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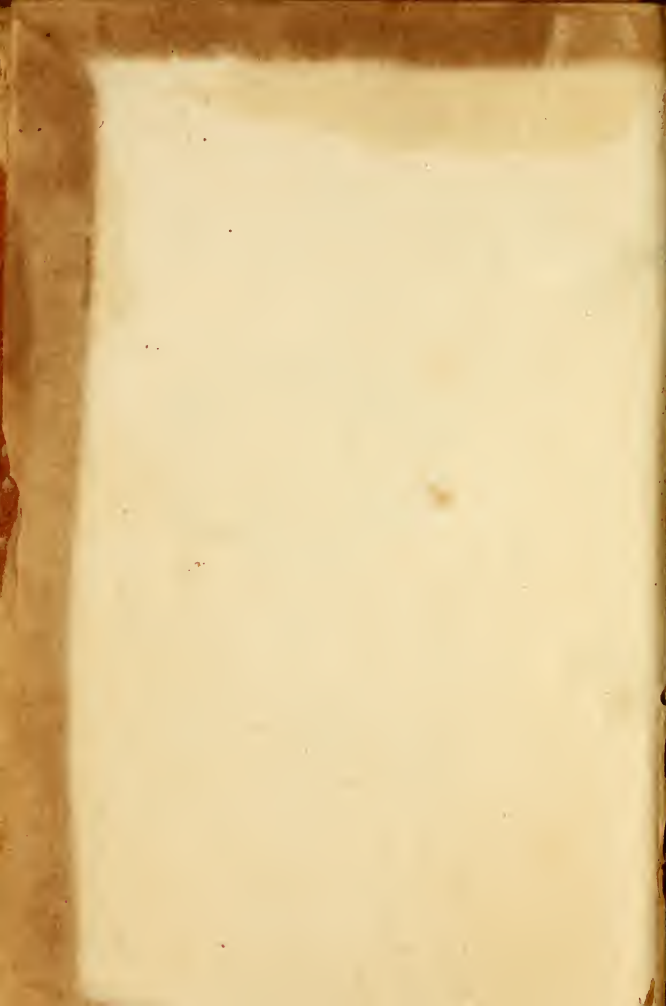
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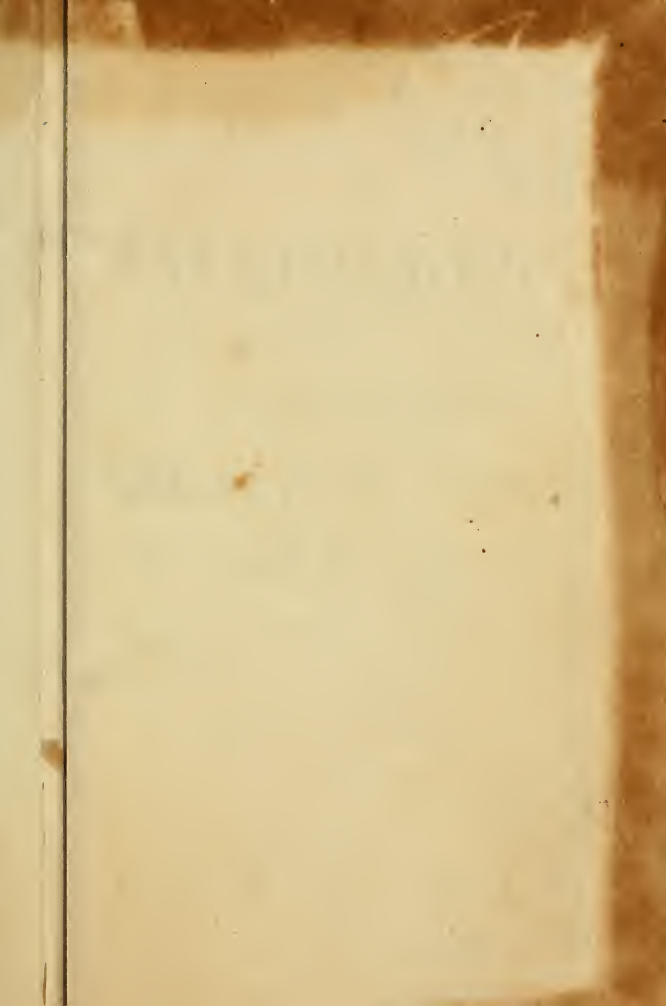
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THE  
L I F E

OF

MAHOMET,

WITH *SKETCHES* OF THE *REIGNS*

OF HIS SUCCESSORS

ABUBEKER, OMAR,  
OTHMAN, and ALI.

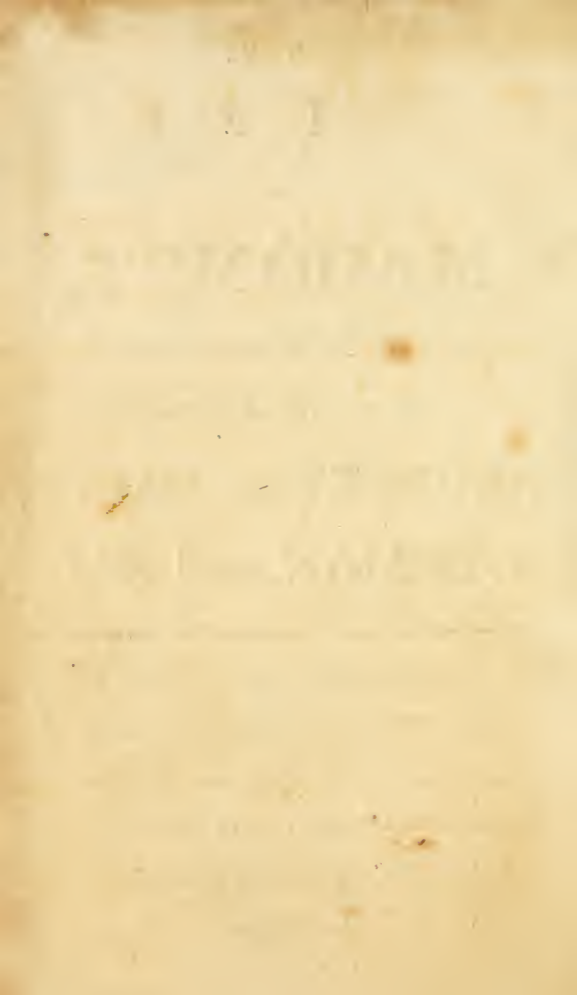
FROM THE *DECLINE & FALL* OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

BY EDWARD GIBBON, Esq.

PRINTED AT LEOMINSTER, BY *SALMON WILDER*,

FOR JOHN WHITING, OF LANCASTER,

—1805.—



THE  
L I F E  
OF  
MAHOMET.



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, appear 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 machinery 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 dishonour 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 demeanour: 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 without awe. 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.

The base and plebeian origin of Mahomet is an unskilful calumny of the Christians, who exalt 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 and the family of Hashem, the most illustrious of the Arabs, the princes of Mecca, and the hereditary guardians of the Caaba. The grandfather of Mahomet was Abdol Motaleb, the son of Hashem, a wealthy and generous citizen, who relieved the distress of famine with the supplies of commerce. Mecca, which had been 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 honour 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 favour of your temple, which I have threatened to destroy ? ” “ Because,” replied the intrepid chief, “ the cattle is my own : the Caaba belongs to the gods, and *they* will defend their house from injury and sacrilege.” The want of provisions, or the valour 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 æra of the elephant. The glory of Abdol Motaleb was crowned with domestic happiness, his life was prolonged to the age of one hundred and ten years, 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, of the noble race of the Zahrites, two hundred virgins are said



to have expired of jealousy and despair. Mahomet, or more properly Mohammed, the only son of Abdallah and Amina, was born at Mecca, four years after the death of Justinian, and two months after the defeat of the Abyssinians, whose victory would have introduced into the Caaba the religion of the Christians. In his early infancy, he 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. 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 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 un-

cle. 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. 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 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 & superior genius. The son of Abdallah was educated in the bosom of the noblest race, in the use of the purest dialect of Arabia; 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; the common ignorance exempted 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 been indulged in the poetical 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 the

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 rights of hospitality ; and the enemies of Mahomet have named the Jew, the Persian, and the Syrian monk, whom they accuse of lending their secret aid to the composition of the Koran. Conversation enriches 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*, he preached to his family and nation, is compounded of an 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 Mahomet 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 honours 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.

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 pretended 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 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 recal their country from idolatry and vice; one hundred and four volumes have been dictated by 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 Chaldaea: 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 the 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 an high & 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 : honourable “ 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, & 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 the last of the apostles of God.

The communication of ideas requires a similitude of tho't & 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 a 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 œconomy, had indeed been dispatched 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 or 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 : the work was revised by the caliph Othman, in the thirtieth year of the Hegira ; and the various editions of the Koran assert the same miraculous privilege of an 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 comparing the productions of human genius. The harmony and copiousness of style will not reach, in a



version the European infidel ; he will peruse with impatience the endless incoherent rhapsody of fable, and precept, and declamation, which seldom excites a sentiment or 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. 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 Philip-pics 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 *Son-na* or oral law was fixed and consecrated by the labours 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. Each day the pious author prayed in the temple of Mecca, and performed 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 prophesy, 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 farther 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 tho' 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 these marvellous tales ; but the gravest of the Mussulman doctors imitate the modesty of their master, and indulge a latitude of faith or interpretation. They might speciously alledge, that in preaching the religion, it was needless to violate the harmony, of nature ; that a creed unclouded with mystery may be ex-

cused from miracles; and that the sword of Mahomet was not less potent than the rod of Moses.

