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SELECTIONS FROM W. IRVING

Selections from W. Irving



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THE AUTHOR'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF

I am of this mind with Homer, that as the snaile that crept out of her shel was turned eftsoons into a toad, and thereby was forced to make a stoole to sit on ; so the traveller that straggleth from his owne country is in a short time transformed into so monstrous a shape, that he is faine to alter his mansion with his manners, and to live where he can, not where he would.—LILY'S EUPHUES.

I was always fond of visiting new scenes, and observing strange characters and manners. Even when a mere child I began my travels, and made many tours of discovery into foreign parts and unknown regions of my native city, to the frequent alarm of my parents, and the emolument of the towncrier. As I grew into boyhood, I extended the range of my observations. My holiday afternoons were spent in rambles about the surrounding country. I made myself familiar with all its places famous in history or fable. I knew every spot where a murder or robbery had been committed, or a ghost seen. I visited the neighbouring villages, and added greatly to my stock of knowledge by noting their habits and customs, and conversing with their sages and great men. I even journeyed one long summer's day to the summit of the most distant

hill, whence I stretched my eye over many a mile of *terra incognita*, and was astonished to find how vast a globe I inhabited.

This rambling propensity strengthened with my years. Books of voyages and travels became my passion, and in devouring their contents I neglected the regular exercises of the school. How wistfully would I wander about the pierheads in fine weather, and watch the parting ships bound to distant climes—with what longing eyes would I gaze after their lessening sails and waft myself in imagination to the ends of the earth !

Further reading and thinking, though they brought this vague inclination into more reasonable bounds, only served to make it more decided. I visited various parts of my own country ; and had I been merely a lover of fine scenery, I should have felt little desire to seek elsewhere its gratification ; for on no country have the charms of Nature been more prodigally lavished. Her mighty lakes, like oceans of liquid silver ; her mountains, with their bright aerial tints ; her valleys, teeming with wild fertility ; her tremendous cataracts, thundering in their solitudes ; her boundless plains, waving with spontaneous verdure ; her broad deep rivers, rolling in solemn silence to the ocean ; her trackless forests, where vegetation puts forth all its magnificence ; her skies, kindling with the magic of summer clouds and glorious sunshine ;—no, never need an American look beyond his own country for the sublime and beautiful of natural scenery.

But Europe held forth the charms of storied and poetical association. There were to be seen the masterpieces of art, the refinements of highly cultivated society, the quaint peculiarities of ancient and local custom. My native country was full of youthful promise: Europe was rich in the accumulated treasures of age. Her very ruins told the history of times gone by, and every mouldering stone was a chronicle. I longed to wander over the scenes of renowned achievement—to tread, as it were, in the footsteps of antiquity—to loiter about the ruined castle—to meditate on the falling tower—to escape, in short, from the commonplace realities of the present, and lose myself among the shadowy grandeurs of the past.

I had, beside all this, an earnest desire to see the great men of the earth. We have, it is true, our great men in America: not a city but has an ample share of them. I have mingled among them in my time, and been almost withered by the shade into which they cast me; for there is nothing so baleful to a small man as the shade of a great one, particularly the great man of the city. But I was anxious to see the great men of Europe; for I had read in the works of various philosophers, that all animals degenerated in America, and man among the number. A great man of Europe, thought I, must therefore be as superior to a great man of America as a peak of the Alps to a highland of the Hudson; and in this idea I was confirmed, by observing the comparative importance and swelling magnitude of many English travellers among us, who I was assured,

were very little people in their own country. I will visit this land of wonders, thought I, and see the gigantic race from which I am degenerated.

It has been either my good or evil lot to have my roving passion gratified. I have wandered through different countries, and witnessed many of the shifting scenes of life. I cannot say that I have studied them with the eye of a philosopher ; but rather with the sauntering gaze with which humble lovers of the picturesque stroll from the window of one print-shop to another ; caught, sometimes by the delineations of beauty, sometimes by the distortions of caricature, and sometimes by the loveliness of landscape. As it is the fashion for modern tourists to travel pencil in hand, and bring home their portfolios filled with sketches, I am disposed to get up a few for the entertainment of my friends. When, however, I look over the hints and memorandums I have taken down for the purpose, my heart almost fails me at finding how my idle humour has led me aside for the great objects studied by every regular traveller who would make a book. I fear I shall give equal disappointment with an unlucky landscape painter who had travelled on the continent, but, following the bent of his vagrant inclination, had sketched in nooks and corners and by-places. His sketch-book was accordingly crowded with cottages, and landscapes, and obscure ruins ; but he had neglected to paint St. Peter's or the Coliseum, the cascade of Terni or the bay of Naples, and had not a single glacier or volcano in his whole collection.

THE VOYAGE

Ships, ships, I will descrie you
Amidst the main ;
I will come and try you,
What you are protecting,
And projecting,
What's your end and aim.

One goes abroad for merchandise and trading.
Another stays to keep his country from invading,
A third is coming home with rich and wealthy lading.
Halloo ! my fancie, whither wilt thou go ?—OLD POEM.

To an American visiting Europe the long voyage he has to make is an excellent preparative. The temporary absence of worldly scenes and employment produces a state of mind peculiarly fitted to receive new and vivid impressions. The vast space of waters that separates the hemispheres is like a blank page in existence. There is no gradual transition by which, as in Europe, the features and population of one country blend almost imperceptibly with those of another. From the moment you lose sight of the land you have left, all is vacancy until you step on the opposite shore, and are launched at once into the bustle and novelties of another world.

In travelling by land, there is a continuity of scene, and a connected succession of persons and incidents, that carry on the story of life, and lessen the effect of absence and separation. We drag, it is true, "a lengthening chain" at each remove of our pilgrimage ; but the chain is unbroken : we can trace

it back link by link, and we feel that the last still grapples us to home. But a wide sea voyage severs us at once. It makes us conscious of being cast loose from the secure anchorage of settled life, and sent adrift upon a doubtful world. It interposes a gulf, not merely imaginary, but real, between us and our homes—a gulf subject to tempest, and fear, and uncertainty, rendering distance palpable, and return precarious.

Such at least, was the case with myself. As I saw the last blue line of my native land fade away like a cloud in the horizon, it seemed as if I had closed one volume of the world and its contents, and had time for meditation before I opened another. That land, too, now vanishing from my view, which contained all most dear to me in life—what vicissitudes might occur in it—what changes might take place in me, before I should visit it again! Who can tell, when he sets forth to wander, whither he may be driven by the uncertain currents of existence; or when he may return; or whether it may ever be his lot to revisit the scenes of his childhood?

I said that at sea all is vacancy; I should correct the expression. To one given to daydreaming, and fond of losing himself in reveries, a sea voyage is full of subjects for meditation; but then they are the wonders of the deep and of the air, and rather tend to abstract the mind from worldly themes. I delighted to loll over the quarter-railing, or climb to the main-top, of a calm day, and muse for hours together on the tranquil bosom of a summer's sea.

to gaze upon the piles of golden clouds just peering above the horizon, fancy them some fairy realms, and people them with a creation of my own ;—to watch the gentle undulating billows, rolling their silver volumes, as if to die away on those happy shores.

There was a delicious sensation of mingled security and awe with which I looked down, from my giddy height, on the monsters of the deep at their uncouth gambols. Shoals of porpoises tumbling about the bow of the ship ; the grampus slowly heaving his huge form above the surface ; or the ravenous shark, darting, like a spectre, through the blue waters. My imagination would conjure up all that I had heard or read of the watery world beneath me ; of the finny herds that roam its fathomless valleys ; of the shapeless monsters that lurk among the very foundations of the earth ; and of those wild phantasms that swell the tales of fishermen and sailors.

Sometimes a distant sail, gliding along the edge of the ocean, would be another theme of idle speculation. How interesting this fragment of a world, hastening to rejoin the great mass of existence ! What a glorious monument of human invention ; which has in a manner triumphed over wind and wave ; has brought the ends of the world into communion ; has established an interchange of blessings, pouring into the sterile regions of the north all the luxuries of the south ; has diffused the light of knowledge and the charities of cultivated life ; and has thus bound together those scattered portions of

SELECTIONS FROM W. IRVING

the human race, between which Nature seemed to have thrown an insurmountable barrier.

We one day described some shapeless object drifting at a distance. At sea everything that breaks the monotony of the surrounding expanse attracts attention. It proved to be the mast of a ship that must have been completely wrecked, for there were the remains of handkerchiefs by which some of the crew had fastened themselves to this spar, to prevent their being washed off by the waves. There was no trace by which the name of the ship could be ascertained. The wreck had evidently drifted about for many months ; clusters of shell-fish had fastened about it, and long sea-weeds flaunted at its sides. But where, thought I, are the crew ? Their struggle has long been over—they have gone down amidst the roar of the tempest—their bones lie whitening among the caverns of the deep. Silence, oblivion, like the waves, have closed over them, and no one can tell the story of their end. What sighs have been wafted after the ship ! What prayers offered up at the deserted fireside of home ! How often has the mistress, the wife, the mother, pored over the daily news to catch some casual intelligence of this rover of the deep ! How has expectation darkened into anxiety—anxiety into dread—and dread into despair ! Alas ! not one memerto may ever return for love to cherish. All that may ever be known is, that she sailed from her port “and was never heard of more !”

The sight of this wreck, as usual, gave rise to many dismal anecdotes. This was particularly the

case in the evening, when the weather, which has hitherto been fair, began to look wild and threatening, and gave indications of one of those sudden storms which will sometimes break in upon the serenity of a summer voyage. As we sat round the dull light of a lamp in the cabin, that made the gloom more ghastly, every one had his tale of shipwreck and disaster. I was particularly struck with a short one related by the captain.

“As I was once sailing,” said he, “in a fine stout ship across the banks of Newfoundland, one of those heavy fogs which prevail in those parts rendered it impossible for us to see far ahead even in the day-time, but at night the weather was so thick that we could not distinguish any object at twice the length of the ship. I kept lights at the mast-head, and a constant watch forward to look out for fishing smacks, which are accustomed to lie at anchor on the banks. The wind was blowing a smacking breeze, and we were going at a great rate through the water. Suddenly the watch gave the alarm of ‘a sail ahead!’—it was scarcely uttered before we were upon her. She was a small schooner, at anchor with her broadside towards us. The crew were all asleep, and had neglected to hoist a light. We struck her just amidships. The force, the size, and weight of our vessel bore her down below the waves; we passed over her and were hurried on our course. As the crashing wreck was sinking beneath us, I had a glimpse of two or three half-naked wretches rushing from her cabin; they just started from their beds to be swallowed

shrieking by the waves. I heard their drowning cry mingling with the wind. The blast that bore it to our ears swept us out of all further hearing. I shall never forget that cry ! It was some time before we could put the ship about, she was under such headway. We returned, as nearly as we could guess, to the place where the smack had anchored. We cruised about for several hours in the dense fog. We fired signalguns, and listened if we might hear the halloo of any survivors ; but all was silent—we never saw or heard anything of them more.”

I confess these stories, for a time, put an end to all my fine fancies. The storm increased with the night. The sea was lashed into tremendous confusion. There was a fearful sullen sound of rushing waves and broken surges. Deep called unto deep. At times the black volume of clouds overhead seemed rent asunder by flashes of lightning, which quivered along the foaming billows, and made the succeeding darkness doubly terrible. The thunders bellowed over the wild waste of waters, and were echoed and prolonged by the mountain waves. As I saw the ship staggering and plunging among these roaring caverns, it seemed miraculous that she regained her balance, or preserved her buoyancy. Her yards would dip into the water ; her bow was almost buried beneath the waves. Sometimes an impending surge appeared ready to overwhelm her, and nothing but a dexterous movement of the helm preserved her from the shock.

When I retired to my cabin, the awful scene still followed me. The whistling of the wind through the

rigging sounded like funereal wailings. The creaking of the masts, the straining and groaning of bulk-heads, as the ship laboured in the weltering sea, were frightful. As I heard the waves rushing along the sides of the ship, and roaring in my very ear it seemed as if Death were raging round this floating prison, seeking for his prey ; the mere starting of a nail, the yawning of a seam, might give him entrance.

A fine day, however, with a tranquil sea and favouring breeze, soon put all these dismal reflections to flight. It is impossible to resist the gladdening influence of fine weather and fair wind at sea. When the ship is decked out in all her canvas, every sail swelled, and careering gaily over the curling waves, how lofty, how gallant she appears—how she seems to lord it over the deep!

I might fill a volume with the reveries of a sea voyage, for with me it is almost a continual reverie—but it is time to get to shore.

It was a fine sunny morning when the thrilling cry of “land” was given from the mast-head. None but those who have experienced it can form an idea of the delicious throng of sensations which rush into an American’s bosom when he first comes in sight of Europe. There is a volume of associations with the very name. It is the land of promise, teeming with everything of which his childhood has heard, or on which his studious years have pondered.

From that time until the moment of arrival it was all feverish excitement. The ships of war

that prowled like guardian giants along the coast; the headlands of Ireland stretching out into the Channel; the Welsh mountains towering into the clouds; all were objects of intense interest. As we sailed up the Mersey, I reconnoitred the shores with a telescope. My eye dwelt with delight on neat cottages, with their trim shrubberies and green grass-plots. I saw the mouldering ruin of an abbey overrun with ivy, and the taper spire of a village church rising from the brow of a neighbouring hill—all were characteristic of England.

The tide and wind were so favourable that the ship was enabled to come at once to the pier. It was thronged with people; some, idle lookers on—others, eager expectants of friends or relatives. I could distinguish the merchant to whom the ship was consigned, I knew him by his calculating brow and restless air. His hands were thrust into his pockets; he was whistling thoughtfully, and walking to and fro, a small space having been accorded him by the crowd in deference to his temporary importance. There were repeated cheerings and salutations interchanged between the shore and the ship, as friends happened to recognize each other. I particularly noticed one young woman of humble dress, but interesting demeanour. She was leaning forward from among the crowd; her eye hurried over the ship as it neared the shore, to catch some wished-for countenance. She seemed disappointed and agitated; when I heard a faint voice call her name. It was from a poor sailor who had been ill all the voyage,

and had excited the sympathy of every one on board. When the weather was fine, messmates had spread a mattress for him on deck in the shade, but of late his illness had so increased, that he had taken to his hammock, and only breathed a wish that he might see his wife before he died. He had been helped on deck as we came up the river, and was now leaning against the shrouds, with a countenance so wasted, so pale, so ghastly, that it was no wonder even the eye of affection did not recognize him. But at the sound of his voice, her eye darted on his features; it read at once a whole volume of sorrow; she clasped her hands, uttered a faint shriek, and stood wringing them in silent agony.

All now was hurry and bustle. The meetings of acquaintances—the greetings of friends—the consultations of men of business. I alone was solitary and idle. I had no friend to meet, no cheering to receive. I stepped upon the land of my forefathers, but felt that I was a stranger in the land.

ROSCOE •

—In the service of mankind to be
A guardian god below; still to employ
The mind's brave ardour in heroic aims,
Such as may raise us o'er the grovelling herd,
And make us shine for ever—that is life.—THOMSON.

One of the first places to which a stranger is taken in Liverpool is the Athenæum. It is established on a liberal and judicious plan; it contains a good

library and spacious readingroom and is the great literary resort of the place. Go there at what hour you may, you are sure to find it filled with grave-looking personages deeply absorbed in the study of newspapers.

As I was once visiting this haunt of the learned, my attention was attracted to a person just entering the room. He was advanced in life, tall, and of a form that might once have been commanding, but it was a little bowed by time—perhaps by care. He had a noble Roman style of countenance; a head that would have pleased a painter; and though some slight furrows on his brow showed that wasting thought had been busy there, yet his eye still beamed with the fire of a poetic soul. There was something in his whole appearance that indicated a being of a different order from the bustling race around him.

I inquired his name, and was informed that it was Roscoe. I drew back with an involuntary feeling of veneration. This, then, was an author of celebrity; this was one of those men whose voices have gone forth to the ends of the earth; with whose minds I have communed even in the solitudes of America. Accustomed, as we are in our country, to know European writers only by their works, we cannot conceive of them as of other men, engrossed by trivial or sordid pursuits, and jostling with the crowd of common minds in the dusty paths of life. They pass before our imaginations like superior beings, radiant with the emanations of their genius, and surrounded by a halo of literary glory.

To find, therefore, the elegant historian of the Medici mingling among the busy sons of traffic, at first shocked my poetical ideas; but it is from the very circumstances and situation in which he has been placed, that Mr. Roscoe derives his highest claims to admiration. It is interesting to notice how some minds seem almost to create themselves, springing up under every disadvantage, and working their solitary but irresistible way through a thousand obstacles. Nature seems to delight in disappointing the assiduities of art, with which it would rear legitimate dullness to maturity; and to glory in the vigour and luxuriance of her chance productions. She scatters the seeds of genius to the winds, and though some may perish among the stony places of the world, and some be choked by the thorns and brambles of early adversity, yet others will now and then strike root even in the clefts of the rock, struggle bravely up into sunshine, and spread over their sterile birthplace all the beauties of vegetation.

Such has been the case with Mr. Roscoe. Born in a place apparently ungenial to the growth of literary talent; in the very market-place of trade; without fortune, family connections, or patronages; self-prompted, self-sustained and almost self-taught, he has conquered every obstacle, achieved his way to eminence, and, having become one of the ornaments of the nation, has turned the whole force of his talents and influence to advance and embellish his native town.

Indeed, it is this last trait in his character which has given him the greatest interest in my eyes, and induced me particularly to point him out to my countrymen. Eminent as are his literary merits, he is but one among the many distinguished authors of this intellectual nation. They, however, in general, live but for their own fame, or their own pleasures. Their private history presents no lesson to the world, or, perhaps, a humiliating one of human frailty and inconsistency. At best, they are prone to steal away from the bustle and commonplace of busy existence ; to indulge in the selfishness of lettered ease ; and to revel in scenes of mental, but exclusive enjoyment.

Mr. Roscoe, on the contrary, has claimed none of the accorded privileges of talent. He has shut himself up in no garden of thought, no elysium of fancy ; but has gone forth into the highways and thoroughfares of life ; he has planted bowers by the wayside, for the refreshment of the pilgrim and the sojourner, and has opened pure fountains, where the labouring man may turn aside from the dust and heat of the day, and drink of the living streams of knowledge. There is a “ daily beauty in his life,” on which mankind may meditate and grow better. It exhibits no lofty and almost useless, because inimitable, example of excellence ; but presents a picture of active, yet simple and imitable virtues, which are within every man’s reach, but which, unfortunately, are not exercised by many, or this world would be a paradise.

But his private life is peculiarly worthy the attention of the citizens of our young and busy country, where literature and the elegant arts must grow up side by side with the coarser plants of daily necessity ; and must depend for their culture, not on the exclusive devotion of time and wealth, nor the quickening rays of titled patronage, but on hours and seasons snatched from the pursuit of worldly interest, by intelligent and public-spirited individuals.

He has shown how much may be done for a place in hours of leisure by one master spirit and how completely it can give its own impress to surrounding objects. Like his own Lorenzo de' Medici, on whom he seems to have fixed his eye as on a pure model of antiquity, he has interwoven the history of his life with the history of his native town, and has made the foundations of its fame the monuments of his virtues. Wherever you go in Liverpool, you perceive traces of his footsteps in all that is elegant and liberal. He found the tide of wealth flowing merely in the channels of traffic ; he has diverted from it invigorating rills to refresh the garden of literature. By his own example and constant exertions, he has effected that union of commerce and the intellectual pursuits, so eloquently recommended in one of his latest writings ;* and has practically proved how beautifully they may be brought to harmonize, and to benefit each other. The noble institutions

*Address on the opening of the Liverpool Institution.

for literary and scientific purposes, which reflect such credit on Liverpool, and are giving such an impulse to the public mind, have mostly been originated, and have all been effectively promoted, by Mr. Roscoe ; and when we consider the rapidly increasing opulence and magnitude of that town, which promises to vie in commercial importance with the metropolis, it will be perceived that in awakening an ambition of mental improvement among its inhabitants, he has effected a great benefit to the cause of British literature.

In America, we know Mr. Roscoe only as the author—in Liverpool he is spoken of as the banker ; and I was told of his having been unfortunate in business. I could not pity him, as I heard some rich men do. I considered him far above the reach of my pity. Those who live only for the world, and in the world, may be cast down by the frowns of adversity ; but a man like Roscoe is not to be overcome by the reverses of fortune. They do but drive him in upon the resources of his own mind ; to the superior society of his own thoughts ; which the best of men are apt sometimes to neglect, and to roam abroad in search of less worthy associates. He is independent of the world around him. He lives with antiquity and posterity ; with antiquity, in the sweet communion of studious retirement ; and with posterity, in the generous aspirings after future renown. The solitude of such a mind is its state of highest enjoyment. It is then visited by those elevated meditations which are the proper

aliment of noble souls, and are, like manna, sent from heaven, in the wilderness of this world.

While my feelings were yet alive on the subject, it was my fortune to light on further traces of Mr. Roscoe. I was riding out with a gentleman, to view the environs of Liverpool, when he turned off, through a gate, into some ornamented grounds. After riding a short distance, we came to a spacious mansion of freestone, built in the Grecian style. It was not in the purest taste, yet it had an air of elegance, and the situation was delightful. A fine lawn sloped away from it, studded with clumps of trees, so disposed as to break a soft fertile country into a variety of landscapes. The Mersey was seen winding a broad quiet sheet of water through an expanse of green meadowland ; while the Welsh mountains, blended with clouds, and melting into distance, bordered the horizon.

This was Roscoe's favourite residence during the days of his prosperity. It had been the seat of elegant hospitality and literary retirement. The house was now silent and deserted. I saw the windows of the study, which looked out upon the soft scenery I have mentioned. The windows were closed—the library was gone. Two or three ill-favoured beings were loitering about the place, whom my fancy pictured into retainers of the law. It was like visiting some classic fountain, that had once welled its pure waters in a sacred shade, but finding it dry and dusty, with the lizard and the toad brooding over the shattered marbles.

I enquired after the fate of Mr. Roscoe's library, which had consisted of scarce and foreign books, from many of which he had drawn the materials for his Italian histories. It had passed under the hammer of the auctioneer, and was dispersed about the country. The good people of the vicinity thronged like wreckers to get some part of the noble vessel that had been driven on shore. Did such a scene admit of ludicrous associations, we might imagine something whimsical in this strange irruption in the regions of learning Pigmies rummaging the armoury of a giant, and contending for the possession of weapons which they could not wield. We might picture to ourselves some knot of speculators, debating with calculating brow over the quaint binding and illuminated margin of an obsolete author ; of the air of intense, but baffled sagacity, with which some successful purchaser attempted to dive into the black-letter bargain he had secured.

It is a beautiful incident in the story of Mr. Roscoe's misfortunes, and one which cannot fail to interest the studious mind, that the parting with his books seems to have touched upon his tenderest feelings, and to have been the only circumstance that could provoke the notice of his muse. The scholar only knows how dear these silent, yet eloquent, companions of pure thoughts and innocent hours become in the seasons of adversity. When all that is wordly turns to dross around us, these only retain their steady value. When friends grow cold, and the converse of intimates languishes into vapid civility

and common place, these only continue the unaltered countenance of happier days, and cheer us with that true friendship which never deceived hope, nor deserted sorrow.

I do not wish to censure ; but surely, if the people of Liverpool had been properly sensible of what was due to Mr. Roscoe and themselves, his library never would have been sold. Good worldly reasons may, doubtless, be given for the circumstance which it would be difficult to combat with others that might seem merely fanciful ; but it certainly appears to me such an opportunity as seldom occurs, of cheering a noble mind struggling under misfortunes, by one of the most delicate, but most expressive tokens of public sympathy. It is difficult, however, to estimate a man of genius properly who is daily before our eyes. He becomes mingled and confounded with other men. His great qualities lose their novelty ; we become too familiar with the common materials which form the basis even of the loftiest character. Some of Mr. Roscoe's townsmen may regard him merely as a man of business ; others as a politician ; all find him engaged like themselves in ordinary occupations, and surpassed, perhaps, by themselves on some points of worldly wisdom. Even that amiable and unostentatious simplicity of character which gives the nameless grace to real excellence, may cause him to be undervalued by some coarse minds, who do not know that true worth is always void of glare and pretension. But the man of letters who speaks of Liverpool, speaks of it as the

residence of Roscoe. The intelligent traveller who visits it inquires where Roscoe is to be seen. He is the literary landmark of the place, indicating its existence to the distant scholar. He is, like Pompey's column at Alexandria, towering alone in classic dignity.

The following sonnet, addressed by Mr. Roscoe to his books on parting with them, is alluded to in the preceding article. If anything can add effect to the pure feeling and elevated thought here displayed, it is the conviction that the whole is no effusion of fancy, but a faithful transcript from the writer's heart :—

TO MY BOOKS

As one who, destined from his friends to part,

Regrets his loss, but hopes again erewhile

To share their converse and enjoy their smile,

And tempers as he may affliction's dart ,

Thus, loved associates, chiefs of elder art,

Teachers of wisdom, who could once beguile

My tedious hours, and lighten every toil,

I now resign you ; nor with fainting heart:

For pass a few short years, or days, or hours.

And happier seasons may their dawn unfold,

And all your sacred fellowship restore .

When, freed from earth, unlimited its powers,

Mind shall with mind direct communion hold,

And kindred spirits meet to part no more.

THE WIFE

The treasures of the deep are not so precious
As are the conceal'd comforts of a man
Locked up in woman's love. I scent the air
Of blessings, when I come but near the house,
What a delicious breath marriage sends forth—
The violet bed's not sweeter.

MIDDLETON.

I HAVE often had occasion to remark the fortitude with which women sustain the most overwhelming reverses of fortune. Those disasters which break down the spirit of a man, and prostrate him in the dust, seem to call forth all the energies of the softer sex, and give such intrepidity and elevation to their character, that at times it approaches to sublimity. Nothing can be more touching than to behold a soft and tender female, who had been all weakness and dependence, and alive to every trivial roughness, while treading the prosperous paths of life, suddenly rising in mental force, to be the comforter and support of her husband under misfortune, and abiding with unshrinking firmness, the bitterest blasts of adversity.

As the vine, which has long twined its graceful foliage about the oak, and been lifted by it into sunshine, will, when the hardy plant is rifted by the thunderbolt, cling round it with its caressing tendrils, and bind up its shattered boughs, so is it beautifully ordered by Providence, that woman, who is the mere

dependent and ornament of man in his happier hours, should be his stay and solace when smitten with sudden calamity ; winding herself into the rugged recesses of his nature, tenderly supporting the drooping head, and binding up the broken heart.

I was once congratulating a friend, who had around him a blooming family, knit together in the strongest affection. "I can wish you no better lot," said he, with enthusiasm, "than to have a wife and children. If you are prosperous, there they are to share your prosperity ; if otherwise, there they are to comfort you." And, indeed, I have observed that a married man falling into misfortune is more apt to retrieve his situation in the world than a single one ; partly because he is more stimulated to exertion by the necessities of the helpless and beloved beings who depend upon him for subsistence ; but chiefly because his spirits are soothed and relieved by domestic endearments, and his self-respect kept alive by finding, that though all abroad is darkness and humiliation, yet there is still a little world of love at home, of which he is the monarch. Whereas a single man is apt to run to waste and self-neglect ; to fancy himself lonely and abandoned, and his heart to fall to ruin like some deserted mansion, for want of an inhabitant.

These observations call to mind a little domestic story, of which I was once a witness. My intimate friend, Leslie, had married a beautiful and accomplished girl, who had been brought up in the midst of fashionable life. She had, it is true, no fortune, but

that of my friend was ample ; and he delighted in the anticipation of indulging her in every elegant pursuit, and administering to those delicate tastes and fancies that spread a kind of witchery about sex,—“Her Life,” said he, “shall be like a fairy tale.”

The very difference in their characters produced an harmonious combination : he was of a romantic and somewhat serious cast ; she was all life and gladness. I have often noticed the mute rapture with which he would gaze upon her in company, of which her sprightly powers made her the delight ; and how, in the midst of applause, her eye would still turn to him, as if there alone she sought favour and acceptance. When leaning on his arm, her slender form contrasted finely with his tall manly person. The fond confiding air with which she looked up to him seemed to call forth a flush of triumphant pride and cherishing tenderness, as if he doted on his lovely burden for its very helplessness. Never did a couple set forward on the flowery path of early and well-suited marriage with a fairer prospect of felicity.

It was the misfortune of my friend, however, to have embarked his property in large speculations ; and he had not been married many months, when, by a succession of sudden disasters, it was swept from him, and he found himself reduced almost to penury. For a time he kept his situation to himself, and went about with a haggard countenance and a breaking heart. His life was but a protracted agony ; and what rendered it more insupportable was the necessity of keeping up a smile in the presence of his wife ; for

he could not bring himself to overwhelm her with the news. She saw, however, with the quick eyes of affection, that all was not well with him. She marked his altered looks and stifled sighs, and was not to be deceived by his sickly and vapid attempts at cheerfulness. She tasked all her sprightly powers and tender blandishments to win him back to happiness ; but she only drove the arrow deeper into his soul. The more he saw cause to love her, the more torturing was the thought that he was soon to make her wretched. A little while, thought he, and the smile will vanish from that cheek—the song will die away from those lips—the lustre of those eyes will be quenched with sorrow—and the happy heart, which now beats lightly in that bosom, will be weighed down like mine, by the cares and miseries of the world.

At length he came to me one day, and related his whole situation in a tone of the deepest despair. When I heard him through, I inquired, “Does your wife know all this?” At the question he burst into an agony of tears. “For God’s sake !” cried he, “if you have any pity on me, don’t mention my wife ; it is the thought of her that drives me almost to madness !”

“And why not?” said I. “She must know it sooner or later : you cannot keep it long from her, and the intelligence may break upon her in a more startling manner than if imparted by yourself ; for the accents of those we love soften the harshest tidings. Besides, you are depriving yourself of the

comforts of her sympathy ; and not merely that, but also endangering the only bond that can keep hearts together—an unreserved community of thought and feeling. She will soon perceive that something is secretly preying upon your mind ; and true love will not brook reserve ; it feels undervalued and outraged when even the sorrows of those it loves are concealed from it.”

“Oh, but my friend ! to think what a blow I am to give to all her future prospects—how I am to strike her very soul to the earth, by telling her that her husband is a beggar ; that she is to forego all the elegancies of life—all the pleasures of society—to shrink with me into indigence and obscurity ! To tell her that I have dragged her down from the sphere in which she might have continued to move in constant brightness—the light of every eye, the admiration of every heart !—How can she bear poverty ? she has been brought up in all the refinements of opulence. How can she bear neglect ? she has been the idol of society. Oh ! it will break her heart—it will break her heart !—”

I saw his grief was eloquent, and I let it have its flow ; for sorrow relieves itself by words. When his paroxysm had subsided, and he had relapsed into moody silence, I resumed the subject gently, and urged him to break his situation at once to his wife. He shook his head mournfully, but positively.

“ But how are you to keep it from her ? It is necessary she should know it, that you may take the steps proper to the alteration of your circumstances.

You must change your style of living—nay,” observing a pang to pass across his countenance, “don’t let that afflict you. I am sure you have never placed your happiness in outward show—you have yet friends, warm friends, who will not think the worse of you for being less splendidly lodged : and surely it does not require a palace to be happy with Mary——”

“I could be happy with her,” cried he, convulsively, “in a hovel !—I could go down with her into poverty and the dust !—I could—I could—God bless her ! God bless her !” cried he bursting into a transport of grief and tenderness.

“And believe me, my friend,” said I, stepping up, and grasping him warmly by the hand, “believe me she can be the same with you. Ay, more : it will be a source of pride and triumph to her—it will call forth all the latent energies and fervent sympathies of her nature ; for she will rejoice to prove that she loves you for yourself. There is in every true woman’s heart a spark of heavenly fire, which lies dormant in the broad daylight of prosperity ; but which kindles up, and beams and blazes in the dark hour of adversity. No man knows what the wife of his bosom is—no man knows what a ministering angel she is—until he has gone with her through the fiery trials of this world.”

There was something in the earnestness of my manner, and the figurative style of my language, that caught the excited imagination of Leslie. I knew the auditor I had to deal with ; and following

up the impression I had made, I finished by persuading him to go home and unburden his sad heart to his wife.

I must confess, notwithstanding all I had said I felt some little solicitude for the result. Who can calculate on the fortitude of one whose whole life has been a round of pleasures? Her gay spirits might revolt at the dark downward path of low humility suddenly pointed out before her, and might cling to the sunny regions in which they had hitherto revelled. Besides, ruin in fashionable life is accompanied by so many galling mortifications, to which in other ranks it is a stranger. In short, I could not meet Leslie the next morning without trepidation. He had made the disclosure.

“And how did she bear it?”

“Like an angel! It seemed rather to be a relief to her mind, for she threw her arms round my neck, and asked if this was all that had lately made me unhappy. But poor girl,” added he; “she cannot realize the change we must undergo. She has no idea of poverty but in the abstract; she has only read of it in poetry, where it is allied to love. She feels as yet no privation; she suffers no loss of accustomed conveniences nor elegancies. When we come practically to experience its sordid cares, its paltry wants, its petty humiliations—then will be the real trial.”

“But,” said I, “now that you have got over the severest task, that of breaking it to her, the sooner you let the world into the secret the better. The disclosure may be mortifying, but

then it is a single misery, and soon over ; whereas you otherwise suffer it in anticipation every hour in the day. It is not poverty so much as pretence that harasses a ruined man—the struggle between a proud mind and an empty purse—the keeping up a hollow show that must soon come to an end. Have the courage to appear poor, and you disarm poverty of its sharpest sting.” On this point I found Leslie perfectly prepared. He had no false pride himself, and as to his wife, she was only anxious to conform to their altered fortunes.

Some days afterwards he called upon me in the evening. He had disposed of his dwelling-house, and taken a small cottage in the country, a few miles from town. He had been busied all day in sending out furniture. The new establishment required few articles, and those of the simplest kind. All the splendid furniture of his late residence had been sold, excepting his wife’s harp. That, he said, was too closely associated with the idea of herself, it belonged to the little story of their loves ; for some of the sweetest moments of their courtship were those when he had leaned over that instrument and listened to the melting tones of her voice. I could not but smile at this instance of romantic gallantry in a doting husband.

He was now going out to the cottage, where his wife had been all day superintending its arrangement. My feelings had become strongly interested in the progress of this family story, and, as it was a fine evening, I offered to accompany him.

He was wearied with the fatigues of the day, and, as he walked out, fell into a fit of gloomy musing.

“Poor Mary!” at length broke, with a heavy sigh, from his lips.

“And what of her?” asked I; “has anything happened to her?”

“What,” said he, darting an impatient glance, “is it nothing to be reduced to this paltry situation—to be caged in a miserable cottage—to be obliged to toil almost in the menial concerns of her wretched habitation?”

“Has she then repined at the change?”

“Repined! she has been nothing but sweetness and good humour. Indeed, she seems in better spirits than I have ever known her; she has been to me all love, and tenderness, and comfort!”

“Admirable girl!” exclaimed I. “You call yourself poor, my friend, you never were so rich—you never knew the boundless treasures of excellence you possess in that woman.”

“Oh! but, my friend, if this first meeting at the cottage were over, I think I could then be comfortable. But this is her first day of real experience; she has been introduced into an humble dwelling—she has been employed all day in arranging its miserable equipments—she has for the first time known the fatigues of domestic employment—she has for the first time looked round her on a home destitute of everything elegant—almost of everything convenient; and may now be

sitting down, exhausted and spiritless, brooding over a prospect of future poverty."

There was a degree of probability in this picture that I could not gainsay, so we walked on in silence.

After turning from the main road up a narrow lane, so thickly shaded with forest trees as to give it a complete air of seclusion, we came in sight of the cottage. It was humble enough in its appearance for the most pastoral poet, and yet it had a pleasing rural look. A wild vine had overrun one end with a profusion of foliage; a few trees threw their branches gracefully over it; and I observed several pots of flowers tastefully disposed about the door, and on the grassplot in front. A small wicket gate opened upon a foot-path that wound through some shrubbery to the door. Just as we approached, we heard the sound of music—Leslie grasped my arm; we paused and listened. It was Mary's voice singing, in a style of the most touching simplicity, a little air of which her husband was peculiarly fond.

I felt Leslie's hand tremble on my arm. He stepped forward to hear more distinctly. His step made a noise on the gravel walk. A bright beautiful face glanced out at the window and vanished—a light footstep was heard—and Mary came tripping forth to meet us; she was in a pretty rural dress of white, a few wild flowers were twisted in her fine hair, a fresh bloom was on her cheek, her whole countenance beamed with smiles—I had never seen her look so lovely.

"My dear George," cried she, "I am so glad you are come! I had been watching and watching for you, and running down the lane and looking out for you. I've set out a table under a beautiful tree behind the cottage, and I've been gathering some of the most delicious strawberries, for I know you are fond of them—and we have such excellent cream—and everything is so sweet and still here—Oh!" said she, putting her arm within his, and looking up brightly in his face, "Oh, we shall be so happy!"

Poor Leslie was overcome. He caught her to his bosom—he folded his arms round her—he kissed her again and again—he could not speak but the tears gushed into his eyes, and he has often assured me that though the world has since gone prosperously with him, and his life has indeed been a happy one, yet never has he experienced a moment of more exquisite felicity.

RIP VAN WINKLE

[The following Tale was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman of New York, who was very curious in the Dutch history of the province, and the manners of the descendants from its primitive settlers. His historical researches, however, did not lie so much among books as among men; for the former are lamentably scanty on his

favourite topics, whereas he found the old burghers, and still more their wives, rich in that legendary lore so invaluable to true history. Whenever, therefore, he happened upon a genuine Dutch family, snugly shut up in its low-roofed farmhouse, under a spreading sycamore, he looked upon it as a little clasped volume of black letter, and studied it with the zeal of a book-worm.

The result of all these researches was a history of the province during the reign of the Dutch governors, which he published some years since. There have been various opinions as to the literary character of his work, and, to tell the truth, it is not a whit better than it should be. Its chief merit is its scrupulous accuracy, which indeed was a little questioned on its first appearance, but has since been completely established : and it is now admitted into all historical collections as a book of unquestionable authority.

The old gentleman died shortly after the publication of his work, and now that he is dead and gone, it cannot do much harm to his memory to say, that his time might have been much better employed in weightier labours. He however, was apt to ride his hobby his own way : and though it did now and then kick up the dust a little in the eyes of his neighbours, and grieve the spirit of some friends, for whom he felt the truest deference and affection ; yet his errors and follies are remembered "more in sorrow than in anger," and it begins to be suspected that he never intended to injure or offend. But however his memory may be appreciated by critics, it is still held dear by many folk whose good opinion is well worth having, particularly by certain biscuit-bakers, who have gone so far as to imprint his likeness on their new-year cakes, and have thus given him a chance for immortality, almost equal to the being stamped on a Waterloo medal or a Queen Anne's farthing]

RIP VAN WINKLE

A POSTHUMOUS WRITING OF DIEDRICH
KNICKERBOCKER.

By Woden, God of Saxons,
From whence comes Wensday, that is Wodensday.
Truth is a thing that ever I will keep
Unto thylke day in which I creep into
My sepulchre——

CARTWRIGHT.

Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapours about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingleroofs gleam among the trees, just

where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village, of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists, in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant, (may he rest in peace!) and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weatherecks.

In that same village and in one of these very houses (which to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten,) there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbour, and an obedient henpecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation, and ~~fa~~ a certain lecture is worth all the

sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing ; and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is that he was a great favourite among all the good wives of the village, who as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles ; and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them, hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity ; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighbourhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labour. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance ; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbour even in

the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone fences ; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend anybody's business but his own ; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm ; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country ; everything about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces ; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages ; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else ; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some out-door work to do ; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst conditioned farm in the neighbourhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins, which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, which-ever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment: but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife: so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much hen-pecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honourable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods—but what courage can withstand the everduring and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house, his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled

between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Time grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on ; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village ; which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third. Hence they used to sit in the shade through a long lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derriek Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary ; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junto were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving

sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree ; so that the neighbours could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sundial. It is true he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however, (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent, and angry puffs, but when pleased he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds ; and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapour curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught ; nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair ; and his only alternative, to escape from the labour of the farm and clamour of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in

persecution. "Poor Wolf," he would say, "thy mistress leads thee a dog's life of it ; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee !" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master's face, and if dogs can feel pity, I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favourite sport of squirrelshooting, and the still solitudes echoed and re-echoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene ; evening was gradually advancing ; the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys ; he saw that it would be dark long before

he could reach the village, and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance hallooing, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" He looked round, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring through the still evening air; "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle"—at the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and, giving a loud growl, skulked to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place; but supposing it to be some one of the neighbourhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger's appearance. He was a short, squarebuilt old fellow, with thick bushy hair and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion—a cloth jerkin strapped round the waist—several pair of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulder a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and

made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity; and mutually relieving each other, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder-showers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time Rip and his companion had laboured on in silence, for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain; yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins. They were dressed in a quaint outlandish fashion; some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with

that of the guide's. Their visages, too, were peculiar ; one had a large head, broad face, and small piggish eyes ; the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugar-loaf hat, set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colours. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weatherbeaten countenance ; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger, high-crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting, in the parlour of Dominic Van Shaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed, statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents

of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling; they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavour of excellent Hollands. He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another; and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often, that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes—it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. “Surely,” thought Rip, “I have not slept here all night.” He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the woe-begone party at nine-pins—the flagon—“Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!” thought Rip; “what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle?”

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean well-oiled fowling-piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel incrustated with rust the lock falling off, and the stock wormeaten. He

now suspected that the grave roysterers of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and, having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him, and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and, if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip; "and if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle." With some difficulty he got down into the glen: he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening; but, to his astonishment, a mountain stream was now foaming down it—leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grape-vines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheatre; but no trace of such opening remained. The rocks presented

a high impenetrable wall, over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam and fell into a broad deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog; he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice; and who secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man's perplexities. What was to be done?—the morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and his gun; he dreaded to meet his wife: but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and, whenever they cast their eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip, involuntarily, to do the same—when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long !

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered ; it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—everything was strange. His mind now misgave him ; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village which he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been. Rip was sorely perplexed. “That flagon last night,” thought he, “has addled my poor head sadly !”

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf, was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed—“My very dog,” sighed poor Rip, “has forgotten me !”

He entered the house , which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty , forlorn , and apparently abandoned.

The desolateness overcame all his connubial fears—he called loudly for his wife and children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn—but it too was gone. A large rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, “The Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle.” Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet Dutch inn of yore, there was now reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red nightcap, and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes—all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe: but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON.

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering

clouds of tobacco-smoke instead of idle speeches ; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean, bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of hand-bills, was harranging vehemently about rights of citizens—elections—members of congress—liberty—Bunker's Hill—heroes of seventy-six—and other words, which were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and an army of women and children at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eyeing him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired, "on which side he voted?" Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, "Whether he was Federal or Democrat?" Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question ; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded in an austere tone, "What brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?"—'Alas !

gentlemen," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the king, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst from the by-standers—"A tory! a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!" It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit, what he came there for, and whom he was seeking? The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbours, who used to keep about the tavern.

"Well—who are they?—name them"

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired "Where's Nicholas Vedder?"

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied in a thin piping voice, "Nicholas Vedder! why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! there was a wooden tombstone in the churchyard that used to tell all about him, but that's rotten and gone too."

"Where's Brom Dutcher?"

Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point—others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony's Nose. I don't know—he never came back again."

"Where's Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?"

"He went off to the wars too, was a great militia-general, and is now in Congress."

Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand; war—Congress—Stony Point;—he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, “Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?”

“Oh, Rip Van Winkle!” exclaimed two or three, “Oh, to be sure! that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree.”

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain; apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name?

“God knows,” exclaimed he, at his wit's end; “I'm not myself—I'm somebody else—that's me yonder—no—that's somebody else got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and everything's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!”

The bystanders began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which

the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which frightened at his looks began to cry. "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you little fool; the old man won't hurt you." The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind.

"What is your name, my good woman?" asked he.
 "Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name?"

"Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since—his dog came home without him; but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask; but he put it with a faltering voice:—

"Where's your mother?"

"Oh, she too had died but a short time since; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New-England pedler."

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" cried he—Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now!—Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?"

RIP

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed. "Sure enough! it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbour—Why, where have you been these twenty long years?"

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him as one night. The neighbours stared when they heard it; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks: and the selfimportant man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighbourhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Kaatskill mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the great Hendrick Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the Half-moon; being

permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river, and the great city called by his name. That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at ninepins in a hollow of the mountain; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her; she had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout cheery farmer for her husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm; but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to anything else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits; he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time; and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favour.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn door, and was revered as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times "before the war." It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or

could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject of His Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him; but there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes; which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed at first to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighbourhood but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunder storm of a

summer afternoon about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of ninepins ; and it is a common wish of all henpecked husbands in the neighbourhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.

