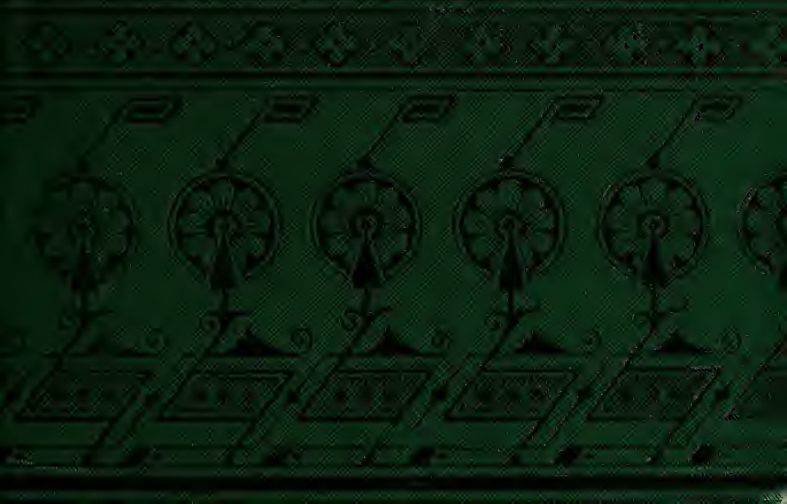
MAHOMET

BY

GIBBON

Biographical Series



EDITOR'S PREFACE.

The splendid fiftieth chapter of Gibbon's History of the 'Decline and fall of the Roman Empire,' with the learned and judicious notes of Dean Milman and Dr. William Smith, may be regarded as at once a brilliant and accurate Life of the Arabian prophet. The narrative of Gibbon favorably exhibits his characteristic qualities of comprehensiveness, breadth of vision, and sustained eloquence. The notes of Dean Milman correct any ecclesiastical errors, and make all necessary additions from the point of view of Church history. In the notes of Dr. William Smith we have the last results of Oriental scholarship in regard to Mahomet's (or Mohammed's) Life. Most of Gibbon's notes, which contain little more than references to his authorities, which would encumber the page and add nothing of interest to the reader, have been omitted.

Those that are retained are referred to by letters. The notes of Milman and Dr. Smith are respectively designated by their initials, and referred to by figures. Following our general plan, we here give a summary of Gibbon's life.

Gibbon, Edward, was born at Putney, in the county of Surrey, on the 27th of April, 1737. He has given us in his 'Autobiography,' copious particulars concerning his life and writings. From his own account we learn that in childhood his health was very delicate, and that his early education was principally conducted by his aunt, Mrs. Porten. At the age of nine he was sent to a boarding-school at Kingston-upon-Thames, where he remained for two years, but made little progress, in consequence of the frequent interruption of his studies by illness. The same cause prevented his attention to study at Westminster school, whither he was sent in 1749, and "his riper age was left to acquire the beauties of the Latin and the rudiments of the Greek tongue." After

residing for a short time with the Rev. Philip Francis, the translator of Horace, he was removed in 1752 to Oxford, where he was matriculated as a gentleman commoner of Magdalen College in his fifteenth year. Though his frequent absence from school had prevented him from obtaining much knowledge of Latin and Greek, his love of reading had led him to peruse many historical and geographical works; and he arrived at Oxford, according to his own account, "with a stock of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a school-boy would have been ashamed." His imperfect education was not improved during his residence at Oxford; his tutors he describes as easy men, who preferred receiving the fees to attending to the instruction of their pupils; and after leading a somewhat dissipated life for fourteen months, he was compelled to leave Oxford in consequence of having embraced the Roman Catholic faith. His conversion was effected by the perusal of

Dr. Middleton's 'Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers possessed by the Church in the Early Ages,' in which he attempts to show that all the leading doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church are supported by the miracles of the early fathers, and that therefore the doctrines of the Church of Rome must be true, or the miracles false. Gibbon's early education had taught him to revere the authority of these fathers; he was induced to read some works, especially 'Bossuet's Variations,' in favor of the Roman faith; and in 1753, he, "solemnly, though privately, abjured the errors of heresy." With the object of reclaiming him to Protestanism, his father sent him to Lausanne in Switzerland, to reside with M. Pavillard, a Calvinist minister. The arguments of Pavillard and his own studies had the effect which his father desired; in the following year he professed his belief in the doctrines of the Protestant Church, and according to his own statement, "suspended his religious inquiries, acquiescing with implicit belief in the tenets

and mysteries which are adopted by the general consent of Catholics and Protestants.' He remained in Switzerland for five years, during which time he paid great attention to study, and assiduously endeavored to remedy the defects of his early education.

During his residence at Lausanne, he had become perfectly acquainted with the French language, in which he composed his first work, entitled 'Essai sur l'Etude de la Littérature,' which was published in 1761. "It was received with more favor on the Continent, than in England, where it was little read, and speedily forgotten." His studies after his return to England were much interrupted by attention to his duties in the Hampshire militia, in which he was appointed captain, and the knowledge of military tactics, which he acquired in the service, was not, to use his own words, "useless to the historian of the Roman Empire." During his visit to Rome in 1764, "as he sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the

Temple of Jupiter, the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to his mind." Many years, however, elapsed before he began the composition of the 'Decline and Fall.' On his return to England, he commenced a work on the Revolutions of Florence and Switzerland; and in conjunction with a Swiss friend of the name of Deyverdun, published in 1767 and 1768, two volumes of a work entitled 'Mémoires Littéraries de la grande Brétagne.' His next work, which appeared in 1770, was a 'Reply to Bishop Warburton's Interpretation of the Sixth Book of the Æneid.' In 1774 he was returned to parliament by the interest of Lord Eliot for the borough of Liskeard; and for eight sessions he steadily supported by his vote, though he never spoke, the ministry of Lord North, for which he was rewarded by being made one of the commissioners of trade and plantations, with a salary of £800 a year. In the next parliament he sat for the borough of Lymington, but resigned his seat on the dissolution of

Lord North's ministry, when he lost "his convenient salary, after having enjoyed it about three years." During the time in which he was a member of parliament, he published in the French language, at the request of the ministry, a pamphlet entitled 'Mémoire Justificatif,' in reply to the French manifesto, and in vindication of the justice of the British arms. In 1776, the first volume of the 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' appeared in 4to., and was received by the public in the most favorable manner: the first impression was exhausted in a few days; a second and third edition were scarcely adequate to the demand." The second and third volumes, which terminated the history of the fall of the Western Empire, were published in 1731.

In 1783 he left England, and retired to Lausanne, to reside permanently with his friend M. Deyverdun. From this time to 1787 he was engaged in the composition of the last three volumes of his great work which appeared in 1788. He spent some

time that year in England to superintend the publication, and again returned to Lausanne, where he remained till 1793, when the death of Lady Sheffield recalled him to his native country to console his friend. He died in London on the 16th of January, 1794.

The 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' comprises the history of the world for nearly thirteen centuries, from the reign of the Antonines to the taking of Constantinople by the Turks. It was a great accession to literature; Niebuhr indeed pronounced it "a work never to be excelled." It connects ancient and modern history, and contains information on many subjects which historians generally neglect, and sometimes unsuccessfully attempt. In the most convenient edition of the 'Decline and Fall,' that edited by Dr. William Smith, 8 vols. 8vo., 1854-55, are embodied the more important notes of Guizot, the equally valuable ones of Wenck, the German translator, with those by Dean Milman, intended to correct

the ecclesiastical bias of the historian, and a judicious selection from the comments of other authorities, while the references are throughout verified. His 'Miscellaneous Works, with Memoirs of his life and writings composed by himself,' were published by Lord Sheffield in 2 vols. 4to., 1796; to which a third volume was added in 1815. The 'Miscellaneous Works' were reprinted in the same year in 5 vols. 8vo. This collection contains a republication of some of the works which have been already mentioned; and in addition to these, a large 'Collection of Letters written by or to Mr. Gibbon;' Abstracts of the Books he read, with Reflections;' Extracts from his Journal;' 'Outlines of the History of the World;' 'A Dissertation on the Subject of L'Homme au Masque de Fer;' 'Antiquities of the House of Brunswick;' Mémoire sur la Monarchie des Medes;' 'Nomina Gentesque Antiquæ Italiæ;' 'Remarks on Blackstone's Commentaries;' 'On the Position of the Meridional Line, and the supposed Circumnavi-

gation of Africa by the Ancients,' and other pieces of less importance.

A splendid and reliable Life of the founder of a religion, that strove many centuries with Christianity for the mastery of the world, that failed because every thing human fails in a conflict with the divine, must be a welcome book. To the thoughtful, whether young or old, who are striving to look beneath the surface in the complicated history of the world, we heartily recommend it.

O. W. WIGHT.

MARCH, 1859.

LIFE OF MAHOMET.

THE genius of the Arabian prophet, the manners of his nation, and the spirit of his religion, involve the causes of the decline and fall of the Eastern empire; and our eyes are curiously intent on one of the most memorable revolutions, which have impressed a new and lasting character on the nations of the globe.[1]

[1] The best works on the ancient geography and ante-Mahometan history of Arabia are 'The Historical Geography of Arabia,' by the Rev. Charles Forster, 2 vols. 8vo., London, 1844, and 'Essai sur l'Histoire des Arabes avant l'Islamisme, pendant l'époque de Mahomet, et jusqu'à la réduction de toutes les tribus sous la loi Musulmane,' by A. P. Caussin de Perceval, Professeur d'Arabe au Collége Royal de France, 3 vols. 8vo., Paris, 1847–1848. Of the latter work there is an able account in the Calcutta Review, No. xli.—S.—Of modern travellers may be mentioned the adventurer who called himself Ali Bey; but, above all, the intelligent, the enterprising, the accurate Burckhardt.—M.

In the vacant space between Persia, Syria, Egypt, and Æthiopia, the Arabian peninsula may be conceived as a triangle of spacious but irregular dimensions. From the northern point of Beles[a] on the Euphrates, a line of fifteen hundred miles is terminated by the straits of Babelmandel and the land of frankincense. About half this length may be allowed for the middle breadth, from east to west, from Bassora to Suez, from the Persian gulf to the Red sea. The sides of the triangle are gradually enlarged, and the southern basis presents a front of a thousand miles to the Indian ocean. The entire surface of the peninsula exceeds in a fourfold proportion that of Germany or France; but the far greater part has been justly stigmatized with the epithets of the *stony* and the *sandy*. Even the wilds

[a] It was in this place, the paradise or garden of a satrap, that Xenophon and the Greeks first passed the Euphrates.

of Tartary are decked, by the hand of nature, with lofty trees and luxuriant herbage; and the lonesome traveller derives a sort of comfort and society from the presence of vegetable life. But in the dreary waste of Arabia, a boundless level of sand is intersected by sharp and naked mountains; and the face of the desert, without shade or shelter, is scorched by the direct and intense rays of the tropical sun. Instead of refreshing breezes, the winds, particularly from the south-west, diffuse a noxious and even deadly vapor; the hillocks of sand which they alternately raise and scatter, are compared to the billows of the ocean, and whole caravans, whole armies, have been lost and buried in the whirlwind. The common benefits of water are an object of desire and contest; and such is the scarcity of wood, that some art is requisite to preserve and propagate the element of fire.

Arabia is destitute of navigable rivers, which fertilize the soil, and convey its produce to the adjacent regions; the torrents that fall from the hills are imbibed by the thirsty earth: the rare and hardy plants, the tamarind or the acacia, that strike their roots into the clefts of the rocks, are nourished by the dews of night; a scanty supply of rain is collected in cisterns and aqueducts; the wells and springs are the secret treasure of the desert; and the pilgrim of Mecca,[a] after many a dry and sultry march, is disgusted by the taste of the waters, which have rolled over a bed of sulphur or salt. Such is the general and genuine picture of the climate of Arabia. The experience of evil enhances the value of any local or partial enjoyments. A shady grove, a green pasture, a stream

[a] In the thirty days, or stations, between Cairo and Mecca, there are fifteen destitute of good water. See the route of the Hadjees, in Shaw's Travels, p. 477.

of fresh water, are sufficient to attract a colony of sedentary Arabs to the fortunate spots which can afford food and refreshment to themselves and their cattle, and which encourage their industry in the cultivation of the palm-tree and the vine. The high lands that border on the Indian ocean are distinguished by their superior plenty of wood and water; the air is more temperate, the fruits are more delicious, the animals and the human race more numerous; the fertility of the soil invites and rewards the toil of the husbandman; and the peculiar gifts of frankincense[a] and coffee have attracted in different ages the merchants of the world. If it be compared with the rest of the peninsula,

[a] The aromatics, especially the *thus* or frankincense, of Arabia, occupy the twelfth book of Pliny. Our great poet (Paradise Lost, l. iv.) introduces, in a simile, the spicy odors that are blown by the north-east wind from the Sabæan coast:

——Many a league,
Pleased with the grateful scent, old Ocean smiles.

this sequestered region may truly deserve the appellation of the *happy;* and the splendid coloring of fancy and fiction has been suggested by contrast, and countenanced by distance. It was for this earthly paradise that nature had reserved her choicest favors and her most curious workmanship: the incompatible blessings of luxury and innocence were ascribed to the natives: the soil was impregnated with gold[a] and gems, and both the land and sea were taught to exhale the odors of aromatic sweets. This division of the

[a] Agatharcides affirms that lumps of pure gold were found from the size of an olive to that of a nut; that iron was twice, and silver ten times, the value of gold. (de Mari Rubro, p. 60.) These real or imaginary treasures are vanished, and no gold mines are at present known in Arabia. (Niebuhr, Description, p. 124.) [1]

[1] A brilliant passage in the geographical poem of Dionysius Periegetes embodies the notions of the ancients on the wealth and fertility of Yemen. Greek mythology, and the traditions of the "gorgeous east," of India as well as Arabia, are mingled together in indiscriminate splendor. Compare on the southern coast of Arabia the recent travels of Lieut. Wellsted.—M.

sandy, the *stony*, and the *happy*, so familiar to the Greeks and Latins, is unknown to the Arabians themselves: and it is singular enough, that a country, whose language and inhabitants have ever been the same, should scarcely retain a vestige of its ancient geography. The maritime districts of *Bahrein* and *Oman* are opposite to the realm of Persia. The kingdom of *Yemen* displays the limits, or at least the situation, of Arabia Fælix: the name of *Neged* is extended over the inland space: and the birth of Mahomet has illustrated the province of *Hejaz*[1] along the coast of the Red sea.

The measure of the population is regulated by the means of subsistence;

[1] *Hejaz* means the "barrier" or "frontier," as lying between the southern and northern merchants, or, in other words, between Arabia Felix and Arabia Petræa. It is a mountainous district, and includes Medina as well as Mecca. It occupies the space between *Neged* (Najd) and the Red Sea. Sprenger, Life of Mohammed, p. 14; C. de Perceval, Essai, &c., vol. i. p. 3.—S.

and the inhabitants of this vast peninsula might be outnumbered by the subjects of a fertile and industrious province. Along the shores of the Persian gulf, of the ocean, and even of the Red sea, the *Icthyophagi*, or fish-eaters, continued to wander in quest of their precarious food. In this primitive and abject state, which ill deserves the name of society, the human brute, without arts or laws, almost without sense or language, is poorly distinguished from the rest of the animal creation. Gene rations and ages might roll away in silent oblivion, and the helpless savage was restrained from multiplying his race, by the wants and pursuits which confined his existence to the narrow margin of the sea-coast. But in an early period of antiquity the great body of the Arabs had emerged from this scene of misery; and as the naked wilderness could not maintain a people

of hunters, they rose at once to the more secure and plentiful condition of the pastoral life. The same life is uniformly pursued by the roving tribes of the desert; and in the portrait of the modern *Bedoweens*, we may trace the features of their ancestors, who, in the age of Moses or Mahomet, dwelt under similar tents, and conducted their horses, and camels, and sheep, to the same springs and the same pastures. Our toil is lessened, and our wealth is increased, by our dominion over the useful animals; and the Arabian shepherd had acquired the absolute possession of a faithful friend and laborious slave.[a] Arabia, in the opinion of the naturalist, is the genuine and original country of the *horse;* the climate most propitious, not indeed to the size, but to the spirit

[a] Read (it is no unpleasant task) the incomparable articles of the *Horse* and the *Camel*, in the Natural History of M. de Buffon.

and swiftness, of that generous animal. The merit of the Barb, the Spanish, and the English breed, is derived from a mixture of Arabian blood: the Bedoweens preserve, with superstitious care, the honors and the memory of the purest race: the males are sold at a high price, but the females are seldom alienated; and the birth of a noble foal was esteemed, among the tribes, as a subject of joy and mutual congratulation. These horses are educated in the tents, among the children of the Arabs, with a tender familiarity, which trains them in the habits of gentleness and attachment. They are accustomed only to walk and to gallop: their sensations are not blunted by the incessant abuse of the spur and the whip their powers are reserved for the moments of flight and pursuit; but no sooner do they feel the touch of the hand or the stirrup, than they dar-

away with the swiftness of the wind; and if their friend be dismounted in the rapid career, they instantly stop till he has recovered his seat. In the sands of Africa and Arabia, the *camel* is a sacred and precious gift. That strong and patient beast of burthen can perform, without eating or drinking, a journey of several days; and a reservoir of fresh water is preserved in a large bag, a fifth stomach of the animal, whose body is imprinted with the marks of servitude: the larger breed is capable of transporting a weight of a thousand pounds; and the dromedary, of a lighter and more active frame, outstrips the fleetest courser in the race. Alive or dead, almost every part of the camel is serviceable to man: her milk is plentiful and nutritious: the young and tender flesh has the taste of veal: a valuable salt is extracted from the urine: the dung supplies

the deficiency of fuel; and the long hair, which falls each year and is renewed, is coarsely manufactured into the garments, the furniture, and the tents of the Bedoweens. In the rainy seasons they consume the rare and insufficient herbage of the desert: during the heats of summer and the scarcity of winter, they remove their encampments, to the sea-coast, the hills of Yemen, or the neighborhood of the Euphrates, and have often extorted the dangerous licence of visiting the banks of the Nile, and the villages of Syria and Palestine. The life of a wandering Arab is a life of danger and distress; and though sometimes, by rapine or exchange, he may appropriate the fruits of industry, a private citizen of Europe is in possession of more solid and pleasing luxury than the proudest emir, who marches in the field at the head of ten thousand horse.

Yet an essential difference may be found between the hordes of Scythia and the Arabian tribes; since many of the latter were collected into towns, and employed in the labors of trade and agriculture. A part of their time and industry was still devoted to the management of their cattle: they mingled, in peace and war, with their brethren of the desert; and the Bedoweens derived from their useful intercourse, some supply of their wants, and some rudiments of art and knowledge. Among the forty-two cities of Arabia, enumerated by Abulfeda, the most ancient and populous were situate in the *happy* Yemen: the towers of Saana, and the marvellous reservoir of Merab,[1] were constructed by the kings of the Homerites; but their profane

[1] The town never recovered the inundation which took place from the bursting of a large reservoir of water—an event of great importance in the Arabian annals, and discussed at considerable length by modern orientalists.—M.

lustre was eclipsed by the prophetic glories of MEDINA, and MECCA,[1] near the Red sea, and at the distance from each other of two hundred and seventy miles. The last of these holy places was known to the Greeks under the name of Ma coraba; and the termination of the word is expressive of its greatness, which has not indeed, in the most flourishing period, exceeded the size and populousness of Marseilles.[2] Some latent motive, perhaps of superstition, must have impelled the founders, in the choice of a most unpromising situation.

[1] Even in the time of Gibbon, Mecca had not been so inaccessible to Europeans. It had been visited by Ludovico Barthema, and by one Joseph Pitts of Exeter, who was taken prisoner by the Moors, and forcibly converted to Mahometanism. His volume is a curious though plain account of his sufferings and travels. Since that time Mecca has been entered, and the ceremonies witnessed, by Dr. Seetzen, whose papers were unfortunately lost; by the Spaniard who called himself Ali Bey; and lastly, by Burckhardt, whose description leaves nothing wanting to satisfy the curiosity.—M.

[2] Mr. Forster identifies the Greek name with the Arabic *Mecharab*, "the warlike city," or "the city of the Harb." Geogr. of Arabia, vol. i. p. 265.—S.

They erected their habitations of mud or stone, in a plain about two miles long and one mile broad, at the foot of three barren mountains: the soil is a rock; the water even of the holy well of Zem zem is bitter or brackish;[1] the pastures are remote from the city; and grapes are transported above seventy miles from the gardens of Tayef. The fame and spirit of the Koreishites, who reigned in Mecca, were conspicuous among the Arabian tribes; but their ungrateful soil refused the labors of agriculture, and their position was favorable to the enterprises of trade. By the sea-port of Gedda, at the distance only of forty miles, they maintain-

[1] Burckhardt, however, observes:—"The water is heavy n its taste, and sometimes in its color resembles milk, but it *perfectly sweet*, and differs very much from that of the brackish wells dispersed over the town." (Travels in Arabia, p. 144.) Elsewhere he says:—"It seems probable that the town of Mecca owed its origin to this well; for many miles round no sweet water is found, nor is there in any part of the country so copious a supply." (Ibid, p. 145).—S.

ed an easy correspondence with Abyssinia; and that Christian kingdom afforded the first refuge to the disciples of Mahomet. The treasures of Africa were conveyed over the peninsula of Gerrha or Katif, in the province of Bahrein, a city built, as it is said, of rock-salt, by the Chaldean exiles; and from thence, with the native pearls of the Persian gulf, they were floated on rafts to the mouth of the Euphrates. Mecca is placed almost at an equal distance, a month's journey, between Yemen on the right, and Syria on the left hand. The former was the winter, the latter the summer, station of her caravans; and their seasonable arrival relieved the ships of India from the tedious and troublesome navigation of the Red sea. In the markets of Saana and Merab, in the harbors of Oman and Aden, the camels of the Koreishites were laden with a precious cargo of aromatics; a

supply of corn and manufactures was purchased in the fairs of Bostra and Damascus; the lucrative exchange diffused plenty and riches in the streets of Mecca; and the noblest of her sons united the love of arms with the profession of merchandise.

The perpetual independence of the Arabs has been the theme of praise among strangers and natives; and the arts of controversy transform this singular event into a prophecy and a miracle, in favor of the posterity of Ismael. Some exceptions, that can neither be dissembled nor eluded, render this mode of reasoning as indiscreet as it is superfluous; the kingdom of Yemen has been successively subdued by the Abyssinians, the Persians, the sultans of Egypt, and the Turks: the holy cities of Mecca and Medina have repeatedly bowed under a Scythian tyrant; and the Roman province of Arabia embraced the

peculiar wilderness in which Ismael and his sons must have pitched their tents in the face of their brethren. Yet these exceptions are temporary or local; the body of the nation has escaped the yoke of the most powerful monarchies: the arms of Sesostris and Cyrus, of Pompey and Trajan, could never achieve the conquest of Arabia; the present sovereign of the Turks[a] may exercise a shadow of jurisdiction, but his pride is reduced to solicit the friendship of a people, whom it is dangerous to provoke, and fruitless to attack. The obvious causes of their freedom are inscribed on the character and country of the Arabs. Many ages before Mahomet, their intrepid valor had been

[a] Niebuhr (Description de l'Arabie, p. 302, 303, 329—331) affords the most recent and authentic intelligence of the Turkish empire in Arabia.[1]

[1] Niebuhr's, notwithstanding the multitude of later travellers, maintains its ground as the classical work on Arabia. —M.

severly felt by their neighbors in offensive and defensive war. The patient and active virtues of a soldier are insensibly nursed in the habits and discipline of a pastoral life. The care of the sheep and camels is abandoned to the women of the tribe; but 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 scymitar. The long memory of their independence is the firmest pledge of its perpetuity, and succeeding generations are animated to prove their descent, and to maintain their inheritance. Their domestic feuds are suspended on the approach of a common enemy; and in their last hostilities against the Turks, the caravan of Mecca was attacked and pillaged by fourscore thousand of the confederates. 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 the burning solitude. The arms and deserts of the Bedoweens are not only the safeguards of their own freedom, but the barriers also of the Happy Arabia, whose inhabitants, remote from war, are enervated by the luxury of the soil and climate. The legions of Augustus melted away in disease and lassitude; and it is only by a naval power that the reduction of Yemen has been successfully attempted. When Mahomet erected his holy standard, that kingdom was a province of the Persian

empire; yet seven princes of the Homerites still reigned in the mountains; and the vicegerent of Chosroes was tempted to forget his distant country and his unfortunate master. The historians of the age of Justinian represent the state of the independent Arabs, who were divided by interest or affection in the long quarrel of the east: the tribe of *Gassan* was allowed to encamp on the Syrian territory: the princes of *Hira* were permitted to form a city about forty miles to the southward of the ruins of Babylon. Their service in the field was speedy and vigorous; but their friendship 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 of Persia. From Mecca to the Euphrates, the

Arabian tribes were confounded by the Greeks and Latins, under the general appellation of SARACENS, a name which every Christian mouth has been taught to pronounce with terror and abhorrence.

