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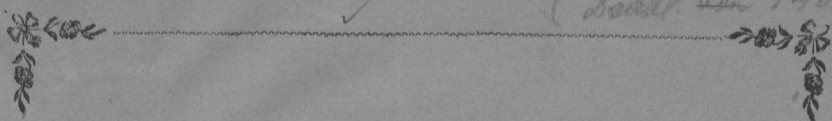








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(Dall. von 1485.)*



FOREFATHERS OF MAHOMET  
AND  
HISTORY OF MECCA.

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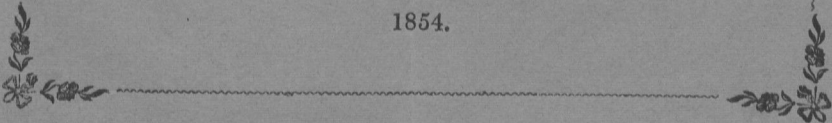
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THE FOREFATHERS OF MAHOMET, AND HISTORY  
OF MECCA, TO THE BIRTH OF MAHOMET.

BIRL.  
SOC. ORIENT.  
GERM.

[FROM THE CALCUTTA REVIEW, NO. XLIII.]

1. *Essai sur L'Histoire des Arabes. Par A. P. Caussin de Perceval. Paris, 1847. Vol. I.*
2. *Life of Mohammed. By A. Sprenger, M. D. Allahabad, 1851.*
3. *Sirat Wâkidi. (Arab. MS.)*
4. *Sirat Tabari. (Arab. MS.)*
5. *Sirat Hishâmi. (Arab. MS.)*

IN a previous Article upon the Ante-Mahometan History of Arabia, we endeavored to give a connected view of the progress of events at Mecca, from the most remote period to which our knowledge extends, down to the middle of the fifth century of our era; and about that period we left Cossai in the possession of all the important dignities of the city, both religious and political.

The social institutions of Mecca did not essentially differ from those of the wandering Bedouins. They were to some extent modified by the requirements of a settled habitation, and the peculiarities of the pilgrimage and local superstition; but the ultimate sanctions of society, and the springs of political movement, were in reality the same at Mecca then, (so wonderfully have they survived the corroding effects of time), as exist in the desert at the present day, and have been so graphically portrayed by the pen of Burkhardt.

It must be borne in mind that at Mecca there was not, before the establishment of Islam, any *Government* in the common sense of the term.\* No authority existed whose mandate must be put into execution. Each tribe formed a republic of opinion, and the opinion of the aggregate tribes, who chanced to be acting together, was the sovereign law; but there was not any recognized exponent of the popular will; each tribe was free to hold back from that which was clearly decreed by the rest; and no individual was more bound than his collective tribe to a compulsory conformity with the desire of the public. Honor and revenge supplied the place of a more elaborate system: the former prompted the individual, by the desire of upholding the name and influence of his clan, to a compliance with its wishes; the latter provided for the respect of private right, by the prospect of

\* See remarks by Sprenger (*Life of Mohammed*, pp. 20, 23.)

an unrelenting pursuit of the injurer. In effect the will of the majority did form the general rule of action for all,\* although there was a continual risk that the minority might separate, and assume an independent, if not opposing, course. The law of revenge, too, though in such a society necessary, was then, even as now, the curse of the Arabs. Blood once shed was not easily effaced: its price might be rejected by the heir, and life for life demanded. Retaliation followed retribution: the friends, the family, the clan, the confederated tribes, one by one in a widening circle, took up the claims of the sufferer, and identified them as their own; and thus an insignificant quarrel or unpremeditated blow not unfrequently involved whole tracts of country in a protracted and bloody strife. Still in a system which provided no magisterial power to interfere with decisive authority in personal disputes, it cannot be doubted that the law of retaliation afforded a check (however defective) upon the passions of the stronger; and that acts of violence and injustice were repressed by the fear of retribution from the friends or relatives of the injured party. The benefit of the custom was further increased by the practice of *patronage* or guardianship. The weak resorted to the strong for protection; and when the word of a chief or powerful man had once pledged him to grant it, the pledge was fulfilled with chivalrous scrupulosity.

At first sight it might appear that, under this system, the chiefs possessed no shadow of authority to execute either their own wishes or those of the people. But in reality their powers, though vague and undefined, were large and effective. Their position always secured for them an important share in forming and giving expression to the public opinion, so that, excepting in rare and unusual cases, they swayed the councils and the actions of their tribes. It was chiefly by the influence gained from the local offices of the Kaaba and the pilgrimage, that the Sheikhs of Mecca differed from their brethren of the desert, and exercised a more systematic and permanent rule. It is important, therefore, carefully to trace downwards the history of these offices, which Cossai, with the hope of establishing a stable government, concentrated, first in his own person, and then in that of his eldest son. The offices are commonly reckoned five in number: I. *Sicâya* and *Rifâda*; the

\* We meet with few instances of *punishments* inflicted by society upon offenders before Islam. In one case a robber's hands were cut off for the theft of treasure belonging to the Kaaba: another man was exiled for ten years on suspicion of connivance at the theft. (*Tabari*, p. 73.)



exclusive privilege of supplying water and food to the pilgrims. II. *Kiyâda*; the command of the troops in war. III. *Liwâ*; the standard, or right of mounting the banner, and presenting it to the standard-bearer. IV. *Hijâba*; the charge of the Kaaba. V. *Dâr al Nadwa*; the presidency in the Hall of Council.\*

Cossai had four sons, the two most distinguished of whom are called ABD AL DAR, and ABD MENAF,† (the latter born about 430 A. D.) The narrative of the patriarch's last days is thus simply told by Wâckidi. In process of time Cossai became old and infirm. Abd al Dar was the oldest of his sons, but he lacked influence and power; and his brethren raised themselves up against him. Therefore Cossai made over all his offices to his first-born, saying—"Thus wilt thou retain 'thine authority over thy people, even though they raise 'themselves up against thee; let no one enter the Kaaba, 'unless thou hast opened it unto him; nor let any banner of 'the Coreish be mounted for war, but thou be the one who 'mountest it with thine own hands; let no man drink at 'Mecca, but from thy drawing; nor any pilgrim eat therein, 'except of thy food; and let not the Coreish resolve upon any 'business, but in thy Council Hall." So he gave him up the Hall of Council, and the custody of the Holy House, and the giving of drink and of food, that he might unite his brethren unto him. And Cossai died, and was buried in Al Hajûn.‡

\* See Sprenger's *Life of Mohammed*, p. 6—C. de Perceval, *Vol. I. p. 237, et seq.* Some make the *Liwâ*, or Standardship, to imply the *Leadership* also; but we find these offices held separately by different persons. But supposing that they are reckoned as one, then the *Sicâya* and *Rifâda* might be regarded as distinct, to make up the *five* offices.

It has been already stated that Cossai did not keep in his own hands the lesser ceremonial offices of the pilgrimage, as the *Ifâdha* and *Ijâza*, or right of dismissal and heading the procession on the tour to Arafat; but this tour was conducted under his superintendence, as he then gave the pilgrims water and food; and we read that he used to kindle a great fire at Muzdalifa, to guide the pilgrims on the night of their return thither from Arafat—"a practice," says Wâckidi, "continued up to the present day." (*Wâckidi*, p. 12½)

† Cossai called two of his sons after his gods, *Abd Menâf* and *Abd al Ozza*; one after his house, *Abd al Dâr*; and one, who died young, after himself, *Abd al Cossai*. *Abd Menâf* was named *Al Camr* from his beauty; but it is said that his proper name was *Al Mughlra*; his mother however dedicated him to *Manâf*, the greatest idol at Mecca; so that name prevailed over the other. (*Tabari*, pp. 25-26.) From *Abd al Ozza* descended *Khadija*, Mahomet's first wife.

