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SELECTIONS FROM
Gibbon's Decline and Fall
of the Roman Empire

BY

H. G. RAWLINSON,
Indian Educational Service

AND

W. N. U. DUNLOP,

Indian Civil Service

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOOK III
THE MAHOMMEDAN WORLD

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EDWARD GIBBON

*The other, deep and slow, exhausting thought,
And living wisdom with each studious year,
In meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,
And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,
Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer ;
The Lord of irony—that master-spell,
Which stung his foes to wrath which grew from fear.
And doomed him to the zealots' ready hell,
Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well.*

CHILDE HAROLD.

EDWARD GIBBON AND HIS WORK

I

EDWARD GIBBON was born at Putney in 1737. His father was a spendthrift country gentleman, who squandered the family estates : he appears, however, to have been an indulgent and well-meaning parent, as his son speaks of him in terms of consistent affection. Gibbon's childhood was passed in chronic illness, which prevented him from ever attending school regularly, though he spent two useless years at Westminster. He grew up a studious, solitary child, spending the time which other lads wasted over their Latin Grammars in devouring old histories in odd corners of his father's library. " I was immersed in the passage of the Goths over the Danube, when the summons of the dinner-bell reluctantly dragged me from my intellectual feast." " Before I was sixteen I had exhausted all that could be learnt in English of the Arabs and Persians, the Tartars and Turks." His mind was " a curious mixture of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and ignorance of which a schoolboy would have been ashamed." Going up to Magdalen at the age of fifteen, he found Oxford at its lowest abyss of idleness and ignorance, and the only event of his residence there was his unexpected conversion to the Catholic Church. His outraged parent promptly banished him to Lausanne under the care of M. Pavilliard, a Swiss Minister of Religion, and eighteen months of exile in the bleak atmosphere of Swiss Calvinism quickly destroyed in him not merely his Catholic beliefs but all vestiges of religious faith. The Swiss sojourn resulted in Gibbon learning French so well

that he came to speak and write it with the same fluency as his mother-tongue; and it was at this time that he met the beautiful Suzanne Curchod. This was the solitary romance of Gibbon's life; once again the outraged parent interposed his veto, and Gibbon "sighed as a lover, and obeyed as a son." *La belle Curchod* consoled herself with Necker, the famous French financier, by whom she became the mother of the notorious Madame de Stael. It is pleasant to record that she and the historian eventually became lifelong and devoted friends.

On his return to England, Gibbon joined the Hampshire militia. The work was distasteful and the company in which he found himself uncongenial, but "the discipline and evolutions of a modern battle gave me a clearer notion of the phalanx and the legion, and the captain of the Hampshire grenadiers was not useless to the historian of the Roman Empire." Demobilized at the Peace of Paris, Gibbon began seriously to contemplate a great historical work. Various schemes floated before his vision, only to be rejected. But the call came when he reached Rome. It can only be told in his own words. "My temper is not very susceptible of enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm which I do not feel I have ever scorned to affect. But at the distance of twenty-five years I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the Eternal City. After a sleepless night, I trod with a lofty step the ruins of the Forum. Each memorable spot where Romulus stood, or Tully spoke, or Caesar fell, was at once present to my eye, and several days of intoxication were lost and enjoyed before I could descend to a cool and minute examination." "It was at Rome, on the 15th October, 1764, as I sat musing amid the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind."

After his father's death in 1770, Gibbon settled in London,

and became a popular member of the literary circles of the day. A writer of the time compares and contrasts him with his great contemporary. "The learned Gibbon" says George Colman, "was a curious counterbalance to the learned (may I not say the less learned) Johnson. Their manners and tastes, both in writing and conversation, were as different as their habiliments. On the day I first sat down with Johnson in his rusty-brown suit and his black worsted stockings, Gibbon was placed opposite to me in a suit of flowered velvet with a bag and sword. Each had his measured phraseology, and Johnson's famous parallel between Dryden and Pope might be loosely parodied in reference to himself and Gibbon. Johnson's style was grand, and Gibbon's elegant; the stateliness of the former was sometimes pedantic, and the latter was occasionally finical. Johnson marched to kettledrums and trumpets, Gibbon moved to flutes and hautboys. Johnson hewed passages through the Alps, while Gibbon levelled walks through parks and gardens.¹ The great historian was light and playful, suiting his matter to the capacity of the boy: but it was done *more suo*—still his mannerism prevailed, still he tapped his snuff-box, still he smirked and smiled, and rounded his periods with the same air of good-breeding, as if he were conversing with men. His mouth, mellifluous as Plato's, was a round hole nearly in the centre of his visage."

His person looked so funnily obese
 As if a Pagod, growing large as man,
 Had rashly wandered off its chimney piece,
 To visit a Chinese upon a fan.
 Such his exterior, curious 'twas to scan!
 And oft he rapped his snuff-box, cocked his snout,
 And ere his polished periods he began,
 Bent forwards stretching his forefinger out
 And talked in phrase as round as he was roundabout.

Meanwhile, he was working hard at his great task, devoting his mornings from seven o'clock to study, and the evening

IBoswell calls Gibbon "an ugly, affected, disgusting fellow, who poisons our club to me."

to Society. Slowly the great scheme unrolled itself in his mind. "At the outset all was dark and doubtful; even the title of the work, the true æra of the decline and fall of the empire, the limits of the Introduction, the division of the chapters, and the order of the narrative, and I was often tempted to cast away the labour of seven years. The style of an author should be the image of his mind, but the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise. Many experiments were made before I could hit the middle tone between a dull chronicle and a rhetorical declamation; three times did I compare the first chapter, twice the second and third, before I was tolerably satisfied with their effect." The last two chapters required three successive revisals, and the first volume occupied three years in all.

It was during this period that Gibbon (chiefly, one fears, for mercenary reasons,) was induced to enter Parliament. One morning, at half-past seven, "as he was destroying an army of barbarians," a messenger arrived with an invitation to him to sit for the borough of Liskeard. Gibbon regarded politics with cynical indifference, and never opened his mouth in the House. Even the rebellion of the American Colonies left him unmoved. "The great speakers rilled him with despair, the bad ones with terror." He accepted from Lord North a post on the Board of Trade, and this sinecure enabled him to work in comfort. In 1776, the first volume came out. Its success was immediate. "The first impression was exhausted in a few days; a second and third edition were scarcely adequate to the demand; the bookseller's property was twice invaded by the pirates of Dublin; the book was on every table, and almost on every toilette." Robertson, Walpole, and his old friends the Neckers, hastened to offer their congratulations. Paris was as enthusiastic as London. "Whether I consider the dignity of your style," wrote Hume, "the depth of your matter or the extensiveness of your learning, I must regard the work as equally the object of esteem."

In 1781 two more quartos appeared, and two years later, Gibbon left London to stay with his friend Deyverdun at Lausanne in order to finish his task in unbroken calm amid the vine-trellises and orange trees of that delectable spot. For four years he never went ten miles out of Lausanne. His industry was prodigious. The fifth volume was completed in twenty-one months, and the sixth in a year. And so the great work, the greatest, perhaps, ever undertaken by a single writer, was finished. "On the day, or rather the night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summerhouse in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a berceau, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious." He went straight to London with his precious burden, and on May 8th, 1788, the last three volumes saw the light. His life-work was finished.

Gibbon's closing years were clouded by the loss of many old and valued friends. In 1789 Deyverdun was taken. He still, however, enjoyed the society, at Lausanne, of the Neckers and of Lord and Lady Sheffield. In 1793, news of the death of Lady Sheffield caused him to return to England, and he himself died of dropsy at Sheffield Place on January 7th, 1794, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

II

THE *Decline and Fall* is the greatest historical work in the English language, and one of the greatest in all literature. Two features differentiate it from other works of the same kind, the vastness of the design, and the masterly manner in which it is coordinated. The story of the decline of the Roman Empire is the most stupendous catastrophe in history. The Empire under Augustus and his immediate successors included almost the entire civilized world, and gave to its millions of subjects blessings never enjoyed before,—a uniform legal code, equality of treatment, freedom of action and belief, and safety of person and property. Inside this fabric grew up another organization, despised and neglected at first, the Christian Church, forming a state within a state, which, when the huge structure collapsed under the combined influences of internal decay and external pressure, tamed its rude conquerors and moulded them into fresh nations and kingdoms. It is the story of the death and rebirth, not merely of an Empire, but of civilization itself.

And Gibbon handles the theme in a manner worthy of itself. It did not come to him all at once. Originally he intended to confine himself to the Eternal City; by insensible degrees he was led to include, first Constantinople, then Persia, and finally the Mahommedan world. Yet he manipulates this huge and unwieldy mass of material with almost epic power. The vast panorama unfolds itself before the reader's eyes, perfectly proportioned and arranged. It marches on, someone has remarked, with the steady and measured tramp of the Roman legion; or, to vary the simile, it has been compared to "a magnificent Roman aqueduct, spanning over the chasm which separates the ancient from the modern world." Another point which impresses us is the extraordinary degree in which Gibbon combines literary excellence and grasp of his subject with accuracy of detail. Few subjects become

obsolete so quickly as history, yet modern research, with all its probing into original sources, has merely served to confirm the accuracy in all substantial points of the *Decline and Fall*. In his regard, not merely for literary authorities, but for coins, inscriptions and archaeological evidence, Gibbon was a century before his time. And it must be remembered that he had no predecessor in his work, and his authorities were not historians like Thucydides and Livy and Tacitus, or orators like Demosthenes and Cicero, but the barbarous and almost unreadable jargon of Ammianus Macellinus and the debased Greek of the Byzantine age. To extract from this dross the gold of his matchless narrative was in itself a work of genius.

Perhaps the most serious charge that has been brought against Gibbon is that of *superficiality*. He sees only the outside of things, it has been said. His Roman Empire consists only of Emperors and generals and great statesmen; the everyday life of the people, and the social and economic conditions, receive but little attention. Yet they played a decisive part in the great catastrophe which it is his business to chronicle. In the same way, he speaks of the overthrow of the Empire by the barbarians, forgetting that the Empire had already been "barbarized" for centuries, and that the real struggle was between two rival parties of barbarians, one within the Empire and one without it. Gibbon is, moreover, responsible for the popular but erroneous view of the Byzantine Empire as frivolous and degenerate, whereas it was in reality a bulwark of civilization, and the guardian of the ancient classical learning until the West became sufficiently civilized to receive it and profit by it.

Another charge brought against Gibbon is his anti-Christian bias,—“sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer,” in the words of Byron. Gibbon's attitude towards Christianity is that of the eighteenth century deist, and he has the typical eighteenth century distrust of enthusiasm and enthusiasts, Julian and Mahomet no less than the

Christian martyrs and hermits. The fall of the Empire is in his mind indissolubly linked with "the triumph of barbarism and religion." "Europe was overrun by barbarians, and Asia by monks." He refuses to recognize that the death of the old order was the birth of the new, and that Christianity merely hastened the process. The difference between Gibbon and Milman is that the former is always looking backward and the latter forward. Gibbon ascribes the rise of Christianity, or rather, attempts to explain it away, on purely natural grounds, and his own view is scarcely concealed in his statement that "the various modes of worship that prevailed in the Roman world were considered by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and the magistrates as equally useful." His own creed was doubtless that of his hero Genghis Khan, "whose first and only article of faith was the existence of One God, the author of all good, Who fills by His presence the Heavens and the Earth which He has created by His power." Gibbon's dislike of what he considers to be fanaticism led, no doubt, to such violations of good taste as his callous remark about "the annual consumption of one hundred and fifty martyrs" in the Neronian persecution, which provoked Porson's vicious retort that "Gibbon's humanity never sleeps save when women are being ravished or Christians violated." On the other hand, Gibbon never speaks with disrespect of the Founder of Christianity or His teaching. His famous discussion of the Incarnation in the forty-seventh chapter is a model of theological argument, and earned from no less an authority than Cardinal Newman the opinion that Gibbon is "the only Church historian worthy of the name who has written in English."

The merits of Gibbon's style have been the object of much controversy, tinged, it is to be feared, by some of the theological and political odium aroused by his work. With his stately, Latinized periods, he could scarcely hope to be a *persona grata* with the new Romantic School, and

Lamb, with quite unwonted bitterness, classes the *Decline and Fall* among the *biblia abiblia*, and speaks contemptuously of "cursed Gibbonian fine writing." His aim was to acquire a "middle tone between a dull chronicle and a rhetorical declamation," and he only achieved his object by patient effort. "It has always been my practice to cast a long paragraph in a single mould, to try it in my ear, to deposit it in my memory, but to suspend the action of my pen, till I had given the last polish to my work." The result is admirably adapted to the end in view. Gibbon's style has exactly the massive grandeur, the stateliness and restraint which his subject demands. Indeed, his chief defect is that his grandeur tends to become monotonous: he speaks with the same solemnity of a Byzantine Emperor and a barbarian chieftain. He lacks the lighter touch. He is at his best in his vivid descriptive narratives,—Rome in the fifth century, Constantinople under Justinian, Arabia at the time of the birth of Mahomet, the rise and fall of Zenobia, the death of Julian. As a typical example of his style, let us select for analysis a sentence like the following:—

"The early Christian was encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness. When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymeneal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation, or when the sad procession of the dead slowly moved towards the funeral pile, the Christian on these interesting occasions was compelled to desert the persons who were dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent in these impious ceremonies."

Here nearly all the leading characteristics of Gibbon's style are exemplified, his irony, his sparkling wit, his Latinisms, and above all, what Professor Saintsbury calls "the peculiar roll of sentence, conducted throughout with a wave-like movement, and ending with a sound so arranged

as to echo over the interval of sense and breadth till the next is well on its way."

"That Gibbon should ever be replaced," said Freeman, "seems impossible. That wonderful man monopolized, so to speak, the historical genius and the historical learning of a whole generation, and has left little of either for his contemporaries. . . . Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read too."

BOOK III
THE MAHOMMEDAN WORLD

BOOK III

THE MAHOMMEDAN WORLD

CHAPTER I

Arabia and the Arabs

[INTRODUCTION.—The description of Arabia and the Arabs is one of Gibbons' most brilliant pieces of writing, only to be compared with his description of Constantinople. "Gibbon's attention to geography," says Cotter Morrison, "and his skill and taste for geographical description, are remarkable among his many gifts. He was as diligent a student of maps and travels as of historical records, and seems to have the rare faculty of realising in imagination scenes and countries of which he had only read. In three chapters, glowing with oriental colour and rapid as the charge of Arab horse, he tells the story of the Prophet and the Saracen Empire."]

