The Speeches and Table-talk of Mohammad by Stanley

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THE SPEECHES & TABLE-TALK OF THE PROPHET MOHAMMAD

Chosen and Translated, with Introduction and Notes,

BY

STANLEY LANE-POOLE

Kufic Calligraphy

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GOD! THERE IS NO GOD BUT HE, THE LIVING, THE STEADFAST! SLUMBER SEIZETH HIM NOT, NOR SLEEP. WHATSOEVER IS IN THE HEAVENS, AND WHATSOEVER IS IN THE EARTH, IS HIS. WHO IS THERE THAT SHALL PLEAD WITH HIM SAVE BY HIS LEAVE? HE KNOWETH WHAT WAS BEFORE THEM AND WHAT SHALL COME AFTER THEM, AND THEY COMPASS NOT AUGHT OF HIS KNOWLEDGE, BUT WHAT HE WILLETH. HIS THRONE OVERSPREADETH THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, AND THE KEEPING OF BOTH IS NO BURDEN TO HIM: AND HE IS THE HIGH, THE GREAT!

THE THRONE VERSE, ii. 256.

INTRODUCTION.

The aim of this little volume is to present all that is most enduring and memorable in the public orations and private sayings of the prophet Mohammad in such a form that the general reader may be tempted to learn a little of what a great man was and of what made him great. At present, it must be allowed that although “Auld Mahound” is a household word, he is very little more than a word. Things are constantly being said, written, and preached about the Arab prophet and the religion he taught, of which an elementary acquaintance with him would show the absurdity. No one would dare to treat the ordinary classics of European literature in this fashion; or, if he did, his exposure would immediately ensue. What I wish to do is to enable any one, at the cost of the least possible exertion, to put himself into a position to judge of popular fallacies about Mohammad and his creed as [Pg vi] surely and certainly as he can judge of errors in ordinary education and scholarship. I do not wish to mention the Korān by name more than can be helped, for I have observed that the word has a deterrent effect upon readers who like their literary food light and easy of digestion. It cannot, however, be disguised that a great deal of this book consists of the Korān, and it may therefore be as well to explain away as far as possible the prejudice which the ill-fated name is apt to excite. It is not easy to say for how much of this prejudice the standard English translator is responsible. The patient and meritorious George Sale put the Korān into tangled English and heavy quarto,—people read quartos then and did not call them *éditions de luxe*,—his version then appeared in a clumsy octavo, with most undesirable type and paper; finally it has come out in a cheap edition, of which it need only be said that utility rather than taste has been consulted. One can hardly blame any one for refusing to look even at the outsides of these volumes. And the inside,—not the mere outward inside, if I may so say, the type and paper,—but the heart of hearts, the matter itself, is by no means calculated to tempt a reluctant reader. The Korān is there arranged according to the orthodox form, instead of [Pg vii] in chronological order,—it must be allowed that the chronological order was not discovered in Sale’s time,—and the result is that impression of chaotic indefiniteness which impressed Carlyle so strongly, and which Carlyle has impressed upon most of the present generation. A large disorderly collection of prophetic rhapsody did not prove inviting, as the state of popular knowledge about Mohammad very clearly shows.

The attitude of the multitude towards Sale’s Korān was on the whole reasonable. But if the faults that were found there are shown to belong to Sale and not to the Korān, or only partly to it, the attitude should change. In the