‡ This is from *Wâckidi*, p. 12.—See also *Tabari*, p. 35. *Al Hajûn* is a hill "near Mecca, which became henceforth the burial-ground of the Qorayshites," (if indeed it was not so before.) (*Sprenger*, p. 26.)

Through the careful providence of his father, Abd al Dar contrived, notwithstanding his weakness, to retain at least a nominal supremacy. But he enjoyed little influence in comparison with his brother Abd Menâf, on whom the real management of public affairs devolved, and who laid out fresh quarters for the growing population of Mecca.\* Upon the death of Abd al Dar, the whole of the offices of state and religion passed into the hands of his sons; but they all died within a few years after, and his grand-sons, who then inherited the dignities of the family, (500 A. D.) were of too tender years effectually to maintain their rights.

Meanwhile the sons of Abd Menâf had grown up, and continued in possession of their father's influence. The chief of them were Al Muttalib, Hâshim, Abd Shams, and Naufal.† These conspired to seize from the descendants of Abd al Dar the hereditary offices bequeathed by Cossai. Hâshim took the lead, and grounded his claim on the superior dignity of his branch of the family. But the descendants of Abd al Dar, headed by Amir, his grand-son, refused to cede any of their rights; and an open rupture ensued. The society of Mecca was equally divided by the two factions, one portion of the Coreish siding with the claimants, and the other with the actual possessors of the dignities; while but few remained neutral. Both parties swore that they would prosecute their claim, and be faithful among themselves, so long as there remained water in the sea sufficient to wet a tuft of wool. To add stringency to their oath, Hâshim and his faction filled a dish with aromatic substances, and having brought it close to the Kaaba, they thrust their hands therein as they swore, and rubbed them upon the Holy House. The

\* This seems to be the real state of the case, although the accounts differ. Thus Wâckidi says, that after Cossai's death, Abd Menâf succeeded to his position and

to the Government of the Coreish; *رباعا بعد الذي كان قصي قطع لقومه*; *واختط بمكة*

A tradition is given by Azracki, that Cossai himself divided the offices between Abd al Dâr and Abd Menâf, and allotted to the latter the giving of drink and food, and the leadership. But had it been so, then the descendants of Abd Menâf would have had no necessity to fight for those offices.

† He had six sons and six daughters. The eldest of the sons was Al Muttalib. (*Wâckidi*, pp. 13-14.) The three first mentioned in the text above were by one mother, Atika, of the Bani Cays Aylân. Naufal was by a female of the Bani Sâssâa. Wâckidi mentions a third wife. C. de Perceval makes Abd Shams the eldest son. (See also *Tubari*, p. 22.)

opposite party similarly dipped their hands into a bowl of blood.\*

The opponents now made ready for a bloody contest; and the ranks were already marshalled in sight of each other, when by an unexpected turn of events, they mutually called for a truce, upon condition that Hâshim and his party should have the offices of providing food and water for the pilgrims, and that the descendants of Abd al Dar should as hitherto retain the custody of the Kaaba, the Hall of Council, and the Bannership. Peace was restored upon these terms.†

HASHIM, (born A. D. 464,†) thus installed in the office of entertaining the pilgrims, fulfilled it with a princely magnificence. He was himself possessed of great riches, and many others of the Coreish had also by trading acquired much wealth. He appealed to them as his grand-father Cossai had done:—"Ye are the neighbours of God, and the keepers of his house. The pilgrims who come honoring the sanctity of his temple are his guests, and it is meet that ye should entertain

\* Hence the former were called *المطيبين* the "sweet scented," or "those who pledged themselves in perfumes;"—the latter, *لعقة الدم*—"the lickers of blood." (*Wâckidi*, p. 13½.)

Sprenger calls the former party the *Liberals*, the latter the *Conservatives*. But on the part of the latter there was no greater conservatism than the natural desire to retain the dignities and power they already possessed: on the part of the former there was no greater liberalism than the assertion of their pretensions to a portion of those dignities and power. The principles of both were the same. Neither had any intention of effecting a change in the religious or political system. Both recognized the patriarchal-oligarchical form of the constitution, and both would continue it, without any intention of adopting a more efficient and enlightened regime. It was a simple struggle for power on the part of two branches of the dominant family. But Sprenger's principle of a spirit of enquiry and advance towards the truth, before Mahomet's time, prepared him to recognize in the stock of Abd Menâf the seeds of liberalism, which (as it appears to us) were no more there than in the stock of Abd al Dar.

† The *Leadership* is not here specified, and the inference might thence be drawn that it followed the *Bannership*. But we know from subsequent history, that the leadership actually fell to the lot of Abd Shams, and from him was inherited in regular descent by Omeiya, Harb, and Abu Sofîân. (See *Sprenger*, p. 26, note 1.) The three offices retained by the descendants of Abd al Dar remained in that line. The custody of the Kaaba was generously continued by Mahomet to the party in possession at the opening of Islam, though hitherto one of his opponents. The Hall of Council was sold by Ikrîma, who had inherited it, to the Caliph Moâwia, who made it the House of Government *دار الامارة*—"and so," adds Wâckidi, "it continues in the hands of the Caliphs even unto this day" (p. 13½.)

‡ This is according to C. de Perceval's calculations, which have our confidence as near approximations to fact. Sprenger places Hâshim's birth, A. D. 442. (Vide *Asiatic Journal*, No. CCXXI, p. 352.)



them above all other guests. God hath specially chosen and exalted you to this high dignity: wherefore honor his guests and refresh them: For, from distant cities, on their lean and jaded camels, they come unto you fatigued and harassed, with hair dishevelled, and bodies covered with the dust and filthiness of the long way. Invite them, then, with hospitality, and furnish them with water in abundance." Hâshim set the example by a munificent expenditure from his own resources, and the Coreish were forward to contribute, every man according to his ability. A fixed cess was also levied upon all.\* Water sufficient for the prodigious assemblage of pilgrims was collected in cisterns by the Kaaba from the wells of Mecca; and in temporary reservoirs of leather at the stations on the route to Arafat. The feeding commenced upon the day before the pilgrims started for Minâ and Arafat, and continued until the assemblage dispersed.† During this period they were entertained with pottage of meat and bread, of butter and barley, variously prepared, and with the favorite national repast of dates.‡

Thus Hâshim supported the credit of Mecca. But his name is even more renowned for the splendid charity, by which he relieved the necessities of his fellow-citizens, reduced by a long continued famine to extreme distress.§ He proceeded to Syria, and purchased an immense store of bread, which he packed in panniers, and conveyed upon camels to Mecca. There the victuals were cooked for distribution; the camels were slaughtered and roasted; and the whole parted among the people. Destitution and mourning were suddenly turned

\* *Wâchidi*, pp. 13-14. The fixed cess is noted at 100 Heraclian Mithcals. Sprenger thinks that this may mean the *aureus* of Constantine, which Gibbon calculates at 11 Shillings. The fixed contribution from each would thus exceed £50. The richer of the merchants may have given so much. It is certain that mercantile projects had begun to revive at Mecca, and especially among the Coreish. The profits of each expedition are stated to have generally doubled the capital stock employed. And as the ostentatious Arabs would generally expend all that they could on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage, the sum specified is not an unlikely one for the more extensive traders. But as a general and uniform cess on each person or head of a family, it appears excessive and improbable. The period alluded to, however, is early in the sixth century, and we cannot look for any great certainty of detail in such matters at that remote era.

† The day before starting is called *يوم التروية* and falls on the 8th of Dzul Hijj. The ceremonies concluded, and the multitude dispersed on the 12th of the same month.

