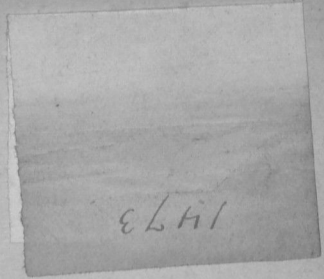


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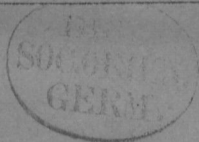
FOR THE

BIOGRAPHY OF MAHOMET.

*by W. Muir Esqre
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[EXTRACTED FROM THE CALCUTTA REVIEW, NO. XXXVII.]

For March, 1853.



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SOURCES FOR BIOGRAPHY OF MAHOMET.

[REPRINTED FROM THE CALCUTTA REVIEW, NO. XXXVII.]

1. *The Coran.*
2. *Sîrat Hishâmi: the Biography of Mahomet, by Ibn Hishâm.*
3. *Sîrat Wâckidi.*
4. *Sîrat Tabari.*

THE light in which we view the stories of former times, varies with the medium through which they have been handed down to us. The exploits of Hercules carry less conviction than the feats of the heroes of Troy; while the wanderings of Ulysses and the adventures of the early founders of Rome, again, are regarded with incomparably more distrust than the history of the Peloponnesian war, or the fortunes of Julius Cæsar. Thus there are three great divisions of ancient narrative. Legendary tales are based upon the most evanescent materials, and it is often doubtful whether they shadow forth abstract principles or real facts. Tradition and the rhapsodies of bards, have, for their object, actual or supposed events; but the impression of these events is liable to become distorted, from the imperfection of the vehicle which conveys them to posterity. It is to the contemporary historian alone, or to history deriving its facts from contemporary records, that the mind accords a reliance, which, proportioned to the means and the fidelity of the writer, may rise even to certainty.

The narrative which we now possess, of the origin of Islam, does not belong exclusively to any one of these three classes. It is *legendary*, for it contains multitudes of wild myths, such as the "Light of Mahomet," and the cleansing of his heart. It is *traditional*, since the main material of the story is oral tradition, not recorded until Islam had attained to its full growth. But it possesses also some of the elements of *history*, because there are contemporary records, of undoubted authority, to which we can still refer. The Moslem traditions, too, are of a peculiar and systematic character, and in some respects have an authority not claimable by common tradition.

From this mixture of apparently heterogeneous and incoherent materials, it might be supposed difficult, if not sometimes



impossible, to extract a uniform and consistent account of the Arabian prophet, the various points of which shall be supported by sufficient evidence or probability. It is our object, in the present paper, to elucidate this topic; to enquire into the available sources for such a history, and the degree of credit to which they are entitled.

There are but two main sources, from which it is possible to draw materials for tracing the life of Mahomet and the rise of Islam. These are the CORAN, and the TRADITIONS of his followers. Two minor sources may be added, namely, contemporary documents, and the verses of Arab poets; but these have been, for the most part, transmitted by tradition, and may with propriety be treated as coming under the same head.

What dependence, then, can be placed on these sources—what is their individual merit as historical documents, and what their comparative value, in relation to each other? To the solution of these questions, we propose now to address ourselves.

The *Coran* consists exclusively of the revelations or commands, which Mahomet professed, from time to time, to receive through Gabriel as a message direct from God himself, and which, under an alleged divine direction, he delivered to all with whom he came in contact.* Shortly after its reception, each pretended revelation was recited by Mahomet, and in general was committed to writing by some one of his followers,† upon leather, palm-leaves, stones, or such other rude materials

* This is strictly the Mahometan doctrine; but is not improbable, that those portions of the *Coran*, in a wild and rhapsodical style, were originally composed without that exclusive dress of a message from the Most High, which characterizes all but some of the earliest Suras (as the xci., c., cii., ciii.). When Mahomet's die was cast of assuming that great name as the Speaker, in his pretended revelations (the turning point in his career), then the earlier Suras would be regarded as emanating in the same manner directly from the Deity. Hence we find that Mahometans rigidly include every word of the *Coran* in the *Câl allâhu*, or "thus saith the Lord;" and it is one of their arguments against our Scriptures, that they are not entirely cast in the same mould.

† In the latter part of his career, the prophet had many Arabic amanuenses, some of them occasional, as Ali and Othmân, others official, as Zeid ibn Thâbit (who also learned Hebrew expressly to conduct Mahomet's business at Medina.) In Wâchidi's collection of despatches, the writers are mentioned, and they amount to fourteen. Some say there were four-and-twenty of his followers whom he used more or less as scribes; others, as many as forty-two (*Weil's Mohamed*, p. 350.) In his early Meccan life, he could not have had these facilities; but even then his wife, Khadija, (who could read the sacred Scriptures) might have recorded his revelations; or Waraca, Ali, or Abu Baer. At Medina, Obey ibn Kab is mentioned as one who used to record the inspired recitations of Mahomet (*Wâchidi*, p. 277.) Abdallah ibn Sad, another, was excepted from the Meccan amnesty, because he had falsified the revelation dictated to him by the Prophet (*Weil's Mohamed*, p. 348.)

It is also evident that the revelations were recorded, because they are called frequently throughout the *Coran* itself, *Kitâb*, "the writing"—"Scriptures."

as conveniently came to hand. These divine messages continued throughout the three-and-twenty years of his prophetic life, so that the last portion did not appear till the year of his death. The canon was then closed, but the contents were never, during the Prophet's life-time, systematically arranged, or even collected together. We have no certain knowledge as to how the originals were preserved. That there was no special depository for their preservation, is evident from the mode in which the various fragments had to be sought for, after Mahomet's death. Much of the Coran possessed but a temporary interest, arising out of circumstances which soon ceased to be important; and it seems to be doubtful, whether the prophet intended such passages for public worship, or even for eventual currency.* If this be true, it is little likely that he would take any pains to preserve these portions. Whether he retained under his own eye and custody the more important parts, we have no indication; perhaps he regarded them as sufficiently safe in the current copies, guarded by the almost miraculous tenacity of the Arab memory. The later, and the more necessary, revelations were probably left with the scribes who recorded them, or laid up in the habitation of some one of his wives.† However this may have been, it is very certain that, when Mahomet died,

* Weil holds the opinion, that Mahomet rather destroyed or gave away these parts of his revelations (*Mohamed*, p. 349, note 549), and that great portions have thus been lost (p. 351). He farther holds, that Mahomet did not intend the *abrogated* passages to be inserted in the Coran (*Einleitung*, p. 46.) But this cannot be admitted as a general rule, for Mahomet lost no opportunity of impressing on his people, that the *whole* of his revelation was a direct message from God, to be reverentially preserved and repeated; and as the cancelled passages are so frequent, and inwrought into the very substance of the Coran, we cannot doubt that it was repeated by Mahomet and by his followers during his life-time, with the abrogated passages included as at present. Had he excluded them in his recitation, we may be sure that his followers also would have done so. We must remember that Mahomet, who always led the public devotions, repeated a portion of the Coran at each celebration of them.

† The later revelations are much more uniform, and their connection less broken and fragmentary, than in the case of the earlier Suras; and this may have resulted in part from the greater care taken of them, as supposed in the text, though no doubt in part also from their actual composition being more sober and less rhapsodical.

There is a tradition that Abdallah ibn Masūd wrote down a verse from Mahomet's mouth, and next morning found it erased from his paper, which the Prophet explained by saying it had been recalled to heaven (*Maracci II.* 42.—*Weil's Mohamed*, p. 383). The presumption from this is, that the leaves remained with Mahomet. In later traditions, the incident is told with the miraculous addition that it occurred simultaneously in the copies of a number of Mahomet's followers (*Weil's Geschichte der Chalifen*, I. 168). This, however, is absurd, and we prefer the explanation (if there be any truth in the tradition at all), that the erasure occurred in the original whilst in Mahomet's own keeping.

If the originals were retained by Mahomet, they must needs have been in the custody of one of his wives; as at Medina, the prophet had no special house of his own, but dwelt by turns in the abodes of each of his wives. As Omar committed his exemplar to the keeping of Haphsa, may it not have been in imitation of Mahomet's own practice? The statement made by Sale (*Prelim. disc.*, p. 77), that the fragmentary revelations were cast promiscuously into a chest, does not seem borne out by any good authority.

there was nowhere any complete deposit of the original transcripts, and it seems doubtful whether they were then even generally in existence.

But the preservation of the Coran during Mahomet's life was not dependent on any such uncertain archives. The Coran was the corner-stone of Islam. The recital of a portion formed an essential part of every celebration of public worship; and its private perusal and repetition was enforced as a duty, and a privilege fraught with the richest religious merit. This is the universal voice of early tradition, and may be gathered from the Coran itself. It was accordingly committed to memory, more or less, by every adherent of Islam, and the extent of this knowledge was reckoned one of the chief distinctions of nobility.* The habits of Arabia favored this task. Passionately fond of poetry, yet possessed of but limited means and skill in committing to writing the previous effusions of their bards, the Arabs were wont to imprint them on the living tablets of their hearts: the recollective faculty was thus cultivated to the highest pitch, and it was applied, with all the ardour of an awakened Arab spirit, to the Coran. Such was the tenacity of their memory, and so great their powers of application, that, according to early tradition, several of Mahomet's followers could even, during his life-time, repeat his entire revelations with the most scrupulous accuracy.†

We are not, however, to assume, that the entire Coran was at that period repeated in a fixed order. The present compilation, indeed, is held by the Moslems to follow the arrangement prescribed by Mahomet; and early tradition might also appear to imply some known sequence.‡ But this is incredible; for

* Thus he who had been the most versed in the Coran, among a heap of martial martyrs, was honored with the first burial. The same distinction entitled its possessor to the post of *Imâm*, or conductor of the public prayers (a post closely connected with that of Government,) and to pecuniary rewards. Thus, after the usual distribution of the spoils taken on the field of Cadesia, A. H. 14, the residue was divided among those who knew most of the Coran. (*Caussin de Perc. Hist. des Arabes III., p. 486.*)

† Wäckidi mentions four or five such persons, and likewise several others, who wanted but little of being able to repeat the entire revelation before Mahomet's death. (*Pp. 172, 270.*)

When, according to Mahometan idiom, we speak of "the entire revelation," we mean of course that which was preserved and current in Mahomet's later days, exclusive of that which may possibly have been lost or destroyed or become obsolete.

‡ Thus Wäckidi mentions a few of the companions, who could repeat the whole Coran *in a given time*, which would seem to imply some usual connection of the parts, but the original tradition may have referred to those portions only which were commonly used by Mahomet in public worship, and these may have been placed, both in the copies and memory, in some understood order; or more likely the tradition refers to a later period, after the order had been fixed by Omar's compilation, and by a common error referred to an earlier date. There was no fixed order observed (as in the Christian "Lessons,") in the portions of the Coran recited at the public prayers.

had any fixed order been observed or sanctioned by the Prophet, it would unquestionably have been preserved in the subsequent collection. Now the Coran, as we have it, follows in the disposition of its several parts no intelligible arrangement whatever, either of subject or time; and it is inconceivable that Mahomet should have enjoined its recital invariably in this concatenation. We must even doubt whether the number of the Suras, or chapters, was determined by Mahomet as we now have it,* and as to the *internal* sequence and disposition of each Sura, it cannot, in most cases, have been that enforced by the Prophet. The chaotic mingling of subjects, ever and anon disjoined, as well by chronology as by the sense—a portion produced at Medîna often preceding its context revealed long before at Mecca—sometimes an early command placed after a later one that cancels it, or an argument suddenly disturbed by the interjection of a sentence utterly foreign to its purport: all this forbids us to believe that the present, or indeed any complete arrangement, was in use during Mahomet's life-time.

On the other hand, there does not appear reason to doubt that several at least of the Suras are precisely the same, both in matter and order, as Mahomet left them; † and that the remainder, though often resembling a Mosaic of various materi-

The choice of passage was fortuitous. Thus Abu Hureira one day took credit to himself for remembering which Sura the Prophet had read the day before. (*Wâchidi*, p. 173.) On urgent occasions (as on that of Omar's assassination), a short Sura used to be read. It is only in *private* recitals that the *whole*, or large portions, are said to have been recited consecutively.

The common idea of the Mahometans, that the Coran was fixed by Mahomet, as we have it now, originates in the tradition which says that Gabriel had an annual recitation of the whole with their Prophet, as well as in the desire to augment the authority of their present edition.

* But there is reason to believe that the chief of these, and the passages in most common use, were so fixed. Some of them are spoken of in early and well-authenticated traditions, as referred to by Mahomet himself. Thus he recalled the adjutors at the discomfiture of Honein by shouting to them as "the men of the *Sura Bacr*" ("the cow.")

Several persons are stated in the traditions as having learnt by heart a certain number of Suras in Mahomet's life-time. Thus Abdallah ibn Masûd learned seventy Suras from the Prophet's own mouth, (*Wâchidi*, p. 169); and Mahomet on his death-bed repeated seventy Suras, "among which were the seven long ones." (*Id*, p. 142.) These appear to be good traditions, and signify a recognized division of at least a part of the revelation into Suras, if not a usual order in repeating the Suras themselves.

Weil has a learned note (*Mohammed*, p. 361) on the meaning of the word "Sura," as used by Mahomet; it was probably at first employed to designate any portion of his revelation, or a string of verses; but it soon afterwards, even during Mahomet's life-time, acquired its present technical meaning.

† Where whole Suras were revealed at once, this would naturally be the case; but short passages in driblets, and often single verses, were given forth at a time as occasion required, and with regard to these, it is asserted in some traditions that Mahomet used to direct his amanuensis to enter them in such and such a Sura, or rather "in the Sura which treated of such and such a subject," في سورة التي يدكر فيها كذا

als, rudely dove-tailed together, is yet composed of genuine fragments, some of considerable size, and for the most part, following the connection in which they were recited at the public prayers, and committed to memory or to paper by the earliest Moslems.* The irregular interjection, and disorderly concatenation of the smaller fragments, has indeed very frequently destroyed the sequence, and produced the chaotic confusion we now find. Still the fact remains, that the fragments themselves were Mahomet's own composition, and were committed to memory or writing under his instructions; and this fact stamps the Coran, not merely as formed out of the Prophet's words and sentences, but in the main as his in relation to the context likewise.

However retentive the Arab memory, we should still have regarded with distrust a transcript made entirely from that source. But there is good reason for believing, that many fragmentary copies of the whole Coran, or of nearly the whole of it, were made by Mahomet's followers during his life. Even if we admit that writing had been but lately introduced into Mecca,† it was without doubt generally known there long

(*Mishcat I.*, p. 526—See also the *Persian Commentary*). This, if an authentic tradition (and it may be founded on fact), would indicate that Mahomet wished the Coran to be arranged according to its matter, and not chronologically.

The traditions given above, as to the number of Suras some of the companions could repeat, and which Mahomet himself repeated on his death-bed, would seem to point to the existence of such Suras in a complete and finished form.

* Anecdotes are told of some who used, in recitation, especially when tired, to pass over passages from the similar termination of the verses, and of others who, having done so, could spontaneously correct themselves. Such *homoioteleuta* are of very frequent recurrence, from the rythm of the verses being formed by common-place repetitions, as suffixes, of God's attributes, &c. The anecdotes certainly suppose a settled order of the parts repeated; and though the period referred to is subsequent to Mahomet's death, yet the power of such connected repetition was most likely obtained during his life-time, and before the collection into one volume.

† Messrs. De Sacy and Caussin de Perceval concur in fixing the date of the introduction of Arabic writing into Mecca at A. D. 560. (*Mém. de l'Acad.*, vol. L., p. 306—*C. de Perc. I.*, p. 294.) The chief authority is contained in a tradition given by Ibn Khallicân. According to this, the Arabic system was invented by Morâmir at Anbar, whence it spread to Hira. It was thence introduced, shortly after its invention, into Mecca by Harb, the father of Abû Sofiân, Mahomet's great opponent (*Ibn Khallicân*, by Slane, vol. II., p. 284 [480].) Other traditions give a later date, but C. de Perceval reconciles the discrepancy by referring them rather to the advent of a zealous and successful teacher, than to the first introduction of the system. (*Vol. I.*, p. 295.)

Either the above traditions are erroneous, or some other sort of writing than the Arabic, was known long before the date specified, *i. e.* A. D. 560. Thus Abd al Muttalib is described as writing from Mecca, to his maternal relatives at Medina, for help in his younger days, *i. e.* about A. D. 520, or so. And still farther back, in the middle of the fifth century, Cussei addressed a written demand of a similar tenor, to his brother in Arabia Petrea. (*Wâchidi*, 11;—*Tabari*, 18 & 28.)

The Himyar or *Mâsnad* writing is said, by Ibn Khallicân, not to have been allowed out of Yemen (*I.*, p. 295); but the verses quoted by C. de Perceval (*vol. I.*, p. 295) would seem to imply that it had been known and used by the Meccans, and was, in fact

before Mahomet assumed his prophetic office. Very many of his followers are expressly mentioned, as occasionally employed by the Prophet at Medîna, in writing his letters or despatches. And, though himself delighting in the title of the "Illiterate Prophet," and abstaining, by necessity or design, from the use of penmanship, he was by no means adverse to the art. The poorest of the Meccan captives, taken at Badr, were offered their release on condition that they should first teach a certain number of the ignorant people of Medîna to write.* And although the inhabitants of Medîna were not so generally educated as the Meccans, yet many of them are distinctly noticed by Wâckidi as having been able to write before Islam.†

The ability being thus possessed, it may safely be inferred, that what was so indefatigably committed to memory, would be committed to writing also. We find likewise, that when a tribe joined Islam, Mahomet deputed one or more of his followers to teach them the Coran and the requirements of his religion; we know that they frequently carried *written* instructions with them on the latter point, and it is natural to conclude that they would provide themselves with transcripts of the more important parts of the revelation also, especially of those upon which the ceremonies of Islam were founded, and of such as were usually recited at the public prayers.‡ Besides the references made in the Coran itself to its own ex-

supplanted by the Arabic. The Syriac and Hebrew were also known, and probably used extensively in Medîna and the northern parts of Arabia from a remote period.

Whatever, in fine, the system employed may have been, it is evident that writing of some sort was known and practised at Mecca long before A. D. 560. And at all events, the frequent notices of written papers leave us no room to doubt that Arabic writing was well known and not uncommonly practised there in Mahomet's early days. We cannot think with Weil, that any great "want of writing materials" could have been felt, even "by the poorer Moslems in the early days of Islam." (*Mohammed*, p. 350.) Reeds and palm-leaves would never be wanting.

* Thus *Wâckidi*, p. 101½, relates:—"Now the people of Mecca were able to write, but those of Medîna were unaccustomed to the art. When, therefore, the captives could not pay any ransom, the Prophet made over to each of them ten of the lads of Medîna, and when these lads became expert in writing, that stood for the ransom of the captives."

† Thus to cite one of a score of instances, "Abu Abas used to write Arabic before the rise of Islam, while as yet writing was rare among the Arabs." (*Wâckidi*, p. 269.)

‡ A curious illustration of this is given in the case of the despatch and embassy to the Himyarites; the ambassador, Harith ibn Abi Rabia, among other things was told to direct them to "translate," (perhaps "explain"—ترجموا) the Coran when they recited it in a foreign tongue or dialect. (*Wâckidi*, p. 55.)

Abdallah ibn Abbâs is mentioned as a good "translator" (perhaps "explainer") of the Coran. (*Id.*, p. 174.)

istence in a written form,* we have express mention made, in Omar's conversion, of a copy of Sura XX, used by his sister's family for their private devotional reading. This refers to a period preceding, by three or four years, the emigration to Medîna. If transcripts of the revelation were made, and in common use, at that early time, when the followers of Islam were few and oppressed, it seems a sure deduction that they must have multiplied exceedingly when the Prophet came to power, and his book formed the law of the greater part of Arabia.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to add, that the limitations already applied to the Coran, as committed to memory, must be equally understood here. The transcripts were mere fragmentary copies, compiled, if at all, with little or no reference to concatenation of subject and date. The Suras chiefly used in public worship, or the most favourite and meritorious for private perusal and recitation, would be those of which the greatest number of copies existed. Transcripts of the earlier Suras, and of those of evanescent interest, if extant at all, would be few in number.†

Such was the condition of the text of the Coran during Mahomet's life, and such it remained for about a year after his death, imprinted upon the hearts of his people, and fragmentary copies of it increasing daily. These sources would correspond closely with each other; for the Coran, even in the Prophet's life-time, was regarded with superstitious awe, as containing the very words of God himself, so that any variations would be reconciled by a direct reference to Mahomet, ‡ and after his death, to the originals where they existed, or to the transcripts, and to the memory of the Prophet's confidential friends and amanuenses.

It was not till the overthrow of Moseilama, that a fearful

* We have before alluded to the evidence conveyed by the name "Kitâb." Other passages involve the existence of copies in common use thus—"The Coran.....none shall touch the same, excepting those who are clean" (Sura LVI. 80.) This is an early Meccan Sura, and the passage is referred to by Omar's sister, when he desired, before his conversion, to take her copy of Sura XX, into his hands. Such passages are moreover evidence of the extreme care, if not awe, with which all transcripts of the Coran would be treated, and they served as an additional safeguard against corruption.

† Those revelations, however, must be excepted, which related to individuals. Such passages as praised or exculpated certain parties, would be most carefully treasured up by those to whom they referred, and by their families, however little interest they might possess for any one else, e. g. the verses in Sura XXIV., regarding Ayesha, Sura IX. 120, respecting Kab ibn Mâlik, and others, who were pardoned for not accompanying the Tabûk expedition.

‡ See instances of such references made to Mahomet by Omar, Abdallah ibn Masûd, and Obey ibn Kab, at pp. 521 & 522, vol. I. of the *Mishcat, Eng. Translation.*

carnage having taken place amongst the Moslems at Yemâma, * and great numbers of the best Coran-reciters having been slain, the idea appears first to have occurred to Omar, that difficulties would be experienced regarding the Coran, when all those who had it in their memories should have passed away. "I fear," said he, addressing the Caliph Abu Bacr, "that the slaughter may again wax hot amongst the readers of the Coran, in other fields of battle; and that much may be lost from the Coran. † I think, therefore, that thou shouldst give orders for the collection of the Coran." Abu Bacr, coinciding in this view, thus made known his wishes to Zeid ibn Thâbit.—"Thou art a young and wise man, against whom none amongst us can cast any imputation, and thou usedst to write down the inspiration of the Prophet of the Lord. Do thou, therefore, search out the Coran, and bring it together." So new and unexpected was the enterprise, that Zeid at first shrank from the task, and doubted the propriety of attempting that which Mahomet himself had never done. He yielded at last to the joint entreaties of Abu Bacr and of Omar, and seeking out the fragments of the Coran from every quarter, "gathered it together, from date-leaves and tablets of white-stone, and from the breasts of men." ‡ By the labours of Zeid, these scattered and disorderly fragments were reduced to the order and pseudo-sequence in which we

* The exact date of the battle of Yemâma is uncertain. Wâckidi makes it to fall in Rabi I., A. H. 12, or one year after Mahomet's death, and Abu Mashâr follows him. Tabari mentions the 11th year of the Hegira, and others give the end of that year. The latter opinion is the likeliest, as Khalid set out for Irâk after the battle, and in the beginning of A. H. 12. Weil would place it in Shabân of A. H. 11, or only about five months after Mahomet's death, which apparently leaves too little time for the intervening transactions. (*Weil's Gesch. der Chalifen I.*, p. 27—*Wâckidi*, p. 195, et passim.)

† فيذهب كثير من القرآن (*vide Mishcat*, vol. I. p. 524, *Eng. Translation—Bk. VIII.*, ch. iii., pt. 3.)

‡ فكتبت القرآن اجمعة من العشب والخفاف وصدور الرجال †

عشب signifies branches of the date-tree, on which there are no leaves; it appears, however, here to mean date-leaves. *لخفاف* signifies thin white stones. The commentary on this passage of the *Mishcat* adds traditions to the effect that Zeid gathered the Coran also from fragments of parchment or paper (الرقاع) and pieces of leather, (قطع الاديم) and the shoulder and the rib bones of camels and goats (الاكتاف والاضلاع) (*Mishcat*, as above.) Leather was frequently used for writing; many of Mahomet's treaties and letters are mentioned as recorded on it, sometimes red leather is specified. (*Wâckidi*, p. 59.) There is a curious tradition regarding a man who used a leather letter received from Mahomet, for the purpose of mending his bucket, and whose family were thence called the *Bani Rachi*—"children of the mender," or "cobblers." (*Wâckidi*, p. 54.)

now find them, and in which it is pretended that Zeid was wont to repeat the Coran before Mahomet. The original copy, prepared by Zeid, appears to have been kept by Abu Baer during the short remainder of his reign; it then came into Omar's possession, and was by him committed to the custody of his daughter Haphsa, one of the Prophet's widows. Thus the authorized text continued during the ten years' caliphate of Omar.*

But various readings, either at first existed, or soon crept into the copies of this edition. These began to scandalize the Moslems: the Coran sent down by the Lord was ONE, but if there were several varying Corans, what became of its unity? Hodzeifa had warred both in Armenia and Adzerbâijan, and observed the different coranic readings of the Syrians and of the men of Irâk; alarmed at the variations, he warned Othmân, and called upon him to interpose and "stop the people, before ' they should differ regarding their scriptures, as did the Jews ' and Christians."† To remedy the evil, the Caliph had recourse again to Zeid, with whom he associated three Coreishites of Mecca.‡ The previous original was obtained from Haphsa's depository, and a careful recension of the whole set on foot. In case of difference between Zeid and his coadjutors, the voice of the latter, as demonstrative of the Coreishite idiom, was to preponderate; and thus was the new collation assimilated to the Meccan dialect, in which the Prophet had given utterance to his inspiration.§ Transcripts were multiplied and forwarded to the chief cities in the empire, and all the previously existing copies were, by the Caliph's command, com-

* This consistent account is derived from the traditions in the *Mishcat*. The authorities in *Wâchidi* vary. Abu Baer is said to have been "the first who collected the Coran into one book." (P. 216.) "He died before he had collected the Coran," (probably it is meant "finished the collection.") (P. 219½.) "Omar was the first to collect the Coran into one volume." (P. 234½.) But at P. 237 we read, that "he died before he had collected the Coran." This may probably be a loose mode of intimating that his was not the final collection.