IN the vacant space between Persia, Syria, Egypt, and Æthiopia, the Arabian peninsula may be conceived as a triangle of spacious but irregular dimensions. From the northern point of Beles on the Euphrates a line of fifteen hundred miles is terminated by the straits of Babelmandeb and the land of frankincense. About half this length may be allowed for the middle breadth from east to west, from Bassora to Suez, from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea. The sides of the triangle are gradually enlarged, and the southern basis presents a front of a thousand miles to the Indian ocean. The entire surface of the peninsula exceeds in a fourfold proportion that of Germany or France; but the far greater part has been justly stigmatized with the epithets of the *stony* and the *sandy*. Even the wilds of Tartary are decked by the hand of nature with lofty trees and luxuriant herbage; and the lonesome traveller derives a sort of comfort and society from the presence of vegetable life. But in the dreary waste of Arabia, a boundless level of sand is intersected by sharp and naked mountains, and the face of the desert, without shade or shelter,

is scorched by the direct and intense rays of a tropical sun. Instead of refreshing breezes, the winds, particularly from the south-west, diffuse a noxious and even deadly vapour ; the hillocks of sand which they alternately raise and scatter are compared to the billows of the ocean ; and whole caravans, whole armies, have been lost and buried in the whirlwind. The common benefits of water are an object of desire and contest ; and such is the scarcity of wood that some art is requisite to preserve and propagate the element of fire. Arabia is destitute of navigable rivers, which fertilise the soil and convey its produce to the adjacent regions ; the torrents that fall from the hills are imbibed by the thirsty earth ; the rare and hardy plants, the tamarind or the acacia, that strike their roots into the clefts of the rocks, are nourished by the dews of the night ; a scanty supply of rain is collected in cisterns and aqueducts ; the wells and springs are the secret treasure of the desert ; and the pilgrim of Mecca, after many a dry and sultry march, is disgusted by the taste of the waters, which have rolled over a bed of sulphur or salt. Such is the general and genuine picture of the climate of Arabia. The experience of evil enhances the value of any local or partial enjoyments. A shady grove, a green pasture, a stream of fresh water, are sufficient to attract a colony of sedentary Arabs to the fortunate spots which can afford food and refreshment to themselves and their cattle, and which encourage their industry in the cultivation of the palm-tree and the vine. The high lands that border on the Indian ocean are distinguished by their superior plenty of wood and water ; the air is more temperate, the fruits are more delicious, the animals and the human race more numerous ; the fertility of the soil invites and rewards the toil of the husbandman ; and the peculiar gifts of frankincense and coffee have attracted, in different ages, the merchants of the world. If it be compared with the rest of the peninsula, this sequestered region may truly deserve the appellation of the *happy* ; and the splendid colouring of fancy and

fiction has been suggested by contrast and countenanced by distance. It was for this earthly paradise that nature had reserved her choicest favours and her most curious workmanship ; the incompatible blessings of luxury and innocence were ascribed to the natives ; the soil was impregnated with gold and gems, and both the land and sea were taught to exhale the odours of aromatic sweets. This division of the *sandy*, the *stony*, and the *happy*, so familiar to the (keeks and Latins, is unknown to the Arabians themselves ; and it is singular enough that a country, whose language and inhabitants had ever been the same, should scarcely retain a vestige of its ancient geography. The maritime districts of *Bahrein* and *Oman* are opposite to the realm of Persia. The kingdom of *Yemen* displays the limits, or at least the situation, of Arabia Felix ; the name *Neged* is extended over the inland space ; and the birth of Mahomet has illustrated the province of *Hejaz* along the coast of the Red Sea.

The measure of population is regulated by the means of subsistence ; and the inhabitants of this vast peninsula might be out-numbered by the subjects of a fertile and industrious province. Along the shores of the Persian gulf, of the ocean, and even of the Red Sea, the *Ichthyophagi*, or fish-eaters, continued to wander in quest of their precarious food. In this primitive and abject state, which ill deserves the name of society, the human brute, without arts or laws, almost without sense or language, is poorly distinguished from the rest of the animal creation. Generations and ages might roll away in silent oblivion, and the helpless savage was restrained from multiplying his race by the wants and pursuits which confined his existence to the narrow margin of the sea-coast. But in an early period of antiquity the great body of the Arabs had emerged from this scene of misery ; and, as the naked wilderness could not maintain a people of hunters, they rose at once to the more secure and plentiful condition of the pastoral life. The same life is uniformly pursued by the roving

tribes of the desert, and in the portrait of the modern *Bedoweens* we may trace the features of their ancestors, who, in the age of Moses or Mahomet, dwelt under similar tents, and conducted their horses and camels and sheep to the same springs and the same pastures. Our toil is lessened, and our wealth is increased, by our dominion over the useful animals ; and the Arabian shepherd had acquired the absolute possession of a faithful friend and a laborious slave. Arabia, in the opinion of the naturalist, is the genuine and original country of the *horse*; the climate most propitious, not indeed to the size, but to the spirit and swiftness, of that generous animal. The merit of the Barb, the Spanish, and the English breed is derived from a mixture of Arabian blood; the *Bedoweens* preserve, with superstitious care, the honours and the memory of the purest race ; the males are sold at a high price, but the females are seldom alienated ; and the birth of a noble foal was esteemed, among the tribes, as a subject of joy and mutual congratulation. These horses are educated in the tents, among the children of the Arabs, with a tender familiarity, which trains them in the habits of gentleness and attachment. They are accustomed only to walk and to gallop ; their sensations are not blunted by the incessant abuse of the spur and the whip ; their powers are reserved for the moments of flight and pursuit; but no sooner do they feel the touch of the hand or the stirrup than they dart away with the swiftness of the wind ; and, if their friend be dismounted in the rapid career, they instantly stop till he has recovered his seat. In the sands of Africa and Arabia the *camel* is a sacred and precious gift. That strong and patient beast of burthen can perform, without eating or drinking, a journey of several days; and a reservoir of fresh water is preserved in a large bag, a fifth stomach of the animal, whose body is imprinted with the marks of servitude. The larger breed is capable of transporting a weight of a thousand pounds ; and the dromedary, of a lighter and more active frame, outstrips the

fleetest courser in the race. Alive or dead, almost every part of the camel is serviceable to man ; her milk is plentiful and nutritious ; the young and tender flesh has the taste of veal ; a valuable salt is extracted from the urine ; the dung supplies the deficiency of fuel ; and the long hair, which falls each year and is renewed, is coarsely manufactured into the garments, the furniture, and the tents, of the Bedoweens. In the rainy seasons they consume the rare and insufficient herbage of the desert ; during the heats of summer and the scarcity of winter, they remove their encampments to the sea-coast, the hills of Yemen, or the neighbourhood of the Euphrates, and have often extorted the dangerous licence of visiting the banks of the Nile and the villages of Syria and Palestine. The life of a wandering Arab is a life of danger and distress ; and, though sometimes, by rapine and exchange, he may appropriate the fruits of industry, a private citizen in Europe is in the possession of more solid and pleasing luxury than the proudest emir who marches in the field at the head of ten thousand horse.

Yet an essential difference may be found between the hordes of Scythia and the Arabian tribes, since many of the latter were collected into towns and employed in the labours of trade and agriculture. A part of their time and industry was still devoted to the management of their cattle ; they mingled, in peace and war, with their brethren of the desert ; and the Bedoweens derived from their useful intercourse some supply of their wants and some rudiments of art and knowledge. Among the forty-two cities of Arabia, enumerated by Abulfeda, the most ancient and populous were situate in the *happy* Yemen ; the towers of Saana and the marvellous reservoir of Merab were constructed by the kings of the Homerites ; but their profane lustre was eclipsed by the prophetic glories of MEDINA and MECCA, near the Red Sea, and at the distance from each other of two hundred and seventy miles. The last of these holy places was known to the Greeks under the name of

Macoraba ; and the termination of the word is expressive of its greatness, which has not indeed, in the most flourishing period, exceeded the size and populousness of Marseilles. Some latent motive, perhaps of superstition, must have impelled the founders, in the choice of a most unpromising situation. They erected their habitations of mud or stone in a plain about two miles long and one mile broad, at the foot of three barren mountains ; the soil is a rock ; the water even of the holy well of Zemzem is bitter or brackish ; the pastures are remote from the city ; and grapes are transported about seventy miles from the gardens of Tayef. The fame and spirit of the Koreishites, who reigned in Mecca, were conspicuous among the Arabian tribes ; but their ungrateful soil refused the labours of agriculture, and their position was favourable to the enterprises of trade. By the sea-port of Gedda, at the distance only of forty miles, they maintained an easy correspondence with Abyssinia ; and that Christian kingdom afforded the first refuge to the disciples of Mahomet. The treasures of Africa were conveyed over the peninsula to Gerrha or Katif, in the province of Bahrein, a city built, as it is said, of rock-salt, by the Chaldæan exiles ; and from thence, with the native pearls of the Persian Gulf, they were floated on rafts to the mouth of the Euphrates. Mecca is placed almost at an equal distance, a month's journey, between Yemen on the right, and Syria on the left, hand. The former was the winter, the latter the summer, station of her caravans ; and their seasonable arrival relieved the ships of India from the tedious and troublesome navigation of the Red Sea. In the markets of Saana and Merab, in the harbours of Oman and Aden, the camels of the Koreishites were laden with a precious cargo of aromatics ; a supply of corn and manufactures was purchased in the fairs of Bostra and Damascus ; the lucrative exchange diffused plenty and riches in the streets of Mecca ; and the noblest of her sons united the love of arms with the profession of merchandise.

The perpetual independence of the Arabs has been the

theme of praise among strangers and natives ; and the arts of controversy transform this singular event into a prophecy and a miracle, in favour of the posterity of Ismael. Some exceptions, that can neither be dissembled nor eluded, render this mode of reasoning as indiscreet as it is superfluous : the kingdom of Yemen has been successively subdued by the Abyssinians, the Persians, the sultans of Egypt, and the Turks ; the holy cities of Mecca and Medina have repeatedly bowed under a Scythian tyrant ; and the Roman province of Arabia embraced the peculiar wilderness in which Ismael and his sons must have pitched their tents in the face of their brethren. Yet these exceptions are temporary or local ; the body of the nation has escaped the yoke of the most powerful monarchies ; the arms of Sesostris and Cyrus, of Pompey and Trajan, could never achieve the conquest of Arabia ; the present sovereign of the Turks may exercise a shadow of jurisdiction, but his pride is reduced to solicit the friendship of a people whom it is dangerous to provoke and fruitless to attack. The obvious causes of their freedom are inscribed on the character and country of the Arabs. Many ages before Mahomet, their intrepid valour had been severely felt by their neighbours in offensive and defensive war. The patient and active virtues of a soldier are insensibly nursed in the habits and discipline of a pastoral life. The care of the sheep and camels is abandoned to the women of the tribe ; but the martial youth under the banner of the emir is ever on horseback and in the field, to practise the exercise of the bow, the javelin, and the scymetar. The long memory of their independence is the firmest pledge of its perpetuity, and succeeding generations are animated to prove their descent and to maintain their inheritance. Their domestic feuds are suspended on the approach of a common enemy ; and in their last hostilities against the Turks the caravan of Mecca was attacked and pillaged by fourscore thousand of the confederates. When they advance to battle, the hope of victory is in the front ;

in the rear, the assurance of a retreat. Their horses and camels, who in eight or ten days can perform a march of four or five hundred miles, disappear before the conqueror ; the secret waters of the desert elude his search ; and his victorious troops are consumed with thirst, hunger, and fatigue, in the pursuit of an invisible foe, who scorns his efforts, and safely reposes in the heart of the burning solitude. The arms and deserts of the Bedoweens are not only the safeguards of their own freedom, but the barriers also of the happy Arabia, whose inhabitants, remote from war, are enervated by the luxury of the soil and climate. The legions of Augustus melted away in disease and lassitude; and it is only by a naval power that the reduction of Yemen has been successfully attempted. When Mahomet erected his holy standard, that kingdom was a province of the Persian empire ; yet seven princes of the Homerites still reigned in the mountains ; and the vicegerent of Chosroes was tempted to forget his distant country and his unfortunate master. The historians of the age of Justinian represent the state of the independent Arabs, who were divided by interest or affection in the long quarrel of the East : the tribe of *Gassan*, was allowed to encamp on the Syrian territory; the princes of *Hira* were permitted to form a city about forty miles to the southward of the ruins of Babylon. Their service in the field was speedy and vigorous ; but their friendship was venal, their faith inconstant, their enmity capricious : it was an easier task to excite than to disarm these roving barbarians ; and, in the familiar intercourse of war, they learned to see, and to despise, the splendid weakness both of Rome and of Persia. From Mecca to the Euphrates, the Arabian tribes were confounded by the Greeks and Latins under the general appellation of SARACENS, a name which every Christian mouth has been taught to pronounce with tenor and abhorrence.

The slaves of domestic tyranny may vainly exult in their national independence ; but the Arab is personally free;

and he enjoys, in some degree, the benefits of society, without forfeiting the prerogatives of nature. In every tribe, superstition, or gratitude, or fortune has exalted a particular family above the heads of their equals. The dignities of sheikh and emir invariably descend in this chosen race ; but the order of succession is loose and precarious ; and the most worthy or aged of the noble kinsmen are preferred to the simple, though important, office of composing disputes by their advice and guiding valour by their example. Even a female of sense and spirit has been permitted to command the countrymen of Zenobia. The momentary junction of several tribes produces an army ; their more lasting union constitutes a nation ; and the supreme chief, the emir of emirs, whose banner is displayed at their head, may deserve, in the eyes of strangers, the honours of the kingly name. If the Arabian princes abuse their power, they are quickly punished by the desertion of their subjects, who had been accustomed to a mild and parental jurisdiction. Their spirit is free, their steps are unconfined, the desert is open, and the tribes and families are held together by a mutual and voluntary compact. The softer natives of Yemen supported the pomp and majesty of a monarch ; but, if he could not leave his palace without endangering his life, the active powers of government must have been devolved on his nobles and magistrates. 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.

In the study of nations and men, we may observe the causes that render them hostile or friendly to each other, that tend to narrow or enlarge, to mollify or exasperate, the social character. The separation of the Arabs from the rest of mankind has accustomed them to confound the ideas of stranger and enemy ; and the poverty of the land has introduced a maxim of jurisprudence which they believe and practise to the present hour. They pretend that, in the division of the earth, the rich and fertile climates were assigned to the other branches of the human family ; and that the posterity of the outlaw Ismael might recover, by fraud or force, the portion of inheritance of

which he had been unjustly deprived. According to the remark of Pliny, the Arabian tribes are equally addicted to theft and merchandise ; the caravans that traverse the desert are ransomed or pillaged ; and their neighbours, since the remote times of Job and Sesostris, have been the victims of their rapacious spirit. If a Bedoween discovers from afar a solitary traveller, he rides furiously against him, crying, with a loud voice, “ Undress thyself, thy aunt (*my wife*) is without a garment.” A ready submission entitles him to mercy ; resistance will provoke the aggressor, and his own blood must expiate the blood which he presumes to shed in legitimate defence. A single robber or a few associates are branded with their genuine name ; but the exploits of a numerous band assume the character of a lawful and honourable war. The temper of a people, thus armed against mankind, was doubly inflamed by the domestic licence of rapine, murder, and revenge. In the constitution of Europe, the right of peace and war is now confined to a small, and the actual exercise to a much smaller, list of respectable potentates ; but each Arab, with impunity and renown, might point his javelin against the life of his countryman. The union of the nation consisted only in a vague resemblance of language and manners ; and in each community the jurisdiction of the magistrate was mute and impotent. Of the time of ignorance which preceded Mahomet, seventeen hundred battles are recorded by tradition ; hostility was embittered with the rancour of civil faction ; and the recital, in prose or verse, of an obsolete feud was sufficient to rekindle the same passions among the descendants of the hostile tribes. In private life, every man, at least every family, was the judge and avenger of its own cause. The nice sensibility of honour, which weighs the insult rather than the injury, sheds its deadly venom on the quarrels of the Arabs ; the honour of their women, and of their *beards*, is most easily wounded ; an indecent action, a contemptuous word, can be expiated only by the blood of the offender ; and such is their patient

inveteracy that they expect whole months and years the opportunity of revenge. A fine or compensation for murder is familiar to the barbarians of every age ; but in Arabia the kinsmen of the dead are at liberty to accept the atonement, or to exercise with their own hands the law of retaliation. The refined malice of the Arabs refuses even the head of the murderer, substitutes an innocent to the guilty person, and transfers the penalty to the best and most considerable of the race by whom they have been injured. If he falls by their hands, they are exposed in their turn to the danger of reprisals ; the interest and principal of the bloody debt are accumulated ; the individuals of either family lead a life of malice and suspicion, and fifty years may sometimes elapse before the account of vengeance be finally settled. This sanguinary spilit, ignorant of pity or forgiveness, has been moderated, however, by the maxims of honour, which require in every private encounter some decent equality of age and strength, of numbers and weapons. An annual festival of two, perhaps of four, months was observed by the Arabs before the time of Mahomet, during which their swords were religiously sheathed, both in foreign and domestic hostility ; and this partial truce is more strongly expressive of the habits of anarchy and warfare.