‡ The foregoing account is chiefly from *Wâchidi*, p. 14.

§ On the liability of Mecca still to famine from long drought, see *Burkhardt's Travels in Arabia*, p. 240.



into mirth and plenty; and it was, (the historian adds,) "as it were the beginning of new life after the year of scarcity."\*

The foreign relations of the Coreish were managed solely by the sons of Abd Menâf. With the Roman authorities and the Ghassânide ruler, Hâshim himself concluded a treaty; and he received from the Emperor a rescript, authorizing the Coreish to go to and fro in security.† He also gained the friendship of the inhabitants on the road, by promising to carry their goods without hire.‡ His brother Abd Shams made a treaty with the Najâshy, in pursuance of which they traded with the land of Abyssinia: his other brothers, Naufal and Al Muttalib, concluded alliances, the former with the King of Persia, who allowed them to traffic in Irâc and Fars, the latter with the Kings of Himyar, who encouraged their operations in Yemen. Thus the affairs of the Coreish prospered in every direction.§

To Hâshim is ascribed the credit of regulating the mercantile expeditions of his people, so that every winter a caravan set out regularly for Yemen and Abyssinia, while in the summer a second visited Ghazza, Ancyra, and the other Syrian marts.||

The success and the glory of Hâshim exposed him to the envy of Omeiya, the son of his brother, Abd Shams. Omeiya was opulent, and he sought to expend his riches in a vain attempt to rival the splendour of his uncle's munificence.

\* *Wâchidi*, p. 13—*Tabari*, p. 22. It is added by all the Mahometan historians, that this is the origin of the name *Hâshim*, i. e. he that broke up the victuals:—

هشم الثريد But the meaning of the word is more likely to be a mere coincidence, and not the origin of the name of Hâshim, which was already in existence. Thus the leading opponent of our Hâshim, in the struggle for the offices, was Amr, son of *Hâshim*, son of Abd al Dar; so that already there was a cousin styled by the same name. The Arab poets, however, delighted in the pun upon the name; and we have fragments of poetry referring to it, handed down to us in the traditions. Hâshim's proper name is said to have been Amr.

† It is added that so often as he went to Anckira (*Ancyra*), he was admitted into the presence of the Emperor, who honored and esteemed him; but the legend, no doubt, originated in the desire to glorify this ancestor of the prophet. (*Wâchidi*, pp. 13-14—*Tabari*, p. 23.) The former says, that both the Caysar and the Najâshy honored and loved him.

‡ وهو الذي اخذ الحلف لقريش من قيصر لان تختلف آمنة واما من علي الطريق فالفهم علي ان تحمل قريش بضائعهم ولا كرا علي اهل الطريق وكتب له قيصر كتابا

(*Wâchidi*, p. 14.) The meaning of this passage seems to be as we have given it in the text.

§ *Tabari*, p. 23.

|| *Wâchidi*, p. 13—*Tabari*, p. 22.

The Coreish perceived the endeavour, and turned it into ridicule. Omeiya was enraged. "Who is Hâshim?" said he, and he defied him to a trial of superiority.\* Hâshim would willingly have avoided a contest with one so much his inferior both in years and in dignity; but the Coreish, who loved such exhibitions, would not excuse him; so he was forced to consent, with the stipulation, however, that the vanquished party should lose fifty black-eyed camels, and be ten years exiled from Mecca. A Khozâite soothsayer was appointed umpire; and having heard the pretensions of both, pronounced Hâshim to be the victor. Then Hâshim took the fifty camels, and slaughtered them in the vale of Mecca, and fed with them all that were present. But Omeiya set out for Syria, and remained there the full period of his exile.†

Hâshim was now advanced in years, when on a mercantile trip to the north, he visited Medina with a party of Coreish. As he traded there in the *Nabathean market*,‡ he was attracted by the soft figure of a female, who from a lofty position was directing her people how to buy and sell for her. She was discreet, and withal comely; and she made a tender impression upon the heart of Hâshim. He enquired of the people whether she was married or single; and they answered that she had been married to Oheiha, and had borne him two sons, but that he had then divorced her. The dignity of this lady, they added, was so great in her tribe, that she would not marry

\* It is difficult to express in any language, but the Arabic, the idea conveyed by منافرة. It was a vain-glorious practice of the Arabs, in which one party challenged another, claiming to be more noble and renowned, brave and generous, than he. Each brought forward his ambitious pretensions, and the arbiter judged accordingly.

† Wâkidi, p. 13½—*Tabari*, p. 24. The Mahometan historians add: "This was the beginning of the enmity between Hâshim and Omeya," meaning between the Omeiyads and Abbassides. To give a mysterious and a sort of predestined appearance to this conclusion, it is pretended that Hâshim and Abd Shams (Omeya's father) were twins; that the one first born came forth with his finger adhering to the forehead of his fellow; and that on being severed, blood flowed from the wound. The sooth-sayers were consulted, and declared that there would be bloodshed between them or their descendants. (*Tabari*, p. 23.) Wâkidi does not give this legend. It is an evident Abasside fable. The envy of Omeya, and the rivalry between the branches of Hâshim and Abd Shams, need no such recondite explanation. They were the natural result of the retention of power and office by one of two collateral lines. The Hâshimites had the chief dignities of giving food and drink to the pilgrims. The Omeiyads possessed only the leadership in battle. What more natural, than that the latter should envy the former?

‡ That one of the marts at Medina should have been then currently called by this name, is proof that the Nabatheans long before had extensive mercantile dealings so far south as Medina.

any one, unless it were stipulated that she should remain mistress of her own concerns, and have the power of divorce if she disliked her husband. This was Salma, the daughter of Amr, a Khazrajite of the Bani Najjâr.\*

So Hâshim demanded her in marriage; and she consented, for she was well aware of his nobility and renown. And he married her; and made a great feast to the Coreish, of whom forty were present with the caravan: he also invited some of the Khazrajites. After a few days' rest, the caravan proceeded onwards to Syria; and on its return, Hâshim carried his bride with him to Mecca. As the days of her pregnancy advanced, she retired to her father's house at Medina, and there (A. D. 497) brought forth a son, who, from the white hair which covered his infantile head, was called *Shêba* al Hamd. Not long after, Hâshim made another expedition to the north, and while at Ghazza (*Gaza*), he sickened and died. The event occurred early in the sixth century of our era.†

\* We have already made mention of Oheiha as one of the leaders of Medina, and also of Salma, in a former Article on the "Ante-Mahometan History of Arabia."

† *Wâckidi*, p. 14—*Tabari*, p. 15. The account of the latter varies somewhat from Wâckidi. Tabari makes Hâshim, on his visit to Medina, to abide in the house of Amr, Salma's father, where he saw and fell in love with the comely widow. She made the stipulation that she was not to bring forth a child except in her father's house. Hâshim, after contracting the alliance, proceeded on his journey to Syria, and the marriage was not consummated till his return, when he carried Salma to Mecca. These facts, and the birth of *Shêba* at *Medina*, are not mentioned by Wâckidi.

Hâshim's death could not have occurred very immediately after the birth of *Shêba*, as he is said to have had another child by Salma, a daughter called Ruckeya, who died in infancy; but it is possible she may have been born before *Shêba*. Hâshim had also another daughter of the same name by another wife; he appears to have had in all five wives, by whom four sons and five daughters were born to him. (*Wâckiâi ibidem*.) But the only child of any note was *Shêba* or Abd al Muttalib.

Hâshim was probably between fifty and sixty when he died. Sprenger has satisfactorily shown that the absurd tradition of his being at death only twenty or twenty-five years old, originated in a corrupt copy of a tradition in Wâckidi, where it is stated that *Abu Ruhm*, who carried back the property left by Hâshim at Gaza to his family at Mecca, was then only twenty years old.