The slaves of domestic tyranny may vainly exult in their national independence: but the Arab is personally free; and he enjoys, in some degree, the benefits of society, without forfeiting the prerogatives of nature. In every tribe, superstition, or gratitude, or fortune, has exalted a particular family above the heads of their equals. The dignities of sheick and emir invariably descend in this chosen race; but the order of succession is loose and precarious, and the most worthy or aged of the noble kinsmen are preferred to the simple, though important, office of composing disputes by their advice, and guiding valor by their example. Even a fe-

male of sense and spirit has been permitted to command the countrymen of Zenobia. The momentary junction of several tribes produces an army; their more lasting union constitutes a nation; and the supreme chief, the emir of emirs, whose banner is displayed at their head, may deserve, in the eyes of strangers, the honors of the kingly name. If the Arabian princes abuse their power, they are quickly punished by the desertion of their subjects, who had been accustomed to a mild and parental jurisdiction. Their spirit is free, their steps are unconfined, the desert is open, and the tribes and families are held together by a mutual and voluntary compact. The softer natives of Yemen supported the pomp and majesty of a monarch; but if he could not leave his palace without endangering his life, the active powers of government must have been devolved on his nobles and mag-

istrates. The cities of Mecca and Medina present, in the heart of Asia, the form, or rather the substance, of a commonwealth. The grandfather of Mahomet, and his lineal ancestors, ap pear, in foreign and domestic transactions as the princes of their country; but they reigned, like Pericles at Athens, or the Medici at Florence, by the opinion of their wisdom and integrity; their influence was divided with their patrimony; and the sceptre was transferred from the uncles of the prophet to a younger branch of the tribe of Koreish. On solemn occasions they convened the assembly of the people; and since mankind must be either compelled or persuaded to obey, the use and reputation of oratory among the ancient Arabs is the clearest evidence of public freedom. But their simple freedom was of a very different cast from the nice and artificial machi-

nery of the Greek and Roman republics, in which each member possessed an undivided share of the civil and political rights of the community. In the more simple state of the Arabs, the nation is free, because each of her sons disdains a base submission to the will of a master. His breast is fortified with the austere virtues of courage, patience, and sobriety; the love of independence prompts him to exercise the habits of self-command; and the fear of dishonor guards him from the meaner apprehension of pain, of danger, and of death. The gravity and firmness of the mind is conspicuous in his outward demeanor; his speech is slow, weighty, and concise; he is seldom provoked to laughter; his only gesture is that of stroking his beard, the venerable symbol of manhood; and the sense of his own importance teaches him to accost his equals without levity, and his superiors with-

out awe.[1] The liberty of the Saracens survived their conquests: the first caliphs indulged the bold and familiar language of their subjects; they ascended the pulpit to persuade and edify the congregation; nor was it before the seat of empire was removed to the Tigris, that the Abbassides adopted the proud and pompous ceremonial of the Persian and Byzantine courts.

In the study of nations and men, we may observe the causes that render them hostile or friendly to each other, that tend to narrow or enlarge, to mollify or exasperate, the social character. The separation of the Arabs from the rest of mankind, has accustomed them to confound the ideas of stranger and enemy; and the poverty of the land has introduced a maxim of jurispru dence, which they believe and practise

[1] See the curious romance of Antar, the most vivid an. authentic picture of Arabian manners.—M.

to the present hour. They pretend, that in the division of the earth, the rich and fertile climates were assigned to the other branches of the human family; and that the posterity of the outlaw Ismael might recover, by fraud or force, the portion of the inheritance of which he had been unjustly deprived. According to the remark of Pliny, the Arabian tribes are equally addicted to theft and merchandise: the caravans that traverse the desert are ransomed or pillaged; and their neighbors, since the remote times of Job and Sesostris, have been the victims of their rapacious spirit. If a Bedoween discovers from afar a solitary traveller, he rides furiously against him, crying, with a loud voice, "Undress thyself, thy aunt (*my wife*) is without a garment." A ready submission entitles him to mercy; resistance will provoke the aggressor, and his own blood must expiate the

blood which he presumes to shed in legitimate defence. A single robber, or a few associates, are branded with their genuine name; but the exploits of a numerous band assume the charac ter of lawful and honorable war. The temper of a people, thus armed against mankind, was doubly inflamed by the domestic license of rapine, murder, and revenge. In the constitution of Europe, the right of peace and war is now confined to a small, and the actual exercise to a much smaller, list of respectable potentates; but each Arab, with impunity and renown, might point his javelin against the life of his countryman. The union of the nation consisted only in a vague resemblance of language and manners; and in each community, the jurisdiction of the magistrate was mute and impotent. Of the time of ignorance which preceded Mahomet, seventeen hundred battles

are recorded by tradition: hostility was embittered with the rancor of civil faction; and the recital, in prose or verse, of an obsolete feud, was sufficient to rekindle the same passions among the descendants of the hostile tribes. In private life, every man, at least every family, was the judge and avenger of its own cause. The nice sensibility of honor, which weighs the insult rather than the injury, sheds its deadly venom on the quarrels of the Arabs: the honor of their women, and of their *beards*, is most easily wounded; an indecent action, a contemptuous word, can be expiated only by the blood of the offender; and such is their patient inveteracy, that they expect whole months and years the opportunity of revenge. A fine or compensation for murder is familiar to the barbarians of every age; but in Arabia the kinsmen of the dead are at liberty to accept the atonement,

or to exercise with their own hands the law of retaliation. The refined malice of the Arabs refuses even the head of the murderer, substitutes an innocent to the guilty person, and transfers the penalty to the best and most considerable of the race by whom they have been injured. If he falls by their hands, they are exposed in their turn to the danger of reprisals; the interest and principal of the bloody debt are accumulated; the individuals of either family lead a life of malice and suspicion, and fifty years may sometimes elapse before the account of vengeance be finally settled. This sanguinary spirit, ignorant of pity or forgiveness, has been moderated, however, by the maxims of honor, which require in every private encounter some decent equality of age and strength, of numbers and weapons. An annual festival of two, perhaps of four, months, was observed by the

Arabs before the time of Mahomet, during which their swords were religiously sheathed both in foreign and domestic hostility; and this partial truce is more strongly expressive of the habits of anarchy and warfare.

But the spirit of rapine and revenge was attempered by the milder influence of trade and literature. The solitary peninsula is encompassed by the most civilized nations of the ancient world; the merchant is the friend of mankind; and the annual caravans imported the first seeds of knowledge and politeness into the cities, and even the camps, of the desert. Whatever may be the pedigree of the Arabs, their language is derived from the same original stock with the Hebrew, the Syriac, and the Chaldean tongues; the independence of the tribes was marked by their peculiar dialects; but each, after their own, allowed a just preference to the pure

and perspicuous idiom of Mecca. In Arabia, as well as in Greece, the perfection of language outstripped the refinement of manners; and her speech could diversify the fourscore names of honey, the two hundred of a serpent, the five hundred of a lion, the thousand of a sword, at a time when this copious dictionary was intrusted to the memory of an illiterate people. The monuments of the Homerites were inscribed with an obsolete and mysterious character; but the Cufic letters, the groundwork of the present alphabet, were invented on the banks of the Euphrates; and the recent invention was taught at Mecca by a stranger who settled in that city after the birth of Mahomet. The arts of grammar, of metre, and of rhetoric, were unknown to the free-born eloquence of the Arabians; but their penetration was sharp, their fancy luxuriant, their wit strong and sententious,[a]

[a] Stated from the one hundred and sixty-nine sentences

and their more elaborate compositions were addressed with energy and effect to the minds of their hearers. The genius and merit of a rising poet was celebrated by the applause of his own and the kindred tribes. A solemn banquet was prepared, and a chorus of women, striking their tymbals, and displaying the pomp of their nuptials, sung in the presence of their sons and husbands the felicity of their native tribe—that a champion had now appeared to vindicate their rights—that a herald had raised his voice to immortalize their renown. The distant or hostile tribes resorted to an annual fair, which was abolished by the fanaticism of the first Moslems—a national assembly that must have contributed to refine and harmonize the barbarians. Thirty days

of Ali (translated by Ockley, London, 1718), which afford a just and favorable specimen of Arabian wit. [1]

[1] Compare the Arabic proverbs translated by Burckhardt, London, 1830.—M.

were employed in the exchange, not only of corn and wine, but of eloquence and poetry. The prize was disputed by the generous emulation of the bards; the victorious performance was deposited in the archives of princes, and emirs; and we may read in our own language, the seven original poems which were inscribed in letters of gold, and suspended in the temple of Mecca. The Arabian poets were the historians and moralists of the age; and if they sympathized with the prejudices, they inspired and crowned the virtues, of their countrymen. The indissoluble union of generosity and valor was the darling theme of their song; and when they pointed their keenest satire against a despicable race, they affirmed, in the bitterness of reproach, that the men knew not how to give, nor the women to deny. The same hospitality, which was practised by Abraham, and cele

brated by Homer, is still renewed in the camps of the Arabs. The ferocious Bedoweens, the terror of the desert, embrace, without inquiry or hesitation, the stranger who dares to confide in their honor and to enter their tent. His treatment is kind and respectful; he shares the wealth, or the poverty, of his host; and, after a needful repose, he is dismissed on his way, with thanks, with blessings, and perhaps with gifts. The heart and hand are more largely expanded by the wants of a brother or a friend; but the heroic acts that could deserve the public applause, must have surpassed the narrow measure of discretion and experience. A dispute had arisen, who, among the citizens of Mecca, was entitled to the prize of generosity; and a successive application was made to the three who were deemed most worthy of the trial. Abdallah, the son of Abdas, had undertaken a distant

journey, and his foot was in the stirrup when he heard the voice of a suppliant, "O son of the uncle of the apostle of God, I am a traveller and in distress!" He instantly dismounted, to present the pilgrim with his camel, her rich caparison, and a purse of four thousand pieces of gold, excepting only the sword, either for its intrinsic value, or as the gift of an honored kinsman. The servant of Kais informed the second suppliant that his master was asleep; but he immediately added, "Here is a purse of seven thousand pieces of gold, (it is all we have in the house,) and here is an order, that will entitle you to a camel and a slave;" the master, as soon as he awoke, praised and enfranchised his faithful steward with a gentle reproof, that by respecting his slumbers he had stinted his bounty. The third of these heroes, the blind Arabah, at the hour of prayer, was supporting his

steps on the shoulders of two slaves. "Alas!" he replied, "my coffers are empty! but these you may sell; if you refuse, I renounce them." At these words, pushing away the youths, he groped along the wall with his staff. The character of Hatem is the perfect model of Arabian virtue;[1] he was brave and liberal, an eloquent poet, and a successful robber: forty camels were roasted at his hospitable feasts; and at the prayer of a suppliant enemy, he restored both the captives and the spoil. The freedom of his countrymen disdained the laws of justice; they proudly indulged the spontaneous impulse of pity and benevolence.

The religion of the Arabs, as well as of the Indians, consisted in the worship of the sun, the moon, and the fixed

[1] See the translation of the amusing Persian romance of Hatim Tai, by Duncan Forbes, Esq., among the works published by the Oriental Translation Fund.—M.

stars; a primitive and specious mode of superstition. The bright luminaries of the sky display the visible image of the Deity: their number and distance convey to a philosophic, or even a vulgar, eye, the idea of boundless space: the character of eternity is marked on these solid globes, that seem incapable of corruption or decay: the regularity of their motions may be ascribed to a principle of reason or instinct; and their real or imaginary influence encourages the vain belief that the earth and its inhabitants are the object of their peculiar care. The science of astronomy was cultivated at Babylon; but the school of the Arabs was a clear firmament and a naked plain. In their nocturnal marches, they steered by the guidance of the stars; their names, and order, and daily station, were familiar to the curiosity and devotion of the Bedoween

and he was taught by experience to divide in twenty-eight parts the zodiac of the moon, and to bless the constellations who refreshed, with salutary rains, the thirst of the desert. The reign of the heavenly orbs could not be extended beyond the visible sphere; and some metaphysical powers were necessary to sustain the transmigration of souls and the resurrection of bodies: a camel was left to perish on the grave, that he might serve his master in another life; and the invocation of departed spirits implies that they were still endowed with consciousness and power. I am ignorant, and I am careless, of the blind mythology of the barbarians; of the local deities, of the stars, the air, and the earth, of their sex or titles, their attributes, or subordination. Each tribe, each family, each independent warrior, created and changed the rites and the object of his fantastic worship

but the nation, in every age, has bowed to the religion, as well as to the language, of Mecca. The genuine antiquity of the CAABA ascends beyond th Christian era: in describing the coas of the Red Sea, the Greek historian Diodorus has remarked, between the Thamudites and the Sabians, a famous temple,[1] whose superior sanctity was revered by *all* the Arabians; the linen or silken veil, which is annually renewed by the Turkish emperor, was first offered by a pious king of the Homerites, who reigned seven hundred years before the time of Mahomet. A tent, or a cavern, might suffice for the worship of the savages, but an edifice of

[1] Mr. Forster (Geography of Arabia, vol. ii. p. 118 et seq.) has raised an objection, as I think, fatal to this hypothesis of Gibbon. The temple, situated in the country of the Banizomeneis, was not between the Thamudites and the Sabians, but higher up than the coast inhabited by the former. Mr. Forster would place it as far north as Moilah. I am not quite satisfied that this will agree with the whole description of Diodorus.—M. 1845.

stone and clay has been erected in its place; and the art and power of the monarchs of the east have been confined to the simplicity of the original model. A spacious portico includes the quadrangle of the Caaba—a square chapel, twenty-four cubits long, twenty-three broad, and twenty-seven high: a door and a window admit the light; the double roof is supported by three pillars of wood; a spout (now of gold) discharges the rain-water, and the well Zemzem is protected by a dome from accidental pollution. The tribe of Koreish, by fraud or force, had acquired the custody of the Caaba: the sacerdotal office devolved through four lineal descents to the grandfather of Mahomet; and the family of the Hashemites, from whence he sprung, was the most respectable and sacred in the eyes of their country. The precincts of Mecca enjoyed the rights of

sanctuary; and, in the last month of each year, the city and temple were crowded with a long train of pilgrims, who presented their vows and offerings in the house of God. The same rites, which are now accomplished by the faithful mussulman, were invented and practised by the superstition of the idolaters. At an awful distance they cast away their garments: seven times, with hasty steps, they encircled the Caaba, and kissed the black stone: seven times they visited and adored the adjacent mountains: seven times they threw stones into the valley of Mina: and the pilgrimage was achieved, as at the present hour, by a sacrifice of sheep and camels, and the burial of their hair and nails in the consecrated ground. Each tribe either found or introduced in the Caaba their domestic worship: the temple was adorned, or defiled, with three hundred and sixty idols of men

eagles, lions, and antelopes ; and most conspicuous was the statue of Hebal, of red agate, holding in his hand seven arrows, without heads or feathers, the instruments and symbols of profane divination. But this statue was a monument of Syrian arts: the devotion of the ruder ages was content with a pillar or a tablet : and the rocks of the desert were hewn into gods or altars, in imitation of the black stone of Mecca, which is deeply tainted with the reproach of an idolatrous origin. From Japan to Peru, the use of sacrifice has universally prevailed ; and the votary has expressed his gratitude, or fear, by destroying, or consuming, in honor of the gods, the dearest and most precious of their gifts. The life of a man is the most precious oblation to deprecate a public calamity : the altars of Phœnicia and Egypt, of Rome and Carthage, have been polluted with human gore ; the

cruel practice was long preserved among the Arabs; in the third century, a boy was annually sacrificed by the tribe of Dumatians; and a royal captive was piously slaughtered by the prince of the Saracens, the ally and soldier of the emperor Justinian.[1] A parent who drags his son to the altar, exhibits the most painful and sublime effort of fanaticism: the deed, or the intention, was sanctified by the example of saints and heroes; and the father of Mahomet himself was devoted by a rash vow, and hardly ransomed for the equivalent of a hundred camels. In the time of ignorance, the Arabs, like the Jews and Egyptians, abstained from the taste of swine's flesh; they circumcised their children at the age of puberty: the

[1] A writer in the 'Calcutta Review' (No. xliii. p. 15) maintains that the sacrifice of human beings in Arabia was only incidental, and in the case of violent and cruel tyrants where it is alleged to have been done uniformly and on principle, the authority seems doubtful.—S.

same customs, without the censure or the precept of the Koran, have been silently transmitted to their posterity and proselytes. It has been sagaciously conjectured, that the artful legislator indulged the stubborn prejudices of his countrymen. It is more simple to believe that he adhered to the habits and opinions of his youth, without foreseeing that a practice congenial to the climate of Mecca, might become useless or inconvenient on the banks of the Danube or the Volga.

Arabia was free: the adjacent kingdoms were shaken by the storms of conquest and tyranny, and the persecuted sects fled to the happy land where they might profess what they thought, and practise what they professed. The religions of the Sabians and Magians, of the Jews and Christians, were disseminated from the Persian gulf to the Red Sea. In a remote period of antiquity,

Sabianism was diffused over Asia by the science of the Chaldeans and the arms of the Assyrians. From the observations of two thousand years, the priests and astronomers of Babylon deduced the eternal laws of nature and providence. They adored the seven gods, or angels, who directed the course of the seven planets, and shed their irresistible influence on the earth. The attributes of the seven planets, with the twelve signs of the zodiac, and the twenty-four constellations of the northern and southern hemisphere, were represented by images and talismans; the seven days of the week were dedicated to their respective deities: the Sabians prayed thrice each day; and the temple of the moon at Haran was the term of their pilgrimage. But the flexible genius of their faith was always ready either to teach or to learn: in the tradition of the creation, the deluge, and

the patriarchs, they held a singular agreement with their Jewish captives; they appealed to the secret books of Adam, Seth, and Enoch; and a slight infusion of the gospel has transformed the last remnant of the polytheists into the Christians of St. John, in the territory of Bassora.[1] The altars of Babylon were overturned by the Magians; but the injuries of the Sabians were revenged by the sword of Alexander; Persia groaned above five hundred years under a foreign yoke; and the purest disciples of Zoroaster escaped from the contagion of idolatry, and breathed with their adversaries the freedom of the desert. Seven hundred years before the death of Mahomet, the Jews were ettled in Arabia; and a far greater

[1] The Codex Nasiræus, their sacred book, has been published by Norberg, whose researches contain almost all that known of this singular people. But their origin is almost as obscure as ever: if ancient, their creed has been so corrupted with mysticism and Mahometanism, that its native elements are very indistinct.—M.

multitude was expelled from the holy land in the wars of Titus and Hadrian. The industrious exiles aspired to liberty and power: they erected synagogues in the cities, and castles in the wilderness; and their Gentile converts were confounded with the children of Israel, whom they resembled in the outward mark of circumcision. The Christian missionaries were still more active and successful: the Catholics asserted their universal reign; the sects whom they oppressed successively retired beyond the limits of the Roman empire; the Marcionites and the Manichæans dispersed their *phantastic* opinions and apocryphal gospels; the churches of Yemen, and the princes of Hira and Gassan, were instructed in a purer creed by the Jacobite and Nestorian bishops. The liberty of choice was presented to the tribes; each Arab was free to elect or to compose his private

religion; and the rude superstition of his house was mingled with the sublime theology of saints and philosophers. A fundamental article of faith was inculcated by the consent of the learned strangers; the existence of one supreme God, who is exalted above the powers of heaven and earth, but who has often revealed himself to mankind by the ministry of his angels and prophets, and whose grace or justice has interrupted, by seasonable miracles, the order of nature. The most rational of the Arabs acknowledged his power, though they neglected his worship; and it was habit rather than conviction that still attached them to the relics of idolatry. The Jews and Christians were the people of the *book;* the Bible was already translated into the Arabic language, and the volume of the Old Testament was accepted by the concord of these implacable enemies. In the story of

the Hebrew patriarchs, the Arabs were pleased to discover the fathers of their nation. They applauded the birth and promises of Ismael; revered the faith and virtue of Abraham; traced his pedigree and their own to the creation of the first man, and imbibed with equal credulity the prodigies of the holy text, and the dreams and traditions of the Jewish rabbis.

The base and plebeian origin of Mahomet is an unskilful calumny of the Christians,[1] who exalted instead of degrading the merit of their adversary. His descent from Ismael was a national privilege or fable; but if the first steps of the pedigree are dark and doubtful, he could produce many generations of pure and genuine nobility: he sprung from the tribe of Koreish[2] and the

[1] The most orthodox Mahometans only reckon back the ancestry of the prophet, for twenty generations, to Adnan. 'Weil, Mohammed der Prophet, p. 1).—M. 1845.

[2] According to the usually received tradition, Koreish

family of Hashem, the most illustrious of the Arabs, the princes of Mecca, and the hereditary guardians of the Caaba.[1] The grandfather of Mahomet was Abdol Motalleb, the son of Hashem, a wealthy and generous citizen, who relieved the distress of famine with the supplies of commerce. Mecca, which had been

was originally an epithet conferred upon Fihr (born about A. D. 200), who was the ancestor, at the distance of eight generations, of the famous Kussai mentioned in the next note. Sprenger, however, maintains that the tribe of Koreish was first formed by Kussai, and that the members of the new tribe called themselves the children of Fihr as a symbol of unity. He regards Fihr as a mythical personage. (See Caussin de Perceval, vol. i. p. 42; Calcutta Review, No. xli. p. 42; Sprenger, Life of Mohammed, p. 42).—S.

[1] Kussai, (born about A. D. 400), great-grandfather of Abdol Motalleb, and consequently fifth in the ascending line from Mahomet, obtained supreme power at Mecca. His office and privileges were—to supply the numerous pilgrims with food and fresh water, the latter a rare article at Mecca; to conduct the business of the temple; and to preside in the senate or council. His revenues were a tenth of all merchandise brought to Mecca. After the death of Kussai these offices became divided among his descendants; and, though the branch from which Mahomet sprang belonged to the reigning line, yet his family, especially after the death of his grandfather, had but little to do with the actual government of Mecca. (Weil, Mohammed, pp. 4 and 12).—S.

fed by the liberality of the father, was saved by the courage of the son. The kingdom of Yemen was subject to the Christian princes of Abyssinia: their vassal Abrahah was provoked by an insult to avenge the honor of the cross; and the holy city was invested by a train of elephants, and an army of Africans. A treaty was proposed; and, in the first audience, the grandfather of Mahomet demanded the restitution of his cattle. "And why," said Abrahah, "do you not rather implore my clemency in favor of your temple, which I have threatened to destroy?" "Because," replied the intrepid chief, "the cattle are my own; the Caaba belongs to the gods, and *they* will defend their house from injury and sacrilege." The want of provisions, or the valor of the Koreish, compelled the Abyssinians to a disgraceful retreat: their discomfiture has been adorned with a miraculous

flight of birds, who showered down stones on the heads of the infidels; and the deliverance was long commemorated by the era of the elephant.[1] The glory of Abdol Motalleb was crowned with domestic happiness; his life was prolonged to the age of one hundred and ten years,[2] and he became the father of six daughters and thirteen sons. His best beloved Abdallah was the most beautiful and modest of the Arabian youth; and in the first night, when he consummated his marriage with Amina,[3] of the noble race of the Zahrites, two hundred virgins are said to have ex-

[1] The apparent miracle was nothing else but the small-pox, which broke out in the army of Abrahah. (Sprenger, Life of Mohammed, p. 35, who quotes Wakidi; Weil, Mohammed, p. 10.) This seems to have been the first appearance of the small-pox in Arabia. (Reiske, Opuscula Medica ex monumentis Arabum, Halæ, 1776, p. 8).—S.