ادرك هذا الامة قبل ان يختلفوا في الكتاب اختلف اليهود والنصارى

† Zeid, it will be remembered, was an *adjutor*, and native of Medina.

§ It is one of the maxims of the Moslem world, (supported, perhaps, by the revelation itself) (see Sura XI. 2), that the Coran is incorruptible, and preserved from error, and variety of reading, by the miraculous interposition of God himself. In order therefore, to escape the scandal of the transaction here detailed, they hold that the Coran, as to its external dress, was revealed in seven dialects of the Arabic tongue. (See *Traditions* at p. 520, vol. I. of the *Mishcat*—Weil's *Mohammed*, p. 349, note 551.) It is not improbable, that Mahomet himself may have originated or countenanced some idea of this kind to avoid the embarrassment of differing versions of the same revelation (See also Weil's *Einleitung*, p. 48.)

mitted to the flames.* The old original was returned to Haphsa's custody.

The recension of Othmân has been handed down to us unaltered. So carefully, indeed, has it been preserved, that there are no variations of importance—we might almost say no variations at all—amongst the innumerable copies of the Coran scattered throughout the vast bounds of the empire of Islam. Contending and embittered factions, originating in the murder of Othmân himself, within a quarter of a century from the death of Mahomet, have ever since rent the Mahometan world. Yet but ONE CORAN has always been current amongst them; and the consentaneous use of it by all, up to the present day, is an irrefragable proof, that we have now before us the self-same text prepared by the commands of that unfortunate Caliph.† There is probably no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text. The various readings are wonderfully few in number, and are chiefly confined to differences in the vowel points and diacritical signs; but as these marks were invented at a later date, and did not exist at all in the early copies, they can hardly be said to affect the text of Othmân.‡

* *Mishcat*, vol. I., p. 525. Wâchidi, however, mentions, that *twelve* persons were employed by Othmân in this work, among whom were Obey ibn Kab and Zeid. The three Coreish noticed in the text were probably *umpires* from amongst the twelve. (*Wâchidi*, p. 278½.)

† The Moslems would have us believe, that some of the self-same *copies*, penned by Othmân, or by his order, are still in existence. M. Quatremère has collected a number of facts bearing on this head. (*Journal Asiatique*, *Suillet*, 1838, pp. 41 *et seq.*) The very copy which the Caliph held in his hand, when he was murdered, is said to have been preserved in the village of Antartus. Others hold that leaves of it were treasured up in the grand mosque of Cordova; Edrisi describes in detail the formalities with which they were treated: they were finally transferred to Fez or Telesman. Ibn Batûta, when (in the fourteenth century) he visited Basra, declares that this Coran was then in its mosque, and that the marks of the Caliph's blood were still visible at the words "God shall avenge thee against them"—Sura II., 138. (*Jee's translation*, p. 35.) [*Wâchidi*, p. 193, states that the unfortunate Caliph's blood ran down to these words.] Others of Othmân's originals are said to be preserved in Egypt, Morocco, and Damascus; as well as at Mecca and Medina. The Medina copy is stated to have a note at its end, relating that it was compiled by the injunctions of Othmân, and the compilers' names are given (*Conf. Gayangos Spain*, vol. I., pp. 222—224, & 497, 498, and *Well's Einleit*, p. 51.) In Quatremère's conclusion, that though the preservation of such copies is not impossible, yet the accounts on the subject are of doubtful authority, we are disposed to concur. It appears very unlikely that any of Othmân's copies can have escaped the innumerable changes of dynasty and party, to which every part of the Moslem world has been subjected. Any very ancient copy would come, however unfounded the claim, to be called that of Othmân.

‡ There are, however, instances of variation in the letters themselves, and these are not confined to difference in the dots as *نشر* for *بشر* (Sura. VII. 58 and XXV. 49); *يكلف* for *تكلف* (IV. 83); but extend sometimes to the *form* of the letters as *صواف* for *صوف* (XXII. 37.)

Since, then, we possess the undoubted text of Othmân's recension, it remains to be enquired whether that text was an honest re-production of Abu Baer's edition, with the variations reconciled; and there appears to be the fullest ground for believing that it was so. No early or trust-worthy traditions throw out any suspicions of unfair dealing against Othmân.* The Shiâhs, indeed, of later times, pretend, that Othmân left out Suras and passages which favored Ali. But this is inconceivable. He could not possibly have done so without being observed at the time; and it cannot be imagined that Ali and his followers—not to mention the whole body of the Mussul-

This almost incredible purity of text, in a book so widely scattered over the world, and continually copied by people of different tongues and lands, is undoubtedly owing mainly to Othmân's recension, and the official enforcement of his one edition. To countenance a various reading was an offence against the state, and punished as such. An instance may be found in *Weil's History of the Caliphs, vol. II, p. 676*. Yet the various readings, for which the learned Abul Hasan was persecuted, appear to have been very innocent and harmless to the state. We need not wonder that, when such means were resorted to, a perfect uniformity of text has been maintained. To compare (as the Moslems are fond of doing) *their* pure text, with the various readings of our Scriptures, is to compare things between the history and essential points of which there is no analogy.

* Weil, indeed, impugns Othmân's honesty by saying that he committed the task not to the most learned men, but to those most devoted to himself (*Chalif. I., p. 167.*) But he seems herein mistaken; for Wâkidi, as we have seen, holds that Othmân selected *twelve* men for the work, among whom was Obey ibn Kab as well as Zeid. Abdullah ibn Masûd, it is true, was vexed at Zeid being entrusted with the revision, and cast suspicions upon him, but this, as we shall see further below, was simple jealousy. Zeid was selected for the first compilation by Abu Baer and Omar, and Othmân cannot be blamed for fixing upon the same person to revise it. The traditions regarding Zeid are the highest and most unexceptionable that could be imagined (*vide Wâkidi, p. 172½, 173.*) He is spoken of as "the first man in Medina for his judgment, decision, reading of the Coran, and legal knowledge, during the caliphates of Omar, Othmân, Ali, and until he died in Muâvia's reign."

The only tradition which imputes any *change* to Othman is one in the *Mishcat* (I., p. 526,) where the Caliph being asked why he had joined Suras VIII. and IX. without interposing the usual formula, "In the name of God &c." is said to have answered that "the Prophet, when dictating a passage, used to direct the scribe to write it on the Sura relating to such a subject; that Mahomet died before explaining the position of Sura IX., that last revealed; but that as it resembled in subject the Sura VIII., he, Othmân, had them joined together without the intervening formula." Here certainly is no charge of corruption, or even of changing the contents of the Coran, but simply a direction as to the formal collocation and heading of a single chapter. There is also a tradition from Dzahaby given by Weil (*Chalif. I., p. 168, note*) which apparently implies, that previous to Othmân's collection, the Coran, though arranged into Suras, was not brought together into one volume or series. "The Coran," it says, "was composed of books." (كُتِبَ) "but Othman left it

one book." (كُتِبَ) This would correspond with the principle laid down in the commentary on the *Mishcat*:—"The difference between the collection of Abu Baer and that of Othmân, is that the object of the former was to gather up everything, so that no portion should be lost; the object of the latter, to prevent any discrepancy in the copies." The former object might have been attained without arranging the Suras into a volume. Still we incline to think that Abu Baer did so arrange them.

mans, who fondly regarded the Coran as the word of God—would have permitted such a proceeding. In support of this position, the following arguments may be adduced:—*First*; when Othmân's edition was prepared, no open breach had yet taken place between the Omeiyads and the Âlyites. The unity of Islam was still complete and unthreatened; Ali's pretensions were undeveloped, and no sufficient object can be assigned for the perpetration by Othmân of an offence which all Moslems regard as one of the blackest dye. *Second*; on the other hand, Ali, from the very commencement of Othmân's reign, had an influential party of adherents, strong enough in the end to depose the Caliph, to storm his palace, and to put an end to his life. Is it conceivable, that these men would have remained quiet, when the very evidences of their leader's superior claims were being openly annihilated? *Third*; at the time of the recension, there were still multitudes alive who had the Coran, as originally delivered, by heart; and of the supposed passages favouring Ali—had any ever existed, there would have been numerous transcripts in the hands of his family and followers: both of these sources must have proved an effectual check upon any attempt at suppression.* *Fourth*; the party of Ali shortly after assumed an independent attitude, and he himself soon succeeded to the caliphate. Is it possible that either he, or his party, when thus arrived at power, would tolerate a mutilated Coran—mutilated expressly to destroy his own claims? Yet we find that they followed one and the same Coran with their opponents, and

* Weil supposes that Othmân threatened the severest punishments against those who did not burn all the old manuscripts. (*Gesch. der Chalifen I.*, p. 169, note.) But we find in reality no trace of any such severity, or indeed of any inquisitorial proceedings at all. The new edition, and the destruction of former copies (though subsequently forming a convenient accusation against Othmân,) do not appear to have excited at the time any opposition.

The opposition and imprisonment of Abdallah ibn Masûd seem to have originated in his discontent and jealousy. The burning of his Coran, for supposed errors, (*Chalif. I.*, p. 169,) is not supported by any good tradition; it was probably burnt with all the others on the new edition being promulgated. The following is all that Wâkidi has upon it. A tradition runs thus:—"Abdallah ibn Masûd addressed us when the command was received regarding (the compilation or recension of) the Coran; and, referring to the verse in the Coran reproaching robbery (of the booty,

غلول Sura—III. 162,) he added, 'And they have made secret robbery in the Coran; and certainly if I were to recite the Coran according to the reading of any other person whom I might choose, it would be better in my opinion than the reading of Zeid. For, by the Lord! I received seventy Suras from the mouth of the Prophet himself, at a time when Zeid was but a curly-headed urchin playing with the children. Verily, if I knew any one more learned than myself in the book of the Lord, I would travel to him, were it never so far.'" (*Wâkidi*, p. 169.) These are the words evidently of a piqued and discontented man. Had there been any foundation for his calumny, we should undoubtedly have heard of it from other quarters.

raised not the shadow of an objection against it.* The insurgents are indeed said to have made it one of their complaints against Othmân, that he had caused a new edition to be made of the Coran, and had committed all the old copies to the flames; but this was objected to simply as an unauthorized act, and no hint was dropped of any alteration or omission. Such a supposition, palpably absurd at the time, is altogether an after-thought of the modern Shîas.

We may safely conclude, then, that Othmân's recension was, what it professed to be, a re-production of Abu Bacr's edition, possibly with a more complete and uniform arrangement of the Suras, but still a faithful re-production. The most important question yet remains, viz., *whether Abu Bacr's edition was an authentic and complete collection of Mahomet's revelations.* The following considerations induce us to believe that it was authentic, and in the main, as complete as at the time was possible.

First.—We have no reason to doubt, that Abu Bacr was a sincere follower of Mahomet, and an earnest believer in the divine origin of the Coran. His faithful attachment to the Prophet's person, conspicuous throughout his life, and his simple, consistent and unambitious deportment as Caliph, seem to admit of no other supposition. Firmly believing the revelations of his dear friend to be the revelations of God himself, his natural object would be to secure a pure and complete

* So far from objecting to Othmân's revision, Ali multiplied copies of this very version. Quatremère, in the paper cited in a former note, among other MSS. supposed to have been written by Ali, mentions one which was preserved at Mesched Ali up to the fourteenth century, and which bore his signature. Some leaves of the Coran, said to have been copied by him, are now in the Lahore *Tosha-khâna*; others are there, ascribed to the pen of his son, Husein. Without leaning upon such uncertain evidence, it is abundantly sufficient for our argument, that copies of Othmân's Coran were notoriously used and multiplied by Ali's partizans, and have been so up to the present day.

There is a curious tradition in *Wâchidi* to the following effect:—"Ali delayed long to do homage to Abu Bacr, who, happening to meet him, asked, 'Art thou displeased with my being elected chief?'—'Nay,' replied Ali, 'but I have sworn with an oath that I shall not put on my mantle, except for prayers, until I have collected the Coran.' And it is thought that he wrote it (chronologically) according to its revelation." The party who received this tradition asked Ikrima about the book here spoken of: he knew nothing of it. But the traditionist adds—"Had that book reached us, verily there had been knowledge for us therein." (*Wâchidi*, p. 168½.) A similar tradition appears to be referred to by Weil (*Chalif. I.*, p. 169, note); but the idea is preposterous, and is simply an invention to exculpate Ali from the charge of having done homage to Abu Bacr tardily. Had he really compiled a Coran of his own, we should have had multitudes of traditions about it, besides that the notion is incompatible with his subsequent reception of Othmân's version.

Ali was besides deeply versed in the Coran, and his memory, if tradition be true, would amply have sufficed to detect, if not to restore, any passage that had been tampered with. Ali said of himself, "there is not a verse in the Coran, of which I do not know the matter, the parties to whom it refers, and the place and time of its revelation, whether by night or by day, whether in the plains or upon the mountains." (*Wâchidi*, p. 168½.)

transcript of them. A similar argument applies with almost equal force to Omar, and the other agents in the revision. The great mass of the Moslem people were undoubtedly sincere, nay, fanatical, in their belief. From the scribes themselves, who were employed in the compilation, down to the most humble Mussulman, who brought his little store of writing on stones or palm-leaves, we believe that all were influenced by the same earnest desire to re-produce the very words which their Prophet had declared as his message from the Lord. And a similar guarantee is possessed in the feelings of the people at large, in whose soul no principle was more deeply rooted, than an awful reverence for the supposed word of God. The Coran itself contains frequent denunciations against those who should presume to "fabricate anything in the name of the Lord," as well as to conceal that which he had revealed. Such an action, which is represented as the worst description of crime, we cannot believe that the first Moslems, in the early ardour of their faith and love, ever dared to contemplate.*

Second.—The compilation was made within two years of

ومن كان اظلم ممن افترى على الله كذبا
او كذب باياته انه لا يفامح الظالمون

* Vide Coran, Sura VI. a. 21.

ومن كان اظلم ممن افترى على الله كذبا The same sentiment, in nearly the same words, is repeated in eleven other places.

The considerations above detailed seem sufficient to rebut the supposition advanced by Dr. Weil (*Mohammed*, p. 350,) that Abu Baer *might* have colluded with Zeid, or some other of the Prophet's scribes, and made them produce at pleasure scraps which Mahomet never gave forth, as portions of the Coran. The ONLY passage brought forward, as favouring this view, is that regarding the mortality of Mahomet, quoted (or, as Weil holds, fabricated) by Abu Baer immediately after his death. The people were at the time so frantic with grief, and could so little realize that their Prophet and their Ruler, whom a few hours before they had seen in the mosque apparently convalescent, upon whom they hung in every thing, for temporal guidance and spiritual direction, was no more, that they refused to believe he was really dead; they persuaded themselves, that he was only in a swoon, and would soon again return to consciousness, as from some heavenly journey. It was thus, that when Abu Baer sounded in their ears Mahomet's own words, in which (with reference to his perilous position in a field of battle) he announced his mortality, they were bewildered, and "it was as if they had not known that this verse had been revealed, until Abu Baer recited it; and the people took it up from him, and it was forthwith in all their mouths." Another relates—"By the Lord! it was so, that when I heard Abu Baer repeating this, I was horror-struck, my limbs shook, and I fell to the earth, and knew of a certainty that Mahomet was indeed dead." (*Wâchidi*, p. 155;—*Hishâmi*, p. 462.) The whole circumstances appear natural and readily explicable by the highly excited feelings and wild grief of Omar and those who were with him. The traditions are here consistent throughout with the Coran. Mahomet always contemplated death as awaiting him, and spoke of it as such. (The tradition of the choice of both worlds being offered him is a fiction, or a highly-coloured exaggeration.) Whatever expectations of a miraculous interference and resuscitation Mahomet's sudden decease may have excited, they were certainly warranted neither by the Coran nor by any speeches of Mahomet. We entirely dissent from Weil, that there is any suspicion whatever of the verse repeated by Abu Baer having been fabricated for the occasion. German criticism has here proved to be gratuitous incredulity. (Cnf. *Weil's Mohammed*, pp. 333, 350; his *Einleitung*, p. 43; and his *Gesch. der Chalifen*, vol. I., pp. 4 & 15.)

Mahomet's death.* We have seen, that several of his followers had the entire revelation (excepting, perhaps, some obsolete fragments,) by heart; that every Moslem treasured it up more or less in his memory; and, that there were official reciters of it, for public worship and tuition, in every quarter to which Islam extended. These formed an unbroken link, a living stereotype, between the revelation fresh from Mahomet's lips, and the edition of it by Zeid. The people had thus not only the sincere and fervent spirit to desire a faithful copy of the Coran, but they had the means of securing their wish.

Third.—The same, if not a greater, security would be obtained from the fragmentary transcripts, which existed in Mahomet's life-time, and must have greatly multiplied before the Coran was thrown together. These were in the hands, probably, of all who could read. And as the compilation of Abu Baer came into immediate and unquestioned use, it is reasonable to conclude that it embraced and corresponded with every extant fragment, and, *therefore*, by common consent, superseded them all. We hear of no fragments that were intentionally omitted by the compilers, nor of any that differed from the received edition. Had there been any such discoverable, they would undoubtedly have been preserved and noticed in those traditional repositories, which treasured up, and handed down, even the minutest and most trivial acts and sayings attributed to the Prophet.

Fourth.—The contents and the arrangement of the Coran speak forcibly for its authenticity. All the fragments that could possibly be obtained, have evidently, with the most artless simplicity, been joined together. The patch-work bears no marks of a designing genius or of a moulding hand. It clearly testifies to the faith and reverence of the compilers, and that they dared not do more than collect the sacred fragments and place them in juxtaposition. Hence the interminable repetitions; the palling reiteration of the same ideas, the same truths, the same doctrines; hence the scriptural stories and Arabian legends, told over and over again with little verbal variation; and hence the pervading want of connection, and the startling chasms between adjacent passages. Again, the confessions and the frailties of Mahomet, which it was sometimes expedient to represent as having been noticed by the Deity, are all, with evident faithfulness, entered in the Coran; and not less undisguised are the frequent verses which are con-

* The battle of Yemâna, we have seen, occurred within a year after Mahomet's death. Abu Baer's caliphate lasted little more than two years and two months. The compilation was certainly in progress, if not completed, between the former date and Abu Baer's death.

tradicted or abrogated by later revelations.* The editors plainly contented themselves with simply throwing together fragments which had been preserved with scrupulous accuracy. They neither ventured to select from amongst repeated versions of the same incident, nor to reconcile differences, nor, by the alteration of a single letter, to dove-tail abrupt transitions of context, nor, by tampering with the text, to soften discreditable appearances. Thus we possess every internal guarantee of confidence.

But it may be objected, if the text of Abu Bacr's Coran was pure and universally received, how came it to be so soon corrupted, and to require an extensive recension? The traditions do not afford us sufficient light to determine decisively the causes of discrepancy. It may have arisen from various readings in the fragmentary transcripts, which remained in the possession of the people; it may have originated in the diverse dialects of Arabia, and the different modes of pronunciation and orthography; or it may have sprung up naturally in the usual course of manuscripts left to themselves. It is sufficient for us to know, that in Othmân's revision, recourse was had to the *original* manuscript of the first compilation, and that we have otherwise every guarantee, internal and external, of possessing a text the same as that which Mahomet himself gave forth and used. †

* Though the doctrine of abrogation (being a very convenient one,) is acknowledged in the Coran, yet the Mussulmans endeavour, as far as possible, to explain away such contradictions. But they are obliged to confess that the Coran contains no fewer than 225 verses cancelled by later ones.

† We have already referred to the Mahometan doctrine of *the seven dialects*, as possibly founded in part on some explanation given by Mahomet himself, when he found that he had attested two varying versions of the same text as divine. The idea, however, was probably not fully developed and worked into a systematic form, till after days, when it was required to account for the various readings.

Variety of reading in the originals might arise from two causes. *First*; passages, actually distinct and revealed at different times, might be so similar as to appear really *the same* with insignificant variations; it is possible they might thus come to be confounded together, and the differences to be regarded as various readings. This, however, is opposed to the tautological character of the Coran, which renders it likely that such passages were always inserted as separate and distinct revelations. *Second*; different transcripts of one and the same passage might have variations of reading. It is *possible* that these transcripts were sometimes entered repeatedly in Zeid's compilation as separate passages, and that hence may arise some part of the repetitions in the Coran. But from the care with which the *occasions* of the several revelations are said to have been noted and remembered, it seems more likely that such passages were inserted but once. What then became of the various readings in the several copies? Some, leaning on the dogma of the "seven dialects," suppose that they were *all* exhibited in Zeid's first collection. But this is very improbable. He evidently made one version out of the whole. But the various readings would still remain in the hands of the possessors of the original transcripts.

We have then the following sources, from which various readings may have crept into the *subsequent copies of Abu Bacr's version*. *1st.*—The variations in the private transcripts just referred to, might have been gradually transferred to such copies; *2nd.*—Differences in the mode of repetition from memory, *dialectical peculiarities*, might have been similarly transferred; or, *3rd.*—The manuscripts not being checked, as was afterwards done by Othmân's standard copy, would naturally soon begin to differ.

Variations, once introduced into what was regarded as the Word of God, acquired an authority, which could only be superseded by a general revision such as Othmân's, and by the authoritative decision of the successor of the Prophet of the Lord.

While, however, it is maintained, that we now have the Coran as it was left by Mahomet, we do not, by any means, assert that passages revealed at some former period may not have been changed or withdrawn. On the contrary, repeated instances of such withdrawal are noticed. ~~the~~ the traditions, and the principle of alteration (although no express instances are given,) seems to be clearly implied. To the latter effect are the following early traditions.

Omar praised Obey ibn Kab, and said he was the most perfect repeater of the Coran. "We, indeed," he added, "are in the habit of omitting some portions which Obey includes in his citation; for Obey is accustomed to say, *I heard the Prophet saying so, and I omit not a single word inserted (in the Coran) by the Prophet.* But the fact is, that parts of the book were 'revealed in Obey's absence' (which cancelled or altered the verses Obey repeats.)—*Wäckidi, p. 169.*

Again; Ibn Abbâs stated that he preferred the reading of Abdallah ibn Masûd—"for Mahomet used to have the Coran repeated to him (by Gabriel) once every Ramazân; but in the year he died, it was thus repeated twice; and Abdallah was present (on these occasions;) AND WITNESSED WHAT WAS REPEATED THEREOF, AND WHAT WAS CHANGED."—*Wäckidi, p. 169½.*

The Coran itself recognizes the principle of the withdrawal of certain passages after being given forth as revelations: "whatever verses we cancel, or *cause thee to forget*, we give thee better in their stead, or the like thereof."—*Sura II. v. 100.*

Any passages, which Mahomet thus finding to be inconvenient, or otherwise inexpedient for publication, withdrew from the original transcripts, or altered, before they went into circulation, will, of course, not be found in our present Coran; but this does not in any measure affect its value as an exponent of Mahomet's opinions, or rather of the opinions he professed to hold, since what we have, though possibly corrected and modified by himself, is still *his own*.*

It is, moreover, not impossible, that passages, which had been

* The following are, we believe, the only instances of withdrawal or omission referred to in the traditions.

First.—Upon the slaughter of the seventy Moslems at Bir Maûna, Mahomet pretended to have received a message from them through the Deity, which is given by different traditionists (with slight variations) as follows:—

بلغوا قومنا عنا انا لقينا ربنا فرضى عنا ورضينا عنه "Convey to our

people this intelligence regarding us, that we have met our Lord, and that he is well pleased with us, and we are well pleased with Him." (*Wäckidi, pp. 108½ & 280½—Tabari, p. 415.*) After this had been repeated by all for some time as a verse of the Coran, it was cancelled and withdrawn. No sufficient reason is recognizable for this cancellation. That supposed by Weil, viz., that the message is from the slain Moslems, and not, as the rest of the Coran, from God himself, is hardly sufficient,

allowed to fall into abeyance and become obsolete, or the suppression of which Mahomet may himself have desired, were ferreted out by the blind zeal of his followers, and with pious veneration for every thing believed to be the word of God, entered in Zeid's collection. On the other hand, many early passages of ephemeral interest, may, without any design on Mahomet's part, have entirely disappeared in the lapse of time; and no trace being left of them, they must necessarily have been omitted from the compilation. But both of these are hypothetical positions, not supported by any actual evidence or tradition.*

because, in other places also, the formula of the divine message has to be supplied. Here the insertion of some such expression as "*thy companions say unto me, convey to our people,*" &c., would reduce the passage to the Mahometan rule, of coming as from God himself.