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

the refinement of manners ; and her speech could diversify the fourscore names of honey, the two hundred of a serpent, the five hundred of a lion, the thousand of a sword, at a time when this copious dictionary was entrusted to the memory of an illiterate people. The monuments of the Homerites were inscribed with an obsolete and mysterious character ; but the Cufic letters, the groundwork of the present alphabet, were invented on the banks of the Euphrates ; and the recent invention was taught at Mecca by a stranger who settled in that city after the birth of Mahomet. The arts of grammar, of metre, and of rhetoric were unknown to the freeborn eloquence of the Arabians ; but their penetration was sharp, their fancy luxuriant, their wit strong and sententious, and their more elaborate compositions were addressed with energy and effect to the minds of their hearers. The genius and merit of a rising poet was celebrated by the applause of his own and the kindred tribes. A solemn banquet was prepared, and a chorus of women, striking their tymbals, and displaying the pomp of their nuptials, sung in the presence of their sons and husbands the felicity of their native tribe ; that a champion had now appeared to vindicate their rights ; that a herald had raised his voice to immortalise their renown. The distant or hostile tribes resorted to an annual fair, which was abolished by the fanaticism of the first Moslems : a national assembly that must have contributed to refine and harmonize the barbarians. Thirty days were employed in the exchange, not only of corn and wine, but of eloquence and poetry. The prize was disputed by the generous emulation of the bards ; the victorious performance was deposited in the archives of princes and emirs ; and we may read in our own language the seven original poems which were inscribed in letters of gold and suspended in the temple of Mecca. The Arabian poets were the historians and moralists of the age ; and, if they sympathized with the prejudices, they inspired and crowned the virtues, of their countrymen. The indissoluble union of generosity

and valour was the darling theme of their song ; and, when they pointed their keenest satire against a despicable race, they affirmed, in the bitterness of reproach, that the men knew not how to give nor the women to deny. The same hospitality which was practised by Abraham and celebrated by Homer is still renewed in the camps of the Arabs. The ferocious Bedoweens, the terror of the desert, embrace, without enquiry or hesitation, the stranger who dares to confide in their honour and to enter their tent. His treatment is kind and respectful; he shares the wealth or the poverty of his host; and, after a needful repose, he is dismissed on his way, with thanks, with blessings, and perhaps with gifts. The heart and hand are more largely expanded by the wants of a brother or a friend, but the heroic acts that could deserve the public applause must have surpassed the narrow measure of discretion and experience. A dispute had arisen, who, among the citizens of Mecca, was entitled to the prize of generosity ; and a successive application was made to the three who were deemed most worthy of the trial. Abdallah, the son of Abbas, had undertaken a distant journey, and his foot was in the stirrup when he heard the voice of a suppliant, “ O son of the uncle of the apostle of God, I am a traveller, and in distress ! ” He instantly dismounted to present the pilgrim with his camel, her rich caparison, and a purse of four thousand pieces of gold, excepting only the sword, either for its intrinsic value or as the gift of an honoured kinsman. The servant of Kais informed the second suppliant that his master was asleep ; but he immediately added, “ Here is a purse of seven thousand pieces of gold (it is all we have in the house), and here is an order that will entitle you to a camel and a slave.” The master, as soon as he awoke, praised and enfranchised his faithful steward, with a gentle reproof that by respecting his slumbers he had stinted his bounty. The third of these heroes, the blind Arabah, at the hour of prayer, was supporting his steps on the shoulders of two slaves. “ Alas ! ”

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

CHAPTER II

MAHOMET

(A.D. 570—632)

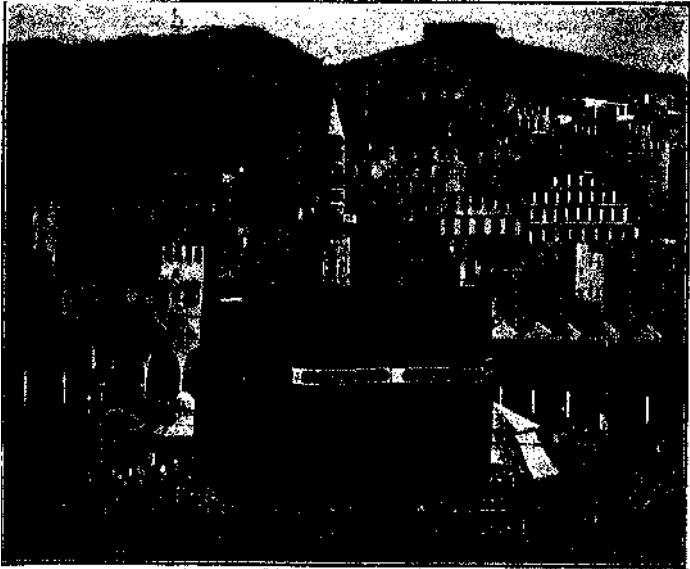
[INTRODUCTION.—Mahomet (The Praised), the founder of Islam, was born c. 570 at Mecca, on the borders of the Red Sea, of the tribe of the Koreish. He was brought up by his uncle, Abu Talib. At the age of twenty-five, he entered the service of the rich widow Khadijih, whom he afterwards married. The influence of the Hanifs, a little band of religious and social reformers, turned his mind towards God, and he constantly retired to the fastnesses of Mount Hira to meditate. Here in the year 610, in the month Ramadan, he received the Call from the angel Gabriel in a vision. He was then forty. Mahomet's austere teaching found little favour among the corrupt and idolatrous Meccans, and this led to the Flight (Hijra) of himself and his followers to Medina (Ramadan, A.D. 622). A long war ended in the capture of Mecca. The new religion now spread like wildfire, and before his death in 632, Mahomet was master of Arabia. The essence of Islam as taught by him was very simple. It consisted of (1) confession of the Unity of God. (2) Prayer at the stated hours, five times a day. (3) Almsgiving. (4) Observance of the fast of Ramadan. (5) Observance of the festival of Mecca. But it created an *esprit de corps* which was irresistible. All Moslems are brothers, without distinction of rank, caste or nationality. Faith, not race, is the bond. The spread of Islam through the Near East in the next two centuries is the most striking testimony to the greatness of Mahomet: it would have appeared incredible at the time of his birth that the Arabians should appear as the conquerors of the Greeks and Persians.]

I

His Birth and Teaching

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



THE KAABA AT MECCA

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 had 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 live 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 uncle. By this alliance, the son of Abdallah was restored to the station of his ancestors ; and the judicious matron was content with his domestic virtues, till, in the fortieth year of his age, he assumed the title of a prophet, and proclaimed the religion of the Koran.

According to the tradition of his companions, Mahomet was distinguished by the beauty of his person, an outward gift which is seldom despised, except by those to whom it has been refused. Before he spoke, the orator engaged on his side the affections of a public or private audience. They applauded his commanding presence, his majestic aspect, his piercing eye, his gracious smile, his flowing beard, his countenance that painted every sensation of the soul, and his gestures that enforced each expression of the tongue. 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 and superior genius. The son of Abdallah was educated in the bosom of the noblest race, in the use of the purest dialect of Arabia ; 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 political and philosophical observations which are ascribed to the Arabian *traveller*. He compares the nations and the religions of the earth ; discovers the weakness of the Persian and Roman monarchies ; beholds, with pity and indignation, the degeneracy of the times ; and resolves to unite, under one God and one king, the invincible spirit and primitive virtues of the Arabs. Our more accurate inquiry will suggest that, instead of visiting the courts, the camps, the temples of the East, the two journeys of Mahomet into Syria were confined to the fairs of Bostra and Damascus ; that he was only thirteen years of age when he accompanied the caravan of his uncle ; and that his duty compelled him to return as soon as he had disposed of the merchandise of Zadjah. In these hasty and superficial excursions, the eye of genius might discern some objects invisible to his grosser companions ; some seeds of knowledge might be cast upon a fruitful soil ; but his ignorance of the Syriac language must have checked his curiosity ; and I cannot perceive, in the life or writings of Mahomet, that his prospect was far extended beyond the limits of the Arabian world. From every region of that solitary world, the pilgrims of Mecca were annually assembled by the calls of devotion and commerce : in the free concourse of multitudes, a simple citizen, in his native tongue, might study the political state and character of the tribes, the theory and practice of the Jews and Christians. Some useful strangers might be tempted, or forced, to implore the 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 Atheist 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.

II

His Death and Character

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 Musulman ? let him proclaim *my* faults in the face of the congregation. Has any one been despoiled of his goods ? the little that I possess shall compensate the principal and the interest of the debt." " Yes," replied a voice from the crowd, " I am entitled to three drachms of silver." Mahomet heard the complaint, satisfied the demand, and thanked his creditor for accusing him in this world rather than at the day of judgment. He beheld with temperate firmness the approach of death ; enfranchised his slaves (seventeen men, as they are named, and eleven women) ; minutely directed the order of his funeral ; and moderated the

lamentations of his weeping friends, on whom he bestowed the benediction of peace. Till the third day before his death, he regularly performed the function of public prayer. The choice of Abubeker to supply his place appeared to mark that ancient and faithful friend as his successor in the sacerdotal and regal office; but he prudently declined the risk and envy of a more explicit nomination. At a moment when his faculties were visibly impaired, he called for pen and ink, to write, or more properly to dictate, a divine book, the sum and accomplishment of all his revelations : a dispute arose in the chamber whether he should be allowed to supersede the authority of the Koran ; and the prophet was forced to reprove the indecent vehemence of his disciples. If the slightest credit may be afforded to the traditions of his wives and companions, he maintained in the bosom of his family, and to the last moments of his life, the dignity of an apostle and the faith of an enthusiast ; described the visits of Gabriel, who bid 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 agony of his dissolution : his head was reclined on the lap of Ayesha, the best beloved of all his wives ; he fainted with the violence of pain ; recovering his spirits, he raised his eyes towards the roof of the house, and, with a steady look, though a faltering voice, uttered the last broken, though articulate, words : “ O God ! . . . pardon my sins . . . Yes, . . . I come, . . . among my fellow-citizens on high ” ; and thus peaceably expired on a carpet spread upon the floor. An expedition for the conquest of Syria was stopped by this mournful event; the army halted at the gates of Medina ; the chiefs were assembled round their dying master. The city, more especially the house of the prophet, was a scene of clamorous,

sorrow, or silent despair : fanaticism alone could suggest a ray of hope and consolation. “ How can he be dead, our witness, our intercessor, our mediator with God ? By God, he is not dead ; like Moses and Jesus, he is wrapt in a holy trance, and speedily will he return to his faithful people.” The evidence of sense was disregarded; and Omar, unsheathing his 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 Mahomet, it may perhaps be expected that I should balance his faults and virtues, that I should decide whether the title of enthusiast or impostor more properly belongs to that extraordinary man. Had I been intimately conversant with the son of Abdallah, the task would still be difficult, and the success 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 domination 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 suggestings 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 daemon 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 Nineveh, for the destruction of the rebels whom he had condemned. The injustice of Mecca and the choice of Medina transformed the citizen into a prince, the humble preacher into the leader of armies ; but his sword was consecrated by the example of the saints ; and the same God who afflicts a sinful world with pestilence and earthquakes might inspire for their conversion or chastisement the 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 impostor !) at the enthusiasm of his youth and the credulity of his proselytes. A philosopher will observe that *their* cruelty and *his* success would tend more strongly to fortify the assurance of his divine mission, that his interest and religion were inseparably connected, and that his conscience would be soothed by the persuasion that he alone was absolved by the Deity from the obligation of positive and moral laws. If he retained any vestige of his native innocence, the sins of Mahomet may be allowed as an evidence of his sincerity. In the support of truth, the arts of fraud and fiction may be deemed less criminal ; and he would have started at the foulness of the means, had he not been satisfied of the importance and justice of the end. Even in a conqueror or a priest, I can surprise a word or action of unaffected humanity ; and the decree of Mahomet that, in the sale of captives, the mothers should never be separated from their children may suspend or moderate the censure of the historian.

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 a hermit, he observed, without effort or vanity, the abstemious diet of an Arab and a soldier. On solemn occa-

sions, 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.

III

His Achievements

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 inquire the name of the Deity who is worshipped with such mysterious rites in that magnificent temple : at Oxford or Geneva, they would experience less surprise ; but it might still be incumbent on them to peruse the catechism of the church, and to study the orthodox commentators on their own writings and the words of their Master. But the Turkish dome of St. Sophia, with an increase of 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 and martyrs. The metaphysical questions on the attributes of God and the liberty of man have been agitated in the schools of the Mahometans as well as in those of the Christians ; but among the former they have never engaged the passions of the people or disturbed the tranquillity of the state. The cause of this important difference may be found in the separation or union of the regal and sacerdotal characters. It was the interest of the caliphs, the successors of the prophet and commanders of the faithful, to repress and discourage all religious innovations : the order, the discipline, the temporal and spiritual ambition of the clergy are un-

known 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 and those of his country ; and the institutions of the Arabian desert may be ill adapted to the wealth and numbers of Ispahan and Constantinople. On these occasions, the Cadhi respectfully places on his head the holy volume, and substitutes a dexterous interpretation, more apposite to the principles of equity and the manners and policy of the times.

His beneficial or pernicious influence on the public happiness is the last consideration in the character of Mahomet. The most bitter or most bigoted of his Christian or Jewish foes will surely allow that he assumed a false commission to inculcate a salutary doctrine, less perfect only than their own. He piously supposed, as the basis of his religion, the truth and sanctity of *their* prior revelations, the virtues and miracles of their founders. The idols of Arabia were broken before the throne of God ; the blood of human victims was expiated by prayer and fasting and alms, the laudable or innocent arts of devotion ; and his rewards and punishments of a future life were painted by the images most congenial to an ignorant and carnal generation. Mahomet was perhaps incapable of dictating a moral and political system for the use of his countrymen ; but he breathed among the faithful a spirit of charity and friendship, recommended the practice of the social virtues, and checked, by his laws and precepts, the thirst of revenge and the oppression of widows and orphans. The hostile tribes were united in faith and obedience, and the valour which had been idly spent in domestic quarrels was vigor-

ously 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.