The polytheist is oppressed and distracted 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 pagantry 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 Mussulman; 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 day break, at noon, in the afternoon, in the evening, and at the first watch of the night; and, in the present decay of religious fervour, 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. Yet every spot for the 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 is 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; and the independent spirit of fanaticism looks down with contempt on the ministers and the 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 Ramadān, from the rising to the setting of the sun, the Mussulman 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 priest 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 appetites.

III. The charity of the Mahometans descends,



to the animal creation; and the Koran repeatedly inculcates, not as a merit, but as a strict & indispensable duty, the relief of the indigent and unfortunate. Mahomet, perhaps, is the only lawgiver 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 Mussulman 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 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, are guarded by rewards and punishments and the faith of the Mussulman 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 confounded 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 re-union of the soul and body will be followed by the final judgment of man-



kind ; 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 favourable 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 has 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 Mussulman 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 inno-

cent, 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 sensusal 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 an 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 the divine vision.

The first and most arduous conquests of Mahomet were those of his wife, his servant, his pupil, and his friend ; since he presented himself as a prophet to those who were most conversant with his infirmities as a man. Yet Cadijah believed the words, and cherished the glory, of her husband ; the obsequious and affectionate Zeid was tempted by the prospect of freedom ; the illustrious Ali, the son of Abu Taleb, embraced the sentiments of his cousin with the spirit of a youthful hero ;

and the wealth, the moderation, the veracity of Abubeker, 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 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 honours, 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 support



“ my burthen ? Who among you will be  
“ my companion and my vizir ? ” No  
answer was returned, till the silence of as-  
tonishment, 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 : who-  
“ soever 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.” Mahom-  
et accepted his offer with transport, and  
Abu Taleb was ironically exhorted to re-  
spect the superior dignity of his son. In  
a more serious tone, the father of Ali ad-  
vised his nephew to relinquish his imprac-  
ticable design. “ Spare your remon-  
strances,” 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 the West, advan-  
ced with a slow and painful progress  
within the walls of Mecca. Yet Mahom-  
et enjoyed the satisfaction of beholding the



increase of his infant congregation of Unitarians, who revered him as a prophet, and to whom he seasonably dispensed the spiritual nourishment of the Koran. The number of proselytes may be esteemed by the absence of eighty-three men and eighteen women, who retired, to *Æthiopia* in the seventh year of his mission: and his party was fortified by the timely conversion of his uncle Hamza, & of the fierce and inflexible Omar, who signalised 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 was 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 clamours of Abu Taleb. “ Citizens and pilgrims, listen not to the tempter, hearken not to his “ impious novelties. Stand fast in the wor- “ ship 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. Their malice was coloured with the pretence of religion : in the age of Job, the crime of impiety was punished by the Arabian magistrate ; and Mahomet was guilty 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 ne-

“ phew reviles our religion ; he accuses  
“ our wise forefathers of ignorance and fol-  
“ ly ; silence him quickly, lest he kindle  
“ tumult and discord in the city. If he per-  
“ severe, 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 re-  
ligious faction ; the most helpless or timid  
of the disciples retired to Æthiopia, and  
the prophet withdrew himself to various  
places of strength in the town and country.  
As he was still 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 impla-  
cable 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  
Mussulman 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 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 neighbourhood 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 convince them that the place was solitary and inviolate. " 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 prom-

ises 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 æra of the *Hegira*, which, at the end of twelve centuries, 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*, known under the name of Yathreb, before it was sanctified by the throne of the prophet, was divided between the tribes of the Charegites 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. Some of her noblest citizens, in a pilgrimage to the Caa-ba, 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 forever profess the creed, and observe the precepts, of the Koran. 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 fidelity. 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 honour and interest. I am your friend, and the ene-



“ 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 unanimously 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 Mosléms was distinguished by the names of *Mohagerians* and *Ansars*, the fugitives of Mecca, and the

auxiliaries of Medina. To eradicate the seeds of jealousy, Mahomet 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 an 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 & 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 faithful to the words & looks of the prophet, by the eagerness with which they collected his spittle, an 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 fervour 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 Mahomet 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 plentitude 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 sanc-

tivity 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 atchieved 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 movea-



bles and immoveables, was reserved by the prophet for pious and charitable uses; 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 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 license 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 & 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 vermillion 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 pic-



ture 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 alarmed by the vengeance of an enemy, who could intercept their Syrian trade as it passed and re-passed 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 rob-

bers were placed in ambush to await his return. He dispatched 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, 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 ; discharge your arrows, and  
“ the day is your own.” At these words  
he placed himself, with Abubeker, on a  
throne or pulpit, and instantly demanded  
the succour of Gabriel and three thousand  
angels. His eye was fixed on the field of  
battle : the Mussulmans fainted and were  
pressed : in that decisive moment the pro-  
phet started from his 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 vic-  
tory of the faithful. 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 drams 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 Eu-  
phrates : they were overtaken by the dili-

gence of the Mussulmans ; and wealthy must have been the prize, if twenty thousand drams 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 Caba. The standard of God and Mahomet was upheld by nine hundred & 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. The second battle 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 the 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 Mussulmans 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 javelin: two of his teeth were shattered with a stone; yet, in the midst of tumult and dismay, he reproached the infidels with the murder of a prophet; and blessed the friendly hand that staunched his blood, and conveyed him to a place of safety. 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 wife of Abu Sophian tasted the entrails of Hamza, the uncle of Mahomet. They might applaud their superstition and satiate their fury; but the Mussulmans soon rallied in the field, and the Koreish wanted strength or courage to un-

dertake 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 Mussulmans. The prudence of Mahomet declined a general engagement; the valour 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: the 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 favour of the Jews; and happy would it have been for their temporal interest, had they recognised, 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 Mussulmans ; 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 Me-



dina, but their resolute defence obtained an honourable capitulation; and the garrison, sounding their trumpets and beating their drums, was permitted to depart with the honours 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 armour, 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 judgement they appealed, pronounced the sentence of their death: seven hundred Jews were dragged in chains to the marketplace 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 Mussulmans: 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 & 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 an Hebrew champion of gigantic stature was cloven to the chest by his irresistible scymetar ; 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 husband-

men 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 the 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 tygers;" 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, 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 Mussulmans, and their disappointment 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 re-

tired 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 seasonably 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, and the 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 scymetar 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; eleven men and six women were proscribed by the sentence of Mahomet; but he blamed the cruelty 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! you 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 ex-



ample 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 Bedoueens ; 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 beneath the yoke of their enemy. The banners of Medina and Mecca



were displayed by the prophet; a crowd of Bedowens increased the strength or numbers of the army, and twelve thousand Mussulmans 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 attempted 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 succour!" 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 friendly 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 the repentance and safety of the unbelieving city. The spoil of this fortunate expedition amounted to six thousand captives, twenty four thou-

and 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 endeavoured 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 entrust my life and fortunes. You are the companions of my exile, of my kingdom, of my paradise.” He was followed by the depu-

ties of Tayef, who dreaded the repetition of a siege. "Grant us, O 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 alms and tithes were applied to the service of religion: and one hundred and fourteen thousand Moslems accompanied the last pilgrimage of the apostle.

When Heraclius returned in triumph from the Persian war, he entertained, at Emese, one of the ambassadors of Ma-

homet, 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 of 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 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 entrusted 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 authorised to elect their general. The three leaders were slain in the battle of Muta, the first military action which tried the valour of the Mos-

lems 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 honourable 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 valour 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 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 alledged the want of money, or horses, or provisions ; the season of harvest, and the intolerable heat of the summer : “ Hell 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. The 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 necessi-



ty of drinking the water from the belly of that useful animal. In the midway, 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. But the active and intrepid Cal led spread around the terror of his name; and the prophet received the submission of the tribes and cities, 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 ; 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 Mussulman ? “ let him proclaim *my* faults in the face of “ the congregation. Has any one been “ despoiled of his goods ? the little I possess shall compensate the principal and “ interest of the debt.” “ Yes,” replies a voice from the crowd, “ I am entitled to “ three drams 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 firm-

ness 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 antient 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, 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 supercede 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 moments 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 favour 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 agency 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 scymetar, 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 Mahomet," 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." He was piously interred by the hands of his nearest kinsman, on the same spot on which he expired; Medina has been sanctified 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 Mohomet, 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 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 labour 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 benevolence; but a human missionary is incapable of cherishing the obstinate unbelievers who reject his claims, despise his arguments, and persecute his life; he might forgive his personal adversaries, he may lawfully hate the enemies of God; the stern passions of



pride and revenge were kindled in the bosom of Mahomet, and he sighed like the prophet of Niniveh, 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 valour of his servants. In the exercise of political government, he was compelled to abate of the stern rigour of fanaticism, to comply in some measure with the prejudices and passions of his followers, and to employ even the vices of mankind as the 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 imposter!) 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 the 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.

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 with his own hands his shoes and his woollen garment. Disdaining the penance and merit of an hermit, he observed without effort or vanity, the abstemious diet of an Arab and a soldier. 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 prophet. The interdiction of wine was confirmed by his example ; his hunger was appeased with a sparing allowance of barley-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 fervour of 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 of 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 an 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 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 Mussulmans. If we remember the seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines of the wise Solomon, we shall applaud the mod-

esty 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 favour 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 behaviour 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. In his adventures with Zeineb, the wife of Zeid, and 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 Zeineb, 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 apostle 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 & concubines, without listening to the clamours of his wives. In a solitary retreat of thirty days, he laboured, 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 labour 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 with 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 nume-  
rous posterity and a lineal succession.  
The hopes of Mahomet were fatally disap-  
pointed. The virgin Ayesha, and his ten  
widows of mature age and approved ferti-  
lity, were barren in his potent embraces.  
The four sons of Cadijah died in their in-  
fancy. Mary, his Egyptian concubine,  
was endeared to him by the birth of Ibra-  
him. At the end of fifteen months the  
prophet wept over his grave ; but he sus-  
tained with firmness the raillery of his ene-  
mies, and checked the adulation or credu-  
lity of the Moslems, by the assurance that  
an eclipse of the sun was *not* occasioned by  
the death of the infant. Cadijah had like-  
wise given him four daughters, who were  
married to the most faithful of his disci-

ples : 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.

