

eral generations, as Abdallah, one personage in his day, asham the prince, ing him in the cus- mer of Mohammed, predecessors, and bestowed upon the of magistrate, both ce of Mohammed, es." The name of was traceable also was envied in gain- surpassing beauty of hundred maidens of sigh over the wreck.

father, was possess- was an infant, or, as hat little was seized l shared among his mohammed. Although promulgated by the y and kindness; yet rom Eastern writers, injustice, frequently fathers and husbands, among those only who e, even against their ns. The fatherless his countrymen, re- ore than five came-

irth of their pretend- ses or of Christ, the e reported a tissue of xion with that event. e same implicit faith- knowledge, that at the world, a flood of rt of Syria; that the that a city was built urteen towers of the Persians was extin- the moon and stars nor could they ever ie child also, if w-

he had sprung from thine own loins; for all the honour thou showest unto him shall be trebled unto thee. Be more than ordinarily careful in thy treatment towards him, for it will be paid thee with interest.— Give him the preference before thine own children, for he exceedeth them and all mankind in excellency and perfection. Take notice, that whensoever he calleth upon thee, thou answer him not as an infant, as his tender age may require, but as thou wouldst reply to the most aged and venerable person when he asketh thee any question. Sit not down to thy repasts of any sort soever, either alone or in company, till thy worthy nephew Mohammed is seated at the table before thee; neither do thou ever offer to taste of any kind of viands, or even to stretch forth thine hand towards the same, until he hath tasted thereof. If thou observe these my injunctions, thy goods shall always increase, and in no-wise be diminished."

Whether Abu Taleb recognised in the deposit thus solemnly committed to his trust an object of such high destiny and such profound veneration as his father's language would imply, we are not informed; but there is good evidence that he acted towards his nephew the part of a kind friend and protector, giving him an education, scanty indeed, but equal to that usually received by his countrymen. His followers, it is true, in order to magnify their prophet's supernatural gifts, and render the composition of the Koran a greater miracle, generally affirm that he was wholly illiterate, neither able to read or write. In this, indeed, they are authorised by the pretensions of Mohammed himself, who says, "Thus have we sent down the book of the Koran unto thee. Thou couldst not read any book before this; neither couldst thou write it with thy right hand; then had the gainsayers justly doubted of the divine original thereof." "Believe, therefore, in God and his apostle, the illiterate prophet." But in the Koran, a complete fabric of imposture, the last thing we are to expect is an honest adherence to truth. There is abundant evidence, from the pages of this spurious revelation itself, that writing was an art in common use among the Arabs at that time. The following precept concerning bonds puts it beyond question. "O, true believers, when ye bind yourselves one to the other in a debt for a certain time, write it down; and let a writer write between you according to justice, and let not the writer refuse writing according to what God hath taught him." We learn also that Ali Taleb, the son of Abu Taleb, and cousin of Mohammed, with whom the prophet passed his childhood, afterward became one of his scribes, of whom he had a number employed in making copies of the Koran as its successive portions were revealed to him. How did it happen that Abu Taleb should have had his son instructed in writing, and not his nephew?—The city of Mecca, moreover, being a place of traffic, the merchants must have hourly felt the want of some mode of recording their transactions; and as we are informed that Mohammed himself was for several years engaged in mercantile pursuits before he commenced the propagation of a new religion, it is scarcely supposeable that he was unacquainted with the use of letters.

Of the infancy, childhood, and youth of the future prophet no authentic details have reached. The blank has indeed been copiously supplied by the fabulous legends of his votaries, but as they are utterly void of authority, they will not repay the trouble of transcription. Being destined by his uncle to the profession of a merchant, he was taken