first place, the Korān is not a large book, and in the second, it is by no means so disorderly and anarchic as is commonly supposed. Reckoned by the number of verses, the Korān is only two-thirds of the length of the New Testament, or, if the wearisome stories of the Jewish patriarchs which Mohammad told and retold are omitted, it is no more than the Gospels and Acts. It has been remarked that the Sunday edition of the *New York Herald* is three times as long. But the real permanent contents of the Korān may be taken at far less even than this estimate. The book is full—I will not say of vain repetitions, for in teaching and preaching repetition is necessary—but of reiterations of certain cardinal articles of faith, and certain standard demonstrations of these articles by the analogy of nature. Like the numerous stories borrowed by Mohammad from the Talmud, which have little but an antiquarian interest, many of these reiterated arguments and illustrations may with advantage be passed over. There is also a considerable portion of the Korān which is devoted to the exposure and confutation of those who, from political, commercial, or religious motives, made it their business to thwart Mohammad in his efforts to reform his people. These personal, one might say party, speeches are valuable only to the biographer and historian of the times. They throw but little light on the character of the man Mohammad himself. They show him, indeed, to be—what we knew him before—a sensitive, irritable man, keenly alive to ridicule and scorn. But for this purpose one instance is sufficient. We do not form our estimate of a great statesman from his moments of irritation, but from those larger utterances which reveal the results of a life's study of men and government. So with Mohammad, we may abandon the personal and temporary element in the Korān, and base our judgment upon those utterances which stand for all time, and deal not with individuals or classes, but with man as he is, in Arabia or England, or where we will. This position is not taken with the object of saving Mohammad from himself. His attacks upon his opponents will bear comparison with those of other statesmen. They are doubtless couched in more barbaric language than we are accustomed to, and where we insinuate, Mohammad curses outright. But in the face of a treacherous and malignant opposition, the Arabian prophet comported himself with singular self-restraint. He only threatened hell-fire, and people of all denominations are still threatened with that every Sunday, to say nothing of Lent. Leaving out the Jewish stories, needless repetitions, and temporary exhortations or personal vindications, the speeches of Mohammad may be set forth in very moderate compass. One speech —*sura*, or chapter, as it is generally called—follows another so much to the same effect, that a limited number will be found to contain all the ideas which a minute study of the whole Korān could collect. I believe there is nothing important, either in doctrine or style, which is not contained in the twenty-eight speeches which fill the first hundred and thirty pages of this small

volume. If I were a Mohammadan, I think I could accept the present collection as a sufficient representation of what the Korān teaches.

The obscurity of the Korān is largely due to its ordinary arrangement. This consists merely in putting the longest chapters first and the shortest last. The Mohammadans appear to be contented with this curious order, which after all is not more remarkable than that of some other sacred books. German criticism, however, has discovered the method of arranging the Korān in approximately chronological sequence. To explain how this is established would carry me too far, but the results are certain. We can state positively that the chapters of the Korān—or, as I prefer to call them, the speeches of Mohammad—fall into certain definite chronological groups, and if we cannot arrange each individual speech in its precise place, we can at least tell to which group, extending over but few years, it belongs. The effect of this critical arrangement is to throw a perfectly clear light on the development of Mohammad's teaching, and the changes in his style and method. When the Korān is thus arranged—as it is in Mr. Rodwell's charming version, which deserves to be better read than it is—the impression of anarchy disappears, and we see only the growth of a remarkable mind, the alternations of weakness and strength in a gifted soul, the inevitable inconsistencies of a great man. I do not believe any one who reads the speeches of Mohammad as I have arranged them in Professor Nöldeke's chronological order will say that they have no definite aim or coherence. They may be monotonous, and often they are rambling, but their intention and sequence of thought are to me clear as noonday.

It is something more, however, than any supposed length or obscurity that has hitherto scared people from the Koran. The truth is that the atmosphere of our Arabian prophet's thoughts is so different from what we breathe ourselves, that it needs a certain effort to transplant ourselves into it. That it can be done, and done triumphantly, may be proved by Mr. Browning's *Saul*, as Semitic a poem as ever came from the desert itself. We see the whole life and character of the Bedawy in these lines:—

Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! No spirit feels waste,

Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.

Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock unto rock,

The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock

Of the plunge in the pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,

And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,

And the locust flesh steeped in the pitcher, the deep draught of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel, where bulrushes tell

That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.

How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ

All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy.

It is not easy to catch the Arab spirit as Mr. Browning has caught it. Arab poetry is a sealed book to most, even among special Orientalists; they construe it, but it does not move them. The cause is to be found in the abrupt transition of thought which is required if we would enter into the spirit of desert song. The Arab stands in direct contrast to ourselves of the north. He is not in the least like an Englishman. His mind travels by entirely different routes from ours, and his body is built up of much more inflammable materials. His free desert air makes him impatient of control in a degree which we can scarcely understand in an organised community. It is difficult now to conceive a nation without cabinets and secretaries of State and policemen, yet to the Arab these things were not only unknown but inconceivable. He lived the free aimless satisfied life of a child. He was supremely content with the exquisite sense of simple existence, and was happy because he lived. Throughout a life that was full of energy, of passion, of strong endeavour after his ideal of desert perfectness, there was yet a restful sense of satisfied enjoyment, a feeling that life was of a surety well worth living. What his ideal was, and how different from any of the ideals of to-day, we know from his own poetry. It was, not in the gentler virtues that he prided himself:—

Had I been a son of Māzin, there had not plundered my herds

the sons of the child of the dust, Dhuhl, son of Sheybān.

