

vived him. And such was the prophet's respect to the memory of his wife, that after her death he placed her in the rank of the four perfect women.

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### CHAPTER III.

*Mohammed forms the design of palming a new Religion upon the world—Difficult to account for this determination—Considerations suggested—Retires to the Cave of Hera—Announces to Cadijah the Visits of Gabriel with a portion of the Koran—She becomes a Convert—His slow progress in gaining Proselytes—Curious Coincidence.*

BEING now raised by his marriage to an equality with the first citizens of Mecca, Mohammed was enabled to pass the next twelve years of his life in comparative affluence and ease; and, until the age of forty, nothing remarkable distinguished the history of the future prophet. It is probable, that he still followed the occupation of a merchant, as the Arabian nation, like their ancestors the Ishmaelites, have always been greatly addicted to commerce. It was during this interval, however, that he meditated and matured the bold design of palming a new religion upon the world. This therefore becomes, in its results, the most important period in his whole life; and it is greatly to be regretted, that the policy of the impostor, and the ravages of time, have deprived us of all sources of information, which might afford a satisfactory clew to the real origin of this design. The circumstances which first suggested it, the peculiar train of reflection which went to cherish it, the ends which he proposed to accomplish by it, together with the real agencies employed in bringing it forward, are all matters wrapped in impenetrable mystery; yet these are the very points on which the inquiring mind, intent upon tracing great events to their primary sources, is most eager for information. At the present day, it is impossible to determine whether Mohammed commenced his career as a deluded enthusiast or a designing impostor. Those who have most profoundly considered the whole subject of Mohammedanism in its rise, progress, genius, and effects, are, on this point, divided in their opinion.

On the one hand, it is supposed by some, that Mohammed was constitutionally addicted to religious contemplation—that his native temperament was strongly tinged with enthusiasm—and that he might originally have been free from any sinister motive in giving scope to the innate propensities of his character. As the result of his retired speculations he might, moreover, it is said, have been sincerely persuaded in his own mind of the grand article of his faith, the unity of God, which in his opinion was violated by all the rest of the world, and, therefore, might have deemed it a meritorious work to endeavour to liberate his