Second.—Omar is said thus to have addressed his subjects at Medina:—"Take heed ye people, that ye abandon not the verse which commands stoning for adultery; and if any one say, *we do not find two punishments (i. e., one for adultery and another for fornication), in the book of the Lord,* I reply, that verily, I have seen the Prophet of the Lord executing the punishment of stoning for adultery, and we have put in force the same after him. And, by the Lord! if it were not that men would say *Omar hath introduced something new into the Coran,* I would have inserted the

same in the Coran, for truly I have read the verse والشيخ والشيخة إذا زنا فارجموهما البتة
والشيخ والشيخة
والشيخ والشيخة

(*the married man and the married woman, when they commit adultery, stone them both without doubt*)" (*Wächidi, p. 245*—*Weil's Mohammed, p. 351.*) That this command should have been omitted after being once entered in the Coran, appears strangely unaccountable, seeing its great importance as a civil rule, and the prominent part it occupied in the controversy with the Jews, who were accused of hiding the similar command alleged to be in the Old Testament. There must, however, be some foundation for Omar's speech, because stoning is still by Mahometan law the punishment for adultery, and is founded on the withdrawn verse.

Third.—A tradition is quoted by Maracci (*II, p. 42.*) to the effect that a verse about a valley of gold has been omitted from Sura X. at v. 26, but the authority seems doubtful.

Fourth.—We have already noticed the tale of Abdallah ibn Mas'ud, that he found a verse had disappeared during the night from his leaves, it having been cancelled from heaven.

There is a fifth passage regarding the goddesses of Mecca, which Mahomet is said to have repeated at the suggestion of Satan as a verse of the Coran, and which is held to have been expunged therefrom. (*Wächidi, p. 39*—*Tabari, p. 140*—*Note by Dr. Sprenger, p. 128*—*Asiatic Journal, XII.*) But according to Moslem ideas, this could hardly have ever formed an actual portion of the revelation.

The Mahometans divide the abrogated passages into three classes: I. Where the *writing* is cancelled, but the purport or command remains; as in the first and second instances given above. II. Where the *command* is cancelled, but the writing remains, as in the abrogated passages regarding Jerusalem as the Kiblah, &c. III. Where the writing and purport are both cancelled, as in the third and fourth instances, quoted in this note. (*See Maracci II, p. 42.*)

* The possibility of unintentional omissions from the Coran is admitted in the very reason urged by Omar for its being collected; he feared, if there was farther slaughter among those who had it by heart, *that much might be lost from the Coran* (*Mishcat, I. 525.*) See also Zeid's assertion, that the last verse of Sura IX. (or, as others say, a section of Sura XXXIII.) was found with Khuzeima, the adjutor, after all the rest had been collected. The tradition, however, is suspicious. It seems improbable that any portion of either of these Suras should have been so imperfectly preserved, seeing that both are Medina ones, and the former the very last revealed. Possibly it had been revealed so lately, that sufficient time had not elapsed for copies to get abroad.

The conclusion which we may now with confidence draw, is that the editions both of Abu Bacr and of Othmân were not only faithful, but complete, as far as the materials went, and that whatever omissions there may have been, they were not, on the part of the compilers, intentional. The real drawback to the inestimable value of the Coran as a contemporary and authentic record of Mahomet's character and actions, is the want of arrangement and connection which pervades it; so that in enquiring into the meaning and force of a passage, no infallible dependence can be placed upon the adjacent sentences as being the true context; but bating this defect, we may, upon the strongest presumption, affirm that every verse in the Coran is Mahomet's very own, and conclude with at least a close approximation to the verdict of H. v. Hammer:—*that we can hold the Coran to be as surely Mahomet's word, as the Mahometans hold it to be the word of God.**

The importance of this deduction can hardly be over-estimated. The Coran becomes the historical test and ground-work in all enquiries into the origin of Islam and the character of its founder. Here we have a store-house of *Mahomet's own words recorded during his life*, extending over the whole course of his public career, and illustrating his religious views, his public acts, and his domestic character. By this standard of his own construction, we may safely judge his life and actions, for it *must* represent either what he actually thought, or that which he desired to appear to think. And so true a mirror is the Coran of Mahomet's character, that the saying became proverbial among the early Moslems, خلقه القرآن — *His character is the Coran.*†

"Tell me," was the curious enquiry often put to Ayesha, as well as to Mahomet's other widows, "tell me something 'about the Prophet's disposition.'"—"Thou hast the Coran," replied Ayesha, "art thou not an Arab, and redest the Arabic 'tongue?'"—"Certainly, it is as thou sayest."—"Well then," answered she, "why dost thou take the trouble to enquire of me?"

* Der Koran eben so sicher für Mohammeds Wort, als den Moslimen für das Gottes gilt." Weil, though dissenting from this opinion, yet allows "that no *important* alterations, additions, or abstractions have been made:—"so glauben wir auch nicht an *bedeutende* Veränderungen, Zusätze oder Anlassungen" (*Mohammed*, p. 352.) But *cnf. Pref.*, p. xv.

So Dr. Sprenger: "Though the Coran may not be free from interpolations, yet there seems to be no reason for doubting its authenticity," (*Life of Mohammed*, p. 63.)

Thus even on these grounds, the Coran would still be the grand basis of Mahomet's biography.

† *Wâchidi*, p. 70½. This tradition is repeated by Wâchidi from different authorities many times, and in the same words which appear to have become proverbial.

‘ For the Prophet’s disposition is just the Coran.’ Of Mahomet’s biography, the Coran is indeed the key-stone.

Having gained this firm position, we proceed to enquire into the authority and credibility of the other source of early Mahometan history, viz., TRADITION. This forms the chief substance and raw material of all Moslem biographies of the Prophet; and it is the only instrument we possess for calculating the relative position of the salient points of his life, already established by the Coran, and for weaving them together with the tissue of intermediate events.

Mahometan tradition consists of the sayings of the associates of the Prophet, handed down by a real or supposed chain of narrators to the period when they were recorded, collected, and classified. The process of transmission was for the most part oral. It may be sketched as follows.

After the death of Mahomet, the main employment of his followers was that of arms. The pursuit of pleasure, and the formal round of religious observances, while they filled up the interstices of active life, afforded but little exercise to the mind. The lazy intervals from campaign to campaign, and the tedium of long and irksome marches, fell listlessly on the hands of a simple and semi-barbarous race. These intervals were occupied, and that tedium beguiled, chiefly by calling up the past in familiar conversation or formal discourse. On what topic, upon these occasions, would the early Moslems more enthusiastically descant than on the acts and sayings of that wonderful man, who had called them into existence as a conquering nation, and had placed in their hands “the keys both of this World and of Paradise?”

Thus the conversation of Mahomet’s followers would be much about him. The majesty of his character would gain greatness by contemplation; and as time removed him farther and farther from them, the lineaments of the mysterious mortal, who was wont to hold familiar intercourse with the messengers of heaven, would rise in dimmer, but in more gigantic proportions. The mind would be unconsciously led on to think of him as having been ever surrounded by supernatural agency, and endowed with supernatural powers; and the tongue would give utterance to corresponding ideas. Whenever there was no standard of fact, whereby to test these recitals, they would be in effect the offspring of an unlicensed union between the memory and the imagination; and as days rolled on, the features of the latter element would gain the ascendancy.

Such is the result which the lapse of time would naturally have upon the minds and the narratives of the *Ashâb* or “com-

panions" of Mahomet—more especially of those who were young when he died. And then another race sprang up, which had never seen the Prophet; who looked up to his contemporaries with fond reverence, and listened to their stories of him as to tidings of a messenger from the other world. "Is it possible, oh father of Abdallah! that thou hast been with Mahomet?" was the question addressed by a pious Moslem to Hodzeifa, in the mosque of Kufâ; "didst thou really see the Prophet, and wert thou on familiar terms with him?"—"Yea, indeed, oh son of my uncle."—"And how usedst thou to act towards him?"—"Verily, we used to labour hard to please him."—"Well, by the Lord!" exclaimed the ardent listener, "if I had been but alive in his time, I would not have allowed him to put his blessed foot upon the earth, but would have borne him on my shoulders wherever he listed."* Another youth was listening to the story of the Prophet's head having been shaved at the Pilgrimage, and his hair distributed amongst his followers; Obeida's eyes glistened, as the speaker proceeded, and he interrupted him with the impatient exclamation—"Would that I had but a single one of those blessed hairs! I would cherish and value it more than all the gold and silver in the world!"† Such were the natural feelings of fond devotion, with which the Prophet came to be regarded by the followers of the "Companions."

As they took up the tale from the lips, distance began to invest it with an increasing charm, while the products of a living faith and warm imagination were becoming fast debased by superstitious credulity. This second generation are termed in the language of Arabic *patristic* lore *Tâbiün*, or successors. Here and there a "*Companion*" survived till near the end of the first century, but for all practical purposes, they had passed off the stage before the commencement of its last quarter. Their first *successors*, who were in some measure also their contemporaries, flourished in the latter half of the same century, though some of the oldest may have survived for a time in the second.‡

* *Hishâmi*, p. 295.

† *Wâchidi*, p. 279.

‡ Sprenger gives the names of the companions of the Prophet who survived the latest. He mentions the last six, who died between the years A. H. 86 and 100. Among these is the famous traditionist, Anas ibn Mâlik. (*Life of Mohammed*, p. 67, note 3).

But those who lived to that advanced period, must either have been very young when they knew Mahomet, or have become decrepit and superannuated. In the former case, their evidence, as the contemporaries of the Prophet, is of little value; in the latter, their prime as narrators must have passed away. Hence, for practical purposes, we would limit generally the age of the *Companions* to the first half, or three-quarters, of the century.

Meanwhile a new cause was at work, which gave to the tales of Mahomet's companions, a fresh and an adventitious importance.

The Arabs, a simple and unsophisticated race, found in the Coran ample provisions for the regulation of all their affairs, religious, social, and political. But their Prophet was hardly dead when they issued forth from their barren Peninsula, armed with the warrant of the Coran, to impose upon all the nations of the earth the faith of Islam. Within a century from Mahomet's death, they had—as a first step to this universal subjugation—conquered every land that intervened from the banks of the Oxus to the farthest shores of Northern Africa and of Spain; and had enrolled the great majority of their people under the standard of the Coran. A mighty empire like this differed widely indeed from the Arabia of Mahomet's time; and that which well sufficed for the patriarchal simplicity and limited social system of the early Arabs, became utterly inadequate for their hourly developing wants. Crowded cities, such as Fostât, Kufâ, and Damascus, required an elaborate code of laws for the guidance of their courts of justice; new political relations demanded a system of international equity; the speculations of a people, before whom literature was about to throw open her arena; and the eager contentions of opposing factions upon nice points of Mahometan faith:—all these called loudly for the enlargement of the scanty and naked dogmas of the Coran, and for the development of its defective code of ethics.

And yet it is the cardinal principle of early Islam, that the standard of Law, of Theology, and of Politics, is the Coran, and the Coran alone. By it Mahomet himself ruled; to it in his teaching he referred; from it he professed to derive his opinions, and upon it to ground his decisions. If he, the messenger of the Lord, and the founder of the faith, was thus bound by the Coran, much more the Caliphs, who were but his substitutes. New and unforeseen circumstances continually arose, but for them the Coran contained no provision. It no longer sufficed for its original object. How then were its deficiencies to be supplied?

The dilemma was resolved by adopting the *Custom* or "SUNNAT" of Mahomet, that is, his sayings and his practice, as a supplement to the Coran. The recitals regarding the life of the Prophet thus acquired an unlooked-for value. *He* had never held himself to be infallible, except when directly inspired of God; but this new doctrine assumed, that a hea-

venly and unerring guidance pervaded every word and action of his prophetic years. Tradition was thus invested with the force of law, and with some of the authority of inspiration. It was in great measure owing to the rise of this theory, that, during the first century of Islam, the cumbrous system of tradition outgrew the dimensions of reality. It was this which, before the close of the century, began to give an almost incredible impulse to the labours of the collectors of traditions, who travelled from city to city and from tribe to tribe, over the whole Mahometan world, seeking out, by personal enquiry, every vestige of Mahomet's biography, yet lingering among the *Companions*, the *successors*, and their descendants,—and committing to writing those tales and reminiscences with which they used to edify their wondering and admiring auditors.

The work, however, too closely affected the public interests, and the political aspect of the empire, to be left entirely to individual zeal; and we find that about a hundred years after Mahomet, the Caliph Omar II. issued circular orders for the formal collection of all extant traditions.* The task thus begun continued to be vigorously prosecuted, but we possess no authentic remains of any compilation of an earlier date than the middle or end of the second century. Then, indeed, ample materials had been amassed, and they have been handed down to us both in the shape of *biographies* and of *general collections*, which bear upon every imaginable point of Mahomet's character, and detail the minutest incidents of his life.

From this brief survey, it appears, that the traditions we now possess remained generally in an unrecorded form for at least the greater part of a century. It is not indeed denied, that some of Mahomet's sayings may possibly have been noted in writing during his life-time, and from such source copied and propagated afterwards. We say *possibly*, for the evidence in favour of any such records, is meagre, suspicious, and contradictory. The few and uncertain authorities of this nature may have owed their origin to the credit such a supposed habit would impart to the Companion's name. We have thrown together, in the form of a note, all the original authorities or references which we can find to bear upon this ques-

* He committed to Abu Baer ibn Muhammad the task of compiling all the traditions he could meet with: this traditionist died A. H. 120, aged 84 (*Sprenger's Mohammed*, p. 67.)

tion.* It is hardly possible, that if it had been customary to record Mahomet's sayings during his life, we should not have had frequent notices of the writers, and special references to the nature, contents, and peculiar authority of their records. But no such references or quotations are anywhere to be found. It cannot be objected that the Arabs trusted so implicitly to their memory, that they regarded oral to be as authoritative as recorded narratives, and therefore would take no note of the latter; for we see that Omar, with respect even to the Coran, believed by him to be divine, and itself the subject of heavenly care, feared lest it should become defective if left to the memory of man. On the other hand, we attribute just as little weight to the traditions, that Mahomet *prohibited* his followers from noting down his words, though it is not easy to see how these traditions could have become current had it really been the practice to record his words. The truth appears to be that there was no such practice, and that this tradition embodies the *after-thought* of serious Mahometans, as to what Mahomet *would have said*, had he foreseen the loose and fabricated stories

* From certain early traditions, we conclude that it was not *customary*, before the time of the Caliph Omar II., above noticed, to put the current traditions on paper.

"Omar II. (A. H. 100.) son of Abd al Aziz, wrote to Abu Baer ibn Muhammad thus—'Look out (at Medina), for whatever traditions there are of Mahomet, or of the by-gone *Sunnat*, or for any traditions of Amarah, daughter of Abd al Rahman, and commit them to writing, for verily I fear the obliteration of knowledge (tradition) and the departure (death) of the people possessing it.'" (*Wâchidi*, p. 178.)

Again—"Sâlih ibn Keisân related as follows:—Zohri" (who died A. H. 124) "and I joined together and sought after knowledge (traditions;) and we spake one to another saying—'Let us write down the *Sunnat* (traditions regarding Mahomet;) so we recorded those which came from the Prophet.—Then said Zohri—'Let us record that also which emanates from the companions of the Prophet, for it too is *Sunnat*.'—I replied, 'It is not *Sunnat*;' and I recorded none of it. So he wrote (the latter,) but I did not; and thus he obtained his object, but I lost the opportunity of obtaining this knowledge." (*Wâchidi*, p. 178.)

And, again, Wâchidi relates the following speech by Zohri:—"I used to be greatly averse to writing down knowledge (traditions), until these rulers (the Caliphs, &c.) forced me to do so. Then I saw it (to be right,) that none of the Moslems should be hindered from it, (*i.e.* from readily acquiring traditional knowledge in a recorded form)

قال كنا نكره كتاب العلم حتى اكرهنا عليه هو لاء الا امر اء فرائنا ان لا يمنعه احد من المسلمين (*Wâchidi*, *ibidem*.)

This important tradition seems to be decisive against the previous practice, at any rate, as a general one, of recording traditions. The other authorities we have met with on the point are very weak: they are as follows.

Marwân (when Governor of Medina, in Mu'avia's reign) secreted men behind a curtain, then called Zeid ibn Thâbit (one of Mahomet's companions, and the collector of the Coran,) and began to question him, the men meanwhile writing his answers down. But Zeid turning round saw them and called out, "Treachery, Marwân! My words are those of my own opinion only" (*i.e.*, not authoritative tradition.) (*Wâchidi*, p. 173.)

Again—Abdallah ibn Amr asked permission of Mahomet, to take down in writing what he heard from him, and Mahomet gave him permission. So he wrote it down,

that would spring up, and the real danger his people would fall into, of allowing *tradition* to supersede the *Coran*. The evils of tradition were as little thought of, as its value was perceived, till many years after Mahomet's death.

But even were we to admit all that has been advanced, it would prove no more than that some of the companions *used to make memoranda* of the Prophet's sayings. Now unless it be possible to connect such memoranda with any extant tradition, the position becomes useless. But it is not, as far as we know, demonstrable of any single tradition, or class of traditions now in existence, that they were copied from such memoranda, or have been derived from them. To prove, therefore, that *some* traditions were at first recorded, will not help us to a knowledge of whether any of them still exist, or to a discrimination of these from others that rest on a purely oral basis. The very most that could be urged from these premises, is that our present collections *may* contain *some* traditions founded upon a recorded original, and handed down in writing; but we cannot single out *any* tradition and make this affirmation regarding it. The whole mass of extant tradition rests in this respect on the same uncertain ground, and the uncertainty of any one portion (apart from internal evidence of probability)

and he used to call that book *Al Sâdica* ("The True.") Mujahid (born A. H. 11: died A. H. 100) says he saw a book Abdallah had, and he asked him regarding it, and he replied, "This is *Al Sâdica*; therein is what I heard from the Prophet; there is not in it between him and me any one" (i. e. its contents are derived *immediately* from him. (*Wâchidi*, p. 1754.))

Again—"Omar (the successor of Abu Baer) intended to write down the Sunnat, and prayed to the Lord regarding it for a month; when at last he was ready to commence the work, he desisted, saying—"I remember a tribe who recorded such a writing, and then followed after it, leaving the Book of the Lord." (*Wâchidi*, p. 2354.)

Dr. Sprenger has carefully collected several traditions, both for and against the record of Mahomet's sayings, during his life-time. At page 67 of his *Life of Mohammed*, notes 1 and 2, will be found a few authorities in which the above-mentioned Abdallah, and one or two others, are said to have written down such memoranda. On the contrary, at p. 64, note 1, are transcribed three or four traditions to the effect that Mahomet *forbad* his followers to record any of his sayings, and stopped them, when they had begun to do so, "lest they should fall into the confusion of the Jews and the Christians." Both sets of traditions seem to be equally balanced, and for reasons given in the text, we reject both as untrustworthy. See also some traditions in Dr. Sprenger's note on Zohri. (*Asiatic Journal* for 1851, p. 396.)

The phrase (*خبرنا*) or *حد ثنا* "Such a one informed me"—the technical link in the traditional chain—does not *necessarily* imply that the traditional matter was conveyed *orally* and not in a recorded form. With the later traditionists, it certainly came to be applied likewise to relations already preserved in writing by the party on whose authority they are delivered. This is very clearly shown by Dr. Sprenger, in his notice of Tabari. (*Asiatic Journal*, No. CCXII., p. 1090.) Tabari constantly introduces traditions, with this formula, from Ibn Ishâc and Wâchidi; and on turning to these authors, we find the same matter, word for word, in their works. The fair conclusion is, that it may be the same with some of the authorities earlier than Ibn Ishâc; and we shall see reason for believing that it was so in the case of Zohri.

attaches equally to all. We cannot with confidence, or even with show of likelihood, affirm of *any* tradition that it was recorded till nearly the end of the first century of the Hegira.

We see, then, how entirely such traditions were dependent upon the memory of those who repeated them; and not only so, but upon their convictions and prejudices. Added to the frailty of human recollection, which renders traditional evidence notoriously infirm, and to the mistakes and exaggerations to which a narrative handed down from mouth to mouth must always be liable, we have in Mahometan tradition the plentiful evidence of actual fabrication, and the indirect, but not less powerful and dangerous, influence of a silently working bias, which insensibly gave its color and its shape to all the stories treasured up of their Prophet in the memories of the believers.

To form an adequate conception of the value and defects of tradition, it is absolutely necessary that this bias and influence should be thoroughly understood; and it is therefore essential that the reader should possess a brief outline of the political aspect of the empire, from the death of Mahomet, down to the period at which our *written* authorities commence. Such an outline we propose to trace.

Mahomet survived, for ten years, the era of his *Hegira*, or emigration from Mecca to Medîna. The caliphates of Abu Bacr and of Omar occupied the thirteen succeeding years, during which the new-born empire, animated by the one ruling passion of enforcing an universal submission to Islam, was still unbroken by division. The distorting medium of **FACTION** had not yet interposed betwixt us and the history of Mahomet. The chief tendency to be dreaded in the tradition conveyed through this period, or originating in it, is one which was then at work, with perhaps even less check than in the approaching days of civil broil, namely, the disposition to exalt the character of Mahomet, and to endow it with superhuman attributes.

The weak and vacillating reign of Othmân (A. H. 23—35), nourished or gave birth to the discontent and conspiracy of Ali and his party, who, by the murder of the aged prince, caused a fatal rent in the unity of the empire, which fell a prey to the contending factions of the new competitors for the caliphate. The immediate effect of this disunion may be regarded as not unfavorable to the historical value of tradition. For although each party would be tempted to color their recollections by their own factious bias, they would still be conscious that a hostile criticism was opposed to them. And, while as

yet there were alive on either side eye-witnesses of the Prophet's actions, both would be cautious in advancing what might be liable to impugment, though eager to denounce and expose every false statement of their opponents.*

The caliphate of Ali (A. H. 35—40), after a troubled and doubtful existence of four and a half years, was terminated by assassination, and the opposing faction of the Omeiyads then gained undisputed supremacy. During the long sovereignty of this dynasty, that is, for nearly one hundred years, the influence of the ruling power was cast into the opposite scale from that of the transcendental adherents of Mahomet's more immediate family. The authority of a court, which derived its descent from Abû Sofiân, long the grand opponent of the Prophet, may indeed have been employed towards softening the apparent asperity of their progenitor's opposition, while it would chime in, with perhaps the loudest note of all, in swelling the chorus of glory to Mahomet. But it would be tempted to none of the distorting fabrications of those, whose object was to make out a divine right of succession in favor of the uncle or the descendants of the founder of Islam; and who, for that end, invested them with virtues, and attributed to them actions, which never had existence. Such in the process of time were the motives, and such was the practice of the partizans of the houses of Ali and Abbâs, the son-in-law and the uncle of Mahomet. In the early part, however, of the Omeiyad succession, these untruthful tendencies had but little room for play. The fiction of divine right, even had it been thought of, would then have met with no support. The unceremonious and unqualified opposition of a large section of Mahomet's most intimate friends to Ali himself, shows how little ground there was, during his lifetime, for regarding him as the peculiar favourite of heaven. The Khâridjites, or sectarians of the theocratic principle, and the extreme opponents of the Omeiyads, went the length of even condemning and rejecting Ali for the scandalous crime of parleying with Muâvia, and submitting his claims to arbitration. Thus the extravagant pretensions of the Alyites and Abbâs-

* The following tradition seems to illustrate this position:—

Othmân (when Caliph) commanded saying: "It is not permitted to any one to relate a tradition as from the Prophet, which he hath not already heard in the time of Abu Baer or Omar. And verily nothing hinders me from repeating traditions of the Prophet's sayings, (although I be one of those endowed with the most retentive memory amongst his companions), but that I have heard him say, *Whoever shall repeat of me that which I have not said, his resting-place shall be in Hell.*" (*Wâkidi, p. 168½.*)

This tradition, if well founded, gives pretty clear intimation, that even before Othmân's murder, fabricated traditions were propagated by his opponents to shake his authority, and that the poor old Caliph endeavoured to check the practice, by forbidding the repetition of any fresh recitals, which had not already been made known in the caliphates of his two predecessors.

sides were not entertained, or even dreamt of, in the early part of the Omejad caliphate.

During this century it was that the main fabric of tradition grew up, and assumed its permanent shape. Towards its close, the extant traditions began to be systematically sought out, and publicly put upon record. The type then struck could not but be maintained, in its chief features at least, ever after. However much subsequent sectaries may have sought to re-cast it, their efforts must, to a certain degree, have proved unsuccessful, because the only mould they possessed was that which formed itself under the influence of the Omejad princes. We may conclude, then, that in the traditional impression of this period, although the features of Mahomet himself were magnified into dimensions of supernatural majesty, yet those of his friends and followers, and the general events of early Islam, were likely to have been preserved with tolerable accuracy, and that thus a broad basis of historical truth has been maintained.

