

portable stupidity in short ! Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran." This is still true, though better historical illustration has shed a little more light upon the murky chaos. But the literary inferiority is the least part of the matter. The Koran is a gospel of war and plunder ; to those appetites of the Bedouin, it distinctly and unequivocally appeals. The new translator, Mr. Palmer, who is inclined to take a favourable view of the Prophet and his work, remarks that Mahomet, with true political sagacity, saw that the only way to prevent the new kingdom from becoming hopelessly disintegrated, was to give its members some common interest and ambition, and that his reason for never relinquishing his design upon Syria, was that there the turbulent tribes might find scope for their warlike propensities, and a rich booty might be gained. "It was to this common bond of unity," adds Mr. Palmer, "the desire for plunder and the love of making border raids, as much as the religious idea, that the triumph of El Islam was due." Nor can there be any mistake about the Sensual Paradise with its large-eyed houris, its delicious drinks and its dresses of green satin and brocade, or about its adaptation to the tastes of the Bedouin. There are two Mahomets and two Korans. The Mahomet of Mecca is a religious reformer, a preacher of Monotheism, a destroyer of idols ; epileptic perhaps, and partly self-deluded, yet thoroughly sincere and profoundly interesting ; a virtuous man and a monogamist withal. The chapters of the Koran written at Mecca are in keeping with this character. The creed which they embody is not new ; it is a bastard Judaism with a slight infusion of still more bastard Christianity, large portions of the Old Testament history and small portions of that of the New Testament being incorporated, though in a debased version and mixed with the coarsest fables. But the Mahomet of Medina is another man, so far as it is possible for character to change. Master now of a considerable force, he becomes the ambitious schemer and the incipient conqueror : he appeals without disguise to the warlike and predatory propensities of his disciples ;