NOTE. The foregoing tale, one would suspect, had been suggested to Mr. Knickerbocker by a little German superstition about the Emperor Frederick *der Rothbart*, and the Kypphauser mountain; the subjoined note, however, which he had appended to the tale, shows that it is an absolute fact, narrated with his usual fidelity :—

“ The story of Rip Van Winkle may seem incredible to many, but nevertheless I give it my full belief, for I know the vicinity of our old Dutch settlements to have been very subject to marvellous events and appearances. Indeed, I have heard many stranger stories than this in the villages along the Hudson, all of which were too well authenticated to admit of a doubt. I have even talked with Rip Van Winkle myself, who, when I last saw him, was a very venerable old man, and so perfectly rational and consistent on every other point, that I think no conscientious person could refuse to take this into the bargain ; nay, I have seen a certificate on the subject taken before a country justice, and signed with a cross, in the justice’s own handwriting. The story, therefore, is beyond the possibility of doubt

—“D. K.”

POSTSCRIPT.—The following are travelling notes from a memorandum book of Mr. Knickerbocker

“ The Kaatsberg, or Catskill Mountains, have always been a region full of fable. The Indians considered them the abode of spirits, who influenced the weather, spreading sunshine or clouds over the landscape, and sending good or bad hunting seasons. They were ruled by an old squaw spirit, said to be their mother. She dwelt on the highest peak of the Catskills, and had charge of the doors of day and night, to open and shut them at the proper hour. She hung up the new moons

in the skies, and cut up the old ones into stars. In times of drought, if properly propitiated, she would spin light summer clouds out of cobwebs and morning dew, and send them off from the crest of the mountain, flake after flake, like flakes of carded cotton, to float in the air, until, dissolved by the heat of the sun, they would fall in gentle showers, causing the grass to spring, the fruits to ripen, and the corn to grow an inch an hour. If displeased, however, she would brew up clouds black as ink, sitting in the midst of them like a bottle-bellied spider in the midst of its web; and when these clouds broke, woe betide the valleys!

"In old times, say the Indian traditions, there was a kind of Manitou or Spirit, who kept about the wildest recesses of the Catskill Mountains, and took a mischievous pleasure in wreaking all kinds of evils and vexations upon the red men. Sometimes he would assume the form of a bear, a panther, or a deer, lead the bewildered hunter a weary chase through tangled forests and among ragged rocks, and then spring off with a loud ho! ho! leaving him aghast on the brink of a beetling precipice or raging torrent.

"The favourite abode of this Manitou is still shown. It is a great rock or cliff on the loneliest part of the mountains, and, from the flowering vines which clamber about it, and the wild flowers which abound in its neighbourhood, is known by the name of the Garden Rock. Near the foot of it is a small lake, the haunt of the solitary bittern, with water-snakes basking in the sun on the leaves of the pond-lilies which lie on the surface. This place was held in great awe by the Indians, insomuch that the boldest hunter would not pursue his game within its precincts. Once upon a time, however, a hunter who had lost his way penetrated to the Garden Rock, where he beheld a number of gourds placed in the crotches of trees. One of these he seized and made off with, but in the hurry of his retreat he let it fall among the rocks, when a great stream gushed forth which washed him away and swept him down precipices, where he was dashed to pieces, and the stream made its way to the Hudson, and continues to flow to the present day, being the identical stream known by the name of the Kaaterskill."

RURAL LIFE IN ENGLAND

Oh ! friendly to the best pursuits of man,
 Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,
 Domestic life in rural pleasures past !—COWPER.

THE stranger who would form a correct opinion of the English character, must not confine his observations to the metropolis. He must go forth into the country ; he must sojourn in villages and hamlets ; he must visit castles, villas, farm-houses, cottages ; he must wander through parks and gardens ; along hedges and green lanes ; he must loiter about country churches ; attend wakes and fairs, and other rural festivals ; and cope with the people in all their conditions, and all their habits and humours.

In some countries the large cities absorb the wealth and fashion of the nation ; they are the only fixed abodes of elegant and intelligent society, and the country is inhabited almost entirely by boorish peasantry. In England, on the contrary, the metropolis is a mere gathering-place, or general rendezvous of the polite classes, where they devote a small portion of the year to a hurry of gaiety and dissipation, and having indulged this kind of carnival, return again to the apparently more congenial habits of rural life. The various orders of society are therefore diffused over the whole surface of the kingdom, and the most retired neighbourhoods afford specimens of the different ranks.

The English, in fact, are strongly gifted with the rural feeling. They possess a quick sensibility

to the beauties of nature, and a keen relish for the pleasures and employments of the country. This passion seems inherent in them. Even the inhabitants of cities born and brought up among brick walls and bustling streets, enter with facility into rural habits and evince a tact for rural occupation. The merchant has his snug retreat in the vicinity of the metropolis, where he often displays as much pride and zeal in the cultivation of his flower-garden, and the maturing of his fruits, as he does in the conduct of his business and the success of a commercial enterprise. Even those less fortunate individuals, who are doomed to pass their lives in the midst of din and traffic, contrive to have something that shall remind them of the green aspect of nature. In the most dark and dingy quarters of the city, the drawing-room window resembles frequently a bank of flowers, every spot capable of vegetation has its grass-plot and flower-bed; and every square its mimic park, laid out with picturesque taste, and gleaming with refreshing verdure.

Those who see the Englishman only in town are apt to form an unfavourable opinion of his social character. He is either absorbed in business, or distracted by the thousand engagements that dissipate time, thought, and feeling, in this huge metropolis. He has, therefore, too commonly a look of hurry and abstraction. Wherever he happens to be, he is on the point of going somewhere else; at the moment he is talking on one subject, his mind is wandering to another; and while paying a friendly visit, he is calculating how he shall economize time so as to pay

the other visits allotted in the morning. An immense metropolis, like London, is calculated to make men selfish and uninteresting. In their casual and transient meetings they can but deal briefly in commonplaces. They present but the cold superficies of character—its rich and genial qualities have no time to be warmed into a flow.

It is in the country that the Englishman gives scope to his natural feelings. He breaks loose gladly from the cold formalities and negative civilities of town; throws off his habits of shy reserve, and becomes joyous and free-hearted. He manages to collect round him all the conveniences and elegancies of polite life, and to banish its restraints. His country-seat abounds with every requisite, either for studious retirement, tasteful gratification, or rural exercise. Books, paintings, music, horses, dogs, and sporting implements of all kinds, are at hand. He puts no constraint either upon his guests or himself, but in the true spirit of hospitality provides the means of enjoyment, and leaves every one to partake according to his inclination.

The taste of the English in the cultivation of land, and in what is called landscape gardening, is unrivalled. They have studied nature intently, and discover an exquisite sense of her beautiful forms and harmonious combinations. Those charms, which in other countries she lavishes in wild solitudes, are here assembled round the haunts of domestic life. They seem to have caught her coy and furtive graces, and spread them, like witchery, about their rural abodes.

Nothing can be more imposing than the magnificence of English park scenery. Vast lawns that extend like sheets of vivid green, with here and there clumps of gigantic trees, heaping up rich piles of foliage : the solemn pomp of groves and woodland glades, with the deer trooping in silent herds across them ; the hare, bounding away to the covert ; or the pheasant, suddenly bursting upon the wing : the brook, taught to wind in natural meanderings, or expand into a glassy lake : the sequestered pool, reflecting the quivering trees, with the yellow leaf sleeping on its bosom, and the trout roaming fearlessly about its limpid waters, while some rustic temple or sylvan statue, grown green and dank with age, gives an air of classic sanctity to the seclusion.

These are but a few of the features of park scenery ; but what most delights me, is the creative talent with which the English decorate the unostentatious abodes of middle life. The rudest habitation, the most unpromising and scanty portion of land, in the hands of an Englishman of taste, becomes a little paradise. With a nicely discriminating eye, he seizes at once upon its capabilities, and pictures in his mind the future landscape. The sterile spot grows into loveliness under his hand ; and yet the operations of art which produce the effect are scarcely to be perceived. The cherishing and training of some trees ; the cautious pruning of others ; the nice distribution of flowers and plants of tender and graceful foliage ; the introduction of a green slope of velvet turf ; the partial opening to a

peep of blue distance, or silver gleam of water : all these are managed with a delicate tact, a pervading yet quiet assiduity, like the magic touchings with which a painter finishes up a favourite picture.

The residence of people of fortune and refinement in the country has diffused a degree of taste and elegance in rural economy, that descends to the lowest class. The very labourer, with his thatched cottage and narrow slip of ground, attends to their embellishment. The trim hedge, the grass-plot before the door, the little flower-bed bordered with snug box, the woodbine trained up against the wall, and hanging its blossoms about the lattice, the pot of flowers in the window, the holly, providentially planted about the house, to cheat winter of its dreariness, and to throw in a semblance of green summer to cheer the fireside : all these bespeak the influence of taste, flowing down from high sources and pervading the lowest levels of the public mind. If ever Love, as poets sing, delights to visit a cottage, it must be the cottage of an English peasant.

The fondness for rural life among the higher classes of the English has had a great and salutary effect upon the national character. I do not know a finer race of men than the English gentlemen. Instead of the softness and effeminacy which characterize the men of rank in most countries, they exhibit a union of elegance and strength, a robustness of frame and freshness of complexion, which I am inclined to attribute to their living so much in the open air, and pursuing so eagerly the invigorating

recreations of the country. These hardy exercises produce also a healthful tone of mind and spirits, and a manliness and simplicity of manners, which even the follies and dissipations of the town cannot easily pervert, and can never entirely destroy. In the country, too, the different orders of society seem to approach more freely, to be more disposed to blend and operate favourably upon each other. The distinctions between them do not appear to be so marked and impassable as in the cities. The manner in which property has been distributed into small estates and farms has established a regular gradation from the nobleman, through the classes of gentry, small landed proprietors, and substantial farmers, down to the labouring peasantry ; and while it has thus banded the extremes of society together, has infused into each intermediate rank a spirit of independence. This, it must be confessed, is not so universally the case at present as it was formerly ; the larger estates having, in late years of distress absorbed the smaller ; and, in some parts of the country, almost annihilated the sturdy race of small farmers. These, however, I believe, are but casual breaks in the general system I have mentioned.

In rural occupation there is nothing mean and debasing. It leads a man forth among scenes of natural grandeur and beauty ; it leaves him to the workings of his own mind operated upon by the purest and most elevating of external influences. Such a man may be simple and rough but he cannot be vulgar. The man of refinement, therefore, finds

nothing revolting in an intercourse with the lower orders in rural life, as he does when he casually mingles with the lower orders of cities. He lays aside his distance and reserve, and is glad to waive the distinctions of rank, and to enter into the honest, heartfelt enjoyments of common life. Indeed, the very amusements of the country bring men more and more together; and the sound of hound and horn blend all feelings into harmony. I believe this is one great reason why the nobility and gentry are more popular among the inferior orders in England than they are in any other country, and why the latter have endured so many excessive pressures and extremities, without repining more generally at the unequal distribution of fortune and privilege.

To this mingling of cultivated and rustic society may also be attributed the rural feeling that runs through British literature; the frequent use of illustrations from rural life; those incomparable descriptions of nature that abound in the British poets, that have continued down from "The Flower and the Leaf" of Chaucer, and have brought into our closets all the freshness and fragrance of the dewy landscape. The pastoral writers of other countries appear as if they had paid nature an occasional visit, and become acquainted with her general charms; but the British poets have lived and revelled with her—they have wooed her in her most secret haunts—they have watched her minutest caprices. A spray could not tremble in the breeze—a leaf could not rustle to the ground—a diamond drop could not

patter in the stream—a fragrance could not exhale from the humble violet, nor a daisy unfold its crimson tints to the morning, but it has been noticed by these impassioned and delicate observers, and wrought up into some beautiful morality.

The effect of this devotion of elegant minds to rural occupations has been wonderful on the face of the country. A great part of the island is rather level, and would be monotonous, were it not for the charms of culture: but it is studded and gemmed, as it were, with castles and palaces and embroidered with parks and gardens. It does not abound in grand and sublime prospects, but rather in little home scenes of rural repose and sheltered quiet. Every antique farm-house and moss grown cottage is a picture; and as the roads are continually winding, and the view is shut in by groves and hedges, the eye is delighted by a continual succession of small landscapes of captivating loveliness.

The great charm, however, of English scenery is the moral feeling that seems to pervade it. It is associated in the mind with ideas of order, of quiet, of sober, well-established principles, of hoary usage and reverend custom. Everything seems to be the growth of ages of regular and peaceful existence. The old church of remote architecture, with its low, massive portal, its Gothic tower, its windows rich with tracery and painted glass, in scrupulous preservation, its stately monuments of warriors and worthies of the olden time, ancestors of the present lords of the soil; its tombstones, recording successive

generations of sturdy yeomanry, whose progeny still plough the same fields, and kneel at the same altar—the parsonage, a quaint irregular pile, partly antiquated, but repaired and altered in the tastes of various ages and occupants—the stile and footpath leading from the church-yard, across pleasant fields, and along shady hedgerows, according to an immemorial right of way—the neighbouring village, with its venerable cottages, its public green sheltered by trees, under which the forefathers of the present race have sported—the antique family mansion, standing apart in some little rural domain, but looking down with a protecting air on the surrounding scene: all these common features of English landscape evince a calm and settled security, and hereditary transmission of homebred virtues and local attachments, that speak deeply and touchingly for the moral character of the nation.

It is a pleasing sight of a Sunday morning, when the bell is sending its sober melody across the quiet fields, to behold the peasantry in their best finery, with ruddy faces and modest cheerfulness, thronging tranquilly along the green lanes to church; but it is still more pleasing to see them in the evenings, gathering about their cottage doors, and appearing to exult in the humble comforts and embellishments which their own hands have spread around them.

It is this sweet home-feeling, this settled repose of affection in the domestic scene, that is, after all, the parent of the steadiest virtues and purest enjoyments; and I cannot close these desultory remarks

better than by quoting the words of a modern English poet, who has depicted it with remarkable felicity :—

Through each gradation, from the castled hall,
 The city dome, the villa crowned with shade,
 But chief from modest mansions numberless,
 In town or hamlet, shelt'ring middle life
 Down to the cottaged vale, and straw-roof'd shed ;
 This western isle hath long been famed for scenes
 Where bliss domestic finds a dwelling-place ;
 Domestic bliss, that, like a harmless dove,
 (Honour and sweet endearment keeping guard,)
 Can centre in a little quiet nest
 All that desire would fly for through the earth ;
 That can, the world eluding, be itself
 A world enjoyed ; that wants no witnesses
 But its own sharers, and approving heaven ;
 That, like a flower deep hid in rocky cleft,
 Smiles, though 'tis looking only at the sky.*

THE BROKEN HEART

I never heard

Of any true affection, but it was nipt
 With care, that, like the caterpillar, eats
 The leaves of spring's sweetest book —the rose.

MIDDLETON.

It is a common practice with those who have outlived the susceptibility of early feeling, or have been brought up in the gay heartlessness

* From a Poem on the death of the Princess Charlotte, by the Reverend Rann Kennedy, A.M.

of dissipated life, to laugh at all love stories, and to treat the tales of romantic passion as mere fictions of novelists and poets. My observations on human nature have induced me to think otherwise. They have convinced me, that however the surface of the character may be chilled and frozen by the cares of the world, or cultivated into mere smiles by the arts of society, still there are dormant fires lurking in the depths of the coldest bosom, which, when once enkindled, become impetuous, and are sometimes desolating in their effects. Indeed, I am a true believer in the blind deity, and go to the full extent of his doctrines. Shall I confess it?—I believe in broken hearts, and the possibility of dying of disappointed love. I do not, however, consider it a malady often fatal to my own sex; but I firmly believe that it withers down many a lovely woman into an early grave.

Man is the creature of interest and ambition. His nature leads him forth into the struggle and bustle of the world. Love is but the embellishment of his early life, or a song piped in the intervals of the acts. He seeks for fame, for fortune, for space in the world's thought, and dominion over his fellow-men. But a woman's whole life is a history of the affections. The heart is her world: it is there her ambition strives for empire; it is there her avarice seeks for hidden treasures. She sends forth her sympathies on adventure; she embarks her whole soul in the traffic of affection; and if shipwrecked, her case is hopeless—for it is a bankruptcy of the heart.

To a man, the disappointment of love may occasion some bitter pangs : it wounds some feelings of tenderness—it blasts some prospects of felicity ; but he is an active being—he may dissipate his thoughts in the whirl of varied occupation, or may plunge into a tide of pleasure ; or, if the scene of disappointment be too full of painful associations, he can shift his abode at will, and taking as it were the wings of the morning can “ fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, and be at rest.”

But woman's is comparatively a fixed, a secluded and meditative life. She is more the companion of her own thoughts and feelings ; and if they are turned to ministers of sorrow, where shall she look for consolation ? Her lot is to be wooed and won ; and if unhappy in her love, her heart is like some fortress that has been captured, and sacked, and abandoned, and left desolate.

How many bright eyes grow dim—how many soft cheeks grow pale—how many lovely forms fade away into the tomb, and none can tell the cause that blighted their loveliness ! As the dove will clasp its wings to its side, and cover and conceal the arrow that is preying on its vitals, so is it the nature of woman to hide from the world the pangs of wounded affection. The love of a delicate female is always shy and silent. Even when fortunate, she scarcely breathes it to herself ; but when otherwise she, buries it in the recesses of her bosom, and there lets it cower and brood among the ruins of her place. With her the desire of the heart has failed. The great charm

of existence is at an end. She neglects all the cheerful exercises which gladden the spirits, quicken the pulses, and send the tide of life in healthful currents through the veins. Her rest is broken—the sweet refreshment of sleep is poisoned by melancholy dreams—“dry sorrow drinks her blood,” until her enfeebled frame sinks under the slightest external injury. Look for her, after a little while, and you find friendship weeping over her untimely grave, and wondering that one, who but lately glowed with all the radiance of health and beauty, should so speedily be brought down to “darkness and the worm.” You will be told of some wintry chill, some casual indisposition, that laid her low:—but no one knows of the mental malady which previously sapped her strength, and made her so easy a prey to the spoiler.

She is like some tender tree, the pride and beauty of the grove; graceful in its form, bright in its foliage, but with the worm preying at its heart. We find it suddenly withering, when it should be most fresh and luxuriant. We see it drooping its branches to the earth, and shedding leaf by leaf, until, wasted and perished away, it falls even in the stillness of the forest; and as we muse over the beautiful ruin, we strive in vain to recollect the blast or thunderbolt that could have smitten it with decay.

I have seen many instances of women running to waste and self-neglect, and disappearing gradually from the earth, almost as if they had been exhaled to have repeatedly fancied that I could trace through the various declensions of consumption, cold, debility,

langour, melancholy, until I reached the first symptoms of disappointed love. But an instance of the kind was lately told to me; the circumstances are well-known in the country where they happened, and I shall but give them in the manner in which they were related.

Every one must recollect the tragical story of young E——, the Irish patriot; it was too touching to be soon forgotten. During the troubles in Ireland, he was tried, condemned, and executed on a charge of treason. His fate made a deep impression on public sympathy. He was so young—so intelligent—so generous—so brave—so everything that we are apt to like in a young man. His conduct under trial, too, was so lofty and intrepid. The noble indignation with which he repelled the charge of treason against his country—the eloquent vindication of his name—and his pathetic appeal to posterity in the hopeless hour of condemnation—all these entered deeply into every generous bosom, and even his enemies lamented the stern policy that dictated his execution.

But there was one heart whose anguish it would be impossible to describe. In happier days and fairer fortunes he had won the affections of a beautiful and interesting girl, the daughter of a late celebrated Irish barrister. She loved him with the disinterested fervour of a woman's first and early love. When every worldly maxim arrayed itself against him; when blasted in fortune, and disgrace and danger darkened around his name, she loved him

the more ardently for his very sufferings. If, then, his fate could awaken the sympathy even of his foes, what must have been the agony of her, whose whole soul was occupied by his image ! Let those tell who have had the portals of the tomb suddenly closed between them and the being they most loved on earth—who have sat at its threshold, as one shut out in a cold and lonely world, whence all that was most lovely and loving had departed.

But then the horrors of such a grave ! so frightful, so dishonoured ! there was nothing for memory to dwell on that could soothe the pang of separation—none of those tender though melancholy circumstances, which endear the parting scene—nothing to melt sorrow into those blessed tears, sent like the dews of heaven to revive the heart in the parting hour of anguish.

To render her widowed situation more desolate she had incurred her father's displeasure by her unfortunate attachment, and was an exile from the paternal roof. But could the sympathy and kind offices of friends have reached a spirit so shocked and driven in by horror, she would have experienced no want of consolation, for the Irish are a people of quick and generous sensibilities. The most delicate and cherishing attentions were paid her by families of wealth and distinction. She was led into society, and they tried by all kinds of occupation and amusement to dissipate her grief, and wean her from the tragical story of her love. But it was all in vain. There are some strokes of calamity which

scathe and scorch the soul—which penetrate to the vital seat of happiness—and blast it, never again to put forth bud or blossom. She never objected to frequent the haunts of pleasure, but was as much alone there as in the depths of solitude ; walking about in sad reverie, apparently unconscious of the world around her. She carried with her an inward woe that mocked at all the blandishments of friendship, and “heeded not the song of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.”

The person who told me her story had seen her at a masquerade. There can be no exhibition of far—gone wretchedness more striking and painful than to meet in such a scene. To find it wandering like a spectre, lonely and joyless, where all around is gay—to see dressed out in the trappings of mirth, and looking so wan and woe-begone, as if it had tried in vain to cheat the poor heart into a momentary forgetfulness of sorrow. After strolling through the splendid rooms and giddy crowd with an air of utter abstraction, she sat herself down on the steps of an orchestra, and, looking about for sometime with a vacant air, that showed her insensibility to the garish scene, she began, with the capriciousness of a sickly heart, to warble a little plaintive air. She had an exquisite voice; but on this occasion it was so simple, so touching, it breathed forth such a soul of wretchedness, that she drew a crowd mute and silent around her, and melted every one into tears.

The story of one so true and tender could not but excite great interest in a country remarkable for enthusiasm. It completely won the heart of a brave officer, who paid his addresses to her, and thought that one so true to the dead could not but prove affectionate to the living. She declined his attentions, for her thoughts were irrevocably engrossed by the memory of his former lover. He, however, persisted in his suit. He solicited not her tenderness, but her esteem. He was assisted by her conviction of his worth, and her sense of her own destitute and dependent situation, for she was existing on the kindness of friends. In a word, he at length succeeded in gaining her hand, though with the solemn assurance that her heart was unalterably another's.

He took her with him to Sicily, hoping that a change of scene might wear out the remembrance of early woes. She was an amiable and exemplary wife, and made an effort to be a happy one; but nothing could cure the silent and devouring melancholy that had entered into her very soul. She wasted away in a slow, but hopeless decline, and at length sunk into the grave, the victim of a broken heart.

It was on her that Moore, the distinguished Irish poet, composed the following lines:—

She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps,
And lovers around her are sighing;

But coldly she turns from their gaze, and weeps,

For her heart in his grave is lying.

She sings the wild songs of her dear native plains,
 Every note which he loved awaking

Ah ! little they think, who delight in her strains,
 How the heart of the ministrel is breaking !

He had lived for his love, for his country he died--
 They were all that to life had entwined him--

Nor soon shall the tears of his country be dried,
 Nor long will his love stay behind him !

Oh ! make her a grave where the sunbeams rest,
 When they promise a glorious morrow :

They'll shine o'er her sleep, like a smile from the west,
 From her own loved island of sorrow !

A ROYAL POET

Though your body be confined,
 And soft love a prisoner bound,
 Yet the beauty of your mind
 Neither check nor chain hath found,
 Look out nobly, then, and dare
 Even the fetters that you wear. -FLETCHER.

On a soft sunny morning, in the genial month of May, I made an excursion to Windsor Castle. It is a place full of storied and poetical associations. The very external aspect of the proud old pile is enough to inspire high thought. It rears its irregular walls and massive towers, like a mural crown, round the brow of a lofty ridge, waves its royal banner in the clouds, and looks down with a lordly air upon the surrounding world.

On this morning the weather was of that voluptuous vernal kind which calls forth all the latent romance of a man's temperament, filling his mind with music, and disposing him to quote poetry and dream of beauty. In wandering through the magnificent saloons and long echoing galleries of the castle, I passed with indifference by whole rows of portraits of warriors and statesmen, but lingered in the chamber where hang the likenesses of the beauties which graced the gay court of Charles the Second, and as I gazed upon them, depicted with amorous half-dishevelled tresses, and the sleepy eye of love, I blessed the pencil of Sir Peter Lely, which had thus enabled me to bask in the reflected rays of beauty. In traversing also the "large green courts," with sunshine beaming on the gray walls, and glancing along the velvet turf, my mind was engrossed with the image of the tender, the gallant, but hapless Surrey, and his account of his loiterings about them in his stripling days, when enamoured of the Lady Geraldine—

" With eyes cast up unto the maiden's tower,
With easie sighs, such as men draw in love."

In this mood of mere poetical susceptibility, I visited the ancient Keep of the Castle, where James the First of Scotland, the pride and theme of Scottish poets and historians, was for many years of his youth detained a prisoner of state. It is a large gray tower, that has stood the brunt of ages, and is still in good preservation. It stands on a mound which elevates it above the other parts of the castle and a

great flight of steps leads to the interior. In the armoury, a Gothic hall, furnished with weapons of various kinds and ages, I was shown a coat of armour hanging against the wall which had once belonged to James. Hence I was conducted up a staircase to a suit of apartments of faded magnificence, hung with storied tapestry which formed his prison, and the scene of that passionate and fanciful amour which has woven into the web of his story the magical hues of poetry and fiction.

The whole history of this amiable but unfortunate prince is highly romantic. At the tender age of eleven he was sent from home by his father, Robert III, and destined for the French court, to be reared under the eye of the French monarch, secure from the treachery and danger that surrounded the royal house of Scotland. It was his mishap in the course of his voyage to fall into the hands of the English and he was detained prisoner by Henry IV, notwithstanding that a truce existed between the two countries.

The intelligence of his capture, coming in the train of many sorrows and disasters, proved fatal to his unhappy father. "The news," we are told, "was brought to him while at supper, and did so overwhelm him with grief, that he was amost ready to give up the ghost into the hands of the servants that attended him. But being carried to his bed-chamber, he abstained from all food, and in three days died of hunger and grief, at Rothesay."*

* Buchanan.

James was detained in captivity above eighteen years; but though deprived of personal liberty, he was treated with the respect due to his rank. Care was taken to instruct him in all the branches of useful knowledge cultivated at that period, and to give him those mental and personal accomplishments deemed proper for a prince. Perhaps, in this respect, his imprisonment was an advantage, as it enabled him to apply himself the more exclusively to his improvement, and quietly to imbibe that rich fund of knowledge, and to cherish those elegant tastes which have given such a lustre to his memory. The picture drawn of him in early life by the Scottish historians is highly captivating, and seems rather the description of a hero of romance, than of a character in real history. He was well learnt, we are told, "to fight with the sword, to tourney, to wrestle, to sing and dance; he was an expert mediciner, right crafty in playing both of lute and harp, and sundry other instruments of music and was expert in grammar, oratory and poetry."*

With this combination of manly and delicate accomplishments, fitting him to shine both in active and elegant life, and calculated to give him an intense relish for joyous existence, it must have been a severe trial, in an age of bustle and chivalry, to pass the spring-time of his years in monotonous captivity. It was the good fortune of James, however, to be gifted with a powerful poetic fancy, and to be

* Ballenden's Translation of Hector Boyce.

visited in his prison by the choicest inspirations of the muse. Some minds corrode and grow inactive under the loss of personal liberty; others grow morbid and irritable; but it is the nature of the poet to become tender and imaginative in the loneliness of confinement. He banquets upon the honey of his own thoughts, and, like the captive bird, pours forth his soul in melody.

Have you not seen the nightingale,
A pilgrim coop'd into a cage,
How doth she chant her wonted tale,
In that her lonely hermitage !
Even there her charming melody doth prove
That all her boughs are trees, her cage a grove. *

Indeed, it is the divine attribute of the imagination, that it is irrepressible, unconfined; that when the real world is shut out, it can create a world for itself, and with a necromantic power, can conjure up glorious shapes and forms, and brilliant visions, to make solitude populous, and irradiate the gloom of the dungeon. Such was the world of pomp and pageant that lived round Tasso in his dismal cell at Ferrara when he conceived the splendid scenes of his "Jerusalem"; and we may consider the "King's Quair," composed by James during his captivity at Windsor, as another of those beautiful breakings-forth of the soul from the restraint and gloom of the prison-house.

* Roger l'Estrange.

The subject of the poem is his love for the Lady Jane Beaufort, daughter of the Earl of Somerset, and a princess of the blood royal of England, of whom he became enamoured in the course of his captivity. What gives it a peculiar value is, that it may be considered a transcript of the royal bard's true feelings, and the story of his real loves and fortunes. It is not often that sovereigns write poetry, or that poets deal in fact. It is gratifying to the pride of a common man to find a monarch thus suing, as it were, for admission into his closet, and seeking to win his favour by administering to his pleasures. It is a proof of the honest equality of intellectual competition, which strips off all the trappings of factitious dignity, brings the candidate down to a level with his fellow-men, and obliges him to depend on his own native powers for distinction. It is curious, too, to get at the history of a monarch's heart, and to find the simple affections of human nature throbbing under the ermine. But James had learnt to be a poet before he was a king: he was schooled in adversity, and reared in the company of his own thoughts. Monarchs have seldom time to parley with their hearts, or to meditate their minds into poetry: and had James been brought up amidst the adulation and gaiety of a court, we should never, in all probability, have had such a poem as the "Quair".

I have been particularly interested by those parts of the poem which breathe his immediate thoughts concerning his situation, or which are connected with

the apartment in the tower. They have thus a personal and local charm, and are given with such circumstantial truth, as to make the reader present with the captive in his prison, and the companion of his meditations.

Such is the account which he gives of his weariness of spirit, and of the incident which first suggested the idea of writing the poem. It was the still midwatch of a clear moonlight night; the stars, he says, were twinkling as fire in the high vault of heaven, and "Cynthia rinsing her golden locks in Aquarius." He lay in bed wakeful and restless, and took a book to beguile the tedious hours. The book he chose was Boetius's "Consolations of Philosophy," a work popular among the writers of that day, and which had been translated by his great prototype, Chaucer. From the high eulogium in which he indulges, it is evident this was one of his favourite volumes while in prison; and indeed it is an admirable text-book for meditation under adversity. It is the legacy of a noble and enduring spirit, purified by sorrow and suffering, bequeathing to its successors in calamity the maxims of sweet morality, and the train of eloquent but simple reasoning by which it was enabled to bear up against the various ills of life. It is a talisman which the unfortunate may treasure up in his bosom, or, like the good King James, lay upon his nightly pillow.

After closing the volume he turns its contents over in his mind, and gradually falls into a fit of musing on the fickleness of fortune, the vicissitudes of his own life,

and the evils that had overtaken him even in his tender youth. Suddenly he hears the bell ringing to matins; but its sound chiming in with his melancholy fancies, seems to him like a voice exhorting him to write his story. In the spirit of poetic errantry he determines to comply with this intimation; he therefore takes pen in hand, makes with it a sign of the cross to implore a benediction, and sallies forth into the fairy land of poetry. There is something extremely fanciful in all this, and it is interesting as furnishing a striking and beautiful instance of the simple manner in which whole trains of poetical thought are sometimes awakened, and literary enterprises suggested to the mind.

In the course of his poem he more than once bewails the peculiar hardness of his fate; thus doomed to lonely and inactive life, and shut up from the freedom and pleasure of the world, in which the meanest animal indulges unrestrained. There is a sweetness, however, in his very complaints; they are the lamentations of an amiable and social spirit at being denied the indulgence of its kind and generous propensities; there is nothing in them harsh nor exaggerated; they flow with a natural and touching pathos and are perhaps rendered more touching by their simple brevity. They contrast finely with those elaborate and iterated repinings, which we sometimes meet with in poetry;—the effusions of morbid minds sickening under miseries of their own creating, and venting their bitterness upon an unoffending world. James speaks of his privations with acute sensibility, but

having mentioned them, passes on, as if his manly mind disdained to brood over unavoidable calamities. When such a spirit breaks forth into complaint, however brief, we are aware how great must be the suffering that extorts the murmur. We sympathize with James, a romantic, active, and accomplished prince, cut off in the lustihood of youth from all the enterprise, the noble uses, and vigorous delights of life; as we do with Milton, alive to all the beauties of nature and glories of art, when he breathes forth brief, but deep-toned lamentations over his perpetual blindness.

Had not James evinced a deficiency of poetic artifice, we might almost have suspected that these lowerings of gloomy reflection were meant as preparative to the brightest scene of his story; and to contrast with that refulgence of light and loveliness that exhilarating accompaniment of bird and song, and foliage and flower, and all the revel of the year, with which he ushers in the lady of his heart. It is this scene in particular, which throws all the magic of romance about the old castle keep. He had risen, he says, at daybreak, according to custom, to escape from the dreary meditations of a sleepless pillow. "Bewailing in his chamber thus alone", despairing of all joy and remedy, "fortired of thought and woebegone," he had wandered to the window, to indulge the captive's miserable solace of gazing wistfully upon the world from which he is excluded. The window looked forth upon a small garden which lay at the foot of the tower. It was a quiet, sheltered

spot, adorned with arbours and green alleys, and protected from the passing gaze by trees and hawthorn hedges.

Now was there made, fast by the tower's wall,
 A garden faire, and in the corners set
 An arbour green, with wandis long and small
 Railed about, and so with leaves beset
 Was all the place, and hawthorn hedges knet,
 That lyf* was none, walkyng there forbye
 That might within scarce any wight espye.

So thick the branches and the leves grene,
 Beshaded all the alleys that there were,
 And midst of every arbour might be sene
 The sharpe, grene, swete juniper.
 Growing so fair, with branches here and there,
 That as it seemed to a lyf without,
 The boughs did spread the arbour all about.

And on the small grene twistist† set
 The lytel swete nightingales, and sung
 So loud and clear, the hymnis consecrate
 Of lovis use, now soft, now loud among,
 That all the garden and the wallis rung
 Right of their song—

It was the month of May, when everything was in bloom and he interprets the song of the nightingale into the language of his enamoured feeling.

Worship, all ye that lovers be, this May,
 For of your bliss the kalends are begun,
 And sing with us away, winter away,
 Come, summer, come, the sweet season and sun.

* *Lyf*, Person. † *Twistis*, small boughs or twigs.

As he gazes on the scene, and listens to the notes of the birds, he gradually relapses into one of those tender and undefinable reveries, which fill the youthful bosom in this delicious season. He wonders what this love may be, of which he has so often read, and which thus seems breathed forth in the quickening breath of May, and melting all nature into ecstacy and song. If it really be so great a felicity, and if it be a boon thus generally dispensed to the most insignificant beings, why is he alone cut off from its enjoyments?

Oft would I think, O Lord, what may this be,
 That love is of such noble might and kynde ?
 Loving his folke, and such prosperitee
 Is it of him, as we in books do find
 May he oure hertes setten * and unbynd :

Hath he upon our hertes such maistrye ?
 Or is all this but feynit fantasye ?
 For giff he be of so grete excellence,
 That he of every wight hath care and charge,
 What I have gilt† to him, or done offense,
 That I am thral'd, and birdis go at large ?

In the midst of his musing, as he casts his eye downward, he beholds the fairest and the freshest young floure” that ever he had seen. It is the lovely Lady Jane, walking in the garden to enjoy the beauty of that “fresh May morrowe.” Breaking

* *Setten*, incline

NOTE.—The language of the quotations is generally modernized.

† *Gilt*, What injury have I done, &c.

thus suddenly upon his sight, in the moment of loneliness and excited susceptibility, she at once captivates the fancy of the romantic prince, and becomes the object of his wandering wishes, the sovereign of his ideal world.

There is in this charming scene, an evident resemblance to the early part of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*; where Palamon and Arcite fall in love with Emilia, whom they see walking in the garden of their prison. Perhaps the similarity of the actual fact to the incident which he had read in Chaucer may have induced James to dwell on it in his poem. His description of the Lady Jane is given in the picturesque and minute manner of his master; and being doubtless taken from the life, is a perfect portrait of a beauty of that day. He dwells, with the fondness of a lover, on every article of her apparel, from the net of pearl, splendent with emeralds and sapphires, that confined her golden hair, even to the "goodly chaine of small orfeverye"* about her neck, whereby there hung a ruby in shape of a heart, that seemed, he says, like a spark of fire burning upon her white bosom. Her dress of white tissue was looped up to enable her to walk with more freedom. She was accompanied by two female attendants, and about her sported a little hound decorated with bells; probably the small Italian hound of exquisite symmetry, which was a parlour favourite and a pet among the fashionable dames of

* Wrought gold.

ancient times. James closes his description by a burst of general eulogium :

In her was youth, beauty, with humble port,
 Bounty, riches, and womanly features ;
 God better knows than my pen can report,
 Wisdom, largesse, * estate, † and cunning ‡ sure,
 In every point so guided her measure,
 In word, in deed, in shape, in countenance,
 That Nature might no more her child advance

The departure of the Lady Jane from the garden puts an end to this transient riot of the heart. With her departs the amorous illusion that had shed a temporary charm over the scene of his captivity, and he relapses into loneliness, now rendered tenfold more intolerable by this passing beam of unattainable beauty. Through the long and weary day he repines at his unhappy lot and when evening approaches and Phœbus, as he beautifully expresses it, had “bade farewell to every leaf and flower,” he still lingers at the window, and laying his head upon the cold stone, gives vent to a mingled flow of love and sorrow, until gradually lulled by the mute melancholy of the twilight hour, he lapses, “half sleeping, half swoon,” into a vision, which occupies the remainder of the poem, and in which is allegorically shadowed out the history of his passion.

When he wakes from his trance, he rises from his stony pillow, and pacing his apartment, full of

* *Largesse*, bounty.

† *Estate*, dignity

‡ *Cunning*, discretion.

dreary reflections, questions his spirit whither it has been wandering ; whether, indeed, all that has passed before his dreaming fancy has been conjured up by preceding circumstances ; or whether it is a vision, intended to comfort and assure him in his despondency. If the latter, he prays that some token may be sent to confirm the promise of happier days, given him in his slumbers. Suddenly, a turtledove, of the purest whiteness, comes flying in at the window, and alights upon his hand, bearing in her bill a branch of red gilliflower, on the leaves of which is written, in letters of gold, the following sentence :

Awake ! awake ! I bring, lover, I bring
 The new is glad that blissful is, and sure
 Of thy comfort ; now laugh, and play, and sing,
 For in the heaven decretit is thy cure.

He receives the branch with mingled hope and dread ; reads it with rapture : and this, he says, was the first token of his succeeding happiness. Whether this is a mere poetic fiction, or whether the Lady Jane did actually send him a token of her favour in this romantic way, remains to be determined according to the faith or fancy of the reader. He concludes his poem by intimating that the promise conveyed in the vision and by the flower is fulfilled, by his being restored to liberty, and made happy in the possession of the sovereign of his heart.

Such is the poetical account given by James of his love-adventures in Windsor Castle. How much of it is absolute fact, and how much the embellishment of fancy, it is fruitless to conjecture : let us not,

however, reject every romantic incident as incompatible with real life ; but let us sometimes take a poet at his word. I have noticed merely those parts of the poem immediately connected with the tower, and have passed over a large part, written in the allegorical vein, so much cultivated at that day. The language, of course, is quaint and antiquated, so that the beauty of many of its golden phrases will scarcely be perceived at the present day ; but it is impossible not to be charmed with the genuine sentiment, the delightful artlessness and urbanity, which prevail throughout it. The descriptions of nature, too, with which it is embellished, are given with a truth, a discrimination, and a freshness, worthy of the most cultivated periods of the art.

As an amatory poem, it is edifying in these days of coarser thinking, to notice the nature, refinement, and exquisite delicacy which pervade it ; banishing every gross thought or immodest expression, and presenting female loveliness, clothed in all its chivalrous attributes of almost supernatural purity and grace.

James flourished nearly about the time of Chaucer and Gower, and was evidently an admirer and studier of their writings. Indeed in one of his stanzas he acknowledges them as his masters and in some parts of his poem we find traces of similarity to their productions, more especially to those of Chaucer. There are always however, general features of resemblance in the works of contemporary authors, which are not so much borrowed from each other as from the

times. Writers, like bees, toll their sweets in the wide world; they incorporate with their own conceptions the anecdotes and thoughts current in society: and thus each generation has some features in common characteristic of the age in which it lived.

James belongs to one of the most brilliant eras of our literary history, and establishes the claims of his country to a participation in its primitive honours. Whilst a small cluster of English writers are constantly cited as the fathers of our verse, the name of their great Scottish compeer is apt to be passed over in silence, but he is evidently worthy of being enrolled in that little constellation of remote but never-failing luminaries, who shine in the highest firmament of literature, and who, like morning-stars, sang together at the bright dawning of British poesy.

Such of my readers as may not be familiar with Scottish history (though the manner in which it has of late been woven with captivating fiction has made it a universal study) may be curious to learn something of the subsequent history of James, and the fortunes of his love. His passion for the Lady Jane, as it was the solace of his captivity, so it facilitated his release, it being imagined by the court that the connexion with the blood-royal of England would attach him to its own interests. He was ultimately restored to his liberty and crown, having previously espoused the Lady Jane, who accompanied him to Scotland, and made him a most tender and devoted wife.

He found his kingdom in great confusion, the feudal chieftains having taken advantage of the troubles and irregularities of a long interregnum to strengthen themselves in their possessions, and place themselves above the power of the laws. James sought to found the basis of his power in the affections of his people. He attached the lower orders to him by the reformation of abuses, the temperate and equable administration of justice, the encouragement of the arts of peace, and the promotion of everything that could diffuse comfort, competency, and innocent enjoyment through the humblest ranks of society. He mingled occasionally among the common people in disguise ; visited their firesides ; entered into their cares, their pursuits, and their amusements ; informed himself of the mechanical arts, and how they could best be patronized and improved ; and was thus an all-pervading spirit, watching with a benevolent eye over the meanest of his subjects. Having in this generous manner made himself strong in the hearts of the common people, he turned himself to curb the power of the factious nobility ; to strip them of those dangerous immunities which they had usurped ; to punish such as had been guilty of flagrant offences ; and to bring the whole into proper obedience to the crown. For some time they bore this with outward submission, but with secret impatience and brooding resentment. A conspiracy was at length formed against his life, at the head of which was his own uncle, Robert Stewart, Earl of Athol, who, being too old himself

for the perpetration of the deed of blood, instigated his grandson, Sir Robert Stewart, together with Sir Robert Graham, and others of less note, to commit the deed. They broke into his bedchamber at the Dominican Convent, near Perth, where he was residing, and barbarously murdered him by oft-repeated wounds. His faithful queen, rushing to throw her tender body between him and the sword, was twice wounded in the ineffectual attempt to shield him from the assassin; and it was not until she had been forcibly torn from his person, that the murder was accomplished.

It was the recollection of this romantic tale of former times, and of the golden little poem which had its birthplace in this tower, that made me visit the old pile with more than common interest. The suit of armour hanging up in the hall, richly gilt and embellished, as if to figure in the tourney, brought the image of the gallant and romantic prince vividly before my imagination. I paced the deserted chambers where he had composed his poem; I leaned upon the window, and endeavoured to persuade myself it was the very one where he had been visited by his vision; I looked out upon the spot where he had first seen the Lady Jane. It was the same genial and joyous month; the birds were again vying with each other in strains of liquid melody; everything was bursting into vegetation, and budding forth the tender promise of the year. Time, which delights to obliterate the sterner memorials of human pride, seems to have passed lightly over this little

scene of poetry and love, and to have withheld his desolating hand. Several centuries have gone by yet the garden still flourishes at the foot of the tower. It occupies what was once the moat of the keep; and though some parts have been separated by dividing walls, yet others have still their arbours and shaded walks, as in the days of James, and the whole is sheltered, blooming, and retired. There is a charm about a spot that has been printed by the footsteps of departed beauty, and consecrated by the inspirations of the poet, which is heightened, rather than impaired, by the lapse of ages. It is, indeed, the gift of poetry to hallow every place in which it moves; to breathe around nature an odour more exquisite than the perfume of the rose, and to shed over it a tint more magical than the blush of morning.