CHAPTER III

The Rise of the Mahommedan Power

THE revolution of Arabia had not changed the character of the Arabs : the death of Mahomet was the signal of independence ; and the hasty structure of his power and religion tottered to its foundations. A small and faithful band of his primitive disciples had listened to his eloquence and shared his distress ; had fled with the apostle from the persecution of Mecca or had received the fugitive in the walls of Medina. The increasing myriads, who acknowledged Mahomet as their king and prophet, had been compelled by his arms or allured by his prosperity. The polytheists were confounded by the simple idea of a solitary and invisible God ; the pride of the Christians and Jews disdained the yoke of a mortal and contemporary legislator. Their habits of faith and obedience were not sufficiently confirmed ; and many of the new converts regretted the venerable antiquity of the law of Moses, or the rites and mysteries of the Catholic Church, or the idols, the sacrifices, the joyous festivals, of their pagan ancestors. The jarring interests and hereditary feuds of the Arabian tribes had not yet coalesced in a system of union and subordination ; and the barbarians were impatient of the mildest and most salutary laws that curbed their passions or violated their customs. They submitted with reluctance to the religious precepts of the Koran, the abstinence from wine, the fast of the Ramadan, and the daily repetition of five prayers ; and the alms and tithes, which were collected for the treasury of Medina, could be distinguished only by a name

from the payment of a perpetual and ignominious tribute. The example of Mahomet had excited a spirit of fanaticism or imposture, and several of his rivals presumed to imitate the conduct and defy the authority of the living prophet. At the head of the *fugitives* and *auxiliaries*, the first caliph was reduced to the cities of Mecca, Medina and Tayef; and perhaps the Koreish would have restored the idols of the Caaba, if their levity had not been checked by a seasonable reproof. “ Ye men of Mecca, will ye be the last to embrace and the first to abandon the religion of Islam ? ” After exhorting the Moslems to confide in the aid of God and his apostle, Abubeker resolved, by a vigorous attack, to prevent the junction of the rebels. The women and children were safely lodged in the cavities of the mountains: the warriors, marching under eleven banners, diffused the terror of their arms; and the appearance of a military force revived and confirmed the loyalty of the faithful. The inconstant tribes accepted, with humble repentance, the duties of prayer and fasting and alms; and, after some examples of success and severity, the most daring apostates fell prostrate before the sword of the Lord and of Caled. In the fertile province of Yemannah, between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Persia, in a city not inferior to Medina itself, a powerful chief, his name was Moseilama, had assumed the character of a prophet, and the tribe of Hanifa listened to his voice. A female prophetess was attracted by his reputation: the decencies of words and actions were spurned by these favourites of heaven, and they employed several days in mystic and amorous converse. An obscure sentence of his Koran, or book, is yet extant; and, in the pride of his mission, Moseilama condescended to offer a partition of the earth. The proposal was answered by Mahomet with contempt; but the rapid progress of the impostor awakened the fears of his successor: forty thousand Moslems were assembled under the standard of Caled; and the existence of their faith was resigned to the event of a decisive battle. In

the first action they were repulsed with the loss of twelve hundred men ; but the skill and perseverance of their general prevailed: their defeat was avenged by the slaughter of ten thousand infidels ; and Moseilama himself was pierced by an Ethiopian slave with the same javelin which had mortally wounded the uncle of Mahomet. The various rebels of Arabia, without a chief or a cause, were speedily suppressed by the power and discipline of the rising monarchy ; and the whole nation again professed, and more steadfastly held, the religion of the Koran. The ambition of the caliphs provided an immediate exercise for the restless spirit of the Saracens ; their valour was united in the prosecution of an holy war ; and their enthusiasm was equally confirmed by opposition and victory.

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, the longest expeditions were the frequent pilgrimages 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 a 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 live 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. Economy is the source of liberality, and the increase of the revenue enabled 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 drachms 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 schools 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.

CHAPTER IV

The Siege of Damascus

(A.D. 635)

[INTRODUCTION.—On the death of the Prophet, Abubekr, the first Khalifa, or Commander of the Faithful, sent his general Khalid to attack the Sassanians in Iraq, or lower Mesopotamia, and the Byzantines in Syria. Damascus, the capital of the latter province, fell after a great siege in A. D. 635. In the following year, the Emperor Heraclius, after a decisive defeat at the Hieromax, evacuated the country. In Iraq, the Persians were defeated at Kadisiya in 637. Thus by 641, all the old Semitic lands, Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Egypt, were in the hands of the victorious Moslems.]

THE conquest of Bosra, four days' journey from Damascus, encouraged the Arabs to besiege the ancient capital of Syria. At some distance from the walls, they encamped among the groves and fountains of that delicious territory, and the usual option of the Mahometan faith, of tribute, or of war, was proposed to the resolute citizens, who had been lately strengthened by a reinforcement of five thousand Greeks. In the decline as in the infancy of the military art, an hostile defiance was frequently offered and accepted by the generals themselves : many a lance was shivered in the plain of Damascus, and the personal prowess of Caled was signalled in the first sally of the besieged. After an obstinate combat, he had overthrown and made prisoner one of the Christian leaders, a stout and worthy antagonist. He instantly mounted a fresh horse, the gift of the governor of Palmyra, and pushed forwards to the front of the battle. " Repose yourself for a moment," said his friend Derar, " and permit me to supply your place ;

you are fatigued with fighting with this dog." " O Derar !" replied the indefatigable Saracen, " we shall rest in the world to come. He that labours to-day shall rest to-morrow." With the same unabated ardour, Caled answered, encountered, and vanquished a second champion ; and the heads of his two captives who refused to abandon their religion were indignantly hurled into the midst of the city. The event of some general and partial actions reduced the Damascenes to a closer defence ; but a messenger, whom they dropped from the walls, returned with the promise of speedy and powerful succour, and their tumultuous joy conveyed the intelligence to the camp of the Arabs. After some debate it was resolved by the generals to raise, or rather to suspend, the siege of Damascus, till they had given battle to the forces of the emperor. In the retreat, Caled would have chosen the more perilous station of the rear-guard ; he modestly yielded to the wishes of Abu Obeidah. But in the hour of danger he flew to the rescue of his companion, who was rudely pressed by a sally of six thousand horse and ten thousand foot, and few among the Christians could relate at Damascus the circumstances of their defeat. The importance of the contest required the junction of the Saracens who were dispersed on the frontiers of Syria and Palestine; and I shall transcribe one of the circular mandates which was addressed to Amrou the future conqueror of Egypt. " In the name of the most merciful God : from Caled to Amrou, health and happiness. Know that thy brethren the Moslems design to march to Aiznadin, where there is an army of seventy thousand Greeks, who purpose to come against us, *that they may extinguish the light of God with their mouths ; but God preserveth his light in spite of the infidels.* As soon, therefore, as this letter of mine shall be delivered to thy hands, come with those that are with thee to Aiznadin, where thou shalt find us, if it please the most high God." The summons was cheerfully obeyed, and the forty-five thousand Moslems who met on the same day, on the same

spot, ascribed to the blessing of providence the effects of their activity and zeal,

About four years after the triumphs of the Persian war, the repose of Heraclius and the empire was again disturbed by a new enemy, the power of whose religion was more strongly felt than it was clearly understood by the Christians of the East. In his palace of Constantinople or Antioch, he was awakened by the invasion of Syria, the loss of Bosra, and the danger of Damascus. An army of seventy thousand veterans, or new levies, was assembled at Hems or Emesa, under the command of his general Werdan ; and these troops, consisting chiefly of cavalry, might be indifferently styled either Syrians, or Greeks, or Romans : *Syrians*, from the place of their birth and warfare ; *Greeks*, from the religion and language of their sovereign ; and *Romans*, from the proud appellation which was still profaned by the successors of Constantine. On the plain of Aiznadin, as Werdan rode on a white mule decorated with gold chains and surrounded with ensigns and standards, he was surprised by the near approach of a fierce and naked warrior, who had undertaken to view the state of the enemy. The adventurous valour of Derar was inspired, and has perhaps been adorned, by the enthusiasm of his age and country. The hatred of the Christians, the love of spoil, and the contempt of danger were the ruling passions of the audacious Saracen ; and the prospect of instant death could never shake his religious confidence, or ruffle the calmness of his resolution, or even suspend the frank and martial pleasantry of his humour. In the most hopeless enterprises, he was bold, and prudent, and fortunate : after innumerable hazards, after being thrice a prisoner in the hands of the infidels, he still survived to relate the achievements, and to enjoy the rewards, of the Syrian conquest. On this occasion, his single lance maintained a flying fight against thirty Romans, who were detached by Werdan ; and, after killing or unhorsing seventeen of their number, Derar returned in safety to his applauding brethren. When

his rashness was mildly censured by the general, he excused himself with the simplicity of a soldier. "Nay," said Derar, "I did not begin first; but they came out to take me, and I was afraid that God should see me turn my back; and indeed I fought in good earnest, and without doubt God assisted me against them; and, had I not been apprehensive of disobeying your orders, I should not have come away as I did; and I perceive already that they will fall into our hands." In the presence of both armies, a venerable Greek advanced from the ranks with a liberal offer of peace; and the departure of the Saracens would have been purchased by a gift to each soldier, of a turban, a robe, and a piece of gold; ten robes and an hundred pieces to their leader; one hundred robes and a thousand pieces to the caliph. A smile of indignation expressed the refusal of Caled. "Ye Christian dogs, you know your option: the Koran, the tribute, or the sword. We are a people whose delight is in war rather than in peace; and we despise your pitiful alms, since we shall be speedily masters of your wealth, your families, and your persons." Notwithstanding this apparent disdain, he was deeply conscious of the public danger: those who had been in Persia, and had seen the armies of Chosroes, confessed that they never beheld a more formidable array. From the superiority of the enemy the artful Saracen derived a fresh incentive of courage: "You see before you," said he, "the united force of the Romans, you cannot hope to escape, but you may conquer Syria in a single day. The event depends on your discipline and patience. Reserve yourselves till the evening. It was in the evening that the prophet was accustomed to vanquish." During two successive engagements, his temperate firmness sustained the darts of the enemy, and the murmurs of his troops. At length, when the spirits and quivers of the adverse line were almost exhausted, Caled gave the signal of onset and victory. The remains of the Imperial army fled to Antioch, or Cæsarea, or Damascus; and the death of four hundred and seventy Moslems was

compensated by the opinion that they had sent to **hell** above fifty thousand of the infidels. The spoil was inestimable : many banners and crosses of gold and silver, precious stones, silver and gold chains, and innumerable suits of the richest armour and apparel. The general distribution was postponed till Damascus should be taken; but the seasonable supply of arms became the instrument of new victories. The glorious intelligence was transmitted to the throne of the caliph, and the Arabian tribes, the coldest or most hostile to the prophet's mission, were eager and importunate to share the harvest of Syria.

The sad tidings were carried to Damascus by the speed of grief and terror ; and the inhabitants beheld from their walls the return of the heroes of Aiznadin. Amrou led the van at the head of nine thousand horse ; the bands of the Saracens succeeded each other in formidable review ; and the rear was closed by Caled in person, with the standard of the black eagle. To the activity of Derar he entrusted the commission of patrolling round the city with two thousand horse, of scouring the plain, and of intercepting all succour or intelligence. The rest of the Arabian chiefs were fixed in their respective stations before the seven gates of Damascus ; and the siege was renewed with fresh vigour and confidence. The art, the labour, the military engines, of the Greeks and Romans, are seldom to be found in the simple, though successful, operations of the Saracens : it was sufficient for them to invest a city with arms rather than with trenches ; to repel the sallies of the besieged ; to attempt a stratagem or an assault; or to expect the progress of famine and discontent. Damascus would have acquiesced in the trial of Aiznadin, as a final and peremptory sentence between the emperor and the caliph ; her courage was rekindled by the example and authority of Thomas, a noble Greek, illustrious in a private condition by the alliance of Heraclius. The tumult and illumination of the night proclaimed the design of the morning sally; and the Christian hero, who affected to despise the en-

thusiasm of the Arabs, employed the resource of a similar superstition. At the principal gate, in the sight of both armies, a lofty crucifix was erected ; the bishop, with his clergy, accompanied the march, and laid the volume of the New Testament before the image of Jesus ; and the contending parties were scandalized or edified by a prayer that the Son of God would defend his servants and vindicate his truth. The battle raged with incessant fury ; and the dexterity of Thomas, an incomparable archer, was fatal to the boldest Saracens, till their death was revenged by a female heroine. The wife of Aban, who had followed him to the holy war, embraced her expiring husband. " Happy," said she, " happy art thou, my dear ; thou art gone to thy Lord, who first joined us together, and then parted us asunder. I will revenge thy death, and endeavour to the utmost of my power to come to the place where thou art, because I love thee. Henceforth shall no man ever touch me more, for I have dedicated myself to the service of God." Without a groan, without a tear, she washed the corpse of her husband, and buried him with the usual rites. Then grasping the manly weapons, which in her native land she was accustomed to wield', the intrepid widow of Aban sought the place where his murderer fought in the thickest of the battle. Her first arrow pierced the hand of his standard-bearer; her second wounded Thomas in the eye; and the fainting Christians no longer beheld their ensign or their leader. Yet the generous champion of Damascus refused to withdraw to his palace ; his wound was dressed on the rampart; the fight was continued till the evening ; and the Syrians rested on their arms. In the silence of the night, the signal was given by a stroke on the great bell; the gates were thrown open, and each gate discharged an impetuous column on the sleeping camp of the Saracens. Caled was the first in arms ; at the head of four hundred horse he flew to the post of danger, and the tears trickled down his iron cheeks, as he uttered a fervent ejaculation : " O God ! who never sleepest, look upon thy servants, and

do not deliver them into the hands of their enemies." The valour and victory of Thomas were arrested by the presence of the *sword of God* ; with the knowledge of the peril, the Moslems recovered their ranks, and charged the assailants in the flank and rear. After the loss of thousands, the Christian general retreated with a sigh of despair, and the pursuit of the Saracens was checked by the military engines of the rampart.

After a siege of seventy days, the patience, and perhaps the provisions, of the Damascenes were exhausted ; and the bravest of their chiefs submitted to the hard dictates of necessity. In the occurrences of peace and war, they had been taught to dread the fierceness of Caled, and to revere the mild virtues of Abu Obeidah. At the hour of midnight, one hundred chosen deputies of the clergy and the people were introduced to the tent of that venerable commander. He received and dismissed them with courtesy. They returned with a written agreement, on the faith of a companion of Mahomet, that all hostilities should cease; that the voluntary emigrants might depart in safety, with as much as they could carry away of their effects; and that the tributary subjects of the caliphs should enjoy their lands and houses, with the use and possession of seven churches. On these terms, the most respectable hostages, and the gate nearest to his camp, were delivered into his hands ; his soldiers imitated the moderation of their chief; and he enjoyed the submissive gratitude of a people whom he had rescued from destruction. But the success of the treaty had relaxed their vigilance, and in the same moment the opposite quarter of the city was betrayed and taken by assault. A party of an hundred Arabs had opened the eastern gate to a more inexorable foe. " No quarter," cried the rapacious and sanguinary Caled, " no quarter to the enemies of the Lord " ; his trumpets sounded, and a torrent of Christian blood was poured down the streets of Damascus. When he reached the church of St. Mary, he was astonished and provoked by the peaceful

aspect of his companions: their swords were in the scabbard, and they were surrounded by a multitude of priests and monks. Abu Obeidah saluted the general: " God," said he, " has delivered the city into my hands by way of surrender, and he has saved the believers the trouble of fighting." " And am I not," replied the indignant Caled, " am I not the lieutenant of the commander of the faithful? Have I not taken the city by storm? The unbelievers shall perish by the sword. Fall on." The hungry and cruel Arabs would have obeyed the welcome command; and Damascus was lost, if the benevolence of Abu Obeidah had not been supported by a decent and dignified firmness. Throwing himself between the trembling citizens and the most eager of the barbarians, he adjured them by the holy name of God to respect his promise, to suspend their fury, and to wait the determination of their chiefs. The chiefs retired into the church of St. Mary; and, after a vehement debate, Caled submitted in some measure to the reason and authority of his colleague; who urged the sanctity of a covenant, the advantage as well as the honour which the Moslems would derive from the punctual performance of their word, and the obstinate resistance which they must encounter from the distrust and despair of the rest of the Syrian cities. It was agreed that the sword should be sheathed, that the part of Damascus which had surrendered to Abu Obediah should be immediately entitled to the benefit of his capitulation, and that the final decision should be referred to the justice and wisdom of the caliph. A large majority of the people accepted the terms of toleration and tribute; and Damascus is still peopled by twenty thousand Christians. But the valiant Thomas, and the free-born patriots who had fought under his banner, embraced the alternative of poverty and exile. In the adjacent meadow, a numerous encampment was formed of priests and laymen, of soldiers and citizens, of women and children: they collected with haste and terror their most precious moveables; and abandoned, with loud lamenta-

tions or silent anguish, their native homes and the pleasant banks of the Pharphar. The inflexible soul of Caled was not touched by the spectacle of their distress : he disputed with the Damascenes the property of a magazine of corn ; endeavoured to exclude the garrison from the benefit of the treaty ; consented, with reluctance, that each of the fugitives should arm himself with a sword, or a lance, or a bow ; and sternly declared that, after a respite of three days, they might be pursued and treated as the enemies of the Moslems.