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 blessing 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 shewn 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 valour. 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 viceregent, 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.

The silence and death of the prophet restored the liberty of the people; and his

companions convened 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 preeminence 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 of chusing 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 Mussulman should hereafter presume to anticipate the suffrage of his brethren, both the elector and the elected would be worthy of death. After the simple inauguration 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 preventing their common enemies, and wisely rejected his courteous offer of abdicating the government of the Arabians. After a reign of two years, the aged caliph was summoned by the angel of death. In his testament, with the tacit approbation of the 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; who expired with a fervent prayer, that the God of Mahomet would ratify his choice, and direct the Mussulmans 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 year of his reign, 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*. 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 contests 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 usur-

pers who intercepted his indefeasible right to the dignity of Imam and Caliph; and the name of Omar expresses in their tongue the perfect accomplishments of wickedness and impiety. The *Sonnites*, who are supported by the genial consent and orthodox tradition of the Mussulmans, 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 decrees 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 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 dispatched an haughty mandate to their sovereign, requiring him to execute justice, or to descend from the throne. His repentance began to disarm and to disperse the insurgents; but their fury was re-kindled by the arts of his enemies: and the forgery of a perfidious secretary was contrived to blast his reputation and precipitate his fall. The caliph had lost the only guard of his predecessors, the esteem and confi-

dence 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 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 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 & 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 inconsisencies ; and the enemies, perhaps 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. The most reasonable Moslems were scandalised, 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 Bossora. Their leaders, Telha and Zobeir, 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 ; and the cage or liter in which

she sat, was stuck with javelins and darts like the quills of a porcupine. The venerable captive sustained with firmness the reproaches of the conqueror, and was speedily dismissed to her proper station, at the tomb of Mahomet, with the respect and tenderness that was still due to the widow of the apostle. After this victory which was styled the Day of the Camel, 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, 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 caliph

displayed a superior character of valour 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 as a sentence of inevitable death. The ranks of the Syrians were broken by the charge of a hero who was mounted on a pyebald horse, and wielded with irresistible force his ponderous and two-edged sword. As often as he smote a rebel, he shouted the Allah Aebar, "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, 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 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, devoted 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, and mercifully recommended to his children, that they would dispatch 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 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 entrusted him with the government of Syria; and he admin-



istered that important province above forty years either in a subordinate or supreme rank. Without renouncing the fame of valour and liberality, he affected the reputation of humanity and moderation: a grateful people was 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 valour 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; but the designs of Moawiyah were conducted with vigour 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 bevolence 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 an equal measure of piety, Hosein, the younger brother of Hassan,

inherited a remnant of his father's spirit, and served with honour 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 centered 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 & 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 timorous 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; Oheidollah, 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 honourable 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 Ho-

sein, “ 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 bet-  
“ ter than me ; and every Mussulman has  
“ an example in the prophet.” He pres-  
sed 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 fer-  
vent prayer and the assurance of paradise.  
On the morning of the fatal day, he mount-  
ed 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, ac-  
cording to the practice of the Arabs. The  
enemy advanced with reluctance ; and one  
of their chiefs deserted, with thirty follow-  
ers, to claim the partnership of inevitable  
death. In every close onset, or single  
combat, the despair of the Fatimites was  
invincible ; but the surrounding multi-  
tudes galled them from a distance with a  
cloud of arrows, & the horses & 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 companions 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 up 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 Shamar, 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 ! ” ex-



claimed an aged Mussulman, "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 honourably 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, & provoked the jealousy of the reigning caliphs:



their tombs at Mecca or Medina, on the banks of the Euphrates, or in the province of Chorasán, 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 Mussulman empire, allowed an ample scope for every bold and art-

ful impostor, who claimed affinity with the holy seed: the sceptre of the Almohades in Spain and Afric, 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 scymetar: This, said Moez, "is my pedigree; and these," casting an 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 honoured 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 merit of Mahomet would enoble a plebian race, and the ancient blood of the Korcish transcends the recent majesty of the kings of the earth.

The talents of Mahomet are entitled 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, an 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 establish 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 enquire 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 splendour and size, represents the humble tabernacle erected at Medina by the hands of Mahomet. The Mahometans have uniformly withstood the temptation of reducing the object of their faith and devotion to a level with the senses 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 honours 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 or 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 engaged the passions of the people or disturbed the tranquility 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 theology 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 & those of his country ; & 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 dextrous interpretation more opposite 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 bigotted 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 laudible 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 valour 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.

From the rapid conquests of the Saracens a presumption will naturally arise, that the first caliphs commanded in person the armies of the faithful, and sought the crown of martyrdom in the foremost ranks of the battle. The courage of Abubeker, Omar, and Othman, had indeed been tried in the persecution and wars of the prophet; and the personal assurance of paradise must have taught them to despise the pleasures and dangers of the present world. But they ascended the throne in a venerable or mature age, and esteemed the domestic cares of religion and justice the most important duties of a sovereign. Except the presence of Omar at the siege of Jerusalem, their longest expeditions were the frequent pilgrimage from Medina to Mecca; and they calmly received the tidings of victory as they prayed or preached before the sepulchre of the prophet. The austere and frugal measure of their lives was the effect of virtue or habit, and the pride of their simplicity insulted the vain magnificence of the kings of the earth.

When Abubeker assumed the office of caliph, he enjoined his daughter Ayesha to take a strict account of his private patrimony, that it might be evident whether he were enriched or impoverished by the service of the state. He thought himself entitled to a stipend of three pieces of gold, with the sufficient maintenance of a single camel and a black slave; but on the Friday of each week he distributed the residue of his own and the public money, first to the most worthy, and then to the most indigent, of the Moslems. The remains of his wealth, a coarse garment, and five pieces of gold, were delivered to his successor, who lamented with a modest sigh his own inability to equal such an admirable model. Yet the abstinence and humility of Omar were not inferior to the virtues of Abubeker; his food consisted of barley-bread or dates; his drink was water; he preached in a gown that was torn or tattered in twelve places; and a Persian satrap who paid his homage to the conqueror, found him asleep among the beggars on the steps of the mosch of Medina. Oeconomy is the source of liberality, and the increase of the revenue en-

bled Omar to establish a just and perpetual reward for the past and present services of the faithful. Careless of his own emolument, he assigned to Abbas, the uncle of the prophet, the first and most ample allowance of twenty-five thousand drams or pieces of silver. Five thousand were allotted to each of the aged warriors, the relics of the field of Beder, and the last and meanest of the companions of Mahomet was distinguished by the annual reward of three thousand pieces. One thousand was the stipend of the veterans who had fought in the first battles against the Greeks and Persians, and the decreasing pay, as low as fifty pieces of silver, was adapted to the respective merit and seniority of the soldiers of Omar. Under his reign, and that of his predecessor, the conquerors of the East were the trusty servants of God and the people : the mass of the public treasure was consecrated to the expenses of peace and war ; a prudent mixture of justice and bounty, maintained the discipline of the Saracens, and they united, by a rare felicity, the dispatch and execution of despotism, with the equal and frugal maxims of a republican government. The heroic



courage of Ali, the consummate prudence of Moawiyah, excited the emulation of their subjects ; and the talents which had been exercised in the school of civil discord, were more usefully applied to propagate the faith and dominion of the prophet. In the sloth and vanity of the palace of Damascus, the succeeding princes of the house of Ommiyah were alike destitute of the qualifications of statesmen and of saints. Yet the spoils of unknown nations were continually laid at the foot of their throne, and the uniform ascent of the Arabian greatness must be ascribed to the spirit of the nation rather than the abilities of their chiefs. A large deduction must be allowed for the weakness of their enemies. The birth of Mahomet was fortunately placed in the most degenerate and disorderly period of the Persians, the Romans, and the Barbarians of Europe: the empires of Trajan, or even of Constantine or Charlemagne, would have repelled the assault of the naked Saracens, and the torrent of fanaticism might have been obscurely lost in the sands of Arabia.

In the victorious days of the Roman republic, it had been the aim of the senate to confine their counsels and legions to a



single war, and completely to suppress a first enemy before they provoked the hostilities of a second. These timid maxims of policy were disdained by the magnanimity or enthusiasm of the Arabian caliphs. With the same vigour and success they invaded the successors of Augustus, and those of Artaxerxes; and the rival monarchies at the same instant became the prey of an enemy whom they had been so long accustomed to despise. In the ten years of the administration of Omar, the Saracens reduced to his obedience thirty-six thousand cities or castles, destroyed four thousand churches or temples of the unbelievers, and edified fourteen hundred moschs for the exercise of the religion of Mahomet. One hundred years after his flight from Mecca, the arms and the reign of his successors extended from India to the Atlantic Ocean, over the various and distant provinces, which may be comprised under the names of, I. Persia; II. Syria; III. Egypt; IV. Africa; and, V. Spain.