There had straightway arisen to help me a heavy-handed kin,

good smiters when help is needed, though the feeble bend to the blow:

Men who, when Evil bares before them his hindmost teeth,

fly gaily to meet him in companies or alone.

They ask not their brother, when he lays before them his wrong

in his trouble, to give them proof of the truth of what he says.

But as for my people, though their number be not small,

they are good for naught against evil, however light it be;

They requite with forgiveness the wrong of those that do them wrong,

and the evil deeds of the evil they meet with kindness and love!

As though thy Lord had created among the sons of men

themselves alone to fear him, and never one man more.

Would that I had in their stead a folk who, when they ride forth,

strike swiftly and hard, on horse or on camel borne!

The ideal warrior, however, is not always so fierce as this, as may be seen in the following lament for a departed hero, where a gentler touch mingles in its warlike manliness:—

But know ye if Abdallah be gone, and his place a void?

no weakling, unsure of hand, and no holder-back was he!

Alert, keen, his loins well girt, his leg to the middle bare,

unblemished and clean of limb, a climber to all things high:

No wailer before ill-luck, one mindful in all he did,

to think how his work to-day would live in to-morrow's tale.

Content to bear hunger's pain, though meat lay beneath his hand,

to labour in ragged shirt that those whom he served might rest.

If Dearth laid her hand on him, and Famine devoured his store,

he gave but the gladlier what little to him they spared.

He dealt as a youth with Youth, until, when his head grew hoar,

and age gathered o'er his brow, to Lightness he said—Begone!

The fierceness of the Arab warrior was tempered by those virtues in which more civilised nations are found wanting. If he was swift to strike, the Arab was also prompt to succour, ready to give shelter and protection even to his worst enemy. The hospitality of the Arab is a proverb, but unlike many proverbs it is strictly true. The last milch-camel must be killed rather than the duties of the host neglected. The chief of a clan—not necessarily the richest man in it, but the strongest and wisest—set the example in all Arab virtues, and his tent was so placed in the camp that it was the first the enemy would attack, and also the first that the wayworn traveller would approach. Beacons were lighted hard by to guide wanderers to the hospitable haven, and any man, of whatever condition, who came to the Arab nobleman's tent and said, "I throw myself on your honour," was safe from pursuit even at the cost of his host's life. Honour, like hospitality, meant more than it does now; and the Arab chieftain's pledge of welcome meant protection, unswerving fidelity,

help, and succour. Like his pride of birth, devotion to the clan, courage, and generosity, this hospitable trusty friendship of the Arab belongs no doubt to the barbarous virtues of the old world; but it is just these parts of barbarism which civilisation might profitably emulate.

As a friend and as an enemy there was no ambiguity about the Arab. In both relations he was frank, generous, and fearless. And the same may be said of his love. The Arab of the Days of Ignorance, as Mohammadans style the time before the birth of their prophet, was the forerunner of the best side of mediæval chivalry, which indeed is forced to own an Arabian origin. The Arab chief was as much a knight-errant in love as he was a chivalrous opponent in fight. The position of the women of Arabia before the coming of Mohammad has often been commiserated. That women were probably held in low esteem in the town-life which formed an important factor in the Arabian polity is probably true; savage virtues are apt to disappear in the civilised society of cities. But poetry is a good test of a nation's character,—not, perhaps, of a highly civilised nation, for then affectation and the *vogue* come into play,—but undoubtedly of a partly savage nation, where poets only say what they and their fellow men feel. Arabian poetry is full of a chivalrous reverence for women. Allowing for difference of language and the varieties of human nature, it is much more reverent than a great deal of the poetry of our own country to-day. In the old days, says an ancient writer, the true Arab had but one love, and her he loved till death. The Bedawy or Arab of the desert, though he was not above a certain amount of gallantry of a romantic and exciting order, regarded women as divinities to be worshipped, not as chattels to possess. The poems are full of instances of the courtly respect, "full of state and ancientry," displayed by the heroes of the desert towards defenceless maidens, and the mere existence of so general an ideal of conduct in the poems is a strong argument for Arab chivalry; for with the Arabs the abyss between the ideal accepted of the mind and the attaining thereof in action was narrower than it is among more advanced nations. We remember the story of Antar, the Bayard of pagan Arabia, who gave his life to guard some helpless women; and recall these verses of Muweylik, which breathe a tender chivalrous regret for an only love:—