Sprenger, however, seems to be wrong in attributing the name of *Shêba* to *Hâshim's* being grey-headed when Salma bore him a son. The view taken in the text is that of native authority, and is besides the most natural.

C. de Perceval considers that Hâshim died A. D. 510, and supposes *Shêba* to have been then thirteen years old (having been born A. D. 497.) But Tabari makes the lad only seven or eight years of age, when, some time later, he quitted Medina (p. 15.) Hâshim may therefore have died earlier.

We follow C. de Perceval in placing *Shêba's* (Abd al Muttalib's) birth in 497 A. D. He died aged eighty-two, in 579 A. D. Sprenger, by lunar years, brings the calculation of his birth to 500 A. D., but we prefer the luni-solar system of C. de Perceval.



Hâshim left his dignities to his elder brother, Al Muttalib,\* who conducted the entertainment of the pilgrims in so splendid a style, as to deserve the epithet *Al Fawdh*, "the munificent." Meanwhile, his little nephew, Shêba, was growing up, under the care of his widowed mother, at Medina. Several years after his brother's death, Al Muttalib chanced to meet a traveller from Medina, who described, in glowing terms, the noble bearing of the young Meccan. Al Muttalib's heart smote him, because he had so long left his brother's son in that distant locality, and he set out forthwith to bring him to Mecca. Arrived at Medina, he enquired for the lad, and found him practising archery among the boys of the city. He knew him at once from his likeness to his father: he embraced and wept over him, and clothed him in a suit of Yemen raiment. His mother then sent to invite him to her house, but he refused to untie a knot of his camel's accoutrements, until he had carried off the lad to Mecca. Salma was taken by surprise at the proposal, and was passionate in her grief; but Al Muttalib reasoned with her, and explained the advantages which her son was losing by his absence from his father's house. Salma seeing him determined, at last relented; and thus, after Al Muttalib had sojourned with her three days, he set out for home with his nephew. He reached Mecca during the heat of the day; and as the inhabitants from their houses saw him return with a lad by his side, they concluded it was a slave he had purchased, and they exclaimed, *Abd Al Muttalib!*—"Lo, the servant of Al Muttalib!" "Out upon you," said he; "it is my nephew, Shêba, the son of Amr (Hâshim.)" And as each scrutinized the features of the boy, they swore—"By my life! it is the very same."

In this incident is said to have originated the name of ABD AL MUTTALIB, by which the son of Hâshim was ever after called.†

\* Al Muttalib and Hâshim, and their descendants, kept together on the one hand; as did Abd Shams and Naufal, and their descendants, on the other. Each body, Wâckidi adds, acted in all their proceedings "as one hand."

† *Wâckidi*, pp. 14-15—*Tabari*, pp. 15-17. The accounts vary considerably. The former makes Thâbit, father of the Poet Hassân, to give the tidings of his nephew to Al Muttalib: the latter makes a Meccan of the Bani al Hârith to do so. Tabari also varies (p. 16) in representing Al Muttalib as carrying off his nephew clandestinely, and thus omits the interview with his mother; but at page 17 he gives another account more like Wâckidi's. He also makes Al Muttalib at first represent his nephew at Mecca to be *really* his slave, and then surprise the Coreish by leading him about the streets of Mecca well dressed, and proclaiming that he was Hâshim's son. There seems some reason to doubt this origin for Abd al Muttalib's name: however, as it is universally received by Mahometan



Al Muttalib proceeded in due time to instal his nephew in the possession of his father's property; but Naufal, another uncle, interposed, and violently deprived him of his paternal estate. Abd al Muttalib, (who would appear now to have reached the years of discretion,) appealed to his tribe to aid him in resisting these unjust pretensions; but they declined to interfere. He then wrote to his maternal relatives at Medina, who no sooner received the intelligence, than eighty mounted men of the Bani Najjâr, with Abu Asâd at their head, started for Mecca. Abd al Muttalib went forth to meet them, and invited them to his house, but Abu Asâd refused to alight until he had called Naufal to account. He proceeded straight to the yard of the Holy House, and found him seated there among the chiefs of the Coreish. Naufal arose and welcomed the stranger; but he refused his welcome, and, drawing his sword, sternly declared that he would plunge it into him, unless he forthwith reinstated the orphan in his rights. The oppressor was daunted and agreed to the concession, which was ratified by oath before the assembled Coreish.\*

Some years after, Al Muttalib died on a mercantile journey to Yemen;† and then Abd al Muttalib succeeded to the office of entertaining the pilgrims. But for a long time he was devoid of power and influence; and having but one son to assist him

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writers, we have thought it as well to adopt it in the text. There is a good deal of fragmentary poetry on the subject. The following lines describe Al Muttalib's emotion when he recognized his nephew at Medina:—

- \* *عرفت شيبه والنجار قد حلفت ابنا وها حوله بالذبل تنتصل*
- \* *عرفت اجلا دة منا شيمته ففاض مني عليه وابل سويل*

*Wâkidi, p. 14.*

\* See *Tabari, pp. 17–21*. These incidents are not given by Wâkidi; and there is ground for suspecting at the least exaggeration in them, arising from the Abbasside desire of casting disrepute upon the Omeyad branch. Abd al Muttalib being represented as himself asserting his rights and sending a message to his Medina relatives (which is given by Tabari as a poetical fragment, p. 20,) we must regard him as now grown up. But we do not see any ground for holding the rights of which he was dispossessed to be those of entertaining the pilgrims, as Sprenger supposes. (*Life of Mohammed, p. 30.*) In that case we should have to consider his uncle, Al Muttalib, as dead, which from the narrative does not appear likely. The whole story, however, may be regarded, for the reason specified above, with some degree of doubt.

† Tradition states that Hâshim was the first of Abd Menâf's sons who died; then Abd Shams, at Mecca, where he was buried, at Ajyâd; then Al Muttalib as above; and lastly, Naufal at Salmân in Irâc. (See *Tabari, p. 25.*)

\* Var read *جعلت*

in the assertion of his claims, he found it difficult to cope with the opposing faction of the Coreish. It was during this period that he discovered the ancient well of Zamzam. Finding it irksome to procure water from the scattered wells of Mecca, and store it in cisterns by the Kaaba, and perhaps aware by tradition of the existence of a well in the vicinity, he made diligent search, and at last came upon the circle of its venerable masonry.\* It was a remnant of the palmy days of Mecca, when, an unfailling stream of commerce flowed through it: centuries had elapsed since the trade had ceased, and with it followed the desertion of Mecca, and the neglect of the well. It became choked either by accident or design, and the remembrance of it was now so uncertain, that its very position was unknown. Mecca had again arisen to a comparatively prosperous state, and the discovery of the ancient well was an auspicious token of increasing advancement.