I. In the first year of the first caliph, his lieutenant Caled, the sword of God, and the scourge of the infidels, advanced to the banks of the Euphrates, and reduced

the cities of Anbar and Hira. Westward of the ruins of Babylon, a tribe of sedentary Arabs had fixed themselves on the verge of the desert ; and Hira was the seat of a race of kings who had embraced the Christian religion, and reigned above six hundred years under the shadow of the throne of Persia. The last of the Mondars was defeated and slain by Caled; his son was sent a captive to Medina ; his nobles bowed before the successor of the prophet ; the people was tempted by the example and success of their countrymen ; and the caliph accepted as the first fruits of foreign conquest, an annual tribute of seventy thousand pieces of gold. The conquerors, and even their historians, were astonished by the dawn of their future greatness : “ In the same year,” says Elmacin, “ Caled fought many signal battles ; an immense multitude of the infidels was slaughtered ; and spoils, infinite and innumerable, were acquired by the victorious Moslems.” But the invincible Caled was soon transferred to the Syrian war : the invasion of the Persian frontier was conducted by less active or less prudent commanders : the Saracens were repulsed with loss in the passage of

the Euphrates ; and, though they chastised the insolent pursuit of the Magians, their remaining forces still hovered in the desert of Babylon.

The indignation and fears of the Persians suspended for a moment their intestine divisions. By the unanimous sentence of the priests and nobles, their queen Arzema was deposed ; the sixth of the transient usurpers, who had arisen and vanished in three or four years, since the death of Chosroes and the retreat of Heraclius. Her tiara was placed on the head of Yezdegerd, the grandson of Chosroes ; and the same æra, which coincides with an astronomical period, has recorded the fall of the Sassanian dynasty and the religion of Zoroaster. The youth and inexperience of the prince, he was only fifteen years of age, declined a perilous encounter : the royal standard was delivered into the hands of his general Rustam ; and a remnant of thirty thousand regular troops was swelled in truth, or in opinion, to one hundred and twenty thousand subjects, or allies, of the great king. The Moslems, whose numbers were reinforced from twelve to thirty thousand, had pitched their camp in the plains of Cadésia :

and their line, though it consisted of fewer *men*, could produce more *soldiers* than the unwieldy hosts of the infidels. I shall here observe what I must often repeat, that the charge of the Arabs was not like that of the Greeks and Romans, the effort of a firm and compact infantry : their military force was chiefly formed of cavalry and archers ; and the engagement, which was often interrupted and often renewed by single combats and flying skirmishes, might be protracted without any decisive event to the continuance of several days. The periods of the battle of Cadesia were distinguished by their peculiar appellations. The first, from the well-timed appearance of six thousand of the Syrian brethren, was denominated the day of *succour*. The day of *concussion* might express the disorder of one, or perhaps of both, of the contending armies. The third, a nocturnal tumult, received the whimsical name of the night of *barking*, from the discordant clamours, which were compared to the inarticulate sounds of the fiercest animals. The morning of the succeeding day determined the fate of Persia ; and a seasonable whirlwind drove a cloud of dust against the faces of the unbelievers. The

clangor of arms was re-echoed to the tent of Rustam, who, far unlike the ancient hero of his name, was gently reclining in a cool and tranquil shade, amidst the baggage of his camp, and the train of mules that were laden with gold and silver. On the sound of danger he started from his couch; but his flight was overtaken by a valiant Arab, who caught him by the foot, struck off his head, hoisted it on a lance, and instantly returning to the field of battle, carried slaughter and dismay among the thickest ranks of the Persians. The Saracens confess a loss of seven thousand five hundred men; and the battle of Cadesia is justly described by the epithets of obstinate and atrocious. The standard of the monarchy was overthrown and captured, in the field—a leathern apron of a blacksmith, who, in ancient times, had arisen the deliverer of Persia; but this badge of heroic poverty was disguised, and almost concealed by a profusion of precious gems. After this victory, the wealthy province of Irak or Assyria submitted to the caliph, and his conquests were firmly established by the speedy foundation of Bassora, a place which ever commands the trade and navigation of the Persians. At the dis-



tance of fourscore miles from the Gulf, the Euphrates and Tigris unite in a broad and direct current, which is aptly styled the river of the Arabs. In the mid-way, between the junction and the mouth of these famous streams, the new settlement was planted on the western bank; the first colony was composed of eight hundred Moslems; but the influence of the situation soon reared a flourishing and populous capital. The air, though excessively hot, is pure and healthy: the meadows are filled with palm-trees and cattle; and one of the adjacent vallies has been celebrated among the four paradises or gardens of Asia. Under the first caliphs, the jurisdiction of this Arabian colony extended over the southern provinces of Persia: the city has been sanctified by the tombs of the companions and martyrs; and the vessels of Europe still frequent the port of Bassora, as a convenient station and passage of the Indian trade.

After the defeat of Cadesia, a country intersected by rivers and canals might have opposed an insuperable barrier to the victorious cavalry; and the walls of Ctesiphon or Madayn, which had resisted the battering-rams of the Romans, would not have yield-



ed to the darts of the Saracens. But the flying Persians were overcome by the belief, that the last day of their religion and empire was at hand : the strongest posts were abandoned by treachery or cowardice ; and the king, with a part of his family and treasures, escaped to Holwan at the foot of the Median hills. In the third month after the battle, Said, the lieutenant of Omar, passed the Tigris without opposition ; the capital was taken by assault ; and the disorderly resistance of the people gave a keener edge to the sabres of the Moslems, who shouted with religious transport, " This is the white palace of Chosroes, this " is the promise of the apostle of God ! " The naked robbers of the desert were suddenly enriched beyond the measure of their hope or knowledge. Each chamber revealed a new treasure secreted with art, or ostentatiously displayed ; the gold and silver ; the various wardrobes and precious furniture, surpassed (says Abulfeda) the estimate of fancy or numbers ; and another historian defines the untold and almost infinite mass, by the fabulous computation of three thousands of thousands of thousands of pieces of gold. Some minute though curious facts represent the

contrast of riches and ignorance. From the remote islands of the Indian Ocean, a large provision of camphire had been imported, which is employed with a mixture of wax to illuminate the palaces of the East. Strangers to the name and properties of that odoriferous gum, the Saracens, mistaking it for salt, mingled the camphire in their bread, and were astonished at the bitterness of the taste. One of the apartments of the palace was decorated with a carpet of silk, sixty cubits in length, and as many in breadth; a paradise or garden was depicted on the ground; the flowers, fruits, and shrubs were imitated by the figures of the gold embroidery, and the colours of the precious stones; and the ample square was encircled by a variegated and verdant border. The Arabian general persuaded his soldiers to relinquish their claim, in the reasonable hope, that the eyes of the caliph would be delighted with the splendid workmanship of nature and industry. Regardless of the merit of art and the pomp of royalty, the rigid Omar divided the prize among his brethren of Medina: the picture was destroyed; but such was the intrinsic value of the materials, that the share of Ali alone

was sold for twenty thousand drams. A mule that carried away the tiara and cuirass, the belt and bracelets of Chosroes, was overtaken by the pursuers; the gorgeous trophy was presented to the commander of the faithful, and the gravest of the companions condescended to smile when they beheld the white beard, hairy arms, & uncouth figure of the veteran, who was invested with the spoils of the great king. The sack of Ctesiphon was followed by its desertion and gradual decay. The Saracens disliked the air and situation of the place, and Omar was advised by his general to remove the seat of government to the western side of the Euphrates. In every age the foundation and ruin of the Assyrian cities has been easy and rapid; the country is destitute of stone and timber, and the most solid structures are composed of brick baked in the sun, and joined by a cement of the native bitumen. The name of *Cufa*, describes an habitation of reeds and earth; but the importance of the new capital was supported by the numbers, wealth, and spirit of a colony of veterans; and their licentiousness was indulged by the wisest caliphs, who were apprehensive of provoking the revolt of an hundred thousand swords: "Ye men of

“Cufa,” said Ali, who solicited their aid, “you have been always conspicuous by your valour. You conquered the Persian king, and scattered his forces, till you had taken possession of his inheritance.” This mighty conquest was achieved by the battles of Jalula and Nehavend. After the loss of the former, Yezdegerd fled from Holwan, and concealed his shame and despair in the mountains of Farsistan, from whence Cyrus had descended with his equal and valiant companions. The courage of the nation survived that of the monarch; among the hills to the south of Ecbatana or Hamadan, one hundred & fifty thousand Persians made a third and final stand for their religion and country; and the decisive battle of Nahavend was styled by the Arabs the victory of victories. If it be true that the flying general of the Persians was stopt and overtaken in a crowd of mules and camels laden with honey, the incident, however slight or singular, will denote the luxurious impediments of an Oriental army.