Take thou thy way by the grave wherein thy dear one lies—

Umm el-´Alā—and lift up thy voice: ah! if she could hear!

How art thou come, for very fearful wast thou, to dwell

in a land where not the most valiant goes but with quaking heart?

God's love be thine and His mercy, O thou dear lost one!

not meet for thee is the place of shadow and loneliness.

And a little one hast thou left behind—God’s ruth on her!

she knows not what to bewail thee means, yet weeps for thee,

For she misses those sweet ways of thine which thou hadst with her,

and the long night wails, and we strive to hush her to sleep in vain.

When her crying smites in the night upon my sleepless ears,

straightway mine eyes brimful are filled from the well of tears.

If anywhere poetry is a gauge of national character, it was so in Arabia, for nowhere was it more a part of the national life. That line, “to think how his work to-day would live in to-morrow’s tale,” is a true touch. The Arabs were before all things a poetical people. It is not easy to judge of this poetry in translation, even in the fine renderings which I have taken above from Mr. C. J. Lyall, but its effect on the Arabs themselves was unmistakeable. Damiri has a saying, “Wisdom hath alighted on three things, the brain of the Franks, the hands of the Chinese, and the tongue of the Arabs,” and the last is not the least true. They had an annual fair, the *Académie française* of Arabia, where the poets of rival clans recited their masterpieces before immense audiences, and received the summary criticism of the multitude. This fair of Okadh was a literary congress, without formal judges, but with unbounded influence. It was here that the polished heroes of the desert determined points of grammar and prosody; here the seven “Golden Songs” were sung, although (alas for the legend!) they were *not* afterwards suspended in the Kaaba; and here “a magical language, the language of the Hijaz,” was built out of the dialects of Arabia and made ready to the skilful hand of Mohammad, that he might conquer the world with his Korān.

Hitherto we have been looking at but one side of Arab life. The Bedawis were indeed the bulk of the race and furnished the swords of the Muslim conquests; but there was also a vigorous town-life in Arabia, and the citizens waxed rich with the gains of their trafficking. For through Arabia ran the trade-route between east and west: it was the Arab traders who carried the produce of the Yemen to the markets of Syria; and how ancient was their commerce one may divine from the words of a poet of Judaea, spoken more than a thousand years before the coming of Mohammad—

Wedan and Javan from San´a paid for thy produce:

sword-blades, cassia, and calamus were in thy trafficking.

Dedan was thy merchant in saddle-cloths for riding.

Arabia and all the merchants of Kedar, they were the merchants of thy hand;

in lambs and rams and goats, in these were they thy merchants.

The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants;

with the chief of all spices, and with every precious stone,

and gold, they paid for thy produce.

EZEKIEL xxvii. 19-22.