The passion of a Syrian youth completed the ruin of the exiles of Damascus. A nobleman of the city, of the name of Jonas, was betrothed to a wealthy maiden ; but her parents delayed the consummation of his nuptials, and their daughter was persuaded to escape with the man whom she had chosen. They corrupted the nightly watchman of the gate Keisan : the lover, who led the way, was encompassed by a squadron of Arabs ; but his exclamation in the Greek tongue, " the bird is taken," admonished his mistress to hasten her return. In the presence of Caled, and of death, the unfortunate Jonas professed his belief in one God, and his apostle Mahomet ; and continued, till the season of his martyrdom, to discharge the duties of a brave and sincere Musulman. When the city was taken, he flew to the monastery, where Eudocia had taken refuge ; but the lover was forgotten ; the apostate was scorned ; she preferred her religion to her country ; and the justice of Caled, though deaf to mercy, refused to detain by force a male or female inhabitant of Damascus. Four days was the general confined to the city by the obligation of the treaty and the urgent cares of his new conquest. His appetite for blood and rapine would have been extinguished by the hopeless computation of time and distance ; but he listened to the importunities of Jonas, who assured him that the weary fugitives might yet be overtaken. At the head of four thousand horse, in the disguise of Christian Arabs, Caled undertook the pursuit. They halted only for

the moments of prayer; and their guide had a perfect knowledge of the country. For a long way the footsteps of the Damascenes were plain and conspicuous: they vanished on a sudden; but the Saracens were comforted by the assurance that the caravan had turned into aside the mountains, and must speedily fall into their hands. In traversing the ridges of the Libanus, they endured intolerable hardships, and the sinking spirits of the veteran fanatics were supported and cheered by the unconquerable ardour of a lover. From a peasant of the country, they were informed that the emperor had sent orders to the colony of exiles, to pursue without delay the road of the sea-coast and of Constantinople; apprehensive, perhaps, that the soldiers and people of Antioch might be discouraged by the sight and the story of their sufferings. The Saracens were conducted through the territories of Gabala and Laodicea, at a cautious distance from the walls of the cities; the rain was incessant, the night was dark, a single mountain separated them from the Roman army; and Caled, ever anxious for the safety of his brethren, whispered an ominous dream in the ear of his companion. With the dawn of day, the prospect again cleared, and they saw before them, in a pleasant valley, the tents of Damascus. After a short interval of repose and prayer, Caled divided his cavalry into four squadrons, committing the first to his faithful Derar, and reserving the last for himself. They successively rushed on the promiscuous multitude, insufficiently provided with arms, and already vanquished by sorrow and fatigue. Except a captive who was pardoned and dismissed, the Arabs enjoyed the satisfaction of believing that not a Christian of either sex escaped the edge of their scymetars. The gold and silver of Damascus was scattered over the camp, and a royal wardrobe of three hundred load of silk might clothe an army of naked barbarians. In the tumult of the battle, Jonas sought and found the object of his pursuit; but her resentment was inflamed by the last act of his perfidy; and, as Eudocia,

struggled in his hateful embraces, she struck a dagger to her heart. Another female, the widow of Thomas, and the real or supposed daughter of Heraclius, was spared and released without a ransom; but the generosity of Caled was the effect of his contempt; and the haughty Saracen insulted, by a message of defiance, the throne of the Caesars. Caled had penetrated above an hundred and fifty miles into the heart of the Roman province: he returned to Damascus with the same secrecy and speed. On the accession of Omar, the *sword of God* was removed from the command; but the caliph, who blamed the rashness, was compelled to applaud the vigour and conduct, of the enterprise.

CHAPTER V

The Death of Hosein (A.D. 680)

[INTRODUCTION.—The Prophet left no male issue, and on his death Abu Bekr, father of his favourite wife Ayesha, was chosen as Khalifa or Successor. Abu Bekr was succeeded by Omar, and Omar by Othman. This led to jealousy on the part of Ali, Mahomet's nephew and son-in-law. Ali murdered Othman, and was in turn himself assassinated, A.D. 660. Ali's two sons, Hassan and Hosein, carried on the struggle : Hassan died, and Hosein was obliged to flee. At Kerbela on the Euphrates he was surrounded by the troops of the Khalifa and slain (A.D. 680). This tragedy deeply impressed the Mahommedan world, and is commemorated by the Shiah in the Mubarram Festival, and in Persia by an annual Passion Play. From the rivalry between Ali and the Khalifas arose the two great Moslem sects, the Shias and the Sunnis.]

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

prosecute his claim against Yezid the tyrant of Damascus, whose vices he despised, and whose title he had never deigned to acknowledge. A list was secretly transmitted **from** Cufa to Medina of one hundred and forty thousand Moslems, who professed their attachment to his cause, and who were eager to draw their swords so soon as he should appear on the banks of the Euphrates. Against the advice of his wisest friends, he resolved to trust his person and family in the hands of a perfidious people. He traversed the desert of Arabia with a 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: Obeidollah, the governor of Cufa, had extinguished the first sparks of an insurrection ; and Hosein, in the plain of Kerbela, was encompassed by a body of five thousand horse, who intercepted his communication with the city and the river. He might still have escaped to a fortress in the desert that had defied the power of Caesar 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 Yediz. But the commands of the caliph, or his lieutenant, were stern and absolute ; and Hosein was informed that he must either submit as a captive and a criminal to the commander of the faithful or expect the consequences of his rebellion. " Do you think," replied he, "to terrify me with death ? " And, during the short respite of a night, he prepared with calm and solemn resignation to encounter his fate. He checked the lamentations of his sister Fatima, who deplored the impending ruin of his house. " Our trust," said Hosein, " is in God alone. All things, both in heaven and earth, must perish and return

to their Creator. My brother, my father, my mother, were better than me ; and every Musulman has an example in the prophet." He pressed his friends to consult their safety by a timely flight: they unanimously refused to desert or survive their beloved master ; and their courage was fortified by a fervent prayer and the assurance of paradise. On the morning of the fatal day, he mounted on horseback, with his sword in one hand and the Koran in the other ; his generous band of martyrs consisted only of thirty-two horse and forty foot; but their flanks and rear were secured by the tent-ropes, and by a deep trench which they had filled with lighted faggots, according to the practice of the Arabs. The enemy advanced with reluctance ; and one of their chiefs deserted, with thirty followers, to claim the partnership of inevitable death. In every close onset or single combat, the despair of the Fatimites was invincible ; but the surrounding multitudes galled them from a distance with a cloud of arrows, and the horses and men were successively slain : a truce was allowed on both sides for the hour of prayer ; and the battle at length expired by the death of the last of the 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 his hands to heaven, they were full of blood, and he uttered a funeral prayer for the living and the dead. In a transport of despair his sister issued from the tent, and adjured the general of the Cufians that he would not suffer Hosein to be murdered before his eyes : a tear trickled down his venerable beard; and the boldest of his soldiers fell back on every side as the dying hero threw himself among them. The remorseless Shamer, a name detested by the faithful, reproached their cowardice ; and the grandson of Mahomet was slain with three and thirty strokes of lances and swords. After they had trampled on his body, they carried his head to the castle of Cufa, and the

inhuman Obeidollah struck him on the mouth with a cane : “ Alas ! ” exclaimed an aged Musulman, “ on these lips have I seen the lips of the apostle of God ! ” In a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of Hosein will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader. On the annual festival of his martyrdom, in the devout pilgrimage to his sepulchre, his Persian votaries abandon their souls to the religious frenzy of sorrow and indignation.

When the sisters and children of AH 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 Yediz 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 and provoked the jealousy of the reigning caliphs ; their tombs at Mecca or Medina, on the banks of the Euphrates or in the province of 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 Musulman empire allowed an ample scope for every bold and artful impostor who claimed affinity with the holy seed ; the sceptre of the Almohades in Spain and 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 ennoble a plebeian race, and the ancient blood of the Koreish transcends the recent majesty of the kings of the earth.

CHAPTER VI

The Spread of Mahommedanism in the Eighth Century

[INTRODUCTION.—After the death of Ali, the power fell into the hands of Moawija, a cousin of the Khalifa Othman, who founded the Ommeyad Khalifate of Damascus. Under Moawija, Mahommedanism made rapid strides. It spread over Northern Africa, and reached Corsica, Sicily, Sardinia and Spain, where Tarik captured Gibraltar (Gibal al Tarik, Hill of Tarik) and defeated Roderick, the king of the Visigoths, at Xeres de la Frontera in A.D. 711. It penetrated into Southern Russia, and overflowed Persia and Central Asia to the banks of the Jaxartes. Fifteen years after the Prophet's death, Arabian naval expeditions attacked Sind, and ultimately reached Canton, where they preached Islam in China. At one time it seemed probable that the Mahommedans would overrun Europe and exterminate Christianity, but they were checked by Charles Martel, who turned back the rising tide at Poitiers in 732, and saved Germanic civilization. The Mahommedans were far more cultured than the semi-barbarous tribes of Europe in the eighth century. Bagdad, Cordova and Alexandria were famous centres of learning. To the Arabs mediaeval Europe owed all she knew of mathematics, the physical sciences, especially chemistry, medicine, and astronomy, and strangely enough, even of Aristotle ! But Mahommedanism, chiefly owing to its doctrine of fatalism and its leaning towards absolute military rule, has stagnated while the western nations have progressed.]

A PROVINCE is assimilated to the victorious state by the introduction of strangers and the imitative spirit of the natives ; and Spain, which had been successively tinctured with the Punic, and Roman, and Gothic blood, imbibed, in a few generations, the name and manners of the Arabs. The first conquerors, and the twenty successive lieutenants

a narrow home ; the private and public interest was promoted by the establishment of faithful colonies ; and the cities of Spain were proud to commemorate the tribe or country of their Eastern progenitors. The victorious though motley bands of Tarik and Musa asserted, by the name of *Spaniards*, their original claim of conquest; yet they allowed their brethren of Egypt to share their establishments of Murcia and Lisbon. The royal legion of Damascus was planted at Cordova ; that of Emesa at Seville ; that of Kinnisrin or Chalcis at Jaen; that of Palestine at Algezire and Medina Sidonia. The natives of Yemen and Persia were scattered round Toledo and the inland country ; and the fertile seats of Grenada were bestowed on ten thousand horsemen of Syria, and Irak, the children of the purest and most noble of the Arabian tribes. A spirit of emulation, sometimes beneficial, more frequently dangerous, was nourished by these hereditary factions. Ten years after the conquest, a map of the province was presented to the caliph : the seas, the rivers, and the harbours, the inhabitants and cities, the climate, the soil, and the mineral productions of the earth. In the space of two centuries, the gifts of nature were improved by the agriculture, the manufactures, and the commerce of an industrious people ; and the effects of their diligence have been magnified by the idleness of their fancy. The first of the Ommiades who reigned in Spain solicited the support of the Christians ; and, in his edict of peace and protection, he contents himself with the modest imposition of ten thousand ounces of gold, ten thousand pounds of silver, ten thousand horses, as many mules, one thousand cuirasses, with an equal number of helmets and lances. The most powerful of his successors derived from the same kingdom the annual tribute of twelve millions and forty-five thousand dinars or pieces of gold, about six millions of sterling money : a sum which, in the tenth century, most probably surpassed the united revenues of the Christian monarchs. His royal seat of Cordova contained six hundred

moschs, nine hundred baths, and two hundred thousand houses : he gave laws to eighty cities of the first, to three hundred of the second and third order ; and the fertile banks of the Guadalquivir were adorned with twelve thousand villages and hamlets. The Arabs might exaggerate the truth, but they created and they describe the most prosperous æra of the riches, the cultivation, and the populousness of Spain.

The wars of the Moslems were sanctified by the prophet; but, among the various precepts and examples of his life, the caliphs selected the lessons of toleration that might tend to disarm the resistance of the unbelievers. Arabia was the temple and patrimony of the God of Mahomet ; but he beheld with less jealousy and affection the nations of the earth. The polytheists and idolaters who were ignorant of his name might be lawfully extirpated by his votaries; but a wise policy supplied the obligation of justice; and, after some acts of intolerant zeal, the Mahometan conquerors of Hindostan have spared the pagods of that devout and populous country. The disciples of Abraham, of Moses, and of Jesus were solemnly invited to accept the more *perfect* revelation of Mahomet; but, if they preferred the payment of a moderate tribute, they were entitled to the freedom of conscience and religious worship. In a field of battle, the forfeit lives of the prisoners were redeemed by the profession of *Islam*; the females were bound to embrace the religion of their masters, and a race of sincere proselytes was gradually multiplied by the education of infant captives. But the millions of African and Asiatic converts, who swelled the native band of the faithful Arabs, must have been allured, rather than constrained, to declare their belief in one God and the apostle of God. By the repetition of a sentence and the loss of a foreskin, the subject or the slave, the captive or the criminal, arose in a moment the free and equal companion of the victorious Moslems. Every sin was expiated, every engagement was dissolved : the vow of celibacy was

superseded by the indulgence of nature ; the active spirits who slept in the cloister were awakened by the trumpet of the Saracens ; and, in the convulsion of the world, every member of a new society ascended to the natural level of his capacity and courage. The minds of the multitude were tempted by the invisible as well as temporal blessings of the Arabian prophet; and charity will hope that many of his proselytes entertained a serious conviction of the truth and sanctity of his revelation. In the eyes of an inquisitive polytheist, it must appear worthy of the human and the divine nature. More pure than the system of Zoroaster, more liberal than the law of Moses, the religion of Mahomet might seem less inconsistent with reason than the creed of mystery and superstition which, in the seventh century, disgraced the simplicity of the gospel.