The geography of Persia is darkly delineated by the Greeks and Latins; but the most illustrious of her cities appear to

be more ancient than the invasion of the Arabs. By the reduction of Hamadan and Iphahan, of Caswin, Tauris, and Rei, they gradually approached the shores of the Caspian Sea; and the orators of Mecca might applaud the success and spirit of the faithful, who had already lost sight of the northern bear, and had almost transcended the bounds of the habitable world. Again turning towards the West and the Roman empire, they repassed the Tigris over the bridge of Mosul, and in the captive provinces of Armenia and Mesopotamia, embraced their victorious brethren of the Syrian army. From the palace of Madayn their Eastern progress was not less rapid or extensive. They advanced along the Tigris and the Gulf; penetrated through the passes of the mountains into the valley of Estachar or Persepolis; and profaned the last sanctuary of the Magian empire. The grandson of Chosroes was nearly surprised among the falling columns and mutilated figures; a sad emblem of the past and present fortune of Persia; he fled with accelerated haste over the desert of Kirman, implored the aid of the war-like Segestans, and sought an humble refuge on the verge of the Turkish



and Chinese power. But a victorious army is sensible of fatigue : the Arabs divided their forces in the pursuit of a timorous enemy ; and the caliph of Othman promised the government of Chorasán to the first general who should enter that large and populous country, the kingdom of the ancient Bactrians. The condition was accepted ; the prize was deserved ; the standard of Mahomet was planted on the walls of Herat, Merou, and Balch ; and the successful leader neither halted nor reposed till his foaming cavalry had tasted the waters of the Oxus. In the public anarchy, the independent governors of the cities and castles obtained their separate capitulations : the terms were granted or imposed by the esteem, the prudence, or the compassion, of the victors ; and a simple profession of faith established the distinction between a brother and a slave. After a noble defence, Harmozan, the prince or satrap of Ahwaz and Susa, was compelled to surrender his person and his state to the discretion of the caliph ; and their interview exhibits a portrait of the Arabian manners. In the presence, and by the command of Omar, the gay Barbarian was despoiled of his silken robes embroidered



with gold, and of his tiara bedecked with rubies and emeralds ; “ Are you now sensible,” said the conqueror to his naked captive ; “ are you sensible of the judgment of God, and of the different rewards of infidelity and obedience ? ” “ Alas ! ” replied Harmozan, “ I feel them two deeply. In the days of our common ignorance, we fought with the weapons of flesh, and my nation was superior. God was then neuter : since he has espoused your quarrel, you have subverted our kingdom and religion.” Oppressed by this painful dialogue, the Persian complained of intolerable thirst, but discovered some apprehensions lest he should be killed whilst he was drinking a cup of water. “ Be of good courage,” said the caliph, “ your life is safe till you have drank this water : ” the crafty satrap accepted the assurance, and instantly dashed the vase against the ground. Omar would have avenged the deceit ; but his companions represented the sanctity of an oath ; and the speedy conversion of Harmozan entitled him not only to a free pardon, but even to a stipend of two thousand pieces of gold. The administration of Persia was regulated by an actual sur-

vey of the people, the cattle, and the fruits of the earth ; and this monument, which attests the vigilance of the caliphs, might have instructed the philosophers of every age.

The flight of Yezdegerd had carried him beyond the Oxus, and as far as the Jaxartes, two rivers of ancient and modern renown, which descend from the mountains of India towards the Caspian Sea. He was hospitably entertained by Tarkhan, prince of Fargana, a fertile province on the Jaxartes ; the king of Samarcand, with the Turkish tribes of Sogdiana and Scythia, were moved by the lamentations and promises of the fallen monarch ; & he solicited by a suppliant embassy, the more solid and powerful friendship of the emperor of China. The virtuous Taitsong, the first of the dynasty of the Tang, may be justly compared with the Antonines of Rome : his people enjoyed the blessings of tranquility and peace ; and his dominion was acknowledged by forty-four hords of the Barbarians of Tartary. His last garrisons of Cashgar and Khoten maintained a frequent intercourse with their neighbours of the Jaxartes and Oxus ; a recent colony of Persians had introduced

into China the astronomy of the Magi; and Taitsong might be alarmed by the rapid progress and dangerous vicinity of the Arabs. The influence, and perhaps the supplies, of China revived the hopes of Yezdegerd and the zeal of the worshippers of fire; and he returned with an army of Turks to conquer the inheritance of his fathers. The fortunate Moslems, without unsheathing their swords, were the spectators of his ruin and death. The grandson of Chosroes was betrayed by his servant, insulted by the seditious inhabitants of Merou, and oppressed, defeated, and pursued, by his Barbarian allies. He reached the banks of a river, and offered his rings and bracelets for an instant passage in a millers boat. Ignorant or insensible of royal distress, the rustic replied, that four drams of silver were the daily profit of his mill, and that he would not suspend his work unless the loss were repaid. In this moment of hesitation and delay, the last of the Sàssanian kings was overtaken and slaughtered by the Turkish cavalry, in the nineteenth year of his unhappy reign. His son Firuz, an humble client of the Chinese Emperor, accepted the station of captain of his guards; and

the Magian worship was long preserved by a colony of loyal exiles in the province of Bucharìa. His grandson inherited the regal name ; but after a faint and fruitless enterprize, he returned to China, and ended his days in the palace of Sigan. The male line of the Sassanides was extinct ; but the female captives, the daughters of Persia, were given to the conquerors in servitude, or marriage ; and the race of the caliphs and imams was enobled by the blood of their royal mothers.

II. The conquest of Egypt may be explained by the character of the victorious Saracen, one of the first of his nation, in an age when the meanest of the brethren was exalted above his nature by the spirit of enthusiasm. The birth of Amrou was at once base and illustrious : his mother, a notorious prostitute, was unable to decide among five of the Koreish ; but the proof of resemblance adjudged the child to Aasi the oldest of her lovers. The youth of Amrou was impelled by the passions and prejudices of his kindred : his poetic genius was exercised in satirical verses against the person and doctrines of Mahomet ; his dexterity was employed by the reigning faction to pursue the religious exiles who

had taken refuge in the court of the Ethiopian king. Yet he returned from this embassy, a secret proselyte; his reason or his interest determined him to renounce the worship of idols; he escaped from Mecca with his friend Caled, and the prophet of Medina enjoyed at the same moment the satisfaction of embracing the two firmest companions of his cause. The impatience of Amrou to lead the armies of the faithful, was checked by the reproof of Omar, who advised him not to seek power and dominion, since he who is a subject to-day, may be a prince to-morrow. Yet his merit was not overlooked by the two first successors of Mahomet; they were indebted to his arms for the conquest of Palestine; & in all battles and sieges of Syria, he united with the temper of a chief, the valour of an adventurous soldier. In a visit to Medina, the caliph expressed a wish to survey the sword which had cut down so many christian warriors: the son of Aasi unsheathed a short and ordinary scymetar; and as he perceived the surprise of Omar, "Alas," said the modest Saracen, "the sword itself, without the arm of its master, is neither sharper nor more weighty than the sword of Pharez-



“dak the poet.” After the conquest of Egypt he was recalled by the jealousy of the caliph Othman; but in the subsequent troubles, the ambition of a soldier, a statesman, and an orator, emerged from a private station. His powerful support, both in council and in the field, established the throne of the Omniades; the administration and revenue of Egypt were restored by the gratitude of Moawiÿh to a faithful friend who had raised himself above the rank of a subject; and Amrou ended his days in the palace and city which he had founded on the banks of the Nile. His dying speech to his children is celebrated by the Arabians as a model of eloquence and wisdom; he deplored the errors of his youth; but if the penitent was still infected by the vanity of a poet, he might exaggerate the venom and mischief of his impious composition.

From his camp, in Palestine, Amrou had surprised or anticipated the caliph's leave for the invasion of Egypt. The invincible Omar trusted in his God and in his sword, which had shaken the thrones of Chosroes and Cæsar: but when he compared the slender force of the Moslems with the greatness of the enterprise, he condemned



his own rashness, and listened to his timid companions. The pride and greatness of Pharaoh were familiar to the readers of the Koran; and a tenfold repetition of prodigies had been scarcely sufficient to effect, not the victory but the flight, of 600,000 of the children of Israel: the cities of Egypt were many and populous; their architecture was strong and solid; the Nile, with its numerous branches, was alone an insuperable barrier; and the granary of the Imperial city would be obstinately defended by the Roman powers. In this perplexity, the commander of the faithful resigned himself to the decision of chance, or, in his opinion, of providence. At the head of only four thousand Arabs, the intrepid Amrou had marched away from his station of Gaza when he was overtaken by the messenger of Omar. "If you are still in Syria," said the ambiguous mandate, "retreat without delay; but if, at the receipt of this epistle, you have already reached the frontiers of Egypt, advance with confidence, and depend on the succour of God and of your brethren." The experience, perhaps the secret intelligence, of Amrou had taught him to suspect the mutability of

courts ; and he continued his march till his tents were unquestionably pitched on Egyptian ground. He there assembled his officers, broke the seal, perused the epistle, gravely inquired the name and situation of the place, and declared his ready obedience to the commands of the caliph. After a siege of thirty days, he took possession of Farmah or Pelusium ; and that key of Egypt, as it has been justly named, unlocked the entrance of the country, as far as the ruins of Heliopolis and the neighborhood of the modern Cairo.

On the western side of the Nile, at a small distance to the east of the Pyramids, at a small distance to the south of the Delta, Memphis, one hundred and fifty furlongs in circumference, displayed the magnificence of ancient kings. Under the reign of the Ptolemies and Cæsars, the seat of government was removed to the sea-coast ; the antient capital was eclipsed by the arts and opulence of Alexandria ; the palaces, and at length the temples, were reduced to a desolate and ruinous condition : yet in the age of Augustus, and even in that of Constantine, Memphis was still numbered among the

greatest and most populous of the provincial cities. The banks of the Nile, in this place of the breadth of three thousand feet, were united by two bridges of sixty and of thirty boats, connected in the middle stream by the small island of Rouda, which was covered with gardens and habitations. The eastern extremity of the bridge was terminated by the town of Babylon and the camp of a Roman legion, which protected the passage of the river and the second capital of Egypt. This important fortress, which might fairly be described as a part of Memphis or Misrah, was invested by the arms of the lieutenant of Omar : a reinforcement of four thousand Saracens soon arrived in his camp ; and the military engines, which battered the walls, may be imputed to the art and labor of his Syrian allies. Yet the siege was protracted to seven months ; and the rash invaders were encompassed and threatened by the inundation of the Nile. Their last assault was bold and successful : they passed the ditch, which had been fortified with iron spikes, applied their scaling-ladders, entered the fortress with the shout of " God is victorious ! " and drove the remnant of the Greeks to

their boats and the isle of Rouda. The spot was afterwards recommended to the conqueror by the easy communication with the gulph and the peninsula of Arabia : the remains of Memphis were deserted : the tents of the Arabs were converted into permanent habitations ; and the first mosch was blessed by the presence of fourscore companions of Mahomet. A new city arose in their camp on the eastward bank of the Nile ; and the contiguous quarters of Babylon and Fostat are confounded in their present decay by the appellation of old Misrah or Cairo, of which they form an extensive suburb. But the name of Cairo, the town of victory, more strictly belongs to the modern capital, which was founded in the tenth century by the Fatimite caliphs. It has gradually receded from the river, but the continuity of buildings may be traced by an attentive eye from the monuments of Sesostris to those of Saladin.

