

was thus trained by his uncle to the business of a merchant traveller. He joined the trading caravans, at the early age of thirteen. Though engaged in mercantile pursuits, he could neither read nor write. But a merchant in Arabia in the time of Mohammed, was very different from that that bears the name among us. The credit system was unknown, men had not the honesty to trust one another. Every thing was done upon the principle of exchange and present payment. Consequently there was not the same necessity of keeping accounts. We need not wonder that Mohammed, the Arabian trader, could not write when we remember that seven hundred years later the nobility of France and England could not sign their names to important state documents. You will please remember that Mohammed did not begin his career behind the counter, but upon the camel's back. Carry your minds back to those days when the wealth of India, by the overland route was carried across the desert—when but few ships ventured to pass the pillars of Hercules, and the passage of the Cape of Good Hope was undreamed of—when the Camel, with the pack upon his back, was emphatically the ship of the desert,—and you will form a pretty correct idea of the business and work of the merchant Mohammed. How invigorating this roving life! How keen it renders the eye in reading character as well as foot prints! How shrewd, how cunning men must become who pursue it long. This was the training school Mohammed entered at the age of thirteen. His first trading journey was made with his uncle to Bostra, an ancient city of refuge in the tribe of Ruben. While sojourning in Bostra he became acquainted with a Nestorian monk, an Arabian by nation. This man the Arabian writers call Bohira, the Greeks Sergius. It appears he paid a good deal of attention to the boy Mohammed, perceiving in him the budding of genius; and as we shall afterwards see aided him by his learning in planning his new religion, and palming it upon the world. The next remarkable event we shall notice in

the life of Mohammed is his profession of arms, and distinguishing himself as a bold and skilful warrior. At the age of twenty he served under his uncle Abutaleb, in the war between the Korish and the rival tribes of Kenan and Howazean. Under the skilful generalship of Mohammed and his uncle the Korish were victorious. This event rendered the young soldier the idol of his tribe, and greatly raised his reputation with the fair. How far this influenced the heart of the rich widow, whose third husband he soon afterward became, we pretend not to say. The following important incident occurred about this time. The Caaba by the mouldering hand of time had become so impaired that it was found necessary to raise a new structure upon the old site. A violent dispute arose among the tribes about placing the sacred black stone* at last to end the dispute they all agreed to leave this vexing question to the decision of the first person who should come to the place. That person was Mohammed. Thus he was called to be the umpire in this great religious dissension of his countrymen. Here superstition again testifies that he is no common character. This event no doubt suggested to his own mind that he was born to reform or at least remodel the religion of his countrymen. His dreams of enthusiasm are, however, for the moment, dissipated by the calls of business. His uncle had secured for him the situation of factor or agent, to manage the mercantile concerns of a very rich

*According to the Legend, the "Black Stone" was brought down from heaven by Gabriel at the creation of the world, and was then of a pure white, but has contracted its present sable hue from the guilt of sins committed by the sons of men.

†He placed the "Black Stone" near the door of the Caaba, in the angle of the wall of the north-east corner, about seven spans from the ground. It is devoutly kissed by every pilgrim visiting the sacred city. It is of an oval shape about seven inches in diameter, composed of seven smaller stones of different sizes and shapes joined together with cement, and perfectly smooth. A border of cement rises above the surface, and both this and the Stone are encircled by a silver band.