[2] Weil sets him down at about eighty-two at his death. (Mohammed, p. 28).—S.

[3] Amina was of Jewish birth. (Von Hammer, Geschichte uer Assass., p. 10).—M.

Von Hammer gives no authority for this important fact.

pired of jealousy and despair. Mahomet, or more properly Mohammed,[1] the only son of Abdallah and Amina, was born[2] at Mecca, four years after the death of Justinian, and two months after the defeat of the Abyssinians, whose victory would have introduced

which seems hardly to agree with Sprenger's account that she was a Koreishite, and the daughter of Wahb, an elder of the Zohrah family.—S.

[1] Mohammed means "praised," the name given to him by his grandfather on account of the favorable omen attending his birth. When Amina had given birth to the prophet, she sent for his grandfather, and related to him that she had seen in a dream a light proceeding from her body, which illuminated the palaces of Bostra. (Sprenger, p. 76.) We learn from Burckhardt that among the Arabs a name is given to the infant immediately on its birth. The name is derived from some trifling accident, or from some object which had struck the fancy of the mother or any of the women present at the child's birth. (Notes on the Bedouins, vol. i. p. 97).—S.

[2] All authorities agree that Mohammed was born on a Monday, in the first half of Raby' I.; but they differ on the year and on the date of the month. Most traditions say that he died at an age of sixty-three years. If this is correct, he was born in 571.* There are, however, good traditions in Bokhari, Moslim, and Tirmidzy, according to which he attained an age of sixty-five years, which would place his

* This is the year which Weil decides upon.

into the Caaba the religion of the Christians. In his early infancy,[1] he

birth in 569. With reference to the date, his birthday is celebrated on the 12th of Raby' I. by the Musalmans, and for this day are almost all traditions. This was a Thursday in 571, and a Tuesday in 569; and, supposing the new moon of Raby'I. was seen one day sooner than expected, it was a Monday in 569. A tradition of Abú Ma'shar is for the 2d of Raby' I., which was a Monday in 571; but Abú Ma'shar was a mathematician, and his account may possibly be a calculation, and not a tradition. There are also traditions for the first Monday, and for the 10th day of the month." (Sprenger p. 75.)

In reference, however, to this subject, it is important to observe that Caussin de Perceval has brought forward reasons for believing that the Meccan year was originally a lunar one, and continued so till the beginning of the fifth century, when, in imitation of the Jews, it was turned by the intercalation of a month at the close of every third year, into a luni-solar period. (C. de Perceval, Essai, &c., vol. i. p. 49; Journal Asiatique, April, 1843, p. 342.) Hence it follows that all calculations up to the end of Mahomet's life must be made in luni-solar years, and not in lunar years, involving a yearly difference of ten days. Hence also we can explain certain discrepancies in Mahomet's life, some historians calculating by the luni-solar year in force in the period under narration, others adjusting such periods by the application of the lunar year subsequently adopted. Thus some make their prophet to have lived sixty-three or sixty-three and a half years, others sixty-five—the one possibly being luni-solar, the other lunar years. (See Calcutta Review, No. xli. p. 49).—S.

[1] The father of Mahomet died two months before his

was deprived of his father, his mother, and his grandfather; his uncles were strong and numerous; and in the division of the inheritance, the orphan's share was reduced to five camels and an Æthiopian maid-servant.[1] At home and abroad, in peace and war, Abu Taleb, the most respectable of his uncles, was the guide and guardian of his youth; in his twenty-fifth year, he entered into the service of Cadijah, a rich and noble widow of Mecca, who

birth; and to the ill state of health which the shock of this premature bereavement entailed on his widow, Sprenger attributes the sickly and nervous temperament of Mahomet. His mother died in his seventh year (p. 79); his grandfather two years later.—S.

[1] Sprenger, however, (p. 81), ascribes his poverty not to the injustice of his uncles, who, on the contrary, were anxious to bring him forwards, but to his own inactivity and unfitness for the ordinary duties of life. He had the same patrimony with which his father began life, viz., a house, five camels, a flock of sheep, and a female slave; yet he was reduced to the necessity of pasturing sheep, an occupation considered by the Arabs as peculiarly humiliating. (Compare Weil, p. 33.) The latter author adds that Mahomet afterwards entered into the linen trade, in partnership with a man named Saib.—S.

soon rewarded his fidelity with the gift of her hand and fortune. The marriage contract, in the simple style of antiquity, recites the mutual love of Mahomet and Cadijah; describes him as the most accomplished of the tribe of Koreish; and stipulates a dowry of twelve ounces of gold and twenty camels, which was supplied by the liberality of his uncle. By this alliance, the son of Abdallah was restored to the station of his ancestors; and the judicious matron was content with his domestic virtues, till, in the fortieth year of his age, he assumed the title of a prophet, and proclaimed the religion of the Koran.

According to the tradition of his companions, Mahomet was distinguished by the beauty of his person, an outward gift which is seldom despised, except by those to whom it has been refused. Before he spoke, the orator engaged on his side the affections of a

public or private audience. They applauded his commanding presence, his majestic aspect, his piercing eye, his gracious smile, his flowing beard, his countenance that painted every sensation of the soul, and his gestures that enforced each expression of the tongue.[1]

[1] To the general characteristics of Mahomet's person here recorded by Gibbon, it may not be uninteresting to add the more particular traits derived from the researches of modern orientalists. "Mohammed," says Dr. Sprenger, "was of middling size, had broad shoulders, a wide chest, and large bones, and he was fleshy but not stout. The immoderate size of his head was partly disguised by the long locks of hair, which in slight curls came nearly down to the lobes of his ears. His oval face, though tawny, was rather fair for an Arab, but neither pale nor high colored. The forehead was broad, and his fine and long, but narrow, eyebrows were separated by a vein, which you could see throbbing if he was angry. Under long eyelashes sparkled bloodshot black eyes through wide-slit eyelids. His nose was large, prominent, and slightly hooked, and the tip of it seemed to be turned up, but was not so in reality. The mouth was wide, and he had a good set of teeth, and the fore-teeth were asunder. His beard rose from the cheek-bones and came down to the collar-bone; he clipped his mustachios, but did not shave them. He stooped, and was slightly humpbacked. His gait was careless, and he walked fast but heavily, as if he were ascending a hill;* and if he looked back, he turned

* Weil's description, which agrees in other particulars, differs in this: "His hands and feet," says that writer, "were very large, yet his step was so light that his foot left no mark behind in the sand."—p. 341.

In the familiar offices of life he scrupulously adhered to the grave and ceremonious politeness of his country: his respectful attention to the rich and powerful was dignified by his condescension and affability to the poorest citizens of Mecca: the frankness of his manner concealed the artifice of his views; and the habits of courtesy were imputed to personal friendship, or universal benevolence. His memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgment clear, rapid, and decisive. He possessed the courage both of

his whole body. The mildness of his countenance gained him the confidence of every one; but he could not look straight into a man's face; he turned his eyes usually outwards. On his back he had a round, fleshy tumor of the size of a pigeon's egg; its furrowed surface was covered with hair, and its base was surrounded by black moles. This was considered as the seal of his prophetic mission, at least during the latter part of his career, by his followers who were so devout that they found a cure for their ailings in drinking the water in which he had bathed; and it must have been very refreshing, for he perspired profusely, and his skin exhaled a strong smell." (Life of Mohammed, p. 84.)

thought and action; and, although his designs might gradually expand with his success, the first idea which he entertained of his divine mission bears the stamp of an original and superior genius. The son of Abdallah was educated in the bosom of the noblest race, in the use of the purest dialect of Arabia;[1] and the fluency of his speech was corrected and enhanced by the practice of discreet and seasonable silence. With these powers of eloquence, Mahomet was an illiterate barbarian: his youth had never been instructed in the arts of reading and writing;[2] the common ignorance ex-

[1] Namely, both as being a Koreishite, and as having been suckled five years in the desert by his foster-mother Halymah, of the tribe of Banu Sad, which spoke the purest dialect. (Sprenger, p. 77).—S.

[2] Modern orientalists are inclined to answer the question whether Mahomet could read and write in the affirmative. The point hinges upon the critical interpretation of certain passages of the Koran, and upon the authority of traditions. The 96th Sura, adduced by Gibbon in support of his view

empted him from shame or reproach, but he was reduced to a narrow circle of existence, and deprived of those faithful mirrors, which reflect to our mind the minds of sages and heroes. Yet the book of nature and of man was open to his view; and some fancy has

is interpreted by Silvestre de Sacy as an argument on the opposite side, (Mém. de l'Acad. des Inscr. L., p. 95), and his opinion is supported by Weil (p. 46, note 50). Moslem authors are at variance on the subject. Almost all the modern writers, and many of the old, deny the ability of their prophet to read and write; but good authors, especially of the Shiite sect, admit that he could read, though they describe him as an unskilful penman. The former class of writers support their opinion by perverting the texts of the Koran which bear upon the subject. "Several instances," says Dr. Sprenger, "in which Mohammed did read and write, are recorded by Bokhári, Nasay, and others. It is, however, certain that he wished to appear ignorant, in order to raise the elegance of the composition of the Koran into a miracle" (p. 102). The same wish would doubtless influence the views of the more orthodox Musulman commentators. It may be further remarked, that reading and writing were far from being so rare among the citizens of Mecca in the time of Mahomet as Gibbon represents (Sprenger, p. 37). Nor, on a general view, does it appear probable that a work like the Koran, containing frequent references to the Scriptures and other books, should have been composed by "an illiterate barbarian."—S.

been indulged in the political and philosophical observations which are ascribed to the Arabian *traveller*. He compares the nations and the religions of the earth; discovers the weakness of the Persian and Roman monarchies; beholds, with pity and indignation, the degeneracy of the times; and resolves to unite, under one God and one king, the invincible spirit and primitive virtues of the Arabs. Our more accurate inquiry will suggest, that instead of visiting the courts, the camps, the temples of the east, the two journeys of Mahomet into Syria were confined to the fairs of Bostra and Damascus; that he was only thirteen years of age when he accompanied the caravan of his uncle; and that his duty compelled him to return as soon as he had disposed of the merchandise of Cadijah. In these hasty and superficial excursions, the eye of genius might discern some objects invisible to his

grosser companions; some seeds of knowledge might be cast upon a fruitful soil; but his ignorance of the Syriac language must have checked his curiosity; and I cannot perceive, in the life or writings of Mahomet, that his prospect was far extended beyond the limits of the Arabian world. From every region of that solitary world, the pilgrims of Mecca were annually assembled, by the calls of devotion and commerce: in the free concourse of multitudes, a simple citizen, in his native tongue, might study the political state and character of the tribes, the theory and practice of the Jews and Christians. Some useful strangers might be tempted, or forced, to implore the rites of hospitality; and the enemies of Mahomet nave named the Jew, the Persian, and the Syrian monk, whom they accuse of lending their secret aid to the composition of the Koran. Conversation en

riches the understanding, but solitude is the school of genius; and the uniformity of a work denotes the hand of a single artist. From his earliest youth Mahomet was addicted to religious contemplation; each year, during the month of Ramadan, he withdrew from the world, and from the arms of Cadijah: in the cave of Hera, three miles from Mecca, he consulted the spirit of fraud or enthusiasm, whose abode is not in the heavens, but in the mind of the prophet. The faith which, under the name of *Islam*,[1] he preached to his family and nation, is compounded of an

[1] *Islâm* is the verbal noun, or infinitive, and *Moslim*, which has been corrupted into *Musalman* or *Musulman*, is the participle of the causative form of *salm*, which means immunity, peace. The signification of *Islâm* is therefore *to make peace*, or *to obtain immunity*, either by compact, or by doing homage to the stronger, acknowledging his superiority, and surrendering to him the object of the dispute. It also means simply to surrender. In the Koran it signifies in most instances to do homage to God, to acknowledge him as our absolute Lord, to the exclusion of idols. Sometimes, however, it occurs in that book in its technical meaning, as the name of a religion. (Sprenger, p. 168).—S.

eternal truth, and a necessary fiction, THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD, AND THAT MAHOMET IS THE APOSTLE OF GOD.

It is the boast of the Jewish apologists, that while the learned nations of antiquity were deluded by the fables of polytheism, their simple ancestors of Palestine preserved the knowledge and worship of the true God. The moral attributes of Jehovah may not easily be reconciled with the standard of *human* virtue: his metaphysical qualities are darkly expressed; but each page of the Pentateuch and the Prophets is an evidence of his power: the unity of his name is inscribed on the first table of the law; and his sanctuary was never defiled by any visible image of the invisible essence. After the ruin of the temple, the faith of the Hebrew exiles was purified, fixed, and enlightened, by the spiritual devotion of the synagogue; and the authority of Ma-

homet will not justify his perpetual reproach, that the Jews of Mecca or Medina adored Ezra as the son of God. But the children of Israel had ceased to be a people; and the religions of the world were guilty, at least in the eyes of the prophet, of giving sons, or daughters, or companions, to the supreme God. In the rude idolatry of the Arabs, the crime is manifest and audacious: the Sabians are poorly excused by the pre-eminence of the first planet, or intelligence, in their celestial hierarchy; and in the Magian system the conflict of the two principles betrays the imperfection of the conqueror. The Christians of the seventh century had insensibly relapsed into a semblance of paganism; their public and private vows were addressed to the relics and images that disgraced the temples of the east: the throne of the Almighty was darkened by a cloud of martyrs

and saints, and angels, the objects of popular veneration; and the Collyridian heretics, who flourished in the fruitful soil of Arabia, invested the Virgin Mary with the name and honors of a goddess. The mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation *appear* to contradict the principle of the divine unity. In their obvious sense, they introduce three equal deities, and transform the man Jesus into the substance of the Son of God: an orthodox commentary will satisfy only a believing mind: intemperate curiosity and zeal had torn the veil of the sanctuary: and each of the Oriental sects was eager to confess that all, except themselves, deserved the reproach of idolatry and polytheism. The creed of Mahomet is free from suspicion or ambiguity; and the Koran is a glorious testimony to the unity of God. The prophet of Mecca rejected the worship of idols and men,

of stars and planets, on the rational principle that whatever rises must set, that whatever is born must die, that whatever is corruptible must decay and perish. In the Author of the universe, his rational enthusiasm confessed and adored an infinite and eternal being, without form or place, without issue or similitude, present to our most secret thoughts, existing by the necessity of his own nature, and deriving from himself all moral and intellectual perfection. These sublime truths, thus announced in the language of the prophet, are firmly held by his disciples, and defined with metaphysical precision by the interpreters of the Koran. A philosophic theist might subscribe the popular creed of the Mahometans: a creed too sublime perhaps for our present faculties. What object remains for the fancy, or even the understanding, when we have abstracted from the unknown

substance all ideas of time and space, of motion and matter, of sensation and reflection? The first principle of reason and revelation was confirmed by the voice of Mahomet: his proselytes from India to Morocco, are distinguished by the name of *Unitarians;* and the danger of idolatry has been prevented by the interdiction of images. The doctrine of eternal decrees and absolute predestination is strictly embraced by the Mahometans; and they struggle with the common difficulties, *how* to reconcile the prescience of God with the freedom and responsibility of man; *how* to explain the permission of evil under the reign of infinite power and infinite goodness.[1]

[1] This sketch of the Arabian prophet and his doctrines is drawn with too much partiality, and requires to be modified by the researches and opinions of later inquirers. Gibbon was probably led by his notion that Mahomet was a "philosophic theist," to regard him with such evident favor. Nothing, however, can be more at variance with the prophet's enthusiastic temperament than such a character. His

The God of nature has written his existence on all his works, and his law in the heart of man. To restore the knowledge of the one, and the practice of the other, has been the real or pre-

apparently deistical opinions arose merely from his belief in the Mosaic revelation, and his rejection of that of Christ. He was thus a deist in the sense that any Jew may be called a deist. On this point Sprenger well remarks, "He never could reconcile his notions of God with the doctrine of the Trinity and with the divinity of Christ; and he was disgusted with the monkish institutions and sectarian disputes of the Christians. His creed was: 'He is God alone, the eternal God; he has not begotten, and is not begotten; and none is his equal.' Nothing, however, can be more erroneous than to suppose that Mohammed was, at any period of his early career, a deist. Faith, when once extinct, cannot be revived; and it was his enthusiastic faith in inspiration that made him a prophet." (p. 104). And that Mahomet's ideas of God were far from being of that abstract nature which might suit a "philosophic theist," is evident from his ascribing to the Omnipotent ninety-nine attributes, thus regarding him as a being of the most concrete kind. (Ib. p. 90).

With regard, again, to the originality of Mahomet's doctrines, there is reason to think that it was not so complete as Gibbon would lead us to believe by characterizing the Koran as the work "of a single artist," and by representing Mahomet as cut off from all subsidiary sources in consequence of his inability to read. The latter point has been already examined; and it now remains to show that Mahomet was not without predecessors, who had not only held

tended aim of the prophets of every age: the liberality of Mahomet allowed to his predecessors the same credit which he claimed for himself; and the chain of inspiration was prolonged from

the same tenets, but even openly preached them. Gibbon admits, indeed, that before Mahomet's time "the most rational of the Arabs acknowledged God's power, though they neglected his worship;" and that it was habit rather than conviction that still attached them to the relics of idolatry, (*supra*, p. 57). But the new creed had made still more active advances. The Koreishites charged Mahomet with taking his whole doctrine from a book called the "Asatyr of the Ancients," which is several times quoted in the Koran, and appears to have contained the doctrine of the resurrection. (Sprenger, p. 100.) At the fair of Okatz, Qoss had preached the unity of God before Mahomet assumed the prophetic office; and contemporary with him was Omayah of Tayef, to whose teaching Mahomet allowed that his own bore a great similarity. (Ib. pp. 5, 38, 39.) Zayd the sceptic was another forerunner of Mahomet, and his followers were among the prophet's first converts. (p. 167) Sprenger concludes his account of the Præ-Mahometans—or Reformers before the Reformation—as follows: "From the preceding account of early converts, and it embraces nearly all those who joined Mohammed during the first six years, it appears that the leading men among them held the tenets which form the basis of the religion of the Arabic prophet long before he preached them. They were not his tools, but his constituents. He clothed the sentiments which he had in common with them in poetical language; and his malady gave divine sanction to his oracles. Even when he was ac

the fall of Adam to the promulgation of the Koran. During that period, some rays of prophetic light had been imparted to one hundred and twenty-four thousand of the elect, discriminated by their respective measure of virtue and grace; three hundred and thirteen apostles were sent with a special commission to recall their country from idolatry and vice; one hundred and four volumes have been dictated by

knowledged as the messenger of God, Omar had as much or more influence on the development of the Islam as Mohammed himself. He sometimes attempted to overrule the convictions of these men, but he succeeded in very few instances. The Islam is not the work of Mohammed; it is not the doctrine of the impostor; it embodies the faith and sentiments of men who for their talents and virtues must be considered as the most distinguished of their nation, and who acted under all circumstances so faithful to the spirit of the Arabs, that they must be regarded as their representatives. The Islam is, therefore, the offspring of the spirit of the time, and the voice of the Arabic nation. And it is this which made it victorious, particularly among nations whose habits resemble those of the Arabs, like the Berbers and Tatars. There is, however, no doubt that the impostor has defiled it by his immorality and perverseness of mind, and that most of the objectionable doctrines are his. (p. 174).—S.

the Holy Spirit; and six legislators of transcendent brightness have announced to mankind the six successive revelations of various rites, but of one immutable religion. The authority and station of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, and Mahomet, rise in just gradation above each other; but whosoever hates or rejects any one of the prophets is numbered with the infidels. The writings of the patriarchs were extant only in the apocryphal copies of the Greeks and Syrians: the conduct of Adam had not entitled him to the gratitude or respect of his children; the seven precepts of Noah were observed by an inferior and imperfect class of the proselytes of the synagogue; and the memory of Abraham was obscurely revered by the Sabians in his native land of Chaldæa: of the myriads of prophets, Moses and Christ alone lived and reigned; and the remnant of

the inspired writings was comprised in the books of the Old and New Testament. The miraculous story of Moses is consecrated and embellished in the Koran; and the captive Jews enjoy the secret revenge of imposing their own belief on the nations whose recent creeds they deride. For the author of Christianity, the Mahometans are taught by the prophet to entertain a high and mysterious reverence. "Verily, Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, is the apostle of God, and his word, which he conveyed unto Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from him: honorable in this world, and in the world to come; and one of those who approach near to the presence of God." The wonders of the genuine and apocryphal gospels are profusely heaped on his head; and the Latin Church has not disdained to borrow from the Koran the immaculate conception of his virgin mother. Yet Jesus

was a mere mortal ; and, at the day of judgment, his testimony will serve to condemn both the Jews, who reject him as a prophet, and the Christians, who adore him as the Son of God. The malice of his enemies aspersed his reputation, and conspired against his life ; but their intention only was guilty, a phantom or a criminal was substituted on the cross, and the innocent saint was translated to the seventh heaven. During six hundred years the gospel was the way of truth and salvation ; but the Christians insensibly forgot both the laws and the example of their founder ; and Mahomet was instructed by the Gnostics to accuse the church, as well as the synagogue, of corrupting the integrity of the sacred text. The piety of Moses and of Christ rejoiced in the assurance of a future prophet, more illustrious than themselves : the evangelic promise of the *Paraclete*, or Holy

Ghost, was prefigured in the name, and accomplished in the person, of Mahomet, the greatest and last of the apostles of God.

The communication of ideas requires a similitude of thought and language the discourse of a philosopher would vibrate without effect on the ear of a peasant; yet how minute is the distance of *their* understandings, if it be compared with the contact of an infinite and finite mind, with the word of God expressed by the tongue or the pen of a mortal! The inspiration of the Hebrew prophets, of the apostles and evangelists of Christ, might not be incompatible with the exercise of their reason and memory; and the diversity of their genius is strongly marked in the style and composition of the books of the Old and New Testament. But Mahomet was content with a character more humble, yet more sublime, of a simple

editor: the substance of 'the Koran,' according to himself or his disciples, is uncreated and eternal; subsisting in the essence of the Deity, and inscribed with a pen of light on the table of his everlasting decrees. A paper copy, in a volume of silk and gems, was brought down to the lowest heaven by the angel Gabriel, who, under the Jewish economy, had indeed been despatched on the most important errands; and this trusty messenger successively revealed the chapters and verses to the Arabian prophet. Instead of a perpetual and perfect measure of the divine will, the fragments of the Koran were produced at the discretion of Mahomet; each revelation is suited to the emergencies of his policy or passion; and all contradiction is removed by the saving maxim, that any text of scripture is abrogated or modified by any subsequent passage. The word of God, and of the

apostle, was diligently recorded by his disciples on palm-leaves, and the shoulder-bones of mutton; and the pages, without order and connection, were cast into a domestic chest in the custody of one of his wives. Two years after the death of Mahomet, the sacred volume was collected and published by his friend and successor Abubeker:[1] the work was revised by the caliph Othman, in the thirtieth year of the Hegira;[2] and the various

[1] Abubeker, at the suggestion of Omar, gave orders for its collection and publication; but the editorial labor was actually performed by Zeid Ibn Thâbit, who had been one of Mahomet's secretaries. He is related to have gathered the text—"from date-leaves, and tablets of white stone, and from the breasts of men." (Weil, p. 348; Calcutta Review, No. xxxvii. p. 9).—S.