Others may dwell on the illustrious deeds of James as a warrior and a legislator; but I have delighted to view him merely as the companion of his fellow-men, the benefactor of the human heart, stooping from his high estate to sow the sweet flowers of poetry and song in the paths of common life. He was the first to cultivate the vigorous and hardy plant of Scottish genius, which has since become so prolific of the most wholesome and highly-flavoured fruit. He carried with him into the sterner regions of the north all the fertilizing arts of southern refinement. He did everything in his power to win his countrymen to the gay, the elegant, and gentle arts, which soften and refine the character of a people, and wreath a grace round the loftiness of a proud and warlike

spirit. He wrote many poems, which, unfortunately for the fulness of his fame, are now lost to the world ; one, which is still preserved, called "Christ's Kirk of the Green," shows how diligently he had made himself acquainted with the rustic sports and pastimes which constitute such a source of kind and social feeling among the Scottish peasantry ; and with what simple and happy humour he could enter into their enjoyments. He contributed greatly to improve the national music ; and traces of his tender sentiment and elegant taste are said to exist in those witching airs still piped among the wild mountains and lonely glens of Scotland. He has thus connected his image with whatever is most gracious and endearing in the national character ; he has embalmed his memory in song, and floated his name to after-ages in the rich streams of Scottish melody. The recollection of these things was kindling at my heart as I paced the silent scene of his imprisonment. I have visited Vacluse with as much enthusiasm as a pilgrim would visit the shrine at Loretto ; but I have never felt more poetical devotion than when contemplating the old tower and the little garden at Windsor, and musing over the romantic loves of the Lady Jane and the Royal Poet of Scotland.

THE COUNTRY CHURCH

A gentleman !

What, O' the woolpack ? or the sugar-chest ?
Or lists of velvet ? which is't, pound or yard,
You vend your gentry by ?—BEGGAR'S BUSH.

THERE are few places more favourable to the study of character than an English country church. I was once passing a few weeks at the seat of a friend, who resided in the vicinity of one, the appearance of which particularly struck my fancy. It was one of those rich morsels of quaint antiquity which give such a peculiar charm to English landscape. It stood in the midst of a country filled with ancient families, and contained, within its cold and silent aisles, the congregated dust of many noble generations. The interior walls were incrustated with monuments of every age and style. The light streamed through windows dimmed with armorial bearings, richly emblazoned in stained glass. In various parts of the church were tombs of knights, and high-born dames, of gorgeous workmanship, with their effigies in coloured marble. On every side the eye was struck with some instance of aspiring mortality ; some haughty memorial which human pride had erected over its kindred dust, in this temple of the most humble of all religions.

The congregation was composed of the neighbouring people of rank, who sat in pews, sumptuously

lined and cushioned, furnished with richly-gilded prayer-books, and decorated with their arms upon the pew doors ; of the villagers and peasantry who filled the back seats, and a small gallery beside the organ ; and of the poor of the parish, who were ranged on benches in the aisles.

The service was performed by a snuffing wellfed vicar, who had a snug dwelling near the church. He was a privileged guest at all the tables of the neighbourhood, and had been the keenest fox-hunter in the country ; until age and good living had disabled him from doing anything more than ride to see the hounds throw off, and make one at the hunting dinner.

Under the ministry of such a pastor, I found it impossible to get into the train of thought suitable to the time and place ; so, having, like many other feeble Christians, compromised with my conscience, by laying the sin of my own delinquency at another person's threshold, I occupied myself by making observations on my neighbours.

I was as yet a stranger in England, and curious to notice the manners of its fashionable classes. I found, as usual, that there was the least pretension where there was the most acknowledged title to respect. I was particularly struck, for instance, with the family of a nobleman of high rank, consisting of several sons and daughters. Nothing could be more simple and unassuming than their appearance. They generally came to church in the plainest equipage, and often on foot. The

young ladies would stop and converse in the kindest manner with the peasantry, caress the children, and listen to the stories of the humble cottagers. Their countenances were open and beautifully fair, with an expression of high refinement, but, at the same time, a frank cheerfulness, and an engaging affability. Their brothers were tall, and elegantly formed. They were dressed fashionably, but simply ; with strict neatness and propriety, but without any mannerism or foppishness. Their whole demeanour was easy and natural, with that lofty grace, and noble frankness, which bespeak freeborn souls that have never been checked in their growth by feelings of inferiority. There is a healthful hardiness about real dignity, that never dreads contact and communion with others, however humble. It is only spurious pride that is morbid and sensitive, and shrinks from every touch. I was pleased to see the manner in which they would converse with the peasantry about those rural concerns and field-sports, in which the gentlemen of this country so much delight. In these conversations there was neither haughtiness on the one part, nor servility on the other ; and you were only reminded of the difference of rank by the habitual respect of the peasant.

In contrast to these was the family of a wealthy citizen, who had amassed a vast fortune ; and, having purchased the estate and mansion of a ruined nobleman in the neighbourhood, was endeavouring to assume all the style and dignity of an hereditary lord

of the soil. The family always came to church *en prince*. They were rolled majestically along in a carriage emblazoned with arms. The crest glittered in silver radiance from every part of the harness where a crest could possibly be placed. A fat coachman, in a three-cornered hat, richly laced, and a flaxen wig, curling close round his rosy face, was seated on the box, with a sleek Danish dog beside him. Two footmen, in gorgeous liveries, with huge bouquets, and gold-headed canes, lolled behind. The carriage rose and sunk on its long springs with peculiar stateliness of motion. The very horses champed their bits, arched their necks, and glanced their eyes more proudly than common horses ; either because they had caught a little of the family feeling, or were reined up more tightly than ordinary.

I could not but admire the style with which this splendid pageant was brought up to the gate of the churchyard. There was a vast effect produced at the turning of an angle of the wall ;—a great smacking of the whip, straining and scrambling of horses, glistening of harness, and flashing of wheels through gravel. This was the moment of triumph and vainglory to the coachman. The horses were urged and checked until they were fretted into a foam. They threw out their feet in a prancing trot, dashing about pebbles at every step. The crowd of villagers sauntering quietly to church, opened precipitately to the right and left, gaping in vacant admiration. On reaching the gate, the horses were pulled up with a suddenness that produced an

immediate stop, and almost threw them on their haunches.

There was an extraordinary hurry of the footman to alight, pull down the steps, and prepare everything for the descent on earth of this august family. The old citizen first emerged his round red face from out the door, looking about him with the pompous air of a man accustomed to rule on 'Change, and shake the Stock Market with a nod. His consort, a fine, fleshy, comfortable dame, followed him. There seemed, I must confess, but little pride in her composition. She was the picture of broad, honest, vulgar enjoyment. The world went well with her ; and she liked the world. She had fine clothes, a fine house, a fine carriage, fine children, everything was fine about her, it was nothing but driving about, and visiting and feasting. Life was to her a perpetual revel, it was one long Lord Mayor's day.

Two daughters succeeded to this goodly couple. They certainly were handsome ; but had a supercilious air that chilled admiration, and disposed the spectator to be critical. They were ultra-fashionable in dress ; and, though no one could deny the richness of their decorations, yet their appropriateness might be questioned amidst the simplicity of a country church. They descended loftily from the carriage and moved up the line of peasantry with a step that seemed dainty of the soil it trod on. They cast an excursive glance around, that passed coldly over the burly faces of the peasantry, until they met the eyes of the nobleman's family, when their countenances

immediately brightened into smiles, and they made the most profound and elegant courtesies, which were returned in a manner that showed they were but slight acquaintances.

I must not forget the two sons of this aspiring citizen, who came to church in a dashing curricie, with outriders. They were arrayed in the extremity of the mode, with all that pedantry of dress which marks the man of questionable pretensions to style. They kept entirely by themselves, eyeing every one askance that came near them, as if measuring his claims to respectability; yet they were without conversation, except the exchange of an occasional cant phrase. They even moved artificially; for their bodies, in compliance with the caprice of the day, had been disciplined into the absence of all ease and freedom. Art had done everything to accomplish them as men of fashion, but nature had denied them the nameless grace. They were vulgarly shaped, like men formed for the common purposes of life, and had that air of supercilious assumption which is never seen in the true gentleman.

I have been rather minute in drawing the pictures of these two families, because I considered them specimens of what is often to be met with in this country—the unpretending great, and the arrogant little. I have no respect for titled rank unless it be accompanied with true nobility of soul; but I have remarked in all countries where artificial distinctions exist, that the very highest classes are always the most courteous and unassuming. Those who are well assured of their

own standing are least apt to trespass on that of others; whereas nothing is so offensive as the aspirings of vulgarity, which thinks to elevate itself by humiliating its neighbour.

As I have brought these families into contrast, I must notice their behaviour in church. That of the nobleman's family was quiet, serious, and attentive. Not that they appeared to have any fervour of devotion, but rather a respect for sacred things and sacred places, inseparable from good breeding. The other on the contrary, were in a perpetual flutter and whisper; they betrayed a continual consciousness of finery, and a sorry ambition of being the wonders of a rural congregation.

The old gentleman was the only one really attentive to the service. He took the whole burden of family devotion upon himself, standing bolt upright, and uttering the responses with a loud voice that might be heard all over the church. It was evident that he was one of those thorough church-and-king men, who connect the idea of devotion and loyalty; who consider the Deity, somehow or other, of the government party, and religion "a very excellent sort of thing that ought to be countenanced and kept up."

When he joined so loudly in the service, it seemed more by way of example to the lower orders, to show them that, though so great and wealthy, he was not above being religious; as I have seen a turtle-fed alderman swallow publicly a basin of charity soup, smacking his lips at every mouthful, and pronouncing it "excellent food for the poor."

When the service was at an end, I was curious to witness the several exits of my groups. The young noblemen and their sisters, as the day was fine, preferred strolling home across the fields, chatting with the country people as they went. The others departed as they came, in grand parade. Again were the equipages wheeled up to the gate. There was again the smacking of whips, the clattering of hoofs, and the glittering of harness. The horses started off almost at a bound; the villagers again hurried to right and left; the wheels threw up a cloud of dust; and the aspiring family was rapt out of sight in a whirlwind.

THE WIDOW AND HER SON

Pittie olde age, within whose silver haire
Honour and reverence evermore have rained.

MARLOWE'S *TAMBURLAINE*.

Those who are in the habit of remarking such matters must have noticed the passive quiet of an English landscape on Sunday. The clacking of the mill, the regularly recurring stroke of the flail, the din of the blacksmith's hammer, the whistling of the ploughman, the rattling of the cart, and all other sounds of rural labour are suspended. The very farm-dogs bark less frequently, being less disturbed by passing travellers. At such times I have almost fancied the winds sunk into quiet, and that the sunny

landscape, with its fresh green tints melting into blue haze, enjoyed the hallowed calm.

Sweet day, so pure, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky.

Well was it ordained that the day of devotion should be a day of rest. The holy repose which reigns over the face of nature has its moral influence ; every restless passion is charmed down, and we feel the natural religion of the soul gently springing up within us. For my part, there are feelings that visit me in a country church, amid the beautiful serenity of nature, which I experience nowhere else ; and if not a more religious, I think I am a better man on Sunday than on any other day of the seven.

During my recent residence in the country I used frequently to attend at the old village church. Its shadowy aisles ; its mouldering monuments ; its dark oaken panelling, all reverend with the gloom of departed years, seemed to fit it for the haunt of solemn meditation ; but being in a wealthy aristocratic neighbourhood, the glitter of fashion penetrated even into the sanctuary ; and I felt myself continually thrown back upon the world by the frigidity and pomp of the poor worms around me. The only being in the whole congregation who appeared thoroughly to feel the humble and prostrate piety of a true Christian was a poor decrepit old woman, bending under the weight of years and infirmities. She bore the traces of something better than abject poverty. The lingerings of decent pride were visible in her appearance. Her dress, though humble in the

extreme, was scrupulously clean. Some trivial respect, too, had been awarded her, for she did not take her seat among the village poor, but sat alone on the altar. She seemed to have survived all love, all friendship, all society ; and to have nothing left her but the hopes of heaven. When I saw her feebly rising and bending her aged form in prayer ; habitually conning her prayer-book, which her palsied hand and failing eyes would not permit her to read, but which she evidently knew by heart ; I felt persuaded that the faltering voice of that poor woman arose to heaven far before the responses of the clerk, the swell of the organ, or the chanting of the choir.

I am fond of loitering about country churches, and this was so delightfully situated, that it frequently attracted me. It stood on a knoll, round which a small stream made a beautiful bend and then wound its way through a long reach of soft meadow scenery. The church was surrounded by yew-trees which seemed almost coeval with itself. Its tall Gothic spire shot up lightly from among them, with rooks and crows generally wheeling about it. I was seated there one still sunny morning, watching two labourers who were digging a grave. They had chosen one of the most remote and neglected corners of the churchyard ; where, from the number of nameless graves around, it would appear that the indigent and friendless were huddled into the earth. I was told that the new-made grave was for the only son of a poor widow. While I was meditating on the distinctions of worldly rank, which

extend thus down into the very dust, the toll of the bell announced the approach of the funeral. They were the obsequies of poverty, with which pride had nothing to do. A coffin of the plainest materials without pall or other covering, was borne by some of the villagers. The sexton walked before with an air of cold indifference. There were no mock mourners in the trappings of affected woe; but there was one real mourner who feebly tottered after the corpse. It was the aged mother of the deceased—the poor old woman whom I had seen seated on the steps of the altar. She was supported by an humble friend, who was endeavouring to comfort her. A few of the neighbouring poor had joined the train, and some children of the village were running hand in hand, now shouting with unthinking mirth, and now pausing to gaze, with childish curiosity, on the grief of the mourner.

As the funeral train approached the grave, the parson issued from the church porch, arrayed in the surplice, with prayer-book in hand, and attended by the clerk. The service, however, was a mere act of charity. The deceased had been destitute, and the survivor was penniless. It was shuffled through, therefore, in form, but coldly and unfeelingly. The well-fed priest moved but a few steps from the church door; his voice could scarcely be heard at the grave; and never did I hear the funeral service, that sublime and touching ceremony, turned into such a frigid mummary of words.

I approached the grave. The coffin was placed on the ground. On it were inscribed the name and age of the deceased—"George Somers, aged twenty-six years." The poor mother had been assisted to kneel down at the head of it. Her withered hands were clasped, as if in prayer, but I could perceive by a feeble rocking of the body, and a convulsive motion of the lips, that she was gazing on the last relics of her son, with the yearnings of a mother's heart.

Preparations were made to deposit the coffin in the earth. There was that bustling stir which breaks so harshly on the feelings of grief and affection; directions given in the cold tones of business; the striking of spades into sand and gravel; which, at the grave of those we love, is, of all sounds, the most withering. The bustle around seemed to waken the mother from a wretched reverie. She raised her glazed eyes, and looked about with a faint wildness. As the men approached with cords to lower the coffin into the grave, she wrung her hands, and broke into an agony of grief. The poor woman who attended her took her by the arm, endeavouring to raise her from the earth, and to whisper something like consolation—"Nay, now—nay, now—don't take it so sorely to heart." She could only shake her head and wring her hands, as one not to be comforted.

As they lowered the body into the earth, the creaking of the cords seemed to agonize her; but when, on some accidental obstruction, there was a justling of the coffin, all the tenderness of the mother burst; as

if any harm could come to him who was far beyond the reach of worldly suffering.

I could see no more—my heart swelled into my throat—my eyes filled with tears—I felt as if I were acting a barbarous part in standing by and gazing idly on this scene of maternal anguish. I wandered to another part of the churchyard, where I remained until the funeral train had dispersed.

When I saw the mother slowly and painfully quitting the grave, leaving behind her the remains of all that was dear to her on earth, and returning to silence and destitution, my heart ached for her. What, thought I, are the distresses of the rich! they have friends to soothe—pleasures to beguile—a world to divert and dissipate their griefs. What are the sorrows of the young! Their growing minds soon close above the wound—their elastic spirits soon rise beneath the pressure—their green and ductile affections soon twine round new objects. But the sorrows of the poor, who have no outward appliances to soothe—the sorrows of the aged, with whom life at best is but a wintry day, and who can look for no after-growth of joy—the sorrows of the widow, aged, solitary, destitute, mourning over an only son, the last solace of her years; these are indeed sorrows which make us feel the impotency of consolation.

It was some time before I left the churchyard. On my way homeward I met with the woman who had acted as comforter: she was just returning from accompanying the mother to her lonely habitation,

and I drew from her some particulars connected with the affecting scene I had witnessed.

The parents of the deceased had resided in the village from childhood. They had inhabited one of the neatest cottages, and by various rural occupations, and the assistance of a small garden, had supported themselves creditably and comfortably, and led a happy and blameless life. They had one son who had grown up to be the staff and pride of their age.—“Oh, sir !” said the good woman, “he was such a comely lad, so sweet-tempered, so kind to every one around him, so dutiful to his parents! It did one’s heart good to see him of a Sunday, dressed out in his best, so tall, so straight, so cheery supporting his old mother to church—for she was always fonder of leaning on George’s arm than on her good man’s; and poor soul she might well be proud of him, for a finer lad there was not in the country round.”

Unfortunately, the son was tempted, during a year of scarcity and agricultural hardship, to enter into the service of one of the small craft that plied on a neighbouring river. He had not been long in this employ when he was entrapped by a pressgang, and carried off to sea. His parents received tidings of his seizure, but beyond that they could learn nothing. It was the loss of their main prop. The father, who was already infirm, grew heartless and melancholy, and sunk into the grave. The widow, left lonely in her age and feebleness, could no longer support herself, and came upon the parish. Still

there was a kind feeling toward her throughout the village, and a certain respect as being one of the oldest inhabitants. As no one applied for the cottage, in which she had passed so many happy days, she was permitted to remain in it, where she lived solitary and almost helpless. The few wants of nature were chiefly supplied from the scanty productions of her little garden, which the neighbours would now and then cultivate for her. It was but a few days before the time at which these circumstances were told me, that she was gathering some vegetables for her repast, when she heard the cottage door which faced the garden suddenly opened. A stranger came out, and seemed to be looking eagerly and wildly around. He was dressed in seaman's clothes, was emaciated and ghastly pale and bore the air of one broken by sickness, and hardships. He saw her, and hastened towards her, but his steps were faint and faltering; he sank on his knees before her, and sobbed like a child. The poor woman gazed upon him with a vacant and wandering eye—"Oh my dear, dear mother! don't you know your son? your poor boy George?" It was, indeed, the wreck of her once noble lad, who shattered by wounds, by sickness, and foreign imprisonment, had, at length, dragged his wasted limbs homeward, to repose among the scenes of his childhood.

I will not attempt to detail the particulars of such a meeting, where joy and sorrow were so completely blended: still he was alive! he was come home! he might yet live to comfort and cherish her old age!

Nature, however, was exhausted in him ; and if anything had been wanting to finish the work of fate, the desolation of his native cottage would have been sufficient. He stretched himself on the pallet on which his widowed mother had passed many a sleepless night, and he never rose from it again.

The villagers, when they heard that George Somers had returned, crowded to see him, offering every comfort and assistance that their humble means afforded. He was too weak, however, to talk—he could only look his thanks. His mother was his constant attendant ; and he seemed unwilling to be helped by any other hand.

There is something in sickness that breaks down the pride of manhood ; that softens the heart, and brings it back to the feelings of infancy. Who that has languished, even in advanced life, in sickness and despondency ; who that has pined on a weary bed in the neglect and loneliness of a foreign land ; but has thought on the mother “that looked on his childhood,” that smoothed his pillow, and administered to his helplessness ? Oh ! there is an enduring tenderness in the love of a mother to her son that transcends all other affections of the heart. It is neither to be chilled by selfishness, nor daunted by danger, nor weakened by worthlessness, nor stifled by ingratitude. She will sacrifice every comfort to his convenience ; she will surrender every pleasure to his enjoyment ; she will glory in his fame, and exult in his prosperity :—and, if misfortune overtake him, he will be the dearer to her from misfortune ; and if disgrace settle upon his name, she will still love and cherish

him in spite of his disgrace; and if all the world beside cast him off, she will be all the world to him.

Poor George Somers had known what it was to be in sickness, and none to soothe—lonely and in prison, and none to visit him. He could not endure his mother from his sight; if she moved away, his eye would follow her. She would sit for hours by his bed, watching him as he slept. Sometimes he would start from a feverish dream, and look anxiously up until he saw her bending over him; when he would take her hand, lay it on his bosom, and fall asleep with the tranquillity of a child. In this way he died.

My first impulse on hearing this humble tale of affliction was to visit the cottage of the mourner, and administer pecuniary assistance, and, if possible, comfort. I found, however, on inquiry, that the good feelings of the villagers had prompted them to do everything that the case admitted; and as the poor know best how to console each other's sorrows, I did not venture to intrude.

The next Sunday I was at the village church; when, to my surprise, I saw the poor old woman tottering down the aisle to her accustomed seat on the steps of the altar.

She had made an effort to put on something like mourning for her son; and nothing could be more touching than this struggle between pious affection and utter poverty: a black riband or so, a faded black handkerchief, and one or two more such humble attempts to express by outward signs that grief which passes show. When I looked round upon the storied

monuments, the stately hatchments, the cold marble pomp, with which grandeur mourned magnificently over departed pride and turned to this poor widow, bowed down by age and sorrow, at the altar of her God, and offering up the prayers and praises of a pious, though a broken heart, I felt that this living monument of real grief was worth them all.

I related her story to some of the wealthy members of the congregation, and they were moved by it. They exerted themselves to render her situation more comfortable, and to lighten her afflictions. It was, however, but smoothing a few steps to the grave. In the course of a Sunday or two after, she was missed from her usual seat at church, and before I left the neighbourhood, I heard, with a feeling of satisfaction, that she had quietly breathed her last, and had gone to rejoin those she loved, in that world where sorrow is never known, and friends are never parted.

A SUNDAY IN LONDON

In a preceding paper I have spoken of an English Sunday in the country, and its tranquillizing effect upon the landscape ; but where is its sacred influence more strikingly apparent than in the very heart of that great Babel, London ? On this sacred day, the gigantic monster is charmed into repose. The intolerable din and struggle of the week are at an

end. The shops are shut. The fires of forges and manufactories are extinguished ; and the sun, no longer obscured by murky clouds of smoke, pours down a sober, yellow radiance into the quiet streets. The few pedestrians we meet, instead of hurrying forward with anxious countenances, move leisurely along ; their brows are smoothed from the wrinkles of business and care ; they have put on their Sunday looks, and Sunday manners, with their Sunday clothes, and are cleansed in mind as well as in person.

And now the melodious clangour of bells from church towers summons their several flocks to the fold. Forth issues from his mansion the family of the decent tradesman, the small children in the advance ; then the citizen and his comely spouse, followed by the grown-up daughters, with small morocco-bound prayer-books laid in the folds of their pocket-handkerchiefs. The housemaid looks after them from the window, admiring the finery of the family, and receiving, perhaps, a nod and smile from her young mistresses, at whose toilet she has assisted.

Now rumbles along the carriage of some magnate of the city, peradventure an alderman or a sheriff, and now the patter of many feet announces a procession of charity scholars, in uniforms of antique cut, and each with a prayer-book under his arm.

The ringing of bells is at an end ; the rumbling of the carriage has ceased ; the pattering of feet is

heard no more ; the flocks are folded in ancient churches, cramped up in by-lanes and corners of the crowded city, where the vigilant beadle keeps watch like the shepherd's dog, round the threshold of the sanctuary. For a time everything is hushed ; but soon is heard the deep prevailing sound of the organ, rolling and vibrating through the empty lanes and courts ; and the sweet chanting of the choir making them resound with melody and praise. Never have I been more sensible of the sanctifying effect of church music, than when I have heard it thus poured forth like a river of joy through the inmost recesses of this great metropolis, elevating it, as it were, from all the sordid pollutions of the week ; and bearing the poor world-worn soul on a tide of triumphant harmony to heaven.

The morning service is at an end. The streets are again alive with the congregations returning to their homes, but soon again relapse into silence. Now comes on the Sunday dinner, which, to the city tradesman, is a meal of some importance. There is more leisure for social enjoyment at the board. Members of the family can now gather together, who are separated by the laborious occupations of the week. A school-boy may be permitted on that day to come to the paternal home ; an old friend of the family takes his accustomed Sunday seat at the board, tells over his well-known stories, and rejoices young and old with his well-known jokes.

On Sunday afternoon the city pours forth its legions to breathe the fresh air and enjoy the

sunshine of the parks and rural 'environs. Satirists may say what they please about the rural enjoyments of a London citizen on Sunday, but to me there is something delightful in beholding the poor prisoner of the crowded and dusty city enabled thus to come forth once a week and throw himself upon the green bosom of nature. He is like a child restored to the mother's breast; and they who first spread out these noble parks and magnificent pleasure-grounds which surround this huge metropolis, have done at least as much for its health and morality, as if they had expended the amount of cost, in hospitals, prisons, and penitentiaries.

RURAL FUNERALS

Here's a few flowers ! but about midnight more .
 The herbs that have on them cold dew o' the night
 Are strewings fitt'st for graves—
 You were as flowers now wither'd ; even so
 These herblets shall which we upon you strow.---

CYMBELINE.

AMONG the beautiful and simple-hearted customs of rural life which still linger in some parts of England, are those of strewing flowers before the funerals, and planting them at the graves of departed friends. These, it is said, are the remains of some of the rites of the primitive

church; but they are of still higher antiquity, having been observed among the Greeks and Romans, and frequently mentioned by their writers, and were no doubt, the spontaneous tributes of unlettered affection, originating long before art had tasked itself to modulate sorrow into song, or story it on the monument. They are now only to be met with in the most distant and retired places of the kingdom, where fashion and innovation have not been able to throng in, and trample out all the curious and interesting traces of the olden time.

In Glamorganshire, we are told, the bed whereon the corpse lies is covered with flowers, a custom alluded to in one of the wild and plaintive ditties of Ophelia :

White his shroud as the mountain snow.
 Larded all with sweet flowers ;
 Which be-wept to the grave did go,
 With true-love showers.

There is also a most delicate and beautiful rite observed in some of the remote villages of the south, at the funeral of a female who has died young and unmarried. A chaplet of white flowers is borne before the corpse by a young girl nearest in age, size, and resemblance, and is afterwards hung up in the church over the accustomed seat of the deceased. These chaplets are sometimes made of paper, in imitation of flowers, and inside of them is generally a pair of white gloves. They are intended as emblems of the purity of the deceased, and the crown of glory which she has received in heaven.

In some parts of the country, also, the dead are carried to the grave with the singing of psalms and hymns: a kind of triumph, "to show," says Bourne, "that they have finished their course with joy, and are become conquerors." This, I am informed, is observed in some of the northern countries, particularly in Northumberland, and it has a pleasing, though melancholy effect, to hear, of a still evening, in some lonely country scene, the mournful melody of a funeral dirge swelling from a distance, and to see the train slowly moving along the landscape.

Thus, thus, and thus, we compass round
Thy harmless and unhaunted ground,
And as we sing thy dirge, we will
The daffodill
And other flowers lay upon
The altar of our love, thy stone.—HERRICK.

There is also a solemn respect paid by the traveller to the passing funeral in these sequestered places; for such spectacles, occurring among the quiet abodes of nature, sink deep into the soul. As the mourning train approaches, he pauses, uncovered, to let it go by; he then follows silently in the rear; sometimes quite to the grave, at other times for a few hundred yards, and, having paid this tribute of respect to the deceased, turns and resumes his journey.

The rich vein of melancholy which runs through the English character, and gives it some of its most touching and ennobling graces, is finely evidenced in these pathetic customs, and in the solicitude shown

by the common people for an honoured and a peaceful grave. The humblest peasant, whatever may be his lowly lot while living, is anxious that some little respect may be paid to his remains. Sir Thomas Overbury, describing the "faire and happy milkmaid," observes, "thus lives she, and all her care is, that she may die in the spring-time, to have store of flowers stucke upon her winding-sheet." The poets, too, who always breathe the feeling of a nation, continually advert to this fond solicitude about the grave. In "The Maid's Tragedy," by Beaumont and Fletcher, there is a beautiful instance of the kind describing the capricious melancholy of a broken-hearted girl :

When she sees a bank
Stuck full of flowers, she, with a sigh, will tell
Her servants, what a pretty place it were
To bury lovers in ; and make her maids
Pluck 'em, and strew her over like a corse.

The custom of decorating graves was once universally prevalent : osiers were carefully bent over them to keep the turf uninjured, and about them were planted evergreens and flowers. "We adorn their graves," says Evelyn, in his *Sylva*, "with flowers and redolent plants, just emblems of the life of man, which has been compared in Holy Scripture to those fading beauties, whose roots buried in dishonour, rise again in glory." This usage has now become extremely rare in England ; but it may still be met with in the churchyards of retired villages, among the Welsh mountains ; and I recollect an

instance of it at the small town of Ruthven, which lies at the head of the beautiful vale of Clewyd. I have been told also by a friend, who was present at the funeral of a young girl in Glamorganshire, that the female attendants had their aprons full of flowers, which, as soon as the body was interred, they stuck about the grave.

He noticed several graves which had been decorated in the same manner. As the flowers had been merely stuck in the ground, and not planted, they had soon withered, and might be seen in various states of decay ; some drooping, others quite perished. They were afterwards to be supplanted by holly, rosemary, and other evergreens, which on some graves had grown to great luxuriance, and overshadowed the tombstones.

There was formerly a melancholy fancifulness in the arrangement of these rustic offerings, that had something in it truly poetical. The rose was sometimes blended with the lily, to form a general emblem of frail mortality. "This sweet flower," says Evelyn, "borne on a branch set with thorns, and accompanied with the lily, are natural hieroglyphics of our fugitive, umbratile, anxious, and transitory life, which, making so fair a show for a time, is not yet without its thorns and crosses." The nature and colour of the flowers, and of the ribands with which they were tied, had often a particular reference to the qualities or story of the deceased, or were expressive of the feelings of the mourner. In an old poem, entitled, "Corydon's

Doleful Knell" a lover specifies the decorations he intends to use :

A garland shall be framed
 By art and nature's skill
 Of sundry-colored flowers,
 In token of good-will.
 And sundry-colored ribands
 On it I will bestow ;
 But chiefly blacke and yellows
 With her to grave shall go.
 I'll deck her tomb with flowers,
 The rarest ever seen ;
 And with my tears as showers,
 I'll keep them fresh and green.

The white rose, we are told, was planted at the grave of a virgin ; her chaplet was tied with white ribands, in token of her spotless innocence ; though sometimes black ribands were intermingled, to bespeak the grief of the survivors. The red rose was occasionally used in remembrance of such as had been remarkable for benevolence ; but roses in general were appropriated to the graves of lovers. Evelyn tells us that the custom was not altogether extinct in his time, near his dwelling in the country of Surrey, "where the maidens yearly planted and decked the graves of their defunct sweethearts with rose-bushes." And Camden likewise remarks, in his *Britannia* : "Here is also a certain custom observed time out of mind, of planting rose-trees upon the graves, especially by the young men and maids who have lost their loves ; so that this churchyard is now full of them."

When the deceased had been unhappy in their loves, emblems of a more gloomy character were used, such as the yew and cypress : and if flowers were strewn, they were of the most melancholy colours. Thus, in poems by Thomas Stanley, Esq. (published in 1651), is the following stanza :

Yet strew
Upon my dismall grave
Such offerings as you have,
Forsaken cypresse and sad yewe ;
For kinder flowers can take no birth
Or growth from such unhappy earth.

In "The Maid's Tragedy," a pathetic little air is introduced, illustrative of this mode of decorating the funerals of females who had been disappointed in love :

Lay a garland on my hearse,
Of the dismall yew,
Maidens, willow branches wear,
Say I died true.

My love was false, but I was firm
From my hour of birth ;
Upon my buried body lie
Lightly, gentle earth.

The natural effect of sorrow over the dead is to refine and elevate the mind ; and we have a proof of it in the purity of sentiment and the unaffected elegance of thought which pervaded the whole of these funeral observances. Thus, it was an especial precaution, that none but sweet-scented evergreens

and flowers should be employed. The intention seems to have been to soften the horrors of the tomb, to beguile the mind from brooding over the disgraces of perishing mortality and to associate the memory of the deceased with the most delicate and beautiful objects in nature. There is a dismal process going on in the grave, ere dust can return to its kindred dust, which the imagination shrinks from contemplating ; and we seek still to think of the form we have loved with those refined associations which it awakened when blooming before us in youth and beauty. "Lay her i' the earth," says Laertes, of his virgin sister,

And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring !

Herrick, also, in his "Dirge of Jephtha," pours forth a fragrant flow of poetical thought and image, which in a manner embalms the dead in the recollections of the living.

Sleep in thy peace, thy bed of spice,
And make this place all Paradise :
May sweets grow here and smoke from hence
Fat frankincense.

Let balme and cassia send their scent
From out thy maiden monument.

* * * *

May all shie maids at wonted hours
Come forth to strew thy tombe with flowers !
May virgins, when they come to mourn,
Male incense burn

Upon thine altar ! then return
And leave thee sleeping in thine urn.

I might crowd my page with extracts from the older British poets who wrote when these rites were more prevalent, and delighted frequently to allude to them ; but I have already quoted more than is necessary. I cannot, however, refrain from giving a passage from Shakspeare, even though it should appear trite ; which illustrates the emblematical meaning often conveyed in these floral tributes : and at the same time possesses that magic of language and appositeness of imagery for which he stands pre-eminent.

With fairest flowers,
While summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave ; thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose ; nor
The azured harebell, like thy veins ; no, nor
The leaf of eglantine ; whom not to slander
Outsweeten'd not thy breath.

There is certainly something more affecting in these prompt and spontaneous offerings of nature, than in the most costly monuments of art ; the hand strews the flower while the heart is warm, and the tear falls on the grave as affection is binding the osier round the sod ; but pathos expires under the slow labour of the chisel, and is chilled among the cold conceits of sculptured marble.

It is greatly to be regretted, that a custom so truly elegant and touching has disappeared from general use, and exists only in the most remote and insignificant villages. But it seems as if poetical custom always shuns the walks of cultivated society.

In proportion as people grow polite they cease to be poetical. They talk of poetry, but they have learnt to check its free impulses, to distrust its sallying emotions, and to supply its most affecting and picturesque usages, by studied form and pompous ceremonial. Few pageants can be more stately and frigid than an English funeral in town. It is made up of show and gloomy parade; mourning carriages, mourning horses, mourning plumes, and hireling mourners, who make a mockery of grief. "There is a grave digged," says Jeremy Taylor, "and solemn mourning, and a great talk in the neighbourhood, and when the daies are finished, they shall be, and they shall be remembered no more." The associate in the gay and crowded city is soon forgotten; the hurrying succession of new inmates and new pleasures effaces him from our minds, and the very scenes and circles in which he moved are incessantly fluctuating. But funerals in the country are solemnly impressive. The stroke of death makes a wider space in the village circle, and is an awful event in the tranquil uniformity of rural life. The passing bell tolls its knell in every ear; it steals with its pervading melancholy over hill and vale, and saddens all the landscape.

The fixed and unchanging features of the country also perpetuate the memory of the friend with whom we once enjoyed them; who was the companion of our most retired walks, and gave animation to every lonely scene. His idea is associated with every charm of nature; we hear his voice in the echo which he

once delighted to awaken ; his spirit haunts the grove which he once frequented ; we think of him in the wild upland solitude, or amidst the pensive beauty of the valley. In the freshness of joyous morning, we remember his beaming smiles and bounding gaiety ; and when sober evening returns, with its gathering shadows and subduing quiet, we call to mind many a twilight hour of gentle talk and sweet-souled melancholy.

Each lonely place shall him restore,
For him the tear be duly shed ;
Beloved, till life can charm no more ;
And mourn'd till pity's self be dead.

Another cause that perpetuates the memory of the deceased in the country is that the grave is more immediately in sight of the survivors. They pass it on their way to prayer ; it meets their eyes when their hearts are softened by the exercises of devotion ; they linger about it on the Sabbath, when the mind is disengaged from worldly cares, and most disposed to turn aside from present pleasures and present loves, and to sit down among the solemn mementos of the past. In North Wales the peasantry kneel and pray over the graves of their deceased friends for several Sundays after the interment ; and where the tender rite of strewing and planting flowers is still practised, it is always renewed on Easter, Whitsuntide, and other festivals, when the season brings the companion of former festivity more vividly to mind. It is also invariably performed by the nearest relatives

and friends ; no menials nor hirelings are employed ; and if a neighbour yields assistance, it would be deemed an insult to offer compensation.

I have dwelt upon this beautiful rural custom, because, as it is one of the last, so it is one of the holiest offices of love. The grave is the ordeal of true affection. It is there that the divine passion of the soul manifests its superiority to the instinctive impulses of mere animal attachment. The latter must be continually refreshed and kept alive by the presence of its object ; but the love that is seated in the soul can live on long remembrance. The mere inclinations of sense languish and decline with the charms which excited them, and turn with shuddering disgust from the dismal precincts of the tomb : but it is thence that truly spiritual affection rises, purified from every sensual desire, and returns, like a holy flame to illumine and sanctify the heart of the survivor.

The sorrow for the dead is the only sorrow from which we refuse to be divorced. Every other wound we seek to heal—every other affliction to forget ; but this wound we consider it a duty to keep open—this affliction we cherish and brood over in solitude. Where is the mother who would willingly forget the infant that perished like a blossom from her arms, though every recollection is a pang ? Where is the child that would willingly forget the most tender of parents, though to remember be but to lament ? Who, even in the hour of agony, would forget the friend over whom he mourns ? Who,

even when the tomb is closing upon the remains of her he most loved ; when he feels his heart, as it were, crushed in the closing of its portal ; would accept of consolation that must be bought by forgetfulness ?—No, the love which survives the tomb is one of the noblest attributes of the soul. If it has its woes, it has likewise its delights ; and when the overwhelming burst of grief is calmed into the gentle tear of recollection ; when the sudden anguish and the convulsive agony over the present ruins of all that we most loved, is softened away into pensive meditation on all that it was in the days of its loveliness—who would root out such a sorrow from the heart ? Though it may sometimes throw a passing cloud over the bright hour of gaiety, or spread a deeper sadness over the hour of gloom, yet who would exchange it, even for the song of pleasure or the burst of revelry ? No, there is a voice from the tomb sweeter than song. There is a remembrance of the dead to which we turn even from the charms of the living. Oh, the grave !—the grave !—It buries every error—covers every defect—extinguishes every resentment ! From its peaceful bosom spring none but fond regrets and tender recollections. Who can look down upon the grave even of an enemy, and not feel a compunctious throb, that he should ever have warred with the poor handful of earth that lies mouldering before him !

But the grave of those we loved—what a place for meditation ! There it is that we call up in long review the whole history of virtue and gentleness,

and the thousand endearments lavished upon us almost unheeded in the daily intercourse of intimacy—there it is that we dwell upon the tenderness, the solemn, awful tenderness of the parting scene. The bed of death, with all its stifled griefs—its noiseless attendance—its mute, watchful assiduities. The last testimonies of expiring love ! The feeble, fluttering, thrilling—oh ! how thrilling ! pressure of the hand ! The faint, faltering accents, struggling in death to give one more assurance of affection ! The last fond look of the glazing eye, turning upon us even from the threshold of existence !

Ay, go to the grave of buried love, and meditate. There settle the account with thy conscience for every past benefit unrequited—every past endearment unregarded, of that departed being, who can never—never—never return to be soothed by thy contrition !

If thou art a child, and hast ever added a sorrow to the soul, or a furrow to the silvered brow of an affectionate parent—if thou art a husband, and hast ever caused the fond bosom that ventured its whole happiness in thy arms to doubt one moment of thy kindness or thy truth—if thou art a friend, and hast ever wronged, in thought, or word, or deed, the spirit that generously confided in thee—if thou art a lover, and hast ever given one unmerited pang to that true heart which now lies cold and still beneath thy feet ;—then be sure that every unkind look, every ungracious word, every ungentle action, will come thronging back upon thy memory, and knocking dolefully at thy soul—then be sure that

thou wilt lie down sorrowing and repentant on the grave, and utter the unheard groan, and pour the unavailing tear ; more deep, more bitter, because unheard and unavailing.

Then weave thy chaplet of flowers, and strew the beauties of nature about the grave ; console thy broken spirit, if thou canst, with these tender, yet futile tributes of regret ; but take warning by the bitterness of this thy contrite affliction over the dead, and henceforth be more faithful and affectionate in the discharge of thy duties to the living.

In writing the preceding article, it was not intended to give a full detail of the funeral customs of the English peasantry, but merely to furnish a few hints and quotations illustrative of particular rites, to be appended, by way of note, to another paper, which has been withheld. The article swelled insensibly into its present form, and this is mentioned as an apology for so brief and casual a notice of these usages after they have been amply and learnedly investigated in other works.

I must observe, also, that I am well aware that this custom of adorning graves with flowers prevails in other countries besides England. Indeed, in some it is much more general, and is observed even by the rich and fashionable ; but it is then apt to lose

its simplicity, and to degenerate into affectation. Bright, in his travels in Lower Hungary, tells us of monuments of marble, and recesses formed for retirement, with seats placed among bowers of greenhouse plants ; and that the graves generally are covered with the gayest flowers of the season. He gives a casual picture of filial piety, which I cannot but describe ; for I trust it is as useful as it is delightful, to illustrate the amiable virtues of the sex. "When I was at Berlin," says he, "I followed the celebrated Iffland to the grave. Mingled with some pomp, you might trace much real feeling. In the midst of the ceremony, my attention was attracted by a young woman, who stood on a mound of earth, newly covered with turf, which she anxiously protected from the feet of the passing crowd. It was the tomb of her parent ; and the figure of this affectionate daughter presented a monument more striking than the most costly work of art."

I will barely add an instance of sepulchral decoration that I once met among the mountains of Switzerland. It was at the village of Gersau, which stands on the borders of the Lake of Lucerne, at the foot of Mount Rigi. It was once the capital of a miniature republic, shut up between the Alps and the Lake, and accessible on the land side only by foot-paths. The whole force of the republic did not exceed six hundred fighting men ; and few miles of circumference, scooped out, as it were, from the bosom of the mountains, comprised its territory. The village of Gersau seemed separated from the

rest of the world, and retained the golden simplicity of a purer age. It had a small church, with a burying-ground adjoining. At the heads of the graves were placed crosses of wood or iron. On some were affixed miniatures, rudely executed, but evidently attempts at likenesses of the deceased. On the crosses were hung chaplets of flowers—some withering, others fresh, as if occasionally renewed. I paused with interest at this scene ; I felt that I was at the source of poetical description, for these were the beautiful but unaffected offerings of the heart which poets are fain to record. In a gayer and more populous place, I should have suspected them to have been suggested by factitious sentiment, derived from books ; but the good people of Gersau knew little of books ; there was not a novel nor a love-poem in the village ; and I question whether any peasant of the place dreamt, while he was twining a fresh chaplet for the grave of his mistress, that he was fulfilling one of the most fanciful rites of poetical devotion, and that he was practically a poet.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

When I behold, with deep astonishment,
 To famous Westminster how there resorte,
 Living in brasse or stoney monument,
 The princes and the worthies of all sorte ;
 Do not I see reformed nobilitie,
 Without contempt, or pride, or ostentation,
 And looke upon offenselesse majesty,
 Naked of pomp or earthly domination ?
 And how a play-game of a painted stone
 Contents the quiet now and silent sprites,
 Whome all the world which late they stood upon
 Could not content nor quench their appetites.

Life is a frost of cold felicity,

And death the thaw of all our vanitie.

CHRISTOLERO'S EPIGRAMS BY T. B., 1598.

On one of those sober and rather melancholy days, in the latter part of autumn, when the shadows of morning and evening almost mingle together, and throw a gloom over the decline of the year, I passed several hours in rambling about Westminster Abbey. There was something congenial to the season in the mournful magnificence of the old pile ; and as I passed its threshold, it seemed like stepping back into the regions of antiquity, and losing myself among the shades of former ages.

I entered from the inner court of Westminster School, through a long, low, vaulted passage, that had an almost subterranean look, being dimly lighted in one part by circular perforations in the massive walls. Through this dark avenue I had a distant view of the cloisters, with the figure of an

old verger, in his black gown, moving along their shadowy vaults, and seeming like a spectre from one of neighbouring tombs. The approach to the abbey through these gloomy monastic remains prepares the mind for its solemn contemplation. The cloisters still retain something of the quiet and seclusion of former days. The grey walls are discoloured by damp, and crumbling with age ; a coat of hoary moss has gathered over the inscriptions of the mural monuments, and obscured the death's heads and other funeral emblems. The sharp touches of the chisel are gone from the rich tracery of the arches ; the roses which adorned the keystones have lost their leafy beauty ; everything bears marks of the gradual dilapidations of time, which yet has something touching and pleasing in its very decay.