Yet the Arabs, after a glorious and profitable enterprise, must have retreated to the desert, had they not found a powerful alliance in the heart of the country. The rapid conquest of Alexander was assisted by the superstition and revolt of the na-

tives ; they abhorred their Persian oppressors, the disciples of the Magi, who had burnt the temples of Egypt, and feasted with sacrilegious appetite on the flesh of the god Apis. After a period of ten centuries the same revolution was renewed by a similar cause : and in the support of an incomprehensible creed, the zeal of Coptic Christians was equally ardent. I have already explained the origin and progress of the Monophysite controversy, and the persecution of the emperors, which converted a sect into a nation, and alienated Egypt from their religion and government. The Saracens were received as the deliverers of the Jacobite church ; and a secret and effectual treaty was opened during the siege of Memphis between a victorious army and a people of slaves. A rich and noble Egyptian, of the name of Mokawkas, had dissembled his faith to obtain the administration of his province : in the disorders of the Persian war he aspired to independence : the embassy of Mahomet ranked him among princes ; but he declined, with rich gifts and ambiguous compliments, the proposal of a new religion. The abuse of his trust exposed him to the resentment of Herachus ;



his submission was delayed by arrogance and fear ; and his conscience was prompted by interest to throw himself on the favour of the nation and support of the Saracens. In his first conference with Amrou, he heard without indignation the usual option of the Koran, the tribute, or the sword. "The Greeks," replied, Mokawkas, "are determined to abide the determination of the sword ; but with the Greeks I desire no communication, either in this world or in the next, and I abjure forever the Byzantine tyrant, his synod of Chalcedon, and his Melchite slaves. For myself and my brethren, we are resolved to live and die in the profession of the gospel and unity of Christ. It is impossible for us to embrace the revelations of your prophet ; but we are desirous of peace, and cheerfully submit to pay tribute and obedience to his temporal successors." The tribute was ascertained at two pieces of gold for the head of every Christian ; but old men, monks, women, and children, of both sexes, under sixteen years of age, were exempted from this personal assessment ; the Copts above and below Memphis swore allegiance to



the caliph, and promised an hospitable entertainment of three days to every Mussulman who should travel through their country. By this charter of security, the ecclesiastical and civil tyranny of the Melchites was destroyed: the anathemas of St. Cyril were thundered from every pulpit; and the sacred edifices, with the patrimony of the Church, were restored to the national communion of the Jacobites, who enjoyed without moderation the moment of triumph & revenge. At the pressing summons of Amrou, their patriarch Benjamin emerged from his desert; and, after the first interview, the courteous Arab affected to declare, that he had never conversed with a Christian priest of more innocent manners and a more venerable aspect. In the march from Memphis to Alexandria the lieutenant of Omar entrusted his safety to the zeal and gratitude of the Egyptians: the roads and bridges were diligently repaired; and in every step of his progress, he could depend on a constant supply of provisions and intelligence. The Greeks of Egypt, whose numbers could scarcely equal a tenth of the natives, were overwhelmed by the universal defection; they had ever been hated, they were no longer

feared : the magistrate fled from his tribunal, the bishop from his altar ; and the distant garrisons were surprised or starved by the surrounding multitudes. Had not the Nile afforded a safe and ready conveyance to the sea, not an individual could have escaped, who by birth, or language, or office, or religion, was connected with their odious name.

By the retreat of the Greeks from the provinces of Upper Egypt, a considerable force was collected in the Island of Delta : the natural and artificial channels of the Nile afforded a succession of strong and defensible posts ; and the road to Alexandria was laboriously cleared by the victory of the Saracens in two and twenty days of general or partial combat. In their annals of conquest, the siege of Alexandria is perhaps the most arduous and important enterprise. The first trading city in the world was abundantly replenished with the means of subsistence and defence. Her numerous inhabitants fought for the dearest of human rights, religion and property ; and the enmity of the natives seemed to exclude them from the common benefit of peace and toleration. The sea was continually open ; and if

Heraclius had been awake to the public distress, fresh armies of Romans and Barbarians might have been poured into the harbour to save the second capital of the empire. A circumference of ten miles would have scattered the forces of the Greeks and favoured the stratagems of an active enemy ; but the two sides of an oblong square were covered by the sea and the lake Maræotis, and each of the narrow ends exposed a front of no more than ten furlongs. The efforts of the Arabs were not inadequate to the difficulty of the attempt and the value of the prize. From the throne of Medina, the eyes of Omar were fixed on the camp and city : his voice excited to arms the Arabian tribes and the veterans of Syria ; and the merit of an holy war was recommended by the peculiar fame and fertility of Egypt. Anxious for the ruin or expulsion of their tyrants, the faithful natives devoted their labours to the service of Amrou ; some sparks of marshal spirit were perhaps rekindled by the example of their allies ; and the sanguine hopes of Mokawkas had fixed his sepulchre in the church of St. John of Alexandria. Euty chius the patriarch observes, that the Saracens fought with the

courage of lions ; they repulsed the frequent and almost daily sallies of the besieged, and soon assaulted in their turn the walls and towers of the city. In every attack, the sword the banner of Amrou, glittered in the van of the Moslems. On a memorable day, he was betrayed by his imprudent valour : his followers who had entered the citadel were driven back ; and the general with a friend and a slave, remained a prisoner in the hands of the Christians. When Amrou was conducted before the præfect, he remembered his dignity and forgot his situation ; a lofty demeanour, and resolute language, revealed the lieutenant of the caliph, and the battle-axe of a soldier was already raised to strike off the head of his audacious captive. His life was saved by the readiness of his slave, who instantly gave his master a blow on the face, and commanded him, with an angry tone, to be silent in the presence of his superiors. The credulous Greek was deceived ; he listened to the offer of a treaty, and his prisoners were dismissed in the hope of a more respectable embassy, till the joyful acclamations of the camp announced the return of their general, and insulted the folly of the infidels.



At length, after a siege of fourteen months, and the loss of three and twenty thousand men, the Saracens prevailed: the Greeks embarked their dispirited and diminished numbers, and the standard of Mahomet was planted on the walls of the capital of Egypt. "I have taken," said Amrou to the caliph, "the great city of the West. It is impossible for me to enumerate the variety of its riches and beauty; and I shall content myself with observing, that it contains four thousand palaces, four thousand baths, four thousand theatres or places of amusement, twelve thousand shops for the sale of vegetable food, and forty thousand tributary Jews. The town has been subdued by force of arms, without treaty or capitulation, and the Moslems are impatient to seize the fruits of their victory." The commander of the faithful rejected with firmness the Idea of pillage, and directed his lieutenant to reserve the wealth and revenue of Alexandria for the public service and the propagation of the faith: the inhabitants were numbered; a tribute was imposed; the zeal and resentment of the Jacobites were curbed, and the Melchites who submitted to the Arabian yoke, were

indulged in the obscure but tranquil exercise of their worship. The intelligence of this disgraceful and calamitous event afflicted the declining health of the emperor; and Heraclious died of a dropsy about seven weeks after the loss of Alexandria. Under the minority of his grandson, the clamours of a people, deprived of their daily sustenance, compelled the Byzantine court to undertake the recovery of the capital of Egypt. In the space of four years, the harbour and fortifications of Alexandria were twice occupied by a fleet and army of Romans. They were twice expelled by the valour of Amrou, who was recalled by the domestic peril from the distant wars of Tripoli and Nubia. But the facility of the attempt, the repetition of the insult, and the obstinacy of the resistance, provoked him to swear, that if a third time he drove the infidels into the sea, he would render Alexandria as accessible on all sides as the house of a prostitute. Faithful to his promise, he dismantled several parts of the walls and towers, but the people were spared in the chastisement of the city, and the mosch of *Mercy* was erected on the spot where the victorious general had stopped the fury of his troops.