[2] The recension of Othman has been handed down to us unaltered. So carefully, indeed, has it been preserved, that there are no variations of importance—we might almost say no variations at all—amongst the innumerable copies of the Koran scattered throughout the vast bounds of the empire of Islam. Contending and embittered factions, originating in the murder of Othman himself, within a quarter of a century from the death of Mahomet, have ever since rent the Mahometan world. Yet but one Koran has always been

editions of the Koran assert the same miraculous privilege of a uniform and incorruptible text. In the spirit of enthusiasm or vanity, the prophet rests the truth of his mission on the merit of his book, audaciously challenges both men and angels to imitate the beauties 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 com-

current amongst them; and the consentaneous use of it by all, up to the present day, is an irrefragable proof that we have now before us the self-same text prepared by the commands of that unfortunate caliph. There is probably no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text. The various readings are wonderfully few in number, and are chiefly confined to differences in the vowel points and diacritical signs; but as these marks were invented at a later date, and did not exist at all in the early copies, they can hardly be said to affect the text of Othman. (Calcutta Review, No. xxxvii. p. 11).—S.

paring 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 an 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.[1] If the composition of the Koran exceed the faculties of a man, to what superior intelligence should we ascribe the Iliad of Homer, or the

[1] The age of the book of Job is still, and probably will still be disputed. Rosenmüller thus states his own opinion: Certe serioribus republicæ temporibus assignandum esse librum, suadere videtur ad Chaldaismum vergens sermo. Yet the observations of Kosegarten, which Rosenmüller has

Philippics of Demosthenes? In all religions the life of the founder supplies the silence of his written revelation: the sayings of Mahomet were so many lessons of truth; his actions so many examples of virtue; and the public and private memorials were preserved by his wives and companions. At the end of two hundred years, the *Sonna*, or oral law, was fixed and consecrated by the labors of Al Bochari, who discriminated seven thousand two hundred and seventy-five genuine traditions, from a mass of three hundred thousand reports, of a more doubtful or spurious character.[1] Each day the pious author prayed in the temple of Mecca, and per-

given in a note, and common reason, suggest that this Chaldaism may be the native form of a much earlier dialect; or the Chaldaic may have adopted the poetical archaisms of a dialect differing from, but not less ancient than the Hebrew. (See Rosenmüller, Proleg. on Job, p. 41.) The poetry appears to me to belong to a much earlier period.—M.

[1] The numbers were much more disproportionate than these. Out of 600,000 traditions, Bokhâri found only 4000 to be genuine. (Weil, Gesch. der Chalifen, vol. i. p. 291).—S.

formed his ablutions with the water of Zemzem: the pages were successively deposited on the pulpit, and the sepulchre of the apostle; and the work has been approved by the four orthodox sects of the Sonnites.

The mission of the ancient prophets, of Moses and of Jesus, had been confirmed by many splendid prodigies; and Mahomet was repeatedly urged, by the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina, to produce a similar evidence of his divine legation; to call down from heaven the angel or the volume of his revelation, to create a garden in the desert, or to kindle a conflagration in the unbelieving city. As often as he is pressed by the demands of the Koreish, he involves himself in the obscure boast of vision and prophecy, appeals to the internal proofs of his doctrine, and shields himself behind the providence of God, who refuses those signs and

wonders that would depreciate the merit of faith, and aggravate the guilt of infidelity. But the modest or angry tone of his apologies betrays his weakness and vexation; and these passages of scandal establish, beyond suspicion, the integrity of the Koran. The votaries of Mahomet are more assured than himself of his miraculous gifts, and their confidence and credulity increase as they are further removed from the time and place of his spiritual exploits. They believe or affirm that trees went forth to meet him; that he was saluted by stones; that water gushed from his fingers; that he fed the hungry, cured the sick, and raised the dead; that a beam groaned to him; that a camel complained to him; that a shoulder of mutton informed him of its being poisoned; and that both animate and inanimate nature were equally subject to the apostle of God. His dream of a

nocturnal journey is seriously described as a real and corporeal transaction. A mysterious animal, the Borak, conveyed him from the temple of Mecca to that of Jerusalem: with his companion Gabriel, he successively ascended the seven heavens, and received and repaid the salutations of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the angels, in their respective mansions. Beyond the seventh heaven, Mahomet alone was permitted to proceed; he passed the veil of unity, approached within two bow-shots of the throne, and felt a cold that pierced him to the heart, when his shoulder was touched by the hand of God. After this familiar though important conversation, he again descended to Jerusalem, remounted the Borak, returned to Mecca, and performed in the tenth part of a night the journey of many thousand years. According to another legend, the apostle confounded

in a national assembly the malicious challenge of the Koreish. His resistless word split asunder the orb of the moon: the obedient planet stooped from her station in the sky, accomplished the seven revolutions round the Caaba, saluted Mahomet in the Arabian tongue, and suddenly contracting her dimensions, entered at the collar, and issued forth through the sleeve, of his shirt. The vulgar are amused with the marvellous tales; but the gravest of the Musulman doctors imitate the modesty of their master, and indulge a latitude of faith or interpretation. They might speciously allege, that in preaching the religion, it was needless to violate the harmony of nature; that a creed unclouded with mystery may be excused from miracles; and that the sword of Mahomet was not less potent than the rod of Moses.

The polytheist is oppressed and dis-

tracted by the variety of superstition: a thousand rites of Egyptian origin were interwoven with the essence of the Mosaic law; and the spirit of the gospel had evaporated in the pageantry of the church. The prophet of Mecca was tempted by prejudice, or policy, or patriotism, to sanctify the rites of the Arabians, and the custom of visiting the holy stone of the Caaba. But the precepts of Mahomet himself inculcate a more simple and rational piety: prayer, fasting, and alms, are the religious duties of a Musulman; and he is encouraged to hope that prayer will carry him half way to God, fasting will bring him to the door of his palace, and alms will gain him admittance. I. According to the tradition of the nocturnal journey, the apostle, in his personal conference with the Deity, was commanded to impose on his disciples the daily obligation of fifty prayers. By

the advice of Moses, he applied for an alleviation of this intolerable burthen; the number was gradually reduced to five; without any dispensation of business or pleasure, or time or place: the devotion of the faithful is repeated at daybreak, at noon, in the afternoon, in the evening, and at the first watch of the night; and in the present decay of religious fervor, our travellers are edified by the profound humility and attention of the Turks and Persians. Cleanliness is the key of prayer: the frequent lustration of the hands, the face, and the body, which was practised of old by the Arabs, is solemnly enjoined by the Koran: and a permission is formally granted to supply with sand the scarcity of water. The words and attitudes of supplication, as it is performed either sitting, or standing, or prostrate on the ground, are prescribed by custom or authority, but the prayer

is poured forth in short and fervent ejaculations; the measure of zeal is not exhausted by a tedious liturgy; and each mussulman, for his own person is invested with the character of a priest. Among the theists, who reject the use of images, it has been found necessary to restrain the wanderings of the fancy, by directing the eye and the thought towards a *kebla*, or visible point of the horizon. The prophet was at first inclined to gratify the Jews by the choice of Jerusalem; but he soon returned to a more natural partiality; and five times every day the eyes of the nations at Astracan, at Fez, at Delhi, are devoutly turned to the holy temple of Mecca.[1] Yet every spot for the

[1] Mahomet at first granted the Jews many privileges in observing their ancient customs, and especially their Sabbath; and he himself kept the fast of ten days with which the Jewish year begins. But, when he found himself deceived in his expectations of converting them, these privileges were withdrawn. Mecca was substituted for Jerusalem as the *kebla*, or quarter to which the face is directed during

service of God is equally pure: the Mahometans indifferently pray in their chamber or in the street. As a distinction from the Jews and Christians the Friday in each week is set apart for the useful institution of public worship: the people are assembled in the mosch: and the imam, some respectable elder, ascends the pulpit, to begin the prayer and pronounce the sermon. But the Mahometan religion is destitute of priesthood or sacrifice;[1] and the in-

prayer; and, in place of the Jewish fast, that of Ramadhan was instituted. (Weil, Mohammed, p. 90).—S.

[1] Mr. Forster (Mahometanism Unveiled, vol. i. p. 416) has severely rebuked Gibbon for his inaccuracy in saying that "the Mahometan religion is destitute of priesthood or *sacrifice;*" but this expression must be understood of the *general* practice of the Mahometans. The occasion of the pilgrimage to Mecca formed an exception; and Gibbon has himself observed (*supra*, p. 48) that "the pilgrimage was achieved, *as at the present hour*, by a sacrifice of sheep and camels." The Koran sanctions sacrifice on th' occasion; and Mahomet himself, in his last pilgrimage to Mecca, set the example, by offering up with his own hand the sixty-three camels which he had brought with him from Medina, ordering Ali to do the like with the thirty-seven which he had brought from Yemen. (Weil, Mohammed, pp. 294, 317.)

dependent spirit of fanaticism looks down with contempt on the ministers and slaves of superstition. II. The voluntary penance of the ascetics, the torment and glory of their lives, was odious to a prophet who censured in his companions a rash vow of abstaining from flesh, and women, and sleep; and firmly declared, that he would suffer no monks in his religion. Yet he instituted, in each year, a fast of thirty days; and strenuously recommended the observance, as a discipline which purifies the soul and subdues the body, as a salutary exercise of obedience to the will of God and his apostle. During the month of Ramadan, from the rising

This ordinance was probably a sort of political compromise with the ancient idolatrous rites of Mecca. It may be further remarked, that there were two kinds of pilgrimage viz., *Hadj* and *Umra*. The rites accompanying them, however, were exactly similar—the only distinction being that the former took place only on the appointed festivals, whils' the latter might be performed all the year round. (Ib. p 390).—S.

to the setting of the sun, the Musulman abstains from eating, and drinking, and women, and baths, and perfumes; from all nourishment that can restore his strength, from all pleasure that can gratify his senses. In the revolution of the lunar year, the Ramadan coincides, by turns, with the winter cold and the summer heat; and the patient martyr, without assuaging his thirst with a drop of water, must expect the close of a tedious and sultry day. The interdiction of wine, peculiar to some orders of priests or hermits, is converted by Mahomet alone into a positive and general law; and a considerable portion of the globe has abjured, at his command, the use of that salutary, though dangerous, liquor. These painful restraints are, doubtless, infringed by the libertine, and eluded by the hypocrite; but the legislator, by whom they are enacted, cannot surely

be accused of alluring his proselytes by the indulgence of their sensual appetities.[1] III. The charity of the Mahometans descends to the animal creation; and the Koran repeatedly inculcates, not as a merit, but as a strict and indispensable duty, the relief of the indigent and unfortunate. Mahomet, perhaps, is the only law-giver who has defined the precise measure of charity: the standard may vary with the degree and nature of property, as it consists either in money, in corn or cattle, in fruits or merchandise; but the Musulman does not accomplish the law, unless he bestows a *tenth* of his revenue; and if his conscience accuses him of fraud or extortion, the tenth, under the idea of restitution, is enlarged

[1] Forster points out the inconsistency of this passage with the one on page 230: "His voice invited the Arabs to freedom and victory, to arms and rapine, to the indulgence of their darling passions in this world and the other." (Mahometanism Unveiled, vol. ii. p. 498.)—S.

to a *fifth.* Benevolence is the foundation of justice, since we are forbid to injure those whom we are bound to assist. A prophet may reveal the secrets of heaven and of futurity; but in his moral precepts he can only repeat the lessons of our own hearts.

The two articles of belief, and the four practical duties of Islam[1] are guarded by rewards and punishments; and the faith of the Musulman is devoutly fixed on the event of the judgment and the last day. The prophet has not presumed to determine the moment of that awful catastrophe, though he darkly announces the signs, both in heaven and earth, which will precede the universal dissolution, when life shall be destroyed, and the order of creation shall be con-

[1] The *four* practical duties are prayer, fasting, alms, and pilgrimage. (Weil, Mohammed, p. 288, note.) It is here obvious that Gibbon had not overlooked the last, though he has omitted it in the preceding enumeration of the *ordinary* and *constant* duties of a Musulman.—S.

founded in the primitive chaos. At the blast of the trumpet, new worlds will start into being; angels, genii, and men, will arise from the dead, and the human soul will again be united to the body. The doctrine of the resurrection was first entertained by the Egyptians; and their mummies were embalmed, their pyramids were constructed, to preserve the ancient mansion of the soul, during a period of three thousand years. But the attempt is partial and unavailing; and it is with a more philosophic spirit that Mahomet relies on the omnipotence of the Creator, whose word can reanimate the breathless clay, and collect the innumerable atoms, that no longer retain their form or substance. The intermediate state of the soul it is hard to decide; and those who most firmly believe her immaterial nature, are at a loss to understand how

she can think or act without the agency of the organs of sense.

The reunion of the soul and body will be followed by the final judgment of mankind; and, in his copy of the Magian picture, the prophet has too faithfully represented the forms of proceeding, and even the slow and successive operations, of an earthly tribunal. By his intolerant adversaries he is upbraided for extending, even to themselves, the hope of salvation, for asserting the blackest heresy, that every man who believes in God, and accomplishes good works, may expect in the last day a favorable sentence. Such rational indifference is ill adapted to the character of a fanatic; nor is it probable that a messenger from heaven should depreciate the value and necessity of his own revelation. In the idiom of the Koran, the belief of God is inseparable from that of Mahomet: the

good works are those which he had enjoined; and the two qualifications imply the profession of Islam, to which all nations and all sects are equally invited. Their spiritual blindness, though excused by ignorance, and crowned with virtue, will be scourged with everlasting torments; and the tears which Mahomet shed over the tomb of his mother, for whom he was forbidden to pray, display a striking contrast of humanity and enthusiasm. The doom of the infidels is common: the measure of their guilt and punishment is determined by the degree of evidence which they have rejected, by the magnitude of the errors which they have entertained: the eternal mansions of the Christians, the Jews, the Sabians, the Magians, and the idolaters, are sunk below each other in the abyss; and the lowest hell is reserved for the faithless hypocrites who have assumed the mask

of religion. After the greater part of mankind has been condemned for their opinions, the true believers only will be judged by their actions. The good and evil of each Musulman will be accurately weighed in a real or allegorical balance, and a singular mode of compensation will be allowed for the payment of injuries: the aggressor will refund an equivalent of his own good actions, for the benefit of the person whom he has wronged; and if he should be destitute of any moral property, the weight of his sins will be loaded with an adequate share of the demerits of the sufferer. According as the shares of guilt or virtue shall preponderate, the sentence will be pronounced, and all, without distinction, will pass over the sharp and perilous bridge of the abyss; but the innocent, treading in the footsteps of Mahomet, will gloriously enter the gates of paradise, while the

guilty will fall into the first and mildest of the seven hells. The term of expiation will vary from nine hundred to seven thousand years; but the prophet has judiciously promised, that *all* his disciples, whatever may be their sins, shall be saved, by their own faith, and his intercession, from eternal damnation. It is not surprising that superstition should act most powerfully on the fears of her votaries, since the human fancy can paint with more energy the misery than the bliss of a future life. With the two simple elements of darkness and fire, we create a sensation of pain, which may be aggravated to an infinite degree by the idea of endless duration. But the same idea operates with an opposite effect on the continuity of pleasure; and too much of our present enjoyments is obtained from the relief, or the comparison, of evil. It is natural enough that an Arabian prophet should

dwell with rapture on the groves, the fountains, and the rivers, of paradise; but instead of inspiring the blessed inhabitants with a liberal taste for harmony and science, conversation and friendship, he idly celebrates the pearls and diamonds, the robes of silk, palaces of marble, dishes of gold, rich wines, artificial dainties, numerous attendants, and the whole train of sensual and costly luxury, which becomes insipid to the owner, even in the short period of this mortal life. Seventy-two *houris*, or black-eyed girls, of resplendent beauty, blooming youth, virgin purity, and exquisite sensibility, will be created for the use of the meanest believer; a moment of pleasure will be prolonged to a thousand years, and his faculties will be increased a hundred-fold, to render him worthy of his felicity. Notwithstanding a vulgar prejudice, the gates of heaven will be open to both sexes;

but Mahomet has not specified the male companions of the female elect, lest he should either alarm the jealousy of their former husbands, or disturb their felicity, by the suspicion of an everlasting marriage. This image of a carnal paradise has provoked the indignation, perhaps the envy, of the monks; they declaim against the impure religion of Mahomet; and his modest apologists are driven to the poor excuse of figures and allegories. But the sounder and more consistent party adhere, without shame, to the literal interpretation of the Koran: useless would be the resurrection of the body, unless it were restored to the possession and exercise of its worthiest faculties; and the union of sensual and intellectual enjoyment is requisite to complete the happiness of the double animal, the perfect man. Yet the joys of the Mahometan paradise will not be confined

to the indulgence of luxury and appetite; and the prophet has expressly declared, that all meaner happiness will be forgotten and despised by the saints and martyrs, who shall be admitted to the beatitude of the divine vision.

The first and most arduous conquests of Mahomet[1] were those of his wife,

[1] The original materials for a Life of Mahomet are—I. The Koran.—II. The traditions of Mahomet's followers.—III. Some poetical works.—IV. The earliest Arabian biographies of the prophet.

I. The Koran, respecting the general integrity and authenticity of which Oriental scholars are agreed, is the great storehouse for the opinions and character of Mahomet; but the events of his outward life, and their connection, are derived almost entirely from tradition.

II. After Mahomet's death, such of his followers as had been much about his person (*Ashâb*, "companions"), were surrounded by pupils who had not seen and conversed with him, but who were desirous of acquiring information from those who had enjoyed that advantage. This second generation, who were called Tabiys (Tâbiûn, "successors"), transmitted in turn to others the information thus acquired. Great care was employed in comparing and sifting these traditions, which were derived from various and often distant sources; and, as a guarantee of authenticity, the name of the person on whose authority they rested was transmitted along with them. It is possible that some of them may have been committed to writing in Mahomet's lifetime; but

his servant, his pupil, and his friend; since he presented himself as a prophet to those who were most conversant with

the first formal collection of them was made about a century after his death, by command of the Caliph Omar II. They multiplied rapidly; and it is said that the books of the historian Bokhâri—who died only about two centuries after Mahomet—which consisted chiefly of these traditions, filled six hundred boxes, each a load for two men. The most important among these collections are the six canonical ones of the Sunnies and four of the Shiahs. The former were compiled under the influence of the Abasside caliphs, and were begun in the reign of Al Mâmûn. The Shiahs were somewhat later, and are far less trustworthy than the Sunnies, being composed with the party view of supporting the claims of Ali and his descendants to supreme power.

III. Some extant Arabic poems were probably composed by Mahomet's contemporaries. They are of much value, as adding confirmation to the corresponding traditions; but there are no facts in the prophet's life the proof of which depends upon these historical remains. Although, therefore, they are valuable because confirmatory of tradition their practical bearing upon the biographical elements of the prophet's life is not of so much interest as might have been expected. They deserve, indeed, deep attention, as the earliest literary remains of a period which contained the germ of such mighty events, but they give us little new insight into the history or character of Mahomet. (Calcutta Review, No. xxxvii. p. 66.)

IV. It seems that regular biographies of Mahomet began to be composed towards the end of the first, or early in the second century of the Hegira; but the earliest biographical writers, whose works are extant more or less in their origi

his infirmities as a man. Yet Cadijah believed the words, and cherished the glory, of her husband; the obsequious

nal state, are—1. Ibn Ishâc; 2. Ibn Hishâm; 3. Wâckidi and his secretary; 4. Tabari.—1. Ibn Ishâc, a Tabiy, died A. H. 151 (A. D. 768). His work, which was composed for the caliph Al Mansûr, enjoys a high reputation among the Moslems; and its statements have been incorporated into most of the subsequent biographies of the prophet. Dr. Sprenger, however, (p. 69,) though hardly, perhaps, on sufficient grounds, regards him as little trustworthy, and doubts whether his book has come down to us in its original form —2. Ibn Ishâc was succeeded by Ibn Hishâm (died A. H. 213 A. D. 828), whose work, still extant, is founded on that of his predecessor, but bears the reputation of being still less trustworthy.—3. Wâckidi, born at Medina about A. H. 129 compiled several books relating to Mahomet, but no work of his has come down to us in its original form. The fruits of his researches were, however, collected into fifteen large quarto volumes by his secretary, Mohammed Ibn Saad. The first of these, containing the *Sirat* or biography of Mahomet, including accounts of his companions, has been preserved in its genuine form, and is one of the best sources of information respecting the prophet. This valuable work was discovered by Dr. Sprenger at Cawnpore. Dr. Sprenger observes that "this is by far the best biography of the Arabic prophet, but, being rare, it has never been used by an European scholar. The veracity and knowledge of the author have never been impugned by his contemporaries nor by good early writers." It is generally quoted under the name of "Wâckidi," probably for the sake of brevity. The carefully collected traditions of Wâckidi must not be confounded with the romances of the eighth century which

and affectionate Zeid was tempted by the prospect of freedom; the illustrious Ali, the son of Abu Taleb, em-

bear the same name, and which form the basis of Ockley's work.—4. Tabari, the most celebrated of all the Arabic historians, died A. H. 310 (A. D. 929). A short account of this writer is given by Gibbon himself (ch. li. note 11). Tabari wrote an account both of Mahomet's life and of the progress of Islam. The latter has long been known; and a portion of it, in the original Arabic, was published, with a Latin translation, by Kosegarten in 1831. But the earlier part, relating to Mahomet, could be read only in an untrustworthy Persian translation even so late as 1851, when Dr. Sprenger published his Life of Mahomet. It has, however, been subsequently discovered in the original language by that gentleman, during his mission by the Indian Government to search the native libraries of Lucknow. To Dr. Sprenger, therefore, belongs the honor of having discovered two of the most valuable works respecting the history of Mahomet.

But even the most authentic traditions respecting Mahomet have been corrupted by superstition, faction, and other causes; and it is hardly necessary to say that a European writer must exercise the most careful and discriminating criticism in the use of them. Inattention to this point is the defect of Gagnier's otherwise excellent work.

The later Arabic biographers of Mahomet are entitled to no credit as independent authorities. They could add no true information, but they often add many spurious traditions and fabricated stories of later days. Hence such a writer as Abulfeda, whom Gibbon frequently quotes, is of no value as an *authority*.

The best recent biographies of Mahomet by Europeans are Dr. Sprenger's Life of Mohammed from original sources

braced the sentiments of his cousin with the spirit of a youthful hero; and the wealth, the moderation, the veracity of Abubeker,[1] confirmed the religion of the prophet whom he was destined to succeed. By his persuasion, ten of the most respectable citizens of Mecca were introduced to the private lessons of Islam; they yielded to the voice of

Allahabad, 1851, and Dr. Weil's Mohammed der Prophet, Stuttgart, 1843. Dr. Sprenger's Life (part i.) only goes down to the flight from Mecca, but it is a very valuable contribution to Oriental literature, and has been of great service to the editor of this work.—S.