The sun was pouring down a yellow autumnal ray into the square of the cloisters ; beaming upon a scanty plot of grass in the centre, and lighting up an angle of the vaulted passage with a kind of dusky splendour. From between the arcades the eye glanced up to a bit of blue sky or a passing cloud, and beheld the sun-gilt pinnacles of the abbey towering into the azure heaven.

As I paced the cloisters, sometimes contemplating this mingled picture of glory and decay, and sometimes endeavouring to decipher the inscriptions on the tombstones, which formed the pavement beneath my feet, my eye was attracted to three figures, rudely carved in relief, but nearly worn away by the footsteps of many generations. They were the

effigies of three of the early abbots ; the epitaphs were entirely effaced ; the names alone remained, having no doubt been renewed in later times. (Vitalis. Abbas. 1082, and Gislebertus Crispinus. Abbas. 1114, and Laurentius. Abbas. 1176.) I remained some little while, musing over these casual relics of antiquity, thus left like wrecks upon this distant shore of time, telling no tale but that such beings had been and had perished ; teaching no moral but the futility of that pride which hopes still to exact homage in its ashes, and to live in an inscription. A little longer, and even these faint records will be obliterated, and the monument will cease to be a memorial. Whilst I was yet looking down upon these gravestones, I was roused by the sound of the abbey clock, reverberating from buttress to buttress, and echoing among the cloisters. It is almost startling to hear this warning of departed time sounding among the tombs, and telling the lapse of the hour, which, like a billow, has rolled us onward towards the grave. I pursued my walk to an arched door opening to the interior of the abbey. On entering here, the magnitude of the building breaks fully upon the mind, contracted with the vaults of the cloister. The eyes gaze with wonder at clustered columns of gigantic dimensions, with arches springing from them to such an amazing height ; and man wandering about their bases, shrunk into insignificance in comparison with his own handiwork. The spaciousness and gloom of this vast edifice, produce a profound and mysterious

awe. We step cautiously and softly about, as if fearful of disturbing the hallowed silence of the tomb; while every footfall whispers along the walls, and chatters among the sepulchres, making us more sensible of the quiet we have interrupted.

It seems as if the awful nature of the place presses down upon the soul, and hushes the beholder into noiseless reverence. We feel that we are surrounded by the congregated bones of the great men of past times, who have filled history with their renown.

And yet it almost provokes a smile at the vanity of human ambition, to see how they are crowded together and jostled in the dust; what parsimony is observed in doling out a scanty nook, a gloomy corner, a little portion of earth, to those whom, when alive, kingdoms could not satisfy; and how many shapes, and forms, and artifices are devised to catch the casual notice of the passenger, and save from forgetfulness, for a few short years, a name which once aspired to occupy ages of the world's thought and admiration.

I passed some time in Poets' Corner, which occupies an end of one of the transepts or cross aisles of the abbey. The monuments are generally simple; for the lives of literary men afford no striking themes for the sculptor. Shakspeare and Addison have statues erected to their memories; but the greater part have busts, medallions, and sometimes mere inscriptions. Notwithstanding the simplicity of these memorials, I have always observed that the visitors to the abbey remained longest about them.

A kinder and fonder feeling takes place of that cold curiosity or vague admiration with which they gaze on the splendid monuments of the great and the heroic. They linger about these as about the tombs of friends and companions; for indeed there is something of companionship between the author and the reader. Other men are known to posterity only through the medium of history, which is continually growing faint and obscure; but the intercourse between the author and his fellowmen is ever new, active, and immediate. He has lived for them more than for himself; he has sacrificed surrounding enjoyments, and shut himself up from the delights of social life, that he might the more intimately commune with distant minds and distant ages. Well may the world cherish his renown; for it has been purchased, not by deeds of violence and blood, but by the diligent dispensation of pleasure. Well may posterity be grateful to his memory; for he has left it an inheritance, not of empty names and sounding actions, but whole treasures of wisdom, bright gems of thought, and golden veins of language.

From Poets' Corner, I continued my stroll towards that part of the abbey which contains the sepulchres of the kings. I wandered among what once were chapels, but which are now occupied by the tombs and monuments of the great. At every turn I met with some illustrious name; or the cognizance of some powerful house renowned in history. As the eye darts into these dusky chambers of death, it

catches glimpses of quaint effigies ; some kneeling in niches, as if in devotion ; others stretched upon the tombs, with hands piously pressed together ; warriors in armour as if reposing after battle ; prelates with crosiers and mitres ; and nobles in robes and coronets, lying as it were in state. In glancing over this scene, so strangely populous, yet where every form is so still and silent, it seems almost as if we were treading a mansion of that fabled city, where every being had been suddenly transmuted into stone.

I paused to contemplate a tomb on which lay the effigy of a knight in complete armour. A large buckler was on one arm ; the hands were pressed together in supplication upon the breast : the face was almost covered by the morion ; the legs were crossed, in token of the warrior's having been engaged in the holy war. It was the tomb of a crusader ; of one of those military enthusiasts, who so strangely mingled religion and romance, and whose exploits form the connecting link between fact and fiction ; between the history and the fairy tale. There is something extremely picturesque in the tombs of these adventurers, decorated as they are with rude armorial bearings and Gothic sculpture. They comport with the antiquated chapels in which they are generally found ; and in considering them, the imagination is apt to kindle with the legendary associations, the romantic fiction, the chivalrous pomp and pageantry, which poetry has spread over the wars for the sepulchre of Christ. They are the relics of times utterly gone by ; of beings passed

from recollection ; of customs and manners with which ours have no affinity. They are like objects from some strange and distant land, of which we have no certain knowledge, and about which all our conceptions are vague and visionary. There is something extremely solemn and awful in those effigies on Gothic tombs, extended as if in the sleep of death, or in the supplication of the dying hour. They have an effect infinitely more impressive on my feelings than the fanciful attitudes, the over-wrought conceits, and allegorical groups, which abound on modern monuments. I have been struck, also, with the superiority of many of the old sepulchral inscriptions. There was a noble way, in former times, of saying things simply, and yet saying them proudly ; and I do not know an epitaph that breathes a loftier consciousness of family worth and honourable lineage, than one which affirms of a noble house, that "all the brothers were brave, and all the sisters virtuous."

In the opposite transept to Poets' Corner stands a monument which is among the most renowned achievements of modern art ; but which to me appears horrible rather than sublime. It is the tomb of Mrs. Nightingale, by Roubilliac. The bottom of the monument is represented as throwing open its marble doors, and a sheeted skeleton is starting forth. The shroud is falling from his fleshless frame as he launches his dart at his victim. She is sinking into her affrighted husband's arms, who strives, with vain and frantic effort, to avert the blow. The whole is executed with terrible truth

and spirit ; we almost fancy we hear the gibbering yell of triumph bursting from the distended jaws of the spectre. But why should we thus seek to clothe death with unnecessary terrors, and to spread horrors round the tomb of those we love ? The grave should be surrounded by everything that might inspire tenderness and veneration for the dead ; or that might win the living to virtue. It is the place, not of disgust and dismay, but of sorrow and meditation.

While wandering about these gloomy vaults and silent aisles, studying the records of the dead, the sound of busy existence from without occasionally reaches the ear ;—the rumbling of the passing equipage ; the murmur of the multitude ; or perhaps the light laugh of pleasure. The contrast is striking with the deathlike repose around ; and it has a strange effect upon the feelings, thus to hear the surges of active life hurrying along, and beating against the very walls of the sepulchre.

I continued in this way to move from tomb to tomb, and from chapel to chapel. The day was gradually wearing away ; the distant tread of loiterers about the abbey grew less and less frequent ; the sweet-tongued bell was summoning to evening prayers, and I saw at a distance the choristers, in their white surplices, crossing the aisle and entering the choir. I stood before the entrance to Henry the Seventh's chapel. A flight of steps lead up to it, through a deep and gloomy, but magnificent arch. Great gates of brass, richly and delicately wrought, turn heavily upon their hinges, as if proudly reluctar t

to admit the feet of common mortals into this most gorgeous of sepulchres.

On entering, the eye is astonished by the pomp of architecture, and the elaborate beauty of sculptured detail. The very walls are wrought into universal ornament, incrustcd with tracery, and scooped into niches, crowded with the statues of saints and martyrs. Stone seems, by the cunning labour of the chisel, to have been robbed of its weight and density, suspended aloft as if by magic, and the fretted roof achieved with the wonderful minuteness and airy security of a cobweb.

Along the sides of the chapel are the lofty stalls of the Knights of the Bath, richly carved of oak, though with the grotesque decorations of Gothic architecture. On the pinnacles of the stalls are affixed the helmets and crests of the knights, with their scarfs and swords ; and above them are suspended their banners, emblazoned with armorial bearings, and contrasting the splendour of gold and purple and crimson, with the cold gray fretwork of the roof. In the midst of this grand mausoleum stands the sepulchre of its founder,—his effigy, with that of his queen, extended on a sumptuous tomb, and the whole surrounded by a superbly-wrought brazer railing.

There is a sad dreariness in this magnificence ; this strange mixture of tombs and trophies ; these emblems of living and aspiring ambition, close beside mementos which show the dust and oblivion in which all must, sooner or later, terminate. Nothing

impresses the mind with a deeper feeling of loneliness than to tread the silent and deserted scene of former throng and pageant. On looking round on the vacant stalls of the knights and their esquires, and on the rows of dusty but gorgeous banners that were once borne before them, my imagination conjured up the scene when this hall was bright with the valour and beauty of the land ; glittering with the splendour of jewelled rank and military array ; alive with the tread of many feet and the hum of an admiring multitude. All had passed away ; the silence of death had settled again upon the place, interrupted only by the casual chirping of birds, which had found their way into the chapel, and built their nests among its friezes and pendants—sure signs of solitariness and desertion.

When I read the names inscribed on the banners, they were those of men scattered far and wide about the world ; some tossing upon distant seas ; some under arms in distant lands ; some mingling in the busy intrigues of courts and cabinets ; all seeking to deserve one more distinction in this mansion of shadowy honours : the melancholy reward on a monument.

Two small aisles on each side of this chapel present a touching instance of the equality of the grave, which brings down the oppressor to a level with the oppressed, and mingles the dust of the bitterest enemies together. In one is the sepulchre of the haughty Elizabeth ; in the other is that of her victim, the lovely and unfortunate

Mary. Not an hour in the day but some ejaculation of pity is uttered over the fate of the latter, mingled with indignation at her oppressor. The walls of Elizabeth's sepulchre continually echo with the sighs of sympathy heaved at the grave of her rival.

A peculiar melancholy reigns over the aisle where Mary lies buried. The light struggles dimly through windows darkened by dust. The greater part of the place is in the deep shadow, and the walls are stained and tinted by time and weather. A marble figure of Mary is stretched upon the tomb, round which is an iron railing much corroded, bearing her national emblem—the thistle. I was weary with wandering, and sat down to rest myself by the monument, revolving in my mind the chequered and disastrous story of poor Mary.

The sound of casual footsteps had ceased from the abbey. I could only hear, now and then, the distant voice of the priest repeating the evening service and the faint responses of the choir; these paused for a time and all was hushed. The stillness, the desertion, and obscurity that were gradually prevailing around gave a deeper and more solemn interest to the place :

For in the silent grave no conversation,
No joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers,
No careful father's counsel—nothing's heard,
For nothing is, but all oblivion,
Dust, and an endless darkness.

Suddenly the notes of the deep-labouring organ burst upon the ear, falling with doubled and redoubled

intensity, rolling, as it were, huge billows of sound. How well do their volume and grandeur accord with this mighty building ! With what pomp do they swell through its vast vaults, and breathe their awful harmony through these caves of death, and make the silent sepulchre vocal ! And now they rise in triumphant acclamation, heaving higher and higher their accordant notes, and piling sound on sound. And now they pause, and the soft voices of the choir break out into sweet gushes of melody ; they soar aloft, and warble along the roof, and seem to play about these lofty vaults like the pure airs of heaven. Again the pealing organ heaves its thrilling thunders, compressing air into music, and rolling it forth upon the soul. What long-drawn cadences ! What solemn sweeping concords ! It grows more and more dense and powerful—it fills the vast pile, and seems to jar the very walls—the ear is stunned—the senses are overwhelmed. And now it is winding up in full jubilee—it is rising from the earth to heaven—the very soul seems rapt away and floated upwards on this swelling tide of harmony !

I sat for some time lost in that kind of reverie which a strain of music is apt sometimes to inspire : the shadows of evening were gradually thickening round me ; the monuments began to cast deeper and deeper gloom ; and the distant clock again gave token of the slowly waning day.

I rose and prepared to leave the abbey. As I descended the flight of steps which lead into the body of the building, my eye was caught by the

shrine of Edward the Confessor, and I ascended the small staircase that conducts to it, to take from thence a general survey of this wilderness of tombs. The shrine is elevated upon a kind of platform, and close around it are the sepulchres of various kings and queens. From this eminence the eye looks down between pillars and funeral trophies to the chapels and chambers below, crowded with tombs ; where warriors, prelates, courtiers, and statesmen, lie mouldering in their “beds of the darkness.” Close by me stood the great chair of coronation, rudely carved of oak, in the barbarous taste of a remote and Gothic age. The scene seemed almost as if contrived, with theatrical artifice, to produce an effect upon the beholder. Here was a type of the beginning and the end of human pomp and power ; here it was literally but a step from the throne to the sepulchre. Would not one think that these incongruous mementos had been gathered together as a lesson to living greatness ?—to show it, even in the moment of its proudest exaltation, the neglect and dishonour to which it must soon arrive ; how soon that crown which encircles its brow must pass away, and it must lie down in the dust and disgraces of the tomb and be trampled upon by the feet of the meanest of the multitude. For, strange to tell, even the grave is here no longer a sanctuary. There is a shocking levity in some natures, which leads them to sport with awful and hallowed things ; and there are base minds, which delight to revenge on the illustrious dead the abject homage and grovelling servility which

they pay to the living. The coffin of Edward the Confessor has been broken open, and his remains despoiled of their funeral ornaments ; the sceptre has been stolen from the hand of the imperious Elizabeth, and the effigy of Henry the Fifth lies headless. Not a royal monument but bears some proof how false and fugitive is the homage of mankind. Some are plundered, some mutilated ; some covered with ribaldry and insult—all more or less outraged and dishonoured !

The last beams of day were now faintly streaming through the painted windows in the high vaults above me ; the lower parts of the abbey were already wrapped in the obscurity of twilight. The chapel and aisles grew darker and darker. The effigies of the kings faded into shadows ; the marble figures of the monuments assumed strange shapes in the uncertain light ; the evening breeze crept through the aisles like the cold breath of the grave ; and even the distant footfall of a verger, traversing the Poets' Corner, had something strange and dreary in its sound. I slowly retraced my morning's walk, and as I passed out at the portal of the cloisters, the door, closing with a jarring noise behind me, filled the whole building with echoes.

I endeavoured to form some arrangement in my mind of the objects I had been contemplating, but found they were already fallen into indistinctness and confusion. Names, inscriptions, trophies, had all become confounded in my recollection, though I had scarcely taken my foot from off the threshold. What,

thought I, is this vast assemblage of sepulchres but a treasury of humiliation ; a huge pile of reiterated homilies on the emptiness of renown, and the certainty of oblivion ! It is, indeed, the empire of Death ; his great shadowy palace, where he sits in state, mocking at the relics of human glory, and spreading dust and forgetfulness on the monuments of princes. How idle a boast, after all, is the immortality of a name ! Time is ever silently turning over his pages ; we are too much engrossed by the story of the present to think of the characters and anecdotes that gave interest to the past ; and each age is a volume thrown aside to be speedily forgotten. The idol of to-day pushes the hero of yesterday out of our recollection ; and will, in turn, be supplanted by his successor of to-morrow. “ Our fathers,” says Sir Thomas Browne, “ find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our survivors.” History fades into fable ; fact becomes clouded with doubt and controversy ; the inscription moulders from the tablet ; the statue falls from the pedestal. Columns, arches, pyramids, what are they but heaps of sand ; and their epitaphs, but characters written in the dust ? What is the security of a tomb, or the perpetuity of an embalmment ? The remains of Alexander the Great have been scattered to the wind, and his empty sarcophagus is now the mere curiosity of a museum. “ The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyzes or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth ; Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams.”*

* Sir T. Browne.

What, then, is to insure this pile which now towers above me from sharing the fate of mightier mausoleums? The time must come when its gilded vaults, which now spring so loftily, shall lie in rubbish beneath the feet; when, instead of the sound of melody and praise, the wind shall whistle through the broken arches, and the owl hoot from the shattered tower—when the garish sunbeam shall break into these gloomy mansions of death, and the ivy twine round the fallen column; and the foxglove hang its blossoms about the nameless urn, as if in mockery of the dead. Thus man passes away; his name perishes from record and recollection; his history is as a tale that is told, and his very monument becomes a ruin.

NOTES CONCERNING WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

Toward the end of the sixth century, when Britain, under the dominion of the Saxons, was in a state of barbarism and idolatry, Pope Gregory the Great, struck with the beauty of some Anglo-Saxon youths exposed for sale in the market-place at Rome, conceived a fancy for the race, and determined to send missionaries to preach the gospel among these comely but benighted islanders. He was encouraged to this by learning that Ethelbert, king of Kent, and the most potent of the Anglo-Saxon princes, had married Bertha, a Christian princess, only daughter of the king of Paris, and that she was allowed by stipulation the full exercise of her religion.

The shrewd pontiff knew the influence of the sex in matters of religious faith. He forthwith despatched Augustine, a Roman

monk, with forty associates, to the court of Ethelbert at Canterbury, to effect the conversion of the king, and to obtain through him a foothold in the island.

Ethelbert received them warily, and held a conference in the open air ; being distrustful of foreign priestcraft, and fearful of spells and magic. They ultimately succeeded in making him as good a Christian as his wife : the conversion of the king of course produced the conversion of his loyal subjects. The zeal and success of Augustine were rewarded by his being made Archbishop of Canterbury, and being endowed with authority over all the British Churches.

One of the most prominent converts was Segebert or Sebert, king of the East Saxons, a nephew of Ethelbert. He reigned at London, of which Mellitus, one of the Roman monks who had come over with Augustine, was made bishop.

Sebert, in 605, in his religious zeal, founded a monastery by the riverside to the west of the city, on the ruins of a temple of Apollo, being in fact the origin of the present pile of Westminster Abbey. Great preparations were made for the consecration of the church, which was to be dedicated to St. Peter. On the morning of the appointed day, Mellitus, the bishop, proceeded with great pomp and solemnity to perform the ceremony. On approaching the edifice, he was met by a fisherman, who informed him that it was needless to proceed, as the ceremony was over. The bishop stared with surprise, when the fisherman went on to relate, that the night before, as he was in his boat on the Thames, St. Peter appeared to him, and told him that he intended to consecrate the church himself, that very night. The apostle accordingly went into the church, which suddenly became illuminated. The ceremony was performed in sumptuous style, accompanied by strains of heavenly music and clouds of fragrant incense. After this, the apostle came into the boat and ordered the fisherman to cast his net. He did so, and had a miraculous draught of fishes ; one of which he was commanded to present to the bishop, and to signify to him that the apostle had relieved him from the necessity of consecrating

Mellitus was a wary man, slow of belief, and required confirmation of the fisherman's tale. He opened the church doors, and beheld wax candles, crosses, holy water, oil sprinkled in various places, and various other traces of a grand ceremonial. If he had still any lingering doubts, they were completely removed on the fisherman's producing the identical fish which he had been ordered by the apostle to present to him. To resist this would have been to resist ocular demonstration. The good bishop accordingly was convinced that the church had actually been consecrated by St. Peter in person; so he reverently abstained from proceeding further in the business.

The foregoing tradition is said to be the reason why King Edward the Confessor chose this place as the site of a religious house which he meant to endow. He pulled down the old church and built another in its place in 1045. In this his remains were deposited in a magnificent shrine.

The sacred edifice again underwent modifications, if not a reconstruction, by Henry III, in 1220, and began to assume its present appearance.

Under Henry VIII, it lost its conventual character, that monarch turning the monks away, and seizing upon the revenues.

RELICS OF EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

A curious narrative was printed in 1688, by one of the choristers of the cathedral, who appears to have been the Paul Pry of the sacred edifice, giving an account of his rummaging among the bones of Edward the Confessor after they had quietly reposed in their sepulchre upwards of six hundred years, and of his drawing forth the crucifix and golden chain of the deceased monarch. During eighteen years that he had officiated in the choir it had been a common tradition, he says, among his brother choristers and the gray-headed servants of the abbey, that the body of King Edward was deposited in a kind of chest or coffin, which was indistinctly seen in the upper part of the shrine

erected to his memory. None of the abbey gossips, however, had ventured upon a nearer inspection, until the worthy narrator to gratify his curiosity mounted to the coffin by the aid of a ladder, and found it to be made of wood, apparently very strong and firm, being secured by bands of iron.

Subsequently, in 1685, on taking down the scaffolding used in the coronation of James II. the coffin was found to be broken, a hole appearing in the lid, probably made through accident by the workmen. No one ventured, however, to meddle with the sacred depository of royal dust—until, several weeks afterwards, the circumstance came to the knowledge of the aforesaid chorister. He forthwith repaired to the abbey in company with two friends, of congenial tastes, who were desirous of inspecting the tombs. Procuring a ladder, he again mounted to the coffin, and found, as had been represented, a hole in the lid about six inches long and four inches broad, just in front of the left breast. Thrusting in his hand, and groping among the bones, he drew from underneath the shoulder a crucifix, richly adorned and enamelled, affixed to a gold chain twenty-four inches long. These he showed to his inquisitive friends, who were equally surprised with himself.

“At the time,” says he, “when I took the cross and chain out of the coffin, *I drew the head to the hole and viewed it*, being very sound and firm, with the upper and nether jaws whole and full of teeth, and a list of gold above an inch broad, in the nature of a coronet, surrounding the temples. There was also in the coffin white linen and gold-coloured flowered silk, that looked indifferent fresh; but the least stress put thereto showed it was well nigh perished. There were all his bones, and much dust likewise, which I left as I found.”

It is difficult to conceive a more grotesque lesson to human pride than the skull of Edward the Confessor thus irreverently pulled about in its coffin by a prying chorister and brought to grin face to face with him through a hole in the lid!

Having satisfied his curiosity, the chorister put the crucifix and chain back again into the coffin, and sought the dean, to apprise him of his discovery. The dean not being accessible at

the time, and fearing that the "holy treasure" might be taken away by other hands, he got a brother chorister to accompany him to the shrine about two or three hours afterwards, and in his presence again drew forth the relics. These he afterwards delivered on his knees to King James. The king subsequently had the old coffin enclosed in a new one of great strength, "each plank being two inches thick, and clamped together with large iron wedges, where it now remains (1688) as a testimony of his pious care, that no abuse might be offered to the sacred ashes therein deposited."

As the history of this shrine is full of moral, I subjoin a description of it in modern times. "The solitary and forlorn shrine," says a British writer, "now stands a mere skeleton of what it was. A few faint traces of its sparkling decorations inlaid on solid mortar catch the rays of the sun, for ever set on its splendour. * * * * Only two of the spiral pillars remain. The wooden Ionic top is much broken, and covered with dust. The mosaic is picked away in every part within reach; only the lozenges of about a foot square and five circular pieces of the rich marble remain."—MALCOLM, LONDON, RÆDIV.

INSCRIPTION ON A MONUMENT ALLUDED TO IN THE SKETCH.

Here lyes the Loyal Duke of Newcastle and his Dutchess his second wife, by whom he had no issue. Her name was Margaret Lucas, youngest sister to the Lord Lucas of Colchester, a noble family; for all the brothers were valiant and all the sisters virtuous. This Dutchess was a wise, witty, and learned lady, which her many Bookes do well testify; she was a most virtuous, and loving and careful wife, and was with her lord all the time of his banishment and miseries, and when he came home never parted from him in his solitary retirements.

In the winter time, when the days are short, the service in the afternoon is performed by the light of tapers. The effect is fine of the choir partially lighted up while the main body of the cathedral and the transepts are in profound and cavernous darkness. The white dresses of the choristers gleam amidst the deep brown of the oaken slats and canopies; the partial illumination makes enormous shadows from columns and screens and darting into the surrounding gloom, catches here and there upon a sepulchral decoration or monumental effigy. The swelling notes of the organ accord well with the scene.

When the service is over, the dean is lighted to his dwelling, in the old conventual part of the pile, by the boys of the choir, in their white dresses, bearing tapers, and the procession passes through the abbey and along the shadowy cloisters, lighting up angles and arches and grim sepulchral monuments, and leaving all behind in darkness

On entering the cloisters at night from what is called the Dean's yard, the eye ranging through a dark vaulted passage catches a distant view of a white marble figure reclining on a tomb, on which a strong glare thrown by a gas-light has quite a spectral effect. It is a mural monument of one of the Pultneys.

The cloisters are well worth visiting by moonlight, when the moon is in the full.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON

Thou soft-flowing Avon, by thy silver stream
Of things more than mortal sweet Shakspeare would dream ;
The fairies by moonlight dance round his green bed,
For hallow'd the turf is which pillow'd his head.—

GARRICK.

To a homeless man, who has no spot on this wide world which he can truly call his own, there

is a momentary feeling of something like independence and territorial consequence, when after a weary day's travel, he kicks off his boots, thrusts his feet into slippers, and stretches himself before an inn fire. Let the world without go as it may ; let kingdoms rise or fall, so long as he has the wherewithal to pay his bill, he is, for the time being, the very monarch of all he surveys. The arm-chair is his throne, the poker his sceptre, and the little parlour, some twelve feet square, his undisputed empire. It is a morsel of certainty, snatched from the midst of the uncertainties of life ; it is a sunny moment gleaming out kindly on a cloudy day : and he who has advanced some way on the pilgrimage of existence knows the importance of husbanding even morsels and moments of enjoyment. "Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn?" thought I, as I gave the fire a stir, lolled back in my elbow-chair, and cast a complacent look about the little parlour of the Red Horse, at Stratford-on-Avon.

The words of sweet Shakspeare were just passing through my mind as the clock struck midnight from the tower of the church in which he lies buried. There was a gentle tap at the door, and a pretty chambermaid, putting in her smiling face, inquired, with a hesitating air, whether I had rung. I understood it as a modest hint that it was time to retire. My dream of absolute dominion was at an end ; so abdicating my throne, like a prudent potentate, to avoid being deposed, and putting the

Stratford Guide-Book under my arm, as a pillow companion, I went to bed, and dreamt all night of Shakspeare, the Jubilee, and David Garrick.

The next morning was one of those quickening mornings which we sometimes have in early spring; for it was about the middle of March. The chills of a long winter had suddenly given way; the north wind had spent its last gasp; and a mild air came stealing from the west, breathing the breath of life into nature, and wooing every bud and flower to burst forth into fragrance and beauty.

I had come to Stratford on a poetical pilgrimage. My first visit was to the house where Shakspeare was born, and where, according to tradition, he was brought up to his father's craft of wool-combing. It is a small mean-looking edifice of wood and plaster, a true nestling-place of genius, which seems to delight in hatching its offspring in by-corners. The walls of its squalid chambers are covered with names and inscriptions in every language, by pilgrims of all nations, ranks, and conditions, from the prince to the peasant; and present a simple, but striking instance of the spontaneous and universal homage of mankind to the great poet of nature.

The house is shown by a garrulous old lady, in a frosty red face, lighted up by a cold blue anxious eye, and garnished with artificial locks of flaxen hair, curling from under an exceedingly dirty cap. She was peculiarly assiduous in exhibiting the relics with which this, like all other celebrated shrines, abounds.

There was the shattered stock of the very matchlock with which Shakspeare shot the deer, on his poaching exploits. There, too, was his tobacco-box ; which proves that he was a rival smoker of Sir Walter Raleigh ; the sword also with which he played Hamlet ; and the identical lantern with which Friar Laurence discovered Romeo and Juliet at the tomb ! there was an ample supply also of Shakspeare's mulberry-tree, which seems to have as extraordinary powers of self-multiplication as the wood of the true cross, of which there is enough extant to build a ship of the line.

The most favourite object of curiosity, however, is Shakspeare's chair. It stands in the chimney nook of a small gloomy chamber, just behind what was his father's shop. Here he may many a time have sat when a boy, watching the slowly revolving spit with all the longing of an urchin ; or of an evening, listening to the cronies and gossips of Stratford, dealing forth churchyard tales and legendary anecdotes of the troublesome times of England. In this chair it is the custom of every one that visits the house to sit ; whether this be done with the hope of imbibing any of the inspiration of the bard I am at a loss to say, I merely mention the fact ; and mine hostess privately assured me, that, though built of solid oak, such was the fervent zeal of devotees, that the chair had to be new bottomed at least once in three years. It is worthy of notice, also, in the history of this extraordinary chair, that it partakes something of the volatile nature of the

Santa Casa of Loretto, or the flying chair of the Arabian enchanter ; for though sold some few years since to a northern princess, yet, strange to tell, it has found its way back again to the old chimney-corner.

I am always of easy faith in such matters, and am ever willing to be deceived, where the deceit is pleasant and costs nothing. I am, therefore, a ready believer in relics, legends, and local anecdotes of goblins and great men ; and would advise all travellers who travel for their gratification to be the same. What is it to us, whether these stories be true or false, so long as we can persuade ourselves into the belief of them, and enjoy all the charm of the reality ? There is nothing like resolute good-humoured credulity in these matters ; and on this occasion I went even so far as willingly to believe the claims of mine hostess to a lineal descent from the poet, when, unluckily for my faith, she put into my hands a play of her own composition, which set all belief in her consanguinity at defiance.

From the birth-place of Shakspeare a few paces brought me to his grave. He lies buried in the chancel of the parish church, a large and venerable pile, mouldering with age, but richly ornamented. It stands on the banks of the Avon, on an embowered point, and separated by adjoining gardens from the suburbs of the town. Its situation is quiet and retired ; the river runs murmuring at the foot of the church-yard, and the elms which grow upon its banks droop their branches into its clear

bosom. An avenue of limes, the boughs of which are curiously interlaced, so as to form in summer an arched way of foliage, leads up from the gate of the yard to the church porch. The graves are overgrown with grass; the gray tombstones, some of them nearly sunk into the earth, are half-covered with moss, which has likewise tinted the reverend old building. Small birds have built their nests among the cornices and fissures of the walls, and keep up a continual flutter and chirping; and rooks are sailing and cawing about its lofty gray spire.

In the course of my rambles I met with the gray-headed sexton, Edmonds, and accompanied him home to get the key of the church. He had lived in Stratford, man and boy, for eighty years, and seemed still to consider himself a vigorous man, with the trivial exception that he had nearly lost the use of his legs for a few years past. His dwelling was a cottage, looking out upon the Avon and its bordering meadows; and was a picture of that neatness, order, and comfort which pervade the humblest dwellings in this country. A low white-washed room, with a stone floor carefully scrubbed, served for parlour, kitchen, and hall. Rows of pewter and earthen dishes glittered along the dresser. On an old oaken table, well rubbed and polished, lay the family Bible and Prayer-book, and the drawer contained the family library, composed of about half a score of well-thumbed volumes. An ancient clock, that important article of cottage furniture, ticked on the opposite side of the room; with a

bright warming-pan hanging on one side of it, and the old man's horn-handled Sunday cane on the other. The fireplace, as usual, was wide and deep enough to admit a gossip knot within its jambs. In one corner sat the old man's grand-daughter sewing, a pretty blue-eyed girl,—and in the opposite corner was a superannuated crony, whom he addressed by the name of John Ange, and who, I found, had been his companion from childhood. They had played together in infancy; they had worked together in manhood; they were now tottering about and gossiping away the evening of life; and in a short time they will probably be buried together in the neighbouring church-yard. It is not often that we see two streams of existence running thus evenly and tranquilly side by side; it is only in such quiet “bosom scenes” of life that they are to be met with.

I had hoped to gather some traditionary anecdotes of the bard from these ancient chroniclers; but they had nothing new to impart. The long interval during which Shakspeare's writings lay in comparative neglect has spread its shadow over his history; and it is his good or evil lot that scarcely anything remains to his biographers but a scanty handful of conjectures.

The sexton and his companion had been employed as carpenters on the preparations for the celebrated Stratford Jubilee, and they remembered Garrick, the prime mover of the fête, who superintended the arrangements, and who, according to the sexton, was “a short punch man, very lively and bustling.”

John Ange had assisted also in cutting down Shakspeare's mulberry-tree, of which he had a morsel in his pocket for sale ; no doubt a sovereign quickener of literary conception.

I was grieved to hear these two worthy wights speak very dubiously of the eloquent dame who shows the Shakspeare house. John Ange shook his head when I mentioned her valuable and inexhaustible collection of relics, particularly her remains of the mulberry-tree ; and the old sexton even expressed a doubt as to Shakspeare having been born in her house. I soon discovered that he looked upon her mansion with an evil eye, as a rival to the poet's tomb ; the latter having comparatively but few visitors. Thus it is that historians differ at the very outset, and mere pebbles make the stream of truth diverge into different channels even at the fountain head.

We approached the church through the avenue of limes, and entered by a Gothic porch, highly ornamented, with carved doors of massive oak. The interior is spacious, and the architecture and embellishments superior to those of most country churches. There are several ancient monuments of nobility and gentry, over some of which hang funeral escutcheons, and banners dropping piecemeal from the walls. The tomb of Shakspeare is in the chancel. The place is solemn and sepulchral. Tall elms wave before the pointed windows, and the Avon, which runs at a short distance from the walls, keeps up a low perpetual murmur. A flat stone marks

the spot where the bard is buried. There are four lines inscribed on it, said to have been written by himself, and which have in them something extremely awful. If they are indeed his own, they show that solicitude about the quiet of the grave, which seems natural to fine sensibilities and thoughtful minds.

Good friend, for Jesus' sake, forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be he that spares these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones.

Just over the grave, in a niche of the wall, is a bust of Shakspeare, put up shortly after his death, and considered as a resemblance. The aspect is pleasant and serene, with a finely-arched forehead; and I thought I could read in it clear indications of that cheerful, social disposition, by which he was as much characterized among his contemporaries as by the vastness of his genius. The inscription mentions his age at the time of his decease—fifty-three years; an untimely death for the world: for what fruit might not have been expected from the golden autumn of such a mind; sheltered as it was from the stormy vicissitudes of life, and flourishing in the sunshine of popular and royal favour.

The inscription on the tombstone has not been without its effects. It has prevented the removal of his remains from the bosom of his native place to Westminster Abbey, which was at one time contemplated. A few years since, also, as some labourers

were digging to make an adjoining vault, the earth caved in, so as to leave a vacant space almost like an arch, through which one might have reached into his grave. No one, however, presumed to meddle with his remains so awfully guarded by a malediction ; and lest any of the idle or the curious, or any collector of relics, should be tempted to commit depredations, the old sexton kept watch over the place for two days, until the vault was finished and the aperture closed again. He told me that he had made bold to look in at the hole, but could see neither coffin nor bones ; nothing but dust. It was something, I thought, to have seen the dust of Shakspeare.

Next to this grave are those of his wife, his favourite daughter, Mrs. Hall, and others of his family. On a tomb close by, also, is a full-length effigy of his old friend John Combe, of usurious memory ; on whom he is said to have written a ludicrous epitaph. There are other monuments around, but the mind refuses to dwell on anything that is not connected with Shakspeare. His idea pervades the place ; the whole pile seems but as his mausoleum. The feelings, no longer checked and thwarted by doubt, here indulge in perfect confidence : other traces of him may be false or dubious, but here is palpable evidence and absolute certainty. As I trod the sounding pavement, there was something intense and thrilling in the idea that, in very truth, the remains of Shakspeare were mouldering beneath my feet. It was a long time before I could prevail

upon myself to leave the place ; and as I passed through the churchyard, I plucked a branch from one of the yew-trees, the only relic that I have brought from Stratford.

I had now visited the usual objects of a pilgrim's devotion, but I had a desire to see the old family seat of the Lucys, at Charlecot, and to ramble through the park where Shakspeare, in company with some of the roisters of Stratford, committed his youthful offence of deer-stealing. In this hare-brained exploit we are told that he was taken prisoner, and carried to the keeper's lodge, where he remained all night in doleful captivity. When brought into the presence of Sir Thomas Lucy, his treatment must have been galling and humiliating ; for it so wrought upon his spirit as to produce a rough pasquinade, which was affixed to the park gate at Charlecot.

This flagitious attack upon the dignity of the knight so incensed him, that he applied to a lawyer at Warwick to put the severity of the laws in force against the rhyming deer-stalker. Shakspeare did not wait to brave the united puissance of a knight of the shire and a country attorney. He forthwith abandoned the pleasant banks of the Avon and his paternal trade ; wandered away to London ; became a hanger-on to the theatres ; then an actor ; and finally, wrote for the stage ; and thus, through the persecution of Sir Thomas Lucy, Stratford lost an indifferent wool-comber, and the world gained an immortal poet. He retained, however, for a long

time, a sense of the harsh treatment of the Lord of Charlecot, and revenged himself in his writings ; but in the sportive way of a good-natured mind. Sir Thomas is said to be the original of Justice Shallow, and the satire is slyly fixed upon him by the Justice's armorial bearings, which, like those of the knight, had white luses in the quarterings.

Various attempts have been made by his biographers to soften and explain away this early transgression of the poet ; but I look upon it as one of those thoughtless exploits natural to his situation and turn of mind. Shakspeare, when young, had doubtless all the wildness and irregularity of an ardent, undisciplined, and undirected genius. The poetic temperament has naturally something in it of the vagabond. When left to itself, it runs loosely and wildly, and delights in everything eccentric and licentious. It is often a turn-up of a die, in the gambling freaks of fate, whether a natural genius shall turn out a great rogue or a great poet ; and had not Shakspeare's mind fortunately taken a literary bias, he might have as daringly transcended all civil as he has all dramatic laws.

I have little doubt that in early life, when running like an unbroken colt about the neighbourhood of Stratford, he was to be found in the company of all kinds of odd anomalous characters ; that he associated with all the madeaps of the place, and was one of those unlucky urchins at mention of whom old men shake their heads, and predict that they will one day come to the gallows. To him the poaching in

Sir Thomas Lucy's park was doubtless like a foray to a Scottish knight, and struck his eager and as yet untamed imagination as something delightfully adventurous.

The old mansion of Charlecot and its surrounding park still remain in the possession of the Lucy family and are peculiarly interesting, from being connected with this whimsical but eventful circumstance in the scanty history of the bard. As the house stood at little more than three miles' distance from Stratford, I resolved to pay it a pedestrian visit, that I might stroll leisurely through some of those scenes from which Shakspeare must have derived his earliest ideas of rural imagery.

The country was, yet naked and leafless ; but English scenery is always verdant, and the sudden change in the temperature of the weather was surprising in its quickening effects upon the landscape. It was inspiring and animating to witness this first awakening of spring ; to feel its warm breath stealing over the senses ; to see the moist mellow earth beginning to put forth the green sprout and the tender blade ; and the trees and shrubs, in their reviving tints and bursting buds, giving the promise of returning foliage and flower. The cold snowdrop, that little borderer on the skirts of winter, was to be seen with its chaste white blossoms in the small gardens before the cottages. The bleating of the new-dropped lambs was faintly heard from the fields. The sparrow twittered about the thatched eaves and budding hedges ; the robin threw a livelier

note into his late querulous wintry strain ; and the lark, springing up from the reeking bosom of the meadow, towered away into the bright fleecy cloud pouring forth torrents of melody. As I watched the little songster, mounting up higher and higher, until his body was a mere speck on the white bosom of the cloud, while the ear was still filled with his music, it called to mind Shakspeare's exquisite little song in *Cymbeline* :

Hark ! hark ! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phœbus' gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs,
On chaliced flowers that lies.

And winking mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes ;
With everything that pretty bin,
My lady sweet arise !

Indeed the whole country about here is poetic ground ; everything is associated with the idea of Shakspeare. Every old cottage that I saw I fancied into some resort of his boyhood, where he had acquired his intimate knowledge of rustic life and manners, and heard those legendary tales and wild superstitions which he has woven like witchcraft into his dramas ; for in his time, we are told, it was a popular amusement in winter evenings " to sit round the fire, and tell merry tales of errant knights, queens, lovers, lords, ladies, giants, dwarfs, thieves, cheaters, witches, fairies, goblins, and friars."

My route for a part of the way lay in sight of the Avon, which made a variety of the most fanciful

doublings and windings through a wide and fertile valley ; sometimes glittering from among willows, which fringed its borders ; sometimes disappearing among groves, or beneath green banks ; and sometimes rambling out into full view, and making an azure sweep round a slope of meadow-land. This beautiful bosom of country is called the Vale of the Red Horse. A distant line of undulating blue hills seems to be its boundary, whilst all the soft intervening landscape lies in a manner enchained in the silver links of the Avon.

After pursuing the road for about three miles, I turned off into a footpath, which led along the borders of fields, and under hedgerows, to a private gate of the park ; there was a stile, however, for the benefit of the pedestrian ; there being a public right of way through the grounds. I delight in these hospitable estates, in which every one has a kind of property—at least as far as the footpath is concerned. It in some measure reconciles a poor man to his lot, and, what is more, to the better lot of his neighbour thus to have parks and pleasure-grounds thrown open for his recreation. He breathes the pure air as freely, and lolls as luxuriously under the shade as the lord of the soil ; and if he has not the privilege of calling all that he sees his own, he has not, at the same time, the trouble of paying for it, and keeping it in order.

I now found myself among noble avenues of oaks and elms, whose vast size bespoke the growth of centuries. The wind sounded solemnly among their

branches, and the rooks cawed from their hereditary nests in the tree-tops. The eye ranged through a long lessening vista, with nothing to interrupt the view but a distant statue, and a vagrant deer stalking like a shadow across the opening.

There is something about these stately old avenues that has the effect of Gothic architecture, not merely from the pretended similarity of form, but from their bearing the evidence of long duration, and of having had their origin in a period of time with which we associate ideas of romantic grandeur. They betoken also the long-settled dignity and proudly-concentrated independence of an ancient family ; and I have heard a worthy but aristocratic old friend observe, when speaking of the sumptuous palaces of modern gentry, that “money could do much with stone and mortar, but, thank Heaven, there was no such thing as suddenly building up an avenue of oaks.”

It was from wandering in early life among this rich scenery, and about the romantic solitudes of the adjoining park of Fullbroke which then formed a part of the Lucy estate, that some of Shakspeare’s commentators have supposed he derived his noble forest meditations of Jacques, and the enchanting woodland pictures in *As you like it*. It is in lonely wanderings through such scenes that the mind drinks deep but quiet draughts of inspiration, and becomes intensely sensible of the beauty and majesty of nature. The imagination kindles into reverie and rapture ; vague but exquisite images and ideas keep

breaking upon it ; and we revel in a mute and almost incommunicable luxury of thought. It was in some such mood, and perhaps under one of those very trees before me, which threw their broad shades over the grassy banks and quivering waters of the Avon, that the poet's fancy may have sallied forth into that little song which breathes the very soul of a rural voluptuary :

Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry throat
Unto the sweet bird's note,
Come hither, come hither, come hither.
Here shall he see
No enemy,
But winter and rough weather.

I had now come in sight of the house. It is a large building of brick, with stone quoins, and is in the Gothic style of Queen Elizabeth's day, having been built in the first year of her reign. The exterior remains very nearly in its original state, and may be considered a fair specimen of the residence of a wealthy country gentleman of those days. A great gateway opens from the park into a kind of court-yard in front of the house, ornamented with a grassplot, shrubs, and flower-beds. The gateway is in imitation of the ancient barbican ; being a kind of out-post, and flanked by towers ; though evidently for mere ornament instead of defence. The front of the house is completely in the old style, with stone-shafted casements, a great bow window of

heavy stone-work, and a portal with armorial bearings over it, carved in stone. At each corner of the building is an octagon tower surmounted by a gilt ball and weathercock.

The Avon, which winds through the park, makes a bend just at the foot of a gently-sloping bank, which sweeps down from the rear of the house. Large herds of deer were feeding or reposing upon its borders ; and swans were sailing majestically upon its bosom. As I contemplated the venerable old mansion, I called to mind Falstaff's encomium on Justice Shallow's abode, and the affected indifference and real vanity of the latter.

Falstaff. You have a goodly dwelling and a rich.

Shallow. Barren, barren, barren : beggars all, beggars all,
Sir John—marry, good air.

Whatever may have been the joviality of the old mansion in the days of Shakspeare, it had now an air of stillness and solitude. The great iron gateway that opened into the court-yard was locked ; there was no show of servants bustling about the place ; the deer gazed quietly at me as I passed, being no longer harried by the moss-troopers of Stratford. The only sign of domestic life that I met with was a white cat, stealing with wary look and stealthy pace towards the stables, as if on some nefarious expedition. I must not omit to mention the carcass of a scoundrel crow which I saw suspended against the barn wall, as it shows that the Lucys still inherit that lordly abhorrence of poachers, and maintain that rigorous exercise of territorial

power which was so strenuously manifested in the case of the bard.