In the extensive provinces of Persia and Africa, the national religion has been eradicated by the Mahometan faith. The ambiguous theology of the Magi stood alone among the sects of the East: but the profane writings of Zoroaster might, under the reverend name of Abraham, be dexterously connected with the chain of divine revelation. Their evil principle, the daemon Ahriman, might be represented as the rival, or as the creature, of the God of light. The temples of Persia were devoid of images ; but the worship of the sun and of fire might be stigmatized as a gross and criminal idolatry. The milder sentiment was consecrated by the practice of Mahomet and the prudence of the caliphs ; the Magians, or Ghebers, were ranked with the Jews and Christians among the people of the written law ; and, as late as the third century of the Hegira, the city of Herat will afford a lively contrast of private zeal and public toleration. Under the payment of an annual tribute, the Mahometan law secured to the Ghebers of Herat their civil and religious liberties ; but the recent and humble mosch was overshadowed by the antique splendour of the adjoining temple of fire. A fanatic Imam deplored, in his sermons, the scandalous neighbourhood, and accused

the weakness or indifference of the faithful. Excited by his voice, the people assembled in tumult; the two houses of prayer were consumed by the flames, but the vacant ground was immediately occupied by the foundations of a new mosch. The injured Magi appealed to the sovereign of Chorasán; he promised justice and relief; when, behold! four thousand citizens of Herat, of a grave character and mature age, unanimously swore that the idolatrous fane had *never* existed; the inquisition was silenced, and their conscience was satisfied (says the historian Mirchond) with this holy and meritorious perjury. But the greatest part of the temples of Persia were ruined by the insensible and general desertion of their votaries. It was *insensible*, since it is not accompanied with any memorial of time or place, of persecution or resistance. It was *general*, since the whole realm, from Shiraz to Samarcand, imbibed the faith of the Korán; and the preservation of the native tongue reveals the descent of the Mahometans of Persia. In the mountains and deserts, an obstinate race of unbelievers adhered to the superstition of their fathers; and a faint tradition of the Magian theology is kept alive in the province of Kirman, along the banks of the Indus, among the exiles of Surat, and in the colony, which, in the last century, was planted by Shaw Abbas at the gates of Ispahan. The chief pontiff has retired to mount Elbourz, eighteen leagues from the city of Yezd; the perpetual fire (if it continue to burn) is inaccessible to the profane; but his residence is the school, the oracle, and the pilgrimage of the Ghebers, whose hard and uniform features attest the unmingled purity of their blood. Under the jurisdiction of their elders, eighty thousand families maintain an innocent and industrious life; their subsistence is derived from some curious manufactures and mechanic trades; and they cultivate the earth with the fervour of a religious duty. Their ignorance withstood the despotism of Shaw Abbas, who demanded with threats and books of Zoroaster; and this

Magians is spared by the moderation or contempt of their present sovereigns.

The northern coast of Africa is the only land in which the light of the gospel, after a long and perfect establishment, has been totally extinguished. The arts, which had been taught by Carthage and Rome, were involved in a cloud of ignorance, the doctrine of Cyprian and Augustine was no longer studied. Five hundred episcopal churches were overturned by the hostile fury of the Donatists, the Vandals, and the Moors. The zeal and numbers of the clergy declined; and the people, without discipline, or knowledge, or hope, submissively sunk under the yoke of the Arabian prophet. Within fifty years after the expulsion of the Greeks, a lieutenant of Africa informed the caliph that the tribute of the infidels was abolished by their conversion; and, though he sought to disguise his fraud and rebellion, his specious pretence was drawn from the rapid and extensive progress of the Mahometan faith. In the next age an extraordinary mission of five bishops was detached from Alexandria to Cairoan. They were ordained by the Jacobite patriarch to cherish and revive the dying embers of Christianity. But the interposition of a foreign prelate, a stranger to the Latins, an enemy to the Catholics, supposes the decay and dissolution of the African hierarchy. It was no longer the time when the successor of St. Cyprian, at the head of a numerous synod, could maintain an equal contest with the ambition of the Roman pontiff. In the eleventh century, the unfortunate priest who was seated on the ruins of Carthage, implored the arms and the protection of the Vatican; and he bitterly complains that his naked body had been scourged by the Saracens, and that his authority was disputed by the four suffragans, the tottering pillars of his throne. Two epistles of Gregory the Seventh are destined to seethe the distress of the Catholics and the pride of a Moorish prince. The pope assures the sultan that they both worship the same God and may hope to meet in the bosom of Abraham; but the

complaints that three bishops could no longer be found to consecrate a brother, announces the speedy and inevitable ruin of the episcopal order. The Christians of Africa and Spain had long since submitted to the practice of circumcision and the legal abstinence from wine and pork ; and the name of *Mozarabes* (adoptive Arabs) was applied to their civil or religious conformity. About the middle of the twelfth century, the worship of Christ and the succession of pastors were abolished along the coast of Barbary, and in the kingdoms of Cordova and Seville, of Valencia and Granada. The throne of the Almohades, or Unitarians, was founded on the blindest fanaticism, and their extraordinary rigour might be provoked or justified by the recent victories and intolerant zeal of the princes of Sicily and Castile, of Arragon and Portugal. The faith of the Mozarabes was occasionally revived by the papal missionaries ; and, on the landing of Charles the Fifth, some families of Latin Christians were encouraged to rear their heads at Tunis and Algiers. But the seed of the gospel was quickly eradicated, and the long province from Tripoli to the Atlantic has lost all memory of the language and religion of Rome.

After the revolution of eleven centuries, the Jews and Christians of the Turkish empire enjoy the liberty of conscience, which was granted by the Arabian caliphs. During the first age of the conquest, they suspected the loyalty of the Catholics, whose name of Melchites betrayed their secret attachment to the Greek emperor, while the Nestorians and Jacobites, his inveterate enemies, approved themselves the sincere and voluntary friends of the Mahometan government. Yet this partial jealousy was healed by time and submission ; the churches of Egypt were shared with the Catholics ; and all the Oriental sects were included in the common benefits of toleration. The rank, the immunities, the domestic jurisdiction, of the patriarchs, the bishops, and the clergy, were protected by the civil magistrate ; the learning of individuals recommended them

to the employments of secretaries and physicians; they were enriched by the lucrative collection of the revenue; and their merit was sometimes raised to the command of cities and provinces. A caliph of the house of Abbas was heard to declare that the Christians were most worthy of trust in the administration of Persia. "The Moslems," said he, "will abuse their present fortune; the Magians regret their fallen greatness; and the Jews are impatient for their approaching deliverance." But the slaves of despotism are exposed to the alternatives of favour and disgrace. The captive churches of the East have been afflicted in every age by the avarice or bigotry of their rulers; and the ordinary and legal restraints must be offensive to the pride or the zeal of the Christians. About two hundred years after Mahomet, they were separated from their fellow-subjects by a turban or girdle of a less honourable colour; instead of horses or mules, they were condemned to ride on asses, in the attitude of women. Their public and private buildings were measured by a diminutive standard; in the streets or the baths, it is their duty to give way or bow down before the meanest of the people; and their testimony is rejected, if it may tend to the prejudice of a true believer. The pomp of processions, the sound of bells, or of psalmody, is interdicted in their worship; a decent reverence for the national faith is imposed on their sermons and conversations; and the sacrilegious attempt to enter a mosch or to seduce a Musulman will not be suffered to escape with impunity. In a time, however, of tranquillity and justice, the Christians have never been compelled to renounce the Gospel or to embrace the Koran; but the punishment of death is inflicted upon the apostates who have professed and deserted the law of Mahomet. The martyrs of Cordova provoked the sentence of the cadhi by the public confession of their inconstancy, or their passionate invectives against the person and religion of the prophet.

At the end of the first century of the Hegira, the caliphs

were the most potent and absolute monarchs of the globe. Their prerogative was not circumscribed, either in right or in fact, by the power of the nobles, the freedom of the commons, the privileges of the church, the votes of a senate, or the memory of a free constitution. The authority of the companions of Mahomet expired with their lives ; and the chiefs or emirs of the Arabian tribes left behind, in the desert, the spirit of equality and independence. The regal and sacerdotal characters were united in the successors of Mahomet; and, if the Koran was the rule of their actions, they were the supreme judges and interpreters of that divine book. They reigned by the right of conquest over the nations of the East, to whom the name of liberty was unknown, and who were accustomed to applaud in their tyrants the acts of violence and severity that were exercised at their own expense. Under the last of the Ommiades, the Arabian empire extended two hundred days' journey from east to west, from the confines of Tartary and India to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. And, if we retrench the sleeve of the robe, as it is styled by their writers, the long and narrow province of Africa, the solid and compact dominion from Fargana to Aden, from Tarsus to Surat, will spread on every side to the measure of four or five months of the march of a caravan. We should vainly seek the indissoluble union and easy obedience that pervaded the government of Augustus and the Antonines ; but the progress of the Mahometan religion diffused over this ample space a general resemblance of manners and opinions. The language and laws of the Koran were studied with equal devotion at Samarcand and Seville : the Moor and the Indian embraced as countrymen and brothers in the pilgrimage of Mecca ; and the Arabian language was adopted as the popular idiom in all the provinces to the westward of the Tigris.

CHAPTER VII

Bagdad at the Height of its Glory

[INTRODUCTION.—In A.D. 750, Abbas, a great-grandson of the uncle of the Prophet, cruelly massacred his rivals the Ommeyyads, and founded the famous Abbasid dynasty (A.D. 750—1258). In 757, the Khalifa Al-Mansur founded a new capital on the site of the ancient Babylon on the Tigris. This he named Bagdad, the Garden of God. Under Haroun. al Raschid, the friend and contemporary of Charlemagne, and his son Al Mamun, Bagdad became the wealthiest and most cultured city in the world. Haroun al Raschid (known to English readers from the *Arabian Nights*) was a magnificent patron of art and learning. The dynasty gradually declined. Rival Khalifas appeared in Egypt and Spain, and in A.D. 1277, the city was sacked by the Tartars.]

MECCA was the patrimony of the line of Hashem, yet the Abbassides were never tempted to reside either in the birth-place or the city of the prophet. Damascus was disgraced by the choice, and polluted with the blood, of the Ommiades ; and, after some hesitation, Almansor, the brother and successor of Saffah, laid the foundations of Bagdad, the Imperial seat of his posterity during a reign of five hundred years. The chosen spot is on the eastern bank of the Tigris, about fifteen miles above the ruins of Modain ; the double wall was of a circular form ; and such was the rapid increase of a capital, now dwindled to a provincial town, that the funeral of a popular saint might be attended by eight hundred thousand men and sixty thousand women of Bagdad and the adjacent villages. In this *city of peace*, amidst the riches of the East, the Abbassides soon disdained the abstinence and frugality

of the first caliphs, and aspired to emulate the magnificence of the Persian kings. After his wars and buildings, Almansor left behind him in gold and silver about thirty millions sterling ; and this treasure was exhausted in a few years by the vices or virtues of his children. His son Mahadi, in a single pilgrimage to Mecca, expended six millions of dinars of gold. A pious and charitable motive may sanctify the foundation of cisterns and caravanseras, which he distributed along a measured road of seven hundred miles ; but his trains of camels, laden with snow, could serve only to astonish the natives of Arabia, and to refresh the fruits and liquors of the royal banquet. The courtiers would surely praise the liberality of his grandson Almamon, who gave away four-fifths of the income of a province, a sum of two millions four hundred thousand gold dinars, before he drew his foot from the stirrup. At the nuptials of the same prince, a thousand pearls of the largest size were showered on the head of the bride, and a lottery of lands and houses displayed the capricious bounty of fortune. The glories of the court were brightened rather than impaired in the decline of the empire ; and a Greek ambassador might admire or pity the magnificence of the feeble Mochtader. “ The caliph's whole army,” says the historian Abulfeda, “ both horse and foot, was under arms, which together made a body of one hundred and sixty thousand men. His state-officers, the favourite slaves, stood near him in splendid apparel, their belts glittering with gold and gems. Near them were seven thousand eunuchs, four thousand of them white, the remainder black. The porters or door-keepers were in number seven hundred. Barges and boats, with the most superb decorations, were seen swimming upon the Tigris. Nor was the palace itself less splendid, in which were hung up thirty-eight thousand pieces of tapestry, twelve thousand five hundred of which were of silk embroidered with gold. The carpets on the floor were twenty-two thousand. An hundred lions were brought out, with a keeper to each lion. Among the

other spectacles of rare and stupendous luxury, was a tree of gold and silver spreading into eighteen large branches, on which, and on the lesser boughs, sat a variety of birds made of the same precious metals, as well as the leaves of the tree. While the machinery affected spontaneous motions, the several birds warbled their natural harmony. Through this scene of magnificence, the Greek ambassador was led by the visir to the foot of the caliph's throne." In the West, the Omniades of Spain supported, with equal pomp, the title of commander of the faithful. Three miles from Cordova, in honour of his favourite sultana, the third and greatest of the Abdalrahmans constructed the city, palace, and gardens of Zehra. Twenty-five years, and above three millions sterling, were employed by the founder : his liberal taste invited the artists of Constantinople, the most skilful sculptors and architects of the age ; and the buildings were sustained or adorned by twelve hundred columns of Spanish and African, of Greek and Italian marble. The hall of audience was encrusted with gold and pearls, and a great bason in the centre was surrounded with the curious and costly figures of birds and quadrupeds. In a lofty pavillion of the gardens, one of these basons and fountains, so delightful in a sultry climate, was replenished not with water, but with the purest quicksilver. The seraglio of Abdalrahman, his wives, concubines, and black eunuchs, amounted to six thousand three hundred persons ; and he was attended to the field by a guard of twelve thousand horse, whose belts and scymetars were studded with gold.

In a private condition, our desires are perpetually repressed by poverty and subordination ; but the lives and labours of millions are devoted to the service of a despotic prince, whose laws are blindly obeyed, and whose wishes are instantly gratified. Our imagination is dazzled by the splendid picture ; and, whatever may be the cool dictates of reason, there are few among us who would obstinately refuse a trial of the comforts and the cares of royalty. It

may therefore be of some use to borrow the experience of the same Abdalrahman, whose magnificence has perhaps excited our admiration and envy, and to transcribe an authentic memorial which was found in the closet of the deceased caliph. “ I have now reigned above fifty years in victory or peace ; beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honours, power and pleasure, have waited on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot: they amount to FOURTEEN :—O man ! place not thy confidence in this present world ! ” The luxury of the caliphs, so useless to their private happiness, relaxed the nerves, and terminated the progress, of the Arabian empire. Temporal and spiritual conquest had been the sole occupation of the first successors of Mahomet; and, after supplying themselves with the necessaries of life, the whole revenue was scrupulously devoted to that salutary work. The Abbassides were impoverished by the multitude of their wants and their contempt of œconomy. Instead of pursuing the great object of ambition, their leisure, their affections, the powers of their mind, were diverted by pomp and pleasure ; the rewards of valour were embezzled by women and eunuchs, and the royal camp was encumbered by the luxury of the palace. A similar temper was diffused among the subjects of the caliph. Their stern enthusiasm was softened by time and prosperity : they sought riches in the occupations of industry, fame in the pursuits of literature, and happiness in the tranquillity of domestic life. War was no longer the passion of the Saracens ; and the increase of pay, the repetition of donatives, were insufficient to allure the posterity of those voluntary champions who had crowded to the standard of Abubeker and Omar for the hopes of spoil and of paradise.