Mekka was the centre of this trading life, the typical Arab city of old times, a stirring little town, with its caravans bringing the silks and woven stuffs of Syria and the far-famed damask, and carrying away the sweet-smelling produce of Arabia, frankincense, cinnamon, sandal-wood, aloe and myrrh, and the dates and leather and metals of the south, and the goods that came to the Yemen from Africa and even India; its assemblies of merchant-princes in the Council Hall near the Kaaba; and again its young poets running over with love and gallantry; its Greek and Persian slave-girls brightening the luxurious banquet with their native songs, when as yet there was no Arab school of music and the monotonous but not unmelodious chant of the camel-driver was the national song of Arabia; and its club, where busy men spent their idle hours in playing chess and draughts, or in gossiping with their acquaintance. It was a little republic of commerce, too much infected with the luxuries and refinements of the states it traded with, yet retaining enough of the free Arab nature to redeem it from the charge of effeminacy. Mekka was a home of music and poetry, and this characteristic lasted into Muslim times. There is a story of a certain stonemason who had a wonderful gift of singing. When he was at work the young men used to come and importune him, and bring him gifts of money and food to induce him to sing. He would then make a stipulation that they should first help him with his work. And forthwith they would strip off their cloaks, and the stones would gather round him rapidly. Then he would mount a rock and sing, whilst the whole hill was coloured red and yellow with the variegated garments of his audience. It was, however, in this town-life that the worst qualities of the Arab came out; it was here that his raging passion for dicing and his thirst for wine were most prominent. In the desert there was no great opportunity for indulging in either luxury, but in a town which often welcomed a caravan bringing goods to the value of twenty thousand pound such excesses were to be looked for. Excited by the songs of the Greek slave-girls, and the fumes of mellow wine, the Mekkan would throw the dice till, like the German of Tacitus, he had staked and lost his own liberty.

But Mekka was more than a centre of trade and of song. It was the focus of the religion of the Arabs. Thither the tribes went up every year to kiss the black stone which had fallen from heaven in the primeval days of Adam, and to make the seven circuits of the Kaaba, naked,—for they would not approach

God in the garments in which they had done their sins,—and to perform the other ceremonies of the pilgrimage. The Kaaba, a cubical building in the centre of Mekka, was the most sacred temple in all Arabia, and it gave its sanctity to all the district around. It was built, saith tradition, by Adam from a heavenly model, and then rebuilt from time to time by Seth and Abraham and Ishmael, and less reverend persons, and it contained the sacred things of the land. Here was the black stone, here the great god of red agate, and the three hundred and sixty idols, one for each day of the year, which Mohammad afterwards destroyed in one day. Here was Abraham's stone, and that other which marked the tomb of Ishmael, and hard by was Zemzem, the God-sent spring which gushed from the sand when the forefather of the Arabs was perishing of thirst.

The religion of the ancient Arabs, little as we know of it, is especially interesting inasmuch as the Arabs longest retained the original Semitic character, and hence probably the original Semitic religion; and thus in the ancient cult of Arabia we may see the religion once professed by Chaldeans, Canaanites, Israelites, and Phœnicians. This ancient religion "rises little higher than animistic polydaemonism; it is a collection of tribal religions standing side by side, only loosely united, though there are traces of a once closer connection." The great objects of worship were the sun, and the stars, and the three moon-goddesses,—El-Lāt, the bright moon, Menāh, the dark, and El-´Uzza, the union of the two—whilst a lower cultus of trees, stones, and mountains shows that the religion had not quite risen above simple fetishism. There are traces of a belief in a supreme God behind this pantheon, and the moon-goddesses and other divinities were regarded as daughters of the Most High God (Allāh ta´āla). The various deities (but not the supreme Allāh) had their fanes where human sacrifices, though rare, were not unknown; and their cult was superintended by a hereditary line of seers, who were held in great reverence, but never developed into a priestly caste.

Besides the tribal gods, individual households had their special *penates*, to whom was due the first and the last salām of the returning or outgoing master. But in spite of all this superstitious apparatus the Arabs were never a religious people. In the old days, as now, they were reckless, sceptical, materialistic. They had their gods and their divining arrows, but they were ready to demolish both if the responses proved contrary to their wishes. An Arab, who wished to avenge the death of his father, went to consult the square block of white stone called El-Khalasa, by means of divining arrows. Three times he tried, and each time he drew the arrow forbidding vengeance. Then he broke the arrows, and flung them in the face of the idol, crying, "Wretch! if it had been *your* father who was murdered, you would not have forbidden me to avenge him!" The great majority believed in no future life, nor in a reckoning

day of good and evil. If a few tied camels to the graves of the dead that the corpse might ride mounted to the judgment-seat, they must have done so more by force of superstitious habit than anything else.