After prowling about for some time, I at length found my way to a lateral portal, which was the every-day entrance to the mansion. I was courteously received by a worthy old house-keeper, who, with the civility and communicativeness of her order, showed me the interior of the house. The greater part has undergone alterations, and been adapted to modern tastes and modes of living : there is a fine old oaken staircase ; and the great hall, that noble feature in an ancient manor-house, still retains much of the appearance it must have had in the days of Shakspeare. The ceiling is arched and lofty ; and at one end is a gallery, in which stands an organ. The weapons and trophies of the chase, which formerly adorned the hall of a country gentleman, have made way for family portraits. There is a wide hospitable fire-place, calculated for an ample old-fashioned wood fire, formerly the rallying-place of winter festivity. On the opposite side of the hall is the huge Gothic bow-window, with stone shafts, which looks out upon the court-yard. Here are emblazoned in stained glass the armorial bearings of the Lucy family for many generations, some being dated in 1558. I was delighted to observe in the quarterings the three *white luces*, by which the character of Sir Thomas was first identified with that of Justice Shallow. They are mentioned in the first scene of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, where the Justice is in a rage with Falstaff for having "beaten

his men, killed his deer, and broken into his lodge." The poet had no doubt the offences of himself and his comrades in mind at the time, and we may suppose the family pride and vindictive threats of the puissant Shallow to be a caricature of the pompous indignation of Sir Thomas.

Shallow. Sir Hugh, persuade me not : I will make a Star-Chamber matter of it ; if he were twenty John Falstaffs, he shall not abuse Sir Robert Shallow, Esq.

Slender. In the country of Gloster, Justice of peace, and *coram*.

Shallow. Ay, cousin Slender, and *custalorum*.

Slender. Ay, and *ratalorum* too, and a gentleman born, master parson ; who writes himself *Armigero* in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation *Armigero*.

Shallow. Ay, that I do ; and have done any time these three hundred years.

Slender. All his successors gone before him have done't, and all his ancestors that come after him may ; they may give the dozen *white lues* in their coat. * * *

Shallow. The council shall hear it ; it is a riot.

Evans. It is not meet the council hear of a riot ; there is no fear of Got in a riot ; the council, hear you, shall desire to hear the fear of Got, and not to hear a riot ; take your vizaments in that.

Shallow. Ha ; o'my life, if I were young again, the sword should end it !

Near the window thus emblazoned hung a portrait by Sir Peter Lely, of one of the Lucy family, a great beauty of the time of Charles the Second : the old housekeeper shook her head as she pointed to the picture, and informed me that this lady had been sadly addicted to cards, and had gambled away a great portion of the family estate.

among which was that part of the park where Shakspeare and his comrades had killed the deer. The lands thus lost had not been entirely regained by the family even at the present day. It is but justice to this recreant dame to confess that she had a surpassingly fine hand and arm.

The picture which most attracted my attention was a great painting over the fireplace, containing likenesses of Sir Thomas Lucy and his family, who inhabited the hall in the latter part of Shakspeare's lifetime. I at first thought that it was the vindictive knight himself, but the housekeeper assured me that it was his son ; the only likeness extant of the former being an effigy upon his tomb in the church of the neighbouring hamlet of Charlecot. The picture gives a lively idea of the costume and manners of the time. Sir Thomas is dressed in ruff and doublet, white shoes with roses in them, and has a peaked yellow, or, as Master Slender would say, "a cane-coloured beard." His lady is seated on the opposite side of the picture, in wide ruff and long stomacher, and the children have a most venerable stiffness and formality of dress. Hounds and spaniels are mingled in the family group, a hawk is seated on his perch in the foreground, and one of the children holds a bow—all intimating the knight's skill in hunting, hawking, and archery, so indispensable to an accomplished gentleman in those days.

I regretted to find that the ancient furniture of the hall had disappeared, for I had hoped to meet

with the stately elbow-chair of carved oak, in which the country squire of former days was wont to sway the sceptre of empire over his rural domains ; and in which it might be presumed the redoubted Sir Thomas sat enthroned in awful state when the recreant Shakspeare was brought before him. As I like to deck out pictures for my own entertainment, I pleased myself with the idea that this very hall had been the scene of the unlucky bard's examination on the morning after his captivity in the lodge. I fancied to myself the rural potentate, surrounded by his body-guard of butler, pages, and blue-coated serving-men with their badges ; while the luckless culprit was brought in, forlorn and chopfallen, in the custody of gamekeepers, huntsmen, and whippers-in, and followed by a rabble rout of country clowns. I fancied bright faces of curious housemaids peeping from the half-opened doors, while from the gallery the fair daughters of the knight leaned gracefully forward, eyeing the youthful prisoner with that pity " that dwells in womanhood." Who would have thought that this poor varlet, thus trembling before the brief authority of a country squire, and the sport of rustic boors, was soon to become the delight of princes, the theme of all tongues and ages, the dictator to the human mind, and was to confer immortality on his oppressor by a caricature and a lampoon !

I was now invited by the butler to walk into the garden, and I felt inclined to visit the orchard and harbour where the justice treated Sir John Falstaff

and Cousin Silence “to a last-year’s pippin of his own grafting, with a dish of carraways” ; but I had already spent so much of the day in my ramblings, that I was obliged to give up any further investigations. When about to take my leave I was gratified by the civil entreaties of the housekeeper and butler that I would take some refreshment, an instance of good old hospitality which, I grieve to say, we castle-hunters seldom meet with in modern days. I make no doubt it is a virtue which the present representative of the Lucys inherits from his ancestors ; for Shakspeare, even in his caricature, makes Justice Shallow importunate in this respect, as witness his pressing instances to Falstaff.

By cock and pye, sir, you shall not away to-night *** I will not excuse you : you shall not be excused ; excuses shall not be admitted ; there is no excuse shall serve ; you shall not be excused *** Some pigeons, Davy ; a couple of short-legged hens ; a joint of mutton : and any pretty little tiny kickshaws, tell William Cook.

I now bade a reluctant farewell to the old hall. My mind had become so completely possessed by the imaginary scenes and characters connected with it, that I seemed to be actually living among them. Everything brought them as it were before my eyes ; and as the door of the dining-room opened, I almost expected to hear the feeble voice of Master Silence quavering forth his favourite ditty :

’Tis merry in hall, when beards wag all,
And welcome merry Shrove-tide.

On returning to my inn, I could not but reflect on the singular gift of the poet ; to be able thus to spread the magic of his mind over the very face of nature ; to give to things and places a charm and character not their own, and to turn this “ working-day world ” into a perfect fairy land. He is, indeed, the true enchanter, whose spell operates, not upon the senses, but upon the imagination of the heart. Under the wizard influence of Shakspeare, I had been walking all day in a complete delusion. I had surveyed the landscape through the prism of poetry, which tinged every object with the hues of the rainbow. I had been surrounded with fancied beings ; with mere airy nothings, conjured up by poetic power, yet which to me had all the charm of reality. I had heard Jacques soliloquize beneath his oak ; had beheld the fair Rosalind and her companion adventuring through the woodlands ; and, above all, had been once more present in spirit with fat Jack Falstaff and his contemporaries, from the august Justice Shallow, down to the gentle Master Slender and the sweet Ann Page. Ten thousand honours and blessings on the bard who has thus gilded the dull realities of life with innocent illusions ; who has spread exquisite and unbought pleasures in my chequered path, and beguiled my spirit in many a lonely hour with all the cordial and cheerful sympathies of social life !

As I crossed the bridge over the Avon on my return, I paused to contemplate the distant church in which the poet lies buried, and could not but

exult in the malediction, which has kept his ashes undisturbed in its quiet and hallowed vaults. What honour could his name have derived from being mingled in dusty companionships with the epitaphs and escutcheons and venal eulogiums of a titled multitude ? What would a crowded corner in Westminster Abbey have been, compared with this reverend pile, which seems to stand in beautiful loneliness as his sole mausoleum ! The solicitude about the grave may be but the offspring of an overwrought sensibility ; but human nature is made up of foibles and prejudices ; and its best and tenderest affections are mingled with these factitious feelings. He who has sought renown about the world, and has reaped a full harvest of worldly favour, will find, after all, that there is no love, no admiration, no applause, so sweet to the soul as that which springs up in his native place. It is there that he seeks to be gathered in peace and honour among his kindred and his early friends. And when the weary heart and failing head begin to warn him that the evening of life is drawing on, he turns as fondly as does the infant to the mother's arms, to sink to sleep in the bosom of the scene of his childhood.

How would it have cheered the spirit of the youthful bard, when, wandering forth in disgrace upon a doubtful world, he cast back a heavy look upon his paternal home, could he have foreseen that, before many years, he should return to it covered with renown ; that his name should become the boast and glory of his native place ; that his ashes should be

religiously guarded as its most precious treasure ;
and that lessening spire, on which his eyes were fixed
in tearful contemplation, should one day become the
beacon, towering amidst the gentle landscape, to
guide the literary pilgrim of every nation to his
tomb !

Selections from Life of Mahomet

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY NOTICE OF ARABIA AND THE ARABS

During a long succession of ages, extending from the earliest period of recorded history down to the seventh century of the Christian era, that great chersonese or peninsula formed by the Red Sea, the Euphrates, the Gulf of Persia, and the Indian Ocean, and known by the name of Arabia, remained unchanged and almost unaffected by the events which convulsed the rest of Asia, and shook Europe and Africa to their centre. While kingdoms and empires rose and fell ; while ancient dynasties passed away ; while the boundaries and names of countries were changed, and their inhabitants were exterminated or carried into captivity, Arabia, though its frontier provinces experienced some vicissitudes, preserved in the depths of its deserts its primitive character and independence, nor had its nomadic tribes ever bent their haughty necks to servitude.

The Arabs carry back the traditions of their country to the highest antiquity. It was peopled, they say, soon after the deluge, by the progeny of

Shem the son of Noah, who gradually formed themselves into several tribes, the most noted of which are the Adites and Thamudites.

The permanent population of the peninsula is ascribed, by the same authorities, to Kahtan or Joctan, a descendant in the fourth generation from Shem. His posterity spread over the southern part of the peninsula and along the Red Sea. Yarab, one of his sons, founded the kingdom of Yemen, where the territory of Araba was called after him ; whence the Arabs derive the names of themselves and their country. Jurham, another son, founded the kingdom of Hedjaz, over which his descendants bore sway for many generations. Among these people Hagar and her son Ishmael were kindly received, when exiled from their home by the patriarch Abraham. In the process of time Ishmael married the daughter of Modâd, a reigning prince of the line of Jurham ; and thus a stranger and a Hebrew became grafted on the original Arabian stock. It proved a vigorous graft. Ishmael's wife bore him twelve sons, who acquired dominion over the country, and whose prolific race, divided into twelve tribes, expelled or overran and obliterated the primitive stock of Joctan.

Such is the account given by the peninsular Arabs of their origin.

A strong distinction grew up in the earliest times between the Arabs who "held towns and castles," and those who "dwelt in tents." Some of the former occupied the fertile wadies, or valleys, scattered here and there among the mountains, where these towns

and castles were surrounded by vineyards and orchards, groves of palm-trees, fields of grain, and well-stocked pastures. They were settled in their habits, devoting themselves to the cultivation of the soil and the breeding of cattle.

Others of this class gave themselves up to commerce, having ports and cities along the Red Sea, the southern shores of the peninsula and the Gulf of Persia, and carrying on foreign trade by means of ships and caravans. Such especially were the people of Yemen, or Arabia the Happy, that land of spices, perfumes, and frankincense ; the Sabæa of the poets ; the Sheba of the sacred Scriptures. They were among the most active mercantile navigators of the eastern seas. Their ships brought to their shores the myrrh and balsams of the opposite coast of Berbera, with the gold, the spices, and other rich commodities of India and tropical Africa. These, with the products of their own country, were transported by caravans across the deserts to the semi-Arabian states of Ammon, Moab, and Edom or Idumea, to the Phœnician ports of the Mediterranean, and thence distributed to the western world.

The camel has been termed the ship of the desert, the caravan may be termed its fleet. The caravans of Yemen were generally fitted out, manned, conducted, and guarded by the nomadic Arabs, the dwellers in tents, who, in this respect, might be called the navigators of the desert. They furnished the innumerable camels required, and also contributed to the freight by the fine fleeces of their countless flocks.

The writings of the prophets show the importance, in scriptural times, of this inland chain of commerce by which the rich countries of the south, India, Ethiopia, and Arabia the Happy, were linked with ancient Syria.

Ezekiel, in his lamentations for Tyre, exclaims, "Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats ; in these were they thy merchants. The merchants of Sheba and Raamah occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones and gold. Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chelmad, were thy merchants."

The agricultural and trading Arabs, however, the dwellers in towns and cities, have never been considered the true type of the race. They became softened by settled and peaceful occupations, and lost much of their original stamp by an intercourse with strangers. Yemen, too, being more accessible than the other parts of Arabia, and offering greater temptation to the spoiler, had been repeatedly invaded and subdued.

It was among the other class of Arabs, the rovers of the desert, the "dwellers in tents," by far the most numerous of the two, that the national character was preserved in all its primitive force and freshness. Nomadic in their habits, pastoral in their occupations, and acquainted by experience and tradition with all the hidden resources of the desert, they led a wandering life, roaming from place to place in quest of those wells and springs which had

been the resort of their forefathers since the days of the patriarchs ; encamping wherever they could find date-trees for shade, and sustenance and pasturage for their flocks, and herds, and camels ; and shifting their abode whenever the temporary supply was exhausted.

These nomadic Arabs were divided and subdivided into innumerable petty tribes or families, each with its Sheikh or Emir, the representative of the patriarch of yore, whose spear, planted beside his tent, was the ensign of command. His office, however, though continued for many generations in the same family, was not strictly hereditary ; but depended upon the good-will of the tribe. He might be deposed, and another of a different line elected in his place. His power, too, was limited, and depended upon his personal merit and the confidence reposed in him. His prerogative consisted in conducting negotiations of peace and war ; in leading his tribe against the enemy ; in choosing the place of encampment, and in receiving and entertaining strangers of note. Yet, even in these and similar privileges, he was controlled by the opinions and inclinations of his people.*

* In summer the wandering Arabs, says Burckhardt, seldom remain above three or four days on the same spot ; as soon as their cattle have consumed the herbage near a watering-place, the tribe removes in search of pasture, and the grass again springing up, serves for a succeeding camp. The encampments vary in the number of tents, from six to eight hundred ; when the tents are but few, they are pitched in a circle ; but more

However numerous and minute might be the divisions of a tribe, the links of affinity were carefully kept in mind by the several sections. All the Sheikhs of the same tribe acknowledge a common chief called the Sheikh of Sheikhs, who, whether ensconced in a rock-built castle, or encamped amid his flocks and herds in the desert, might assemble under his standard all the scattered branches on any emergency affecting the common weal.

The multiplicity of these wandering tribes, each with its petty prince and petty territory, but without a national head, produced frequent collisions. Revenge, too, was almost a religious principle among them. To avenge a relative slain was the duty of his family, and often involved the honour of his tribe; and these debts of blood sometimes remained unsettled for generations, producing deadly feuds.

The necessity of being always on the alert to defend his flocks and herds, made the Arab of the desert familiar from his infancy with the exercise of

considerable numbers in a straight line, or a row of single tents, especially along a rivulet, sometimes three or four behind as many others. In winter, when water and pasture never fail, the whole tribe spreads itself over the plain in parties of three or four tents each, with an interval of half-an-hour's distance between each party. The Sheikh's tent is always on the side on which enemies or guests may be expected. To oppose the former, and to honour the latter, is the Sheikh's principal business. Every father of a family sticks his lance into the ground by the side of his tent, and ties his horse in front. There also his camels repose at night.—*Burckhardt, Notes on Bedouins*, vol. i., p. 33.

arms. None could excel him in the use of the bow, the lance, and the scimitar, and the adroit and graceful management of the horse. He was a predatory warrior also; for though at times he was engaged in the service of the merchant, furnishing him with camels and guides and drivers for the transportation of his merchandise, he was more apt to lay contributions on the caravan or plunder it outright in its toilsome progress through the desert. All this he regarded as a legitimate exercise of arms; looking down upon the gainful sons of traffic as an inferior race, debased by sordid habits and pursuits.

Such was the Arab of the desert, the dweller in tents, in whom was fulfilled the prophetic destiny of his ancestor Ishmael. "He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him."* Nature had fitted him for his destiny. His form was light and meagre, but sinewy and active, and capable of sustaining great fatigue and hardship. He was temperate and even abstemious, requiring but little food, and that of the simplest kind. His mind like his body was light and agile. He eminently possessed the intellectual attributes of the Shemitic race, penetrating sagacity, subtle wit, a ready conception, and a brilliant imagination. His sensibilities were quick and acute, though not lasting; a proud and daring spirit was stamped on his sallow visage and flashed from his dark and kindling eye. He was easily aroused by

* Genesis, xvi. 12

the appeals of eloquence, and charmed by the graces of poetry. Speaking a language copious in the extreme, the words of which have been compared to gems and flowers, he was naturally an orator; but he delighted in proverbs and apothegms, rather than in sustained flights of declamation, and was prone to convey his ideas in the Oriental style by apologue and parable.

Though a restless and predatory warrior, he was generous and hospitable. He delighted in giving gifts; his door was always open to the wayfarer, with whom he was ready to share his last morsel; and his deadliest foe, having once broken bread with him, might repose securely beneath the inviolable sanctity of his tent.

In religion the Arabs, in what they term the Days of Ignorance, partook largely of the two faiths, the Sabeian and the Magian, which at that time prevailed over the Eastern world. The Sabeian, however, was the one to which they most adhered. They pretended to derive it from Sabi the son of Seth, who, with his father and his brother Enoch, they supposed to be buried in the pyramids. Others derive the name from the Hebrew word, Saba, or the Stars, and trace the origin of the faith to the Assyrian shepherds, who as they watched their flocks by night on their level plains, and beneath their cloudless skies, noted the aspects and movements of the heavenly bodies, and formed theories of their good and evil influences on human affairs; vague notions which the Chaldean philosophers and priests

reduced to a system, supposed to be more ancient even than that of the Egyptians.

By others it is derived from still higher authority, and claimed to be the religion of the antediluvian world. It survived, say they, the deluge, and was continued among the patriarchs. It was taught by Abraham, adopted by his descendants, the children of Israel, and sanctified and confirmed in the tablets of the law delivered unto Moses, amid the thunder and lightning of Mount Sinai.

In its original state the Sabean faith was pure and spiritual; inculcating a belief in the unity of God, the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, and the necessity of a virtuous and holy life to obtain a happy immortality. So profound was the reverence of the Sabeans for the Supreme Being, that they never mentioned his name, nor did they venture to approach him, but through intermediate intelligences or angels. These were supposed to inhabit and animate the heavenly bodies, in the same way as the human body is inhabited and animated by a soul. They were placed in their respective spheres to supervise and govern the universe in subserviency to the Most High. In addressing themselves to the stars and other celestial luminaries, therefore, the Sabeans did not worship them as deities, but sought only to propitiate their angelic occupants as intercessors with the Supreme Being; looking up through these created things to God the great creator.

By degrees this religion lost its original simplicity and purity, and became obscured by mysteries, and degraded by idolatries. The Sabeans, instead of regarding the heavenly bodies as the habitations of intermediate agents, worshipped them as deities ; set up graven images in honour of them, in sacred groves and in the gloom of forests ; and at length enshrined these idols in temples, and worshipped them as if instinct with divinity. The Sabean faith too underwent changes and modifications in the various countries through which it was diffused. Egypt has long been accused of reducing it to the most abject state of degradation ; the statues, hieroglyphics, and painted sepulchres of that mysterious country, being considered records of the worship, not merely of celestial intelligences, but of the lowest order of created beings, and even of inanimate objects. Modern investigation and research, however, are gradually rescuing the most intellectual nation of antiquity from this aspersion ; and as they slowly lift the veil of mystery which hangs over the tombs of Egypt, are discovering that all these apparent objects of adoration were but symbols of the varied attributes of the one Supreme Being, whose name was too sacred to be pronounced by mortals. Among the Arabs the Sabean faith became mingled with wild superstitions, and degraded by gross idolatry. Each tribe worshipped its particular star or planet, or set up its particular idol. Infanticide mingled its horrors with their religious rites. Among the nomadic tribes the birth of a daughter was considered a

misfortune, her sex rendering her of little service in a wandering and predatory life, while she might bring disgrace upon her family by misconduct or captivity. Motives of unnatural policy, therefore, may have mingled with their religious feelings, in offering up female infants as sacrifices to their idols, or in burying them alive.

The rival sect of Magians or Guebres (fire worshippers), which, as we have said, divided the religious empire of the East, took its rise in Persia, where, after a while, its oral doctrines were reduced to writing by its great prophet and teacher Zoroaster, in his volume of the "Zendavesta." The creed, like that of the Sabeans, was originally simple and spiritual, inculcating a belief in one supreme and eternal God, in whom and by whom the universe exists: that he produced, through his creating word, two active principles; Ormusd, the principle or angel of light or good, and Ahriman, the principle or angel of darkness or evil: that these formed the world out of a mixture of their opposite elements, and were engaged in a perpetual contest in the regulation of its affairs. Hence the vicissitudes of good and evil, accordingly as the angel of light or darkness has the upper hand: this contest would continue until the end of the world, when there would be a general resurrection and a day of judgment; the angel of darkness and his disciples would then be banished to an abode of woful gloom, and their opponents would enter the blissful realms of ever during light.

The primitive rites of this religion were extremely simple. The Magians had neither temples, altars, nor religious symbols of any kind, but addressed their prayers and hymns directly to the Deity, in what they conceived to be his residence, the sun. They revered this luminary as being his abode, and as the source of the light and heat of which all the other heavenly bodies were composed ; and they kindled fires upon the mountain tops to supply light during its absence. Zoroaster first introduced the use of temples, wherein sacred fire, pretended to be derived from heaven, was kept perpetually alive through the guardianship of priests, who maintained a watch over it night and day.

In process of time this sect, like that of the Sabeans, lost sight of the divine principle in the symbol, and came to worship light or fire, as the real Deity, and to abhor darkness as Satan or the devil. In their fanatic zeal the Magians would seize upon unbelievers, and offer them up in the flames to propitiate their fiery deity.

To the tenets of these two sects reference is made in that beautiful text of the wisdom of Solomon : " Surely vain are all men by nature who are ignorant of God, and could not, by considering the work, acknowledge the work master ; but deemed either fire, or wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the violent water, or the lights of heaven, to be gods which govern the world."

Of these two faiths the Sabeans, as we have before observed, was much the most prevalent among the

Arabs ; but in an extremely degraded form, mingled with all kinds of abuses, and varying among the various tribes. The Magian faith prevailed among those tribes which, from their frontier position, had frequent intercourse with Persia ; while other tribes partook of the superstitions and idolatries of the nations on which they bordered.

Judaism had made its way into Arabia at an early period, but very vaguely and imperfectly. Still many of its rites and ceremonies, and fanciful traditions, became implanted in the country. At a later day, however, when Palestine was ravaged by the Romans, and the city of Jerusalem taken and sacked, many of the Jews took refuge among the Arabs ; became incorporated with the native tribes ; formed themselves into communities ; acquired possession of fertile tracts ; built castles and strongholds, and rose to considerable power and influence.

The Christian religion had likewise its adherents among the Arabs. St. Paul himself declares in his epistle to the Galatians, that soon after he had been called to preach Christianity, he “ went into Arabia.” The dissensions, also, which rose in the Eastern church, in the early part of the third century, breaking it up into sects, each persecuting the others as it gained the ascendancy, drove many into exile into remote parts of the East ; filled the deserts of Arabia with anchorites, and planted the Christian faith among some of the principal tribes.

The foregoing circumstances, physical and moral, may give an idea of the causes which maintained

the Arabs for ages in an unchanged condition. While their isolated position and their vast deserts protected them from conquest, their internal feuds, and their want of a common tie, political or religious, kept them from being formidable as conquerors. They were a vast aggregation of distinct parts ; full of individual vigour, but wanting coherent strength. Although their nomadic life rendered them hardy and active ; although the greater part of them were warriors from infancy, yet their arms were only wielded against each other, excepting some of the frontier tribes, which occasionally engaged as mercenaries in external wars. While, therefore, the other nomadic races of Central Asia, possessing no greater aptness for warfare, had, during a course of ages, successively overrun and conquered the civilised world, this warrior race, unconscious of its power, remained disjointed and harmless in the depths of its native deserts.

The time at length arrived when its discordant tribes were to be united in one creed, and animated by one common cause ; when a mighty genius was to arise, who should bring together these scattered limbs, animate them with his own enthusiastic and daring spirit, and lead them forth, a giant of the desert, to shake and overturn the empires of the earth.

CHAPTER II

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE OF MAHOMET—
HIS INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD

Mahomet, the great founder of the faith of Islam, was born in Mecca, in April, in the year 569 of the Christian era. He was of the valiant and illustrious tribe of Koreish, of which there were two branches, descended from two brothers, Haschem and Abd Schems. Haschem, the progenitor of Mahomet, was a great benefactor of Mecca. This city is situated in the midst of a barren and stony country, and in former times was often subject to scarcity of provisions. At the beginning of the sixth century Haschem established two yearly caravans, one in the winter to South Arabia or Yemen; the other in the summer to Syria. By these means abundant supplies were brought to Mecca, as well as a great variety of merchandise. The city became a commercial mart, and the tribe of Koreish, which engaged largely in these expeditions, became wealthy and powerful. Haschem, at this time, was the guardian of the Caaba, the great shrine of Arabian pilgrimage and worship, the custody of which was confided to none but the most honourable tribes and families, in the same manner as, in old times, the temple of Jerusalem was intrusted only to the care of the

Levites. In fact, the guardianship of the Caaba was connected with civil dignities and privileges, and gave the holder of it the control of the sacred city.

On the death of Haschem, his son, Abd al Motâlleb, succeeded to his honours, and inherited his patriotism. He delivered the holy city from an invading army of troops and elephants, sent by the Christian princes of Abyssinia, who at that time held Yemen in subjection. These signal services rendered by father and son, confirmed the guardianship of the Caaba in the line of Haschem; to the great discontent and envy of the line of Abd Schems.

Abd al Motâlleb had several sons and daughters. Those of his sons who figure in history were, Abu Taleb, Abu Lahab, Abbas, Hamza, and Abdallah. The last named was the youngest and best beloved. He married Amina, a maiden of a distant branch of the same illustrious stock of Koreish.

Mahomet was the first and only fruit of the marriage. His birth, according to traditions, was accompanied by signs and portents announcing a child of wonder. His mother suffered none of the pangs of travail. At the moment of his coming into the world a celestial light illumined the surrounding country, and the new-born child, raising his eyes to heaven, exclaimed : "God is great ! There is no God but God, and I am his prophet."

Heaven and earth, we are assured, were agitated at his advent. The Lake Sawa shrank back to its secret springs, leaving its borders dry ; while the

Tigris, bursting its bounds, overflowed the neighbouring lands. The palace of Khosru the king of Persia shook to its foundations, and several of its towers were toppled to the earth. In that troubled night the Kadhi, or Judge of Persia, beheld, in a dream, a ferocious camel conquered by an Arabian courser. He related his dream in the morning to the Persian monarch, and interpreted it to portend danger from the quarter of Arabia.

In the same eventful night the sacred fire of Zoroaster, which, guarded by the Magi, had burned without interruption for upwards of a thousand years, was suddenly extinguished, and all the idols in the world fell down. The demons, or evil genii, which lurk in the stars and the signs of the zodiac, and exert a malignant influence over the children of men, were cast forth by the pure angels, and hurled, with their arch leader, Eblis, or Lucifer, into the depths of the sea.

The relatives of the new-born child, say the Arabian writers, were filled with awe and wonder. His mother's brother, an astrologer, cast his nativity and predicted that he would rise to vast power, found an empire, and establish a new faith among men. His grandfather, Abd al Motâlleb, gave a feast to the principal Koreishites, the seventh day after his birth, at which he presented this child, as the dawning glory of their race, and gave him the name of Mahomet (or Muhamed), indicative of his future renown.

Such are the marvellous accounts given by Moslem writers of the infancy of Mahomet, and we

have little else than similar traditions about his early years. He was scarce two months old when his father died, leaving him no other inheritance than five camels, a few sheep, and a female slave of Ethiopia, named Barakat. His mother, Amina, had hitherto nurtured him, but care and sorrow dried the fountains of her breast, and the air of Mecca being unhealthy for children, she sought a nurse for him among the females of the neighbouring Bedouin tribes. These were accustomed to come to Mecca twice a year, in spring and autumn, to foster the children of its inhabitants ; but they looked for the offspring of the rich, where they were sure of ample recompense, and turned with contempt from this heir of poverty. At length Halêma, the wife of a Saadite shepherd, was moved to compassion, and took the helpless infant to her home. It was in one of the pastoral valleys of the mountains.*

Many were the wonders related by Halêma of her infant charge. On the journey from Mecca, the mule which bore him became miraculously endowed with speech, and proclaimed aloud that he bore on his back the greatest of prophets, the chief of ambassadors, the favourite of the Almighty. The sheep bowed to him as he passed ; as he lay in his

* The Beni Sad (or children of Sad) date from the most remote antiquity, and, with the Katan Arabs, are the only remnants of the primitive tribes of Arabia. Their valley is among the mountains which range southwardly from the Tayef.—*Burckhardt on the Bedouins*, vol. ii, p. 47.

cradle, and gazed at the moon, it stooped to him in reverence.

The blessing of heaven, say the Arabian writers, rewarded the charity of Halêma. While the child remained under her roof, everything around her prospered. The wells and springs were never dried up ; the pastures were always green ; her flocks and herds increased tenfold ; a marvellous abundance reigned over her fields, and peace prevailed in her dwelling.

The Arabian legends go on to extol the almost supernatural powers, bodily and mental, manifested by this wonderful child at a very early age. He could stand alone when three months old ; run abroad when he was seven, and at ten could join other children in their sports with bows and arrows. At eight months he could speak so as to be understood ; and in the course of another month could converse with fluency, displaying a wisdom astonishing to all who heard him.

At the age of three years, while playing in the fields with his foster-brother Masroud, two angels in shining apparel appeared before them. They laid Mahomet gently upon the ground, and Gabriel, one of the angels, opened his breast, but without inflicting any pain. Then taking forth his heart, he cleansed it from all impurity, wringing from it those black and bitter drops of original sin, inherited from our forefather Adam, and which lurk in the hearts of the best of his descendants, inciting them to crime. When he had thoroughly purified it, he filled it with

faith and knowledge and prophetic light, and replaced it in the bosom of the child.

At this supernatural visitation, it is added, was impressed between the shoulders of the child the seal of prophecy, which continued throughout life the symbol and credential of his divine mission ; though unbelievers saw nothing in it but a large mole, the size of a pigeon's egg.

When the marvellous visitation of the angel was related to Halêma and her husband, they were alarmed lest some misfortune should be impending over the child, or that his supernatural visitors might be of the race of evil spirits or genii, which haunt the solitudes of the desert, wreaking mischief on the children of men. His Saadite nurse, therefore, carried him back to Mecca, and delivered him to his mother Amina.

He remained with his parent until his sixth year, when she took him with her to Medina, on a visit to her relatives of the tribe of Adij, but on her journey homeward she died, and was buried at Abwa, a village between Medina and Mecca. Her grave, it will be found, was a place of pious resort and tender recollection to her son, at the latest period of his life.

The faithful Abyssinian slave Barakat now acted as a mother to the orphan child, and conducted him to his grandfather Abd al Motâlleb, in whose household he remained for two years, treated with care and tenderness. Abd al Motâlleb was now well stricken in years ; having outlived the ordinary term of human existence. Finding his end approaching, he

called to him his eldest son Abu Taleb, and bequeathed Mahomet to his especial protection. The good Abu Taleb took his nephew to his bosom, and ever afterwards was to him as a parent. As the former succeeded to the guardianship of the Caaba at the death of his father, Mahomet continued for several years in a kind of sacerdotal household, where the rites and ceremonies of the sacred house were rigidly observed.

CHAPTER III

TRADITIONS CONCERNING MECCA AND THE CAABA

When Adam and Eve were cast forth from Paradise, say Arabian traditions, they fell in different parts of the earth ; Adam on a mountain of the Island of Serendib, or Ceylon ; Eve in Arabia, on the borders of the Red Sea, where the port of Joddah is now situated. For two hundred years they wandered separate and lonely about the earth, until, in consideration of their penitence and wretchedness, they were permitted to come together again on Mount Arafat, not far from the present city of Mecca. In the depth of his sorrow and repentance, Adam, it is said, raised his hands and eyes to heaven, and implored the clemency of God ; entreating that a shrine might be vouchsafed to him similar to that at which he had worshipped when

in Paradise, and round which the angels used to move in adoring processions.

The supplication of Adam was effectual. A tabernacle or temple formed of radiant clouds was lowered down by the hands of angels, and placed immediately below its prototype in the celestial paradise. Towards this heaven-descended shrine, Adam thenceforth turned when in prayer, and round it he daily made seven circuits in imitation of the rites of the adoring angels.

At the death of Adam, say the same traditions, the tabernacle of clouds passed away, or was again drawn up to heaven ; but another of the same form, and in the same place, was built of stone and clay by Seth, the son of Adam. This was swept away by the deluge. Many generations afterwards, in the time of the patriarchs, when Hagar and her child Ishmael were near perishing with thirst in the desert, an angel revealed to them a spring or well of water, near to the ancient site of the tabernacle. This was the well of Zem Zem, held sacred by the progeny of Ishmael to the present day. Shortly afterwards two individuals of the gigantic race of the Amalekites, in quest of a camel which had strayed from their camp, discovered this well, and, having slaked their thirst, brought their companions to the place. Here they founded the city of Mecca, taking Ishmael and his mother under their protection. They were soon expelled by the proper inhabitants of the country, among whom Ishmael remained. When grown to man's estate, he married the daughter of the ruling

prince, by whom he had a numerous progeny, the ancestors of the Arabian people. In process of time, by God's command, he undertook to rebuild the Caaba, on the precise site of the original tabernacle of clouds. In this pious work he was assisted by his father Abraham. A miraculous stone served Abraham as a scaffold, rising and sinking with him as he built the walls of the sacred edifice. It still remains there an inestimable relic, and the print of the patriarch's foot is clearly to be perceived on it by all true believers.

While Abraham and Ishmael were thus occupied, the angel Gabriel brought them a stone, about which traditional accounts are a little at variance ; by some it is said to have been one of the precious stones of Paradise, which fell to the earth with Adam, and was afterwards lost in the slime of the deluge, until retrieved by the angel Gabriel. The more received tradition is, that it was originally the guardian angel appointed to watch over Adam in Paradise, but changed into a stone and ejected thence with him at his fall, as a punishment for not having been more vigilant. This stone Abraham and Ishmael received with proper reverence, and inserted it in a corner of the exterior wall of the Caaba, where it remains to the present day, devoutly kissed by worshippers each time they make a circuit of the temple. When first inserted in the wall it was, we are told, a single jacinth of dazzling whiteness, but became gradually blackened by the kisses of sinful mortals. At the resurrection it will recover its

angelic form, and stand forth a testimony before God in favour of those who have faithfully performed the rites of pilgrimage.

Such are the Arabian traditions, which rendered the Caaba and the well of Zem Zem objects of extraordinary veneration from the remotest antiquity among the people of the East, and especially the descendants of Ishmael. Mecca, which incloses these sacred objects within its walls, was a holy city many ages before the rise of Mahometanism, and was the resort of pilgrims from all parts of Arabia. So universal and profound was the religious feeling respecting this observance, that four months in every year were devoted to the rites of pilgrimage, and held sacred from all violence and warfare. Hostile tribes then laid aside their arms ; took the heads from their spears ; traversed the late dangerous deserts in security ; thronged the gates of Mecca clad in the pilgrim's garb ; made their seven circuits round the Caaba in imitation of the angelic host ; touched and kissed the mysterious black stone ; drank and made ablutions at the well Zem Zem in memory of their ancestor Ishmael ; and having performed all the other primitive rites of pilgrimage, returned home in safety, again to resume their weapons and their wars.

Among the religious observances of the Arabs in these their "days of ignorance"—that is to say before the promulgation of the Moslem doctrines—fasting and prayer had a foremost place. They had three principal fasts within the year ; one of seven,

one of nine, and one of thirty days. They prayed three times each day : about sunrise, at noon, and about sunset ; turning their faces in the direction of the Caaba, which was their kebla, or point of adoration. They had many religious traditions, some of them acquired in early times from the Jews, and they are said to have nurtured their devotional feelings with the book of Psalms, and with a book said to be by Seth, and filled with moral discourses.

Brought up, as Mahomet was, in the house of the guardian of the Caaba, the ceremonies and devotions connected with the sacred edifice may have given an early bias to his mind, and inclined it to those speculations in matters of religion by which it eventually became engrossed. Though his Moslem biographers would fain persuade us his high destiny was clearly foretold in his childhood by signs and prodigies, yet his education appears to have been as much neglected as that of ordinary Arab children. He was a thoughtful child, however ; quick to observe, prone to meditate on all that he observed, and possessed of an imagination fertile, daring, and expansive. The yearly influx of pilgrims from distant parts made Mecca a receptacle for all kinds of floating knowledge, which he appears to have imbibed with eagerness and retained in a tenacious memory ; and as he increased in years, a more extended sphere of observation was gradually opened to him.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST JOURNEY OF MAHOMET WITH
THE CARAVAN TO SYRIA

Mahomet was now twelve years of age, but, as we have shown, he had an intelligence far beyond his years. The spirit of inquiry was awake within him, quickened by intercourse with pilgrims from all parts of Arabia. His uncle Abu Taleb, too, beside his sacerdotal character as guardian of the Caaba, was one of the most enterprising merchants of the tribe of Koreish, and had much to do with those caravans set on foot by his ancestor Haschem, which traded to Syria and Yemen. The arrival and departure of those caravans, which thronged the gates of Mecca and filled its streets with pleasing tumult, were exciting events to a youth like Mahomet, and carried his imagination to foreign parts. He could no longer repress the ardent curiosity thus aroused ; but once, when his uncle was about to mount his camel to depart with the caravan for Syria, clung to him, and entreated to be permitted to accompany him : “ For who, Oh my uncle,” said he, “ will take care of me when thou art away ?”

The appeal was not lost upon the kind-hearted Abu Taleb. He bethought him, too, that the youth was of an age to enter upon the active scenes of Arab life, and of a capacity to render essential service

in the duties of the caravan ; he readily, therefore, granted his prayer, and took him with him on the journey to Syria.

The route lay through regions fertile in fables and traditions, which it is the delight of the Arabs to recount in the evening halts of the caravan. The vast solitudes of the desert, in which that wandering people pass so much of their lives, are prone to engender superstitious fancies ; they have accordingly peopled them with good and evil genii, and clothed them with tales of enchantment, mingled up with wonderful events which happened in days of old. In these evening halts of the caravan, the youthful mind of Mahomet doubtless imbibed many of those traditions of the desert which ever afterwards dwelt in his memory, and had a powerful influence over his imagination. We may especially note two which he must have heard at this time, and which we find recorded by him in after years in the Koran. One related to the mountainous district of Hedjar. Here, as the caravan wound its way through silent and deserted valleys, caves were pointed out in the sides of the mountains once inhabited by the Beni Thamud, or children of Thamud, one of the "lost tribes" of Arabia ; and this was the tradition concerning them :

They were a proud and gigantic race, existing before the time of the patriarch Abraham. Having fallen into blind idolatry, God sent a prophet of the name of Saleh to restore them to the right way. They refused, however, to listen to him, unless he

should prove the divinity of his mission by causing a camel, big with young, to issue from the entrails of a mountain. Saleh accordingly prayed, and lo ! a rock opened, and a female camel came forth, which soon produced a foal. Some of the Thamudites were convinced by the miracle, and were converted by the prophet from their idolatry ; the greater part, however, remained in unbelief. Saleh left the camel among them as a sign, warning them that a judgment from heaven would fall on them, should they do her any harm. For a time the camel was suffered to feed quietly in their pastures, going forth in the morning, and returning in the evening. It is true, that when she bowed her head to drink from a brook or well, she never raised it until she had drained the last drop of water ; but then in return she yielded milk enough to supply the whole tribe. As, however, she frightened the other camels from the pasture, she became an object of offence to the Thamudites, who hamstrung and slew her. Upon this there was a fearful cry from heaven, and great claps of thunder, and in the morning all the offenders were found lying on their faces, dead. Thus the whole race was swept from the earth, and their country was laid for ever afterward under the ban of heaven.

This story made a powerful impression on the mind of Mahomet, insomuch that, in after years, he refused to let his people encamp in the neighbourhood, but hurried them away from it as an accursed region.

Another tradition, gathered on this journey, related to the city of Eyla, situated near the Red Sea. This place, he was told, had been inhabited in old times by a tribe of Jews, who lapsed into idolatry and profaned the Sabbath, by fishing on that sacred day ; in consequence of which the whole tribe incurred Divine displeasure.

We have noted these two traditions especially because they are both cited by Mahomet as instances of divine judgment on the crime of idolatry and evince the bias his youthful mind was already taking on that important subject.

Moslem writers tell us of wonderful circumstances which attended the youth throughout this journey, giving evidence of the continual guardianship of heaven. At one time, as he traversed the burning sands of the desert, an angel hovered over him unseen, sheltering him with his wings ; a miracle, however, which evidently does not rest on the evidence of an eye-witness ; at another time he was protected by a cloud which hung over his head during the noontide heat ; and on another occasion, as he sought the scanty shade of a withered tree, it suddenly put forth leaves and blossoms.

After skirting the ancient domains of the Moabites and the Ammonites often mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, the caravan arrived at Bosra, or Bostra, on the confines of Syria, in the country of the tribe of Manasseh, beyond the Jordan. In Scripture days it had been a city of the Levites, but now was inhabited by Nestorian Christians. It was a great

mart, annually visited by the caravans ; and here our wayfarers came to a halt, and encamped near a convent of Nestorian monks.

By this fraternity Abu Taleb and his nephew were entertained with great hospitality. One of the monks, by some called Sergius, by others Bahira,* on conversing with Mahomet, was surprised at the precocity of his intellect, and interested by his eager desire for information, which appears to have had reference, principally, to matters of religion. They had frequent conversations together on such subjects, in the course of which the efforts of the monk must have been mainly directed against that idolatry in which the youthful Mahomet had hitherto been educated ; for the Nestorian Christians were strenuous in condemning not merely the worship of images, but even the casual exhibition of them ; indeed, so far did they carry their scruples on this point, that even the cross, that general emblem of Christianity, was in a great degree included in this prohibition.

Many have ascribed that knowledge of the principles and traditions of the Christian faith displayed by Mahomet in after life, to those early conversations with this monk ; it is probable, however, that he had further intercourse with the latter in the course of subsequent visits which he made to Syria.

Moslem writers maintain that the interest taken by the monk in the youthful stranger, arose from his having accidentally perceived between his shoulders

Some assert that these two names indicate two monks, who held conversations with Mahomet.

the seal of prophecy. He warned Abu Taleb, say they, when about to set out on his return to Mecca, to take care that his nephew did not fall into the hands of the Jews ; foreseeing with the eye of prophecy the trouble and opposition he was to encounter from that people.

It required no miraculous sign, however, to interest a sectarian monk anxious to make proselytes in an intelligent and inquiring youth, nephew of the guardian of the Caaba, who might carry back with him to Mecca the seeds of Christianity sown in his tender mind ; and it was natural that the monk should be eager to prevent his hoped-for convert, in the present unsettled state of his religious opinions, from being beguiled into the Jewish faith.

Mahomet returned to Mecca, his imagination teeming with the wild tales and traditions picked up in the desert, and his mind deeply impressed with the doctrines imparted to him in the Nestorian convent. He seems ever afterwards to have entertained a mysterious reverence for Syria, probably from the religious impressions received there. It was the land whither Abraham the patriarch had repaired from Chaldea, taking with him the primitive worship of the one true God. " Verily," he used to say in after years, " God has ever maintained guardians of his word in Syria ; forty in number ; when one dies another is sent in his room ; and through them the land is blessed." And again—"Joy be to the people of Syria, for the angels of the kind God spread their wings over them."

CHAPTER V

COMMERCIAL OCCUPATIONS OF MAHOMET—HIS MARRIAGE
WITH CADIJAH.

Mahomet was now completely launched in active life, accompanying his uncles in various expeditions. At one time, when sixteen years of age, we find him with his uncle Zobier, journeying with the caravan to Yemen ; at another time acting as armour-bearer to the same uncle, who led a warlike expedition of Koreishites in aid of the Kenanites against the tribe of Hawazan. This is cited as Mahomet's first essay in arms, though he did little else than supply his uncle with arrows in the heat of the action, and shield him from the darts of the enemy.