Under the reign of the Ommiades, the studies of the Moslems were confined to the interpretation of the Koran,

and the eloquence and poetry of their native tongue. A people continually exposed to the dangers of the field must esteem the healing powers of medicine or rather of surgery ; but the starving physicians of Arabia murmured a complaint that exercise and temperance deprived them of the greatest part of their practice. After their civil and domestic wars, the subjects of the Abbassides, awakening from this mental lethargy, found leisure and felt curiosity for the acquisition of profane science. This spirit was first encouraged by the caliph Almansor, who, besides his knowledge of Mahometan law, had applied himself with success to the study of astronomy. But, when the sceptre devolved to Almamon, the seventh of the Abbassides, he completed the designs of his grandfather, and invited the muses from their ancient seats. His ambassadors at Constantinople, his agents in Armenia, Syria, and Egypt, collected the volumes of Grecian science ; at his command they were translated by the most skilful interpreters into the Arabic language ; his subjects were exhorted assiduously to peruse these instructive writings ; and the successor of Mahomet assisted with pleasure and modesty at the assemblies and disputations of the learned. " He was not ignorant," says Abulpharagius, " that *they* are the elect of God, his best and most useful servants, whose lives are devoted to the improvement of their rational faculties. The mean ambition of the Chinese or the Turks may glory in the industry of their hands or the indulgence of their brutal appetites. Yet these dexterous artists must view, with hopeless emulation, the hexagons and pyramids of the cells of a bee-hive : these fortitudinous heroes are awed by the superior fierceness of the lions and tigers. The teachers of wisdom are the true luminaries and legislators of a world which, without their aid, would again sink in ignorance and barbarism." The zeal and curiosity of Almamon were imitated by succeeding princes of the line of Abbas ; their rivals, the Fatimites of Africa and the Ommiades of Spain, were the patrons of the learned, as

well as the commanders of the faithful; the same royal prerogative was claimed by their independent emirs of the provinces ; and their emulation diffused the taste and the rewards of science from Samarcand and Bochara to Fez and Cordova. The visir of a sultan consecrated a sum of two hundred thousand pieces of gold to the foundation of a college at Bagdad, which he endowed with an annual revenue of fifteen thousand dinars. The fruits of instruction were communicated, perhaps at different times, to six thousand disciples of every degree, from the son of the noble to that of the mechanic ; a sufficient allowance was provided for the indigent scholars ; and the merit or industry of the professors was repaid with adequate stipends. In every city the productions of Arabic literature were copied and collected by the curiosity of the studious and the vanity of the rich. A private doctor refused the invitation of the sultan of Bochara, because the carriage of his books would have required four hundred camels. The royal library of the Fatimites consisted of one hundred thousand manuscripts, elegantly transcribed and splendidly bound, which were lent, with jealousy or avarice, to the students of Cairo. Yet this collection must appear moderate, if we can believe that the Omniades of Spain had formed a library of six hundred thousand volumes, forty-four of which were employed in the mere catalogue. Their capital, Cordova, with the adjacent towns of Malaga, Almeria, and Murcia, had given birth to more than three hundred writers, and above seventy public libraries were opened in the cities of the Andalusian kingdom. The age of Arabian learning continued about five hundred years, till the great irruption of the Moguls, and was coeval with the darkest and most slothful period of European annals ; but, since the sun of science has arisen in the West, it should seem that the Oriental studies have languished and declined.

In the libraries of the Arabians, as in those of Europe, the far greater part of the innumerable volumes were possessed only of local value or imaginary merit. The

shelves were crowded with orators and poets, whose style was adapted to the taste and manners of their countrymen ; with general and partial histories, which each revolving generation supplied with a new harvest of persons and events ; with codes and commentaries of jurisprudence, which derived their authority from the law of the prophet ; with the interpreters of the Koran and orthodox tradition ; and with the whole theological tribe, polemics, mystics, scholastics, and moralists, the first or the last of writers, according to the different estimate of sceptics or believers. The works of speculation or science may be reduced to the four classes of philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and physic. The sages of Greece were translated and illustrated in the Arabic language, and some treatises, now lost in the original, have been recovered in the versions of the East, which possessed and studied the writings of Aristotle and Plato, of Euclid and Apollonius, of Ptolemy, Hippocrates, and Galen. Among the ideal systems, which have varied with the fashion of the times, the Arabians adopted the philosophy of the Stagirite, alike intelligible or alike obscure for the readers of every age. Plato wrote for the Athenians, and his allegorical genius is too closely blended with the language and religion of Greece. After the fall of that religion, the Peripatetics, emerging from their obscurity, prevailed in the controversies of the Oriental sects, and their founder was long afterwards restored by the Mahometans of Spain to the Latin schools. The physics both of the Academy and the Lyceum, as they are built, not on observation, but on argument, have retarded the progress of real knowledge. The metaphysics of infinite or finite spirit have too often been enlisted in the service of superstition. But the human faculties are fortified by the art and practice of dialectics ; the ten predicaments of Aristotle collect and methodize our ideas, and his syllogism is the keenest weapon of dispute. It was dexterously wielded in the schools of the Saracens, but, as it is more effectual for the detection of error than for the investi-

gation of truth, it is not surprising that new generations of masters and disciples should still revolve in the same circle of logical argument. The mathematics are distinguished by a peculiar privilege that, in the course of ages, they may always advance and can never recede. But the ancient geometry, if I am not misinformed, was resumed in the same state by the Italians of the fifteenth century ; and, whatever may be the origin of the name, the science of algebra is ascribed to the Grecian Diophantus by the modest testimony of the Arabs themselves. They cultivated with more success the sublime science of astronomy, which elevates the mind of man to disdain his diminutive planet and momentary existence. The costly instruments of observation were supplied by the caliph Almamon, and the land of the Chaldeans still afforded the same spacious level, the same unclouded horizon. In the plains of Sinaar, and a second time in those of Cufa, his mathematicians accurately measured a degree of the great circle of the earth, and determined at twenty-four thousand miles the entire circumference of our globe. From the reign of the Abbassides to that of the grandchildren of Tamerlane, the stars, without the aid of glasses, were diligently observed ; and the astronomical tables of Bagdad, Spain, and Samarcand, correct some minute errors, without daring to renounce the hypothesis of Ptolemy, without advancing a step towards the discovery of the solar system. In the eastern courts, the truths of science could be recommended only by ignorance and folly, and the astronomer would have been disregarded, had he not debased his wisdom or honesty by the vain predictions of astrology. But in the science of medicine, the Arabians have been deservedly applauded. The names of Mesua and Geber, of Razis and Avicenna, are ranked with the Grecian masters ; in the city of Bagdad, eight hundred and sixty physicians were licensed to exercise their lucrative profession ; in Spain, the life of the Catholic princes was entrusted to the skill of the Saracens, and the school of Salerno, their legitimate

offspring, revived in Italy and Europe the precepts of the healing art. The success of each professor must have been influenced by personal and accidental causes ; but we may form a less fanciful estimate of their general knowledge of anatomy, botany, and chemistry, the threefold basis of their theory and practice. A superstitious reverence for the dead confined both the Greeks and the Arabians to the dissection of apes and quadrupeds ; the more solid and visible parts were known in the time of Galen, and the finer scrutiny of the human frame was reserved for the microscope and the injections of modern artists. Botany is an active science, and the discoveries of the torrid zone might enrich the herbal of Dioscorides with two thousand plants. Some traditionary knowledge might be secreted in the temples and monasteries of Egypt ; much useful experience had been acquired in the practice of arts and manufactures ; but the *science* of chemistry owes its origin and improvement to the industry of the Saracens. They first invented and named the alembic for the purpose of distillation, analysed the substances of the three kingdoms of nature, tried the distinction and affinities of alcalis and acids, and converted the poisonous minerals into soft and salutary medicines. But the most eager search of Arabian chemistry was the transmutation of metals and the elixir of immortal health ; the reason and the fortunes of thousands were evaporated in the crucibles of alchymy, and the consummation of the great work was promoted by the worthy aid of mystery, fable, and superstition.

CHAPTER VIII

Mahmud of Ghazni

(A.D. 997—1030)

[INTRODUCTION.—It was inevitable that the rich and populous country of Hindustan would eventually fall a prey to the ever-advancing tide of Mahommedan conquest. In 986, Sabuktigin, the Amir of Ghazni, made his first raid, and came into conflict with a confederacy of Rajput princes in the Peshawar district. In 997, he was succeeded by his son Mahmud, who started a series of annual expeditions, in the course of which he sacked the fortress of Kangra, and the sacred cities of Mathura and Kanauj, and finally, the famous temple of Somnath, on the coast of Kathiawar. The plunder obtained from these immemorial shrines was almost incredible. Mahmud, though ruthless in his treatment of infidels, was otherwise a man of noble and enlightened character : the poet Firdausi and the antiquarian Albiruni flourished at his court.]

ONE of the greatest of the Turkish princes was Mamood or Mahmud, the Gaznevide, who reigned in the eastern provinces of Persia one thousand years after the birth of Christ. His father Sebectagi was the slave of the slave of the slave of the commander of the faithful. But in this descent of servitude, the first degree was merely titular, since it was filled by the sovereign of Transoxiana and Chorasán, who still paid a nominal allegiance to the caliph of Bagdad. The second rank was that of a minister of state, a lieutenant of the Samanides, who broke, by his revolt, the bonds of political slavery. But the third step was a state of real and domestic servitude in the family of that rebel; from which Sebectagi, by his courage and dexterity, ascended to the supreme command of the city and province of Gazna, as the son-in-law and successor

of his grateful master. The falling dynasty of the Samanides was at first protected, and at last overthrown, by their servants ; and, in the public disorders, the fortune of Mahmud continually increased. For him, the title of *sultan* was first invented; and his kingdom was enlarged from Transoxiana to the neighbourhood of Ispahan, from the shores of the Caspian to the mouth of the Indus. But the principal source of his fame and riches was the holy war which he waged against the Gentoos of Hindostan. In this foreign narrative I may not consume a page; and a volume would scarcely suffice to recapitulate the battles and sieges of his twelve expeditions. Never was the Musulman hero dismayed by the inclemency of the seasons, the height of the mountains, the breadth of the rivers, the barrenness of the desert, the multitudes of the enemy, or the formidable array of their elephants of war. The sultan of Gazna surpassed the limits of the conquests of Alexander ; after a march of three months, over the hills of Cashmir and Thibet, he reached the famous city of Kinnoge, on the Upper Ganges ; and, in a naval combat on one of the branches of the Indus, he fought and vanquished four thousand boats of the natives. Delhi, Lahor, and Multan were compelled to open their gates; the fertile kingdom of Guzarat attracted his ambition and tempted his stay; and his avarice indulged the fruitless project of discovering the golden and aromatic isles of the Southern Ocean. On the payment of a tribute, the *rajahs* preserved their dominions ; the people, their lives and fortunes; but to the religion of Hindostan the zealous Musulman was cruel and inexorable; many hundred temples, or pagodas, were levelled with the ground ; many thousand idols were demolished; and the servants of the prophet were stimulated and rewarded by the precious materials of which they were composed. The pagoda of Sumnat was situated on the promontory of Guzarat, in the neighbourhood of Diu, one of the last remaining possessions of the Portuguese. It was endowed with the revenue

of two thousand villages; two thousand Brahmins were consecrated to the service of the Deity, whom they washed each morning and evening in water from the distant Ganges : the subordinate ministers consisted of three hundred musicians, three hundred barbers, and five hundred dancing girls, conspicuous for their birth and beauty. Three sides of the temple were protected by the ocean, the narrow isthmus was fortified by a natural or artificial precipice ; and the city and adjacent country were peopled by a nation of fanatics. They confessed the sins and the punishment of Kinnoge and Delhi; but, if the impious stranger should presume to approach *their* holy precincts, he would surely be overwhelmed by a blast of the divine vengeance. By this challenge the faith of Mahmud was animated to a personal trial of the strength of this Indian deity. Fifty thousand of his worshippers were pierced by the spear of the Moslems : the walls were scaled ; the sanctuary was profaned ; and the conqueror aimed a blow of his iron mace at the head of the idol. The trembling Brahmins are said to have offered ten millions sterling for his ransom ; and it was urged by the wisest counsellors that the destruction of a stone image would not change the hearts of the Gentoos, and that such a sum might be dedicated to the relief of the true believers. “ Your reasons,” replied the Sultan, “ are specious and strong ; but never in the eyes of posterity shall Mahmud appear as a merchant of idols,” He repeated his blows, and a treasure of pearls and rubies, concealed in the belly of the statue, explained in some degree the devout prodigality of the Brahmins. The fragments of the idol were distributed to Gazna, Mecca, and Medina. Bagdad listened to the edifying tale ; and Mahmud was saluted by the caliph with the title of guardian of the fortune and faith of Mahomet.

From the paths of blood, and such is the history of nations, I cannot refuse to turn aside to gather some flowers of science or virtue. The name of Mahmud the Gaznevide is still venerable in the East: his subjects enjoyed the

blessings of prosperity and peace ; his vices were concealed by the veil of religion; and two familiar examples will testify his justice and magnanimity. I. As he sat in the Divan, an unhappy subject bowed before the throne to accuse the insolence of a Turkish soldier who had driven him from his house and bed. " Suspend your clamours," said Mahmud, " inform me of his next visit, and ourself in person will judge and punish the offender." The sultan followed his guide, invested the house with his guards, and, extinguishing the torches, pronounced the death of the criminal, who had been seized in the act of rapine and adultery. After the execution of his sentence, the lights were rekindled, Mahmud fell prostrate in prayer, and, rising from the ground, demanded some homely fare, which he devoured with the voraciousness of hunger. The poor man, whose injury he had avenged, was unable to suppress his astonishment and curiosity ; and the courteous monarch condescended to explain the motives of this singular behaviour. " I had reason to suspect that none except one of my sons could dare to perpetuate such an outrage ; and I extinguished the lights, that my justice might be blind and inexorable. My prayer was a thanksgiving on the discovery of the offender ; and so painful was my anxiety that I had passed three days without food since the first moment of your complaint." II. The sultan of Gazna had declared war against the dynasty of the Bowides, the sovereigns of the western Persia ; he was disarmed by an epistle of the sultana mother, and delayed his invasion till the manhood of her son. " During the life of my husband," said the artful regent, " I was ever apprehensive of your ambition; he was a prince and a soldier worthy of your arms. He is now no more; his sceptre has passed to a woman and a child, and you *dare not* attack their infancy and weakness. How inglorious would be your conquest, how shameful your defeat! and yet the event of war is in the hand of the Almighty." Avarice was the only defect that tarnished the illustrious

character of Mahmud ; and never has that passion been more richly satisfied. The Orientals exceed the measure of credibility in the account of millions of gold and silver, such as the avidity of man has never accumulated ; in the magnitude of pearls, diamonds, and rubies, such as have never been produced by the workmanship of nature. Yet the soil of Hindostan is impregnated with precious minerals ; her trade, in every age, has attracted the gold and silver of the world ; and her virgin spoils were rifled by the first of the Mahometan conquerors. His behaviour, in the last days of his life, evinces the vanity of these possessions, so laboriously won, so dangerously held, and so inevitably lost. He surveyed the vast and various chambers of the treasury of Gazna ; burst into tears ; and again closed the doors, without bestowing any portion of the wealth which he could no longer hope to preserve. The following day he reviewed the state of his military force : one hundred thousand foot, fifty-five thousand horse, and thirteen hundred elephants of battle. He again wept the instability of human greatness ; and his grief was embittered by the hostile progress of the Turkmans, whom he had introduced into the heart of his Persian kingdom.

