

away only at an age when many sinners have reformed. It is useless to defend the sexual laxity of Mahomet by saying that he was neither better nor worse than the usual morality of his own age and country. The preacher of a religious reform ought to rise above the usual morality of his age and country, and Mahomet, at one time of his life, showed that he could rise above it. The youth of Mahomet was, according to all our evidence, a youth of temperance, soberness, and chastity, and not a breath of scandal rested on his married life past during twenty years with a woman old enough to be his mother.—The manners of his country allowed both polygamy and concubinage, but no rival, whether wife or slave, ever disturbed the declining years of Khadijah. Now that the temperament of Mahomet was from the first ardent and voluptuous, that this long period of virtuous living must have been the result of a hard struggle with his lower nature, we have a singular proof in the nature of his revelations. It is the oldest of charges against Mahomet that he promised his followers a paradise of sensual delights. The charge might indeed be made part of a larger one. The contrast between the Gospel and the Koran, is nowhere more strongly marked than in the veil which the Gospel throws over all details as to the next world, when compared with the minuteness with which the Koran dwells alike on its rewards and its punishments. And the special charge against Mahomet of holding out sensual promises to his disciples is a charge which cannot be got over except by the daring apologetics of certain Mussulman doctors, who maintain that the hours of Paradise are to be taken figuratively, like those passages of the New Testament which, taken literally, seem to promise eating and drinking among the delights of the New Jerusalem. But even if we accept this desperate shift, a symbolism of this kind, so dangerous, to say the least, for ordinary believers, could have sprung only from an imagination which dwelt perhaps all the more on pleasures from which a virtuous effort of continence had forbidden. It is a striking fact that those passages in the Koran which go into any detail on this perilous subject all come from the hand of the faithful hus-

band of Khadijah, while the owner of the well-stocked harem of Medina speaks only once or twice in a cursory way of any presence of women in the next world. At the earlier time Mahomet may have seemed to himself to deserve a future reward for his present virtuous effort. Yet the man who was capable of that virtuous effort for so long a time—an effort made, as it would seem, out of respect and gratitude towards the woman who had made his fortunes—could surely have prolonged that effort, if only to keep up the dignity and consistency of his own character. A man who had so long lived a chaste life, and who on every other point was an ascetic—a man who, on this very point of sexual morality, was in his own age and country a reformer—surely should not, to say the very least, have proclaimed for himself exemptions from the laws which he laid down for others. In itself, the polygamy and concubinage of Mahomet was no worse than the polygamy and concubinage of the patriarchs under the Old Law. It was far better than the unrestrained licence of not a few Christian kings. The female companions of the Prophet were at least his own acknowledged wives and slaves; there was no fear of either violence or seduction towards the wives and daughters of his followers. The law of Mahomet is strict against adultery and fornication in his own sense of those words, and on these heads the practice of the Prophet was in full conformity with his own teaching.—Yet in Mahomet's relations to women we cannot but see a distinct fall, both from the standard of the Gospel and from the standard of his own early life. In the tale of Zeyd and Zeinab there is a distinct fall from the commandment of the Old law which forbids, not only the act of adultery, but the mere coveting of the wife of another. The faithful freedman divorced his wife as soon as a seemingly involuntary expression of the Prophet, showed that her beauty had found favor in his eyes. But Arabian manners looked on marriage with the widow or divorced wife of a freedman, an artificial son, as savouring of the guilt of incest. After a time a new revelation removed this scruple, and Zeinab was added to the number of the Prophet's wives. In the like