As Mahomet advanced in years he was employed by different persons as commercial agent or factor in caravan journeys to Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere ; all which tended to enlarge the sphere of his observation, and to give him a quick insight into character and a knowledge of human affairs.

He was a frequent attender of fairs also, which in Arabia were not always mere resorts of traffic, but occasionally scenes of poetical contests between different tribes, where prizes were adjudged to the victors, and their prize poems treasured up in the

archives of princes. Such, specially, was the case with the fair of Ocadh ; and seven of the prize poems adjudged there, were hung up as trophies in the Caaba. At these fairs, also, were recited the popular traditions of the Arabs, and inculcated the various religious faiths which were afloat in Arabia. From oral sources of this kind, Mahomet gradually accumulated much of that varied information as to creeds and doctrines which he afterwards displayed.

There was at this time residing in Mecca a widow, named Cadijah (or Khadijah) of the tribe of Koreish. She had been twice married. Her last husband, a wealthy merchant, had recently died, and the extensive concerns of the house were in need of a conductor. A nephew of the widow, named Chuzima, had become acquainted with Mahomet in the course of his commercial expeditions, and had noticed the ability and integrity with which he acquitted himself on all occasions. He pointed him out to his aunt as a person well qualified to be her factor. The personal appearance of Mahomet may have strongly seconded this recommendation ; for he was now about twenty-five years of age, and extolled by Arabian writers for his manly beauty and engaging manners. So desirous was Cadijah of securing his services, that she offered him double wages to conduct a caravan which she was on the point of sending off to Syria. Mahomet consulted his uncle Abu Taleb, and, by his advice, accepted the offer. He was accompanied and aided in the expedition by the nephew of the widow, and by her slave Maïsara, and so highly

satisfied was Cadijah with the way in which he discharged his duties, that, on his return, she paid him double the amount of his stipulated wages. She afterwards sent him to the southern parts of Arabia on similar expedition, in all which he gave like satisfaction.

Cadijah was now in her fortieth year, a woman of judgment and experience. The mental qualities of Mahomet rose more and more in her estimation, and her heart began to yearn toward the fresh and comely youth. According to Arabian legends, a miracle occurred most opportunely to confirm and sanctify the bias of her inclinations. She was one day with her handmaids, at the hour of noon, on the terraced roof of her dwelling, watching the arrival of a caravan conducted by Mahomet. As it approached, she beheld, with astonishment, two angels overshadowing him with their wings to protect him from the sun. Turning, with emotion, to her handmaids, "Behold !" said she, "the beloved of Allah, who sends two angels to watch over him !"

Whether or not the handmaidens looked forth with the same eyes of devotion as their mistress, and likewise discerned the angels, the legend does not mention. Suffice it to say, the widow was filled with a lively faith in the superhuman merits of her youthful steward, and forthwith commissioned her trusty slave, Maïsara, to offer him her hand. The negotiation is recorded with simple brevity. "Mahomet," demanded Maïsara, "why dost thou not marry?" "I have not the means," replied

Mahomet. "Well, but if a wealthy dame should offer thee her hand—one also who is handsome and of high birth?" "And who is she?" "Cadijah!" "How is that possible?" "Let me manage it." Maïsara returned to his mistress, and reported what had passed. An hour was appointed for an interview, and the affair was brought to a satisfactory arrangement with that promptness and sagacity which had distinguished Mahomet in all his dealings with the widow. The father of Cadijah made some opposition to the match, on account of the poverty of Mahomet, following the common notion that wealth should be added to wealth: but the widow wisely considered her riches only as the means of enabling her to follow the dictates of her heart. She gave a great feast, to which were invited her father and the rest of her relatives, and Mahomet's uncles Abu Taleb and Hamza, together with several other of the Koreishites. At this banquet wine was served in abundance, and soon diffused good-humour round the board. The objections to Mahomet's poverty were forgotten; speeches were made by Abu Taleb on the one side, and by Waraka, a kinsman of Cadijah, on the other, in praise of the proposed nuptials; the dowry was arranged, and the marriage formally concluded.

Mahomet then caused a camel to be killed before his door, and the flesh distributed among the poor. The house was thrown open to all comers; the female slaves of Cadijah danced to the sound of timbrels, and all was revelry and rejoicing. Abu Taleb,

forgetting his age and his habitua melancholy, made merry on the occasion. He had paid down from his purse a dower of twelve-and-a-half okks of gold, equivalent to twenty young camels. Halêma, who had nursed Mahomet in his infancy, was summoned to rejoice at his nuptials, and was presented with a flock of forty sheep, with which she returned, enriched and contented, to her native valley, in the desert of the Saadites.

CHAPTER VI

CONDUCT OF MAHOMET AFTER HIS MARRIAGE—BECOMES ANXIOUS FOR RELIGIOUS REFORM—HIS HABITS OF SOLITARY ABSTRACTION—THE VISION OF THE CAVE—HIS ANNUNCIATION AS A PROPHET.

The marriage with Cadijah placed Mahomet among the most wealthy of his native city. His moral worth also gave him great influence in the community. Allah, says the historian Abulfeda, had endowed him with every gift necessary to accomplish and adorn an honest man; he was so pure and sincere; so free from every evil thought, that he was commonly known by the name of Al Amin, or The Faithful.

The great confidence reposed in his judgment and probity caused him to be frequently referred to

as arbiter in disputes between his townsmen. An anecdote is given as illustrative of his sagacity on such occasions. The Caaba having been injured by fire, was undergoing repairs, in the course of which the sacred black stone was to be replaced. A dispute arose among the chiefs of the various tribes, as to which was entitled to perform so august an office, and they agreed to abide by the decision of the first person who should enter by the gate al Harâm. That person happened to be Mahomet. Upon hearing their different claims, he directed that a great cloth should be spread upon the ground, and the stone laid thereon; and that a man from each tribe should take hold of the border of the cloth. In this way the sacred stone was raised equally and at the same time by them all to a level with its allotted place, in which Mahomet fixed it with his own hands.

Four daughters and one son were the fruit of the marriage with Cadijah. The son was named Kasim, whence Mahomet was occasionally called Abu Kasim, or the father of Kasim, according to Arabian nomenclature. This son, however, died in his infancy.

For several years after his marriage he continued in commerce, visiting the great Arabian fairs and making distant journeys with the caravans. His expeditions were not as profitable as in the days of his stewardship, and the wealth acquired with his wife diminished, rather than increased, in the course of his operations. That wealth, in fact, had raised

him above the necessity of toiling for subsistence, and given him leisure to indulge the original bias of his mind: a turn for reverie and religious speculation, which he had evinced from his earliest years. This had been fostered in the course of his journeyings, by his intercourse with Jews and Christians, originally fugitives from persecution, but now gathered into tribes, or forming part of the population of cities. The Arabian deserts, too, rife as we have shown them with fanciful traditions, had furnished aliment for his enthusiastic reveries. Since his marriage with Cadijah, also, he had a household oracle to influence him in his religious opinions. This was his wife's cousin Waraka, a man of speculative mind and flexible faith; originally a Jew, subsequently a Christian; and withal a pretender to astrology. He is worthy of note as being the first on record to translate parts of the Old and New Testament into Arabic. From him Mahomet is supposed to have derived much of his information respecting those writings, and many of the traditions of the Mishnu and the Talmud.

Various passages in the Koran show the ruling idea which gradually sprang up in his mind, until it engrossed his thoughts and influenced all his actions. That idea was a religious reform. It had become his fixed belief, deduced from all that he had learnt and meditated, that the only true religion had been revealed to Adam at his creation, and been promulgated and practised in the days of innocence. That religion inculcated the direct and spiritual

worship of one true and only God, the creator of the universe.

It was his belief, furthermore, that this religion, so elevated and simple, had repeatedly been corrupted and debased by man, and especially outraged by idolatry ; wherefore a succession of prophets, each inspired by a revelation from the Most High, had been sent from time to time, and at distant periods, to restore it to its original purity.

It appeared to Mahomet that the time for another reform was again arrived. The world had once more lapsed into blind idolatry. It needed the advent of another prophet, authorised by a mandate from on high, to restore the erring children of men to the right path, and to bring back the worship of the Caaba to what it had been in the days of Abraham and the patriarchs. The probability of such an advent, with its attendant reforms, seems to have taken possession of his mind, and produced habits of reverie and meditation, incompatible with the ordinary concerns of life and the bustle of the world. We are told that he gradually absented himself from society, and sought the solitude of a cavern on Mount Hara, about three leagues north of Mecca, where, like the Christian anchorites of the desert, he would remain days and nights together, engaged in prayer and meditation. In this way he always passed the month of Ramadhan, the holy month of the Arabs. Such intense occupation of the mind on one subject, accompanied by fervent

enthusiasm of spirit, could not but have a powerful effect upon his frame. He became subject to dreams, to ecstasies and trances. For six months successively, according to one of his historians, he had constant dreams bearing on the subject of his waking thoughts. Often he would lose all consciousness of surrounding objects, and lie upon the ground as if insensible. Cadijah, who was sometimes the faithful companion of his solitude, beheld these paroxysms with anxious solicitude, and entreated to know the cause ; but he evaded her inquiries, or answered them mysteriously. Devout Moslems declare them to have been the workings of prophecy ; for already, say they, the intimations of the Most High began to dawn, though vaguely, on his spirit ; and his mind laboured with conceptions too great for mortal thought. At length, say they, what had hitherto been shadowed out in dreams, was made apparent and distinct by an angelic apparition and a divine annunciation.

It was in the fortieth year of his age when this famous revelation took place. Accounts are given of it by Moslem writers as if received from his own lips, and it is alluded to in certain passages of the Koran. He was passing, as was his wont, the month of Ramadhan in the cavern of Mount Hara, endeavouring by fasting, prayer, and solitary meditation, to elevate his thoughts to the contemplation of divine truth. It was on the night called by Arabs *Al Kader*, or *The Divine Decree* ; a night in which, according to the Koran, angels descend to earth, and Gabriel brings down the decrees of God. During that night

there is peace on earth, and a holy quiet reigns over all nature until the rising of the morn.

As Mahomet, in the silent watches of the night, lay wrapped in his mantle, he heard a voice calling upon him ; uncovering his head, a flood of light broke upon him of such intolerable splendour that he swooned away. On regaining his senses, he beheld an angel in a human form, which, approaching from a distance, displayed a silken cloth, covered with written characters. "Read !" said the angel.

"I know not how to read !" replied Mahomet.

"Read !" repeated the angel, "in the name of the Lord, who has created all things ; who created man from a clot of blood. Read in the name of the Most High, who taught man the use of the pen ; who sheds on his soul the ray of knowledge, and teaches him what before he knew not."

Upon this Mahomet instantly felt his understanding illumined with celestial light, and read what was written on the cloth, which contained the decrees of God, as afterwards promulgated in the Koran. When he had finished the perusal, the heavenly messenger announced, "Oh Mahomet, of a verity, thou art the prophet of God ! and I am his angel Gabriel."

Mahomet, we are told, came trembling and agitated to Cadijah in the morning, not knowing whether what he had heard and seen was indeed true, and that he was a prophet decreed to effect that reform so long the object of his meditations ; or whether it might not be a mere vision, a delusion of

the senses, or worse than all, the apparition of an evil spirit.

Cadijah, however, saw everything with the eye of faith, and the credulity of an affectionate woman. She saw in it the fruition of her husband's wishes, and the end of his paroxysms and privations. "Joyful tidings dost thou bring!" exclaimed she. "By him, in whose hand is the soul of Cadijah, I will henceforth regard thee as the prophet of our nation. Rejoice," added she, seeing him still cast down; "Allah will not suffer thee to fall to shame. Hast thou not been loving to thy kinsfolk, kind to thy neighbours, charitable to the poor, hospitable to the stranger, faithful to thy word, and ever a defender of the truth?"

Cadijah hastened to communicate what she had heard to her cousin Waraka, the translator of the Scriptures; who, as we have shown, had been a household oracle of Mahomet in matters of religion. He caught at once, and with eagerness, at this miraculous annunciation. "By him in whose hand is the soul of Waraka," exclaimed he; "thou speakest true, oh Cadijah! The angel who has appeared to thy husband is the same who, in days of old, was sent to Moses the son of Amram. His annunciation is true. Thy husband is indeed a prophet!"

The zealous concurrence of the learned Waraka is said to have had a powerful effect in fortifying the dubious mind of Mahomet.

CHAPTER VII

MAHOMET SLOWLY INCULCATES HIS DOCTRINES.

For a time Mahomet confided his revelations merely to his own household. One of the first to avow himself a believer was his servant Zeid, an Arab of the tribe of Kalb. This youth had been captured in childhood by a freebooting party of Koreishites, and had come by purchase or lot into the possession of Mahomet. Several years afterwards his father, hearing of his being in Mecca, repaired thither and offered a considerable sum for his ransom. "If he chooses to go with thee," said Mahomet, "he shall go without ransom: but if he chooses to remain with me, why should I not keep him? Zeid preferred to remain, having ever, he said, been treated more as a son than as a slave. Upon this, Mahomet publicly adopted him, and he had ever since remained with him in affectionate servitude. Now, on embracing the new faith, he was set entirely free, but it will be found that he continued through life that devoted attachment which Mahomet seems to have had the gift of inspiring in his followers and dependents.

The early steps of Mahomet in his prophetic career were perilous. He had hostility to apprehend on every side; from his immediate kindred, the Koreishites of the line of Hascem, whose power

and prosperity were identified with idolatry ; and still more from the rival line of Abd Schems, who had long looked with envy and jealousy on the Haschemites, and would eagerly raise the cry of impiety to dispossess them of the guardianship of the Caaba. At the head of this rival branch of Koreish was Abu Sofian, grandson of Omeya. He was an able and ambitious man, of great wealth and influence, and proved to be one of the most persevering and powerful opponents of Mahomet.

One of the bitterest opponents of Mahomet was his uncle, Abu Lahab, a wealthy man, of proud spirit and irritable temper. His son Otha had married Mahomet's third daughter, Rokaia, so that they were doubly allied. Abu Lahab, however, was also allied to the rival line of Koreish, having married Omm Jemil, sister of Abu Sofian, and he was greatly under the control of his wife and his brother-in-law. Mahomet was keenly sensible of the rancorous opposition of this uncle, which he attributed to the instigations of his wife, Omm Jemil. He especially deplored it, as he saw that it affected the happiness of his daughter Rokaia, whose inclination to his doctrines brought on her the reproaches of her husband and his family.

These, and other causes of solicitude, preyed upon his spirits, and increased the perturbation of his mind. He became worn and haggard, and subject more and more to fits of abstraction. Those of his relatives who were attached to him, noticed his altered mien, and dreaded an attack of illness ; others

scoffingly accused him of mental hallucination ; and the foremost among these scoffers was his uncle's wife, Omm Jemil, the sister of Abu Sofian.

CHAPTER VIII

VIOLENCE OF THE KOREISHITES—MAHOMET'S DAUGHTER ROKAIA, WITH HER UNCLE OTHMAN, AND A NUMBER OF DISCIPLES, TAKE REFUGE IN ABYSSINIA—MAHOMET IN THE HOUSE OF ORKHAM—HOSTILITY OF ABU JAHL ; HIS PUNISHMENT.

The animosity of the Koreishites became more and more virulent, and proceeded to personal violence. Mahomet was assailed and nearly strangled in the Caaba, and was rescued with difficulty by Abu Beker, who himself suffered personal injury in the affray. His immediate family became objects of hatred, especially his daughter Rokaia and her husband Othman Ibn Affan. Such of his disciples as had no powerful friends to protect them were in peril of their lives. Full of anxiety for their safety, Mahomet advised them to leave his dangerous companionship for the present, and take refuge in Abyssinia. The narrowness of the Red Sea made it easy to reach the African shore. The Abyssinians were Nestorian Christians, elevated by their religion above their barbarous neighbours. Their najashee or king was reputed to be tolerant and just. With him Mahomet trusted his

daughter and his fugitive disciples would find refuge.

Othman Ibn Affan was the leader of this little band of Moslems, consisting of eleven men and four women. They took the way by the sea-coast to Jodda, a port about two days' journey to the east of Mecca, where they found two Abyssinian vessels at anchor, in which they embarked, and sailed for the land of refuge.

This event, which happened in the fifth year of the mission of Mahomet, is called the first Hegira or Flight, to distinguish it from the second Hegira, the flight of the prophet himself from Mecca to Medina. The kind treatment experienced by the fugitives induced others of the same faith to follow their example, until the number of Moslem refugees in Abyssinia amounted to eighty-three men and eighteen women, besides children.

The Koreishites finding that Mahomet was not to be silenced, and was daily making converts, passed a law banishing all who should embrace his faith. Mahomet retired before the storm, and took refuge in the house of a disciple named Orkham, situated on the hill of Safa. This hill, as has already been mentioned, was renowned in Arabian tradition as the one on which Adam and Eve were permitted to come once more together, after the long solitary wandering about the earth which followed their expulsion from paradise. It was likewise connected in tradition with the fortunes of Hagar and Ishmael.

Mahomet remained for a month in the house of Orkham, continuing his revelations and drawing to him sectaries from various parts of Arabia. The hostility of the Koreishites followed him to his retreat. Abu Jahl, an Arab of that tribe, sought him out, insulted him with opprobrious language, and even personally maltreated him. The outrage was reported to Hamza, an uncle of Mahomet, as he returned to Mecca from hunting. Hamza was no proselyte to Islamism, but he was pledged to protect his nephew. Marching with bow unstrung in his hand to an assemblage of the Koreishites, where Abu Jahl was vaunting his recent triumph, he dealt the boaster a blow over the head, that inflicted a grievous wound. The kinsfolk of Abu Jahl rushed to his assistance, but the brawler stood in awe of the vigorous arm and fiery spirit of Hamza, and sought to pacify him. "Let him alone," said he to his kinsfolk; "in truth I have treated his nephew very roughly." He alleged in palliation of his outrage the apostasy of Mahomet; but Hamza was not to be appeased. "Well!" cried he, fiercely and scornfully, "I also do not believe in your gods of stone; can you compel me?" Anger produced in his bosom what reasoning might have attempted in vain. He forthwith declared himself a convert; took the oath of adhesion to the prophet, and became one of the most zealous and valiant champions of the new faith.

CHAPTER IX

OMAR IBN AL KHATTAB, NEPHEW OF ABU JAHL, UNDERTAKES TO REVENGE HIS UNCLE BY SLAYING MAHOMET—HIS WONDERFUL CONVERSION TO THE FAITH—MAHOMET TAKES REFUGE IN A CASTLE OF ABU TALEB—ABU SOFIAN, AT THE HEAD OF THE RIVAL BRANCH OF KOREISHITES, PERSECUTES MAHOMET AND HIS FOLLOWERS—OBTAINS A DECREE OF NON-INTERCOURSE WITH THEM—MAHOMET LEAVES HIS RETREAT AND MAKES CONVERTS DURING THE MONTH OF PILGRIMAGE—LEGEND OF THE CONVERSION OF HABIB THE WISE.

The hatred of Abu Jahl to the prophet was increased by the severe punishment received at the hands of Hamza. He had a nephew named Omar Ibn al Khattâb ; twenty-six years of age ; of gigantic stature, prodigious strength, and great courage. His savage aspect appalled the bold, and his very walking-staff struck more terror into beholders than another man's sword. Such are the words of the Arabian historian, Abu Abdallah Mohamed Ibn Omal Al-wakedi, and the subsequent feats of this warrior prove that they were scarce chargeable with exaggeration.

Instigated by his uncle Abu Jahl, this fierce Arab undertook to penetrate to the retreat of Mahomet, who was still in the house of Orkham, and to strike a poniard to his heart. The Koreishites are accused of having promised him one hundred camels and one thousand ounces of gold for this deed of blood ; but

this is improbable, nor did the vengeful nephew of Abu Jahl need a bribe.

As he was on his way to the house of Orkham he met a Koreishite, to whom he imparted his design. The Koreishite was a secret convert to Islamism, and sought to turn him from his bloody errand. "Before you slay Mahomet," said he, "and draw upon yourself the vengeance of his relatives, see that your own are free from heresy." "Are any of mine guilty of backsliding?" demanded Omar with astonishment. "Even so," was the reply, "thy sister Amina and her husband Seid."

Omar hastened to the dwelling of his sister, and, entering it abruptly, found her and her husband reading the Koran. Seid attempted to conceal it, but his confusion convinced Omar of the truth of the accusation, and heightened his fury. In his rage he struck Seid to the earth; placed his foot upon his breast, and would have plunged his sword into it, had not his sister interposed. A blow on the face bathed her visage in blood. "Enemy of Allah!" sobbed Amina, "dost thou strike me thus for believing in the only true God? In despite of thee and thy violence, I will persevere in the true faith." "Yes," added she with fervour, "'There is no God but God, and Mahomet is his prophet.'—And now, Omar, finish thy work!"

Omar paused; repented of his violence, and took his foot from the bosom of Seid.

"Show me the writing," said he. Amina, however, refused to let him touch the sacred scroll until

he had washed his hands. The passage which he read is said to have been the twentieth chapter of the Koran, which thus begins :—

“In the name of the most merciful God ! We have not sent down the Koran to inflict misery on mankind, but as a monitor, to teach him to believe in the true God, the creator of the earth and the lofty heavens.

“The all merciful is enthroned on high ; to him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, and in the regions under the earth.

“Dost thou utter thy prayers with a loud voice ? know that there is no need. God knoweth the secrets of thy heart ; yea, that which is most hidden.

“Verily, I am God ; there is none beside me. Serve me, serve none other. Offer up thy prayer to none but me.”

The words of the Koran sank deep into the heart of Omar. He read farther, and was more and more moved ; but when he came to the parts treating of the resurrection and of judgment, his conversion was complete.

He pursued his way to the house of Orkham, but with an altered heart. Knocking humbly at the door, he craved admission. “Come in, son of al Khattab,” exclaimed Mahomet. “What brings thee hither ?”

“I come to enrol my name among the believers of God and his prophet.” So saying, he made the Moslem profession of faith.

He was not content until his conversion was publicly known. At his request, Mahomet accompanied him instantly to the Caaba, to perform openly the rites of Islamism. Omar walked on the left hand of the prophet, and Hamza on the right, to protect him from injury and insult, and they were followed by upwards of forty disciples. They passed in open day through the streets of Mecca, to the astonishment of its inhabitants. Seven times did they make the circuit of the Caaba, touching each time the sacred black stone, and complying with all the other ceremonials. The Koreishites regarded this procession with dismay, but dared not approach nor molest the prophet, being deterred by the looks of those terrible men of battle Hamza and Omar ; who, it is said, glared upon them like two lions that had been robbed of their young.

Fearless and resolute in everything, Omar went by himself the next day to pray as a Moslem in the Caaba, in open defiance of the Kqreishites. Another Moslem, who entered the temple, was interrupted in his worship, and rudely treated ; but no one molested Omar, because he was the nephew of Abu Jahl. Omar repaired to his uncle. "I renounce thy protection," said he. "I will not be better off than my fellow-believers." From that time he cast his lot with the followers of Mahomet, and was one of his most strenuous defenders.

Such was the wonderful conversion of Omar, afterwards the most famous champion of the Islam faith. So exasperated were the Koreishites by this

new triumph of Mahomet, that his uncle Abu Taleb feared they might attempt the life of his nephew, either by treachery or open violence. At his earnest entreaties, therefore, the latter, accompanied by some of his principal disciples, withdrew to a kind of castle, or stronghold, belonging to Abu Taleb, in the neighbourhood of the city.

It is evident the hostility of Abu Sofian arose, not merely from personal hatred or religious scruples, but from family feud. He was ambitious of transferring to his own line the honours of the city so long engrossed by the Haschemites. The last measure of the kind-hearted Abu Taleb, in placing Mahomet beyond the reach of persecution, and giving him a castle as a refuge, was seized upon by Abu Sofian and his adherents as a pretext for a general ban of the rival line. They accordingly issued a decree, forbidding the rest of the tribe of Koreish from intermarrying, or holding any intercourse, even of bargain or sale, with the Haschemites, until they should deliver up their kinsman, Mahomet, for punishment.

This decree, which took place in the seventh year of the mission of the prophet, was written on parchment, and hung up in the Caaba. It reduced Mahomet and his disciples to great straits, being almost famished at times in the stronghold in which they had taken refuge. The fortress was also beleaguered occasionally by the Koreishites, to enforce the ban in all its rigour, and to prevent the possibility of supplies.

The annual season of pilgrimage, however, when hosts of pilgrims repair from all parts of Arabia to

Mecca, brought transient relief to the persecuted Moslems. During that sacred season, according to immemorial law and usage among the Arabs, all hostilities were suspended, and warring tribes met in temporary peace to worship at the Caaba. At such times Mahomet and his disciples would venture from their stronghold and return to Mecca. Protected also by the immunity of the holy month, Mahomet would mingle among the pilgrims, and preach and pray; propound his doctrines, and proclaim his revelations. In this way he made many converts, who, on their return to their several homes, carried with them the seeds of the new faith to distant regions. Among these converts were occasionally the princes or heads of tribes, whose example had an influence on their adherents. Arabian legends give a pompous and extravagant account of the conversion of one of these princes; which, as it was attended by some of the most noted miracles recorded of Mahomet, may not be unworthy of an abbreviated insertion.

The prince in question was Habib Ibn Malec, surnamed the Wise, on account of his vast knowledge and erudition; for he is represented as deeply versed in magic and the sciences, and acquainted with all religions, to their very foundations, having read all that had been written concerning them, and also acquired practical information, for he had belonged to them all by turns, having been Jew, Christian, and one of the Magi. It is true he had had more than usual time for his studies and experience, having, according to Arabian legend, attained to the age of one

hundred and forty years. He now came to Mecca at the head of a powerful host of twenty thousand men, bringing with him a youthful daughter, Satiha, whom he must have begotten in a ripe old age; and for whom he was putting up prayers at the Caaba, she having been struck dumb, and deaf, and blind, and deprived of the use of her limbs.

Abu Sofian and Abu Jahl, according to the legend, thought the presence of this very powerful, very idolatrous, and very wise old prince, at the head of so formidable a host, a favourable opportunity to effect the ruin of Mahomet. They accordingly informed Habib the Wise of the heresies of the pretended prophet; and prevailed upon the venerable prince to summon him into his presence, at his encampment in the Valley of Flints, there to defend his doctrines in the hope that his obstinacy in error would draw upon him banishment or death.

The legend gives a magnificent account of the issuing forth of the idolatrous Koreishites, in proud array, on horseback and on foot, led by Abu Sofian and Abu Jahl, to attend the grand inquisition in the Valley of Flints; and of the Oriental state in which they were received by Habib the Wise, seated under a tent of crimson, on a throne of ebony, inlaid with ivory and sandal-wood, and covered with plates of gold.

Mahomet was in the dwelling of Cadijah when he received a summons to this formidable tribunal. Cadijah was loud in her expressions of alarm; and his daughters hung about his neck, weeping and lamenting, for they thought him going to certain

death ; but he gently rebuked their fears, and bade them trust in Allah.

Unlike the ostentatious state of his enemies, Abu Sofian and Abu Jahl, he approached the scene of trial in simple guise, clad in a white garment, with a black turban, and a mantle which had belonged to his grandfather, Abd al Motâlleb and was made of the stuff of Aden. His hair floated below his shoulders, the mysterious light of prophecy beamed from his countenance ; and though he had not anointed his beard, nor used any perfumes, excepting a little musk and camphor for the hair of his upper lip, yet wherever he passed a bland odour diffused itself around, being, say the Arabian writers, the fragrant emanations from his person.

He was preceded by the zealous Abu Beker, clad in a scarlet vest and a white turban, with his mantle gathered up under his arms, so as to display his scarlet slippers.

A silent awe, continues the legend, fell upon the vast assemblage as the prophet approached. Not a murmur, not a whisper was to be heard. The very brute animals were charmed to silence ; and the neighing of the steed, the bellowing of the camel, and the braying of the ass, were mute.

The venerable Habib received him graciously : his first question was to the point. "They tell thou dost pretend to be a prophet sent from God ? Is it so ?"

"Even so," replied Mahomet. "Allah has sent me to proclaim the veritable faith."

"Good," rejoined the wary sage, "but every prophet has given proof of his mission by signs and miracles. Noah had his rainbow ; Solomon his mysterious ring ; Abraham the fire of the furnace, which became cool at his command ; Isaac the ram, which was sacrificed in his stead ; Moses his wonder-working rod ; and Jesus brought the dead to life, and appeased tempests with a word. If, then, thou art really a prophet, give us a miracle in proof."

The adherents of Mahomet trembled for him when they heard this request, and Abu Jahl clapped his hands and extolled the sagacity of Habib the Wise. But the prophet rebuked him with scorn. "Peace! dog of thy race !" exclaimed he ; "disgrace of thy kindred and of thy tribe." He then calmly proceeded to execute the wishes of Habib.

The first miracle demanded of Mahomet was to reveal what Habib had within his tent, and why he had brought it to Mecca.

Upon this, says the legend, Mahomet bent toward the earth and traced figures upon the sand. Then raising his head, he replied, "Oh Habib ! thou hast brought hither thy daughter, Satiha, deaf and dumb, and lame and blind, in the hope of obtaining relief of Heaven. Go to thy tent ; speak to her, and hear her reply, and know that God is all powerful."

The aged prince hastened to his tent. His daughter met him with light step and extended arms, perfect in all her faculties, her eyes beaming with joy, her face clothed with smiles, and moreauteous than the moon in an unclouded night.

The second miracle demanded by Habib was still more difficult. It was that Mahomet should cover the noontide heaven with supernatural darkness, and cause the moon to descend and rest upon the top of the Caaba.

The prophet performed this miracle as easily as the first. At his summons, a darkness blotted out the whole light of day. The moon was then seen straying from her course and wandering about the firmament. By the irresistible power of the prophet, she was drawn from the heavens and rested on the top of the Caaba. She then performed seven circuits about it, after the manner of the pilgrims, and having made a profound reverence to Mahomet, stood before him with lambent wavering motion, like a flaming sword, giving him the salutation of peace, and hailing him as a prophet.

Not content with this miracle, pursues the legend, Mahomet compelled the obedient luminary to enter by the right sleeve of his mantle, and go out by the left; then to divide into two parts, one of which went towards the east, and the other towards the west, and meeting in the centre of the firmament reunited themselves into a round and glorious orb.

It is needless to say that Habib the Wise was convinced, and converted by these miracles, as were also four hundred and seventy of the inhabitants of Mecca. Abu Jahl, however, was hardened in unbelief, exclaiming that all was illusion and enchantment produced by the magic of Mahomet.

CHAPTER X

MAHOMET MAKES CONVERTS OF PILGRIMS FROM MEDINA—DETERMINES TO FLY TO THAT CITY—A PLOT TO SLAY HIM—HIS MIRACULOUS ESCAPE—HIS HEGIRA, OR FLIGHT—HIS RECEPTION AT MEDINA.

The fortunes of Mahomet were becoming darker and darker in his native place. Cadijah, his original benefactress, the devoted companion of his solitude and seclusion, the zealous believer in his doctrines, was in her grave : so also was Abu Taleb, once his faithful and efficient protector. Deprived of the sheltering influence of the latter, Mahomet had become, in a manner, an outlaw in Mecca ; obliged to conceal himself, and remain a burden on the hospitality of those whom his own doctrines had involved in persecution. If worldly advantage had been his object, how had it been attained ? Upwards of ten years had elapsed since first he announced his prophetic mission ; ten long years of enmity, trouble, and misfortune. Still he persevered, and now, at a period of life when men seek to enjoy in repose the fruition of the past, rather than risk all in new schemes for the future, we find him, after having sacrificed ease, fortune, and friends, prepared to give up home and country also, rather than his religious creed.

As soon as the privileged time of pilgrimage arrived, he emerged once more from his concealment, and mingled with the multitude assembled from all parts of Arabia. His earnest desire was to find some powerful tribe, or the inhabitants of some important city, capable and willing to receive him as a guest, and protect him in the enjoyment and propagation of his faith.

His quest was for a time unsuccessful. Those who had come to worship at the Caaba, drew back from a man stigmatised as an apostate; and the worldly-minded were unwilling to befriend one proscribed by the powerful of his native place.

At length, as he was one day preaching on the hill Al Akaba, a little to the north of Mecca, he drew the attention of certain pilgrims from the city of Yathreb. This city, since called Medina, was about two hundred and seventy miles north of Mecca. Many of its inhabitants were Jews and heretical Christians. The pilgrims in question were pure Arabs of the ancient and powerful tribe of Khazradites, and in habits of friendly intercourse with the Keneedites and Naderites, two Jewish tribes inhabiting Mecca, who claimed to be of the sacerdotal line of Aaron. The pilgrims had often heard their Jewish friends explain the mysteries of their faith, and talk of an expected Messiah. They were moved by the eloquence of Mahomet, and struck with the resemblance of his doctrines to those of the Jewish law; insomuch that when they heard him proclaim himself

a prophet, sent by heaven to restore the ancient faith, they said, one to another, "Surely this must be the promised Messiah of which we have been told." The more they listened, the stronger became their persuasion of the fact, until in the end they avowed their conviction, and made a final profession of the faith.

As the Khazradites belonged to one of the most powerful tribes of Yathreb, Mahomet sought to secure their protection, and proposed to accompany them on their return ; but they informed him that they were at deadly feud with the Awsites, another powerful tribe of that city, and advised him to defer his coming until they should be at peace. He consented ; but on the return home of the pilgrims, he sent with them Musab Ibn Omeir, one of the most learned and able of his disciples, with instructions to strengthen them in the faith, and to preach it to their townsmen. Thus were the seeds of Islamism first sown in the city of Medina. For a time they thrived but slowly. Musab was opposed by the idolaters, and his life threatened ; but he persisted in his exertions, and gradually made converts among the principal inhabitants. Among these were Saad Ibn Maads, a prince or chief of the Awsites ; and Osain Ibn Hodheir, a man of great authority in the city. Numbers of the Moslems of Mecca also, driven away by persecution, took refuge in Medina, and aided in propagating the new faith among its inhabitants, until it found its way into almost every household.

Feeling now assured of being able to give Mahomet an asylum in the city, upwards of seventy of the converts of Medina, led by Musab Ibn Omeir, repaired to Mecca with the pilgrims in the holy month of the thirteenth year of "the mission," to invite him to take up his abode in their city. Mahomet gave them a midnight meeting on the hill Al Akaba. His uncle, Al Abbas, who, like the deceased Abu Taleb, took an affectionate interest in his welfare, though no convert to his doctrines, accompanied him to this secret conference, which he feared might lead him into danger. He entreated the pilgrims from Medina not to entice his nephew to their city until more able to protect him : warning them that their open adoption of the new faith would bring all Arabia in arms against them. His warnings and entreaties were in vain : a solemn compact was made between the parties. Mahomet demanded that they should abjure idolatry, and worship the one true God openly and fearlessly. For himself he exacted obedience in weal and woe ; and for the disciples who might accompany him, protection ; even such as they would render to their own wives and children. On these terms he offered to bind himself to remain among them, to be the friend of their friends, the enemy of their enemies. " But should we perish in your cause," asked they, " what will be our reward ?" " Paradise !" replied the prophet.

The terms were accepted ; the emissaries from Medina placed their hands in the hands of Mahomet,

and swore to abide by the compact. The latter then singled out twelve from among them, whom he designated as his apostles; in imitation, it is supposed, of the example of our Saviour. Just then a voice was heard from the summit of the hill, denouncing them as apostates, and menacing them with punishment. The sound of this voice, heard in the darkness of the night, inspired temporary dismay. "It is the voice of the fiend Iblis," said Mahomet, scornfully; "he is the foe of God: fear him not." It was probably the voice of some spy or eavesdropper of the Koreishites; for the very next morning they manifested a knowledge of what had taken place in the night; and treated the new confederates with great harshness as they were departing from the city.

It was this early accession to the faith, and this timely aid proffered and subsequently afforded to Mahomet and his disciples, which procured for the Moslems of Medina the appellation of Ansarians, or auxiliaries, by which they were afterwards distinguished.

After the departure of the Ansarians, and the expiration of the holy month, the persecutions of the Moslems were resumed with increased virulence, insomuch that Mahomet, seeing a crisis was at hand, and being resolved to leave the city, advised his adherents generally to provide for their safety. For himself, he still lingered in Mecca with a few devoted followers.

Abu Sofian, his implacable foe, was at this time governor of the city. He was both incensed and

alarmed at the spreading growth of the new faith, and held a meeting of the chief of the Koreishites to devise some means of effectually putting a stop to it. Some advised that Mahomet should be banished the city; but it was objected that he might gain other tribes to his interest, or perhaps the people of Medina, and return at their head to take his revenge. Others proposed to wall him up in a dungeon, and supply him with food until he died; but it was surmised that his friends might effect his escape. All these objections were raised by a violent and pragmatistical old man, a stranger from the province of Nedja, who, say the Moslem writers, was no other than the devil in disguise, breathing his malignant spirit into those present. At length it was declared by Abu Jahl, that the only effectual check on the growing evil was to put Mahomet to death. To this all agreed, and as a means of sharing the odium of the deed, and withstanding the vengeance it might awaken among the relatives of the victim, it was arranged that a member of each family should plunge his sword into the body of Mahomet.

It is to this conspiracy that allusion is made in the eighth chapter of the Koran. "And call to mind how the unbelievers plotted against thee, that they might either detain thee in bonds, or put thee to death, or expel thee the city; but God laid a plot against them; and God is the best layer of plots."

In fact, by the time the murderers arrived before the dwelling of Mahomet, he was apprised of the

impending danger. It is probable that the warning was given by some Koreishite, less bloody-minded than his confederates. It came just in time to save Mahomet from the hands of his enemies. They paused at his door, but hesitated to enter. Looking through a crevice they beheld, as they thought, Mahomet wrapped in his green mantle, and lying asleep on his couch. They waited for a while, consulting whether to fall on him while sleeping, or wait until he should go forth. At length they burst open the door and rushed toward the couch. The sleeper started up; but, instead of Mahomet, Ali stood before them. Amazed and confounded, they demanded, "Where is Mahomet?" "I know not," replied Ali sternly, and walked forth; nor did any one venture to molest him. Enraged at the escape of their victim, however, the Koreishites proclaimed a reward of a hundred camels to any one who should bring them Mahomet alive or dead.

Divers accounts are given of the mode in which Mahomet made his escape from the house after the faithful Ali had wrapped himself in his mantle and taken his place upon the couch. The most miraculous account is, that he opened the door silently, as the Koreishites stood before it, and, scattering a handful of dust in the air, cast such blindness upon them, that he walked through the midst of them without being perceived. This, it is added, is confirmed by the verse of the thirtieth chapter of the Koran: "We have thrown blindness upon them, that they shall not see."

The most probable account is, that he clambered over the wall in the rear of the house, by the help of a servant, who bent his back for him to step upon it.

He repaired immediately to the house of Abu Beker, and they arranged for instant flight. It was agreed that they should take refuge in a cave in Mount Thor, about an hour's distance from Mecca, and wait there until they could proceed safely to Medina: and in the meantime the children of Abu Beker should secretly bring them food. They left Mecca while it was yet dark, making their way on foot by the light of the stars, and the day dawned as they found themselves at the foot of Mount Thor. Scarce were they within the cave, when they heard the sound of pursuit. Abu Beker, though a brave man, quaked with fear. "Our pursuers," said he, "are many, and we are but two." "Nay," replied Mahomet, "there is a third; God is with us!" And here the Moslem writers relate a miracle, dear to the minds of all true believers. By the time, say they, that the Koreishites reached the mouth of the cavern, an acacia-tree had sprung up before it, in the spreading branches of which a pigeon had made its nest, and laid its eggs and over the whole a spider had woven its web. When the Koreishites beheld these signs of undisturbed quiet, they concluded that no one could recently have entered the cavern; so they turned away, and pursued their search in another direction.

The fugitives remained for three days undiscovered in the cave, and Asama, the daughter of Abu Beker, brought them food in the dusk of the evenings.

On the fourth day, when they presumed the ardour of pursuit had abated, the fugitives ventured forth, and set out for Medina, on camels which a servant of Abu Beker had brought in the night for them. Avoiding the main road usually taken by the caravans, they bent their course nearer to the coast of the Red Sea. They had not proceeded far, however, before they were overtaken by a troop of horse, headed by Soraka Ibn Malec. Abu Beker was again dismayed by the number of their pursuers; but Mahomet repeated the assurance, "Be not troubled; Allah is with us." Soraka was a grim warrior, with shaggy iron-grey locks, and naked sinewy arms rough with hair. As he overtook Mahomet, his horse reared and fell with him. His superstitious mind was struck with it as an evil sign. Mahomet perceived the state of his feelings, and by an eloquent appeal wrought upon him to such a degree, that Soraka, filled with awe, entreated his forgiveness; and turning back with his troop, suffered him to proceed on his way unmolested.

The fugitives continued their journey without further interruption, until they arrived at Koba, a hill about two miles from Medina. It was a favourite resort of the inhabitants of the city, and a place to which they sent their sick and infirm, for the air was pure and salubrious. Hence, too, the city was supplied with fruit; the hill and its environs being covered with vineyards, and with groves of the date and lotus; with gardens producing citrons, oranges, pomegranates, figs, peaches,

and apricots; and being irrigated with limpid streams.

On arriving at this fruitful spot, Al Kaswa, the camel of Mahomet, crouched on her knees, and would go no further. The prophet interpreted it as a favourable sign, and determined to remain at Koba, and prepare for entering the city. The place where his camel knelt is still pointed out by pious Moslems, a mosque named Al Takwa having been built there to commemorate the circumstance. Some affirm that it was actually founded by the prophet. A deep well is also shown in the vicinity, beside which Mahomet reposed under the shade of the trees, and into which he dropped his seal ring. It is believed still to remain there and has given sanctity to the well; the waters of which are conducted by subterraneous conduits to Medina. At Koba he remained four days, residing in the house of an Awsite named Colthum Ibn Hadem. While at this village he was joined by a distinguished chief, Boreida Ibn Hoseib, with seventy followers, all of the tribe of Saham. These made profession of faith between the hands of Mahomet.

Another renowned proselyte who repaired to the prophet at this village, was Salman al Parsi (or the Persian). He is said to have been a native of a small place near Ispahan, and that, on passing one day by a Christian church, he was so much struck by the devotion of the people, and the solemnity of the worship, that he became disgusted with the idolatrous faith in which he had been brought up. He

afterwards wandered about the East, from city to city, and convent to convent, in quest of a religion, until an ancient monk, full of years and infirmities, told him of a prophet who had arisen in Arabia to restore the pure faith of Abraham.

This Salman rose to power in after years, and was reputed by the unbelievers of Mecca to have assisted Mahomet in compiling his doctrine. This is alluded to in the sixteenth chapter of the Koran. "Verily, the idolaters say, that a certain man assisted to compose the Koran; but the language of this man is Ajami (or Persian); and the Koran is indited in the pure Arabian tongue."

The Moslems of Mecca, who had taken refuge some time before in Medina, hearing that Mahomet was at hand, came forth to meet him at Koba; among these was the early convert Talha, and Zobeir, the nephew of Cudjah. These, seeing the travel-stained garments of Mahomet and Abu Beker, gave them white mantles, with which to make their entrance into Medina. Numbers of the Ansarians, or auxiliaries, of Medina, who had made their compact with Mahomet in the preceding year, now hastened to renew their vow of fidelity.

Learning from them that the number of proselytes in the city was rapidly augmenting, and that there was a general disposition to receive him favourably, he appointed Friday, the Moslem sabbath, the sixteenth day of the month Rabi, for his public entrance.

Accordingly, on the morning of that day, he assembled all his followers to prayer ; and after a sermon, in which he expounded the main principles of his faith, he mounted his camel Al Kaswa, and set forth for that city which was to become renowned in after ages as his city of refuge.

Boreida Ibn al Hoseib, with his seventy horsemen of the tribe of Saham, accompanied him as a guard. Some of the disciples took turns to hold a canopy of palm-leaves over his head, and by his side rode Abu Beker. "Oh apostle of God !" cried Boreida, "thou shalt not enter Medina without a standard ;" so saying, he unfolded his turban, and tying one end of it to the point of his lance, bore it aloft before the prophet.

The city of Medina was fair to approach, being extolled for beauty of situation, salubrity of climate, and fertility of soil ; for the luxuriance of its palm-trees, and the fragrance of its shrubs and flowers. At a short distance from the city a crowd of new proselytes to the faith came forth in sun and dust to meet the cavalcade. Most of them had never seen Mahomet, and paid reverence to Abu Beker through mistake ; but the latter put aside the screen of palm-leaves, and pointed out the real object of homage, who was greeted with loud acclamations.