In the modern depopulation of Asia, the regular operation of government and agriculture is confined to the neighbourhood of cities ; and the distant country is abandoned to the pastoral tribes of Arabs, Curds, and *Turkmans*. Of the last-mentioned people, two considerable branches extend on either side of the Caspian Sea : the western colony can muster forty thousand soldiers ; the eastern, less obvious to the traveller, but more strong and populous, has increased to the number of one hundred thousand families. In the midst of civilised nations, they preserve the manners of the Scythian desert, remove their encampments with the change of seasons, and feed their cattle among the ruins of palaces and temples. Their flocks and herds are their only riches ; their tents, either black or white, according to the colour of the banner, are covered

with felt, and of a circular form; their winter apparel is a sheep-skin; a robe of cloth or cotton their summer garment: the features of the men are harsh and ferocious; the countenance of their women is soft and pleasing. Their wandering life maintains the spirit and exercise of arms; they fight on horseback; and their courage is displayed in frequent contests with each other and with their neighbours. For the licence of pasture they pay a slight tribute to the sovereign of the land; but the domestic jurisdiction is in the hands of the chiefs and elders. The first emigration of the eastern Turkmans, the most ancient of their race, may be ascribed to the tenth century of the Christian sera. In the decline of the caliphs, and the weakness of their lieutenants, the barrier of the Jaxartes was often violated: in each invasion, after the victory or retreat of their countrymen, some wandering tribe, embracing the Mahometan faith, obtained a free encampment in the spacious plains and pleasant climate of Transoxiana and Carizme. The Turkish slaves who aspired to the throne encouraged these emigrations, which recruited their armies, awed their subjects and rivals, and protected the frontier against the wilder natives of Turkestan; and this policy was abused by Mahmud the Gaznevide beyond the example of former times. He was admonished of his error by a chief of the race of Seljuk, who dwelt in the territory of Bochara. The sultan had enquired what supply of men he could furnish for military service. "If you send," replied Ismael, "one of these arrows into our camp, fifty thousand of your servants will mount on horseback." "And if that number," continued Mahmud, "should not be sufficient?" "Send this second arrow to the horde of Balik, and you will find fifty thousand more." "But," said the Gaznevide, dissembling his anxiety, "if I should stand in need of the whole force of your kindred tribes?" "Dispatch my bow," was the last reply of Ismael, "and, as it is circulated around, the summons will be obeyed by two hundred thousand horse." The apprehension of such

formidable friendship induced Mahmud to transport the most obnoxious tribes into the heart of Chorasán, where they would be separated from their brethren by the river Oxus, and inclosed on all sides by the walls of obedient cities. But the face of the country was an object of temptation rather than terror ; and the vigour of government was relaxed by the absence and death of the sultan of Gazna. The shepherds were converted into robbers ; the bands of robbers were collected into an army of conquerors ; as far as Ispahan and the Tigris, Persia was afflicted by their predatory inroads ; and the Turkmans were not ashamed or afraid to measure their courage and numbers with the proudest sovereigns of Asia. Massoud, the son and successor of Mahmud, had too long neglected the advice of his wisest Omrahs. " Your enemies," they repeatedly urged, " were in their origin a swarm of ants ; they are now little snakes ; and, unless they be instantly crushed, they will acquire the venom and magnitude of serpents." After some alternatives of truce and hostility, after the repulse or partial success of his lieutenants, the sultan marched in person against the Turkmans, who attacked him on all sides with barbarous shouts and irregular onset. "Massoud," says the Persian historian, "plunged singly to oppose the torrent of gleaming arms, exhibiting such acts of gigantic force and valour as never king had before displayed. A few of his friends, roused by his words and actions, and that innate honour which inspires the brave, seconded their lord so well that, wheresoever he turned his fatal sword, the enemies were mowed down or retreated before him. But now, when victory seemed to blow on his standard, misfortune was active behind it ; for, when he looked round, he beheld almost his whole army, excepting that body he commanded in person, devouring the paths of flight." The Gaznevide was abandoned by the cowardice or treachery of some generals of Turkish race ; and this memorable day of Zendecan founded in Persia the dynasty of the shepherd kings.

CHAPTER IX

Tamerlane the Great

(A.D. 1336—1405)

[INTRODUCTION.—Timour was descended from the Mongolian chief Chingiz Khan, ruler of the Moguls and Tartars (1208—1227). His conquests covered an astounding area of country, from the Ganges to the Caucasus, but his empire fell to pieces at his death, which occurred in 1405, when he was planning the conquest of China. He was the ancestor of Babar, the founder of the Mogul Dynasty of India.]

FROM the Irtish and Volga to the Persian Gulf, and from the Ganges to Damascus and the Archipelago, Asia was in the hand of Timour ; his armies were invincible, his ambition was boundless, and his zeal might aspire to conquer and convert the Christian kingdoms of the West, which already trembled at his name. He touched the utmost verge of the land ; but an insuperable, though narrow sea, rolled between the two continents of Europe and Asia ; and the lord of so many *tomans*, or myriads of horse, was not master of a single galley. The two passages of the Bosphorus and Hellespont, of Constantinople and Gallipoli, were possessed, the one by the Christians, the other by the Turks. On this great occasion, they forgot the difference of religion, to act with union and firmness in the common cause. The double straits were guarded with ships and fortifications ; and they separately withheld the transports which Timour demanded of either nation, under the pretence of attacking their enemy. At the same time, they soothed his pride with tributary gifts and suppliant embassies, and prudently tempted him to retreat with the

honours of victory. Soliman, the son of Bajazet, implored his clemency for his father and himself ; accepted; by a red patent, the investiture of the kingdom of Romania, which he already held by the sword ; and reiterated his ardent wish of casting himself in person at the feet of the king of the world. The Greek emperor (either John or Manuel) submitted to pay the same tribute which he had stipulated with the Turkish sultan, and ratified the treaty by an oath of allegiance, from which he could absolve his conscience as soon as the Mogul arms had retired from Anatolia. But the fears and fancy of nations ascribed to the ambitious Tamerlane a new design of vast and romantic compass : a design of subduing Egypt and Africa, marching from the Nile to the Atlantic Ocean, entering Europe by the Straits of Gibraltar, and, after imposing his yoke on the kingdoms of Christendom, of returning home by the deserts of Russia and Tartary. This remote and perhaps imaginary danger was averted by the submission of the sultan of Egypt; the honours of the prayer and the coin attested at Cairo the supremacy of Timour ; and a rare gift of a *giraffe*, or camelopard, and nine ostriches, represented at Samarcand the tribute of the African world. Our imagination is not less astonished by the portrait of a Mogul, who, in his camp before Smyrna, meditates and almost accomplishes the invasion of the Chinese empire. Timour was urged to this enterprise by national honour and religious zeal. The torrents which he had shed of Musulman blood could be expiated only by an equal destruction of the infidels ; and, as he now stood at the gates of paradise, he might best secure his glorious entrance by demolishing the idols of China, founding mosques in every city, and establishing the profession of faith in one God and his prophet Mahomet. The recent expulsion of the house of Zingis was an insult on the Mogul name; and the disorders of the empire afforded the fairest opportunity for revenge. The illustrious Hongvou, founder of the dynasty of *Ming*, died four years before the battle of Angora ; and his grandson, a

weak and unfortunate youth, was burnt in a palace, after a million of Chinese had perished in the civil war. Before he exacuated Anatolia, Timour dispatched beyond the Sihoon a numerous army, or rather colony, of his old and new subjects, to open the road, to subdue the Pagan Calmucks and Mungals, and to found cities and magazines in the desert; and, by the diligence of his lieutenant, he soon received a perfect map and description of the unknown regions from the source of the Irtish to the wall of China. During these preparations, the emperor achieved the final conquest of Georgia; passed the winter on the banks of the Araxes; appeased the troubles of Persia; and slowly returned to his capital, after a campaign of four years and nine months.

On the throne of Samarcand, he displayed, in a short repose, his magnificence and power; listened to the complaints of the people; distributed a just measure of rewards and punishments; employed his riches in the architecture of palaces and temples; and gave audience to the ambassadors of Egypt, Arabia, India, Tartary, Russia, and Spain, the last of whom presented a suit of tapestry which eclipsed the pencil of the Oriental artists. The marriage of six of the emperor's grandsons was esteemed an act of religion as well as of paternal tenderness; and the pomp of the ancient caliphs was revived in their nuptials. They were celebrated in the gardens of Canighul, decorated with innumerable tents and pavilions, which displayed the luxury of a great city, and the spoils of a victorious camp. Whole forests were cut down to supply fuel for the kitchens; the plain was spread with pyramids of meat and vases of every liquor, to which thousands of guests were courteously invited. The orders of the state and the nations of the earth were marshalled at the royal banquet; nor were the ambassadors of Europe (says the haughty Persian) excluded from the feast; since even the *casses*, the smallest of fish, find their place in the ocean. The public joy was testified by illuminations and masquerades; the trades of

Samarcand passed in review ; and every trade was emulous to execute some quaint device, some marvellous pageant, with the materials of their peculiar art. After the marriage-contracts had been ratified by the cadhis, the bridegrooms and their brides retired to their nuptial chambers ; nine times, according to the Asiatic fashion, they were dressed and undressed ; and at each change of apparel pearls and rubies were showered on their heads, and contemptuously abandoned to the attendants. A general indulgence was proclaimed; every law was relaxed, every pleasure was allowed ; the people was free, the sovereign was idle ; and the historian of Timour may remark that, after devoting fifty years to the attainment of empire, the only happy period of his life were the two months in which he ceased to exercise his power. But he was soon awakened to the cares of government and war. The standard was unfurled for the invasion of China : the emirs made their report of two hundred thousand, the select and veteran soldiers of Iran and Turan ; their baggage and provisions were transported by five hundred great waggons, and an immense train of horses and camels ; and the troops might prepare for a long absence, since more than six months were employed in the tranquil journey of a caravan from Samar-cand to Pekin. Neither age nor the severity of the winter could retard the impatience of Timour ; he mounted on horseback, passed the Sihoon on the ice, marched seventy-six parasangs, three hundred miles, from his capital, and pitched his last camp in the neighbourhood of Otrar, where he was expected by the angel of death. Fatigue, and the indiscreet use of iced water, accelerated the progress of his fever ; and the conqueror of Asia expired in the seventieth year of his age, thirty-five years after he had ascended the throne of Zagatai. His designs were lost; his armies were disbanded; China was saved; and, fourteen years after his decease, the most powerful of his children sent an embassy of friendship and commerce to the court of Pekin.

The fame of Timour has pervaded the East and West;

his posterity is still invested with the Imperial *title*; and *the* admiration of his subjects, who revered him almost as a deity, may be justified in some degree by the praise or confession of his bitterest enemies. Although he was lame of an hand and foot, his form and stature were not unworthy of his rank; and his vigorous health, so essential to himself and to the world, was corroborated by temperance and exercise. In his familiar discourse he was grave and modest, and, if he was ignorant of the Arabic language, he spoke with fluency and elegance the Persian and Turkish idioms. It was his delight to converse with the learned on topics of history and science; and the amusement of his leisure hours was the game of chess, which he improved or corrupted with new refinements. In his religion, he was a zealous, though not perhaps an orthodox Musulman; but his sound understanding may tempt us to believe that a superstitious reverence for omens and prophecies, for saints and astrologers, was only affected as an instrument of policy. In the government of a vast empire, he stood alone and absolute, without a rebel to oppose his power, a favourite to seduce his affections, or a minister to mislead his judgment. It was his firmest maxim that, whatever might be the consequence, the word of the prince should never be disputed or recalled; but his foes have maliciously observed that the commands of anger and destruction were more strictly executed than those of beneficence and favour. His sons and grandsons, of whom Timour left six-and-thirty at his decease, were his first and most submissive subjects; and, whenever they deviated from their duty, they were corrected, according to the laws of Zingis, with the bastonade, and afterwards restored to honour and command. Perhaps his heart was not devoid of the social virtues; perhaps he was not incapable of loving his friends and pardoning his enemies; but the rules of morality are founded on the public interest; and it may be sufficient to applaud the *wisdom* of a monarch, for the liberality by which he is not impoverished, and for



TOMB OF TIMOUR

*(from Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire
Edited by J. B. Bury.) (Methuen & Co., Ltd.)*

Timour was buried in this building under a slab of Jade,

the justice by which he is strengthened and enriched. To maintain the harmony of authority and obedience, to christian the proud, to protect the weak, to reward the deserving, to banish vice and idleness from his dominions, to secure the traveller and merchant, to restrain the depredations of the soldier, to cherish the labours of the husbandman, to encourage industry and learning, and, by an equal and modern assessment, to increase the revenue without increasing the taxes, are indeed the duties of a prince ; but, in the discharge of these duties, he finds an ample and immediate recompense. Timour might boast that, at his accession to the throne, Asia was the prey of anarchy and rapine, whilst under his prosperous monarchy, a child, fearless and unhurt, might carry a purse of gold from the East to the West. Such was his confidence of merit that from this reformation he derived excuse for his victories and a title to universal dominion. The four following observations will serve to appreciate his claim to the public gratitude ; and perhaps we shall conclude that the Mogul emperor was rather the scourge than the benefactor of mankind. 1. If some partial disorders, some local oppressions, were healed by the sword of Timour, the remedy was far more pernicious than the disease. By their rapine, cruelty, and discord, the petty tyrants of Persia might afflict their subjects ; but whole nations were crushed under the footsteps of the reformer. The ground which had been occupied by flourishing cities was often marked by his abominable trophies, by columns or pyramids of human heads. Astracan, Carizme, Delhi, Ispahan, Bagdad, Aleppo, Damascus, Bursa, Smyrna, and a thousand others, were sacked, or burnt, or utterly destroyed, in his presence, and by his troops ; and perhaps his conscience would have been startled if a priest or philosopher had dared to number the millions of victims whom he had sacrificed to the establishment of peace and order. 2. His most destructive wars were rather inroads than conquests. He invaded Turkestan, Kipzak, Russia, Hindostan, Syria, Anatolia,

Armenia, and Georgia, without a hope or a desire of preserving those distant provinces. From thence he departed laden with spoil; but he left behind him neither *a troops* to awe the contumacious, nor magistrates to protect the obedient, natives. When he had broken the fabric of their ancient government, he abandoned them to the evils which his invasion had aggravated or caused; nor were these evils compensated by any present or possible benefits.

3. The kingdoms of Transoxiana and Persia were the proper field which he laboured to cultivate and adorn as the perpetual inheritance of his family. But his peaceful labours were often interrupted, and sometimes blasted, by the absence of the conqueror. While he triumphed on the Volga or the Ganges, his servants, and even his sons, forgot their master and their duty. The public and private injuries were poorly redressed by the tardy rigour of inquiry and punishment; and we must be content to praise the Institutions of Timour, as the specious idea of a perfect monarchy.

4. Whatsoever might be the blessings of his administration, they evaporated with his life. To reign, rather than to govern, was the ambition of his children and grandchildren, the enemies of each other and of the people. A fragment of the empire was upheld with some glory by Sharokh, his youngest son; but after *his* decease, the scene was again involved in darkness and blood; and before the end of a century Transoxiana and Persia were trampled by the Uzbeks from the North, and the Turkmans of the black and white sheep. The race of Timour would have been extinct, if an hero, his descendant in the fifth degree, had not fled before the Uzbek arms to the conquest of Hindostan. His successors (the Great Moguls) extended their sway from the mountains of Cashmir to Cape Comorin, and from Candahar to the Gulf of Bengal. Since the reign of Aurungzebe, their empire has been dissolved; their treasures of Delhi have been rifled by a Persian robber; and the riches of their kingdoms is now possessed by a company of Christian merchants, of a remote island in the Northern Ocean.

EPILOGUE

OF these pilgrims, and of every reader, the attention will be excited by an History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: the greatest, perhaps, and most awful scene in the history of mankind. The various causes and progressive effects are connected with many of the events most interesting in human annals: the artful policy of the Caesars, who long maintained the name and image of a free republic; the disorder of military despotism; the rise, establishment, and sects of Christianity; the foundation of Constantinople; the division of the monarchy; the invasion and settlements of the Barbarians of Germany and Scythia; the institutions of the civil law; the character and religion of Mahomet; the temporal sovereignty of the popes; the restoration and decay of the Western empire of Charlemagne; the crusades of the Latins in the East; the conquests of the Saracens and Turks; the ruin of the Greek empire; the state and revolutions of Rome in the middle age. The historian may applaud the importance and variety of his subject; but, while he is conscious of his own imperfections, he must often accuse the deficiency of his materials. It was among the ruins of the Capitol that I first conceived the idea of a work which has amused and exercised near twenty years of my life, and which, however inadequate to my own wishes, I finally deliver to the curiosity and candour of the public.

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