As Abd al Muttalib, aided by his son, Harith, dug deeper and deeper, he came upon two golden gazelles, with some swords and suits of armour. The rest of the Coreish envied these treasures, and demanded a share in them: they asserted also their right to the well itself, which they declared had been possessed by their common ancestor Ismael. Abd al Muttalib was not powerful enough to resist this oppressive claim; but he agreed to refer their several pretensions to the decision of the arrows of HOBAL, the god whose image was within the Kaaba.† Lots were therefore cast for the Kaaba and for the respective claimants: the gazelles fell to the share of the Kaaba, and the swords and suits of armour to Abd al Muttalib, while the

\* *Hishâmi*, p. 21—*Wâkidi*, p. 15. The event is encircled by a halo of miraculous associations. Abd al Muttalib receives in a vision the heavenly behest to dig for the well, couched in enigmatical phrases, which after being several times repeated, he at last apprehends. The Coreish assemble to watch his labours: his pick-axe strikes upon the ancient masonry, and he utters a loud *Takbir* (Allâhu Akbar—*Great is the Lord!*) The Coreish then insist on being associated with him in the possession of the well. Abd al Muttalib resists the claim, which they agree to refer to a female soothsayer in the highlands of Syria. On their journey thither, their water is expended in a wild desert, where no springs are to be found. They prepare to dig graves for themselves and await death, when lo! the camel of Abd al Muttalib strikes her hoof on the ground, and a fountain straightway gushes forth. The Coreish, with a flood of thanksgiving, acknowledge that God has by this miracle shown that the well Zamzam belonged solely to Abd al Muttalib, and all return to Mecca. The dispute about the gazelles and other property is represented as following the above incident. After an absurd story of this sort, what reliance is to be placed on Wâkidi's judgment or common sense? Sprenger has rightly thrown the whole of these fables into his legendary chapter. (*Life of Mohammed*, p. 58.)

† The image of Hobal was over the well or sink within the Kaaba. In this sink were preserved the offerings and other treasures of the temple. (*Tabari*, p. 6.)

arrows of the Coreish were blank.\* The latter acquiesced in the divine decision, and relinquished their pretensions to the well. Abd al Muttalib beat out the gazelles into plates of gold, and fixed them by way of ornament to the door of the Kaaba.† He hung up the swords before the door as a protection to the treasures within; but at the same time added a more effectual guard in the shape of a lock and key, which (they say) were made of gold.

The plentiful flow of fresh water, soon apparent in the well Zamzam, was a great triumph to Abd al Muttalib. All other wells in Mecca were deserted for supplies to quench thirst, and this alone resorted to.‡ From it alone he carried water for the

\* Wäckidi is the only authority who states the number of the weapons, viz., seven swords, and five suits of armour (p. 15.) The story of their being cast here by Modhâd, the last Jorhomite king, has been related in a former Article—"Ante-Mahometan History of Arabia." In casting the lots on this occasion, six arrows were used; two yellow for the Kaaba; two black for Abd al Muttalib; and two white for the Coreish. (*Hishâmi*, p. 23.) The mode of casting the arrows is described by Tabari (pp. 6-7) and by C. de Perceval (*Essai*, Vol. I. pp. 261—265.) There were fixed responses written upon the several arrows, from which some sort of oracle could be gathered in any matter, domestic, social, or political:—either in digging for water, circumcising a lad, fixing his paternity, taking a wife, going to war, concluding a treaty, &c. &c.

† These were soon after stolen by three Coreishites, but recovered. (*Wäckidi*, p. 15.) Tabari (p. 73) gives an account of a sacrilegious theft, which we understand to be this one. On account of it, the supposed offender had his hands cut off, and one of the Coreish was expatriated for ten years.

‡ See note at page 50 of the Article on the "Ante-Mahometan History of Arabia," in No. XXXIX. of this *Review*. Burkhardt is there quoted as stating that the water of Zamzam is "perfectly sweet, and differs very much from that of the brackish wells dispersed over the town." The names of some of these other wells, and their diggers, are mentioned by C. de Perceval (Vol. I. p. 262.) The statement of Ali Bey somewhat differs. He makes the water to be "a little brackish and heavy, but drinkable;" and he says that the wells in the city are of the same depth, and their "water of the same temperature, taste and clearness, as that of Zamzam." He therefore believes them all to originate in "one sheet," supplied by the filtration of rain water. But his testimony is mingled with some degree of religious fervour. The city wells, he says, "spring from the same source as the water of Zamzam; they have the same virtue in drawing down the divine favour and blessing as the miraculous well. God be praised for it!" (Vol. II. p. 98.) We prefer the calm and impartial testimony of Burkhardt. In another part of his work, the latter repeats, that excepting Zamzam, the well-water throughout Mecca "is so brackish, that it is used only for culinary purposes;" and he adds, that even the fresh water of Zamzam "is heavy to the taste and impedes digestion." (*Travels*, p. 106.) Elsewhere he says:—"It seems probable that the town of Mecca owes its origin to this well; for many miles round, no sweet water is found, nor is there, in any part of the country, so copious a supply." (*Ibid*, p. 145.) But as the whole of Mecca cannot be supplied from this well, a stream of good water is now brought by a conduit from the hills about Arafat. This, however, is often out of repair, and then "during the pilgrimage sweet water becomes an absolute scarcity; a small skin of water (two of which a person may carry), being then often sold for one shilling—a very high price among Arabs." (*Ibid*, p. 107.) This proves that all the other wells, but Zamzam, must be unfit for drinking.



pilgrims to Arafat and Minâ; and it soon acquired the renown of sacredness in connection with the rites of the Kaaba. The fame and influence of Abd al Muttalib now began to wax greater and greater; a large family of powerful sons added to his dignity; and at last he became, and continued to his death, the virtual chief of Mecca.\*

But during his early troubles, while supported by his only son, Harith, he had experienced such weakness and inferiority in contending with the large and influential families of his opponents, as led him to vow, that if Providence should ever grant him ten sons, he would devote one of them to the Deity. Years rolled on, and the rash father at last found himself surrounded by the longed-for number, the sight of whom daily reminded him of his vow. He bade his sons accompany him to the Kaaba: each was made to write his name upon a lot, and the lots were made over to the intendant of the temple, who cast them in the usual mode. The fatal arrow fell upon ABDALLAH, the youngest and the best beloved of Abd al Muttalib's sons. The vow devoting him to the Deity must needs be kept, but how else shall it be fulfilled than by the use of the sacrificial knife? His daughters wept and clung around the fond father, who was willingly persuaded to cast lots between Abdallah and a ransom of ten camels, the current fine for the blood of a man. If the Deity should accept the ransom, what scruple need the father feel in sparing his son? But the lot a second time fell upon Abdallah: again, and with equal fortune, it was cast between him and twenty camels. At each successive cast, as Abd al Muttalib added ten camels to the stake, the Deity appeared inexorably to refuse the vicarious offering, and require the blood of the son. But at the tenth throw, when the ransom had now reached 100 camels, the lot fell upon them. The father joyfully released Abdallah from his impending fate; and taking the camels, he slaughtered them between Safa and Marwa. The inhabitants of Mecca feasted upon them; and the residue was left to the beasts and to the birds; for Abd al Muttalib's family refused to taste of them. It was this Abdallah who became the father of the Prophet.†

\* Sprenger, however, considers that the Omejad family had the pre-eminence. "It is certain that Harb, and after him Abu Sofîan, surpassed the family of Hâshim in wealth and influence, and that they were the chiefs of Mecca" (p. 31.) Notwithstanding Sprenger's great authority, we believe Abd al Muttalib to have been the virtual chief of Mecca; after his death, there was a dead uniformity among the several families, and no real chief or first man.

† The above account is from *Wâkidi*, p. 16. See also a paper in the *Zeitschrift, Morgen ländische Gesellschaft*, VII. 1, p. 34. Abd al Muttalib had six daughters, and it was one of them who made the proposal to cast lots for the camels.