But in the latter part of the period now before us, an under-current of great volume and intensity commenced to flow. The adherents of the house of Ali, beaten in the field, and in all their rebellious attempts to dethrone the Omejads, devised other counsels, and the key-stone of their new machinations was the divine right of the family of the Prophet to temporal and spiritual rule. They established secret associations, and sent forth their emissaries in every direction to decry the Omejads as godless usurpers, and to canvass for the Alyite pretender of the day. These claims were ever and anon strengthened by the mysterious report, that the divine Imâm of Ali's race was about to step forth from his hidden recess, and stand confessed the conqueror of the world. Such attempts, however, issued in no more permanent results than a succession of rebellions, massacres, and unsuccessful civil wars, until another party leagued themselves in the struggle. These were the Abbâssides, who desired to raise to the throne some descendant of the Prophet's uncle, Abbâs. They combined with the Alyites in denouncing as usurpers the present dynasty, which, though sprung from the Coreish, was but distantly related to Mahomet; and by their united machinations, they at length succeeded in supplanting the Omejads, when the Alyites found themselves over-reached, and an Abbâsside Caliph was raised to the throne.

It is not difficult to perceive how much tradition must have been affected by these unwearied conspirators. *Perverted tradition* was, in fact, the chief instrument employed to accomplish their ends. By it they blackened the memory of the forefathers

of the Omeiyads, and lauded the progenitors of the Abbâssides. By it they were enabled almost to deify Ali, and to make good their principle, that the right of empire vested solely in the near relatives of the Prophet, and their progeny. For these ends no device was spared. The Coran was misinterpreted, and traditions were falsely colored, distorted, and fabricated. Their operations were concealed, and studiously avoiding the eye of any one likely to oppose them, they canvassed in the dark. Hence the traditions of this party would be safe from criticism; and the stories and glosses of their traditional schools would quietly and unobtrusively gain the stamp of prescriptive evidence.

In the 136th year of the Hegira, the Abbâssides were installed in the imperial caliphate; and the factious teaching, which had hitherto lurked in the distant satrapies of Persia, or in the purlieus of crowded cities near the throne, now stalked forth with the prestige of sovereignty. The Omeiyads were regarded as the mortal foes of the new dynasty, and persecuted even to extirpation, while their names and descent were overwhelmed with obloquy.*

It was under the auspices of the first two of the Abbâssides, that the earliest biography, of which we have any remains, was composed, that, namely, of Ibn Ishâc. It is little wonder, then, if we find him following his patrons, and if, while he lauds their ancestors, he seeks to stigmatize the Omeiyads, and to reprobate their forefathers, who acted a prominent part in the first scene of Islam, as an abomination.

The fifth Caliph from this period was the famous Al Mâmûn, who, during a reign of twenty years (A. H. 198—218), countenanced, with princely support, the pursuits of literature. He affected a combination with the followers of Ali,† and adopted with enthusiasm the peculiar teaching of the Motazelites—a sect whom the learned Weil admires as the rationalists of Islam. But however much this Caliph may have derided the doctrine of the eternity of the Coran, and in opposition to the orthodox asserted the freedom of the human will, he was not a whit less bigoted or intolerant than his predecessors. He not only declared Ali to be the noblest of the human-kind, and Mu'âvia the basest, but he denounced the most severe punishment

* *Weil's Gesch. der Chalifen*, vol. II., p. 7.

† When the Abbâssides reached the throne, they cast aside the Alyide platform, from which they had made the fortunate ascent. They were then obliged in self-defence to crush with an iron hand every rising of that party, which found to their cost that, after all their wiles and machinations, they had at last become the unconscious tools for raising to power a body with whom they had in reality as little fellow-feeling as with the Omeiyads. They deserved their fate.

against him who should venture to say anything evil of the one, or attribute anything good to the other.* He made strenuous efforts to impose his theological views upon all. He even established a species of inquisition, and visited with penalties those who dared to differ from him.† Unhappily for us, this very reign was the busiest age of the traditional writers, and the period at which the earliest biographies of Mahomet possessed by us were composed. It was under Al Mâmûn that Wâckidi, Ibn Hishâm and Madaini lived and wrote; and well indeed may Dr. Weil dwell sorrowfully on this most unlucky coincidence. "We look upon it," says he, "as a great misfortune, that the very three oldest Arabic histories, which are nearly the only sources of authority for the first period of Islam, were written under the Government of Mâmûn. At a period when every word in favour of Muâvia rendered the speaker liable to death, and when every one was declared an outlaw who would not acknowledge Ali to be the most distinguished of all mankind, it was not possible to compose, with even the smallest degree of impartiality, a history of the companions of Mahomet and of his successors; because, as we have before seen, the personal interests of Ali and his descendants, and their pretensions to the Caliphate, are connected in the closest manner with the most important political events of the first two centuries."‡

But it was not alone the biographers of Mahomet, and the historians of early Islam, but likewise the collectors of general tradition, who flourished at this period, and thus came within the circle of Abbâsside influence, and specially of Al Mâmûn's direct persuasion. This class of men, we have already seen, travelled over the whole empire, and ferreted out every species of tradition which bore the slightest relation to their Prophet. The mass of narrations gathered by this laborious process was sifted by a pseudo-critical canon, founded on the general repute of the narrators, forming the chain from Mahomet downwards, and the approved remainder was published under the authority of the collector's name. Such collections were more popular than the biographical or historical treatises. They formed, in fact, and still form, the ground-work of the different theological schools of Islam, and having been carefully and continuously studied from the period of their appearance, are extant to the present day in an authentic and genuine shape. Copies of them

* *Gesch. Chalifen*, vol. II., p. 258.

† *Gesch. Chalifen*, vol. II., p. 265.

‡ *Gesch. Chalifen*, vol. II., p. 287.

abound in all Moslem countries; whereas the early biographies are either not extant at all, or can be procured only with the greatest difficulty.

The six standard *Sunnîe* collections were compiled exclusively under the influence of Abbâsside Caliphs, and the earliest of them in part during the reign of Al Mâmûn.*

The four canonical collections of the *Shiâhs* were prepared somewhat later.† The latter are incomparably less trustworthy than the compilations of the Sunnîes, because their paramount object is to build up the divine *Imâmat*, or headship, of Ali and his descendants.

That the collectors of tradition rendered an important service to Islam, and even to history, cannot be doubted, although this service loses much of its value by the amount of error which they have perpetuated. The vast flood of tradition, poured forth from every quarter of the Moslem empire, and daily gathering volume from innumerable tributaries, was composed of the most heterogeneous materials; and without the labours of the traditionists, must soon have formed a chaotic sea, in which truth and error, fact and fable, would have mingled together in undistinguishable confusion. It is a legitimate inference, from the sketch we have given above, that tradition, in the second century, contained a large element of truth. That even respectably derived traditions often contained much of the exaggerated and fabulous, is an equally legitimate conclusion; while it is proved by the testimony of the collectors themselves, that thousands, and tens of thousands of traditions were current in their times, which possessed not even a shadow of authority. The mass might be likened to the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, formed by a strange union of gold, of the baser metals, and of clay; and here the more valuable parts were fast commingling with the worthless.

The proportion of base and fictitious material may be gathered from the estimate even of Mahometan criticism. Upon this topic, we quote with approbation and confidence the opinion of the philosophical Weil:—"By leaning upon oral

* The names of the authors of the six collections, together with those of other popular traditional compilations, are noted by Dr. Sprenger (*Life of Mohammed*, p. 68, note 2,) together with the date of each author's death. Dr. Sprenger has, however, omitted the earliest collection of all, viz., that of Imâm Mâlik Al Muâtta—born A. H. 95, died A. H. 179. This work was lithographed at Delhi in 1849. It is held in very great esteem, and, although not generally included among the standard *six*, it is yet believed by many to be the source whence a great portion of their materials are derived. "It is, as it were, the origin and *mother* of the two *Sahîh*," i. e., of the collections of Bokhâri and of Muslim.

† Sprenger's *Mohammed*, p. 68, note 3.

traditions, at a time when they were transmitted by memory alone, and every day produced new divisions among the professors of Islam, a wide field was opened up for fabrication and distortion. There was nothing easier, when it was required to defend any religious or political system, than to appeal to an oral tradition of the Prophet. The nature of these so-called traditions, and the manner in which the name of Mahomet was abused to support all possible lies and absurdities, may be gathered most clearly from the following fact, that Bokhâri, who travelled from land to land to gather from the learned the traditions they had received, found, after many years' sifting, that out of 600,000 traditions at that time current, only 4,000 were authentic! And of this selected number, the European critic is compelled, without hesitation, to reject at least one-half.* Similar appears to have been the experience of the other intelligent compilers of the day: thus Abu Dâûd, out of 500,000 traditions which he is said to have amassed, threw aside 496,000, and retained as trustworthy only 4,000.† The heavenly vision which induced Bokhâri to commence his pious, but herculean task, is sufficiently significant of the urgent necessity that then existed for searching out and preserving the grains of truth scattered here and there in the vast pile of tares and stubble. These are his words:—"In a dream I beheld the messenger of the Lord (Mahomet,) from whom, methought, I was driving off the flies. When I awoke, I enquired of one who interpreted dreams, the meaning of my vision. *It is*, he replied, *that thou shalt drive away LIES far from him.* This it was which induced me to compile the *Sahîh*." And well, indeed, in the eyes of Mahometans, did he fulfil the heavenly behest; for, to this day, the SAHÎH BOKHARI is regarded by them as one of the most authentic treasuries of tradition.‡

It is evident, then, that some species of criticism was prac-

* *Gesch. Chalifen*, vol. II., p. 290. *Ibn Khallicân*, by Stane, vol. II., p. 595.

† *Gesch. Chalifen*, vol. II., p. 291. *Ibn Khallicân*, vol. I., p. 589. The latter authority makes the number selected 4,800; but even of these he seems to have had doubts. "I wrote down," says Abu Dâûd, "five hundred thousand traditions respecting the Prophet, from which I selected those, to the number of four thousand eight hundred, which are contained in this book (*The Sunan*.) I have mentioned herein the authentic, those which seem to be so (بشبهه), and those which are nearly so."

‡ *Abu Abdallah Muhammad*, surnamed from his country *Al Bokhâri*, was born A.H. 194; but with rare precocity he had, in his eighteenth year, commenced his work of collecting and sifting. We may therefore give his works the full benefit of the Caliph Mâmûn's influence. *Ibn Khallicân* says of him—"Animated with the desire of collecting traditions, he went to see most of the traditionists in all the great cities; he wrote down in Khorâsân, in the cities of Irâk, in the Hijaz, in Syria, and in Egypt, the information he thus acquired." (*Ibn Khallicân*, vol. II., p. 595.)

tised by the compilers; and that, too, with such an unsparing hand, that *nine-tenths* of their materials were entirely rejected. But the European reader will be grievously deceived if he at all regard such criticism, unsparing as it was, in the light of a sound and discriminating investigation into the credibility of the traditional elements. It was not the *subject-matter* of a tradition, but simply the *names* attached thereto, which decided the question of its credit. Its authority must rest on some companion of the Prophet, and on the character of each link in the long chain of witnesses, through whom it was handed down.* If that was deemed unimpeachable, the tradition *must* be *received*; and no inherent improbability, however glaring, could debar a narration thus attested, from its place in the authentic collections. The compilers dared not to embark upon the open sea of criticism, but steering by this single miserable canon, they slavishly coasted along the shoals of a mere formal system. They ventured not to enquire into internal evidence, to arraign the motives of the first author, and subsequent rehearsers of a story, to discuss its probability, and to bring it to the test of historical evidence. The spirit of Islam would not brook the spirit of enquiry and of real criticism. The blind faith of Mahomet and his followers spurned the aids of evidence and investigation. *Thus saith the Prophet of the Lord*, and every doubt must vanish, every rising question be smothered. If doubts *did* arise, and questions *were* entertained by any rash philosopher, the temporal authority was at hand to dispel and to silence them. The dogmas of Islam were so closely welded with the principles of Civil Government, that the latter had no option but to enforce with a stern face and iron hand an implicit faith in those dogmas, on which its existence hung. Upon the apostate Moslem, the sentence of death—an award resting on the Prophet's authority—was by the civil power rigorously executed; and between the heterodoxy of the free-thinker, and the lapse of the renegade, there appears to exist no well-defined boundary. It is thus that to the combination, or rather to the *unity* of the spiritual and political elements in the Mahometan type of Government, may be attributed that utter absence of candid and free investigation into the origin and truth of Islam, which so painfully character-

* This may be illustrated by the practice of Bokhâri and Muslim. Out of 40,000 men, who are said to have been instrumental in handing down tradition, they acknowledged the authority of only 2,000 by receiving their traditions. A *later* writer adds, that of these 40,000 persons, only 226 are to be excepted as not deserving credit, which may throw light upon one cause at least of the fabulous narratives, which abound in subsequent biographers, viz., that they were less careful about their authorities. (See *Sprenger's Mohammed*, p. 65, note 1.)

izes the Moslem mind up to the present day. The critical sense was annihilated by the sword.

Upon the other hand, there is no reason to doubt that the collectors were sincere and honest in doing that which they professed. It may well be admitted, that they sought out in good faith all traditions actually current, enquired carefully into their authorities, and recorded them with accuracy. The sanctions of religion were at hand, to enforce diligence and caution. Thus Bokhâri commenced his work at a supposed divine monition, and he was heard to say, "that he never inserted a 'tradition in his *Sahih*," until he had made an ablution, and 'offered up a prayer of two *rakas*.'"* The pre-possession of the several collectors would undoubtedly influence them in accepting or rejecting the chain of witnesses in individual cases; but there is no reason to suppose that they tampered with the traditions themselves. Thus a *Shie-ite* collector might cast aside a tradition received from Ayesha through an Omeiad channel; whilst one of Omeiad predilections might discard the traditional chain, among the links of which he discovered an emissary of the house of Ali; but neither the one nor the other was likely to *fabricate* a tradition, or *interpolate* a narration, which they had once accepted as credible. This conclusion is warranted by the style and contents of their works. The complete series of witnesses, tracing each tradition from mouth to mouth up to one of the Prophet's companions, is invariably prefixed, and we cannot but admit the authority which the *later* witnesses in such a chain would impart.† These were not feigned names, but the names of real characters, many of whom were personages of note. The traditional collections were openly published, and the credit of the compilers would have been endangered by the fabrication of this species of evidence. The collector was likewise, in general, the centre of a school of traditional learning, which, as it were, challenged the public to test its authorities. So far, then, as this kind of attestation *can* give weight to hearsay, that weight may be readily conceded. Again, the *naive* manner in which

* *Ibn Khallicân*, vol. II., p. 596.

† A tradition is always given in the direct form of speech in which it is supposed to have been originally uttered. Thus—"A informed me, saying that B had informed him, to the effect that C had told him, saying D mentioned to me that he heard E saying he had listened to F, who said, I heard G enquiring of Ayesha, 'What food did the Prophet of the Lord like?' and she replied, 'Verily, he loved sweetmeats and honey, and greatly relished the pumpkin.'" The technical links in these narrations are generally *أخبرنا* or *حدثنا*—*I have heard from such a one, or such a one informed me*; and *قال* or *قالت*—"quoth he," or "quoth she."

the most contradictory traditions are accepted, and placed side by side, is a guarantee of sincerity. They appear all to have been thrown together with scrupulous simplicity; and each tradition, though it be a bare repetition, or perhaps a direct opposite of a dozen that preceded it, is noted down unquestioned with its special chain of witnesses; whilst no account whatsoever is taken of the most violent improbabilities, of incidents plainly fabulous, or even of patent contradictions.* Now this appears to us evidence of honest design. Pains would, otherwise, have been taken to exclude or to soften down the opposing statements, and we should not have found so much allowed to ~~the~~ credible tradition, which either on the one hand or on the other must have impinged against the views and prejudices of the compiler. If we suppose *design*, we must suppose also a less even-handed admission of contrary traditions.

Conceding, then, the general honesty of the collectors, in making their selection (upon however absurd a principle,) *bonâ fide*, from existing materials, let us now turn to their selected compilations, and enquire whether they contain truthful elements of the biography of Mahomet; and if so, how, and to what extent, these have become commingled with adventitious or erroneous matter.

In the first place, how far does the present text give us confidence that its contents are identical with the supposed evidence originally given forth by contemporary witnesses? To place the case in the strongest possible point of view, we shall suppose a class of traditions purporting to have been written by the companions, and to have been recorded by each succeeding set of witnesses in the several chains. There is a peculiarity in traditional composition, which even upon this supposition would render it always of doubtful authority, namely, that each tradition is short and abrupt, and completely isolated from any other. This isolation extends not simply to its present state, but to its whole history and descent throughout the two centuries preceding our collections; and coupled with the brief and fragmentary character of the traditions themselves, deprives us of the checks and critical appliances which may be brought to bear on an extended and continuous narration. From the fragmentary and divided nature of the

* No Mahometan is of course expected to believe implicitly in two contradictory traditions. All properly attested traditions are *recorded*, but many of them are acknowledged *weak* or *doubtful*, and when they contradict one another, the choice is left to the individual. The historians of Mahomet and of early Islam, when they relate contradictory or varying narratives, sometimes add an expression of their own opinion as to which they prefer. They also sometimes mark *doubtful stories* by the addition—"But the Lord (only) knows whether this be false or true."

composition, any of the common tests of authenticity are generally impossible. There is no context whereby to judge of the soundness of the text. Each witness in the chain, though professing simply to repeat the original tradition, is in effect an independent authority, and we cannot tell how far, and in what stages, fresh matter may not have been interpolated by any of them. Even were we satisfied of the integrity of each, we are unacquainted with their views as to the liberty with which tradition might be treated. The style of the narrations marks them for the most part as communicated at first with all the informality of social conversation, and with much of the looseness of hearsay; and the same informality and looseness are not unlikely to have characterized their subsequent propagation.

Again, the tradition is not only isolated, but it is an *indivisible unit*, and as such was received or rejected by the collectors. If the traditional links were unexceptionable, the tradition must be accepted *as it stood*, whole and entire. There could be no sifting of its component parts: what in it was true, and what was fabricated—the probable and the fabulous, composed an indissoluble mass, and the acceptance or rejection of one part, involved the acceptance or rejection of the whole tradition, as equally credible or undeserving of credit. The power of eradicating interpolated statements, or of excluding such parts of a tradition as were evidently unfounded or erroneous, was thus abnegated. The good seed and the tares were reaped together, and unfortunately the latter were likely to predominate.

It may be possible, indeed, to derive some confirmation from the verbal correspondence of separate traditions regarding the same event; for if such traditions sprang at the first from a common source (a companion of Mahomet,) and if they have really been handed down through independent channels, *unconnected with one another*, the coincidence of the expression would argue for the faithfulness of the transmission. But the conditions here required, it would be extremely difficult to prove to the satisfaction of a critical mind. The earlier links of the traditional chain are removed far back in the obscurity of a twilight dawn; and it is impossible to say where, and how often, the supposed separate chains may have crossed; at what point the common matter may have been obtained; or in what manner previous variations may have been assimilated. Many traditions, though supported by unexceptionable names, and corresponding with others even to minute verbal coincidence, abound in stories so fabulous, and facts so

erroneous, as to render it impossible that they could ever have formed part of any contemporary record, and to shake our confidence in the whole system of "*respectable names.*" There is also reason for believing (as we shall see farther below), that much of the coincidence of narrative is derived from those traditionists, who, at the close of the first and beginning of the second centuries, reduced to writing, and harmonized, the traditions extant in their day.

Such is the uncertainty which would attach to tradition, even if we conceded that it had been recorded from the first; but we have already seen that there is no ground for believing that it was the practice to record it, till near the close of the first century. The existence of a record from the first would have afforded *some* check; but there is here in reality none; *that* would have at the least induced a fixed caste of expression and an element of invariableness; whereas tradition by word of mouth is variable and changeful, as the character, habits, and associations, of each repeater. In oral tradition all external check is parted with against the commingling of mistake or fabrication with that which at the first may have been real fact and trust-worthy representation. The flood-gates of error, extravagance and fiction are thrown wide open; and we need only look to human nature in similar predicaments in any part of the globe, and in every age, to be satisfied that little dependence can be placed on otherwise unsupported details of historical incident, and none whatever upon those of supernatural wonders, conveyed for any length of time through such a channel. That Mahometan experience proves no exception to the general principle, is amply testified by the puerile extravagancies and splendid fabrications of oriental imagination, which adorn or darken the pages of early Islam. The critical test applied by the collectors had, as we have seen, no reference whatever to these pregnant sources of error; and though it may have excluded multitudes of *later* fabrications, it failed to place the earlier traditions upon any base of confidence, or to afford any judgment, or any means of judging, between the actual and the suppositious, between the fabricated and the true.

It remains to examine the traditional books with reference to their contents and internal probability; and here, we are fortunate in having at hand, as a standard of comparison, the Coran, which we have in the early part of this paper shown to be a genuine and contemporary document.

In bringing tradition to this test, we find, that in its main historical points, the Coran is at one with the standard tradi-

tional collections. It notices—sometimes directly, sometimes incidentally—the topics which, from time to time, most interested Mahomet, and with these salient positions, the mass of tradition is found upon the whole to tally. The statements and references of the Coran, though comparatively few in number, are linked more or less with a vast variety of important events, relating as well to the Prophet individually and his domestic relations, as to general subjects. A just confidence is thus imparted, that a large element of historical truth has been conveyed by tradition.

Upon the other hand, there are subjects in which the Coran is at variance with tradition. For example, there is no point more satisfactorily established by the Coran, than that Mahomet at no part of his career performed, or pretended to perform, miracles. Yet the traditions abound with miraculous acts, which belie the plain enunciations of the Coran; and which, moreover, if he had ever pretended to perform them, would undoubtedly have been mentioned by the Prophet, in those pretended revelations which neglected the notice of nothing, however trivial, that could strengthen his prophetic claim. Here, then, in matters of plain narration and historical fact, we find tradition discredited by the Coran.

These conclusions are precisely the ones which, *à priori*, we should have arrived at from the historical review of tradition already given; but they do not in any measure relieve us from our difficulties. The dilemma resolves itself into this, that facts which we know to be well-founded, and tales which we know to be fabricated, are interwoven with the whole tissue of tradition, and the fabric and color of both are so uniform, that we are at a loss for any means of distinguishing the one from the other. The biographer of Mahomet constantly runs the risk of substituting for the realities of history, some puerile fancy or extravagant invention; and in striving to avoid this danger, he is exposed to the opposite peril of rejecting as pious fabrications what may in reality be real and important historical facts, or that which at the least may contain their pith.*

* This is well expressed by Dr. Weil:—"Ich durfte daher nicht bloss die Quelle übertragen oder je nach Gutdünken excerpiren, sondern musste ihren Angaben vorher einer strengen Kritik unterwerfen; denn wenn man überhaupt gegen alle orientalischen Schriftsteller misstranisch seyn muss, so hat man heir doppelten Grund dazu, weil sie nicht nur von ihrer Leidenschaft und ihrer Phantasie, sondern auch von ihrer religiösen Schwarmerei geleitet waren. Schon im zweiten Jahrhundert, als die ersten Biographen Mohammeds auftraten, die ihre Erzählungen noch auf Aussage seiner Zeitgenossen Zurückzuführen wagen, war sein ganzes Leben, nicht nur von seiner Geburt, sondern schon von seiner Zeugung, bis zu seinem Tode, von einem Gewebe von Märchen und Legenden umspinnen, das auch das nüchternste europäische Auge nicht immer ganz zu durchschauen und abzulösen vermag, ohne Gefahr zu laufen, aus allzu grosser Aengstlichkeit

It is, indeed, the opinion of the learned Sprenger, that, "although the nearest view of the Prophet, which we can obtain, is at a distance of one hundred years," and although this long vista is formed of an *exclusively* Mahometan medium, yet our knowledge of the bias of the narrators, "enables us to correct the media, and to make them almost achromatic."* This is true to some extent; but its full and absolute application appears to be beyond the truth. The difficulties of the task are underrated; for to bring to a right focus the various lights of tradition, to reject those that are fictitious, to restore to a proper direction the rays reflected by a false and deceptive surface, to calculate the extent of aberration, and make due allowance for a thousand disturbing influences—this is indeed a work of entanglement and complication, which would require, for its perfect accomplishment, a finer discernment, and a machinery of nicer construction, than human nature can boast of. Nevertheless, it is right that an attempt should be made, however imperfect the success that may attend it: and it is possible that, by a continuous advance and careful discrimination, we may reach, at the last, an approximation to the truth. With the view of helping towards this end, we shall now endeavour to lay down some principles which may prove useful to the historical enquirer in discriminating the true from the false in Mahometan tradition.

The grand defect in the traditional evidence regarding Mahomet consists in its being wholly *ex-parte*. It is the evidence of a witness for himself, in which the license of partiality is unchecked by any opposing party, and wanting in the sanction even of a neutral audience. What is thus externally defective must, if possible, be supplied from within. By analysing the deposition itself, we may find grounds for credit or for doubt; while in some of the relations, it may even

such wirkliche historische Facta als fromme Dichtung anzusehen." "(In writing the inner and the external history of this extraordinary man, I could not follow the plan of simply transcribing the original sources, or of making extracts from them at discretion, but was obliged to cast their statements into the crucible of a rigid criticism; because, as we have reason to be generally distrustful of all oriental authors, we have here a double ground of distrust, because men were here led not only by their passions and fancies, but by their religious enthusiasm also. Already, in the second century, when the first biographers of Mahomet appeared, and they still ventured to trace back their narrations to the sayings of his contemporaries, his whole Life, not merely from his birth, but even from his conception, onwards to his death, was spun round with a web of fables and legends, which even the most dispassionate European eye cannot always entirely pierce through and unravel, without, from an over-strained anxiety and distrust, running the danger of regarding even historical facts as pious fabrications."—(Weil's *Mohammed*, pp. 14, 15).