[1] Abubeker, or, more properly, Abu Bakr, literally, "the father of the virgin"—so called because his daughter Ayesha was the only maiden whom Mahomet married—was a wealthy merchant of the Taym family, much respected for his benevolence and straightforward dealing. He was one of the first to accept the mission of the prophet, and is said to have believed in the unity of God before that event. "The faith of Abu Bakr," says Dr. Sprenger, "is in my opinion the greatest guarantee of the sincerity of Mohammed at the beginning of his career; and he did more for the success of Islam than the prophet himself. His having joined Mohammed lent respectability to his cause; he spent seven-eighths of his property, which amounted to 40,000 dirhams, or a thousand pounds, when he embraced the new faith, towards its promotion at Mecca, and he continued the same course of liberality at Medina." (p. 171.)—S.

reason and enthusiasm; they repeated the fundamental creed, "there is but one God, and Mahomet is the apostle of God;" and their faith, even in this life, was rewarded with riches and honors, with the command of armies and the government of kingdoms. Three years were silently employed in the conversion of fourteen proselytes, the first-fruits of his mission; but in the fourth year he assumed the prophetic office, and resolving to impart to his family the light of divine truth, he prepared a banquet, a lamb, as it is said, and a bowl of milk, for the entertainment of forty guests of the race of Hashem. "Friends and kinsmen," said Mahomet to the assembly, "I offer you, and I alone can offer, the most precious of gifts, the treasures of this world and of the world to come. God has commanded me to call you to his service. Who among you will sup-

port my burthen? Who among you will be my companion and my vizir?" No answer was returned, till the silence of astonishment, and doubt, and contempt, was at length broken by the impatient courage of Ali, a youth in the fourteenth year of his age. "O prophet, I am the man: whosoever rises against thee, I will dash out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, rip up his belly. O prophet, I will be thy vizir over them." Mahomet accepted his offer with transport, and Abu Taleb was ironically exhorted to respect the superior dignity of his son. In a more serious tone, the father of Ali advised his nephew to relinquish his impracticable design. "Spare your remonstrances," replied the intrepid fanatic to his uncle and benefactor; "if they should place the sun on my right-hand, and the moon on my left, they should not divert me from my course."

He persevered ten years in the exercise of his mission; and the religion which has overspread the East and West, advanced with a slow and painful progress within the walls of Mecca. Ye Mahomet enjoyed the satisfaction of beholding the increase of his infan congregation of Unitarians, who re vered him as a prophet, and to whom he seasonably dispensed the spiritual nourishment of the Koran. The number of proselytes may be estimated by the absence of eighty-three men and eighteen women, who retired to Æthiopia in the seventh year of his mission,[1] and his party was fortified

[1] There were *two* emigrations to Abyssinia. The first was in the fifth year of the prophet's mission, when twelve men and four women emigrated. They returned to Mecca in the course of the same year, upon hearing that a reconciliation had taken place between the prophet and his enemies. The second emigration was in the seventh year of the mission, and is the one mentioned in the text. Omar had been converted in the preceding year, the sixth of the mission; and after his conversion the number of the faithfu was almost immediately doubled. (Sprenger, p. 182–189).—S

by the timely conversion of his uncle Hamza, and of the fierce and inflexible Omar, who signalized in the cause of Islam the same zeal which he had exerted for its destruction. Nor was the charity of Mahomet confined to the tribe of Koreish, or the precincts of Mecca: on solemn festivals, in the days of pilgrimage, he frequented the Caaba, accosted the strangers of every tribe, and urged, both in private converse and public discourse, the belief and worship of a sole Deity. Conscious of his reason and of his weakness, he asserted the liberty of conscience, and disclaimed the use of religious violence; but he called the Arabs to repentance, and conjured them to remember the ancient idolaters of Ad and Thamud, whom the divine justice had swept away from the face of the earth.

The people of Mecca were hardened in their unbelief by superstition and

envy. The elders of the city, the uncles of the prophet, affected to despise the presumption of an orphan, the reformer of his country: the pious orations of Mahomet in the Caaba were answered by the clamors of Abu Taleb. "Citizens and pilgrims, listen not to the tempter, hearken not to his impious novelties. Stand fast in the worship of Al Lâta and Al Uzzah." Yet the son of Abdallah was ever dear to the aged chief; and he protected the fame and person of his nephew against the assaults of the Koreishites, who had long been jealous of the pre-eminence of the family of Hashem.[1] Their malice was colored with the pretence of religion: in the age of Job, the crime of impiety was punished by the Arabian magistrate; and Mahomet was guilty

[1] On one occasion Mahomet narrowly escaped being strangled in the Caaba; and Abu Bekr, who came to his aid, was beaten with sandals till his nose was flattened. Weil, p. 56.)—S.

of deserting and denying the national deities. But so loose was the policy of Mecca, that the leaders of the Koreish, instead of accusing a criminal, were compelled to employ the measures of persuasion or violence. They repeatedly addressed Abu Taleb in the style of reproach and menace. "Thy nephew reviles our religion; he accuses our wise forefathers of ignorance and folly; silence him quickly, lest he kindle tumult and discord in the city. If he persevere, we shall draw our swords against him and his adherents, and thou wilt be responsible for the blood of thy fellow-citizens." The weight and moderation of Abu Taleb eluded the violence of religious faction; the most helpless or timid of the disciples retired to Æthiopia, and the prophet withdrew himself to various places of strength in town and country.[1] As he was still

[1] Especially to a fortress or castle in a defile near Mecca.

supported by his family, the rest of the tribe of Koreish engaged themselves to renounce all intercourse with the children of Hashem, neither to buy nor sell, neither to marry nor to give in marriage, but to pursue them with implacable enmity, till they should deliver the person of Mahomet to the justice of the gods. The decree was suspended in the Caaba before the eyes of the nation; the messengers of the Koreish pursued the Musulman exiles in the heart of Africa: they besieged the prophet and his most faithful followers, intercepted their water, and inflamed their mutual animosity by the retaliation of injuries and insults. A doubtful truce restored the appearances of concord, till the death of Abu Taleb abandoned Mahomet to the power of his enemies, at

in which he seems to have spent nearly three years, often in want of the necessaries of life, and obliged to change his bed every night for fear of being surprised by assassins. (Weil, p. 63.)—S.

the moment when he was deprived of his domestic comforts by the loss of his faithful and generous Cadijah. Abu Sophian, the chief of the branch of Ommiyah, succeeded to the principality of the republic of Mecca. A zealous votary of the idols, a mortal foe of the line of Hashem, he convened an assembly of the Koreishites and their allies, to decide the fate of the apostle. His imprisonment might provoke the despair of his enthusiasm; and the exile of an eloquent and popular fanatic would diffuse the mischief through the provinces of Arabia. His death was resolved; and they agreed that a sword from each tribe should be buried in his heart, to divide the guilt of his blood, and baffle the vengeance of the Hashemites. An angel or a spy revealed their conspiracy, and flight was the only resource of Mahomet. At the dead of night, accompanied by his

friend Abubeker, he silently escaped from his house: the assassins watched at the door; but they were deceived by the figure of Ali, who reposed on the bed, and was covered with the green vestment of the apostle. The Koreish respected the piety of the heroic youth; but some verses of Ali, which are still extant, exhibit an interesting picture of his anxiety, his tenderness, and his religious confidence. Three days Mahomet and his companion were concealed in the cave of Thor, at the distance of a league from Mecca; and in the close of each evening, they received, from the son and daughter of Abubeker, a secret supply of intelligence and food. The diligence of the Koreish explored every haunt in the neighborhood of the city: they arrived at the entrance of the cavern; but the providential deceit of a spider's web and a pigeon's nest, is supposed to con

vince them that the place was solitary and inviolate.[1] "We are only two," said the trembling Abubeker. "There is a third," replied the prophet; "it is God himself." No sooner was the pursuit abated, than the two fugitives issued from the rock, and mounted their camels: on the road to Medina, they were overtaken by the emissaries of the Koreish; they redeemed themselves with prayers and promises from their hands. In this eventful moment, the lance of an Arab might have changed the history of the world. The flight of the prophet from Mecca to Medina has fixed the memorable era of the *Hegira*,[2] which, at the end of twelve centuries,

[1] According to another legend, which is less known, a tree grew up before the entrance of the cavern, at the command of the prophet. (Weil, p. 79, note 96.)—S.

[2] The *Hegira* was instituted by Omar, the second caliph, in imitation of the era of the martyrs of the Christians (D'Herbelot, p. 444); and properly commenced sixty-eight days before the flight of Mahomet, with the first of Moharren, or first day of that Arabian year, which coincides with Friday, July 16th, A. D. 622. (Abulfoda, Vit. Moham.

still discriminates the lunar years of the Mahometan nations.

The religion of the Koran might have perished in its cradle, had not Medina embraced with faith and reverence the holy outcasts of Mecca. Medina, or the *city*,[1] known under the name of Yathreb, before it was sanctified by the throne of the prophet, was divided between the tribes of the Charegites[2] and the Awsites, whose hereditary feud was rekindled by the slightest provocations: two colonies of Jews, who boasted a sacerdotal race, were their humble allies, and without converting the Arabs, they introduced the taste of science and religion, which distinguished Medina as the city of the Book.

c. 22, 23, p. 45–50; and Greaves's edition of Ulug Beg's Epochæ Arabum, &c. c. 1, p. 8, 10, &c.)

[1] It was at first called *Medinatalnabi*, "*the city* of the prophet;" and afterwards simply "the city." (Conde, Hist. de la Domination des Arabes, i. 44. note.)—S.

[2] More properly *Chazrajites*, of the tribe Chazraj. (Sprenger, p. 203, Weil, p. 71.)—S.

Some of her noblest citizens, in a pilgrimage to the Caaba, were converted by the preaching of Mahomet: on their return they diffused the belief of God and his prophet, and the new alliance was ratified by their deputies in two secret and nocturnal interviews on a hill in the suburbs of Mecca. In the first, ten Charegites and two Awsites united in faith and love, protested in the name of their wives, their children, and their absent brethren, that they would for ever profess the creed, and observe the precepts, of the Koran.[1] The second was a political association, the first vital spark of the empire of the Saracens. Seventy-three men and two women of Medina held a solemn conference with Mahomet, his kinsmen, and his disciples; and pledged themselves to each other by a mutual oath of fidel-

[1] This first alliance was called "the agreement of women," because it did not contain the duty of fighting for the Islam. (Sprenger, p. 203.)—S.

ity. They 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 by your country," they asked with a flattering anxiety, "will you not abandon your new allies?" "All things," replied Mahomet with a smile, "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 honor and interest. I am your friend, and the enemy of your foes." "But if we are killed in your service, what," exclaimed the deputies of Medina, "will be our reward?" "PARADISE," replied the prophet. "Stretch forth thy hand." He stretched it forth, and they reiterated the oath of allegiance and fidelity. Their treaty was ratified by the people, who unanimous-

ıy embraced the profession of Islam ; they rejoiced in the exile of the apostle, but they trembled for his safety, and impatiently expected his arrival. After a perilous and rapid journey along the sea-coast he halted at Koba, two miles from the city, and made his public entry into Medina, sixteen days after his flight from Mecca. Five hundred of the citizens advanced to meet him; he was hailed with acclamations of loyalty and devotion ; Mahomet was mounted on a she-camel, an umbrella shaded his head, and a turban was unfurled before him to supply the deficiency of a standard. His bravest disciples, who had been scattered by the storm, assembled round his person ; and the equal though various merit of the Moslems was distinguished by the names of *Mohageri-ans* and *Ansars*, the fugitives of Mecca, and the auxiliaries of Medina. To eradicate the seeds of jealousy, Ma-

homet judiciously coupled his principal followers with the rights and obligations of brethren, and when Ali found himself without a peer, the prophet tenderly declared, that *he* would be the companion and brother of the noble youth. The expedient was crowned with success; the holy fraternity was respected in peace and war, and the two parties vied with each other in a generous emulation of courage and fidelity. Once only the concord was slightly ruffled by an accidental quarrel; a patriot of Medina arraigned the insolence of the strangers, but the hint of their expulsion was heard with abhorrence, and his own son most eagerly offered to lay at the apostle's feet the head of his father.

From his establishment at Medina, Mahomet assumed the exercise of the regal and sacerdotal office; and it was impious to appeal from a judge whose

decrees were inspired by the divine wisdom. A small portion of ground, the patrimony of two orphans, was acquired by gift or purchase; on that chosen spot, he built a house and a mosch, more venerable in their rude simplicity than the palaces and temples of the Assyrian caliphs. His seal of gold, or silver, was inscribed with the apostolic title; when he prayed and preached in the weekly assembly, he leaned against the trunk of a palm-tree; and it was long before he indulged himself in the use of a chair or pulpit of rough timber. After a reign of six years, fifteen hundred Moslems, in arms and in the field, renewed their oath of allegiance; and their chief repeated the assurance of protection till the death of the last member, or the final dissolution of the party. It was in the same camp that the deputy of Mecca was astonished by the attention of the faith

ful to the words and looks of the prophet, by the eagerness with which they collected his spittle, a hair that dropt on the ground, the refuse water of his lustrations, as if they participated in some degree of the prophetic virtue. "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." The devout fervor of enthusiasm acts with more energy and truth than the cold and formal servility of courts.

In the state of nature every man has a right to defend, by force of arms, his person and his possessions; to repel, or even to prevent, the violence of his enemies, and to extend his hostilities to a reasonable measure of satisfaction and retaliation. In the free society of the Arabs, the duties of subject and citizen imposed a feeble restraint; and Ma

homet, in the exercise of a peaceful and benevolent mission, had been despoiled and banished by the injustice of his countrymen. The choice of an independent people 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. The imperfection of human rights was supplied and armed by the plenitude of divine power: the prophet of Medina assumed, in his new revelations, a fiercer and more sanguinary tone, which proves that his former moderation was the effect of weakness: the means of persuasion had been tried, the season of forbearance was elapsed, and he was now commanded to propagate his religion by the sword, to destroy the monuments of idolatry, and, without regarding the sanctity of days or months, to pursue the unbelieving

nations of the earth. The same bloody precepts, so repeatedly inculcated in the Koran, are ascribed by the author to the Pentateuch and the Gospel. But the mild tenor of the evangelic style may explain an ambiguous text, that Jesus did not bring peace on the earth, but a sword: his patient and humble virtues should not be confounded with the intolerant zeal of princes and bishops, who have disgraced the name of his disciples. In the prosecution of religious war, Mahomet might appeal with more propriety to the example of Moses, of the judges and the kings of Israel. The military laws of the Hebrews are still more rigid than those of the Arabian legislator. The Lord of hosts marched in person before the Jews: if a city resisted their summons, the males, without distinction, were put to the sword: the seven nations of Canaan were devoted to

destruction; and neither repentance nor conversion could shield them from the inevitable doom, that no creature within their precincts should be left alive. 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 banner to extend the religion which they had embraced. The clemency of the prophet was decided by his interest, yet he seldom trampled on a prostrate enemy; and he seems to promise, that, on the payment of a tribute, the least guilty of his unbelieving subjects might be indulged in their worship, or at least in their imperfect faith. In the first months of his reign, he practised the lessons of holy warfare, and displayed his white banner before the gates of

Medina: the martial apostle fought in person at nine battles or sieges; and fifty enterprises of war were achieved in ten years by himself or his lieutenants. The Arab continued to unite the professions of a merchant and a robber; and his petty excursions for the defence or the attack of a caravan insensibly prepared his troops for the conquest of Arabia. The distribution of the spoil was regulated by a divine law; the whole was faithfully collected in one common mass: a fifth of the gold and silver, the prisoners and cattle, the movables and immovables, was reserved by the prophet for pious and charitable uses;[1] the remainder was shared in adequate portions by the soldiers who had obtained the victory or guarded the camp: the rewards of the slain devolved

[1] Before the time of Mahomet it was customary for the head of the tribe, or general, to retain *one-fourth* of the booty; so that this new regulation must have been regarded with favor by the army. (Weil, p. 111.)—S.

to their widows and orphans; and the increase of cavalry was encouraged by the allotment of a double share to the horse and to the man. From all sides the roving Arabs were allured to the standard of religion and plunder: the apostle sanctified the licence of embracing the female captives as their wives or concubines; and the enjoyment of wealth and beauty was a feeble type of the joys of paradise prepared for the valiant martyrs of the faith. "The sword," says Mahomet, "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 of fasting or prayer: whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven: at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as musk; and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim." The intrepid

souls of the Arabs were fired with enthusiasm: the picture of the invisible world was strongly painted on their imagination; and the death which they had always despised became an object of hope and desire. The Koran inculcates, in the most absolute sense, the tenets of fate and predestination, which would extinguish both industry and virtue, if the actions of man were governed by his speculative belief. Yet their influence in every age has exalted the courage of the Saracens and Turks. The first companions of Mahomet advanced to battle with a fearless confidence: there is no danger where there is no chance: they were ordained to perish in their beds; or they were safe and invulnerable amidst the darts of the enemy.

Perhaps the Koreish would have been content with the flight of Mahomet, had they not been provoked and alarm

ed by the vengeance of an enemy, who could intercept their Syrian trade as it passed and repassed through the territory of Medina. Abu Sophian himself, with only thirty or forty followers, conducted a wealthy caravan of a thousand camels; the fortune or dexterity of his march escaped the vigilance of Mahomet; but the chief of the Koreish was informed that the holy robbers were placed in ambush to await his return. He despatched a messenger to his brethren of Mecca, and they were roused, by the fear of losing their merchandise and their provisions, unless they hastened to his relief with the military force of the city. The sacred band of Mahomet was formed of three hundred and thirteen Moslems, of whom seventy-seven were fugitives, and the rest auxiliaries: they mounted by turns a train of seventy camels (the camels of Yathreb were formidable in war);

but such was the poverty of his first disciples that only two could appear on horseback in the field. In the fertile and famous vale of Beder, three stations from Medina, he was informed by his scouts of the caravan that approached on one side; of the Koreish, one hundred horse, eight hundred and fifty foot,[1] who advanced on the other. After a short debate, he sacrificed the prospect of wealth to the pursuit of glory and revenge; and a slight intrenchment was formed, to cover his troops, and a stream of fresh water that glided through the valley. "O God," he exclaimed, as the numbers of the Koreish descended from the hills, "O God, if these are destroyed, by whom wilt thou be worshipped on the earth?—Courage, my children, close your ranks;

[1] Of these, however, 800 of the tribe of Zohra returned to Mecca before the engagement, and were joined by many others. The battle began with a fight, like that of the Horatii and Curiatii, of three on each side. (Weil, p. 105–111.)—S.

discharge your arrows, and the day is your own." At these words he placed himself, with Abubeker, on a throne or pulpit,[1] and instantly demanded the succor of Gabriel and three thousand angels. His eyes were fixed on the field of battle: the Musulmans fainted and were pressed: in that decisive moment the prophet started from his

[1] Weil (p. 103) calls it *a hut* (Hütte), which his followers had erected for him on a gentle eminence near the field of battle. Gibbon is solicitous for the reputation of Mahomet, whom he has before characterized (*supra*, p. 67,) as possessing "the courage both of thought and action." Weil, however, draws a very different portrait of him (p. 344.) "According to his Musulman biographers, whom Europeans have followed without further inquiry, his physical strength was accompanied with the greatest valor; yet not only is this assertion destitute of all proof, but his behavior in his different campaigns, as well as in the first years of his appearance as a prophet, and also towards the close of his life, when he was become very powerful, compel us, despite his endurance and perseverance, to characterize him as very timorous. It was not till after the conversion of Omar and Hamza that he ventured openly to appear in the mosque along with the professors of his faith, as a Moslem. He not only took no part in the fight in the battle of Bedr, but kept at some distance from the field, and had some dromedaries ready before his tent, in order to fly in case of a reverse."—S.

throne, mounted his horse, and cast a handful of sand into the air; "let their faces be covered with confusion." Both armies heard the thunder of his voice: their fancy beheld the angelic warriors: the Koreish trembled and fled: seventy of the bravest were slain; and seventy captives adorned the first victory of the faithful.[1] The dead bodies of the Koreish were despoiled and insulted: two of the most obnoxious prisoners were punished with death; and the ransom of the others, four thousand drachms of silver, compensated in some degree the escape of the caravan. But it was in vain that the camels of Abu Sophian explored a new road through the desert and along the Euphrates: they were overtaken by the

[1] According to others, 44. (Weil, p. 109.) Among the captives was Abbas, the rich uncle of Mahomet, who was obliged to pay ransom, although he alleged that *inwardly* he was a believer, and had been forced to take part in the expedition. He returned to Mecca, where, it is said, he served Mahomet as a spy. (Ib. p. 109–114.)—S.

diligence of the Musulmans; and wealthy must have been the prize, if twenty thousand drachms could be set apart for the fifth of the apostle. The resentment of the public and private loss stimulated Abu Sophian to collect a body of three thousand men, seven hundred of whom were armed with cuirasses, and two hundred were mounted on horseback; three thousand camels attended his march; and his wife Henda, with fifteen matrons of Mecca, incessantly sounded their timbrels to animate the troops, and to magnify the greatness of Hobal, the most popular deity of the Caaba. The standard of God and Mahomet was upheld by nine hundred and fifty believers: the disproportion of numbers was not more alarming than in the field of Beder; and their presumption of victory prevailed against the divine and human sense of the apostle.[1] The second bat-

[1] But on this occasion Abd Allah, with 200 men aban-

tle was fought on Mount Ohud, six miles to the north of Medina: the Koreish advanced in the form of a crescent; and the right wing of cavalry was led by Caled, the fiercest and most successful of the Arabian warriors. The troops of Mahomet were skilfully posted on the declivity of a hill, and their rear was guarded by a detachment of fifty archers. The weight of their charge impelled and broke the centre of the idolaters; but in the pursuit they lost the advantage of their ground: the archers deserted their station: the Musulmans were tempted by the spoil, disobeyed their general, and disordered their ranks. The intrepid Caled, wheeling his cavalry on their flank and rear, exclaimed, with a loud voice, that Mahomet was slain. He was indeed wounded in the face with a

doned Mahomet, so hat the disproportion of forces was vastly greater than at Bedr. See note [1] *supra*, page 139. (Weil, p. 124.)—S.

javelin: two of his teeth were shattered with a stone;[1] yet, in the midst of tumult and dismay, he reproached the infidels with the murder of a prophet, and blessed the friendly hand that stanched his blood, and conveyed him to a place of safety.[2] Seventy martyrs died for the sins of the people: they fell, said the apostle, in pairs, each brother embracing his lifeless companion; their bodies were mangled by the inhuman females of Mecca; and the

[1] Two of Mahomet's teeth are (or were) preserved at Constantinople; but as, according to the *best authorities*, he only lost *one* on this occasion, one-half at least of these relics must be regarded with the same suspicion that attaches to most other articles of the same description. (See Weil, p. 127.)—S.

[2] The person of the prophet was protected by a helmet and double coat of mail. He was recognized among the wounded by Caab, the son of Malek; by whom, Abu Bakr, Omar, and ten or twelve others, he was carried to a cave upon an eminence. Here he was pursued by Ubejj Ibn Challaf, who had long been keeping a horse in extraordinary condition for the purpose of surprising and killing Mahomet; but the latter dealt him a blow of which he died. This was the only time that Mahomet took any personal share in an action. (Weil, p. 128.)—S.

wife of Abu Sophian tasted the entrails of Hamza, the uncle of Mahomet. They might applaud their superstition, and satiate their fury; but the Musulmans soon rallied in the field, and the Koreish wanted strength or courage to undertake the siege of Medina. It was attacked the ensuing year by an army of ten thousand enemies; and this third expedition is variously named from the *nations*, which marched under the banner of Abu Sophian, from the *ditch* which was drawn before the city, and a camp of three thousand Musulmans. The prudence of Mahomet declined a general engagement: the valor of Ali was signalized in single combat; and the war was protracted twenty days, till the final separation of the confederates. A tempest of wind, rain, and hail, overturned their tents; their private quarrels were fomented by an insidious adversary; and the Koreish, deserted

by their allies, no longer hoped to subvert the throne, or to check the conquests, of their invincible exile.

