

in fasting, prayer, and holy meditation. The important crisis having now arrived, he began to break to his wife, on his return home in the evening, the solemn intelligence of supernatural visions and voices with which he was favoured in his retirement. Cadijah, as might be expected, was at first incredulous: She treated his visions as the dreams of a disturbed imagination, or as the delusions of the devil.* Mohammed, however, persisted in assuring her of the reality of these communications, and rising still higher in his demands upon her credulity, at length repeated a passage which he affirmed to be a part of a divine revelation, recently conveyed to him by the ministry of the angel Gabriel. The memorable night on which this visit was made by the heavenly messenger is called the "night of Al Kadr," or the night of the *divine decree*, and is greatly celebrated, as it was the same night on which the entire KORAN descended from the seventh to the lowest heaven, to be thence revealed by Gabriel in successive portions as occasion might require. The Koran has a whole chapter devoted to the commemoration of this event, entitled Al Kadr. It is as follows: "In the name of the most merciful God. Verily, we sent down the Koran in the night of Al Kadr. And what shall make thee understand how excellent the night of Al Kadr is? This night is better than a thousand months. Therein do the angels descend, and the spirit Gabriel also, by the permission of their Lord, with his decrees concerning every matter. It is peace until the rising of the morn." On this favoured night, between the 23d and 24th of *Ramadan*, according to the prophet, the angel appeared to him, in glorious form, to communicate the happy tidings of his mission. The light issuing from his body, if the apostle-elect may be believed, was too dazzling for mortal eyes to behold; he fainted under the splendour; nor was it till Gabriel had assumed a human form, that he could venture to approach or look upon him. The angel then cried aloud, "O MOHAMMED, THOU ART THE APOSTLE OF GOD, AND I AM THE ANGEL GABRIEL!" "Read!" continued the angel; the prophet declared that he was unable to read. "Read!" Gabriel again exclaimed, "read, in the name of thy Lord, who hath created all things; who hath created man of congealed blood. Read, by thy most beneficent Lord, who hath taught the use of the pen; who teacheth man that which he knoweth not." The prophet, who professed hitherto to have been illiterate, then read the joyful tidings respecting his ministry on earth, when the angel, having accomplished his mission, majestically ascended to heaven, and disappeared from his view. When the story of this surprising interview with a celestial visitant was related to Cadijah in connexion with the passage repeated, her unbelief, as tradition avers, was wholly overcome, and not only so, but she was wrought by it into a kind of ecstasy, declaring, "By Him in whose hands her soul was, that she trusted her husband would indeed one day become the prophet of his nation." In the height of her joy she imme-

* This is the account given by Prideaux. Sale, however, says, "I do not remember to have read in any Eastern author, that Cadijah ever rejected her husband's pretences as delusions, or suspected him of any imposture."—Prelim. Disc. p. 58. note.