* Sprenger's *Mohammed*, p. 68.

appear that a Mahometan public would itself supply the place of an impartial censor. In this view, the points on which the probability of a tradition will mainly depend, appear to be, *first*, whether there existed any bias in the Mahometan body generally towards the subject narrated; *second*, whether there are traces of interest or design on the part of the narrator; and *third*, whether the latter had opportunity for personally knowing the facts. These topics will perhaps best be discussed by considering the *period* to which a narration relates, and then the *subject* of which it treats.

I. A.—The PERIOD to which a tradition purports to refer, is a point of vital importance. The original sources of all the traditions were, as we have seen, the *companions* of Mahomet himself, and the time of their first propagation was subsequent to the Prophet's decease. But Mahomet was above three-score years old when he died, and few of his companions, who were instrumental in giving rise to tradition, were of equal age, hardly any of them older. In proportion to their years the number of aged man was small, and the period short during which they survived Mahomet; and these are precisely the considerations by which their influence, in the formation of tradition, must be limited also. The great majority were young, and in proportion to their youth, was the number that survived longest, and gave the deepest imprint to tradition.* We may then fix the age of Mahomet himself, as the extreme backward limit within which the ages of our witnesses range themselves. In other words, we have virtually no original witnesses who lived at a period anterior to Mahomet; few, if any, were born before him; the great majority, very many years after him. They are not, therefore, trustworthy witnesses for events preceding Mahomet's birth, or for the details of his childhood; few of them, even, for the incidents of his youth. They could not by any possibility possess a personal knowledge of these things; and to admit that they gained their information at second-hand, is to introduce an element of uncertainty, which entirely impairs the value of their testimony as that of contemporary witnesses.

B.—But, again, the value of evidence depends upon the

* Abu Baer, for instance, was within two years of Mahomet's age; but then he survived him only two and a half years. Most of the elderly companions either died a natural death, or were killed in action before tradition came into vogue. Thus Wäckidi writes—"The reason why many of the chief men of the companions have left few traditions, is that they died before there was any necessity of referring to them." He adds—"The chiefest among the companions, Abu Baer, Othmán, Talha, &c., gave forth fewer traditions than others. *There did not issue from them, anything like the number of traditions that did from the younger.*" (Wäckidi, p. 176.)

attention bestowed by the witness upon the facts at the time of their occurrence. If his mind had not been attracted towards the event, it would be in vain to expect a full and careful report; and after the lapse of many years, the utmost that could be looked for from such a witness, would be a mere general outline of important facts. This principle applies forcibly to the biography of Mahomet, up to the time when he became a prominent character. Before this period, there was nothing remarkable in him. He was a quiet inoffensive citizen; perhaps, of all the inhabitants of Mecca, the least likely to have the eyes of his neighbours turned upon him, and their imagination and memory busy in conjuring up and recording anticipations of his coming greatness. The same remark may be extended, not merely to the era when he first made pretensions to inspiration, (for that produced sensation only among a few of his earliest partizans;*) but to the time when he *publicly* stood forth assuming the prophetic rank—opposed polytheism, and came into open collision with the chiefs of Mecca. Then he began to be indeed most narrowly watched, and thenceforward the companions of the Prophet are not to be distrusted on the score at least of insufficient attention.

C.—It follows necessarily, that in all cases falling under either of the foregoing heads, circumstantiality will be a strong token of fabrication. And we shall do well to adopt the analogous canon of Christian criticism, that any tradition, the origin of which is not strictly contemporary with the facts related, *is worthless exactly in proportion to the particularity of detail.** This rule will relieve us of a vast number of extravagant stories, in which the minutiae of close narrative and sustained colloquy are preserved with the pseudo-freshness of yesterday.

D.—It will, however, be just to admit an exception for such general outlines and important incidents in Mahomet's life, as, under ordinary circumstances, his friends and acquaintances would naturally remember, or might learn from himself, and would thus be able in after days to call up with tolerable accuracy. A still wider exception must be allowed in favor of public personages and national events, even though they precede Mahomet's birth, because the attention of the people would

* This rule is adapted from Alford. (*Greek Test. Proleg.*, p. 56.) His remarks are strikingly illustrative of Mahometan tradition. "As usual in traditional matter, on our advance to later writers, we find more and more particular accounts given; the year of John's life, the reigning Emperor, &c., under which the Gospel was written." But Christian traditionists were mere tyros in the art of discovering such "particular accounts" in comparison with the Mahometans, at the talisman of whose pen distance vanishes, and even centuries deliver up the details they had engulfed.

be strongly directed to these subjects, while the patriarchal habits of the Arabs, and their spirit of clanship, would be propitious for their tenacious recollection. Thus the conversation of Abd al Muttalib, Mahomet's grand-father, with Abraha, the Abyssinian invader, is more likely to be founded in fact, than any of the much later conversations Mahomet himself is said to have had with the monks on his journeys to Syria; and yet the leading facts regarding these journeys there is no reason for doubting.

Ranged under the same exception, will fall all those genealogical and historical facts, the preservation of which, for five or six centuries, by the memory alone, is so wonderful a phenomenon in the story of Arabia. Here poetry, no doubt, aided the retentive faculty. The glowing rhapsodies of the bard were caught up immediately by his admiring clan, and were soon in the mouths even of the children. In such poetry were preserved the names of the chieftains, their feats of bravery, their glorious liberality, the unparalleled nobility of their breeds of the camel and the horse. Many of these odes became national, and thus carried with them the testimony, not of the tribe only, but of the whole Arab family. Thus poetry, superadded to the passion for genealogical and tribal reminiscences, and the capacity of imprinting them indelibly on the memory, have secured to us the interwoven details of many centuries, with a minuteness and particularity which would excite suspicion, were not their reality in many instances established by other evidence and by internal coincidence. Caussin de Perceval, who with incredible labour and proportionate success, has sought out and arranged these facts into an uniform history, thus justly expresses his estimate of the Arab genealogical traditions:—

J'ai dit que toutes les généalogies Arabes n'étaient point certaines; on en trouve en effet un grand nombre d'évidemment incomplètes. Mais il en est aussi beaucoup d'authentiques, et qui remontent, sans lacune probable, jusqu'à environ six siècles avant Mahomet. C'est un phénomène vraiment singulier, chez un peuple inculte et en général étranger à l'art de l'écriture, comme l'étaient les Arabes, que cette fidélité à garder le souvenir des ancêtres. Elle prenait sa source dans un sentiment de fierté, dans l'estime qu'ils faisaient de leur noblesse. Les noms des aïeux, gravés dans la mémoire des enfants, étaient les archives des familles. A ces noms se rattachaient nécessairement quelques notions sur la vie des individus, sur les événements dans lesquels ils avaient figuré; et c'est ainsi que les traditions se perpétuaient d'âge en âge.—*Essai Sur L'Histoire des Arabes, vol. I, Pref., p. ix.*

E.—A second marked section of time, is that which intervenes between Mahomet's entrance on public life, and the taking of Mecca (B. H. 10 to A. H. 8.) Here indeed we have two op-

posing parties, marshalled against each other in mortal strife, whose statements might have been a check one upon the other. But during this interval, or within a very short period of its close, one of the parties was extirpated; its leaders were nearly all killed in battle, and the remainder amalgamated themselves with the victors. We have, therefore, no surviving evidence whatever on the side of Mahomet's enemies. No one was left to explain their actions, no doubt often misrepresented by hatred; or to rebut the unfounded accusations and exaggerated charges imputed to them by Mahomet and his followers. Upon the other hand, we have no witnesses of any kind against Mahomet and his party, whose one-sided assertions of their innocence and justice might often, perhaps, have been successfully impugned. The intemperate and unguarded language of Mahomet and the companions is sufficient evidence that their estimate was not always fair, nor their judgement impartial.

F.—It may be urged in reply, that the great body of the hostile Meccans, who eventually went over to Islam, would still form a check upon any material misrepresentation of themselves or their party. It may be admitted, that they did form some check on matters not vitally connected with the credit of Islam and of its founder; their influence would also tend to preserve the reports of their own individual actions, and perhaps those of their friends and relatives, in as favourable a light as possible. But this influence was at best only partial; for it must ever be borne in mind, that the enemies of the Prophet, who now joined his ranks, acquired at the same time, or very shortly after, all the *esprit de corps* of Islam;* and long before the fountain head of tradition began to flow, these very men had begun to look back upon the heathenism of their own Meccan career, with all the hearty contempt and shuddering horror of the early converts. The stains of the Moslem's unbelieving life were washed away on his conversion, and imparted no tarnish to his subsequent character. He had sinned "ignorantly in unbelief," but now, as well in his own view as in the eyes of his comrades, he was *another man*. Well, therefore, might he speak of his mad opposition to "the Prophet of the Lord" and his divine message, with as hearty a reprobation as other men; nay, the violence of reaction might make his language

* Thus Abu Sofîan, himself the leader of the later opposition against Mahomet, became a zealous Moslem, and fought under the banners of his own son in the first Syrian campaign.

"Le vieil Abu-Sofyan, qui autrefois avait souvent combattu contre Mahomet, devenu alors un des plus zélés sectateurs de l'Islamisme, avait voulu servir sous son fils, et l'aider des conseils de son expérience."—*Caus. de Perc. L'Histoire des Arabes*, vol. III., p. 429.

even stronger. Yet such persons as these are the only check we possess upon the *ex-parte* story which the Mahometans tell of their long struggle with the idolators of Mecca.

G.—It is fair, therefore, to make much allowance, in the accounts handed down to us by the Mahometans, of the injustice, cruelty, and folly of their Prophet's opponents, and to suspect exaggeration in the stories of hardship and persecution suffered at their hands. And above all, the history of those who died in unbelief, before the conquest of Mecca, and under the ban of Mahomet, must be subjected to a rigid criticism. For such men as Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab, hated and cursed by their Prophet, what Mahometan would dare to be the advocate? To the present day, the hearty ejaculation—*May the Lord curse him!* is linked by every Moslem with the mention of such "enemies of the Lord, and of his Prophet." What voice would be raised to correct the pious exaggerations by the faithful of *their* execrable deeds, or to point out the just causes of provocation which they may have received? Impious attempt, and mad perversity! Over and again was the bare sword of Omar brandished above the neck of the luckless offender, for conduct far more excusable, and attempts less dangerous to Islam.

H.—The same considerations apply with nearly equal force to the Jewish settlements in the vicinity of Medîna, as the Bani Nadhir and Bani Coreitza, whom Mahomet either expatriated, brought over to his faith, or utterly extirpated. The various Arab tribes also, whether Christian or Pagan, whom Mahomet at different times of his life attacked, come more or less under the same category.

II.—The SUBJECT-MATTER of the traditions themselves will help us to an estimate of their credibility, considered both as to the motives of their author, and the views of early Mahometan society generally. The chief aspects in which this argument may be viewed refer to *personal, party, and national* bias.

A.—*Individual* pre-possession and self-interested motives would cause false colouring, exaggeration, and even invention. Besides the more obvious cases falling under this head, there is a fertile class which originates in the ambition of the narrator to be associated with Mahomet. The name of the Prophet threw nobility and veneration around every object immediately connected with it; and his friendship imparted a rank and dignity acknowledged by the universal voice of Islam. We can with difficulty conceive the reverence and court enjoyed by his widows, friends, or servants; the interminable enquiries put to them; and the implicit deference with which

their responses were received. Every one who had personal knowledge of the Prophet, and especially those who had been much with him, or been honored by his familiar acquaintance, were admitted by common consent into this envied circle of Moslem aristocracy, and many a picturesque scene is incidentally sketched by the traditionists, of narratives told by such men in the mosques of Kufâ or of Damascus, where the listening crowds hung upon the lips of the speaker. The sterling value of such qualifications would induce a counterfeit imitation. Many who had but a distant and superficial knowledge of Mahomet, would be tempted by the consideration it imparted, to assume a more perfect acquaintance; and the attempt to support so equivocal a position by particularity of detail, would lead the way to loose and unfounded narratives of the life and character of the Prophet. Analogous with such doubtful assumption of intimacy, is the ambition which frequently shines through the traditions of the Companions, of being closely connected with Mahomet's supposed mysterious visitations or supernatural actions. To be *noticed* in the revelation was deemed the highest honour that could be aspired to; and in any way to be linked with the heavenly phases of his life, reflected back a portion of the divine lustre on the fortunate aspirant.* Thus a premium was put upon the invention or exaggeration of such super-human incidents.

B.—Under the same head are to be classed the attempts of narrators to enhance their labours and exploits, and to exaggerate their losses and perils in the service of the Prophet and of Islam. The tendency thus to appropriate a superior degree of merit is very obvious on the part of many of the companions of Mahomet.† It may occasionally be employed by the critic

* The following example will illustrate our meaning. Ayesha's party being delayed on an expedition, the verse permitting *Tayammum*, or substitution of sand for lustration, was revealed in the Coran. The honor conferred by this indirect connection with a divine revelation is thus eulogized by Useid:—"This is not the least of the divine favours poured out upon you, ye house of Abu Baer!" (*Wâchidi*, p. 111.) To have been the companion of Mahomet during the season of inspiration, at the supposed reception of a heavenly visitor, or at the performance of any wonderful work, conferred more or less similar distinction.

† We have many examples of the glory and honor received by those who had suffered persecution at Mecca for Islam. Thus when Omar was Caliph, Khobâb ibn al Aratt showed him the scars of the stripes he had received from the unbelieving Meccans twenty or thirty years before. "Omar seated him upon his *musnad*, saying, that there was but one man who was more worthy of this favor than Khobâb, namely, Balâl (who had also been sorely persecuted by the unbelievers.) But Khobâb replied,—'Why is he more worthy than I am? He had his friends among the idolaters whom the Lord raised up to help him. But I had none to help me. And I well remember one day they took me and kindled a fire for me, and threw me therein upon my back; and a man stamped with his foot upon my chest, my back being towards the ground. And when they uncovered my back, lo! it was blistered and white.' " (*Wâchidi*, p. 210.)

towards the exculpation of the Prophet from some questionable actions. For example, Amr ibn Omeya, in narrating his mission by Mahomet to assassinate Abu Sofîân, so magnifies the dangers and exploits of his adventure, as might have involved the whole story in suspicion, were there not collateral proof to support it.*

But, it may be asked, would not untrue or exaggerated tales like these receive a check from other parties, free from the interested motives of the narrator? They would to some extent. But to prove a negative position is generally a matter of difficulty, and would not often be attempted without some unusual cause, especially in the early spread of Islam, when the public mind was so impressible and credulous. Such traditions then were likely to be opposed only when they interfered with the private claims of others, or ran counter to public opinion, in which case they would fall into discredit and oblivion. Otherwise they would have every chance of being preserved and carried down, along the traditional stream of legend and of truth, and with it finding a place in the unquestioning registration of the second century.

c.—We have unquestionable evidence, that the bias of *party* effected a deep imprint on tradition. Where the result of this spirit was to produce or to embellish a story adverse to the interests of *another* party, and the denial of such story involved nothing prejudicial to the honour of Islam, it may be assumed that endeavours would be made to rebut the fabrication or embellishment, and the discussion so produced would subserve the purity of tradition. But this could only be the case occasionally. The tradition would often not be controverted at all; in other instances, it would perhaps at first be confined within the limits of the party in whose favor it originated; and under any circumstances, the reasoning in the preceding paragraph is

The same principle led the Moslems to magnify the hardships Mahomet himself endured; and lies at the bottom of Ayesha's strange exaggerations of the Prophet's poverty and frequent starvation, which she carries so far as to say, that she had not even oil to burn in her chamber while Mahomet lay dying there! The subsequent affluence and luxuries of the conquering nation, also led them by reaction to compare with fond regret their present state with their former simplicity and want, and even to weep at the remembrance.

Thus of the same Khobâb, it is recorded:—"He had a winding-sheet ready for himself of fine Coptic cloth; and he compared it with the wretched pall of Hamza (killed at Ohod;) and he contrasted his own poverty when he possessed not a dinar with his present state:—'and now I have in my chest by the house 40,000 *owcheas*. Verily, I fear that the sweets of the present world have hastened upon us. Our companions (who died in the first days of Islam) have received their reward in Paradise; but truly I fear lest my reward consist of these benefits I have obtained after their departure.'" (*Wâchidi*, p. 211.)

* See *Wâchidi*, p. 118, and *Hishâmi*, p. 450.

equally applicable here, so that without doubt a vast collection of exaggerated tales have come down to us, which owe their existence to party spirit.

By the "bias of party" is not simply to be understood the influence of *faction*, but likewise of all the lesser circles which formed the ramifications of Mussulman society. The former we are less in danger of overlooking. Where the full development of faction—as in the case of the Abbâssides and Omeiyads—has laid bare the passions and excesses to which this spirit may give rise, the reader is on his guard against misrepresentation; and he receives with caution the unnaturally darkened or resplendent phases of such characters as Ali and Abbâs, Muâvia and Abu Sofiân. But though on a less gigantic scale, the influences of tribe, of family, and of the smaller associations of party feeling attached to the several heroes of Islam, were equally real and effective. The spirit of clanship, which ran so high among the Arabs, and which Mahomet in vain endeavored to supplant by the brotherhood of the faith, perpetuated the confederacies and antipathies of ante-Mahometan Arabia far down into the annals of Islam, and often exerted a potent influence upon the destinies of the caliphate. It cannot be doubted that these combinations and prejudices imparted a strong and often deceptive hue to the sources of tradition. As an example, we may specify the rivalry which led the several families or parties to compete with each other for the earliest converts to Islam, until they arrived at the conclusion that some of their patrons were Mahometans before Mahomet himself.*

D.—We now come to the class of motives incomparably the most dangerous to the purity of tradition, namely, those which were *common to the whole Moslem body*. In the previous cases, the bias was confined to a fragment, and the remainder of the nation might form a check upon the fractional aberration. But here the bias was universal, pervading the *entire medium* through which we have received tradition, and leaving us, for the correction of its divergencies, no check whatever.

To this class must be assigned all traditions whose object it is to exalt Mahomet, and to invest him with supernatural attributes. Although in the Coran the Prophet disclaims

* See Sprenger's *Mohammed*, pp. 158, 162, &c.—vide also his *Notice in No. CXII. of the Asiatic Journal*, p. 123. "There is a great deal of sectarian spirit mixed up in the disputes who 'were the first believers?' The Sunnies say Abu Baer, and the Shiâhs say Ali." Tabari also starts another candidate, Zeid ibn Hâritha (p. 111). One of the traditions opposed to Abu Baer says, that *fifty* persons were believers before him! (*Ibid.*) Well then may Dr. Sprenger style these "childish disputes on the seniority of their sains in the Islam." (*Mohammed*, p. 158.) Yet he himself builds too much upon them.

the power of working miracles, yet he implies that there existed a continuous intercourse between himself and the agents of the other world. The whole Coran, indeed, assumes to be a message from the Almighty, communicated through Gabriel; and independently of it, that favoured angel was often referred to as bringing directions from the Lord for the guidance of his Prophet in the common concerns of life. The supposed communication with heavenly messengers, thus countenanced by Mahomet himself, was implicitly believed by his followers, and led them, even during his life-time, to regard him with a superstitious awe. On a subject so impalpable to sense, yet so readily perceivable by imagination, it may be fairly assumed, that reason had little share in controlling the fertile productions of fancy; that the conclusions of his susceptible and credulous followers far exceeded the premises granted by Mahomet himself; that even simple facts were construed by their excited faith as pregnant with marks of supernatural power and unearthly companionship; and that, after the object of their veneration had passed from their sight, fond devotion perpetuated and enhanced these fascinating legends. If the Prophet gazed into the heavens, or looked wistfully to the right hand or to the left, it was Gabriel with whom he was holding mysterious converse.* The passing gust raises a cloud from the sandy track; and the pious believer exults in the conviction that it is the dust of Gabriel and his mounted troop, who are scouring the plain, and going before them to shake the foundations of the doomed fortress.† On the field of Badr, three stormy blasts swept over the marshalled army: again, it is Gabriel, with a thousand horses, darting along to the succour of Mahomet, while Michael and Serâfil, each with a like angelic squadron, wheel to the right and to the left of the Moslem front.‡ Nay, the very dress and martial uniform of these helmed

* Vide *Wâchidi*, p. 33.—See also *Sprenger's Mohammed*, p. 112, note 5.

† How absurd soever the idea may seem, it is taken literally from the biographers of Mahomet, and relates to the expedition against the unfortunate Bani Coreitza. (*Wâchidi*, p. 114.) Mahomet countenanced, if he did not originate the notion.

‡ Vide *Wâchidi*, p. 114, and p. 100½. Similar statements are made regarding the battle of Honein. (*Wâchidi*, p. 130½.) At p. 198, the angelic host is represented in the uniform of Zobeir, one of Mahomet's companions, namely, with yellow turbans, on piebald horses. *Hishâmî* (p. 227) and *Tabarî* (p. 290) give their dress at the battles of Badr and Kheibar. The Meccans on their return, vanquished from Badr, are introduced as describing the warrior angels against whom they had to contend. (*Hishâmî*, p. 233—*Tabarî*, p. 301—*Caus. de Perc.*, vol. III., pp. 66 & 73.) Various traditionists assert that the heads of the unbelievers dropped off before the Moslem swords came near them, the invisible scimitars of the angels doing the work with greater rapidity and effect than the grosser steel of Medina. (*Hishâmî*, p. 227—*Tabarî*, p. 289.) Gabriel fought alongside of Abu Bacr, Michael alongside of Ali, and Isrâfil looked on. (*Wâchidi*, p. 212½.) Gabriel, after the battle of Badr was concluded, asked leave of Mahomet, without which he could not retire!

angels, are detailed even by the honest Wäckidi, with as much *naïveté* as if they had been veritable warriors of flesh and blood! Such is but a specimen of the vein of legend and extravagance which pervades tradition.

It will frequently be a question, extremely difficult and sometimes impossible, to decide what portions of these supernatural stories either originated in Mahomet himself, or received his countenance, and what portion owed its birth, after he was gone, to the excited imagination of his followers. No doubt real facts have not seldom been thus adorned or distorted by the colouring of a superstitious fancy. The subjective conceptions of the fond believer have been reflected back upon the biography of the Prophet, and have encircled even the objective realities of his life, as in the pictures of our saints, with a lustrous halo. The false colouring and fictitious light so intermingle with the picture, as to make it often beyond the reach of analytical criticism.*

E.—To the same universal desire of glorifying Mahomet, must be ascribed the unquestioned miracles with which even the earliest traditions abound. They are such as the following. A tree from a distance moves towards the Prophet, ploughing up the earth as it advances, and then similarly retires; oft-repeated attempts to murder him are miraculously averted; distant occurrences are instantaneously revealed, and future events

(Wäckidi, p. 102½.) Mahomet had a conversation with Gabriel, related by Hâritha, who actually saw the angel. (Wäckidi, p. 276.) These instances are given simply as samples, to bear out what might otherwise have appeared over-statement in the text.

The following may be viewed as a normal type of a large class of miraculous stories. Othmân being attacked by the conspirators made no resistance, and when asked the cause, replied to the effect that "Mahomet had made with him a covenant, and he patiently abided thereby." The Moslems afterwards (concluding, no doubt, that it was impossible their Prophet should not have foreseen so important an event as the murder of his beloved son-in-law) referred this speech to a supposed *prophecy* by Mahomet, who told Othmân "that the Lord would clothe him with a garment, and that he was not to take it off at the call of the disaffected." (Wäckidi, p. 191.) The garment was interpreted to be the *caliphate*, which the conspirators called upon him to abdicate. Again Ayesha was not at a loss to conjure up a scene to give a farther clue to these mysterious facts. "When Mahomet lay on his death-bed, he summoned Othmân, and desired me to depart out of the chamber; and Othmân sat down by the dying Prophet; and as he spake with him, the colour of Othmân changed." Without doubt, say the credulous believers, this was Mahomet foretelling to his son-in-law the violent death that awaited him. (Wäckidi, p. 191½.) Such *suppositions* and *explanations*, in the course of time, were repeated as *facts*.

* The following tradition may perhaps be thought illustrative of this position. The corpse of Saad lay in an empty room. Mahomet entered alone, picking his steps carefully, as if he walked in the midst of men seated closely on the ground. On being asked the cause of so curious a proceeding, he replied, "True, there were no men in the room, but it was so filled with angels, all seated on the ground, that I found nowhere to sit, until one of the angels spread his wing for me on the ground, and then I sat down thereon." (Wäckidi, p. 264½.) It is almost impossible to say what in this Mahomet's own, and what has been concocted for him.

foretold; a large company is fed from victuals hardly adequate to the supply of a single person; his prayer draws down immediate rain from heaven, or causes an equally sudden cessation. A very frequent and favourite class of miracles is for the Prophet to fill the udders of dry goats by his simple touch, and to cause floods of water to well forth from parched fountains, and to gush out from empty vessels, or even from betwixt his fingers.* With respect to all such stories, it is sufficient to refer to what has been already said, that they are opposed to the clear declarations and pervading sense of the Coran.