Christianity and Judaism had made but small impress upon the Arabs. There were Jewish tribes in the north, and there is evidence in the Korān and elsewhere that the traditions and rites of Judaism were widely known in Arabia. But the creed was too narrow and too exclusively national to commend itself to the majority of the people. Christianity fared even worse. Whether or not St. Paul went there, it is at least certain that very little effect was produced by the preaching of Christianity in Arabia. We hear of Christians on the borders, and even two or three among the Mekkans, and bishops and churches are spoken of at Dhafār and Nejrān. But the Christianity that the Arabs knew was, like the Judaism of the northern tribes, a very imperfect reflection of the faith it professed to be. It had become a thing of the head instead of the heart, and the refinements of monophysite and monothelite doctrines gained no hold on the Arab mind.

Thus Judaism and Christianity, though they were well known, and furnished many of the ideas and most of the ceremonies of Islām, were never able to effect any general settlement in Arabia. The common Arabs did not care much about any religion, and the finer spirits found the wrangling dogmatism of the Christian and the narrow isolation of the Jew little to their mind. For there were men before the time of Mohammad who were dissatisfied with the low fetishism in which their countrymen were plunged, and who protested emphatically against the idle and often cruel superstitions of the Arabs. Not to refer to the prophets, who, as the Korān relates, were sent in old times to the tribes of Ad and Thamūd to convert them, there was, immediately before the preaching of Mohammad, a general feeling that a change was at hand; a prophet was expected, and women were anxiously hoping for male children, if so be they might mother the Apostle of God; and the more thoughtful minds, tinged with traditions of Judaism, were seeking for what they called the “religion of Abraham.” These men were called “Hanīfs,” or “incliners,” and their religion seems to have consisted chiefly in a negative position,—in denying the superstition of the Arabs, and in only asserting the existence of one sole-ruling God whose absolute slaves are all mankind—without being able to decide on any minor doctrines, or to determine in what manner this One God was to be worshipped. So long as the Hanīfs could give their countrymen no more definite creed than this, their influence was limited to a few inquiring and doubting minds. It was reserved for Mohammad to formulate the faith of the Hanīfs in the dogmas of Islām.

It is essential to bear in mind all these surroundings of Mohammad if we

would understand his position and influence. A desert Arab in love of liberty and worship of nature's beauty, but lacking something of the frank chivalrous spirit of the desert warrior—more a saint than a knight,—yet possessing a patient determined perseverance which belonged to the life of the town, a moral force which the roaming Bedawy did not need, Mohammad owed something to either side of Arabian life; whilst without the influence of other religions, especially the Jewish, he could never have come forward as the preacher of Islām. Even the old nature worship of the Arabs had its share in the new religion, and no faith was made up of more varied materials than that which Mohammad impressed upon so large a portion of mankind.

Of his early life very little is known. He was born in A.D. 571, and came of the noble tribe of the Koreysh, who had long been guardians of the sacred Kaaba. He lost both his parents early, and as his branch of the tribe had become poor, his duty was to betake himself to the hillsides and pasture the flocks of his neighbours. In after years he would look back with pleasure on these days, and say that God took never a prophet save from among the sheep-folds. The life on the hills gave him the true shepherd's eye for nature which is seen in every speech of the Korān; and it was in those solitary watches under the silent sky, with none near to distract him, that he began those earnest communings with his soul which made him in the end the prophet of his nation. Beyond this shepherd life and his later and more adventurous trade of camel-driver to the Syrian caravans of his rich cousin, Khadīja, whom he presently married at the age of twenty-five, there is little that can be positively asserted of Mohammad's youth. He must have witnessed the poets' contests at the Fair of ´Okadh, and listened to the earnest talk of the Jews and Hanīfs who visited the markets; he may have heard a little, dimly, of Jesus of Nazareth; what he did we know not; what he was is expressed in the nickname by which he was known—"El-Amīn," the Trusty.

"Mohammad was of the middle height, rather thin, but broad of shoulders, wide of chest, strong of bone and muscle. His head was massive, strongly developed. Dark hair, slightly curled, flowed in a dense mass almost to his shoulders; even in advanced age it was sprinkled with only about twenty gray hairs, produced by the agonies of his 'Revelations.' His face was oval-shaped, slightly tawny of colour. Fine long arched eyebrows were divided by a vein, which throbbed visibly in moments of passion. Great black restless eyes shone out from under long heavy eyelashes. His nose was large, slightly aquiline. His teeth, upon which he bestowed great care, were well set, dazzling white. A full beard framed his manly face. His skin was clear and soft, his complexion 'red and white,' his hands were as 'silk and satin,' even as those of a woman. His step was quick and elastic, yet firm as that of one who steps 'from a high to a low place.' In turning his face he would also turn

his whole body. His whole gait and presence were dignified and imposing. His countenance was mild and pensive. His laugh was rarely more than a smile.