In this way did Mahomet, so recently a fugitive, from his native city, with a price upon his head, enter Medina, more as a conqueror in triumph than an exile seeking an asylum. He alighted at the house of a Khazradite, named Abu Ayub, a devout

Moslem, to whom moreover he was distantly related ; here he was hospitably received, and took up his abode in the basement story.

Shortly after his arrival he was joined by the faithful Ali, who had fled from Mecca, and journeyed on foot, hiding himself in the day and travelling only at night, lest he should fall into the hands of the Koreishites. He arrived weary and way-worn, his feet bleeding with the roughness of the journey.

Within a few days more came Ayesha, and the rest of Abu Beker's household, together with the family of Mahomet, conducted by his faithful freed-man Zeid, and by Abu Beker's servant Abdallah.

Such is the story of the memorable Hégira, or "Flight of the prophet ;"—the era of the Arabian calendar from which time is calculated by all true Moslems : it corresponds to the 622nd year of the Christian era.

CHAPTER XI

MOSLEMS IN MEDINA, MOHADJERINS AND ANSARIANS—THE PARTY OF ABDALLAH IBN OBBA AND THE HYPOCRITES—MAHOMET BUILDS A MOSQUE ; PREACHES ; BROTHERHOOD ESTABLISHED BETWEEN FUGITIVES AND ALLIES.

Mahomet soon found himself at the head of a numerous and powerful sect in Medina ; partly made

up of those of his disciples who had fled from Mecca, and were thence called Mohadjerins or Fugitives, and partly of inhabitants of the place, who on joining the faith were called Ansarians or Auxiliaries. Most of these latter were of the powerful tribes of the Awsites and Khazradites, which, though descended from two brothers, Al Aws and Al Khazraj, had for a hundred and twenty years distracted Medina by their inveterate and mortal feuds, but had now become united in the bonds of faith. With such of these tribes as did not immediately adopt his doctrines he made a covenant.

The Khazradites were very much under the sway of a prince or chief named Abdallah Ibn Obba; who, it is said, was on the point of being made king, when the arrival of Mahomet and the excitement caused by his doctrines gave the popular feeling a new direction. Abdallah was stately in person, of a graceful demeanour, and ready and eloquent tongue; he professed great friendship for Mahomet, and, with several companions of his own type and character, used to attend the meetings of the Moslems. Mahomet was captivated at first by their personal appearance, their plausible conversation, and their apparent deference; but he found in the end that Abdallah was jealous of his popularity and cherished secret animosity against him, and that his companions were equally false in their pretended friendship; hence, he stamped them with the name of "The Hypocrites." Abdallah Ibn Obba long continued his political rival in Medina.

Being now enabled publicly to exercise his faith and preach his doctrines, Mahomet proceeded to erect a mosque. The place chosen was a graveyard or burying ground, shaded by date-trees. He is said to have been guided in his choice by what he considered a favourable omen ; his camel having knelt opposite to this place on his public entry into the city. The dead were removed, and the trees cut down to make way for the intended edifice. It was simple in form and structure, suited to the unostentatious religion which he professed, and to the scanty and precarious means of its votaries. The walls were of earth and brick ; the trunks of the palm-trees recently felled served as pillars to support the roof, which was framed of their branches and thatched with their leaves. It was about a hundred ells square, and had three doors : one to the south, where the Kebla was afterwards established ; another called the gate of Gabriel ; and the third the gate of Mercy. A part of the edifice, called Soffat, was assigned as a habitation to such of the believers as were without a home.

Mahomet assisted with his own hands in the construction of this mosque. With all his foreknowledge, he little thought that he was building his own tomb and monument ; for in that edifice his remains are deposited. It has in after times been repeatedly enlarged and beautified, but still bears the name Mesjed al Nebi (the Mosque of the Prophet), from having been founded by his hands. He was for some time at a loss in what manner his

followers should be summoned to their devotions ; whether with the sound of trumpets, as among the Jews, or by lighting fires on high places, or by the striking of timbrels. While in this perplexity, a form of words, to be cried aloud, was suggested by Abdallah, the son of Zeid, who declared that it was revealed to him in a vision. It was instantly adopted by Mahomet, and such is given as the origin of the following summons, which is to this day heard from the lofty minarets throughout the East, calling the Moslems to the place of worship : “ God is great ! God is great ! There is no God but God. Mahomet is the apostle of God. Come to prayers ! come to prayers ! God is great ! God is great ! There is no God but God.” To which at dawn of day is added the exhortation, “ Prayer is better than sleep ! Prayer is better than sleep ! ”

Everything in this humble mosque was at first conducted with great simplicity. At night it was lighted up by splinters of the date-tree ; and it was some time before lamps and oil were introduced. The prophet stood on the ground and preached, leaning with his back against the trunk of one of the date-trees, which served as pillars. He afterwards had a pulpit or tribune erected, to which he ascended by three steps, so as to be elevated above the congregation. Tradition asserts, that when he first ascended this pulpit, the deserted date-tree uttered a groan ; whereupon, as a consolation, he gave it the choice either to be transplanted to a garden again to flourish or to be transferred to paradise, there to

yield fruit, in after life, to true believers. The date-tree wisely chose the latter, and was subsequently buried beneath the pulpit, there to await its blissful resurrection.

Mahomet preached and prayed in the pulpit, sometimes sitting, sometimes standing and leaning on a staff. His precepts as yet were all peaceful and benignant, inculcating devotion to God and humanity to man. "He who is not affectionate to God's creatures, and to his own children," would he say, "God will not be affectionate to him. Every Moslem who clothes the naked of his faith, will be clothed by Allah in the green robes of paradise."

In one of his traditional sermons transmitted by his disciples, is the following apologue on the subject of charity: "When God created the earth it shook and trembled, until he put mountains upon it to make it firm. Then the angels asked, 'Oh God, is there anything of thy creation stronger than these mountains?' And God replied, 'Iron is stronger than the mountains; for it breaks them.' 'And is there anything of thy creation stronger than iron?' 'Yes; fire is stronger than iron, for it melts it.' 'Is there anything of thy creation stronger than fire?' 'Yes; water, for it quenches fire.' 'Oh Lord, is there anything of thy creation stronger than water?' 'Yes wind; for it overcomes water and puts it in motion.' 'Oh our Sustainer! is there anything of thy creation stronger than wind?' 'Yes, a good man giving alms; if he give with his right hand and conceal it from his left, he overcomes all things.' "

His definition of charity embraced the wide circle of kindness. Every good act, he would say, is charity. Your smiling in your brother's face is charity; an exhortation of your fellow man to virtuous deeds is equal to alms-giving; your putting a wanderer in the right road is charity; your assisting the blind is charity; your removing stones and thorns and other obstructions from the road is charity; your giving water to the thirsty is charity.

"A man's true wealth hereafter is the good he does in this world to his fellow man. When he dies, people will say, What property has he left behind him? But the angels, who examine him in the grave, will ask, 'What good deeds hast thou sent before thee?'"

"Oh prophet!" said one of his disciples, "my mother, Omm-Sad, is dead; what is the best alms I can send for the good of her soul?" "Water!" replied Mahomet, bethinking himself of the panting heats of the desert. "Dig a well for her, and give water to the thirsty." The man digged a well in his mother's name, and said, "This well is for my mother, that its rewards may reach her soul."

Charity of the tongue, also, that most important and least cultivated of charities, was likewise earnestly inculcated by Mahomet. Abu Jaraiya, an inhabitant of Basrah, coming to Medina, and being persuaded of the apostolical office of Mahomet, entreated of him some great rule of conduct. "Speak evil of no one," answered the prophet. "From that time," says Abu Jaraiya, "I never did abuse any one, whether freeman or slave."

The rules of Islamism extended to the courtesies of life. Make a salam (or salutation) to a house on entering and leaving it. Return the salute of friends and acquaintances, and wayfarers on the road. He who rides must be the first to make the salute to him who walks; he who walks to him who is sitting; a small party to a large party, and the young to the old.

While new converts were daily made among the inhabitants of Medina, sickness and discontent began to prevail among the fugitives from Mecca. They were not accustomed to the climate; many suffered from fevers, and in their sickness and debility languished after the home whence they were exiled.

To give them a new home, and link them closely with their new friends and allies, Mahomet established a brotherhood between fifty-four of them and as many of the inhabitants of Medina. Two persons thus linked together were pledged to stand by each other in weal and woe; it was a tie which knit their interests more closely even than that of kindred, for they were to be heirs to each other in preference to blood relations.

This institution was one of expediency, and lasted only until the new comers had taken firm root in Medina; extended merely to those of the people of Mecca who had fled from persecution; and is alluded to in the following verse of the eighth chapter of the Koran: "They who have believed and have fled their country, and employed their substance and their persons in fighting for the faith, and they who have

given the prophet a refuge among them, and have assisted him, these shall be deemed the one nearest of kin to the other."

In this shrewd, but simple way, were laid the foundations of that power which was soon to attain stupendous strength, and to shake the mightiest empires of the world.

CHAPTER XII

THE BATTLE OF BEDER.

In the second year of the Hegira, Mahomet received intelligence that his arch foe, Abu Sofian, with a troop of thirty horsemen, was conducting back to Mecca a caravan of a thousand camels, laden with the merchandise of Syria. Their route lay through the country of Medina, between the range of mountains and the sea. Mahomet determined to intercept them. About the middle of the month Ramadhan, therefore, he sallied forth with three hundred and fourteen men, of whom eighty-three were Mohadjerins, or exiles from Mecca; sixty-one Awsites, and a hundred and seventy Khazradites. Each troop had its own banner. There were but two

horses in this little army,* but there were seventy fleet camels, which the troop mounted by turns, so as to make a rapid march without much fatigue.

Othman Ibn Affan, the son-in-law of Mahomet, was now returned with his wife Rokaia from their exile in Abyssinia, and would have joined the enterprise, but his wife was ill almost unto death, so that he was obliged reluctantly to remain in Medina.

Mahomet for awhile took the main road to Mecca, then leaving it to the left turned toward the Red Sea, and entered a fertile valley watered by the Brook Beder. Here he laid in wait near a ford over which the caravans were accustomed to pass. He caused his men to dig a deep trench, and to divert the water therein, so that they might resort thither to slake their thirst out of reach of the enemy.

In the meantime, Abu Sofian having received early intelligence that Mahomet had sallied forth to waylay him with a superior force, despatched a messenger named Omair, on a fleet dromedary, to summon instant relief from Mecca. The messenger arrived at the Caaba haggard and breathless. Abu Jahl mounted the roof and sounded the alarm. All

* "The Arabs of the desert," says Burckhardt, "are not rich in horses. Among the great tribes on the Red Sea, between Akaba and Mecca, and to the south and south-east of Mecca, as far as Yemen, horses are very scarce, specially among those of the mountainous districts. The settled inhabitants of Hedjaz and Yemen are not much in the habit of keeping horses. The tribes most rich in horses are those who dwell in the comparatively fertile plains of Mesopotamia, on the banks of the river Euphrates, and on the Syrian plains."—*Burckhardt*, ii. 50.

Mecca was in confusion and consternation. Henda, the wife of Abu Sofian, a woman of a fierce and intrepid nature, called upon her father Otha, her brother Al Walid, her uncle Shaiba, and all the warriors of her kindred, to arm and hasten to the relief of her husband. The brothers, too, of the Koreishite slain by Abdullah Ibn Jasch, in the valley of Naklah, seized their weapons to avenge his death. Motives of interest were mingled with eagerness for vengeance, for most of the Koreishites had property embarked in the caravan. In a little while a force of one hundred horse and seven hundred camels hurried forward on the road toward Syria. It was led by Abu Jahl, now threescore and ten years of age, a veteran warrior of the desert who still retained the fire, and almost the vigour and activity of youth, combined with the rancour of old age.

While Abu Jahl, with his forces, was hurrying on in one direction, Abu Sofian was approaching in another. On arriving at the region of danger, he preceded his caravan a considerable distance, carefully regarding every track and footprint. At length he came upon the track of the little army of Mahomet. He knew it from the size of the kernels of the dates, which the troops had thrown by the wayside as they marched,—those of Medina being remarkable for their smallness. On such minute signs do the Arabs depend in tracking their foes through the deserts.

Observing the course Mahomet had taken, Abu Sofian changed his route, and passed along the coast

of the Red Sea until he considered himself out of danger. He then sent another messenger to meet any Koreishites that might have sallied forth, and to let them know that the caravan was safe, and they might return to Mecca.

The messenger met the Koreishites when in full march. On hearing that the caravan was safe, they came to a halt and held council. Some were for pushing forward and inflicting a signal punishment on Mahomet and his followers ; others were for turning back. In this dilemma, they sent a scout to reconnoitre the enemy. He brought back word that they were about three hundred strong ; this increased the desire of those who were for battle. Others remonstrated. "Consider," said they, "these are men who have nothing to lose ; they have nothing but their swords ; not one of them will fall without slaying his man. Beside, we have relatives among them ; if we conquer, we will not be able to look each other in the face, having slain each other's relatives." These words were producing their effect, but the brothers of the Koreishite who had been slain in the valley of Naklah, were instigated by Abu Jahl to cry for revenge. That fiery old Arab seconded their appeal. "Forward !" cried he ; "let us get water from the brook Beder for the feast with which we shall make merry over the escape of our caravan." The main body of the troops, therefore, elevated their standards and resumed their march, though a considerable number turned back to Mecca.

The scouts of Mahomet brought him notice of the approach of this force. The hearts of some of his followers failed them ; they had come forth in the expectation of little fighting and much plunder, and were dismayed at the thoughts of such an overwhelming host ; but Mahomet bade them be of good cheer, for Allah had promised him an easy victory.

The Moslems posted themselves on a rising ground, with water at the foot of it. A hut, or shelter of the branches of trees, had been hastily erected on the summit for Mahomet, and a dromedary stood before it, on which he might fly to Medina in case of defeat.

The vanguard of the enemy entered the valley panting with thirst, and hastened to the stream to drink ; but Hamza, the uncle of Mahomet, set upon them with a number of his men, and slew the leader with his own hand. Only one of the vanguard escaped, who was afterwards converted to the faith.

The main body of the enemy now approached with sound of trumpet. Three Koreishite warriors advancing in front, defied the bravest of the Moslems to equal combat. Two of these challengers were Otha, the father-in-law of Abu Sofian, and Al Walid, his brother-in-law. The third challenger was Shaiba, the brother of Otha. These it will be recollected had been instigated to sally forth from Mecca by Henda, the wife of Abu Sofian. They were all men of rank in their tribe.

Three warriors of Medina stepped forward and accepted their challenge ; but they cried "No ! Let

the renegades of our own city of Mecca advance, if they dare." Upon this Hamza and Ali, the uncle and cousin of Mahomet, and Obeidah Ibn al Hareth, undertook the fight. After a fierce and obstinate contest, Hamza and Ali each slew his antagonist. They then went to the aid of Obeidah, who was severely wounded and nearly overcome by Otha. They slew the Koreishite and bore away their associate, but he presently died of his wounds.

The battle now became general. The Moslems, aware of the inferiority of their number, at first merely stood on the defensive, maintaining their position on the rising ground, and galling the enemy with flights of arrows whenever they sought to slake their intolerable thirst at the stream below. Mahomet remained in his hut on the hill, accompanied by Abu Beker, and earnestly engaged in prayer. In the course of the battle he had a paroxysm, or fell into a kind of trance. Coming to himself, he declared that God in a vision had promised him the victory. Rushing out of the hut, he caught up a handful of dust and cast it into the air toward the Koreishites, exclaiming, "May confusion light upon their faces." Then ordering his followers to charge down upon the enemy: "Fight, and fear not," cried he; "the gates of paradise are under the shade of swords. He will assuredly find instant admission who falls fighting for the faith."

In the shock of battle which ensued, Abu Jahl, who was urging his horse into the thickest of the conflict, received a blow of a scimitar in the thigh,

which brought him to the ground. Abdallah Ibn Masoud put his foot upon his breast, and while the fiery veteran was still uttering imprecations and curses on Mahomet, severed his head from his body.

The Koreishites now gave way and fled. Seventy remained dead on the field, and nearly the same number were taken prisoners. Fourteen Moslems were slain, whose names remain on record as martyrs to the faith.

This signal victory was easily to be accounted for on natural principles ; the Moslems being fresh and unwearied, and having the advantage of a rising ground, and a supply of water ; while the Koreishites were fatigued by a hasty march, parched with thirst, and diminished in force, by the loss of numbers who had turned back to Mecca. Moslem writers, however, attribute this early triumph of the faith to supernatural agency. When Mahomet scattered dust in the air, say they, three thousand angelic warriors in white and yellow turbans, and long dazzling robes, and mounted on black and white steeds, came rushing like a blast, and swept the Koreishites before them. Nor is this affirmed on Moslem testimony alone, but given on the word of an idolater, a peasant who was attending sheep on an adjacent hill. "I was with a companion, my cousin," said the peasant, "upon the fold of the mountain watching the conflict, and waiting to join with the conquerors and share the spoil. Suddenly we beheld a great cloud sailing towards us, and within it were the neighing of

steeds and braying of trumpets. As it approached, squadrons of angels sallied forth, and we heard the terrific voice of the archangel as he urged his mare Haizum, 'Speed! speed! Oh Haizum!' At which awful sound the heart of my companion burst with terror, and he died on the spot, and I had well nigh shared his fate."¹

When the conflict was over Abdallah Ibn Masoud brought the head of Abu Jahl to Mahomet, who eyed the grizzly trophy with exultation, exclaiming, "This man was the Pharaoh of our nation." The true name of this veteran warrior was Amru Ibn Hasham. The Koreishites had given him the surname of Abu 'lhcm, or Father of Wisdom, on account of his sagacity. The Moslems had changed it to Abu Jahl, Father of Folly. The latter appellation has adhered to him in history, and he is never mentioned by true believers without the ejaculation, "May he be accursed of God."

The Moslems who had fallen in battle were honourably interred; as to the bodies of the Koreishites, they were contemptuously thrown into a pit which had been digged for them. The question was how to dispose of the prisoners. Omar was for striking off their heads; but Abu Beker advised that they should be given up on ransom. Mahomet observed that Omar was like Noah, who prayed

¹ This miraculous aid is repeatedly mentioned in the Koran, *e.g.*, "God had already given you the victory at Beder, when ye were inferior in number."

for the destruction of the guilty by the deluge; but Abu Beker was like Abraham, who interceded for the guilty. He decided on the side of mercy. But two of the prisoners were put to death; one, named Nadhar, for having ridiculed the Koran as a collection of Persian tales and fables; the other, named Okba, for the attempt upon the life of Mahomet when he first preached in the Caaba, and when he was rescued by Abu Beker. Several of the prisoners who were poor were liberated on merely making oath never again to take up arms against Mahomet or his followers. The rest were detained until ransoms should be sent by their friends.

Among the most important of the prisoners was Al Abbas, the uncle of Mahomet. He had been captured by Abu Yaser, a man of small stature. As the bystanders scoffed at the disparity of size, Al Abbas pretended that he really had surrendered to a horseman of gigantic size, mounted on a steed the like of which he had never seen before. Abu Yaser would have steadily maintained the truth of his capture, but Mahomet, willing to spare the humiliation of his uncle, intimated that the captor had been aided by the angel Gabriel.

Al Abbas would have excused himself from paying ransom, alleging that he was a Moslem in heart, and had only taken part in the battle on compulsion; but his excuse did not avail. It is thought by many that he really had a secret understanding with his nephew, and was employed by him

as a spy in Mecca, both before and after the battle of Beder.

Another prisoner of great importance to Mahomet was Abul Aass, the husband of his daughter Zeinab. The prophet would fain have drawn his son-in-law to him and enrolled him among his disciples, but Abul Aass remained stubborn in unbelief. Mahomet then offered to set him at liberty on condition of his returning to him his daughter. To this the infidel agreed; and Zeid, the faithful freedman of the prophet, was sent with several companions to Mecca, to bring Zeinab to Medina; in the meantime, her husband, Abul Aass, remained a hostage for the fulfilment of the compact.

Before the army returned to Medina there was a division of the spoil; for though the caravan of Abu Sofian had escaped, yet considerable booty of weapons and camels had been taken in the battle, and a large sum of money would accrue from the ransom of the prisoners. On this occasion, Mahomet ordered that the whole should be equally divided among all the Moslems engaged in the enterprise; and though it was a long-established custom among the Arabs to give a fourth part of the booty to the chief, yet he contented himself with the same share as the rest. Among the spoil which fell to his lot was a famous sword of admirable temper, called Dhul Fakar, or the Piercer. He ever afterwards bore it when in battle; and his son-in-law, Ali, inherited it at his death.

This equal distribution of the booty caused great murmurs among the troops. Those who had borne the brunt of the fight, and had been most active in taking the spoil, complained that they had to share alike with those who had stood aloof from the affray, and with the old men who had remained to guard the camp. The dispute, observes Sale, resembles that of the soldiers of David in relation to spoils taken from the Amalekites; those who had been in the action insisting that they who tarried by the stuff should have no share of the spoil. The decision was the same—that they should share alike. (1. Samuel, ch. xxx. 21-25) Mahomet, from his knowledge of Bible history, may have been guided by this decision. The division of the spoils was an important point to settle for a leader about to enter on a career of predatory warfare. Fortunately, he had a timely revelation shortly after his return to Mecca, regulating for the future the division of all booty gained in fighting for the faith.

Such are the particulars of the famous battle of Beder, the first victory of the Saracens under the standard of Mahomet; inconsiderable perhaps in itself, but stupendous in its results; being the commencement of a career of victories which changed the destinies of the world.

The battle of Beder completely changed the position of Mahomet; he was now a triumphant chief of a growing power.

His tone now became altered, and he spoke as a lawgiver and a sovereign.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPONTANEOUS INAUGURATION.

Six years had now elapsed since the flight of Mahomet from Mecca. As that city was sacred in the eyes of the Arabs and their great point of pilgrimage, his long exile from it, and his open warfare with the Koreishites, who had charge of the Caaba, prejudiced him in the opinion of many of the tribes, and retarded the spread of his doctrines. His followers, too, who had accompanied him in his flight, languished once more to see their native home, and there was danger of their faith becoming enfeebled under a protracted exile.

Mahomet felt more and more the importance of linking the sacred city with his religion, and maintaining the ancient usages of his race. Besides, he claimed but to be a reformer, anxious to restore the simplicity and purity of the patriarchal faith. The month Doul Kaada was at hand, the month of pilgrimage, when there was a truce to warfare, and enemies might meet in peace within the holy boundaries. A timely vision assured Mahomet that he and his followers might safely avail themselves of the protection of this venerable custom to revisit the ancient shrines of Arabian worship. The revelation was joyfully received by his followers, and in the holy month he set forth from Medina on his pilgrimage, at the head of fourteen hundred men; partly Mohadjerins or Fugitives, and partly Ansarians or

Auxiliaries. They took with them seventy camels to be slain in sacrifice at the Caaba. To manifest publicly that they came in peace and not in war, they halted at Dsu Huleifa, a village about a day's journey from Medina, where they laid aside all their weapons, excepting their sheathed swords, and thence continued on in pilgrim garb.

In the mean time a confused rumour of this movement had reached Mecca. The Koreishites, suspecting hostilities, sent forth Khaled Ibn Waled with a powerful troop of horse, to take post in a valley about two days' journey from Mecca, and check the advance of the Moslems.

Mahomet, hearing that the main road was thus barred against him, took a rugged and difficult route through the defiles of the mountains, and, avoiding Khaled and his forces, descended into the plain near Mecca ; where he encamped at Hodeiba, within the sacred boundaries. Hence he sent assurances to the Koreishites of his peaceable intentions, and claimed the immunities and rights of pilgrimage.

Envoys from the Koreishites visited his camp to make observations. They were struck with the reverence with which he was regarded by his followers. The water with which he performed his ablutions became sanctified ; a hair falling from his head, or the paring of a nail, was caught up as a precious relic. One of the envoys, in the course of conversation, unconsciously touched the flowing beard of the prophet ; he was thrust back by the disciples, and warned of the impiety of the act. In making his report to the

Koreishites on his return, "I have seen the king of Persia, and the emperor of Constantinople, surrounded by their courts," said he, "but never did I behold a sovereign so revered by his subjects as is Mahomet by his followers."

The Koreishites were the more loth to admit into their city an adversary to their sect, so formidable in his influence over the minds and affections of his fellow-men. Mahomet sent repeated missions to treat for a safe access to the sacred shrines, but in vain. Othman Ibn Affan, his son-in-law, was the last envoy. Several days elapsed without his return, and it was rumoured that he was slain. Mahomet determined to revenge his fall. Standing under a tree, and summoning his people around him, he exacted an oath to defend him even to the death, and never to desert the standard of the faith. This ceremony is known among Mahometans by the name of the Spontaneous Inauguration.

The reappearance of Othman in the camp restored tranquillity. He was accompanied by Solhail, an ambassador from the Koreishites, to arrange a treaty of peace. They perceived the impolicy of warring with a man whose power was incessantly increasing, and who was obeyed with such fanatic devotion. The treaty proposed was for ten years ; during which time Mahomet and his adherents were to have free access to Mecca as pilgrims, there to remain, three days at a time, in the exercise of their religious rites. The terms were readily accepted, and Ali was employed to draw up the treaty. Mahomet dictated the

words. "Write," said he, "these are the conditions of peace made by Mahomet the apostle of God." "Hold !" cried Solhail, the ambassador ; "had I believed thee to be the apostle of God, I should never have taken up arms against thee. Write, therefore, simply thy name, and the name of thy father." Mahomet was fain to comply, for he felt he was not sufficiently in force at this moment to contend about forms ; so he merely denominated himself in the treaty Mahomet Ibn Abdallah (Mahomet the son of Abdallah), an abnegation which gave some little scandal to his followers. Their discontent was increased when he ordered them to shave their heads, and to sacrifice on the spot the camels brought to be offered up at the Caaba, as it showed he had not the intention of entering Mecca ; these rites being properly done at the conclusion of the ceremonials of pilgrimage. They reminded him of his vision which promised a safe entrance of the sacred city ; he replied that the present treaty was an earnest of its fulfilment, which would assuredly take place on the following year. With this explanation they had to content themselves ; and having performed the ceremony, and made the sacrifice prescribed, the camp was broken up, and the pilgrim host returned, somewhat disappointed and dejected, to Medina.

CHAPTER XIV

EXPEDITION AGAINST KHAIBAR.

About five days' journey to the north-east of Medina was situated the city of Khaibar, and its dependent territory. It was inhabited by Jews, who had grown wealthy by commerce, as well as agriculture. Their rich domain was partly cultivated with grain, and planted with groves of palm-trees ; partly devoted to pasturage and covered with flocks and herds, and it was fortified by several castles. So venerable was its antiquity, that Abulfeda, the Arabian historian, assures us that Moses, after the passage of the Red Sea, sent an army against the Amalekites, inhabiting Gothreb (Medina) and the strong city of Khaibar.

This region had become a place of refuge for the hostile Jews, driven by Mahomet from Medina and its environs, and for all those who had made themselves obnoxious to his vengeance. These circumstances, together with its teeming wealth, pointed it out as a fit and ripe object for that warfare which he had declared against all enemies of the faith.

In the beginning of the seventh year of the Hegira, he departed on an expedition against Khaibar, at the head of twelve hundred foot and two hundred horse, accompanied by Abu Beker, by Ali, by Omar, and other of his principal officers. He had two standards ; one represented the sun, the other a

black eagle ; which last became famous in after years as the standard of Khaled.

Entering the fertile territory of Khaibar, he began his warfare by assailing the inferior castles with which it was studded. Some of these capitulated without making resistance ; in which cases, being considered "gifts from God," the spoils went to the prophet, to be disposed of by him. Others of more strength, and garrisoned by stouter hearts, had to be taken by storm.

After the capture of these minor fortresses, Mahomet advanced against the city of Khaibar. It was strongly defended by outworks, and its citadel, Al Kamus, built on a steep rock, was deemed impregnable, insomuch that Kenana Ibn al Rabi, the chief or king of the nation, had made it the depository of all his treasures.

The siege of this city was the most important enterprise the Moslems had yet undertaken. When Mahomet first came in sight of its strong and frowning walls, and its rock-built citadel, he is said to have put up the following prayer :—

"Oh Allah ! Lord of the seven heavens, and of all things which they cover ! Lord of the seven earths, and all which they sustain ! Lord of the evil spirits, and of all whom they lead astray ! Lord of the winds, and of all whom they scatter and disperse ! We supplicate thee to deliver into our hands this city, and all that it contains, and the riches of all its lands. To thee we look for aid against this people, and against all the perils by which we are environed."

To give more solemnity to his prayers, he chose as his place of worship a great rock, in a stony place called Mansela, and during all the time that he remained encamped before Khaïbar, made daily seven circuits round it, as are made round the Caaba. A mosque was erected on this rock in after times in memorial of this devout ceremonial, and it became an object of veneration to all pious Moslems.

The siege of the citadel lasted for some time, and tasked the skill and patience of Mahomet and his troops ; as yet but little practised in the attack of fortified places. They suffered too from want of provisions, for the Arabs, in their hasty expeditions, seldom burden themselves with supplies, and the Jews on their approach had laid waste the level country, and destroyed the palm-trees round their capital.

Mahomet directed the attacks in person ; the besiegers protected themselves by trenches, and brought battering-rams to play upon the walls ; a breach was at length effected, but for several days every attempt to enter was vigorously repelled. Abu Beker at one time led the assault, bearing the standard of the prophet ; but after fighting with great bravery, was compelled to retreat. The next attack was headed by Omar Ibn Khattab, who fought until the close of the day with no better success. A third attack was led by Ali, whom Mahomet armed with his own scimitar, called Dhu'l-Fakâr, or the Trenchant. On confiding to his hands the sacred banner, he pronounced him "a man who loved God and his prophet ; and whom

God and his prophet loved. A man who knew not fear, nor ever turned his back upon a foe."

And here it may be well to give a traditional account of the person and character of Ali. He was of the middle height, but robust and square, and of prodigious strength. He had a smiling countenance, exceedingly florid, with a bushy beard. He was distinguished for an amiable disposition, sagacious intellect, and religious zeal, and, from his undaunted courage, was surnamed the Lion of God.

Arabian writers dwell with fond exaggeration on the exploits, at Khaïbar, of this their favourite hero. He was clad, they say, in a scarlet vest, over which was buckled a cuirass of steel. Scrambling with his followers up the great heap of stones and rubbish in front of the breach, he planted his standard on the top, determined never to recede until the citadel was taken. The Jews sallied forth to drive down the assailants. In the conflict which ensued, Ali fought hand to hand with the Jewish commander Al Hareth, whom he slew. The brother of the slain advanced to revenge his death. He was of gigantic stature; with a double cuirass, a double turban, wound round a helmet of proof, in front of which sparkled an immense diamond. He had a sword girt to each side, and brandished a three-pronged spear, like a trident. The warriors measured each other with the eye, and accosted each other in boasting Oriental style.

"I," said the Jew, "am Marhab; armed at all points, and terrible in battle."

“And I am Ali, whom his mother, at his birth, surnamed Al Haïdara (the Rugged Lion).”

The Moslem writers make short work of the Jewish champion. He made a thrust at Ali with his three-pronged lance, but it was dexterously parried; and before he could recover himself, a blow from the scimitar Dhu'l-Fakâr divided his buckler, passed through the helm of proof, through doubled turban and stubborn skull, cleaving his head even to his teeth. His gigantic form fell lifeless to the earth.

The Jews now retreated into the citadel, and a general assault took place. In the heat of the action the shield of Ali was severed from his arm, leaving his body exposed: wrenching a gate, however, from its hinges, he used it as a buckler through the remainder of the fight. Abu Râfe, a servant of Mahomet testifies to the fact. “I afterwards,” says he, “examined this gate in company with seven men, and all eight of us attempted in vain to wield it.”

The citadel being captured, every vault and dungeon was ransacked for the wealth said to be deposited there by Kenana the Jewish prince. None being discovered, Mahomet demanded of him where he had concealed his treasure. He declared that it had all been expended in the subsistence of his troops, and in preparations for defence. One of his faithless subjects, however, revealed the place where a great amount had been hidden. It did not equal the expectations of the victors, and Kenana

was put to the torture to reveal the rest of his supposed wealth. He either could not or would not make further discoveries, so he was delivered up to the vengeance of a Moslem, whose brother he had crushed to death by a piece of a millstone hurled from the wall, and who struck off his head with a single blow of his sabre.

While in the citadel of Khaibar, Mahomet came near falling a victim to Jewish vengeance. Demanding something to eat, a shoulder of lamb was set before him. At the first mouthful, he perceived something unusual in the taste, and spat it forth, but instantly felt acute internal pain. One of his followers, named Baschar, who had eaten more freely, fell down and expired in convulsions. All now was confusion and consternation; on diligent inquiry, it was found that the lamb had been cooked by Zainab, a female captive, niece to Marhab, the gigantic warrior slain by Ali. Being brought before Mahomet, and charged with having infused poison into the viand, she boldly avowed it, vindicating it as a justifiable revenge for the ills he had brought upon her tribe and her family. "I thought," said she, "if thou wert indeed a prophet, thou wouldst discover thy danger; if but a chieftain, thou wouldst fall, and we should be delivered from a tyrant."

Arabian writers are divided as to the fate of this heroine. According to some, she was delivered up to the vengeance of the relatives of Baschar, who had died of the poison. According to others, her

beauty pleaded in her behalf, and Mahomet restored her unharmed to her family.

The same writers seldom permit any remarkable event of Mahomet's life to pass without a miracle. In the present instance, they assure us that the poisoned shoulder of lamb became miraculously gifted with speech, and warned Mahomet of his danger. If so, it was rather slow of speech, for he had imbibed sufficient poison to injure his constitution throughout the remainder of his life; affecting him often with paroxysms of pain; and in his last moments he complained that the veins of his heart throbbed with the poison of Khaibar. He experienced kinder treatment at the hands of Saniya (or Sophia), another female captive, who had still greater motives for vengeance than Zainab; for she was the recently espoused wife of Kenana, who had just been sacrificed for his wealth, and she was the daughter of Hoya Ibn Akhtab, prince of the Beni Koraida, who, with seven hundred of his people, had been put to death in the square of Medina.

CHAPTER XV

DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS.

During the residue of the year Mahomet remained at Medina, sending forth his trusty disciples, by this time experienced captains, on various

military expeditions; by which refractory tribes were rapidly brought into subjection. His views as a statesman widened as his territories increased. Though he professed, in cases of necessity, to propagate his religion by the sword, he was not neglectful of the peaceful measures of diplomacy, and sent envoys to various princes and potentates, whose dominions bordered on his political horizon, urging them to embrace the faith of Islam; which was, in effect, to acknowledge him, through his apostolic office, their superior.

Two of the most noted of these missions were to Khosru II., King of Persia, and Heraclius, the Roman Emperor, at Constantinople. The wars between the Romans and the Persians, for the dominion of the East, which had prevailed from time to time through several centuries, had been revived by these two potentates with varying fortunes, and for several years past had distracted the eastern world. Countries had been overrun by either power; states and kingdoms had changed hands under alternate invasions, and according to the conquests and defeats of the warring parties. At one time, Khosru with three armies, one vauntingly called the Fifty Thousand Golden Spears, had wrested Palestine, Cappadocia, Armenia, and several other great and wealthy provinces, from the Roman emperor; had made himself master of Jerusalem, and carried off the Holy Cross to Persia; had invaded Africa, conquered Libya and Egypt, and extended his victories even to Carthage.

In the midst of his triumphant career, a Moslem envoy arrived, bearing him a letter from Mahomet. Khosru sent for his secretary or interpreter, and ordered him to read it. The letter began as follows :—

“In the name of the most merciful God! Mahomet, son of Abdallah, and apostle of God, to Khosru King of Persia.”

“What!” cried Khosru, starting up in haughty indignation, “does one who is my slave dare to put his name first in writing to me?” So saying, he seized the letter and tore it in pieces, without seeking to know its contents. He then wrote to his viceroy in Yemen, saying, “I am told there is in Medina a madman, of the tribe of Koreish, who pretends to be a prophet. Restore him to his senses; or, if you cannot, send me his head.”

When Mahomet was told how Khosru had torn his letter, “Even so,” said he, “shall Allah rend his empire in pieces.”

The letter from the prophet to Heraclius was more favourably received, reaching him probably during his reverses. It was signed in characters of silver, Mahomet Azzarel, Mahomet the messenger of God, and invited the emperor to renounce Christianity, and embrace the faith of Islam. Heraclius, we are told, deposited the epistle respectfully upon his pillow, treated the envoy with distinction, and dismissed him with magnificent presents. Engrossed, however, by his Persian wars, he paid no further attention to this mission from

one whom he probably considered a mere Arab fanatic; nor attached sufficient importance to his military operations, which may have appeared mere predatory forays of the wild tribes of the desert.

Another mission of Mahomet was to the Mukow-kis, or governor of Egypt, who had originally been sent there by Heraclius to collect tribute; but who, availing himself of the confusion produced by the wars between the Romans and Persians had assumed sovereign power, and nearly thrown off all allegiance to the emperor. He received the envoy with signal honour, but evaded a direct reply to the invitation to embrace the faith, observing that it was a grave matter, requiring much consideration. In the mean time, he sent presents to Mahomet of precious jewels; garments of Egyptian linen; exquisite honey and butter; a white she-ass, called Yafur; a white mule, called Daldal, and a fleet horse called Lazlos, or the Prancer.

CHAPTER XVI

VISIT TO MECCA.

The time had now arrived when, by treaty with the Koreishites, Mahomet and his followers were permitted to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, and pass three days unmolested at the sacred shrines. He

departed accordingly with a numerous and well-armed host, and seventy camels for sacrifices. His old adversaries would fain have impeded his progress, but they were overawed, and on his approach withdrew silently to the neighbouring hills. On entering the bounds of Mecca, the pilgrims, according to compact and usage, laid aside all their warlike accoutrements excepting their swords, which they carried sheathed.

Great was their joy on beholding once more the walls and towers of the sacred city. They entered the gates in pilgrim garb, with devout and thankful hearts, and Mahomet performed all the ancient and customary rites with a zeal and devotion which gratified beholders, and drew to him many converts. When he had complied with all the ceremonials he threw aside the Iram or pilgrim's garb, and withdrew to Sarif, a hamlet two leagues distant, and without the sacred boundaries. Here he wedded Maimuna by which connexion he gained two powerful proselytes. One was Khaled Ibn al Waled, an intrepid warrior. He now became one of the most victorious champions of Islamism, and by his prowess obtained the appellation of "The Sword of God."

The other proselyte was Khaled's friend Amru Ibn al Aass ; the same who assailed Mahomet with poetry and satire at the commencement of his prophetic career ; who had been an ambassador from the Koreishites to the king of Abyssinia, to obtain the surrender of the fugitive Moslems, and who was

henceforth destined with his sword to carry victoriously into foreign lands the faith he had once so strenuously opposed.

CHAPTER XVII

EXPEDITION AGAINST MUTA.

Among the different missions which had been sent by Mahomet beyond the bounds of Arabia to invite neighbouring princes to embrace his religion, was one to the governor of Bosra, the great mart on the confines of Syria, to which he had made his first caravan journey in the days of his youth. Syria had been alternately under Roman and Persian domination, but was at that time subject to the emperor, though probably in a great state of confusion. The envoy of Mahomet was slain at Muta, a town about three days' journey eastward from Jerusalem. The one who slew him was an Arab of the Christian tribe of Gassan, and son to Shorhail, an emir, who governed Muta in the name of Heraclius.

To revenge the death of his legate, and to insure respect to his envoys in future, Mahomet prepared to send an army of three thousand men against the offending city. It was a momentous expedition,

as it might, for the first time, bring the arms of Islam in collision with those of the Roman Empire ; but Mahomet presumed upon his growing power, the energy of his troops, and the disordered state of Syrian affairs. The command was entrusted to his freedman Zeid, Several chosen officers were associated with him. One was Mahomet's cousin Jaafar, son of Abu Taleb, and brother of Ali ; the same who, by his eloquence, had vindicated the doctrines of Islam before the king of Abyssinia, and defeated the Koreish embassy. He was now in the prime of life, and noted for great courage and manly beauty. Another of the associate officers was Abdallah Ibn Kawaha, the poet, but who had signalised himself in arms as well as poetry. A third was the new proselyte Khaled, who joined the expedition as a volunteer, being eager to prove by his sword the sincerity of his conversion.

The orders to Zeid were to march rapidly, so as to come upon Muta by surprise, to summon the inhabitants to embrace the faith, and to treat them with lenity. Women, children, monks, and the blind, were to be spared at all events ; nor were any houses to be destroyed, nor trees cut down.

The little army sallied from Medina in the full confidence of coming upon the enemy unawares. On their march, however, they learned that a greatly superior force of Romans, or rather Greeks and Arabs, was advancing to meet them. A council of war was called. Some were for pausing, and awaiting further orders from Mahomet : but

Abdallah, the poet, was for pushing fearlessly forward without regard to numbers. "We fight for the faith!" cried he; "if we fall, paradise is our reward. On, then, to victory or martyrdom!"

All caught a spark of the poet's fire, or rather fanaticism. They met the enemy near Muta, and encountered them with fury rather than valour. In the heat of the conflict Zeid received a mortal wound. The sacred banner was falling from his grasp, but was seized and borne aloft by Jaafar. The battle thickened round him, for the banner was the object of fierce contention. He defended it with desperate valour. The hand by which he held it was struck off; he grasped it with the other. That, too, was severed: he embraced it with his bleeding arms. A blow from a scimitar cleft his skull; he sank dead upon the field, still clinging to the standard of the faith. Abdallah the poet next reared the banner; but he too fell beneath the sword. Khaled, the new convert, seeing the three Moslem leaders slain, now grasped the fatal standard, but in his hand it remained aloft. His voice rallied the wavering Moslems: his powerful arm cut its way through the thickest of the enemy. If his own account may be credited, and he was one whose deeds needed no exaggeration, nine scimitars were broken in his hand by the fury of the blows given by him in this deadly conflict.

Night separated the combatants. In the morning Khaled, whom the army acknowledged as their commander, proved himself as wary as he was

valiant. By dint of marches and counter-marches, he presented his forces in so many points of view, that the enemy were deceived as to his number, and supposed he had received a strong reinforcement. At his first charge, therefore, they retreated : their retreat soon became a flight ; in which they were pursued with great slaughter. Khaled then plundered their camp, in which was found great booty. Among the slain in the field of battle was found the body of Jaafar, covered with wounds, but all in front. Out of respect to his valour, and to his relationship with the prophet, Khaled ordered that his corpse should not be buried on the spot, but borne back for honourable interment at Medina.

The army, on its return, though laden with spoil, entered the city more like a funeral train than a triumphant pageant, and was received with mingled shouts and lamentations. While the people rejoiced in the success of their arms, they mourned the loss of three of their favourite generals. All bewailed the fate of Jaafar, brought home a ghastly corpse to that city whence they had so recently seen him sally forth in all the pride of valiant manhood, the admiration of every beholder. He had left behind him a beautiful wife and infant son. The heart of Mahomet was touched by her affliction. He took the orphan child in his arms and bathed it with his tears. But most he was affected when he beheld the young daughter of his faithful Zeid approaching him. He fell on her neck and wept in speechless emotion. A bystander expressed surprise that he should give way

to tears for a death which, according to Moslem doctrine, was but a passport to paradise. "Alas!" replied the prophet, "these are the tears of friendship for the loss of a friend!"

The obsequies of Jaafar were performed on the third day after the arrival of the army. By that time Mahomet had recovered his self-possession, and was again the prophet. He gently rebuked the passionate lamentations of the multitude, taking occasion to inculcate one of the most politic and consolatory doctrines of his creed. "Weep no more," said he, "over the death of this my brother. In place of the two hands lost in defending the standard of the faith, two wings have been given him to bear him to paradise; there to enjoy the endless delights insured to all believers who fall in battle."

It was in consequence of the prowess and generalship displayed by Khaled in this perilous fight, that he was honoured by Mahomet with the appellation of "The Sword of God," by which he was afterwards renowned.

CHAPTER XVIII

ABU SOFIAN'S FRUITLESS ERRAND.

Mahomet, by force either of arms or eloquence, had now acquired dominion over a great number of the Arabian tribes. He had many thousand warriors under his command; sons of the desert, inured to

hunger, thirst, and the scorching rays of the sun, and to whom war was a sport, rather than a toil. He had corrected their intemperance, disciplined their valour, and subjected them to rule. Repeated victories had given them confidence in themselves and in their leader; whose standard they followed with the implicit obedience of soldiers, and the blind fanaticism of disciples.