The choice of Jerusalem for the first kebla of prayer discovers the early propensity of Mahomet in favor of the Jews; and happy would it have been for their temporal interest, had they recognized, in the Arabian prophet, the hope of Israel and the promised Messiah. Their obstinacy converted his friendship into implacable hatred, with which he pursued that unfortunate people to the last moment of his life; and in the double character of an apostle and a conqueror, his persecution was extended to both worlds. The Kainoka dwelt at Medina under the protection of the city; he seized the occasion of an accidental tumult, and summoned them to embrace his religion, or contend with him in battle. "Alas," replied the trembling Jews,

"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?" The unequal conflict was terminated in fifteen days; and it was with extreme reluctance that Mahomet yielded to the importunity of his allies, and consented to spare the lives of the captives. But their riches were confiscated, their arms became more effectual in the hands of the Musulmans; and a wretched colony of seven hundred exiles was driven with their wives and children to implore a refuge on the confines of Syria. The Nadhirites were more guilty, since they conspired in a friendly interview to assassinate the prophet. He besieged their castle three miles from Medina, but their resolute defence obtained an honorable capitulation; and the garrison, sounding their trumpets and beating their drums,

was permitted to depart with the honors of war. The Jews had excited and joined the war of the Koreish: no sooner had the *nations* retired from the *ditch*, than Mahomet, without laying aside his armor, marched on the same day to extirpate the hostile race of the children of Koraidha. After a resistance of twenty-five days, they surrendered at discretion. They trusted to the intercession of their old allies of Medina: they could not be ignorant that fanaticism obliterates the feelings of humanity. A venerable elder, to whose judgment they appealed, pronounced the sentence of their death: seven hundred Jews were dragged in chains to the market-place of the city; they descended alive into the grave prepared for their execution and burial; and the apostle beheld with an inflexible eye the slaughter of his helpless enemies. Their sheep and camels were

inherited by the Musulmans: three hundred cuirasses, five hundred pikes, a thousand lances, composed the most useful portion of the spoil. Six days' journey to the north-east of Medina, the ancient and wealthy town of Chaibar, was the seat of the Jewish power in Arabia: the territory, a fertile spot in the desert, was covered with plantations and cattle, and protected by eight castles, some of which were esteemed of impregnable strength. The forces of Mahomet consisted of two hundred horse and fourteen hundred foot: in the succession of eight regular and painful sieges they were exposed to danger, and fatigue, and hunger; and the most undaunted chiefs despaired of the event. The apostle revived their faith and courage by the example of Ali, on whom he bestowed the surname of the Lion of God: perhaps we may believe that a Hebrew champion of

gigantic stature was cloven to the chest by his irresistible scymitar; but we cannot praise the modesty of romance, which represents him as tearing from its hinges the gate of a fortress, and wielding the ponderous buckler in his left hand. After the reduction of the castles, the town of Chaibar submitted to the yoke. The chief of the tribe was tortured, in the presence of Mahomet, to force a confession of his hidden treasure: the industry of the shepherds and husbandmen was rewarded with a precarious toleration: they were permitted, so long as it should please the conqueror, to improve their patrimony, in equal shares, for *his* emolument and their own. Under the reign of Omar, the Jews of Chaibar were transplanted to Syria; and the caliph alleged the injunction of his dying master, that one and the

true religion should be professed in his native land of Arabia.

Five times each day the eyes of Mahomet were turned towards Mecca, and he was urged by the most sacred and powerful motives to revisit, as a conqueror, the city and temple from whence he had been driven as an exile. The Caaba was present to his waking and sleeping fancy: an idle dream was translated into vision and prophecy; he unfurled the holy banner; and a rash promise of success too hastily dropped from the lips of the apostle. His march from Medina to Mecca displayed the peaceful and solemn pomp of a pilgrimage: seventy camels chosen and bedecked for sacrifice, preceded the van; the sacred territory was respected; and the captives were dismissed without ransom to proclaim his clemency and devotion. But no sooner did Mahomet descend into the plain, within a

day's journey of the city, than he exclaimed, "they have clothed themselves with the skins of tigers:" the numbers and resolution of the Koreish opposed his progress; and the roving Arabs of the desert might desert or betray a leader whom they had followed for the hopes of spoil. The intrepid fanatic sunk into a cool and cautious politician: he waved in the treaty his title of apostle of God,[1] concluded with the Koreish and their allies a truce of ten years, engaged to restore the fugitives of Mecca who should embrace his religion, and stipulated only, for the ensuing year, the humble privilege of entering the city as a friend, and of remaining three days to accomplish the rites of the pilgrimage. A cloud of shame and sorrow hung on the retreat of the Musulmans, and their disap-

[1] He struck out the title with his own hand, as Ali had refused to do it. (Weil, p. 178.)—S.

pointment might justly accuse the failure of a prophet who had so often appealed to the evidence of success. The faith and hope of the pilgrims were rekindled by the prospect of Mecca: their swords were sheathed: seven times in the footsteps of the apostle they encompassed the Caaba: the Koreish had retired to the hills, and Mahomet, after the customary sacrifice, evacuated the city on the fourth day. The people was edified by his devotion; the hostile chiefs were awed, or divided, or seduced; and both Caled and Amrou, the future conquerors of Syria and Egypt, most seaonably deserted the sinking cause of idolatry. The power of Mahomet was increased by the submission of the Arabian tribes; ten thousand soldiers were assembled for the conquest of Mecca;[1] and the

[1] The expedition of Mahomet against Mecca took place in the 10th Ramadhan of the 8th Hegira (1 Jan. 630). (Weil, p. 212.)—S.

idolaters, the weaker party, were easily convicted of violating the truce. Enthusiasm and discipline impelled the march and preserved the secret, till the blaze of ten thousand fires proclaimed to the astonished Koreish the design, the approach, and the irresistible force of the enemy. The haughty Abu Sophian presented the keys of the city; admired the variety of arms and ensigns that passed before him in review; observed that the son of Abdallah had acquired a mighty kingdom; and confessed, under the scymitar of Omar, that he was the apostle of the true God. The return of Marius and Sylla was stained with the blood of the Romans: the revenge of Mahomet was stimulated by religious zeal, and his injured followers were eager to execute or to prevent the order of a massacre. Instead of indulging their passions and his own, the victorious exile forgave the guilt,

and united the factions of Mecca. His troops, in three divisions, marched into the city: eight and twenty of the inhabitants were slain by the sword of Caled;[1] eleven men and six women were proscribed by the sentence of Mahomet;[2] but he blamed the cruelty

[1] These men—their numbers are variously given at less and more—were slain on the hill called Chandama, *before* the entrance of Chaled into the city, which they had opposed. It was on a different occasion that Chaled incurred the censure of Mahomet. The prophet had sent him on an expedition to the province of Tehama, and, on passing through the territory of the Beni Djasima, Chaled caused a considerable number of them to be put to death, although they were already Musulmans. Unfortunately, when required to confess their faith, they had, from ancient custom, used the word *Saba' na*, (converts or renegades,) instead of the usual Moslem expression, *Aslamna*. On hearing of the act, Mahomet raised his hands to heaven, and exclaimed, "O God, I am pure before thee, and have taken no part in Chaled's deed." Mahomet compensated the Beni Djasima for the slaughter of their kinsmen; but the services of Chaled obliged him to overlook his offence. (Weil, p. 230.)—S.

[2] Eleven men and *four* women; but the sentence was executed only on three of the former and one of the latter. (Weil, p. 220.) Mahomet remained two or three weeks in Mecca, during which he sent his captains to destroy the idols in the surrounding country, and to summon the Arabians to submission and belief. (Weil, p. 228.—S.)

of his lieutenant; and several of the most obnoxious victims were indebted for their lives to his clemency or contempt. The chiefs of the Koreish were prostrate at his feet. "What mercy can you expect from the man whom you have wronged?" "We confide in the generosity of our kinsman." "And you shall not confide in vain: begone! your are safe, you are free." The people of Mecca deserved their pardon by the profession of Islam; and after an exile of seven years, the fugitive missionary was enthroned as the prince and prophet of his native country. But the three hundred and sixty idols of the Caaba were ignominiously broken: the house of God was purified and adorned: as an example to future times, 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.

The conquest of Mecca determined the faith and obedience of the Arabian tribes; who, according to the vicissitudes of fortune, had obeyed, or disregarded, the eloquence or the arms of the prophet. Indifference for rites and opinions still marks the character of the Bedoweens; and they might accept, as loosely as they hold, the doctrine of the Koran. Yet an obstinate remnant still adhered to the religion and liberty of their ancestors, and the war of Honain derived a proper appellation from the *idols*, whom Mahomet had vowed to destroy, and whom the confederates of Tayef had sworn to defend. Four thousand pagans advanced with secrecy and speed to surprise the conqueror: they pitied and despised the supine negligence of the Koreish, but they depended on the wishes, and perhaps the aid, of

a people who had so lately renounced their gods, and bowed benēath the yoke of their enemy. The banners of Medina and Mecca were displayed by the prophet; a crowd of Bedoweens increased the strength or numbers of the army, and twelve thousand Musulmans entertained a rash and sinful presumption of their invincible strength. They descended without precaution into the valley of Honain: the heights had been occupied by the archers and slingers of the confederates; their numbers were oppressed, their discipline was confounded, their courage was appalled, and the Koreish smiled at their impending destruction. The prophet on his white mule, was encompassed by the enemies: he attemped to rush against their spears in search of a glorious death: ten of his faithful companions interposed their weapons and their breasts; three of these fell dead at his

feet: "O my brethren," he repeatedly cried with sorrow and indignation, "I am the son of Abdallah, I am the apostle of truth! O man, stand fast in the faith! O God, send down thy succor!" His uncle Abbas, who, like the heroes of Homer, excelled in the loudness of his voice, made the valley resound with the recital of the gifts and promises of God: the flying Moslems returned from all sides to the holy standard; and Mahomet observed with pleasure, that the furnace was again rekindled: his conduct and example restored the battle, and he animated his victorious troops to inflict a merciless revenge on the authors of their shame. From the field of Honain, he marched without delay to the siege of Tayef, sixty miles to the south-east of Mecca, a fortress of strength, whose fertile lands produce the fruits of Syria in the midst of the Arabian desert. A friend

ly tribe, instructed (I know not how) in the art of sieges, supplied him with a train of battering rams and military engines, with a body of five hundred artificers. But it was in vain that he offered freedom to the slaves of Tayef; that he violated his own laws by the extirpation of the fruit-trees; that the ground was opened by the miners; that the breach was assaulted by the troops. After a siege of twenty days, the prophet sounded a retreat; but he retreated with a song of devout triumph, and affected to pray for the repentance and safety of the unbelieving city. The spoil of this fortunate expedition amounted to six thousand captives, twenty-four thousand camels, forty thousand sheep, and four thousand ounces of silver: a tribe who had fought at Honain redeemed their prisoners by the sacrifice of their idols: but Mahomet compensated the loss, by resigning to

the soldiers his fifth of the plunder, and wished, for their sake, that he possessed as many head of cattle as there were trees in the province of Tehama. Instead of chastising the disaffection of the Koreish, he endeavored to cut out their tongues, (his own expression,) and to secure their attachment by a superior measure of liberality: Abu Sophian alone was presented with three hundred camels and twenty ounces of silver; and Mecca was sincerely converted to the profitable religion of the Koran.

The *fugitives* and *auxiliaries* complained, that they who had borne the burthen were neglected in the season of victory. "Alas," replied their artful leader, "suffer me to conciliate these recent enemies, these doubtful proselytes, by the gift of some perishable goods. To your guard I intrust my life and fortunes. You are the com

panions of my exile, of my kingdom, of my paradise."[1] He was followed by the deputies of Tayef, who dreaded the repetition of a siege.[2] "Grant us, O

[1] Weil gives this address of Mahomet's differently (from the Insan Al Ujun, and Sirat Arrasul), observing that it has not before been presented to the European reader. His version is as follows:—"Were ye not wandering in the paths of error when I came unto you, and was it not through me that you obtained the guidance of God? Were ye not poor, and are ye not now rich? Were ye not at variance, and are ye not now united?" They answered, "Surely, O Prophet of God, thou hast overloaded us with benefits." Mahomet proceeded:—"Lo! ye auxiliaries, if ye would, ye might with all truth object to me. Thou camest to us branded for a liar, yet we believed in thee; as a persecutor, and we protected thee; as a fugitive, and we harbored thee; as one in need of assistance, and we supported thee. Yet such are not your thoughts; how, then, can ye find fault with me because I have given a few worldly toys to some persons in order to win their hearts? Are ye not content, ye auxiliaries, if these people return home with sheep and camels, whilst ye return with the prophet of God in the midst of you? By him in whose hand is Mohammed's soul, were it not the reward of the fugitives, I should wish to belong to you; and, when all the world went one way and you another, I would choose yours. God be merciful unto you, and to your children, and your children's children!" At these words the auxiliaries sobbed aloud, and exclaimed, "We are content with our lot." (Weil, p. 241.)—S.

[2] The deputation from Taïf, as well as from innumerable other tribes, for the most part to tender their submission,

apostle of God! a truce of three years, with the toleration of our ancient worship." "Not a month, not an hour." "Excuse us at least from the obligation of prayer." "Without prayer religion is of no avail." They submitted in silence: their temples were demolished, and the same sentence of destruction was executed on all the idols of Arabia. His lieutenants, on the shores of the Red Sea, the ocean, and the gulf of Persia, were saluted by the acclamations of a faithful people; and the ambassadors who knelt before the throne of Medina, were as numerous (says the Arabian proverb) as the dates that fall from the maturity of a palm-tree. The nation submitted to the God and the sceptre of Mahomet: the opprobrious name of tribute was abolished: the spontaneous or reluctant oblations of

took place in the following year, which, on this account, has been called "the year of deputations." (See Weil, p. 243 sqq.)—S.

alms and tithes were applied to the service of religion; and one hundred and fourteen thousand Moslems accompanied the last pilgrimage of the apostle.[1]

When Heraclius returned in triumph from the Persian war, he entertained, at Emesa, one of the ambassadors of Mahomet, who invited the princes and nations of the earth to the profession of Islam. On this foundation the zeal of the Arabians has supposed the secret conversion of the Christian emperor; the vanity of the Greeks has feigned a personal visit to the prince of Medina, who accepted from the royal bounty a rich domain, and a secure retreat in the province of Syria. But the friendship of Heraclius and Mahomet was of short continuance: the new religion had inflamed rather than

[1] The more probable traditions mention 40,000. This, the last pilgrimage of Mahomet, took place in the tenth year of the Hegira. (Weil, ch. 8.)—S.

assuaged the rapacious spirit of the Saracens; and the murder of an envoy afforded a decent pretence for invading, with three thousand soldiers, the territory of Palestine, that extends to the eastward of the Jordan. The holy banner was intrusted to Zeid; and such was the discipline or enthusiasm of the rising sect, that the noblest chiefs served without reluctance under the slave of the prophet. On the event of his decease, Jaafar and Abdallah were successively substituted to the command; and if the three should perish in the war, the troops were authorized to elect their general. The three leaders were slain in the battle of Muta, the first military action which tried the valor of the Moslems against a foreign enemy Zeid fell, like a soldier, in the foremost ranks: the death of Jaafar was heroic and memorable: he lost his right-hand: he shifted the standard to

his left: the left was severed from his body: he embraced the standard with his bleeding stumps, till he was transfixed to the ground with fifty honorable wounds. "Advance," cried Abdallah, who stepped into the vacant place, "advance with confidence: either victory or paradise is our own." The lance of a Roman decided the alternative; but the falling standard was rescued by Caled, the proselyte of Mecca: nine swords were broken in his hand; and his valor withstood and repulsed the superior numbers of the Christians. In the nocturnal council of the camp he was chosen to command: his skilful evolutions of the ensuing day secured either the victory or the retreat of the Saracens; and Caled is renowned among his brethren and his enemies by the glorious appellation of the *Sword of God.* In the pulpit, Mahomet described, with prophetic rapture, the

crowns of the blessed martyrs; but in private he betrayed the feelings of human nature: he was surprised as he wept over the daughter of Zeid: "What do I see?" said the astonished votary. "You see," replied the apostle, "a friend who is deploring the loss of his most faithful friend." After the conquest of Mecca,[1] the sovereign of Arabia affected to prevent the hostile preparations of Heraclius; and solemnly proclaimed war against the Romans, without attempting to disguise the hardships and dangers of the enterprise. The Moslems were discouraged: they alleged the want of money, or horses, or provisions; the season of harvest, and the intolerable heat of the summer: "Hell

[1] The battle of Muta took place *before* the conquest of Mecca, as Gibbon here rightly assumes, though Von Hammer places it *after* that event. (Weil, p. 206, note 318.) Weil supposes that the defeat of the Musulmans on that occasion encouraged the Meccans to violate the truce. (Ib. p. 207.)—S.

is much hotter," said the indignant prophet. He disdained to compel their service: but on his return he admonished the most guilty, by an excommunication of fifty days. Their desertion enhanced the merit of Abubeker, Othman, and the faithful companions who devoted their lives and fortunes; and Mahomet displayed his banner at the head of ten thousand horse and twenty thousand foot. Painful indeed was the distress of the march: lassitude and thirst were aggravated by the scorching and pestilential winds of the desert: ten men rode by turns on the same camel; and they were reduced to the shameful necessity of drinking the water from the belly of that useful animal. In the mid-way, ten days' journey from Medina and Damascus, they reposed near the grove and fountain of Tabuc. Beyond that place Mahomet declined the prosecution of the war: he declared himself

satisfied with the peaceful intentions, he was more probably daunted by the martial array, of the emperor of the East.[1] But the active and intrepid Caled spread around the terror of his name; and the prophet received the submission of the tribes and cities,

[1] The expedition of Tabuc was undertaken in the month of Radjab of the ninth year of the Hegira (A. D. 631). Mahomet's more devoted friends gave a great part of their substance towards defraying its expenses. Abu Bekr gave the whole of his property, consisting of 4,000 drachms; and when Mahomet inquired, "What then hast thou left for thy family?" he answered, "God and his prophet." The traditions vary exceedingly respecting the number of the army assembled on this occasion. Thirty thousand is the lowest number assigned; but even this is probably exaggerated, and a large part deserted at the commencement of the march. (Weil, Mahom., p. 260.) When Mahomet, at Tabuc, consulted his companions as to the further prosecution of the enterprise, Omar said, "If you are commanded by God to go farther, do it." Mahomet answered, "If I had the command of God, I should not ask your advice." Omar replied, "O prophet of God! the Greeks are a numerous people, and there is not a single Musulman among them. Moreover we have already nearly approached them, and your neighborhood has struck them with terror. This year therefore, let us return, till you find it convenient to undertake another campaign against them, or till God offers some opportunity." (Weil, note 405.)—S.

from the Euphrates to Ailah, at the head of the Red Sea. To his Christian subjects, Mahomet readily granted the security of their persons, the freedom of their trade, the property of their goods, and the toleration of their worship. The weakness of their Arabian brethren had restrained them from opposing his ambition; the disciples of Jesus were endeared to the enemy of the Jews; and it was the interest of a conqueror to propose a fair capitulation to the most powerful religion of the earth.

Till the age of sixty-three years, the strength of Mahomet was equal to the temporal and spiritual fatigues of his mission. His epileptic fits, an absurd calumny of the Greeks, would be an object of pity rather than abhorrence;[1]

[1] The opinion, however, of modern Oriental scholars tends the other way. Dr. Sprenger (p. 77) shows, on the authority of Ibn Ishac, that Mahomet, whilst still an infant under the care of his foster mother, had an attack which at

but he seriously believed that he was poisoned at Chaibar by the revenge of a Jewish female. During four years, the health of the prophet declined; his infirmities increased; but his mortal disease was a fever of fourteen days, which deprived him by intervals of the use of reason. As soon as he was conscious of his danger, he edified his brethren by the humility of his virtue or penitence. "If there be any man," said the apostle from the pulpit, "whom I have unjustly scourged, I submit my own back to the lash of retaliation. Have I aspersed the reputation of a Musulman? let him proclaim *my* faults in the face of the congregation. Has any one been

all events very much resembled epilepsy. Three other fits are recorded (Ib. p. 78, note 4). Dr. Weil (Mohammed, p. 26, note 11) remarks that the word *Ussiba*, which Abulfeda uses with regard to Mahomet, is particularly used of epileptic attacks. The same author has collected several instances of these fits, (Ib. p. 42, note 48, and in the Journal Asiatique, Juillet, 1842,) and is of opinion that his visions were for the most part, connected with them.—S.

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, "I am entitled to three drachms of silver." Mahomet heard the complaint, satisfied the demand, and thanked his creditor for accusing him in this world rather than at the day of judgment. He beheld with temperate firmness the approach of death; enfranchised his slaves (seventeen men, as they are named, and eleven women); minutely directed the order of his funeral, and moderated the lamentations of his weeping friends, on whom he bestowed the benediction of peace. Till the third day before his death, he regularly performed the function of public prayer: the choice of Abubeker to supply his place appeared to mark that ancient and faithful friend as his successor in the sacerdotal and regal office; but he prudently declined

the risk and envy of a more explicit nomination. At a moment when his faculties were visibly impaired, he called for pen and ink to write,[1] or more properly, to dictate, a divine book, the sum and accomplishment of all his revelations: a dispute arose in the chamber, whether he should be allowed to supersede the authority of the Koran; and the prophet was forced to reprove the indecent vehemence of his disciples. If the slightest credit may be afforded to the traditions of his wives and companions, he maintained, in the bosom of his family, and to the last mo-

[1] The tradition seems to be doubtful; but, if true, it proves, as Dr. Weil remarks, Mahomet's ability to write. There is no authority for Gibbon's addition, "or, more properly, to dictate," which seems to be a salvo for his own theory. According to one version he said, "Bring me parchment, or a table, I will write something for Abu Bekr, in order that nobody may oppose him." (Weil, p. 330 and note 526.)

Gagnier, whom Gibbon follows, has erroneously translated "book." It was only a short paper that Mahomet wished to write, probably to name his successor. (Ib. note 527.)—S.

ments of his life, the dignity of an apostle, and the faith of an enthusiast; described the visits of Gabriel, who bade an everlasting farewell to the earth, and expressed his lively confidence, not only of the mercy, but of the favor, of the Supreme Being. In a familiar discourse he had mentioned his special prerogative, that the angel of death was not allowed to take his soul till he had respectfully asked the permission of the prophet. The request was granted; and Mahomet immediately fell into the agony of his dissolution: his head was reclined on the lap of Ayesha, the best beloved of all his wives; he fainted with the violence of pain; recovering his spirits, he raised his eyes towards the roof of the house, and, with a steady look, though a faltering voice, uttered the last broken, though articulate, words: "O God! . . pardon my sins . . Yes, . . I come, . . . among my fellow-citizens

on high;" and thus peaceably expired on a carpet spread upon the floor. An expedition for the conquest of Syria was stopped by this mournful event: the army halted at the gates of Medina; the chiefs were assembled round their dying master. The city, more especially the house of the prophet, was a scene of clamorous sorrow or silent despair: fanaticism alone could suggest a ray of hope and consolation. "How can he be dead, our witness, our intercessor, our mediator with God? By God he is not dead: like Moses and Jesus he is wrapt in a holy trance, and speedily will he return to his faithful people." The evidence of sense was disregarded; and Omar, unsheathing his scymitar, threatened to strike off the heads of the infidels, who should dare to affirm that the prophet was no more. The tumult was appeased by the weight and moderation of Abubeker. "Is it Mahom

et," said he to Omar and the multitude, "or the God of Mahomet, whom you worship? The God of Mahomet liveth for ever; but the apostle was a mortal like ourselves, and according to his own prediction, he has experienced the common fate of mortality."[1] He was piously interred by the hands of his nearest kinsman, on the same spot on which he expired.[2] [a] Medina has been sanctified

[1] After this address Abu Bekr read the following verse from the Koran:—"Mohammed is only a prophet; many prophets have departed before him; will ye then, when he has been slain, or died a natural death, turn upon your heels (i. e. forsake his creed)? He who does this cannot harm God, but God rewards those who are thankful." (Sura iii. v. 144.) The people seemed never to have heard of this verse, yet they accepted it from Abu Bekr, and it ran from mouth to mouth. Omar himself was so struck when he heard it that he fell to the ground, and perceived that Mahomet was dead. Weil (p. 333) observes that this anecdote, which is important to a critical view of the Koran, is entirely new to Europeans.—S.

