

repudiate as ridiculous and preposterous, together with much pure morality, blended with wildness and incoherency.

He could not philosophise with the child of the desert, nor offer him a pure, yet incomprehensible religion; he therefore made his eternal rewards, *personal* instead of *spiritual*—he dazzled and bewildered the imagination by the bright attractions of beauty and luxuries to be enjoyed in Paradise; which he painted in colours, so delightful and attractive, that all his soldiers became daringly valiant, with a contempt of death, nay, an anxiety, to “shuffle off this mortal coil,” to taste the imaginary joys held out in the new faith just preached.—The Jews and the Christians stood calmly by and preached salvation hereafter for the good practiced in this life, but were without converts—the new faith spread over the desert and reached quickly to the confines of Asia.

“Children of Ishmael,” said Mahomet to the Arabs, “I restore to you that worship which your fathers Abraham, Noah and all the Patriarchs professed. There is but one God sovereign of the world: He calls himself Merciful. Adore no other God but him. Be ye bountiful to the orphan, the poor, the slaves, and the captives. Be just towards all men; for Justice is the sister of Piety—pray and be charitable.” There is no imposture in this—it is pure morality, such as we at this day should practice as well as preach; but the reward—the inducement appended to this advice.

“Your recompense,” says Mahomet, “will be to live in heaven, in gardens, the most delightful, where limpid streams abound, where you will find wives forever beautiful, forever young and everlastingly in love with you.—Encounter with valor the unbelieving and the impious. Maintain the combat until you gain the victory, until they consent to embrace Islamism or to pay you tribute. Every soldier killed in battle will go to enjoy the pleasures of heaven. The cowardly cannot prolong their lives. The instant the Angel of Death gives the blow it is noted in the book of the Eternal Being.”

Such were the inducements held out by this extraordinary man, such the dazzling promises of temporal bliss and eternal rewards by which he chained to his fortune and destiny, the whole of the Asiatic dominions. The Koran is a compound of religious and political doctrines; a code of sacred and civil laws, written in a language soft, sweet, flowing and figurative. For, in addition to the valor of the

soldier, the discernment of the politician, and the ability of the Legislator, Mahomet was poet of the first order, full of tender conceptions, and when he produced that chapter of the Koran called *Labia ebu Rabia*, he was crowned as chief of living poets.

Reposing, however, in luxurious and voluptuous ease, indicting the chapter of his new faith, alternately in prose and poetry, his enemies pressed hard upon him in every direction.

He who broaches reform must meet the responsibility of new doctrines; and he who perfects a novel and attractive invention, does not often realize the benefits of his ingenuity. Accordingly, the persecutions of his enemies compelled him to fly from Mecca. In his case like thousands of others, religious and political persecution made him.

Had Mahomet been permitted tranquilly to exercise his freedom of opinion, his visions of a new faith undisturbed; had he been allowed to have luxuriated in the soft climate and extensive pleasures which his family could not afford, at Mecca, and have written chapters of his Koran and sonnets to his “mistress’ eyes and brows,” he would in a few years more of indulgence, have lost the energy of his character, and probably the horde of Arabs would have adopted a milder and more tolerant faith; and the descendants of Hagar’s offspring would not, at this day, have been a powerful nation, and masters of Asia and Africa.

But it was ordained, no doubt from good causes and considerations, to be otherwise. The flight of Mahomet from Mecca to Medina in 622 of the Christian era, commonly called the Hegira, gave at once glory to his standard and permanency to his faith. He then drew his sword like a baited lion, and carried his victorious banner through Arabia and Ethiopia; cut his way in the midst of every opposition; conquered countries, cities, villages, armed bands, and hosts; kind to the captive, benevolent to the distressed, and merciful to all.

Mahomet, by his warlike yet pacific policy, made instant friends of his prisoners; feared yet respected by the sovereigns of Asia, and surrounded by renowned captains and an immense army, he became the most potent warrior and legislator in all Asia.

This great man died by slow poison, which for several years had gnawed his vitals: and from the pulpit of his mosque, in which he had so often prayed, he addressed them for the last time.