The views of Mahomet expanded with his means, and a grand enterprise now opened upon his mind. Mecca, his native city, the abode of his family for generations, the scene of his happiest years, was still in the hands of his implacable foes. The Caaba, the object of devotion and pilgrimage to all the children of Ishmael, the shrine of his earliest worship, was still profaned by the emblems and rites of idolatry. To plant the standard of the faith on the walls of his native city; to rescue the holy house from profanation; restore it to the spiritual worship of the one true God, and make it the rallying point of Islamism, formed now the leading object of his ambition.

The treaty of peace existing with the Koreishites was an impediment to any military enterprise; but some casual feuds and skirmishings soon gave a pretext for charging them with having violated the treaty stipulations. The Koreishites had by this time learned to appreciate and dread the rapidly increasing power of the Moslems, and were eager to explain away, or atone for, the quarrels and misdeeds of a few heedless individuals. They even

prevailed on their leader, Abu Sofian, to repair to Medina as ambassador of peace, trusting that he might have some influence with the prophet through his daughter, Omm Habiba.

It was a sore trial to this haughty chief to come almost a suppliant to the man whom he had scoffed at as an impostor, and treated with inveterate hostility ; and his proud spirit was doomed to still further mortification, for Mahomet, judging from his errand of the weakness of his party, and being secretly bent on war, vouchsafed him no reply.

Repressing his rage, Abu Sofian sought the intermediation of Abu Beker, of Omar, and Ali ; but they all rebuked and repulsed him ; for they knew the secret wishes of Mahomet. He next endeavoured to secure the favour of Fatima, the daughter of Mahomet and wife of Ali, by flattering a mother's pride, entreating her to let her son Hassan, a child but six years old, be his protector ; but Fatima answered haughtily, " My son is too young to be a protector ; and no protection can avail against the will of the prophet of God." Even his daughter, Omm Habiba, the wife of Mahomet, on whom Abu Sofian had calculated for influence, added to his mortification, for on his offering to seat himself on a mat in her dwelling, she hastily folded it up, exclaiming, " It is the bed of the prophet of God, and too sacred to be made the resting-place of an idolater."

The cup of humiliation was full to overflowing, and in the bitterness of his heart Abu Sofian cursed

his daughter. He now turned again to Ali, beseeching his advice in the desperate state of his embassy.

“I can advise nothing better,” replied Ali, “than for thee to promise, as the head of the Koreishites, a continuance of thy protection; and then to return to thy home.”

“But thinkest thou that promise will be of any avail?”

“I think not,” replied Ali, dryly; “but I know not to the contrary.”

In pursuance of this advice, Abu Sofian repaired to the mosque, and made public declaration, in behalf of the Koreishites, that on their part the treaty of peace should be faithfully maintained; after which he returned to Mecca, deeply humiliated by the imperfect result of his mission. He was received with scoffs by the Koreishites, who observed that his declaration of peace availed nothing without the concurrence of Mahomet.

CHAPTER XIX

MAHOMET'S ENTRY INTO MECCA.

Mahomet now prepared for a secret expedition to take Mecca by surprise. His allies were summoned from all quarters to Medina; but no intimation was given of the object he had in view. All the roads leading to Mecca were barred to prevent any intelligence of his movements being carried to the Koreishites. With

all his precautions the secret came near being discovered. Among his followers, fugitives from Mecca, was one named Hateb, whose family had remained behind, and were without connexions or friends to take an interest in their welfare. Hateb now thought to gain favour for them among the Koreishites, by betraying the plans of Mahomet. He accordingly wrote a letter revealing the intended enterprise, and gave it in charge to a singing woman, named Sara, a Haschemite slave, who undertook to carry it to Mecca.

She was already on the road when Mahomet was apprised of the treachery. Ali and five others, well mounted, were sent in pursuit of the messenger. They soon overtook her, but searched her person in vain. Most of them would have given up the search and turned back, but Ali was confident that the prophet of God could not be mistaken nor misinformed. Drawing his scimitar, he swore to strike off the head of the messenger, unless the letter were produced. The threat was effectual. She drew forth the letter from among her hair.

Hateb, on being taxed with his perfidy, acknowledged it; but pleaded his anxiety to secure favour for his destitute family, and his certainty that the letter would be harmless, and of no avail against the purposes of the apostle of God. Omar spurned at his excuses and would have struck off his head; but Mahomet, calling to mind that Hateb had fought bravely in support of the faith in the battle of Beder, admitted his excuses and forgave him.

The prophet departed with ten thousand men on this momentous enterprise. Omar, who had charge of regulating the march, and appointing the encampments, led the army by lonely passes of the mountains; prohibiting the sound of attabal or trumpet, or anything else that could betray their movements. While on the march, Mahomet was joined by his uncle Al Abbas, who had come forth with his family from Mecca, to rally under the standard of the faith. Mahomet received him graciously, yet with a hint at his tardiness. "Thou art the last of the emigrants," said he, "as I am the last of the prophets." Al Abbas sent his family forward to Medina, while he turned and accompanied the expedition. The army reached the valley of Marr Azzahran, near to the sacred city, without being discovered. It was nightfall when they silently pitched their tents, and now Omar for the first time permitted them to light their watch-fires.

In the mean time, though Al Abbas had joined the standard of the faith in all sincerity, yet he was sorely disquieted at seeing his nephew advancing against Mecca, with such a powerful force and such hostile intent; and feared the entire destruction of the Koreishites, unless they could be persuaded in time to capitulate. In the dead of the night, he mounted Mahomet's white mule Fadda, and rode forth to reconnoitre. In skirting the camp, he heard the tramp of men and sound of voices. A scouting party were bringing in two prisoners captured near the city. Al Abbas approached, and found the captives to be Abu Sofian, and one of his captains. They were

conducted to the watch-fire of Omar, who recognised Abu Sofian by the light. "God be praised," cried he, "that I have such an enemy in my hands, and without conditions." His ready scimitar might have given fatal significance to his words, had not Al Abbas stepped forward and taken Abu Sofian under his protection, until the will of the prophet should be known. Omar rushed forth to ascertain that will, or rather to demand the life of the prisoner; but Al Abbas, taking the latter up behind him, put spurs to his mule, and was the first to reach the tent of the prophet, followed hard by Omar clamouring for the head of Abu Sofian.

Mahomet thus beheld in his power his inveterate enemy who had driven him from his home and country, and persecuted his family and friends; but he beheld in him the father of his wife Omm Habiba, and felt inclined to clemency. He postponed all decision in the matter until morning; giving Abu Sofian in charge of Al Abbas.

When the captain was brought before him on the following day: "Well, Abu Sofian," cried he, "is it not at length time to know that there is no other God but God?"

"That I already knew," replied Abu Sofian.

"Good! and is it not time for thee to acknowledge me as the apostle of God?"

"Dearer art thou to me than my father and my mother," replied Abu Sofian, using an Oriental phrase of compliment; "but I am not yet prepared to acknowledge thee a prophet."

“Out upon thee!” cried Omar, “testify instantly to the truth, or thy head shall be severed from thy body.”

To these threats were added the counsels and entreaties of Al Abbas, who showed himself a real friend in need. The rancour of Abu Sofian had already been partly subdued by the unexpected mildness of Mahomet; so, making a merit of necessity, he acknowledged the divinity of his mission; furnishing an illustration of the Moslem maxim, “To convince stubborn unbelievers, there is no argument like the sword.”

Having now embraced the faith, Abu Sofian obtained favourable terms for the people of Mecca, in case of their submission. None were to be harmed who should remain quietly in their houses; or should take refuge in the houses of Abu Sofian and Hakim; or under the banner of Abu Rāwaiha.

That Abu Sofian might take back to the city a proper idea of the force brought against it, he was stationed with Al Abbas at a narrow defile where the whole army passed in review. As the various Arab tribes marched by with their different arms and ensigns, Al Abbas explained the name and country of each. Abu Sofian was surprised at the number, discipline, and equipment of the troops; for the Moslems had been rapidly improving in the means and art of war; but when Mahomet approached, in the midst of a chosen guard, armed at all points and glittering with steel, his astonishment passed all bounds.

"There is no withstanding this !" cried he to Al Abbas, with an oath—"truly thy nephew wields a mighty power."

"Even so," replied the other; "return then to thy people, provide for their safety, and warn them not to oppose the apostle of God."

Abu Sofian hastened back to Mecca, and assembling the inhabitants, told them of the mighty host at hand, led on by Mahomet ; of the favourable terms offered in case of their submission, and of the vanity of all resistance. As Abu Sofian had been the soul of the opposition to Mahomet and his doctrines, his words had instant effect in producing acquiescence in an event which seemed to leave no alternative. The greater part of the inhabitants, therefore, prepared to witness, without resistance, the entry of the prophet.

Mahomet, in the mean time, who knew not what resistance he might meet with, made a careful distribution of his forces as he approached the city. While the main body marched directly forward, strong detachments advanced over the hills on each side. To Ali, who commanded a large body of cavalry, was confided the sacred banner, which he was to plant on Mount Hadjun, and maintain it there until joined by the prophet. Express orders were given to all the generals to practise forbearance, and in no instance to make the first attack ; for it was the earnest desire of Mahomet to win Mecca by moderation and clemency rather than subdue it by violence. It is true, all who offered armed resistance were to be cut down, but none were to be harmed who submitted

quietly. Overhearing one of his captains exclaim, in the heat of his zeal, that "no place was sacred on the day of battle," he instantly appointed a cooler-headed commander in his place.

The main body of the army advanced without molestation. Mahomet brought up the rear-guard, clad in a scarlet vest, and mounted on his favourite camel Al Kaswa. He proceeded but slowly, however ; his movements being impeded by the immense multitude which thronged around him. Arrived on Mount Hadjun, where Ali had planted the standard of the faith, a tent was pitched for him. Here he alighted, put off his scarlet garment, and assumed the black turban and the pilgrim garb. Casting a look down into the plain, however, he beheld, with grief and indignation, the gleam of swords and lances, and Khaled, who commanded the left wing, in a full career of carnage. His troops, composed of Arab tribes converted to the faith, had been galled by a flight of arrows from a body of Koreishites; whereupon the fiery warrior charged into the thickest of them with sword and lance ; his troops pressed after him ; they put the enemy to flight, entered the gates of Mecca pell-mell with them, and nothing but the swift commands of Mahomet preserved the city from a general massacre.

The carnage being stopped, and no further opposition manifested, the prophet descended from the mount and approached the gates, seated on his camel, accompanied by Abu Beker on his right hand, and followed by Osama, the son of Zeid. The sun was just rising as he entered the gates of his native city,

with the glory of a conqueror, but the garb and humility of a pilgrim. He entered, repeating verses of the Koran, which he said had been revealed to him at Medina, and were prophetic of the event. He triumphed in the spirit of a religious zealot, not of a warrior. "Unto God," said he, "belong the hosts of heaven and earth, and God is mighty and wise. Now hath God verified unto his apostle the vision, wherein he said, ye shall surely enter the holy temple of Mecca in full security."

Without dismounting, Mahomet repaired directly to the Caaba, the scene of his early devotions, the sacred shrine of worship since the days of the patriarchs, and which he regarded as the primitive temple of the one true God. Here he made the seven circuits round the sacred edifice, a reverential rite from the days of religious purity ; with the same devout feeling he each time touched the black stone with his staff ; regarding it as a holy relic. He would have entered the Caaba, but Othman Ibn Talha, the ancient custodian, locked the door. Ali snatched the keys, but Mahomet caused them to be returned to the venerable officer, and so won him by his kindness, that he not merely threw open the doors, but subsequently embraced the faith of Islam ; whereupon he was continued in his office.

Mahomet now proceeded to execute the great object of his religious aspirations, the purifying of the sacred edifice from the symbols of idolatry, with which it was crowded. All the idols in and about it, to the number of three hundred and sixty, were

thrown down and destroyed. Among these, the most renowned was Hobal, an idol brought from Balka, in Syria, and fabled to have the power of granting rain. It was, of course, a great object of worship among the inhabitants of the thirsty desert. There were statues of Abraham and Ishmael also, represented with divining arrows in their hands; "an outrage on their memories," said Mahomet, "being symbols of a diabolical art which they had never practised." In reverence of their memories, therefore, these statues were demolished. There were paintings, also, depicting angels in the guise of beautiful women. "The angels," said Mahomet, indignantly, "are no such beings. Angels are ministering spirits of the Most High, and of too pure a nature to admit of sex." The paintings were accordingly obliterated.

Even a dove, curiously carved of wood, he broke with his own hands, and cast upon the ground as savouring of idolatry.

From the Caaba he proceeded to the well of Zem Zem. It was sacred in his eyes, from his belief that it was the identical well revealed by the angel to Hagar and Ismael, in their extremity; he considered the rite connected with it as pure and holy, and continued it in his faith. As he approached the well, his uncle Al Abbas presented him a cruise of the water, that he might drink, and make the customary ablution. In commemoration of this pious act, he appointed his uncle guardian of the cup of the well; an office of sacred dignity, which his descendants retain to this day.

At noon one of his followers, at his command, summoned the people to prayer from the top of the Caaba, a custom continued ever since throughout Mahometan countries, from minarets or towers provided in every mosque. He also established the Kebla, toward which the faithful in every part of the world should turn their faces in prayer.

He afterwards addressed the people in a kind of sermon, setting forth his principal doctrines, and announcing the triumph of the faith as a fulfilment of prophetic promise. Shouts burst from the multitude in reply, "Allah Achbar! God is great!" cried they. "There is no God but God, and Mahomet is his prophet."

The religious ceremonials being ended, Mahomet took his station on the hill Al Safa, and the people of Mecca, male and female, passed before him, taking the oath of fidelity to him as the prophet of God, and renouncing idolatry. This was in compliance with a revelation in the Koran: "God hath sent his apostle with the direction, and the religion of truth, that he may exalt the same over every religion. Verily, they who swear fealty to him, swear fealty unto God; the hand of God is over their hands." In the midst of his triumph, however, he rejected all homage paid exclusively to himself; and all regal authority. "Why dost thou tremble?" said he, to a man who approached with timid and faltering steps. "Of what dost thou stand in awe? I am no king, but the son of a Koreishite woman, who ate flesh dried in the sun."

His lenity was equally conspicuous. The once haughty chiefs of the Koreishites appeared with abject countenances before the man they had persecuted, for their lives were in his power.

"What can you expect at my hands?" demanded he sternly.

"Mercy, oh generous brother ! Mercy, oh son of a generous line !"

"Be it so !" cried he, with a mixture of scorn and pity. "Away ! begone ! ye are free !"

Some of his followers who had shared his persecutions, were disappointed in their anticipations of a bloody revenge, and murmured at his clemency ; but he persisted in it, and established Mecca as an inviolable sanctuary, or place of refuge, so to continue until the final resurrection. He reserved to himself, however, the right on the present occasion, and during that special day, to punish a few of the people of the city who had grievously offended, and been expressly proscribed ; yet even these, for the most part, were ultimately forgiven.

Among the Koreishite women who advanced to take the oath, he descried Henda, the wife of Abu Sofian. On the present occasion she had disguised herself to escape detection ; but seeing the eyes of the prophet fixed on her, she threw herself at his feet, exclaiming, "I am Henda : pardon ! pardon !" Mahomet pardoned her.

The whole conduct of Mahomet, on gaining possession of Mecca, showed that it was a religious, more than a military triumph. His heart, too, softened

toward his native place, now that it was in his power ; his resentments were extinguished by success, and his inclinations were all toward forgiveness.

The Ansarians, or Auxiliaries of Medina, who had aided him in his campaign, began to fear that its success might prove fatal to their own interests. They watched him anxiously, as one day, after praying on the hill Al Safa, he sat gazing down wistfully upon Mecca, the scene of his early struggles and recent glory : “ Verily,” said he, “ thou art the best of cities, and the most beloved of Allah ! Had I not been driven out from thee by my own tribe, never would I have left thee !” On hearing this, the Ansarians said, one to another, “ Behold ! Mahomet is conqueror and master of his native city ; he will, doubtless, establish himself here, and forsake Medina !” Their words reached his ear, and he turned to them with reproachful warmth : “ No !” cried he, “ when you plighted to me your allegiance, I swore to live and die with you. I should not act as the servant of God, nor as his ambassador, were I to leave you.”

He acted according to his words, and Medina, which had been his city of refuge, continued to be his residence to his dying day.

Mahomet did not content himself with purifying the Caaba, and abolishing idolatry from his native city ; he sent forth his captains at the head of armed bands, to cast down the idols of different tribes set up in the neighbouring towns and villages, and to convert their worshippers to his faith.

Of all these military apostles, none was so zealous as Khaled, whose spirit was still fermenting with recent conversion. Arriving at Naklah, the resort of the idolatrous Koreishites to worship at the shrine of Uzza, he penetrated the sacred grove, laid waste the temple, and cast the idol to the ground. A horrible hag, black and naked, with dishevelled hair, rushed forth, shrieking and wringing her hands ; but Khaled severed her through the middle with one blow of his scimitar. He reported the deed to Mahomet, expressing a doubt whether she were priestess or evil spirit. "Of a truth," replied the prophet, "it was Uzza herself whom thou hast destroyed."

On a similar errand into the neighbouring province of Tehama, Khaled had with him three hundred and fifty men, some of them of the tribe of Suleim, and was accompanied by Abda'rahman, one of the earliest proselytes of the faith. His instructions from the prophet were to preach peace and good will, to inculcate the faith, and to abstain from violence, unless assailed. When about two days' journey on his way to Tehama, he had to pass through the country of the tribe of Jadsima. Most of the inhabitants had embraced the faith, but some were still of the Sabeian religion. On a former occasion this tribe had plundered and slain an uncle of Khaled, also the father of Abda'rahman, and several Suleimites, as they were returning from Arabia Felix. Dreading that Khaled and his host might take vengeance for these misdeeds, they armed themselves on their approach.

Khaled was secretly rejoiced at seeing them ride forth to meet him in this military array. Hailing them with an imperious tone, he demanded whether they were Moslems or infidels. They replied, in faltering accents, "Moslems." "Why, then, come ye forth to meet us with weapons in your hands?" "Because we have enemies among some of the tribes who may attack us unawares."

Khaled sternly ordered them to dismount and lay by their weapons. Some complied, and were instantly seized and bound ; the rest fled. Taking their flight as a confession of guilt, he pursued them with great slaughter ; laid waste the country, and in the effervescence of his zeal even slew some of the prisoners.

Mahomet, when he heard of this unprovoked outrage, raised his hands to heaven, and called God to witness that he was innocent of it. Khaled, when upbraided with it on his return, would fain have shifted the blame on Abda'rahman, but Mahomet rejected indignantly an imputation against one of the earliest and worthiest of his followers. The generous Ali was sent forthwith to restore to the people of Jadsima what Khaled had wrested from them, and to make pecuniary compensation to the relatives of the slain. It was a mission congenial with his nature, and he executed it faithfully. Inquiring into the losses and sufferings of each individual, he paid him to his full content. When every loss was made good, and all blood atoned for, he distributed the remaining money among the people,

gladdening every heart by his bounty. So Ali received the thanks and praises of the prophet, but the vindictive Khaled was rebuked even by those whom he had thought to please.

“Behold !” said he, to Abda’lrahman, “I have avenged the death of thy father.” “Rather say,” replied the other, indignantly, “thou hast avenged the death of thine uncle. Thou hast disgraced the faith by an act worthy of an idolater.”

Mahomet’s fame, was now spreading to the uttermost parts of Arabia, and deputations from distant tribes were continually arriving at Medina, some acknowledging him as a prophet, and embracing Islamism ; others submitting to him as a temporal sovereign, and agreeing to pay tribute. The talents of Mahomet rose to the exigency of the moment ; his views expanded with his fortunes, and he now proceeded with statesmanlike skill to regulate the fiscal concerns of his rapidly growing empire. Under the specious appellation of alms, a contribution was levied on true believers, amounting to a tithe of the productions of the earth, where it was fertilized by brooks and rain ; and a twentieth part where its fertility was the result of irrigation. For every ten camels, two sheep were required ; for forty head of cattle, one cow ; for thirty head, a two years’ calf ; for every forty sheep, one ; whoever contributed more than at this rate, would be considered so much the more devout, and would gain a proportionate favour in the eyes of God.

One instance of his susceptibility to the charms of poetry, is recorded in the case of Caab Ibn Zohair, a celebrated poet of Mecca, who had made him the subject of satirical verses, and had consequently been one of the proscribed ; but had fled on the capture of the sacred city. Caab now came to Medina to make his peace, and approaching Mahomet when in the mosque, began chanting his praises in a poem afterwards renowned among the Arabs as a masterpiece. He concluded by especially extolling his clemency, “for with the prophet of God, the pardon of injuries is, of all his virtues, that on which one can rely with the greatest certainty.”

Captivated with the verse, and soothed by the flattery, Mahomet made good the poet’s words, for he not merely forgave him, but taking off his own mantle, threw it upon his shoulders. The poet preserved the sacred garment to the day of his death, refusing golden offers for it. The Caliph Moawyah purchased it of his heirs for ten thousand drachmas, and it continued to be worn by the Caliphs in processions and solemn ceremonials until the thirty-sixth Caliphat, when it was torn from the back of the Caliph Al-Most’asem Billah, by Holagu, the Tartar conqueror, and burnt to ashes.

While Mahomet was exulting in the tidings of success from every quarter, he was stricken to the heart by one of the severest of domestic bereavements. Ibrahim, his son, a child but fifteen months old, his only male issue, on whom reposed his hope of transmitting his name to posterity, was seized with a

mortal malady, and expired before his eyes. Mahomet could not control a father's feelings as he bent in agony over this blighted blossom of his hopes. Yet even in this trying hour he showed that submission to the will of God which formed the foundation of his faith. "My heart is sad," murmured he, "and mine eyes overflow with tears at parting with thee, oh my son! And still greater would be my grief, did I not know that I must soon follow thee; for we are of God; from him we came, and to him we must return."

Abda'lahman, seeing him in tears, demanded, "Hast thou not forbidden us to weep for the dead?" "No," replied the prophet. "I have forbidden ye to utter shrieks and outcries, to beat your faces, and rend your garments; these are suggestions of the evil one; but tears shed for a calamity are as balm to the heart, and are sent in mercy."

He followed his child to the grave, where, amidst the agonies of separation, he gave another proof that the elements of his religion were ever present to his mind. "My son! my son!" exclaimed he, as the body was committed to the tomb, "say God is my Lord! the prophet of God was my father, and Islamism is my faith!" This was to prepare his child for the questioning by examining angels, as to religious belief, which, according to Moslem creed, the deceased would undergo while in the grave.

An eclipse of the sun, which happened about that time, was interpreted by some of his zealous followers as a celestial sign of mourning for the death of

Ibrahim ; but the afflicted father rejected such obsequious flattery. "The sun and the moon," said he, "are among the wonders of God, through which at times he signifies his will to his servants ; but their eclipse has nothing to do either with the birth or death of any mortal."

The death of Ibrahim was a blow which bowed him toward the grave. His constitution was already impaired by the extraordinary excitements and paroxysms of his mind, and the physical trial to which he had been exposed ; the poison, too, administered to him at Khaiber, had tainted the springs of life, subjected him to excruciating pains, and brought on a premature old age. His religious zeal took the alarm from the increase of bodily infirmities, and he resolved to expend his remaining strength in a final pilgrimage to Mecca ; intended to serve as a model for all future observances of the kind.

The announcement of his pious intention brought devotees from all parts of Arabia, to follow the pilgrim-prophet. The streets of Medina were crowded with the various tribes from the towns and cities, from the fastnesses of the mountains, and the remote parts of the desert, and the surrounding valleys were studded with their tents. It was a striking picture of the triumph of a faith, these recently disunited, barbarous, and warring tribes brought together as brethren, and inspired by one sentiment of religious zeal.

Mahomet was accompanied on this occasion by his wives, who were transported on litters. He

departed at the head of an immense train, some say of fifty-five, others ninety, and others a hundred and fourteen thousand pilgrims. There was a large number of camels also, decorated with garlands of flowers and fluttering streamers, intended to be offered up in sacrifice.

The first night's halt was a few miles from Medina, at the village of Dhu'l Halaifa, where, on a former occasion, he and his followers had laid aside their weapons, and assumed the pilgrim garb. Early on the following morning, after praying in the mosque, he mounted his camel Al Aswa, and entering the plain of Baida, uttered the prayer or invocation called in Arabic Talbijah, in which he was joined by all his followers. The following is the import of this solemn invocation: "Here am I in thy service, oh God! Here am I in thy service! Thou hast no companion. To thee alone belongeth worship. From thee cometh all good. Thine alone is the kingdom. There is none to share it with thee."

This prayer, according to Moslem tradition, was uttered by the patriarch Abraham, when, from the top of the hill of Kubeis, near Mecca he preached the true faith to the whole human race, and so wonderful was the power of his voice, that it was heard by every living being throughout the world; insomuch, that the very child in the womb responded, "Here am I in thy service, oh God!"

In this way the pilgrim host pursued its course, winding in a lengthened train of miles, over mountain and valley, and making the deserts vocal at

times with united prayers and ejaculations. There were no longer any hostile armies to impede or molest it, for by this time the Islam faith reigned serenely over all Arabia. Mahomet approached the sacred city over the same heights which he had traversed in capturing it, and he entered through the gate Beni Scheiba, which still bears the name of The Holy.

A few days after his arrival, he was joined by Ali, who had hastened back from Yemen; and who brought with him a number of camels to be slain in sacrifice. As this was to be a model pilgrimage, Mahomet rigorously observed all the rites which he had continued in compliance with patriarchal usage, or introduced in compliance with revelation. Being too weak and infirm to go on foot, he mounted his camel, and thus performed the circuits round the Caaba, and the journeyings to and fro, between the hills of Safa and Merwa.

When the camels were to be offered up in sacrifice, he slew sixty-three with his own hand, one for each year of his age, and Ali, at the same time, slew thirty-seven on his own account.

Mahomet then shaved his head, beginning on the right side and ending on the left. The locks thus shorn away were equally divided among his disciples, and treasured up as sacred relics. Khaled ever afterwards wore one in his turban, and affirmed that it gave him supernatural strength in battle.

Conscious that life was waning away within him, Mahomet, during this last sojourn in the sacred city

of his faith, sought to engrave his doctrines deeply in the minds and hearts of his followers. For this purpose he preached frequently in the Caaba from the pulpit, or in the open air from the back of his camel. "Listen to my words," would he say, "for I know not whether, after this year, we shall ever meet here again. Oh, my hearers, I am but a man like yourselves; the angel of death may at any time appear, and I must obey his summons."

He would then proceed to inculcate not merely religious doctrines and ceremonies, but rules for conduct in all the concerns of life, public and domestic; and the precepts laid down and enforced on this occasion, have had a vast and durable influence on the morals, manners, and habitudes of the whole Moslem world.

It was doubtless in view of his approaching end, and in solicitude for the welfare of his relatives and friends after his death and especially of his favourite Ali, that he took occasion, during a moment of strong excitement and enthusiasm among his hearers, to address to them a solemn adjuration.

"Ye believe," said he, "that there is but one God; that Mahomet is his prophet and apostle; that paradise and hell are truths; that death and the resurrection are certain; and that there is an appointed time when all who rise from the grave must be brought to judgment."

They all answered, "We believe these things." He then adjured them solemnly by these dogmas of their faith ever to hold his family, and especially

Ali, in love and reverence. "Whoever loves me," said he, "let him receive Ali as his friend. May God uphold those who befriend him, and may he turn from his enemies." It was at the conclusion of one of his discourses in the open air, from the back of his camel, that the famous verse of the Koran is said to have come down from heaven in the very voice of the Deity. "Evil to those, this day, who have denied your religion. Fear them not; fear me. This day I have perfected your religion, and accomplished in you my grace. It is my good pleasure that Islamism be your faith."

On hearing these words, say the Arabian historians, the camel Al Karwa, on which the prophet was seated, fell on its knees in adoration. These words, add they, were the seal and conclusion of the law, for after them there were no further revelations.

Having thus fulfilled all the rites and ceremonies of pilgrimage, and made a full exposition of his faith, Mahomet bade a last farewell to his native city, and putting himself at the head of his pilgrim army, set out on his return to Medina.

As he came in sight of it, he lifted up his voice and exclaimed, "God is great! God is great! There is but one God; he has no companion. His is the kingdom. To him alone belongeth praise. He is almighty. He hath fulfilled his promise. He has stood by his servant, and alone dispersed his enemies. Let us return to our homes, and worship and praise him!"

Thus ended what has been termed the valedictory pilgrimage, being the last made by the prophet.

CHAPTER XX

FALSE PROPHETS.

The health of Mahomet continued to decline after his return to Medina; nevertheless his ardour to extend his religious empire was unabated, and he prepared, on a great scale, for the invasion of Syria and Palestine. While he was meditating foreign conquest, however, two rival prophets arose to dispute his sway in Arabia. One was named Al Aswad, the other Moseïlma; they received from the faithful the well-merited appellation of the "Two Liars."

Moseïlma, was an Arab of the tribe of Honeifa, and ruled over the city and province of Yamama, situated between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Persia. In the ninth year of the Hegira he had come to Mecca at the head of an embassy from his tribe, and had made profession of faith between the hands of Mahomet; but, on returning to his own country, had proclaimed that God had gifted him likewise with prophecy, and appointed him to aid Mahomet in converting the human race. To this effect he likewise wrote a Koran, which he gave forth as a volume of inspired truth. His creed was noted for giving the soul a humiliating residence in the region of the abdomen.

Being a man of influence and address, he soon made hosts of converts among his credulous

countrymen. Rendered confident by success, he addressed an epistle to Mahomet, beginning as follows :

“ From Moseïlma the prophet of Allah, to Mahomet the prophet of Allah ! Come, now, and let us make a partition of the world, and let half be thine and half be mine.”

This letter came also to the hands of Mahomet, while bowed down by infirmities and engrossed by military preparations. He contented himself for the present with the following reply : “ From Mahomet the prophet of God, to Moseïlma the Liar ! The earth is the Lord’s, and he giveth it as an inheritance to such of his servants as find favour in his sight. Happy shall those be who live in his fear.”

In the urgency of other affairs, the usurpation of Moseïlma remained unchecked. His punishment was reserved for a future day.

CHAPTER XXI

LAST ILLNESS OF THE PROPHET—PARTING EXHORTATIONS— DEATH—BURIAL.

It was early in the eleventh year of the Hegira, that Mahomet had a severe access of the malady which for some time past had affected him, and which was ascribed by some to the lurking effects of the poison given to him at Khaïbar. It commenced with a violent pain in the head, accompanied by vertigo, and the delirium which seems to have

mingled with all his paroxysms of illness. Starting up in the mid-watches of the night from a troubled dream, he called upon an attendant slave to accompany him ; saying he was summoned by the dead who lay interred in the public burying-place of Medina to come and pray for them. Followed by the slave, he passed through the dark and silent city, where all were sunk in sleep, to the great burying-ground, outside of the walls.

Arrived in the midst of the tombs, he lifted up his voice and made a solemn apostrophe to their tenants. "Rejoice, ye dwellers in the grave !" exclaimed he. "More peaceful is the morning to which ye shall awaken, than that which attends the living. Happier is your condition than theirs. God has delivered you from the storms with which they are threatened, and which shall follow one another like the watches of a stormy night, each darker than that which went before."

After praying for the dead, he turned and addressed his slave. "The choice is given me," said he, "either to remain in this world to the end of time, in the enjoyment of all its delights, or to return sooner to the presence of God ; and I have chosen the latter."

From this time his illness rapidly increased, though he endeavoured to go about as usual, and shifted his residence from day to day, with his different wives. as he had been accustomed to do. He was in the dwelling of Maimona, when the violence of his malady became so great, that he saw it must soon prove fatal. His heart now yearned to be with his

favourite wife Ayesha, and pass with her the fleeting residue of life. With his head bound up, and his tottering frame supported by Ali and Fadhl, the son of Al Abbas, he repaired to her abode. She, likewise, was suffering with a violent pain in the head, and entreated of him a remedy.

“Wherefore a remedy?” said he. “Better that thou shouldst die before me. I could then close thine eyes; wrap thee in thy funeral garb; lay thee in the tomb, and pray for thee.”

“Yes,” replied she, “and then return to my house and dwell with one of thy other wives, who would profit by my death.”

Mahomet smiled at this expression of jealous fondness, and resigned himself into her care. His only remaining child, Fatima, the wife of Ali, came presently to see him. Ayesha used to say that she never saw any one resemble the prophet more in sweetness of temper, than this his daughter. He treated her always with respectful tenderness. When she came to him, he used to rise up, go towards her, take her by the hand, and kiss it, and would seat her in his own place. Their meeting on this occasion is thus related by Ayesha, in the traditions preserved by Abulfeda.

“‘Welcome, my child,’ said the prophet, and made her sit beside him. He then whispered something in her ear, at which she wept. Perceiving her affliction, he whispered something more, and her countenance brightened with joy. ‘What is the meaning of this?’ said I to Fatima. ‘The prophet honours thee with a mark of confidence never bestowed on

any of his wives.' 'I cannot disclose the secret of the prophet of God,' replied Fatima. Nevertheless, after his death she declared that at first he announced to her his impending death; but, seeing her weep, consoled her with the assurance that she would shortly follow him, and become a princess in heaven, among the faithful of her sex."

In the second day of his illness Mahomet was tormented by a burning fever, and caused vessels of water to be emptied on his head and over his body; exclaiming, amidst his paroxysms, "Now I feel the poison of Khaïbar rending my entrails."

When somewhat relieved, he was aided in repairing to the mosque, which was adjacent to his residence. Here, seated in his chair, or pulpit, he prayed devoutly; after which, addressing the congregation, which was numerous, "If any of you," said he, "have aught upon his conscience, let him speak out, that I may ask God's pardon for him."

Upon this a man, who had passed for a devout Moslem, stood forth and confessed himself a hypocrite, a liar, and a weak disciple. "Out upon thee!" cried Omar; "why dost thou make known what God had suffered to remain concealed?" But Mahomet turned rebukingly to Omar. "Oh son of Khattab," said he, "better is it to blush in this world, than suffer in the next." Then lifting his eyes to heaven, and praying for the self-accused, "Oh God," exclaimed he, "give him rectitude and faith, and take from him all weakness in fulfilling such of thy commands as his conscience dictates."

Again addressing the congregation, "Is there any one among you," said he, "whom I have stricken ; here is my back, let him strike me in return. Is there any one whose character I have aspersed ; let him now cast reproach upon me. Is there any one from whom I have taken aught unjustly ; let him now come forward and be indemnified."

Upon this, a man among the throng reminded Mahomet of a debt of three dinars of silver, and was instantly repaid with interest. "Much easier is it," said the prophet, "to bear punishment in this world than throughout eternity."

He now prayed fervently for those who had suffered for the faith in battles ; interceding with them in virtue of the pact which exists between the living and the dead.

After this he addressed the Mohadjerins or Exiles, who had accompanied him from Mecca, exhorting them to hold in honour the Ansarians, or allies of Medina. "The number of believers," said he, "will increase, but that of the allies never can. They were my family with whom I found a home. Do good to those who do good to them, and break friendship with those who are hostile to them."

He then gave three parting commands :—

First.—Expel all idolaters from Arabia.

Second.—Allow all proselytes equal privileges with yourselves.

Third.—Devote yourselves incessantly to prayer.

His sermon and exhortation being finished, he was affectionately supported back to the mansion of

Ayesha, but was so exhausted on arriving there that he fainted.

His malady increased from day to day, apparently with intervals of delirium ; he spoke of receiving visits from the angel Gabriel, who came from God to inquire after the state of his health and told him that it rested with himself to fix his dying moments the angel of death being forbidden by Allah to enter his presence without his permission.

In one of his paroxysms he called for writing implements, that he might leave some rules of conduct for his followers. His attendants were troubled, fearing he might do something to impair the authority of the Koran. Hearing them debate among themselves whether to comply with his request, he ordered them to leave the room, and when they returned said nothing more on the subject.

On Friday, the day of religious assemblage, he prepared, notwithstanding his illness, to officiate in the mosque, and had water again poured over him to refresh and strengthen him ; but on making an effort to go forth, fainted. On recovering, he requested Abu Beker to perform the public prayers ; observing, "Allah has given his servant the right to appoint whom he pleases in his place." It was afterwards maintained by some that he thus intended to designate this long-trying friend and adherent as his successor in office ; but Abu Beker shrank from construing the words too closely.

Word was soon brought to Mahomet that the appearance of Abu Beker in the pulpit had caused

great agitation, a rumour being circulated that the prophet was dead. Exerting his remaining strength, therefore, and leaning on the shoulders of Ali and Al Abbas, he made his way into the mosque, where his appearance spread joy throughout the congregation. Abu Beker ceased to pray, but Mahomet bade him proceed, and taking his seat behind him in the pulpit, repeated the prayers after him. Then addressing the congregation, "I have heard," said he, "that a rumour of the death of your prophet filled you with alarm; but has any prophet before me lived for ever, that ye think I would never leave you? Everything happens according to the will of God, and has its appointed time, which is not to be hastened nor avoided. I return to him who sent me; and my last command to you is, that ye remain united; that ye love, honour, and uphold each other; that ye exhort each other to faith and constancy in belief, and to the performance of pious deeds; by these alone men prosper; all else leads to destruction."

In concluding his exhortation, he added, "I do but go before you; you will soon follow me. Death awaits us all; let no one then seek to turn it aside from me. My life has been for your good; so will be my death."

These were the last words he spake in public; he was again conducted back by Ali and Abbas to the dwelling of Ayesha.

On a succeeding day there was an interval during which he appeared so well that Ali, Abu Beker, Omar, and the rest of those who had been constantly about

him, absented themselves for a time, to attend to their affairs. Ayesha alone remained with him. The interval was but illusive. His pains returned with redoubled violence. Finding death approaching he gave orders that all his slaves should be restored to freedom, and all the money in the house distributed among the poor; then raising his eyes to heaven, "God be with me in the death struggle," exclaimed he.

Ayesha now sent in haste for her father and Hafza. Left alone with Mahomet, she sustained his head on her lap, watching over him with tender assiduity, and endeavouring to soothe his dying agonies. From time to time he would dip his hand in a vase of water, and with it feebly sprinkle his face. At length, raising his eyes and gazing upward for a time with unmoving eyelids, "Oh, Allah!" ejaculated he, in broken accents, "be it so!—among the glorious associates in paradise!"

"I knew by this," said Ayesha, who related the dying scene, "that his last moment had arrived, and that he had made choice of supernal existence."

In a few moments his hands were cold, and life was extinct. Ayesha laid his head upon the pillow, and beating her head and breast, gave way to loud lamentations. Her outcries brought the other wives of Mahomet, and their clamorous grief soon made the event known throughout the city. Consternation seized upon the people, as if some prodigy had happened. All business was suspended.

The multitude crowded to contemplate the corpse, and agitation and dispute prevailed even in the chamber

of death. Some discredited the evidence of their senses. "How can he be dead?" cried they. "Is he not our mediator with God? How then can he be dead? Impossible! He is but in a trance, and carried up to heaven like Isa (Jesus) and the other prophets."

The throng augmented about the house, declaring with clamour that the body should not be interred; when Omar, who had just heard the tidings, arrived. He drew his scimitar, and pressing through the crowd, threatened to strike off the hands and feet of any one who should affirm that the prophet was dead. "He has but departed for a time," said he, "as Musa (Moses) the son of Imram went up forty days into the mountain; and like him he will return again."

Abu Beker, who had been in a distant part of the city, arrived in time to soothe the despair of the people and calm the transports of Omar. Passing into the chamber he raised the cloth which covered the corpse, and kissing the pale face of Mahomet, "Oh thou!" exclaimed he, "who wert to me as my father and my mother; sweet art thou even in death, and living odours dost thou exhale! Now livest thou in everlasting bliss, for never will Allah subject thee to a second death."

Then covering the corpse he went forth, and endeavoured to silence Omar, but finding it impossible, he addressed the multitude: "Truly if Mahomet is the sole object of your adoration, he is dead; but if it be God you worship, he cannot die. Mahomet was but the prophet of God, and has shared the fate of

the apostles and holy men who have gone before him. Allah, himself, has said in his Koran that Mahomet was but his ambassador, and was subject to death. What then ! will you turn the heel upon him, and abandon his doctrine because he is dead ? Remember your apostasy harms not God, but insures your own condemnation ; while the blessings of God will be poured out upon those who continue faithful to him."

The people listened to Abu Beker with tears and sobbings, and as they listened their despair subsided. Even Omar was convinced but not consoled, throwing himself on the earth and bewailing the death of Mahomet, whom he remembered as his commander and his friend.

The death of the prophet, according to the Moslem historians Abulfeda and Al Jannabi, took place on his birthday, when he had completed his sixty-third year. It was in the eleventh year of the Hegira, and the 632nd year of the Christian era.

The body was prepared for sepulture by several of the dearest relatives and disciples. They affirmed that a marvellous fragrance which, according to the evidence of his wives and daughters, emanated from his person during life, still continued ; so that to use the words of Ali, "it seemed as if he were, at the same time dead and living."

The body having been washed and perfumed, was wrapped in three coverings ; two white, and the third of the striped cloth of Yemen. The whole was then perfumed with amber, musk, aloes, and odoriferous

herbs. After this, it was exposed in public, and seventy-two prayers were offered up.

The body remained three days unburied, in compliance with Oriental custom, and to satisfy those who still believed in the possibility of a trance. When the evidences of mortality could no longer be mistaken, preparations were made for interment. A dispute now arose as to the place of sepulture. The Mohadjerins or disciples from Mecca contended for that city, as being the place of his nativity ; the Ansarians claimed for Medina, as his asylum and the place of his residence during the last ten years of his life. A third party advised that his remains should be transported to Jerusalem, as the place of sepulture of the prophets. Abu Beker, whose word had always the greatest weight, declared it to have been the expressed opinion of Mahomet that a prophet should be buried in the place where he died. This, in the present instance, was complied with to the very letter, for a grave was digged in the house of Ayesha, beneath the very bed on which Mahomet had expired.

CHAPTER XXII

CHARACTERISTICS.

Mahomet, according to accounts handed down by tradition from his contemporaries, was of the middle stature, square built and sinewy, with large hands

and feet. In his youth he was uncommonly strong and vigorous ; in the latter part of his life he inclined to corpulency. His head was capacious, well shaped, and well set on a neck which rose like a pillar from his ample chest. His forehead was high, broad at the temples, and crossed by veins extending down to the eyebrows, which swelled whenever he was angry or excited. He had an oval face, marked and expressive features, an aquiline nose, black eyes, arched eyebrows which nearly met, a mouth large and flexible, indicative of eloquence ; very white teeth, somewhat parted and irregular ; black hair which waved without a curl on his shoulders, and a long and very full beard.

His deportment, in general, was calm and equable ; he sometimes indulged in pleasantry, but more commonly was grave and dignified ; though he is said to have possessed a smile of captivating sweetness. His complexion was more ruddy than is usual with Arabs, and in his excited and enthusiastic moments there was a glow and radiance in his countenance, which his disciples magnified into the supernatural light of prophecy.

His intellectual qualities were undoubtedly of an extraordinary kind. He had a quick apprehension, a retentive memory, a vivid imagination, and an inventive genius. Owing but little to education, he had quickened and informed his mind by close observation, and stored it with a great variety of knowledge concerning the systems of religion current in his day, or handed down by tradition from antiquity. His

ordinary discourse was grave and sententious, abounding with those aphorisms and apologues so popular among the Arabs ; at times he was excited and eloquent, and his eloquence was aided by a voice musical and sonorous.

He was sober and abstemious in his diet, and a rigorous observer of fasts. He indulged in no magnificence of apparel, the ostentation of a petty mind ; neither was his simplicity in dress affected, but the result of a real disregard to distinction from so trivial a source. His garments were sometimes of wool ; sometimes of the striped cotton of Yemen ; and were often patched. He wore a turban, for he said turbans were worn by the angels ; and in arranging it he let one end hang down between his shoulders, which he said was the way they wore it. He forbade the wearing of clothes entirely of silk ; but permitted a mixture of thread and silk. He forbade also red clothes and the use of gold rings. He wore a seal ring of silver, the engraved part under his finger close to the palm of his hand, bearing the inscription, "Mahomet the messenger of God." He was scrupulous as to personal cleanliness, and observed frequent ablutions. Of all his children, Fatima, the wife of Ali, alone survived him, and she died within a short time after his death. Of her descendants, none excepting her eldest son Hassan ever sat on the throne of the Caliphs.

In his private dealings he was just. He treated friends and strangers, the rich and poor, the powerful and the weak, with equity, and was beloved by the

common people for the affability with which he received them, and listened to their complaints.

He was naturally irritable, but had brought his temper under great control, so that even in the self-indulgent intercourse of domestic life he was kind and tolerant. "I served him from the time I was eight years old," said his servant Anas, "and he never scolded me for anything, though things were spoiled by me."