It by no means, however, follows, that because a tradition relates a miracle, the collateral facts in the narrative are thereby discredited. It may be that the facts were imagined to illustrate or embellish a current miracle; but it is also possible, that the miracle was imagined to embellish or account for some well-founded facts. In the former case, the supposed facts are worthless; in the latter, they may be true and valuable. If other evidence be wanting, the main drift and apparent design of the narrative is all that can guide the critic between these alternatives.

F.—The same propensity to fabricate the marvellous must be borne in mind when we peruse the puerile tales and extravagant legends, which are put by tradition into Mahomet's mouth. The Coran, it is true, imparts a wider base of likelihood to the narration by Mahomet of such tales, than to his assumption of miraculous powers. When he ventured to place such fanciful and unworthy fictions as those of "Solomon and the Genii," of "the seven sleepers," and "the adventures of Dhûl Carnein," in the pages of a *Divine Revelation*, to what puerilities might he not stoop in the familiarity of social conversation? It must, on the other hand, be remembered, that Mahomet was taciturn, laconic, and reserved; and is therefore not likely to have given forth more than an infinitesimal part of the vast details of legend and fable which are stored up as his in tradition. They are probably the growth of successive years, each of which deposited its accretion around the nucleus of the Prophet's pregnant words, if indeed such nucleus there were at all. For example, the ground-work of the elaborate pictures and gorgeous scenery of the Prophet's heavenly journey, lies in a very short and simple recital in the Coran. That he subsequently expanded this ground-work by amusing his companions with all the minutiae which have been brought down to us by tradition, is perhaps possible. But it is also possible, and (by the analogy

* All these and scores of like incidents adorn the pages of the honest Wäckidi, as well as the other biographers and traditionists. Sprenger has over-praised Wäckidi's discrimination and sense. (*Mohammed*, p. 72.)

of Mahomet's miracles) incomparably more probable, that the vast majority of these fancies have no other origin than the heated imaginations of the early Mussulmans.*

g.—Indirectly connected with Mahomet's life, but directly with the credit and evidences of Islam, is another class of narrations, which would conjure up on all sides prophecies regarding the founder of the faith and anticipations of his approach. These were probably, for the most part, suspended upon some general declaration or incidental remark of the Prophet, which his enthusiastic followers deemed themselves bound to prove and illustrate. For example, the Jews are often accused in the Coran of wilfully rejecting Mahomet, "although they 'recognized him as they did one of their own sons.'" Accordingly, tradition provides us with a host of Jewish rabbis and Christian monks, who found it written in their books that the last of the Prophets was at this time to arise at Mecca: they assert, that not only his name, but his personal appearance, manners and character are therein so depicted to the life, that recognition must be instantaneous; and among other absurd particulars, the very city of *Medina* is pointed out as the place whither he would "emigrate!" Again, the Jews are accused of grudging that a Prophet had arisen among the Arabs, and that the prophetic dignity had thus departed from their nation; and in fit illustration, we have innumerable stories of Mahomet being recognized by the rabbins, and of attempts made by them to kill him; and this, too, long before he had any suspicion himself that he was to be a Prophet, *nay during his very infancy!* It is enough to have alluded to this class of fabrications.†

* See *Sprenger*, pp. 123—137, where these principles are admitted. The learned doctor, at the same time, gives a clue to the real facts of the case. "We must never forget," he well writes, "that when his religion was victorious, he was surrounded by the most enthusiastic admirers, whose craving faith could be satiated only by the most extravagant stories. Their heated imagination would invent them by itself; he only needed to give the key, and to nod assent, to augment the number of his miracles to the infinite." (P. 136.) His theory however attributes more than we should be disposed to do to Mahomet in the construction of the legend.

It is curious, as illustrating the Mahometan canon of criticism, to observe that this wild legend is, *according to its rules*, one of the best established in tradition, not only in the main features, but in all its marvellous details. Sprenger, who is too much guided by the canon, writes here from the Mahometan stand point. "Though the accounts, which we find in Arabic and Persian authors, are not free from later additions, the numerous records of Mahomet's own words give us the assurance that the narrative, in its main features, emanated from himself. *There is no event in his life, on which we have more numerous and genuine traditions than on his nightly journey.*" (P. 126.)

† As specimens, the Arabic scholar may consult *Wâchidi*, pp. 29, 30, 30½, 31, 35½, 79½, and the whole chapter, *Description of Mahomet in the Old Testament and Gospel*, p. 69½. The key to Mahomet's assertions, as given above, is simply the two facts; 1st, that the Jews *did* look for a Prophet to come, which expectation Mahomet affected to appropriate to himself; 2nd, that they held this Prophet would be of the seed of David, which assertion Mahomet believed, or pretended to believe, was founded in mere envy and a grudge against himself.

H.—Such unblushing inventions will lead us to receive with suspicion the whole series of tales in which it is pretended that Mahomet and his religion were *foreshadowed*, and in which we are called upon to believe that pious men before the Prophet anticipated many of the peculiarities of Islam. It is a fond conceit of Mahomet that Islam is as old as Adam, and has from the beginning been the faith of all good men, who looked forward to himself as the great Prophet, who was to wind up the Divine dispensation. It was therefore very natural for his credulous followers to carry out this idea, and to invest any serious-minded man, or earnest enquirer, who preceded Mahomet, with a dawning of that divine effulgence which was about to burst upon the world.*

I.—It is to the same spirit that we are to attribute the continual and palpable endeavour to make Mahometan traditionally with our Scriptures, and with Jewish tradition. This canon has little application to the biography of Mahomet himself, but it has a wide and most effective range in reference to the legendary history of his ancestors and of early Arabia. The desire to regard, and possibly the endeavour to prove, the Prophet of Islam a descendant of Ishmael, began, as we think, even in his life-time. Many Jews, versed in the Scriptures, and won over by the inducements of Islam, proved false to their own creed, and pandered their knowledge to the service of Ma-

* Such are the tales regarding Zeid, (*Hishâmi*, pp. 55—59—*Wâchidi*, p. 30.) who, it is said, spent his life in searching "for the religion of Abraham," till at last a monk, meeting him at Balca, sent him back to Mecca to await the Prophet about to arise there! Sentences of the Coran, and prayers in Mahomet's style, are put into his lips by the traditionists. The discreditable nature of these narratives is palpable from their very style and contents: (*vide Sprenger's Mohammed*, p. 43, note 4.) Still we are far from denying that Zeid's enquiries and doctrines may have constituted one of the causes which prompted Mahomet to enquiry and religious thought. But whatever grounds may exist for regarding Zeid as a philosophical or a religious enquirer, we should only have smiled at the clumsiness of the structure erected by the traditionists on so slender a base, had it not been that Dr. Sprenger appears to recognize it, and even builds thereon in part his own theory that Mahomet "did nothing more than gather the floating elements which had been imported or originated by others;" and instead of carrying Arabia along with him, was himself carried along "by the irresistible force of the spirit of the time:" (*vide Life of Mohammed*, pp. 39—49.)

Arabia was no doubt prepared for a religious change; Judaism and Christianity had sown the seeds of divine knowledge every here and there, and many enquiring minds may have groped the way to truth, and paved the road for Mahomet's investigations and convictions. But to none of these is Islam attributable. Its peculiarities are all the Prophet's own. Mahomet alone appears to us responsible for its faults, as well as entitled to all the credit (whatever it is) of being its sole founder. It is the workmanship of his wonderful mind, and bears in every part the impress of his individuality. Such passages as the following appear to us strangely untrue:—"The Islam is not the work of Mahomet; it is not the doctrine of the Impostor" (*Sprenger's Mohammed*, p. 175.) Yet the learned doctor charges him with its faults: "There is however no doubt that the impostor has defiled it by his immorality and perverseness of mind, and that most of the objectionable doctrines are his." (*Ibid.*) This is hardly the even-handed justice we should have expected from the philosophical Sprenger.

homet and his followers. Jewish tradition had been long notorious in Medîna, and the Mahometan system was now made to fit upon it; for Islam did not ignore Christianity and Judaism, but merely superseded them as the whole does a part, and as that which is complete swallows up an imperfect commencement. Hence arose such absurd anachronisms, as the attempts to identify Cahtân with Joktan (between whom, at the most moderate estimate, fifteen centuries intervene;) and hence were forged the earlier links of the Abrahamic genealogy, together with numberless tales of Ishmael and the Israelites. These, though pretending to be regular traditions, can generally be recognized as plagiarisms from Scripture, or as Arabian legends twisted into accommodation with it.

J.—Of analogous nature may be classed such traditions as affirm that the Jews and Christians mutilated or interpolated their Scriptures. We believe, after a careful examination into the Coran, that Mahomet himself never expressed the smallest doubt at any period of his life, either as to the authority or genuineness of the Old and New Testaments extant in his time. He was profuse in assurances, that his system corresponded with both, and that he had been foretold by former prophets; and as the Bible was little known among the generality of his followers, his assertions were implicitly believed. But as Islam spread abroad, and began to include countries where the Holy Scriptures were familiarly read, the discrepancies between them and the Coran became patent to all. The sturdy believer, with an easy conscience, laid the entire blame at the door of the dishonest Jews and Christians, (the former of whom their Prophet had accused in the Coran of hiding and “dislocating” the prophecies of himself); and according to the Moslem wont, a host of stories, with all the necessary details of Jewish fabrication and excision, soon grew up, exactly suited to the necessities of Islam.*

K.—If it appear strange that extravagant and unreasonable stories of the kind alluded to in the few last paragraphs should not have been contradicted by the more upright and sensible Mahometans of the first age, and thus nipped in the bud, it must be kept in view that criticism and freedom of opinion (as has been already shown,) were completely stifled under the crushing dogmas of Islam. Every simpleton might ima-

* An instance of this very numerous class of stories will be found in *Wachidi*, p. 70. A Copt, reading his uncle's Bible, is struck by finding two leaves closely glued together. On opening them, he discovers the most copious details regarding Mahomet, as a Prophet about immediately to appear. His uncle was displeased at his curiosity and beat him, saying the Prophet had not yet arisen. (*Cnf. Sprenger's Mohammed*, p. 140.)

gine, and any designing man could with ease invent, such traditions; but when once in currency, the attempt to disprove them would be difficult and dangerous. Supposing that no well-known fact, or received dogma, were contradicted by them, upon what general considerations were they to be rebutted? If any one, for instance, had contended that all human experience was contradicted by the marvellous foreknowledge of the Jews regarding Mahomet, he would have been scouted as an infidel. Honest enquiry into the genuineness of holy Scripture would have sapped the foundations of Islam, and was therefore out of the question. Who would have dared to argue against a miraculous tale, that did honour to Mahomet, on the ground that it was in itself improbable, that the narrator might have imbibed a false impression, or that even in the Coran miraculous powers were never arrogated by the Prophet? The argument would have placed the neck of the logician in peril of the sword; for it has been already shown, that the faith and the polity of the nation were one; and that free opinions and heresy were synonymous with conspiracy and rebellion.* It was thus that, under the shelter of the civil arm, and of the fanatical credulity of the nation at large, these marvellous legends grew up, in perfect security from the attacks of doubt and of honest enquiry.

L.—The converse of the principle laid down above is likewise true; that is to say, traditions, founded upon good evidence, and undisputed, because notorious in the first stage of Islam, gradually fell into disrepute, or were entirely rejected, because they appeared to dishonor Mahomet, or countenance some heretical opinion. The nature of the case renders it impossible to prove this position so fully as any of the preceding, because we can now have no trace of such traditions as were early dropped. But we discover the

* See also an absurd tradition of something of a similar nature quoted at p. 408 of Volume XVII. of this *Review*. The Arabic student will find this well illustrated by the treatment which the "hypocrites" or "disaffected" are represented as receiving even during Mahomet's life-time. On the expedition to Tabûk, Mahomet prayed for rain, which accordingly descended. A perverse doubter, however, said, "it was but a chance cloud that happened to pass." Again the Prophet's camel strayed, and the doubter said, "Doth not Mahomet deem himself a prophet? doth he not profess to bring intelligence to you from the Heavens? yet is he unable to tell where his own camel is!" "Ye servants of the Lord!" exclaimed his comrade, "there is a plague in this place, and I knew it not. Get out from my tent, enemy of the Lord! Wretch, remain not in my society!" Mahomet had of course supernatural intimation conveyed to him not only of the doubter's speech, but of where the camel was, and the doubter afterwards repented and was confirmed in the faith. (*Hishâmi*, p. 391.)

Omar's sword was readily unsheathed ever and anon to punish such sceptical temerity, and Mahomet himself frequently visited it, in the early part of his Medina career, with assassination, and on his conquest of Mecca, by open execution.

spirit working even in the second and third centuries. There is an apparently well-supported story, which attributes to Mahomet a momentary lapse and compromise with the idolatry of Mecca, and traditions on the subject from various sources are related by the earliest and the best biographers. But the theologians began to deem the opinion dangerous or heretical that Mahomet should thus have degraded himself "after he had received the truth," and the occurrence is therefore denied, or entirely omitted, by some of the later writers, though the facts are so patent, that the more candid fully admit them.* The principle thus found in existence, in the second and third centuries, may be presumed to have been at work also in the first.

M.—The system of *pious frauds* is not abhorrent from the principles of Islam. Deception is, by the current theology of Mahometans, allowable in certain circumstances. The Prophet himself, both by precept and example, encouraged the notion, that to tell an untruth is, on some occasions, allowable; and what occasion would approve itself as more justifiable, nay meritorious, than that of furthering the interests of Islam?†

* Dr. Sprenger has some valuable remarks on this subject in his notice of Tabari. (*Asiat. Journ.*, No. CCXII., p. 19 *et. seq.*) The story is honestly told by Wäckidi and Tabari, and (as we find by a quotation in the latter) by Ibn Ishâc; but it is entirely and tacitly omitted by Ibn Hishâm, although his book professes to embrace that of Ibn Ishâc. (*Vide Wäckidi*, p. 29—*Tabari*, p. 10, and *Sprenger's Mohammed*, p. 184.)

† The author of the *Mawâhib Alladoniya*, in an interesting passage in elucidation of the authenticity of the story, traces the objections and doubts to fear of heresy and injury to Islam; thus:

قد قيل ان هذه القصة من وضع الزنادقة لا اصل لها وليس كذلك
بل لها اصل "It is said that this story is of a heretical character and

has no foundation. But it is not so; and is really well founded." And again,

ثم رده من طريق النظر بان ذلك لو وقع لارتد كثير من اسلم قال
ولم ينقل ذلك "Again (another author) rejects it, because if it had really

happened, many of those who had believed, would have become apostates, which was not the case."

† The common Moslem belief is, that it is allowable to tell a falsehood on four occasions: 1st, to save one's life; 2nd, to effect a peace or reconciliation; 3rd, to persuade a woman; 4th, on the occasion of a journey or expedition.

The *first* is borne out by Mahomet's express sanction. Ammâr ibn Yâsir was sorely persecuted by the pagans of Mecca, and denied the faith for his deliverance. The Prophet approved of his conduct:—"If they do this again, *then repeat the same recantation to them again.*" (*Wäckidi*, p. 227½) Another tradition preserved in the family of Yâsir, is as follows:—"The idolators seized Ammâr, and they let him not go until he had abused Mahomet and spoken well of their gods. He then repaired to the Prophet, who asked of him what had happened."—"Evil, oh, Prophet of the Lord! I was not let go until I had abused thee, and spoken well of their gods."—"But how," replied Mahomet, "dost thou find thine own heart?"—"Secure and steadfast in the faith."—"Then," said Mahomet, "*if they repeat the same, do thou too repeat the same.*" (*Ibidem.*) Mahomet also said that Ammâr's lie was better than Abu Jahl's truth.

The early Moslems would suppose it to be fitting and right, that a divine religion should be supported by the evidence of miracles, and they would think they were doing God service by building up testimony in accordance with the supposition. The case of our own religion, whose purer morality renders the attempt incomparably the more inexcusable, shows that *pious* fabrications of this description easily commend themselves to the conscience, where there is the inclination and the opportunity for their perpetration.

There were indeed conscientious persons among the early Moslems, who would probably have scrupled at such open frauds; but these are the very individuals from whom we have the fewest traditions. We read of some cautious men among the "Companions,"* who, perceiving the difficulty of reciting accounts of their Prophet with perfect accuracy, and perhaps disgusted with the bare-faced effrontery of the propagators of unfounded traditions, abstained entirely from repeating the sayings of Mahomet. But regarding the Companions in general, from whom the great mass of tradition is drawn, and their immediate successors, we are not aware that any satisfactory means are possessed of classifying them into parties, of which the trustworthiness would vary to any great extent. Some we

The *second* is directly sanctioned by the following tradition:—"That person is not a liar, who makes peace between two people, and speaks good words to do away their quarrel, *although they should be lies.*" (*Mishcat*, Vol. II., p. 427.)

As to the *third*, we have a melancholy instance that Mahomet did not think it wrong to make false promises to his wives, in the matter of his slave girl Maria. And regarding the *fourth*, it was his *constant* habit in projecting expeditions (excepting only that to l'abûk) to conceal his intentions, and to give out that he was about to proceed in another direction from the true one. (*Hishâmi*, p. 392,—*Wâchidi*, p. 133½.)

* Thus Omar declined to give certain information, saying, "If it were not that I feared lest I should add to the facts in relating them, or take therefrom, verily I should tell you." (*Wâchidi*, p. 236½.) Similar traditions are given regarding Othmân. (*Ibid*, p. 168½, 189½.) Abdallah ibn Masûd was so afraid in repeating Mahomet's words, that he always guarded his relation by this conditional clause, "near or like this,"

but one day, as he repeated a tradition, the words *قال رسول الله* "The Prophet of the Lord said," escaped his lips, and he became oppressed with anguish, so that the sweat dropped from his forehead. Then he said, "If the Lord will, the Prophet may have said more than that, or less, or near unto it." (*Ibid*, p. 209.) This is no doubt greatly exaggerated.—"Saad ibn Abi Wâchhâs was asked a question and he kept silence, saying *I fear that if I tell you one thing, ye will go and add thereto as from me, a hundred.*" (*Ibid*, p. 206½.) So Abdallah ibn Zobeir was asked, "Why do we not hear thee telling stories regarding the Prophet, as such and such persons tell?" He replied, "It is very true that I kept close by the Prophet from the time I first believed, (and therefore am intimately acquainted with his words); but I heard him say, 'Whosoever shall repeat a lie concerning me, his resting place shall be in hell-fire.'" (*Ibid*, p. 199.) So in explaining why some of the principal *companions* have left no traditions, Wâchidi writes, "From others, there are no remains of tradition regarding the Prophet, although they were more in his company, sitting and hearing him, than those who have left us traditions, and this we attribute to their fear (of giving forth erroneous traditions)" &c. (*Ibid*, p. 176½.)

know were more constantly with Mahomet, and had therefore better opportunities than others for acquiring information; some, like the garrulous Ayesha, are more given to gossiping tales and trifling frivolities; but none of them, as far as we can judge, is free from the tendency to exalt Mahomet at the expense of truth, or can be withheld from the marvellous by the most glaring violations of probability or of reason. Such at least is the impression derived from their evidence in the shape *in which it has reached us*.

N.—The aberrations from the truth hitherto noticed are presumed to have proceeded from some species of bias, the nature of which we have endeavoured to trace. But the testimony of the Companions, as delivered to us, is so fickle and so unaccountably capricious, that even where no motive whatever can be guessed at, and where there were the fullest opportunities of observation, the traditions often flatly contradict one another. For instance, a score of witnesses affirm that Mahomet dyed his hair; they mention the substances he used; and some not only maintain that they were eye-witnesses of this during the Prophet's life, but actually produced relics of his hair after his death, on which the dye was visible. A score of others, possessed of equally good means of information, assert that he *never* dyed his hair, and that moreover he had no need to do so, as his grey-hairs were so few, that they might be counted.* Again, with respect to his *signet ring*—a matter involving no faction or dogma—the traditions are most discordant. One party relate, that feeling the want of a seal for his despatches, the Prophet had a signet ring prepared for that purpose of pure silver. Another party assert, that Khâlid ibn Saïd made for himself an iron ring, plated with silver; and that Mahomet took a fancy to this, and appropriated it to his own use. A third tradition states, that the ring was brought by Amr ibn Saïd from Abyssinia; and yet a fourth that Muâdz ibn Jabal had it engraved for himself in Yemen! One set of traditions hold

* Vide *Wâchidi*, pp. 83½—85. Even the number of the white hairs is given by various authorities as 17, 18, 20, or 30. Some say, that when he oiled his head, they appeared, others that that process concealed them. As to the color used, the accounts also differ. One says he employed Henna and Katam, which gave a reddish tinge, but that he liked *yellow* best. One traditionist approves of a jet black dye, while others say the Prophet forbade this. The following traditions on the subject are curious:—Mahomet said, "Those who dye their hair black like the crops of pigeons, shall never smell the smell of Paradise." "In the day of judgment, the Lord will not look upon him who dyes his hair black." Again, Mahomet not recognizing a grey-headed man, who came to him one day with his hair dyed black, asked who he was. The man gave his name. "Nay," replied the Prophet, "*but thou art the Devil!*" The only possible supposition is that these traditions were invented by grey-headed men, to countenance and sanction the several modes of dyeing they themselves practised.

that Mahomet wore this ring on his right hand, another on his left; one that he wore the seal inside, others that he wore it outside; and one that the inscription upon it was *صدق الله* while all the rest declare that it was *محمد رسول الله*.— Now all these traditions refer to one and the same ring, because it is repeatedly added, that after Mahomet's death, it was worn by Abu Bacr, by Omar, and by Othmân, and was lost by the latter in the well Arîs. There is still another tradition, that neither the Prophet nor any of his immediate successors ever wore a ring at all.* Now all these varying narratives are not given doubtfully as conjectures, which might either be right or wrong, but they are told with the full assurance of apparent certainty, and with such minute particulars and circumstantiality of detail, as to leave the impression on the simple reader's mind, that each of the narrators had the most intimate acquaintance with the subject.

In these instances, then, which might easily be multiplied to an indefinite extent, to what tendency or habit of mind, but the sheer love of story-telling, are we to attribute such gratuitous and wholesale fabrications? The principle to be hence deduced, is that tradition generally cannot be received with too much caution, or exposed in our critical crucible to too strong a tentative process; and that no important fact can be received as securely proved by mere tradition, unless there be some ground of probability, analogy or collateral evidence in its favor.

III. We shall now proceed to mention the considerations, which should be regarded as *confirming* the credit of a tradition, as well as the caution to be observed in their application.

A.—Unanimous consent, or general agreement, between apparently independent traditions, may generally be regarded as a presumption of credibility. We know that the original sources of tradition were numerous; and as we have already stated, the streams emitted by them often flow downward through separate channels. Cumulative evidence of this description is therefore a presumption, that the circumstances common to so many separate traditions were currently reported or believed at the point of divergence, that is, in the era immediately succeeding Mahomet's death. But there is a danger to be here guarded against; for even in traditions apparently of the nature contemplated, close agreement may be a ground of distrust. It may argue, that though attributed to different sources, they belong to one and the same family, perhaps of spurious origin, long subse-

* All these will be found in *Wâchidi*, pp. 91½—92½.

quent to the time of Mahomet. If the uniformity be so great as to exclude circumstantial variety, it will be strong ground for believing that either the original source is not of old date, or that the channels of conveyance have not been kept distinct. Some degree of incidental discrepancy must be looked for, and it will improve rather than injure the character of the evidence. Thus the frequent variations in the day of the week, on which remarkable events occurred, are just what we should expect in independent traditions having their origin in hearsay; and the simplicity with which these are placed in juxta-position, speaks strongly for the honesty of the collectors, and for the absence of attempt to blend or harmonize the differing accounts.

The same argument may be applied to the several parts of a tradition. Certain portions of several corresponding traditions may agree almost verbally together, while other portions may contain circumstantial variations; and it is possible, that the latter may have a bona-fide independent origin, which the former could not pretend to. The intimate union, in separate, but corresponding traditions, of fabulous narrations, characterized by a suspicious uniformity, and of well-grounded facts, circumstantially varying, receives an excellent illustration from the story of Mahomet's infantile days, derived from his nurse Halîma, and handed down to us in three distinct traditions. "These three accounts," says Dr. Sprenger, "agree almost 'literally in the marvellous, but they differ in the facts.'"* The *marvellous* was derived from one common source of fabrication, but the facts from original authorities. Hence the uniformity of the one, and the variations in the other.

Entire verbal coincidence may sometimes involve a species of evidence peculiar to itself; it may point to a common and recorded original, of date antecedent to that probably at which most of the other traditions were reduced to writing. There is no reason for believing that any such records were made till long after the era of Mahomet, and they can therefore assume for themselves none of the merit of contemporaneous remains. They may, however, claim the advantages of considerable antiquity, as in the case of Zohri's history of the Prophet's military conquests, which was probably recorded about the close of the first century.†

B.—Correspondence with facts mentioned or alluded to in the Coran, will generally impart credit to traditional narration. Some of the most important incidents, connected

* Vide *Sprenger's Life of Mohammed*, p. 78, note 3.