The prosperity and fame of Abd al Muttalib attracted the envy of the rival branch of Omeya, whose son Harb challenged him to a trial of their respective merits. The Abyssinian king having declined to be the umpire, the judgment was committed to a Coreishite, who declared that Abd al Muttalib was in every respect the superior. Harb was deeply mortified, and

Wäckidi, however, gives another account, which is that commonly received. (*Cnf. Hishâmi*, p. 24—*Tabari*, pp. 6—11—*C. de Perceval*, *Vol. I.* pp. 264—267—*Weil*, p. 8.) According to this version, the Coreish held back Abd al Muttalib just as he was about to plunge the knife into his son, and offered to give a ransom, but he would not listen; and they at last persuaded him to refer the matter to a divineress at Kheibar, who indicated the plan of ransom described in the text. Whatever may have been the facts of the case, they have been greatly over-colored and distorted by tradition, so much so, that Sprenger has placed the entire incident in his legendary chapter (p. 56.) But we believe the story to be *founded* on real facts. It is difficult, indeed, to imagine an adequate motive for the entire invention of such a tale because the Mahometans regard the vow as a sinful one, the illegality of which rendered it null and void. (*Tabari*, p. 5.) No doubt they afterwards dressed the incident in exaggerated and meretricious colors, and pretended a resemblance between it and Abraham's intended sacrifice of Ismael; and thus they make Mahomet to say that he was "the son of two sacrifices:"—

ابن ذبلمحين But (had there been *no* facts to found the story on) the desire to establish such an analogy would have led to a very different fiction; for Abraham was *commanded* to offer up his son, and the Mahometans believe he acted piously in obeying; whereas they hold Abd al Muttalib to be wrong both in the vow, and in his attempt to fulfil it.

We must doubt whether the vow was really to *immolate* a son, and whether there was ever any attempt to put a sacrifice of human life into execution. We believe that human sacrifices to the Deity were unknown in Mecca. The truth we suppose to be that Abd al Muttalib vowed he would *devote* a son to Hobal.

*Nadzar*, نذر, would probably be the word employed; and the idea of a son devoted to the service of God might have become known among the Arabs from its currency among the Jews. But the custom, however natural to the Judaical system, would not mould itself to the mongrel and idolatrous creed of the Kaaba. How was the devotion of a son to the service of God to be carried out at Mecca? The question was referred to the idol, who simply chose one of the sons. In this difficulty, recourse may have been had to a divineress. But the warm imagination of the traditionists has conjured up a theatrical appeal to the sacrificial knife, which we believe never existed.

The sacrifice of human beings in Arabia was only *incidental*, and in the case of violent and cruel tyrants; where it is alleged to have been done *uniformly and on principle*, the authority seems doubtful. Of the former class, are the immolation of a Ghassanide Prince to Venus by Mundzir, king of Hira (*C. de Perceval*, *Vol. II.* p. 101—Article on the "Ante-Mahometan History of Arabia," p. 28, note 4); and the yearly sacrifice by the same prince on his "evil day," in expiation of the murder of two friends. (*Ibid*, p. 104, *et seq.*—*Pococke's Spec. History of Arabia*, p. 73.) Of the second description is the uncertain tale of one *Naaman* sacrificing, with his own hand, men to his deities (*Evagrius* vi. 21—*Pococke's Specimen*, p. 87); and the story of Porphyry, that at Dumaetha (Dumat al Jandal?) κατ' έτος εκαστον παιδα έθνον. See two notes of Gibbon on this subject (Chap. L.) He appears to believe in the practice of human sacrifice in Arabia (as it seems to us, however, on insufficient grounds); but with philosophical discrimination he adds: "the danger and escape of Abdallah is a tradition rather than a fact."

abandoned the society of his rival, whose companion he had previously been.\*

Abd al Muttalib gained an important increase of stability to his party, by concluding a defensive league with the Khozâite inhabitants of Mecca. They came to him and represented, that as their quarters adjoined, the advantages of such a treaty would be great for both parties. These advantages Abd al Muttalib was not slow in perceiving. With ten of his adherents he repaired to the Kaaba, where they met the Khozâites and mutually pledged their faith. The league was then reduced to writing, and hung up in the Holy House. None of the descendants of Abd Shams or Naufal were present, or indeed knew anything of the transaction until it was thus published.† The combination was permanent, and, in after times, proved of essential service to Mahomet.

In the year 570 A. D., or about eight years before the death of Abd al Muttalib, occurred the memorable invasion of Mecca by Abraha, the Abyssinian viceroy of Yemen.‡ It has been already related how the despoil done to the cathedral of Abraha made him resolve to attack Mecca and raze its temple to the ground. He set out with a considerable army—in its train was led an elephant, a circumstance so singular and remarkable, that the commander, his host, the invasion, and the year, are to this day denominated as those “of the Elephant.”§ A prince of the old Himyar stock, with

\* *Wâchidi*, p. 16—*Tabari*, p. 25—*Sprenger*, p. 31. Nofail was of the stock of the Bani Adi, and an ancestor of Omar. The story much resembles that of Hâshim's contest with Omeiya, and one is half tempted to think it may be a spurious re-production of it, the more strongly to illustrate the enmity of the two branches; but the suspicion is not sufficiently great to deprive the narrative of a place in our text. When Harb gave up the society of Abd al Muttalib, “he took to that of Abdallah ibn Jodâân of the branch of Taym, son of Murra.”

Another contest of a somewhat similar nature is related between Abd al Muttalib and a chief of Tâif, on account of a spring of water claimed by the former. An Odzarite soothsayer, in the south of Syria, decided in favor of Abd al Muttalib; but the story is accompanied by several marvellous and suspicious incidents. Thus on the journey northwards, a fountain of water gushed from a spot struck by the heel of Abd al Muttalib's camel—an evident re-production of the legend of Abd al Muttalib's similar journey to adjudicate the claims of the Coreish against him.

† *Wâchidi*, p. 15½—*Sprenger*, p. 31. There were present seven of the immediate family of Abd al Muttalib, Arcam, and two other grand-sons of Hâshim.

‡ The authorities are *Wâchidi*, pp. 16½-17, and *Hishâmi*, pp. 15-19. C. de Perceval has given the circumstances of this expedition in more detail than the character of the traditions warrant (Vol. I, pp. 268-279.)

§ *Wâchidi* gives a tradition (p. 19) that there were thirteen elephants with the army, besides this famous one called Mahmûd; and that the latter was the only one that escaped death from the shower of stones. But this would seem to oppose the drift of tradition generally on the subject. *Wâchidi* adds that Abraha sent expressly for the famous elephant Mahmûd to join his expedition.

an army of Arab adherents, was the first to oppose the advance of the Abyssinian. He was defeated, but his life was spared, and he followed the camp as a prisoner. Arrived at the northern limits of Yemen, Abraha was attacked by the Bani Khuthâm (descendants of Modhar), under the command of Nofail; but he too was discomfited, and escaped death on condition of guiding the Abyssinian army. Thence the conqueror proceeded to Tâif, three days' march from Mecca; but the Bani Thackîf, its inhabitants, deputed men to say that they had no concern with the Kaaba which he had come to destroy, and that so far from opposing the project of Abraha, they would furnish him with a guide.\* For this purpose they sent him a man called Abu Rughâl, and the viceroy moved onwards. At Mughammis, between Tâif and Mecca, Abu Rughâl died; and centuries afterwards, the Meccans marked their abhorrence of the traitor by casting stones at his tomb as they passed.

From Mughammis, Abraha sent forward an Abyssinian with a body of troops to scour the Tehâma, and carry off what cattle they could find. They were successful in the raid, and among the plunder secured 200 camels belonging to Abd al Muttalib. An embassy was then despatched to the inhabitants of Mecca:—"Abraha" (such was the message) "had no desire to do them injury; his only object was to demolish the Kaaba: that performed, he would retire without shedding the blood of any one." The Meccans had already resolved, that it would be vain to oppose the invader by force of arms; but to the destruction of the Kaaba, they refused to give their assent. The embassy, therefore, prevailed on Abd al Muttalib and the chieftains of some of the other Meccan tribes† to ~~return~~ repair to the viceroy's camp, and there plead their cause. There Abd al Muttalib was treated with distinguished honor. To gain him over, Abraha restored his plundered camels, but obtained from him no satisfactory answer regarding the Kaaba.‡

\* They had a goddess, *Lat*, of their own, which they honored nearly in the same way as the Meccans did that at the Kaaba. (*Hishâmi*, p. 16.)