[2] That is, in the house of his wife Ayesha; but after the enlargement of the mosque by the chalif Walid, his grave was comprehended within its walls. (Weil, p. 339.)—S.

[a] The Greeks and Latins have invented and propagated the vulgar and ridiculous story that Mahomet's iron tomb is suspended in the air at *Mecca* (σῆμα μετεωρι ζόμενον.

by the death and burial of Mahomet; and the innumerable pilgrims of Mecca often turn aside from the way, to bow, in voluntary devotion, before the simple tomb of the prophet.

At the conclusion of the life of Mahomet, it may perhaps be expected, that I should balance his faults and virtues, that I should decide whether the title of enthusiast or impostor more properly belongs to that extraordinary man. Had I been intimately conversant with the son of Abdallah, the task would still be difficult, and the success

Laonicus Chalcocondyles de Rebus Turcicis, l. iii. p. 66.) by the action of equal and potent loadstones, (Dictionnaire de Bayle, MAHOMET, Rem. EE. FF.) Without any philosophical inquiries, it may suffice, that, 1. The prophet was not buried at Mecca; and, 2. That his tomb at Medina, which has been visited by millions, is placed on the ground. (Reland. de Relig. Moham. l. ii. c. 19. p. 209–211.) Gagnier. (Vie de Mahomet, tom. iii. p. 263–268.)[1]

[1] Most of the biographers of Mahomet state that he died on Monday the 12th Rabia-l-Awwl, in the year 11 of the Hegira, which answers to the 7th of June, A. D. 632. This, however, fell on a Sunday, but, as a contemporary poem mentions Monday as the day of his death, it is probable that a mistake has been made in the day of the month, and that he died on the 8th of June. (Weil, p. 331.)—S.

uncertain: at the distance of twelve centuries, I darkly contemplate his shade through a cloud of religious incense; and could I truly delineate the portrait of an hour, the fleeting resemblance would not equally apply to the solitary of mount Hera, to the preacher of Mecca, and to the conqueror of Arabia. The author of a mighty revolution appears to have been endowed with a pious and contemplative disposition: so soon as marriage had raised him above the pressure of want, he avoided the paths of ambition and avarice; and till the age of forty, he lived with innocence, and would have died without a name. The unity of God is an idea most congenial to nature and reason; and a slight conversation with the Jews and Christians would teach him to despise and detest the idolatry of Mecca. It was the duty of a man and a citizen to impart the

doctrine of salvation, to rescue his country from the dominion of sin and error. The energy of a mind incessantly bent on the same object, would convert a general obligation into a particular call; the warm suggestions of the understanding or the fancy would be felt as the inspirations of heaven; the labor of thought would expire in rapture and vision; and the inward sensation, the invisible monitor, would be described with the form and attributes of an angel of God. From enthusiasm to imposture, the step is perilous and slippery; the dæmon of Socrates affords a memorable instance, how a wise man may deceive himself, how a good man may deceive others, how the conscience may slumber in a mixed and middle state between self-illusion and voluntary fraud. Charity may believe that the original motives of Mahomet were those of pure and genuine benevo-

tence; 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 might 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 the 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 valor of his servants. In the exercise of political government, he was compelled to abate of the stern rigor

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 last years, ambition was the 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 will observe, that *their* credulity 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. If he retained any vestige of his native innocence, the sins of Mahomet may be allowed as an evidence of his sincerity. 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. Even in a conqueror or a priest, I can surprise a word or action of unaffected humanity; and the decree of Mahomet, that, in the sale of captives, the mothers should never be

separated from their children, may suspend, or moderate, the censure of the historian.[1]

The good sense of Mahomet despised the pomp of royalty; the apostle of God submitted to the menial offices of the family; he kindled the fire, swept the floor, milked the ewes, and mended

[1] It may be remarked that, in estimating Mahomet's character, Gibbon entirely leaves out of sight his physical temperament. Thus he indignantly rejects the accounts of his epileptic seizures, and everywhere directs his attention to the moral qualities of the prophet, either as a philosophical and contemplative enthusiast, or, as he seems to consider him in the latter part of his career, as a political impostor. Yet the physical constitution of Mahomet was of so peculiar a kind, that it can hardly be passed over in a complete and accurate sketch of his character, upon which it must have undoubtedly exercised a wonderful influence; and we have, therefore, inserted the following interesting details from the pages of Dr. Sprenger:—

"The temperament of Mohammed was melancholic and in the highest degree nervous. He was generally low-spirited, thinking, and restless; and he spoke little, and never without necessity. His eyes were mostly cast on the ground, and he seldom raised them towards heaven. The excitement under which he composed the more poetical Suras of the Koran was so great, that he said that they had caused him grey hair; his lips were quivering and his hands shaking whilst he received the inspirations. An offensive smell made him so uncomfortable, that he forbad persons who had

with his own hands his shoes and his woollen garments. Disdaining the penance and merit of a hermit, he observed, without effort or vanity, the abstemious diet of an Arab and a sol-

eaten garlic or onions to come into his place of worship. In a man of semi-barbarous habits this is remarkable. He had a woollen garment, and was obliged to throw it away when it began to smell of perspiration, on account of his delicate constitution. When he was taken ill, he sobbed like a woman in hysterics—or, as Ayesha says, he roared like a camel; and his friends reproached him for his unmanly bearing. During the battle of Bedr, his nervous excitement seems to have bordered on frenzy. The faculties of his mind were very unequally developed; he was unfit for the common duties of life, and, even after his mission, he was led in all practical questions by his friends. But he had a vivid imagination, the greatest elevation of mind, refined sentiments, and a taste for the sublime. Much as he disliked the name, he was a poet; and a harmonious language and sublime lyric constitute the principal merits of the Koran. His mind dwelt constantly on the contemplation of God; he saw his finger in the rising sun, in the falling rain, in the growing crop; he heard his voice in the thunder, in the murmuring of the waters, and in the hymns which the birds sing to his praise; and in the lonely deserts and ruins of ancient cities he saw the traces of his anger." (Life of Mohammed, p. 89.) "The mental excitement of the prophet was much increased during the fatrah (intermission of revelations); and, like the ardent scholar in one of Schiller's poems, who dared to lift the veil of truth, he was nearly annihilated by the light which broke in upon him. He usu-

dier. On solemn occasions he feasted his companions with rustic and hospitable plenty; but in his domestic life, many weeks would elapse without a fire being kindled on the hearth of the

ally wandered about in the hills near Mecca, and was so absent, that on one occasion his wife, being afraid that he was lost, sent men in search of him. He suffered from hallucinations of his senses; and, to finish his sufferings, he several times contemplated suicide, by throwing himself down from a precipice. His friends were alarmed at his state of mind. Some considered it as the eccentricities of a poetical genius; others thought that he was a *kahin*, or soothsayer; but the majority took a less charitable view, and declared that he was insane; and as madness and melancholy are ascribed to supernatural influence in the East, they said that he was in the power of Satan and his agents the jinn." (Ib. p. 105.) "One day, whilst he was wandering about in the hills near Mecca, with the intention of destroying himself, he heard a voice, and on raising his head he beheld Gabriel between heaven and earth; and the angel assured him that he was the prophet of God. Frightened by this apparition, he returned home, and, feeling unwell, he called for covering. He had a fit, and they poured cold water upon him, and when he was recovering from it he received the revelation:—'O thou covered, arise and preach, and magnify thy Lord, and cleanse thy garment, and fly every abomination;' and henceforth, we are told, he received revelations without intermission, that is to say, the fatrah was at an end, and he assumed his office." (p. 109.) "Some authors consider the fits of the prophet as the principal evidence of his mission, and it is, therefore, necessary to say a few words on them.

prophet. The interdiction of wine was confirmed by his example; his hunger was appeased with a sparing allowance of barely-bread: he delighted in the taste of milk and honey; but his ordinary food consisted of dates and water. Perfumes and women were the two sensual enjoyments which his nature required, and his religion did not forbid; and Mahomet affirmed, that the fervor of

They were preceded by great depression of spirits, and his face was clouded; and they were ushered in by coldness of the extremities and shivering. He shook as if he were suffering from ague, and called out for covering. His mind was in a most painfully excited state. He heard a tinkling in his ears as if bells were ringing, or a humming as if bees were swarming round his head, and his lips quivered, but this motion was under the control of volition. If the attack proceeded beyond this stage, his eyes became fixed and staring, and the motions of his head convulsive and automatic. At length perspiration broke out, which covered his face in large drops; and with this ended the attack. Sometimes, however, if he had a violent fit, he fell comatose to the ground, like a person who is intoxicated; and (at least at a later period of his life) his face was flushed, and his respiration stertorous, and he remained in that state for some time. The bystanders sprinkled water in his face: but he himself fancied that he would derive a great benefit from being cupped on the head." (Ib. p. 111.)--S.

his devotion was increased by these innocent pleasures. The heat of the climate inflames the blood of the Arabs, and their libidinous complexion has been noticed by the writers of antiquity. Their incontinence was regulated by the civil and religious laws of the Koran; their incestuous alliances were blamed; the boundless licence of polygamy was reduced to four legitimate wives or concubines; their rights both of bed and dowry were equitably determined; the freedom of divorce was discouraged; adultery was condemned as a capital offence; and fornication, in either sex, was punished with a hundred stripes. Such were the calm and rational precepts of the legislator; but in his private conduct, Mahomet indulged the appetites of a man, and abused the claims of a prophet. A special revelation dispensed him from the laws which he had imposed on his

nation; the female sex, without reserve, was abandoned to his desires; and this singular prerogative excited the envy rather than the scandal, the veneration rather than the envy, of the devout Musulmans. If we remember the seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines of the wise Solomon, we shall applaud the modesty of the Arabian, who espoused no more than seventeen or fifteen wives; eleven are enumerated who occupied at Medina their separate apartments round the house of the apostle, and enjoyed in their turns the favor of his conjugal society. What is singular enough, they were all widows, excepting only Ayesha, the daughter of Abubeker. *She* was doubtless a virgin, since Mahomet consummated his nuptials (such is the premature ripeness of the climate) when she was only nine years of age. The youth, the beauty, the spirit of

Ayesha, gave her a superior ascendant: she was beloved and trusted by the prophet; and, after his death, the daughter of Abubeker was long revered as the mother of the faithful. Her behavior had been ambiguous and indiscreet: in a nocturnal march she was accidentally left behind; and in the morning Ayesha returned to the camp with a man. The temper of Mahomet was inclined to jealousy; but a divine revelation assured him of her innocence: he chastised her accusers, and published a law of domestic peace, that no woman should be condemned unless four male witnesses had seen her in the act of adultery.[1] In his adventures with Zeineb, the wife of Zeid, and

[1] This law, however, related only to accusations by strangers. By a subsequent law (Sura 24, v. 6–10) a husband who suspected his wife might procure a divorce by taking four oaths to the truth of his charge, and a fifth invoking God's curse upon himself if he had sworn falsely. The woman escaped punishment if she took an oath of the same description. (Weil, p. 273.)—S.

with Mary, an Egyptian captive, the amorous prophet forgot the interest of his reputation. At the house of Zeid, his freedman and adopted son, he beheld, in a loose undress, the beauty of Zeinib, and burst forth into an ejaculation of devotion and desire. The servile, or grateful, freedman understood the hint, and yielded without hesitation to the love of his benefactor. But as the filial relation had excited some doubt and scandal, the angel Gabriel descended from heaven to ratify the deed, to annul the adoption, and gently to reprove the prophet for distrusting the indulgence of his God. One of his wives, Hafna, the daughter of Omar, surprised him on her own bed, in the embraces of his Egyptian captive: she promised secrecy and forgiveness: he swore that he would renounce the possession of Mary. Both parties forgot their engagements; and Gabriel again

descended with a chapter of the Koran, to absolve him from his oath, and to exhort him freely to enjoy his captives and concubines, without listening to the clamors of his wives. In a solitary retreat of thirty days, he labored, alone with Mary, to fulfil the commands of the angel. When his love and revenge were satiated, he summoned to his presence his eleven wives, reproached their disobedience and indiscretion, and threatened them with a sentence of divorce, both in this world and in the next—a dreadful sentence, since those who had ascended the bed of the prophet were forever excluded from the hope of a second marriage. Perhaps the incontinence of Mahomet may be palliated by the tradition of his natural or preternatural gift; he united the manly virtue of thirty of the children of Adam; and the apostle might rival the thirteenth labor of the Grecian Hercules.

A more serious and decent excuse may be drawn from his fidelity to Cadijah. During the twenty-four years of their marriage, her youthful husband abstained from the right of polygamy, and the pride or tenderness of the venerable matron was never insulted by the society of a rival. After her death, he placed her in the rank of the four perfect women, with the sister of Moses, the mother of Jesus, and Fatima, the best beloved of his daughters. "Was she not old?" said Ayesha, with the insolence of a blooming beauty; "has not God given you a better in her place?" "No, by God," said Mahomet, with an effusion of honest gratitude, "there never can be a better! She believed in me, when men despised me; she relieved my wants, when I was poor and persecuted by the world."

In the largest indulgence of polygamy, the founder of a religion and empire

might aspire to multiply the chances of a numerous posterity and a lineal succession. The hopes of Mahomet were fatally disappointed. The virgin Ayesha, and his ten widows of mature age and approved fertility, were barren in his potent embraces. The four sons of Cadijah died in their infancy. Mary, his Egyptian concubine, was endeared to him by the birth of Ibrahim. At the end of fifteen months the prophet wept over his grave ; but he sustained with firmness the raillery of his enemies, and checked the adulation or credulity of the Moslems, by the assurance that an eclipse of the sun was *not* occasioned by the death of the infant. Cadijah had likewise given him four daughters, who were married to the most faithful of his disciples: the three eldest died before their father ; but Fatima, who possessed his confidence and love, became the wife of her cousin Ali, and

the mother of an illustrious progeny. The merit and misfortunes of Ali and his descendants will lead me to anticipate, in this place, the series of the Saracen caliphs, a title which describes the commanders of the faithful as the vicars and successors of the apostle of God.[1]

The birth, the alliance, the character of Ali, which exalted him above the rest of his countrymen, might justify his claim to the vacant throne of Arabia. The son of Abu Taleb was, in his own right, the chief of the family of Hashem, and the hereditary prince or guardian of the city and temple of Mecca. The light of prophecy was extinct; but the husband of Fatima might expect the inheritance and bless-

[1] The most valuable work since Gibbon's time upon the history of the Caliphs is Weil's "Geschichte der Chalifen," (Mannheim, 3 vols. 8vo. 1846, *seq.*,) founded upon original sources. This work is referred to in subsequent notes under the name of Weil.—S.

ing of her father: the Arabs had sometimes been patient of a female reign; and the two grandsons of the prophet had often been fondled in his lap, and shown in his pulpit, as the hope of his age, and the chief of the youth of paradise. The first of the true believers might aspire to march before them in this world and in the next; and if some were of a graver and more rigid cast, the zeal and virtue of Ali were never outstripped by any recent proselyte. He united the qualifications of a poet, a soldier, and a saint: his wisdom still breathes in a collection of moral and religious sayings; and every antagonist, in the combats of the tongue or of the sword, was subdued by his eloquence and valor. From the first hour of his mission to the last rites of his funeral, the apostle was never forsaken by a generous friend, whom he delighted to name his brother, his vice-

gerent, and the faithful Aaron of a second Moses. The son of Abu Taleb was afterwards reproached for neglecting to secure his interest by a solemn declaration of his right, which would have silenced all competition, and sealed his succession by the decrees of Heaven. But the unsuspecting hero confided in himself: the jealousy of empire, and perhaps the fear of opposition, might suspend the resolutions of Mahomet; and the bed of sickness was besieged by the artful Ayesha, the daughter of Abubeker, and the enemy of Ali.[1]

[1] Gibbon wrote chiefly from the Arabic or Sunnite account of these transactions, the only sources accessible at the time when he composed his history. Major Price, writing from Persian authorities, affords us the advantage of comparing throughout what may be fairly considered the Shiite version. The glory of Ali is the constant burden of their strain. He was destined, and, according to some accounts, designated, for the caliphate by the prophet; but while the others were fiercely pushing their own interests, Ali was watching the remains of Mahomet with pious fidelity. His disinterested magnanimity, on each separate occasion, declined the sceptre, and gave the noble example of

The silence and death of the prophet restored the liberty of the people; and his companions covened an assembly to deliberate on the choice of his successor. The hereditary claim and lofty spirit of Ali, were offensive to an aristocracy of elders, desirous of bestowing and resuming the sceptre by a free and frequent election: the Koreish could never be reconciled to the proud pre-eminence of the line of Hashem: the ancient discord of the tribes was rekindled: the *fugitives* of Mecca and the *auxiliaries* of Medina asserted their respective merits; and the rash proposal

obedience to the appointed Caliph. He is described in retirement, on the throne, and in the field of battle, as transcendently pious, magnanimous, valiant and humane. He lost his empire through his excess of virtue and love for the faithful; his life through his confidence in God, and submission to the decrees of fate.

Compare the curious account of this apathy in Price, chap. 2. It is to be regretted, I must add, that Major Price has contented himself with quoting the names of the Persian works which he follows, without any account of the character, age, and authority.—M.

of choosing two independent caliphs, would have crushed in their infancy the religion and empire of the Saracens. The tumult was appeased by the disinterested resolution of Omar, who, suddenly renouncing his own pretensions, stretched forth his hand, and declared himself the first subject of the mild and venerable Abubeker. The urgency of the moment, and the acquiescence of the people, might excuse this illegal and precipitate measure; but Omar himself confessed from the pulpit, that if any Musulman should hereafter presume to anticipate the suffrage of his brethren, both the elector and the elected would be worthy of death.[a] After the simple inauguration

[a] Ockley (Hist. of the Saracens, vol. i. p. 5, 6,) from an Arabian MS. represents Ayesha as adverse to the substitution of her father in the place of the apostle.[1]

[1] The anecdote here mentioned seems to bo an allusion to the following scene, which took place *before* the death of Mahomet. Finding that he had not strength to offer up the evening prayer, the prophet ordered that Abu Bekr should

of Abubeker, he was obeyed in Medina, Mecca, and the provinces of Arabia: the Hashemites alone declined the oath of fidelity; and their chief, in his own house, maintained, above six months, a sullen and independent reserve, without listening to the threats of Omar, who attempted to consume with fire the habitation of the daughter of the apostle. The death of Fatima, and the decline of his party, subdued the indignant spirit of Ali: he condescended to salute the commander of the faithful, accepted his excuse of the necessity of subjugating their common enemies, and wisely rejected his courteous offer of abdicating the government of the Ara-

pray in his place; Ayesha, however, several times requested that Omar should perform the service, since her father was so touched that he could not pray aloud. But Mahomet answered, "Thou art a second Potiphar's wife"—that is, as great a hypocrite as she; since he well knew that she mus wish her father, and nobody else, by offering up the prayers, to appear in a certain degree as his representative. (Weil, Mohammed, p. 327.)—S.

bians. After a reign of two years, the aged caliph[1] was summoned by the angel of death. In his testament, with the tacit approbation of his companions, he bequeathed the sceptre to the firm and intrepid virtue of Omar. "I have no occasion," said the modest candidate, "for the place." "But the place has occasion for you," replied Abubeker;[2] who expired with a fervent prayer, that the God of Mahomet would ratify his choice, and direct the Musulmans in the way of concord and obedience. The prayer was not ineffectual, since Ali himself, in a life of privacy and prayer, professed to revere the superior worth and dignity of his rival; who comforted him for the loss of empire, by the most flattering marks of confidence and esteem. In the twelfth[3] year of his reign,

[1] Caliph in Arabic means "successor."—S.

[2] Abu Bekr died on the 22d August, 634, after a reign of two years, three months and a few days. (Weil, vol. i. p. 46 and 52.)—S.

[3] *Eleventh.* Gibbon's computation is wrong on his own

Omar received a mortal wound from the hand of an assassin; he rejected with equal impartiality the names of his son and of Ali, refused to load his conscience with the sins of his successor, and devolved on six of the most respectable companions the arduous task of electing a commander of the faithful. On this occasion, Ali was again blamed by his friends for submitting his right to the judgment of men, for recognizing their jurisdiction by accepting a place among the six electors. He might have obtained their suffrage, had he deigned to promise a strict and servile conformity, not only to the Koran and tradition, but likewise to the determinations of two *seniors*.[1]

showing. Omar's reign lasted ten lunar years, six months, and four days. He died on the 3d November, 644. (Weil, vol. i. p. 130, sq.)—S.

[1] This conjecture of Gibbon's is confirmed by Dr. Weil's narrative of the election from Arabian authorities (vol. i. p. 153). The nomination was finally intrusted to Abd Errahman, who had been appointed one of the six electors, bu

With these limitations, Othman, the secretary of Mahomet, accepted the government; nor was it till after the third caliph, twenty-four years after the death of the prophet, that Ali was invested, by the popular choice, with the regal and sacerdotal office. The manners of the Arabians retained their primitive simplicity, and the son of Abu Taleb despised the pomp and vanity of this world. At the hour of prayer, he repaired to the mosch of Medina, clothed in a thin cotton gown, a coarse turban on his head, his slippers in one hand, and his bow in the other, instead of a walking-staff. The companions of the prophet and the chiefs of the tribes saluted their new sovereign, and gave him their right hands as a sign of fealty and allegiance.

The mischiefs that flow from the con-

who declined for himself all pretensions to the caliphate. He did not, however, discharge his office without first consulting the people. (Ib. p. 130, 131, and 150-155.)—S.

tests of ambition are usually confined to the times and countries in which they have been agitated. But the religious discord of the friends and enemies of Ali has been renewed in every age of the Hegira, and is still maintained in the immortal hatred of the Persians and Turks. The former, who are branded with the appellation of *Shiites* or sectaries, have enriched the Mahometan creed with a new article of faith; and if Mahomet be the apostle, his companion Ali is the vicar, of God. In their private converse, in their public worship, they bitterly execrate the three usurpers who intercepted his indefeasible right to the dignity of Imam and Caliph; and the name of Omar expresses in their tongue the perfect accomplishment of wickedness and impiety.[1]

[1] The first sect that arose among the Moslems was a political one, and had for its object the dethronement of Othman. It was founded in Egypt by Abdallah Ibn Saba, a native of Yemen, and of Jewish descent, whom Othman had

The *Sonnites*, who are supported by the general consent and orthodox traditions of the Musulmans, entertain a more impartial, or at least a more decent, opinion. They respect the memory of Abubeker, Omar, Othman, and Ali, the holy and legitimate successors of the prophet. But they assign the last and most humble place to the husband of Fatima, in the persuasion that the order of succession was determined by the degrees of sanctity. An historian who balances the four caliphs with a hand unshaken by superstition, will calmly pronounce, that their manners were alike pure and exemplary; that their zeal was fervent and probably sincere; and that, in the midst of riches

banished from Medina for finding fault with his government. Abdallah maintained that Ali had been Mahomet's assistant, or vizier, and as such was entitled to the caliphate, out of which he had been cheated by Abd Errahman. The chief article of his speculative belief was that Mahomet would return to life, whence his sect was named that of the return." (Weil, vol. i. p. 173, sq.)—S.

and power, their lives were devoted to the practice of moral and religious duties. But the public virtues of Abubeker and Omar, the prudence of the first, the severity of the second, maintained the peace and prosperity of their reigns. The feeble temper and declining age of Othman were incapable of sustaining the weight of conquest and empire. He chose, and he was deceived; he trusted, and he was betrayed: the most deserving of the faithful became useless or hostile to his government, and his lavish bounty was productive only of ingratitude and discontent. The spirit of discord went forth in the provinces; their deputies assembled at Medina; and the Charegites, the desperate fanatics who disclaimed the yoke of subordination and reason, were confounded among the free-born Arabs, who demanded the redress of their wrongs and

the punishment of their oppressors. From Cufa, from Bassora, from Egypt, from the tribes of the desert, they rose in arms, encamped about a league from Medina, and despatched a haughty mandate to their sovereign, requiring him to execute justice, or to descend from the throne.[1] His repentance began to disarm and disperse the insurgents; but their fury was rekindled by the arts of his enemies; and the forgery of a perfidious secretary was contrived to blast his reputation and precipitate his fall. The

[1] The principal complaints of the rebels were that Othman, on the occasion of his new edition of the Koran—which probably contained some alterations—had caused all the previous copies to be burned; that he had enclosed and appropriated the best pasturages; that he had recalled Hakam, who had been banished by Mahomet; that he had ill-treated some of the companions of the prophet; and that he had named several young persons as governors merely because they were his relations. He was likewise accused of neglecting to tread in the footsteps of his predecessors, as he had promised to do at his election; and on this point Abd Errahman himself, who had nominated him, was his accuser. (Weil, vol. i. p. 178.)—S.

caliph had lost the only guard of his predecessors, the esteem and confidence of the Moslems; during a siege of six weeks his water and provisions were intercepted, and the feeble gates of the palace were protected only by the scruples of the more timorous rebels. Forsaken by those who had abused his simplicity, the helpless and venerable caliph expected the approach of death; the brother of Ayesha marched at the head of the assassins; and Othman,[1] with the Koran in his lap, was pierced with a multitude of wounds. A tumultuous anarchy of five days was appeased by the inauguration of Ali: his refusal would have provoked a general massacre. In this painful situation he supported the becoming pride of the chief of the Hashemites; declared that he had

[1] Died June 17, 656 Othman was upwards of eighty years of age at the time of his death. (Weil, vol. i. p. 185—8.

rather serve than reign; rebuked the presumption of the strangers, and required the formal, if not the voluntary, assent of the chiefs of the nation. He has never been accused of prompting the assassin of Omar; though Persia indiscreetly celebrates the festival of that holy martyr. The quarrel between Othman and his subjects was assuaged by the early mediation of Ali; and Hassan, the eldest of his sons, was insulted and wounded in the defence of the caliph. Yet it is doubtful whether the father of Hassan was strenuous and sincere in his opposition to the rebels; and it is certain that he enjoyed the benefit of their crime. The temptation was indeed of such magnitude as might stagger and corrupt the most obdurate virtue. The ambitious candidate no longer aspired to the barren sceptre of Arabia; the Saracens had been victorious in the East and

West; and the wealthy kingdoms of Persia, Syria, and Egypt, were the patrimony of the commander of the faithful.

