

It was a night in the month of Ramadan or fasting (609th year of the Christian era) when the vision spoke, once, twice and yet a third time the angel Gabriel insisted.

But overwhelmed with divine magnificence as Muhammed was:

'How can I read ? I do not know how to read!'

he replied. And here the first revelation occurred to Muhammed:

Read in the name of thy Lord . . .

spoke the angel, and the *Koran* has it:

*Read in the name of thy Lord who created,
He created man from a clot.
Read, and thy Lord is most honourable,
Who taught (to write) with pen,
Taught man when he knew not . . .*

This over, Muhammed woke from his trance.

A great trembling had seized him; for God's Messenger had had speech with a mere man: and fear stole into his heart.

Presently he was walking back home; in a paroxysm he lay on his bed all a-quiver, for he knew not what he had seen, or what its significance was.

Like a comforting wife Khadija was at his bedside, and listening to her husband's experiences.

'From thy lips never have I heard a lie,' she said, 'nor have I doubted thy virtue,' and she added, 'what thine eyes have seen and ears heard, of a truth, is odd.

But it is as thou sayst, that a Mission is placed in thy hands; thou art heralded as the Prophet of Allah.'

And, as Bin Ibrahim says, no man in Mecca was more conversant with the Holy Writ than Waraqa Ben Noful, an Arab convert to Christianity. Muhammed's wife took her husband immediately to the scholar's home.

No sooner had he heard his cousin Khadija's story about her Prophet-husband than he cried:

'By the most Holy God! If what thou sayest is correct, He who manifested His Voice to thy husband is the very same great Namus, that is, Allah's confidant, the Angel who appeared to Our Lord Moses. Doubt me not, O, Khadija,' he added, 'but thy husband is the Prophet risen out of the clan of Qureish. Go and be of good cheer!'

Bent by age, and blinded by long years of study, the Christian sage Waraqah henceforth could go to the shrine of Mecca to see the Prophet regarding whom he had read and for whom, like the Syrian monk, he had awaited.

Again he asked Muhammed of his experience at the cave of Hira, and again he tested it with his knowledge of the ancient lore and found it true.

'Ah! I should like to be still in the land of the living,' he would address the Prophet, 'when your kinsmen will send thee to exile.'

Muhammed would feel surprised by what Waraqa said, for exile outside Mecca was quite the most remote possibility for a respected citizen of the Holy City, and he a merchant-prince to boot.

'Of a surety, they will drive thee to exile,' insisted Waraqa, 'for never hath mortal man brought what thou bringest without falling a victim to the most dastardly persecution.'

'Ah!' he sighed, 'if God deigned to lengthen my days until then,' relates Ibn Hisham of Waraqa, 'I would devote all my energies to helping thee to triumph over thy enemies!'

But Waraqa died soon after.