“In his habits he was extremely simple, though he bestowed great care on his person. His eating and drinking, his dress and his furniture retained, even when he had reached the fulness of power, their almost primitive nature. The only luxuries he indulged in were, besides arms, which he highly prized, a pair of yellow boots, a present from the Negus of Abyssinia. Perfumes, however, he loved passionately, being most sensitive to smells. Strong drink he abhorred.

“His constitution was extremely delicate. He was nervously afraid of bodily pain; he would sob and roar under it. Eminently unpractical in all common things of life, he was gifted with mighty powers of imagination, elevation of mind, delicacy and refinement of feeling. ‘He is more modest than a virgin behind her curtain,’ it was said of him. He was most indulgent to his inferiors, and would never allow his awkward little page to be scolded whatever he did. ‘Ten years,’ said Anas his servant, ‘was I about the Prophet, and he never said as much as “uff” to me.’ He was very affectionate towards his family. One of his boys died on his breast in the smoky house of the nurse, a blacksmith’s wife. He was very fond of children; he would stop them in the streets and pat their little heads. He never struck any one in his life. The worst expression he ever made use of in conversation was, ‘What has come to him? may his forehead be darkened with mud!’ When asked to curse some one, he replied, ‘I have not been sent to curse, but to be a mercy to mankind.’ ‘He visited the sick, followed any bier he met, accepted the invitation of a slave to dinner, mended his own clothes, milked the goats, and waited upon himself,’ relates summarily another tradition. He never first withdrew his hand out of another man’s palm, and turned not before the other had turned.

“He was the most faithful protector of those he protected, the sweetest and most agreeable in conversation. Those who saw him were suddenly filled with reverence; those who came near him loved him; they who described him would say, ‘I have never seen his like either before or after.’ He was of great taciturnity, but when he spoke it was with emphasis and deliberation, and no one could forget what he said. He was, however, very nervous and restless withal; often low-spirited, downcast, as to heart and eyes. Yet he would at times suddenly break through these broodings, become gay, talkative, jocular, chiefly among his own. He would then delight in telling little stories, fairy tales, and the like. He would romp with the children and play with their toys.”

“He lived with his wives in a row of humble cottages, separated from one another by palm-branches, cemented together with mud. He would kindle the

fire, sweep the floor, and milk the goats himself. The little food he had was always shared with those who dropped in to partake of it. Indeed, outside the prophet's house was a bench or gallery, on which were always to be found a number of poor, who lived entirely upon his generosity, and were hence called 'the people of the bench.' His ordinary food was dates and water, or barley bread; milk and honey were luxuries of which he was fond, but which he rarely allowed himself. The fare of the desert seemed most congenial to him, even when he was sovereign of Arabia."

Mohammad was forty before he began his mission of reform. He may long have doubted and questioned with himself, but at least outwardly he seems to have conformed to the popular religion. At length, as he was keeping the sacred months, the God's Truce of the Arabs, in prayer and fasting on Mount Hirā, "a huge barren rock, torn by cleft and hollow ravine, standing out solitary in the full white glare of the desert sun," he thought he heard a voice say "Cry." "What shall I cry?" he answered. And the voice said:—

"Cry! in the name of thy Lord, who created—

Created man from blood.

Cry! for thy Lord is the Bountifullest!

Who taught the pen,

Taught man what he did not know."

Korān, ch. xcvi.

At first he thought he was possessed with a devil, and the refuge of suicide was often present to his mind. But yet again he heard the voice—"Thou art the Messenger of God, and I am Gabriel." He went back to Khadīja, worn out in body and mind. "Wrap me, wrap me," he cried. And then the word came to him:—

"O thou who art wrapped, rise up and warn!

And thy Lord magnify,

And thy raiment purify,

And abomination shun!

And grant not favours to gain increase!

And wait for thy Lord!"

Korān, ch. lxxiv.

These are the first two revelations that came to Mohammad. That he believed he heard them spoken by an angel from heaven is beyond doubt. His