A life of prayer and contemplation had not chilled the martial activity of Ali; but in a mature age, after a long experience of mankind, he still betrayed in his conduct the rashness and indiscretion of youth. In the first days of his reign, he neglected to secure, either by gifts or fetters, the doubtful allegiance of Telha and Zobeir, two of the most powerful of the Arabian chiefs. They escaped from Medina to Mecca, and from thence to Bassora; erected the standard of revolt; and usurped the government of Irak, or Assyria, which they had vainly solicited as the reward of their services. The mask of patriotism is allowed to cover the most glaring inconsistencies; and the enemies, per

haps the assassins, of Othman, now demanded vengeance for his blood. They were accompanied in their flight by Ayesha, the widow of the prophet, who cherished, to the last hour of her life, an implacable hatred against the husband and the posterity of Fatima.[1] The most reasonable Moslems were scandalized, that the mother of the faithful should expose in a camp her person and character; but the superstitious crowd was confident that her presence would sanctify the justice, and assure the success, of their cause. At the head of twenty thousand of his loyal Arabs, and nine thousand valiant auxiliaries of Cufa, the caliph encountered and defeated the superior numbers of the rebels under the walls of

[1] Ali is said to have incurred her hatred by remarking to Mahomet, at the time when he was dejected by his suspicions of her unfaithfulness—"Why do you take it so much to heart? There are plenty more women in the world." Weil, vol. i. p. 196.)—S.

Bassora.[1] Their leaders, Telha and Zobeir,[2] were slain in the first battle that stained with civil blood the arms of the Moslems. After passing through the ranks to animate the troops, Ayesha had chosen her post amidst the dangers of the field. In the heat of the action, seventy men, who held the bridle of her camel, were successively killed or wounded;[3] and the cage, or litter, in which she sat, was struck with javelins and darts like the quills of a porcupine. The venerable captive sustained with firmness the reproaches of the conqueror, and was speedily dis-

[1] The reluctance of Ali to shed the blood of true believers is strikingly described by Major Price's Persian historians. (Price, p. 222.)—M.

[2] See (in Price) the singular adventures of Zobeir. He was murdered after having abandoned the army of the insurgents. Telha was about to do the same, when his leg was pierced with an arrow by one of his own party. The wound was mortal. (Price, p. 222.)—M.

[3] According to Price, two hundred and eighty of the Benni Belanziat alone lost a right hand in this service, p 225.—M.

missed to her proper station, at the tomb of Mahomet, with the respect and tenderness that was still due to the widow of the apostle.[1] After this victory, which was styled the Day of the Camel,[2] Ali marched against a more formidable adversary; against Moawiyah, the son of Abu Sophian, who had assumed the title of caliph, and whose claim was supported by the forces of Syria and the interest of the house of Ommiyah. From the passage of Thapsacus, the plain of Siffin extends along the western bank of the Euphrates. On this spacious and level theatre, the two competitors waged a desultory war of one hundred and ten days. In the course of ninety actions or skirmishes,

[1] She was escorted by a guard of females disguised as soldiers. When she discoverd this, Ayesha was as much gratified by the delicacy of the arrangement as she had been offended by the familiar approach of so many men. (Price, p. 229.)—M.

[2] From the camel which Ayesha rode. (Well, vol. i. p. 110.)—S.

the loss of Ali was estimated at twenty-five, that of Moawiyah at forty-five, thousand soldiers; and the list of the slain was dignified with the names of five-and-twenty veterans who had fought at Beder, under the standard of Mahomet. In this sanguinary contest, the lawful[1] caliph displayed a superior character of valor and humanity. His troops were strictly enjoined to await the first onset of the enemy, to spare their flying brethren, and to respect the bodies of the dead, and the chastity of the female captives. He generously proposed to save the blood of the Moslems by a single combat; but his trembling rival declined the challenge

[1] Weil remarks that it must not be forgotten that the history of the first caliphs was collected or forged under the reign of the Abassides, with whom it was a life and death point to depress Moawiyah and the Ommijahds, and to elevate Ali. If all is true that is related in Ali's praise, it is incomprehensible how he should have been set aside by Abu Bekr Omar, and Othman, and should not even have been able to maintain his ground when named caliph. (Vol. i. p. 254, sq.) —S.

as a sentence of inevitable death. The ranks of the Syrians were broken by the charge of a hero who was mounted on a piebald horse, and wielded with irresistible force his ponderous and two-edged sword. As often as he smote a rebel, he shouted the Allah Acbar, "God is victorious!" and in the tumult of a nocturnal battle, he was heard to repeat four hundred times that tremendous exclamation. The prince of Damascus already meditated his flight; but the certain victory was snatched from the grasp of Ali by the disobedience and enthusiasm of his troops. Their conscience was awed by the solemn appeal to the books of the Koran which Moawiyah exposed on the foremost lances; and Ali was compelled to yield to a disgraceful truce and an insidious compromise. He retreated with sorrow and indignation to Cufa; his party was discouraged

the distant provinces of Persia,[1] of Yemen, and of Egypt, were subdued or seduced by his crafty rival; and the stroke of fanaticism, which was aimed against the three chiefs of the nation, was fatal only to the cousin of Mahomet. In the temple of Mecca, three Charegites,[2] or enthusiasts, discoursed of the disorders of the church and state: they soon agreed, that the deaths of Ali, of Moawiyah, and of his friend Amrou, the viceroy of Egypt, would restore the peace and unity of religion. Each of the assassins chose his victim, poisoned his dagger, de-

[1] According to Weil, Ali retained Persia. (Vol. i. p. 247.) —S.

[2] Chawarij, or Charijites (deserters, rebels), was the name given to all those who revolted from the lawful Imam. Gibbon seems here to confound them with the Chazrajites, one of the two tribes of Medina. (See above, p. 125.) They were divided into six principal sects; but they all agreed in rejecting the authority both of Othman and Ali, and the damnation of those caliphs formed their chief tenet. (Weil, vol. i. p. 231.) They were very numerous, and had risen in open rebellion against Ali, who was obliged to resort to force to reduce them to obedience. (Ib. p. 237.)—S.

voted his life, and secretly repaired to the scene of action. Their resolution was equally desperate: but the first mistook the person of Amrou, and stabbed the deputy who occupied his seat; the prince of Damascus was dangerously hurt by the second; the lawful caliph, in the mosch of Cufa, received a mortal wound from the hand of the third. He expired in the sixty-third year of his age,[1] and mercifully recommended to his children, that they would despatch the murderer by a single stroke. The sepulchre of Ali was concealed from the tyrants of the house of Ommiyah: but in the fourth age of the Hegira, a tomb, a temple, a city, arose near the ruins of Cufa. Many thousands of the Shiites repose in holy ground at the feet of the vicar of God; and the desert is vivified by

[1] On the 21st of January, 661, two days after the mortal blow. (Weil, vol. i. p. 250.)—S.

the numerous and annual visits of the Persians, who esteem their devotion not less meritorious than the pilgrimage of Mecca.

The persecutors of Mahomet usurped the inheritance of his children; and the champions of idolatry became the supreme heads of his religion and empire. The opposition of Abu Sophian had been fierce and obstinate; his conversion was tardy and reluctant; his new faith was fortified by necessity and interest; he served, he fought, perhaps he believed; and the sins of the time of ignorance were expiated by the recent merits of the family of Ommiyah. Moawiyah, the son of Abu Sophian, and of the cruel Henda, was dignified in his early youth with the office or title of secretary of the prophet: the judgment of Omar intrusted him with the government of Syria; and he administered that important province

above forty years, either in a subordinate or supreme rank. Without renouncing the fame of valor and liberality, he affected the reputation of humanity and moderation: a grateful people were attached to their benefactor; and the victorious Moslems were enriched with the spoils of Cyprus and Rhodes. The sacred duty of pursuing the assassins of Othman was the engine and pretence of his ambition. The bloody shirt of the martyr was exposed in the mosch of Damascus: the emir deplored the fate of his injured kinsman; and sixty thousand Syrians were engaged in his service by an oath of fidelity and revenge. Amrou, the conqueror of Egypt, himself an army, was the first who saluted the new monarch, and divulged the dangerous secret, that the Arabian caliphs might be created elsewhere than in the city of the prophet. The policy of Moawiyah

eluded the valor of his rival; and, after the death of Ali, he negotiated the abdication of his son Hassan, whose mind was either above or below the government of the world, and who retired without a sigh from the palace of Cufa to an humble cell near the tomb of his grandfather. The aspiring wishes of the caliph were finally crowned by the important change of an elective to an hereditary kingdom. Some murmurs of freedom or fanaticism attested the reluctance of the Arabs, and four citizens of Medina refused the oath of fidelity ;[1] but the designs of Moawiyah

[1] These were, Hosein, Ali's son; Abd Allah, the son of Zubeir; Abd Errahman, son of Abu Bekr; and Abd Allah, son of Omar. Moawiyah, having failed in his attempts to gain them over, caused them to be seized and led into the mosch, each accompanied by two soldiers with drawn swords, who were ordered to stab them if they attempted to speak. Moawiyah then mounted the pulpit, and, addressing the assembly, said that he had seen the necessity of having his son's title recognized before his death, but tha he had not taken this step without consulting the four prin cipal men in Mecca, who were then present, and who had

were conducted with vigor and address; and his son Yezid, a feeble and dissolute youth, was proclaimed as the commander of the faithful and the successor of the apostle of God.

A familiar story is related of the benevolence of one of the sons of Ali. In serving at table, a slave had inadvertently dropt a dish of scalding broth on his master: the heedless wretch fell prostrate, to deprecate his punishment, and repeated a verse of the Koran: "Paradise is for those who command their anger:"—"I am not angry:"—"and for those who pardon offences:"—"I pardon your offence:"—"and for those who return good for evil:"—"I give you your liberty, and four hundred pieces of silver." With

entirely agreed with his views. He then called upon the assembly to do homage to his son; and as the four prisoners did not venture to contradict his assertion, Yezid was acknowledged by those present as Moawiyah's successor. (Weil, vol. i. p. 280, sq.)—S.

an equal measure of piety, Hosein, the younger brother of Hassan, inherited a remnant of his father's spirit, and served with honor against the Christians in the siege of Constantinople. The primogeniture of the line of Hashem, and the holy character of grandson of the apostle, had centred in his person, and he was at liberty to prosecute his claim against Yezid, the tyrant of Damascus, whose vices he despised, and whose title he had never deigned to acknowledge. A list was secretly transmitted from Cufa to Medina, of one hundred and forty thousand Moslems, who professed their attachment to his cause, and who were eager to draw their swords so soon as he should appear on the banks of the Euphrates. Against the advice of his wisest friends, he resolved to trust his person and family in the hands of a perfidious people. He traversed the desert of Arabia with a timo

rous retinue of women and children; but as he approached the confines of Irak, he was alarmed by the solitary or hostile face of the country, and suspected either the defection or ruin of his party. His fears were just: Obeidollah, the governor of Cufa, had extinguished the first sparks of an insurrection; and Hosein, in the plain of Kerbela, was encompassed by a body of five thousand horse, who intercepted his communication with the city and the river. He might still have escaped to a fortress in the desert, that had defied the power of Cæsar and Chosroes, and confided in the fidelity of the tribe of Tai, which would have armed ten thousand warriors in his defence. In a conference with the chief of the enemy, he proposed the option of three honorable conditions; that he should be allowed to return to Medina, or be stationed in a frontier garrison against the Turks, or

safely conducted to the presence of Yezid. But the commands of the caliph, or his lieutenant, were stern and absolute; and Hosein was informed that he must either submit as a captive and a criminal to the commander of the faithful, or expect the consequences of his rebellion. "Do you think," replied he, "to terrify me with death?" And, during the short respite of a night, he prepared with calm and solemn resignation to encounter his fate. He checked the lamentations of his sister Fatima, who deplored the impending ruin of his house. "Our trust," said Hosein, "is in God alone. All things, both in heaven and earth, must perish and return to their Creator. My brother, my father, my mother, were better than me, and every Musulman has an example in the prophet." He pressed his friends to consult their safety by a timely flight: they unanimously refused

to desert or survive their beloved master; and their courage was fortified by a fervent prayer and the assurance of paradise. On the morning of the fatal day, he mounted on horseback, with his sword in one hand and the Koran in the other: his generous band of martyrs consisted only of thirty-two horse and forty foot; but their flanks and rear were secured by the tent-ropes, and by a deep trench which they had filled with lighted faggots, according to the practice of the Arabs. The enemy advanced with reluctance, and one of their chiefs deserted, with thirty followers, to claim the partnership of inevitable death. In every close onset, or single combat, the despair of the Fatimites was invincible; but the surrounding multitudes galled them from a distance with a cloud of arrows, and the horses and men were successively slain: a truce was allowed on both

sides for the hour of prayer; and the battle at length expired by the death of the last of the champions of Hosein. Alone, weary and wounded, he seated himself at the door of his tent. As he tasted a drop of water, he was pierced in the mouth with a dart; and his son and nephew, two beautiful youths, were killed in his arms. He lifted his hands to heaven—they were full of blood—and he uttered a funeral prayer for the living and the dead. In a transport of despair his sister issued from the tent, and adjured the general of the Cufians, that he would not suffer Hosein to be murdered before his eyes: a tear trickled down his venerable beard; and the boldest of his soldiers fell back on every side as the dying hero threw himself among them. The remorseless Shamer, a name detested by the faithful, reproached their cowardice; and the grandson of Mahomet was slain with

three and thirty strokes of lances and swords. After they had trampled on his body, they carried his head to the castle of Cufa, and the inhuman Obeidollah struck him on the mouth with a cane: "Alas!" exclaimed an aged Musulman, "on these lips have I seen the lips of the apostle of God!" In a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of Hosein will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader. On the annual festival of his martyrdom, in the devout pilgrimage to his sepulchre, his Persian votaries abandon their souls to the religious frenzy of sorrow and indignation.

When the sisters and children of Ali were brought in chains to the throne of Damascus, the caliph was advised to extirpate the enmity of a popular and hostile race, whom he had injured beyond the hope of reconciliation. But Yezid preferred the counsels of mercy;

and the mourning family was honorably dismissed to mingle their tears with their kindred at Medina. The glory of martyrdom superseded the right of primogeniture; and the twelve IMAMS, or pontiffs, of the Persian creed, are Ali, Hassan, Hosein, and the lineal descendants of Hosein to the ninth generation. Without arms or treasures, or subjects, they successively enjoyed the veneration of the people, and provoked the jealousy of the reigning caliphs; their tombs at Mecca or Medina, on the banks of the Euphrates, or in the province of Chorasan, are still visited by the devotion of their sect. Their names were often the pretence of sedition and civil war; but these royal saints despised the pomp of the world, submitted to the will of God and the injustice of man, and devoted their innocent lives to the study and practice of religion. The twelfth and last of the Imams

conspicuous by the title of *Mahadi*, or the Guide, surpassed the solitude and sanctity of his predecessors. He concealed himself in a cavern near Bagdad: the time and place of his death are unknown; and his votaries pretend that he still lives, and will appear before the day of judgment to overthrow the tyranny of Dejal, or the Antichrist. In the lapse of two or three centuries the posterity of Abbas, the uncle of Mahomet, had multiplied to the number of thirty-three thousand; the race of Ali might be equally prolific; the meanest individual was above the first and greatest of princes; and the most eminent were supposed to excel the perfection of angels. But their adverse fortune, and the wide extent of the Musulman empire, allowed an ample scope for every bold and artful impostor, who claimed affinity with the holy seed; the sceptre of the Almohades in Spain and

Africa, of the Fatimites in Egypt and Syria, of the sultans of Yemen, and of the sophis of Persia, has been consecrated by this vague and ambiguous title. Under their reigns it might be dangerous to dispute the legitimacy of their birth; and one of the Fatimite caliphs silenced an indiscreet question by drawing his scymitar: "This," said Moez, "is my pedigree; and these," casting a handful of gold to his soldiers, —"and these are my kindred and my children." In the various conditions of princes, or doctors, or nobles, or merchants, or beggars, a swarm of the genuine or fictitious descendants of Mahomet and Ali is honored with the appellation of sheiks, or sherifs, or emirs. In the Ottoman empire, they are distinguished by a green turban, receive a stipend from the treasury, are judged only by their chief, and, however debased by fortune or character

still assert the proud pre-eminence of their birth. A family of three hundred persons, the pure and orthodox branch of the caliph Hassan, is preserved without taint or suspicion in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and still retains, after the revolutions of twelve centuries, the custody of the temple and the sovereignty of their native land. The fame and merrit of Mahomet would ennoble the plebeian race, and the ancient blood of the Koreish transcends the recent majesty of the kings of the earth.

The talents of Mahomet entitle him to our applause, but his success has perhaps too strongly attracted our admiration. Are we surprised that a multitude of proselytes should embrace the doctrine and the passions of an eloquent fanatic? In the heresies of the church the same seduction has been tried and repeated from the time of the apostles

to that of the reformers. Does it seem incredible that a private citizen should grasp the sword and the sceptre, subdue his native country, and erect a monarchy by his victorious arms? In the moving picture of the dynasties of the East, a hundred fortunate usurpers have arisen from a baser origin, surmounted more formidable obstacles, and filled a larger scope of empire and conquest. Mahomet was alike instructed to preach and to fight, and the union of these opposite qualities, while it enhanced his merit, contributed to his success: the operation of force and persuasion, of enthusiasm and fear, continually acted on each other, till every barrier yielded to their irresistible power. His voice invited the Arabs to freedom and victory, to arms and rapine, to the indulgence of their darling passions in this world and the other: the restraints which he imposed were requisite to es-

tablish the credit of the prophet, and to exercise the obedience of the people; and the only objection to his success was his rational creed of the unity and perfections of God. It is not the propagation, but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder: the same pure and perfect impression which he engraved at Mecca and Medina, is preserved after the revolutions of twelve centuries, by the Indian, the African, and the Turkish proselytes of the Koran. If the Christian apostles, St. Peter or St. Paul, could return to the Vatican, they might possibly inquire the name of the Deity who is worshipped with such mysterious rites in that magnificent temple: at Oxford or Geneva, they would experience less surprise; but it might still be incumbent on them to peruse the catechism of the church, and to study the orthodox commentators on their own writings and the words of their Master. But the Turkish dome of

St. Sophia, with an increase of splendor and size, represents the humble tabernacle erected at Medina by the hands of Mahomet. The Mahometans have uniformly withstood the temptation of reducing the objects of their faith and devotion to a level with the sense and imagination of man. "I believe in one God, and Mahomet the apostle of God," is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honors of the prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue; and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion. The votaries of Ali have indeed consecrated the memory of their hero, his wife, and his children; and some of the Persian doctors pretend that the divine essence was incarnate in the person of the Imams; but their superstition is universally condemned by the Sonnites;

and their impiety has afforded a seasonable warning against the worship of saints and martyrs. The metaphysical questions on the attributes of God, and the liberty of man, have been agitated in the schools of the Mahometans, as well as in those of the Christians; but among the former they have never enraged the passions of the people or disturbed the tranquillity of the state. The cause of this important difference may be found in the separation or union of the regal and sacerdotal characters. It was the interest of the caliphs, the successors of the prophet and commanders of the faithful, to repress and discourage all religious innovations: the order, the discipline, the temporal and spiritual ambition of the clergy, are unknown to the Moslems; and the sages of the law are the guides of their conscience and the oracles of their faith. From the Atlantic to the Ganges the Koran is acknowledged as the fundamental code. not only of the-

ology but of civil and criminal jurisprudence; and the laws which regulate the actions and the property of mankind, are guarded by the infallible and immutable sanction of the will of God. This religious servitude is attended with some practical disadvantage; the illiterate legislator had been often misled by his own prejudices and those of his country; and the institutions of the Arabian desert may be ill adapted to the wealth and numbers of Ispahan and Constantinople. On these occasions, the Cadhi respectfully places on his head the holy volume, and substitutes a dexterous interpretation more apposite to the principles of equity, and the manners and policy of the times.

His beneficial or pernicious influence on the public happiness is the last consideration in the character of Mahomet. The most bitter or most bigoted of his Christian or Jewish foes, will surely allow that he assumed a false commission

to inculcate a salutary doctrine, less perfect only than their own. He piously supposed, as the basis of his religion, the truth and sanctity of *their* prior revelations, the virtues and miracles of their founders. The idols of Arabia were broken before the throne of God; the blood of human victims was expiated by prayer, and fasting, and alms, the laudable or innocent arts of devotion; and his rewards and punishments of a future life were painted by the images most congenial to an ignorant and carnal generation. Mahomet was perhaps incapable of dictating a moral and political system for the use of his countrymen: but he breathed among the faithful a spirit of charity and friendship, recommended the practice of the social virtues, and checked, by his laws and precepts, the thirst of revenge and the oppression of widows and orphans. The hostile tribes were united in faith and obedience, and the valor which had

been idly spent in domestic quarrels was vigorously directed against a foreign enemy. Had the impulse been less powerful, Arabia, free at home, and formidable abroad, might have flourished under a succession of her native monarchs. Her sovereignty was lost by the extent and rapidity of conquest. The colonies of the nation were scattered over the East and West, and their blood was mingled with the blood of their converts and captives. After the reign of three caliphs, the throne was transported from Medina to the valley of Damascus and the banks of the Tigris; the holy cities were violated by impious war; Arabia was ruled by the rod of a subject, perhaps of a stranger; and the Bedoweens of the desert, awakening from their dream of dominion, resumed their old and solitary independence.

FINIS.