Lord therefore answereth them, saying, I will not suffer the work of him among you who worketh to be lost, whether he be male or female : the one of you is from the other. They therefore who have left their country, and have turned out of their houses, and have suffered for my sake, and have been slain in battle ; verily I will expiate their evil deeds from them, and I will surely bring them into gardens watered by rivers ; a reward from God : and with God is the most excellent reward. Let not the prosperous dealing of the unbelievers in the land deceive thee : it is but a slender provision ; and then their receptacle shall be hell : an unhappy couch shall it be. But they who fear their Lord shall have gardens through which rivers flow, they shall continue therein for ever : this is the gift of God ; for what is with God shall be better for the righteous than short-lived worldly prosperity. There are some of those who have received the Scriptures, who believe in God, and that which hath been sent down to you, and that which hath been sent down to them, submitting themselves unto God ; they sell not the signs of God for a small price : these shall have their reward with their Lord ; for God is swift in taking an account. O true believers, be patient, and strive to excel in patience, and be constant-minded, and fear God, that ye may be happy.

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