† Of these the chiefs of the Bani Bakr and Hodzeil are mentioned. The Bani Bakr here mentioned are not the tribe collateral with the Taghlibites, but the stock descended from Bakr, son of Abd Monât, son of Kinana, and nearly allied to the Coreish.

‡ He is said to have descended from his masnad and seated himself by Abd al Muttalib. But many of these details were probably invented by the traditionist to glorify the grand-father of the prophet. Abraha is said to have asked him what favour he could do him: Abd al Muttalib replied, to restore to him his camels. The viceroy was mortified. "I looked upon you," said he, "at first with admiration; but now you ask as a favour the return of your own property, and make no solicitation regarding the Holy House, which constitutes your glory, and is the pillar of your own religion and that of your forefathers." Abd al Muttalib answered:—"Of the camels I am myself the master, and therefore I asked for them: as for the Kaaba, another is its master, who will surely defend it, and to him I leave its defence." The speech of Abraha is convenient as affording



The chiefs who accompanied him, offered a third of the wealth of the Tehâma, if he would desist from his designs against their temple, but he refused. The negotiation was broken off, and the chieftains returned to Mecca. By Abd al Muttalib's advice, the people made preparations for retiring in a body to the hills and defiles in the vicinity, which they did the day before the expected attack. As Abd al Muttalib leant upon the ring of the door of the Kaaba, he is said to have prayed to God aloud, that he would defend his own house, and not suffer the Cross to triumph over the Kaaba. This done, he relaxed his hold, and betaking himself to the neighbouring heights, watched what the end might be.\*

Meanwhile a pestilential distemper had shewn itself in the viceroy's camp. It broke out with deadly pustules and frightful blains, and was probably an aggravated form of small-pox. In confusion and dismay the army commenced its retreat. Their guides abandoned them, and it is pretended that the wrath of Heaven farther manifested itself in a flood which swept off multitudes into the sea. But the Pestilence alone is a cause quite adequate to the effect produced.† No one, they say, smitten by it, ever recovered; and

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an occasion for Abd al Muttalib's prophetic defiance; but it is not the speech of a Prince who came to destroy the Kaaba, and whose object would be to depreciate and not to extol it. We regard the conversation as fabricated. It is enough in this narrative to admit the main events, without holding to the details of every speech and conversation, as the effort throughout is patent to magnify Abd al Muttalib, Mecca, and the Kaaba.

Some accounts represent Abd al Muttalib as gaining admittance to Abrahâ through Dzû Nafas, the Himyar prisoner noticed above, whose friendship he had formed in his mercantile expeditions to Yemen. (See *C. de Perceval*, Vol. I. p. 214.) It was on one of these expeditions that Abd al Muttalib is said to have learnt in Yemen to dye his hair black: the people of Mecca were delighted with his appearance, and the custom was thus introduced there. (*Wâkidi*, p. 15½—*Sprenger*, p. 86.) Wâkidi represents Abd al Muttalib as withdrawing from Mecca, on Abrahâ's approach to Hira, (afterwards Mahomet's sacred retreat;) and from thence letting loose his 200 recovered camels as devoted to the Deity, in the hope that some one of the enemy might injure them in the Tehâma, and the Deity be thereby prompted to revenge the insult upon the enemy's army.

\* No doubt these events, too, are highly colored by legendary growth, or traditional fiction, in order to cast a mysterious and supernatural air over the retreat of Abrahâ.

† No one appears to have pursued the retreating army. They sought Nofail to guide them back; but in the confusion he escaped to one of the surrounding heights, whence, it is pretended, he derided the fugitives in these words:—

أين المفروا لاله الطالِب \* والاشرم المغلوب ليس الغالب \*

"Whither away, do ye flee, and no one pursuing! Al Ashram (Abrahâ) is the vanquished one, not the vanquisher." (*Hishâmi*, p. 18.)

A contemporary poet, a Coreishite, named Abdalla, son of Zibara, estimates the killed at 60,000, in these exaggerated verses.

ستون الفا لم يوبوا ارضهم \* بل لم يعيش بعد الا ياب سقيمها

*C. de Perceval*, Vol. I. p. 280.





Abraha himself, a mass of malignant and putrid sores, died miserably on his return to Sanâ.\*

The unexpected disappointment of the hostile designs and grand preparations of Abraha increased the reverence with

\* His body was covered with pustules, and as they dropped off, matter flowed forth, followed by blood : "he became like an unfledged bird ; and did not die until his heart separated from his chest." (*Hishâmi*, p. 18.) This is no doubt over-drawn.

The accounts of Wâckidi and Hishâmi leave no room to question the nature of the disease as having been a pestilential form of small-pox. Wâckidi, after describing the calamity in the fanciful style of the Coran, adds—

فكان ذلك اول ما كان الجدرى والحصبة والا شجار المروة

"And that was the first beginning of the small-pox, and the pustular disease, and a kind of bitter trees" (p. 17.) Similarly Hishâmi, اول ما رائت الحصبة

والجدري بارض العرب ذلك العام وانه اول ما راي مرابير الشجر  
الحرميل والكنظل والعثر The word الحصبة signifies likewise small stones,

and the name as applied to the small-pox is probably derived from the gravelly appearance and feeling of the hard pustules : (such a feeling is believed to be common at some stages of the disease, so much so that the patient on setting his foot to the ground, feels as if he were standing on gravel.) The name, coupled with this derivation, without doubt, gave rise to the poetical description of the event in the Coran :—"Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the army of the Elephant? Did he not cause their stratagem to miscarry? And he sent 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." (*Sura CV.*—See No. XXXVII. of this *Review*, p. 61.—*Canon iii.* B.) This passage, as Gibbon well says, is "the seed" of the marvellous details given regarding Abraha's defeat.

Hishâmi describes the stones showered upon the enemy as being like grains of corn and pulse امثال الحمص والعدس (p. 18); and it is remarkable that the latter expression signifies also a species of deadly pustule. It would seem that not all who were struck (or sickened) died ; for Ayesha says that she saw at Mecca the mahout and the driver of the elephant, وقايد الفيل وسائسه both blind, and sitting, begging food of the people. (*Hishâmi*, p. 19.) The story is the more likely : for blindness is a very common effect of small-pox.