† This will be farther noticed below.



with Mahomet's battles, as well as with a variety of domestic and political matters, are thus attested. This ground of confirmation may, however, be deceptive, for the allusion in the Coran may have *given rise* to the tradition. The story, if not from the first an actual fraud, may possibly have originated in some paraphrastic comment or illustrative supposition, which afterwards became transmitted into a confident narrative of fact. For example, in the Coran there occurs the following verse:—*Remember the favour of the Lord unto thee, when certain men designed to stretch forth their hands against thee, and the Lord held back from thee their hands.** By some this passage is supposed to refer to Mahomet's escape from Mecca; but the craving after circumstantiality not being satisfied with this tame interpretation, several stories have been invented, in which an enemy's hand, already brandishing the sword over Mahomet's head, has been miraculously staid by Gabriel.† Again, the discomfiture of the army of Abraha, shortly before the birth of Mahomet, is thus poetically celebrated in Sura CV.:—*And did not the Lord send against them flocks of little birds, which cast upon them small clay stones, and made them like unto the stubble of which the cattle have eaten?* This probably is only a highly coloured metaphor for the general destruction of the army by the ravages of small-pox.‡ But in whatever light viewed, it has formed the starting point for the imaginations of the traditionists, who give us the most matter-of-fact details of the kind of bird, the size and material of the stones, the precise mode in which they struck the enemy, &c. &c., as if they had themselves been eye-witnesses of the portent

* Sura, v. 12.

† In the attack upon the Bani Ghatfân, we learn from Wäckidi, that whilst Mahomet was resting under a tree, the enemy's leader came stealthily up, and snatching his sword, exclaimed, "Who is there to defend thee against me this day?"—"The Lord," replied the Prophet; whereupon Gabriel struck the man upon his chest, and the sword falling from his hand, Mahomet in his turn seized it, and retorted the question on his adversary, who immediately became a convert; "and with reference to this," it is added, "*was Sura v. 12 revealed.*" (Wäckidi, p. 104.) Vide also *Weil's Mohammed*, p. 121, where the story is related; but at p. 257 (note 397,) the learned doctor, (on account of the numerous attempts at assassination and marvellous escapes his biographers tell of Mahomet,) not without reason regrets the respect with which he had previously treated it. The tale is a second time clumsily repeated by the biographers, almost in the same terms, in the expedition to Dzât al Ricâ, and here Hishâmi adds, "Regarding this event, Sura v. 12 was revealed, but others attribute the passage to the attempt of Amr ibn Jahsh, one of the Bani Nadhir," who it is pretended tried to roll down a stone upon the Prophet from the roof of a house. (*Hishâmi*, p. 283—*Wäckidi*, p. 110)—Compare also Sale's note on the verse.) Thus we have three or four different incidents to which the passage is applied, some of them apparently fabricated to suit it.

‡ The metaphor was probably suggested by the name for small-pox (حَبَّ) signifying also "small stones;" and by the hard and gravelly feeling of the pustules. (See *Hishâmi*, p. 19.)

—and the whole of this has evidently no other foundation than the verse above quoted, which the credulous Moslems having interpreted literally, deemed it necessary to clothe with ample illustrations. These are but types of the puerile and extravagant legends, which have been framed out of nothing, and raised upon a supposed Coranic foundation purely imaginary.

C.—Wherever a tradition contains any thing in disparagement of Mahomet, such as an indignity shown to him by his followers, or by his enemies, after his emigration (for then the period of his persecution and humiliation had passed, and that of his exaltation arrived), his failure in any enterprise or laudable endeavour, or in fine, any thing at variance, either in fact or doctrine, with the principles and tendencies of Islam, there will be strong reason for admitting it as authentic; because, otherwise, it seems hardly credible that such a tradition could be fabricated, or having been fabricated, that it could obtain currency among the followers of Mahomet. At the same time we must be careful not to apply this rule to all that we consider discreditable or opposed to morality. So cruelty however inhuman, and revenge the most implacable, when practised against infidels, were regarded by the first followers of Islam as highly meritorious; and the rude civilization of Arabia admitted with complacency a coarseness both in language and behaviour, which we should look upon as the most reprehensible indecency. These and similar exceptions must be made from this otherwise universal and effective canon.

D.—There is embodied in tradition a source of information far more authentic than any to which we have yet alluded, but unfortunately of very limited extent:—we mean the transcripts of treaties purporting to have been dictated by Mahomet, and recorded in his presence.

It has been before shown, that the traditions we now possess were not, at least generally, recorded in the time of Mahomet: and that, even if they were occasionally committed to writing, we have no evidence regarding the subsequent fate of such memoranda, and no criteria for distinguishing, in our present stores, the traditions possibly founded upon such notes, from those that originated, and were for a long time sustained, by purely oral means. In a far different category are the treaties of Mahomet to be placed. They consist of compacts entered into by him with the surrounding tribes of Arabia, Jewish and Christian, as well as Pagan and Moslem, which having been reduced to writing, were attested by one or more of his followers. They are of course confined to the period succeeding

the Prophet's flight to Medîna, and acquisition of political influence, and, from the nature of the case, are limited to the recital of a few simple facts. But these facts again form valuable supports to the traditional outline, and, especially where they detail the relations of Islam with the neighbouring Jewish and Christian tribes, are possessed of the highest interest.

In Wâckidi's biography there is a section expressly devoted to the transcription of such treaties, and it contains two or three scores of them. Over and over again, the author (in the end of the second or beginning of the third century) states that he had copied these from the original treaties, or recorded their purport from the testimony of those who had seen them. "They were still in force," writes Dr. Sprenger, "in the time of Hârûn Al Rashîd" (A. H. 170—193,) and were then collected.* This is quite conceivable, for they were often recorded upon leather,† and would invariably be preserved with care, as the charters of privilege to those in whose favor they were concluded. Some of the most interesting of them, as the terms allowed to the Jews of Kheibar, and to the Christians of Najrân, formed the basis of political events in the caliphates of Abu Bacr and Omar; and the concessions made in others to Jewish and Christian tribes, are satisfactory proof that they were not fabricated by Mahometans; while it is equally clear that they would never have been acknowledged or made current by them if counterfeited by a Jewish or a Christian hand.

Wherever then, we have good reason for regarding such treaties as authentic, they may be placed, as to historical authority, almost on a par with the Coran.‡

* Sprenger's Mohammed, p. 63.

† Instances of this have been given above.

‡ The following are the chief references to the extant originals of such treaties:—

1. Hishâm ibn Mohammed relates that a man of the Tai tribe told him that Walid ibn Jabir sent an embassy to Mahomet, who wrote to them a letter then extant and in the possession of his tribe at Jabalein. (*Wâckidi*, p. 54.)

2. Wâckidi gives a copy of the treaty Mahomet entered into with the chief of Dûmat al Jandal, the original of which an old man of the people of Dûma showed him. (*Id.* p. 56½.)

3. Wâckidi copied a letter (apparently original) from Mahomet to the people of Adzruh (a Jewish settlement on the Aelanitic gulph) and gives the words of it. (*Id.*, p. 57.)

4. Mahomet gave to Rufâd ibn Amr ibn Jadah al Fulj, a written treaty "which that family now possesses." (*Id.*, p. 59½.)

5. Zoheir, who came from Mahrah to Mahomet, got from him a written treaty "which is with the family to this day." (*Id.*, p. 69.)

Wâckidi read the original document in which Arcam, one of the Companions, devoted his house (famous in the Prophet's Meccan history) to sacred purposes. (*Id.*, p. 226.)

Besides these, there are a great number of treaties and letters to the various chiefs and tribes in Arabia, introduced *in extenso*, into the biographical writings; and although it is not expressly so stated, it is extremely probable that these were in many

In cases of official deputations to Mahomet, it is sometimes stated that the account is derived from the family or tribe which made the deputation, and which had preserved a written memorial of the circumstance. We may view such accounts as undoubtedly founded on fact, for the family or clan would naturally treasure up in the most careful way any memorials of the manner in which the Prophet had received or honored them, although there would be a tendency in all such statements to self-aggrandizement.*

Another traditionary source, possessing peculiar evidence, takes its rise in the verses and poetical fragments attributed to the time of Mahomet. Some of these profess to be the composition of persons who died before the Prophet, as *Abu Tâlib*; and others, of those who survived him, as *Hassân ibn Thâbit*. There can be no question as to the great antiquity of these remains, though we may not be able to fix exactly the period of their composition. With respect to such as purport to be of date *preceding* Mahomet's death, when we consider the poetical habits of the nation, and their faculty of preserving poetry by memory,† together with the ancient style and language of the poetry itself, it cannot certainly be deemed improbable that the verses should be in reality the work of the parties to whom they are ascribed. It is on the other hand quite possible, that poetry composed after the death of Mahomet, and either actually describing and referring to passages of preceding history, or incidentally corresponding therewith, should subsequently have come to be regarded as composed upon the occasion, or as the actual effusion of personages in the scene, to whom they afterwards were only by poetical fiction attributed.

cases copied from the originals; or from transcripts of them, which though perhaps several removes from the originals, are still likely to be genuine. Counterfeits there may be amongst them, but the wonder is that, considering their value, fabricated documents of this nature are not more numerous. The reason no doubt is that it was difficult to counterfeit such written relics in the early age of Islam, with any chance of success.

* Thus *Wâchidi* details such a narrative with the preface—"My informant *Muhammad ibn Yahya* relates that he found it in the writings of his father;" and again "*Amr the Odzrite* says, he found it written in the papers of his father."—The story that follows relating to a deputation from the *Bani Odzara*. (*Wâchidi*, pp. 61½ & 12.)

† *Burkhardt's* testimony shows that the faculty still remains. "Throughout every part of the Arabian desert, poetry is equally esteemed. Many persons are found who make verses of true measure, although they cannot either read or write; yet as they employ on such occasions chosen terms only, and as the purity of their vernacular language is such as to preclude any grammatical errors, these verses, after passing from mouth to mouth, may at last be committed to paper, and will most commonly be found regular and correct. I presume that the greater part of the regular poetry of the Arabs, which has descended to us, is derived from similar compositions." (*Burkhardt's Notes on the Bedouins*, vol. I., p. 251—see also p. 373.)

As a general rule, it may be laid down, that wherever there is any anticipation of Mahomet's prophetic dignity or victories, any premonitory dawn of the approaching glories of Islam, the poetry may at once be concluded as an after-thought, triumphant Islam having reflected some of its refulgence back upon the bare points of its earlier career. Tried by this rule, there is much poetry which may be ascribed, as more or less genuine, to the men whose name it bears; but there is some also, which from patent anachronism, either in fact or spirit, is evidently the composition of a later age.* The question is however more one of literary curiosity than of historical evidence, for this species of poetry is seldom of use in confirming any important point in Mahomet's biography.

We do not here refer to the *national* poets of Arabia, whose verses, preserved in the Kitab al Aghani and other works, possess without doubt the elements of authenticity, and form the trustworthy archives of Arabia before Islam. It is

* As an example we may refer to the poetry which Abu Tâlib, Mahomet's uncle, is said to have recited, when the Coreish took decisive measures against the Prophet, and sought to warn the pilgrims of other tribes not to give heed to him. Abu Tâlib, in plaintive verse, expresses his fears, lest the whole of the Arabs should join the Coreish against him. (*Vide Hishâmi, p. 75.*) There is in these verses something perhaps too plainly anticipative of the future national struggle; still the language from Abu Tâlib's stand-point is possible. But there follows a reference to "the clouds giving rain before him" (Mahomet): and it is added in explanation by the biographer, that when the Prophet in after days miraculously procured rain by prayer at Medina, he called to mind this prediction by his uncle. Thus doubt is cast upon the whole piece of its being an after-composition. At the same time it is not impossible that the sentence may have been used *metaphorically* by Abu Tâlib in laudation of his nephew, or that the couplet containing the suspicious verses may have been interpolated.

Another glaring anachronism may be mentioned, which shows with what caution poetry of this class must be received. When Mahomet with his followers performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, under the treaty of Hodeibia, the leader of his camel, as he encircled the Kaaba, ~~uttered~~ verses of hostile defiance against the Coreish, who viewed them from the impending rocks, whither they had by compact retired. Among these verses was the couplet, "We shall slay you on the score of the interpretation of it, (the Coran) as we slew you on the score of its revelation (*i. e.* for rejecting it.)

نحن قتلناكم على تأويله * كما قتلناكم على تنزيله *
 Now this evidently belongs to a period long subsequent, when Islam was broken up into parties, and men fought against each other for their several "interpretations" of the Coran. Yet the verses are referred both by Wâckidi and Hishâmi to a period anterior even to the conquest of Mecca. (*Wâckidi, p. 124, § 282½. — Hishâmi, p. 347.*) Ibn Hishâm, however, seeing probably the clumsiness of the story, adds that the poetry should be ascribed to another party.

As another example, the Arabic scholar may peruse the rhetorical contest held before Mahomet between his followers and the embassy of the Bani Tamim, (*Hishâmi, p. 416—419.*) The anticipations of universal conquest appear too prematurely developed. Thus the threat is used by Thâbit ibn Keis that the Moslems "would fight against all the world till they believed" (p. 416.) This was language suited to the time when the Arabs had begun to fight and conquer beyond Arabia. These may have been speeches and poems composed afterwards as suitable to the occasions, and like the orations of classical history, attributed to the actual time and place of the event related.

shouted

only necessary to peruse the "Essai" of Caussin de Perceval to be satisfied with their authority.

The verses ascribed to the poets who *survived Mahomet*, there is every reason to believe the composition of those whose names they bear; but whether composed before the Prophet's death, even when they profess to be so, is a more difficult question, and their value as historical documents will in some measure be regulated by that consideration. Under any circumstances, however, they cannot but be regarded as of very great value, from their being the work of Mahomet's contemporaries. Wherever they bear upon historical events, they are of much use, as adding confirmation to the corresponding traditions; for whether handed down by writing, or by memory alone, their poetical form is in some degree a safeguard against change or interpolation. As examples may be specified, the odes of Hassân ibn Thâbit on the "battle of the Ditch," and on "the conquest of Mecca," and the poem of Kab ibn Mâlik, descriptive of the oath of fealty taken by the adjutors at the second Acaba, in which he mentions by name the twelve leaders chosen from amongst them by the Prophet.* Besides such specific facts, this early poetry is often instructive, as exhibiting the *spirit* of the first Moslems towards their unconverted brethren, and the biting satire and virulent abuse employed against the enemies of Islam.

We do not, however, know of any fact, the proof of which *depends* upon these poetical remains. Although, therefore, they are valuable because *confirmatory* of tradition, their practical bearing upon the biographical elements of the Prophet's life, is not of so much interest as might have been expected. They deserve indeed deep attention, as the earliest literary remains of a period which contained the germ of such mighty events; but they give us little *new* insight into the history or character of Mahomet. While they attest many facts we are already

* Kab survived Mahomet, and wrote an elegy on his death. (*Wâkidi*, p. 166½.) Hassân ibn Thâbit was an inhabitant of Medina; he was converted during the Prophet's life-time, and survived him about half a century. A good instance of the incidental manner, in which his verses corroborate tradition, is that of his elegy on Mutîm, in whose praise he notices that he received the Prophet under his protection when he returned to Mecca from Nakhla and Tâif, dispirited and friendless. (*Hishâmî*, p. 139.)

A curious anecdote occurs of the mode in which Hassân's poetry is said to have *originated* an erroneous tradition. In his piece upon Mahomet's expedition to Al Ghâba (or Dzûl Carada) against a party of marauders, he speaks of *the horsemen of Al Mihdâd*, as if he had been the chief of this expedition. In reality, however, Saad ibn Zeid was chief, having been put in the command by Mahomet. On hearing the poetry recited, the latter repaired in great wrath to Hassân, and required amends for the misrepresentation. The poet quietly replied, that his name did not suit the rhythm, and therefore he had chosen Mikdâd's. Nevertheless, says Wâkidi, the verses gave currency to the tradition in favor of the latter. (*Wâkidi*, p. 115½.)

-acquainted with, they reveal none which, without them, we should not know.

Such, then, are the criteria which, it appears to us, should be applied to Mahometan tradition. It is obvious that the critical canon of the traditional collectors can carry no authority with us; that every tradition must be separately subjected to close examination, and stand or fall upon its own individual merits; and that even after its reception as *generally* credible, the component parts are severally liable, according to the internal evidence, to suspicion and rejection. The biographer of Mahomet, who shall endeavour to treat them thus, while shunning their misdirection, will retain, as far as appears practicable, the elements of truth preserved in them. Whenever the ground is common both to tradition and the Coran, he will regard the latter as outweighing all other testimony; but where its sure guidance is wanting, he will turn with cautious eye to the dazzling, but uncertain, light of tradition, and will carefully concentrate its fitful gleams of truth, while he exercises continual vigilance against the false glare and meteoric flashes which illuminate only to deceive.

We now proceed to notice briefly the character and merits of the EARLY HISTORIANS OF MAHOMET, the special materials which they afford for his biography, and the manner in which these materials are exhibited in their works.

We have seen that towards the end of the first century of the Hegira, there is ground for believing that Mahometan tradition began generally to be recorded. One of the parties known to have been employed in this task was *Zohri*, who died A. H. 124, aged 72.* It has been even stated that he composed a work on Mahomet's life; but this is uncertain.† Be this as it may, there is no doubt that he threw together traditions bearing on certain portions of the Prophet's life, certainly on that relating to his military expeditions; and it is conjectured by Dr. Sprenger, that he is the source whence that uniformity of narrative and coincidence of expression arose, observable in many parts of the biographical works, specially in the narratives of his military career. This hypothesis is very probable: at all events *Zohri* was *one* of such sources. He lived at the courts of several princes of the Omejad dynasty, and there is hence every reason to believe that his accounts are as unbiassed as we may expect to find among Mussulman

* Vide *Ibn Khallican*, II. 583.

† See an interesting note in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, by Dr. Sprenger, on this subject. (*No. V. of 1851, page 395.*)

authors. There is no work by Zohri extant, but he is largely quoted by subsequent biographers; and if Dr. Sprenger's hypothesis be correct, their statements of Mahomet's military operations must be in great part the re-production of materials composed by him.

Two other authors are mentioned as having written biographies of Mahomet early in the second century, namely MUSA IBN OCKBA and ABU MASHAR; but neither of their works is extant. The latter is, however, extensively referred to by Tabari.* To these may be added, as no longer available, the histories of ABU ISHÂC, who died A. H. 188, and MADAINI, who lived to the beginning of the third century. Though the latter published many works on Mahomet, not one is known now to exist.†

The earliest biographical writers, whose works are extant more or less in their original state, are:—I. Ibn Ishâc; II. Ibn Hishâm; III. Wâkidi, and his secretary; IV. Tabari.

These works, though professing, like the traditional collections, to be composed only of *traditions*, differ from them in the following particulars:‡—*First*, the traditional matter is confined to biographical subjects, and is arranged in biographical order; commencing with anticipatory and genealogical notices; the work generally advances to the birth of Mahomet, and traces him with some degree of method, through every stage of his eventful life. To each step, a separate chapter is devoted, and all the traditions, which have any bearing on the special subject, are thrown together in that chapter, and arranged with more or less of intelligible sequence. The principle, however, followed by the traditional collectors, is, with some exceptions, observed, namely, that each separate tradition must be supported by its original authority, and that the chain of witnesses be specified, connecting the author with such authority. This induces the same motley and fragmentary appearance, which distinguishes the traditional *collectors*. The biographies in fact resemble Mosaics; the several traditions being adjusted and dovetailed, so as to form one uniform history. The species of work is more like a collection of "table talk" than a life: more like a compilation than an original composition.

Secondly, traditions are sometimes fused together, or broken up, and re-formed into a uniform narrative, by adjusting the various pieces. This is more particularly the case in descrip-

* See the note just referred to.

† Sprenger's *Mohammed*, p. 70.

‡ The biographical works are called *Styar* or *Strat* سيرة or سير while the general collections are termed حديث *Hadith*.

tions of Mahomet's military life, where the expeditions are often detailed in an unbroken narration, the authorities being generally thrown together at the beginning.*

Thirdly, this process at times induces some degree of critical collation between the expressions or purport of the several traditions thus brought together. Where the authorities differ, we find the biographer occasionally expressing his opinion as to which is the correct exposition. Verbal differences are also often mentioned, and the various readings noted. Such minuteness of examination affords satisfactory evidence of the labour ungrudgingly bestowed by the biographers, in bringing together all the authentic traditions, which could possibly illustrate their subject, as well as of the scrupulous care and accuracy with which they recorded them.

The following particulars of the several authors named above, it may prove interesting and useful to bring together.

I. MUHAMMAD IBN ISHÂC is the earliest biographer, of whom any remains, the authorship of which can certainly be distinguished, have reached us. He died in the year of the Hegira 151,† or within fifteen years of the overthrow of the Omeyyad dynasty. His work was, however, published under the auspices and influence of the Abbasside princes, and was in fact composed for the Caliph Al Mansûr, the second of that race.‡ Its accuracy has been impugned; but from the passages which have come down to us, there does not seem ground to believe that he was less careful than other traditionists; while the high character generally ascribed to him, and the fact that he is uniformly quoted with confidence by later authors, leave little doubt that the aspersions cast on his character had no good foundation.§ In Ibn Khallicân, we find the following testimonies in his favour:—

“ Muhammad ibn Ishâc is held by the majority of the learned

* Thus recounting a number of separate chains of rehearsers' names, running up in each case to the time of Mahomet, the traditionist will go on to a uniform narrative framed from the whole, and thus prefaced, “ the traditions from these sources are intermixed and fused together in the following account” *دخل بعضهم في بعض*

† Ibn Khallicân gives several dates from A. H. 150 to 154; but mentions that given in the text as the likeliest. (*Slane, vol. II., p. 678.*)

‡ *Vide Weil's Gesch. Chalif, (vol. II.) p. 81.* Ibn Cuteiba says, that Ibn Ishâc came to Abu Jafar (Mansûr) to Hira, and wrote for him “ the book of the campaigns.” Ibn Khallicân relates that “ he put his *Maghâzi* in writing for the Caliph's use at Hira; and thus the learned men of Kûfa had the advantage of hearing him read and explain it himself.” (*Slane, vol. II., p. 678.*)

§ The unfavourable testimonies have been carefully collected, (and as it appears to us magnified), by Dr. Sprenger, who brings the following charges against Ibn Ishâc:—

1. *He was not critical.* The only proof, however, is the complaint of an author of the 8th century, that he did not always mention the name of the companions, to

‘ as a sure authority in the traditions, and none can be ignorant of the high character borne by his work—the *Maghâzi*.
 ‘ *Whoever wishes to know the early conquests,*” says Zohri, “*let him refer to Ibn Ishâc, and Al Bokhari himself cites him in his history.* * * * *Al Shafi said, whoever wishes to obtain a complete acquaintance with the conquests, must borrow his in-*

whom the traditions are traced. But this does not necessarily imply a want of critical care, and is sometimes forced upon the author by the narrative style proper to the biographer.

2. *He invented new traditions.* In proof, there is adduced, *first*, a round-about testimony from Ibn Cuteiba, as follows. “I heard Abu Hâtim say on the authority of Asmay, that Motamir said:—“*Take no tradition from Ibn Ishâc, he is a great liar;*” and, *second*, that Mâlik ibn Anas had an unfavourable opinion of him. But Dr. Sprenger does not mention that this unfavourable opinion was expressly ascribed to jealousy, Ibn Ishâc having boasted that he was “a doctor fit to cure the infirmities of Mâlik’s traditions,” on which Mâlik enraged called him a *Dajjâl* (anti-christ), and said, he would drive him out of the city. (*Ibn Khallicân, vol. II., p. 678.*) Not much credit is therefore attachable to his opinion.

3. *He forged his authorities.* This most serious charge is supported by absolutely no proof. It rests solely on the following gossiping story, cited by Ibn Cuteiba and Ibn Khallicân (II. 678). “He gave one (or some) of his traditions on the authority of Fâtima, wife of Hishâm, who when informed of the circumstance, denied Ibn Ishâc’s statement, saying, *Did he then go and visit my wife?*” There is really not a farther tittle of evidence against him.

4. *On the above account, he was not relied on by early authors.* But this is surely opposed to fact, as is evident from the statements in the text. Three authors are mentioned by Sprenger as not relying on him. Bokhâri, Muslim, and Wâckidi. As regards the latter, we think Dr. Sprenger mistaken, as Wâckidi does quote him in numerous places, and not simply, as affirmed, on genealogical subjects. As to Bokhâri, Sprenger should have quoted the full authority, which is as follows:—“*Though Al Bokhâri did not quote him (in his Sahih), he nevertheless held him for a trustworthy traditionist.*” (*Ibn Khallicân, vol. II., p. 678.*) Again, “*And Al Bokhâri himself cites him in his history.*” (*Id., p. 677.*) This is exactly the mode in which we should have expected a collector of original traditions to treat a biographical writer. As to Mâlik, the passage in Ibn Khallicân runs thus:—“*And if Muslim ibn al Hajjaj cited only one of his traditions, it was on account of the attack, which Mâlik ibn Anas had directed against him*” (vide the absurd story related above). (*Ibid.*) It must be remembered that the labours of Bokhâri, Muslim, &c., lay in another direction from those of our author, who was an historical compiler; they again were recorders of original traditions, and would naturally seek for them at first hand, independently of such an author. And we see that Bokhâri *did* quote him, when he came to write a history.

