

refuge is ready for him within his own Arabia. He flies from Mecca to Medina, and the whole character of his life and teaching is presently changed. Islam and its founder now take their place in the history of the world. The peaceful preacher changes into the ruler and conqueror; the religious sect becomes a political commonwealth; the teaching of faith and righteousness changes into the legislation, permanent and occasional, needed for a new-born commonwealth surrounded by enemies and waging constant warfare. The man who had been driven forth from Mecca with only one companion becomes strong enough to make a treaty with the rulers of his native city, and he is allowed to make his pilgrimage to the holy place of Abraham and Ishmael. An alleged breach of the treaty supplies a pretext for warfare. The Prophet marches against the holy city; he is met on his way by the submission and conversion of the most stubborn of his enemies; the city itself is yielded almost without a blow; the triumphant Prophet enters; the holy place is purified, and the idols which had thrust themselves into the shrine of Abraham are dashed in pieces in answer to the words, 'Truth is come, let falsehood disappear.' One by one all the tribes of Arabia are gathered in to the faith of Alla and the obedience of his Prophet. The purified temple of Mecca becomes the scene of yet another last and solemn pilgrimage, of one last and solemn giving of the law to the assembled believers. And then, when he seemed to have reached the great crisis of his history, when his power was threatened by rival prophets in his own land, and when he was gathering his forces to measure himself with the power of Rome—with the power of Rome in all the glory of the Persian victories of Heraclius—the Prophet is called away to his Companion in Paradise, and leaves none to succeed him on earth. At his death the greater part of the tribes of Arabia fall away. They are won back by the wisdom of Abou-Bekr and by the sword of Omar. The united powers of the peninsula, gathered together in the name of God and his Prophet, go forth to the conquest of the two great empires of the world. Within a few years the Eastern

provinces of Rome are lopped away, and Persia is wiped out of the list of nations. A century has not passed away before the Caliph of Mahomet reigns alike on the banks of the Jaxartes and on the banks of the Guadalquivir, and the same faith is taught in the temple of Samarkland and in the temples of Cordova.

Such were the main events of the life of Mahomet, and of that first burst of zeal on the part of his followers after his death which can hardly be kept apart from the story of his life. What does such a story lead us to think of the man himself and of his alleged revelation? We may dismiss without examination the exploded theory which once looked on Mahomet as a conscious impostor from the beginning of his career to the end. But many estimates may be formed of him ranging between the mere reviling of writers like Prideaux and Maracci and the implicit faith which Syed Ahmed is bound to put in the teaching of his Prophet and forefather. Of Mahomet's thorough sincerity, of his honest faith in the truth of his own mission, at all events during the first stages of his career, there can, we think, be no reasonable doubt; indeed, the opposite view seems no longer to have any adherents of whom much heed need be taken. The early Suras—those which in the ordinary arrangement will be found at the end—carry with them the stamp of perfect sincerity. To a Western taste they may often seem incoherent and unintelligible, but on this point Western taste is hardly a fair judge. As for their matter, there is in them as yet no legislation for a commonwealth; there is not even any dogmatic teaching for a religious sect. These early chapters are the outpouring of the heart of the man himself, the psalms, the musings, the ejaculations,—for some of the Suras are so short as to be hardly more than ejaculations—of a man whose whole soul is given up to the contemplation of the goodness of God and of the ingratitude and wickedness of mankind. It is only gradually that Mahomet assumes the character of a preacher, of a Prophet sent by God to announce to man the last revelation of his will. How far then was he sincere, and, if sincere, how far was he justified in thus assuming the