The other miraculous part of the story is, that when the army was about to advance upon Mecca, Nofail, the Khuthamite guide, whispered in its ear : it forthwith sat down, and no persuasion or compulsion would induce it to stir a step towards Mecca, while it would readily proceed in every other direction. The germ of this story lies in a saying of Mahomet's at Hodeibia. His camel sat down there fatigued ; and as the place was at such a convenient distance from Mecca, as to prevent a collision between the Meccans and his army, Mahomet took advantage of the circumstance and said :—"Nay ! Al Cuswa (that was his camel's name) is not worn out ; but he that restrained the elephant from advancing upon Mecca, the same hath held her back also." (*Wâckidi*, p. 118½—*Hishâmi*, p. 321.) Hence the traditionists invented a variety of stories illustrative of the manner in which God was supposed to have "held back the elephant." Yet Mahomet's meaning seems to have been simply metaphorical :—"He who by his providence restrained the elephant, or the possessor of the elephant, from advancing upon Mecca, the same," &c. It is possible that the fable of the elephant's unwillingness to move against Mecca may have been current in Mahomet's time ; but it is incomparably more likely to have been the fiction of the traditionists, grounded on the saying of Mahomet alluded to.

which the Arab tribes regarded the Coreish and the other inhabitants of Mecca. These became vain-glorious, and sought to mark their superiority over all others by special duties and exemptions. "Let us," said they, "release ourselves from 'some of the observances imposed upon the common mass; and forbid ourselves some of the things which to them are 'lawful.'" Thus (say the Arab historians) they gave up the yearly pilgrimage to Arafat, and the ceremonial return therefrom, although they still acknowledged those acts to be an essential part of the religion of Abraham, and binding upon all others: they also denied themselves the use of cheese and butter, while in the pilgrim-state, and abandoning tents of camels' hair, restricted themselves to leather ones. Upon pilgrims who came from beyond the sacred limits (*haram*,) they imposed new rules for their own aggrandisement. Such visitors, whether they came for the great or the little pilgrimage, were to eat no food brought with them from without the sacred boundary; and they were forbidden to perform the ceremonial circuits of the Kaaba, unless naked, or clothed in vestments provided by the Meccans alone, who formed the league.\* This association, called the *Homs*, included the Coreish, a collateral branch, the Bani Kanâna, and the Khozâites. To them the privileges of the league were restricted. All others were subjected to the dependence on them, involved in the solicitation of food and raiment.†

There appears to be some doubt as to the period when these innovations were introduced;‡ but under any circumstances

\* If persons of rank came as pilgrims, and no Meccan garments were available, they were permitted to go through the ceremony in their own vestments; but they were to cast them off immediately after, and never again to use them.

The common pilgrims, who could not get clothes, made the circuits of the Kaaba entirely naked: the women with only a single loose shift.

† The word *Homs*, says Wäckidi, refers to something *new* added to a religion, (p. 12½.) Its etymological derivation seems to be the bringing into play a *fresh stringency* in the pilgrim ceremonial. Sprenger gives its meaning as the "alliance of certain tribes by religion" (p. 36.) This was no doubt an incidental feature of the imposition of the new practices, though it would not appear to be the main and original idea.

‡ Hishâmi says, "I know not whether the Coreish introduced the innovation before or after the attack of Abrahâ" (p. 43.) Wäckidi places his account of the *Homs* league, under the chapter of Cossai, but he does not say that it was introduced in his time: he mentions the practice *incidentally*, and rather in connection with the meaning of the word "Coreish," and as showing that they formed a portion of the league: hence no chronological deduction can be surely drawn from the position of the narrative, such parenthetical episodes being often introduced, thus irregularly in the Arab histories. Sprenger does not therefore go upon certain ground when he quotes Wäckidi, as assigning the beginning of the custom to the era of the Cossai (p. 36, note 1.) He supposes that the *Homs* practices being then introduced, were again *revived* in the year of the Elephant; but the supposition appears to us unnecessary.

they give proof that the Meccan superstition was active and vigorous, and that its directors possessed over the Arabs a prodigious influence.\* The practices then begun were superseded only by Islam; and (adopting the latest date of their introduction) they must have continued in force above half a century. The reverence for the Meccan system, which suffered the imposition of such oppressive customs, must needs have been grossly superstitious, as well as universally prevalent. But the effect of the new practices themselves may perhaps have been adverse to the Meccan system. If the pilgrimage were really of divine appointment, what human authority could grant a dispensation to relax any part of its observances; and in a country where the decent morals of Christianity and Judaism were known and respected, what could be gained by the outrage of society in causing the female sex to perform a public ceremony in an insufficient dress, and the men entirely naked? Here were fair points for the reformer to take exception at, and they would avail either for the denunciation of the entire superstition, or for insisting upon a return to the practices of a purer and more scrupulous age.†

Let us now glance for a moment at the state of parties in Mecca, towards the latter days of Abd al Muttalib.

\* We cannot understand on what principle Sprenger regards this league as a symptom of the declining power of the Meccan superstition, a vain effort which sought "a remedy in reforming the faith of the Haram," \* \* \* "the last spark of the life of whose confederation seemed to be on the point of being extinguished" (p. 36.) To us, the facts convey a conclusion totally the reverse.

† Mahomet was not slow in availing himself of the last of these arguments. He abolished all the restrictions, as well as the relaxations of the Homs league. These practices are indirectly reprobated in Sura II, vv. 199-200 (where he enforces the necessity of the pilgrimage to Arafat,) and in Sura VII, vv. 28 and 32, (where proper apparel is enjoined, and the free use of food and water.) It is said that Mahomet himself, before he assumed the prophetic office, used to perform the pilgrimage to Arafat, thus disallowing the provisions of the association.

Besides the Homs, there were other practices, some of them with less likelihood said to be modern innovations. Such were the arbitrary rules regarding the dedication of camels as hallowed and exempt from duty, when they had come up to a certain standard of fruitfulness; involving some curious rules as to their flesh being wholly illicit, or lawful to men only in certain circumstances, to women only in others. The dedicated mother camel was called *Sâiba*, (and in some cases *Wasila*, which included goats or ewes); the eleventh, or dedicated female young one, *Bahira*; *Hâmi*, the dedicated stallion. But Ibn Ishâc and Ibn Hishâm are not agreed on the details of these customs. It is pretended that Amr Ibn Lohay (in the third century A. D.) introduced the practice; but it, no doubt, grew up long before that time, and is founded, as C. de Perceval says, in the Arab affection for the camel, and reverence for such animals as greatly added to the breed (*Vol. I*, pp. 225-226.—*Sal. Prel. Disc.* pp. 151—153.—*Hishâmi*, pp. 29-30.)

Mahomet inveighed strongly against these arbitrary distinctions which God had not enjoined. (See *Sura V*, v. 112; *Sura VI*, v. 144; *Sura X*, v. 59.)



There had formerly been two leading factions, the descendants of Abd al Dar, and those of Abd Menâf, the two sons of Cossai. The former were originally possessed of all the public offices; but since the struggle with Hâshim, about seventy years before, when they were stripped of several important dignities, their influence had departed, and they had sunk into a subordinate and insignificant position. The offices retained by them were still undoubtedly valuable; but they were divided among separate members of the family; the benefit of combination was lost; and there was no steady and united effort to improve their advantages towards the acquisition of social influence and political power.\*

The virtual chiefship of Mecca was thus in the hands of the descendants of Abd Menâf. But amongst these, two parties had arisen: the families, to wit, of the two brothers, Hâshim and Abd Shams. The grand offices of giving of food and water to the pilgrims secured to the Hâshimites a commanding and a permanent influence, vastly increased by the able management of Hâshim, of Al Muttalib, and now of Abd al Muttalib; and the latter, like his father Hâshim, appears to have been regarded as the chief of the Meccan Sheikhs. But the Abd Shams family, with their numerous and powerful connexions, were jealous of the power of the Hâshimites, and (as we have seen) repeatedly endeavoured to humble them, or to cast a slur upon their high position. One office, that of the leadership in war, was secured by this family, and contributed much to its splendour. It was, moreover, rich and successful in merchandise, and by some is thought to have exceeded in influence and power even the Hâshimite branch.†

But the "year of the Elephant" had already given birth to a personage, destined, within half a century, to eclipse all the distinctions either of Hâshimite or Omeyyad race. To the consideration of this momentous event we hope in a future Article to recur.

\* The custody of the Holy House, the presidency in the Hall of Council, and privilege of binding the banner on the leader's spear, offices secured to the branch of Abd al Dar, might all have been turned to important account, if the advice of their ancestor Cossai had been followed. But division of authority, want of ability, and adverse fortune, appear all along to have depressed this family.

† *Sprengr's Life of Mohammed*, p. 31.







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