Now these are positively all the proofs or presumptions of evidence brought by Dr. Sprenger in support of his charges: they appear to us quite inadequate, and are at any rate far more than counter-balanced by the almost universal reception the statements of Ibn Ishâc have met with in the Moslem world, since his own time to the present. Had he “invented new traditions,” or “forged authorities,” this would not have been the case.

We do not understand Dr. Sprenger, when he calls him “the father of Mohammedan mythology” and states that the Mahometans discerned his attempt to “shape the biography of their Prophet, according to the notions of the Christians.”—Seeing that his doctrine and system seem to be generally of the same type exactly as those of the other traditionists and biographers, who are said by Dr. Sprenger himself to be independent of our author.

The conclusion of the learned doctor is as follows:—“His object is to edify and amuse his readers, and to this object *he sacrifices not only truth, but in some instances even common sense*” (p. 69.) *Common sense* is no very usual attribute of any of the traditionists or biographers, and Ibn Ishâc seems to have brought into play as great a share as his neighbours. As to “the sacrifice of truth,” we do not believe that it was deliberately made, any more than in hundreds of the lying legends recounted by the “honest” Wâckidi.

‘ formation from Ibn Ishâc. * * * Safyan ibn Oyaina declared
 ‘ that he never met any one who cast suspicions on Ibn Ishâc’s
 ‘ recitals, and Shoba ibn al Hajjaj was heard to say, *Muhammad*
 ‘ *ibn Ishâc is the Commander of the Faithful*, meaning that he held
 ‘ that rank as a traditionist. * * * Al Sâji mentions that Zohri’s
 ‘ pupils had recourse to Muhammad ibn Ishâc, whenever they
 ‘ had doubts respecting the exactness of any of the traditions
 ‘ delivered by their master: such was the confidence they
 ‘ placed in his excellent memory. * * * It is stated that Yahya
 ‘ ibn Mâîn, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and Yahya Sâid al Kattân
 ‘ considered Muhammad ibn Ishâc as a trustworthy authority,
 ‘ and quoted his traditions in proof of their legal doctrines.***
 ‘ It was from Ibn Ishâc’s works that Ibn Hishâm extracted the
 ‘ materials of his biography of the Prophet, and every person,
 ‘ who has treated this subject, has been obliged to take Ibn
 ‘ Ishâc for his authority and guide.” (*Ibn Khallicân, by Slane,*
vol. II., pp. 677-678.)

These testimonies appear to us conclusive of Ibn Ishâc’s authority among the Moslems, and of his general respectability as a writer; and we find in effect, that his statements have been embodied in the biographies of all subsequent writers of the Life of Mahomet, excepting that of Wâckidi, who in comparison quotes sparingly from him; and that the two works of Ibn Ishâc and Wâckidi form the grand staple out of which the majority of authentic narratives of the Prophet’s actions have been framed.

II. IBN HISHÂM, who died A. H. 213 (or according to others A. H. 218,) took the histories of Ibn Ishâc as the basis of his biography of Mahomet. Copies of this work are extant in its original form, and have been made use of by European historians. The following extract from Ibn Khallicân will place before the reader all that it is necessary to know regarding this author:—

“ *Abu Muhammad, Abd al Mâlik, Ibn Hishâm*, the author of the *Sîrat al Rasûl*, or *History of the Prophet*, is spoken of in these terms by Abu’l-Casim-al-Suhaili, in his work entitled *Al Raud al Unuf*, which is a commentary on the *Sîrat*: ‘ He was celebrated for his learning, and possessed superior information in genealogy and grammar: his native place was old Cairo, but his family were at Basra. He composed a genealogical work on the tribe of Himyar and its princes; and I have been told that he wrote another work, in which he explained the obscure passages of poetry cited in (Ibn Ishâc’s) biography of the Prophet. His death occurred at old Cairo A. H. 213 (A. D. 828-9.) This Ibn Hishâm is the person

‘ who extracted and drew up the ‘ History of the Prophet
 ‘ from Ibn Ishâc’s work, entitled *Al Maghâzi wa al Siar* (‘ The
 ‘ Wars and Life of Mahomet :’) Al-Suhaili explained its
 ‘ difficulties in a commentary, and it is now found in the hands
 ‘ of the public under the title of *Sîrat ibn Hishâm, i. e.*
 ‘ ‘ The Biography of Mahomet, by Ibn Hishâm.” (*Slane’s trans-*
lation, vol. II., p. 128.)

There is reason to suspect that Ibn Hishâm was not so honest as his great authority, Ibn Ishâc. One instance, at least, throws suspicion upon him as a witness not inclined to tell the *whole* truth. We find in Tabari a quotation from Ibn Ishâc, narrating the temporary lapse towards idolatry, of which Mahomet is supposed to have been guilty at Mecca : the story is also given from original sources by Wâckidi. But no notice whatever of the fact appears in Ibn Hishâm’s edition of Ibn Ishâc.* That he was capable of studiously omitting all reference to so important a narrative, because he fancied it to be not creditable to his Prophet, cannot but lessen our confidence in his book. However, it is evident from a comparison of his text with the quotations taken by Tabari, also from Ibn Ishâc, and which generally tally word for word, that whatever he did excerpt from his author, was faithfully and accurately copied.†

The arrangement and composition of Ibn Hishâm are good, if not elaborate. The traditions are well thrown together, and the narrative proceeds with much of the regularity of a good biography. From the frequent fusion of traditions, the disadvantage however results, that it is sometimes difficult to single out the separate traditions, and to judge of them on their individual merits.

An abridgment of Ibn Hishâm’s work was made at Damascus A. H. 707 (A. D. 1307,) by Ahmad ibn Ibrahim. A beautiful manuscript, *in the hand-writing of the abbreviator himself*, is in the possession of Muhammad Sadr-ood-Deen, the principal sudder ameen of Delhi. It is the copy which has been used by Dr. Sprenger,‡ and the same to which

* See the notice on this subject by Dr. Sprenger, in the *Asiatic Journal*, No. CCXII., p. 125, and also the details of a previous note under the head II. L.

† Dr. Sprenger writes of Ibn Hishâm : — “ Unfortunately the additions of Ibn Hishâm are even less critical than the text of Ibn Ishâc.” He adds that he was a pupil of Bakay, of whom he gives this account by Samaâny, “ that he made awful blunders, gave free scope to his imagination, and that his accounts cannot be considered conclusive unless they are confirmed by others.” (*Life of Mohammed, p. 70.*) The latter qualification is, we fear, applicable, without exception, to all the traditional biographers. But, as we have said in the text, wherever Ibn Hishâm quotes Ibn Ishâc, he appears to do so with literal correctness.

‡ Vide *Sprenger’s Mohammed*, p. 70, note 2.

reference has occasionally been made throughout this article. A manuscript of the abridged work is in the library of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta.

III. WÂCKIDI,—or as his full name runs, *Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Omar al Wâckidi*,—was born at Medîna about the year of the Hegira 129 or 130, and died A. H. 207.* He therefore studied and wrote exclusively under the Abbasides. He enjoyed their patronage, and passed a part of his life at their court, having in his later days been appointed Cazî of the eastern quarter of Baghdad. It is accordingly to be remarked, that the influence of these princes bore strongly and uniformly upon him. His traditional researches were very great, and his works voluminous.†

“Al Wâckidi was a man eminent for learning, and the author of some well-known works on the conquests of the Moslems, and other subjects. His *Kitab al Redda*, a work of no inferior merit, contains an account of the apostasy of the Arabs on the death of the Prophet, and of the wars between his followers and Tuleiha al Aswad and Museilama, the false prophet.‡ * * * His Secretary, Muhammad ibn Saad, and a number of other distinguished men, delivered traditional information on his authority. * * * The traditions received from him are considered of feeble authority, and doubts have been expressed on the subject of his veracity.” (*Ibn Khallîcân*, by Slane, vol. III., p. 63.)

Notwithstanding the fertility of his pen, no work of his, in its original form, appears to have been preserved to us.

His secretary, however, MUHAMMAD IBN SAAD, profited by his labours, and through him we enjoy some of their results. The secretary is thus described by Ibn Khallîcân:—

“*Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Saad ibn Mani* was a man of the highest talents, merit and eminence. He lived for some time with Al Wâckidi in the character of a secretary, and for this reason became known by the appellation *Kâtib al Wâckidi*. He composed an excellent work in fifteen volumes on the different classes (*Tabacât*) of Mahomet’s companions and the *Tâbies*: it contains also a history of the caliphs, brought down to his own time. He left also a smaller ‘*Tabacât*.’ His character as a veracious and trustworthy historian is univer-

* *Ibn Cateiba*. Ibn Khallîcân also gives this date, as the true one, but mentions that some say, A. H. 206, others 209. (*Slane*, vol. III. p. 65.)

† *Sprenger’s Mohammed*, p. 70, note 5. “He left at his death 600 boxes of books, each of which was a load for two men. The boxes made 120 camel loads.”

‡ The titles of several other works by Wâckidi are quoted by Dr. Sprenger. (*Id.*, p. 71, note 1.)

sally admitted. It is said that the complete collection of Al Wâckidi's works remained in the possession of four persons, the first of whom was his secretary, Mahammad ibn Saad. This distinguished writer displayed great acquirements in the sciences, the traditions, and traditional literature; most of his books treat of the Traditions and Law. The Khatib ^{Katib} Abu Bacr, author of the history of Baghdad, speaks of him in these terms:—'We consider Muhammad ibn Saad as a man of unimpeached integrity, and the traditions which he delivered are a proof of his veracity, for in the greater part of the information handed down by him, we find him discussing it passage by passage.' At the age of sixty-two, he died at Baghdad, A. H. 230 (A. D. 844,)* and was interred in the cemetery outside the Damascus gate (*Bâb al Shâm*).[†] (*Slane's translation, vol. III., pp. 66, 67.*)

In the fifteen volumes noticed in this extract, the secretary is supposed to have embodied all the researches of his master, Al Wâckidi, together with the fruits of his own independent labour. The first volume has, happily for the interests of literature and of truth, been preserved to us in an undoubtedly genuine form. It contains the *Sirat* or "Biography of Mahomet," with detailed accounts of the early learned men of Medîna, and of the whole of the companions of the Prophet, who were present at Badr. For this invaluable volume, we are indebted to the indefatigable research of Dr. Sprenger, who discovered it in a library belonging to Mozuffer Husain Khan at Cawnpore. The manuscript, which is the only known copy extant, transcribed in a distinct but ancient character, was executed at Damascus, A. H. 718 (A. D. 1318,) by a scholar named Al Hakkari, who repeatedly traces up from the pupil to the master (by whom it was successively taught, or by whom copied,) the guarantee of the authenticity of the volume, till the chain reaches up to Muhammad ibn Saad, the secretary, himself.†

The title of the work, though pasted over, can, by a little care,

* In Slane's original the date is given as A. H. 203 (A. D. 818), but this is shown to be a mistake by Dr. Sprenger. (*Ibidem, note 2.*)

† He not only does this in some places through a double chain of authorities, but in the margin he transcribes the frequent notes of his immediate master, Abu Muhammad Dzumiâti, written in the margin of the original MS. from which he copied, and which recorded how far he had reached in his daily readings in the year A. H. 647 (A. D. 1249.) Each of these notes again contains the string of authorities up to the secretary. The frequent memoranda of careful collation with the original, give great confidence as to the care with which this copy was transcribed, and it is in effect remarkably accurate. It contains 300 leaves or 600 pages. It is numbered by the leaves, and in quoting it, we have kept to the same plan, thus the 4th page is quoted as p. 2½.

* الجزء الاول من كتاب (طبقات كبير) تاليف امام الحافظ ابي محمد بن سعد الكاتب الواقدي

The expression, *Al Kâtib al Wâckidi*, might lead to the supposition that the *writer* was Wâckidi himself; but all the evidence, internal as well as external, points to the *secretary*, *Kâtib al Wâckidi*, as the author. The work is generally quoted (probably for brevity's sake) as that of "Wâckidi."

This treatise is composed almost entirely, (if we except the narrative portions of the military expeditions,) of detached traditions, arranged in chapters according to the subject, and in tolerably good chronological order. The chain of authority is generally traced in detail to the fountain-head for each separate tradition; and so carefully is every fragment of a tradition bearing on each subject treasured up, and gathered together, that we often meet with a succession of perhaps a dozen traditions reiterated one after another, though, perhaps, couched in the same or nearly the same expressions. We likewise meet continually with the most contradictory authorities placed side by side, the author sometimes giving his opinion as to their relative credibility.

Wâckidi is said to have been a follower of the Alyite sect,† and he probably did really yield to the prevailing influence of the day, which exalted the Prophet's son-in-law, and the progenitors of the Abbasside race. But there is not the slightest ground for doubting that his authority is equal, if not superior, to that of any other historian of his time.‡ Of the work compiled by his secretary, at all events, Dr. Sprenger has well vindicated the authority and faithfulness. "There is no trace," says he, "of a sacrifice of truth to design, or of pious fraud, in his work. It contains few miracles; and even those which are recorded in it, admit of an easy explanation." This praise is, perhaps, more than is due, but we do not hesitate to designate the book as the product of an

* Besides, no great dependence can be placed on the title-page, which may have been subsequently added. (See *Sprenger*, p. 71, note 3.)

† Some of the traditions given by Wâckidi are evidently such as no extreme Alyite would have admitted into his book. Take for example the conversation between Ali and Abbâs, in which the former, when urged by the latter to repair to the dying Prophet and enquire who was to be caliph, declined, "fearing lest Mahomet should name another, and then his chance of the caliphate would be gone for ever." (*Wâckidi*, p. 150½.) Such an idea would not be tolerated by an extreme Sheeite.

‡ The aspersions contained in the *Kanz al Jawâhir* are completely refuted by Dr. Sprenger, p. 71, note 4. The carefully collected traditions of Al Wâckidi must not be confounded with the romances of the eighth century, which bear the same name, and are described with more praise than they deserve by Gibbon in a note (x.) to the fifty-first chapter of his history, and which form the basis of Ockley's work.

honest endeavour to bring together the most credible authorities current at the end of the second century, and thereby to depict the life of Mahomet with as much truth as possible. It is marked by at least as great sincerity as we may expect to find in any Mahometan author. But Dr. Sprenger's admiration carries him beyond the reality, when he affirms that the miracles it contains are few in number and easy of explanation. They are, on the contrary, nearly, if not quite, as numerous as those we find in Ibn Hishâm. It is very evident that the criticism of Wäckidi and his secretary extended little, if at all, beyond that of their contemporaries. They were mere compilers of current traditions, &c. ; and where these were attested by reputable names, they were received, however fabulous or extravagant, with a blind and implicit credulity.

IV. TABARI, or *Abû Jafar ibn Jarîr al Tabari*, flourished in the latter part of the third century of the Moslem era. The following account of him is extracted from Ibn Khallicân:—

“ Al Tabari was an Imam (*master of the highest authority*) in many various branches of knowledge, such as Coranic interpretation, traditions, jurisprudence, history, &c. He composed some fine works on various subjects, and these productions are a testimony of his extensive information and great abilities. He was one of the *Mujtahid Imams*, as he (judged for himself and) adopted the opinions of no particular doctor. * * * He is held to merit the highest confidence as a transmitter of traditional information, and his history is the most authentic and the most exact of any. * * * He was born A. H. 224 (A. D. 838-9) at Amul in Tabarestân, and he died at Baghdad A. H. 310 (A. D. 923). He was buried the next day in (the court of) his own house. I saw in the Lësser Karâfa cemetery, at the foot of Mount Mokattam, near Old Cairo, a tomb which is often visited, and at the head of which is a stone bearing this inscription—*This is the tomb of Ibn Jarîr al Tabari*. The public imagine it to belong to the author of the history; but this opinion is erroneous, the fact being that he was buried at Baghdad.” (*Slane's translation, vol. II., pp. 597-8*).

Tabari, who is happily styled by Gibbon, “ the Livy of the Arabians,”* composed annals, not only of Mahomet's life, but of the progress of Islam. Portions of the Arabic version of the latter have long been known, and a part has been published, with Latin translation by Kosegarten, so long ago as 1831. Unfortunately the earliest volume relating to Mahomet, hitherto dis-

* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ch. LI., note I.

covered, commenced with the Prophet's death. Even at so late a period as the publication of his *Life of Mohammed*, Dr. Sprenger writes of this author:—

“At present, however, the portion of his annals, which contains the history of the origin of the Islam, is available only in the Persian translation, which cannot be fully relied upon.” (Page 72.)

Again is the literary world indebted to the learned Doctor, who shortly after the above was written, having been deputed by the enlightened policy of the Indian Government to examine the native libraries of Lucknow, succeeded in ferretting out, from the midst of musty and neglected heaps of old manuscripts, a copy, in its original language, of a book which throws much valuable light upon the biography of Mahomet. The volume commences with his birth, but terminates, though not abruptly, with the siege of Medina, that is, five years before the Prophet's death. The remainder of the work is in all probability extant in India, and may yet reward the search of some future collector of manuscripts. We shall give Doctor Sprenger's account of his discovery in his own words:—

“One of the most important books, which it was my good luck to find during my late mission to Lucknow, is the fourth volume of the history of Tabari (who died in A. H. 310,) of which I believe no other copy is known to exist. In the collection of Colonel Taylor is the 3rd volume, and in the Public Library at Berlin are the 5th, (which has been printed,) 10th, 11th, and 12th volumes.

“It is a volume in a small quarto of 451 pages, fifteen lines in a page. Ten pages are wanting. The writing is ancient and bold, and though not without errors, generally very correct. I should say, from the appearance, the copy is five hundred years old.

“The intrinsic merits of the work are not so great as might be expected. Two-thirds of the book consist of extracts from Ibn Ishâc and Wâckidi, and only one-third or thereabouts contains original traditions. Some of these are very valuable, inasmuch as they contain information not to be found anywhere else.” (*Notice of the 4th vol. of Tabari, Asiatic Journal, No. CCXII., p. 108.*)

The discovery of the original Tabari is, after that of Wâckidi, the most important event regarding the biography of Mahomet, which has occurred for many years. It has a marked bearing on the sufficiency and completeness of our other early authorities, Ibn Hishâm and Wâckidi.

The estimate given by Dr. Sprenger, not an exaggerated

one, that two-thirds of Tabari's biography are composed of literal extracts, formally quoted from Ibn Ishâc and Wâckidi, proves not only the opinion in which they were held as trustworthy and acknowledged authorities; but likewise that they were *the standard writers on the subject* up to at least the close of the third century. The remaining materials of Tabari are derived from a variety of sources, which, as Dr. Sprenger observes, have a peculiar interest, because accessible in no other quarter. Yet no one of these sources would give the idea of being a complete and authoritative biography, nor do any of them bring to light new and important features in Mahomet's life. They are often valuable as supplementary to the accounts we already possess from Ibn Hishâm and Wâckidi, and confirmatory of them,* but they are likewise often symptomatic of the growth of a less honest and scrupulous selection than that of the earlier collectors.† Now as Tabari was an intelligent and diligent historian, and neglected no respectable sources within his reach, it appears to follow as a reasonable conclusion, that besides the works we already hold, there were in Tabari's time none others of essential importance relating to the biography of Mahomet. Had any existed, they must have been within his reach, and if within his reach, he would unquestionably have made ample use of them in his annals.

To the three biographies by IBN HISHÂM, by WÂCKIDI, and by TABARI, the judicious historian of Mahomet will, as his original authorities, confine himself. He will also receive with respect, and subject to his critical apparatus, any traditions in the general collections of the earlier traditionists—as Bokhâri, Muslim, Tirmidzi, which may chance to bear upon his subject; but he will reject as *evidence* all later authors, and he will not

* One of these miscellaneous sources is remarkable. Abd al Mâlik, who was caliph from A. H. 66 to A. H. 96, was addicted to traditional subjects, and being curious to ascertain several points of Mahomet's biography, consulted Orwah ibn al Zobeir for information. We have thus extracts from letters written by Orwah in reply to the caliph's questions, and in particular one long and detailed account of the battle of Badr (pp. 247—251.) Orwah's letters are also quoted, but briefly, by Ibn Hishâm, (Eg. p. 330.) He was born A.H. 20, and was therefore acquainted with several of the companions of Mahomet, on whose authority he relates traditions. He was also the master of Zohri, of whom we have spoken above.

† This especially displays itself in the insertion of many unfounded stories of an evidently ultra-Alyite origin. Thus in the account of Ohod, Othmân (afterwards caliph and of the Omeiad family), is made to run away, with a company of others, from the field of battle, and not stop till he had ascended a hill close to Medina: there he is said to have remained concealed for three days, and then to have returned to Mahomet, who accosted him thus—"Ah, Othmân, you went away and remained a long time there!" (p. 380.) This is evidently an anti-Omeiad fiction, to which there is no allusion in Wâckidi or Ibn Hishâm. All the combatants of Ohod went forth *the next day* towards Hamra al Asad, in a bravado pursuit after their conquerors, who had retired immediately after the battle. It is not possible that Othmân could have been then in his pretended hiding place.

permit to their so-called traditions any historical weight whatever.

It is very evident, that in the absence of any history or collection of traditions, compiled *before* the accession of the Abbassides, the works above specified present us with all the credible information regarding the Arabian Prophet, mankind are ever likely to obtain. It is clear that the biographical writers alluded to sought with zeal and assiduity for all traditions which could illustrate their subject. They were contemporary with those tradition-gatherers, who, as we have seen, compassed land and sea in the enthusiastic search after any trace of Mahomet, yet lingering in the memories or family archives of his followers. Whatever authentic information really existed, must already have become public and available. It cannot be imagined, that in the unwearied search of the second century, any respectable tradition could have escaped the collectors, or, supposing this possible, that it could have survived in an unrecorded shape. Every day diminished the chance of any stray tradition still floating upon the swift and troubled current of time. Later historians can add no true information to what these authors have given us ; but they may, and they very often do, add much false matter, gathered from the spurious traditions and fabricated stories of later days. After the era of our three biographers, the sources of fresh authority become extinct.

Dr Sprenger's verdict is therefore just and sound:—"To consider late historians like Abúlfedá as *authorities*, and to suppose that an account gains in certainty, because it is mentioned by several of them, is highly uncritical ; and if such a mistake is committed by an orientalist, we must accuse him of culpable ignorance in the history of Arabic literature." (*Life of Mohammed*, p. 73.)

Our early authors were, besides, in an incomparably better position than men in later days, for judging of the character and authenticity of each tradition. However blind their reception of the supposed authorities, that lay far back close to the fountain-head, they must have had the ability, as we are sure they had the wish, to test the credit and honesty of the tradition-mongers of their own age, and of that immediately preceding. An intimate acquaintance with their character and circumstances would often afford them grounds for distinguishing the recently fabricated or mistaken narratives from ancient and *bonâ fide* tradition ; and for rejecting many infirm and worthless traditions, which later historians, with that indiscriminate ap-

petite so pitifully generated by Moslem credulity, have greedily devoured.*

We have thus, as was proposed, endeavoured to give a sketch of the original sources available for the biography of Mahomet. We have examined the Coran, and have admitted its authority as an authentic and contemporary record. We have enquired into the origin and history of Mahometan tradition generally, and specially into those of the biographical compilations; we have acknowledged that they contain the elements of truth, and have endeavoured to indicate some canons, by which the legend and fiction mingled with that truth, may be eliminated from it. The principles thus laid down, if followed with sagacity, perseverance, and impartiality, will, we feel persuaded, enable the enquirer to arrive at a fair approximation to historical fact. Many Gordian knots regarding the character of the Prophet of Arabia will remain unsolved, many paradoxes will still vainly excite curiosity and baffle explanation; but the ground-work of his life will be laid down with certainty, and the chief features of his mind and of his career will be developed with accuracy and clearness.

* In illustration, it is sufficient to refer to the "Legends" contained in the *Life of Mohammed*, by Dr. Sprenger, and to the extravagant and absurd stories contained in a late article of this *Review* on "Biographies of Muhammad for *Illustration*, XXXIV., Art. 6.

ERRATA.

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
8	5 from bottom ..	Ayesha!	Ayesha;
11	33 ditto top ..	Ibn Batûla.....	Ibn Batûta.
14	40 ditto ditto ..	revelation	revelation."
15	21 & 22 ditto ..	<i>In the Arabick quotation read the second line first.</i>	
17	6 from bottom...	dialectical peculiarities	and dialectical peculiarities,
18	5 ditto top ..	noticed, as the traditions	noticed in the traditions;
"	22 ditto ditto ..	REPEATED	REPEALED.
"	7 from bottom..	اضينا عنه	رضينا عنه
19	23 & 24 from top..	<i>In the Arabick quotation read the second line first.</i>	
20	9 from bottom..	bedetende	bedeutende..
33	8 ditto ditto ..	so	so."
36	12 ditto top ..	the	be.
42	15 & 16 ditto ..	<i>Erase the marks of quotation.</i>	
47	2 ditto ditto ..	Omeva	Omeva.
57	36 ditto ditto ..	Before ^{محمد} insert	قال
"	last line	fear	fear"
63	15 from top ..	collected.....	collected."
64	13 ditto ditto ...	Ibn	Abu.
65	20 ditto bottom..	showed	shouted.
68	21 & 22 bottom..	} order, commencing with an- ticipatory and genealogical notices;.....	} order: commencing with an- ticipatory and genealogi- cal notices,
69	6 ditto bottom ..		

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