IV. The conquest of Africa, from the Nile to the Atlantic ocean, was first attempted by the arms of the caliph Othman. The pious design was approved by the companions of Mahomet and the chiefs of the tribes; and twenty thousand Arabs marched from Medina, with the gifts and the blessing of the commander of the faithful. They were joined in the camp of Memphis by twenty thousand of their countrymen; and the conduct of the war was entrusted to Abdallah, the son of Said and the foster brother of the caliph, who had lately supplanted the conqueror and lieutenant of Egypt. Yet the favour of the prince, and the merit of his favourite, could not obliterate the guilt of his apostacy. The early conversion of Abdallah, and his skilful pen, had recommended him to the important office of transcribing the sheets of the Koran; he betrayed his trust, corrupted the text, derided the errors which he had made, and fled to Mecca to escape the justice, and expose the ignorance, of the apostle. After the conquest of Mecca, he fell prostrate at the feet of Mahomet; his tears, and the entreaties of Othman, extorted a reluctant pardon; but the prophet declared that he had so long

hesitated, to allow time for some zealous disciple to avenge his injury in the blood of the apostate. With apparent fidelity and effective merit, he served the religion which it was no longer his interest to desert: his birth and talents gave him an honourable rank among the Koreish; and, in a nation of cavalry, Abdallah was renowned as the boldest and most dexterous horse-man of Arabia. At the head of forty thousand Moslems, he advanced from Egypt into the unknown countries of the West. The sands of Barca might be impervious to a Roman legion; but the Arabs were attended by their faithful camels; and the natives of the desert beheld without terror the familiar aspect of the soil and climate. After a painful march, they pitched their tents before the walls of Tripoli, a maritime city, in which the name, the wealth, and the inhabitants, of the province had gradually centered, and which now maintains the third rank among the states of Barbary. A reinforcement of the Greeks was surprisèd and cut in pieces on the sea-shore; but the fortifications of Tripoli resisted the first assaults; and the Saracens were tempted by the approach of the præfect Gregory to relin-

quish the labours of the siege for the perils and the hopes of a decisive action. If his standard was followed by one hundred and twenty thousand men, the regular bands of the empire must have been lost in the naked and disorderly crowd of Africans and Moors, who formed the strength, or rather the numbers, of his host. He rejected with indignation the option of the Koran or the tribute; and during several days, the two armies were fiercely engaged from the dawn of light to the hour of noon, when their fatigue and the excessive heat compelled them to seek shelter and refreshment in their respective camps. The daughter of Gregory, a maid of incomparable beauty and spirit, is said to have fought by his side: from her earliest youth she was trained to wield the scymetar; and the richness of her arms and apparel was conspicuous in the foremost ranks of the battle. Her hand, with an hundred thousand pieces of gold, was offered for the head of the Arabian general; and the youths of Africa were excited by the prospect of the glorious prize. At the pressing solicitations of his brethren, Abdallah withdrew his person from the field; but the Saracens were discouraged by the

retreat of their leader, and the repetition of these equal or unsuccessful conflicts.

A noble Arabian, who afterwards became the adversary of Ali and the father of a caliph, had signalized his value in Egypt, and Zobier was the first who planted a scaling-ladder against the walls of Babylon. In the African war he was detached from the standard of Abdallah. On the news of the battle, Zobier, with twelve companions, cut his way through the camp of the Greeks, and pressed forwards, without tasting either food or repose, to partake of the dangers of his brethren. He cast his eyes round the field: "Where," said he, "is our General?" "In his tent." "Is the tent a station for the general of the Moslems?" Abdallah represented with a blush the importance of his own life, and the temptation that was held forth by the Roman præfect. "Retort," said Zobier, "on the infidels their ungenerous attempt. Proclaim through the ranks, that the head of Gregory shall be repaid with his captive daughter, and the equal sum of one hundred thousand pieces of gold." To the courage and discretion of Zobier the lieutenant of the caliph entrusted the exe-

cution of his own stratagem, which inclined the long-disputed balance in the favour of the Saracens. Supplying by activity and artifice the deficiency of numbers, a part of their forces lay concealed in their tents, while the remainder prolonged an irregular skirmish with the enemy, till the sun was high in the heavens. On both sides they retired with fainting steps: their horses were unbridled; their armour was laid aside, and the hostile nations prepared, or seemed to prepare, for the refreshment of the evening, and the encounter of the ensuing day. On a sudden, the charge was sounded; the Arabian camp poured forth a swarm of fresh and intrepid warriors; and the long line of the Greeks and Africans was surprised, assaulted, overturned, by new squadrons of the faithful, who, to the eye of fanaticism, might appear as a band of angels descending from the sky. The præfect himself was slain by the hand of Zobier: his daughter who sought revenge and death, was surrounded and made prisoner; and the fugitives involved in their disaster the town of Sufetula, to which they escaped from the sabres and lances of the Arabs. Sufetula was built one hundred and fifty miles to



the south of Carthage : a gentle declivity is watered by a running stream, and shaded by a grove of juniper trees ; and, in the ruins of a triumphal arch, a portico, and three temples of the corinthian order, curiosity may yet admire the magnificence of the Romans. After the fall of this opulent city, the provincials and Barbarians implored on all sides the mercy of the conqueror. His vanity or his zeal might be flattered by offers of tribute or professions of faith ; but his losses, his fatigues, and the progress of an epidemical disease, prevented a solid establishment ; and the Saracens, after a campaign of fifteen months, retreated to the confines of Egypt, with the captives and the wealth of their African expedition. The caliph's fifth was granted, to a favorite on the nominal payment of 500,000 pieces of gold ; but the state was doubly injured by this fallacious transaction, if each foot-soldier had shared one thousand, and each horseman three thousand, pieces, in the real division of the plunder. The author of the death of Gregory was expected to have claimed the most precious reward of the victory : from his silence it might be presumed that he



had fallen in the battle, till the tears and exclamations of the præfect's daughter at the sight of Zobeir revealed the value and modesty of that gallant soldier. The unfortunate virgin was offered, and almost rejected as a slave, and her father's murderer, who coolly declared that his sword was consecrated to the service of religion and that he laboured for a recompence far above the charms of mortal beauty, or the riches of this transitory life. A reward congenial to his temper, was the honourable commission of announcing to the caliph Othman the success of his arms. The companions, the chiefs, and the people were assembled in the mosch of Medina to hear the interestesting narrative of Zobeir; and, as the orator forgot nothing except the merit of his own counsels and actions, the name of Abdallah was joined by the Arabians with the heroic names of Caled and Amrou.

The western conquests of the Saracens were suspended near twenty years, till their dissensions were composed by the establishment of the house of Ommiyah and the caliph Moawiyah was invited by the cries of the Africans themselves. The

successors of Heraclius had been informed of the tribute which they had been compelled to stipulate with the Arabs; but instead of being moved to pity and relieve their distress, they imposed, as an equivalent or a fine, a second tribute of a similar amount. The ears of the Byzantine ministers were shut against the complaints of their poverty and ruin: their despair was reduced to prefer the dominion of a single master; and the extortions of the patriarch of Carthage, who was invested with civil and military power, provoked the sectaries, and even the Catholics, of the Roman province to abjure the religion as well as the authority of their tyrants. The first lieutenant of Moawiyah acquired a just renown, subdued an important city, defeated an army of thirty thousand Greeks, swept away four score thousand captives, and enriched with their spoils the bold adventurers of Syria and Egypt. But the title of conquer of Africa is more justly due to his successor Akbah. He marched from Damascus at the head of 10,000 of the bravest Arabs: and the genuine force of the Moslems was enlarged by the doubtful aid and conversion of many thou-

sand Barbarians. It would be difficult, nor is it necessary, to trace the accurate line of the progress of Akbah. The interior regions have been peopled by the Orientals with fictitious armies and imaginary citidels. In the warlike province of Zab or Numidia, four score thousand of the natives might assemble in arms; but the number of three hundred and sixty towns is incompatible with the ignorance or decay of husbandry; and a circumference of three leagues will be justified by the ruins of Erbe or Lambesa, the antient metropolis of that island country. As we approach near the sea-coast, the well-known cities of Bugia and Tangier define the more certain limits of the Saracen victories. A remnant of trade still adheres to the commodious harbour of Bugia, which in a more prosperous age, is said to have contained about twenty thousand houses; and the plenty of iron which is dug from the adjacent mountains might have supplied a braver people with the instruments of defence. The remote position and venerable antiquity of Tingi, or Tangier, have been decorated by the Greek and Arabian fables; but the figur-

ative expressions of the latter, that the walls were constructed of brass, and that the roofs were covered with gold and silver, may be interpreted as the emblems of strength and opulence. The province of Mauritania Tingitana, which assumed the name of the capital, had been imperfectly discovered and settled by the Romans; the five colonies were confined to a narrow pale, and the more southern parts were seldom explored except by the agents of luxury, who searched the forests for ivory and the citron wood, & the shores of the ocean for the purple shell-fish. The fearless Akbah plunged into the heart of the country, traversed the wilderness in which his successors erected the splendid capitals of Fez and Morocco, and at length penetrated to the verge of the Atlantic and the great desert. The river Sus descends from the western sides of mount Atlas, fertilises, like the Nile, the adjacent soil, and falls into the sea at a moderate distance from the Canary, or Fortunate, Islands. Its banks were inhabited by the last of the Moors, a race of savages, without laws, or discipline, or religion: they were astonished by the

strange and irresistible terrors of the Oriental arms; and as they possessed neither gold nor silver, the richest spoil was the beauty of the female captives, some of whom were afterwards sold for a thousand pieces of gold. The career, though not the zeal of Akbah was checked by the prospect of a boundless ocean. He spurred his horse into the waves, and raising his eye to heaven, exclaimed with a tone of a fanatic: "Great God! if my course were not stopped by this sea, I would still go on, to the unknown kingdoms of the West, preaching the unity of thy holy name, and putting to the sword the rebellious nations, who worship any other gods than thee." Yet this Mahometan Alexander, who sighed for the new worlds, was unable to preserve his recent conquests. By the universal defection of the Greeks and Africans, he was recalled from the shores of the Atlantic; and the surrounding multitudes left him only the resource of an honourable death. The last scene was dignified by an example of national virtue. An ambitious chief, who had disputed the command and failed in the attempt, was led about as



a prisoner in the camp of the Arabian general. The insurgents had trusted to his discontent and revenge; he disdained their offers and revealed their designs. In the hour of danger, the grateful Akbah unlocked his fetters, and advised him to retire; he chose to die under the banner of his rival. Embracing as friends and martyrs, they unsheathed their scymetars, broke their scabbards, and maintained an obstinate combat, till they fell by each other's side on the last of their slaughtered countrymen. The third general or governor of Africa, Zuheir, avenged and encountered the fate of his predecessor. He vanquished the natives in many battles; he was overthrown by a powerful army, which Constantinople had sent to the relief of Carthage.

It has been the frequent practice of the Moorish tribes to join the invaders, to share the plunder, to profess the faith, and to revolt to their savage state of independence and idolatry, on the first retreat or misfortune of the Moslems. The prudence of Akbah had proposed to found an Arabian colony in the heart of Africa; a citadel that might curb the levity



of the Barbarians, a place of refuge to secure against the accidents of war, the wealth and the families of the Saracens. With this view, and under the modest title of the station of a caravan, he planted this colony in the fiftieth year of the Hégira. In its present decay, Cairoan still holds the second rank in the kingdom of Tunis, from which it is distant about fifty miles to the south; its inland situation, twelve miles westward of the sea, has protected the city from the Greek and Sicilian fleets. When the wild beasts and serpents were extirpated, when the forest, or rather wilderness, was cleared, the vestiges of a Roman town were discovered in a sandy plain: the vegetable food of Cairoan is brought from afar; and the scarcity of springs constrains the inhabitants to collect in cisterns and reservoirs a precarious supply of rain-water. These obstacles were subdued by the industry of Akbah; he traced a circumference of three thousand and six hundred paces, which he encompassed with a brick wall; in the space of five years, the governor's palace was surrounded with a sufficient number of private habitations; a spacious mosch was

supported by five hundred columns of granite, porphyry, and Numidian marble; and Carioan became the seat of learning as well as of empire. But these were the glories of a later age; the new colony was shaken by the successive defeats of Akbah and Zuheir, and the western expeditions were again interrupted by the civil discord of the Arabian monarchy. The son of the valiant Zobeir maintained a war of twelve years, a siege of seven months against the house of Ommyyah. Abdallah was said to unite the fierceness of the lion with the subtlety of the fox; but if he inherited the courage, he was devoid of the generosity, of his father.

The return of domestic peace allowed the caliph Abdalmalek to resume the conquest of Africa; the standard was delivered to Hassan governor of Egypt, and the revenue of that kingdom, with an army of forty thousand men, was consecrated to the important service. In the vicissitudes of war, the interior provinces had been alternately won and lost by the Saracens. But the sea-coast still remained in the hands of the Greeks; the predecessors of Hassan had respected the name and forti-

fications of carthage ; and the number of defenders was recruited by the fugitives of Cebes & Tripoli. The arms of Hassan were bolder and more fortunate : he reduced and pillaged the metropolis of Africa ; and the mention of scaling-ladders may justify the suspicion that he anticipated, by a sudden assault, the more tedious operations of a regular siege. But the joy of the conquerors was soon disturbed by the appearance of the Christian succours. The præfect and patrician John, a general of experience and renown, embarked at Constantinople the forces of the Eastern empire ; they were joined by the ships and soldiers of Sicily, and a powerful reinforcement of Goths was obtained from the fears and religion of the Spanish monarch. The weight of the confederate navy broke the chain that guarded the entrance of the harbour ; the Arabs retired to Cairoan, or Tripoli ; the Christians landed ; the citizens hailed the ensign of the cross, and the winter was idly wasted in the dream of victory or deliverance. But Africa was irrecoverably lost: the zeal and resentment of the commander of the faithful prepared in the ensuing spring a more numerous ar-

mament by sea and land ; and the patrician in his turn was compelled to evacuate the post and fortifications of Carthage. A second battle was fought in the neighbourhood of Utica : the Greeks and Goths were again defeated ; and their timely embarkation saved them from the sword of Hassan who had invested the slight and insufficient rampart of their camp. Whatever yet remained of Carthage, was delivered to the flames, and the colony of Dido and Cæsar lay desolate above two hundred years, till a part, perhaps a twentieth, of the old circumference was re-peopled by the first of the Fatimite caliphs. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, the second capital of the West was represented by a mosch, a college without students, twenty-five or thirty shops, and the huts of five hundred peasants, who in their abject poverty, displayed the arrogance of the Punic senators. Even that paltry village was swept away by the Spaniards whom Charles the Fifth had stationed in the fortress of Goletta. The ruins of Carthage have perished ; and the place might be unknown if some broken arches of an aque-

duct did not guide the footsteps of the inquisitive traveller.

The Greeks were expelled, but the Arabians were not yet masters of the country. In the interior provinces the Moors or *Berbers*, so feeble under the first Cæsars, so formidable to the Byzantine princes, maintained a disorderly resistance to the religion and power of the successors of Mahomet. Under the standard of their queen Cahina the independant tribes acquired some degree of union and discipline; and as the Moors respected in their females the character of a prophetess, they attacked the invaders with an enthusiasm similar to their own. The veteran bands of Hassan were inadequate to the defence of Africa; the conquests of an age were lost in a single day; and the Arabian chief, overwhelmed by the torrent, retired to the confines of Egypt, and expected, five years, the promised succours of the caliph. After the retreat of the Saracens, the victorious prophetess assembled the Moorish chiefs, and recommended a measure of strange and savage policy. "Our cities," said she, "and the gold and sil-



“ ver which they contain, perpetually at-  
“ tract the arms of the Arabs. These  
“ vile metals are not the object of our am-  
“ bition ; we content ourselves with the  
“ simple productions of the earth. Let  
“ us destroy these cities ; let us bury in  
“ their ruins those pernicious treasures ;  
“ and when the avarice of our foes shall be  
“ destitute of temptation, perhaps they will  
“ cease to disturb the tranquility of a war-  
“ like people.” The proposal was accep-  
ted with an unanimous applause. From  
Tangier to Tripoli the buildings, or at  
least the fortifications, were demolished;  
the fruit-trees were cut down, the means  
of subsistence were extirpated, a fertile and  
populous garden was changed into a de-  
sert, and the historians of a more recent  
period could discern the frequent traces of  
the prosperity and devastation of their an-  
cestors. Such is the tale of the modern  
Arabians. Yet I strongly suspect that  
their ignorance of antiquity, the love of  
the marvellous, and the fashion of extol-  
ling the philosophy of Barbarians, has in-  
duced them to describe, as one voluntary  
act, the calamities of three hundred years



since the first fury of the Donatists and Vandals. In the progress of the revolt Cahina had most probably contributed her share of destruction ; and the alarm of universal ruin might terrify and alienate the cities that had reluctantly yielded to her unworthy yoke. They no longer hoped, perhaps they no longer wished, the return of their Byzantine sovereigns : their present servitude was not alleviated by the benefits of order and justice ; and the most zealous Catholic must prefer the imperfect truths of the Koran to the blind and rude idolatry of the Moors. The general of the Saracens was again received as the saviour of the province : the friends of civil society conspired against the savages of the land ; and the royal prophetess was slain in the first battle which overturned the baseless fabric of her superstition and empire. The same spirit revived under the successor of Hassan : it was finally quelled by the activity of Musa and his two sons ; but the number of the rebels may be presumed from that of three hundred thousand captives ; sixty thousand of whom, the caliph's fifth, were sold for

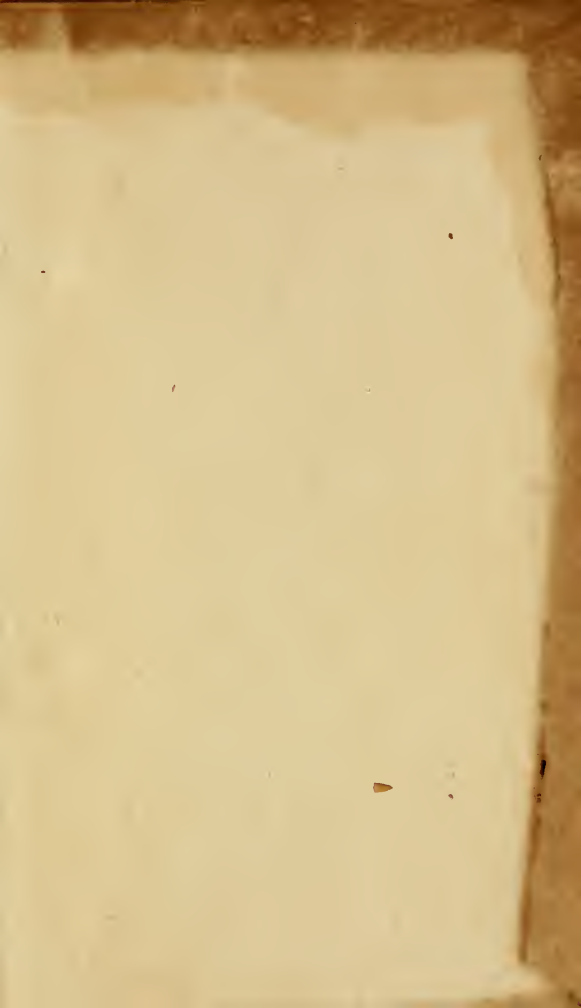
the profit of the public treasury. Thirty thousand of the Barbarian youth were enlisted in the troops ; and the pious labours of Musa to inculcate the knowledge and practice of the Koran accustomed the Africans to obey the apostle of God and the commander of the faithful. In their climate and government, their diet and habitation, the wandering Moors resembled the Bedoweens of the desert. With the religion, they were proud to adopt the language, name, and origin of Arabs : the blood of the strangers and natives was insensibly mingled ; and from the Euphrates to the Atlantic the same nation might seem to be diffused over the sandy plains of Asia and Africa. Yet I will not deny that fifty thousand tents of pure Arabians might be transported over the Nile, and scattered through the Libian desert ; and I am not ignorant that five of the Moorish tribes still retain their *barbarous* idiom, with the appellation and character of *white* Africans.

THE END.







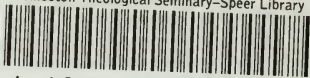




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The life of Mahomet, with sketches of

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